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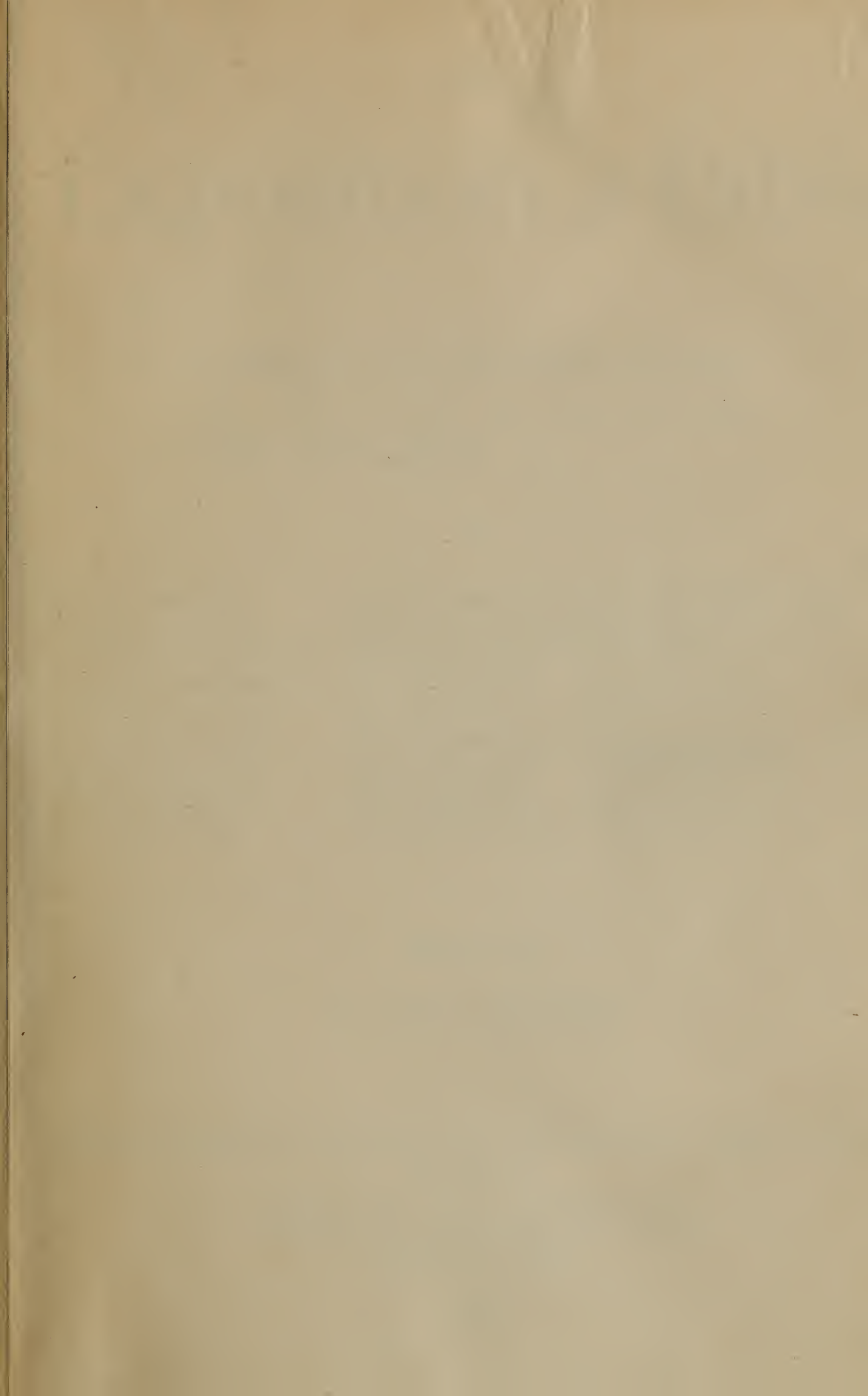
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... AN ...

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ALL THE BOOKS OF THE OLD AND  
NEW TESTAMENT . . . . .

BY

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THE GOSPEL ACCORDING  
TO ST. LUKE





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# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. LUKE.

BY THE REV. HENRY BURTON, M. A.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE GENESIS OF THE GOSPEL.

THE four walls and the twelve gates of the Seer looked in different directions, but together they guarded, and opened into, one City of God. So the four Gospels look in different directions; each has its own peculiar aspect and inscription; but together they lead towards, and unveil, one Christ, "which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." They are the successive quarterings of the one Light. We call them "four" Gospels, though in reality they form but one, just as the seven arches of colour weave one bow; and that there should be four, and not three or five, was the purpose and design of the Mind which is above all minds. There are "diversities of operations" even in making Testaments, New or Old; but it is one Spirit who is "over all, and in all;" and back of all diversity is a heavenly unity—a unity that is not broken, but rather beautified, by the variety of its component parts.

Turning to the third Gospel, its opening sentences strike a key-note unlike the tone of the other three. Matthew, the Levite Apostle, schooled in the receipt of custom—where parleying and preambles were not allowed—goes to his subject with sharp abruptness, beginning his story with a "genesis," "the book of the generation of Jesus Christ." Mark, too, and John, without staying for any prelude, proceed at once to their portrayals of the Divine Life, each starting with the same word "beginning"—though between the "beginning" of St. Mark and that of St. John there is room for an eternity. St. Luke, on the other hand, stays to give to his Gospel a somewhat lengthy preface, a kind of vestibule, where we become acquainted with the presence and personality of the verger, before passing within the temple proper.

It is true the Evangelist does not here inscribe his name; it is true that after inserting these lines of explanation, he loses sight of himself completely, with a "sublime repressing of himself" such as John did not know; but that he here throws the shadow of himself upon the page of Scripture, calling the attention of all people and ages to the "me also," shows clearly that the personal element cannot be eliminated from the question of inspiration. Light is the same in its nature; it moves only in straight lines; it is governed by fixed laws; but in its reflections it is infinitely varied, turning to purple, blue, or gold, according to the nature of the medium and reflecting substance. And what, indeed, is beauty, what the harmony of colours, but the visible music as the same light plays upon the diverse keys? Exactly the same law rules in inspiration. As the Divine Love needed an incarnation, an inshrining in human flesh, that the Divine Word might be vocal, so the Divine Light needs its incarnation too. Indeed, we can scarcely conceive of any revelation of the Divine Mind but as coming through a human mind. It needs the human element to analyse and to throw it forward, just as the electric spark needs the dull

carbon-point to make it visible. Heaven and earth are here, as elsewhere, "threads of the same loom," and if we take out one, even the earthly woof of the humanities, we leave only a tangle; and if it is true of works of art that "to know them we must know the man who produced them," it is equally important, if we would know the Scripture, that we have some knowledge of the scribe. And especially important is it here, for there are few books of Scripture on which the writer's own personality is more deeply impressed than on the Gospel of St. Luke. The "me also" is only legible in the third verse, but we may read it, between the lines, through the whole Gospel.

Concerning the life of St. Luke the facts are few. It has been thought by some that he was one of the "certain Greeks" who came to Jerusalem to worship; while others, again, suppose him to be the nameless one of the two Emmaus travellers. But both these suppositions are set aside by the fact that the Evangelist carefully separates himself from those who were "eyewitnesses," which he could not well have done had he taken part in those closing scenes of the Lord's life, or had he been honoured with that "infallible proof" of the Lord's resurrection. That he was a Gentile is evident; his speech bewrayeth him; for he speaks with a Grecian accent, while Greek idioms are sprinkled over his pages. Indeed, St. Paul speaks of him as not being of the "circumcision" (Col. iv. 11, 14), and he himself, in Acts i. 19, speaks of the dwellers at Jerusalem, and the Aceldama of "their" proper tongue. Tradition, with unanimous voice, represents him as a native of Antioch, in Syria.

Responding to the Divine Voice that bids him "write," St. Luke brings to the task new and special qualifications. Familiar with the Old Testament Scriptures—at least in their Septuagint form, as his many quotations show—intimately acquainted with the Hebrew faith and ritual, he yet brings to his work a mind unwarped by its traditions. He knows nothing of that narrowness of spirit that Hebraism unconsciously engendered, with its insulation from the great outer world. His mount of vision was not Mount Zion, but a new Pisgah, lying outside the sacred borders, and showing him "all the kingdoms of the world," as the Divine thought of humanity took possession of him. And not only so, we must remember that his connection with Christianity has been mainly through St. Paul, who was the Apostle of the "uncircumcision." For months, if not for years, he has been his close companion, reading his innermost thoughts; and so long and so close together have they been, their two hearts have learned to beat in a perfect synchronism. Besides, we must not forget that the Gentile question—their *status* in the new kingdom, and the conditions demanded of them—had been the burning question of the early Church, and that it was at this same Antioch it had reached its height. It was at Antioch the Apostle Peter had "dissembled," so soon forgetting the lessons of the Cæsarean Pentecost, holding himself aloof from the Gentile converts



until Paul felt constrained to rebuke him publicly; and it was to Antioch came the decree of the Jerusalem Council, that Magna Charta which recognised and enfranchised manhood, giving the privileges of the new kingdom to Gentiles, without imposing upon them the Judaic anachronism of circumcision. We can therefore well understand the bent of St. Luke's mind and the drift of his sympathies; and we may expect that his pen—though it is a reed shaken with the breath of a higher inspiration—will at the same time move in the direction of these sympathies.

And it is exactly this—its "gentility," if we may be allowed to give a new accent and a new meaning to an old word—that is a prominent feature of the third Gospel. Not, however, that St. Luke decries Judaism, or that he denies the "advantage" the Jews have; he cannot do this without erasing Scripture and silencing history; but what he does is to lift up the Son of Man in front of their tabernacle of witness. He does not level down Judaism; he levels up Christianity, letting humanity absorb nationality. And so the Gospel of St. Luke is the Gospel of the world, greeting "all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues" with its "peace on earth." St. Matthew traces the genealogy of Christ back to Abraham; St. Luke goes farther back, to the fountain-head, where all the divergent streams meet and mingle, as he traces the descent to Adam, the Son of God. Matthew shows us the "wise men," lost in Jerusalem, and inquiring, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" But St. Luke gives, instead, the "good tidings" to "all people;" and then he repeats the angel song, which is the key-note of his Gospel, "Glory to God in the highest, . . . goodwill toward men." It is St. Luke only who records the first discourse at Nazareth, showing how in ancient times, even, the mercy of God flowed out towards a Gentile widow and a Gentile leper. St. Luke alone mentions the mission of the Seventy, whose very number was a prophecy of a world-wide Gospel, seventy being the recognised symbol of the Gentile world, as twelve stood for the Hebrew people. St. Luke alone gives us the parable of the Good Samaritan, showing that all the virtues did not reside in Israel, but that there was more of humanity, and so more of Divinity, in the compassionate Samaritan than in their priest and Levite. St. Luke alone records the call of Zacchæus, the Gentile publican, telling how Jesus cancelled their laws of heredity, passing him up among the sons of Abraham. St. Luke alone gives us the twin parables of the lost coin and the lost man, showing how Jesus had come to seek and to save that which was lost, which was humanity, here, and there, and everywhere. And so there breathes all through this Gospel a catholic spirit, more pronounced than in the rest, a spirit whose rhythm and deep meaning have been caught in the lines—

"There's a wideness in God's mercy,  
Like the wideness of the sea."

The only other fact of the Evangelist's life we will here notice is that of his profession; and we notice this simply because it enters as a factor into his work, reappearing there frequently. He was a physician; and from this fact some have supposed that he was a freedman, since many of the Roman physicians were of that class. But this by no means follows. All physicians were not freedmen; while the language and style of

St. Luke show him to be an educated man, one, too, who walked in the upper classes of society. Where he speaks natively, as here in the introduction, he uses a pure Greek, somewhat rounded and ornate, in which there is a total absence of those rusticisms common in St. Mark. That he followed his calling at Troas, where he first joined St. Paul, is probable; but that he practised it on board one of the large corn-ships of the Mediterranean is a pure conjecture, for which even his nautical language affords no presumption; for one cannot be at sea for a few weeks—especially with an observant eye and attentive ear, as St. Luke's were—without falling naturally into nautical language. One's speech soon tastes of salt.

The calling of a physician naturally develops certain powers of analysis and synthesis. It is the art of putting things together. From the seen or felt symptoms he traces out the unseen cause. Setting down the known qualities, by processes of comparison or of elimination he finds the unknown quantity, which is the disease, its nature, and its seat. And so on the pages of the third Gospel we frequently find the shadow of the physician. It appears even in his brief preface; for as he sits down with ample materials before him—on one side the first-hand testimony of "eye-witnesses," and on the other the many and somewhat garbled narratives of anonymous scribes—we see the physician-Evangelist exercising a judicious selection, and thus compounding or distilling his pure elixir. Then, too, a skilled and educated physician would find easy access into the higher circles of society, his very calling furnishing him with letters of introduction. And so, indeed, we find it. Our physician dedicates his Gospel, and also the "Acts," to, not the "most excellent," but the "most noble" Theophilus, giving to him the same title that he afterwards gave to Felix and to Festus. Perhaps its English equivalent would be "the honourable." At any rate it shows that this Theophilus was no mere myth, a locution for any "friend of God," but that he was a person of rank and influence, possibly a Roman governor. Then, too, St. Luke's mention of certain names omitted by the other Evangelists, such as Chuza and Manaen, would suggest that probably he had some personal acquaintance with the members of Herod's household. Be this as it may, we recognise the "physician" in St. Luke's habits of observation, his attention to detail, his fondness for grouping together resemblances and contrasts, his fuller reference to miracles of healing, and his psychological observations. We find in him a student of the humanities. Even in his portrayal of the Christ it is the human side of the Divine nature that he emphasises; while all through his Gospel, his thought of humanity, like a wide-reaching sky, overlooks and embraces all such earthly distinctions as position, sex, or race.

With a somewhat high-sounding word "Forasmuch," which here makes its solitary appearance in the pages of Scripture—a word, too, which, like its English equivalent, is a treble compound—the Evangelist calls our attention to his work, and states his reasons for undertaking it. It is impossible for us to fix either the date or the place where this Gospel was written, but probably it was some time between A. D. 58-60. Now, what was the position of the Church at that date, thirty-five years after the Crucifixion?



The fiery tongues of Pentecost had flashed far and wide, and from their heliogram even distant nations had read the message of peace and love. Philip had witnessed the wonderful revival in "the (a) city of Samaria." Antioch, Cæsarea, Damascus, Lystra, Philippi, Athens, Rome—these names indicate, but do not attempt to measure, the wide and ever-widening circle of light. In nearly every town of any size there is the nucleus of a Church; while Apostles, Evangelists, and Christian merchants are proclaiming the new kingdom and the new laws everywhere. And since the visits of the Apostles would be necessarily brief, it would only be a natural and general wish that some permanent record should be made of their narratives and teaching. In other places, which lay back of the line of Apostles' travel, the story would reach them, passed from mouth to mouth, with all the additions of rumour, and exaggerations of Eastern loquacity. It is to these ephemeral Gospels the Evangelist now refers; and distinguishing, as he does, the "many" from the "eye-witnesses" and "ministers of the word," he shows that he does not refer to the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark—which probably he has not seen—for one was an Apostle, and both were "eye-witnesses." There is no censure implied in these words, nor does the expression "taken in hand" in itself imply failure; but evidently, to St. Luke's mind, these manifold narratives were incomplete and unsatisfactory. They contain some of the truth, but not all that the world should know. Some are put together by unskilled hands, and some have more or less of fable blended with them. They need sifting, winnowing, that the chaff may be blown away, and the seed tares separated from the wheat. Such is the physician's reason for now assuming the rôle of an Evangelist. The "forasmuch," before being entered on the pages of his Scriptures, had struck upon the Evangelist's soul, setting it vibrating like a bell, and moving mind and hand alike in sympathy.

And so we see how, in ways simple and purely natural, Scripture grows. St. Luke was not conscious of any special influence resting upon him. He did not pose as an oracle or as the mouth-piece of an oracle, though he was all that, and vastly more. He does not even know that he is doing any great work; and who ever does? A generous, unselfish thought takes possession of him. He will sacrifice leisure and ease, that he may throw forward to others the light that has fallen upon his own heart and life. He will be a truth-seeker and a light-bearer for others. Here, then, we see how a human mind falls into gear with the Divine mind, and human thought gets into the rhythm and swing of the higher thought. Simply natural, purely human, are all his processes of reasoning, comparing, and planning, and the whole Gospel is but the perfect bloom of this seed-thought. But whence came this thought? This is the question. Did it not grow out of these manifold narratives? and did not the narratives themselves grow out of the wonderful Life, the Life which was itself but a Divine Thought and Word incarnate? And so we cannot separate heaven from earth, we cannot eliminate the Divine from even our little lives; and though St. Luke did not recognise it as such—he was an ordinary man, doing an ordinary thing—yet we, standing a few centuries back, and seeing how the Church has hidden in her ark the omer of manna that he gathered, to be

carried on and down till time itself shall be no more, we see another Apocalyptic vision, and we hear a Voice Divine that commands him "write." When St. Luke wrote, "It seemed good to me also," he doubtless wrote the pronoun small; for it was the "me" of his obscure, retiring self; but high above the human thought we see the Divine purpose, and as we watch, the smaller "me" grows into the ME, which is a shadow of the great I AM. And so while the "many" treatises, those which were purely human, have passed out of sight, buried deep in their unknown sepulchres, this Gospel has survived and become immortal—immortal because God was back of it, and God was in it.

So in the mind of St. Luke the thought ripens into a purpose. Since others "have taken in hand" to draw up a narrative concerning those matters which have been "fulfilled among us," he himself will do the same; for has he not a special fitness for the task, and peculiar advantages? He has long been intimately associated with those who from the very first were "eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word," the chosen companion of one Apostle, and doubtless owing to his visit to Jerusalem and to his prolonged residence at Cæsarea, personally acquainted with the rest. His shall not be a Gospel of surmise or of rumour; it shall only contain the record of facts—facts which he himself has investigated, and for the truth of which he gives his guarantee. The clause "having traced the course of all things accurately from the first"—which is a more exact rendering than that of the Authorised Version, "having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first"—shows us the keen, searching eye of the physician. He looks into things. He distinguishes between the To seem and the To be, the actual and the apparent. He takes nothing for granted, but proves all things. He investigates his facts before he endorses them, sounding them, as it were, and reading not only their outer voice, which may be assumed, and so untrue, but with his stethoscope of patient research listening for the unconscious voices that speak within, and so finding out the reality. He himself is committed to nothing. He is not anxious to make up a story. Himself a searcher after truth, his one concern is to know, and then to tell, the truth, naturally, simply, with no fictitious adornment or dressing up of his own. And having submitted the facts of the Divine Life to a close scrutiny, and satisfied himself of their absolute truth, and having thrown aside the many guesses and fables which somehow have woven themselves around the wonderful Name, he will write down, in historical order as far as may be, the story, so that his friend Theophilus may know the "certainty of the things" in which he has been "instructed," or orally catechised, as the word would mean.

Where, then, it may be asked, is there room for inspiration? If the genesis of the Gospel is so purely human, where is there room for the touch of the Divine? Why should the Gospel of St. Luke be canonised, incorporated into Holy Scripture, while the writings of others are thrown back into an Apocrypha, or still farther back into oblivion? The very questions will suggest an answer. That touch of the Divine which we call inspiration is not always an equal touch. Now it is a pressure from above that is overwhelming. The writer is carried out of himself, borne up into regions where Sight and Reason in their



loftiest flights cannot come, as the prophet foretells events no human mind could foresee, much less describe. In the case of St. Luke there was no need for this abnormal pressure, or for these prophetic ecstasies. He was to record, for the most part, facts of recent occurrence, facts that had been witnessed, and could now be attested, by persons still living; and a fact is a fact, whether it is inspired or no. Inspiration may record a fact, while others are omitted, showing that this fact has a certain value above others; but if it is true, inspiration itself cannot make it more true. Nevertheless, there is the touch of the Divine even here. What is the meaning of this new departure? for it is a new and a wide departure. Why does not Thomas write a Gospel? or Philip, or Paul? Why should the Evangelist-mantle be carried outside the bounds of the sacred land, to be thrown around a Gentile, who cannot speak the sacred tongue except with a foreign Shibboleth? Ah, we see here the movings of the Holy Ghost! selecting the separate agents for the separate tasks, and dividing to "every man severally as he will." And not only does the Holy Spirit summon him to the work, He qualifies him for it, furnishing him with materials, and guiding his mind as to what shall be omitted and what retained. It is the same Spirit, who moved "holy men of old" to speak and write the things of God, who now touches the mind and heart of the four Evangelists, enabling them to give the four versions of the one Story, in different language, and with sundry differences of detail, but with no contradiction of thought, each being, in a sense, the complement of the rest, the four quarters making one rounded and perfect whole.

Perhaps at first sight our subject may not seem to have any reference to our smaller lives; for who of us can be Evangelists or Apostles, in the highest meaning of the words? And yet it has, if we look into it, a very practical bearing upon our lives, even the commonplace, every-day life. Whence come our gifts? Who makes these gifts to differ? Who gives us the differing taste and nature? for we are not consulted as to our nature any more than as to our nativities. The fact is, our "human" is touched by the Divine at every point. What are the chequered scenes of our lives but the black or the white squares to which the Unseen Hand moves us at will? Earth's problem is but Heaven's purpose. And are not *we*, too, writing scriptures? putting God's thoughts into words and deeds, so that men may read them and know them? Verily we are; and our writing is for eternity. In the volume of our book are no omissions or erasures. Listen, then, to the heavenly call. Be obedient to your heavenly vision. Leave mind and heart open to the play of the Divine Spirit. Keep self out of sight. Delight in God's will, and do it. So will you make your lowlier life another Testament, written over with Gospels and Epistles, and closing at last with an Apocalypse.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE MUTE PRIEST.

LUKE i. 5-25, 57-80.

AFTER his personal prelude, our Evangelist goes on to give in detail the pre-Advent revelations, so connecting the thread of his narrative

with the broken-off thread of the Old Testament. His language, however, suddenly changes its character and accent; and its frequent Hebraisms show plainly that he is no longer giving his own words, but that he is simply recording the narratives as they were told him, possibly by some member of the Holy Family.

"There was in the days of Herod, king of Judæa." Even the surface-reader of Scripture will observe how little is made in its pages of the time-element. There is a purposed vagueness in its chronology, which scarcely accords with our Western ideas of accuracy and precision. We observe times and seasons. We strike off the years with the clang of bells or the hush of solemn services. Each day with us is lifted up into prominence, having a personality and history all its own, and as we write its history, we keep it clear of all its to-morrows and yesterdays. And so the day grows naturally into a date, and dates combine into chronologies, where everything is sharp, exact. Not so, however, was it, or indeed is it, in the Eastern world. Time there, if we may speak temporally, was of little moment. To that slow-moving and slow-thinking world one day was a trifle, something atomic; it took a number of them to make an appreciable quantity. And so they divided their time, in ordinary speech, not minutely as we do, but into larger periods, measuring its distances by the shadows of their striking events. Why is it that we have four Gospels, and in fact a whole New Testament, without a date? for it cannot possibly be a chance omission. Is the time-element so subdued and set back, lest the "things temporal" should lead off our minds from the "things spiritual and eternal"? For what is time, after all, but a negative quantity? an empty space in itself all silent and dead, until our thoughts and deeds strike against it and make it vocal? Nay, even in the heavenly life we see the same losing of the time-element, for we read, "There should be time no longer." Not that it will then disappear, swallowed up in that infinite duration we call eternity. That would make heaven a confusion; for to finite minds eternity itself must come in measured beats, striking, like the waves along the shore, in rhythmic intervals. But *our* time will be no longer. It must needs be transfigured, ceasing to be earthly, that it may become heavenly in its measurement and in its speech. And so in the Bible, which is a Divine-human book, written for the ages, God has purposely veiled the times, at any rate the "days" of earthly reckoning. Even the day of our Lord's birth, and the day of His death, our chronologies cannot determine: we measure, we guess, but it is randomly, like the blinded men of Sodom, who wearied themselves to find the door. In Heaven's reckoning deeds are more than days. Time-beats by themselves are only broken silences, but put a soul among them, and you make songs, anthems, and all kinds of music. "In those days" may be a common Hebraism, but may it not be something more? may it not be an idiom of celestial speech, the heavenly way of referring to earthly things? At any rate we know this, that while Heaven is careful to give us the purpose, the promise, and the fulfilment, the Divine Spirit does not care to give us the exact moment when the promise became a realisation. And that it is so shows that it is best it should be so. Silence sometimes may be better than speech.



But in saying all this we do not say that Heaven is unobservant of earthly times and seasons. They are a part of the Divine order, stamped on all lives, on all worlds. Our days and nights keep their alternate step; our seasons observe their processional order, singing in antiphonal responses: while our world, geared in with other worlds, strikes off our earthly years and days with an absolute precision. So, now the time of the Advent has been Divinely chosen for whole millenniums unalterably fixed; nor have the cries of Israel's impatient hopes been allowed to hurry forward the Divine purpose, so making it premature. But why should the Advent be so long delayed? In our off-handed way of thinking we might have supposed the Redeemer would have come directly after the Fall; and as far as Heaven was concerned, there was no reason why the Incarnation and the Redemption should not be effected immediately. The Divine Son was even then prepared to lay aside His glories, and to become incarnate. He might have been born of the Virgin of Eden, as well as of the Virgin of Galilee; and even then He might have offered unto God that perfect obedience by which the "many are made righteous." Why, then, this strange delay, as the months lengthen into years, and the years into centuries? The Patriarchs come and go, and only see the promise "afar off." Then come centuries of oppression, as Canaan is completely eclipsed by the dark shadow of Egypt; then the Exodus, the wanderings, the conquest. The judges administer a rough-handed justice; Kings play with their little crowns; Prophets rebuke and prophesy, telling of the "Wonderful" who shall be; but still the Messiah delays His coming. Why this strange postponement of the world's hopes, as if prophecy dealt with illusions only? We find the answer in St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians (chap. iv. 4). "The fulness of the time" was not yet come. The time was maturing, but was not yet ripe. Heaven was long ago prepared for an Incarnation, but Earth was not; and had the Advent occurred at an earlier stage of the world's history, it would have been an anachronism the age would have misunderstood. There must be a leading up to God's gifts, or His blessings cease to be blessings. The world must be prepared for the Christ, or virtually He is no Christ, no Saviour to them. The Christ must come into the world's mind as a familiar thought, He must come into the world's heart as a deep-felt need, before He can come as the Word Incarnate.

And when is this "fulness of the time"? "In the days of Herod, king of Judæa." Such is the phrase that now strikes the Divine hour, and leads in the dawn of a new dispensation. And what dark days were those to the Hebrew people, when on the throne of their David sat that Idumean shadow of the dread Cæsar! Their land swarms with Gentile hordes, and on the soil devoted to Jehovah rise stately, splendid temples, dedicated to strange gods. It is one irruption of Paganism, as if the Roman Pantheon had emptied itself upon the Holy Land. Nay, it seemed as if the Hebrew faith itself would become extinct, strangled by heathen fables, or at any rate that she would survive, only the ghost of her other self, walking like an apparition, with veiled face and sealed lips, amid the scenes of her former glories. "The days of Herod" were the Hebrew midnight, but they give us the Bright and Morning Star. And so upon this

dial-plate of Scripture the great Herod, with all his royalties, is nothing more than the dark, empty shadow which marks a Divine hour, "the fulness of the time."

Israel's corporate life began with four centuries of silence and oppression, when Egypt gave them the doubled task, and Heaven grew strangely still, giving them neither voice nor vision. Is it but one of the chance repetitions of history that Israel's national life should end, too, with four hundred years of silence? for such is the coincidence, if, indeed, we may not call it something more. It is, however, just such a coincidence as the Hebrew mind, quick to trace resemblances and to discern signs, would grasp firmly and eagerly. It would revive their long-deferred and dying hopes, overlaying the near future with its gold. Possibly it was this very coincidence that now transformed their hope into expectation, and set their hearts listening for the advent of the Messiah. Did not Moses come when the task was doubled? And was not the four hundred years' silence broken by the thunders of the Exodus, as the I AM, once again asserting Himself, "sent redemption to His people"? And so, counting back their silent years since Heaven's last voice came to them through their prophet Malachi, they caught in its very silences a sound of hope, the footfall of the forerunner, and the voice of the coming Lord. But where, and how, shall the long silence be broken? We must go for our answer—and here, again, we see a correspondence between the new Exodus and the old—to the tribe of Levi, and to the house of Amram and Jochebed.

Residing in one of the priestly cities of the hill-country of Judæa—though not in Hebron, as is commonly supposed, for it is most unlikely that a name so familiar and sacred in the Old Testament would here be omitted in the New—was "a certain priest named Zacharias." Himself a descendant of Aaron, his wife, too, was of the same lineage; and besides being "of the daughters of Aaron," she bore the name of their ancestral mother, "Elisabeth." Like Abraham and Sarah, they were both well advanced in years, and childless. But if they were not allowed to have any lien upon posterity, throwing themselves forward into future generations, they made up the lack of earthly relationships by cultivating the heavenly. Forbidden, as they thought, to look forward down the lines of earthly hopes, they could and did look heavenward; for we read that they were both "righteous"—a word implying a Mosaic perfection—"walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." We may not be able, perhaps, to give the precise distinction between "commandments" and "ordinances," for they were sometimes used interchangeably; but if, as the general use of the words allows us, we refer the "commandments" to the moral, and the "ordinances" to the ceremonial law, we see how wide is the ground they cover, embracing, as they do, the (then) "whole duty of man." Rarely, if ever, do the Scriptures speak in such eulogistic terms; and that they should here be applied to Zacharias and Elisabeth shows that they were advanced in saintliness, as well as in years. Possibly St. Luke had another object in view in giving us the portraits of these two pre-Advent Christians, completing in the next chapter the quaternion, by his mention of Simeon and Anna. It is somewhat strange, to say the



least, that the Gentile Evangelist should be the one to give us this remarkable group—the four aged Templars, who, “when” it was yet dark, rose to chant their matins and to anticipate the dawn. Whether the Evangelist intended it or not, his narrative salutes the Old, while it heralds the New dispensation, paying to that Old a high though unconscious tribute. It shows us that Hebraism was not yet dead; for if on its central stem, within the limited area of its Temple courts, such a cluster of beautiful lives could be found, who will tell the harvest of its outlying branches? Judaism was not altogether a piece of mechanism, elaborate and exact, with a soulless, metallic click of rites and ceremonies. It was an organism, living and sentient. It had nerves and blood. Possessed of a heart itself, it touched the hearts of its children. It gave them aspirations and inspirations without number; and even its shadows were the interpreters, as they were the creations, of the heavenly light. And if now it is doomed to pass away, outdated and superseded, it is not because it is bad, worthless; for it was a Divine conception, the “good” thing, preparing for and proclaiming God’s “better thing.” Judaism was the “glorious angel, keeping the gates of light;” and now, behold, she swings back the gates, welcomes the Morning, and herself then disappears.

It is the autumn service for the course of Abia—which is the eighth of the twenty-four courses into which the priesthood was divided—and Zacharias proceeds to Jerusalem to perform whatever part of the service the lot may assign to him. It is probably the evening of the Sabbath—the presence of the multitude would almost imply that—and this evening the lot gives to Zacharias the coveted distinction—which could only come once in a lifetime—of burning incense in the Holy Place. At a given signal, between the slaying and the offering of the lamb, Zacharias, barefooted and robed in white, passes up the steps, accompanied by two assistants, one bearing a golden censer containing half a pound of the sweet-smelling incense, the other bearing a golden vessel of burning coals taken from the altar. Slowly and reverently they pass within the Holy Place, which none but Levites are permitted to enter; and having arranged the incense, and spread the live coals upon the altar, the assistants retire, leaving Zacharias alone—alone in the dim light of the seven-branched candlestick, alone beside that veil he may not uplift, and which hides from his sight the Holy of Holies, where God dwells “in the thick darkness.” Such is the place, and such the supreme moment, when Heaven breaks the silence of four hundred years.

It is no concern of ours to explain the phenomenon that followed, or to tone down its supernatural elements. Given an Incarnation, and then the supernatural becomes not only probable, but necessary. Indeed, we could not well conceive of any new revelation without it; and instead of its being a weakness, a blemish on the page of Scripture, it is rather a proof of its heavenliness, a hall-mark that stamps its Divinity. Nor is there any need, believing as we do in the existence of intelligences other and higher than ourselves, that we apologise for the appearance of angels, here and elsewhere, in the story; such deference to Sadducean doubts is not required.

Suddenly, as Zacharias stands with uplifted hands, joining in the prayers offered by the silent “multitude” without, an angel appears. He stands on the “right side of the altar of in-

cense,” half-veiled by the fragrant smoke, which curling upwards, filled the place. No wonder that the lone priest is filled with “fear,” and that he is “troubled”—a word implying an outward tremor, as if the very body shook with the unwonted agitation of the soul. The angel does not at first announce his name, but seeks rather to calm the heart of the priest, stilling its tumult with a “Fear not,” as Jesus stilled the waters with His “Peace.” Then he makes known his message, speaking in language most homely and most human: “Thy prayer is heard.” Perhaps a more exact rendering would be, “Thy request was granted,” for the substantive implies a specific prayer, while the verb indicates a “hearing” that becomes an “assenting.” What the prayer was we may gather from the angel’s words; for the whole message, both in its promise and its prophecy, is but an amplification of its first clause. To the Jew, childlessness was the worst of all bereavements. It implied, at least they thought so, the Divine displeasure; while it effectually cut them off from any personal share in those cherished Messianic hopes. To the Hebrew heart the message, “Unto you a son is born,” was the music of a lower Gospel. It marked an epoch in their life-history; it brought the fulfilment of their desires, and a wealth of added dignities. And Zacharias had prayed, earnestly and long, that a son might be born to them; but the bright hope, with the years, had grown distant and dim, until at last it had dropped down beyond the horizon of their thoughts, and become an impossibility. But those prayers were heard, yea, and granted, too, in the Divine purpose; and if the answer has been delayed, it was that it might come freighted with a larger blessing.

But in saying that this was the specific prayer of Zacharias we do not wish to disparage his motives, confining his thoughts and aspirations within a circle so narrow and selfish. This lesser hope of offspring, like a satellite, revolved around the larger hope of a Messiah, and indeed grew out of it. It drew all its brightness and all its beauty from that larger hope, the hope that lighted up the dark Hebrew sky with the auroras of a new and fadeless dawn. When mariners “take the sun,” as they call it, reading from its disc their longitudes, they bring it down to their horizon-level. They get the higher in the lower vision, and the real direction of their looks is not the apparent direction. And if Zacharias’ thoughts and prayers seem to have an earthward drift, his soul looks higher than his speech; and if he looks along the horizon-level of earthly hopes, it is that he may read the heavenly promise. It is not a son that he is looking for, but the Son, the “Seed” in whom “all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” And so, when the silent tongue regains its powers of speech, it gives its first and highest doxologies for that other Child, who is Himself the promised “redemption” and a “horn of salvation;” his own child he sets back, far back in the shadow (or rather the light) of Him whom he calls the “Lord.” It is the near realisation of both these hopes that the angel now announces.

A son shall be born to them, even in their advanced years, and they shall call his name “John,” which means “The Lord is gracious.” “Many will rejoice with them at his birth,” for that birth will be the awakening of new hopes, the first hour of a new day. “Great in the sight



of the Lord," he must be a Nazarite, abstaining wholly from "wine and strong drink"—the two Greek words including all intoxicants, however made. "Filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb"—that original bias or propensity to evil, if not obliterated, yet more than neutralised—he shall be the Elijah (in spirit and in power) of Malachi's prophecy, turning many of Israel's children "to the Lord their God." "Going before Him"—and the antecedent of "Him" must be "the Lord their God" of the preceding verse, so early is the purple of Divinity thrown around the Christ—he "shall turn the hearts of fathers to their children," restoring peace and order to domestic life; and the "disobedient" he shall incline "to walk in the wisdom of the just" (R. V.), bringing back the feet that have erred and slipped to "the paths of uprightness," which are the "ways of wisdom." In short, he shall be the herald, making ready a people prepared for the Lord, running before the Royal chariot, proclaiming the coming One, and preparing His way, then leaving his own little footprints to disappear, thrown up in the chariot-dust of Him who was greater and mightier than he.

We can easily understand, even if we may not apologise for, the incredulity of Zacharias. There are crises in our life when, under profound emotion, Reason herself seems bewildered, and Faith loses her steadiness of vision. The storm of feeling throws the reflective powers into confusion, and thought becomes blurred and indistinct, and speech incoherent and wild. And such a crisis was it now, but intensified to the mind of Zacharias by all these additions of the supernatural. The vision, with its accessories of place and time, the message, so startling, even though so welcome, must necessarily produce a strange perturbation of soul; and what surprise need there be that when the priest does speak it is in the lisping accents of unbelief? Could it well have been otherwise? Peter "wist not that it was true which was done by the angel, but thought he saw a vision;" and though Zacharias has none of these doubts of unreality—it is to him no dream of the moment's ecstasy—still he is not yet aware of the rank and dignity of his angel-visitant, while he is perplexed at the message, which so directly contravenes both reason and experience. He does not doubt the Divine power, let it be observed, but he does seek for a sign that the angel speaks with Divine authority. "Whereby shall I know this?" he asks, reminding us by his question of Jacob's "Tell me thy name." The angel replies, in substance, "You ask whereby you may know this; that is, you wish to know by whose authority I declare this message to you. Well, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and I was sent to speak unto you, and to bring you these good tidings. And since you ask for a sign, an endorsement of my message, you shall have one. I put the seal of silence upon your lips, and you shall not be able to speak until the day when these things shall come to pass, because you believed not my words." Then the vision ends; Gabriel returns to the songs and anthems of the skies, leaving Zacharias to carry, in awful stillness of soul, this new "secret of the Lord."

This infliction of dumbness upon Zacharias has generally been regarded as a rebuke and punishment for his unbelief; but if we refer to the

parallel cases of Abraham and of Gideon, such is not Heaven's wonted answer to the request for a sign. We must understand it rather as the proof Zacharias sought, something at once supernatural and significant, that should help his stumbling faith. Such a sign, and a most effective one, it was. Unlike Gideon's dew, that would soon evaporate, leaving nothing but a memory, this was ever present, ever felt, at least until faith was exchanged for sight. Nor was it dumbness simply, for the word (ver. 22) rendered "speechless" implies inability to hear as well as inability to speak; and this, coupled with the fact mentioned in ver. 62, that "they made signs to him"—which they would scarcely have done could he have heard their voices—compels us to suppose that Zacharias had suddenly become deaf as well as dumb. Heaven put the seal of silence upon his lips and ears, that so its own voice might be more clear and loud; and so the profound silences of Zacharias' soul were but the blank spaces on which Heaven's sweet music was written.

How long the interview with the angel lasted we cannot tell. It must, however, have been brief; for at a given signal, the stroke of the Magrephah, the attendant priest would re-enter the Holy Place, to light the two lamps that had been left unlighted. And here we must look for the "tarrying" that so perplexed the multitude, who were waiting outside, in silence, for the benediction of the incensing priest. Re-entering the Holy Place, the attendant finds Zacharias smitten as by a sudden paralysis—speechless, deaf, and overcome by emotion. What wonder that the strange excitement makes them oblivious of time, and, for the moment, all-forgetful of their Temple duties! The priests are in their places, grouped together on the steps leading up to the Holy Place; the sacrificing priest has ascended the great brazen altar, ready to cast the pieces of the slain lamb upon the sacred fire; the Levites stand ready with their trumpets and their psalms—all waiting for the priests who linger so long in the Holy Place. At length they appear, taking up their position on the top of the steps, above the rows of priests, and above the silent multitude. But Zacharias cannot pronounce the usual benediction to-day. The "Jehovah bless thee and keep thee" is unsaid; the priest can only "beckon" to them, perhaps laying his finger on the silent lips, and then pointing to the silent heavens—to them indeed silent, but to himself all vocal now.

And so the mute priest, after the days of his ministration are completed, returns to his home in the hill-country, to wait the fulfilment of the promises, and out of his deep silences to weave a song that should be immortal; for the "Benedictus," whose music girdles the world to-day, before it struck upon the world's ear and heart, had, through those quiet months, filled the hushed temple of his soul, lifting up the priest and the prophet among the poets, and passing down the name of Zacharias as one of the first sweet singers of the new Israel.

And so the Old meets, and merges into the New; and at the marriage it is the speaking hands of the mute priest that join together the two Dispensations, as each gives itself to the other, never more to be put asunder, but to be "no longer twain, but one," one Purpose, one Plan, one Divine Thought, one Divine Word.



## CHAPTER III.

## THE GOSPEL PSALMS.

UNLIKE modern church-builders, St. Luke sets his chancel by the porch. No sooner have we passed through the vestibule of his Gospel than we find ourselves within a circle of harmonies. On the one side are Zacharias and Simeon, the one chanting his "Benedictus," and the other his "Nunc Dimittis." Facing them, as if in antiphon, are Elisabeth and Mary, the one singing her "Beatitude," and the other her "Magnificat"; while overhead, in the frescoed and star-lighted sky, are vast multitudes of the heavenly host, enriching the Advent music with their "Glorias." What means this grand irruption of song? and why is St. Luke, the Gentile Evangelist, the only one who repeats to us these Hebrew psalms? At first it would seem as if their natural place would be as a prelude to St. Matthew's Gospel, which is the Gospel of the Hebrews. But strangely enough, St. Matthew passes them by in silence, just as he omits the two angelic visions. St. Matthew is evidently intent on one thing. Beginning a New Testament, as he is, he seems especially anxious that there shall be no rent or even seam between the Old and the New; and so, in his first pages, after giving us the genealogy, running the line of descent up to Abraham, he laces up the threads of his narrative with the broken-off threads of the old prophecies, so that the written Word may be a vestment of the Incarnate Word, which shall be "without seam, woven from the top throughout." And so really the Advent hymns would not have suited St. Matthew's purpose. Their ring would not have been in accord with the tone of his story; and had we found them in his first chapters, we should have instinctively felt that they were out of place, as if we saw a rose blossoming on a widespread oak.

St. Luke, however, is portraying the Son of Man. Coming to redeem humanity, he shows how He was first born into that humanity, making His advent in a purely human fashion. And so the two conceptions form a fit beginning for his Gospel; while over the Divine Birth and Childhood he lingers reverently and long, paying it, however, only the homage Heaven had paid it before. Then, too, was there not a touch of poetry about our Evangelist? Tradition has been almost unanimous in saying that he was a painter; and certainly in the grouping of his figures, and his careful play upon the lights and shadows, we can discover traces of his artistic skill, in word-painting at any rate. His was evidently a soul attuned to harmonies, quick to discern any accordant or discordant strains. Nor must we forget that St. Luke's mind is open to certain occult influences, whose presence we may indeed detect, but whose power we are not able to gauge. As we have already seen, it was the manifold narratives of anonymous writers that first moved him to take up the pen of the historian; and to those narratives we doubtless owe something of the peculiar cast and colouring of St. Luke's story. It is with the Nativity that tradition would be most likely to take liberties. The facts of the Advent, strange enough in themselves, would at the hands of rumour undergo a process of developing, like the magni-

fied and somewhat grotesque shadows of himself the traveller casts on Alpine mists. It was doubtless owing to these enlargements and distortions of tradition that St. Luke was led to speak of the Advent so fully, going into the minutiae of detail, and inserting, as is probable, from the Hebrew tone of these first two chapters, the account as given orally, or written, by some members of the Holy Family.

It must be admitted that to some inquiring and honest minds these Advent psalms have been a difficulty, an enigma, if not a stumbling-block. As the bells that summon to worship half-deafen the ear of the worshipper on a too near approach, or they become merely a confused and unmeaning noise if he climbs up into the belfry and watches the swing of their brazen lips, so this burst of music in our third Gospel has been too loud for certain sensitive ears. It has shaken somewhat the foundations of their faith. They think it gives an unreality, a certain mythical flavour, to the story, that these four pious people, who have always led a quiet, prosaic kind of life, should now suddenly break out into impromptu songs, and when these are ended lapse again into complete silence, like the century plant, which throws out a solitary blossom in the course of a hundred years. And so they come to regard these Hebrew psalms as an interpolation, an afterthought, thrown into the story for effect. But let us not forget that we are dealing now with the Eastern mind, which is naturally vivacious, imaginative, and highly poetical. Even our colder tongue, in this glacial period of nineteenth-century civilisation, is full of poetry. The language of common every-day life—to those who have ears to hear—is full of tropes, metaphors, and parables. Take up the commonest words of daily speech, and put them to your ear, and they will sing like shells from the sea. There are whole poems in them—epics, idylls, of every sort; and let our colder speech get among the sweet influences of religion, and like the iceberg adrift in the Gulf Stream, it loses its rigidity and frigidity at once, melting in liquid, rhythmic measures, throwing itself away in hymns and *jubilates*. The fact is, the world is full of music. As the Sage of Chelsea said, "See deep enough, and you see musically, the heart of Nature being everywhere music if you can only reach it." And it is so. You can touch nothing but there are harmonies slumbering within it, or itself is a stray note of some grander song. Dead wood from the forest, dead ore from the mine, dead tusks of the beast—these are the "base things" that strike our music; and only put a mind within them, and a living soul with a living touch before them, and you have songs and anthems without number.

But to Eastern minds poetry was a sort of native language. Its inspiration was in the air. Their ordinary speech was ornate and efflorescent, throwing itself out in simile and hyperbole. It only needed some small excitement, and they fell naturally into the couplet form of utterance. Even to-day the children swing under the mulberry-trees to songs and choruses; hucksters extol their wares in measured verse; and the Bethany fruit-girl sings in the market, "O lady, take of our fruit, without money and without price: it is yours; take all that you will"! And so it need not surprise us, much less trouble us, that Simeon and Elisabeth, Zacharias and Mary, should each speak in measured cadences. Their



speech blossomed with flowers of rhetoric, just as naturally as their hills were ablaze with daisies and anemones. Besides, they were now under the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit. We read, "Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost;" and again, Zacharias was "filled with the Holy Ghost;" Simeon "came in the Spirit into the Temple;" while Mary now seemed to live in one conscious, constant inspiration. It is said that "a poet is born, not made;" and if he be not thus "free-born" no "great sum," either of gold or toil, will ever pass him up within the favoured circle. And the same is true of the poet's creations. Sacred hymns are not the product of the unaided intellect. They do not come at the bidding of any human will. They are inspirations. There is the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit in their conception. The human mind, heart, and lips are but the instrument, a kind of Æolian lyre, played upon by the Higher Breath, which comes and goes—how, the singer himself can never tell; for

"In the song  
The singer has been lost."

It was when "filled with the Spirit" that Bezaleel put into his gold and silver the thoughts of God; it was when the Spirit of God came upon him that Balaam took up his parable, putting into stately numbers Israel's forward march and endless victories. And so the sacred psalm is the highest type of inspiration; it is a voice from no earthly Parnassus, but from the Mount of God itself—the nearest approach to the celestial harmonies, the harmonies of that city whose very walls are poetry, and whose gates are praise.

And so, after all, it was but fitting and perfectly natural that the Gospel that Heaven had been so long time preparing should break upon the world amid the harmonies of music. Instead of apologising for its presence, as if it were but an interlude improvised for the occasion, we should have noted and mourned its absence, as when one mourns for "the sound of a voice that is still." When the ark of God was brought up from Baale Judah it was encircled with one wide wreath of music, a travelling orchestra of harps and psalteries, castanets and cymbals; and as now that Ark of all the promises is borne across from the Old to the New Dispensation, as the promise becomes a fulfilment, and the hope a realisation, shall there not be the voice of song and gladness? Our sense of the fitness of things expects it; Heaven's law of the harmonies demands it; and had there not been this burst of praise and song, we should have listened for the very stones to cry out, rebuking the strange silence. But the voice was not silent. The singers were there, in their places; and they sang, not because they would, but because they must. A heavenly pressure, a sweet constraint, was upon them. If Wealth lays down her tribute of gold, with frankincense and myrrh, Poetry weaves for the Holy Child her beautiful songs, and crowns Him with her fadeless amaranth; and so around the earthly cradle of the Lord, as around His heavenly throne, we have angelic songs, and "the voice of harpers, harping with their harps."

Turning now to the four Gospel-psalmists—not, however, to analyse, but to listen to their song—we meet first with Elisabeth. This aged daughter of Aaron, and wife of Zacharias, as we have seen, resided somewhere in the hill-country

of Judæa, in their quiet, childless home. Righteous, blameless, and devout, religion to her was no mere form; it was her life. The Temple services, with which she was closely associated, were to her no cold clatter of dead rites; they were realities, full of life and full of music, as her heart had caught their deeper meaning. But the Temple, while it attracted her thoughts and hopes, did not enclose them; its songs and services were to her but so many needles, swinging round on their marble pivot, and pointing beyond to the Living God, the God who dwelt not in temples made with hands, but who, then as now, inhabits the purified temple of the heart. Long past the time when motherly hopes were possible, the fretting had subsided, and her spirit had become, first acquiescent, then quiescent. But these hopes had been miraculously rekindled, as she slowly read the vision of the Temple from the writing-table of her dumb husband. The shadow of her dial had gone backward; and instead of its being evening, with gathering shadows and ever-lessening light, she found herself back in the glow of the morning, her whole life lifted to a higher level. She was to be the mother, if not of the Christ, yet of His fore-runner. And so the Christ was near at hand, this was certain, and she had the secret prophecy and promise of His advent. And Elisabeth finds herself exalted—borne up, as it were, into Paradise, among visions and such swells of hosannas that she cannot utter them; they are too sweet and too deep for her shallow words. Was it not this, the storm of inward commotion, that drove her to hide herself for the five months? Heaven has come so near to her, such thoughts and visions fill her mind, that she cannot bear the intrusions and jars of earthly speech; and Elisabeth passes into a voluntary seclusion and silence, keeping strange company with the dumb and deaf Zacharias.

At length the silence is broken by the unexpected appearance of her Nazareth relative. Mary, fresh from her hasty journey, "entered into the house of Zacharias and saluted Elisabeth." It is a singular expression, and evidently denotes that the visit of the Virgin was altogether unlooked for. There is no going out to meet the expected guest, as was common in Eastern hospitalities; there was even no welcome by the gate; but like an apparition, Mary passes within, and salutes the surprised Elisabeth, who returns the salutation, not, however, in any of the prescribed forms, but in a benediction of measured verse:—

"Blessed art thou among women,  
And blessed is the fruit of thy womb!  
And whence is this to me,  
That the mother of my Lord should come unto me?  
For, behold, when the voice of thy salutation came into  
mine ears  
The babe leaped in my womb for joy.  
And blessed is she that believed,  
For there shall be a fulfilment of the things which have  
been spoken to her from the Lord."

The whole canticle—and it is Hebrew poetry, as its parallelisms and strophes plainly show—is one apostrophe to the Virgin. Striking the keynote in its "Blessed art thou," the "thou" moves on, distinct and clear, amid all variations, to the end, reaching its climax in its central phrase, "The mother of my Lord." As one hails the morning star, not so much for its own light as for its promise of the greater light, the day-spring that is behind it, so Elisabeth salutes the



morning star of the new dawn, at the same time paying homage to the Sun, whose near approach the star heralds. And why is Mary so blessed among women? Why should Elisabeth, forgetting the dignity of years, bow so deferentially before her youthful relative, crowning her with a song? Who has informed her of the later revelation at Nazareth? It is not necessary to suppose that Elisabeth, in her seclusion, had received any corroborative vision, or even that she had been supernaturally enlightened. Had she not the message the angel delivered to Zacharias? and was not that enough? Her son was to be the Christ's forerunner, going, as the angel said, before the face of "the Lord." Three times had the angel designated the Coming One as "the Lord," and this was the word she had carried with her into her seclusion. What it meant she did not fully understand; but she knew this, that it was He of whom Moses and the prophets had written, the Shiloh, the Wonderful; and as she put together the detached Scriptures, adding, doubtless, some guesses of her own, the Christ grew as a conception of her mind and the desire of her heart into such colossal proportions that even her own offspring was dwarfed in comparison, and the thoughts of her own maternity became, in the rush of greater thoughts, only as the stray eddies of the stream. That such was the drift of her thoughts during the five quiet months is evident; for now, taught of the Holy Ghost that her kinswoman is to be the mother of the expected One, she greets the unborn Christ with her lesser "Benedictus." Like the old painters, she puts her aureole of song around the mother's head, but it is easy to see that the mother's honours are but the far-off reflections from the Child. Is Mary blessed among women? it is not because of any wealth of native grace, but because of the fruit of her womb. Does Elisabeth throw herself right back in the shade, asking almost abjectly, "Whence is this to me?" it is because, like the centurion, she feels herself unworthy that even the unborn "Lord" should come under her roof. And so, while this song is really an ode to the Virgin, it is virtually Elisabeth's salute of the Christ who is to be, a salute in which her own offspring takes part, for she speaks of his "leaping" in her womb, as if he were a participant in her joy, interpreting its movements as a sort of "Hail, Master!" The canticle thus becomes invested with a higher significance. Its words say much, but suggest more. It carries our thought out from the seen to the unseen, from the mother to the Holy Child, and Elisabeth's song thus becomes the earliest "Hosannah to the Son of David," the first prelude to the unceasing anthems that are to follow.

It will be observed that in the last line the song drops out of the first and the second personals into the third. It is no longer the frequent "thy," "thou," "my," but "she:" "Happy is she that believed." Why is this change? Why does she not end as she began—"Happy art thou who hast believed"? Simply because she is no longer speaking of Mary alone. She puts herself as well within this beatitude, and at the same time states a general law, how faith ripens into a harvest of blessedness. The last line thus becomes the "Amen" of the song. It reaches up among the eternal "Verities," and sets them ringing. It speaks of the Divine faithfulness, out of which and within which human

faith grows as an acorn within its cup. And who could have better right to sing of the blessedness of faith, and to introduce this New Testament grace—not unknown in the Old Testament, but unnamed—as she who was herself such an exemplification of her theme? How calmly her own heart reposed on the Divine word! How before her far-seeing and foreseeing vision valleys were exalted, mountains and hills made low, that the way of the Lord might appear! Elisabeth sees the unseen Christ, lays before Him the tribute of her song, the treasures of her affection and devotion; even before the Magi had saluted the Child-King, Elisabeth's heart had gone out to meet Him with her hosannas, and her lips had greeted Him "My Lord." Elisabeth is thus the first singer of the New Dispensation; and though her song is more a bud of poetry than the ripe, blossomed flower, enfolding rather than unfolding its hidden beauties, it pours out a fragrance sweeter than spikenard on the feet of the Coming One, while it throws around Him the purple of new royalties.

Turning now to the song of Mary, our "Magnificat," we come to poetry of a higher order. Elisabeth's introit was evidently spoken under intense feeling; it was the music of the storm; for "she lifted up her voice with a loud cry." Mary's song, on the other hand, is calm, the hymn of the "quiet resting-place." There is no unnatural excitement now, no inward perturbation, half mental and half physical. Mary was perfectly self-possessed, as if the spell of some Divine "peace" were upon her soul; and as Elisabeth's "loud cry" ceased, Mary "said"—so it reads—her response. But if the voice was lower, the thought was higher, more majestic in its sweep. Elisabeth's song was on the lower heights. "The mother of my Lord," this was its starting-place, and the centre around which its circles were described; and though its wings beat now and again against the infinities, it does not attempt to explore them, but returns timidly to its nest. But Elisabeth's loftiest reach is Mary's starting-point; her song begins where the song of Elisabeth ends. Striking her key-note in the first line, "The Lord," this is her one thought, the Alpha and Omega of her psalm. We call it the "Magnificat"; it is a "Te Deum," full of suggested doxologies. Beginning with the personal, as she is almost compelled to do by the intense personality of Elisabeth's song, Mary hastes to gather up the eulogies bestowed upon herself, and to bear them forward to Him who merits all praise, as He is the Source of all blessing. Her soul "magnifies the Lord," not that she, by any weak words of hers, can add to His greatness, which is infinite, but even she may give the Lord a wider place within her thoughts and heart; and whoever is silent, her song shall make "the voice of His praise to be heard." Her spirit "hath rejoiced in God her Saviour," and why? Has He not looked down on her low estate, and done great things for her? "The bondmaid of the Lord," as she a second time calls herself, glorying in her bonds, such is her promotion and exaltation that all generations shall call her blessed. Then, with a beautiful effacement of self, which henceforth is not even to be a mote playing in the sunshine, she sings of Jehovah—His holiness, His might, His mercy, His faithfulness.

Mary's song, both in its tone and language, belongs to the Old Dispensation. Thoroughly



Hebraic, and all inlaid with Old Testament quotations, it is the swan-song of Hebraism. There is not a single phrase, perhaps not a single word, that bears a distinctive Christian stamp; for the "Saviour" of the first strophe is the "Saviour" of the Old Testament, and not of the New, with a national rather than an evangelical meaning. The heart of the singer is turned to the past rather than to the future. Indeed, with the solitary exception, how all generations shall call her blessed, there is no passing glimpse into the future. Instead of speaking of the Expected One, and blessing "the fruit of her womb," her song does not even mention Him. She tells how the Lord hath done great things for her, but what those "great things" are she does not say; she might, as far as her own song tells us, be simply a later Miriam, singing of some family or personal deliverance, a salvation which was one of a thousand. A true daughter of Israel, she dwells among her own people, and her very broadest vision sees in her offspring no world-wide blessing, only a Deliverer for Israel, His servant. Does she speak of mercy? it is not that wider mercy that like a sea laves every shore, bearing on its still bosom a redeemed humanity; it is the narrower mercy "toward Abraham and his seed for ever." Mary recognises the unity of the Godhead, but she does not recognise the unity, the brotherhood of man. Her thought goes back to "our fathers," but there it halts; the shrunken sinew of Hebrew thought could not cross the prior centuries, to find the world's common father in Paradise. But in saying this we do not depreciate Mary's song. It is, and ever will be, the "Magnificat," great in its theme, and great in its conception. Following the flight of Hannah's song, and making use of its wings at times, it soars far above, and sweeps far beyond its original. Not even David sings of Jehovah in more exalted strains. The holiness of God, the might supreme above all powers, the faithfulness that cannot forget, and that never fails to fulfil, the Divine choice and exaltation of the lowly—these four chief chords of the Hebrew Psalter Mary strikes with a touch that is sweet as it is clear.

Mary sang of God; she did not sing of the Christ. Indeed, how could she? The Christ to be was part of her own life, part of herself; how could she sing His praise without an appearance of egotism and self-gratulation? There are times when silence is more eloquent than speech; and Mary's silence about the Christ was but the silence of the winged cherubim, as they bend over the ark, beholding and feeling a mystery they can neither know nor tell. It was the hush inspired by a near and glorious presence. And so the "Magnificat," while it tells us nothing of the Christ, swings our thoughts around towards Him, sets us listening for His advent; and Mary's silence is but the setting for the Incarnate WORD.

The song of Zacharias follows that of Mary, not only in the order of time, but also in its sequence of thought. It forms a natural postlude to the "Magnificat," while both are but different parts of one song, this earliest "Messiah." It is something remarkable that our first three Christian hymns should have their birth in the same nameless city of Judah, in the same house, and probably in the same chamber; for the room, which now is filled with the priest's relatives, and where Zacharias breaks the long

silence with his prophetic "Benedictus," is doubtless the same room where Elisabeth chanted her greeting, and Mary sang her "Magnificat." The song of Mary circled about the throne of Jehovah, not could she leave that throne, even to tell the great things the Lord had done for her. Zacharias, coming down from his mount of vision and of silence, gives us a wider outlook into the Divine purpose. He sings of the "salvation" of the Lord; and salvation, as it is the key-note of the heavenly song, is the key-note of the "Benedictus." Does he bless the Lord, the God of Israel? it is because He has "visited" (or looked upon) "His people, and wrought redemption for" them; it is because He has provided an abundant salvation, or a "horn of salvation," as he calls it. Has God remembered His covenant, "the oath He swore unto Abraham"? has He "shown mercy towards their fathers"? that mercy and faithfulness are seen in this wonderful salvation—a salvation "from their enemies," and "from the hand of all that hate" them. Is his child to be "the prophet of the Most High," going "before the face of the Lord," and making "ready His ways"? it is that he may "give knowledge of" this "salvation," in "the remission of sins." Then the psalm ends, falling back on its key-note; for who are they who "sit in darkness and the shadow of death," but a people lost? And who is the Day-spring who visits them from on high, who shines upon their darkness, turning it into day, and guiding their lost feet into the way of peace, but the Redeemer, the Saviour, whose name is "Wonderful"? And so the "Benedictus," while retaining the form and the very language of the Old, breathes the spirit of the New Dispensation. It is a fragrant breeze, blowing off from the shores of a new, and now near world, a world already seen and possessed by Zacharias in the anticipations of faith. The Saviour whose advent the inspired priest proclaims is no mere national deliverer, driving back those eagles of Rome, and rebuilding the throne of his father David. He might be all that—for even prophetic vision had not sweep of the whole horizon; it only saw the little segment of the circle that was Divinely illumined—but to Zacharias He was more, a great deal more. He was a Redeemer as well as Deliverer; and a "redemption"—for it was a Temple word—meant a price laid down, something given. The salvation of which Zacharias speaks is not simply a deliverance from our political enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us. It was a salvation higher, broader, deeper than that, a "salvation" that reached to the profound depths of the human soul, and that sounded its jubilee there, in the remission of sin and deliverance from sin. Sin was the enemy, to be vanquished and destroyed, and the shadow of death was but the shadow of sin. And Zacharias sings of this great redemption that leads to salvation, while the salvation leads into the Divine peace, to "holiness and righteousness," and a service that is "without fear."

The ark of Israel was borne by four of the sons of Kohath; and here this ark of song and prophecy is borne of four sweet singers, the sexes dividing the honours equally. We have listened to the songs of three, and have seen how they follow each other in a regular, rhythmic succession, the thought moving forward and outward in ever-widening circles. Where is the fourth?



and what is the burden of his song? It is heard within the precincts of the Temple, as the parents bring the Child Jesus, to introduce Him to the visible sanctities of religion, and to consecrate Him to the Lord. It is the "Nunc Dimittis" of the aged Simeon. He too sings of "salvation," "Thy salvation" as he calls it. It is the "consolation of Israel" he has looked for so ardently and so long, and which the Holy Ghost had assured him he should behold before his promotion to the higher temple. But the vision of Simeon was wider than that of Zacharias, as that in turn was wider and clearer than the vision of Mary. Zacharias saw the spiritual nature of this near salvation, and he described it in words singularly deep and accurate; but its breadth he did not seem to realise. The theocracy was the atmosphere in which he lived and moved; and even his vision was theocratic, and so somewhat narrow. His "Benedictus" was for the "God of Israel," and the "redemption" he sang was "for His people." The "horn of salvation" is "for us;" and all through his psalm these first personal pronouns are frequent and emphatic, as if he would still insulate this favoured people, and give them a monopoly even of "redemption." The aged Simeon, however, stands on a higher Pisgah. His is the nearer and the clearer vision. Standing as he does in the Court of the Gentiles, and holding in his arms the Infant Christ, "the Lord's Christ," he sees in Him a Saviour for humanity, "the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world." Still, as ever, "the glory of God's people Israel," but likewise "a light for the unveiling of the Gentiles." Like the sentry who keeps watch through the night till the sunrise, Simeon has been watching and longing for the Day-spring from on high, reading from the stars of promise the wearing of the night, and with the music of fond hopes "keeping his heart awake till dawn of morn." Now at length the consummation, which is the consolation, comes. Simeon sees in the Child Jesus the world's hope and Light, a salvation "prepared before the face of all people." And seeing this, he sees all he desires. Earth can give no brighter vision, no deeper joy, and all his request is—

"Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart, O Lord,  
According to Thy word, in peace;  
For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation."

And so the four psalms of the Gospels form in reality but one song, the notes rising higher and still higher, until they reach the very pinnacle of the new temple—God's purpose and plan of redemption; that temple whose altar is a cross, and whose Victim is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world;" that temple where courts and dividing-lines all disappear; where the Holiest of all lies open to a redeemed humanity, and Jews and Gentiles, bond and free, old and young, are alike "kings and priests unto God." And so the Gospel psalms throw back, as it were, in a thousand echoes, the "Glorias" of the Advent angels, as they sing—

"Glory to God in the highest,  
And on earth peace."

And what is this but earth's prelude or rehearsal for the heavenly song, as all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues, falling down before the Lamb in the midst of the throne, sing, "Salvation unto our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the LAMB"?

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE VIRGIN MOTHER.

THE Beautiful Gate of the Jewish Temple opened into the "Court of the Women"—so named from the fact that they were not allowed any nearer approach towards the Holy Place. And as we open the gate of the third Gospel we enter the Court of the Women; for more than any other Evangelist, St. Luke records their loving and varied ministries. Perhaps this is owing to his profession, which naturally would bring him into more frequent contact with feminine life. Or perhaps it is a little Philippian colour thrown into his Gospel; for we must not forget that St. Luke had been left by the Apostle Paul at Philippi, to superintend the Church that had been cradled in the prayers of the "river-side" women. It may be a tinge of Lydia's purple; or to speak more broadly and more literally, it may be the subtle, unconscious influences of that Philippian circle that have given a certain femininity to our third Gospel. St. Luke alone gives us the psalms of the three women, Anna, Elisabeth, and Mary; he alone gives us the names of Susanna and Joanna, who ministered to Christ of their substance; he alone gives us that Galilean idyll, where the nameless "woman" bathes His feet with tears, and at the same time rains a hot rebuke on the cold civilities of the Pharisee, Simon; he alone tells of the widow of Zarephath, who welcomed and saved a prophet men were seeking to slay; he alone tells us of the widow of Nain, of the woman bent with infirmity, and of the woman grieving over her lost piece of silver. And as St. Luke opens his Gospel with woman's tribute of song, so in his last chapter he paints for us that group of women, constant amid man's inconstancies, coming ere the break of day, to wrap around the body of the dead Christ the precious and fragrant offering of devotion. So, in this Paradise Restored, do Eve's daughters roll back the reproach of their mother. But ever first and foremost among the women of the Gospels we must place the Virgin Mother, whose character and position in the Gospel story we are now to consider.

We need not stay to discuss the question—perhaps we ought not to stay even to give it a passing notice—whether there might have been an Incarnation even had there been no sin. It is not an impossible, it is not an improbable supposition, that the Christ would have come into the world even had man kept his first estate of innocence and bliss. But then it would have been the "Christ" simply, and not Jesus Christ. He would have come into the world, not as its Redeemer, but as the Son and Heir, laying tribute on all its harvests; He would have come as the flower and crown of a perfected humanity, to show the possibilities of that humanity, its absolute perfections. But leaving the "might-have-beens," in whose tenuous spaces there is room for the nebulae of fancies and of guesses without number, let us narrow our vision within the horizon of the real, the actual.

Given the necessity for an Incarnation, there are two modes in which that Incarnation may be brought about—by creation, or by birth. The first Adam came into the world by the creative act of God. Without the intervention of second causes, or any waiting for the slow lapse of time,



God spake, and it was done. Will Scripture repeat itself here, in the new Genesis? and will the second Adam, coming into the world to repair the ruin wrought by the first, come as did the first? We can easily conceive such an advent to be possible; and if we regarded simply the analogies of the case, we might even suppose it to be probable. But how different a Christ it would have been! He might still have been bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh; He might have spoken the same truths, in the same speech and tone; but He must have lived apart from the world. It would not be our humanity that He wore; it would only be its shadow, its semblance, playing before our minds like an illusion. No, the Messiah must not be simply a second Adam; He must be the Son of Man, and He cannot become Humanity's Son except by a human birth. Any other advent, even though it had satisfied the claims of reason, would have failed to satisfy those deeper voices of the heart. And so, on the first pages of Scripture, before Eden's gate is shut and locked by bolts of flame, Heaven signifies its intention and decision. The coming One, who shall bruise the serpent's head, shall be the woman's "Seed"—the Son of woman, that so He may become more truly the Son of Man; while later a strange expression finds its way into the sacred prophecy, how "a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a son." It is true these words primarily might have a local meaning and fulfilment—though what that narrower meaning was no one can tell with any approach to certainty; but looking at the singularity of the expression, and coupling it with the story of the Advent, we can but see in it a deeper meaning and a wider purpose. Evidently it was that the virgin-conception might strike upon the world's ear and become a familiar thought, and that it might throw backwards across the pages of the Old Testament the shadow of the Virgin Mother. We have already seen how the thought of a Messianic motherhood had dropped deep within the heart of the Hebrew people, awaking hopes, and prayers, and all sorts of beautiful dreams—dreams, alas! that vanished with the years, and hopes that blossomed but to fade. But now the hour is coming, that supreme hour for which the centuries have all been waiting. The forerunner is already announced, and in twelve short weeks he who loved to call himself a Voice will break the strange silence of that Judæan home. Whence will come his Lord, who shall be "greater than he"? Where shall we find the Mother-elect, for whom such honours have been reserved—honours such as no mortal has ever yet borne, and as none will ever bear again? St. Luke tells us, "Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary" (R. V.). And so the Mother-designate takes her place in this firmament of Scripture, silently and serenely as a morning star, which indeed she is; for she shines in a borrowed splendour, taking her glories all from Him around whom she revolves, from Him who was both her Son and her Sun.

It will be seen in the above verse how particular the Evangelist is in his topographical reference, putting a kind of emphasis upon the name which now appears for the first time upon the pages of Scripture. When we remember how

Nazareth was honoured by the angel visit; how it was, not the chance, but the chosen home of the Christ for thirty years; how it watched and guarded the Divine Infancy, throwing into that life its powerful though unconscious influences, even as the dead soil throws itself forward and upward into each separate flower and farthest leaf; when we remember how it linked its own name with the Name of Jesus, becoming almost a part of it; how it wrote its name upon the cross, then handing it down to the ages as the name and watchword of a sect that should conquer the world, we must admit that Nazareth is by no means "the least among the cities" of Israel. And yet we search in vain through the Old Testament for the name of Nazareth. History, poetry, and prophecy alike pass it by in silence. And so the Hebrew mind, while rightly linking the expected One with Bethlehem, never associated the Christ with Nazareth. Indeed, its moralities had become so questionable and proverbial that while the whole of Galilee was too dry a ground to grow a prophet, Nazareth was thought incapable of producing "any good thing." Was, then, the Nazareth chapter of the Christ-life an afterthought of the Divine Mind, like the marginal reading of an author's proof, put in to fill up a blank or to be a substitute for some erasure. Not so. It had been in the Divine Mind from the beginning; yea, it had been in the authorised text, though men had not read it plainly. It is St. Matthew who first calls our attention to it. Writing, as he does, mainly for Hebrew readers, he is constantly looping up his story with the Old Testament prophecies; and speaking of the return from Egypt, he says they "came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, that He should be called a Nazarene." We said just now that the name of Nazareth was not found in the Old Testament. But if we do not find the proper name, we find the word which is identical with the name. It is now regarded by competent authorities as proved that the Hebrew name for Nazareth was Netser. Taking now this word in our mind, and turning to Isaiah xi. 1, we read, "And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch [Netser] out of his roots shall bear fruit: and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him." Here, then, evidently, is the prophetic voice to which St. Matthew refers; and one little word—the name of Nazareth—becomes the golden link binding in one the Prophecies and the Gospels.

Returning to our main subject, it is to this secluded, and somewhat despised city of Nazareth the angel Gabriel is now sent, to announce the approaching birth of Christ. St. Luke, in his nominative way of speaking, says he came "to a Virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the Virgin's name was Mary." It is difficult for us to form an unbiassed estimate of the character before us, as our minds are feeling the inevitable recoil from Roman assumptions. We are confused with the childish prattle of their "Ave Marias"; we are amused at their dogmas of Immaculate Conceptions and Ever Virginities; we are surprised and shocked at their apotheosis of the Virgin, as they lift her to a throne practically higher than that of her Son, worshipped in devouter homage, supplicated with more earnest and more frequent prayers, and at the blas-



phemies of their Mariolatry, which make her supreme on earth and supreme in heaven. This undue exaltation of the Virgin Mother, which becomes an adoration pure and simple, sends our Protestant thought with a violent swing to the extreme of the other side, considerably over the line of the "golden mean." And so we find it hard to dissociate in our minds the Virgin Mother from these Marian assumptions and divinations; for which, however, she herself is in no way responsible, and against which she would be the first to protest. Seen only through these Romish haloes, and atmospheres highly incensed, her very name has been distorted, and her features, spoiled of all grace and sweet serenity, have ceased to be attractive. But this is not just. If Rome weighs one scale with crowns, and sceptres, and piles of imperial purple, we need not load down the other with our prejudices, satires, and negations. Two wrongs will not make a right. It is neither on the crest of the wave, nor yet in the deep trough of the billows, that we shall find the mean sea-level, from which we can measure all heights, running out our lines even among the stars. Can we not find that mean sea-level now, hushing alike the voices of adulation and of depreciation? Laying aside the traditions of antiquity and the legends of scribulous monks, laying aside, too, the coloured glasses of our prejudice, with which we have been wont to protect our eyes from the glare of Roman suns, may we not get a true portraiture of the Virgin Mother, in all the native naturalness of Scripture? We think we can.

She comes upon us silently and suddenly, emerging from an obscurity whose secrets we cannot read. No mention is made of her parents; tradition only has supplied us with their names—Joachim and Anna. But whether Joachim or not, it is certain that her father was of the tribe of Judah, and of the house of David. Having this fact to guide us, and also another fact, that Mary was closely related to Elisabeth—though not necessarily her cousin—who was of the tribe of Levi and a daughter of Aaron, then it becomes probable, at least, that the unnamed mother of the Virgin was of the tribe of Levi, and so the connecting link between the houses of Levi and Judah—a probability which receives an indirect but strong confirmation in the fact that Nazareth was intimately connected with Jerusalem and the Temple, one of the cities selected as a residence of the priests. May we not, then, suppose that this unnamed mother of the Virgin was a daughter of one of the priests then residing at Nazareth, and that Mary's relatives on the mother's side—some of them—were also priests, going up at stated times to Jerusalem, to perform their "course" of Temple services? It is certainly a most natural supposition, and one, too, that will help to remove some subsequent difficulties in the story; as, for instance, the journey of Mary to Judæa. Some honest minds have stumbled at that long journey of a hundred miles, while others have grown pathetic in their descriptions of that lonely pilgrimage of the Galilean Virgin. But it is neither necessary nor likely that Mary should take the journey alone. Her connection with the priesthood, if our supposition be correct, would find her an escort, even among her own relatives, at least as far as Jerusalem; and since the priestly courses were half-yearly in their service, it would be just the time the "course of Abijah," in

which Zacharias served, would be returning once again to their Judæan homes. It is only a supposition, it is true, but it is a supposition that is extremely natural and more than probable; and if we look through it, taking "Levi" and "Judah" as our binocular lenses, it carries a thread of light through otherwise dark places; while throwing our sight forward, it brings distant Nazareth in line with Jerusalem and the "hill-country of Judæa."

Betrothed to Joseph, who was of the royal line, and as some think, the legal heir to David's throne, Mary was probably not more than twenty years of age. Whether an orphan or not we cannot tell, though the silence of Scripture would almost lead us to suppose that she was. Papias, however, who was a disciple of St. John, states that she had two sisters—Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Salome the wife of Zebedee. If this be so—and there is no reason why we should discredit the statement—then Mary the Virgin Mother would probably be the eldest of the three sisters, the house-mother in the Nazareth home. Where it was that the angel appeared to her we cannot tell. Tradition, with one of its random guesses, has fixed the spot in the suburbs, beside the fountain. But there is something incongruous and absurd in the selection of such a place for an angelic appearance—the public resort and lounge, where the clatter of feminine gossip was about as constant as the flow and sparkle of its waters. Indeed, the very form of the participle disposes of that tradition, for we read, "He came in unto her," implying that it was within her holy place of home the angel found her. Nor is there any need to suppose, as some do, that it was in her quiet chamber of devotion, where she was observing the stated hours of prayer. Celestials do not draw that broad line of distinction between so-called secular and sacred duties. To them "work" is but another form of "worship," and all duties to them are sacred, even when they lie among life's temporal, and so-called secular things. Indeed, Heaven reserves its highest visions, not for those quiet moments of still devotion, but for the hours of busy toil, when mind and body are given to the "trivial rounds" and the "common tasks" of every-day life. Moses is at his shepherding when the bush calls him aside, with its tongues of fire; Gideon is threshing out his wheat when God's angel greets him and summons him to the higher task; and Zacharias is performing the routine service of his priestly office when Gabriel salutes him with the first voice of the New Dispensation. And so all the analogies would lead us to suppose that the Virgin was quietly engaged in her domestic duties, offering the sacrifice of her daily task, as Zacharias offered his incense of stacte and onycha, when Gabriel addressed her, "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee" (R. V.). The Romanists, eager to accord Divine honours to the Virgin Mother as the dispenser of blessing and of grace, interpret the phrase, "Thou that art full of grace." It is, perhaps, not an inapt rendering of the word, and is certainly more euphonious than our marginal reading "much graced;" but when they make the "grace" an inherent, and not a derived grace, their doctrine slants off from all Scripture, and is opposed to all reason. That the word itself gives no countenance to such an enthronement of Mary, is evident, for St. Paul makes use of the same word when speak-



ing of himself and the Ephesian Christians (Eph. i. 6), where we render it "His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved." But criticism apart, never before had an angel so addressed a mortal, for even Daniel's "greatly beloved" falls below this Nazareth greeting. When Gabriel came to Zacharias there was not even a "Hail;" it was simply a "Fear not," and then the message; but now he gives to Mary a "Hail" and two beatitudes besides: "Thou art highly favoured;" "the Lord is with thee." And do these words mean nothing? Are they but a few heavenly courtesies whose only meaning is in their sound? Heaven does not speak thus with random, unmeaning words. Its voices are true, and deep as they are true, never meaning less, but often more than they say. That the angel should so address her is certain proof that the Virgin possessed a peculiar fitness for the Divine honours she was now to receive—honours which had been so long held back, as if in reserve for herself alone. It is only they who look heavenward who see heavenly things. There must be a heart aflame before the bush burns; and when the bush is alight it is only "he who sees takes off his shoes."

The glimpses we get of the Virgin are few and brief; she is soon eclipsed—if we may be allowed that shadowy word—by the greater glories of her Son; but why should she be selected as the mother of the human Christ? why should her life nourish His? why should the thirty years be spent in her daily presence, her face being the first vision of awakening consciousness, as it was in the last earthward look from the cross?—why all this, except that there was a wealth of beauty and of grace about her nature, a certain tinge of heavenliness that made it fitting the Messiah should be born of her rather than of any woman else? As we have seen, the royal and the priestly lines meet in her, and Mary unites in herself all the dignity of the one with the sanctity of the other. With what delicacy and grace she receives the angel's message! "Greatly troubled" at first—not, however, like Zacharias, at the sight of the messenger, but at his message—she soon recovers herself, and "casts in her mind what manner of salutation this might be." This sentence just describes one prominent feature of her character, her reflective, reasoning mind. Sparring of words, except when under the inspiration of some "Magnificat," she lived much within herself. She loved the companionship of her own thoughts, finding a certain music in their still monologue. When the shepherds made known the saying of the angel about this child, repeating the angelic song, perhaps with sundry variations of their own, Mary is neither elated nor astonished. Whatever her feelings—and they must have been profoundly moved—she carefully conceals them. Instead of telling out her own deep secrets, letting herself drift out on the ecstasies of the moment, Mary is silent, serenely quiet, unwilling that even a shadow of herself should dim the brightness of His rising. "She kept," so we read, "all these sayings, pondering them in her heart;" or putting them together, as the Greek word means, and so forming, as in a mental mosaic, her picture of the Christ who was to be. And so, in later years, we read (ii. 51) how "His mother kept all these sayings in her heart," gathering up the fragmentary sentences of the Divine childhood and Youth, and

hiding them, as a treasure peculiarly her own, in the deep, still chambers of her soul. And what those still chambers of her soul were, how heavenly the atmosphere that enswathed them, how hallowed by the Divine Presence, her "Magnificat" will show; for that inspired psalm is but an opened window, letting the music pass without, as it throws the light within, showing us the temple of a quiet, devout, and thoughtful soul.

With what complacency and with what little surprise she received the angel's message! The Incarnation does not come upon her as a new thought, a thought for which her mind cannot possibly find room, and human speech can weave no fitting dress. It disturbs neither her reason nor her faith. Versed in Scripture as she is, it comes rather as a familiar thought—a heavenly dove, it is true, but gliding down within her mind in a perfect, because a heavenly naturalness. And when the angel announces that the "Son of the Most High," whose name shall be called Jesus, and who shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, shall be born of herself, there is no exclamation of astonishment, no word of incredulity as to whether this can be, but simply a question as to the manner of its accomplishment: "How shall this be, seeing that I know not a man?" The Christ had evidently been conceived in her mind, and cradled in her heart, even before He became a conception of her womb.

And what an absolute self-surrender to the Divine purpose! No sooner has the angel told her that the Holy Ghost shall come upon her, and the power of the Most High overshadow her, than she bows to the Supreme Will in a lowly, reverential acquiescence: "Behold, the handmaid (bondmaid) of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." So do the human and the Divine wills meet and mingle. Heaven touches earth, comes down into it, that earth may evermore touch heaven, and indeed form part of it.

The angel departs, leaving her alone with her great secret; and little by little it dawns upon her, as it could not have done at first, what this secret means for her. A great honour it is, a great joy it will be; but Mary finds, as we all find, the path to heaven's glories lies through suffering; the way into the wealthy place is "through the fire." How can she carry this great secret herself? and yet how can she tell it? Who will believe her report? Will not these Nazarenes laugh at her story of the vision, except that the matter would be too grave for a smile? It is her own secret yet, but it cannot be a secret long; and then—who can defend her, and ward off the inevitable shame? Where can she find shelter from the venomous shafts that will be hurled from every side—where, save in her consciousness of unsullied purity, and in the "shadow of the Highest"? Was it thoughts like these that now agitated her mind, deciding her to make the hasty visit to Elisabeth? or was it that she might find sympathy and counsel in communion with a kindred soul, one that age had made wise, and grace made beautiful? Probably it was both; but in this journey we will not follow her now, except to see how her faith in God never once wavered. We have already listened to her sweet song; but what a sublime faith it shows, that she can sing in face of this gathering storm, a storm of suspicion and of shame,



when Joseph himself will seek to put her away, lest his character should suffer too! But Mary believed, even though she felt and smarted. She endured "as seeing Him who is invisible." Could she not safely leave her character to Him? Would not the Lord avenge His own elect? Would not Divine Wisdom justify her child? Faith and hope said "Yes;" and Mary's soul, like a nightingale, trilled out her "Magnificat" when earth's light was disappearing, and the shadows were falling thick and fast on every side.

It is on her return to Nazareth, after her three months' absence, that the episode occurs narrated by St. Matthew. It is thrown into the story almost by way of parenthesis, but it casts a vivid light on the painful experience through which she was now called to pass. Her prolonged absence, most unusual for one betrothed, was in itself puzzling; but she returns to find only a scant welcome. She finds herself suspected of shame and sin, "the white flower of her blameless life" dashed and stained with black aspersions. Even Joseph's confidence in her is shaken, so shaken that he must put her away and have the betrothal cancelled. And so the clouds darken about the Virgin; she is left almost alone in the sharp travail of her soul, charged with sin, even when she is preparing for the world a Saviour, and likely, unless Heaven speedily interpose, to become an outcast, if not a martyr, thrown outside the circle of human courtesies and sympathies as a social leper. Like another heir of all the promises, she too is led as a lamb to the slaughter, a victim bound, and all but sacrificed, upon the altar of the public conscience. But Heaven did intervene, even as it stayed the knife of Abraham. An angel appears to Joseph, throwing around the suspected one the mantle of unsullied innocence, and assuring him that her explanation, though passing strange, was truth itself. And so the Lord did avenge His own elect, stilling the babble of unfriendly tongues, restoring to her all the lost confidences, together with a wealth of added hopes and prospective honours.

Not, however, out of Galilee must the Shiloh come, but out of Judah; and not Nazareth, but Bethlehem Ephratah is the designated place of His coming forth who shall be the Governor and Shepherd of "My people Israel." What means then, this apparent divergence of the Providence from the Prophecy, the whole drift of the one being northward while the other points steadily to the south? It is only a seeming divergence, the backward flash of the wheel that all the time is moving steadily, swiftly forward. The Prophecy and the Providence are but the two staves of the ark, moving in different but parallel lines, and bearing between them the Divine purpose. Already the line is laid that links Nazareth with Bethlehem, the line of descent we call lineage; and now we see Providence setting in motion another force, the Imperial Will, which, moving along this line, makes the purpose a realisation. Nor was it the Imperial Will only; it was the Imperial Will acting through Jewish prejudices. These two forces, antagonistic, if not opposite, were the centrifugal and centripetal forces that kept the Divine Purpose moving in its appointed round and keeping Divine hours. Had the registration decreed by Cæsar been conducted after the Roman manner, Joseph and Mary would not have been required to go up to Bethlehem; but when, out of

deference to Jewish prejudice, the registration was made in the Hebrew mode, this compelled them, both being descendants of David, to go up to their ancestral city. It has been thought by some that Mary possessed some inherited property in Bethlehem; and the narrative would suggest that there were other links that bound them to the city; for evidently they intended to make Bethlehem henceforth their place of residence, and they would have done so had not a Divine monition broken in upon their purpose (Matt. ii. 23).

And so they move southward, obeying the mandate of Cæsar, who now is simply the executor of the higher Will, the Will that moves silently but surely, back of all thrones, principalities, and powers. We will not attempt to gild the gold, by enlarging upon the story of the Nativity, and so robbing it of its sweet simplicity. The toilsome journey; its inhospitable ending; the stable and the manger; the angelic symphonies in the distance; the adoration of the shepherds—all form one sweet idyll, no word of which we can spare; and as the Church chants her "Te Deum" all down the ages this will not be one of its lowest strains:—

"When thou tookest upon thee to deliver man  
Thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb."

And so the Virgin becomes the Virgin Mother, graduating into motherhood amid the acclamations of the sky, and borne on to her exalted honours in the sweep of Imperial decrees.

After the Nativity she sinks back into a second—a far-off second—place, for "the greater glory doth dim the less;" and twice only does her voice break the silence of the thirty years. We hear it first in the Temple, as, in tones tremulous with anxiety and sorrow, she asks, "Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? Behold, Thy father and I sought Thee sorrowing." The whole incident is perplexing, and if we read it superficially, not staying to read between the lines, it certainly places the mother in anything but a favourable light. Let us observe, however, that there was no necessity that the mother should have made this pilgrimage, and evidently she had made it so that she might be near her precious charge. But now she strangely loses sight of Him, and goes even a day's journey without discovering her loss. How is this? Has she suddenly grown careless? or does she lose both herself and her charge in the excitements of the return journey? Thoughtfulness, as we have seen, was a characteristic feature of her life. Hers was "the harvest of the quiet eye," and her thoughts centred not on herself, but on her Divine Son; He was her Alpha and Omega, her first, her last, her only thought. It is altogether outside the range of possibilities that she now could be so negligent of her maternal duties, and so we are compelled to seek for our explanation elsewhere. May we not find it in this? The parents had left Jerusalem earlier in the day, arranging for the child Jesus to follow with another part of the same company, which, leaving later, would overtake them at their first camp. But Jesus not appearing when the second company starts, they imagine that He has gone on with the first company, and so proceed without Him. This seems the only probable solution of the difficulty; at any rate it makes plain and perfectly natural what else is most obscure and perplexing. Mary's mistake, however—and it was



not her fault—opens to us a page in the sealed volume of the Divine Boyhood, letting us hear its solitary voice—"Wist ye not that I must be in My Father's house?"

We see the mother again at Cana, where she is an invited and honoured guest at the marriage, moving about among the servants with a certain quiet authority, and telling her Divine Son of the breakdown in the hospitalities: "They have no wine." We cannot now go into details, but evidently there was no distancing reserve between the mother and her Son. She goes to Him naturally; she speaks to Him freely and frankly, as any widow would speak to the son on whom she leaned. Nay, she seems to know, as by a sort of intuition, of the superhuman powers that are lying dormant in that quiet Son of hers, and she so correctly reads the horoscope of Heaven as to expect this will be the hour and the place of their manifestation. Perhaps her mind did not grasp the true Divinity of her Son—indeed, it could not have done so before the Resurrection—but that He is the Messiah she has no doubt, and so, strong in her confidence, she says to the servants, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." And her faith must have been great indeed, when it required a "whatsoever" to measure it. Some have thought they could detect a tinge of impatience and a tone of rebuke in the reply of Jesus; and doubtless there is a little sharpness in our English rendering of it. It does sound to our ears somewhat unfilial and harsh. But to the Greeks the address "Woman" was both courteous and respectful, and Jesus Himself uses it in that last tender salute from the cross. Certainly she did not take it as a rebuke, for one harsh word, like the touch on the sensitive plant, would have thrown her back into silence; whereas she goes off directly to the servants with her "whatsoever."

We get one more brief glimpse of her at Capernaum, as she and her other sons come out to Jesus to urge Him to desist from His long speaking. It is but a simple narrative, but it serves to throw a side-light on that home-life now removed to Capernaum. It shows us the thoughtful, loving mother, as, forgetful of herself and full of solicitude for Him, who, she fears, will tax Himself beyond His strength, she comes out to persuade Him home. But what is the meaning of that strange answer, and the significant gesture? "Mother," "brethren"? It is as if Jesus did not understand the words. They are something He has now outgrown, something He must now lay aside, as He gives Himself to the world at large. As there comes a time in the life of each when the mother is forsaken—left, that he may follow a higher call, and be himself a man—so Jesus now steps out into a world where Mary's heart, indeed, may still follow, but a world her mind may not enter. The earthly relation is henceforth to be overshadowed by the heavenly. The Son of Mary grows into the Son of man, belonging now to no special one, but to humanity at large, finding in all, even in us, who do the will of the Father in heaven, a brother, a sister, a mother. Not that Jesus forgets her. Oh, no! Even amid the agonies of the cross He thinks of her; He singles her out among the crowd, bespeaking for her a place—the place He Himself has filled—in the heart of His nearest earthly friend; and amid the prayer for his murderers, and the "ELOI, ELOI"

of a terrible forsaking, He says to the Apostle of love, "Behold thy mother," and to her, "Behold thy son."

And so the Virgin Mother takes her place in the focal point of all the histories. Through no choice, no conceit or forwardness of her own, but by the grace of God and by an inherent fitness, she becomes the connecting-link between earth and heaven. And throwing, as she does, her unconscious shadow back within the Paradise Lost, and forward through the Gospels to the Paradise Regained, shall we not "magnify the Lord" with her? shall we not "magnify the Lord" for her, as, with all the generations, we "call her blessed"?

## CHAPTER V.

### THE ADORATION OF THE SHEPHERDS.

LUKE ii. 8-21.

THE Gospel of St. Mark omits entirely the Nativity, passing at once to the words and miracles of His public ministry. St. John, too, dismisses the Advent and the earlier years of the Divine Life with one solitary phrase, how the Word, which in the beginning was with God and was God, "became flesh and dwelt among us" (i. 14). St. Luke, however, whose Gospel is the Gospel of the Humanity, lingers reverently over the Nativity, throwing a variety of side-lights upon the cradle of the Holy Child. Already has he shown how the Roman State prepared the cradle of the Infancy, and how Cæsar Augustus unconsciously wrought out the purpose of God, the breath of his imperial decree being but part of a higher inspiration; and now he proceeds to show how the shepherds of Judæa bring the greetings of the Hebrew world, the wave-sheaf of the ripening harvests of homage which yet will be laid, by Jew and Gentile alike, at the feet of Him who was Son of David and Son of man.

It is generally supposed that these anonymous shepherds were residents of Bethlehem, and tradition has fixed the exact spot where they were favoured with this Advent Apocalypse, about a thousand paces from the modern village. It is a historic fact that there was a tower near that site, called Eder, or "the Tower of the Flock," around which were pastured the flocks destined for the Temple sacrifice; but the topography of ver. 8 is purposely vague. The expression "in that same country," written by one who both in years and in distance was far removed from the events recorded, would describe any circle within the radius of a few miles from Bethlehem as its centre, and the very vagueness of the expression seems to push back the scene of the Advent music to a farther distance than a thousand paces. And this view is confirmed by the language of the shepherds themselves, who, when the vision has faded, say one to another, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing that is come to pass;" for they scarcely would have needed, or used, the adverbial "even" were they keeping their flocks so close up to the walls of the city. We may therefore infer, with some amount of probability, that whether the shepherds were residents of Bethlehem or not, when they kept watch over their flocks, it was not on the tradi-



tional site, but farther away over the hills. Indeed, it is difficult, and very often impossible, for us to fix the precise locality of these sacred scenes, these bright points of intersection, where Heaven's glories flash out against the dull carbon-points of earth; and the voices of tradition are at best but doubtful guesses. It would almost seem as if God Himself had wiped out these memories, hiding them away, as He hid the sepulchre of Moses, lest the world should pay them too great a homage, and lest we might think that one place lay nearer to heaven than another, when all places are equally distant, or rather equally near. It is enough to know that somewhere on these lonely hills came the vision of the angels, perhaps on the very spot where David was minding his sheep when Heaven summoned him to a higher task, passing him up among the kings.

While the shepherds were "watching the watches of the night over their flock," as the Evangelist expresses it, referring to the pastoral custom of dividing the night into watches, and keeping watch by turns, suddenly "an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them." When the angel appeared to Zacharias, and when Gabriel brought to Mary her evangel, we do not read of any supernatural portent, any celestial glory, attending them. Possibly because their appearances were in the broad daylight, when the glory would be masked, invisible; but now, in the dead of night, the angelic form is bright and luminous, throwing all around them a sort of heavenly halo, in which even the lustrous Syrian stars grow dim. Dazzled by the sudden burst of glory, the shepherds were awed by the vision, and stricken with a great fear, until the angel, borrowing the tones and accents of their own speech, addressed to them his message, the message he had been commissioned to bring: "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people: for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." And then he gave them a sign by which they might recognise the Saviour Lord: "Ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger."

From the indefinite wording of the narrative we should infer that the angel who brought the message to the shepherds was not Gabriel, who had before brought the good tidings to Mary. But whether or not the messenger was the same, the two messages are almost identical in structure and in thought, the only difference being the personal element of the equation, and the shifting of the time from the future to the present tense. Both strike the same key-note, the "Fear not" with which they seek to still the vibrations of the heart, that the Virgin and the shepherds may not have their vision blurred and tremulous through the agitation of the mind. Both make mention of the name of David, which name was the key-word which unlocked all Messianic hopes. Both speak of the Child as a Saviour—though Gabriel wraps up the title within the name, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus;" for, as St. Matthew explains it, "it is He that shall save His people from their sins." Both, too, speak of Him as the Messiah; for when the angel now calls Him the "Christ" it was the same "Anointed" one who, as Gabriel had said, "should reign over the house of Jacob for ever;" while in the last august title now

given by the angel, "Lord," we may recognise the higher Divinity—that He is, in some unique, and to us incomprehensible sense, "the Son of the Most High" (i. 32). Such, then, is the triple crown the angel now bears to the cradle of the Holy Child. What He will be to the world is still but a prophecy; but as He, the Firstborn, is now brought into the world, God commands all the angels to worship Him (Heb. i. 6); and with united voice—though the antiphon rings back over a nine months' silence—they salute the Child of Bethlehem as Saviour, Messiah, Lord. The one title sets up His throne facing the lower world, commanding the powers of darkness, and looking at the moral conditions of men; the second throws the shadow of His throne over the political relations of men, making it dominate all thrones; while the third title sets up His throne facing the heavens themselves, vesting Him with a supreme, a Divine authority.

No sooner was the message ended than suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying—

"Glory to God in the highest,  
And on earth peace among men in whom He is well pleased."

The Revised Version lacks the rhythmic qualities of the Authorised Version; and the wordy clause "among men in whom He is well pleased" seems but a poor substitute for the terse and clear "good-will toward men," which is an expression easy of utterance, and which seemed to have earned a prescriptive right to a place in our Advent music. The revised rendering, however, is certainly more in accord with the grammatical construction of the original, whose idiomatic form can scarcely be put into English, except in a way somewhat circuitous and involved. In both expressions the underlying thought is the same, representing man as the object of the Divine good-pleasure, that Divine "benevolence"—using the word in its etymological sense—which enfolds, in the germ, the Divine favour, compassion, mercy, and love. There is thus a triple parallelism running through the song, the "Glory to God in the highest" finding its corresponding terms in the "peace among (or to) men in whom He is well pleased on earth;" while altogether it forms one complete circle of praise, the "good-pleasure to man," the "peace on earth," the "glory to God" marking off its three segments. And so the song harmonises with the message: indeed, it is that message in an altered shape; no longer walking in common prosaic ways, but winged now, it moves in its higher circles with measured beat, leaving a path from the cradle of the Infancy to the highest heavens all strewn with "Glorias." And what is the triplicity of the song but another rendering of the three august titles of the message—Saviour, Messiah, Lord? the "Saviour" being the expression of the Divine good-pleasure; the "Messiah" telling of His reign upon earth who is Himself the Prince of peace; while the "Lord," which, as we have seen, corresponds with "the Son of the Most High," leads us up directly to the "heavenlies," to Him who commands and who deserves all doxologies.

But is this song only a song in some far-distant sky—a sweet memory indeed, but no experience? Is it not rather the original from which copies may be struck for our individual



lives? There is for each of us an advent, if we will accept it; for what is regeneration but the beginning of the Divine life within our life, the advent of the Christ Himself? And let but that supreme hour come to us when place and room are made for Him who is at once the expression of the Divine favour and the incarnation of the Divine love, and the new era dawns, the reign of peace, the "peace of God," because the "peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Then will the heart throw off its "Glorias," not in one burst of song, which subsides quickly into silence, but in one perpetual anthem, which ever becomes more loud and sweet as the day of its perfected redemption draweth nigh; for when the Divine displeasure is turned away, and a Divine peace or comfort takes its place, who can but say, "O Lord, I will praise Thee"?

Directly the angel-song had ceased, and the singers had disappeared in the deep silence whence they came, the shepherds, gathering up their scattered thoughts, said one to another (as if their hearts were speaking all at once and all in unison), "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing that is come to pass which the Lord hath made known unto us." The response was immediate. They do not shut out this heavenly truth by doubt and vain questioning; they do not keep it at a distance from them, as if it only indirectly and distantly concerned themselves, but yield themselves up to it entirely; and as they go hastily to Bethlehem, in the quick step and in the rapid beating of their heart, we can trace the vibrations of the angel-song. And why is this? Why is it that the message does not come upon them as a surprise? Why are these men ready with such a perfect acquiescence, their hearts leaping forward to meet and embrace this Gospel of the angels? We shall probably find our answer in the character of the men themselves. They pass into history unnamed; and after playing their brief part, they disappear, lost in the incense-cloud of their own praises. But evidently these shepherds were no mean, no common men. They were Hebrews, possibly of the royal line; at any rate they were Davids in their loftiness of thought, of hope and aspiration. They were devout, God-fearing men. Like their father Jacob, they too were citizens of two worlds; they could lead their flocks into green pastures, and mend the fold; or they could turn aside from flock and fold to wrestle with God's angels, and prevail. Heaven's revelations come to noble minds, as the loftiest peaks are always the first to hail the dawn. And can we suppose that Heaven would so honour them, lighting up the sky with an aureole of glory for their sole benefit, sending this multitude to sing to them a sweet chorale, if the men themselves had nothing heavenly about them, if their selfish, sordid mind could soar no higher than their flocks, and have no wider range than the markets for their wool?

"Let but a flute  
Play 'neath the fine-mixed metal;  
Then shall the huge bell tremble, then the mass  
With myriad waves concurrent shall respond  
In low, soft unison."

But there must be the music hidden within, or there is no unison. And we may be sure of this, that the angel-song had passed by them as a cold night-wind, had not their hearts been tuned up by intense desire, until they struck responsive to the angel-voice. Though they knew it not, they

had led their flock to the mount of God; and up the steps of sacred hopes and lofty aspirations they had climbed, until their lives had got within the circle of heavenly harmonies, and they were worthy to be the first apostles of the New Dispensation.

In our earthly modes of thinking we push the sacred and the secular far apart, as if they were two different worlds, or, at any rate, as opposite hemispheres of the same world, with but few points of contact between them. It is not so. The secular is the sacred on its under, its earthward side. It is a part of that great whole we call duty, and in our earthly callings, if they are but pure and honest, we may hear the echoes of a heavenly call. The temple of Worship and the temple of Work are not separated by indefinable spaces; they are contiguous, leaning upon each other, while they both front the same Divine purpose. Nor can it be simply a coincidence that Heaven's revelations should nearly always come to man in the moments of earthly toil, rather than in the hours of leisure or of so-called worship. It was from his shepherding the burning bush beckoned Moses aside; while Heaven's messenger found Gideon on the threshing-floor, and Elisha in the furrow. In the New Testament, too, in all the cases whose circumstances are recorded, the Divine call reached the disciples when engaged in their every-day task, sitting at the receipt of custom, and casting or mending their nets. The fact is significant. In the estimate of Heaven, instead of a discount being put upon the common tasks of life, those tasks are dignified and ennobled. They look towards heaven, and if the heart be only set in that direction they lead too up towards heaven. Our weeks are not unlike the sheet of Peter's vision; we take care to tie up the two ends, attaching them to heaven, and then we leave what we call the "week-days" bulging down earthward in purely secular fashion. But would not our weeks, and our whole life, swing on a higher and holier level, could we but recognise the fact that all days are the Lord's days, and did we but attach each day and each deed to heaven? Such is the truest, noblest life, that takes the "trivial rounds" as a part of its sacred duties, doing them all as unto the Lord. So, as we sanctify life's common things, they cease to be common, and the earthly becomes less earthly as we learn to see more of heaven in it. In the weaving of our life some of its threads stretch earthward, and some heavenward; but they cross and interlace, and together they form the warp and woof of one fabric, which should be, like the garment of the Master, without seam, woven from the top throughout. Happy is that life which, keeping an open eye over the flock, keeps too a heart open towards heaven, ready to listen to the angelic music, and ready to transfer its rhythm to their own hastening feet or their praising lips.

Our Evangelist tells us that they "came in haste" in search of the young Child, and we may almost detect that haste in the very accents of their speech. It is, "Let us now go across even to Bethlehem," allowing the prefix its proper meaning; as if their eager hearts could not stay to go round by the ordinary road, but like bees scenting a field of clover, they too must make their cross-country way to Bethlehem. Though the angel had not given explicit directions, the city of David was not so large but that



they could easily discover the object of their search—the Child, as had been told them, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. It has been thought by some that the “inn” is a mistranslation, and that it really was the “guest-chamber” of some friend. It is true the word is rendered “guest-chamber” on the other two occasions of its use (Mark xiv. 14; Luke xxii. 11), but it also signified a public guest-house, as well as a private guest-chamber; and such evidently is its meaning here, for private hospitality, even had its “guest-chamber” been preoccupied, would certainly, under the circumstances, have offered something more human than a stable. That would not have been its only alternative.

It is an interesting coincidence, and one serving to link together the Old and the New Testament, that Jeremiah speaks of a certain *geruth*, or inn, as it may read, “which is by Bethlehem” (Jer. xli. 17). How it came into the possession of Chimham, who was a Gileadite, we are not told; but we are told that because of the kindness shown to David in his exile by Barzillai, his son Chimham received special marks of the royal favour, and was, in fact, treated almost as an adopted son (1 Kings ii. 7). What is certain is that the *khan* of Bethlehem bore, for successive generations, the name of Chimham; which fact is in itself evidence that Chimham was its builder, as the well of Jacob retained, through all the changes of inheritance, the name of the patriarch whose thought and gift it was. In all probability, therefore, the “inn” was built by Chimham, on that part of the paternal estate which David inherited; and as the *khans* of the East cling with remarkable tenacity to their original sites, it is probable, to say the least, that the “inn of Chimham” and the inn of Bethlehem, in which there was no room for the two late comers from Nazareth, were, if not identical, at any rate related structures—so strangely does the cycle of history complete itself, and the Old merge into the New. And so, while Prophecy sings audibly and sweetly of the place which yet shall give birth to the Governor who shall rule over Israel, History puts up her silent hand, and salutes Beth-lehem Ephratah as by no means the least among the cities of Judah.

But not in the inn do the shepherds find the happy parents—the springtide of the unusual immigration had completely flooded that, leaving no standing-place for the son and daughter of David—but they find them in a stable, probably in some adjoining cave, the swaddled Child, as the angels had foretold, lying in the manger. Art has lingered reverently and long over this stable scene, hiding with exquisite draperies its baldness and meanness, and lighting up its darkness with wreaths of golden glory; but these splendours are apocryphal, existing only in the mind of the beholder; they are the luminous mist of an adoring love. What the shepherds do find is an extemporised apartment, mean in the extreme; two strangers fresh from Nazareth, both young and both poor; and a new-born infant asleep in the manger, with a group of sympathising spectators, who have brought, in the emergency, all kinds of proffered helps. It seems a strange ending for an angel-song, a far drop from the superhuman to the subhuman. Will it shake the faith of these apostle-shepherds? Will it shatter their bright hope? And chagrined that their auroral dream should have so poor a realisation,

will they return to their flocks with heavy hearts and sad? Not they. They prostrate themselves before the Infant Presence, repeating over and over the heavenly words the angels had spoken unto them concerning the Child, and while Mary announces the name as “Jesus,” they salute Him, as the angels had greeted Him before, as Saviour, Messiah, Lord; thus putting on the head of the Child Jesus that triple crown, symbol of a supremacy which knows no limit either in space or time. It was the “Te Deum” of a redeemed humanity, which succeeding years have only made more deep, more full, and which in ever-rising tones will yet grow into the Alleluias of the heavens. Saviour, Messiah, Lord! these titles struck upon Mary’s ear not with surprise, for she has grown accustomed to surprises now, but with a thrill of wonder. She could not yet spell out all their deep meaning, and so she pondered “them in her heart,” hiding them away in her maternal soul, that their deep secrets might ripen and blossom in the summer of the after-years.

The shepherds appear no more in the Gospel story. We see them returning to their task “glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen,” and then the mantle of a deep silence falls upon them. As a lark, rising heavenward, loses itself from our sight, becoming a sweet song in the sky, so these anonymous shepherds, these first disciples of the Lord, having laid their tribute at His feet—in the name of humanity saluting the Christ who was to be—now pass out of our sight, leaving for us the example of their heavenward look and their simple faith, and leaving, too, their “Glorias,” which in multiplied reverberations fill all lands and all times, the earthly prelude of the New, the eternal Song.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS.

WHEN the Old Testament closed, prophecy had thrown upon the screen of the future the shadows of two persons, cast in heavenly light. Sketched in outline rather than in detail, still their personalities were sufficiently distinct to attract the gaze and hopes of the intervening centuries; while their differing, though related missions were clearly recognised. One was the Coming ONE, who should bring the “consolation” of Israel, and who should Himself be that Consolation; and gathering into one august title all such glittering epithets as Star, Shiloh, and Emmanuel, prophecy reverently saluted Him as “the Lord,” paying Him prospective homage and adoration. The other was to be the herald of another Dispensation, proclaiming the new King, running before the royal chariot, even as Elijah ran from Ahab to the ivory palace at Jezreel, his voice then dying away in silence, as he himself passes out of sight behind the throne. Such were the two figures that prophecy, in a series of dissolving views, had thrown forward from the Old into the New Testament; and such was the signal honour accorded to the Baptist, that while many of the Old Testament characters appear as reflections in the New, his is the only human shadow thrown back from the New into the Old.

The forerunner thus had a virtual existence



long before the time of the Advent. Known by his synonym of Elias, the prophesied, he became as a real presence, moving here and there among their thoughts and dreams, and lighting up their long night with the beacon-fires of new and bright hopes. His voice seemed familiar, even though it came to them in far-distant echoes, and the listening centuries had caught exactly both its accent and its message. And so the preparer of the way found his own path prepared: for John's path and "the way of the Lord" were the same; it was the way of obedience and of sacrifice. The two lives were thus thrown into conjunction from the first, the lesser light revolving around the Greater, as they fulfil their separate courses—separate indeed, as far as the human must ever be separated from the Divine, yet most closely related.

Living thus through the pre-Advent centuries, both in the Divine purpose and in the thoughts and hopes of men, so early designated to his heraldic office, "My messenger," in a singular sense, as no other of mortals could ever be, it is no matter of apology, or even of surprise, that his birth should be attended by so much of the supernatural. The Divine designation seems to imply, almost to demand, a Divine declaration; and in the birth-story of the Baptist the flashes of the supernatural, such as the angelic announcement and the miraculous conception, come with a simple naturalness. The prelude is in perfect symphony with the song. St. Luke is the only Evangelist who gives us the birth-story. The other three speak only of his mission, introducing him to us abruptly, as, like another Moses, he comes down from his new Sinai with the tables of the law in his hands and the strange light upon his face. St. Luke takes us back to the infancy, that we may see the beginnings of things, the Divine purpose enwrapped in swaddling clothes, as it once was set adrift in a rush-plaited ark. Back of the message he puts the man, and back of the man he puts the child—for is not the child a prophecy or invoice of the man?—while all around the child he puts the environment of home, showing us the subtle, powerful influences that touched and shaped the young prophet-life. As a plant carries up into its outmost leaves the ingredients of the rock around which its fibres cling, so each upspringing life—even the life of a prophet—carries into its farthest reaches the unconscious influence of its home associations. And so St. Luke sketches for us that quiet home in the hill-country, whose windows opened and whose doors turned toward Jerusalem, the "city of the great" and invisible "King." He shows us Zacharias and Elisabeth, true saints of God, devout of heart and blameless of life, down into whose placid lives an angel came, rippling them with the excitements of new promises and hopes. Where could the first meridian of the New Dispensation run better than through the home of these seers of things unseen, these watchers for the dawn? Where could be so fitting a receptacle for the Divine purpose, where it could so soon and so well ripen? Had not God elected them to this high honour, and Himself prepared them for it? Had He not purposely kept back all earlier, lower shoots, that their whole growth should be upward, one reaching out towards heaven, like the palm, its fruit clustering around its outmost branches? We can easily imagine what intense emotion the message of the angel would produce,

and that Zacharias would not so much miss the intercourse of human speech now that God's thoughts were audible in his soul. What loving preparation would Elisabeth make for this child of hers, who was to be "great in the sight of the Lord"! what music she would strike out from its name, "John" (the Grace of Jehovah), the name which was both the sesame and symbol of the New Dispensation! How her eager heart would outrun the slow months, as she threw herself forward in anticipation among the joys of maternity, a motherhood so exalted! And why did she hide herself for the five months, but that she might prepare herself for her great mission? that in her seclusion she might hear more distinctly the voices that spake to her from above, or that in the silence she might hear her own heart sing?

But neither the eagerness of Elisabeth nor the dumbness of Zacharias is allowed to hasten the Divine purpose. That purpose, like the cloud of old, accommodates itself to human conditions, the slow processions of the humanities; and not until the time is "full" does the hope become a realisation, and the infant voice utter its first cry. And now is gathered the first congregation of the new era. It is but a family gathering, as the neighbours and relatives come together for the circumcising of the child—which rite was always performed on the corresponding day of the week after its birth; but it is significant as being the first of those ever-widening circles that moving outwards from its central impulse, spread rapidly over the land, as they are now rapidly spreading over all lands. Zacharias, of course, was present; but mute and deaf, he could only sit apart, a silent spectator. Elisabeth, as we may gather from various references and hints, was of modest and retiring disposition, fond of putting herself in the shade, of standing behind; and so now the conduct of the ceremony seems to have fallen into the hands of some of the relatives. Presuming that the general custom will be observed, that the first-born child will take the name of the father, they proceed to name it "Zacharias." This, however, Elisabeth cannot allow, and with an emphatic negative, she says, "Not so; but he shall be called John." Persistent still in their own course, and not satisfied with the mother's affirmation, the friends turn to the aged and mute priest, and by signs ask how they shall name the child (and had Zacharias heard the conversation, he certainly would not have waited for their question, but would have spoken or written at once); and Zacharias, calling for the writing-table, which doubtless had been his close companion, giving him his only touch of the other world for the still nine months, wrote, "His name is John." Ah, they are too late! the child was named even long before its birth, named, too, within the Holy Place of the Temple, and by an angel of God. "John" and "Jesus," those two names, since the visit of the Virgin, have been like two bells of gold, throwing waves of music across heart and home, ringing their welcome to "the Christ who is to be," the Christ who is now so near. "His name is John;" and with that brief stroke of his pen Zacharias half rebukes these intrusions and interferences of the relatives, and at the same time makes avowal of his own faith. And as he wrote the name "John," his present obedience making atonement for a past unbelief, instantly the paralysed tongue was loosed, and he spake, blessing



God, throwing the name of his child into a psalm; for what is the "Benedictus" of Zacharias but "John" written large and full, one sweet and loud magnifying of "the Grace and Favour of Jehovah"?

It is only a natural supposition that when the inspiration of the song had passed away, Zacharias' speech would begin just where it was broken off, and that he would narrate to the guests the strange vision of the Temple, with the angel's prophecy concerning the child. And as the guests depart to their own homes, each one carries the story of this new Apocalypse, as he goes to spread the evangel, and to wake among the neighbouring hills the echoes of Zacharias's song. No wonder that fear came upon all that dwelt round about, and that they who pondered these things in their hearts should ask, "What then shall this child be?"

And here the narrative of the childhood suddenly ends, for with two brief sentences our Evangelist dismisses the thirty succeeding years. He tells us that "the hand of the Lord was with the child," doubtless arranging its circumstances, giving it opportunities, preparing it for the rugged manhood and the rugged mission which should follow in due course; and that "the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit," the very same expression he afterwards uses in reference to the Holy Child, an expression we can best interpret by the angel's prophecy, "He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb." His native strength of spirit was made doubly strong by the touch of the Divine Spirit, as the iron, coming from its baptism of fire, is hardened and tempered into steel. And so we see that in the Divine economy even a consecrated childhood is a possible experience; and that it is comparatively infrequent is owing rather to our warped views, which possibly may need some readjustment, than to the Divine purpose and provision. Is the child born into the Divine displeasure, branded from its birth with the mark of Cain? Is it not rather born into the Divine mercy, and all enswathed in the abundance of Divine love? True, it is born of a sinful race, with tendencies to self-will which may lead it astray; but it is just as true that it is born within the covenant of grace; that around its earliest and most helpless years is thrown the ægis of Christ's atonement; and that these innate tendencies are held in check and neutralised by what is called "prevenient grace." In the struggle for that child-life are the powers of darkness the first in the field, outmarching and out-manceuvring the powers of light? Why, the very thought is half-libellous. Heaven's touch is upon the child from the first. Ignore it as we may, deny it as some will, yet back in life's earliest dawn the Divine Spirit is brooding over the unformed world, parting its firmaments of right and wrong, and fashioning a new Paradise. Is evil the inevitable? Must each life taste the forbidden fruit before it can attain to a knowledge of the good? In other words, is sin a great though dire necessity? If a necessity, then it is no longer sin, and we must seek for another and more appropriate name. No; childhood is Christ's purchased and peculiar possession; and the best type of religious experience is that which is marked by no rapid transitions, which breaks upon the soul softly and sweetly as a dawn, its beginnings imperceptible, and so unremembered. So not without meaning is it that

right at the gate of the New Dispensation we find the cradle of a consecrated childhood. Placed there by the gate, so that all may see it, and placed in the light, so that all may read it, the childhood of the Baptist tells us what our childhood might oftener be, if only its earthly guardians—whose hands are so powerful to impress and mould the plastic soul—were, like Zacharias and Elisabeth, themselves prayerful, blameless, and devout.

Now the scene shifts; for we read he "was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel." From the fact that this clause is intimately connected with the preceding, "and the child grew and waxed strong in spirit"—the two clauses having but one subject—some have supposed that John was but a child when he turned away from the parental roof and sought the wilderness. But this does not follow. The two parts of the sentence are only separated by a comma, but that pause may bridge over a chasm wide enough for the flow of numerous years, and between the childhood and the wilderness the narrative would almost compel us to put a considerable space. As his physical development was, in mode and proportion, purely human, with no hint of anything unnatural or even supernatural, so we may suppose was his mental and spiritual development. The voice must become articulate; it must play upon the alphabet, and turn sound into speech. It must learn, that it may think; it must study, that it may know. And so the human teacher is indispensable. Children reared of wolves may learn to bark, but, in spite of mythology, they will not build cities and found empires. And where could the child find better instructors than in his own parents, whose quiet lives had been passed in an atmosphere of prayer, and to whom the very jots and tittles of the law were familiar and dear? Indeed, we can scarcely suppose that after having prepared Zacharias and Elisabeth for their great mission, working what is something like a miracle, that she and no one else shall be the mother of the forerunner, the child should then be torn away from its natural guardians before the processes of its education are complete. It is true they were both "well stricken in years," but that phrase would cover any period from threescore years and upwards, and to that threescore the usual longevity of the Temple ministrants would easily allow another twenty years to be added. May we not, then, suppose that the child-Baptist studied and played under the parental roof, the bright focus to which their hopes, and thoughts, and prayers converged; that here, too, he spent his boyhood and youth, preparing for that priestly office to which his lineage entitled and designated him? for why should not the "messenger of the Lord" be priest as well? We have no further mention of Zacharias and Elisabeth, but it is not improbable that their death was the occasion of John's retirement to the deserts, now a young man, perhaps, of twenty years.

According to custom, John now should have been introduced and consecrated to the priesthood, twenty years being the general age of the initiates; but in obedience to a higher call, John renounces the priesthood, and breaks with the Temple at once and for ever. Retiring to the deserts, which, wild and gloomy, stretch westward from the Dead Sea, and assuming the old prophet garb—a loose dress of camel's hair,



bound with a thong of leather—the student becomes the recluse. Inhabiting some mountain cave, tasting only the coarse fare that nature offered—locusts and wild honey—the new Elias has come and has found his Cherith; and here, withdrawn far from “the madding crowd” and the incessant babble of human talk, with no companions save the wild beasts and the bright constellations of that Syrian sky, as they wheel round in their nightly dance, the lonely man opens his heart to God’s great thoughts and purposes, and by constant prayer keeps his clear, trumpet voice in drill. Evidently, John had seen enough of so-called “society,” with its cold conventionalities and hypocrisies; his keen eye had seen only too easily the hollowness and corruption that lay beneath the outer gloss and varnish—the thin veneer that but half concealed the worminess and rottenness that lay beneath. John goes out into the desert like another scape-goat, bearing deep within his heart the sins of his nation—sins, alas, which are yet unrepented of and unforgiven! It was doubtless thoughts like these, and the constant brooding upon them, which gave to the Baptist that touch of melancholy that we can detect both in his features and his speech. Austere in person, with a wail in his voice like the sighing of the wind, or charged at times with suppressed thunders, the Baptist reminds us of the Peri, who

“At the gate  
Of Eden stood disconsolate.”

Sin had become to John an awful fact. He could see nothing else. The fragments of the law’s broken tables strewed the land, even the courts of the Temple itself, and men were everywhere tripping against them and falling. But John did see something else; it was the day of the Lord, now very near, the day that should come scathing and burning “as a furnace,” unless, meanwhile, Israel should repent. So the prophet mused, and as he mused the fire burned within his soul, even the fire of the Refiner, the fire of God.

Our Evangelist characterises the opening of John’s ministry with an official word. He calls it a “showing,” a “manifestation,” putting upon the very word the stamp and sanction of a Divine appointment. He is careful, too, to mark the time, so giving the Gospel story its place among the chronologies of the world; which he does in a most elaborate way. He first reads the time on the horoscope of the Empire, whose swinging pendulum was a rising or a falling throne; and he states that it was “the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar,” counting the two years of his joint rule with Augustus. Then, as if that were not enough, he notes the hour as indicated on the four quarters of the Hebrew commonwealth, the hour when Pilate, Herod, Philip, and Lysanias were in conjunction, ruling in their divided heavens. Then, as if that even were not enough, he marks the ecclesiastical hour as indicated by the marble time-piece of the Temple; it was when Annas and Caiaphas held jointly the high priesthood. What is the meaning of this elaborate mechanism, wheels within wheels? Is it because the hour is so important, that it needs the hands of an emperor, a governor, three tetrarchs, and two high priests to point it? Ewald is doubtless right in saying that St. Luke, as the historian, wished “to frame the Gospel history into the great history of the

world” by giving precise dates; but if that were the Evangelist’s main reason, such an accumulation of time-evidence were scarcely necessary; for what do the subsequent statements add to the precision of the first—“In the fifteenth year of Tiberius”? We must, then, seek for the Evangelist’s meaning elsewhere. Among the oldest of the Hebrew prophecies concerning the Messiah was that of Jacob. Closing his life, as Moses did afterwards, with a wonderful vision, he looked down on the far-off years, and speaking of the coming “Seed,” he said, “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come” (Gen. xlix. 10). Might not this prophecy have been in the thought of the Evangelist when he stayed so much longer than his wont to note times and seasons? Why does he mention Herod and Pilate, Philip and Lysanias, but to show how the sceptre has, alas! departed from Judah, and the lawgiver from between his feet, and how the chosen land is torn to pieces by the Roman eagles? And why does he name Annas and Caiaphas, but to show how the same disintegrating forces are at work even within the Temple, when the rightful high priest can be set aside and superseded by the nominee of a foreign and a Pagan power? Verily “the glory has departed from Israel;” and if St. Luke introduces foreign emperors, tetrarchs, and governors, it is that they may ring a muffled peal over the grave of a dead nation, a funeral knell, which, however, shall be the signal for the coming of the Shiloh, and the gathering of the people unto Him.

Such were the times—times of disorganisation, disorder, and almost despair—when the word of God came unto John in the wilderness. It came “upon” him, as it literally reads, probably in one of those wonderful theophanies, as when God spake to Moses from the flaming bush, or as when He appeared to Elijah upon Horeb, sending him back to an unfinished task. John obeyed. Emerging from his wilderness retreat, clad in his strange attire, spare in build, his features sharp and worn with fasting, his long, dishevelled hair telling of his Nazarite vow, he moves down to the Jordan like an apparition. His appearance is everywhere hailed with mingled curiosity and delight. Crowds come in ever-increasing numbers, not one class only, but all classes—priests, soldiers, officials, people—until it seemed as if the cities had emptied themselves into the Jordan valley. And what went they “out for to see”? “A reed shaken with the wind”? A prophet of smooth things? A preacher of revolt against tyranny? Nay; John was no wind-shaken reed; he was rather the heavenly wind itself, swaying the multitudes at will, and bending hearts and consciences into penitence and prayer. John was no preacher of revolt against the powers that be; in his mind, Israel had revolted more and more, and he must bring them back to their allegiance, or himself die in the attempt. John was no preacher of smooth things; there was not even the charm of variety about his speech. The one burden of his message was, “Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” But the effect was marvellous. The lone voice from the wilderness swept over the land like the breath of God. Borne forwards on a thousand lips, it echoed through the cities and penetrated into remotest places. Judæa, Samaria, and even distant Galilee felt the quiver of the strange



voice, and even from the shore of the Northern Sea men came to sit at the feet of the new teacher, and to call themselves John's disciples. So widespread and so deep was the movement, it sent its ripples even within the royal palace, awaking the curiosity, and perhaps the conscience, of Herod himself. It was a genuine revival of religion, such as Judæa had not witnessed since the days of Ezra, the awaking of the national conscience and of the national hope.

Perhaps it would be difficult, by any analysis of ours, to discover or to define the secret of John's success. It was the resultant, not of one force, but of many. For instance, the hour was favourable. It was the Sabbatic year, when field-work was in the main suspended, and men everywhere had leisure, mind and hand lying, as it were, fallow. Then, too, the very dress of the Baptist would not be without its influence, especially on a mind so sensitive to form and colour as the Hebrew mind was. Dress to them was a form of duty. They were accustomed to weave into their tassels sacred symbols, so making the external speak of the eternal. Their hands played on the parti-coloured threads most faithfully and sacredly; for were not these the chords of Divine harmonies? But here is one who discards both the priestly and the civilian dress, and who wears, instead, the rough camel's-hair robe of the old prophets. The very dress would thus appeal most powerfully to their imagination, carrying back their thoughts to the time of the Theocracy, when Jehovah was not silent as now, and when Heaven was so near, speaking by some Samuel or Elijah. Are those days returning? they would ask. Is this the Elias who was to come and restore all things? Surely it must be. And in the rustle of the Baptist's robe they heard the rustle of Elijah's mantle, dropping a second time by these Jordan banks. Then, too, there was the personal charm of the man. John was young, if years are our reckoning, for he counted but thirty; but in his case the *verve* and energy of youth were blended with the discretion and saintliness of age. What was the world to him, its fame, its luxury and wealth? They were only the dust he shook from his feet, as his spirit sighed for and soared after Heaven's better things. He asks nothing of earth but her plainest fare, a couch of grass, and by-and-by a grave. Then, too, there was a positiveness about the man that would naturally attract, in a drifting, shifting, vacillating age. The strong will is magnetic; the weaker wills follow and cluster round it, as swarming bees cluster around their queen. And John was intensely positive. His speech was clear-cut and incisive, with a tremendous earnestness in it, as if a "Thus saith the Lord" were at his heart. John's mood was not the subjunctive, where his words could eddy among the "mays" and "mights;" it was plainly the indicative, or better still, the imperative. He spoke as one who believed, and who intensely felt what he believed. Then, too, there was a certain nobleness about his courage. He knew no rank, no party; he was superior to all. He feared God too much to have any fear of man. He spake no word for the sake of pleasing, and he kept back no word—even the hot rebuke—for fear of offending. Truth to him was more than titles, and right was the only royalty. How he painted the Pharisees—those shiny, slimy men, with creeping, sinuous ways—with that dark epithet "brood of vipers"!

With what a fearless courage he denounced the incest of Herod! *He* will not level down Sinai, accommodating it to royal passions! Not he. "It is not lawful for thee to have her"—such were his words, that rolled in upon Herod's conscience like a peal of Sinai's thunder, telling him that law was law, that right was more than might, and purity more than power. Then, too, there was something about his message that was attractive. That word "the kingdom of heaven" struck upon the national heart like a bell, and set it vibrating with new hopes, and awaking all kinds of beautiful dreams of recovered pre-eminence and power.

But while all these were auxiliaries, factors, and co-efficients in the problem of the Baptist's success, they are not sufficient in themselves to account for that success. It is not difficult for a man of superior mental attainment, and of strong individuality, to attract a following, especially if that following be in the direction of self-interest. The emotions and passions of humanity lie near the surface; they can be easily swept into a storm by the strong or by the pathetic voice. But to reach the conscience, to lift up the veil, and to pass within to that Most Holy of the human soul is what man, unaided, cannot do. Only the Divine Voice can break those deep silences of the heart; or if the human voice is used the power is not in the words of human speech—those words, even the best, are but the dead wires along which the Divine Voice moves—it is the power of God.

"Some men live near to God, as my right arm  
Is near to me; and then they walk about  
Mailed in full proof of faith, and bear a charm  
That mocks at fear, and bars the door on doubt,  
And dares the impossible."

Just such a man was the Baptist. He was a "man of God." He lived, and moved, and had his being in God. Self to him was an extinct passion. Envy, pride, ambition, jealousy, these were unknown tongues; his pure soul understood not their meaning. Like his great prototype, "the Spirit of the Lord God" was upon him. His life was one conscious inspiration; and John himself had been baptised with the baptism of which he spoke, but which he himself could not give, the baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire. This only will account for the wonderful effects produced by his preaching. John, in his own experience, had antedated Pentecost, receiving the "power from on high," and as he spoke it was with a tongue of fire, a voice in whose accent and tone the people could detect the deeper Voice of God.

But if John could not baptise with the higher baptism, usurping the functions of the One coming after, he could, and he did, institute a lower, symbolic baptism of water, that thus the visible might lead up to the invisible. In what mode John's baptism was administered we cannot tell, nor is it material that we should know. We do know, however, that the baptism of the Spirit—and in John's mind the two were closely related—was constantly referred to in Scripture as an effusion, a "pouring out," a sprinkling, and never once as an immersion. And what was the "baptism of fire" to the mind of John? Was it not that which the prophet Isaiah had experienced, when the angel touched his lips with the live coal taken from the altar, pronouncing over him the great absolution, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken



away, and thy sin purged" (Isa. vi. 7)? At best, the baptism of water is but a shadow of the better thing, the outward symbol of an inward grace. We need not quarrel about modes and forms. Scripture has purposely left them indeterminate, so that we need not wrangle about them. There is no need that we exalt the shadow, levelling it up to the substance; and still less should we level it down, turning it into a playground for the schools.

Thus far the lives of Jesus and John have lain apart. One growing up in the hill-country of Galilee, the other in the hill-country of Judæa, and then in the isolation of the wilderness, they have never looked in each other's face, though they have doubtless heard often of each other's mission. They meet at last. John had been constantly telling of ONE who was coming after—"after," indeed, in order of time, but "before," infinitely before, in pre-eminence and authority. Mightier than he, He was the Lord. John would deem it an honour to kneel down before so august a Master, to untie and bear away His shoes; for in such a Presence servility was both becoming and ennobling. With such words as these the crier in the wilderness had been transferring the people's thought from himself, and setting their hearts listening for the Coming One, so preparing and broadening His way. Suddenly, in one of the pauses of his ministrations, a Stranger presents Himself, and asks that the rite of baptism may be administered to Him. There is nothing peculiar about His dress; He is younger than the Baptist—much younger, apparently, for the rough, ascetic life has prematurely aged him—but such is the grace and dignity of His person, such the mingled "strength and beauty" of His manhood, that even John, who never quailed in the presence of mortal before, is awed and abashed now. Discerning the innate Royalty of the Stranger, and receiving a monition from the Higher World, with which he kept up close correspondence, the Baptist is assured that it is He, the Lord and Christ. Immediately his whole manner changes. The voice that has swept over the land like a whirlwind, now is hushed, subdued, speaking softly, deferentially, reverentially. Here is a Presence in which his imperatives all melt away and disappear, a Will that is infinitely higher than his own, a Person for whom his baptism is out of place. John is perplexed; he hesitates, he demurs. "I have need to be baptised of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" and John, Elias-like, would fain have wrapped his mantle around his face, burying out of sight his little "me," in the presence of the Lord. But Jesus said, "Suffer it now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness" (Matt. iii. 15).

The baptism of Jesus was evidently a new kind of baptism, one in which the usual formulas were strangely out of place; and the question naturally arises, Why should Jesus submit to, and even ask for, a baptism that was so associated with repentance and sin? Could there be any place for repentance, any room for confession, in the Sinless One? John felt the anomaly, and so shrank from administering the rite, till the reply of Jesus put His baptism on different ground—ground altogether clear of any personal demerit. Jesus asked for baptism not for the washing away of sin, but that He might "fulfil all righteousness." He was baptised, not for His own sake, but for the world's

sake. Coming to redeem humanity, He would identify Himself with that humanity, even the sinful humanity that it was. Son of God, He would become a true Son of man, that through His redemption all other sons of men might become true sons of God. Bearing the sins of many, taking away the sin of the world, that heavy burden lay at His heart from the first; He could not lay it down until He left it nailed to His cross. Himself knowing no sin, He yet becomes the Sin-offering, and is "numbered among the transgressors." And as Jesus went to the cross and into the grave mediatorially, as Humanity's Son, so Jesus now passes into the baptismal waters mediatorially, repenting for that world whose heart is still hard, and whose eyes are dry of godly tears, and confessing the sin which He in love has made His own, the "sin of the world," the sin He has come to make atonement for and to bear away.

Such is the meaning of the Jordan baptism, in which Jesus puts the stamp of Divinity upon John's mission, while John bears witness to the sinlessness of Jesus. But a Higher Witness came than even that of John; for no sooner was the rite administered, and the river-bank regained, than the heavens were opened, and the Spirit of God, in the form of a fiery dove, descended and alighted on the head of Jesus; while a Voice out of the Unseen proclaimed, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And so the Son of man receives the heavenly, as well as the earthly baptism. Baptised with water, He is now baptised with the Holy Ghost and with fire, and anointed with the unction of the Holy One. But why should the Holy Spirit descend upon Jesus in the form of a dove, and afterwards upon the disciples in the form of cloven tongues of fire? We can understand the symbolism of the cloven tongues; for was not their mission to preach and teach, spreading and establishing the kingdom by a consecrated speech—the Divine word carried forward by the human voice? What, then, is the meaning of the dove-form? Does it refer to the dove of the Old Dispensation, which bearing the olive-leaf in its mouth, preached its Gospel to the dwellers in the ark, telling of the abatement of the angry waters, and of a salvation that was near? And was not Jesus a heavenly Dove, bearing to the world the olive-branch of reconciliation and of peace, proclaiming the fuller, wider Gospel of mercy and of love? The supposition, at any rate, is a possible one; while the words of Jesus would almost make it a probable one; for speaking of this same baptism of the Spirit, He says—and in His words we can hear the beat and whir of dove-wings—"He anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor: He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, . . . to set at liberty them that are bruised" (iv. 18).

The interview between Jesus and John was but brief, and in all probability final. They spend the following night near to each other, but apart. The day after, John sees Jesus walking, but the narrative would imply that they did not meet. John only points to Him and says, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world;" and they part, each to follow his separate path, and to accomplish his separate mission.

"The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Such was John's testimony to Jesus, in the moment of his clearest illumina-



tion. He saw in Jesus, not as one learned writer would have us suppose, the sheep of David's pastoral, its life encircled with green pastures and still waters—not this, but a lamb, "the lamb of God," the Paschal Lamb, led all uncomplaining to the slaughter, and by its death bearing away sin—not either the sin of a year or the sin of a race, but "the sin of the world." Never had prophet so prophesied before; never had mortal eye seen so clearly and so deeply into God's great mystery of mercy. How, then, can we explain that mood of disappointment and of doubt which afterwards fell upon John? What does it mean that from his prison he should send two of his disciples to Jesus with the strange question, "Art Thou He that cometh, or look we for another?" (vii. 19). John is evidently disappointed—yes, and dejected too; and, the Elias still, Herod's prison is to him the juniper of the desert. He thought the Christ would be one like unto himself, crying in the wilderness, but with a louder voice and more penetrating accent. He would be some ardent Reformer, with axe in hand, or fan, and with baptism of fire. But lo, Jesus comes so different from his thought—with no axe in hand that he can see, with no baptism of fire that he can hear of, a Sower rather than a Winnower, scattering thoughts, principles, beatitudes, and parables, telling not so much of "the wrath to come" as of the love that is already come, if men will but repent and receive it—that John is fairly perplexed and actually sends to Jesus for some word that shall be a solvent for his doubts.

It only shows how this Elias, too, was a man of like passions with ourselves, and that even prophet's eyes were sometimes dim, reading God's purposes with a blurred vision. Jesus returns a singular answer. He says neither Yes nor No; but He goes out and works His accustomed miracles, and then dismisses the two disciples with the message, "Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the Gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me." These words are in part a quotation from John's favourite prophet, Isaiah, who emphasised as no other prophet did the evangelistic character of Christ's mission—which characteristic John seems to have overlooked. In his thought the Christ was Judge, the great Refiner, sifting the base from the pure, and casting it into some Gehenna of burnings. But Jesus reminds John that mercy is before and above judgment; that He has come, "not to condemn the world," but to save it, and to save it, not by reiterations of the law, but by a manifestation of love. Ebal and Sinai have had their word; now Gerizim and Calvary must speak.

And so this greatest of the prophets was but human, and therefore fallible. He saw the Christ, no longer afar off, but near—yea, present; but he saw in part, and he prophesied in part. He did not see the whole Christ, or grasp the full purport of His mission. He stood on the threshold of the kingdom; but the least of those who should pass within that kingdom should stand on a higher vantage-ground, and so be greater than he. Indeed, it seems scarcely possible that John could have fully understood Jesus; the two were so entirely different. In dress, in address, in mode of life, in thought, the two

were exact opposites. John occupies the border-region between the Old and the New; and though his life appears in the New, he himself belongs rather to the Old Dispensation. His accent is Mosaic, his message a tritonomy, a third giving of the law. When asked the all-important question, "What shall we do?" John laid stress on works of charity, and by his metaphor of the two coats he showed that men should endeavour to equalise their mercies. And when Publicans and soldiers ask the same question John gives a sort of transcript of the old tables, striking the negatives of duty: "Extort no more than that which is appointed you;" "Do violence to no man." Jesus would have answered in the simple positive that covered all classes and all cases alike: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." But such was the difference between the Old and the New: the one said, "Do, and thou shalt live;" the other said, "Live, and thou shalt do." The voice of John awoke the conscience, but he could not give it rest. He was the preparer of the way; Jesus was the Way, as He was the Truth and the Life. John was the Voice; Jesus was the Word. John must "decrease" and disappear; Jesus must "increase," filling all times and all climes with His glorious, abiding presence.

But the mission of John is drawing to a close, and dark clouds are gathering in the west. The popular idol still, a hostile current has set against him. The Pharisees, unforgetting and unforgiving, are deadly bitter, creeping across his path, and hissing out their "Devil;" while Herod, who in his better moods had invited the Baptist to his palace, now casts him into prison. He will silence the voice he has failed to bribe, the voice that beat against the chambers of his revelry, like a strange midnight gust, and that set him trembling like an aspen. We need not linger over the last sad tragedy—how the royal birthday was kept, with a banquet to the State officials; how the courtesan daughter of Herodias came in and danced before the guests; and how the half-drunken Herod swore a rash oath, that he would give her anything she might ask, up to the half of his kingdom. Herodias knew well what wine and passion would do for Herod. She even guessed his promise beforehand, and had given full directions to her daughter; and soon as the rash oath had fallen from his lips—before he could recall or change his words—sharp and quick the request is made, "Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger." There is a momentary conflict, and Herod gives the fearful word. The head of John is brought into the banquet-hall before the assembled guests—the long flowing locks, the eyes that even in death seemed to sparkle with the fire of God; the lips sacred to purity and truth, the lips that could not gloss a sin, even the sin of a Herod. Yes; it is there, the head of John the Baptist. The courtiers see it, and smile; Herod sees it, but does not smile. That face haunts him; he never forgets it. The dead prophet lives still, and becomes to Herod another conscience.

"And she brought it to her mother. And his disciples came, and took up the corpse, and buried him; and they went and told Jesus" (Matt. xiv. 11, 12). Such is the *finis* to a consecrated life, and such the work achieved by one man, in a ministry that was only counted by months. Shall not this be his epitaph, re-



cording his faithfulness and zeal, and at the same time rebuking our aimlessness and sloth?—

"He liveth long who liveth well;  
All other life is short and vain:  
He liveth longest who can tell  
Of living most for heavenly gain."

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE TEMPTATION.

THE waters of the Jordan do not more effectually divide the Holy Land than they bisect the Holy Life. The thirty years of Nazareth were quiet enough, amid the seclusions of nature and the attractions of home; but the double baptism by the Jordan now remits that sweet idyll to the past. The I AM of the New Testament moves forward from the passive to the active voice; the long peace is exchanged for the conflict whose consummation will be the Divine Passion.

The subject of our Lord's temptation is mysterious, and therefore difficult. Lying in part within the domain of human consciousness and experience, it stretches far beyond our sight, throwing its dark projections into the realm of spirit, that realm, "dusk with horrid shade," which Reason may not traverse, and which Revelation itself has not illumined, save by occasional lines of light, thrown into, rather than across it. We cannot, perhaps, hope to have a perfect understanding of it, for in a subject so wide and deep there is room for the play of many hypotheses; but inspiration would not have recorded the event so minutely had it not a direct bearing upon the whole of the Divine Life, and were it not full of pregnant lessons for all times. To Him who suffered within it, it was a wilderness indeed; but, to us "the wilderness and the solitary place" have become "glad, and the desert . . . blossoms as the rose." Let us, then, seek the wilderness reverently yet hopefully, and in doing so let us carry in our minds these two guiding thoughts—they will prove a silken thread for the labyrinth—first, that Jesus was tempted as man; and second, that Jesus was tempted as the Son of man.

Jesus was tempted as man. It is true that in His Person the human and the Divine natures were in some mysterious way united; that in His flesh was the great mystery, the manifestation of God; but now we must regard Him as divested of these dignities and Divinities. They are laid aside, with all other pre-mundane glories; and whatever His miraculous power, for the present it is as if it were not. Jesus takes with Him into the wilderness our manhood, a perfect humanity of flesh and blood, of bone and nerve; no Docetic shadow, but a real body, "made in all things like unto His brethren;" and He goes into the wilderness, to be tempted, not in some unearthly way, as one spirit might be tempted of another, but to be "tempted in all points like as we are," in a fashion perfectly human. Then, too, Jesus was tempted as the Son of man, not only as the perfect Man, but as the representative Man. As the first Adam, by disobedience, fell, and fallen, was driven forth into the wilderness, so the second Adam comes to take the place of the first. Tracking the steps of the first Adam, He too goes out into the wilderness, that He may spoil

the spoiler, and that by His perfect obedience He may lead a fallen but redeemed humanity back again to Paradise, reversing the whole drift of the Fall, and turning it into a "rising again for many." And so Jesus goes, as the Representative Man, to do battle for humanity, and to receive in His own Person, not one form of temptation, as the first Adam did, but every form that malignant Evil can devise, or that humanity can know. Bearing these two facts in mind, we will consider—(1) the circumstances of the Temptation, and (2) the nature of the Temptation.

1. The circumstances of the Temptation. "And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness." The Temptation, then, occurred immediately after the twofold baptism; or, as St. Mark expresses it, using his characteristic word, "And straightway the Spirit driveth Him forth into the wilderness" (Mark i. 12). Evidently there is some connection between the Jordan and the wilderness, and there were Divine reasons why the test should be placed directly after the baptism. Those Jordan waters were the inauguration for His mission—a kind of Beautiful Gate, leading up to the different courts and courses of His public ministry, and then up to the altar of sacrifice. The baptism of the Spirit was His anointing for that ministry, and borrowing our light from the after Pentecostal days, His endowment of power for that ministry. The Divine purpose, which had been gradually shaping itself in His mind, now opens in one vivid revelation. The veil of mist in which that purpose had been enwrapped is swept away by the Spirit's breath, disclosing to His view the path redeeming Love must take, even the way of the cross. It is probable, too, that He received at the same time, if not the endowment, at least the consciousness of miraculous power; for St. John, with one stroke of his pen, brushes away those glossy webs that later tradition has spun, the miracles of the Childhood. The Scriptures do not represent Jesus as any prodigy. His childhood, youth, and manhood were like the corresponding phases of other lives; and the Gospels certainly put no aureole about His head—that was the afterglow of traditional fancy. Now, however, as He leaves the wilderness, He goes to open His mission at Cana, where He works His first miracle, turning, by a look, the water into wine. The whole Temptation, as we shall see, was one prolonged attack upon His miraculous power, seeking to divert it into unlawful channels; which makes it more than probable that this power was first consciously received at the baptism—the second baptism of fire; it was a part of the anointing of the Lord He then experienced.

We read that Jesus now was "full of the Holy Spirit." It is an expression not infrequent in the pages of the New Testament, for we have already met with it in connection with Zacharias and Elisabeth; and St. Luke makes use of it several times in his later treatise on the "Acts." In these cases, however, it generally marked some special and sudden illumination or inspiration, which was more or less temporary, the inspiration passing away when its purpose was served. But whether this "filling of the Spirit" was temporary, or permanent, as in the case of Stephen and Barnabas, the expression always marked the highest elevation of human life,



when the human spirit was in entire subordination to the Divine. To Jesus, now, the Holy Spirit is given without measure; and we, who in our far-off experiences can recall moments of Divine baptisms, when our spirits seemed for the time to be caught up into Paradise, hearing voices and beholding visions we might not utter, even we may understand in part—though but in part—what must have been the emotions and ecstasies of that memorable hour by the Jordan. How much the opened heavens would mean to Him, to whom they had been so long and strangely closed! How the Voice that declared His heavenly Sonship, “This is My beloved Son,” must have sent its vibrations quivering through soul and spirit, almost causing the tabernacle of His flesh to tremble with new excitements! Mysterious though it may seem to us, who ask impotently, How can these things be? yet unless we strip the heavenly baptism of all reality, reducing it to a mere play of words, we must suppose that Jesus, who now becomes Jesus Christ, was henceforth more directly and completely than before under the conscious inspiration of the Holy Spirit. What was an atmosphere enswathing the young life, bringing to that life its treasures of grace, beauty, and strength, now becomes a breath, or rather a rushing wind, of God, carrying that life forward upon its mission and upward to its goal. And so we read, He “was led by the Spirit in the wilderness.” The verb generally implies pressure, constraint; it is the enforced leading of the weaker by the stronger. In this case, however, the pressure was not upon a resisting, but a yielding medium. The will of Jesus swung round instantly and easily, moving like a vane only in the direction of the Higher Will. The narrative would imply that His own thought and purpose had been to return to Galilee; but the Divine Spirit moves upon Him with such clearness and force—“driveth” is St. Mark’s expressive word—that He yields Himself up to the higher impulse, and allows Himself to be carried, not exactly as the heath is swept before the wind, but in a passive-active way, into the wilderness. The wilderness was thus a Divine interjection, thrown across the path of the Son of God and Son of man.

Where it was is a point of no great moment. That it was in the Desert of Sinai, as some suppose, is most unlikely. Jesus did not so venerate places; nor was it like Him to make distant excursions to put Himself in the track of Moses or Elijah. He beckons them to Him. He does not go to them, not even to make historical repetitions. There is no reason why we may not accept the traditional site of the Quarantania, the wild, mountainous region, intersected by deep, dark gorges, that sweeps westward from Jericho. It is enough to know that it was a wilderness indeed, a wildness, unsoftened by the touch of human strength or skill; a still, vacant solitude, where only the “wild beasts,” preying upon each other, or prowling outward to the fringe of civilisation, could survive.

In the narrative of the Transfiguration we read that Moses and Elias appeared on the holy mount “talking with Jesus;” and that these two only, of all departed saints, should be allowed that privilege—the one representing the Law, and the other the Prophets—shows that there was some intimate connection between their sev-

eral missions. At any rate, we know that the emancipator and the generator of Israel were specially commissioned to bear Heaven’s salutation to the Redeemer. It would be an interesting study, did it lie within the scope of our subject, to trace out the many resemblances between the three. We may, however, notice how in the three lives the same prolonged fast occurs, in each case covering the same period of forty days; for though the expression of St. Matthew would not of necessity imply a total abstention from food, the more concise statement of St. Luke removes all doubt, for we read, “He did eat nothing in those days.” Why there should be this fast is more difficult to answer, and our so-called reasons can be only guesses. We know, however, that the flesh and the spirit, though closely associated, have but few things in common. Like the centripetal and the centrifugal forces in nature, their tendencies and propulsions are in different and opposite directions. The one looks earthward, the other heavenward. Let the flesh prevail, and the life gravitates downwards, the sensual takes the place of the spiritual. Let the flesh be placed under restraint and control, taught its subordinate position, and there is a general uplift to the life, the untrammelled spirit moving upwards toward heaven and God. And so in the Scriptures we find the duty of fasting prescribed; and though the Rabbis have treated it in an *ad absurdum* fashion, bringing it into disrepute, still the duty has not ceased, though the practice may be well-nigh obsolete. And so we find in Apostolic days that prayer was often joined to fasting, especially when a question of importance was under consideration. The hours of fasting, too, as we may learn from the cases of the centurion and of Peter, were the perihelion of the Christian life, when it swung up in its nearest approaches to heaven, getting amid the circles of the angels and of celestial visions. Possibly in the case before us there was such an absorption of spirit, such rapture (using the word in its etymological, rather than in its derived meaning), that the claims of the body were utterly forgotten, and its ordinary functions were temporarily suspended; for to the spirit caught up into Paradise it matters little whether in the body or out of it.

Then, too, the fast was closely related to the temptation; it was the preparation for it. If Jesus is tempted as the Son of man, it must be our humanity, not at its strongest, but at its weakest. It must be under conditions so hard, no other man could have them harder. As an athlete, before the contest, trains up his body, bringing each muscle and nerve to its very best, so Jesus, before meeting the great adversary in single combat, trains *down* His body, reducing its physical strength, until it touches the lowest point of human weakness. And so, fighting the battle of humanity, He gives the adversary every advantage. He allows him choice of place, of time, of weapons and conditions, so that His victory may be more complete. Alone in the wild, dreary solitude, cut off from all human sympathies, weak and emaciated with the long fast, the Second Adam waits the attack of the tempter, who found the first Adam too easy a prey.

2. The nature of the Temptation. In what form the tempter came to Him, or whether he came in any form at all, we cannot tell. Scrip-



ture observes a prudent silence, a silence which has been made the occasion of much speculative and random speech on the part of its would-be interpreters. It will serve no good purpose even to enumerate the different forms the tempter is said to have assumed; for what need can there be for any incarnation of the evil spirit? and why clamour for the supernatural when the natural will suffice? If Jesus was tempted "as we are," will not our experiences throw the truest light on His? We see no shape. The evil one confronts us; he presents thoughts to our minds; he injects some proud or evil imagination; but he himself is masked, unseen, even when we are distinctly conscious of his presence. Just so we may suppose the tempter came to Him. Recalling the declaration made at the baptism, the announcement of His Divine Sonship, the devil says, "If" (or rather "Since," for the tempter is too wary to suggest a doubt as to His relationship to God) "Thou art the Son of God, command this stone that it become bread." It is as if he said, "You are a-hungred, exhausted, Your strength worn away by Your long fast. This desert, as You see, is wild and sterile; it can offer You nothing with which to supply Your physical wants; but You have the remedy in Your own hands. The heavenly Voice proclaimed You as God's Son—nay, His beloved Son. You were invested, too, not simply with Divine dignities, but with Divine powers, with authority, supreme and absolute, over all creatures. Make use now of this newly given power. Speak in these newly learned tones of Divine authority, and command this stone that it become bread." Such was the thought suddenly suggested to the mind of Jesus, and which would have found a ready response from the shrinking flesh, had it been allowed to speak. And was not the thought fair and reasonable, to our thinking, all innocent of wrong? Suppose Jesus should command the stone into bread, is it any more marvellous than commanding the water into wine? Is not all bread stone, dead earth transformed by the touch of life? If Jesus can make use of His miraculous power for the benefit of others, why should He not use it in the emergencies of His own life? The thought seemed reasonable and specious enough; and at first glance we do not see how the wings of this dove are tipped, not with silver, but with soot from the "pots." But stop. What does this thought of Satan mean? Is it as guileless and guiltless as it seems? Not quite; for it means that Jesus shall be no longer the Son of man. Hitherto His life has been a purely human life. "Made in all things like unto His brethren," from His helpless infancy, through the gleefulness of childhood, the discipline of youth, and the toil of manhood, His life has been nourished from purely human sources. His "brooks in the way" have been no secret springs, flowing for Himself alone; they have been the common brooks, open and free to all, and where any other child of man might drink. But now Satan tempts Him to break with the past, to throw up His Son-of-manhood, and to fall back upon His miraculous power in this, and so in every other emergency of life. Had Satan succeeded, and had Jesus wrought this miracle for Himself, putting around His human nature the shield of His Divinity, then Jesus would have ceased to be man. He would have forsaken the plane of human life for celestial altitudes, with

a wide gulf—and oh, how wide!—between Himself and those He had come to redeem. And let the perfect humanity go, and the redemption goes with it; for if Jesus, just by an appeal to His miraculous power, can surmount every difficulty, escape any danger, then you leave no room for the Passion, and no ground on which the cross may rest.

Again, the suggestion of Satan was a temptation to distrust. The emphasis lay upon the title, "Son of God." "The Voice proclaimed You, in a peculiar sense, the beloved Son of God; but where have been the marks of that special love? Where are the honours, the heritage of joy, the Son should have? Instead of that, He gives You a wilderness of solitude and privation; and He who rained manna upon Israel, and who sent an angel to prepare a cake for Elias, leaves You to pine and hunger. Why wait longer for help which has already tarried too long? Act now for Yourself. Your resources are ample; use them in commanding the stone into bread." Such was the drift of the tempter's words; it was to make Jesus doubt the Father's love and care, to lead Him to act, not in opposition to, but independently of, the Father's will. It was an artful endeavour to throw the will of Jesus out of gear with the Higher Will, and to set it revolving around its own self-centre. It was, in reality, the same temptation, in a slightly altered form, which had been only too successful with the first Adam.

The thought, however, was no sooner suggested than it was rejected; for Jesus had a wonderful power of reading thought, of looking into its very heart; and He meets the evil suggestion, not with an answer of His own, but with a singularly apt quotation from the Old Testament: "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone." The reference is to a parallel experience in the history of Israel, a narrative from which doubtless Jesus had drawn both strength and solace during His prolonged desert fast. Had not the Divine Voice adopted Israel to a special relationship and privilege, announcing within the palace of Pharaoh, "Israel is My Son, My firstborn"? (Exod. iv. 22). And yet had not God led Israel for forty years through the desert, suffering him to hunger, that He might humble and prove him, and show him that men are

"Better than sheep and goats,  
That nourish a blind life within the brain;"

that man has a nature, a life, that cannot live on bread, but—as St. Matthew completes the quotation—"by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God"? Some have supposed that by "bread alone" Jesus refers to the manifold provision God has made for man's physical sustenance; that He is not limited to one course, but that He can just as easily supply flesh, or manna, or a thousand things besides. But evidently such is not the meaning of Jesus. It was not His wont to speak in such literal, commonplace ways. His thought moved in higher circles than His speech, and we must look upward through the letter to find the higher spirit. "I have meat to eat that ye know not of," said Jesus to His disciples; and when He caught the undertone of their literalistic questions He explained His meaning in words that will interpret His answer to the tempter: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." So now



it is as if He said, "The Will of God is My meat. That Will brought Me hither; that Will detains Me here. Nay, that Will commands Me to fast and hunger, and so abstinence from food is itself My food. I do not fear. This wilderness is but the stone-paved court of My Father's house, whose many chambers are filled with treasures, 'bread enough and to spare,' and can I perish with hunger? I wait His time; I accept His will; nor will I taste of bread that is not of His sending."

The tempter was foiled. The specious temptation fell upon the mind of Jesus like a spark in the sea, to be quenched, instantly and utterly; and though Satan found a powerful lever in the pinch of the terrible hunger—one of the sorest pains our human nature can feel—yet even then he could not wrench the will of Jesus from the will of God. The first Adam doubted, and then disobeyed, the Second Adam rests in God's will and word; and like the limpet on the rocks, washed by angry waves, the pressure of the outward storm only unites His will more firmly to the Father's; nor does it for one moment break in upon that rest of soul. And Jesus never did make use of His miraculous power solely for His own benefit. He would live as a man among men, feeling—probably more intensely than we do—all the weaknesses and pains of humanity, that He might be more truly the Son of man, the sympathising High Priest, the perfect Saviour. He became in all points—sin excepted—one with us, so that we might become one with Him, sharing with Him the Father's love on earth, and then sharing His heavenly joys.

Baffled, but not confessing himself beaten, the tempter returns to the charge. St. Luke here inverts the order of St. Matthew, giving as the second temptation what St. Matthew places last. We prefer the order of St. Luke, not only because in general he is more observant of chronology, but because there is in the three temptations what we might call a certain seriality, which demands the second place for the mountain temptation. It is not necessary that we put a literal stress upon the narrative, supposing that Jesus was transported bodily to the "exceeding high mountain." Not only has such a supposition an air of the incredulous about it, but it is set aside by the terms of the narrative itself; for the expression he "showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time" cannot be forced into a literalistic mould. It is easier and more natural to suppose that this and the succeeding temptation were presented only to the spirit of Jesus, without any physical accessories; for after all, it is not the eye that sees, but the soul. The bodily eye had not seen the "great sheet let down from heaven," but it was a real vision, nevertheless, leading to very practical results—the readjustment of Peter's views of duty, and the opening of the door of grace and privilege to the Gentiles. It was but a mental picture, as the "man of Macedonia" appeared to Paul, but the vision was intensely real—more real, if that were possible, than the leagues of intervening sea; and louder to him than all the voices of the deep—of winds, and waves, and storm—was the voice, "Come over and help us," the cry which only the ear of the soul had heard. It was in a similar manner, probably, that the second temptation was presented to Jesus.

He finds Himself upon a lofty eminence, when

suddenly, "in a moment of time," as St. Luke expresses it, the world lies unveiled at His feet. Here are fields white with ripened harvests, vineyards red with clustering grapes, groves of olives shimmering in the sunlight like frosted silver, rivers threading their way through a sea of green; here are cities on cities innumerable, quivering with the tread of uncounted millions, streets set with statues, and adorned with temples, palaces, and parks; here are the flagged Roman roads, all pointing to the world's great centre, thronged with chariots and horsemen, the legions of war, and the caravans of trade. Beyond are seas where a thousand ships are skimming over the blue; while still beyond, all environed with temples, is the palace of the Cæsars, the marble pivot around which the world revolves.

Such was the splendid scene set before the mind of Jesus. "All this is mine," said Satan, speaking a half-truth which is often but a whole lie; for he was indeed the "prince of the power of the air," ruling, however, not in absolute kingship, but as a pretender, a usurper; "and I give it to whom I will. Only worship me (or rather, 'do homage to me as Your superior'), and all shall be thine." Amplified, the temptation was this: "You are the Son of God, the Messiah-King, but a King without a retinue, without a throne. I know well all the devious, somewhat slippery ways to royalty; and if You will but assent to my plan, and work on my lines, I can assure You of a throne that is higher, and of a realm that is vaster, than that of Cæsar. To begin with: You have powers not given to other mortals, miraculous powers. You can command nature as easily as You can obey her. Trade with these at first, freely. Startle men with prodigies, and so create a name and gain a following. Then, when that is sufficiently large, set up the standard of revolt. The priesthood and the people will flock to it; Pharisees and Sadducees, giving up their paper-chases after phantoms, shadows, will forget their strife in the peace of a common war, and before a united people Rome's legions must retire. Then, pushing out Your borders, and avoiding reverse and disaster by a continual appeal to Your miraculous powers, one after another You will make the neighbouring nations dependent and tributary. So, little by little, You will hem in the might of Rome, until by one desperate struggle You will vanquish the Empire. The lines of history will then be all reversed. Jerusalem will become the mistress, the capital of the world; along all these roads swift messengers shall carry Your decrees; Your word shall be law, and Your will over all human wills shall be supreme."

Such was the meaning of the second temptation. It was the chord of ambition Satan sought to strike, a chord whose vibrations are so powerful in the human heart, often drowning or deafening other and sweeter voices. He put before Jesus the highest possible goal, that of universal empire, and showed how that goal was comparatively easy of attainment, if Jesus would only follow his directions and work on his plans. The objective point at which the tempter aimed was, as in the first temptation, to shift Jesus from the Divine purpose, to detach His will from the Father's will, and to induce Him to set up a sort of independence. The life of Jesus, instead of moving on steadily around its Divine centre, striking in with absolute precision to the beat of



the Divine purpose, should revolve only around the centre of its narrower self, exchanging its grander, heavenlier sweep for certain intermittent, eccentric motions of its own. If Satan could not prevent the founding of "the kingdom," he would, if it were possible, change its character. It should not be the kingdom of heaven, but a kingdom of earth, pure and simple, under earthly conditions and earthly laws. Might should take the place of right, and force the place of love. He would set Jesus after gaining the whole world, that so He might forget that His mission was to save it. Instead of a Saviour, they should have a Sovereign, decked with this world's glory and the pomps of earthly empire.

It is easy to see that if Jesus had been merely man the temptation would have been most subtle and most powerful; for how many of the sons of men, alas, have been led astray from the Divine purpose with a far less bait than a whole world! A momentary pleasure, a handful of glittering dust the more, some dream of place or fame—these are more than enough to tempt men to break with God. But while Jesus was man, the Perfect Man, He was more. The Holy Spirit was now given to Him without measure. From the beginning His will had been subordinate to the Father's, growing up within it and configuring itself to it, even as the ductile metal receives the shape of the mould. The Divine purpose, too, had now been revealed to Him in the vivid enlightenment of the Baptism; for the shadow of the cross was thrown back over His life, at any rate as far as the Jordan. And so the second temptation fell harmless as the first. The chord of ambition Satan sought to strike was not found in the pure soul of Jesus, and all these visions of victory and empire awoke no response in His heart, any more than the flower-wreaths laid upon the breast of the dead can quicken the beat of the now silent heart.

The answer of Jesus was prompt and decisive. Not deigning to use any words of His own, or to hold any parley, even the shortest, He meets the word of the tempter with a Divine word: "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." The tempting thought is something foreign to the mind of Jesus, something unwelcome, repulsive, and it is rejected instantly. Instead of allowing Himself to be diverted from the Divine purpose, His will detached from the Father's will, He turns to that will and word at once. It is His refuge, His home. The thought of Jesus cannot pass beyond the circle of that will, any more than a dove can pass beyond the over-arching sky. He sees the throne that is above all thrones, and gazing upon that, worshipping only the Great King, who is over all and in all, the thrones and crowns of earthly dominions are but as motes of the air. The victory was complete. Quickly as it came, the splendid vision conjured up by the tempter disappeared, and Jesus turned away from the path of earthly glory, where power without measure and honours without number awaited Him, to tread the solitary, lowly path of submission and of sacrifice, the path that had a crucifixion, and not a coronation, as its goal.

Twice baffled, the enemy comes once again to the charge, completing the series with the pinnacle temptation, to which St. Luke naturally, and as we think rightly, gives the third place. It

follows the other two in orderly sequence, and it cannot well be placed second, as in St. Matthew, without a certain overlapping of thought. If we must adhere to the literalistic interpretation, and suppose Jesus led up to Jerusalem bodily, then, perhaps, St. Matthew's order would be more natural, as that would not necessitate a return to the wilderness. But that is an interpretation to which we are not bound. Neither the words of the narrative nor the conditions of the temptation require it; and when art represents Jesus as flying with the tempter through the air it is a representation both grotesque and gratuitous. Thus far, in his temptations, Satan has been foiled by the faith of Jesus, the implicit trust He reposed in the Father; but if he cannot break in upon that trust, causing it to doubt or disobey, may he not push the virtue too far, goading Him "to sin in loving virtue"? If the mind and heart of Jesus are so grooved in with the lines of the Divine will that he cannot throw them off the metals, or make them reverse their wheels, perhaps he may push them forward so fast and so far as to bring about the collision he seeks—the clash of the two wills. It is the only chance left him, a forlorn hope, it is true, but still a hope, and Satan moves forward, if perchance he may realise it.

As in the second temptation, the wilderness fades out of sight. Suddenly Jesus finds Himself standing on the pinnacle of the Temple, probably the eastern corner of the royal portico. On the one side, deep below, were the Temple courts, crowded with throngs of worshippers; on the other lay the gorge of the Kedron, a giddy depth, which made the eye of the down-looker to swim, and the brain to reel. "If (or rather 'Since') said Satan, Thou art the Son of God, cast Thyself down from hence; for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee, to guard Thee; on their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest haply Thou dash Thy foot against a stone." It is as if he said, "You are the Son of God, in a special, favoured sense. You are set in title and authority above the angels; they are Your ministering servants; and reciprocate the trust Heaven reposes in You. The will of God is more to You than life itself; the word of God outweighs with You thrones and empires. And You do well. Continue thus, and no harm can overtake You. And just to show how absolute is Your faith in God, cast Yourself down from this height. You need not fear, for You will but throw Yourself upon the word of God; and You have only to speak, and unseen angels will crowd the air, bearing You up in their hands. Cast Yourself down, and so test and attest Your faith in God; and doing so You will give to these multitudes indubitable proof of Your Sonship and Messiahship." Such was the argument, specious, but fallacious, of the tempter. Misquoting Scripture by omitting its qualifying clause, distorting the truth into a dangerous error, he sought to impale his Victim on the horn of a dilemma. But Jesus was on the alert. He recognised at once the seductive thought, though, Jacob-like, it had come robed in the assumed dress of Scripture. Is not obedience as sacred as trust? Is not obedience the life, the soul of trust, without which the trust itself is but a semblance, a decaying, corrupt thing? But Satan asks Him to disobey, to set Himself above the laws by which the world is governed. Instead of His will being entirely



subordinate, conforming itself in all things to the Divine will, if He should cast Himself down from this pinnacle it would be putting pressure upon that Divine will, forcing it to repeal its own physical laws, or at any rate to suspend their action for a time. And what would that be but insubordination, no longer faith, but presumption, a tempting, and not a trusting God? The Divine promises are not cheques made payable to "bearer," regardless of character, place, or time, and to be realised by any one who may happen to possess himself of them anywhere. They are cheques drawn out to "order," crossed cheques, too, negotiated only as the conditions of character and time are fulfilled. The Divine protection and guardianship are indeed assured to every child of God, but only as He "dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, as he abides under the shadow of the Almighty;" in other words, so long as "thy ways" are "His ways." Step out from that pavilion of the Most High, and you step from under the bright bow of promise. Put yourself above, or put yourself out of, the Divine order of things, and the very promise becomes a threatening, and the cloud that else would protect and guide becomes a cloud full of suppressed thunders, and flashing in vivid lightnings its thousand swords of flame. Faith and fidelity are thus inseparable. The one is the calyx, the other the involved corolla; and as they open outwards into the perfect flower they turn towards the Divine will, configuring themselves in all things to that will.

A third time Jesus replied to the tempter in words of Old Testament Scripture, and a third time, too, from the same book of Deuteronomy. It will be observed, however, that the terms of His reply are slightly altered. He no longer uses the "It is written," since Satan himself has borrowed that word, but substitutes another: "It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." It has been thought by some that Jesus used the quotation in an accommodated sense, referring the "Thou" to the tempter himself, and so making "the Lord thy God" an attestation of His own Divinity. But such an interpretation is forced and unnatural. Jesus would not be likely to hide the deep secret from His own disciples, and announce it for the first time to the ears of the seducer. It is an impossible supposition. Besides, too, it was as *man* that Jesus was tempted. Only on the side of His humanity could the enemy approach Him, and for Jesus now to take refuge in His Divinity would strip the temptation of all its meaning, making it a mere acting. But Jesus does not so throw up humanity, or which is the same thing, take Himself out of it, and when He says, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" He includes Himself in the "thou." Son though He is, He must put Himself under the law that prescribes the relations of man towards God. He must learn obedience as other sons of men. He must submit, that He may serve, not seeking to impose His will upon the Father's will, even by way of suggestion, much less by way of demand, but waiting upon that will in an absolute self-surrender and instant acquiescence. Moses must not command the cloud; all that he is permitted to do is to observe it and follow. To go before God is to go without God, and to go without Him is to go against Him; and as to the angels bearing Him up in their hands, that depends altogether upon the path and the errand. Let it

be the Divinely ordered path, and the unseen convoys of heaven will attend, a sleepless, invincible guard; but let it be some self-chosen path, some forbidden way, and the angel's sword will flash its warning, and send the foot of the unfaithful servant crushing against the wall.

And so the third temptation failed, as did the other two. With but a little tension, Satan had made the will of the first Adam to strike a discordant note, throwing it out of all harmony with the Higher Will; but by no pressure, no enticements, can he influence the Second Adam. His will vibrates in a perfect consonance with the Father's, even under the terrible pressure of hunger, and the more terrible pressure, the fearful impact of evil.

So Satan completed, and so Jesus resisted, "every temptation"—that is, every form of temptation. In the first, Jesus was tempted on the side of His physical nature; in the second the attack was on the side of His intellectual nature, looking out on His political life; while in the third the assault was on the side of His spiritual life. In the first He is tempted as the Man, in the second as the Messiah, and in the third as the Divine Son. In the first temptation He is asked to make use of His newly received miraculous power over nature—passive, unthinking nature; in the second He is asked to throw it over the "world," which in this case is a synonym for humankind; while in the third He is asked to widen the realm of His authority, and to command the angels, nay, God Himself. So the three temptations are really one, though the fields of battle lie in three several planes. And the aim was one. It was to create a divergence between the two wills, and to set the Son in a sort of antagonism to the Father, which would have been another Absalom revolt, a Divine mutiny it is impossible for us even to conceive.

St. Luke omits in his narrative the ministry of angels mentioned by the other two Synoptists, a sweet postlude we should have missed much, had it been wanting; but he gives us instead the retreat of the adversary: "He departed from Him for a season." How long a season it was we do not know, but a brief one it must have been, for again and again in the story of the Gospels we see the dark shadow of the evil one; while in Gethsemane the "prince of this world" cometh, but to find nothing in "Me." And what was the horror of great darkness, that strange eclipse of soul Jesus suffered upon Calvary, but the same fearful presence, intercepting for a time even the Father's smile, and throwing upon the pure and patient Sufferer a strip of the outer darkness itself?

The test was over. Tried in the fires of a persistent assault, the faith and obedience of Jesus were found perfect. The shafts of the tempter had recoiled upon himself, leaving all stainless and scatheless the pure soul of Jesus. The Son of man had conquered, that all other sons of men may learn the secret of constant and complete victory; how faith overcomes, putting to flight "the armies of the aliens," and making even the weakest child of God "more than conqueror." And from the wilderness, where innocence has ripened into virtue, Jesus passes up, like another Moses, "in the power of the Spirit," to challenge the world's magicians, to baffle their sleight of hand and skill of speech, and to proclaim to redeemed humanity a new Exodus, a life-long Jubilee.



## CHAPTER VIII.

*THE GOSPEL OF THE JUBILEE.*

IMMEDIATELY after the Temptation Jesus returned "in the power of the Spirit," and with all the added strength of His recent victories, to Galilee. Into what parts of Galilee He came, our Evangelist does not say; but omitting the visit to Cana, and dismissing the first Galilean tour with a sentence—how "He taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all"—St. Luke goes on to record in detail the visit of Jesus to Nazareth, and His rejection by His townsmen. In putting this narrative in the forefront of his Gospel is St. Luke committing a chronological error? or is he, as some suppose, purposely antedating the Nazareth story, that it may stand as a frontispiece to his Gospel, or that it may serve as a key for the after-music? This is the view held by most of our expositors and harmonists, but, as it appears to us, on insufficient grounds; the balance of probability is against it. It is true that St. Matthew and St. Mark record a visit to Nazareth which evidently occurred at a later period of His ministry. It is true also that between their narratives and this of St. Luke there are some striking resemblances, such as the teaching in the synagogue, the astonishment of His hearers, their reference to His parentage, and then the reply of Jesus as to a prophet receiving scant honour in his own country—resemblances which would seem to indicate that the two narratives were in reality one. But still it is possible to push these resemblances too far, reading out from them what we have first read into them. Let us for the moment suppose that Jesus made two visits to Nazareth; and is not such a supposition both reasonable and natural? It is not necessary that the first rejection should be a final rejection, for did not the Jews seek again and again to kill Him, before the cross saw their dire purpose realised? Remaining for so long in Galilee, would it not be a most natural wish on the part of Jesus to see the home of His boyhood once again, and to give to His townspeople one parting word before taking His farewell of Galilee? And suppose He did, what then? Would He not naturally go to the synagogue—as was His custom in every place—and speak? And would they not listen with the same astonishment, and then harp on the very same questions as to His parentage and brotherhood—questions that would have their readiest and fittest answer in the same familiar proverb? Instead, then, of these resemblances identifying the two narratives, and proving that St. Luke's story is but an amplification of the narratives of the other Synoptists, the resemblances themselves are what we might naturally expect in our supposition of a second visit. But if there are certain coincidences between the two narratives, there are marked differences, which make it extremely improbable that the Synoptists are recording one event. In the visit recorded by St. Luke there were no miracles wrought; while St. Matthew and St. Mark tell us that He could not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief, but that He "laid His hands on a few sick folk, and healed them." In the narrative by St. Mark we read that His disciples were with Him, while St. Luke makes no mention of His disciples; but St. Luke does mention the tragic

ending of the visit, the attempt of the men of Nazareth to hurl Him down from a lofty cliff, an incident St. Matthew and St. Mark omit altogether. But can we suppose the men of Nazareth would have attempted this, had the strong body-guard of disciples been with Jesus? Would they be likely to stand by, timidly acquiescent? Would not Peter's sword have flashed instantly from its scabbard, in defence of Him whom he served and dearly loved? That St. Matthew and St. Mark should make no reference to this scene of violence, had it occurred at the visit they record, is strange and unaccountable; and the omission is certainly an indication, if not a proof, that the Synoptists are describing two separate visits to Nazareth—the one, as narrated by St. Luke, at the commencement of His ministry; and the other at a later date, probably towards its close. And with this view the substance of the Nazareth address perfectly accords. The whole address has the ring of an inaugural message; it is the voice of an opening spring, and not of a waning summer. "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears" is the blast of the silver trumpet announcing the beginning of the Messianic year, the year of a truer, wider Jubilee.

It seems to us, therefore, that the chronology of St. Luke is perfectly correct, as he places in the forefront of his Gospel the earlier visit to Nazareth, and the violent treatment Jesus there received. At the second visit there was still a widespread unbelief, which caused Jesus to marvel; but there was no attempt at violence, for His disciples were with Him now, while the report of His Judæan ministry, which had gone before Him, and the miracles He wrought in their presence, had softened down even Nazareth prejudices and asperities. The events of the first Galilean tour were probably in the following order. Jesus, with His five disciples, goes to Cana, invited guests at the marriage, and here He opens His miraculous commission, by turning the water into wine. From Cana they proceed to Capernaum, where they remain for a short time, Jesus preaching in their synagogue, and probably continuing His miraculous works. Leaving His disciples behind at Capernaum—for between the preliminary call by the Jordan and the final call by the lake the fisher-disciples get back to their old occupations for a while—Jesus goes up to Nazareth, with His mother and His brethren. Thence, after His violent rejection, He returns to Capernaum, where He calls His disciples from their boats and receipt of custom, probably completing the sacred number before setting out on His journey southward to Jerusalem. If this harmony be correct—and the weight of probability seems to be in its favour—then the address at Nazareth, which is the subject for our consideration now, would be the first recorded utterance of Jesus; for thus far Cana gives us one startling miracle, while in Capernaum we find the report of His acts, rather than the echoes of His words. And that St. Luke alone should give us this incident, recording it in such a graphic manner, would almost imply that he had received the account from an eye-witness, probably—if we may gather anything from the Nazarene tone of St. Luke's earlier pages—from some member of the Holy Family.

Jesus has now fairly embarked upon His Messianic mission, and He begins that mission, as prophecy had long foretold He should, in Galilee



of the Gentiles. The rumour of His wonderful deeds at Cana and Capernaum had already preceded Him thither, when Jesus came once again to the home of His childhood and youth. Going, as had been His custom from boyhood, into the synagogue on the Sabbath day (St. Luke is writing for Gentiles who are unversed in Jewish customs), Jesus stood up to read. "The Megilloth," or Book of the Prophets, having been handed to Him, He unrolled the book, and read the passage in Isaiah (lxi. 1) to which His mind had been Divinely directed, or which He had purposely chosen:—

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,  
Because He anointed Me to preach good tidings to the  
poor,  
He hath sent Me to proclaim release to the captives,  
And recovering of sight to the blind,  
To set at liberty them that are bruised,  
To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

Then closing, or rolling up, the book, and handing it back to the attendant, Jesus sat down, and began His discourse. The Evangelist does not record any of the former part of the discourse, but simply gives us the effect produced, in the riveted gaze and the rising astonishment of His auditors, as they caught up eagerly His sweet and gracious words. Doubtless, He would explain the words of the prophet, first in their literal, and then in their prophetic sense; and so far He carried the hearts of His hearers with Him, for who could speak of their Messianic hopes without awakening sweet music in the Hebrew heart? But directly Jesus applies the passage to Himself, and says, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears," the fashion of their countenance alters; the Divine emphasis He puts upon the ME curdles in their heart, turning their pleasure and wonder into incredulity, envy, and a perfect frenzy of rage. The primary reference of the prophecy seems to have been to the return of Israel from captivity. It was a political Jubilee he proclaimed, when Zion should have a "garland for ashes," when the captive should be free, and aliens should be their servants. But the flowers of Scripture are mostly double; its pictures and parables have often a nearer meaning, and another more remote, or a spiritual, involved in the literal sense. That it was so here is evident, for Jesus takes this Scripture—which we might call a Babylonish garment, woven out of the Exile—and wraps it around Himself, as if it belonged to Himself alone, and were so intended from the very first. His touch thus invests it with a new significance; and making this Scripture a vestment for Himself, Jesus, so to speak, shakes out its narrower folds, and gives it a wider, an eternal meaning. But why should Jesus select this passage above all others? Were not the Old Testament Scriptures full of types, and shadows, and prophecies which testified of him, any one of which He might have appropriated now? Yes, but no other passage so completely answered His design, no other was so clearly and fully declarative of His earthly mission. And so Jesus selected this picture of Isaiah, which was at once a prophecy and an epitome of His own Gospel, as His inaugural message, His manifesto.

The Mosaic Code, in its play upon the temporal octaves, had made provision, not only for a weekly Sabbath, and for a Sabbath year, but it completed its cycle of festivals by setting apart

each fiftieth year as a year of special grace and gladness. It was the year of redemption and restoration, when all debts were remitted, when the family inheritance, which by the pressure of the times had been alienated, reverted to its original owner, and when those who had mortgaged their personal liberty regained their freedom. The "Jubilee" year, as they called it—putting into its name the play of the priestly trumpets which ushered it in—was thus the Divine safeguard against monopolies, a Divine provision for a periodic redistribution of the wealth and privileges of the theocracy; while at the same time it served to keep intact the separate threads of family life, running its lines of lineage down through the centuries, and across into the New Testament. Seizing upon this, the gladdest festival of Hebrew life, Jesus likens Himself to one of the priests, who with trumpet of silver proclaims "the acceptable year of the Lord." He finds in that Jubilee a type of His Messianic year, a year that shall bring, not to one chosen race alone, but to a world of debtors and captives, remissions and manumissions without number, ushering in an era of liberty and gladness. And so in these words, adapted and adopted from Isaiah, Jesus announces Himself as the World's Evangelist, and Healer, and Emancipator; or separating the general message into its prismatic colours, we have the three characteristics of Christ's Gospel—(1) as the Gospel of Love; (2) the Gospel of Light; and (3) the Gospel of Liberty.

1. The Gospel of Jesus was the Gospel of Love. "He anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor." That there is a Gospel even in the Old Testament no one will attempt to deny, and able writers have delighted in tracing out the evangelism that, like hidden veins of gold, runs here and there, now embedded deep in historical strata, and now cropping out in the current of prophetic speech. Still, an ear but little trained to harmonies can detect a marvellous difference between the tone of the Old and the tone of the New Dispensation. "Evangelists" is scarcely the name we should give to the prophets and preachers of the Old Testament, if we except that prophet of the dawn, Isaiah. They came, not as the bearers of glad tidings, but with the pressure, the burden of a terrible "woe" upon them. With a voice of threat and doom they call Israel back to the days of fidelity and purity, and with the caustic of biting words they seek to burn out the cancer of national corruption. They were no doves, those old-time prophets, building their nests in the blossoming olives, in soft accents telling of a winter past and a summer near; they were storm-birds rather, beating with swift, sad wings on the crest of sullen waves, or whirling about among the torn shrouds. Even the eremite Baptist brought no evangel. He was a sad man, with a sad message, telling, not of the right which men should do, but of the wrong they should not do, his ministry, like that of the law, being a ministry of condemnation. Jesus, however, announces Himself as the World's Evangelist. He declares that He is anointed and commissioned to be the bearer of good, glad tidings to man. At once the Morning Star and Sun, He comes to herald a new day; nay, He comes to make that day. And so it was. We cannot listen to the words of Jesus without noticing the high and heavenly pitch to which their music is set. Be-



ginning with the Beatitudes, they move on in the higher spaces, striking the notes of courage, hope, and faith, and at last, in the guest-chamber, dropping down to their key-note, as they close with an *eirenicon* and a benediction. How little Jesus played upon men's fears! how, instead, He sought to inspire them with new hopes, telling of the possibilities of goodness, the perfections which were within reach of even the human endeavour! How seldom you catch the tone of despondency in His words! As He summons men to a life of purity, unselfishness, and faith, His are not the voice and mien of one who commands to a forlorn hope. There is the ring of courage, conviction, certainty about His tone, a hopefulness that was itself half a victory. Jesus was no Pessimist, reading over the grave of departed glories His "ashes to ashes;" He who knew our human nature best had most hopes of it, for He saw the Deity that was back of it and within it.

And just here we touch what we may call the fundamental chord in the Gospel of Jesus, the Fatherhood of God; for though we can detect other strains running through the music of the Gospel, such as the Love of God, the Grace of God, and the Kingdom of God, yet these are but the consonant notes completing the harmonic scale, or the variations that play about the Divine Fatherhood. To the Hebrew conception of God this was an element altogether new. To their mind Jehovah is the Lord of hosts, an invisible, absolute Power, inhabiting the thick darkness, and speaking in the fire. Sinai thus throws its shadow across the Old Testament Scriptures, and men inhale an atmosphere of law rather than of love.

But what a transformation was wrought in the world's thought and life as Jesus unfolded the Divine Fatherhood! It altered the whole aspect of man's relation to God, with a change as marked and glorious as when our earth turns its face more directly to the sun, to find its summer. The Great King, whose will commanded all forces, became the Great Father, in whose compassionate heart the toiling children of men might find refuge and rest. The "Everlasting Arms" were none the less strong and omnipotent; but as Jesus uncovered them they seemed less distant, less rigid; they became so near and so gentle, the weakest child of earth might not fear to lay its tired heart upon them. Law was none the less mighty, none the less majestic, but it was now a transfigured law, all lighted up and suffused with love. No longer was life one round of servile tasks, demanded by an inexorable, invisible Pharaoh; no longer was it a trampled playground, where all the flowers are crushed, as Fate and Chance take their alternate innings. No; life was ennobled, adorned with new and rare beauties; and when Jesus opened the gate of the Divine Fatherhood the light that was beyond, and that "never was on sea or land," shone through, putting a heavenliness upon the earthly, and a divineness upon the human life. What better, gladder tidings could the poor (whether in spirit or in life) hear than this—that heaven was no longer a distant dream, but a present and most precious reality, touching at every point, and enfolding their little lives; that God was no longer hostile, or even indifferent to them, but that He cared for them with an infinite care, and loved them with an infinite love? Thus did Jesus proclaim the "good tid-

ings;" for love, grace, redemption, and heaven itself are all found within the compass of the Fatherhood. And He who gave to His disciples, in the "Paternoster," a golden key for heaven's audience-chamber, speaks that sacred name "Father" even amid the agonies of the cross, putting the silver trumpet to His parched and quivering lips, so that earth may hear once again the music of its new and more glorious Jubilee.

2. The Gospel of Jesus was a Gospel of Light. "And recovering of sight to the blind," which is the Septuagint rendering of the Hebrew passage in Isaiah, "the opening of the prison to them that are bound." At first sight this appears to be a break in the Jubilee idea; for physical cures, such as the healing of the blind, did not come within the scope of Jubilatic mercies. The original expression, however, contains a blending of figures, which together preserve the unity of the prophetic picture. Literally it reads, "The opening of the eyes to them that are bound;" the figure being that of a captive, whose long captivity in the darkness has filmed his vision, and who now passes through the opened door of his prison into the light of day.

In what way shall we interpret these words? Are they to be taken literally, or spiritually? or are both methods equally legitimate? Evidently they are both intended, for Jesus was the Light-bringer in more senses than one. That the Messiah should signalise His advent by performing wonders and signs, and by working physical cures, was certainly the teaching of prophecy, as it was a fixed and prominent hope in the expectation of the Jews. And so, when the despondent Baptist sent two of his disciples to ask "Art Thou He that should come?" Jesus gave no direct answer, but turning from His questioners to the multitude of sick who pressed around Him, He healed their sick, and gave sight to many that were blind. Then returning to the surprised strangers, He bids them carry back to their master these visible proofs of His Messiahship—how that "lepers are cleansed, and the blind receive their sight." Jesus Himself had a wonderful power of vision. His eyes were Divinely bright, for they carried their own light. Not only had He the gift of prescience, the forward-looking eye; He had what for want of a word we may call the gift of prescience, the eye that looked within, that saw the heart and soul of things. What a strange fascination there was in His very look! how it flashed like a subtle lightning, striking and scathing with its holy indignation the half-veiled meanness and hypocrisy! and how again, like a beam of light, it fell upon Peter's soul, thawing the chilled heart, and opening the closed fountain of his tears, as an Alpine summer falls on the rigid glacier, and sends it rippling and singing through the lower vales. And had not Jesus an especial sympathy for cases of ophthalmic distress, paying to the blind a peculiar attention? How quickly He responded to Bartimæus—"What is it that I shall do for thee?"—as if Bartimæus were conferring the benefit by making his request. Where on the pages of the four Gospels do we find a picture more full of beauty and sublimity than when we read of Jesus taking the blind man by the hand, and leading him out of the town? What moral grandeur and what touching pathos are there! and how that stoop of gentleness makes Him great! No other case is there of such prolonged



and tender sympathy, where He not only opens the gates of day for the benighted, but leads the benighted one up to the gates. And why does Jesus make this difference in His miracles, that while other cures are wrought instantly, even the raising of the dead, with nothing more than a look, a word, or a touch, in healing the blind He should work the cure, as it were, in parts, or by using such intermediaries as clay, saliva, or the water of Siloam's pool? Must it not have been intentional? It would seem so, though what the purpose might be we can only guess. Was it so gradual an inletting of the light, because a glare too bright and sudden would only confuse and blind? or did Jesus linger over the cure with the pleasure of one who loves to watch the dawn, as it paints the east with vermilion and gold? or did Jesus make use of the saliva and clay, that like crystal lenses, they might magnify His power, and show how His will was supreme, that He had a thousand ways of restoring sight, and that He had only to command even unlikely things, and light, or rather sight, should be? We do not know the purpose, but we do know that physical sight was somehow a favourite gift of the Lord Jesus, one that He handed to men carefully and tenderly. Nay, He Himself said that the man of Jerusalem had been born blind "that the works of God should be manifest in him;" that is, his firmament had been for forty years darkened that his age, and all coming ages, might see shining within it the constellations of Divine Pity and Divine Power.

But while Jesus knew well the anatomy of the natural eye, and could and did heal it of its disorders, putting within the sunken socket the rounded ball, or restoring to the optic nerve its lost powers, this was not the only sight He brought. To the companion clauses of this prophecy, where Jesus proclaims deliverance to the captives, and sets at liberty them that are bruised, we are compelled to give a spiritual interpretation; and so "the recovering of sight to the blind" demands a far wider horizon than the literalistic sense offers. It speaks of the true Light which lighteth every man, that spiritual photosphere that environs and enswathes the soul, and of the opening and adjusting of the spiritual sense; for as sight without light is darkness, so light without sight is darkness still. The two facts are thus related, each useless apart from the other, but together producing what we call vision. The recovering of sight to the blind is thus the universal miracle. It is the "Let light be" of the new Genesis, or, as we prefer to call it, the "regeneration." It is the dawn, which, breaking over the soul, broadens unto the perfect day, the heavenly, the eternal noon. Jesus Himself recognises this binoculism, this double vision. He says (John xvi. 16), "A little while, and ye behold Me no more; and again a little while, and ye shall see Me," using two altogether different words—the one speaking of the vision of the sense, the other of the deeper vision of the soul. And it was so. The disciples' vision of the Christ, at least so long as the bodily presence was with them, was the earthly, physical vision. The spiritual Christ was, in a sense, lost, masked in the corporeal. The veil of His flesh hung dense and heavy before their eyes, and not until it was uplifted on the cross, not until it was rent in twain, did they see the mysterious Holy Pres-

ence that dwelt within the veil. Nor was the clearer vision given them even now. The dust of the sepulchre was in their eyes, blurring, and for a time half-blinding them—the anointing with the clay. The emptied grave, the Resurrection, was their "pool of Siloam," washing away the blinding clay, the dust of their gross, materialistic thoughts. Henceforth they saw Christ, not, as before, ever coming and going, but as the ever-present, the abiding One. In the fuller light of the Pentecostal flames the unseen Christ became more near and more real than the seen Christ ever was. Seeing Him as visible, their minds were holden, somewhat perplexed; they could neither accomplish much nor endure much; but seeing Him who had become invisible, they were a company of invincibles. They could do and they could endure anything; for was not the I AM with them always?

Now, even in the physical vision there is a wonderful correspondence between the sight and the soul, the prospect and introspect. As men read the outward world they see pretty much the shadow of themselves, their thoughts, feelings, and ideas. In the German fable the travelled stork had nothing to say about the beauty of the fields and wonders of the cities over which it passed, but it could discourse at length about the delicious frogs it had found in a certain ditch. Exactly the same law rules up in the higher vision. Men see what they themselves love and are; the sight is but a sort of projection of the soul. As St. Paul says, "The natural man receiveth not the things of God;" the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him are "things which eye saw not, and ear heard not." And so Jesus gives sight by renewing the soul; He creates around us a new heaven and a new earth, by creating a new, a clean heart within us. Within every soul there are the possibilities of a Paradise, but these possibilities are dormant. The natural heart is a chaos of confusion and darkness, until it turns towards Jesus as its Saviour and its Sun, and henceforth revolves around Him in its ever-narrowing circles.

3. The Gospel of Jesus was a Gospel of Liberty. "He hath sent Me to proclaim release to the captives," "to set at liberty them that are bruised." The latter clause is not in the original prophecy, but is a rough adaptation of another passage in Isaiah (lviii. 6). Probably it was quoted by Jesus in His address, and so was inserted by the Evangelist with the passages read; for in the New Testament the quotations from the Old are grouped together by affinities of spirit, rather than by the law of textual continuity. The two passages are one in their proclamation and promise of liberty, but they by no means cover the same ground. The former speaks of the liberation of captives, those whom the exigencies of war or some change of fortune have thrown into prison; the latter speaks of deliverance to the oppressed, those whose personal liberties may not be impawned, but whose lives are made hard and bitter under severe exactions, and whose spirits are broken, crushed beneath a weight of accumulated ills. Speaking generally, we should call the one an amnesty, and the other an enfranchisement; for one is the offer of freedom to the captive, the other of freedom to the slave; while together they form an act of emancipation for humanity, enfranchising and ennobling each individual son



of man, and giving to him, even the poorest, the freedom of God's world.

In what sense, then, is Jesus the great Emancipator? It would be easy to show that Jesus, personally, was a lover of freedom. He could not brook restraints. Antiquity, conventionalism, had no charms for Him. Keenly in touch with the present, He did not care to take the cold, clammy hand of a dead Past, or allow it to prescribe His actions. Between the right and the wrong, the good and the evil, He put a wall of adamant, God's eternal "No"; but within the sphere of the right, the good, He left room for the largest liberties. He observed forms—occasionally, at least—but formalism He could not endure. And so Jesus was constantly coming into collision with the Pharisaic school of thought, the school of routinists, casuists, whose religion was a glossary of terms, a volume of formulas and negations. To the Pharisee religion was a cold, dead thing, a mummy, all enswathed in the cerecloths of tradition; to Jesus it was a living soul within a living form, an angel of grace and beauty, whose wings would bear her aloft to higher, heavenlier spheres, and whose feet and hands fitted her just as well for the common walks of life, in a beautiful, every-day ministry of blessing. And how Jesus loved to give personal liberty to man—to remove the restrictions disease had put around their activities, and to leave them physically, mentally free! And what were His miracles of healing but proclamations of liberty, in the lowest sense of that word? He found the human body enfeebled, enslaved; here it was, an arm, there an eye, so held in the grip of disease that it was as if dead. But Jesus said to Disease, "Loose that half-strangled life and let it go," and in an instant it was free to act and feel, finding its lesser jubilee. Jesus saw the human mind led into captivity. Reason was dethroned and immured in the dungeon, while the feet of lawless passions were trampling overhead. But when Jesus healed the demoniac, the imbecile, the lunatic, what was it but a mental jubilee, as He gives peace to a distracted soul, and leads banished Reason back to her Jerusalem?

But these deliverances and liberties, glorious as they are, are but figures of the true, which is the enfranchisement of the soul. The disciples were perplexed and sorely disappointed that Jesus should die without having wrought any "redemption" for Israel. This was their one dream, that the Messiah should break in pieces the hated Roman yoke, and effect a political deliverance. But they see Him moving steadily to His goal, taking no note of their aspirations, or noticing them only to rebuke them, and scarce giving a passing glance to these Roman eagles, which darken the sky, and cast their ominous shadows over the homes and fields of Israel. But Jesus had not come into the world to effect any local, political redemption; another Moses could have done that. He had come to lead captive the captivity of Sin, as Zacharias had foretold, "that being delivered out of the hand of our (spiritual) enemies, we might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life." The sphere of His mission was where His kingdom should be, in the great interior of the heart. A Prophet like unto Moses, but infinitely greater than he, He too leaves the palace of the Eternal,

laying aside, not the robes of a prospective royalty, but the glories He possessed with the Father; He too assumes the dress, the speech, nay, the very nature, of the race He has come to redeem. And when no other ransom was sufficient He "offered Himself without spot to God," "our Passover, sacrificed for us," so sprinkling the doorway of the new Exodus with His own blood. But here we stand on the threshold of a great mystery; for if angels bend over the mercy-seat, desiring, but in vain, to read the secret of redemption, how can our finite minds grasp the great thought and purpose of God? We do know this, however, for it is the oft-repeated truth of Scripture, that the life, or, as St. Peter puts it, "the precious blood of Christ," was, in a certain sense, our ransom, the price of our redemption. We say, "in a certain sense," for the figure breaks down if we press it unduly, as if Heaven had held a parley with the power that had enslaved man, and, at a stipulated price, had bought him off. That certainly was no part of the Divine purpose and fact of redemption. But an atonement was needed in order to make salvation possible; for how could God, infinitely holy and just, remit the penalty due to sin with no expression of His abhorrence of sin, without destroying the dignity of law, and reducing justice to a mere name? But the obedience and death of Christ were a satisfaction of infinite worth. They upheld the majesty of law, and at the same time made way for the interventions of Divine Love. The cross of Jesus was thus the place where Mercy and Truth met together, and Righteousness and Peace kissed each other. It was at once the visible expression of God's deep hatred of sin, and of His deep love to the sinner. And so, not virtually simply, in some far-off sense, but in truest reality, Jesus "died for our sins," Himself tasting death that we might have life, even the life "more abundant," the life everlasting; suffering Himself to be led captive by the powers of sin, bound to the cross and imprisoned in a grave, that men might be free in all the glorious liberty of the children of God.

But this deliverance from sin, the pardon for past offences, is but one part of the salvation Jesus provides and proclaims. Heaven's angel may light up the dungeon of the imprisoned soul; he may strike off its fetters, and lead it forth into light and liberty; but if Satan can reverse all this, and fling back the soul into captivity, what is that but a partial, intermittent salvation, so unlike Him whose name is Wonderful? The angel said, "He shall save His people," not from the effects of their sin, from its guilt and condemnation alone, but "from their sins." That is, He shall give to the pardoned soul power over sin; it shall no longer have dominion over him; captivity itself shall be led captive; for

"His grace, His love, His care  
Are wider than our utmost need,  
And higher than our prayer."

Yes, verily; and the life that is hid with Christ in God, that, with no side-glances at self, is set apart utterly to do the Divine will, that abandons itself to the perfect keeping of the perfect Saviour, will find on earth the "acceptable year of the Lord," its years, henceforth, years of liberty and victory, a prolonged Jubilee.



## CHAPTER IX.

*A SABBATH IN GALILEE.*

WE should naturally expect that our physician-Evangelist would have a peculiar interest in Christ's connection with human suffering and disease, and in this we are not mistaken.

It is almost a superfluous task to consider what our Gospels would have been had there been no miracles of healing to record; but we may safely say that such a blank would be inexplicable, if not impossible. Even had prophecy been utterly silent on the subject, should we not look for the Christ to signalise His advent and reign upon earth by manifestations of His Divine power? A Man amongst men, human yet superhuman, how can He manifest the Divinity that is within, except by the flashings forth of His supernatural power? Speech, however eloquent, however true, could not do this. There must be a background of deeds, visible credentials of authority and power, or else the words are weak and vain—but the play of a borealis in the sky, beautiful and bright indeed, but distant, inoperative, and cold. If the prophets of old, who were but acolytes swinging their lamps and singing their songs before the coming Christ, were allowed to attest their commission by occasional endowments of miraculous power, must not the Christ Himself prove His super-humanity by fuller measures and exhibitions of the same power? And where can He manifest this so well as in connection with the world's suffering, need, and pain? Here is a background prepared, and all dark enough in sooth; where can he write so well that men may read His messages of goodwill, love, and peace? Where can He put His sign manual, His Divine autograph, better than on this firmament of human sorrow, disease, and woe? And so the miracles of healing fall naturally into the story; they are the natural and necessary accompaniments of the Divine life upon earth.

The first miracle that Jesus wrought was in the home at Cana; His first miracle of healing was in the synagogue. He thus placed Himself in the two pivotal centres of our earthly life; for that life, with its heavenward and earthward aspects, revolves about the synagogue and the home. He touches our human life alike on its temporal and its spiritual side. To a nature like that of Jesus, which had an intense love for what was real and true, and as intense a scorn for what was superficial and unreal, it would seem as if a Hebrew synagogue would offer but few attractions. True, it served as the visible symbol of religion; it was the shrine where the Law and the Prophets spoke; what spiritual life there was circled and eddied around its door; while its walls, pointing to Jerusalem, kept the scattered populations in touch with the Temple, that marble dream of Hebraism; but in saying this we say nearly all. The tides of worldliness and formality, which, sweeping through the Temple gates, had left a scum of mire even upon the sacred courts, chilling devotion and almost extinguishing faith, had swept over the threshold of the synagogue. There the scribes had usurped Moses' seat, exalting Tradition as a sort of essence of Scripture, and deadening the majestic voices of the law in the jargon of their vain repetitions. But Jesus does not absent Himself

from the service of the synagogue because the fires upon its altar are dulled and quenched by the down-draught of the times. To Him it is the house of God, and if others see it not, He sees a ladder of light, with ascending and descending angels. If others hear but the voices of man, all broken and confused, He hears the Diviner voice, still and small; He hears the music of the heavenly host, throwing down their "Glorias" upon earth. The pure in heart can find and see God anywhere. He who worships truly carries His Holy of holies within Him. He who takes his own fire need never complain of the cold, and with wood and fire all prepared, he can find or he can build an altar upon any mount. Happy is the soul that has learned to lean upon God, who can say, amid all the distractions and interventions of man, "My soul, wait thou only upon God." To such a one, whose soul is athirst for God, the Valley of Baca becomes a well, while the hot rock pours out its streams of blessing. The art of worship avails nothing if the heart of worship is gone; but if that remain, subtle attractions will ever draw it to the place where "His name is recorded, and where His honour dwelleth."

In his earlier chapters, St. Luke is careful to light his Sabbath lamp, telling that such and such miracles were wrought on that day, because the Sabbath question was one on which Jesus soon came into collision with the Pharisees. By their traditions, and the withes of dry and sharp legalities, they had strangled the Sabbath, until life was well-nigh extinct. They had made rigorous and exacting what God had made bright and restful, fencing it around with negations, and burdening it with penalties. Jesus broke the withes that bound her, let the freer air play upon her face, and then led her back to the sweet liberties of her earlier years. How He does it the sequel will show.

The Sabbath morning finds Jesus repairing to the synagogue at Capernaum, a sanctuary built by a Gentile centurion, and presided over by Jairus, both of whom are yet to be brought into close personal relationship with Christ. From the silence of the narrative we should infer that the courtesy offered at Nazareth was not repeated at Capernaum—that of being invited to read the lesson from the Book of the Prophets. But whether so or not, He was allowed to address the congregation, a privilege which was often accorded to any eminent stranger who might be present. Of the subject of the discourse we know nothing. Possibly it was suggested by some passing scene or incident, as the sculptured pot of manna, in this same synagogue, called forth the remarkable address about the earthly and the heavenly bread (John vi. 31). But if the substance of the discourse is lost to us, its effect is not. It awoke the same feeling of surprise at Capernaum as it had done before among the more rustic minds of Nazareth. There, however, it was the graciousness of His words, their mingled "sweetness and light," which so caused them to wonder; here at Capernaum it was the "authority" with which He spoke that so astonished them, so different from the speech of the scribes, which, for the most part, was but an iteration of quibbles and trivialities, with just as much of originality as the "old clo'" cries of our modern streets. The speech of Jesus came as a breath from the upper air; it was the intense language of One who



possessed the truth, and who was Himself possessed by the truth. He dealt in principles, not platitudes; in eternal facts, and not in the fancies of gossamer that tradition so delighted to spin. Others might speak with the hesitancy of doubt; Jesus spoke in "verilies" and verities, the very essences of truth. And so His word fell upon the ears of men with the tones of an oracle; they felt themselves addressed by the unseen Deity who was behind; they had not learned, as we have, that the Deity of their oracle was within. No wonder that they are astonished at His authority—an authority so perfectly free from any assumptions; they will wonder still more when they find that demons, too, recognise this authority, and obey it.

While Jesus was still speaking—the tense of the verb implies an unfinished discourse—suddenly He was interrupted by a loud, wild shout: "Ah, what have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee, who Thou art, the Holy One of God." It was the cry of a man who, as our Evangelist expresses it, "had a spirit of an unclean devil." The phrase is a singular one, in fact unique, and savours a little of tautology; for St. Luke uses the words "spirit" and "devil" as synonyms (ix. 39). Later in his Gospel he would simply have said "he had an unclean devil;" why, then, does he here amplify the phrase, and say he had "a spirit of an unclean devil"? We can, of course, only conjecture, but might it not be because to the Gentile mind—to which he is writing—the powers of evil were represented as personifications, having a corporeal existence? And so in his first reference to the demoniacal possession he pauses to explain that these demons are evil "spirits," with existences altogether separate from the diseased humanity which temporarily they were allowed to inhabit and to rule. Neither can we determine with certainty the meaning of the phrase "an unclean devil," though probably it was so called because it drove its victim to haunt unclean places, like the Gadarene, who had his dwelling among the tombs.

The whole subject of demonology has been called in question by certain modern critics. They aver that it is simply an after-growth of Paganism, the seeds of worn-out mythologies which had been blown over into the Christian mind; and eliminating from them all that is supernatural, they reduce the so-called "possessions" to the natural effects of purely natural causes, physical and mental. It is confessedly a subject difficult as it is mysterious; but we are not inclined, at the bidding of rationalistic clamour, so to strike out the supernatural. Indeed, we cannot, without impaling ourselves upon this dilemma, that Jesus, knowingly or unknowingly, taught as the truth what was not true. That Jesus lent the weight of His testimony to the popular belief is evident; never once, in all His allusions, does He call it in question, nor hint that He is speaking now only in an accommodated sense, borrowing the accents of current speech. To Him the existence and presence of evil spirits was just as patent and as solemn a fact as was the existence of the arch-spirit, even Satan himself. And granting the existence of evil spirits, who will show us the line of limitation, the "Hitherto, but no farther," where their influence is stayed? Have we not seen, in mesmerism, cases of real pos-

session, where the weaker human will has been completely overpowered by the stronger will? when the subject was no longer himself, but his thoughts, words, and acts were those of another? And are there not, in the experiences of all medical men, and of ministers of religion, cases of depravity so utterly foul and loathsome that they cannot be explained except by the Jewish taunt, "He hath a devil"? According to the teaching of Scripture, the evil spirit possessed the man in the entirety of his being, commanding his own spirit, ruling both body and mind. Now it touched the tongue with a certain glibness of speech, becoming a "spirit of divination," and now it touched it with dumbness, putting upon the life the spell of an awful silence. Not that the obscurity of the eclipse was always the same. There were more lucid moments, the penumbras of brightness, when, for a brief interval, the consciousness seemed to awake, and the human will seemed struggling to assert itself; as is seen in the occasional dualism of its speech, when the "I" emerges from the "we," only, however, to be drawn back again, to have its identity swallowed up as before.

Such is the character who, leaving the graves of the dead for the abodes of the living, now breaks through the ceremonial ban, and enters the synagogue. Rushing wildly within—for we can scarcely suppose him to be a quiet worshipper; the rules of the synagogue would not have allowed that—and approaching Jesus, he abruptly breaks in upon the discourse of Jesus with his cry of mingled fear and passion. Of the cry itself we need not speak, except to notice its question and its confession. "Art thou come to destroy us?" he asks, as if, somehow, the secret of the Redeemer's mission had been told to these powers of darkness. Did they know that He had come to "destroy" the works of the devil, and ultimately to destroy, with an everlasting destruction, him who had the power of death, that is, the devil? Possibly they did, for, citizens of two worlds, the visible and the invisible, should not their horizon be wider than our own? At any rate, their knowledge, in some points, was in advance of the nascent faith of the disciples. They knew and confessed the Divinity of Christ's mission, and the Divinity of His Person, crying, "I know Thee, who Thou art, the Holy One of God;" "Thou art the Son of God" (iv. 41), when as yet the faith of the disciples was only a nebula of mist, made up in part of unreal hopes and random guesses. Indeed, we seldom find the demons yielding to the power of Christ, or to the delegated power of His disciples, but they make their confession of superior knowledge as if they possessed a more intimate acquaintance with Christ. "Jesus I know, and Paul I know," said the demon, which the sons of Sceva could not exorcise (Acts xix. 15), while now the demon of Capernaum boasts, "I know Thee, who Thou art, the Holy One of God." Nor was it a vain boast either, for our Evangelist asserts that Jesus did not suffer the demons to speak, "because they knew that He was the Christ" (ver. 41). They knew Jesus, but they feared and hated Him. In a certain sense they believed, but their belief only caused them to tremble, while it left them demons still. Just so is it now:—

"There are, too, who believe in hell and lie;  
There are who waste their souls in working out  
Life's problem, on these sands betwixt two tides,  
And end, 'Now give us the beasts' part in death.'"



Saving faith is thus more than a bare assent of the mind, more than some cold belief, or vain repetition of a creed. A creed may be complete and beautiful, but it is not the Christ; it is only the vesture the Christ wears; and alas, there are many still who will chaffer about, and cast lots for, a creed, who will go directly and crucify the Christ Himself! The faith that saves, besides the assent of the mind, must have the consent of the will and the surrender of the life. It is "with the heart," and not only with the mind, man "believeth unto righteousness."

The interruption brought the discourse of Jesus to an abrupt end, but it served to point the discourse with further exclamations of surprise, while it offered space for a new manifestation of Divine authority and power. It did not in the least disconcert the Master, though it had doubtless sent a thrill of excitement through the whole congregation. He did not even rise from His seat (ver. 38), but retaining the teaching posture, and not deigning a reply to the questions of the demon, He rebuked the evil spirit, saying, "Hold thy peace, and come out of him," thus recognising the dual will, and distinguishing between the possessor and the possessed. The command was obeyed instantly and utterly; though, as if to make one last supreme effort, he throws his victim down upon the floor of the synagogue, like Samson Agonistes, pulling to the ground the temple of his imprisonment. It was, however, a vain attempt, for he did him "no hurt." The roaring lion had indeed been "muzzled"—which is the primitive meaning of the verb rendered "Hold thy peace"—by the omnipotent word of Jesus.

They were "astonished at His teaching" before, but how much more so now! Then it was a convincing word; now it is a commanding word. They hear the voice of Jesus, sweeping like suppressed thunder over the boundaries of the invisible world, and commanding even devils, driving them forth, just with one rebuke, from the temple of the human soul, as afterwards He drove the traders from His Father's house with His whip of small cords. No wonder that "amazement came upon all," or that they asked, "What is this word? for with authority and power He commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out."

And so Jesus began His miracles of healing at the outmost marge of human misery. With the finger of His love, with the touch of His omnipotence, He swept the uttermost circle of our human need, writing on that far and low horizon His wonderful name, "Mighty to Save." And since none are outcasts from His mercy save those who outcast themselves, why should we limit "the Holy One of Israel"? why should we despair of any? Life and hope should be coeval.

Immediately on retiring from the synagogue, Jesus passes out of Capernaum, and along the shore to Bethsaida, and enters, together with James and John, the house of Peter and Andrew (John i. 44). It is a singular coincidence that the Apostle Peter, with whose name the Romish Church takes such liberties, and who is himself the "Rock" on which they rear their huge fabric of priestly assumptions, should be the only Apostle of whose married life we read; for though John afterwards possesses a "home," its only inmate besides, as far as the records

show, is the new "mother" he leads away from the cross. It is true we have not the name of Peter's wife, but we find her shadow, as well as that of her husband, thrown across the pages of the New Testament; cleaving to her mother even while she follows another; ministering to Jesus, and for a time finding Him a home; while later we see her sharing the privations and the perils of her husband's wandering life (1 Cor. ix. 5). Verily, Rome has drifted far from the "Rock" of her anchorage, the example of her patron saint; and between the Vatican of the modern Pontiff and the sweet domesticities of Bethsaida is a gulf of divergence which only a powerful imagination can cross.

No sooner, however, has Jesus entered the house than He is told how Peter's mother-in-law has been suddenly stricken down by a violent fever, probably a local fever for which that lake shore was notorious, and which was bred from the malaria of the marsh. Our physician-Evangelist does not stay to diagnose the malady, but he speaks of it as "a great fever," thus giving us an idea of its virulence and consequent danger. "And they besought Him for her;" not that He was at all reluctant to grant their request, for the tense of the verb implies that once asking was sufficient; but evidently there was the "beseeching" look and tone of a mingled love and fear. Jesus responds instantly; for can He come fresh from the healing of a stranger, to allow a dread shadow to darken the home and the hearts of His own? Seeking the sick chamber, He bends over the fever-stricken one, and taking her hand in His (Mark i. 31), He speaks some word of command; "rebuking the fever," as St. Luke expresses it. In a moment the fatal fire is quenched, the throbbing heart regains its normal beat, a delicious coolness takes the place of the burning heat, while the fever-flush steals away to make place for the bloom of health. The cure was perfect and instant. The lost strength returned, and "immediately she arose and ministered unto them," preparing, doubtless, the evening meal.

May we not throw the light of this narrative upon one of the questions of the day? Men speak of the reign of law, and the drift of modern scientific thought is against any interference—even Divine—with the ordinary operations of physical law. As the visible universe is opened up and explored the heavens are crowded back and back, until they seem nothing but a golden mist, some distant dream. Nature's laws are seen to be so uniform, so ruthlessly exact, that certain of those who should be teachers of a higher faith are suggesting the impossibility of any interference with their ordinary operations. "You do but waste your breath," they say, "in asking for any immunities from Nature's penalties, or for any deviation from her fixed rules. They are invariable, inviolate. Be content rather to be conformed, mentally and morally, to God's will." But is prayer to have so restricted an area? is the physical world to be buried so deep in "law" that it shall give no rest to prayer, not even for the sole of her foot? Entire conformity to God's will is, indeed, the highest aim and privilege of life, and he who prays the most seeks most for this; but has God no will in the world of physics, in the realm of matter? Shall we push Him back to the narrow ledge of a primal Genesis? or shall we leave Him chained



to that frontier coast, another Prometheus bound? It is well to respect and to honour law, but Nature's laws are complex, manifold. They can form combinations numberless, working different or opposite results. He who searches for "the springs of life" will

"Reach the law within the law ;"

and who can tell whether there is not a law of prayer and faith, thrown by the Unseen Hand across all the warp of created things, binding "the whole round earth" about "the feet of God"? Reason says, "It might be so," and Scripture says, "It is so." Was Jesus angry when they told him of the fever-stricken, and they implored His intervention? Did He say, "You mistake My mission. I must not interfere with the course of the fever; it must have its range. If she lives, she lives; and if she dies, she dies; and whether the one or the other, you must be patient, you must be content"? But such were not the words of Jesus, with their latent fatalism. He heard the prayer, and at once granted it, not by annulling Nature's laws, nor even suspending them, but by introducing a higher law. Even though the fever was the result of natural causes, and though it probably might have been prevented, had they but drained the marsh or planted it with the eucalyptus, yet this does not shut out all interventions of Divine mercy. The divine compassion makes some allowance for our human ignorance, when it is not wilful, and for our human impotence.

The fever "left her, and immediately she rose up and ministered unto them." Yes, and there are fevers of the spirit as well as of the flesh, when the heart is quick and flurried, the brain hot with anxious thought, when the fret and jar of life seem eating our strength away, and our disquiet spirit finds its rest broken by the pressure of some fearful nightmare. And how soon does this soul-fever strike us down! how it unfits us for our ministry of blessing, robbing us of the "heart at leisure from itself," and filling the soul with sad distressing fears, until our life seems like the helpless, withered leaf, whirled and tossed hither and thither by the wind! For the fever of the body there may not always be relief, but for the fever of the spirit there is a possible and a perfect cure. It is the touch of Jesus. A close personal contact with the living and loving Christ will rebuke the fever of your heart; it will give to your soul a quietness and restfulness that are Divine; and with the touch of His omnipotence upon you, and with all the elation of conscious strength, you too will arise into a nobler life, a life which will find its supreme joy in ministering unto others, and so ministering unto Him.

Such was the Sabbath in Galilee on which Jesus began His miracles of healing. But if it saw the beginning of His miracles, it did not see their end; for soon as the sun had set, and the Sabbath restraint was over, "all that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto Him, and He laid His hands on every one of them, and healed them." A marvellous ending of a marvellous day? Jesus throws out by handfuls His largesse of blessing, health, which is the highest wealth, showing that there is no end to His power, as there is no limit to His love; that His will is supreme over all forces and all laws; that

He is, and ever will be, the perfect Saviour, binding up the broken in heart, assuaging all griefs, and healing all wounds!

## CHAPTER X.

### THE CALLING OF THE FOUR.

WHEN Peter and his companions had the interview with Jesus by the Jordan, and were summoned to follow Him, it was the designation, rather than the appointment, to the Apostleship. They did accompany Him to Cana, and thence to Capernaum; but here their paths diverged for a time, Jesus passing on alone to Nazareth, while the novitiate disciples fall back again into the routine of secular life. Now, however, His mission is fairly inaugurated, and He must attach them permanently to His person. He must lay His hand, where His thoughts have long been, upon the future, making provision for the stability and permanence of His work, that so the kingdom may survive and flourish when the Ascension clouds have made the King Himself invisible.

St. Matthew and St. Mark insert their abridged narrative of the call before the healing of the demoniac and the cure of Peter's mother-in-law; and most expositors think that St. Luke's setting "in order," in this case at least, is wrong; that he has preferred to have a chronological inaccuracy, so that His miracles may be gathered into related groups. But that our Evangelist is in error is by no means certain; indeed, we are inclined to think that the balance of probability is on the side of his arrangement. How else shall we account for the crowds who now press upon Jesus so importunately and with such Galilean ardour? It was not the rumour of His Judæan miracles which had awoke this tempest of excitement, for the journey to Jerusalem was not yet taken. And what else could it be, if the miraculous draught of fishes was the first of the Capernaum miracles? But suppose that we retain the order of St. Luke, that the call followed closely upon that memorable Sabbath, then the crowds fall into the story naturally; it is the multitude which had gathered about the door when the Sabbath sun had set, putting an after-glow upon the hills, and on whose sick He wrought His miracles of healing. Nor does the fact that Jesus went to be a guest in Peter's house require us to invert the order of St. Luke; for the casual acquaintance by the Jordan had since ripened into intimacy, so that Peter would naturally offer hospitality to his Master on His coming to Capernaum. Again, too, going back to the Sabbath in the synagogue, we read how they were astonished at His doctrine; "for His word was with authority;" and when that astonishment was heightened into amazement, as they saw the demon cowed and silenced, this was their exclamation, "What a word is this!" And does not Peter refer to this, when the same voice that commanded the demon now commands them to "Let down the nets," and he answers, "At Thy word I will"? It certainly seems as if the "word" of the sea-shore were an echo from the synagogue, and so a "word" that justifies the order of our Evangelist.

It was probably still early in the morning—for the days of Jesus began back at the dawn, and very often before—when He sought the quiet



of the sea-shore, possibly to find a still hour for devotion, or perhaps to see how His friends had fared with their all-night fishing. Little quiet, however, could He find, for from Capernaum and Bethsaida comes a hurrying and intrusive crowd, surging around Him with the swirl and roar of confused voices, and pressing inconveniently near. Not that the crowd was hostile; it was a friendly but inquisitive multitude, eager, not so much to see a repetition of His miracles, as to hear Him speak, in those rare, sweet accents, "the word of God." The expression characterises the whole teaching of Jesus. Though His words were meant for earth, for human ears and for human hearts, there was no earthliness about them. On the topics in which man is most exercised and garrulous, such as local or national events, Jesus is strangely silent. He scarcely gives them a passing thought; for what were the events of the day to Him who was "before Abraham," and who saw the two eternities? what to Him was the gossip of the hour, how Rome's armies marched and fought, or how "the dogs of faction" bayed? To His mind these were but as dust caught in the eddies of the wind. The thoughts of Jesus were high. Like the figures of the prophet's vision, they had feet indeed, so that they could alight and rest awhile on earthly things—though even here they only touched earth at points which were common to humanity, and they were winged, too, having the sweep of the lower spaces and of the highest heavens. And so there was a heavenliness upon the words of Jesus, and a sweetness, as if celestial harmonies were imprisoned within them. They set men looking upwards, and listening; for the heavens seemed nearer as He spoke, and they were no longer dumb. And not only did the words of Jesus bring to men a clearer revelation of God, correcting the hard views which man, in his fears and his sins, had formed of Him, but men felt the Divineness of His speech; that Jesus was the Bearer of a new evangel, God's latest message of hope and love. And He *was* the Bearer of such a message. He was Himself that Evangel, the Word of God incarnate, that men might hear of heavenly things in the common accents of earthly speech.

Nor was Jesus loth to deliver His message; He needed no constraining to speak of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. Only let Him see the listening heart, the void of a sincere longing, and His speech distilled as the dew. And so no time was to Him inopportune; the break of day, the noon, the night were all alike to Him. No place was out of harmony with His message—the Temple-court, the synagogue, the domestic hearth, the mountain, the lake-shore; He consecrated all alike with the music of His speech. Nay, even upon the cross, amid its agonies, He opens His lips once more, though parched with terrible thirst, to speak peace within a penitent soul, and to open for it the gate of Paradise.

Drawn up on the shore, close by the water's edge, are two boats, empty now, for Simon and his partners are busy washing their nets, after their night of fruitless toil. Seeking for freer space than the pushing crowd will allow Him, and also wanting a point of vantage, where His voice will command a wider range of listeners, Jesus gets into Simon's boat, and requests him to put out a little from the land. "And He sat down, and taught the multitudes out of the

boat," assuming the posture of the teacher, even though the occasion partook so largely of the impromptu character. When He dispensed the material bread He made the multitudes "sit down;" but when He dispensed the living bread, the heavenly manna, He left the multitudes standing, while He Himself sat down, so claiming the authority of a Master, as His posture emphasised His words. It is somewhat singular that when our Evangelist has been so careful and minute in his description of the scene, giving us a sort of photograph of that lake-side group, with bits of artistic colouring thrown in, that then he should omit entirely the subject-matter of the discourse. But so He does, and we try in vain to fill up the blank. Did He, as at Nazareth, turn the lamps of prophecy full upon Himself, and tell them how the "great Light" had at last risen upon Galilee of the nations? or did He let His speech reflect the shimmer of the lake, as He told in parable how the kingdom of heaven was "like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind?" Possibly He did, but His words, whatever they were, "like the pipes of Pan, died with the ears and hearts of those who heard them."

"When He had left speaking," having dismissed the multitude with His benediction, He turns to give to His future disciples, Peter and Andrew, a private lesson. "Put out into the deep," He said, including Andrew now in His plural imperative, "and let down your nets for a draught." It was a commanding voice, altogether different in its tone from the last words He addressed to Peter, when He "requested" him to put out a little from the land. Then He spoke as the Friend, possibly the Guest, with a certain amount of deference; now He steps up to a very throne of power, a throne which in Peter's life He never more abdicates. Simon recognises the altered conditions, that a Higher Will is now in the boat, where hitherto his own will has been supreme; and saluting Him as "Master," he says, "We toiled all night, and took nothing; but at Thy word I will let down the nets." He does not demur; he does not hesitate one moment. Though himself weary with his night-long labours, and though the command of the Master went directly against his nautical experiences, he sinks his thoughts and his doubts in the word of his Lord. It is true he speaks of the failure of the night, how they have taken nothing; but instead of making that a plea for hesitancy and doubt, it is the foil to make his unquestioning faith stand out in bolder relief. Peter was the man of impulse, the man of action, with a swift-beating heart and an ever-ready hand. To his forward-stepping mind decision was easy and immediate; and so, almost before the command was completed, his swift lips had made answer, "I will let down the nets." It was the language of a prompt and full obedience. It showed that Simon's nature was responsive and genuine, that when a Christly word struck upon his soul it set his whole being vibrating, and drove out all meaner thoughts. He had learned to obey, which was the first lesson of discipleship; and having learned to obey, he was therefore fit to rule, qualified for leadership, and worthy of being entrusted with the keys of the kingdom.

And how much is missed in life through feebleness of resolve, a lack of decision! How many are the invertebrate souls, lacking in will



and void of purpose, who, instead of piercing waves and conquering the flow of adverse tides, like the medusæ, can only drift, all limp and languid, in the current of circumstance! Such men do not make apostles; they are but ciphers of flesh and blood, of no value by themselves, and only of any worth as they are attached to the unit of some stronger will. A poor broken thing is a life spent in the subjunctive mood, among the "mights" and "shoulds," where the "I will" waits upon "I would"! That is the truest, worthiest life that is divided between the indicative and the imperative. As in shaking pebbles the smaller ones drop to the bottom, their place determined by their size, so in the shaking together of human lives, in the rub and jostle of the world, the strong wills invariably come to the top.

And how much do even Christians lose, through their partial or their slow obedience! How we hesitate and question, when our duty is simply to obey! How we cling to our own ways, modes, and wills, when the Christ is commanding us forward to some higher service! How strangely we forget that in the grammar of life the "Thou wilt" should be the first person, and the "I will" a far-off second! When the soldier hears the word of command he becomes deaf to all other voices, even the voice of danger, or the voice of death itself; and when Christ speaks to us His word should completely fill the soul, leaving no room for hesitancy, no place for doubt. Said the mother to the servants of Cana, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." That "whatsoever" is the line of duty, and the line of beauty too. He who makes Christ's will his will, who does implicitly "whatsoever He saith," will find a Cana anywhere, where life's water turns to wine, and where life's common things are exalted into sacraments. He who walks up to the light will surely walk in the light.

We can imagine with what alacrity Simon obeys the Master's word, and how the disappointment of the night and all sense of fatigue are lost in the exhilaration of the new hopes. Seconded by the more quiet Andrew, who catches the enthusiasm of his brother's faith, he pulls out into deep water, where they let down the nets. Immediately they enclosed "a great multitude" of fishes, a weight altogether beyond their power to lift; and as they saw the nets beginning to give way with the strain, Peter "beckoned" to his partners, James and John, whose boat, probably, was still drawn up on shore. Coming to their assistance, together they secured the spoil, completely filling the two boats, until they were in danger of sinking with the overweight.

Here, then, we find a miracle of a new order. Hitherto, in the narrative of our Evangelist, Jesus has shown His supernatural power only in connection with humanity, driving away the ills and diseases which preyed upon the human body and the human soul. And not even here did Jesus make use of that power randomly, making it common and cheap; it was called forth by the constraint of a great need and a great desire. Now, however, there is neither the desire nor the need. It was not the first time, nor was it to be the last, that Peter and Andrew had spent a night in fruitless toil. That was a lesson they had early to learn, and which they were never allowed long to forget. They had been quite con-

tent to leave their boat, as indeed they had intended, on the sands, until the evening recall them to their task. But Jesus volunteers His help, and works a miracle—whether of omnipotence, or omniscience, or of both, it matters not, and not either to relieve some present distress, or to still some pain, but that He might fill the empty boats with fishes. We must not, however, assess the value of the miracle at the market-price of the take, for evidently Jesus had some ulterior motive and design. As the leaden types, lying detached and meaningless in the "case," can be arranged into words and be made to voice the very highest thought, so these boats and oars, nets and fish are but so many characters, the Divine "code" as we may call it, spelling out, first to these fishermen, and then to mankind in general, the deep thought and purpose of Christ. Can we discover that meaning? We think we may.

In the first place, the miracle shows us the supremacy of Christ. We may almost read the Divineness of Christ's mission in the manner of its manifestation. Had Jesus been man only, His thoughts running on human lines, and His plans built after human models, He would have arranged for another Epiphany at the beginning of His ministry, showing His credentials at the first, and announcing in full the purpose of His mission. That would have been the way of man, fond as he is of surprises and sudden transitions; but such is not the way of God. The forces of heaven do not move forward in leaps and somersaults; their advances are gradual and rhythmic. Evolution, and not revolution, is the Divine law, in the realm of matter and of mind alike. The dawn must precede the day. And just so the life of the Divine Son is manifested. He who is the "Light of the world" comes into that world softly as a sunrise, lighting up little by little the horizon of His disciples' thought, lest a revelation which was too full and too sudden should only dazzle and blind them. So far they have seen Him exercise His power over diseases and demons, or, as at Cana, over inorganic matter; now they see that power moving out in new directions. Jesus sets up His throne to face the sea, the sea with which they were so familiar, and over which they claimed some sort of lordship. But even here, upon their own element, Jesus is supreme. He sees what they do not; He knows these deeps, filling up with His omniscience the blanks they cease to fill with their random guesses. Here, hitherto, their wills have been all-powerful; they could take their boats and cast their nets just when and where they would; but now they feel the touch of a Higher Will, and Christ's word fills their hearts, impelling them onward, even as their boats were driven of the wind. Jesus now assumes the command. His Will, like a magnet, attracts to itself and controls their lesser wills; and as His word now launches out the boat and casts the nets, so shortly, at that same "word," will boats and nets, and the sea itself, be left behind.

And did not that Divine Will move beneath the water as well as above it, controlling the movements of the shoal of fishes, as on the surface it was controlling the thoughts and moving the hands of the fishermen? It is true that in Gennesaret, as in our modern seas, the fish sometimes moved in such dense shoals that an enormous "take" would be an event purely natural, a wonder indeed, but no miracle. Possibly it was



so here, in which case the narrative would resolve itself into a miracle of omniscience, as Jesus saw, what even the trained eyes of the fishermen had not seen, the movements of the shoal, then regulating His commands, so making the oars above and the fins below strike the water in unison. But was this all? Evidently not, to Peter's mind, at any rate. Had it been all to him, a purely natural phenomenon, or had he seen in it only the prescience of Christ, a vision somewhat clearer and farther than his own, it would not have created such feelings of surprise and awe. He might still have wondered, but he scarcely would have worshipped. But Peter feels himself in the presence of a Power that knows no limit, One who has supreme authority over diseases and demons, and who now commands even the fishes of the sea. In this sudden wealth of spoil he reads the majesty and glory of the new-found Christ, whose word, spoken or unspoken, is omnipotent, alike in the heights above and in the depths beneath. And so the moment his thoughts are disengaged from the pressing task he prostrates himself at the feet of Jesus, crying with awe-stricken speech, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" We are not, perhaps, to interpret this literally, for Peter's lips were apt to become tremulous with the excitement of the moment, and to say words which in a cooler mood he would recall, or at least modify. So here, it surely was not his meaning that "the Lord," as he now calls Jesus, should leave him; for how indeed should He depart, now that they are afloat upon the deep, far from land? But such had been the revelation of the power and holiness of Jesus, borne in by the miracle upon Peter's soul, that he felt himself thrown back, morally and in every way, to an infinite distance from Christ. His boat was unworthy to carry, as the house of the centurion was unworthy to receive, such infinite perfections as now he saw in Jesus. It was an apocalypse indeed, revealing, together with the purity and power of Christ, the littleness, the nothingness of his sinful self; that, as Elijah covered his face when the Lord passed by, so Peter feels as if he ought to draw the veil of an infinite distance around himself—the distance which would ever be between him and the Lord. were not His mercy and His love just as infinite as His power.

The fuller meaning of the miracle, however, becomes apparent when we interpret it in the light of the call which immediately followed. Reading the sudden fear which has come over Peter's soul, and which has thrown his speech somewhat into confusion, Jesus first stills the agitation of his heart by a word of assurance and of cheer. "Fear not," He says, for "henceforth thou shalt catch men." It will be observed that St. Luke puts the commission of Christ in the singular number, as addressed to Peter alone, while St. Matthew and St. Mark put it in the plural, as including Andrew as well; "I will make *you* to become fishers of men." The difference, however, is but immaterial, and possibly the reason why St. Luke introduces the Apostle Peter with such a frequent nomination—for "Simon" is a familiar name in these early chapters—making his call so emphatic and prominent, was because in the partisan times which came but too early in the Church the Gentile Christians, for whom our Evangelist is writing, might think unworthily and speak disparagingly

of him who was the Apostle of the Circumcision. Be this as it may, Simon and Andrew are now summoned to, and commissioned for, a higher service. That "henceforth" strikes across their life like a high watershed, severing the old from the new, their future from their past, and throwing all the currents of their thoughts and plans into different and opposite directions. They are to be "fishers of men," and Jesus, who so delights in giving object-lessons to His disciples, uses the miracle as a sort of background, on which He may write their commission in large and lasting characters; it is the Divine seal upon their credentials.

Not that they understood the full purport of His words at once. The phrase "fishers of men" was one of those seed-thoughts which needed pondering in the heart; it would gradually unfold itself in the after-months of discipleship, ripening at last in the summer heat and summer light of the Pentecost. They were now to be fishers of the higher art, their quest the souls of men. This must now be the one object, the supreme aim of their life, a life now ennobled by a higher call. Plans, journeys, thoughts, and words, all must bear the stamp of their great commission, which is to "catch men," not unto death, however, as the fish expire when taken from their native element, but unto life—for such is the meaning of the word. And to "take them alive" is to save them; it is to take them out of an element which stifles and destroys, and to draw them, by the constraints of truth and love, within the kingdom of heaven, which kingdom is righteousness and life, even eternal life.

But if the full meaning of the Master's words grows upon them—an aftermath to be harvested in later months—enough is understood to make the line of present duty plain. That "henceforth" is clear, sharp, and imperative. It leaves room neither for excuse nor postponement. And so immediately, "when they had brought their boats to land, they left all and followed Him," to learn by following how they too might be winners of souls, and in a lesser, lower sense, saviours of men.

The story of St. Luke closes somewhat abruptly, with no further reference to Simon's partners; and having "beckoned" them into his central scene, and filled their boat, then, as in a dissolving-view, the pen of our Evangelist draws around them the haze of silence, and they disappear. The other Synoptists, however, fill up the blank, telling how Jesus came to them, probably later in the day, for they were mending the nets, which had been tangled and somewhat torn with the weight of spoil they had just taken. Speaking no word of explanation, and giving no word of promise, He simply says, with that commanding voice of His, "Follow Me," thus putting Himself above all associations and all relationships, as Leader and Lord. James and John recognise the call, for which doubtless they had been prepared, as being for themselves alone, and instantly leaving the father, the "hired servants," and the half-mended nets, and breaking utterly with their past, they follow Jesus, giving to Him, with the exception of one dark, hesitating hour, a life-long devotion. And forsaking all, the four disciples found all. They exchanged a dead self for a living Christ, earth for heaven. Following the Lord fully, with no side-glances at self or selfish gain,—at any rate after the enduement and the enlightenment of Pentecost—



they found in the presence and friendship of the Lord the "hundredfold" in the present life. Allying themselves with Christ, they too rose with the rising Sun. Obscure fishermen, they wrote their names among the immortals as the first Apostles of the new faith, bearers of the "keys" of the kingdom. Following Christ, they led the world; and as the light that rose over Galilee of the nations becomes ever more intense and bright, so it makes ever more intense and vivid the shadows of these Galilean fishermen, as it throws them across all lands and times.

And such even now is the truest and noblest life. The life which is "hid with Christ" is the life that shines the farthest and that tells the most. Whether in the more quiet paths and scenes of discipleship or in the more responsible and public duties of the apostolate, Jesus demands of us a true, whole-souled, and life-long devotion. And, here indeed, the paradox is true, for by losing life we find it, even the life more abundant; for

"Men may rise on stepping-stones  
Of their dead selves to higher things."

Nay, they may attain to the highest things, even to the highest heavens.

## CHAPTER XI.

### CONCERNING PRAYER.

WHEN the Greeks called man *ὁ ἀνθρώπος*, or the "uplooking one," they did but crystallise in a word what is a universal fact, the religious instinct of humanity. Everywhere, and through all times, man has felt, as by a sort of intuition, that earth was no Ultima Thule, with nothing beyond but oceans of vacancy and silence, but that it lay in the over-shadow of other worlds, between which and their own were subtle modes of correspondence. They felt themselves to be in the presence of Powers other and higher than human, who somehow influenced their destiny, whose favour they must win, and whose displeasure they must avert. And so Paganism reared her altars, almost numberless, dedicating them even to the "Unknown God," lest some anonymous deity should be grieved at being omitted from the enumeration. The prevalence of false religions in the world, the garrulous babble of mythology, does but voice the religious instinct of man; it is but another Tower of Babel, by which men hope to find and to scale the heavens which must be somewhere overhead.

In the Old Testament, however, we find the clearer revelation. What to the unaided eye of reason and of nature seemed but a wave of golden mist athwart the sky—"a meeting of gentle lights without a name"—now becomes a wide-reaching and shining realm, peopled with intelligences of divers ranks and orders; while in the centre of all is the city and the throne of the Invisible King, Jehovah, Lord of Sabaoth. In the breath of the new morning the gossamer threads Polytheism had been spinning through the night were swept away, and on the pillars of the New Jerusalem, that celestial city of which their own Salem was a far-off and broken type, they read the inscription, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord." But while the Old Testament revealed the unity of the Godhead, it emphasised especially His sovereignty, the

glories of His holiness, and the thunders of His power. He is the great Creator, arranging His universe, commanding evolutions and revolutions, and giving to each molecule of matter its secret affinities and repulsions. And again He is the Lawgiver, the great Judge, speaking out of the cloudy pillar and the windy tempest, dividing the firmaments of Right and Wrong, whose holiness hates sin with an infinite hatred, and whose justice, with sword of flame, pursues the wrong-doer like an unforgetting Nemesis. It is only natural, therefore, that with such conceptions of God the heavens should appear distant and somewhat cold. The quiet that was upon the world was the hush of awe, of fear, rather than of love; for while the goodness of God was a familiar and favourite theme, and while the mercy of God, which "endureth for ever," was the refrain, oft repeated, of their loftiest songs, the love of God was a height the Old Dispensation had not explored, and the Fatherhood of God, that new world of perpetual summer, lay all undiscovered, or but dimly apprehended through the mist. The Divine love and the Divine Fatherhood were truths which seemed to be held in reserve for the New Dispensation; and as the light needs the subtle and sympathetic ether before it can reach our outlying world, so the love and the Fatherhood of God are borne in upon us by Him who was Himself the Divine Son and the incarnation of the Divine love.

It is just here where the teaching of Jesus concerning prayer begins. He does not seek to explain its philosophy; He does not give hints as to any observance of time or place; but leaving these questions to adjust themselves, He seeks to bring heaven into closer touch with earth. And how can He do this so well as by revealing the Fatherhood of God? When the electric wire linked the New with the Old World the distances were annihilated, the thousand leagues of sea were as if they were not; and when Jesus threw across, between earth and heaven, that word "Father," the wide distances vanished, and even the silences became vocal. In the Psalms, those loftiest utterances of devotion, Religion only once ventured to call God "Father;" and then, as if frightened at her own temerity, she lapses into silence, and never speaks the familiar word again. But how different the language of the Gospels! It is a name that Jesus is never weary of repeating, striking its music upwards of seventy times, as if by the frequent iteration He would lodge the heavenly word deep within the world's heart. This is His first lesson in the science of prayer: He drills them on the Divine Fatherhood, setting them on that word, as it were, to practise the scales; for as he who has practised well the scales has acquired the key to all harmonies, so he who has learned well the "Father" has learned the secret of heaven, the seasame that opens all its doors and unlocks all its treasures.

"When ye pray," said Jesus, replying to a disciple who sought instruction in the heavenly language, "say, Father," thus giving us what was His own pass-word to the courts of heaven. It is as if He said, "If you would pray acceptably put yourself in the right position. Seek to realise, and then to claim, your true relationship. Do not look upon God as a distant and cold abstraction, or as some blind force; do not regard Him as being hostile to you or as careless about you. Else your prayer will be some wail of bit-



terness, a cry coming out of the dark, and losing itself in the dark again. But look upon God as your Father, your living, loving, heavenly Father; and then step up with a holy boldness into the child-place, and all heaven opens before you there."

And not only does Jesus thus "show us the Father," but He takes pains to show us that it is a real, and not some fictitious Fatherhood. He tells us that the word means far more in its heavenly than in its earthly use; that the earthly meaning, in fact, is but a shadow of the heavenly. For "if ye then," He says, "being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" He thus sets us a problem in Divine proportion. He gives us the human fatherhood, with all it implies, as our known quantities, and from these He leaves us to work out the unknown quantity, which is the Divine ability and willingness to give good gifts to men; for the Holy Spirit includes in Himself all spiritual gifts. It is a problem, however, which our earthly figures cannot solve. The nearest that we can approach to the answer is that the Divine Fatherhood is the human fatherhood multiplied by that "how much more"—a factor which gives us an infinite series.

Again, Jesus teaches that character is an important condition of prayer, and that in this realm heart is more than any art. Words alone do not constitute prayer, for they may be only like the bubbles of the children's play, iridescent but hollow, never climbing the sky, but returning to the earth whence they came. And so when the scribes and Pharisees make "long prayers," striking devotional attitudes, and putting on airs of sanctity, Jesus could not endure them. They were a weariness and abomination to Him; for He read their secret heart, and found it vain and proud. In His parable (xviii. 11) He puts the genuine and the counterfeit prayer side by side, drawing the sharp contrast between them. He gives us that of the Pharisee, wordy, inflated, full of the self-eulogising "I." It is the prayerless prayer, that had no need, and which was simply an incense burned before the clayey image of Himself. Then He gives us the few brief words of the publican, the cry of a broken heart, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," a prayer which reached directly the highest heaven, and which came back freighted with the peace of God. "If I regard iniquity in my heart," the Psalmist said, "the Lord will not hear me." And it is true. If there be the least unforgiven sin within the soul we spread forth our hands, we make many prayers, in vain; we do but utter "wild, delirious cries" that Heaven will not hear, or at any rate regard. The first cry of true prayer is the cry for mercy, pardon; and until this is spoken, until we step up by faith into the child-position, we do but offer vain oblations. Nay, even in the regenerate heart, if there be a temporary lapse, and unholy tempers brood within, the lips of prayer become paralysed at once, or they only stammer in incoherent speech. We may with filled hands compass the altar of God, but neither gifts nor prayers can be accepted if there be bitterness and jealousy within, or if our "brother has aught against" us. The wrong must be righted with our brother, or we cannot be right with God. How can we ask for forgiveness if we ourselves cannot forgive?

How can we ask for mercy if we are hard and merciless, gripping the throat of each offender, as we demand the uttermost farthing? He who can pray for them who spitefully use him is in the way of the Divine commandment; he has climbed to the dome of the temple, where the whispers of prayer, and even its inarticulate aspirations, are heard in heaven. And so the connection is most close and constant between praying and living, and they pray most and best who at the same time "make their life a prayer."

Again, Jesus maps out for us the realm of prayer, showing the wide areas it should cover. St. Luke gives us an abbreviated form of the prayer recorded by St. Matthew, and which we call the "Lord's Prayer." It is a disputed point, though not a material one, whether the two prayers are but varied renderings of one and the same utterance, or whether Jesus gave, on a later occasion, an epitomised form of the prayer He had prescribed before, though from the circumstantial evidence of St. Luke we incline to the latter view. The two forms, however, are identical in substance. It is scarcely likely that Jesus intended it to be a rigid formula, to which we should be slavishly bound; for the varied renderings of the two Evangelists show plainly that Heaven does not lay stress upon the *ipsissima verba*. We must take it rather as a Divine model, laying down the lines on which our prayers should move. It is, in fact, a sort of prayer in microcosm, giving a miniature reflection of the whole world of prayer, as a drop of dew will give a reflection of the encircling sky. It gives us what we may call the *species* of prayer, whose *genera* branch off into infinite varieties; nor can we readily conceive of any petition, however particular or private, whose root-stem is not found in the few but comprehensive words of the Lord's Prayer. It covers every want of man, just as it befits every place and time.

Running through the prayer are two marked divisions, the one general, the other particular and personal; and in the Divine order, contrary to our human wont, the general stands first, and the personal second. Our prayers often move in narrow circles, like the homing birds coming back to this "centred self" of ours, and sometimes we forget to give them the wider sweeps over a redeemed humanity. But Jesus says, "When ye pray, say Father, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come." It is a temporary erasure of self, as the soul of the worshipper is absorbed in God. In its nearness to the throne it forgets for awhile its own little needs; its low-flying thoughts are caught up into the higher currents of the Divine thought and purpose, moving outwards with them. And this is the first petition, that the name of God may be hallowed throughout the world: that is, that men's conceptions of the Deity may become just and holy, until earth gives back in echo the "Trisagion" of the seraphim. The second petition is a continuation of the first; for just in proportion as men's conceptions of God are corrected and hallowed will the kingdom of God be set up on earth. The first petition, like that of the Psalmist, is for the sending out of "Thy light and Thy truth;" the second is that humanity may be led to the "holy hill," praising God upon the harp, and finding in God their "exceeding joy." To find God as the Father-King is to step up within the kingdom.



The prayer now descends into the lower plane of personal wants, covering (1) our physical, and (2) our spiritual needs. The former are met with one petition, "Give us day by day our daily bread," a sentence confessedly obscure, and which has given rise to much dispute. Some interpret it in a spiritual sense alone, since, as they say, any other interpretation would break in upon the uniformity of the prayer, whose other terms are all spiritual. But if, as we have suggested, the whole prayer must be regarded as an epitome of prayer in general, then it must include somewhere our physical needs, or a large and important domain of our life is left uncovered. As to the meaning of the singular adjective *ἐπιούσιον* we need not say much. That it can scarcely mean "to-morrow's" bread is evident from the warning Jesus gives against "taking thought" for the morrow, and we must not allow the prayer to traverse the command. The most natural and likely interpretation is that which the heart of mankind has always given it, as our "daily" bread, or bread sufficient for the day. Jesus thus selects what is the most common of our physical wants, the bread which comes to us in such purely natural, matter-of-course ways, as the specimen need of our physical life. But when He thus lifts up this common, ever-recurring mercy into the region of prayer He puts a halo of Divineness about it, and by including this He teaches us that there is no want of even our physical life which is excluded from the realm of prayer. If we are invited to speak with God concerning our daily bread, then certainly we need not be silent as to aught else.

Our spiritual needs are included in the two petitions, "And forgive us our sins; for we ourselves also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And bring us not into temptation." The parenthesis does not imply that all debts should be remitted, for payment of these is enjoined as one of the duties of life. The indebtedness spoken of is rather the New Testament indebtedness, the failure of duty or courtesy, the omission of some "ought" of life or some injury or offence. It is that human forgiveness, the opposite of resentment, which grows up under the shadow of the Divine forgiveness. The former of these petitions, then, is for the forgiveness of all past sin, while the latter is for deliverance from present sinning; for when we pray, "Bring us not into temptation," it is a prayer that we may not be tempted "above that we are able," which amplified, means that in all our temptations we may be victorious, "kept by the power of God."

Such, then, is the wide realm of prayer, as indicated by Jesus. He assures us that there is no department of our being, no circumstance of our life, which does not lie within its range; that

"The whole round world is every way  
Bound with gold chains about the feet of God,"

and that on these golden chains, as on a harp, the touch of prayer may wake sweet music, far-off or near alike. And how much we miss through restraining prayer, reserving it for special occasions, or for the greater crises of life! But if we would only loop up with heaven each successive hour, if we would only run the thread of prayer through the common events and the common tasks, we should find the whole day

and the whole life swinging on a higher, calmer level. The common task would cease to be common, and the earthly would be less earthly, if we only threw a bit of heaven upon it, or we opened it out to heaven. If in everything we could but make our requests known unto God—that is, if prayer became the habitual act of life—we should find that heaven was no longer the land "afar off," but that it was close upon us, with all its proffered ministries.

Again, Jesus teaches the importance of earnestness and importunity in prayer. He sketches the picture—for it is scarcely a parable—of the man whose hospitality is claimed, late at night, by a passing friend, but who has no provision made for the emergency. He goes over to another friend, and rousing him up at midnight, he asks for the loan of three loaves. And with what result? Does the man answer from within, "Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee"? No, that would be an impossible answer; for "though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth" (xi. 8). It is the unreasonableness, or at any rate the untimeliness of the request Jesus seems to emphasise. The man himself is thoughtless, improvident in his household management. He disturbs his neighbour, waking up his whole family at midnight for such a trivial matter as the loan of three loaves. But he gains his request, not, either, on the ground of friendship, but through sheer audacity, impudence; for such is the meaning of the word, rather than importunity. The lesson is easily learned, for the suppressed comparison would be, "If man, being evil, will put himself out of the way to serve a friend, even at this untimely hour, filling up by his thoughtfulness his friend's lack of thought, how much more will the heavenly Father give to His child such things as are needful?"

We have the same lesson taught in the parable of the Unjust Judge (xviii. 1), that "men ought always to pray, and not to faint." Here, however the characters are reversed. The suppliant is a poor and wronged widow, while the person addressed is a hard, selfish, godless man, who boasts of his atheism. She asks, not for a favour, but for her rights—that she may have due protection from some extortionate adversary, who somehow has got her in his power; for justice rather than vengeance is her demand. But "he would not for a while," and all her cries for pity and for help beat upon that callous heart only as the surf upon a rocky shore, to be thrown back upon itself. But afterwards he said within himself, "Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest she wear me out by her continual coming." And so he is moved to take her part against her adversary, not for any motive of compassion or sense of justice, but through mere selfishness, that he may escape the annoyance of her frequent visits—lest her continual coming "worry" me, as the colloquial expression might be rendered. Here the comparison, or contrast rather, is expressed, at any rate in part. It is, "If an unjust and abandoned judge grants a just petition at last, out of base motives, when it is often urged, to a defenceless person for whom he cares nothing, how much more shall a just and merciful God hear



the cry and avenge the cause of those whom He loves?"\*

It is a resolute persistence in prayer the parable urges, the continued asking, and seeking, and knocking that Jesus both commended and commanded (ix. 9), and which has the promise of such certain answers, and not the tantalising mockeries of stones for bread, or scorpions for fish. Some blessings lie near at hand; we have only to ask, and we receive—receive even while we ask. But other blessings lie farther off, and they can only be ours by a continuance in prayer, by a persistent importunity. Not that our heavenly Father needs any wearying into mercy; but the blessing may not be ripe, or we ourselves may not be fully prepared to receive it. A blessing for which we are unprepared would only be an untimely blessing, and like a December swallow, it would soon die, without nest or brood. And sometimes the long delay is but a test of faith, whetting and sharpening the desire, until our very life seems to depend upon the granting of our prayer. So long as our prayers are among the "may-be's" and "might's" there are fears and doubts alternating with our hope and faith. But when the desires are intensified, and our prayers rise into the "must-be's," then the answers are near at hand; for that "must be" is the soul's Mahanaim, where the angels meet us, and God Himself says "I will." Delays in our prayers are by no means denials; they are often but the lengthened summer for the ripening of our blessings, making them larger and more sweet.

And now we have only to consider, which we must do briefly, the practice of Jesus, the place of prayer in His own life: and we shall find that in every point it coincides exactly with His teaching. To us of the clouded vision heaven is sometimes a hope more than a reality. It is an unseen goal, luring us across the wilderness, and which one of these days we may possess; but it is not to us as the wide-reaching, encircling sky, throwing its sunshine into each day, and lighting up our nights with its thousand lamps. To Jesus, heaven was more and nearer than it is to us. He had left it behind; and yet He had not left it, for He speaks of Himself, the Son of man, as being now in heaven. And so He was. His feet were upon earth, at home amid its dust; but His heart, His truer life, were all above. And how constant His correspondence, or rather communion, with heaven! At first sight it appears strange to us that Jesus should need the sustenance of prayer, or that He could even adopt its language. But when He became the Son of man He voluntarily assumed the needs of humanity; He "emptied Himself," as the Apostle expresses a great mystery, as if for the time divesting Himself of all Divine prerogatives, choosing to live as man amongst men. And so Jesus prayed. He was wont, even as we are, to refresh a wasted strength by draughts from the celestial springs; and as Antæus, in his wrestling, recovered himself as he touched the ground, so we find Jesus, in the great crises of His life, falling back upon Heaven.

St. Luke, in his narrative of the Baptism, inserts one fact the other Synoptists omit—that Jesus was in the act of prayer when the heavens were opened, and the Holy Ghost descended, in the semblance of a dove, upon Him. It is

\* Farrar.

as if the opened heavens, the descending dove, and the audible voice were but the answer to His prayer. And why not? Standing on the threshold of His mission, would He not naturally ask that a double portion of the Spirit might be His—that Heaven might put its manifest seal upon that mission, if not for the confirmation of His own faith, yet for that of His forerunner? At any rate, the fact is plain that it was while He was in the act of prayer that He received that second and higher baptism, even the baptism of the Spirit.

A second epoch in that Divine life was when Jesus formally instituted the Apostleship, calling and initiating the Twelve into the closer brotherhood. It was, so to speak, the appointing of a regency, who should exercise authority and rule in the new kingdom, sitting, as Jesus figuratively expresses it (xxii. 30), "on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." It is easy to see what tremendous issues were involved in this appointment; for were these foundation-stones untrue, warped by jealousies and vain ambitions, the whole superstructure would have been weakened, thrown out of the square. And so before the selection is made, a selection demanding such insight and foresight, such a balancing of complementary gifts, Jesus devotes the whole night to prayer, seeking the solitude of the mountain-height, and in the early dawn coming down, with the dews of night upon His garment and with the dews of heaven upon His soul, which, like crystals or lenses of light, made the invisible visible and the distant near.

A third crisis in that Divine life was at the Transfiguration, when the summit was reached, the border-line between earth and heaven, where, amid celestial greetings and overshadowing clouds of glory, that sinless life would have had its natural transition into heaven. And here again we find the same coincidence of prayer. Both St. Mark and St. Luke state that the "high mountain" was climbed for the express purpose of communion with Heaven; they "went up into the mountain to pray." It is only St. Luke, however, who states that it was "as He was praying" the fashion of His countenance was altered, thus making the vision an answer, or at least a corollary, to the prayer. He is at a point where two ways meet: the one passes into heaven at once, from that high level to which by a sinless life He has attained; the other path sweeps suddenly downward to a valley of agony, a cross of shame, a tomb of death; and after this wide *détour* the heavenly heights are reached again. Which path will He choose? If He takes the one He passes solitary into heaven; if He takes the other He brings with Him a redeemed humanity. And does not this give us, in a sort of echo, the burden of His prayer? He finds the shadow of the cross thrown over this heaven-lighted summit—for when Moses and Elias appear they would not introduce a subject altogether new; they would in their conversation strike in with the theme with which His mind is already preoccupied, that is the deace He should accomplish at Jerusalem—and as the chill of that shadow settles upon Him, causing the flesh to shrink and quiver for a while, would He not seek for the strength He needs? Would He not ask, as later, in the garden, that the cup might pass from Him; or if that should not be possible, that His will might not conflict with the Father's will, even



for a passing moment? At any rate we may suppose that the vision was, in some way, Heaven's answer to His prayer, giving Him the solace and strengthening that He sought, as the Father's voice attested His Sonship, and celestials came forth to salute the Well-beloved, and to hearten Him on towards His dark goal.

Just so it was when Jesus kept His fourth watch in Gethsemane. What Gethsemane was, and what its fearful agony meant, we shall consider in a later chapter. It is enough for our present purpose to see how Jesus consecrated that deep valley, as before He had consecrated the Transfiguration height, to prayer. Leaving the three outside the veil of the darkness, He passes into Gethsemane, as into another Holy of holies, there to offer up for His own and for Himself the sacrifice of prayer; while as our High Priest He sprinkles with His own blood, that blood of the everlasting covenant, the sacred ground. And what prayer was that! how intensely fervent! That if it were possible the dread cup might pass from Him, but that either way the Father's will might be done! And that prayer was the prelude to victory; for as the first Adam fell by the assertion of self, the clashing of his will with God's, the second Adam conquers by the total surrender of His will to the will of the Father. The agony was lost in the acquiescence.

But it was not alone in the great crises of His life that Jesus fell back upon Heaven. Prayer with Him was habitual, the fragrant atmosphere in which He lived, and moved, and spoke. His words glide as by a natural transition into its language, as a bird whose feet have lightly touched the ground suddenly takes to its wings; and again and again we find Him pausing in the weaving of His speech, to throw across the earthward warp the heavenward woof of prayer. It was a necessity of His life; and if the intrusive crowds allowed Him no time for its exercise, He was wont to elude them, to find upon the mountain or in the desert His prayer-chamber beneath the stars. And how frequently we read of His "looking up to heaven" amid the pauses of His daily task! stopping before He breaks the bread, and on the mirror of His upturned glance leading the thoughts and thanks of the multitude to the All-Father, who giveth to all His creatures their meat in due season; or pausing as He works some impromptu miracle, before speaking the omnipotent "Ephphatha," that on His upward look He may signal to the skies! And what a light is turned upon His life and His relation to His disciples by a simple incident that occurs on the night of the betrayal! Reading the sign of the times, in His forecast of the dark to-morrow, He sees the terrible strain that will be put upon Peter's faith, and which He likens to a Satanic sifting. With prescient eye He sees the temporary collapse; how, in the fierce heat of the trial, the "rock" will be thrown into a state of flux; so weak and pliant, it will be all rippled by agitation and unrest, or driven back at the mere breath of a servant-girl. He says mournfully, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat: but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not" (xxii. 31). So completely does Jesus identify Himself with His own, making their separate needs His care (for this doubtless was no solitary case); but just as the High Priest carried

on his breastplate the twelve tribal names, thus bringing all Israel within the light of Urim and Thummim, so Jesus carries within His heart both the name and the need of each separate disciple, asking for them in prayer what, perhaps, they have failed to ask for themselves. Nor are the prayers of Jesus limited by any such narrow circle; they compassed the world, lighting up all horizons; and even upon the cross, amid the jeers and laughter of the crowd, He forgets His own agonies, as with parched lips He prays for His murderers, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

Thus, more than any son of man, did Jesus "pray without ceasing," "in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving" making request unto God. Shall we not copy His bright example? shall we not, too, live, labour, and endure, as "seeing Him who is invisible"? He who lives a life of prayer will never question its reality. He who sees God in everything, and everything in God, will turn his life into a south land, with upper and nether springs of blessing in ceaseless flow; for the life that lies full heavenward lies in perpetual summer, in the eternal noon.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE FAITH OF THE CENTURION.

LUKE vii. 1-10.

OUR Evangelist prefaces the narrative of the healing of the centurion's servant with one of his characteristic time-marks, the shadow upon his dial-plate being the shadow of the new mount of God: "After He had ended all His sayings in the ears of the people, He entered into Capernaum." The language is unusually weighty, almost solemn, as if the Sermon on the Mount were not so much a sermon as a manifesto, the formal proclamation of the kingdom of heaven. Our word "ended," too, is scarcely an equivalent of the original word, whose underlying idea is that of fulness, completion. It is more than a full-stop to point a sentence; it is a word that characterises the sentence itself, suggesting, if not implying, that these "sayings" of His formed a complete and rounded whole, a body of moral and ethical truth which was perfect in itself. The Mount of Beatitudes thus stands before us as the Sinai of the New Testament, giving its laws to all peoples and to all times. But how different the aspect of the two mounts! Then the people dare not touch the mountain; now they press close up to the "Prophet like unto Moses" to hear the word of God. Then the Law came in a cluster of restrictions and negations; it now speaks in commands most positive, in principles permanent as time itself; while from this new Sinai the clouds have disappeared, the thunders ceased, leaving a sky serene and bright, and a heaven which is strangely near.

Returning to Capernaum—which city, after the ejection from Nazareth, became the home of Jesus, and the centre of His Galilean ministry—He was met by a deputation of Jewish elders, who came to intercede with Him on behalf of a centurion whose servant was lying dangerously ill and apparently at the point of death. The narrative thus gives us, as its "dramatis per-



sonæ," the Sufferer, the Intercessor, and the Healer.

As we read the story our thought is arrested, and naturally so, by the central figure. The imposing shadow of the centurion so completely fills our range of vision that it throws into the background the nameless one who in his secret chamber is struggling vainly in the tightening grip of death. But who is he who can command such a service? around whose couch is such a multitude of ministering feet? who is he whose panting breath can throw over the heart of his master, and over his face, the ripple-marks of a great sorrow, which sends hither and thither, as the wind tosses the dry leaves, soldiers of the army, elders of the Jews, friends of the master, and which makes even the feet of the Lord hasten with His succour?

"And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick and at the point of death." Such is the brief sentence which describes a character, and sums up the whole of an obscure life. We are not able to define precisely his position, for the word leaves us in doubt whether he were a slave or a servant of the centurion. Probably—if we may throw the light of the whole narrative upon the word—he was a confidential servant, living in the house of his master, on terms of more than usual intimacy. What those terms were we may easily discover by opening out the word "dear," reading its depths as well as its surface-meaning. In its lower sense it means "valuable," "worth-y" (putting its ancient accent upon the modern word). It sets the man, not over against the tables of the Law, but against the law of the tables, weighing him in the balances of trade, and estimating him by the scale of commercial values. But in this meaner, worldly mode of reckoning he is not found wanting. He is a servant proved and approved. Like Eliezer of old, he has identified himself with his master's interests, listening for his voice, and learning to read even the wishes which were unexpressed in words. Adjusting His will to the higher will, like a vane answering the currents of the wind, his hands, his feet, and his whole self have swung round to fall into the drift of his master's purpose. Faithful in his service, whether that service were under the master's eye or not, and faithful alike in the great and the little things, he has entered into his master's confidence, and so into his joy. Losing his own personality, he is content to be something between a cipher and a unit, only a "hand." But he is the master's right hand, strong and ever ready, so useful as to be almost an integral part of the master's self, without which the master's life would be incomplete and strangely bereaved. All this we may learn from the lower meaning of the phrase "was dear unto him."

But the word has a higher meaning, one that is properly rendered by our "dear." It implies esteem, affection, transferring our thought from the subject to the object, from the character of the servant to the influence it has exerted upon the master. The word is thus an index, a barometrical reading, measuring for us the pressure of that influence, and recording for us the high sentiments of regard and affection it has evoked.

As the trees around the pond lean towards the water which laves their roots, so the strong soul of the centurion, drawn by the attractions of a lowly but a noble life, leans toward, un-til it

leans upon, his servant, giving him its confidence, its esteem and love, that golden fruitage of the heart. That such was the mutual relation of the master and the servant is evident, for Jesus, who read motives and heard thoughts, would not so freely and promptly have placed His miraculous power at the disposal of the centurion had his sorrow been only the selfish sorrow of losing what was commercially valuable. To an appeal of selfishness, though thrown forward and magnified by the sounding-boards of all the synagogues the ears of Jesus would have been perfectly deaf; but when it was the cry of a genuine sorrow, the moan of a vicarious pain, an unselfish, disinterested grief, then the ears of Jesus were quick to hear, and His feet swift to respond.

It is impossible for us to define exactly what the sickness was, though the statement of St. Matthew that it was "palsy," and that he was "grievously tormented," would suggest that it might be an acute case of inflammatory rheumatism. But whatever it might be, it was a most painful, and as every one thought a mortal sickness, one that left no room for hope, save this last hope in the Divine mercy. But what a lesson is here for our times, as indeed for all times, the lesson of humanity! How little does Heaven make of rank and station! Jesus does not even see them; He ignores them utterly. To His mind Humanity is one, and the broad lines of distinction, the impassable barriers Society is fond of drawing or setting up, to Him are but imaginary meridians of the sea, a name but nothing more. It is but a nameless servant of a nameless master, one, too, of many, for a hundred others are ready, with military precision, to do that same master's will; but Jesus does not hesitate. He who voluntarily took upon Himself the form of a servant, as He came into the world "not to be ministered unto, but to minister," now becomes the Servant of a servant, saying to him who knew only how to obey, how to serve, "Here am I; command Me; use Me as thou wilt." All service is honourable, if we serve not ourselves, but our fellows, and it is doubly so if, serving man, we serve God too. As the sunshine looks down into, and strews with flowers, the lowest vales, so the Divine compassion falls on the lowliest lives, and the Divine grace makes them sweet and beautiful. Christianity is the great leveller, but it levels upwards, and if we possess the mind of Christ, His Spirit dwelling and ruling within, we too, like the great Apostle, shall know no man after the flesh; the accidents of birth, and rank, and fortune will sink back into the trifles that they are; for however these may vary, it is an eternal truth, though spoken by a son of the soil and the heather—

"A man's a man for a' that."

It is not easy to tell how the seed-thought is borne into a heart, there to germinate and ripen; for influences are subtle, invisible things. Like the pollen of a flower, which may be carried on the antennæ of some unconscious insect, or borne into the future by the passing breeze, so influences which will yet ripen into character and make destinies are thrown off unconsciously from our common deeds, or they are borne on the wings of the chance, casual word. The case of the centurion is no exception. By what steps he has been brought into the clearer light we cannot tell, but evidently this Pagan officer is now a proselyte to the Hebrew faith and worship,



the window of his soul open towards Jerusalem while his professional life still looks towards Rome, as he renders to Cæsar the allegiance and service which are Cæsar's due. And what a testimony it is to the vitality and reproductive power of the Hebrew faith, that it should boast of at least three centurions, in the imperial ranks, of whom Scripture makes honourable mention—one at Capernaum; another, Cornelius, at Cæsarea, whose prayers and alms were had in remembrance of Heaven; and the third in Jerusalem, witnessing a good confession upon Calvary, and proclaiming within the shadow of the cross the Divinity of the Crucified. It shows how the Paganism of Rome failed to satisfy the aspirations of the soul, and how Mars, red and lurid through the night, paled and disappeared at the rising of the Sun.

Although identifying himself with the religious life of the city, the centurion had not yet had any personal interview with Jesus. Possibly his military duties prevented his attendance at the synagogue, so that he had not seen the cures Jesus there wrought upon the demoniac and the man with the withered hand. The report of them, however, must soon have reached him, intimate as he was with the officials of the synagogue; while the nobleman, the cure of whose sick son is narrated by St. John (iv. 46), would probably be amongst his personal friends, an acquaintance at any rate. The centurion "heard" of Jesus, but he could not have heard had not some one spoken of Him. The Christ was borne into his mind and heart on the breath of common speech; that is, the little human word grew into the Divine Word. It was the verbal testimony as to what Jesus had done that now led to the still greater things He was prepared to do. And such is the place and power of testimony to-day. It is the most persuasive, the most effective form of speech. Testimony will often win where argument has failed, and gold itself is all-powerless to extend the frontiers of the heavenly kingdom until it is melted down and exchanged for the higher currency of speech. It is first the human voice crying in the wilderness, and then the incarnate Word, whose coming makes the wilderness to be glad, and the desert places of life to sing. And so, while a sword of flame guards the Paradise Lost, it is a "tongue" of flame, that symbol of perpetual Pentecost, which calls man back, redeemed now, to the Paradise Restored. If Christians would only speak more for Christ; if, shaking off that foolish reserve, they would in simple language testify to what they themselves have seen, and known, and experienced, how rapidly would the kingdom come, the kingdom for which we pray, indeed, but for which, alas, we are afraid to speak! Nations then would be born in a day, and the millennium, instead of being the distant or the forlorn hope it is, would be a speedy realisation. We should be in the fringe of it directly. It is said that on one of the Alpine glaciers the guides forbid travellers to speak, lest the mere tremor of the human voice should loosen and bring down the deadly avalanche. Whether this be so or not, it was some unnamed voice that now sent the centurion to Christ, and brought the Christ to him.

It was probably a sudden relapse, with increased paroxysms of pain, on the part of the sufferer, which now decided the centurion to make his appeal to Jesus, sending a deputation of Jewish elders, as the day was on the wane,

to the house to which Jesus had now returned. They make their request that "He would come and save the servant of the centurion, who was now lying at the point of death." True advocates, and skilful, were these elders. They made the centurion's cause their own, as if their hearts had caught the rhythmic beat of his great sorrow, and when Jesus held back a little—as He often did, to test the intensity of the desire and the sincerity of the suppliant—"they besought Him earnestly," or "kept on beseeching," as the tense of the verb would imply, crowning their entreaty with the plea, "He is worthy that Thou shouldest do this, for he loveth our nation, and himself built us our synagogue." Possibly they feared—putting a Hebrew construction upon His sympathies—that Jesus would demur, and perhaps refuse, because their client was a foreigner. They did not know, what we know so well, that the mercy of Jesus was as broad as it was deep, knowing no bounds where its waves of blessing are stayed. But how forceful and prevalent was their plea! Though they knew it not, these elders do but ask Jesus to illustrate the words He has just spoken, "Give, and it shall be given unto you." And had not Jesus laid this down as one of the laws of mercy, that action and reaction are equal? Had He not been describing the orbit in which blessings travel, showing that though its orbit be apparently eccentric at times, like the boomerang, that wheels round and comes back to the hand that threw it forward, the mercy shown will eventually come back to him who showed it, with a wealth of heavenly usury? And so their plea was the one of all others to be availing. It was the precept of the mount evolved into practice. It was, "Bless him, for he has richly blessed us. He has opened his hand, showering his favours upon us; do Thou open Thine hand now, and show him that the God of the Hebrews is a God who hears, and heeds, and helps."

It has been thought, from the language of the elders, that the synagogue built by the centurion was the only one that Capernaum possessed; for they speak of it as "the" synagogue. But this does not follow, and indeed it is most improbable. They might still call it "the" synagogue, not because it was the only one, but because it was the one foremost and uppermost in their thought, the one in which they were particularly interested. The definite article no more proves this to be the only synagogue in Capernaum than the phrase "the house" (ver. 10) proves the house of the centurion to be the only house of the city. The fact is that in the Gospel age Capernaum was a busy and important place, as shown by its possessing a garrison of soldiers, and by its being the place of custom, situated as it was on the great highway of trade. And if Jerusalem could boast of four hundred synagogues, and Tiberias—a city not even named by the Synoptists—fourteen, Capernaum certainly would possess more than one. Indeed, had Capernaum been the insignificant village that one synagogue would imply, then, instead of deserving the bitter woes Jesus pronounced upon it, it would have deserved the highest commendation, as the most fruitful field in all His ministry, giving Him, besides other disciples, a ruler of the Jews and the commandant of the garrison. That it deserved such bitter "woes" proves that Capernaum had a population both



dense and, in the general, hostile to Jesus, compared with which His friends and adherents were a feeble few.

In spite of the negative manner Jesus purposely showed at the first He fully intended to grant all the elders had asked, and allowing them now to guide Him, He "went with them." When, however, they were come near the house, the centurion sent other "friends" to intercept Jesus and to urge Him not to take any further trouble. The message, which they deliver in the exact form in which it was given to them, is so characteristic and exquisitely beautiful that it is best to give it entire: "Lord, trouble not Thyself: for I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come under my roof: wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto Thee: but say the word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under myself soldiers: and I say to this one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it."

The narrative of St. Matthew differs slightly from that of St. Luke, in that he omits all reference to the two deputations, speaking of the interview as being personal with the centurion. But St. Matthew's is evidently an abbreviated narrative, and he passes over the intermediaries, in accordance with the maxim that he who acts through another does it *per se*. But both agree as to the terms of the message, a message which is at once a marvel and a rebuke to us, and one which was indeed deserving of being twice recorded and eulogised in the pages of the Gospels.

And how the message reveals the man, disclosing as in a transparency the character of this nameless foreigner! We have already seen how broad were his sympathies, and how generous his deeds, as he makes room in his large heart for a conquered and despised people, at his own cost building a temple for the exercises of their faith. We have seen, too, what a wealth of tenderness and benevolence was hiding beneath a somewhat stern exterior, in his affection for a servant, and his anxious solicitude for that servant's health. But now we see in the centurion other graces of character, that set him high amongst those "outside saints" who worshipped in the outer courts, until such time as the veil of the Temple was rent in twain, and the way into the Holiest was opened for all. And what a beautiful humility is here! what an absence of assumption or of pride! Occupying an honoured position, representing in his own person an empire which was world-wide, surrounded by troops of friends, and by all the comforts wealth could buy, accustomed to speak in imperative, if not in imperious ways, yet as he turns towards Jesus it is with a respectful, yea, a reverential demeanour. He feels himself in the presence of some Higher Being, an unseen but august Cæsar. Nay, not in His presence either, for into that audience-chamber he feels that he has neither the fitness nor the right to intrude. All that he can do is to send forward his petition by the hands of worthier advocates, who have access to Him, while he himself keeps back out of sight, with bared feet standing by the outer gate. Others can speak well and highly of him, recounting his noble deeds, but of himself he has nothing good to say; he can only speak of self in terms of dispar-

agement, as he emphasises his littleness, his unworthiness. Nor was it with him the conventional hyperbole of Eastern manners; it was the language of deepest, sincerest truth, when he said that he was not worthy even to speak with Christ, or to receive such a Guest beneath his roof. Between himself and the One he reverently addressed as "Lord" there was an infinite distance; for one was human, while the Other was Divine.

And what a rare and remarkable faith! In his thought Jesus is an Imperator, commanding all forces, as He rules the invisible realms. His will is supreme over all substances, across all distances. "Thou hast no need, Lord, to take any trouble about my poor request. There is no necessity that Thou shouldst take one step, or even lift up a finger; Thou hast only to speak the word, and it is done;" and then he gives that wonderfully graphic illustration borrowed from his own military life.

The passage "For I also am a man set under authority" is generally rendered as referring to his own subordinate position under the Chiliarch. But such a rendering, as it seems to us, breaks the continuity of thought, and grammatically is scarcely accurate. The whole passage is an amplification and description of the "word" of ver. 7, and the "also" introduces something the centurion and Jesus possess in common, *i. e.*, the power to command; for the "I also" certainly corresponds with the "Thou" which is implied, but not expressed. But the centurion did not mean to imply that Jesus possessed only limited, delegated powers; this was farthest from his thought, and formed no part of the comparison. But let the clause "I also am a man set under authority" be rendered, not as referring to the authority which is above him, but to that which is *upon* him—"I also am vested with authority," or "Authority is put upon me"—and the meaning becomes clear. The "also" is no longer warped into an ungrammatical meaning, introducing a contrast rather than a likeness; while the clause which follows, "having under myself soldiers," takes its proper place as an enlargement and explanation of the "authority" with which the centurion is invested.

The centurion speaks in a soldierly way. There is a crispness and sharpness about his tones—that Shibboleth of militarism. He says, "My word is all-powerful in the ranks which I command. I have but to say 'Come,' or 'Go,' and my word is instantly obeyed. The soldier upon whose ear it falls dare not hesitate, any more than he dare refuse. He 'goes' at my word, anyhow, on some forlorn hope it may be, or to his grave." And such is the obedience, instant and absolute, that military service demands. The soldier must not question, he must obey; he must not reason, he must act; for when the word of command—that leaden word of authority—falls upon his ear, it completely fills his soul, and makes him deaf to all other, meaner voices.

Such was the thought in the centurion's mind, and from the "go" and "come" of military authority to the higher "word" of Jesus the transition is easy. But how strong the faith that could give to Jesus such an enthronement, that could clothe His word with such superhuman power! Yonder, in his secluded chamber, lies the sufferer, his nerves quivering in their pain, while



the mortal sickness physicians and remedies have all failed to touch, much less to remove, has dragged him close up to the gate of death. But this "word" of Jesus shall be all-sufficient. Spoken here and now, it shall pass over the intervening streets and through the interposing walls and doors; it shall say to these demons of evil, "Loose him, and let him go," and in a moment the torturing pain shall cease, the fluttering heart shall resume its healthy, steady beat, the rigid muscles shall become pliant as before, while through arteries and veins the life-blood—its poison all extracted now—shall regain its healthful, quiet flow. The centurion believed all this of the "word" of Jesus, and even more. In his heart it was a word all-potent, if not omnipotent, like to the word of Him who "spake, and it was done," who "commanded, and it stood fast." And if the word of Jesus in these realms of life and death was so imperative and all-commanding, could the Christ Himself be less than Divine?

To find such confidence reposed in Himself was to Jesus something new, and to find this rarest plant of faith growing up on Gentile soil was a still greater marvel, and turning to the multitude, which clustered thick and eager around, He said to them, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." And commending the centurion's faith, He honours it too, doing all he requested, and even more, though without the "word." Jesus does not even say "I will," or "Be it so," but He works the instant and perfect cure by a mere volition. He wills it, and it is done, so that when the friends returned to the house they found the servant "whole."

Of the sequel we know nothing. We do not even read that Jesus saw the man at whose faith He had so marvelled. But doubtless He did, for His heart was drawn strangely to him, and doubtless He gave to him many of those "words" for which his soul had longed and listened, words in which were held, as in solution, all authority and all truth. And doubtless, too, in the after-years, Jesus crowned that life of faithful but unnoted service with the higher "word," the heavenly "Well done."

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### THE ANOINTING OF THE FEET.

LUKE vii. 36-50.

WHETHER the narrative of the Anointing is inserted in its chronological order we cannot say, for the Evangelist gives us no word by which we may recognise either its time or its place-relation; but we can easily see that it falls into the story artistically, with a singular fitness. Going back to the context, we find Jesus pronouncing a high eulogium upon John the Baptist. Hereupon the Evangelist adds a statement of his own, calling attention to the fact that even John's ministry failed to reach and influence the Pharisees and lawyers, who rejected the counsel of God and declined the baptism of His messenger. Then Jesus, in one of His brief but exquisite parables, sketches the character of the Pharisees. Recalling a scene of the market-place, where the children were accustomed to play at "weddings" and "funerals"—which,

by the way, are the only games at which the children of the land play to-day—and where sometimes the play was spoiled and stopped by some of the children getting into a pet, and lapsing into a sullen silence, Jesus says that is just a picture of the childish perversity of the Pharisees. They respond neither to the mourning of the one nor to the music of the other, but because John came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, they call him a maniac, and say, "He hath a devil;" while of Jesus, who has no ascetic ways, but mingles in the gatherings of social life, a Man amongst men, they say, "Behold a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." And having recorded this, our Evangelist inserts, as an appropriate sequel, the account of the supper in the Pharisee's house, with its idyllic interlude, played by a woman's hand, a narrative which shows how Wisdom is justified of all her children, and how these condescensions of Jesus, His intercourse with even those who were ceremonially or morally unclean, were both proper and beautiful.

It was in one of the Galilean towns, perhaps at Nain, where Jesus was surprised at receiving an invitation to the house of a Pharisee. Such courtesies on the part of a class who prided themselves on their exclusiveness, and who were bitterly intolerant of all who were outside their narrow circle, were exceptional and rare. Besides, the teaching of Jesus was diametrically opposed to the leaven of the Pharisees. Between the caste of the one and the catholicism of the other was a wide gulf of divergence. To Jesus the heart was everything, and the outflowing issues were coloured by its hues; to the Pharisees the hand, the outward touch, was more than the heart, and contact more than conduct. Jesus laid a Divine emphasis upon character; the cleanness He demanded was moral cleanness, purity of heart; that of the Pharisees was a ceremonial cleanness, the avoidance of things which were under a ceremonial ban. And so they magnified the jots and tittles, scrupulously tithing their mint and anise, while they overlooked completely the moralities of the heart, and reduced to a mere nothing those grander virtues of mercy and of justice. Between the Separatists and Jesus there was therefore constant friction, which afterwards developed into open hostility; and while they ever sought to damage Him with opprobrious epithets, and to bring His teaching into disrepute, He did not fail to expose their hollowness and insincerity, tearing off the veneer with which they sought to hide the brood of viperous things their creed had gendered, and to hurl against their whited sepulchres His indignant "woes."

It would almost seem as if Jesus hesitated in accepting the invitation, for the tense of the verb "desired" implies that the request was repeated. Possibly other arrangements had been made, or perhaps Jesus sought to draw out and test the sincerity of the Pharisee, who in kind and courteous words offered his hospitality. The hesitation would certainly not arise from any reluctance on His part, for Jesus refused no open door; he welcomed any opportunity of influencing a soul. As the shepherd of His own parable went over the mountainous paths in quest of his lone lost sheep, so Jesus was glad to risk unkind aspersions, and to bear the "fierce light" of hostile, questioning eyes, if He might



but rescue a soul, and win some erring one back to virtue and to truth.

The character of the host we cannot exactly determine. The narrative lights up his features but indistinctly, for the nameless "sinner" is the central object of the picture, while Simon stands in the background, out of focus, and so somewhat veiled in obscurity. To many he appears as the cold and heartless censor, distant and haughty, seeking by the guile of hospitality to entrap Jesus, hiding behind the mask of friendship some dark and sinister motive. But such deep shadows are cast by our own thoughts rather than by the narrative; they are the random "guesses after truth," instead of the truth itself. It will be noticed that Jesus does not impugn in the least his motive in proffering his hospitality; and this, though but a negative evidence, is not without its weight, when on a similar occasion the evil motive was brought to light. The only charge laid against him—if charge it be—was the omission of certain points of etiquette that Eastern hospitality was accustomed to observe, and even here there is nothing to show that Jesus was treated differently from the other invited guests. The omission, while it failed to single out Jesus for special honour, might still mean no disrespect; and at the most it was a breach of manners, deportment, rather than of morals, just one of those lapses Jesus was most ready to overlook and forgive. We shall form a juster estimate of the man's character if we regard him as a seeker after truth. Evidently he has felt a drawing towards Jesus; indeed, ver. 47 would almost imply that he had received some personal benefit at His hand. Be this as it may, he is desirous of a closer and a freer intercourse. His mind is perplexed, the balances of his judgment swinging in alternate and opposite ways. A new problem has presented itself to him, and in that problem is one factor he cannot yet value. It is the unknown quantity, Jesus of Nazareth. Who is He? what is He? A prophet—the Prophet—the Christ? Such are the questions running through his mind—questions which must be answered soon, as his thoughts and opinions have ripened into convictions. And so he invites Jesus to his house and board, that in the nearer vision and the unfettered freedom of social intercourse he may solve the great enigma. Nay, he invites Jesus with a degree of earnestness, putting upon Him the constraint of a great desire; and leaving his heart open to conviction, ready to embrace the truth as soon as he recognises it to be truth, he flings open the door of his hospitalities, though in so doing he shakes the whole fabric of Pharisaic exclusiveness and sanctity. Seeking after truth, the truth finds him.

There was a simplicity and freeness in the social life of the East which our Western civilisation can scarcely understand. The door of the guest-chamber was left open, and the uninvited, even comparative strangers, were allowed to pass in and out during the entertainment; or they might take their seats by the wall, as spectators and listeners. It was so here. No sooner have the guests taken their places, reclining around the table, their bared feet projecting behind them, than the usual drift of the uninvited set in, amongst whom, almost unnoticed in the excitements of the hour, was "a woman of the city." Simon in his soliloquy speaks of her as "a

sinner;" but had we his testimony only, we should hesitate in giving to the word its usually received meaning; for "sinner" was a pet term of the Pharisees, applied to all who were outside their circle, and even to Jesus Himself. But when our Evangelist, in describing her character, makes use of the same word, we can only interpret the "sinner" in one way, in its sensual, depraved meaning. And with this agrees the phrase "a woman which was in the city," which seems to indicate the loose relations of her too-public life.

Bearing in her hand "an alabaster cruse of ointment," for a purpose which soon became apparent, she passed over to the place where Jesus sat, and stood directly behind Him. Accustomed as she had been to hide her deeds in the veil of darkness, nothing but the current of a deep emotion could have carried her thus through the door of the guest-chamber, setting her, alone of her sex, full in the glare of the lamps and the light of scornful eyes; and no sooner has she reached her goal than the storm of the heart breaks in a rain of tears, which fall hot and fast upon the feet of the Master. This, however, is no part of her plan; they were impromptu tears she could not restrain; and instantly she stoops down, and with the loosened tresses of her hair she wipes His feet, kissing them passionately as she did so. There is a delicate meaning in the construction of the Greek verb, "she *began* to wet His feet with her tears;" it implies that the action was not continued, as when afterwards she "anointed" His feet. It was momentary, instantaneous, checked soon as it was discovered. Then pouring from her flask the fragrant nard, she proceeded with loving, leisurely haste to anoint His feet, until the whole chamber was redolent of the sweet perfume.

But what is the meaning of this strange episode, this "song without words," struck by the woman's hands as from a lyre of alabaster? It was evidently something determined, prearranged. The phrase "when she knew that He was sitting at meat" means something more than she "heard." Her knowledge as to where Jesus was had not come to her in a casual way, in the vagrant gossip of the town; it had come by search and inquiry on her part, as if the plan were already determined, and she were eager to carry it out. The cruse of ointment that she brings also reveals the settled resolve that she came on purpose, and she came only, to anoint the feet of Jesus. The word, too, rendered "she brought" has a deeper meaning than our translation conveys. It is a word that is used in ten other passages of the New Testament, where it is invariably rendered "receive," or "received," referring to something received as a wage, or as a gift, or as a prize. Used here in the narrative, it implies that the cruse of ointment had not been bought; it was something she had received as a gift, or possibly as the wages of her sin. And not only was it prearranged, part of a deliberate intention, but evidently it was not displeasing to Jesus. He did not resent it. He gives Himself up passively to the woman's will. He allows her to touch, and even to kiss His feet, though He knows that to society she is a moral leper, and that her fragrant ointment is possibly the reward of her shame. We must, then, look behind the deed to the motive. To Jesus the ointment and the tears were full of meaning, eloquent beyond any



power of words. Can we discover that meaning, and read why they were so welcome? We think we may.

And here let us say that Simon's thoughts were perfectly natural and correct, with no word or tone that we can censure. Canon Farrar, it is true, detects in the "This man" with which he speaks of Jesus a "supercilious scorn;" but we fail to see the least scorn, or even disrespect, for the pronoun Simon uses is the identical word used by St. Matthew (Matt. iii. 3), of John the Baptist, when he says, "*This* is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias," and the word of the "voice from heaven" which said, "*This* is My beloved Son" (Matt. iii. 17). That the woman was a sinner Simon knew well; and would not Jesus know it too, if He were a prophet? Doubtless He would; but as Simon marks no sign of disapproval upon the face of Jesus, the enigmatical "if" grows larger in his mind, and he begins to think that Jesus has scarcely the prescience—the power of seeing through things—that a true prophet would have. Simon's reasoning was right, but his facts were wrong. He imagined that Jesus did not know "who and what manner of woman" this was; whereas Jesus knew more than he, for He knew not only the past of shame, but a present of forgiveness and hope.

And what did the tears and the ointment mean, that Jesus should receive them so readily, and that He should speak of them so approvingly? The parable Jesus spoke to Simon will explain it. "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee," said Jesus, answering his thoughts—for He had heard them—by words. And falling naturally into the parabolic form of speech—as He did when He wanted to make His meaning more startling and impressive—He said, "A certain money-lender had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. When they had not wherewith to pay, he forgave them both. Which of them therefore will love him most?" A question to which Simon could promptly answer, "He, I suppose, to whom he forgave the most." It is clear, then, whatever others might see in the woman's deed, that Jesus read in it the expression of her love, and that He accepted it as such; the tears and outpoured ointment were the broken utterances of an affection which was too deep for words. But if her offering—as it certainly was—was the gift of love, how shall we explain her tears? for love, in the presence of the beloved, does not weep so passionately, indeed does not weep at all, except, it may be, tears of joy, or tears of a mutual sorrow. In this way: As the wind blows landward from the sea, the mountain ranges cool the clouds, and cause them to unlock their treasures, in the fertile and refreshing rains; so in the heart of this "sinner" a cloud of recollections is blown up suddenly from her dark past; the memories of her shame—even though that shame be now forgiven—sweep across her soul with resistless force, for penitence does not end when forgiveness is assured; and as she finds herself in the presence of Infinite Purity, what wonder that the heart's great deeps are broken up, and that the wild storm of conflicting emotions within should find relief in a rain of tears? Tears of penitence they doubtless were, bitter with the sorrow and the shame of years of guilt; but they were tears of gratitude and holy love as well, all suffused and brightened by the touch

of mercy and the light of hope. And so the passionate weeping was no acted grief, no hysterical tempest; it was the perfectly natural accompaniment of profound emotion, that storm of mingled but diverse elements which now swept through her soul. Her tears, like the dew-drops that hang upon leaf and flower, were wrought in the darkness, fashioned by the Night, and at the same time they were the jewels that graced the robe of a new dawn, the dawn of a better, a purer life.

But how came this new affection within her heart, an affection so deep that it must have tears and anointings for its expression—this new affection, which has become a pure and holy passion, and which breaks through conventional bonds, as it has broken through the old habits, the ill usages of a life? Jesus Himself traces for us this affection to its source. He tells us—for the parable is all meaningless unless we recognise in the five-hundred-pence debtor the sinning woman—that her great love grows out of her great forgiveness, a past forgiveness too, for Jesus speaks of the change as already accomplished: "Her sins, which were many, are (have been) forgiven." And here we touch an unwritten chapter of the Divine life; for as the woman's love flows up around Jesus, casting its treasures at His feet, so the forgiveness must first have come from Jesus. His voice it must have been which said, "Let there be light," and which turned the chaos of her dark soul into another Paradise. At any rate, she thinks she owes to Him her all. Her new creation, with its deliverance from the tyrannous past; her new joys and hopes, the spring-blossom of a new and heavenly existence; the conscious purity which has now taken the place of lust—she owes all to the word and power of Jesus. But when this change took place, or when, in the great transit, this Venus of the moral firmament passed across the disc of the Sun, we do not know. St. John inserts in his story one little incident, which is like a piece of mosaic dropped out from the Gospels of the Synoptists, of a woman who was taken in her sin and brought to Jesus. And when the hands of her accusers were not clean enough to cast the first stone, but they shrank one by one out of sight, self-condemned, Jesus bade the penitent one to "go in peace, and sin no more." \* Are the two characters identical? and does the forgiven one, dismissed into peace, now return to bring to her Saviour her offering of gratitude and love? We can only say that such an identification is at least possible, and more so far than the improbable identification of tradition, which confounds this nameless "sinner" with Mary Magdalene, which is an assumption perfectly baseless and most unlikely.

And so in this erring one, who now puts her crown of fragrance upon the feet of Jesus, since she is unworthy to put it upon His head, we see a penitent and forgiven soul. Somewhere Jesus found her, out on the forbidden paths, the paths of sin, which, steep and slippery, lead down to death; His look arrested her, for it cast within her heart the light of a new hope; His presence, which was the embodiment of a purity infinite and absolute, shot through her soul the deep consciousness and conviction of her guilt; and

\* The narrative is of doubtful authenticity; but even should it be proved to be a postscript by some later scribe, it would still point to a tradition, which, as Stier says, was "well founded and genuine."



doubtless upon her ears had fallen the words of the great absolution and the Divine benediction, "Thy sins are all forgiven; go in peace," words which to her made all things new—a new heart within, and a new earth around. And now, regenerate and restored, the sad past forgiven, all the currents of her thought and life reversed, the love of sin turned into a perfect loathing, her language, spoken in tears, kisses, and fragrant nard, is the language of the Psalmist, "O Lord, I will praise Thee; for though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me." It was the "Magnificat" of a forgiven and a loving soul.

Simon had watched the woman's actions in silence, though in evident displeasure. He would have resented her touch, and have forbade even her presence; but found under his roof, she became in a certain sense a guest, shielded by the hospitable courtesies of Eastern life. But if he said nothing, he thought much, and his thoughts were hard and bitter. He looked upon the woman as a moral leper, an outcast. There was defilement in her touch, and he would have shaken it off from him as if it were a viper, fit only to be cast into the fire of a burning indignation. Now Jesus must teach him a lesson, and throw his thoughts back upon himself. And first He teaches him that there is forgiveness for sin, even the sin of uncleanness; and in this we see the bringing in of a better hope. The Law said, "The soul that sinneth, it shall surely die;" it shall be cut off from the people of Israel. The Law had but one voice for the adulterer and adulteress, the voice which was the knell of a sharp and fearful doom, without reprieve or mercy of any kind. It cast upon them the deadly rain of stones, as if it would hurl a whole Sinai upon them. But Jesus comes to man with a message of mercy and of hope. He proclaims a deliverance from the sin, and a pardon for the sinner; nay, He offers Himself, as at once the Forgiver of sin and the Saviour from sin. Let Him but see it repented of; let Him but see the tears of penitence, or hear the sighs of a broken and contrite heart, and He steps forward at once to deliver and to save. The Valley of Achor, where the Law sets up its memorial of shame, Jesus turns into a door of hope. He speaks life where the Law spoke death; He offers hope where the Law gave but despair; and where exacting Law gave pains and fearful punishment only, the Mediator of the New Covenant, to the penitent though erring ones, spoke pardon and peace, even the perfect peace, the eternal peace.

And Jesus teaches Simon another lesson. He teaches him to judge himself, and not either by his own fictitious standard, by the Pharisaic table of excellence, by the Divine standard. Holding up as a mirror the example of the woman, Jesus gives to Simon a portrait of his own self, as seen in the heavenly light, all shrunken and dwarfed, the large "I" of Pharisaic complacency becoming, in comparison, small indeed. Turning to the woman, He said unto Simon, "Seest thou this woman?" (And Simon had not seen her; he had only seen her shadow, the shadow of her sinful past). "I entered into thine house; thou gavest Me no water for My feet: but she hath wetted My feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair. Thou gavest Me no kiss: but she, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss My feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but she hath anointed My feet with

ointment." It is a problem of the pronouns, in which the "I" being given, it is desired to find the relative values of "thou" and "she." And how beautifully does Jesus work it out, according to the rules of Divine proportions! With what antithetical skill does He make His comparison, or rather His contrast! "*Thou* gavest me *no water* for My feet; *she* hath wetted My feet with her *tears*, and wiped them with her hair. *Thou* gavest me *no kiss*: *she* hath not ceased to *kiss my feet*. My head with oil *thou* didst not anoint: *she* hath anointed My feet with ointment."

And so Jesus sets over against the omissions of Simon the loving and lavish attentions of the woman; and while reproving him, not for a lack of civility, but for want of heartiness in his reception of Himself, He shows how deep and full run the currents of her affection, breaking through the banks and bounds of conventionality in their sweet overflow, while as yet the currents of his love were intermittent, shallow, and somewhat cold. He does not denounce *this* Simon as having no part or lot in this matter. No; He even credits him with a little love, as He speaks of him as a pardoned, justified soul. And it was true. The heart of Simon had been drawn toward Jesus, and in the urgent invitation and these proffered hospitalities we can discern a nascent affection. His love is yet but in the bud. It is there, a thing of life; but it is confined, constrained, and lacking the sweetness of the ripened and opened flower. Jesus does not cut off the budding affection, and cast it out amongst the withered and dead things, but sprinkling it with the dew of His speech, and throwing upon it the sunshine of His approving look, He leaves it to develop, ripening into an after-harvest of fragrance and of beauty. And why was Simon's love more feeble and immature than that of the woman? First, because he did not see so much in Jesus as she did. He was yet stumbling over the "if," with some lingering doubts as to whether He were "the prophet;" to her He is more than a "prophet," even her Lord and her Saviour, covering her past with a mantle of mercy, and opening within her heart a heaven. Then, too, Simon's forgiveness was not so great as hers. Not that any forgiveness can be less than entire; for when Heaven saves it is not a salvation by instalments—certain sins remitted, while others are held back uncanceled. But Simon's views of sin were not so sharp and vivid as were those of the woman. The atmosphere of Phariseism in its moral aspects was hazy; it magnified human virtues, and created all sorts of illusive mirages of self-righteousness and reputed holiness, and doubtless Simon's vision had been impaired by the refracting atmosphere of his creed. The greatness of our salvation is ever measured by the greatness of our danger and our guilt. The heavier the burden and weight of condemnation, the deeper is the peace and the higher are the ecstasies of joy when that condemnation is removed. Shall we say, then, "We must sin more, that love may more abound"? Nay, we need not, we must not; for as Godet says, "What is wanting to the best of us, in order to love much, is not sin, but the knowledge of it." And this deeper knowledge of sin, the more vivid realisation of its guilt, its virulence, its all-pervasiveness, comes just in proportion as we approach Christ. Standing close up to the cross, feeling the mortal agonies of Him whose death was necessary as sin's



atonement, in that vivid light of redeeming love even the strict moralist, the Pharisee of the Pharisees, could speak of himself as the "chief" of sinners.

The lesson was over, and Jesus dismissed the woman—who, with her empty alabaster flask, had lingered at the feast, and who had heard all the conversation—with the double assurance of pardon: "Thy sins are forgiven; thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." And such is the Divine order everywhere and always—Faith, Love, Peace. Faith is the procuring cause, or the condition of salvation; love and peace are its after-fruits; for without faith, love would be only fear, and peace itself would be unrest.

She went in peace, "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding;" but she left behind her the music of her tears and the sweet fragrance of her deed, a fragrance and a music which have filled the whole world, and which, floating across the valley of death, will pass up into heaven itself!

There was still one little whisper of murmuring, or questioning rather; for the guests were startled by the boldness of His words, and asked among themselves, "Who is this that even forgiveth sins?" But it will be noticed that Simon himself is no longer among the questioners, the doubters. Jesus is to him "the Prophet," and more than a prophet, for who can forgive sins but God alone. And though we hear no more of him or of his deeds, we may rest assured that his conquered heart was given without reserve to Jesus, and that he too learned to love with a true affection, even with the "perfect love," which "casteth out fear."

#### CHAPTER XIV.

#### THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

LUKE viii. 1-18.

IN a single parenthetical sentence our Evangelist indicates a marked change in the mode of the Divine ministry. Hitherto "His own city," Capernaum, has been a sort of centre, from which the lines of light and blessing have radiated. Now, however, He leaves Capernaum, and makes a circuit through the province of Galilee, going through its cities and villages in a systematic, and as the verb would imply, a leisurely way, preaching the "good tidings of the kingdom of God." Though no mention is made of them, we are not to suppose that miracles were suspended; but evidently they were set in the background, as secondary things, the by-plays or "asides" of the Divine Teacher, who now is intent upon delivering His message, the last message, too, that they would hear from Him. Accompanying Him, and forming an imposing demonstration, were His twelve disciples, together with "many" women, who ministered unto them of their substance, among whom were three prominent ones, probably persons of position and influence—Mary of Magdala, Joanna, wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, who had been healed by Jesus of "evil spirits and infirmities"—which last word, in New Testament language, is a synonym for physical weakness and disorder. Of the particulars and results of this mission we know nothing, unless we may see, in the "great multitude" which fol-

lowed and thronged Jesus on His return, the harvest reaped from the Galilean hills. Our Evangelist, at any rate, links them together, as if the "great multitude" which now lines the shore was, in part at least, the cloud of eager souls which had been caught up and borne along on His fervid speech, as the echoes of the kingdom went resounding among the hills and vales of Galilee.

Returning to Capernaum, whither the crowds followed Him, every city sending its contingent of curious or conquered souls, Jesus, as St. Matthew and St. Mark inform us, leaves the house, and seeks the open stretch of shore, where from a boat—probably the familiar boat of Simon—He addresses the multitudes, adopting now, as His favourite mode of speech, the amplified parable. It is probable that He had observed on the part of His disciples an undue elation of spirit. Reading the crowds numerically, and not discerning the different motives which had brought them together, their eyes deceived them. They imagined that these eager multitudes were but a wave-sheaf of the harvest already ripe, which only waited their gathering-in. But it is not so; and Jesus sifts and winnows His audience, to show His disciples that the apparent is not always the real, and that between the hearers of the word and the doers there will ever be a wide margin of disappointment and comparative failure. The harvest, in God's husbandry, as in man's, does not depend altogether upon the quality of the seed or the faithfulness of the sower, but upon the nature of the soil on which it falls.

As the sower went forth to sow his seed, "some fell by the way-side, and it was trodden under-foot, and the birds of the heaven devoured it." In his carefulness to cover all his ground, the sower had gone close up to the boundary, and some of the seed had fallen on the edge of the bare and trampled path, where it lay homeless and exposed. It was in contact with the earth, but it was a mechanical, and not a vital touch. There was no correspondence, no communion between them. Instead of welcoming and nourishing the seed, it held it aloof, in a cold, repelling way. Had the soil been sympathetic and receptive, it held within itself all the elements of growth. Touched by the subtle life that was hidden within the seed, the dead earth itself had lived, growing up into blades of promise, and from the full ear throwing itself forward into the future years. But the earth was hard and un-receptive; its possibilities of blessing were locked up and buried beneath a crust of trampled soil that was callous and unresponsive as the rock itself. And so the seed lay unwelcomed and alone, and the life which the warm touch of earth would have loosened and set free remained within its husk as a dead thing, without voice or hearing. There was nothing else for it but to be ground into dust by the passing foot or to be picked up by the foraging birds.

The parable was at once a prophecy and an experience. Forming a part of the crowd which surrounded Jesus was an outer ring of hearers who came but to criticise and to cavil. They had no desire to be taught—at any rate by such a teacher. They were themselves the "knowing ones," the learned, and they looked with suspicion and ill-concealed scorn upon the youthful Nazarene. Turning upon the Speaker a cold questioning glance, or exchanging signals with



one another, they were evidently hostile to Jesus, listening, it is true, but with a feline alertness, hoping to entrap the sweet Singer in His speech. Upon these, and such as these, the word of God, even when spoken by the Divine Son, made no impression. It was a speaking to the rocks, with no other result than the awaking of a few echoes of mockery and banter.

The experience is still true. Among those who frequent the house of God are many whose worship is a cold, conventional thing. Drawn by custom, by the social instinct, or by the love of change, they pass within the gates of the Lord's house ostensibly to worship. But they are insincere, indifferent; they bring their body, and deposit it in the accustomed pew, but they might as well have put there a bag of ashes or an automaton of brass. Their mind is not here, and the cold, stolid features, unlighted by any passing gleam, tell too surely of a vacancy or vagrancy of thought. And even while the lips are throwing off mechanically "Jubilates" and "Te Deums" their heart is "far from Me," chasing some phantom "will o' the wisp," or dreaming their dreams of pleasure, gain, and ease. The worship of God they themselves would call it, but God does not recognise it. He calls their prayers a weariness, their incense an abomination. Theirs is but a worship of Self, as, setting up their image of clay, they summon earth's musicians to play their sweet airs about it. God, with them, is set back, ignored, proscribed. The personal "I" is writ so large, and is so all-pervasive, that there is no room for the I AM. Living for earth, all the fibres of their being growing downwards towards it, heaven is not even a cloud drifting across their distant vision; it is an empty space, a vacancy. To the voices of earth their ears are keenly sensitive; its very whispers thrill them with new excitements; but to the voices of Heaven they are deaf; the still, small voice is all unheard, and even the thunders of God are so muffled as to be unrecognised and scarcely audible. And so the word of God falls upon their ears in vain. It drops upon a soil that is impervious and antipathetic, a heart which knows no penitence, and a life whose fancied goodness has no room for mercy, or which finds such complete satisfaction in the gains of unrighteousness or the pleasures of sin that it is purposely and persistently deaf to all higher, holier voices. Ulysses filled his ears with wax, lest he should yield himself up to the enchantments of the sirens. The fable is true, even when read in reversed lines; for when Virtue, Purity, and Faith invite men to their resting-place, calling them to the Islands of the Blessed, and to the Paradise of God, they charm in vain. Deafening their ears, and not deigning to give a passing thought to the higher call, men drift past the heaven which might have been theirs, until these holier voices are silenced by the awful distance.

That the word of God is inoperative here is through no fault, either of the seed or of the sower. That word is still "quick and powerful," but it is sterile, because it finds nothing on which it may grow. It is not "understood," as Jesus Himself explains. It falls upon the outward ear alone, and there only as unmeaning sound, like the accents of some unknown tongue. And so the wicked one easily takes away the word from their heart; for, as the preposition itself implies, that word had not fallen into the heart; it was

lying on it in a superficial way, like the seed cast upon the trampled path.

Is there, then, no hope for these way-side hearers? and sparing our strength and toil, shall we leave them for soils more promising? By no means. The fallow ground may be broken up; the ploughshare can loosen the hardened, unproductive earth. Pulverised by the teeth of the harrow or the teeth of the frost, the barren track itself disappears; it passes up into the advanced classes, giving back the seed with which it is now entrusted, with a thirty, sixty; or a hundredfold increase. And this is true in the higher husbandry, in which we are permitted to be "God's fellow-workers." The heart which to-day is indifferent or repellent, to-morrow, chastened by sickness or torn by the ploughshare of some keen grief, may hail with eagerness the message it rejected and even scorned before. Amid the penury and shame of the far country, the father's house, from which he had wantonly turned, now comes to the prodigal like a sweet dream, and even its bread has all the aroma and sweetness of ambrosial food. No matter how disappointing the soil, we are to do our duty, which is to "sow beside all waters;" nor should any calculations of imaginary productiveness make us slack our hand or cast away our hope. When the Spirit is poured out from on high, even "the wilderness becomes as a fruitful field" and death itself becomes instinct with life.

"And other fell on the rock; and as soon as it grew it withered away, because it had no moisture." Here is a second quality of soil. It is not, however, a soil that is weakened by an intermixture of gravel or of stones, but rather a soil that is thinly spread upon the rock. It is good soil as far as it goes, but it is shallow. It receives the seed gladly, as if that were its one mission, as indeed it is; it gives the seed a hiding-place, throwing over it a mantle of earth, so that the birds shall not devour it. It lays its warm touch upon the enveloping husk, as the Master once laid His finger upon the bier, and to the imprisoned life which was within it said, "Arise and multiply. Pass up into the sunlight, and give God's children bread." And the seed responds, obeys. The emerging life throws out its two wings—one downwards as its roots clasp the soil; one upwards, as the blade, pushing the clods aside, makes for the light and the heavens that are above it. "Surely," we should say, if we read the future from the present merely, "the hundredfold is here. Pull down your barns and build greater, for never was seed received more kindly, never were the beginnings of life more auspicious, and never was promise so great." Ah that the promise should so soon be a disappointment, and the forecast be so soon belied! The soil has no depth. It is simply a thin covering spread over the rock. It offers no room for growth. The life it nourishes can be nothing more than an ephemeral life, which owns but a to-day, whose "to-morrow" will be in the oven of a burning heat. The growth is entirely superficial, for its roots come directly to the hard, impenetrable rock, which, yielding no support, but cutting off all supplies from the unseen reservoirs beneath, turns back the incipient life all starved and shrunken. The result is a sudden withering and decay. A foundling, left, not by some iron gate which the touch of mercy might open, but by a dead wall of cold, unresponsive stone, the plant throws up its arms into the air,



in its vain struggle for life, and then wilts and droops, lying at last, a dead and shrivelled thing, on the dry bosom of the earth which had given it its untimely birth.

Such, says Jesus, are many who hear the word. Unlike those by the way-side, these do not reject it. They listen, bending toward that word with attentive ears and eager hearts. Nay, they receive it with joy; it strikes upon their soul with the music of a new evangel. But the work is not thorough; it is superficial, external. They "have no root" in a deep and settled conviction, only a green blade of profession and of mock promise, and when the testing-time comes, as it comes to all, "the time of temptation," they fall away, or they "stand off," as the verb might be literally rendered.

In this second class we must place a large proportion of those who heard and who followed Jesus. There was something attractive about His manner and about His message. Again and again we read how they "pressed upon Him" to hear His words, the multitude hanging on His lips as the bees will cluster upon a honeyed leaf. Thousands upon thousands thus came within the spell of His voice, now wondering at His gracious words, and now stunned with astonishment, as they marked the authority with which He spoke, the compressed thunder that was in His tones. But in how many cases are we forced to admit the interest to be but momentary! It was with many—shall we say with most?—merely a passing excitement, the effervescence of personal contact. The words of Jesus came "as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice," and for the moment the hearts of the multitudes were set vibrating in responsive harmonies. But the music ceased when the Singer was absent. The impressions were not permanent, and even the emotions had soon passed away, almost from memory. St. John speaks of one sifting in Galilee when "many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him" (vi. 66), showing that with them at least it was an attachment rather than an attachment that bound them to Himself. The bond of union was the hope of some personal gain, rather than the bond of a pure and deep affection. And so directly He speaks of His approaching death, of His "flesh and blood" which He shall give them to eat and to drink, like an icy breath from the north, those words chill their devotion, turning their zeal and ardour into a cold indifference, if not into an open hostility. And this same winnowing of Galilee is repeated in Judæa. We read of multitudes who escorted Jesus down the Mount of Olives, strewing His path with garments, giving Him a royal welcome to the "city of the Great King." But how soon a change "came o'er the spirit of their dream"! how soon the hosannahs died away! As a hawk in the sky will still in a moment the warbling of the birds, so the uplifted cross threw its cold shadow upon their hearts, drowning the brief hosannahs in a strange silence. The cross was the fan in the Master's hand, with which He "thoroughly purged His floor," separating the true from the false. It blew away into the deep Valley of Oblivion the chaff, the dead superficialities, the barren yawns, leaving as the residuum of the sifted multitudes a mere handful of a hundred and twenty names.

These *pro tem.* believers are indigenous to every soil. There never is a great movement afloat—philanthropic, political, or spiritual—but number-

less smaller craft are lifted up on its swell. For a moment they seem instinct with life, but having no propelling power in themselves, they drop behind, soon to be embedded in the mire. And especially is this true in the region of spiritual dynamics. In all so-called "revivals" of religion, when the Church rejoices in a deepened and quickened life, when a cooling zeal has been rewarmed at the heavenly fires, and converts are multiplied, in the accessions which follow almost invariably will be found a proportion of what we may call "casuals." We cannot say they are counterfeits, for the work, as far as it goes, seems real, and the change, both in their thought and life, is clearly marked. But they are unstable souls, prone to drifting, their direction given in the main by the set of the current in which they happen to be. And so when they reach the point—which all must reach sooner or later—where two seas meet, the cross current of enticement and temptation bears hard upon them, and they make shipwreck of faith. Others, again, are led by impulse. Religion with them is mainly a matter of feeling. Overlooking the fact that the emotions are easily stirred, that they respond to the passing breath just as the sea ripples to the breeze, they substitute emotion for conviction, feeling for faith. But these have no foundation, no root, no independent life, and when the excitements on which they feed are withdrawn, when the emotion subsides, the high tide of fervour falling back to its mean sea-level, they lose heart and hope. They are even ready to pity themselves as the objects of an illusion. But the illusion was one of their own making. They set the pleasant before the right, delight before duty, comfort before Christ, and instead of finding their heaven in doing the will of God, no matter what the emotions, they sought their heaven in their own personal happiness, and so they missed both.

"They endure for a while." And of how many are these words true! Verily we must not count our fruits from the blossoms of spring, nor must we reckon our harvest in that easy, hopeful way of multiplying each seed, or even each blade, by the hundredfold, for the blade may be only a short-lived blade and nothing more.

"And other fell amidst the thorns; and the thorns grew with it, and choked it." Here is a third quality of soil in the ascending series. In the first, the trampled path, life was not possible; the seed could find not the least response. In the second there was life. The thinly sprinkled soil gave the seed a home, a rooting; but lacking depth of earth and the necessary moisture, the life was precarious, ephemeral. It died away in the blade, and never reached its fruitage. Now, however, we have a deeper, richer soil, with an abundance of vitality, one capable of sustaining an exuberant life. But it is not clean; it is already thickly sown with thorns, and the two growths running up side by side, the hardier gets the mastery. And though the corn-life struggles up into the ear, bearing a sort of fruit, it is a grain that is dwarfed and shrivelled, a mere husk and shell, which no leaven can transmute into bread. It brings forth fruit, as the exposition of the parable indicates, but it has not strength to complete its task; it does not ripen it, bringing the fruit "to perfection."

Such, says Jesus, is another and a large class of hearers. They are naturally capable of doing great things. Possessing strong wills, and a



large amount of energy, they are just the lives to be fruitful, impressing themselves upon others, and so throwing their manifold influence down into the future. But they do not, and for the simple reason that they do not give to the word a whole heart. Their attentions and energies are divided. Instead of seeking "first the kingdom of God," making that the supreme quest of life, it is with them but one of many things to be desired and sought. Chief among the hindrances to a perfected growth and fruitfulness, Jesus mentions three; namely, cares, riches, and pleasures. By the "cares of life" we must understand—interpreting the word by its related word in Matthew vi. 34—the anxieties of life. It is the anxious thought, mainly about the "to-morrow," which presses upon the heart as a sore and constant burden. It is the fearfulness and unrest of soul which gloom the spirit and shroud the life, making the Divine peace itself a fret and worry. And how many Christians find this to be the normal experience! They love God, they seek to serve Him; but they are weighted and weary. Instead of having the hopeful, buoyant spirit which rises to the crest of passing waves, it is a heart depressed and sad, living in the deeps. And so the brightness of their life is dimmed; they walk not "in the light, as He is in the light," but beneath a sky frequently overcast, their days bringing only "a little glooming light, much like a shade." And so their spiritual life is stunted, their usefulness impaired. Instead of having a heart "at leisure from itself," they are engrossed with their own unsatisfactory experiences. Instead of looking upwards to the heavens which are their own, or outwards upon the crying needs of earth, they look inward with frequent and morbid introspection; and instead of lending a hand to the fallen, that a brotherly touch might help them to rise, their hands find full employment in steadying the world, or worlds, of care which, Atlas-like, they are doomed to carry. Self-doomed, we should have said; for the Divine Voice invites us to cast "all our anxiety upon Him," assuring us that He careth for us, an assurance and an invitation which make our anxieties, the fret and fever of life, altogether superfluous.

Exactly the same effect of making the spiritual life incomplete, and so unproductive, is caused by riches and pleasures, or, as we might render the expression, by the pursuit after riches or after pleasure. Not that the Scriptures condemn wealth in itself. It is, *per se*, of a neutral character, whether a blessing or a bane depends on how it is earned and how it is held. Nor do the Scriptures condemn legitimate modes and measures of business; they condemn waste and indolence, but they commend industry, diligence, thrift. But the evil is in making wealth the chief aim of life. It is deceptive, promising satisfaction which it never gives, creating a thirst which it is powerless to slake, until the desire, ever more greedy and clamorous, grows into a "love of money," a pure worship of Mammon. Religion and business may well go together, for God has joined them in one. Each keeping its proper place, religion first and most, and business a far-off second, together they are the centrifugal and centripetal forces that keep the life revolving steadily around its Divine centre. But let the position be reversed; let business be the first, chief thought, let religion sink down to some second or third place, and the life swings farther

and farther from its pivotal centre, into wildernesses of dearth and cold. To give due thought to earthly things is right; nay, we may give all diligence to make our earthly, as well as our heavenly calling sure; but when business gets imperious in its demands, swallowing up all our thought and energy, leaving no time for spiritual exercises or for personal service for Christ, then the religious life declines. Crowded back into the chance corners, with nothing left it but the brief interstices of a busy life, religion can do little more than maintain a profession; its helpfulness is, in the main, remitted to the past, and its fruitfulness is postponed to that uncertain nowhere of the Greek calends.

The same is true with regard to the pleasures of life. The word "pleasure" is a somewhat infrequent word in the New Testament, and generally it is used of the lower, sensual pleasures. We are not obliged, however, to give the word its lowest meaning; indeed, the analogy of the parable would scarcely allow such an interpretation. Sinful pleasure would not check growth; it would simply prevent it, making a spiritual life impossible. We must therefore interpret the "pleasures" which retard the upward growth, and render it infertile, as the lawful pleasures of life, such as the delights of the eye and ear, the gratification of the tastes, the enjoyments of domestic or social life. Perfectly innocent and pure in themselves, purposely designed for our enjoyment, as St. Paul plainly intimates (1 Tim. vi. 17), they are pleasures which we have no right to treat with the stoic's disdain, nor with the ascetic's aversion. But the snare is in permitting these desires to step out of their proper place, in allowing them to have a controlling influence. As servants their ministry is helpful and benign; but if we make them "lords," then, like "the ill uses of a life," we find it difficult to put them down; they rather put us down, making us their thrall. To please God should be the one absorbing pursuit and passion of life, and wholly bent on this, if other pure enjoyments come in our way we may receive them thankfully. But if we make our personal gratification the aim, if our thoughts and plans are set on this rather than upon the pleasing of God, then our spiritual life is enfeebled and stifled, and the fruit we should bear shrivels up into chaff. Then we become selfish and self-willed, and the pure pleasures of life, which like Vestal Virgins minister within the temple of God, leading us ever to Him, turn round to burn perpetual incense before our enlarged and exalted Self. He who stops to confer with flesh and blood, who is ever consulting his own likes and leanings, can never be an apostle to others.

"And other fell into the good ground, and grew, and brought forth fruit a hundredfold." Here is the highest quality of soil. Not hard, like the trampled path, nor shallow, like the covering of the rock, not preoccupied with the roots of other growths, this is mellow, deep, clean, and rich. The seed falls, not "by," or "in," or "among," but "into" it, while seed and soil together grow in an affluence of life, and passing through the blade-age and the earing, it ripens into a harvest of a hundredfold. Such, says Jesus, are they who, in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, hold it fast, and bring forth fruit with patience. Here, then, we reach the germ of the parable, the secret of



fruitfulness. The one difference between the saint and the sinner, between the hundredfold hearer and him whose life is spent in throwing out promises of a harvest which never ripens, is their different attitude towards the word of God. In the one case that word is rejected altogether, or it is a concept of the mind alone, an aurora of the Arctic night, distant and cold, which some mistake for the dawn of a new day. In the other the word passes through the mind into the deepest heart; it conquers and rules the whole being; it becomes a part of one's very self, the soul of the soul. "Thy word have I hid in my heart," said the Psalmist, and he who puts the Divine word there, back of all earthly and selfish voices, letting that Divine Voice fill up that most sacred temple of the heart, will make his outer life both beautiful and fruitful. He will walk the earth as one of God's seers, ever beholding Him who is invisible, speaking by life or lips in heavenly tones, and by his own steadfast, upward gaze lifting the hearts and thoughts of men "above the world's uncertain haze." Such is the Divine law of life; the measure of our faith is the measure of our fruitfulness. If we but half believe in the promises of God or in the eternal realities, then the sinews of our soul are houghed, and there comes over us the sad paralysis of doubt. How can we bring forth fruit except we abide in Him? and how can we abide in Him but by letting His words abide in us? But having His words abiding in us, then His peace, His joy, His life are ours, and we, who without Him are poor, dead things, now become strong in His infinite strength, and fruitful with a Divine fruitfulness; and to our lives, which were all barren and dead, will men come for the words that "help and heal," while the Master Himself gathers from them His thirty, sixty, or hundredfold, the fruitage of a whole-hearted, patient faith.

Let us take heed, therefore, how we hear, for on the character of the hearing depends the character of the life. Nor is the truth given us for ourselves alone; it is given that it may become incarnate with us, so that others may see and feel the truth that is in us, even as men cannot help seeing the light which is manifest.

And so the parable closes with the account of the visit of His mother and brethren, who came, as St. Matthew informs us, "to take Him home;" and when the message was passed on to Him that His mother and His brethren wished to see Him, this was His remarkable answer, claiming relationship with all whose hearts vibrate to the same "word": "My mother and My brethren are those which hear the word of God, and do it." It is the secret of the Divine life on earth; they hear, and they do.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

IN considering the words of Jesus, if we may not be able to measure their depth or to scale their height, we can with absolute certainty discover their drift, and see in what direction they move, and we shall find that their orbit is an ellipse. Moving around the two centres, sin and salvation, they describe what is not a geometric figure, but a glorious reality, "the kingdom of

God." It is not unlikely that the expression was one of the current phrases of the times, a golden casket, holding within it the dream of a restored Hebraism; for we find, without any collusion or rehearsal of parts, the Baptist making use of the identical words in his inaugural address, while it is certain the disciples themselves so misunderstood the thought of their Master as to refer His "kingdom" to that narrow realm of Hebrew sympathies and hopes. Nor did they see their error until, in the light of Pentecostal flames, their own dream disappeared, and the new kingdom, opening out like a receding sky, embraced a world within its folds. That Jesus adopted the phrase, liable to misconstruction as it was, and that He used it so repeatedly, making it the centre of so many parables and discourses, shows how completely the kingdom of God possessed both His mind and heart. Indeed, so accustomed were His thoughts and words to flow in this direction that even the Valley of Death, "lying darkly between" His two lives, could not alter their course, or turn His thoughts out of their familiar channel; and as we find the Christ back of the cross and tomb, amid the resurrection glories, we hear Him speaking still of "the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."

It will be observed that Jesus uses the two expressions "the kingdom of God" and "the kingdom of heaven" interchangeably. But in what sense is it the "kingdom of heaven"? Does it mean that the celestial realm will so far extend its bounds as to embrace our out-lying and low-lying world? Not exactly, for the conditions of the two realms are so diverse. The one is the perfected, the visible kingdom, where the throne is set, and the King Himself is manifest, its citizens, angels, heavenly intelligences, and saints now freed from the cumbering clay of mortality, and for ever safe from the solicitations of evil. This New Jerusalem does not come down to earth, except in the vision of the seer, as it were in a shadow. And yet the two kingdoms are in close correspondence, after all; for what is the kingdom of God in heaven but His eternal rule over the spirits of the redeemed and of the unredeemed? what are the harmonies of heaven but the harmonies of surrendered wills, as, without any hesitation or discord, they strike in with the Divine Will in absolute precision? To this extent, then, at least, heaven may project itself upon earth; the spirits of men not yet made perfect may be in subjection to the Supreme Spirit; the separate wills of a redeemed humanity, striking in with the Divine Will, may swell the heavenly harmonies with their earthly music.

And so Jesus speaks of this kingdom as being "within you." As if He said, "You are looking in the wrong direction. You expect the kingdom of God to be set up around you, with its visible symbols of flags and coins, on which is the image of some new Cæsar. You are mistaken. The kingdom, like its King, is unseen; it seeks, not countries, but consciences; its realm is in the heart, in the great interior of the soul." And is not this the reason why it is called, with such emphatic repetition, "the kingdom," as if it were, if not the only, at any rate the highest kingdom of God on earth? We speak of a kingdom of Nature, and who will know its secrets as He who was both Nature's child and Nature's Lord? And how far-reach-



ing a realm is that! from the motes that swim in the air to the most distant stars, which themselves are but the gateway to the unseen Beyond! What forces are here, forces of chemical affinities and repulsions, of gravitation and of life! What successions and transformations can Nature show! what infinite varieties of substance, form, and colour! what a realm of harmony and peace, with no irruptions of discordant elements! Surely one would think, if God has a kingdom upon earth, this kingdom of Nature is it. But no; Jesus does not often refer to that, except as He makes Nature speak in His parables, or as He uses the sparrows, the grass, and the lilies as so many lenses through which our weak human vision may see God. The kingdom of God on earth is as much higher than the kingdom of Nature as spirit is above matter, as love is more and greater than power.

We said just now how completely the thought of "the kingdom" possessed the mind and heart of Jesus. We might go one step farther, and say how completely Jesus identified Himself with that kingdom. He puts Himself in its pivotal centre, with all possible naturalness, and with an ease that assumption cannot feign. He gathers up its royalties and draws them around His own Person. He speaks of it as "My kingdom"; and this, not alone in familiar discourse with His disciples, but when face to face with the representative of earth's greatest power. Nor is the personal pronoun some chance word, used in a far-off, accommodated sense; it is the crucial word of the sentence, underscored and emphasised by a threefold repetition; it is the word He will not strike out, nor recall, even to save Himself from the Cross. He never speaks of the kingdom but even His enemies acknowledge the "authority" that rings in His tones, the authority of conscious power, as well as of perfect knowledge. When His ministry is drawing to a close He says to Peter, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven;" which language may be understood as the official designation of the Apostle Peter to a position of pre-eminence in the Church, as its first leader. But whatever it may mean, it shows that the keys of the kingdom are His; He can bestow them on whom He will. The kingdom of heaven is not a realm in which authority and honours move upwards from below, the blossoming of "the people's will"; it is an absolute monarchy, an autocracy, and Jesus Himself is here King supreme, His will swaying the lesser wills of men, and rearranging their positions, as the angel had foretold: "He shall reign over the house of David for ever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end." Given Him of the Father it is (xxii. 29; i. 32), but the kingdom is His, not either as a metaphor, but really, absolutely, inalienably; nor is there admittance within that kingdom but by Him who is the Way, as He is the Life. We enter into the kingdom, or the kingdom enters into us, as we find, and then crown the King, as we sanctify in our hearts "Christ as Lord" (1 Peter iii. 15).

This brings us to the question of citizenship, the conditions and demands of the kingdom; and here we see how far this new dynasty is removed from the kingdoms of this world. They deal with mankind in groups; they look at birth, not character; and their bounds are well defined by rivers, mountains, seas, or by accurately surveyed lines. The kingdom of heaven, on the

other hand, dispenses with all space-limits, all physical configurations, and regards mankind as one group, a unity, a lapsed but a redeemed world. But while opening its gates and offering its privileges to all alike, irrespective of class or circumstance, it is most eclectic in its requirements, and most rigid in the application of its test, its one test of character. Indeed, the laws of the heavenly kingdom are a complete reversal of the lines of worldly policy. Take, for instance, the two estimates of wealth, and see how different the position it occupies in the two societies. The world makes wealth its *summum bonum*; or if not exactly in itself the highest good, in commercial values it is equivalent to the highest good, which is position. Gold is all-powerful, the goal of man's vain ambitions, the panacea of earthly ill. Men chase it in hot, feverish haste, trampling upon each other in the mad scramble, and worshipping it in a blind idolatry. But where is wealth in the new kingdom? The world's first becomes the last. It has no purchasing-power here; its golden key cannot open the least of these heavenly gates. Jesus sets it back, far back, in His estimate of the good. He speaks of it as if it were an encumbrance, a dead weight, that must be lifted, and that handicaps the heavenly athlete. "How hardly," said Jesus, when the rich ruler turned away "very sorrowful," "shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God" (xviii. 24); and then, by way of illustration, He shows us the picture of the camel passing through the so-called "needle's eye" of an Eastern door. He does not say that such a thing is impossible, for the camel could pass through the "needle's eye," but it must first kneel down and be stripped of all its baggage, before it can pass the narrow door, within the larger, but now closed gate. Wealth may have its uses, and noble uses too, within the kingdom—for it is somewhat remarkable how the faith of the two rich disciples shone out the brightest, when the faith of the rest suffered a temporary eclipse from the passing cross—but he who possesses it must be as if he possessed it not. He must not regard it as his own, but as talents given him in trust by his Lord, their image and superscription being that of the Invisible King.

Again, Jesus sets down vacillation, hesitancy, as a disqualification for citizenship in His kingdom. At the close of His Galilean ministry our Evangelist introduces us to a group of embryo disciples. The first of the three says, "Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest" (ix. 57). Bold words they were, and doubtless well meant, but it was the language of a passing impulse, rather than of a settled conviction; it was the coruscation of a glowing, ardent temperament. He had not counted the cost. The large word "whithersoever" might, indeed, easily be spoken, but it held within it a Gethsemane and a Calvary, paths of sorrow, shame, and death he was not prepared to face. And so Jesus neither welcomed nor dismissed him, but opening out one part of his "whithersoever," He gave it back to him in the words, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." The second responds to the "Follow Me" of Christ with the request that he might be allowed first to go and bury his father. It was a most natural request, but participation in these funeral rites



would entail a ceremonial uncleanness of seven days, by which time Jesus would be far away. Besides, Jesus must teach him, and the ages after him, that His claims were paramount; that when He commands obedience must be instant and absolute, with no interventions, no postponement. Jesus replies to him in that enigmatical way of His, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but go thou and publish abroad the kingdom of God;" indicating that this supreme crisis of his life is virtually a passing from death to life, a "resurrection from earth to things above." The last in this group of three volunteers his pledge, "I will follow Thee, Lord; but first suffer me to bid farewell to them that are at my house" (ix. 61); but to him Jesus replies, mournfully and sorrowfully, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (ix. 62). Why does Jesus treat these two candidates so differently? They both say, "I will follow Thee," the one in word, the other by implication; they both request a little time for what they regard a filial duty; why, then, be treated so differently, the one thrust forward to a still higher service, commissioned to preach the kingdom, and afterwards, if we may accept the tradition that he was Philip the Evangelist, passing up into the diaconate; the other, unwelcomed and uncommissioned, but disapproved as "not fit for the kingdom"? Why there should be this wide divergence between the two lives we cannot see, either from their manner or their words. It must have been a difference in the moral attitude of the two men, and which He who heard thoughts and read motives detected at once. In the case of the former there was the fixed, determined resolve, which the bier of the dead father might hold back a little, but which it could not break or bend. But Jesus saw in the other a double-minded soul, whose feet and heart moved in diverse, opposite ways, who gave, not his whole, but a very partial, self to his work; and this halting, wavering one He dismissed with the words of forecasted doom, "Not fit for the kingdom of God."

It is a hard saying, with a seeming severity about it; but is it not a truth universal and eternal? Are any kingdoms, either of knowledge or power, won and held by the irresolute and wavering? Like the stricken men of Sodom, they weary themselves to find the door of the kingdom; or if they do see the Beautiful Gates of a better life, they sit with the lame man, outside, or they linger on the steps, hearing the music indeed, but hearing it from afar. It is a truth of both dispensations, written in all the books; the Reubens who are "unstable as water" can never excel; the elder born, in the accident of years, they may be, but the birth-right passes by them, to be inherited and enjoyed by others.

But if the gates of the kingdom are irrevocably closed against the half-hearted, the self-indulgent, and the proud, there is a sesame to which they open gladly. "Blessed are ye poor," so reads the first and great Beatitude: "for yours is the kingdom of God" (vi. 20); and beginning with this present realisation, Jesus goes on to speak of the strange contrasts and inversions the perfected kingdom will show, when the weepers will laugh, the hungry be full, and those who are despised and persecuted will rejoice in their exceeding great reward. But who

are the "poor" to whom the gates of the kingdom are open so soon and so wide? At first sight it would appear as if we must give a literal interpretation to the word, reading it in a worldly, temporal sense; but this is not necessary. Jesus was now directly addressing His disciples (vi. 20), though, doubtless, His words were intended to pass beyond them, to those ever-enlarging circles of humanity who in the after-years should press forward to hear Him. But evidently the disciples were in no weeping mood to-day; they would be elated and joyful over the recent miracles. Neither should we call them "poor," in the worldly sense of that word, for most of them had been called from honourable positions in society, while some had even "hired servants" to wait upon them and assist them. Indeed, it was not the wont of Jesus to recognise the class distinctions Society was so fond of drawing and defining. He appraised men, not by their means, but by the manhood which was in them; and when He found a nobility of soul—whether in the higher or the lower walks of life it made no difference—He stepped forward to recognise and to salute it. We must therefore give to these words of Jesus, as to so many others, the deeper meaning, making the "blessed" of this Beatitude, who are now welcomed to the opened gate of the kingdom, the "poor in spirit," as, indeed, St. Matthew writes it.

What this spirit-poverty is, Jesus Himself explains, in a brief but wonderfully realistic parable. He draws for us the picture of two men at their Temple devotions. The one, a Pharisee, stands erect, with head uplifted, as if it were quite on a level with the heaven he was addressing, and with supercilious pride he counts his beads of rounded egotisms. He calls it a worship of God, when it is but a worship of self. He inflates the great "I," and then plays upon it, making it strike sharp and loud, like the *tom-tom* of a heathen fetish. Such is the man who fancies that he is rich toward God, that he has need of nothing, not even of mercy, when all the time he is utterly blind and miserably poor. The other is a publican, and so presumably rich. But how different his posture! With heart broken and contrite, self with him is a nothing, a zero; nay, in his lowly estimate it had become a minus quantity, less than nothing, deserving only rebuke and chastisement. Disclaiming any good, either inherent or acquired, he puts the deep need and hunger of his soul into one broken cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (xviii. 13). Such are the two characters Jesus portrays as standing by the gate of the kingdom, the one proud in spirit, the other "poor in spirit"; the one throwing upon the heavens the shadow of his magnified self, the other shrinking up into the pauper, the nothing that he was. But Jesus tells us that he was "justified," accepted, rather than the other. With nought he could call his own, save his deep need and his great sin, he finds an opened gate and a welcome within the kingdom; while the proud spirit is sent empty away, or carrying back only the tithed mint and anise, and all the vain oblations Heaven could not accept.

"Blessed" indeed are such "poor"; for He giveth grace unto the lowly, while the proud He knoweth afar off. The humble, the meek, these shall inherit the earth, aye, and the heavens too, and they shall know how true is the para-



dox, having nothing, yet possessing all things. The fruit of the tree of life hangs low, and he must stoop who would gather it. He who would enter God's kingdom must first become "as a little child," knowing nothing as yet, but longing to know even the mysteries of the kingdom, and having nothing but the plea of a great mercy and a great need. And are they not "blessed" who are citizens of the kingdom—with righteousness, peace, and joy all their own, a peace which is perfect and Divine, and a joy which no man taketh from them? Are they not blessed, thrice blessed, when the bright shadow of the Throne covers all their earthly life, making its dark places light, and weaving rainbows out of their very tears? He who through the strait gate of repentance passes within the kingdom finds it "the kingdom of heaven" indeed, his earthly years the beginnings of the heavenly life.

And now we touch a point Jesus ever loved to illustrate and emphasise, the manner of the kingdom's growth, as with ever-widening frontiers it sweeps outward in its conquest of a world. It was a beautiful dream of Hebrew prophecy that in the latter days the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of the Messiah, should overlap the bounds of human empires, and ultimately cover the whole earth. Looking through her kaleidoscope of ever-shifting but harmonious figures, Prophecy was never weary of telling of the Golden Age she saw in the far future, when the shadows would lift, and a new Dawn, breaking out of Jerusalem, would steal over the world. Even the Gentiles should be drawn to its light, and kings to the brightness of its rising; the seas should offer their abundance as a willing tribute, and the isles should wait for and welcome its laws. Taking up into itself the petty strifes and jealousies of men, the discords of earth should cease; humanity should again become a unit, restored and regenerate fellow-citizens of the new kingdom, the kingdom which should have no end, no boundaries either of space or time.

Such was the dream of Prophecy, the kingdom Jesus sets Himself to found and realise upon earth. But how? Disclaiming any rivalry with Pilate, or with his imperial master, Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world," so lifting it altogether out of the mould in which earthly dynasties are cast. "This world" uses force; its kingdoms are won and held by metallic processes, tinctures of iron and steel. In the kingdom of God carnal weapons are out of place; its only forces are truth and love, and he who takes the sword to advance this cause wounds but himself, after the vain manner of Baal's priests. "This world" counts heads or hands; the kingdom of God numbers its citizens by hearts alone. "This world" believes in pomp and show, in outward visibilities and symbols; the kingdom of God cometh not "with observation"; its voices are gentle as a zephyr, its footsteps noiseless as the coming of spring. If man had had the ordering of the kingdom he would have summoned to his aid all kinds of portents and surprises: he would have arranged processions of imposing events; but Jesus likens the coming of the kingdom to a grain of mustard cast into a garden, or to a

handful of leaven hid in three *sata* of meal. The two parables, with minor distinctions, are one in their import, the leading thought common to both being the contrast between its ultimate growth and the smallness and obscurity of its beginnings. In both the recreative force is a hidden force, buried out of sight, in the soil or in the meal. In both the force works outward from its centre, the invisible becoming visible, the inner life assuming an outer, external form. In both we see the touch of life upon death; for left to itself, the soil never would be anything more than dead earth, as the meal would be nothing more than dust, the broken ashes of a life that was departed. In both there is extension by assimilation, the leaven throwing itself out among the particles of kindred meal, while the tree attracts to itself the kindred elements of the soil. In both there is the mediation of the human hand; but as if to show that the kingdom offers equal privilege to male and female, with like possibilities of service, the one parable shows us the hand of a man, the other the hand of a woman. In both there is a perfect work, a consummation, the one parable showing us the whole mass leavened, the other showing us the widespreading tree, with the birds nesting in its branches.

Such, in outline, is the rise and progress of the kingdom of God in the heart of the individual man, and in the world; for the human soul is the protoplasm, the germ-cell, out of which this world-wide kingdom is evolved. The mass is leavened only by the leavening of the separate units. And how comes the kingdom of God within the soul and life of man? Not with observation or supernatural portents, but silently as the flashing forth of light. Thought, desire, purpose, prayer—these are the wheels of the chariot in which the Lord comes to His temple, the King into His kingdom. And when the kingdom of God is set up "within you" the outer life shapes itself to the new purpose and aim, the writ and will of the King running unhindered through every department, even to its outmost frontier, while thoughts, feelings, desires, and all the golden coinage of the heart bear, not, as before, the image of Self, but the image and superscription of the Invisible King—the "Not I, but Christ."

And so the honour of the kingdom is in our keeping, as the growths of the kingdom are in our hands. The Divine Cloud adjusts its pace to our human steps, alas, often far too slow! Shall the leaven stop with us, as we make religion a kind of sanctified selfishness, doing nothing but gauging the emotions and singing its little doxologies? Do we forget that the weak human hand carries the Ark of God, and pushes forward the boundaries of the kingdom? Do we forget that hearts are only won by hearts? The kingdom of God on earth is the kingdom of surrendered wills and of consecrated lives. Shall we not, then, pray, "Thy kingdom come," and living "more nearly as we pray," seek a redeemed humanity as subjects of our King? So will the Divine purpose become a realisation, and the "morning" which now is always "somewhere in the world" will be everywhere, the promise and the dawn of a heavenly day, the eternal Sabbath!



## CHAPTER XVI.

## THE MIRACLES OF HEALING.

It is only natural that our Evangelist should linger with a professional as well as a personal interest over Christ's connection with human suffering and disease, and that in recounting the miracles of healing He should be peculiarly at home; the theme would be in such thorough accord with his studies and tastes. It is true he does not refer to these miracles as being a fulfilment of prophecy; it is left for St. Matthew, who weaves his Gospel on the unfinished warp of the Old Testament, to recall the words of Isaiah, how "Himself took our infirmities and bare our diseases"; yet our physician-Evangelist evidently lingers over the pathological side of his Gospel with an intense interest. St. John passes by the miracles of healing in comparative silence, though he stays to give us two cases which are omitted by the Synoptists—that of the nobleman's son at Capernaum, and that of the impotent man at Bethesda. But St. John's Gospel moves in more ethereal spheres, and the touches he chronicles are rather the touches of mind with mind, spirit with spirit, than the physical touches through the coarser medium of the flesh. The Synoptists, however, especially in their earlier chapters, bring the works of Christ into prominence, travelling, too, very much over the same ground, though each introduces some special facts omitted by the rest, while in their record of the same fact each Evangelist throws some additional colouring.

Grouping together the miracles of healing—for our space will not allow a separate treatment of each—our thought is first arrested by the variety of forms in which suffering and disease presented themselves to Jesus, the wideness of the ground, physical and psychical, the miracles of healing cover. Our Evangelist mentions fourteen different cases, not, however, as including the whole, or even the greater part, but rather as being typical, representative cases. They are, as it were, the nearer constellations, localised and named; but again and again in his narrative we find whole groups and clusters lying farther back, making a sort of Milky Way of light, whose thickly clustered worlds baffle all our attempts at enumeration. Such are the "women" of chap. viii. ver. 2, who had been healed of their infirmities, but whose record is omitted in the Gospel story; and such, too, are those groups of cures mentioned in chapters iv. 40, v. 15, vi. 19, and vii. 21, when the Divine power seemed to culminate, throwing itself out in a largesse of blessing, fairly raining down its bright gifts of healing like meteoric showers.

Turning now to the typical cases mentioned by St. Luke, they are as follows: the man possessed of an unclean demon; Peter's wife's mother, who was sick of a fever; a leper, a paralytic, the man with the withered hand, the servant of the centurion, the demoniac, the woman with an issue, the boy possessed with a demon, the man with a dumb demon, the woman with an infirmity, the man with the dropsy, the ten lepers, and blind Bartimæus. The list, like so many lines of dark meridians, measures off the entire circumference of the world of suffering, beginning with the withered hand, and going on and down to that "sacrament of death," leprosy, and to that yet further deep, demoniacal

possession. Some diseases were of more recent origin, as the case of fever: others were chronic, of twelve or eighteen years' standing, or life-long, as in the case of the possessed boy. In some a solitary organ was affected, as when the hand had withered, or the tongue was tied by some power of evil, or the eyes had lost their gift of vision. In others the whole person was diseased, as when the fires of the fever shot through the heated veins, or the leprosy was covering the flesh with the white scales of death. But whatever its nature or its stage, the disease was acute, as far as human probabilities went, past all hope of healing. It was no slight attack, but a "great fever" which had stricken down the mother-in-law of Peter, the intensive adjective showing that it had reached its danger point. And where among human means was there hope for a restored vision, when for years the last glimmer of light had faded away, when even the optic nerve was atrophied by the long disuse? and where, among the limited pharmacopœias of ancient times, or even among the vastly extended lists of modern times, was there a cure for the leper, who carried, burned into his very flesh, his sentence of death? No, it was not the trivial, temporary cases of sickness Jesus took in hand; but He passed into that innermost shrine of the temple of suffering, the shrine that lay in perpetual night, and over whose doorway was the inscription of Dante's "Inferno," "All hope abandon, ye who enter here!" But when Jesus entered this grim abode He turned its darkness to light, its sighs to songs, bringing hope to despairing ones and leading back into the light of day these captives of Death, as Orpheus is fabled to have brought back to earth the lost Eurydice.

And not only are the cases so varied in their character, and humanly speaking, hopeless in their nature, but they were presented to Jesus in such a diversity of ways. They are none of them arranged for, studied. They could not have formed any plan or routine of mercy, nor were they timed for the purpose of producing spectacular effects. They were nearly all of them impromptu, extemporaneous events, coming without His seeking, and coming often as interruptions to His own plans. Now it is in the synagogue, in the pauses of public worship, that Jesus rebukes an unclean devil, or He bids the cripple stretch out his withered hand. Now it is in the city, amid the crowd, or out upon the plain; now it is within the house of a chief Pharisee, in the very midst of an entertainment; while at other times He is walking on the road, when, without even stopping in His journey, He wills the leper clean, or He throws the gift of life and health forward to the centurion's servant, whom He has not seen. No times were inopportune to Him, and no places were foreign to the Son of man, where men suffered and pain abode. Jesus refused no request on the ground that the time was not well chosen, and though He did again and again refuse the request of selfish interest or vain ambition, He never once turned a deaf ear to the cry of sorrow or of pain, no matter when or whence it came.

And if we consider His methods of healing we find the same diversity. Perhaps we ought not to use that word, for there was a singular absence of method. There was nothing set, artificial in His way, but an easy freedom, a beautiful naturalness. In one respect, and perhaps in



one only, are all similar, and that is in the absence of intermediaries. There was no use of means, no prescription of remedies; for in the seeming exception, the clay with which He anointed the eyes of the blind, and the waters of Siloam which He prescribed, were not remedial in themselves; the washing was rather the test of the man's faith, while the anointing was a sort of "aside," spoken, not to the man himself, but to the group of onlookers, preparing them for the fresh manifestation of His power. Generally a word was enough, though we read of His healing "touch," and twice of the symbolic laying on of hands. And by the way, it is somewhat singular that Jesus made use of the touch at the healing of the leper, when the touch meant ceremonial uncleanness. Why does He not speak the word only, as He did afterwards at the healing of the "ten"? And why does He, as it were, go out of His way to put Himself in personal contact with the leper, who was under a ceremonial ban? Was it not to show that a new era had dawned, an era in which uncleanness should be that of the heart, the life, and no longer the outward uncleanness, which any accident of contact might induce? Did not the touching of the leper mean the abrogation of the multiplied bans of the Old Dispensation, just as afterwards a heavenly vision coming to Peter wiped out the dividing-line between clean and unclean meats? And why did not the touch of the leper make Jesus ceremonially unclean? for we do not read that it did, or that He altered His plans one whit because of it. Perhaps we find our answer in the Levitical regulations respecting the leprosy. We read (Lev. xiv. 28) that at the cleansing of the leper the priest was to dip his right finger in the blood and in the oil, and put it on the ear, and hand, and foot of the person cleansed. The finger of the priest was thus the index or sign of purity, the lifting up of the ban which his leprosy had put around and over him. And when Jesus touched the leper it was the priestly touch; it carried its own cleansing with it, imparting power and purity, instead of contracting the defilement of another.

But if Jesus touched the leper, and permitted the woman of Capernaum to touch Him, or at any rate His garment, He studiously avoided any personal contact with those possessed of devils. He recognised here the presence of evil spirits, the powers of darkness, which have enthralled the weaker human spirit, and for these a word is enough. But how different a word to His other words of healing, when He said to the leper, "I will; be thou clean," and to Bartimæus, "Receive thy sight"! Now it is a word sharp, imperative, not spoken to the poor helpless victim, but thrown over and beyond him, to the dark personality, which held a human soul in a vile, degrading bondage. And so while the possessed boy lay writhing and foaming on the ground, Jesus laid no hand upon him; it was not till after He had spoken the mighty word, and the demon had departed from him, that Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up.

But whether by word or by touch, the miracles were wrought with consummate ease; there were none of those artistic flourishes which mere performers use as a blind to cover their sleight of hand. There was no straining for effect, no apparent effort. Jesus Himself seemed perfectly unconscious that He was doing anything marvel-

lous or even unusual. The words of power fell naturally from His lips, like the falling of leaves from the tree of life, carrying, wheresoever they might go, healing for the nations.

But if the method of the cures is wonderful, the unstudied ease and simple naturalness of the Healer, the completeness of the cures is even more so. In all the multitudes of cases there was no failure. We find the disciples baffled and chagrined, attempting what they cannot perform, as with the possessed boy; but with Jesus failure was an impossible word. Nor did Jesus simply make them better, bringing them into a state of convalescence, and so putting them in the way of getting well. The cure was instant and complete; "immediately" is St. Luke's frequent and favourite word; so much so that she who half an hour ago was stricken down with malignant fever, and apparently at the point of death, now is going about her ordinary duties as if nothing had happened, "ministering" to Peter's many guests. Though Nature possesses a great deal of resilient force, her periods of convalescence, when the disease itself is checked, are more or less prolonged, and weeks, or sometimes months, must elapse before the spring-tides of health return, bringing with them a sweet overflow, an exuberance of life. Not so, however, when Jesus was the Healer. At His word, or at the mere beckoning of His finger, the tides of health, which had gone far out in the ebb, suddenly returned in all their spring fulness, lifting high on their wave the bark which through hopeless years had been settling down into its miry grave. Eighteen years of disease had made the woman quite deformed; the contracting muscles had bent the form God made to stand erect, so that she could "in no wise lift herself up;" but when Jesus said, "Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity," and laid His hands upon her, in an instant the tightened muscles relaxed, the bent form regained its earlier grace, for "she was made straight, and glorified God." One moment, with the Christ in it, was more than eighteen years of disease, and with the most perfect ease it could undo all the eighteen years had done. And this is but a specimen case, for the same completeness characterises all the cures that Jesus wrought. "They were made whole," as it reads, no matter what the malady might be; and though disease had loosened all the thousand strings, so that the wonderful harp was reduced to silence, or at best could but strike discordant notes, the hand of Jesus has but to touch it, and in an instant each string recovers its pristine tone, the jarring sounds vanish, and body, "mind and soul according well, awake sweet music as before."

But though Jesus wrought these many and complete cures, making the healing of the sick a sort of pastime, the interludes in that Divine "Messiah," still He did not work these miracles indiscriminately, without method or conditions. He freely placed His service at the disposal of others, giving Himself up to one tireless round of mercy; but it is evident there was some selection for these gifts of healing. The healing power was not thrown out randomly, falling on any one it might chance to strike; it flowed out in certain directions only, in ordered channels; it followed certain lines and laws. For instance, these circles of healing were geographically narrow. They followed the personal presence of Jesus, and with one or two exceptions, were



never found apart from that presence; so that, many as they were, they would form but a small part of suffering humanity. And even within these circles of His visible presence we are not to suppose that all were healed. Some were taken, and others were left, to a suffering from which only death would release them. Can we discover the law of this election of mercy? We think we may.

(1) In the first place, there must be the need for the Divine intervention. This perhaps goes without saying, and does not seem to mean much, since among those who were left unhealed there were needs just as great as those of the more favoured ones. But while the "need" in some cases was not enough to secure the Divine mercy, in other cases it was all that was asked. If the disease was mental or psychical, with reason all bewildered, and the firmaments of Right and Wrong mixed confusedly together, making a chaos of the soul, that was all Jesus required. At other times He waited for the desire to be evoked and the request to be made; but for these cases of lunacy, epilepsy, and demoniacal possession He waived the other conditions, and without waiting for the request, as in the synagogue (iv. 34) or on the Gadarene coast, He spoke the word, which brought order to a distracted soul, and which led Reason back to her Jerusalem, to the long-vacant throne.

For others the need itself was not sufficient; there must be the request. Our desire for any blessing is our appraisal of its value, and Jesus dispensed His gifts of healing on the Divine conditions, "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find." How the request came, whether from the sufferer himself or through some intercessor, it did not matter; for no request for healing came to Jesus to be disregarded or denied. Nor was it always needful to put the request into words. Prayer is too grand and great a thing for the lips to have a monopoly of it, and the deepest prayers may be put into acts as well as into words, as they are sometimes uttered in inarticulate sighs, and in groans which are too deep for words. And was it not truest prayer, as the multitudes carried their sick and laid them down at the feet of Jesus, even had their voice spoken no solitary word? and was it not truest prayer, as they put themselves, with their bent forms and withered hands right in His way, not able to speak one single word, but throwing across to Him the piteous but hopeful look? The request was thus the expression of their desire, and at the same time the expression of their faith, telling of the trust they reposed in His pity and His power, a trust He was always delighted to see, and to which He always responded, as He Himself said again and again, "Thy faith hath saved thee." Faith then, as now, was the sesame to which all Heaven's gates fly open; and as in the case of the paralytic who was borne of four, and let down through the roof, even a vicarious faith prevails with Jesus, as it brings to their friend a double and complete salvation. And so they who sought Jesus as their Healer found Him, and they who believed entered into His rest, this lower rest of a perfect health and perfect life; while they who were indifferent and they who doubted were left behind, crushed by the sorrow that He would have removed, and tortured by pains that His touch would have completely stilled.

And now it remains for us to gather up the light of these miracles, and to focus it on Him who was the central Figure, Jesus, the Divine Healer. And (1) the miracles of healing speak of the knowledge of Jesus. The question, "What is man?" has been the standing question of the ages, but it is still unanswered, or answered but in part. His complex nature is still a mystery, the eternal riddle of the Sphinx, and Œdipus comes not. Physiology can number and name the bones and muscles, can tell the forms and functions of the different organs; chemistry can resolve the body into its constituent elements, and weigh out their exact proportions; philosophy can map out the departments of the mind; but man remains the great enigma. Biology carries her silken clue right up to the primordial cell; but here she finds a Gordian knot, which her keenest instruments cannot cut, or her keenest wit unravel. Within that complex nature of ours are oceans of mystery which Thought may indeed explore, but which she cannot fathom, paths which the vulture eye of Reason hath not seen, whose voices are the voices of unknown tongues, answering each other through the mist. But how familiar did Jesus seem with all these life-secrets! how intimate with all the life-forces! How versed He was in ætiology, knowing without possibility of mistake whence diseases came, and just how they looked! It was no mystery to Him how the hand had shrunk, shrivelling into a mass of bones, with no skill in its fingers, and no life in its clogged-up veins, or how the eyes had lost their power of vision. His knowledge of the human frame was an exact and perfect knowledge, reading its innermost secrets, as in a transparency, knowing to a certainty what links had dropped out of the subtle mechanism, and what had been warped out of place, and knowing well just at what point and to what an extent to apply the healing remedy, which was His own volition. All earth and all heaven were without a covering to His gaze; and what was this but Omniscience?

(2) Again, the miracles of healing speak of the compassion of Jesus. It was with no reluctance that He wrought these works of mercy; it was His delight. His heart was drawn towards suffering and pain by the magnetism of a Divine sympathy, or rather, we ought to say, towards the sufferers themselves; for suffering and pain, like sin and woe, were exotics in His Father's garden, the deadly nightshade an enemy had sown. And so we mark a great tenderness in all His dealings with the afflicted. He does not apply the caustic of bitter and biting words. Even when, as we may suppose, the suffering is the harvest of earlier sin, as in the case of the paralytic, Jesus speaks no harsh reproaches; He says simply and kindly, "Go in peace, and sin no more." And do we not find here a reason why these miracles of healing were so frequent in His ministry? Was it not because in His mind Sickness was somehow related to Sin? If miracles were needed to attest the Divineness of His mission, there was no need of the constant succession of them, no need that they should form a part, and a large part, of the daily task. Sickness is, so to speak, something unnaturally natural. It results from the transgression of some physical law, as Sin is the transgression of some moral law; and He who is man's Saviour brings a complete salvation, a redemption for the body as well as a redemption for the soul. Indeed,



the diseases of the body are but the shadows, seen and felt, of the deeper diseases of the soul, and with Jesus the physical healing was but a step to the higher truth and higher experience, that spiritual cleansing, that inner creation of a right spirit, a perfect heart. And so Jesus carried on the two works side by side; they were the two parts of His one and great salvation; and as He loved and pitied the sinner, so He pitied and loved the sufferer; His sympathies all went out to meet him, preparing the way for His healing virtues to follow.

(3) Again, the miracles of healing speak of the power of Jesus. This was seen indirectly when we considered the completeness of the cures, and the wide field they covered, and we need not enlarge upon it now. But what a consciousness of might there was in Jesus! Others, prophets and apostles, have healed the sick, but their power was delegated. It came as in waves of Divine impulse, intermittent and temporary. The power that Jesus wielded was inherent and absolute, deeps which knew neither cessation nor diminution. His will was supreme over all forces. Nature's potencies are diffused and isolated, slumbering in herb or metal, flower or leaf, in mountain or sea. But all are inert and useless until man distils them with his subtle alchemies, and then applies them by his slow processes, dissolving the tinctures in the blood, sending on its warm currents the healing virtue, if haply it may reach its goal and accomplish its mission. But all these potencies lay in the hand or in the will of Christ. The forces of life all were marshalled under His bidding. He had but to say to one "Go," and it went, here or there, or anywhither; nor does it go for naught; it accomplishes its high behest, the great Master's will. Nay, the power of Jesus is supreme even in that outlying and dark world of evil spirits. The demons fly at His rebuke; and let Him throw but one healing word across the dark, chaotic soul of one possessed, and in an instant Reason dawns; bright thoughts play on the horizon; the firmaments of Right and Wrong separate to infinite distances; and out of the darkness a Paradise emerges, of beauty and light, where the new son of God resides, and God Himself comes down in the cool and the heat of the days alike. What power is this? Is it not the power of God? is it not Omnipotence?

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE MIRACLE OF THE LOAVES.

LUKE ix. 1-17.

THE Galilean ministry was drawing to a close, for the "great Light" which had risen over the northern province must now move southward, to set behind a cross and a grave. Jesus, however, is reluctant to leave these borders, amid whose hills the greater part of His life has been spent, and among whose composite population His greatest successes have been won, without one last effort. Calling together the Twelve, who hitherto have been Apostles in promise and in name rather than in fact, He lays His plans before them. Dividing the district into sections, so as to equalise their labours and prevent any overlapping, He sends them out in pairs; for in

the Divine arithmetic two are more than twice one, more than the sum of the separate units by all the added force and strength of fellowship. They are to be the heralds of the new kingdom, to "preach the Kingdom of God," their insignia no outward, visible badge, but the investiture of authority over all demons, and powers over all diseases. Apostles of the Unseen, servants of the Invisible King, they must dismiss all worldly cares; they must not even make provision for their journey, weighting themselves with such *impedimenta* as wallets stored with bread or changes of raiment. They must go forth in an absolute trust in God, thus proving themselves citizens of the heavenly kingdom, whose gates they open to all who will repent and step up into them. They may take a staff, for that will help rather than hinder on the steep mountain paths; but since the King's business requireth haste, they must not spend their time in the interminable salutations of the age, nor in going about from house to house; such changes could only distract, diverting to themselves the thought which should be centred upon their mission. Should any city not receive them, they must retire at once, shaking off, as they depart, the very dust from their feet, as a testimony against them.

Such were the directions, as Jesus dismissed the Twelve, sending them to reap the Galilean harvest, and at the same time to prepare them for the wider fields which after the Pentecost would open to them on every side. It is only by incidental allusions that we learn anything as to the success of the mission, but when our Evangelist says "they went throughout the villages preaching the Gospel and healing everywhere," these frequent miracles of healing would imply that they found a sympathetic and receptive people. Nor were the impulses of the new movement confined to the lower reaches of society; for even the palace felt its vibrations, and St. Luke, who seems to have had private means of information within the Court, possibly through Chuza and Manaen, pauses to give us a kind of *silhouette* of the Tetrarch. Herod himself is perplexed. Like a vane, "that fox" swings round to the varying gusts of public opinion that come eddying within the palace from the excited world outside; and as some say that Jesus is Elias, and others "one of the old prophets," while others aver that He is John himself, risen from the dead, this last rumour falls upon the ears of Herod like alarming thunders, making him quiver like an aspen. "And he sought to see Jesus." The "conscience that makes cowards of us all" had unnerved him, and he longed by a personal acquaintance with Jesus to wave back out of his sight the apparition of the murdered prophet. Who Jesus might be did not much concern Herod. He might be Elias, or one of the old prophets, anything but John; and so when Herod did see Jesus afterwards, and saw that He was not the risen Baptist, but the Man of Galilee, his courage revived, and he gave Jesus into the hands of his cohorts, that they might mock Him with the faded purple.

What steps Herod took to secure an interview we do not know; but the verb indicates more than a wish on his part; it implies some plan or attempt to gratify the wish; and probably it was these advances of Herod, together with the Apostles' need of rest after the strain and excitements of their mission, which prompted



Jesus to seek a place of retirement outside the bounds of Antipas. On the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, and on the eastern bank of the Jordan, as a second Bethsaida, or "House of Fish" as the name means, built by Philip, and to which, in honour of Cæsar's daughter, he gave the surname of "Julias." The city itself stood on the hills, some three or four miles back from the shore; while between the city and the lake swept a wide and silent plain, all untilled, as the New Testament "desert" means, but rich in pasturage, as the "much grass" of John vi. 10 would show. This still shore offered, as it seemed, a safe refuge from the exacting and intrusive crowds of Capernaum, whose constant coming and going left them no leisure so much as to eat; and bidding them launch the familiar boat, Jesus and the twelve sail away to the other side. The excited crowds, however, which followed them to the water's edge, are not so easily to be shaken off; but guessing the direction of the boat, they seek to head her off by a quick *detour* round the shore. And some of them do; for when the boat grates on the northern shingle some of the swift-footed ones are already there; while stretching back for miles is a stream of humanity, of both sexes and of all ages, but all fired with one purpose. The desert has suddenly grown populous.

And how does Jesus bear this interruption to His plans? Does He chafe at this intrusion of the people upon His quiet hours? Does He resent their importunity, calling it impertinence, then driving them from Him with a whip of sharp words? Not so. Jesus was accustomed to interruptions; they formed almost the staple of His life. Nor did He repulse one solitary soul which sought sincerely His mercy, no matter how unseasonable the hour, as men would read the hours. So now Jesus "received" them, or "welcomed" them, as it is in the R. V. It is a favourite word with St. Luke, found in his Gospel more frequently than in the other three Gospels together. Applied to persons, it means nearly always to receive as guests, to welcome to hospitality and home. And such is its meaning here. Jesus takes the place of the host. True, it is a desert place, but it is a part of the All-Father's world, a room of the Father's house, carpeted with grass and ablaze with flowers; and Jesus, by His welcome, transforms the desert into a guest-chamber, where in a new way He keeps the Passover with His disciples, at the same time entertaining His thousands of self-bidden guests, giving to them truth, speaking of the kingdom of God, and giving health, healing "those that had need of healing."

It was toward evening, "when the day began to wear away," that Jesus gave to a bright and busy day its crowning benediction. The thought had already ripened into purpose, in His mind, to spread a table for them in the wilderness; for how could He, the compassionate One, send them to their homes famishing and faint? These poor, shepherdless sheep have put themselves into His care. Their simple, unproviding confidence has made Him in a sense responsible, and can He disappoint that confidence? It is true they have been thoughtless and improvident. They have let the enthusiasm of the hour carry them away, without making any provision of the necessary food; but even this does not check the flow of the Divine compassion, for Jesus proceeds to fill up their lack of thought by His

Divine thoughtfulness, and their scarcity with His Divine affluence.

According to St. John, it was Jesus who took the initiative, as He put the test-question to Philip, "Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" Philip does not reply to the "whence;" that may stand aside awhile, as in mathematical language he speaks to the previous question, which is their ability to buy. "Two hundred pennyworth of bread," he said, "is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little." He does not say how much would be required to satisfy the hunger of the multitude; his reckoning is not for a feast, but for a taste, to every one "a little." Nor does he calculate the full cost of even this, but says simply, "Two hundred pennyworth would *not* be sufficient." Evidently, in Philip's mind the two hundred pence is the known quantity of the equation, and he works out his calculation from that, as he proves the impossibility of buying bread for this vast company anywhere. We may therefore conclude that the two hundred pence represented the value of the common purse, the purchasing power of the Apostolic community; and this was a sum altogether inadequate to meet the cost of providing bread for the multitude. The only alternative, as far as the disciples see, is to dismiss them, and let them requisition for themselves; and in a peremptory manner they ask Jesus to "send the multitude away," reminding Him of what certainly they had no need to remind Him, that they were here "in a desert place."

The disciples had spoken in their subjunctive, *non possumus*, way; it is now time for Jesus to speak, which He does, not in interrogatives longer, but in His imperative, commanding tone: "Give ye them to eat," a word which throws the disciples back upon themselves in astonishment and utter helplessness. What can they do? The whole available supply, as Andrew reports it, is but five barley loaves and two small fishes, which a lad has brought, possibly for their own refreshment. Five flat loaves of barley, which was the food of the poorest of the poor, and "two small fishes," as St. John calls them, throwing a bit of local colouring into the narrative by his diminutive word—these are the foundation repast, which Jesus asks to be brought to Himself, that from Himself it may go, broken and enlarged, to the multitude of guests. Meantime the crowd is just as large, and perhaps more excited and impatient than before; for they would not understand these "asides" between the disciples and the Master, nor could they read as yet His compassionate and benevolent thought. It would be a pushing, jostling crowd, as these thousands were massed on the hill-side. Some are gathered in little groups, discussing the Messiahship; others are clustered round some relative or friend, who to-day has been wonderfully healed; while others, of the forward sort, are selfishly elbowing their way to the front. The whole scene is a kaleidoscope of changing form and colour, a perfect chaos of confusion. But Jesus speaks again: "Make them sit down in companies;" and those words, thrown across the seething mass, reduce it to order, crystallising it, as it were, into measured and numbered lines. St. Mark, half-playfully, likens it to a garden, with its parterres of flowers; and such indeed it was, but it was a garden of the higher cult, with its variegated



beds of humanity, a hundred men broad, and fifty deep.

When order was secured and all were in their places, Jesus takes His place as the host at the head of the extemporised table, and though it is most frugal fare, He holds the barley loaves heavenward, and lifting up His eyes, He blesses God, probably in the words of the usual formula, "Blessed art Thou, Jehovah our God, King of the world, Who causeth to come forth bread from the earth." Then breaking the bread, He distributes it among the disciples, bidding them bear it to the people. It is not a matter of moment as to the exact point where the supernatural came in, whether it was in the breaking or the distributing. Somewhere a power which must have been Divine touched the bread, for the broken pieces strangely grew, enlarging rapidly as they were minished. It is just possible that we have a clue to the mystery in the tense of the verb, for the imperfect, which denotes continued action, would read, "He brake," or "He kept on breaking," from which we might almost infer that the miracle was coincident with the touch. But whether so or not, the power was equal to the occasion, and the supply over and above the largest need, completely satisfying the hunger of the five thousand men, besides the off-group of women and children, who, though left out of the enumeration, were within the circle of the miracle, the remembered and satisfied guests of the Master.

It now remains for us to gather up the meaning and the practical lessons of the miracle. And first, it reveals to us the Divine pity. When Jesus called Himself the Son of man it was a title full of deep meaning, and most appropriate. He was the true, the ideal Humanity, humanity as it would have been without the warps and discolourations that Sin has made, and within His heart were untold depths of sympathy, the "fellow-feeling that makes man wondrous kind." To the haughty and the proud He was stern, lowering upon them with a withering scorn; to the unreal, the false, the unclean He was severity itself, with lightnings in His looks and terrible thunders in His "woes;" but for troubled and tired souls He had nothing but tenderness and gentleness, and a compassion that was infinite. Even had He not called the weary and heavy-laden to Himself, they would have sought Him; they would have read the "come" in the sunlight of His face. Jesus felt for others a vicarious pain, a vicarious sorrow. His heart responding to it at once, as the delicately poised needle responds to the subtle sparks that flash in upon it from without. So here; He receives the multitude kindly, even though they are strangers, and though they have thwarted His purpose and broken in upon His rest, and as this stream of human life flows out to Him, His compassion flows out to them. He commiserates their forlorn condition, wandering like straying sheep upon the mountains; He gives Himself up to them, healing all that were sick, assuaging the pain or restoring the lost sense; while at the same time He ministers to a higher nature, telling them of the kingdom of God which had come nigh to them, and which was theirs if they would surrender themselves to it and obey. Nor was even this enough to satisfy the promptings of His deep pity, but all-forgetful of His own weariness, He lengthens out this day of mercy, staying to minister to their lower, physical wants, as

He spreads for them a table in the wilderness. Verily He was, incarnate, as He is in His glory, "touched with the feeling of our infirmities."

Again, we see the Divine love of order and arrangement. Nothing was done until the crowding and confusion had ceased, and even the Divine beneficence waits until the turbulent mass has become quiet, settled down into serried lines, the five thousand making two perfect squares. "Order," it is said, "is Heaven's first law;" but whether the first or the second, certain it is that Heaven gives us the perfection of order. It is only in the lawless wills of man that "time is broke, and no proportion kept." In the heavenly state nothing is out of place or out of time. All wills there play into each other with such absolute precision that life itself is a song, a "Gloria in Excelsis." And how this is seen in all the works of God! What rhythmic motions are in the marches of the stars and the processions of the seasons! To everything a place, to everything a time; such is the unwritten law of the realm of physics, where Law is supreme, and anarchy is unknown. So in our earthly lives, on their secular and on their spiritual side alike, order is time, order is strength, and he who is deficient in this grace should practise on it the more. Avoid Slovenliness; it is a distant relation of Sin itself. Arrange your duties, and do not let them crowd one upon the other. Set the greater duties, not abreast, but one behind the other, filling up the spaces with the smaller ones. Do not let things drift, or your life, built for carrying precious argosies, and accomplishing something, will break up into pieces, the flotsam and jetsam of a barren shore. In prayer be orderly. Arrange your desires. Let some come first, while others stand back in the second or the third row, waiting their turn. If your relations with your fellows have got a little disarranged, atwist, seek to readjust the disturbed relation. Oppose what is evil and mean with all your might; but if no principle is involved, even at the cost of a little feeling, seek to have things put square. To get things into a tangle requires no great skill; but he who would be a true artist, keeping the Divine pattern before him, and ever working towards it, if not up to it, may reduce the tangled skein to harmony, and like the Gobelin tapestry-makers, weave a life that is noble and beautiful, a life on which men will love to gaze.

Again, we see the Divine concern for little things. Abundance always tempts to extravagance and waste. And so here; the broken remnants of the repast might have been thrown away as of no account; but Jesus bade them, "Gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost;" and we read they filled with the broken bread which remained over and above to them that had eaten, twelve baskets full"—and, by the way, the word rendered "basket" here corresponds with the frugal fare, for, made of willow or of wicker, it was of the coarsest kind, used only by the poor. What became of the fragments, which outweighed the original supply, we do not read; but though they were only the crumbs of the Divine bounty, and though there was no present use for them, Jesus would not allow them to be wasted.

But the true meaning of the narrative lies deeper than this. It is a miracle of a new order, this multiplying of the loaves. In His other miracles Jesus has wrought on the line of Na-



ture, accelerating her slower processes, and accomplishing in an instant, by His mere volition, what by natural causes must have been the work of time, but which in the specific cases would have been purely impossible, owing to the enfeeblement of nature by disease. Sight, hearing, even life itself, come to man through channels purely natural; but Nature never yet has made bread. She grows the corn, but there her part ends, while Science must do the rest, first reducing the corn to flour, then kneading it into dough, and by the burning fires of the oven transmuting the dough to bread. Why does Jesus here depart from His usual order, creating what neither nature nor science can produce alone, but which requires their concurrent forces? Let us see. To Jesus these visible, tangible things were but the dead keys His hand touched, as He called forth some deeper, farther-off music, some spiritual truth that by any other method men would be slow to learn. Of what, then, is this bread of the desert the emblem? St. John tells us that when the miracle occurred "the Passover was nigh at hand," and this time-mark helps to explain the overcrowding into the desert, for probably many of the five thousand were men who were now on their way to Jerusalem, and who had stayed at Capernaum and the neighbouring cities for the night. This supposition, too, is considerably strengthened by the words of the disciples, as they suggest that they should go and "lodge" in the neighbouring cities and villages, which word implies that they were not residents of that locality, but passing strangers. And as Jesus cannot now go up to Jerusalem to the feast, He gathers the shepherdless thousands about Him, and keeps a sort of Passover in the open guest-chamber of the mountainside. That such was the thought of the Master, making it an anterior sacrament, is evident from the address Jesus gave the following day at Capernaum, in which He passes, by a natural transition, from the broken bread with which He satisfied their physical hunger to Himself as the Bread come down from heaven, the "living Bread" as He called it, which was His flesh. There is thus a Eucharistic meaning in the miracle of the loaves, and this northern hill signals in its subtle correspondence on to Jerusalem, to another hill, where His body was bruised and broken "for our iniquities," and His blood was poured out, a precious oblation for sin. And as that blood was typified by the wine of the first miracle at Cana, so now Jesus completes the prophetic sacrament by the miraculous creation of bread from the five seminal loaves, bread which He Himself has consecrated to the holier use, as the visible emblem of that Body which was given for us, men, women, and children alike, even for a redeemed humanity. Cana and the desert-place thus draw near together, while both look across to Calvary; and as the Church keeps now her Eucharistic feast, taking from the one the consecrated bread, and from the other the consecrated wine, she shows forth the Lord's death "till He come."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE TRANSFIGURATION.

THE Transfiguration of Christ marks the culminating point in the Divine life; the few remaining months are a rapid descent into the Val-

ley of Sacrifice and Death. The story is told by each of the three Synoptists, with an almost equal amount of detail, and all agree as to the time when it occurred; for though St. Matthew and St. Mark make the interval six days, while St. Luke speaks of it as "about eight," there is no real disagreement; St. Luke's reckoning is inclusive. As to the locality, too, they all agree, though in a certain indefinite way. St. Matthew and St. Mark leave it indeterminate, simply saying that it was "a high mountain," while St. Luke calls it "the mountain." Tradition has long localised the scene upon Mount Tabor, but evidently she has read off her bearings from her own fancies, rather than from the facts of the narrative. To say nothing of the distance of Mount Tabor from Cæsarea Philippi—which, though a difficulty, is not an insuperable one, since it might easily be covered in less than the six intervening days—Tabor is but one of the group of heights which fringe the Plain of Esdraelon, and so one to which the definite article would not, and could not, be applied. Besides, Tabor now was crowned by a Roman fortress, and so could scarcely be said to be "apart" from the strifes and ways of men, while it stood within the borders of Galilee, whereas St. Mark, by implication, sets his "high mountain" outside the Galilean bounds (ix. 30). But if Tabor fails to meet the requirements of the narrative, Mount Hermon answers them exactly, throwing its spurs close up to Cæsarea Philippi, while its snow-crowned peak shone out pure and white above the lesser heights of Galilee.

It is not an unmeaning coincidence that each of the Evangelists should introduce his narrative with the same temporal word, "after." That word is something more than a connecting-link, a bridge thrown over a blank space of days; it is rather, when taken in connection with the preceding narrative, the key which unlocks the whole meaning and mystery of the Transfiguration. "After these sayings," writes St. Luke. What sayings? Let us go back a little, and see. Jesus had asked His disciples as to the drift of popular opinion about Himself, and had drawn from Peter the memorable confession—that first Apostles' Creed—"Thou art the Christ of God." Immediately, however, Jesus leads down their minds from these celestial heights to the lowest depths of degradation, dishonour, and death, as He says, "The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up." Those words shattered their bright dream at once. Like some fearful nightmare, the foreshadowing of the cross fell upon their hearts, filling them with fear, and gloom, and striking down hope, and courage, yea, even faith itself. It would almost seem as if the disciples were unnerved, paralysed by the blow, and as if an atrophy had stolen over their hearts and lips alike; for the next six days are one void of silence, without word or deed, as far as the records show. How shall their lost hope be recalled, or courage be revived? How shall they be taught that death does not end all—that the enigma was true of Himself, as well as of them, that He shall find His life by losing it? The Transfiguration is the answer.

Taking with Him Peter, John, and James—the three who shall yet be witnesses of His agony—Jesus retires to the mountain height, probably intending, as our Evangelist indicates, to spend



the night in prayer. Keeping the midnight watch was nothing new to these disciples; it was their frequent experience upon the Galilean lake; but now, left to the quiet of their own thoughts, and with none of the excitements of the spoil about them, they yield to the cravings of nature and fall asleep. Awaking, they find their Master still engaged in prayer, all oblivious of earthly hours, and as they watch He is transfigured before them. The fashion, or appearance, of His countenance, as St. Luke tersely puts it, "became another," all suffused with a heavenly radiance, while His very garments became lustrous with a whiteness which was beyond the fuller's art and beyond the whiteness of the snow, and all iridescent, flashing and sparkling as if set with stars. Suddenly, ere their eyes have grown accustomed to the new splendours, two celestial visitants appear, wearing the glorious body of the heavenly life and conversing with Jesus.

Such was the scene upon the "holy mount," which the Apostles could never forget, and which St. Peter recalls with a lingering wonder and delight in the far-off after-years (2 Pet. i. 18). Can we push aside the outward draperies, and read the Divine thought and purpose that are hidden within? We think we may. And—

1. We see the place and meaning of the Transfiguration in the life of Jesus. Hitherto the humanity of Jesus had been naturally and perfectly human; for though heavenly signs have, as at the Advent and the Baptism, borne witness to its super-humanity, these signs have been temporary and external, shining or alighting upon it from without. Now, however, the sign is from within. The brightness of the outer flesh is but the outshining of the inner glory. And what was that glory but the "glory of the Lord," a manifestation of the Deity, that fulness of the Godhead which dwelt within? The faces of other sons of men have shone, as when Moses stepped downward from the mount, or as Stephen looked upwards to the opened heavens; but it was the shining of a reflected glory, like the sunlight upon the moon. But when the humanity of Jesus was thus transfigured it was a native glory, the inward radiance of the soul stealing through, and lighting up, the enveloping globe of human flesh. It is easy to see why this celestial appearance should not be the normal manifestation of the Christ; for had it been, He would no longer have been the "Son of man." Between Himself and the humanity He had come to redeem would have been a gulf wide and profound, while the Fatherhood of God would have been a truth lying back in the vistas of the unknown, a truth unfelt; for men only reach up to that Fatherhood through the Brotherhood of Christ. But if we ask why now, just for once, there should be this transfiguring of the Person of Jesus, the answer is not so evident. Godet has a suggestion which is as natural as it is beautiful. He represents the Transfiguration as the natural issue of a perfect, a sinless life, a life in which death should have no place, as it would have had no place in the life of unfallen man. Innocence, holiness, glory—these would have been the successive steps connecting earth with heaven, an ever-upward path, across which death would not even have cast a shadow. Such would have been the path opened to the first Adam, had not Sin intervened, bringing Death as its wage and penalty. And now, as

the Second Adam takes the place of the first, moving steadily along the path of obedience from which the first Adam swerved, should we not naturally look for that life to end in some translation or transfiguration, the body of the earthly life blossoming into the body of the heavenly? and where else so appropriately as here, upon the "holy mount," when the spirits of the perfected come forth to meet Him, and the chariot of cloud is ready to convey Him to the heavens which are so near? It is thus something more than conjecture—it is a probability—that had the life of Jesus been by itself, detached from mankind in general, the Transfiguration had been the mode and the beginning of the glorification. The way to the heavens, from which He was self-exiled, was open to Him from the mount of glory, but He preferred to pass up by the mount of passion and of sacrifice. The burden of the world's redemption is upon Him, and that eternal purpose leads Him down from the Transfiguration glories, and onwards to a cross and grave. He chooses to die, with and for man, rather than to live and reign without man.

But not only does the "holy mount" throw its light on what would have been the path of unfallen man, it gives us in prophecy a vision of the resurrection life. Compare the picture of the transfigured Christ, as drawn by the Synoptists, with the picture, drawn by John himself, of the Christ of the Exaltation, and how strikingly similar they are (Rev. i. 13-17)! In both descriptions we have an affluence of metaphor and simile, which affluence was itself but the stammering of our weak human speech, as it seeks to tell the unutterable. In both we have a whiteness like the snow, while to portray the countenance St. John repeats almost verbatim St. Matthew's words, "His face did shine as the sun." Evidently the Christ of the Transfiguration and the Christ of the Exaltation are one and the same Person; and why do we blame Peter for speaking in such random, delirious words upon the mount, when John, by the glory of that same vision, in Patmos, is stricken to the ground as if dead, not able to speak at all? When Peter spoke, somewhat incoherently, about the "three tabernacles," it was not, as some aver, the random speech of one who was but half awake, but of one whose reason was dazzled and confused with the blinding glory. And so the Transfiguration anticipates the Glorification, investing the sacred Person with those same robes of light and royalty He had laid aside for a time, but which He will shortly assume again—the habiliments of an eternal re-enthronement.

2. Again, the holy mount shows us the place of death in the life of man. We read, "There talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elijah;" and as if the Evangelist would emphasise the fact that it was no apparition, existing only in their heated imagination, he repeats the statement (ver. 35) that they were "two men." Strange gathering—Moses, Elias, and Christ!—the Law in the person of Moses, the Prophets in the person of Elias, both doing homage to the Christ, who was Himself the fulfilment of prophecy and law. But what the Evangelist seems to note particularly is the humanness of the two celestials. Though the earthly life of each ended in an abrupt, unearthly way, the one having a translation, the other a



Divine interment (whatever that may mean), they have both been residents of the heavenly world for centuries. But as they appear to-day "in glory," that is, with the glorified body of the heavenly life, outwardly, visibly, their bodies are still human. There is nothing about their form and build that is grotesque, or even unearthly. They have not even the traditional but fictitious wings with which poetry is wont to set off the inhabitants of the sky. They are still "men," with bodies resembling, both in size and form, the old body of earth. But if the appearances of these "men" reminds us of earth, if we wait awhile, we see that their natures are very unearthly, not unnatural so much as supernatural. They glide down through the air with the ease of a bird and the swiftness of light, and when the interview ends, and they go their separate ways, these heavenly "men" gather up their robes and vanish, strangely and suddenly as they came. And yet they can make use of earthly supports, even the grosser forms of matter, placing their feet upon the grass as naturally as when Moses climbed up Pisgah or as Elijah stood in Horeb's cave.

And not only do the bodies of these celestials retain still the image of the earthly life, but the bent of their minds is the same, the set and drift of their thoughts following the old directions. The earthly lives of Moses and Elias had been spent in different lands, in different times; five hundred eventful years pushed them far apart; but their mission had been one. Both were prophets of the Highest, the one bringing God's law down to the people, the other leading a lapsed people back and up to God's law. Yes, and they are prophets still, but with a nearer vision now. No longer do they gaze through the crimson lenses of the sacrificial blood, beholding the Promised One afar off. They have read the Divine thought and purpose of redemption; they are initiated into its mysteries; and now that the cross is close at hand, they come to bring to the world's Saviour their heavenly greetings, and to invest Him, by anticipation, with robes of glory, soon to be His for evermore.

Such is the apocalypse of the holy mount. The veil which hides from our dull eye of sense the hereafter was lifted up. The heavens were opened to them, no longer far away beyond the cold stars, but near them, touching them on every side. They saw the saints of other days interesting themselves in earthly events—in one event at least, and speaking of that death which they mourned and feared, calmly, as a thing expected and desired, but calling it by its new and softened name, a "departure," an "exodus." And as they see the past centuries saluting Him whom they have learned to call the Christ, "the Son of God," as the truth of immortality is borne in upon them, not as a vague conception of the mind, but by oral and ocular demonstration, would they not see the shadow of the coming death in a different light? would not the painful pressure upon their spirits be eased somewhat, if not, indeed, entirely removed? and—

"The Apostles' heart of rock  
Be nerved against temptation's shock?"

Would they not more patiently endure, now that they had become apostles of the Invisible, seers of the Unseen?

But if the glory of the holy mount sets in a fairer light the cross and grave of Christ, may we not throw from the mirror of our thought some of its light upon our lowlier graves? What is death, after all, but the transition into life? Retaining its earthly accent, we call it a "decease"; but that is true only of the corporeal nature, that body of "flesh and blood" which cannot inherit the higher kingdom of glory to which we pass. There is no break in the continuity of the soul's existence, not even one parenthetical hour. When He who was the Resurrection and the Life said, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise," that word passed on a forgiven soul directly to a state of conscious blessedness. From "the azure deep of air" does the eagle look regretfully upon the eyrie of its crag, where it lay in its unfledged weakness? or does it mourn the broken shell from which its young life emerged? And why should we mourn, or weep with unrestrained tears, when the shell is broken that the freed spirit may soar up to the regions of the blessed, and range the eternities of God? Paganism closed the story of human life with an interrogation point, and sought to fill up with guesses the blank she did not know. Christianity speaks with clearer voice; hers is "a sure and certain hope," for He who "hath abolished death" hath "brought life and immortality to light." Earth's exodus is heaven's genesis, and what we call the end celestials call the beginning.

And not only does the mount speak of the certainties of the after-life, it gives, in a binocular vision, the likeness of the resurrection body, answering, in part, the standing question, "How are the dead raised up?" The body of the heavenly life must have some correspondence with, and resemblance to, the body of our earthly life. It will, in a sense, grow out of it. It will not be something entirely new, but the old refined, spiritualised, the dross and earthliness all removed, the marks of care, and pain, and sin all wiped out. And more, the Transfiguration mount gives us indubitable proof that heaven and earth lie, virtually, close together, and that the so-called "departed" are not entirely severed from earthly things; they can still read the shadows upon earthly dials, and hear the strike of earthly hours. They are not so absorbed and lost in the new glories as to take no note of earthly events; nor are they restrained from visiting, at permitted times, the earth they have not wholly left; for as heaven was theirs, when on earth, in hope and anticipation, so now, in heaven, earth is theirs in thought and memory. They have still interests here, associations they cannot forget, friends who are still beloved, and harvests of influence they still may reap. With the absurdities and follies of so-called Spiritualism we have no sort of sympathy; they are the vagaries of weak minds; but even their eccentricities and excesses shall not be allowed to rob us of what is a truly Christian hope, that they who cared for us on earth care for us still, and that they who loved and prayed for us below love us none the less, and pray for us none the less frequently, now that the conflict with them is over, and the eternal rest begun. And why may not their spirits touch ours, influencing our mind and heart, even when we are not conscious whence those influences come? for are they not, with the angels, "ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for



the sake of them that shall inherit salvation"? The Mount of Transfiguration does indeed stand "apart," for on its summit the paths of the celestials and of the terrestrials meet and merge; and it is "high" indeed, for it touches heaven.

3. Again, the holy mount shows us the place of death in the life of Jesus. How long the vision lasted we cannot tell, but in all probability the interview was but brief. What supreme moments they were! and what a rush of tumultuous thoughts, we may suppose, would fill the minds of the two saints, as they stand again on the familiar earth! But listen! They speak no word to revive the old-time memories; they bring no tidings of the heavenly world; they do not even ask, as they well might, the thousand questions concerning His life and ministry. They think, they speak, of one thing only, the "decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem." Here, then, we see the drift of heavenly minds, and here we learn a truth which is wonderfully true, that the death of Jesus, the cross of Jesus, was the one central thought of heaven, as it is the one central hope of earth. But how can it be such if the life of Jesus is all we need, and if the death is but an ordinary death, an appendix, necessary indeed, but unimportant? Such is the belief of some, but such certainly is not the teaching of this narrative, nor of the other Scriptures. Heaven sets the cross of Jesus "in the midst," the one central fact of history. He was born that He might die; He lived that He might die. All the lines of His human life converge upon Calvary, as He Himself said, "For unto this hour came I into the world." And why is that death so all-important, bending towards its cross all the lines of Scripture, as it now monopolises the speech of these two celestials? Why? There is but one answer which is satisfactory, the answer St. Peter himself gives: "His own Self bare our sins in His body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness" (1 Pet. ii. 24). And so the Mount of Transfiguration looks towards the Mount of Sacrifice. It lights up Calvary, and lays a wreath of glory upon the cross.

We need not speak again of Peter's random words, as he seeks to detain the celestial visitors. He would fain prolong what to him is a Feast of Tabernacles, and he suggests the building of three booths upon the mountain slope—"one for Thee," putting his Lord first, "and one for Moses, and one for Elias." He makes no mention of himself or of his companions. He is content to remain outside, so that he may only be near, as it were on the fringe of the transfiguring glories. But what a strange request! what wandering, delirious words, almost enough to make celestials smile! Well might the Evangelist excuse Peter's random words by saying, "Not knowing what he said." But if Peter gets no answer to his request, and if he is not permitted to build the tabernacles, Heaven spreads over the group its canopy of cloud, that Shekinah-cloud whose very shadow was brightness; while once again, as at the Baptism, a Voice speaks out of the cloud, the voice of the Father: "This is My Son, My Chosen; hear ye Him." And so the mountain pageant fades; for when the cloud has passed away Moses and Elias have disappeared, "Jesus only" is left with the three disciples. Then they retrace their steps down the mountain

side, the three carrying in their heart a precious memory, the strains of a lingering music, which they only put into words when the Son of man is risen from the dead; while Jesus turns, not reluctantly, from the opened door and the welcome of Heaven, to make an atonement upon Calvary, and through the veil of His rent flesh to make a way for sinful man even into the Holiest.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### *THE GOOD SAMARITAN.*

LUKE x. 25-37.

It would scarcely have accorded with the traditions of human nature had the teachers of religion looked favourably upon Jesus. Stepping, as He did, within their domain, without any human ordination or scholastic authority, they naturally resented the intrusion, and when the teaching of the new Rabbi so distinctly contravened their own interpretation of the law their curiosity deepened into jealousy, and curdled at last into a virulent hate. The ecclesiastical atmosphere was charged with electricity, but it only manifested itself at first in the harmless play of summer lightning, the cross-fire of half-earnest and half-captious questions; later it was the forked lightning that struck Him down into a grave.

We have no means of localising, either in point of time or place, the incident here recorded by our Evangelist, and which, by the way, only St. Luke mentions. It stands by itself, bearing in its dependent parable of the Good Samaritan an exquisite and perfect flower, from whose deep cup has dropped the very nectar of the gods.

It was probably during one of His public discourses that a "certain lawyer," or scribe—for the two titles are used interchangeably—"stood up and tempted Him." He sought to prove Him by questions, as the word means here, hoping to entrap Jesus amid the vagaries of Rabbinical tradition. "Teacher," said he, hiding his sinister motive behind a veil of courtesy and apparent candour, "what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Had the question been sincere, Jesus would probably have given a direct answer; but reading the under-current of his thought, which moved transversely to the surface-current of his speech, Jesus simply answered his question by asking another: "What is written in the law? How readest thou?" With a readiness which implied a perfect familiarity with the Law, he replied, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself." Some expositors have thought that the Evangelist here gives the summary of what was a lengthened conversation, and that Jesus Himself led the mind of the lawyer to join together these detached portions of Scripture—one from Deuteronomy vi. 5, and the other from Leviticus xix. 18. It is true there is a striking resemblance between the answer of the lawyer and the answer Jesus Himself gave subsequently to a similar question (Mark xii. 30, 31); but there is no necessity for us to apologise for the resemblance, as if it were improbable and unnatural. The fact is, as the narrative of Mark xii. plainly indicates, that



these two sentences were held in general consent as the epitome of the Law, its first and its second commandment. Even the scribe assents to this as an axiomatic truth he has no wish to challenge. It will be observed that a fourth term is added to the three of the original, possibly on account of the Septuagint rendering, which translated the Hebrew "heart" by "mind." Godet suggests that since the term "heart" is the most general term, denoting "in Scripture the central focus from which all the rays of the moral life go forth," that it stands in apposition to the other three, the one in its three particulars. This, which is the most natural interpretation, would refer the "mind" to the intellectual faculties, the "soul" to the emotional faculties, the sensibilities, and the "might" to the will which rules all force; while by the "heart" is meant the unit, the "centred self," into which the others merge, and of which they form a part.

Jesus commended him for his answer: "Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live"—words which brushed away completely the Hebraic figment of inherited life. That life was not something that should be reached by processes of loving. The life should precede the love, and should give birth to it: the love should grow out of the life, its blossoming flower.

Having the tables so turned upon himself, and wishing to "justify," or to put himself right, the stranger asks still another question: "And who is my neighbour?" doubtless hoping to cover his retreat in the smoke of a burning question. To our minds, made familiar with the thought of humanity, it seems as if a question so simple scarcely deserved such an elaborate answer as Jesus gave to it. But the thought of humanity had not yet possessed the world; indeed, it had only just come to earth, to be spoken by, and incarnate in, Him who was the Son of man. To the Jew the question of the lawyer was a most important one. The word "neighbour" could be spoken in a breath; but unwind that word, and it measures off the whole of our earthly life, it covers all our practical, every-day duties. It ran through the pages of the Law, the ark in which the Golden Rule was hidden; or like a silent angel, it flashed its sword across life's forbidden paths. But if the Jew could not erase this broad word from the pages of the Law, he could narrow and emasculate its meaning by an interpretation of his own. And this they had done, making this Divine word almost of none effect by their tradition. To the Jewish mind "neighbour" was simply "Jew" spelt large. The only neighbourhood they recognised was the narrow neighbourhood of Hebrew speech and Hebrew sympathies. The Hebrew mind was isolated as their land, and all who could not frame their Shibboleths were barbarians, Gentiles, whom they were at perfect liberty to spoil, as with anathemas and swords they chased them over their Jordans. Jesus, however, is on the alert; and how wisely He answers! He does not declaim against the narrowness of Hebrew thought; He utters no denunciatory word against their proud and false exclusiveness. He quietly unfolds the word, spreading it out into an exquisite parable, that all coming times may see how beautiful, how Divine the word "neighbour" is.

He said, "A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho; and he fell among

robbers, which both stripped him, and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead." The parables of Jesus, though drawn from real life, had no local colouring. They grouped themselves around some well-known fact of nature, or some general custom of social life; and so their spirit was national or cosmopolitan, rather than local. Here, however, Jesus departs from His usual manner, giving to His parable a local habitation. It is the road which led steeply down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and which for centuries has been so infested with robbers or bandits as to earn for itself the darkly ominous name of "the Bloody Way." Possibly that name itself is an outgrowth from the parable; but whether so or not, it is scarcely to be supposed that it had so evil a character in the days of Christ. As Jericho then was a populous city, and intimately connected with Jerusalem in its social and business life, the road would be much frequented. Indeed, the parable indicates as much; for Jesus, whose words were never untrue to nature or to history, represents His three travellers as all journeying singly; while the khan or "inn" shows, in its reflection, a constant stream of travel. Our anonymous traveller, however, does not find it so safe as he had anticipated. Attacked, in one of its dusky ravines, by a band of brigands, they strip him of his clothing, with whatever the girdle-purse might contain, and beating him out of sheer devilry, they leave him by the road-side, unable to walk, unable even to rise, a living-dying man.

"And by chance, a certain priest was going down that way; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. And in like manner a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side." As in *tableaux vivants*, Jesus shows us the two ecclesiastics, who come in sight in the happy, coincidental way that Romance so delights in. They had probably just completed their "course" of Temple service, and were now going down to Jericho, which was a favourite residence of the priests, for the somewhat long interval their sacred duties allowed them. They had, therefore, no pressure of business upon them; indeed, the verb would almost imply that the priest was walking leisurely along. But they bring no help to the wounded man. Directly they see him, instead of being drawn to him by the attractions of sympathy, something, either the shock or the fright, acts upon them as a centrifugal force, and sends them describing an arc of a circle around that centre of groans and blood. At any rate they "passed by on the other side," leaving behind them neither deed nor word of mercy, but leaving behind them a shadow of themselves which, while time itself lasts, will be vivid, cold, and repelling. It is just possible, however, that they do not deserve all the unmeasured censure which the critics and the centuries have given, and are still likely to give. It is very easy for us to condemn their action as selfish, heartless! but let us put ourselves in their place, alone in the lonely pass, with this proof of an imminent danger sprung suddenly upon us, and it is possible that we ourselves should not have been quite so brave as by our safe firesides we imagine ourselves to be. The fact is it needed something more than sympathy to make them turn aside and befriend the wounded man; it needed physical courage, and that of the highest kind, and this wanting, sym-



pathy itself would not be sufficient. The heart might long to help, even when the feet were hastening away. A sudden inrush of fear, even of vague alarm, will sometimes drive us contrary to the drift of our sympathies, just as our feet are lifted and we ourselves carried onwards by a surging crowd.

Whether this be a correct interpretation of their conduct or not, it certainly harmonises with the general attitude of Jesus towards the priesthood. The chief priests were always and bitterly hostile, but we have reasonable grounds for supposing that the priests, as a body, looked favourably upon Jesus. The bolts of terrible "woes" are hurled against Pharisees and scribes, yet Jesus does not condemn the priests in a single word; while in that aftermath of the Pentecost the Temple courts yielded the richest harvests, as "a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." If, then, Jesus now holds up the priesthood to execration, setting these ecclesiastics in the pillory of His parable, that the coming centuries may throw sharp words at them, it is certainly an exceptional mood. The sweet silence has curdled into acrid speech. But even here Jesus does not condemn, except, as it would seem, by implication, the conduct of the priest and Levite. They come into the parable rather as accessories, and Jesus makes use of them as a foil, to throw out into bolder relief the central figure, which is the Samaritan, and so to emphasise His central truth, which is the real answer to the lawyer's question, that "neighbour" is too broad, and too human, a word to be cut off and delimited by any boundaries of race.

But in thus casting a mantle of charity around our priest and Levite, we must admit that the character is sometimes true even down to recent days. Ecclesiasticism and religion, alas! are not always synonyms. Revolted Israel sins and sacrifices by turns, and seeking to keep the balance in equal poise, she puts over against her multitude of sins her multitude of sacrifices. Religiousness may be at times but a cloak for moral laxity, and to some rite is more than right. There are those, alas! to-day, who wear the livery of the Temple, to whom religion is a routine mechanism of dead things, rather than the commerce of living hearts, who open with hireling hand the Temple gates, who chant with hireling lips how "His mercy endureth for ever," and then step down from their sacred Jerusalem, to toss justice and mercy to the winds, as they defraud the widow and oppress the poor.

"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he was moved with compassion, and came to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring on them oil and wine; and he set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him." At first sight it would appear as if Jesus had weakened the narrative by a topographical inaccuracy, as if He had gone out of His way to place a Samaritan on the road to Jericho, which was altogether out of the line of Samaritan travel. But it is a deliberate purpose on the part of Jesus, and not a *lapsus linguae*, that introduces this Samaritan; for this is the gist of the whole parable. The man who had fallen among the robbers was doubtless a Jew; for had it been otherwise, the fact would have been stated. Now there was no question as to

whether the word "neighbour" embraced their fellow-countrymen: the question was whether it passed beyond their national bounds, opening up lines of duty across the outlying world. It is therefore almost a necessity that the one who teaches this lesson should be himself an alien, a foreigner, and Jesus chooses the Samaritan as being of a race against which Jewish antipathies were especially strong, but for which He Himself had a special regard and warmest sympathy. Though occupying adjacent territory, the Jews and the Samaritans practically were far apart, antipodal races we might almost call them. Between them lay a wide and deep chasm that trade even could not bridge, and across which the courtesies and sympathies of life never passed. "The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans," said the flippant woman of Samaria, as she voiced a jealousy and hatred which were as mutual as they were deep. But here, in this ideal Samaritan, is a noble exception. Though belonging to a lowly and obscure race, his thoughts are high. The ear of his soul has so caught the rhythm of Divine harmonies that it does not hear longer the little lisping Shibboleths of earthly speech; and while the sympathies of smaller hearts flow like a stream down in their well-defined and accustomed channel, seldom knowing any overflow, save in some rare freshet of impulse and of feeling, the sympathies of the Samaritan moved outward like the currents of the wind, sweeping across all chasms and over all mountain heights of division, bearing their clouds of blessing anywhere as the need required. It makes no difference to him that the fallen man is of an alien race. He is a *man*, and that is enough; and he is down, and must be raised; he is in need, and must be helped. The priest and Levite thought first and most of themselves, and giving to the man but a brief and scared look, they passed on with a quickened pace. Not so with the Samaritan; he loses all thought of himself, and is perfectly oblivious to the danger he himself may be running. Upon his great soul he feels the pressure of this "must"; it runs along the tightened muscles of his arm, as he checks his steed. He himself comes down, dismounting, that he may help the man to rise. He opens his flask and puts his wine to the lips, that their groans may cease, or that they may be soothed down into inarticulate speech. The oil he has brought for his own food he pours upon the wounds, and when the man has sufficiently recovered he lifts him upon his own beast and takes him to the inn. Nor is this enough for his great heart, but continuing his journey on the morrow, he first arranges with his host that the man shall be well cared for, giving him two pence, which was the two days' wages of a labouring man, at the same time telling him that he must not limit his attention to the sum he pays in advance, but that if anything more should be needed he would pay the balance on his return. We do not read whether it was needed or not, for the Samaritan, mounting his steed, passes out of our hearing and out of our sight. Not quite out of our hearing, however, for Heaven has caught his gentle, loving words, and hidden them within this parable, that all coming times may listen to their music; nor out of our sight either, for his photograph was caught in the sunlight of the Master's speech; and as we turn over the pages of Inspiration there is no picture more beautiful



than that of the nameless Samaritan, whom all the world calls "the Good," the man who knew so much better than his age what humanity and mercy meant.

In the new light the lawyer can answer his own question now, and he does; for when Jesus asks, "Which of these three, thinkest thou, proved neighbour unto him that fell among the robbers?" he replies, with no hesitation, but with a lingering prejudice that does not care to pronounce the, to him, outlandish name, "He that showed mercy on him." The lesson is learned, the lesson of humanity, for the whole parable is but an amplification of the Golden Rule, and Jesus dismisses the subject and the scholar with the personal application, which is but a corollary of the proposition He has demonstrated, "Go thou and do likewise." Go and do to others as you would have them do to you, were the circumstances reversed and your places changed. Read off your duty, not from your own low standpoint merely, but in a binocular vision, as you put yourself in his place; so will you find that the line of duty and the line of beauty are one.

The practical lessons of the parable are easy to trace, as they are of universal application. The first lesson it teaches is the lesson of humanity, the neighbourhood and brotherhood of man. It is a convenience, and perhaps a necessity, of human life, that the great mass of humanity should be broken up into fragments, sections, with differing customs, languages, and names. It gives to the world the stimulus of competition and helpful rivalries. But these distinctions are superficial, temporary, and beneath this diversity of speech and thought there is the deeper unity of soul. We emphasise our differences; we pride ourselves upon them; but how little does Heaven make of them! Heaven does not even see them. Our national boundaries may climb up over the Alps, but they cannot touch the sky. Those skies look down and smile on all alike, Divinely impartial in their gifts of beauty and of light. And how little of the provincial, or even national, there was about Jesus! Though He kept Himself almost entirely within the borders of the Holy Land, never going far from His central pivot, which was Jerusalem, and its cross, yet He belonged to the world, as the world belonged to Him. He called Himself the Son of man, at once humanity's flower, and humanity's Son and Saviour. And as over the cradle of the Son of man the far East and the far West together leaned, so around His cross was the meeting-place of the races. The three chief languages inscribed upon it proclaimed His royalty, while the cross itself, on which the Sacrifice for humanity was to be offered, was itself the gift of humanity at large, as Asia provided it, and Europe prepared it, and Africa, in the person of the Cyrenian, bore it. In the mind of Jesus, as in the purpose of God, humanity was not a group of fractions, but a unit one and indivisible, made of one blood, and by one Blood redeemed. In the heart of Jesus there was the "enthusiasm of humanity," all-absorbing and complete, and that enthusiasm takes possession of us, a new force generated in our lives, as we approach in spirit the great Ideal Man.

The second lesson of the parable is the lesson of mercy, the beauty of self-sacrifice. It was because the Samaritan forgot himself that all the

world has remembered and applauded him. It is because of his stoop of self-renouncing love that his character is so exalted, his memory so dear, and that his very name, which is a title without a name, floats down the ages like a sweet song. "Go and do thou likewise" is the Master's word to us. Discipline your heart that you may see in man everywhere a brother, whose keeper you are. Let fraternity be, not a theory only, but a realised fact, and then a factor of your life. Train your eye to watch for others' needs, to read another's woe. Train your soul to sympathy, and your hand to helpfulness; for in our world there is room enough for both. Bethesda's porches stretch far as our eye can reach, all crowded, too, with the sorrowing, the sick, and the sad—thick enough indeed, but not so close as that an angel's foot may not step between them, and not so sad but an angel's voice may soothe and cheer. He who lifts another's load, who soothes another's smart, who brightens a life that else would be dark, who puts a music within a brother's soul, though it be only for a passing moment, wakes even a sweeter music within his own, for he enters on earth into his Master's joy, the joy of a redeeming, self-sacrificing love.

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE TWO SISTERS.

LUKE x. 38-42.

At first sight it appears as if our Evangelist had departed from the orderly arrangement of which he speaks in his prelude, in thus linking this domestic scene of Judæa with his northern Galilean journey, and to the casual glance this home-flower does certainly seem an exotic in *this* garden of the Lord. The strangeness, the out-of-placeness, however, vanishes entirely upon a nearer, closer view. If, as is probable, the parable of the Good Samaritan was spoken during that northward journey, its scene lies away in Judæa, in the dangerous road that sweeps down from Jerusalem to Jericho. Now, this road to Jericho lay through the village of Bethany, and in the Evangelist's mind the two places are intimately connected, as we see (chap. xix. vv. 1, 29); so that the idyll of Bethany would follow the parable of the Good Samaritan with a certain naturalness, the one recalling the other by the simple association of ideas. Then, too, it harmonises so thoroughly with its context, as it comes between a parable on works and a chapter on prayer. In the one, man is the doer, heart and hand going out in the beautiful ministries of love; in the other, man is the receiver, waiting upon God, opening hand and heart for the inflow of Divine grace. In one it is Love in action that we see; in the other it is Love at rest, at rest from activities of her own, in quest of further good. This is exactly the picture our Evangelist draws of the two sisters, and which might have served as a parable had it not been so plainly taken from real life. Perhaps, too, another consideration influenced the Evangelist, and one that is suggested by the studied vagueness of the narrative. He gives no clue as to where the little incident occurred, for the "certain village" might be equally appropriate in Samaria or Judæa; while the two names, Martha



and Mary, apart from the corroboration of St. John's Gospel, would not enable us to localise the scene. It is evident that St. Luke wished to throw around them a sort of *incognito*, probably because they were still living when he wrote, and too great publicity might subject them to inconvenience, or even to something more. And so St. Luke considerably masks the picture, shutting off the background of locality, while St. John, who writes at a later date, when Jerusalem has fallen, and who is under no such obligation of reserve, fixes the scene precisely; for there can be no doubt that the Mary and Martha of his Gospel, of Bethany, are the Martha and Mary of St. Luke; their very characters, as well as names, are identical.

It was in one of His journeys to the south, though we have no means of telling which, that He came to Bethany, a small village on the eastern slope of Olivet, and about three-quarters of an hour from Jerusalem. There are several indications in the Gospels that this was a favourite resort of Jesus during His Judæan ministry (Matt. xxi. 1; John viii. 1); and it is somewhat singular that the only nights that we read He spent in Jerusalem were the night in the garden and the two nights He slept in His grave. He preferred the quiet haven of Bethany; and though we cannot with absolute certainty recognise the village home where Jesus had such frequent welcome, yet throwing the side-light of John xi. 5 upon the haze, it seems in part to lift; for the deep affection Jesus had for the three implies a close and ripened intimacy.

St. John, in his allusions to the family, makes Mary prominent, giving precedence to her name, as he calls Bethany "the village of Mary and her sister Martha" (John xi. 1). St. Luke, however, makes Martha the central figure of his picture, while Mary is set back in the shade, or rather in the sunshine of that Presence which was and is the Light of the world. It was, "Martha received Him into her house." She was the recognised head of the family, "the lady" in fact, as well as by the implication of her name, which was the native equivalent of "lady." It was she who gave the invitation to the Master, and on her devolved all the care of the entertainment, the preparation of the feast, and the reception of the guests; for though the change of pronoun in ver. 38 from "they" to "Him" would lead us to suppose that the disciples had gone another way, and were not with Him now, still the "much serving" would show that it was a special occasion, and that others had been invited to meet Jesus.

It is a significant coincidence that St. John, speaking (xii. 2) of another supper at Bethany, in the house of Simon, states that Martha "served," using the same word that Jesus addressed to her in the narrative of St. Luke. Evidently Martha was a "server." This was her forte, so much so that her services were in requisition outside her own house. Hers was a culinary skill, and she delighted with her sleight of hand to effect all sorts of transformations, as, conjuring with her fire, she called forth the pleasures and harmonies of taste. In this case, however, she overdid it; she went beyond her strength. Perhaps her guests outnumbered her invitations, or something unforeseen had upset her plans, so that some of the viands were belated. At any rate, she was cumbered, distracted, "put about" as our modern colloquialism would

have it. Perhaps we might say she was "put out" as well, for we can certainly detect a trace of irritability both in her manner and in her speech. She breaks in suddenly among the guests (the aorist participle gives the rustle of a quick movement), and in the hearing of them all she says to Jesus, "Lord, dost Thou not care that my sister did leave me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me." Her tone is sharp, querulous, and her words send a deep chill across the table, as when a sea-fret drifts coldly inland. If Mary was in the wrong thus to sit at the feet of Jesus, Martha certainly was not in the right. There was no occasion to give this public reprimand, this round-hand rebuke. She might have come and secretly called her, as she did afterwards, on the day of their sorrow, and probably Mary would have risen as quickly now as then. But Martha is overweighted, ruffled; her feelings get the better of her judgment, and she speaks, out of the impatience of her heart, words she never would have spoken had she but known that Inspiration would keep their echoes reverberating down all the years of time. And besides, her words were somewhat lacking in respect to the Master. True, she addresses as "Lord;" but having done this, she goes off into an interrogative with an implied censure in it, and closes with an imperative, which, to say the least, was not becoming, while all through an undue emphasis is laid upon the first personal pronoun, the "me" of her aggrieved self.

Turning to the other sister, we find a striking contrast, for Mary, as our Evangelist puts it, "also sat at the Lord's feet, and heard His word." This does not imply any forwardness on her part, or any desire to make herself conspicuous; the whole drift of her nature was in the opposite direction. Sitting "at His feet" now that they were reclining at the table, meant sitting behind Him, alone amid the company, and screened from their too curious gaze by Him who drew all eyes to Himself. Nor does she break through her womanly reserve to take part in the conversation; she simply "heard His word;" or "she kept listening," as the imperfect tense denotes. She put herself in the listening attitude, content to be in the shadow, outside the charmed circle, if she only might hear Him speak, whose words fell like a rain of music upon her soul. Her sister chided her for this, and the large family of modern Marthas—for feminine instinct is almost entirely on Martha's side—blame her severely, for what they call the selfishness of her conduct, seeking her own enjoyment, even though others must pay the price of it. But was Mary so utterly selfish? and did she sacrifice duty to gratify her inclination? Not at all, and certainly not to the extent our Marthas would have us believe. Mary had assisted in the preparations and the reception, as the "also" of ver. 39 shows; while Martha's own words, "My sister did leave me to serve alone," themselves imply that Mary had shared the labours of the entertainment before taking her place at the feet of Jesus. The probability is that she had completed her task, and now that He who spake as never man spake before was conversing with the guests, she could not forego the privilege of listening to the voice she might not hear again.

It is to Jesus, however, that we must go with our rivalry of claims. He is our Court of Equity. His estimate of character was never at fault.



He looked at the essences of things, the soul of things, and not to the outward wrappings of circumstance, and He read that palimpsest of motive, the underlying thought, more easily than others could read the outward act. And certainly Jesus had no apology for selfishness; His whole life was one war against it, and against sin, which is but selfishness ripened. But how does Jesus adjust this sisterly difference? Does He dismiss the listener, and send her back to an unfinished task? Does He pass on to her Martha's warm reproof? Not at all; but He gently reproves the elder sister. "Martha, Martha," He said, as if her mind had wandered, and the iteration was necessary to call her to herself, "thou art anxious and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: for Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

It is easy to see from this where Jesus thought the blame should rest. It was Martha who had taken too much upon herself. Her generous heart had gone beyond her strength, and far beyond the need. Wishing to do honour to her Guest, studying to please Him, she had been over-lavish in her entertainment, until she had become worried—anxious, troubled, as Jesus said, the former word referring to the inner disquiet, the unrest of the soul, and the latter to the outward perturbation, the tremor of the nerves, and the cloudiness that looked from her eyes. The fact was that Martha had misread the tastes of her Guest. She thought to please Him by the abundance of her provision, the largeness of her hospitality; but for these lower pleasures of sense and of taste Jesus cared little. He had meat to eat that others knew not of, and to do the will of Him that sent Him was to Jesus more than any ambrosia or nectar of the gods. The more simple the repast, the more it pleased Him, whose thoughts were high in the heavenly places, even while His feet and the mortal body He wore touched lightly the earth. And so, while Martha's motive was pure, her judgment was mistaken, and her eager heart tempted her to works of supererogation, to an excess of care which was anxiety, the fret and fever of the soul. Had she been content with a modest service, such as would have pleased her Guest, she too might have found time to sit at His feet, and to have found there an Elim of rest and a Mount of Beatitudes.

But while Jesus has a kind rebuke for Martha, He has only words of commendation for her sister, whom she has been so openly and sharply upbraiding. "Mary," He said, speaking the name Martha had not uttered, "hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her." He answers Martha in her own language, her native tongue; for in speaking of Mary's choice as the "good part," it is a culinary phrase, the *parlance* of the kitchen or the table, meaning the choice bit. The phrase is in apposition with the one thing which is needful, which itself is the antithesis to the "many things" of Martha's care. What the "one thing" is of which Jesus speaks we cannot say with certainty, and almost numberless have been the interpretations given to it. But without going into them, can we not find the truest interpretation in the Lord's own words? We think we may, for in the Sermon on the Mount we have an exact parallel to the narrative. He finds people burdened, anxious about the things of this

life, wearying themselves with the interminable questions, "What shall we eat? or What shall we drink?" as if life had no quest higher and vaster than these. And Jesus rebukes this spirit of anxiety, exorcising it by an appeal to the lilies and the grass of the field; and summing up His condemnation of anxiety, He adds the injunction, "Seek ye His kingdom, and these things shall be added unto you" (xii. 31). Here, again, we have the "many things" of human care and strife contrasted with the "one thing" which is of supremest moment. First, the kingdom; this in the mind of Jesus was the *summum bonum*, the highest good of man, compared with which the "many things" for which men strive and toil are but the dust of the balances. And this was the choice of Mary. She sought the kingdom of God, sitting at the feet of Him who proclaimed it, and who was, though she knew it not as yet, Himself the King. Martha too sought the kingdom, but her distracted mind showed that that was not her only, perhaps not her chief quest. Earthly things weighed too heavily upon her mind and heart, and through their dust the heavenly things became somewhat obscured. Mary's heart was set heavenward. She was the listener, eager to know the will of God, that she might do it. Martha was so busied with her own activities that she could not give her thoughts to Christ; Mary ceased from her works, that so she might enter into His rest, setting the world behind her, that her undivided gaze might be upon Him who was truly her Lord. And so Jesus loved Martha, yet pitied and chided her, while He loved and commended Mary.

Nor was the "good part" ever taken from her, for again and again we find her returning to the feet of Jesus. In the day of their great sorrow, as soon as she heard that the Master had come and called her, she arose quickly, and coming to Jesus, though it was the bare, dusty ground, she fell at His feet, seeking strength and help where she before had sought light and truth. And once more: when the shadow of the cross came vividly near, when Simon gave the feast which Martha served, Mary sought those feet again, to pour upon them the precious and fragrant nard, the sweet odours of which filled all the house, as they have since filled all the world. Yes, Mary did not sit at the feet of Jesus in vain. She had learned to know Christ as few of the disciples did; for when Jesus said, "She has done it for My burying," He intends us to infer that Mary feels, stealing over her retiring but loving soul, the cold and awful shadow of the cross. Her broken alabaster and its poured-out spikenard are her unspoken ode to the Redeemer, her pre-dated homage to the Crucified.

And so we find in Mary the truest type of service. Hers was not always the passive attitude, receiving and never giving, absorbing and not diffusing. There was the service before the session; her hands had prepared and wrought for Christ before she placed herself at His feet, and the sacrifice followed, as she brought her costly gift, to the astonishment of all the rest, her sweet and healing balm for the wounds which were soon to follow.

The life that is all receptive, that has no active ministries of love, no waiting upon Christ in the person of His followers, is an unnatural, an unhealthy life, a piece of morbid selfishness which neither pleases God nor blesses man.



On the other hand, the life that is always busy, that is in a constant swirl of outward duties, flying here and there like a stormy petrel over the unresting waves, will soon weary or wear itself out, or it will grow into an automaton, a mechanism without a soul. Receiving, giving, praying, working—these are the alternate chords on which the music of our lives should be struck. Heavenward, earthward, should be the alternate looks—heavenward in our waiting upon God, and earthward in our service for man. That life shines the most and is seen the farthest which reflects most of the heavenly light; and he serves Christ the best who now sits humbly and prayerfully at His feet, and then goes forth to be a “living echo of His voice,” breaking for Him the alabaster of a self-sacrificing love. As one has beautifully expressed it, “The effective life and the receptive life are one. No sweep of arm that does some work for God but harvests also some more of the truth of God and sweeps it into the treasury of the life.”\*

But if Mary gives us a type of the truest and best service, Martha shows us a kind of service which is only too common. She gave to Jesus a right loving welcome, and was delighted with the privilege of ministering to His wants; but the coming of Jesus brought her, not peace, but distraction—not rest, but worry. Her very service ruffled and irritated her, until mind and heart were like the tempestuous lake ere the spell of the Divine “Peace” fell upon it. And all the time the Christ was near, who could bear each burden, and still all the disquiet of the soul! But Martha was all absorbed in the thought of what she could do for Him, and she forgot how much more He could do for her, giving to her chafed spirit quietness and rest, even amid her toil. The Divine Peace was near her, within her home, but the hurrying of her restless will and her manifold activities effectually excluded that peace from her heart.

And how many who call themselves Christians are true Marthas, serving Christ, but feeling the yoke to chafe, and the burden to weight them! perhaps preaching to others the Gospel of rest and peace, and themselves knowing little of its experience and blessedness—like the camels of the desert, which carry their treasures of corn and sweet spices to others, and themselves feed on the bitter and prickly herbs. Ah, you are too much upon your feet! Cease for awhile from your own works, and let God work in you. Wait in His presence. Let His words take hold of you, and His love enthuse you: so will you find rest amid your toil, calmness amid the strife, and you will prove that the fret and the fever of life will all disappear at the touch of the living Christ.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### LOST AND FOUND.

#### LUKE xv.

In this chapter we see how the waves of influence, moving outward from their Divine centre, touch the outermost fringe of humanity, sending the pulsations of new excitements and new hopes through classes Religion and Society both had banned. “Now all the publicans and sinners were drawing near unto Him, for to hear Him.”

\* Phillips Brooks.

It was evidently a movement widespread and deep. The hostility of Pharisees and scribes would naturally give to these outcasts a certain bias in His favour, causing their hearts to lean towards Him, while His words of hope fell upon their lives like the breaking of a new dawn. Nor did Jesus forbid their approach. Instead of looking upon it as an intrusion, an impertinence, the attraction was mutual. Instead of receiving them with a cold and scant courtesy, He welcomed them, receiving them gladly, as the verb of the Pharisees’ murmur implies. He even mingled with them in social intercourse, with an acceptance, if not an interchange, of hospitality. To the Pharasaic mind, however, this was a flagrant lapse, a breach of the proprieties which was unpardonable and half criminal, and they gave vent to their disapprobation and disgust in the loud and scornful murmur, “This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.” It is from this hard sentence of withering contempt, as from a prickly and bitter calyx, we have the trifoliate parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Lost Man, the last of which is perhaps the crown and flower of all the parables. With minor differences, the three parables are really one, emphasising, as they reiterate, the one truth how Heaven seeks after the lost of earth, and how it rejoices when the lost is found.

The first parable is pastoral: “What man of you,” asks Jesus, using the *Tu quoque* retort, “having a hundred sheep, and having lost one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?” It is one of those questions which only need to be asked to be answered, an interrogative which is axiomatic and self-evident. Jesus tries to set his detractors in His place, that they may think His thoughts, feel His feelings, as they look out on the world from His standpoint; but since they cannot follow Him to these redemptive heights, He comes down to the lower level of their vision. “Suppose you have a hundred sheep, and one of them, getting separated from the rest, goes astray, what do you do? Dismissing it from your thought, do you leave it to its fate, the certain slaughter that awaits it from the wild beasts? or do you seek to minimise your loss, working it out by the rule of proportion as you ask, ‘What is one to ninety-nine?’ then writing off the lost one, not as a unit, but as a common fraction? No; such a supposition is incredible and impossible. You would go in search of the lost directly. Turning your back upon the ninety and nine, and turning your thoughts from them too, you would leave them in their mountain pasture,\* as you sought the lost one. Calling it by its name, you would climb the terraced hills, and awake the echoes of the wadies, until the flinty heart of the mountain had felt the sympathy of your sorrow, repeating with you the lost wanderer’s name. And when at last you found it you would not chide or punish it; you would not even force it to retrace its steps across the weary distance, but taking compassion on its weakness, you would lift it upon your shoulders and bear it rejoicing home. Then forgetful of your own weariness, fatigue and anxiety swallowed up in the new-found joy, you would go round to your neighbours, to break the good news to them, and so all would rejoice together.”

\* The word rendered “wilderness” means any land unenclosed.



Such is the picture, warm in colour and instinct with life, Jesus sketches in a few well-chosen words. He delicately conceals all reference to Himself; but even the chromatic vision of the Pharisees would plainly perceive how complete was its justification of His own conduct, in mingling thus with the erring and the lost; while to us the parable is but a veil of words, through which we discern the form and features of the "Good Shepherd," who gave even His life for the sheep, seeking that He might save that which was lost.

The second, which is a twin parable, is from domestic life. As in the parables of the kingdom, Jesus sets beside the man with the mustard-seed the woman with her leaven, so here He makes the same distinction, clothing the Truth both in a masculine and a feminine dress. He asks again, "Or what woman" (He does not say "of you," for if women were present amongst His hearers they would be in the background) "having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a lamp, and sweep the house, and seek diligently until she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth together her friends and neighbours, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost." Much objection has been taken to this parable for its supposed want of naturalness and reality. "Is it likely," our objectors say, "that the loss of a small coin like a drachma, whose value was about sevenpence-halfpenny, could be the occasion of so much concern, and that its recovery should be enough to call forth the congratulations of all the village matrons? Surely that is not parable, but hyperbole." But things have a real as well as an intrinsic value, and what to others would be common and cheap, to its possessor might be a treasure beyond reckoning, with all the added values of association and sentiment. So the ten drachmas of the woman might have a history; they might have been a family heirloom, moving quietly down the generations, with whole poems, aye, and even tragedies hidden within them. Or we can conceive of a poverty so dire and strait that even one small coin in the emergent circumstance might grow into a value far beyond its intrinsic worth. But the parable does not need all these suppositions to steady it and keep it from falling to the ground. When rightly understood it becomes singularly natural, the truth of truth, if such an essence can be distilled in human speech. The probable interpretation is that the ten drachmas were the ten coins worn as a frontlet by the women of the East. This frontlet was given by the bridegroom to the bride at the time of marriage, and like the ring of Western life, it was invested with a kind of sanctity. It must be worn on all public occasions, and guarded with a jealous, sacred care; for should one of its pieces be lost, it would be regarded as an indication that the possessor had not only been careless, but also that she had been unfaithful to her marriage vow. Throwing, then, this light of Eastern custom upon the parable, how vivid and lifelike it becomes! With what intense eagerness would she seek for the missing coin! Lighting her lamp—for the house would be but dimly lighted with its open door and its small unglazed window—how carefully and almost tremblingly she would peer along its shelves, and sweep out the corners of her few rooms! and how great would be her joy as she saw it

glistening in the dust! Her whole soul would go out after it, as if it were a living, sentient thing. She would clasp it in her hand, and even press it to her lips; for has it not taken a heavy care and sorrow from her heart? That one coin rising from the dust has been to her like the rising of another sun, filling her home with light and her life with melody; and what wonder that she hastens to communicate her joy, as, standing by her door, after the eastern wont, she holds up the missing treasure, and calls on her neighbours and friends (the substantives are feminine now) to rejoice with her.

The third parable carries the thought still higher, forming the crown of the ascending series. Not only is there a mathematical progression, as the lost fraction increases from one-hundredth to one-tenth, and then to one-half of the whole, but the intrinsic value of the loss rises in a corresponding series. In the first it was a lost sheep, a loss which might soon be replaced, and which would soon be forgotten; in the second it was a lost coin, which, as we have seen, meant the loss of what was more valuable than gold, even honour and character; while in the third it is a lost child. We call it the parable of the Prodigal Son; it might with equal propriety be called the Parable of the Bereaved Father, for the whole story crystallises about that name, repeating it, in one form or another, no less than twelve times.

"A certain man," so begins this parabolic "Paternoster," "had two sons." Tired of the restraints of home and the surveillance of the father's eye, the younger of them determined to see the world for himself, in order, as the sequel shows, that he might have a free hand, and give loose reins to his passions. With a cold, impertinent bluntness, he says to the father, whose death he thus anticipates, "Father, give me the portion of thy substance that falleth to me," a command whose sharp, imperative tone shows but too plainly the proud, masterful spirit of the youth. He respects neither age nor law; for though the paternal estate could be divided during the father's life, no son, much less the younger, had any right to demand it. The father grants the request, dividing "unto them," as it reads, "his living;" for the same line which marks off the portion of the younger marks out too that of the elder son, though he holds his portion as yet only in promise. Not many days after—for having found its wings, the foolish bird is in haste to fly—the youth gathers all together, and then takes his journey into a far country. The down grades of life are generally steep and short, and so one sentence is enough to describe this *decensus Averni*, down which the youth plunges so insanely: "He wasted his substance with riotous living," scattering it, as the verb means, throwing it away after low, illicit pleasures. "And when he had spent all"—the "all" he had scrambled for and gathered a short while before—"there arose a mighty famine in that country; and he began to be in want;" and so great were his straits, so remorseless the pangs of hunger, that he was glad to attach himself to a citizen of that country as swineherd, living out in the fields with his drove, like the swineherds of Gadara. But such was the pressure of the famine that his mere pittance could not cope with famine prices, and again and again he hungered to have his fill of the carob-pods,



which were dealt out steadily and sparingly to the swine. But no man gave even these to him; he was forgotten as one already dead.

Such is the picture Jesus draws of the lost man, a picture of abject misery and degradation. When the sheep wandered it strayed unwittingly, blindly, getting farther from its fellows and its fold even when bleating vainly for them. When the drachma was lost it did not lose itself, nor had it any consciousness that it had dropped out of its proper environment. But in the case of the lost man it was altogether different. Here it is a wilful perversity, which breaks through the restraints of home, tramples upon its endearments, and throws up a blighted life, scarred and pealed amid the husks and swine of a far country. And it is this element of perversity, self-will, which explains, as indeed it necessitates, another marked difference in the parables. When the sheep and the drachma were lost there was an eager search, as the shepherd followed the wanderer over the mountain gullies, and the woman with broom and lamp went after the lost coin. But when the youth is lost, flinging himself away, the father does not follow him, except in thought, and love, and prayer. He sits "still in the house," nursing a bitter grief, and the work on the farm goes on just as usual, for the service of the younger brother would probably be not much missed. And why does not the father summon his servants, bidding them go after the lost child, bringing him home, if necessary, by force? Simply because such a finding would be no finding. They might indeed carry the wanderer home, setting down his feet by the familiar door; but of what use is that if his heart is still wayward and his will rebellious? Home would not be home to him: and with his heart in the far country, he would walk even in his father's fields and in his father's house as an alien, a foreigner. And so all embassies, all messages would be in vain; and even a father's love can do no more than wait, patiently and prayerfully, in hopes that a better spirit may yet come over him, and that some rebound of feeling may bring him home, a humbled penitent. The change comes at length, and the slow morning dawns.

When the photographer wishes to develop the picture that is hidden in the film of the sensitive plate he carries it to a darkened room, and bathed in the developing solution the latent image gradually appears, even to the minutest details. It was so here; for when in his extremest need, with the pinch of a fearful hunger upon him, and the felt darkness of a painful isolation surrounding him, there came into the prodigal's soul a sweet picture of the far-away home, the home which might still have been his but for his wantonness, but which is his now only in memory. It is true his first thoughts of that home were not very lofty; they only crouched with the dogs under the father's table, or hovered around the plentiful board of the servants, attracted by the "bread enough and to spare." But such is the natural association of ideas; the carob-pods of the swine naturally suggest the bread of the servants, while this in turn opens up all the chambers of the father's house, reviving its half-faded images of happiness and love, and awaking all the sweet memories that sin had stifled and silenced. That it was so here, the lower leading up to the higher thought, is evident from the young man's soliloquy: "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father,

I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight: I am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." The hunger for the servants' bread is all forgotten now, swallowed up in the hunger of the soul, as it pines for the father's presence and for the father's smile, longing for the lost Eden. The very name "father" strikes with a strange music upon his awakened and penitent soul, making him for the time half-oblivious to his present wretchedness; and as Memory recalls a bright but vanished past, Hope peoples the dark sky with a heavenly host, who sing a new Advent, the dawn of a heavenly day. An Advent? Perhaps it was an Easter rather, with a "resurrection from earth to things above," an Easter whose anthem, in songs without end, was, "I will arise and go to my father," that *Resurgam* of a new and holier life.

No sooner is the "I will" spoken than there is a reversing of all the wheels. The hands follow whither the heart has gone; the feet shake off the dust of the far country, retracing the steps they measured so foolishly and lightly before; while the eyes, washed by their bitter tears—

"Not backward are their glances bent,  
But onward to the Father's house."

"And he arose and came to his father." He came to himself first; and having found that better self, he became conscious of the void he had not felt before. For the first time he realises how much the father is to him, and how terrible the bereavement and loss he inflicted upon himself when he put between that father and himself the desert of an awful distance. And as the bright memories of other days flash up within his soul, like the converging rays of a borealis, they all turn towards and centre in the father. Servants, home, and loaves of bread alike speak of him whose very shadow is brightness to the self-orphaned child. He yearns for the father's presence with a strange and intense yearning; and could that presence be his again, even if he were nothing more than a servant, with but casual interviews, hearing his voice but in its commanding tones, he would be content and happy.

And so he comes and seeks the father; will the father relent and receive him? Can he overlook and forgive the waywardness and wantonness which have embittered his old age? Can he receive him back even as a servant, a child who has scorned his authority, slighted his love, and squandered his substance in riotous living? Does the father say, "He has made his own bed, and he must lie upon it; he has had his portion, even to the swept-up crumbs, and there is nothing left for him now"? No, for there is something left, a treasure which he might scorn, indeed, but which he could not throw away, even a heritage of love. And what a picture the parable draws of the love that hopeth and endureth all things! "But while he was yet afar off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." As the moon in her revolutions lifts up the tides, drawing the deep oceans to herself, so do the unsounded depths of the father's heart turn towards the prodigal whose life has set, dropping out of sight behind wildernesses of darkness. Thought, prayer, pity, compassion, love flow out towards the attraction they can no longer see. Nay, it seems as if the father's vision were trans-



fixed, riveted to the spot where the form of his erring lad vanished out of sight; for no sooner has the youth come within sight of the home than the father's eyes, made telescopic with love, discern him, and as if by intuition, recognise him, even though his attire be mean and tattered, and his step has no longer the lightness of innocence nor the firmness of integrity. It is, it is his child, the erring but now repenting child, and the pent-up emotions of the father's soul rush out as in a tumultuous freshet to meet him. He even "ran" to meet him, all forgetful of the dignity of years, and throwing himself upon his neck, he kissed him, not either with the cold kiss of courtesy, but with the warm, fervent kiss of love, as the intensive prefix of the verb implies.

So far this scene of reconciliation has been as a dumbshow. The storm of emotion so interrupted the electric flow of quiet thought and speech that no word was spoken in the mutual embrace. When, however, the power of speech returns the youth is the first to break the silence. "Father," he said, repeating the words of his mental resolve when in the far country, "I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight: I am no more worthy to be called thy son." It is no longer the sense of physical need, but the deeper sense of guilt, that now presses upon his soul. The moral nature, which by the anodynes of sin had been thrown into a state of coma, awakes to a vivid consciousness, and in the new awakening, in the broadening light of the new dawn, he sees one thing only, and that is his sin, a sin which has thrown its blackness over the wasted years, which has embittered a father's heart, and which cast its shadow even into heaven itself. Nor is it the conviction of sin only; there is a full and frank confession of it, with no attempt at palliation or excuse. He does not seek to gloss it over, but smiting his breast with bitter reproaches, he confesses his sin with "a humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart," hoping for the mercy and forgiveness he is conscious he does not deserve. Nor does he hope in vain. Even before the confession is completed, the absolution is spoken, virtually at least; for without allowing the youth to finish his sentence, in which he offers to renounce his sonship and to accept a menial position, the father calls to the servants, "Bring forth quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and make merry." In this peal of imperatives we detect the rapid beating of the father's heart, the loving, eager haste to wipe out all the sad marks that sin has left. In the luminous atmosphere of the father's love the youth is no more the prodigal; he is as one transfigured; and now that the chrysalis has left the mire, and crept up into the sunlight, it must have a dress befitting its new summer life, wings of gauze, and robes of rainbow hues. The best, or "the first robe" as it is in the Greek, must be brought out for him; a signet-ring, the pledge of authority, must be put upon his hand; shoes, the badge of freedom, must be found for the tired and bared feet; while for the merry-making which is extemporised, the domestic *festa* which is the crown of these rejoicings, the fatted calf, which was in reserve for some high festival, must be killed. And all this is spoken in a breath, in a sort of bewilderment, the ecstasy of an ex-

cessive joy; and forgetting that the simple command is enough for servants, the master must needs tell out his joy to them: "For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."

If the three parables were all through coincident, the Parable of the Prodigal Son should close at this point, the curtain dropping over the festive scene, where songs, and music, and the rhythm of the dance are the outward and weak expressions of the father's joy over the son who comes back from the far country, as one alive from the dead. But Jesus has another purpose; He must not only plead the cause of the outcast and the low, setting open for them the door of mercy and of hope; He must also rebuke and silence the unreasoning murmur of the Pharisees and scribes—which He does in the picture of the Elder Brother. Coming from the field, the heir is surprised to find the whole house given up to an impromptu feast. He hears the sounds of merriment and music, but its strains fall strange and harsh upon his ear. What can it mean? Why was *he* not consulted? Why should his father thus take occasion of his absence in the fields to invite his friends and neighbours? The proud spirit chafes under the slight, and calling one of the servants, he asks what it all means. The answer is not reassuring, for it only perplexes and pains him the more: "Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound"—an answer which does but deepen his displeasure, turning his sullenness to anger. "And would not go in." They may end the feast, as they began it, without him. The festive joy is something foreign to his nature; it awakes but feelings of repulsion, and all its music is to him a grating discord, a "Miserere."

But let us not be too severe upon the elder brother. He was not perfect, by any means, but in any appraisement of his character there are certain veinings of worth and nobleness that must not be omitted. We have already seen how, in the division of the father's goods, when he divided unto them his living, while the younger took away his portion, and swiftly scattered it in riotous living, the elder brother took no advantage of the deed of gift. He did not dispossess the father, securing for himself the paternal estate. He put it back into his father's hands, content with the filial relation of dependence and obedience. The father's word was still his law. He was the dutiful son; and when he said, "These many years do I serve thee, and I never transgressed a commandment of thine," the boast was no exaggeration, but the statement of a simple truth. Compared with the life of the prodigal, the life of the elder brother had been consistent, conscientious, and moral. Where, then, was his failure, his lack? It was just here, in the lack of heart, the absence of affection. He bore the name of a son, but he carried the heart of a servant. His nature was servile, rather than filial; and while his hands offered a service unremitting and precise, it was the cold service of an impassive mechanism. Instead of love passing out in living heart-throbs, suffusing all the life with its warmth, and clothing it in its own iridescent colouring, it was only a metallic mainspring called "duty." The father's presence is not the delight to him; he does not once



mention that tender name in which the repenting one finds such a heaven; and when he draws the picture of his highest happiness, the feast of his earthly Walhalla, "my friends" are there, though the father is excluded. And so between the father and the elder brother, with all this seeming nearness, there was a distance of reserve, and where the voices of affection and of constant communion should have been heard there was too often a vacancy of silence. It takes a heart to read a heart; and since this was wanting in the elder brother, he could not know the heart of the father; he could not understand his wild joy. He had no patience with his younger brother; and had he received him back at all, it would have been with a haughty stiffness, and with a lowering in his looks, which should have been at once a rebuke for the past and a warning for the future. The father looked on his son's repentance; the elder brother did not regard the repentance at all; perhaps he had not heard of it, or perhaps he could not understand it; it was something that lay out of the plane of his consciousness. He saw the sin only, how the younger son had devoured his living with harlots; and so he was severe, exacting, bitter. He would have brought out the sackcloth, but nothing more; while as to the music and the fatted calf, they would appear to his loveless soul as an absurd anachronism.

But far removed as he is from the father's spirit, he is still his son; and though the father rejoices more over the younger than over the elder, as was but natural, he loves them both with an equal love. He cannot bear that there should be any estrangement now; and he even leaves the festive throng, and the son he has welcomed and robed, and going out, he begs, he entreats the elder brother to pass in, and to throw himself into the general joy. And when the elder son complains that, with all his years of obedient, dutiful service, he has never had even a kid, much less a fatted calf, on which to feast his friends, the father says, lovingly, but chidingly, "Son"—or "Child," rather, for it is a term of greater endearment than the "son" he had just used before—"thou art ever with me, and all that is mine is thine. But it was meet to make merry and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found." He plays upon the "child" as upon a harp, that he may drive away the evil spirits of jealousy and anger, and that even within the servant-heart he may awake some chords, if only the far-off echoes of a lost childhood. He reminds him how vastly different their two positions are. For him there has been no break in their intercourse; the father's house has been his home; he has had the free range of all: to the younger that home has been nothing but a distant memory, with a waste of dreary years between. He has been heir and lord of all; and so completely have father and son been identified, their separate personalities merged the one in the other, that the possessive pronouns, the "mine" and the "thine," are used interchangeably. The younger returns penniless, disinherited by his own misdeed. Nay, he has been as one dead; for what was the far country but a vault of slimy things, the sepulchre of a dead soul? "And should we not make merry and be glad, when thy brother" (it is the antithesis to "thy son" of ver. 30, a mutual "thy") "comes back to us as one raised from the dead?"

Whether the father's pleading prevailed, or not, we are not told. We can but hope it did, and that the elder brother, with his asperities all dissolved, and his jealousies removed, did pass within to share the general joy, and to embrace a lost brother. Then he too would know the sweetness of forgiveness, and taught by the erring but now forgiven one, he too would learn to spell out more correctly that deep word "father," the word he had stammered at, and perhaps misspelt before, as the fatherhood and the brotherhood became to him not ideas merely, but bright realities.

Gathering up now the lessons of the parables, they show us (1) the Divine grief over sin. In the first two this is the prominent thought, the sorrow of the loser. God is represented as losing that which is of worth to Him, something serviceable, and therefore valuable. In the third parable the same idea is suggested rather than stated; but the thought is carried farther, for now it is more than a loss, it is a bereavement the father suffers. The retreating form of the wanderer throws back its shadow across the father's home and heart, a shadow that congeals and stays, and that is darker than the shadow of Death itself. It is the Divine Grief, whose depths we cannot sound, and from whose mystery we must stand back, not one stone's cast, but many.

The parables show (2) the sad state of the sinner. In the case of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin we see his perfect helplessness to recover himself, and that he must remain lost, unless One higher than himself undertakes his cause, and "help is laid upon One that is mighty." It is the third parable, however, which especially emphasises the downward course of sin and the deepening wretchedness of the sinner. The flowery path leads on to a valley of desolation. The way of transgressors is ever a downward path; and let an evil spirit possess a soul, it hurries him directly down the steep place, where, unless the flight be checked, a certain destruction awaits him. Sin degrades and isolates. Want, sorrow, penury, and pain are but a part of its viperous brood, and he who plays with sin, calling it freedom, will find his rod blossom with bitter fruit, or he will see it grow into a serpent with poison in its fangs.

The parables show (3) God's willingness and eagerness to save. The long and eager search after the lost sheep and the lost coin show, though but imperfectly, the supreme efforts God makes for man's salvation. He is not left to wander unrebuked and unsought. There is no forbidden path along which men insanely rush, but some bright angel stands beside it, warning back the sinner, it may be with a drawn sword, some "terror of the Lord," or it may be with a cross, the sacrifice of an infinite love. Though He could send His armies to destroy, He sends His messengers to win us back to obedience and to love—Conscience, Memory, Reason, the Word, the Spirit, and even the well-beloved Son. Nor is the great search discontinued, until it has proved to be in vain.

The parables show (4) the eager interest Heaven takes in man's salvation, and the deep joy there is among the angels over his repentance and recovery. And so the three parables close with a "Jubilate." The shepherd rejoices over his recovered sheep more than over the ninety and nine which went not astray; the



woman rejoices over the one coin found more than over the nine which were not lost. And this is perfectly natural. The joy of acquisition is more than the joy of possession; and as the crest of the waves is thrown up above the mean sea-level by the alternate depths of depression, so the very sorrow and grief over the loss and bereavement, now that the lost is found and the dead is alive, throw up the emotions beyond their mean level, up to the summits of an exuberant joy. And whether Jesus meant, by the ninety and nine just persons who needed no repentance, the unfallen intelligences of heaven, or whether, as Godet thinks, He referred to those who under the Old Covenant were sincere doers of the Law, and who found their righteousness therein (Deut. vi. 25), it is still true, and a truth stamped with a Divine "Verily," that more than the joy of Heaven over these is its joy over the sinner that repented, the dead who now was alive, and the lost who now was found!

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE ETHICS OF THE GOSPEL.

WHATEVER of truth there may be in the charge of "other-worldliness," as brought against the modern exponents of Christianity, such a charge could not even be whispered against its Divine Founder. It is just possible that the Church had been gazing too steadfastly up into heaven, and that she had not been studying the science of the "Humanities" as zealously as she ought, and as she has done since; but Jesus did not allow even heavenly things to obliterate or to blur the lines of earthly duty. We might have supposed that coming down from heaven, and familiar with its secrets, He would have much to say about the New World, its position in space, its society and manner of life. But no; Jesus says little about the life which is to come; it is the life which now is that engrosses His attention, and almost monopolises His speech. Life with Him was not in the future tense; it was one living present, real, earnest, but fugitive. Indeed, that future was but the present projected over into eternity. And so Jesus, founding the kingdom of God on earth, and summoning all men into it, if he did not bring commandments written and lithographed, like Moses, yet He did lay down principles and rules of conduct, marking out, in all departments of human life, the straight and white lines of duty, the eternal "ought." It is true that Jesus Himself did not originate much in this department of Christian ethics, and probably for most of His sayings we can find a synonym struck from the pages of earlier, and perhaps heathen moralists; but in the wide realm of Right there can be no new law. Principles may be evolved, interpreted; they cannot be created. Right, like Truth, holds the "eternal years;" and through the millenniums before Christ, as through the millenniums after, Conscience, that "ethical intellect" which speaks to all men if they will but draw near to her Sinai and listen, spoke to some in clear, authoritative tones. But if Jesus did no more, He gathered up the "broken lights" of earth, the intermittent flashes which had played on the horizon before, into one steady electric beam, which lights up our human life outward to its farthest reach, and onward to its farthest goal.

In the mind of Jesus conduct was the outward and visible expression of some inner invisible force. As our earth moves round its elliptic in obedience to the subtle attractions of other outlying worlds, so the orbits of human lives, whether symmetrical or eccentric, are determined mainly by the two forces, Character and Circumstance. Conduct is character in motion; for men do what they themselves are, *i. e.*, as far as circumstances will allow. And it is just at this point the ethical teaching of Jesus begins. He recognises the *imperium in imperio*, that hidden world of thought, feeling, sentiment, and desire which, itself invisible, is the mould in which things visible are cast. And so Jesus, in His influence upon men, worked outward from within. He sought, not reform, but regeneration, moulding the life by changing the character, for, to use His own figure, how could the thorn produce grapes, or the thistle figs?

And so when Jesus was asked, "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" He gave an answer which at first sight seemed to ignore the question entirely. He said no word about "doing," but threw the questioner back upon "being," asking what was written in the law: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself" (x. 27). And as Jesus here makes Love the condition of eternal life, its *sine qua non*, so He makes it the one all-embracing duty, the fulfilling of the law. If a man love God supremely, and his neighbour as himself, he cannot do more; for all other commandments are included in these, the sub-sections of the greater law. Jesus thus sought to create a new force, hiding it within the heart, as the main-spring of duty, providing for that duty both aim and inspiration. We call it a "new" force, and such it was practically; for though it was, in a way, embedded in their law, it was mainly as a dead letter, so much so that when Jesus bade His disciples to "love one another" He called it a "new commandment." Here, then, we find what is at once the rule of conduct and its motive. In the new system of ethics, as taught and enforced by Jesus, and illustrated by His life, the Law of Love was to be supreme. It was to be to the moral world what gravitation is to the natural, a silent but mighty and all-pervasive force, throwing its spell upon the isolated actions of the common day, giving impulse and direction to the whole current of life, ruling alike the little eddies of thought and the wider sweeps of benevolent activities. To Jesus "the soul of improvement was the improvement of the soul." He laid His hand upon the heart's innermost shrine, building up that unseen temple four-square, like the city of the Apocalypse, and lighting up all its windows with the warm, iridescent light of love.

With this, then, as the foundation-tone, running through all the spaces and along all the lines of life, the thoughts, desires, words, and acts must all harmonise with love; and if they do not, if they strike a note that is foreign to its key-note, it breaks the harmony at once, throwing jars and discords into the music. Such a breach of the harmonic law would be called a mistake, but when it is a breach of Christ's moral law it is more than a mistake, it is a wrong.

Before passing to the outer life Jesus pauses, in this Gospel, to correct certain dissonances of



mind and soul, of thought and feeling, which put us in a wrong attitude towards our fellows. First of all, He forbids us to sit in judgment upon others. He says, "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: and condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned" (vi. 37). This does not mean that we close our eyes with a voluntary blindness, working our way through life like moles; nor does it mean that we keep our opinions in a state of flux, not allowing them to crystallise into thought, or to harden into the leaden alphabets of human speech. There is within us all a moral sense, a miniature Sinai, and we can no more suppress its thunders or sheath its lightnings than we can hush the breakers of the shore into silence, or suppress the play of the Northern Lights. But in that unconscious judgment we pass upon the actions of others, with our condemnation of the wrong, we pass our sentence upon the wrong-doer, mentally ejecting him from the courtesies and sympathies of life, and if we allow him to live at all, compelling him to live apart, as a moral incurable. And so, with our hatred of the sin, we learn to hate the sinner, and calling from him both our charities and our hopes, we hurl him down into some little Gehenna of our own. But it is exactly this feeling, this kind of judgment, the Law of Love condemns. We may "hate the sin, and yet the sinner love," keeping him still within the circle of our sympathies and our hopes. It is not meet that we should be merciless who have ourselves experienced so much mercy; nor is it for us to hale others off to prison, or ruthlessly to exact the uttermost farthing, when we ourselves at the very best are erring and unfaithful servants, standing so much and so often in need of forgiveness.

But there is another "judging" that the command of Christ condemns, and that is the hasty and the false judgments we pass on the motives and lives of others. How apt we are to depreciate the worth of others who do not happen to belong to our circle! We look so intently for their faults and foibles that we become blind to their excellences. We forget that there is some good in every person, some that we can see if we only look, and we may be always sure that there is some we cannot see. We should not prejudge. We should not form our opinion upon an *ex parte* statement. We should not leave the heart too open to the flying germs of rumour, and we should discount heavily any damaging, disparaging statement. We should not allow ourselves to draw too many inferences, for he who is given to drawing inferences draws largely on his imagination. We should think slowly in our judgment of others, for he who leaps to conclusions generally takes his leap in the dark. We should learn to wait for the second thoughts, for they are often truer than the first. Nor is it wise to use too much "the spur of the moment;" it is a sharp weapon, and is apt to cut both ways. We should not interpret others' motives by our own feelings, nor should we "suppose" too much. Above all, we should be charitable, judging of others as we judge ourselves. Perhaps the beam that is in a brother's eye is but the magnified mote that is in our own. It is better to learn the art of appreciating than that of depreciating; for though the one is easy, and the other difficult, yet he who looks for the good, and exalts the good, will make the very wilderness to blossom

and be glad; while he who depreciates everything outside his own little self impoverishes life, and makes the very garden of the Lord one arid, barren desert.

Again, Jesus condemns pride, as being a direct contravention of His Law of Love. Love rejoices in the possessions and gifts of others, nor would she care to add to her own if it must be at the cost of theirs. Love is an equaliser, levelling up the inequalities the accidents of life have made, and preferring to stand on some lower level with her fellows than to sit solitary on some lofty and cold Olympus. Pride, on the other hand, is a repelling, separating force. Scorning those who occupy the lower places, she is contented only on her Olympian summit, where she keeps herself warm with the fires of her self-adulation. The proud heart is the loveless heart, one huge inflation; if she carries others at all, it is only as a steadying ballast; she will not hesitate to throw them over and throw them down, as mere dust or sand, if their fall will help her to rise. Pride, like the eagle, builds her nest on high, bringing forth whole broods of loveless, preying passions, hatreds, jealousies, and hypocrisies. Pride sees no brotherhood in man; humanity to her means no more than so many serfs to wait upon her pleasure, or so many victims for her sacrifice! And how Jesus loved to prick these bubbles of airy nothings, showing up these vanities as the very essence of selfishness! He did not spare His words, even though they stung, when "He marked how they chose out the chief seats" at the friendly supper (xiv. 7); and one of His bitter "woes" He hurled at the Pharisees just because "they loved the chief seats in the synagogues," worshipping Self, when they pretended to worship God, so making the house of God itself an arena for the sport and play of their proud ambitions. "He that is least among you all," He said, when rebuking the disciples' lust for pre-eminence, "the same is great." And such is Heaven's law: humility is the cardinal virtue, the "strait" and low gate which opens into the very heart of the kingdom. Humility is the one and the only way of heavenly preferments and eternal promotions; for in the life to come there will be strange contrasts and inversions, as he that exalted himself is now humbled, and he that humbled himself is now exalted (xiv. 11).

Tracing now the lines of duty as they run across the outer life, we find them following the same directions. As the golden milestone of the Forum marked the centre of the empire, towards which its roads converged, and from which all distances were measured, so in the Christian commonwealth Jesus makes Love the capital, the central, controlling power; while at the focal point of all the duties He sets up His Golden Rule, which gives direction to all the paths of human conduct: "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise" (vi. 31). In this general law we have what we might call the ethical compass, for it embraces within its circle the "whole duty of man" towards his fellow; and it only needs an adjusted conscience, like the delicately poised needle, and the line of the "ought" can be read off at once, even in those uncertain latitudes where no specific law is found. Are we in doubt as to what course of conduct to pursue, as to the kind of treatment we should accord to our fellow? we can always find the *via recta* by a short mental



transposition. We have only to put ourselves in his place, and to imagine our relative positions reversed, and from the "would" of our supposed desires and hopes we read the "ought" of present duty. The Golden Rule is thus a practical exposition of the Second Commandment, investing our neighbour with the same luminous atmosphere we throw about ourselves, the atmosphere of a benevolent, beneficent love.

But beyond this general law Jesus gives us a prescript as to the treatment of enemies. He says, "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you, pray for them that spitefully use you. To him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other: and from him that taketh away thy cloak withhold not thy coat also" (vi. 27-29). In considering these injunctions we must bear in mind that the word "enemy" in its New Testament meaning had not the wide and general significance it has to-day. It then stood in antithesis to the word "neighbour" as in Matt. v. 43; and as the word "neighbour" to the Jew included those, and those only, who were of the Hebrew race and faith, the word "enemy" referred to those outside, who were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. To the Hebrew mind it stood as a synonym for "Gentile." In these words, then, we find, not a general and universal law, but the special instructions as to their course of conduct in dealing with the Gentiles, to whom they would shortly be sent. No matter what their treatment, they must bear it with an uncomplaining patience. Stripped, beaten, they must not resist, much less retaliate; they must not allow any vindictive feelings to possess them, nor must they take in their own hot hand the sword of a "sweet revenge." Nay, they must even bear a good-will towards their enemies, repaying their hate with love, their spite and enmity with prayers, and their curses with sincerest benedictions.

It will be observed that no mention is made of repentance or of restitution: without waiting for these, or even expecting them, they must be prepared to forgive and prepared to love their enemies, even while they are shamefully treating them. And what else, under the circumstances, could they have done? If they appealed to the secular power it would simply have been an appeal to a heathen court, from enemies to enemies. And as to waiting for repentance, their "enemies" are only treating them as enemies, aliens and foreigners, wronging them, it is true, but ignorantly, and not through any personal malice. They must forgive just for the same reason that Jesus forgave His Roman murderers, "for they know not what they do."

We cannot, therefore, take these injunctions, which evidently had a special and temporary application, as the literal rule of conduct towards those who are unfriendly or hostile to us. This, however, is plain, that even our enemies, whose enmity is directly personal rather than sectional or racial, are not to be excluded from the Law of Love. We must bear them neither hatred nor resentment; we must guard our hearts sacredly from all malevolent, vindictive feelings. We must not be our own avenger, taking vengeance upon our adversaries, as we let loose the barking Cerberus to track and run them down. All such feelings are contrary to the Law of Love, and so are contraband, entirely foreign to the heart that calls itself Christian. But with all this

we are not to meet all sorts of injuries and wrongs without protest or resistance. We cannot condone a wrong without being accomplices in the wrong. To defend our property and life is just as much our duty as it was the wisdom and the duty of those to whom Jesus spoke to offer an uncomplaining cheek to the Gentile smiter. Not to do this is to encourage crime, and to put a premium upon evil. Nor is it inconsistent with a true love to seek to punish, by lawful means, the wrong-doer. Justice here is the highest type of mercy, and pains and penalties have a remedial virtue, taming the passions which had grown too wild, or straightening the conscience that had become warped.

And so Jesus, speaking of the "offences," the occasions of stumbling that would come, said, "If thy brother sin, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him" (xvii. 3). It is not the patient, silent acquiescence now. No, we must *rebuke* the brother who has sinned against us and wronged us. And if this is vain, we must tell it to the Church, as St. Matthew completes the injunction (xviii. 17); and if the offender will not hear the Church, he must be cast out, ejected from their fellowship, and becoming to their thought as a heathen or a publican. The wrong, though it is a brother who does it, must not be glossed over with the enamel of a euphemism; nor must it be hushed up, veiled by a guilty silence. It must be brought to the light of day, it must be rebuked and punished; nor must it be forgiven until it is repented of. Let there be, however, a genuine repentance, and there must be on our part the prompt and complete forgiveness of the wrong. We must set it back out of our sight, amongst the forgotten things. And if the wrong be repeated, if the repentance be repeated, the forgiveness must be repeated too, not only for seven times seven offences, but for seventy times seven. Nor is it left to our option whether we forgive or no; it is a duty, absolute and imperative; we must forgive, as we ourselves hope to be forgiven.

Again, Jesus treats of the true use of wealth. He Himself assumed a voluntary poverty. Silver and gold had He none; indeed, the only coin that we read He handled was the borrowed Roman penny, with Cæsar's inscription upon it. But while Jesus Himself preferred poverty, choosing to live on the outflowing charities of those who felt it both a privilege and an honour to minister to Him of their substance, yet He did not condemn wealth. It was not a wrong *per se*. In the Old Testament it had been regarded as a sign of Heaven's special favour, and amongst the rich Jesus Himself found some of His warmest, truest friends—friends who came nobly to the front when some who had made louder professions had ignominiously fled. Nor did Jesus require the renunciation of wealth as the condition of discipleship. He did not advocate that fictitious *égalité* of the Commune. He sought rather to level up than to level down. It is true He did say to the ruler, "Sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor;" but this was an exceptional case,\* and probably it was put before him as a test command, like the command to Abraham that he should sacrifice his son—which was not intended to be carried out literally, but only as far as the intention, the will. There was no such demand made from Nicodemus, and

\* This demand was made from the Apostles (xii. 33), but not from others beyond the Apostolic circle.



when Zacchæus testified that it had been his practice (the present tense would indicate a retrospective rather than a prospective rule) to give one-half of his income to the poor, Jesus does not find fault with his division, and demand the other half; He commends him, and passes him up, right over the excommunication of the rabbis, among the true sons of Abraham. Jesus did not pose as an assessor; He left men to divide their own inheritance. It was enough for Him if He could put within the soul this new force, the "moral dynamic" of love to God and man; then the outward relations would shape themselves, regulated as by some automatic action.

But with all this, Jesus recognised the peculiar temptations and dangers of wealth. He saw how riches tend to engross and monopolise the thought, diverting it from higher things, and so He classed riches with cares, pleasures, which choke the Word of life, and make it unfruitful. He saw how wealth tended to selfishness; that it acted as an astringent, closing up the valves of the heart, and thus shutting down the outflow of its sympathies. And so Jesus, whenever He spoke of wealth, spoke in words of warning: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" He said, when He saw how the rich ruler set wealth before faith and hope. And singularly enough, the only times Jesus, in His parables, lifts up the curtain of doom it is to tell of "certain rich" men—the one, whose soul swung selfishly between his banquets and his barns, and who, alas! had laid up no treasures in heaven; and the other, who exchanged his purple and fine linen for the folds of enveloping flames, and the sumptuous fare of earth for eternal want, the eternal hunger and thirst of the after-retribution!

What, then, is the true use of wealth? and how may we so hold it that it shall prove a blessing, and not a bane? In the first place, we must hold it in our hand, and not lay it up in the heart. We must possess it; it must not possess us. We may give our thought, moderately, to it, but our affections must not be allowed to centre upon it. We read that the Pharisees "were lovers of money" (xvi. 14), and that argentic passion was the root of all their evils. The love of money, like an opiate, little by little, steals over the whole frame, deadening the sensibility, perverting the judgment, and weakening the will, producing a kind of intoxication, in which the better reason is lost, and the confused speech can only articulate, with Shylock, "My ducats, my ducats!" The true way of holding wealth is to hold it in trust, recognising God's ownership and our stewardship. Bank it up, give it no outlet, and your wealth becomes a stagnant pool, breeding malaria and burning fevers; but open the channel, give it an outlet, and it will bring life and music to a thousand lower vales, increasing the happiness of others, and increasing your own the more. And so Jesus strikes in with His frequent imperative, "Give"—"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they give into your bosom" (vi. 38). And this is the true use of wealth, its consecration to the needs of humanity. And may we not say that here is its truest pleasure? He who has learned the art of generous giving, who makes his life one large-hearted benevolence, living for others and not for himself, has acquired an art that is beautiful and Divine, an

art that turns the deserts into gardens of the Lord and that peoples the sky overhead with unseen singing Ariels. Giving and living are heavenly synonyms, and he who giveth most liveth best.

But not from the words of Jesus alone do we read off the lines of our duty. He is in His own Person a Polar Star, to whom all the meridians of our round life turn, and from whom they emanate. His life is thus our law, His example our pattern. Do we wish to learn what are the duties of children to their parents? the thirty silent years of Nazareth speak in answer. They show us how the Boy Jesus is in subjection to His parents, giving to them a perfect obedience, a perfect trust, and a perfect love. They show us the Divine Youth, still shut in within that narrow circle, ministering to that circle, by hard manual toil becoming the stay of that fatherless home. Do we wish to learn our duties to the State? See how Jesus walked in a land across which the Roman eagle had cast its shadow! He did not preach a crusade against the barbarian invaders. He recognised in their presence and power the ordination of God—that they had been sent to chastise a lapsed Israel. And so Jesus spoke no word of denunciation, no fiery word, which might have proved the spark of a revolution. He took Himself away from the multitudes when they would by force make Him King. He spoke in respectful terms of the powers that were; He even justified the payment of tribute to Cæsar, acknowledging his lordship, while at the same time He spoke of the higher tribute to the great Over-Lord, even God. When upon His trial for life or death, before a Roman tribunal, He even stayed to apologise for Pilate's weakness, casting the heavier sin back on the hierarchy that had bought Him and delivered Him up; while upon the cross, amid its untold agonies, though His lips were glued by a fearful thirst, He opened them to breathe a last prayer for His Roman executioners: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

But was Jesus, then, an alien from His kinsmen according to the flesh? Was patriotism to Him an unknown force? Did He know nothing of love of country, that inspiration which has turned common men into heroes and martyrs, that love which oceans cannot quench, nor distance weaken, which throws an auroral brightness around the most sterile shores, and which makes the emigrant sick with a strange "Heimweh?" Did the Son of man, the ideal Man, know nothing at all of this? He did know it, and know it well. He identified Himself thoroughly with His people; He placed Himself under the law, observing its rites and ceremonies. After the Childhood-exile in Egypt, He scarcely passed out of the sacred bounds; no storms of rough persecution could dislodge the heavenly Dove, or send Him wheeling off from His native hills. And if He did not preach rebellion, He did preach that righteousness which gives to a nation its truest wealth and widest liberty. He did denounce the Pharisaic shams, the hollow hypocrisies, which had eaten away the nation's heart and strength. And how He loved Jerusalem, forgetting His own triumph in the vision of her humiliation, and weeping for the desolations which were coming sure and fast! This, the Holy City, was the centre to which He ever returned, and to which He gave His last bequest—His cross and His grave. Nay, when the cross



is taken down, and the grave is vacant, He lingers to give His Apostles their commission; and when He bids them, "Go ye out into all the world," He adds, "beginning at Jerusalem." The Son of man is the Son of David still, and within His deep love for humanity at large was a peculiar love for His "own," as the ark itself was enshrined within the Holy of Holies.

And so we might traverse the whole ethical domain, and we should find no duty which is not enforced or suggested by the words or the life of the great Teacher. As Dr. Dorner says, "There is only one morality; the original of it is in God; the copy of it is in the Man of God." Happy is he who sees this Polar Star, whose light shines clear and calm above the rush of human years and the ebbs and flows of human life! Happier still is he who shapes his course by it, who reads off all his bearings from its light! He who builds his life after the Divine model, reading the Christ-life into his own, will build up another city of God on earth, four-square and compact together, a city of peace, because a city of righteousness and a city of love.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### THE ESCHATOLOGY OF THE GOSPEL.

COIFI, in his parable to the thanes and nobles of the North Humber country, likened the present life of man to the flight of a sparrow through one of their lighted halls, coming out of the night, and then disappearing in the dark winter whence it came; and he asked for Christianity a candid hearing, if perhaps she might tell the secrets of the beyond. And so indeed she does, lighting up the "dark winter" with a bright, though a partial apocalypse. It is not our purpose to enter into a general discussion of the subject; our task is simply to arrest the beams of inspired light hiding within this Gospel, and by a sort of spectrum analysis to read from them what they are permitted to reveal. And—

1. The Gospel teaches that the grave is not the end of life. It may seem as if we were stating but a truism in saying this; yet if a truism, it perhaps has not been allowed its due place in our thought, and its restatement may not be altogether a superfluous word. We cannot study the life of Jesus without noticing that His views of earth were not the views of men in general. To them this world was everything; to possess it, even in some infinitesimal quantity, was their supreme ambition; and though in their better, clearer moments they caught glimpses of worlds other than their own, yet to their distant vision they were as the twinkling stars of the azure, far off and cold, soon losing themselves in the haze of unreality, or setting in the shadows of the imposing earth. To Jesus earth was but a fragment of a vaster whole, a fragment whose substances were but the shadows of higher, heavenlier realities. Nor were these outlying spaces to His mind voids of silence, a "dark inane," without life or thought; they were peopled with intelligences whose personalities were as distinctly marked as is this human "Ego," and whose movements, unweighted by the gyves of flesh, seemed subtle and swift as thought itself. With one of these worlds Jesus was perfectly familiar. With heaven, which was the abode of His Father, and immeasurable hosts of angels, He was in

close and constant correspondence, and the frequent prayer, the frequent upward looks tell us how near and how intensely real the heavenly places were to Him. But in the mind of Jesus this empyrean of happiness and light had its antipodes of woe and darkness, a penal realm of fearful shadow, and which, borrowing the language of the city, He called the Gehenna of burning. Such were the two invisible realms, lying away from earth, yet closely touching it from opposite directions, and to one or other of which all the paths of human life turned, to find their goal and their self-chosen destiny.

And not only so, but the transition from the Seen to the Unseen was not to Jesus the abrupt and total change that it seems to man. To us the dividing-line is both dark and broad. It seems to us a transmigration to some new and strange world, where we must begin life *de novo*. To Jesus the line was narrow, like one of the imaginary meridians of earth, the "here" shading off into the "hereafter," while both were but the hemispheres of one round life. And so Jesus did not often speak of "death;" that was too human a word. He preferred the softer names of "sleep" or "exodus," thus making death the quickener of life, or likening it to a triumphal march from bondage to liberty. Nor was "the Valley of the Shadow" to Jesus a strange, unfamiliar place. He knew all its secrets, all its windings. It was His own territory, where His will was supreme. Again and again He throws a commanding voice across the valley, a voice which goes reverberating among the heights beyond, and instantly the departed spirit retraces its steps, to animate again the cold clay it had forsaken. "He is not the God of the dead, but of the living," said Jesus, as He claimed for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob an existence altogether apart from the crumbling dust of Hebron; and as we see Moses and Elias coming to the Mount of Transfiguration, we see that the departed have not so far departed as to take no interest in earthly things, and as not to hear the strike of earthly hours. And how clearly this is seen in the resurrection life of Jesus, with which this Gospel closes! Death and the Grave have done their worst to Him, but how little is that worst! how insignificant the blank it makes in the Divine Life! The few hours in the grave were but a semibreve rest in the music of that Life; the Easter morning struck a fresh bar, and the music went on, in the higher spaces, it is true, but in the same key and in the same sweet strain. And just so is it with all human life; "the grave is not our goal." Conditions and circumstances will of necessity change, as the mortal puts on immortality, but the life itself will be one and the same life, here amid things visible and temporal, and there amid the invisible and eternal.

2. The Gospel shows in what respects the conditions of the after-life will be changed. In chapter xx. 27 we read how that the Sadducees came to Jesus, tempting Him. They were the cold materialists of the age, denying the existence of spirits, and so denying the resurrection. They put before Him an extreme, though not impossible case, of a woman who had been the wife, successively, of seven brethren; and they ask, with the ripple of an inward laugh in their question, "In the resurrection therefore whose wife of them shall she be?" Jesus answered, "The sons of this world marry, and are given in



marriage: but they that are accounted worthy to attain to that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: for neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection." It will be observed how Jesus plays with the word around which the Sadducean mind revolves. To them marriage was a key-word which locked up the gates of an after-life, and threw back the resurrection among the impossibilities and absurdities. But Jesus takes up their key-word, and turning it round and round in His speech, He makes it unlock and open the inner soul of these men, showing how, in spite of their intellectuality, the drift of their thoughts was but low and sensual. At the same time Jesus shows that their test-word is altogether mundane. It is made for earth alone; for having a nature of flesh and blood, it cannot enter into the higher kingdom of glory. Marriage has its place in the life whose termini are birth and death. It exists mainly for the perpetuation and increase of the human race. It has thus to do with the lower nature of man, the physical, the earthly; but in the world to come birth, marriage, death will be outdated, obsolete terms. Man then will be "equal unto the angels," the coarser nature which fitted him for earth being shaken off and left behind, amongst other mortalities.

And exactly the same truth is taught by the three posthumous appearances recorded in this Gospel. When they appeared upon the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elias had been residents of the other world, the one for nine, the other for fourteen centuries. But while possessing the form, and perhaps the features of the old body of earth, the glorious body they wear now is under conditions and laws altogether different. How easy and aerial are its movements! Though it possesses no wings, it has the lightness and buoyancy of a bird, moving through space swiftly and silently as the light pulses through the ether. Or take the body of Christ's resurrection life. It has not yet become the glorified body of the heavenly life; it is in its transition state, between the two; yet how changed it is! Lifted above the needs and laws of our earth-bound nature, the risen Christ no longer lives among His own; He dwells apart, where we cannot tell. When He does appear He comes in upon them suddenly, giving no warning of His approach; and then, after the bright though brief apocalypse, He vanishes as mysteriously as He came, passing at the last on the clouds to heaven. There is thus some correspondence between the body of the old and that of the new life, though how far the resemblance extends we cannot tell; we can only fall back upon the Apostle's words, which to our human ear sound like a paradox, but which give us our only solution of the enigma, "It is raised a spiritual body" (1 Cor. xv. 44). It is no longer the "natural body," but a supernatural one, with a spiritual instead of a material form, and under spiritual laws.

But taking the Apostle's words as our baseline, and measuring from them, we may throw our lines of sight across the hereafter, reading at least as much as this, that whatever may be the pleasures or the pains of the after-life, they will be of a spiritual, and not of a physical, kind. It is just here that our vision sometimes gets blurred and indistinct, as all the descriptions of that after-

life, even in Scripture, are given in earthly figures. And so we have built up before us a material heaven, with jasper walls, and gates of pearl, and gardens of perennial fruits, with crowns and other palace delights. But it is evident that these are but the earthly shadows of the heavenly realities, the darkened glasses of our earthly speech, which help our dull vision to gaze upon glories which the eye of our mortality hath not seen, and which its heart cannot conceive, except dimly, as a few "broken lights" pass through the dark lenses of these earthly figures. What new senses may be created we do not know, but if the body of the after-life is "a spiritual body," then its whole environment must be changed. Material substances can no longer affect it, either to cause pleasure or pain; and though we may not yet tell in what the delights of the one state, or the pains of the other will consist, we do know that they must be something other than literal palms and crowns, and other than material fires. These figures are but the stammerings of our earthly speech, as it tries to tell the unutterable.

3. Our Gospel teaches that character determines destiny. "A man's life," said Jesus, when rebuking covetousness (xii. 15), "consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." These are not life's noblest aim, nor its truest wealth. They are but the accidents of life, the particles of floating dust, caught up by the stream; they will be left behind soon as the sediment, if not before, when they reach the barrier of the grave. A man's possessions do not constitute the true life, they do not make the real self, the man. Here it is not what a man has, but what a man is. And a man is just what his heart makes him. The outer life is but the blossoming of the inner soul, and what we call character, in its objective meaning, is but the subtle and silent influence, the odour, as we might call it, fragrant or otherwise, which the soul unconsciously throws out. And even in this world character is more than circumstance, for it gives aim and direction to the whole life. Men do not always reach their goal in earthly things, but in the moral world each man goes to his "own place," the place he himself has chosen and sought; he is the arbiter of his own destiny.

And what we find to be a law of earth is the law of the kingdom of heaven, as Jesus was constantly affirming. The future life would simply be the present life, with eternity as its coefficient. Destiny itself would be but the harvest of earthly deeds, the hereafter being only the after-here. Jesus shows us how while on earth we may lay up "treasures in the heavens," making for ourselves "purses which wax not old," and thus becoming "rich toward God." He draws a vivid picture of "a certain rich man," whose one estimate of life was "the abundance of the things which he possessed," the size and affluence of his barns, and whose soul was required of him just when he was congratulating it on the years of guaranteed plenty, bidding it, "Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry" (xii. 16-22). He does not here trace for us the destiny of such a soul—He does this in another parable—but He pictures it as suddenly torn away, and eternally separated, from all it had possessed before, leaving it, perhaps, to be squandered thriftlessly, or consumed by the fires of lust; while, starved and shrivelled, the pauper soul is driven out from its



earthly stewardship, to find, alas! no welcome in the "eternal tabernacles." In the appraisal of this world such a man would be deemed wise and happy, but to Heaven he is the "foolish one," committing the great, the eternal folly.

The same lesson is taught in the parables of the Housebuilders (vi. 47) and of the Talents (xix. 12). In each there comes the inevitable test, the down-rush of the flood and the reckoning of the lord, a test which leaves the obedient secure and happy, the faithful promoted to honour and rewards, passed up among the kings; but the disobedient, if not entombed in the ruins of their false hopes, yet all shelterless from the pitiless storm, and the unfaithful and slothful servant stripped of even the little he had, passed downwards into dishonour and shame.

In another parable, that of the Rich Man and Lazarus (xvi. 19-31), we have a light thrown upon our subject which is at once vivid and lurid. In a few graphic words He draws for us the picture of strange contrasts. The one is rich, dwelling in a palatial residence, whose imposing gateway looked down upon the vulgar crowd; clothed in garments of Tyrian purple and of Egyptian byssus, which only great wealth could purchase, and faring sumptuously every day. So, with perpetual banquets, the rich man lived his selfish, sensual life. With thought all centred upon himself, and that his lowest self, he has no thoughts or sympathies to spare for the outlying world. They do not even travel so far as to the poor beggar who is cast daily at his gate, in hopes that some of the shaken-out crumbs of the banquet may fall within his reach. Such is the contrast—the extreme of wealth, and the extreme of poverty; the one with troops of friends, the other friendless—for the verb shows that the hands which laid him down by the rich man's gate were not the gentle hands of affection, but the rough hands of duty or of a cold charity; the one clothed in splendid attire, the other not possessing enough even to cover his sores; the one gorged to repletion, the other shrunken and starved; the one the anonymous Epicurean, the other possessing a name indeed, but nought beside, but a name that had a Divinity hidden within it,\* and which was an index to the soul that bore it. Such were the two characters. Jesus portrayed; and then, lifting up the veil of shadows, He shows how the marked contrast reappears in the after-life, but with a strange inverting. Now the poor man is blessed, the rich in distress; the one is enfolded in Abraham's bosom, the other enveloped in flames; the one has all the delights of Paradise, the other begs for just a drop of water with which to cool the parched tongue.

It may be said that this is simply parable, set forth in language which must not be taken literally. So it is; but the parables of Jesus were not merely word-pictures; they held in solution essential truth. And when we have eliminated all this figurative colouring there is still left this residuary, elementary truth, that character determines destiny: that we cast into our future the shadow of our present selves; that the good will be blessed, and the evil unblessed, which means accursed; and that heaven and hell are tremendous realities, whose pleasures and whose pains lie alike deep beyond the sounding of our weak speech. When the rich man forgot his duties to

\* The name "Lazarus" is derived from El-ezer, or "God helps."

humanity; when he banished God from his mansion and proscribed mercy from his thoughts; when he left Heaven's foundling to the dogs, he was writing out his book of doom, passing sentence upon himself. The tree lies as it falls, and it falls as it leans; and where is there place for the unforgiven, the unregenerate, for the sensual and the selfish, the unjust and the unclean, but somewhere in the outer darkness they themselves have helped to make? To the sensual and the vile heaven itself would be a hell, its very joys curdling into pain, its streets, thronged with the multitudes of the redeemed, offering to the guilty and unrenowned soul but a solitude of silence and anguish; and even were there no final judgment, no solemn pronouncement of destiny, the evil could never blend with the good, the pure with the vile; they would gravitate, even as they do now, in opposite directions, each seeking its "own place." Wherever and whatever our final heaven may be, no one is an outcast but who casts himself out, a self-immolator, a suicide.

But is it destiny? it may be asked. May there not be an after-probation, so that character itself may be transformed? may not the "great gulf" itself disappear, or at least be bridged over, so that the repentant may pass out of its penal but purifying fires? Such, indeed, is the belief, or rather the hope, of some; but "the larger hope" as they are pleased to call it, as far as this Gospel is concerned, is a beautiful but illusive dream. He who was Himself the "Resurrection and the Life," and who holds in His own hands the keys of death and of hades, gives no hint of such a posthumous palingenesis. He speaks again and again of a day of test and scrutiny, when actions will be weighed and characters assayed, and when men will be judged according to their works. Now it is at the "coming" of the Son of man, in the glory of His Father, and with a retinue of "holy angels;" now it is the returning of the lord, and the reckoning with his servants; while again it is at the end of the world, as the angel-reapers separate the wheat from the tares; or as He Himself, the great Judge, with His "Come ye," passes on the faithful to the heavenly kingdom, and at the same time, with His "Depart ye," drives from His presence the unfaithful and unforgiven into the outer darkness. Nor does Jesus say one word to suggest that the judgment is not final. The blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, whatever that may mean, shall not be forgiven (xii. 10), as St. Matthew expresses it, "neither in this world, nor in that which is to come." The unfaithful servant is "cut asunder" (xii. 46); the enemies who would not have their Lord to reign over them are slain (xix. 27); and when once the door is shut it is all in vain that those outside cry, "Lord, open to us!" They had an open door, but they slighted and scorned it, and now they must abide by their choice, outside the door, outside the kingdom, with the "workers of iniquity," where "there is weeping and gnashing of teeth" (xiii. 28).

Or if we turn again to the parable of the Rich Man, where is there room for "the larger hope"? where is the suggestion that these "pains of hell" may be lessened, and ultimately escaped altogether? We listen in vain for one syllable of hope. In vain he makes his appeal to "father Abraham;" in vain he entreats the good offices of Lazarus; in vain he asks for a momentary alleviation of his pain, in the boon of one drop of water: between him and help, yea,



between him and hope, is a "great gulf fixed, . . . that none may cross" (xvi. 26).

"That none may cross." Such are the words of Jesus, though here put in the mouth of Abraham; and if finality is not here, where can we find it? What may be the judgment passed upon those who, though erring, are ignorant, we cannot tell, though Jesus plainly indicates that the number of the stripes will vary, as they knew, or they did not know, the Lord's will; but for those who had the light, and turned from it, who saw the right, but did it not, who heard the Gospel of love, with its great salvation, and only rejected it—for these there is only an "outer darkness" of eternal hopelessness. And what is the outer darkness itself but the darkness of their own inner blindness, a blindness which was wilful and persistent?

Our Gospel thus teaches that death does not alter character, that character makes destiny, and that destiny once determined is unalterable and eternal. Or, to put it in the words of the angel to the seer, "He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still: and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him do righteousness still: and he that is holy, let him be made holy still" (Rev. xxii. 11).

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE WATCH IN GETHSEMANE.

HITHERTO the life of Jesus has been comparatively free from sorrow and from pain. With the exception of the narrow strip of wilderness which fell between the Baptism and His inaugural miracle, the Divine Life has lain for the most part in the sunshine, above the fret and fever of anxious thought and care. True, He had enemies, whose hatred was persistent and virulent; the shafts of calumny fell around Him in one steady rain; His motives were constantly misconstrued, His words misunderstood; but with all this His life was peace. How could He have spoken of "rest" of soul, and have promised it to the weary and heavy-laden, if He Himself were a stranger to its experience? How could He have awoke such songs and shouts of gladness, or have strewn the lives of men with such unusual brightness, without having that brightness and music coming back in reflections and echoes within His own heart—that heart which was the fountal source of their new-found joys? And if many doubted, or even hated Him, there were many who admired and feared, and not a few who loved and adored Him, and who were glad to place at His disposal their entire substance, nay, their entire selves. But if His anointing thus far has been the anointing of gladness, there is a baptism of sorrow and anguish prepared for Him, and to that ordeal He now proceeds, first girding up His soul with the music of a thanksgiving psalm. Let us, too, arise and follow Him; but taking off our shoes, let us step softly and reverently into the mystery of the Divine sorrow; for though we must ever stand back from that mystery more than a "stone's cast," perhaps, if we keep in mind and heart awake and alert, we may read something of its deep meaning.

The whole scene of Gethsemane is unique. Like the Mount of Transfiguration, the Garden of the Agony stands "apart" from all other

paths, in a profound isolation. And in more senses than this these two august scenes are related and coincident. Indeed, we cannot fully understand the mystery of the Garden but as we allow the mystery of the Mount to explain it, in part at least, so threading the light of the one into the darkness of the other. On the Mount of Transfiguration the Divine Life, as we have seen, reached its culminating point, its perihelion as we may call it, where it touched the very heavens for one brief night, passing through its out-streaming glories and crossing the paths of celestials. In Gethsemane we have the antipodal fact; we see the Divine Life in its far aphelion, where it touches hell itself, moving round in an awful gloom, and crossing the paths of the "powers of darkness." And so our best outlook into Gethsemane is not from the Mount of Olives—though the two names are related as the two places are adjacent, Gethsemane lying at the foot of Olivet—but from that more distant Mount of Transfiguration.

Leaving the "guest-chamber," where a Passover of a new order has been instituted, and the cup, with its fruit of the vine, has received a higher consecration, Jesus leads the broken band down the stairs, which still vibrate with the heavy tread of the traitor, and in the still, full moonlight they pass out of the city, the gates being open because of the Passover. Descending the steep ravine, and crossing the brook Kedron, they enter the enclosure of Gethsemane. Both St. Luke and St. John tell us that He was accustomed to resort thither—for, strangely enough, we do not read of Jesus spending so much as one night within the city walls—and so probably the garden belonged to one of His adherents, possibly to St. Mark. Bidding the eight remain near the entrance, and exhorting them to pray that they enter not into, or, as it means here, that they "yield not to," the temptation which is shortly to come upon them, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John farther into the garden. They were witnesses of His Transfiguration, when His face shone like the sun, and the spirits of the perfected came to do Him homage; they must now see a transfiguration of sorrow, as that face is furrowed by the sharp lines of pain, and half-masked by a veil of blood. From the narratives of St. Matthew and St. Mark it would appear as if Jesus now experienced a sudden change of feeling. In the guest-chamber He was calmly confident; and though we may detect in His words and symbolic acts a certain undertone of sadness, the salutation of one "about to die," yet there was no tremor, no fear. He spoke of His own death, which now was near at hand, as calmly as if the Mount of Sacrifice were but another mountain of spices; while to His disciples He spoke words of cheer and hope, putting around their hearts a soothing, healing balm, even before the dreadful wound is made. But now all this is changed: "He began to be greatly amazed and sore troubled" (St. Mark xiv. 33). The word we here render "amazed," as St. Mark uses it, has sometimes the element of fear within it, as when the women were "amazed," or "affrighted," by the vision of the angels (xvi. 5); and such, we are inclined to think, is its meaning here. It was not so much wonder as it was trepidation, and a certain dread, which now fell of a sudden upon the Master. Over that pure soul, which ever lay calm and serene as the bright heaven which stooped to



embrace it, has broken a storm of conflicting winds, and dense, murky clouds, and all is disquiet and distress, where before was nothing but peace. My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death;" such is the strange confession of tremulous lips, as for once He opens the infinite depths of His heart, and shows the mortal grief which has suddenly fallen there. It is the first contact of the eclipse, as between Himself and the Father's smile another world is passing, the world of the "outer darkness," even hell, throwing down upon His soul a chilling, awful shadow.

Jesus understands its meaning. It is the signal for the final battle, the shadow of "the prince of this world," who, rallying all his forces, cometh to find "nothing in Me." Jesus accepts the challenge, and that He may meet the enemy single-handed, with no earthly supports, He bids the three, "Abide ye here, and watch with Me." "With me," and not "for Me;" for what could avail to Him the vigilance of human eyes amid this felt darkness of the soul? It was not for Himself He bade them "watch," but for themselves, that waking or praying they might gain a strength which would be proof against temptation, the test which would be keenly severe, and which now was close at hand.

"And He was parted from them about a stone's cast." The verb implies a measure of constraint, as if, in the conflict of emotion, the longing for some human presence and human sympathy held Him back. And why not? Is not the very presence of a friend a solace in grief, even if no words are spoken? and does not the "aloneness" of a sorrow make the sorrow tenfold more bitter? Not like the "stricken deer that left the herd," the human heart, when wounded or sore pressed, yearns for sympathy, finding in the silent look or the touch of a hand a grateful anodyne. But this wine-press He must tread alone, and of the people there must be none with Him; and so the three who are most favoured and most beloved are left back at a stone's cast from the physical suffering of Christ, while from His heart-agony they must stand back at an infinite distance.

It was while Jesus was praying upon the holy mount that the heavens were opened unto Him; and now, as another cloud envelops Him, not of glory, but of a thick darkness, it finds Him in the same attitude of prayer. He at whose feet sinful man had knelt, all unrebuked, Himself now kneels, as He sends to heaven the earnest and almost bitter cry, "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me!" The three Evangelists differ in their wording of the Saviour's petition, showing that the spirit is more than the letter of prayer; that Heaven thinks more of the inner thought than of the outward drapery of words; but the thought of the three is identical, while all make prominent the central figure of the "cup."

The cups of Scripture are of divers patterns and of varied meanings. There was the cup of blessing, like that of the Psalmist (Psalm xxiii. 5), filled to the brim and running over with mercy. There was "the cup of salvation," that sacrament of the Old Testament which kept in memory one deliverance, that of Israel, while it prophesied of another, the "great salvation" which was to come. What, then, was the cup Jesus so feared to drink, and which He asked, so earnestly and repeatedly, that it might pass from Him? Was it the fear of death? Cer-

tainly not; for how could He be afraid of death, who had so triumphed over it, and who had proclaimed Himself the Resurrection and the Life? How could He fear death, when He knew so well "the seraph face that smiled beneath the frowning mask," and knew that it would end for ever all His sufferings and His pain? Death to Him was a familiar thought. He spoke of it freely, not either with the hard indifference of the Stoic, or with the palsied speech of one whose lips shake with an inward fear, but in calm, sweet accents, as any child of earth might speak of going home. Was this "cup," then, the death itself? and when He asked that it might pass away, was He suggesting that possibly some mode of atonement might be found other than the cross? We think not. Jesus knew full well that His earthly life would have, and could have, but one issue. Death would be its goal, as it was its object. Whether, as Holman Hunt represents, the cross threw its shadow back as far as the shop at Nazareth, we do not know, for the record is silent. But we do know that the shadow of death lay across the whole of His public life, for we find it appearing in His words. The cross was a dark and vivid certainty that He wished neither to forget nor to evade, for must not the Son of man be "lifted up," that He may draw all men to Himself? Must not the corn of wheat be hidden in its grave before it can become fruitful, throwing itself forward down the years in hundredfold multiplications? Yes; death to Jesus is the inevitable, and long before the Roman soldiers have pieced together the transverse beams Jesus had made His cross, fashioning it in His thought, and hiding it in His words. Nay, He has this very night instituted a new sacrament, in which, for all generations, the broken bread shall be the emblem of His bruised and broken body, and the wine, of His blood, the blood of the New Testament, which is shed for man. And does Jesus now seek, by reiterated prayers, to shift that cross from the Divine purpose, substituting in its place something less painful, less cruel? does He seek now to annul His own predictions, and to make His own sacrament void and meaningless? This cannot be; and so, whatever the "cup" may mean, we cannot take it as a synonym for His death.

What, then, is its meaning? The Psalmist had long before sung—

"For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine foameth;  
It is full of mixture, and he poureth out of the same:  
Surely the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth  
shall wring them out, and drink them" (Psalm lxxv. 8);

while St. John, speaking of the last woes (Rev. xiv. 10), tells us how they who have the mark of the beast upon their foreheads "shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is prepared unmixed in the cup of His anger." Here, then, is the "cup" which now is set before the Son of man, the very touch of which fills His soul with unutterable dread. It is the cup of God's anger, filled to the brim with its strange red wine, the wine of His wrath. Jesus comes to earth as the Representative Man, the Second Adam, in whom all shall be made alive. He voluntarily assumes the place of the transgressor, as St. Paul writes (2 Cor. v. 21), "Him who knew no sin He made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in Him," a passage which corresponds exactly with the pro-



phetic idea of substitution, as given by Isaiah (liii. 5), "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." And so "the iniquity of us all" was laid on Him, the Holy One. In His own Person He must feel, in its concentrated forms, the smart and consequence of sin; and as His physical sufferings are the extremest pain even sin can produce, so Jesus must suffer, too, all the mental anguish, the agony of a soul bereft of God. And as Jesus, on the Transfiguration Mount, passed up to the very gate of heaven, so lighting up with splendor and glory the lost path of unfallen man, so now, in the Garden, Jesus tracks the path of fallen man, right on to its fearful consummation, which is the "outer darkness" of hell itself. This vivid consciousness has been graciously withheld from Him hitherto; for the terrible pressure would simply have unfitted Him for His ministry of blessing; for how could He have been the "kindly Light," leading humanity homeward, heavenward, if that Light Himself were hidden in "encircling gloom," and lost in a felt darkness? But ere His mission is complete this is an experience that He must know. Identifying Himself with sin, He must feel its very farthest consequence, the awful solitude, and the unutterable anguish, of a soul now bereft of hope and forsaken of God. In the heathen fable Orpheus goes down, lyre in hand, to the Plutonic realm, to bring back again to life and love the lost Eurydice; but Jesus, in His vicarious sufferings, goes down to hell itself, that He may win back from their sins, and bear in triumph to the upper heavens, a lost humanity.

Rising from the ground, and going back to His three disciples, He finds them asleep. The Synoptists all seek to explain, and to apologise for, their unnatural slumber, St. Matthew and St. Mark telling us that their "eyes were heavy," while St. Luke states that their sleep was the result of their grief; for, happily, in the wonderful compensations of nature, intense grief does tend to induce somnolence. But while the Evangelists refer their slumber to natural causes, might there not be something more in it, some supernatural element? Sleep can be caused by natural means, and yet be an unnatural sleep, as when narcotics benumb the senses, or some mesmeric spell muffles the speech, and makes the soul for a time unconscious. And might it not have been some invisible touch which made their eyes so heavy? for it is an exact repetition of their attitude when on the holy mount, and in that sleep sorrow certainly had no part. When St. John saw the vision upon Patmos, he "fell at His feet as one dead;" and when Saul beheld the light, near Damascus, he fell to the ground. And how often we find the celestial vision connected with a trance-like state! and why may not the "trance" be an effect of the vision, just as well as its cause, or rather its circumstance? At any rate, the fact is plain, that supernatural visions tend to lock up the natural senses, the veil which is uplifted before the unseen world being wrapped around the eyes and the soul of the seer. And this, we are inclined to think, was a possible, partial cause for the slumber upon the mount and in the garden, a sleep which, under the circumstances, was strangely unnatural and almost unpardonable.

Addressing Himself directly to Peter, who had

promised to follow his Lord unto death, but whose heart now strangely lagged behind, and calling him by his earlier name—for Jesus only once made use of the name He Himself had chosen; the "Rock" was at present in a state of flux, and had not yet settled down to its petrine character—He said, "What, Simon, could ye not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Then, for a moment forgetting His own sorrow, and putting Himself in their place, He makes the apology for them which their lips are afraid to utter: "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak;" so compassionate is He over human weakness and infirmity, even while He is severity itself towards falsity and sin.

St. Luke records the narrative only in a condensed form, giving us the salient points, but not entering so fully into detail. It is from St. Matthew and St. Mark that we learn how Jesus went back a second time, and falling prostrate on the ground, prayed still in the self-same words, and how He returned to His disciples to find them again asleep; even the reproof of the Master has not been able to counterbalance the pressure of the supernatural heaviness. No word is spoken this time—at any rate the Evangelists have not repeated them for us—but how eloquent would be that look of disappointment and grief! and how that rebuke would fall burning hot upon their heart, focussed in the lenses of His sad and tearful eyes! but the three are dazed, bewildered, and for once the ready tongue of Peter is speechless; "they wist not what to answer Him" (Mark xiv. 40).

Not yet, however, is the conflict ended. Three times did the tempter come to Him in the wilderness, and three times is the fierce battle to be waged in the garden, the last the sorest. It would almost seem as if the three assaults were descending steps of sorrow, each marking some lower deep in the dark mystery; for now the death-sorrow becomes an "agony" of spirit, a pressure from within so fearful as to arrest the flow of blood, forcing it through the opened pores in an awful sweat, until great drops, or "clots," of blood gathered upon His face, and then fell to the ground. Could there be possibly, even for the lost, an anguish more intense? and was not Jesus then, as man's Surety, wringing out and drinking the very last dregs of that cup of His anger which "the wicked of the earth," if unredeemed, had been doomed to drink? Verily He was, and the bloody sweat was a part, an earnest, of our atonement, sprinkling with its redemptive virtues the very ground which was "cursed" for man's sake (Gen. iii. 17). It was the pledge and the foregathered fruit of a death already virtually accomplished, in the absolute surrender of the Divine Son as man's Sacrifice.

And so the thrice-uttered prayer of Jesus, even though He prayed the "more earnestly," was not granted. It was heard, and it was answered, but not in the specific way of the request. Like Paul's prayer for the removal of the thorn, and which, though not granted, was yet answered in the promise of the "sufficient" grace, so now the thrice-uttered prayer of Jesus does not remove the cup. It is there, and it is there for Him to drink, as He tastes for man both of the earthly death and of the bitterness of the after, the second death. But the answer came in the strengthening of His soul, and in the heavenly greetings



the angel brought down to Him when the conflict was over. But in this reiterated prayer for the removal of the cup there was no conflict between Himself and the Father. The request itself was enveloped in submission, the contingent "if" which preceded it, and the "not My will, but Thine," which followed, completely enclosing it. The will of Jesus was ever adjusted to the will of the Father, working within it in an absolute precision, with no momentary breaks. But here the "if" implies uncertainty, doubt. Even Jesus is not quite sure as to what, in the special case, the Father's will may involve, and so, while He asks for the removal of the cup, this is the smaller request, inlaid within the larger, deeper prayer, that "not My will, but Thine, be done." Jesus did not seek to bend the Father's will, and make it conform to His desires, but He sought, whatever might be the cost, to configure His desires to that all-wise and all-loving Will.

So in our smaller lives there may be hours of distress and uncertainty. We may see, mingled for us, cups of sorrow, loss, or pain, which we fear to drink, and the shrinking flesh may seek to be exempted from the ordeal; but let us not too hastily ask that they may be put away, for fear we may dismiss some cup of blessing from our life. Let us seek rather for a perfect submission to the will of God, conforming all our desires and all our prayers to that will. So in that "perfect acquiescence" there will be for us a "perfect rest." Gethsemane itself will become bright and all musical with songs, and where the powers of darkness mocked us Heaven's angels will come, with their sweet ministry. Nay, the cup of sorrow and of pain, at which we trembled before, if we see how God's will has wrought and filled it, and we embrace that will, the cup of sorrow will be a transfigured cup, a golden chalice of the King, all filled to the brim, and running over, with the new wine of the kingdom.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE PASSION.

LUKE xxii. 47-xxiii.

WHILE Jesus kept His sad watch in Gethsemane, treading the winepress alone, His enemies kept theirs in the city. The step of Judas, as he passed out into the night, went reverberating within the house of the high priest, and onwards into the palace of Pilate himself, awaking a thousand echoes, as swift messengers flew hither and thither, bearing the hurried summons, calling the rulers and elders from their repose, and marshalling the Roman cohort. Hitherto the powers of darkness have been restrained, and though they have, again and again, attempted the life of Jesus, as if some occult spell were upon them, they could not accomplish their purpose. Far back in the Infancy Herod had sought to kill Him; but though his cold steel reaped a bloody swath in Ramah, it could not touch the Divine Child. The men of Nazareth had sought to hurl Him down the sheer precipice, but He escaped; Jesus had not come into the world to die at Nazareth, thrown off, as by an accident, from a Galilean cliff. He had come to "accomplish His decease," as the celestials put it upon the mount, "at Jerusalem," and that too, as He

indicated plainly and frequently in His speech, upon a cross. Now, however, the hour of darkness has struck, and the fulness of the time has come. The cross and the Victim both are ready, and Heaven itself consents to the great sacrifice.

Strangely enough, the first overture of the "Passion music" is by one of the twelve—as our Evangelist names him, "Judas who was called Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve" (xxii. 3). It will be observed that St. Luke puts a parenthesis of forty verses between the actual betrayal and its preliminary stages, so throwing the conception of the plot back to an earlier date than the eve of the Last Supper, and the subsequent narrative is best read in the light of its programme. At first sight it would appear as if the part of the betrayer were superfluous, seeing that Jesus came almost daily into the Temple, where He spoke openly, without either reserve or fear. What need could there be for any intermediary to come between the chief priests and the Victim of their hate? Was not His Person familiar to all the Temple officials? and could they not apprehend Him almost at any hour? Yes, but one thing stood in the way, and that was "the fear of the people." Jesus evidently had an influential following; the popular sympathies were on His side; and had the attack been made upon Him during the day, in the thronged streets of the city or in the Temple courts, there would have been, almost to a certainty, a popular rising in His behalf. The arrest must be made "in the absence of the multitude" (xxii. 6), which means that they must fall upon Him in one of His quiet hours, and in one of His quiet retreats; it must be a night attack, when the multitudes are asleep. Here, then, is room for the betrayer, who comes at the opportune moment, and offers himself for the despicable task, a task which has made the name of "Judas" a synonym for all that is treacherous and vile. How the base thought could ever have come into the mind of Judas it were hard to tell, but it certainly was not sprung upon him as a surprise. But men lean in the direction of their weakness, and when they fall it is generally on their weakest side, the side on which temptation is the strongest. It was so here. St. John writes him down in a single sentence: "He was a thief, and having the bag, took away what was put therein" (John xii. 6). His ruling passion was the love of money, and in the delirium of this fever his hot hands dashed to the ground and broke in pieces the tables of law and equity alike, striking at all the moralities. And between robbing his Master and betraying Him there was no great distance to traverse, especially when conscience lay in a numb stupor, drugged by opiates, these tinctures of silver.

Here, then, is a betrayer ready to their hand. He knows what hour is best, and how to conduct them to His secret retreats. And so Judas "communed" with the chief priests and captains, or he "talked it over with them" as the word means, the secret conference ending in a bargain, as they "covenanted" to give him money (xxii. 5). It was a hard and fast bargain; for the word "covenanted" has about it a metallic ring, and opening it out, it lets us see the wordy chaffering, as Judas abates his price to the offer of the high priests, the thirty pieces of silver, which was the market price of an ordinary slave. Not that Judas intended to be a participator in His death, as the sequel of his



remorse shows. He probably thought and hoped that his Master would escape, slipping through the meshes they so cunningly had thrown about Him; but having done his part of the covenant, his reward would be sure, for the thirty pieces were already in his possession. Ah, he little dreamed how far-reaching his action would be! That silver key of his would set in motion the ponderous wheel which would not stop until his Master was its Victim, lying all crushed and bleeding beneath it! He only discovered his mistake when, alas! it was too late for remedy. Gladly would he have given back his thirty pieces, aye, and thirty times thirty, to have called back his treacherous "Hail," but he could not. That "Hail, Master," had gone beyond his recall, reverberating down the ages and up among the stars, while even its echoes, as they came back to him in painful memories, threw him out of the world an unloved and guilty suicide!

What with the cunning of the high priests and the cold calculations of Judas, whose mind was practised in weighing chances and providing for contingencies, the plot is laid deeply and well. No detail is omitted: the band of soldiers, who shall put the stamp of officialism upon the procedure, while at the same time they cower the populace and repress any attempt at rescue; the swords and staves, should they have to resort to force; the lanterns and torches, with which to light up the dark hiding-places of the garden; the cords or chains, with which to bind their Prisoner; the kiss, which should be at once the sign of recognition and the signal for the arrest, all are prearranged and provided; while back of these the high priests are keeping their midnight watch, ready for the mock trial, for which the suborned witnesses are even now rehearsing their parts. Could worldly prudence or malicious skill go farther?

Stealthily as the leopard approaches its victim, the motley crowd enter the garden, coming with muffled steps to take and lead away the Lamb of God. Only the glimmer of their torches gave notice of their approach, and even these burned dull in the intense moonlight. But Jesus needed no audible or visible warning, for He Himself knew just how events were drifting, reading the near future as plainly as the near past; and before they have come in sight He has awoke the three sleeping sentinels with a word which will effectually drive slumber from their eyelids: "Arise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that betrayeth Me" (Matt. xxvi. 46).

It will be seen from this that Jesus could easily have eluded His pursuers had He cared to do so. Even without any appeal to His supernatural powers, He could have withdrawn Himself under cover of the night, and have left the human sleuth-hounds foiled of their prey and vainly baying at the moon. But instead of this, He makes no attempt at flight. He even seeks the glades of Gethsemane, when by simply going elsewhere He might have disconcerted their plot and brought their counsel to naught. And now He yields Himself up to His death, not passively merely, but with the entire and active concurrence of His will. He "offered Himself," as the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews expresses it (Heb. ix. 14), a free-will Offering, a voluntary Sacrifice. He could, as He Himself said, have called legions of angels to His help; but He

would not give the signal, though it were no more than one uplifted look. And so He does not refuse even the kiss of treachery; He suffers the hot lips of the traitor to burn His cheeks; and when others would have shaken off the viper into the fire, or have crushed it with the heel of a righteous indignation, Jesus receives patiently the stamp of infamy, His only word being a question of surprise, not at the treachery itself, but at its mode: "Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" And when for the moment, as St. John tells us, a strange awe fell upon the multitude, and they "went backward and fell to the ground," Jesus, as it were, called in the outshining glories, masking them with the tired and blood-stained humanity that He wore, so stilling the tremor that was upon His enemies, as He nerved the very hands that should take Him. And again, when they do bind Him, He offers no resistance; but when Peter's quick sword flashes from its scabbard, and takes off the right ear of Malchus, the servant of the high priest, and so one of the leaders in the arrest, Jesus asks for the use of His manacled hand—for so we read the "Suffer ye thus far"—and touching the ear, heals it at once. He Himself is willing to be wounded even unto death, but His alone must be the wounds. His enemies must not share His pain, nor must His disciples pass with Him into this temple of His sufferings; and He even stays to ask for them a free parole: "Let these go their way."

But while for the disciples Jesus has but words of tender rebuke or of prayer, while for Malchus He has a word and a touch of mercy, and while even for Judas He has an endearing epithet, "friend," for the chief priests, captains, and elders He has severer words. They are the ringleaders, the plotters. All this commotion, this needless parade of hostile strength, these superfluous insults are but the foaming of their rabid frenzy, the blossoming of their malicious hate; and turning to them as they stand gloating in their supercilious scorn, He asks, "Are ye come out, as against a robber, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the Temple, ye stretched not forth your hands against Me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness." True words, for they who should have been priests of Heaven are in league with hell, willing ministers of the powers of darkness. And this was indeed their hour, but the hour of their victory would prove the hour of their doom.

St. Luke, as do the other Synoptists, omits the preliminary trial before Annas, the ex-high priest (John xviii. 13), and leads us direct to the palace of Caiaphas, whither they conduct Jesus bound. Instead, however, of pursuing the main narrative, he lingers to gather up the side-lights of the palace-yard, as they cast a lurid light upon the character of Simon. Some time before, Jesus had forewarned him of a coming ordeal, and which He called a Satanic sifting; while only a few hours ago He had prophesied that this night, before the cock should crow twice, Peter would thrice deny Him—a singular prediction, and one which at the time seemed most unlikely, but which proved true to the very letter. After the encounter in the garden, Peter retires from our sight for awhile; but his flight was neither far nor long, for as the procession moves up towards the city, Peter and John follow it as a rear-guard, on to the house of Annas, and now to the house



of Caiaphas. We need not repeat the details of the story—how John passed him through the door into the inner court, and how he sat, or “stood,” as St. John puts it, by the charcoal fire, warming himself with the officers and servants. The differing verbs only show the restlessness of the man, which was a life-long characteristic of Peter, but which would be doubly accentuated here, with suspecting eyes focussed upon him. Indeed, in the whole scene of the courtyard, as sketched for us in the varying but not discordant narratives of the Evangelists, we may detect the vibrations of constant movement and the ripple-marks of intense excitement.

When challenged the first time, by the maid who kept the door, Peter answered with a sharp, blunt negative: he was not a disciple; he did not even know Him. At the second challenge, by another maid, he replied with an absolute denial, but added to his denial the confirmation of an oath. At the third challenge, by one of the men standing near, he denied as before, but added to his denial both an oath and an anathema. It is rather unfortunate that our version renders it (Matt. xxvi. 74; Mark xiv. 71), “He began to curse and to swear;” for these words have a peculiarly ill savour, a taste of Billingsgate, which the original words have not. To our ear, “to curse and to swear” are the accomplishments of a loose and a foul tongue, which throws out its fires of passion in profanity, or in coarse obscenities, as it revels in immoralities of speech. The words in the New Testament, however, have a meaning altogether different. Here “to swear” means to take an oath, as in our courts of law, or rather to make an affirmation. Even God Himself is spoken of as swearing, as in the song of Zacharias (i. 73), where He is said to have remembered His holy covenant, “the oath which He swore unto Abraham our father.” Indeed, this form of speech, the oath or affirmation, had come into too general use, as we may see from the paragraph upon oaths in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. v. 33-37). Jesus here condemned it, it is true, for to Him who was Truth itself our word should be as our bond; but His reference to it shows how prevalent the custom was, even amongst strict legalists and moralists. When, then, Peter “swore,” it does not mean that he suddenly became profane, but simply that he backed up his denial with a solemn affirmation. So, too, with the word “curse;” it has not our modern meaning. Literally rendered, it would be, “He put himself under an anathema,” which “anathema” was the bond or penalty he was willing to pay if his words should not be true. In Acts xxiii. 12 we have the cognate word, where the “anathema” was, “They would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.” The “curse” thus was nothing immoral in itself; it was a form of speech even the purest might use, a sort of underlined affirmation.

But though the language of Peter was neither profane nor foul, though in his “oath” and in his “curse” there is nothing for which the purest taste need apologise, yet here was his sin, his grievous sin: he made use of the oath and the curse to back up a deliberate and cowardly lie, even as men to-day will kiss the book to make God’s Word of truth a cover for perjury. How shall we explain the sad fall of this captain-disciple, who was first and foremost of the Twelve? Were these denials but the “wild and wandering cries” of some delirium? We find

that Peter’s lips did sometimes throw off unreasoning and untimely words, speaking like one in a dream, as he proposed the three tabernacles on the mount, “not knowing what he said.” But this is no delirium, no ecstasy; his mind is clear as the sky overhead, his thought bright and sharp as was his sword just now. No, it was not a failure in the reason; it was a sadder failure in the heart. Of physical courage Simon had an abundance, but he was somewhat deficient in moral courage. His surname “Peter” was as yet but a fore-name, a prophecy; for the “rock”-granite was yet in a state of flux, pliant, somewhat wavering, and too easily impressed. It must “be dipped in baths of hissing tears” ere it hardens into the foundation-rock for the new temple. In the garden he was too ready, too brave. “Shall we smite with the sword?” he asked, matching the “we,” which numbered two swords, against a whole Roman cohort; but that was in the presence of his Master, and in the consciousness of strength which that Presence gave. It is different now. His Master is Himself a bound and helpless Prisoner. His own sword is taken from him, or, which is the same thing, it is ordered to its sheath. The bright dream of temporal sovereignty, which like a beautiful mirage had played on the horizon of his thought, had suddenly faded, withdrawing itself into the darkness. Simon is disappointed, perplexed, bewildered, and with hopes shattered, faith stunned, and love itself in a momentary conflict with self-love, he loses heart and becomes demoralised, his better nature falling to pieces like a routed army.

Such were the conditions of Peter’s denial, the strain and pressure under which his courage and his faith gave way, and almost before he knew it he had thrice denied his Lord, tossing away the Christ he would die for on his bold, impetuous words, as, with a tinge of disrespect in his tone and word, he called Him “the Man.” But hardly had the denial been made and the anathema been said when suddenly the cock crew. It was but the familiar call of an unwitting bird, but it smote upon Peter’s ear like a near clap of thunder; it brought to his mind those words of his Master, which he had thought were uncertain parable, but which he finds now were certain prophecy, and thus let in a rush of sweet, old-time memories. Conscience-stricken, and with a load of terrible guilt pressing upon his soul, he looks up timidly towards the Lord he has forsworn. Will He deny *him*, on one of His bitter “woes” casting him down to the Gehenna he deserves? No; Jesus looks upon Peter; nay, He even “turns” round toward him, that He may look; and as Peter saw that look, the face all streaked with blood and lined with an unutterable anguish, when he felt that glance fixed upon him of an upbraiding but a pitying and forgiving love, that look of Jesus pierced the inmost soul of the denying, agnostic disciple, breaking up the fountains of his heart, and sending him out to weep “bitterly.” That look was the supreme moment in Peter’s life. It forgave, while it rebuked him; it passed through his nature like refining fire, burning out what was weak, and selfish, and sordid, and transforming Simon, the boaster, the man of words, into Peter, the man of deeds, the man of “rock.”

But if in the outer court truth is thrown to the winds, within the palace justice herself is parodied. It would seem as if the first interview



of Caiaphas with Jesus were private, or in the presence at most of a few personal attendants. But at this meeting, as the High Priest of the New was arraigned before the high priest of the Old Dispensation, nothing was elicited. Questioned as to His disciples and as to His doctrine, Jesus maintained a dignified silence, only speaking to remind His pseudo-judge that there were certain rules of procedure with which he himself was bound to comply. He would not enlighten him; what He had said He had said openly, in the Temple; and if he wished to know he must appeal to those who heard Him, he must call his witnesses; an answer which brought Him a sharp and cruel blow from one of the officers, the first of a sad rain of blows which bruised His flesh and made His visage marred more than any man's.

The private interview ended, the doors were thrown open to the mixed company of chief priests, elders, and scribes, probably the same as had witnessed the arrest, with others of the council who had been hastily summoned, and who were known to be avowedly hostile to Jesus. It certainly was not a properly constituted tribunal, a council of the Sanhedrim, which alone had the power to adjudicate on questions purely religious. It was rather a packed jury, a Star Chamber of self-appointed assessors. With the exception that witnesses were called (and even these were "false," with discrepant stories which neutralised their testimony and made it valueless), the whole proceedings were a hurried travesty of justice, unconstitutional, and so illegal. But such was the virulent hate of the hierarchy of the Temple, they were prepared to break through all legalities to gain their end; yea, they would even have broken the tables of the law themselves, if they might only have stoned the Nazarene with the fragments, and then have buried Him under the rude cairn. The only testimony they could find was that He had said He would destroy the temple made with hands, and in three days build another made without hands (Mark xiv. 58); and even in this the statements of the two witnesses did not agree, while both were garbled misrepresentations of the truth.

Hitherto Jesus had remained silent, and when Caiaphas sprang from his seat, asking, "Answerest Thou nothing?" seeking to extract some broken speech by the pressure of an imperious mien and browbeating words, Jesus answered by a majestic silence. Why should He cast His pearls before these swine, who were even now turning upon Him to rend Him? But when the high priest asked, "Art Thou the Christ?" Jesus replied, "If I tell you, ye will not believe: and if I ask you, ye will not answer. But from henceforth shall the Son of man be seated at the right hand of the power of God;" thus anticipating His enthronement far above all principalities and powers, in His eternal reign. The words "Son of man" struck with loud vibrations upon the ears of His enraged jurors, suggesting the antithesis, and immediately all speak at once, as they clamour, "Art Thou, then, the Son of God?" a question which Caiaphas repeats as an adjuration, and which Jesus answers with a brief, calm, "Ye say that I am." It was a Divine confession, at once the confession of His Messiahship and a confession of His Divinity. It was all that His enemies wanted; there was no need of further witnesses, and Caiaphas rent his

clothes and asked his echoes of what the blasphemer was worthy? And opening their clenched teeth, his echoes shouted, "Death!"

The lingering dawn had not broken when the high priest and his barking hounds had run their Prey down to death—that is, as far as they were allowed to go; and as the meeting of the full council could not be held till the broad daylight, the men who have Jesus in charge extemporise a little interlude of their own. Setting Jesus in the midst, they mock Him, and make sport of Him, heaping upon that Face, still streaked with its sweat of blood, all the indignities a malign ingenuity can suggest. Now they "cover His face" (Mark xiv. 65), throwing around it one of their loose robes; now they "blindfold" Him, and then strike "Him on the face" (xxii. 64), as they derisively ask that He will prophecy who smote Him; while, again, they "spit in His face" (Matt. xxvi. 67), besmearing it with the venom of unclean, hissing lips! And amid it all the patient Sufferer answers not a word; He is silent, dumb, the Lamb before His shearers.

Soon as the day had fairly broke, the Sanhedrists, with the chief priests, meet in full council, to give effect to the decision of the earlier conclave; and since it is not in their power to do more, they determine to hand Jesus over to the secular power, going to Pilate in a body, thus giving their informal endorsement to the demand for His death. So now the scene shifts from the palace of Caiaphas to the Prætorium, a short distance as measured by the linear scale, but a far remove if we gauge thought or if we consider climatic influences. The palace of Caiaphas lay toward the Orient; the Prætorium was a growth of the Occident, a bit of Western life transplanted to the once fruitful, but now sterile East. Within the palace the air was close and mouldy; thought could not breathe, and religion was little more than a mummy, tightly bound by the grave-clothes of tradition, and all scented with old-time cosmetics. Within the Prætorium the atmosphere was at least freer; there was more room to breathe: for Rome was a sort of libertine in religion, finding room within her Pantheon for all the deities of this and almost any other world. In matters of religion the Roman power was perfectly indifferent, her only policy the policy of *laissez faire*; and when Pilate first saw Jesus and His crowd of accusers he sought to dismiss them at once, remitting Him to be judged "according to your law," putting, doubtless, an inflection of contempt upon the "your." It was not until they had shifted the charge altogether, making it one of sedition instead of blasphemy, as they accuse Jesus of "perverting our nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar," that Pilate took the case seriously in hand. But from the first his sympathies evidently were with the strange and lonely Prophet.

Left comparatively alone with Pilate—for the crowd would not risk the defilement of the Prætorium—Jesus still maintained a dignified reserve and silence, not even speaking to Pilate's question of surprise, "Answerest Thou nothing?" Jesus would speak no word in self-defence, not even to take out the twist His accusers had put into His words, as they distorted their meaning. When, however, He was questioned as to His mission and Royalty He spoke directly, as He had spoken before to Caiaphas,



not, however, claiming to be King of the Jews, as His enemies asserted, but Lord of a kingdom which was not of this world; that is, not like earthly empires, whose bounds are mountains and seas, and whose thrones rest upon pillars of steel, the carnal weapons which first upbuild, and then support them. He was a King indeed; but His realm was the wide realm of mind and heart; His was a kingdom in which love was law, and love was force, a kingdom which had no limitations of speech, and no bounds, either of time or space.

Pilate was perplexed and awed. Governor though he was, he mentally did homage before the strange Emperor whose nature was imperial, whatever His realm might be. "I find no fault in this Man," he said, attesting the innocence he had discovered in the mien and tones of his Prisoner; but his attestation only awoke a fiercer cry from the chief priests, "that He was a seditious person, stirring up the people, and preparing insurrection even from Galilee to Jerusalem." The word Galilee caught Pilate's ear, and at once suggested a plan that would shift the responsibility from himself. He would change the *venue* from Judæa to Galilee; and since the Prisoner was a Galilean, he would send Him to the Tetrarch of Galilee, Herod, who happened to be in Jerusalem at the time. It was the stratagem of a wavering mind, of a man whose courage was not equal to his convictions, of a man with a double purpose. He would like to save his Prisoner, but he *must* save himself; and when the two purposes came into collision, as they did soon, the "might" of a timid desire had to give way to the "must" of a prudential necessity; the Christ was pushed aside and nailed to a cross, that Self might survive and reign. And so "Pilate sent Him to Herod."

Herod was proud to have this deference shown him in Jerusalem, and by his rival, too, and "exceeding glad" that, by a caprice of fortune, his long-cherished desire, which had been baffled hitherto, of seeing the Prophet of Galilee, should be realised. He found it, however, a disappointing and barren interview; for Jesus would work no miracle, as he had hoped; He would not even speak. To all the questions and threats of Herod, Jesus maintained a rigid and almost scornful silence; and though to Pilate He had spoken at some length, Jesus would have no intercourse with the murderer of the Baptist. Herod had silenced the Voice of the wilderness; he should not hear the Incarnate Word. Jesus thus set Herod at naught, counting him as a nothing, ignoring him purposely and utterly; and stung with rage that his authority should be thus contemned before the chief priests and scribes, Herod set his Victim "at naught," mocking Him in coarse banter; and as if the whole proceeding were but a farce, a bit of comedy, he invests Him with one of his glittering robes, and sends the Prophet-King back to Pilate.

For a brief space Jesus finds shelter by the judgment-seat, removed from the presence of His accusers, though still within hearing of their cries, as Pilate himself keeps the wolves at bay. Intensely desirous of acquitting his Prisoner, he leaves the seat of judgment to become His advocate. He appeals to their sense of justice; that Jesus is entirely innocent of any crime or fault. They reply that according to their law He ought to die, because He called Himself the "Son of God." He appeals to their custom of having

some prisoner released at this feast, and he suggests that it would be a personal favour if they would permit him to release Jesus. They answer, "Not this man, but Barabbas." He offers to meet them half-way, in a sort of compromise, and out of deference to their wishes he will chastise Jesus if they will consent to let Him go; but it is not chastisement they want—they themselves could have done that—but death. He appeals to their pity, leading Jesus forth, wearing the purple robe, as if to ask, "Is it not enough already?" but they cry even more fiercely for His death. Then he yields so far to their clamour as to deliver up Jesus to be mocked and scourged, as the soldiers play at "royalty," arrayed Him in the purple robe, putting a reed in His hand as a mock sceptre, and a crown of thorns upon His head, then turning to smite Him on the head, to spit in His face, and to kneel before Him in mock homage, saluting Him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And Pilate allows all this, himself leading Jesus forth in this mock array, as he bids the crowd, "Behold your King!" And why? Has He experienced such a revulsion of feeling towards his Prisoner that he can now vie with the chief priests in his coarse insult of Jesus? Not so; but it is Pilate's last appeal. It is a sop thrown out to the mob, in hopes that it may slake their terrible blood-thirst, a sacrifice of pain and shame which may perhaps prevent the greater sacrifice of life; while at the same time it is an ocular demonstration of the incongruity of their charge; for His Kingship, whatever it might be, was nothing the Roman power had to fear; it was not even to be taken in a serious way; it was a matter for ridicule, and not for revenge, something they could easily afford to play with. But this last appeal was futile as the others had been, and the crowd only became more fierce as they saw in Pilate traces of weakening and wavering. At last the courage of Pilate breaks down utterly before the threat that he will not be Cæsar's friend if he let this man go, and he delivers up Jesus to their will, not, however, before he has called for water, and by a symbolic washing of his hands has thrown back, or tried to throw back, upon his accusers, the crime of shedding innocent blood. Weak, wavering Pilate—

"Making his high place the lawless perch  
Of winged ambitions;"

overridden by his fears; governor, but governed by his subjects; sitting on the judgment-seat, and then abdicating his position of judge; the personification of law, and condemning the Innocent contrary to the law; giving up to the extremest penalty and punishment One whom he has thrice proclaimed as guiltless, without fault, and that, too, in the face of a Heaven-sent warning dream! In the wild inrush of his fears, which swept over him like an inbreaking sea, his own weak will was borne down, and reason, right, conscience, all were drowned. Verily Pilate washes his hands in vain; he cannot wipe off his responsibility or wipe out the deep stains of blood.

And now we come to the last act of the strange drama, which the four Evangelists give from their different stand-points, and so with varying but not differing details. We will read it mainly from the narrative of St. Luke. The shadow of the cross has long been a vivid conception of His mind, and again and again we can see its reflection in the current of His clear speech; now,



however, it is present to His sight, close at hand, a grim and terrible reality. It is laid upon the shoulder of the Sufferer, and the Victim carries His altar through the streets of the city and up towards the Mount of Sacrifice, until He faints beneath the burden, when the precious load is laid upon Simon the Cyrenian, who, coming out of the country, met the procession as it issued from the gate. It was probably during this halt by the way that the incident occurred, related only by our Evangelist, when the women who followed with the multitude broke out into loud lamentation and weeping, the first expression of human sympathy Jesus has received through all the agonies of the long morning. And even this sympathy He gave back to those who proffered it, bidding these "daughters of Jerusalem" weep not for Him, but for themselves and for their children, because of the day of doom which was fast coming upon their city and on them. Thus Jesus pushes from Him the cup of human sympathy, as afterwards He refused the cup of mingled wine and myrrh: He would drink the bitter draught unsweetened; alone and all unaided He would wrestle with death, and conquer.

It is somewhat singular that none of the Evangelists have left us a clue by which we can recognise, with any certainty, the scene of the Crucifixion. In our thoughts and in our songs Calvary is a mount, towering high among the mounts of God, higher than Sinai itself. And such it is, potentially; for it has the sweep of all the earth, and touches heaven. But the Scriptures do not call it a "mount," but only a "place." Indeed, the name of "Calvary" does not appear in Scripture, except as the Latin translation of the Greek "Kranion," or the Hebrew "Golgotha," both of which mean "the place of the skull." All that we can safely say is that it was probably some rounded eminence, as the name would indicate, and as modern explorations would suggest, on the north of the city, near the tomb of Jeremiah.

But if the site of the cross is only given us in a casual way, its position is noted by all the Evangelists with exactness. It was between the crosses of two malefactors or bandits; as St. John puts it, in an emphatic, Divine tautology, "On either side one, and Jesus in the midst." Possibly they intended it as their last insult, heaping shame upon shame; but unwittingly they only fulfilled the Scripture, which had prophesied that He would be "numbered among the transgressors," and that He would make His grave "with the wicked" in His death.

St. Luke omits several details, which St. John, who was an eye-witness, could give more fully; but he stays to speak of the parting of His raiment, and he adds, what the others omit, the prayer for His executioners, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," an incident he probably had heard from one of the band of crucifiers, perhaps the centurion himself.

With a true artistic skill, however, and with brief touches, he draws for us the scene on which all ages will reverently gaze. In the foreground is the cross of Jesus, with its trilingual superscription, "This is the King of the Jews;" while close beside it are the crosses of the thieves, whose very faces St. Luke lights up with life and character. Standing near are the soldiers, relieving the *ennui* with cruel sport, as they rail at the Christ, offering Him vinegar, and bidding Him come down. Then we have the rulers, crowding

up near the cross, scoffing, and pelting their Victim with ribald jests, the "people" standing back, beholding; while "afar off," in the distance, are His acquaintance and the women from Galilee. But if our Evangelist touches these incidents lightly, he lingers to give us one scene of the cross in full, which the other Evangelists omit. Has Jesus found an advocate in Pilate? has He found a cross-bearer in the Cyrenian, and sympathisers in the lamenting women? He finds now upon His cross a testimony to His Messiahship more clear and more eloquent than the hieroglyphs of Pilate; for when one of the thieves railed upon Him, shouting out "Christ" in mockery, Jesus made no reply. The other answered for Him, rebuking his fellow, while attesting the innocence of Jesus. Then, with a prayer in which penitence and faith were strangely blended, he turned to the Divine Victim and said, "Jesus, remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom." Rare faith! Through the tears of his penitence, as through lenses of light, he sees the new Dawn to which this fearful night will give birth, the kingdom, which is sure to come, and which, coming, will abide, and he salutes the dying One as Christ, the King! Jesus did not reply to the railer; He received in silence his barbed taunts; but to this cry for mercy Jesus had a quick response—"To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise," so admitting the penitent into His kingdom at once, and, ere the day is spent, passing him up to the abodes of the Blessed, even to Paradise itself.

And now there comes the hush of a great silence and the awe of a strange darkness. From the sixth to the ninth hour, over the cross, and the city, and the land, hung the shadow of an untimely night, when the "sun's light failed," as our Evangelist puts it; while in the Temple was another portent, the veil, which was suspended between the Holy Place and the Most Holy, being rent in the midst! The mysterious darkness was but the pall for a mysterious death; for Jesus cried with a loud voice into the gloom, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit," and then, as it reads in language which is not applied to mortal man, "He gave up the ghost." He dismissed His spirit, a perfectly voluntary Sacrifice, laying down the life which no man was able to take from Him.

And why? What meant this death, which was at once the end and the crown of His life? What meant the cross, which thus draws to itself all the lines of His earthly life, while it throws its shadow back into the Old Dispensation, over all its altars and its passovers? To other mortals death is but an appendix to the life, a negation, a something we could dispense with, were it possible thus to be exempt from the bond we all must pay to Nature. But not so was it with Jesus. He was born that He might die; He lived that He might die; it was for this hour on Calvary that He came into the world, the Word being made flesh, that the sacred flesh might be transfixed to a cross, and buried in an earthly grave. Surely, then, it was not *as man* that Jesus died; He died *for man*; He died as the Son of God! And when upon the cross the horror of a great darkness fell upon His soul, and He who had borne every torture that earth could inflict without one murmur of impatience or cry of pain, cried, with a terrible anguish in His voice, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" we can interpret the great horror



and the strange cry but in one way: the Lamb of God was bearing away the sin of the world; He was tasting for man the bitter pains of the second death; and as He drinks the cup of the wrath of God against sin He feels passing over Him the awful loneliness of a soul bereft of God, the chill of the "outer darkness" itself. Jesus lived as our Example; He died as our Atonement, opening by His blood the Holiest of all, even His highest heaven.

And so the cross of Jesus must ever remain "in the midst," the one bright centre of all our hopes and all our songs; it must be "in the midst" of our toil, at once our pattern of service and our inspiration. Nay, the cross of Jesus will be "in the midst" of heaven itself, the centre towards which the circles of redeemed saints will bow, and round which the ceaseless "Alleluia" will roll; for what is "the Lamb in the midst of the throne" (Rev. vii. 17) but the cross transfigured, and the Lamb eternally enthroned?

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### THE FIRST LORD'S DAY.

#### LUKE XXIV.

THE Sabbath came and went over the grave of its Lord, and silence reigned in Joseph's garden, broken only by the mailed sentinels, who laughed and chatted by the sealed sepulchre. As to the disciples, this "high day" is a *dies non* to them, for the curtain of a deep silence hides them from our view. Did they go up to the Temple to join in the Psalm, how "His mercy endureth for ever"? Scarcely: their thoughts were transfixed to the cross, which haunted them like a horrid dream; its rude dark wood had stunned them for awhile, as it broke down their faith and shattered all their hopes. But if the constellation of the Apostles passes into temporary eclipse, with no beam of inspired light falling upon them, "the women" are not thus hidden, for we read "And on the Sabbath day they rested, according to the commandment." It is true it is but a negative attitude that is portrayed, but it is an exceedingly beautiful one. It is Love waiting upon Duty. The voices of their grief are not allowed to become so excessive and clamorous as to drown the Divine voice, speaking through the ages, "Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day;" and even the fragrant offerings of their devotion are set aside, that they may keep inviolate the Sabbath rest.

But if the spices of the women are the spike-nard and myrrh of a mingled love and grief, they are at the same time a tacit admission of their error. They prove conclusively that the women, at any rate, had no thought of a resurrection. It appears strange to us that such should be the case, after the frequent references Jesus made to His death and rising again. But evidently the disciples attached to these sayings of Jesus one of those deeper, farther-off meanings which were so characteristic of His speech, interpreting in some mysterious spiritual sense what was intended to be read in a strict literalness. At present nothing could be farther from their thoughts than a resurrection; it had not even occurred to them as a possible thing; and instead of being something to which they were ready to give a

credulous assent, or a myth which came all shaped and winged out of their own heated imaginings, it was something altogether foreign to their thoughts, and which, when it did occur, only by many infallible proofs was recognised and admitted into their hearts as truth. And so the very spices the women prepare for the embalming are a silent but a fragrant testimony to the reality of the Resurrection. They show the drift of the disciples' thought, that when the stone was rolled to the door of the sepulchre it shut in to the darkness, and buried, all their hopes. The only Easter they knew, or even dreamed of, was that first and final Easter of the last day.

As soon as the restraint of the Sabbath was over, the women turned again to their labour of love, preparing the ointment and spices for the embalming, and coming with the early dawn to the sepulchre. Though it was "yet dark," as St. John tells us, they did not anticipate any difficulty from the city gates, for these were left open both by night and day during the Pass-over feast; but the thought did occur to them on the way as to how they should roll back the stone, a task for which they had not prepared, and which was evidently beyond their unaided strength. Their question, however, had been answered in anticipation, for when they reached the garden the stone was rolled away, and the sepulchre all exposed. Surprised and startled by the discovery, their surprise deepened into consternation as, passing within the sepulchre, they found that the body of Jesus, on which they had come to perform the last kind offices of affection, had disappeared. And how? could there be more than one solution of the enigma? The enemies of Jesus had surely laid violent hands upon the tomb, rifling it of the precious dust they sorrowfully had committed to its keeping, reserving it for fresh indignities. St. John supplements the narrative of our Evangelist, telling how the Magdalene, slipping out from the rest, "ran" back to the city to announce, in half-hysterical speech, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we know not where they have laid Him;" for though St. John names but the Magdalene, the "we" implies that she was but one of a group of ministering women, a group that she had abruptly left. The rest lingered by the tomb perplexed, with reason blinded by the whirling clouds of doubt, when suddenly—the "behold" indicates a swift surprise—"two men stood by them in dazzling apparel."

In speaking of them as "two men" probably our Evangelist only intended to call attention to the humanness of their form, as in verse 23 he speaks of the appearance as "a vision of angels." It will be observed, however, that in the New Testament the two words "men" and "angels" are used interchangeably; as in St. Luke vii. 24, Rev. xxii. 8, where the "angels" are evidently men, while in Mark xvi. 5, and again in the verse before us, the so-called "men" are angels. But does not this interchangeable use of the words imply a close relation between the two orders of being? and is it not possible that in the eternal ripenings and evolutions of heaven a perfected humanity may pass up into the angelic ranks? At any rate, we do know that when angels have appeared on earth there has been a strange humanness about them. They have not even had the fictitious wings which poetry has woven for them; they have nearly always appeared wear-



ing the human face Divine, and speaking with the tones and in the tongues of men, as if it were their native speech.

But if their form is earthly, their dress is heavenly. Their garments flash and glitter like the robes of the transfigured Christ; and awed by the supernatural portent, the women bow down their faces to the earth. "Why," asked the angels, "seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how He spake unto you when He was yet in Galilee, saying that the Son of man must be delivered up into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again." Even the angels are not allowed to disclose the secret of His resurrection life, or to tell where He may be found, but they announce the fact that they are not at liberty to explain. "He is not here; He is risen," is the Gospel of the angels, a Gospel whose prelude they themselves have heard, but, alas! forgotten; and since Heaven does not reveal what by searching we ourselves may find out, the angels throw them back upon their own recollections, recalling the words Jesus Himself had spoken, and which, had they been understood and remembered, would have lighted up the empty sepulchre and have solved the great mystery. And how much we lose because we do not remember, or if remembering, we do not believe! Divine words have been spoken, and spoken to us, but to our ear, dulled by unbelief, they have come as empty sound, all inarticulate, and we have said it was some thunder in the sky or the voices of a passing wind. How many promises, which, like the harps of God, would have made even our wildernesses vocal, have we hung up, sad and silent, on the willows of the "strange lands"! If we only "remembered" the words of the Lord Jesus, if they became to us real and eternally true, instead of being the unreal voices of a dream, those words would be, not "the distant lamps" of Heaven, but near at hand, lighting up all dark places, because throwing their light within, turning even the graves of our buried hopes into sanctuaries of joy and praise!

And so the women, instead of embalming their Lord, carried their spices back unused. Not unused, however, for in the spices and ointments the Living One did not need their own names were embalmed, a fragrant memory. Coming to the tomb, as they thought, to do homage to a dead Christ, the Magdalene, and Mary, and Johanna, and Salome found a Christ who had conquered death, and at the same time found an immortality for themselves; for the fragrance of their thought, which was not permitted to ripen into deeds, has filled the whole world.

Returning to the city, whither the Magdalene had outrun them, they announced to the rest, as she had done to Peter and John, the fact of the empty grave; but they completed the story with the narrative of the angelic vision and the statement that Jesus had risen. So little, however, were the disciples predisposed to receive the tidings of a resurrection, they would not admit the fact even when attested by at least four witnesses, but set it down as idle, silly talk, something which was not only void of truth, but void of sense. Only Peter and John of the Apostles, as far as we know, visited the sepulchre, and even they doubted, though they found the tomb empty and the linen clothes carefully wrapped up. They "believed" that the body had disappeared, but, as St. John tells us, "as yet they

knew not the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead" (St. John xx. 9); and as they leave the empty grave to return to their own home, they only "wondered at that which was come to pass." It was an enigma they could not solve; and though the Easter morning had now fully broke, the day which should light all days, as it drew to itself the honours and songs of the Sabbath, yet to the minds and hearts of the Apostles it was "yet dark;" the glory of the Lord had not yet risen upon them.

And now comes one of those beautiful pictures, peculiar to St. Luke, as he lights up the Judæan hills with a soft after-glow—an after-glow which at the same time is the aurora of a new dawn. It was in the afternoon of that first Lord's day, when two disciples set out from Jerusalem for Emmaus, a village, probably the modern Khamasa, sixty furlongs from the city. Who the disciples were we cannot say, for one is unnamed, while the other bears a name, Cleopas, we do not meet with elsewhere, though its Greek origin would lead us to infer that he was some Gentile proselyte who had attached himself to Jesus. As to the second, we have not even the clue of an obscure name with which to identify him, and in this somewhat strange anonymity some expositors have thought they detected the shadow of the Evangelist, Luke, himself. The supposition is not an impossible one; for though St. Luke was not an eye-witness from the beginning, he might have witnessed some of the closing scenes of the Divine life; while the very minuteness of detail which characterises his story would almost show that if not himself a participant, he was closely related to those who were; but had St. Luke himself been the favoured one, it is scarcely likely that he would have omitted this personal testimony when speaking of the "many infallible proofs" of His resurrection.

Whoever the two might be, it is certain that they enjoyed the esteem and confidence of the disciples, having free access, even at untimely hours, to the Apostolic circle, while the fact that Jesus Himself sought their company, and selected them to such honours, shows the high place which was accorded to them in the Divine regard.

We are not apprised of the object of their journey; indeed, they themselves seem to have lost sight of that in the gleams of glory which, all unexpected, fell across their path. It is not unlikely that it was connected with recent events; for now that the central Sun, around whom their lives revolved, has disappeared, will not those lives necessarily take new directions, or drift back into the old orbits? But whatever their purposes might be, their thoughts are retrospective rather than prospective; for while their faces are set towards Emmaus, and their feet are steadily measuring off the furlongs of the journey, their thoughts are lingering behind, clinging to the dark crest of Calvary, as the cloud-pennon clings to the Alpine peak. They can speak but of one theme, "these things which have happened:" the One whom they took to be the Christ, to whom their hearts had been so strangely drawn; His character, miracles, and words; the ignominious Death, in which that Life, with all their hopes, was quenched; and then the strange tidings which had been brought by the women, as to how they had found the grave empty, and how they had seen a vision of angels. The word



"questioned together" generally implies a difference of opinion, and refers to the cross-questioning of disputants; but in this case it probably referred only to the innumerable questions the report of the Resurrection would raise in their minds, the honest doubts and difficulties with which they felt themselves compelled to grapple.

It was while they were discussing these new problems, walking leisurely along the road—for men walk heavily when weighted at heart—a Stranger overtook and joined them, asking, after the usual salutation, which would not be omitted, "What communications are these that ye have one with another, as ye walk?" The very form of the question would help to disguise the familiar voice, while the changed "form" of which St. Mark speaks would somewhat mask the familiar features; but at the same time it would appear that there was a supernatural holding of their eyes, as if a dusky veil were wrapped about the Stranger. His question startled them, even as a voice from another world, as, indeed, it seemed; and stopping suddenly, they turned their "sad" faces to the Stranger in a momentary and silent astonishment, a silence which Cleopas broke by asking, "Dost thou alone sojourn in Jerusalem, and not know the things which are come to pass there in these days?" a double question, to which the Stranger replied with the brief interrogative, "What things?" It needed no more than that solitary word to unseal the fountain of their lips, for the clouds which had broken so wildly and darkly over Calvary had filled their hearts with an intense and bitter grief, which longed for expression, even for the poor relief of words. And so they break in together with their answer (the pronoun is changed now), "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him up to be condemned to death and crucified Him. But we hoped that it was He which should redeem Israel. Yea, and beside all this, it is now the third day since these things came to pass. Moreover certain women of our company amazed us, having been early at the tomb; and when they found not His body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive. And certain of them that were with us went to the tomb, and found it even so as the women had said: but Him they saw not."

It is the impetuous language of intense feeling, in which hope and despair strike alternate chords. In the first strain Jesus of Nazareth is lifted high; He is a Prophet mighty in word and deed; then He is stricken down, condemned to death, and crucified. Again, hope speaks, recalling the bright dream of a redemption for Israel; but having spoken that word, Hope herself goes aside to weep by the grave where her Redeemer was hurriedly buried. Still again is the glimmer of a new light, as the women bring home the message of the angels; but still again the light sets in darkness, a gloom which neither the eyes of Reason nor of Faith could as yet pierce; for "Him they saw not" marks the totality of the eclipse, pointing to a void of darkness, a firmament without a sun or star.

But incidentally, in the swift current of their speech, we catch a reflection of the Christ as He appeared to their minds. He was indeed a Prophet, second to none, and in their hope He was more, for He was the Redeemer of Israel.

It is evident the disciples had not yet grasped the full purport of the Messianic mission. Their thought was hazy, obscure, like the vision of men walking in a mist. The Hebrew dream of a temporal sovereignty seems to have been a prevailing, perhaps *the* prevailing force in their minds, the attraction which drew and cheered them on. But their Redeemer was but a local, temporal one, who will restore the kingdom to Israel; He was not yet the Redeemer of the world, who should save His people from their sins. The "regeneration," as they fondly called it, the "new creation," was purely national, when out of the chaos of Roman irruptions their Hebrew paradise will come. For one thing, the disciples were too near the Divine Life to see its just and large proportions. They must stand back from it the distance of a Pentecost; they must look on it through their lenses of flame, before they can take in the profound meaning of that Life, or the awful mystery of that Death. At present their vision is out of focus, and all they can see is the blurred and shadowy outline of the reality, the temporal rather than the spiritual, a redeemed nationality rather than a redeemed and regenerated humanity.

The risen Jesus, for such the Stranger was, though they knew it not, listened to their requiem patiently and wonderingly, glad to find within their hearts such deep and genuine love, which even the cross and the grave had not been able to extinguish. The men themselves were true, even though their views were somewhat warped—the refractions of their Hebrew atmosphere. And Jesus leads them in thought to those "shining uplands" of truth; as it were, spurring them on, by a sharp though kind rebuke, to the heights where Divine thoughts and purposes move on to their fulfilment. "O foolish men," He said, "and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into His glory?" They thought He was some stranger in Jerusalem, yet He knows their prophets better than themselves; and hark, He puts in a word they had feared to use. They only called Him "Jesus of Nazareth;" they did not give Him that higher title of "the Christ" which they had freely used before. No; for the cross had rudely shattered and broken that golden censer, in which they had been wont to burn a royal incense. But here the Stranger recasts their broken, golden word, burning its sweet, Divine incense even in presence of the cross, calling the Crucified the "Christ"! Verily, this Stranger has more faith than they; and they still their garrulous lips, which speak so randomly, to hear the new and august Teacher, whose voice was an echo of the Truth, if not the Truth itself!

"And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." It will be observed that our Evangelist uses a peculiar word in speaking of this Divine exposition. He calls it an "interpretation," a word used in the New Testament only in the sense of translating from one language to another, from the unknown to the known tongue. And such, indeed, it was; for they had read the Scriptures but in part, and so misread them. They had thrown upon those Scriptures the projections of their own hopes and illusions; while other Scriptures, those relating to the sufferings of Christ, were set back, out of sight, or if heard at all, they were only



the voice of an unknown tongue, a *vox et præterea nihil*. So Jesus interprets to them the voices of this unknown tongue. Beginning at Moses, He shows, from the types, the prophecies, and the Psalms, how that the Christ must suffer and die, ere the glories of His kingdom can begin; that the cross and the grave both lay in the path of the Redeemer, as the bitter and prickly calyx out of which the "glories" should unfold themselves. And thus, opening their Scriptures, putting in the crimson lens of the blood, as well as the chromatic lens of the Messianic glory, the disciples find the cross all transfigured, inwoven in God's eternal purpose of redemption; while the sufferings of Christ, at which they had stumbled before, they now see were part of the eternal plan of mercy, a Divine "ought," a great necessity.

They had now reached Emmaus, the limit of their journey, but the two disciples cannot lose the company of One whose words have opened to them a new and a bright world; and though He was evidently going on farther, they constrained Him to abide with them, as it was towards evening and the day was far spent. And He went in to tarry with them, though not for long. Sitting down to meat, the Stranger Guest, without any apology, takes the place of the host, and blessing the bread, He breaks and gives to them. Was it the uplifted face threw them back on the old, familiar days? or did they read the nail-mark in His hand? We do not know; but in an instant the veil in which He had enfolded Himself was withdrawn, and they knew Him; it was the Lord Himself, the risen Jesus! In a moment the hush of a great awe fell upon them, and before they had time to embrace Him whom they had loved so passionately, indeed before their lips could frame an exclamation of surprise, He had vanished; He "became invisible" to them, as it reads, passing out of their sight like a dissolving cloud. And when they did recover themselves it was not to speak His name—there was no need of that—but to say one to another, "Was not our heart burning within us while He spake to us in the way, while He opened to us the Scriptures?" It was to them a bright Apocalypse, "the Revelation of Jesus Christ," who was dead, and is alive for evermore; and all forgetful of their errand, and though it is evening, they leave Emmaus at once, their winged feet not heeding the sixty furlongs now, as they haste to Jerusalem to announce to the eleven, and to the rest, that Jesus has indeed risen, and has appeared unto them.

Returning to Jerusalem, they go direct to the well-known trysting-place, where they find the Apostles ("the eleven" as the band was now called, though, as St. John informs us, Thomas was not present) and others gathered for their evening meal, and speaking of another and later appearance of Jesus to Simon, which must have occurred during their absence from the city; and they add to the growing wonder by telling of their evening adventure, and how Jesus was known of them in breaking of bread. But while they discussed the subject—for the majority were yet in doubt as to the reality of the appearances—Jesus Himself stood before them, passing through the fastened door; for the same fear that shut the door would securely lock it. Though giving to them the old-time salutation, "Peace be to you," it did not calm the unrest and agitation of their soul; the chill of a great fear fell

upon them, as the spectral Shadow, as they thought it, stood before them. "Why are ye troubled?" asks Jesus, "and wherefore do reasonings arise in your hearts?" for they fairly trembled with fear, as the word would imply. "See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye behold Me having." He then extended His hands, drew back His robe from His feet, and, as St. John says, uncovered His side, that they might see the wounds of the nails and the spear, and that by these visible, tangible proofs they might be convinced of the reality of His Resurrection body. It was enough; their hearts in an instant swung round from an extreme of fear to an extreme of joy, a sort of wild joy, in which Reason for the moment became confused and Faith bewildered. But while the heavenly trance is yet upon them Jesus recalls them to earthly things, asking if they have any meat; and when they give Him a piece of a broiled fish, some of the remnants of their own repast, He takes and eats before them all; not that now He needed the sustenance of earthly food, in His resurrection life, but that by this simple act He might put another seal upon His true humanity. It was a kind of sacrament, showing forth His oneness with His own; that on the farther side of the grave, in His exaltation, as on this, in His humiliation, He was still the "Son of man," interested in all things, even the commonplaces, of humanity.

The interview was not for long, for the risen Christ dwelt apart from His disciples, coming to them at uncertain times and only for brief spaces. He lingers, however, now, to explain to the eleven, as before to the two, the great mystery of the Redemption. He opens their minds, that the truth may pass within. Gathering up the lamps of prophecy suspended through the Scriptures, He turns their varying lights upon Himself, the Me of whom they testify. He shows them how it is written in their law that the Christ must suffer, the Christ must die, the Christ must rise again the third day, and "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem." And then He gave to these preachers of repentance and remission the promise of which the Book of Acts is a fulfilment and enlargement, the "promise of the Father," which is the gift of the Holy Ghost. It was the prophecy of the Pentecost, the first rustle of the mighty rushing wind, that Divine breath which comes to all who will receive it.

Our Evangelist passes in silence other appearances of the Resurrection Life, those forty days in which, by His frequent manifestations, He was training His disciples to trust in His unseen Presence. He only in a few closing words tells of the Ascension; how, near Bethany, He was parted from them, and taken up into heaven, throwing down benedictions from His uplifted hands even as He went; and how the disciples returned to Jerusalem, not sorrowing, as men bereaved, but with great joy, having learned how to endure and rejoice as seeing Him who is invisible, the unseen but ever-present Christ. That St. Luke omits the other Resurrection appearances is probably because he intended to insert them in his prelude to the Acts of the Apostles, which he does, as he joins his second treatise to the first. Nor is it altogether an incidental coincidence that as he writes his later story he begins

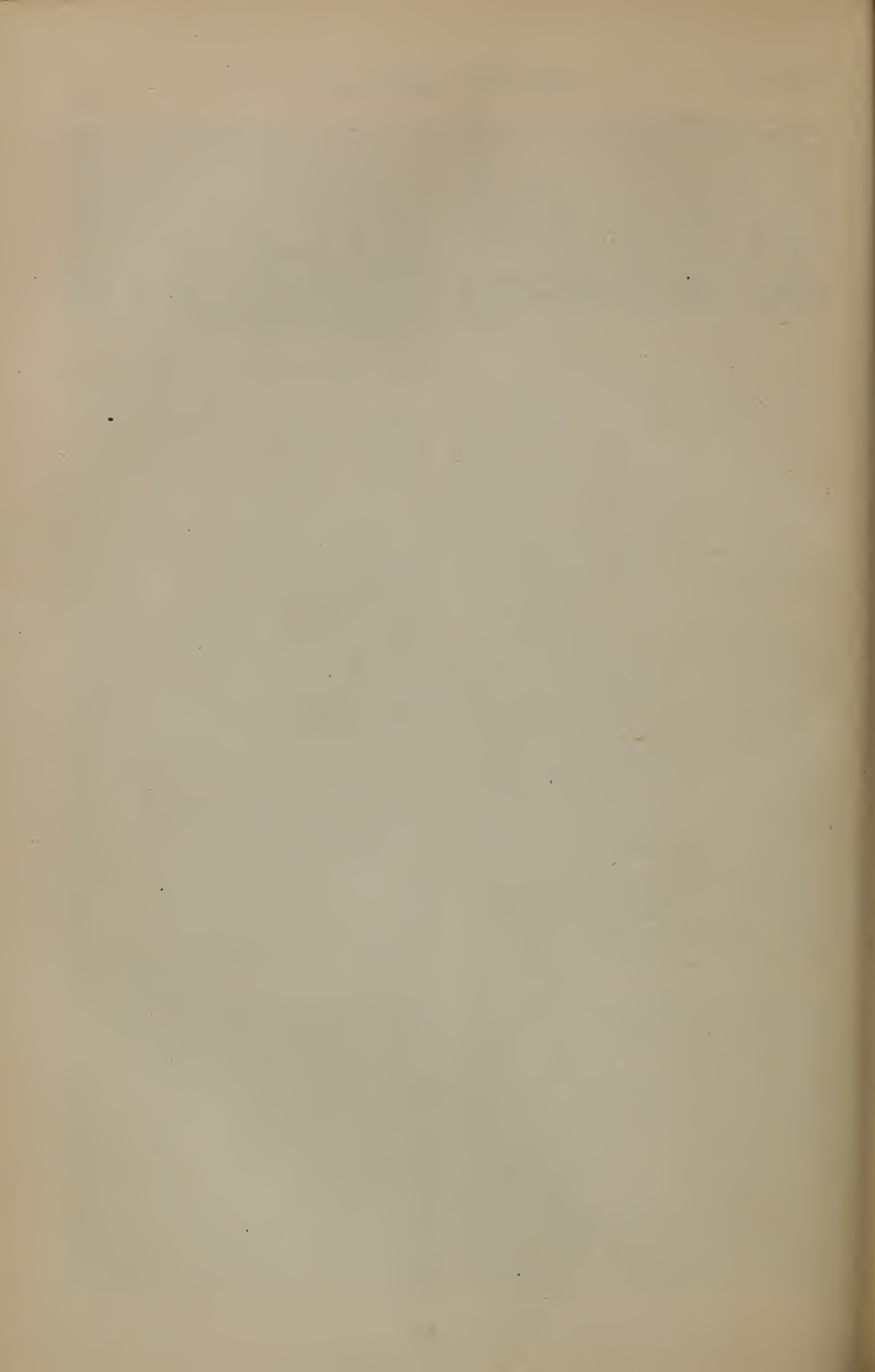


at Jerusalem, lingering in the upper room which was the wind-rocked cradle of the Church, and inserting as key-words of the new story these four words from the old: Repentance, Remission, Promise, Power. The two books are thus one, a seamless robe, woven for the living Christ, the one giving us the Christ of the Humiliation, the other the Christ of the Exaltation, who speaks now from the upper heavens, and whose power is the power of the Holy Ghost.

And was it altogether undesigned that our Evangelist, omitting other appearances of the forty days, yet throws such a wealth of interest

and of colouring into that first Easter day, filling it up from its early dawn to its late evening? We think not. He is writing to and for the Gentiles, whose Sabbaths are not on the last but on the first day of the week, and he stays to picture for us that first Lord's day, the day chosen by the Lord of the Sabbath for this high consecration. And as the Holy Church throughout all the world keeps her Sabbaths now, her anthems and songs are a sweet incense burned by the door of the empty sepulchre; for, "The light which threw the glory of the Sabbath into the shade was the glory of the Risen Lord."







# THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN







## PREFACE.

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IN order to read the Gospel of St. John with some intelligence, it is necessary to understand its purpose and its plan. For in the whole range of literature there is no composition which is a more perfect work of art, or which more rigidly excludes whatever does not subserve its main end. From the first word to the last there is no paragraph, sentence, or expression which is out of its place, or with which we could dispense. Part hangs together with part in perfect balance. The sequence may at times be obscure, but sequence there always is. The relevancy of this or that remark may not at first sight be apparent, but irrelevancy is impossible to this writer.

The object which the Evangelist had in view in writing this Gospel we are not left to find out for ourselves. He explicitly says that his purpose in writing was to promote the belief that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (chap. xx. 31). This purpose, he judges, he will best accomplish, not by writing an essay, nor by framing an abstract argument in advocacy of the claims of Jesus, but by reproducing in his Gospel those manifestations of His glory which elicited faith in the first disciples and in others. That which had produced faith in his own case and in that of his fellow disciples, will, he thinks, if fairly set before men, produce faith in them also. He relates, therefore, with the utmost simplicity of language, the scenes in which Jesus seemed to him most significantly to have revealed His power and His goodness, and most forcibly to have demonstrated that the Father was in Him. At the same time he keeps steadily in view the circumstance that these manifestations had not always produced faith, but that alongside of a growing faith there ran an increasing unbelief which at length assumed the form of hostility and outrage. This unbelief he feels called upon to account for. He feels called upon to demonstrate that its true reason lay, not in the inadequacy of Christ's manifestations, but in the unreasonable and unspiritual requirements of the unbelieving, and in their alienation from God. The Gospel thus forms the primary apologetic, which by its very simplicity and closeness to reality touches at every point the underlying causes and principles of faith and unbelief.

The object of the Gospel being kept in view, the plan is at once perceived. Apart from the Prologue (chap i. 1-18) and the Appendix (chap. xxi.), the body of the work falls into two nearly equal parts, chaps. i. 19-xii., and xiii.-xx. In the former part the Evangelist relates, with a singular felicity of selection, the scenes in which Jesus made those self-revelations which it was most important that men should understand, and the discussions in which their full significance was brought out. Thus he shows how the glory of Christ was manifested at the marriage in Cana, in the cleansing of the Temple, in the conversation with the Samaritans, in the healing of the impotent man, in the feeding of the five thousand, in the cure of the man born blind; and how, through these various signs or object-lessons, Jesus makes Himself known as the Life, the Light, the Judge of men, or, in one word, as the Son doing the Father's works, manifesting the Father's presence, disclosing in His various words and deeds "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."



These manifestations culminate in the raising of Lazarus, recorded in the eleventh chapter. This final sign, while in "many of the Jews" (xi. 45) it produced faith, aggravated at the same time the unbelief of the authorities, who "from that day forth took counsel together for to put Him to death" (xi. 53). The twelfth chapter, therefore, holds a place by itself. In it we have three incidents related, and all related for the same purpose, namely, to demonstrate that there was now no further need of such manifestations of the glory of Jesus as had already been given, and that all things were now ripe for the catastrophe. The incidents in which this became apparent were Mary's anointing of Jesus, His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and the inquiry of the Greeks. By introducing these three incidents together at this point, John wishes to show (1) that Jesus was now embalmed in the love of His intimate friends, (2) that He had found in the untutored instincts of the people a response to His claim, and (3) that even in the still wider circle of the outlying nations His name was known. He may, therefore, now safely finish His self-revelation. It has done its work. And the completeness of its result is seen, not only in this widely extended impression and firmly rooted attachment, but also in the maturity of unbelief which now took active steps to take Jesus and put Him to death.

This part of the Gospel therefore appropriately closes with the words: "These things spake Jesus and departed, and did hide Himself from them" (xii. 36). The public manifestation of Jesus is closed.

Between the first and the second part of the Gospel there is interposed a paragraph (xii. 37-50), in which John briefly points out that the rejection of Jesus by the Jews was no more than had been predicted by the prophet Isaiah, and that it reflects no suspicion on the manifestations of His relation to the Father which Jesus had made. He then sums up in one or two sentences the significance and consequences of receiving and of rejecting Jesus.

In the second part of the Gospel the writer is still guided by the same purpose of showing how Jesus manifested His glory. This is obvious not merely from the contents of this second part, but also from the fact that in the language of John the death of Jesus is constantly referred to as His glorification, being the "lifting up" which was an essential step to, or part of, His glorification. Before entering upon the last scenes, which are described in chaps. xiii.-xix., Jesus is assured that in His death the Father is to glorify His name (xii. 28); and in the prayer recorded in the seventeenth chapter, which closes the explanations which our Lord Himself made of His work, it is still the manifestation of His glory that is in His thoughts. The characteristic which distinguishes this second part of the Gospel is, that Jesus no longer manifests His glory to the people in signs of manifest power, but now, in chapters xiii.-xvii., further discloses His glory privately to the Twelve; and in chapters xviii. and xix. passes triumphantly through the ultimate trial which still lay between Him and the final consummation of His glory. That this final glory has been achieved is witnessed by the Resurrection, the record of which, and of its results in faith, occupies the twentieth chapter. De Wette has the credit of being the first to discern that the entire Gospel is held together by this idea of the manifestation of Christ's glory, and that "the glory of our Lord appears in all its brightness in the second part of the narrative (xiii.-xx), and that (*a*) inwardly and morally in His sufferings and death (xiii.-xix.), and (*b*) outwardly and sensibly, in the triumphant event of the Resurrection."



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# THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN.

BY THE REV. MARCUS DODS, D. D.

## PART I.

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE INCARNATION.

JOHN i. 1-18.

IN this brief introduction to his Gospel John summarises its contents, and presents an abstract of the history he is about to relate in detail. That the Eternal Word, in whom was the life of all things, became flesh and was manifested among men; that some ignored while others recognised Him, that some received while others rejected Him,—this is what John desires to exhibit at large in His Gospel, and this is what he summarily states in this compact and pregnant introductory passage. He briefly describes a Being whom he names "The Word;" he explains the connection of this Being with God and with created things; he tells how He came to the world and dwelt among men, and he remarks upon the reception He met with. What is summed up in these propositions is unfolded in the Gospel. It narrates in detail the history of the manifestation of the Incarnate Word, and of the faith and unbelief which this manifestation evoked.

John at once introduces us to a Being whom he speaks of as "The Word." He uses the term without apology, as if already it were familiar to his readers, and yet he adds a brief description of it, as if possibly they might attach to it ideas incompatible with his own. He uses it without apology, because in point of fact it already had circulation both among Greek and Jewish thinkers. In the Old Testament we meet with a Being called "The Angel of the Lord," who is at once closely related, if not equivalent, to Jehovah, and at the same time manifested to men. Thus when the Angel of the Lord had appeared to Jacob and wrestled with him, Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, for, said he, "I have seen God face to face."\* In the apocryphal books of the Old Testament the Wisdom and the Word of God are poetically personified, and occupy the same relation to God on the one hand, and to man on the other, which was filled by the Angel of the Lord. And in the time of Christ "the Word of the Lord" had become the current designation by which Jewish teachers denoted the manifested Jehovah. In explaining the Scriptures, to make them more intelligible to the people, it was customary to substitute for the name of the infinitely exalted Jehovah the name of Jehovah's manifestation, "the word of the Lord."

Beyond Jewish circles of thought the expression would also be readily understood. For not among the Jews only, but everywhere, men have keenly felt the difficulty of arriving at any certain and definite knowledge of the Eternal One. The

most rudimentary definition of God, by declaring Him to be a Spirit, at once and for ever dissipates the hope that we can ever see Him, as we see one another, with the bodily eye. This depresses and disturbs the soul. Other objects which invite our thought and feeling we easily apprehend, and our intercourse with them is level to our faculties. It is, indeed, the unseen and intangible spirit of our friends which we value, not the outward appearance. But we scarcely separate the two; and as we reach and know and enjoy our friends through the bodily features with which we are familiar, and the words that strike upon our ear, we instinctively long for intercourse with God and knowledge of Him as familiar and convincing. We put out our hand, but we cannot touch Him. Nowhere in this world can we see Him more than we see Him here and now. If we pass to other worlds, there, too, He is concealed from our sight, inhabiting no body, occupying no place. Job is not alone in his painful and baffling search after God. Thousands continually cry with him, "Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him: on the left hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him: He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him."

In various ways, accordingly, men have striven to alleviate the difficulty of mentally apprehending an invisible, infinite, incomprehensible God. One theory, struck out by the pressure of the difficulty, and frequently advanced, was not altogether incompatible with the ideas suggested by John in this prologue. This theory was accustomed, although with no great definiteness or security, to bridge the chasm between the Eternal God and His works in time by interposing some middle being or beings which might mediate between the known and the unknown. This link between God and His creatures, which seemed to make God and His relation to material things more intelligible, was sometimes spoken of as "The Word of God." This seemed an appropriate name by which to designate that through which God made Himself known, and by which He came into relations with things and persons not Himself. Vague indeed was the conception formed even of this intermediary Being. But of this term "The Word," and of the ideas that centred in it, John took advantage to proclaim Him who is the manifestation of the Eternal, the Image of the Invisible.\*

The title itself is full of significance. The word of a man is that by which he utters himself, by which he puts himself in communication with

\* For the need of intermediaries, see Plato, "Symposium," pp. 202-3: "God mingles not with men; but there are spiritual powers which interpret and convey to God the prayers and sacrifices of men, and to men the commands and rewards of God. These powers span the chasm which divides them, and these spirits or intermediate powers are many and divine." See also Philo ("Quod Deus Immut.," xiii.): "God is not comprehensible by the intellect. We know, indeed, that he is, but beyond the fact of His existence we know nothing." The Word reveals God; see Philo ("De post. Caini," vi.), "The wise man, longing to apprehend God, and travelling along the path of wisdom and knowledge, first of all meets with the Divine words, and with them abides as a guest."

\* See also Gen. xvi. 13, xviii. 22; Exod. iii. 6, xxiii. 20; Judges xiii. 22.



other persons and deals with them. By his word he makes his thought and feeling known, and by his word he issues commands and gives effect to his will. His word is distinct from his thought, and yet cannot exist separate from it. Proceeding from the thought and will, from that which is inmost in us and most ourselves, it carries upon itself the imprint of the character and purpose of him who utters it. It is the organ of intelligence and will. It is not mere noise, it is sound instinct with mind, and articulated by intelligent purpose. By a man's word you could perfectly know him, even though you were blind and could never see him. Sight or touch could give you but little fuller information regarding his character if you had listened to his word. His word is his character in expression.

Similarly, the Word of God is God's power, intelligence, and will in expression; not dormant and potential only, but in active exercise. God's Word is His will going forth with creative energy, and communicating life from God, the Source of life and being. "Without Him was not any thing made that was made." He was prior to all created things and Himself with God. and God. He is God coming into relation with other things, revealing himself, manifesting Himself, communicating Himself. The world is not itself God; things created are not God, but the intelligence and will that brought them into being, and which now sustain and regulate them, these are God. And between the works we see and the God who is past finding out, there is the Word, One who from eternity has been with God, the medium of the first utterance of God's mind and the first forthputting of His power; as close to the inmost nature of God, and as truly uttering that nature, as our word is close to and utters our thought, *capable of being used by no one besides, but by ourselves only.*

It is apparent, then, why John chooses this title to designate Christ in His pre-existent life. No other title brings out so clearly the identification of Christ with God, and the function of Christ to reveal God. It was a term which made the transition easy from Jewish Monotheism to Christian Trinitarianism. Being already used by the strictest Monotheists to denote a spiritual intermediary between God and the world, it is chosen by John as the appropriate title of Him through whom all revelation of God in the past has been mediated, and who has at length finished revelation in the person of Jesus Christ. The term itself does not explicitly affirm personality; but what it helps us to understand is, that this same Being, the Word, who manifested and uttered God in creation, reveals Him now in humanity. John wishes to bring the incarnation and the new spiritual world it produced into line with the creation and God's original purpose therein. He wishes to show us that this greatest manifestation of God is not an abrupt departure from previous methods, but is the culminating expression of methods and principles which have ever governed the activity of God. Jesus Christ, who reveals the Father now in human nature, is the same Agent as has ever been expressing and giving effect to the Father's will in the creation and government of all things. The same Word who now utters God in and through human nature, has ever been uttering Him in all His works.

All that God has done is to be found in the universe, partly visible and partly known to us.

There God may be found, because there he has uttered Himself. But science tells us that in this universe there has been a gradual development from lower to higher, from imperfect towards perfect worlds; and it tells us that man is the last result of this process. In man the creature at last becomes intelligent, self-conscious, endowed with will, capable to some extent of meeting and understanding its Creator. Man is the last and fullest expression of God's thought, for in man and man's history God finds room for the utterance not merely of his wisdom and power, but of what is most profoundly spiritual and moral in His nature. In man God finds a creature who can sympathise with His purposes, who can respond to His love, who can give exercise to the whole fulness of God.

But in saying that "the Word became flesh" John says much more than that God through the Word created man, and found thus a more perfect means of revealing Himself. The Word created the visible world, but He did not become the visible world. The Word created all men, but He did not become the human race, but one Man, Christ Jesus. No doubt it is true that all men in their measure reveal God, and it is conceivable that some individual should fully illustrate all that God meant to reveal by human nature. It is conceivable that God should so sway a man's will and purify his character that the human will should be from first to last in perfect harmony with the Divine, and that the human character should exhibit the character of God. An ideal man might have been created, God's ideal of man might have been realised, and still we should have had no incarnation. For a perfect man is not all we have in Christ. A perfect man is one thing, the Word Incarnate is another. In the one the personality, the "I" that uses the human nature, is human; in the other, the personality, the "I" is Divine.

By becoming flesh the Word submitted to certain limitations, perhaps impossible for us to define. While in the flesh He could reveal only what human nature was competent to reveal. But as the human nature had been created in the likeness of the Divine, and as, therefore, "good" and "evil" meant the same to man as to God, the limitation would not be felt in the region of character.

The process of the Incarnation John describes very simply: "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us." The Word did not become flesh in the sense that He was turned into flesh, ceasing to be what He had previously been, as a boy who becomes a man ceases to be a boy. In addition to what He already was He assumed human nature, at once enlarging His experience and limiting His present manifestations of Divinity to what was congruous to human nature and earthly circumstance. The Jews were familiar with the idea of God "dwelling" with His people. At the birth of their nation, while they were still dwelling in tents outside the land of promise, God had His tent among the shifting tents of the people, sharing all the vicissitudes of their wandering life, abiding with them even in their thirty-eight years' exclusion from their land, and thus sharing even their punishment. By the word John here uses he links the body of Christ to the ancient dwelling of God round which the tents of Israel had clustered. God now dwelt among men in the humanity of Jesus Christ. The tabernacle was human, the



indwelling Person was Divine. In Christ is realised the actual presence of God among His people, the actual entrance into and personal participation in human history, which was hinted at in the tabernacle and the temple.

In the Incarnation, then, we have God's response to man's craving to find, to see, to know Him. Men, indeed, commonly look past Christ and away from Him, as if in Him God could not be satisfactorily seen; they discontentedly long for some other revelation of the unseen Spirit. But surely this is to mistake. To suppose that God might make Himself more obvious, more distinctly apparent to us, than He has done, is to mistake what God is and how we can know Him. What are the highest attributes of Divinity, the most Divine characteristics of God? Are they great power, vast size, dazzling physical glory that overpowers the sense; or are they infinite goodness, holiness that cannot be tempted, love that accommodates itself to all the needs of all creatures? Surely the latter, the spiritual and moral qualities, are the more Divine. The resistless might of natural forces shows us little of God till we have elsewhere learned to know Him; the power that upholds the planets in their orbits speaks but of physical force, and tells us nothing of any holy, loving Being. There is no moral quality, no character impressed upon these works of God, mighty though they be. Nothing but an impersonal power meets us in them; a power which may awe and crush us, but which we cannot adore, worship, and love. In a word, God cannot reveal Himself to us by any overwhelming display of His nearness or His power. Though the whole universe fell in ruins around us, or though we saw a new world spring into being before our eyes, we might still suppose that the power by which this was effected was impersonal, and could hold no fellowship with us.

Only, then, through what is personal, only through what is like ourselves, only through what is moral, can God reveal Himself to us. Not by marvellous displays of power that suddenly awe us, but by goodness that the human conscience can apprehend and gradually admire, does God reveal Himself to us. If we doubt God's existence, if we doubt whether there is a Spirit of goodness upholding all things, wielding all things, and triumphant in all things, let us look to Christ. It is in Him we distinctly see upon our own earth, and in circumstances we can examine and understand, *goodness*; goodness tried by every test conceivable, goodness carried to its highest pitch, goodness triumphant. This goodness, though in human forms and circumstances, is yet the goodness of One who comes among men from a higher sphere, teaching, forgiving, commanding, assuring, saving, as One sent to deal with men rather than springing from them. If this is not God, what is God? What higher conception of God has any one ever had? What worthy conception of God is there that is not satisfied here? What do we need in God, or suppose to be in God, which we have not in Christ?

If, then, we still feel as if we had not sufficient assurance of God, it is because we look for the wrong thing, or seek where we can never find. Let us understand that God can best be known as God through His moral qualities, through His love, His tenderness, His regard for right; and we shall perceive that the most suitable rev-

elation is one in which these qualities are manifested. But to apprehend these qualities as they appear in actual history we must have some sense for and love of them. They that are pure in heart, they shall see God; they who love righteousness, who seek with lowliness for purity and goodness, they will find in Christ a God they can see and trust.

The lessons of the Incarnation are obvious. First, from it we are to take our idea of God. Sometimes we feel as if in attributing to God all good we were dealing merely with fancies of our own which could not be justified by fact. In the Incarnation we see what God has actually done. Here we have, not a fancy, not a hope, not a vague expectation, not a promise, but accomplished fact, as solid and unchangeable as our own past life. This God whom we have often shunned, and felt to be in our way and an obstacle, whom we have suspected of tyranny and thought little of injuring and disobeying, has through compassion and sympathy with us broken through all impossibilities, and contrived to take the sinner's place. He, the ever blessed God, accountable for no evil and sole cause of all good, accepted the whole of our condition, lived as a creature, Himself bare our sicknesses, all that is hardest in life, all that is bitterest and loneliest in death, in His own experience combining all the agonies of sinning and suffering men, and all the ineffable sorrows wherewith God looks upon sin and suffering. All this He did, not for the sake of showing us how much better a thing the Divine nature is than the human, but because His nature impelled Him to do it; because He could not bear to be solitary in His blessedness, to know in Himself the joy of holiness and love while His creatures were missing this joy and making themselves incapable of all good.

Our first thought of God, then, must ever be that which the Incarnation suggests: that the God with whom alone and in all things we have to do is not One who is alienated from us, or who has no sympathy with us, or who is absorbed in interests very different from ours, and to which we must be sacrificed; but that He is One who sacrifices Himself for us, who makes all things but justice and right bend to serve us, who forgives our misapprehensions, our coldness, our unspeakable folly, and makes common cause with us in all that concerns our welfare. As while on earth He endured the contradiction of sinners, and waited till they came to a better mind, so does He still, with Divine patience, wait till we recognise Him as our Friend, and humbly own Him as our God. He waits till we learn that to be God is not to be a mighty King enthroned above all the assaults of His creatures, but that to be God is to have more love than all besides; to be able to make greater sacrifices for the good of all; to have an infinite capacity to humble Himself, to put Himself out of sight, and to consider our good. This is the God we have in Christ; our Judge becoming our atoning Victim, our God becoming our Father, the Infinite One coming with all His helpfulness into the most intimate relations with us; is this not a God to whom we can trust ourselves, and whom we can love and serve? If this is the real nature of God, if we may always expect such faithfulness and help from God, if to be God be to be all this, as full of love in the future as He has shown Himself in the past,



then may not existence yet be that perfect joy our instincts crave, and towards which we are slowly and doubtfully finding our way through all the darkness, and strains, and shocks that are needed to sift what is spiritual in us from what is unworthy?

The second lesson the Incarnation teaches regards our own duty. Everywhere among the first disciples was this lesson learned and inculcated. "Let this mind," says Paul, "be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." "Christ suffered for us," says Peter, "leaving us an example." "If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" is the very spirit of John. Look steadily at the Incarnation, at the love which made Christ take our place and identify Himself with us; consider the new breath of life that this one act has breathed into human life, ennobling the world and showing us how deep and lovely are the possibilities that lie in human nature; and new thoughts of your own conduct will lay hold of your mind. Come to this great central fire, and your cold, hard nature will be melted; try in some sort to weigh this Divine love and accept it as your own, as that which embraces and cares for and carries you on to all good, and you will insensibly be imbued with its spirit. You will feel that no loss could be so great as to lose the possession and exercise of this love in your own heart. Great as are the gifts it bestows, you begin to see that the greatest of them all is that it transforms you into its own likeness, and teaches you yourself to love in the same sort. Understanding our security and our joyful prospect as saved by the care of God, and as provided for by a love of perfect intelligence and absolute resource; humbled and softened and melted by the free spending upon us of so Divine and complete a grace, our heart overflows with sympathy. We cannot receive Christ's love without communicating it. It imparts a glow to the heart, which must be felt by all that comes in contact with the heart.

And as Christ's love became incarnate, not spending itself in any one great display, apart from the needs of men, but manifesting itself in all the routine and incident of a human life; never wearying through the monotonous toil of His artisan-life, never provoked into forgetfulness in His boyhood; so must our love derived from Him be incarnated; not spent in one display, but animating our whole life in the flesh, and finding expression for itself in all that our earthly condition brings us into contact with. The thoughts we think and the actions we do are mainly concerned with other people. We are living in families, or we are related as employer and employed, or we are thrown together by the hundred necessities of life; in all these connections we are to be guided by the spirit which prompted Christ to become incarnate. Our chance of doing good in the world depends upon this. Our review of life at the close will be satisfactory or the reverse in proportion as we have or have not been in fact animated by the spirit of the Incarnation. We must learn to bear one another's burdens, and the Incarnation shows us that we can do so only in so far as we identify ourselves with others and live for them. Christ helped us by coming down to our condition and living our life. This is the guide to all help we can give. If anything can reclaim the lowest class in our population, it is by men of godly life living among them; not living among

them in comforts unattainable by them, but living in all points as they live, save that they live without sin. Christ had no money to give, no knowledge of science to impart; He lived a sympathetic and godly life, regardless of Himself. Few can follow Him, but let us never lose sight of His method. The poor are not the only class that need help. It is our dependence on money as the medium of charity that has begotten that feeling. It is easy to give money; and so we discharge our obligation, and feel as if we had done all. It is not money that even the poorest have most need of; and it is not money at all, but sympathy, which all classes need—that true sympathy which gives us insight into their condition, and prompts us to bear their burdens, whatever these are. There are many men on earth who are mere hindrances to better men; who cannot manage their own affairs or play their own part, but are continually entangled and in difficulties. They are a drag on society, requiring the help of more serviceable men, and preventing such men from enjoying the fruit of their own labour. There are, again, men who are not of our kind, men whose tastes are not ours. There are men who seem pursued by misfortune, and men who by their own sin keep themselves continually in the mire. There are, in short, various classes of persons with whom we are day by day tempted to have no more to do whatever; we are exasperated by the discomfort they occasion us, the anxiety and vexation and expenditure of time, feeling, and labour constantly renewed so long as we are in connection with them. Why should we be held down by unworthy people? Why should we have the ease and joy taken out of our life by the ceaseless demands made upon us by wicked, careless, incapable, ungrateful people? Why must we still be patient, still postponing our own interests to theirs? Simply because this is the method by which the salvation of the world is actually accomplished; simply because we ourselves thus tax the patience of Christ, and because we feel that the love we depend upon and believe in as the salvation of the world we must ourselves endeavour to show. Recognising how Christ has humbled Himself to bear the burden of shame and misery we have laid upon Him, we cannot refuse to bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

## CHAPTER II.

### RECEPTION CHRIST MET WITH.

#### JOHN i. 1-18.

IN describing the Word of God, John mentions two attributes of His by which His relation to men becomes apparent: "All things were made by Him," and "the life was the light of men." By whom were all things made? what is the originating force which has produced the world? how are we to account for the existence, the harmony, and the progress of the universe?—these are questions which must always be put. Everywhere in nature force and intelligence appear; the supply of life and power is unfailing, and the unconscious planets are as regular and harmonious in their action as the creatures that are endowed with conscious intelligence and the power of self-guidance. That the whole uni-



verse is one does not admit of a doubt. Far as the astronomer can search into infinite space, he finds the same laws and one plan, and no evidence of another hand or another mind. To what is this unity to be referred? John here affirms that the intelligence and power which underlie all things belong to the Word of God: "without Him was not anything made which was made."

"In Him was life." In this Divine Being, who was "in the beginning" before all things, there was that which gives existence to all else. "And the life was the light of men." That life which appears in the harmony and progress of inanimate nature, and in the wonderfully manifold and yet related forms of animal existence, appears in man as "light"—intellectual and moral light, reason, and conscience. All the endowment possessed by man as a moral being, capable of self-determination and of choosing what is morally good, springs from the one fountain of life which exists in the Word of God.

It is in the light of this close relationship of the Word to the world and to men that John views the reception He met with when He became flesh and dwelt among us. This reception forms the great tragedy of human history. "In Agamemnon returning to his palace after ten years' absence, and falling by the hand of his unfaithful spouse, we have the event which is tragical *par excellence* in pagan history. But what is that outrage when compared with the theocratic tragedy? The God invoked by the nation appears in His temple, and is crucified by His own worshippers." To John it seemed as if the relationship borne by the Word to those who rejected Him was the tragical element in the rejection.

Three different aspects of this relationship are mentioned, that the blindness of the rejecters may more distinctly be seen. First, he says, although the very light that was in man was derived from the Word, and it was by His endowment they had any power to recognise what was illuminating and helpful to their spiritual nature, they yet shut their eyes to the source of light when presented in the Word Himself. "The life was the light of men . . . And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness apprehended it not." This is the general statement of the universal experience of the Eternal Word, and it is illustrated in His incarnate experience summarily related in verses 10 and 11. Again: "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not." So little had men understood the source of their own being, and so little had they learned to know the significance and purpose of their existence, that when their Creator came they did not recognise Him. And thirdly, even the narrow and carefully-trained circle of the Jews failed to recognise Him; "He came unto His own"—to everything which had pointedly and of set purpose spoken of Him, and could not have existed but to teach His character—"and His own received Him not."

1. "The light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness apprehended it not." As yet John has said nothing of the Incarnation, and is speaking of the Word in His eternal or pre-incarnate state. And one thing he desires to proclaim regarding the Word is, that although it is from Him every man has such light as he has, yet this light is commonly rendered useless, and is not cher-

ished. As it is from the Word, from God's uttered will, that all men have life, so it is from the same source that all the light which is in reason and in conscience is derived. Before the Word appeared in the world, and shone out as the true light (ver. 9), He was in all rational creatures as their life and light, imparting to men a sense of right and wrong, and shining in their heart with some of the brightness of a Divine presence. This sense of a connection with God and eternity, and this moral faculty, although cherished by some, were commonly not "comprehended." Evil deeds have been suffered to darken conscience, and it fails to admit the true light.

2. "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not." When our Lord came to earth the heathen world was mainly represented by the Roman Empire, and one of the earliest events of His life on earth was His enrolment as a subject of that empire. If we had been invited before His coming to imagine what would be the result upon this empire of His appearance, we should probably have expected something very different from that which actually happened. The real Sovereign is to appear; the Being who made all that is is to come and visit His possessions. Will not a thrill of glad expectancy run through the world? Will not men eagerly cover up whatever may offend Him, and eagerly attempt, with such scant materials as existed, to make preparations for His worthy reception? The one Being who can make no mistakes, and who can rectify the mistakes of a worn-out, entangled world, is to come for the express purpose of delivering it from all ill: will not men gladly yield the reins to Him, gladly second Him in all His enterprise? Will it not be a time of universal concord and brotherhood, all men joining to pay homage to their common God? "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him"—that is the true, bare, unvarnished statement of the fact. There He was, the Creator Himself, that mysterious Being who had hitherto kept Himself so hidden and remote while yet so influential and supreme; the wonderful and unsearchable Source and Fountain out of which had proceeded all that men saw, themselves included,—there at last He was "*in the world*" Himself had made, apparent to the eyes of men, and intelligible to their understandings; a real person whom they could know as an individual, whom they could love, who could receive and return their expressions of affection and trust. He was in the world, and the world knew Him not.

Indeed, it would not have been easy for the world to show a more entire ignorance of God than while He was upon earth in human form. There was at that time abundance of activity and intelligent apprehension of the external wants of men and nations. There was a ceaseless running to and fro of the couriers of the empire, a fine system of communications spread over the whole known world like a network, so that what transpired in the most remote corner was at once known at the centre. Rome was intelligent to the utmost circumference through all its dominions; as if a nervous system radiated through the whole of it, touch but the extremity in one of the remotest colonies and the touch is felt at the brain and heart of the whole.\* The

\*See Isaac Taylor's "Restoration of Belief."



rising of a British tribe, the discovery of some unheard-of bird or beast, the birth of a calf with two heads—every scrap of gossip found its way to Rome.\* But the entrance of the Creator into the world was an event of such insignificance that not even this finely sympathetic system took any note of it. The great Roman world remained in absolute unconsciousness of the vicinity of God: they registered His birth, took account of Him as one to be taxed, but were as little aware as the oxen with whom He shared His first sleeping-place, that this was God; they saw Him with the same stupid, unconscious, bovine stare.†

3. But in this great world of men there was an inner and specially trained circle, which John here designates "His own." For although the world might be called "His own," as made and upheld by Him, yet it seems more likely that this verse is not a mere repetition of the preceding, but is intended to mark a deeper degree of insensibility on the part of Christ's rejecters. Not only had all men been made in God's image, so that they might have been expected to recognise Christ as the image of the Father; but one nation had been specially instructed in the knowledge of God, and was proud of having His dwelling-place in its midst. If other men were blind to God's glory, the Jews at least might have been expected to welcome Christ when He came. Their temple and all that was done in it, their law, their prophets, their institutions, their history, and their daily life, all spoke to them of God, and reminded them that God dwelt among them and would come to His own. Though all the world should shut its doors against Christ, surely the gates of the Temple, His own house, would be thrown open to Him. For what else did it exist?

Our Lord Himself, in the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen, makes even a heavier accusation against the Jews, intimating, as He there does, that they rejected Him not because they did not recognise Him, but because they did. "This is the Heir. Come, let us kill Him, that the inheritance may be ours." In any case their guilt is great. They had been definitely and repeatedly admonished to expect some great manifestation of God; they looked for the Christ to come, and immediately before His appearance they had been strikingly awakened to prepare for His coming. But what was their actual state when Christ came? Again and again it has been pointed out that their whole thoughts were given to the schemes which usually distract conquered nations. They were "tossing in unhelpful and inefficacious sedition," resenting or paying hollow homage to the rule of the foreigner, looking uneasily for deliverance, and becoming the dupes of every fanatic or schemer that cried, "Lo here!" or "Lo there!" Their power of discerning a present God and a spiritual Deliverer was almost as completely gone as that of the heathen, and they tested the Divine Saviour by external methods which any clever charlatan could have satisfied. The God they believed in and sought was not the God revealed by Christ. They existed for Christ's sake, that among them He might find a home on earth, and through them be made known to all; they believed in a Christ that was to come, but when He came the throne they raised Him to was the cross. And the suspicion that perhaps they were wrong has preyed

on the Jewish mind ever since, and has often pricked them on to a fierce hatred of the Christian name, while sometimes it has taken almost the form of penitence, as in the prayer of Rabbi Ben Ezra,—

"Thou! if Thou wast He, who at mid-watch came,  
By the starlight, naming a dubious name!  
And if, too heavy with sleep—too rash  
With fear—O Thou, if that martyr-gash  
Fell on Thee coming to take Thine own,  
And we gave the Cross, when we owed the Throne,—  
Thou art the Judge."

It is the detailed history of this rejection which John presents in his Gospel. He tells the story of Christ's miracles, and the jealousy they excited; of His authoritative teaching and the opposition it aroused; of His unveiling His Divine nature, His mercy, His power to give life, His prerogative of judgment, His humble self-sacrifice, and of the misunderstanding which ran parallel to this manifestation. He tells how the leaders strove to entangle Him and find Him at fault; how they took up stones to stone Him; how they schemed and plotted, and at length compassed His crucifixion. The patience with which He met this "contradiction of sinners" was a sufficient revelation of His Divine nature. Though rudely received, though met on all hands with suspicion, coldness, and hostility, He did not abandon the world in indignation. He never forgot that He came, not to judge the world, not to deal with us on our merits, but to save the world from its sin and its blindness. For the sake of the few who received Him He bore with the many who rejected Him.

For some did receive Him. John could say for many, along with himself, "We beheld His glory," and recognised that it was Divine glory, such as none but an Only-begotten in the image of His Father could manifest. This glory dawned upon believing men, and gradually encompassed them in the brightness and beauty of a Divine revelation, by the appearance among them of the Incarnate Word, "full of grace and truth" (ver. 14). Not the works of wonder which He did, not the authority with which He laid the angry waves and commanded the powers of evil, but the grace and truth which underlay all His works, shone into their hearts as Divine glory. They had previously known God through the law given by Moses (ver. 17); but coming as it did through law, this knowledge was coloured by its medium, and through it God's countenance seemed stern. In the face of Jesus Christ they saw the Father, they saw "grace," an eye of tender compassion and lips of love and helpfulness. In the law they felt that they were seeing through a dimmed glass darkly; they became weary of symbols and of forms in which often they saw but flitting shadows. What must it have been for such men to live with the manifested God; to have Him dwelling among them, and in Him to handle and see (1 John i. 1) the "truth," the reality to which all symbol had pointed? "The law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."\*

And to those who acknowledge in their hearts that this is Divine glory which is seen in Christ, the glory of the Only-begotten of the Father, He gives Himself with all His fulness. "As many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God." This is the

\* See Pliny's "Letters to Trajan," 23, 98.

† Cp. Faber's "Bethlehem."

\* The first introduction in the Gospel of the name of Jesus Christ.



immediate result of the acceptance of Christ as the Revealer of the Father. In Him we see what true glory is and what true sonship is; and as we behold the glory of the Only-begotten, sent to declare the Father to us, we acknowledge the unseen Father, and His Spirit brings us into the relationship of children. That which is in God passes into us, and we share in the life of God; and this through Christ. He is "full" of grace and truth. In all He is and does, grace and truth overflowingly manifest themselves. And "of His fulness have all we received, and grace upon grace." \* John read this off his own experience and that of those for whom he could confidently speak. What they had seen and valued in Christ became their own character. The inexhaustible fulness of grace in Christ renewed in them grace according to their need. They lived upon Him. It was His life which maintained life in them. By communion with Him they were formed in His likeness.

The presentation of Christ to men now divides them into two classes, as at the first. There are always those who accept and those who reject Him. His contemporaries showed, for the most part, a complete ignorance of what might be expected of God, a native inability to understand spiritual greatness, and to relish it when presented to them. And yet Christ's claims were made with such an air of authority and truth, and His whole character and bearing were so consistent, that they were half persuaded He was all He said. It is chiefly because we have not a perfect sympathy with goodness, and do not know its value, that we do not at once and universally acknowledge Christ. There is in men an instinct that tells them what blessings Christ will secure to them, and they decline connection with Him because they are conscious that their ways are not His ways, nor their hopes His hopes. The very presentation to men of the possibility of becoming perfectly pure reveals what at heart they are. By the judgment each man passes on Christ he passes judgment on himself.

Let us stir ourselves to a clearer decision by remembering that He is presented to us as to His contemporaries. Time was when any one going into the synagogue of Nazareth would have seen Him, and might have spoken with Him. But the particular thirty years during which this manifestation of God on earth lasted makes no material difference to the thing itself. The Incarnation was to be some time, and it is as real having occurred then as if it were occurring now. It occurred in its fit time; but its bearing on us is not dependent on the time of its occurrence. If it had been accomplished in our day, what should we have thought of it? Would it have been nothing to us to see God, to hear Him, perhaps to have had His eye turned upon us with personal observation, with pity, with remonstrance? Would it have been nothing to us to see Him taking the sinner's place, scourged, mocked, crucified? Is it conceivable that in presence of such a manifestation of God we should have been indifferent? Would not our whole nature have burned with shame that we and our fellowmen should have brought our God to this? And are we to suffer the mere fact of Christ's being incarnate in a past age and not in our own, to alter our attitude towards Him,

\* This expression means a succession of graces, higher grace ever taking the place of lower.

and blind us to the reality? Of more importance than anything that is now happening in our own life is this Incarnation of the Only-begotten of the Father.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE BAPTIST'S TESTIMONY:

JOHN i. 6-8, 15-34.

IN proceeding to show how the Incarnate Word manifested Himself among men, and how this manifestation was received, John naturally speaks first of all of the Baptist. "There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for witness . . . that all might believe through him." The Evangelist himself had been one of the Baptist's disciples, and had been led to Christ by his testimony. And to many besides the Baptist was the true forerunner of the Messiah. He was the first to recognise and proclaim the present King. John had come under the Baptist's influence at the most impressible time of his life, while his character was being formed and his ideas of religion taking shape; and his teacher's testimony to the dignity of Jesus had left an indelible print upon his spirit. While his memory retained anything it could not let slip what his first teacher had said of Him who became his Teacher and his Lord. While, therefore, the other Evangelists give us striking pictures of the Baptist's appearance, habits, and style of preaching, and show us the connection of his work with that of Jesus, John glances very slightly at these matters, but dwells with emphasis and iteration on the testimony which the Baptist bore to the Messiahship of Jesus.

To us, at this time of day, it may seem of little importance what the Baptist thought or said of Jesus. We may sympathise rather with the words of the Lord Himself, who, in allusion to this witness, said, "I receive not testimony from man." But it is plain that, at any rate from a Jewish point of view, the witness of John was most important. The people universally accepted John as a prophet, and they could scarcely think him mistaken in the chief article of his mission. In point of fact, many of the most faithful adherents of Jesus became such through the influence of John; and those who declined to accept Jesus were always staggered by John's explicit indication of Him as the Christ. The Jews had not only the predictions of prophets long since dead, and descriptions of the Christ which they could perversely misconstrue; they had not merely pictures of their Messiah by which they might identify Jesus as the Christ, but of which it was also quite possible for them to deny the likeness; but they had a living contemporary, whom they themselves acknowledged to be a prophet, pointing out to them another living contemporary as the Christ. That even such a testimony was to a large extent disregarded shows how much more the inclination to believe has to do with our faith than any external proofs.

But even to us the testimony of a man like John is not without importance. He was, as our Lord bore witness, "a burning and a shining light." He was one of those men who give new thoughts to their generation, and help men to



see clearly what otherwise they might only dimly have seen. He was in a position to know Jesus well. He was His cousin; he had known Him from His childhood. He was also in a position to know what was involved in being the Messiah. By the very circumstance that he himself had been mistaken for the Messiah, he was driven to define to his own mind the distinctive and characteristic marks of the Messiah. Nothing could so have led him to apprehend the difference between himself and Jesus. More and more clearly must he have seen that he was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light. Thus he was prepared to receive with understanding the sign (ver. 33) which gave him something more than *his own personal surmises* to go upon in declaring Jesus to the world as the Messiah. If there is any man's testimony we may accept about our Lord it is that of the Baptist, who, from his close contact with the most profligate and with the most spiritual of the people, saw what they needed, and saw in Jesus power to give it; the business of whose life it was to make Him out, and to arrive at certain information regarding Him; a man whose own elevation and force of character made many fancy he was the Messiah, but who hastened to disabuse their minds of such an idea, because his very elevation gave him capacity to see how infinitely above him the true Christ was. Seen from the low ground, the star may seem close to the top of the mountain; seen from the mountain-top it is recognised as infinitely above it. John was on the mountain-top.

Of John's person and work nothing need here be said save what serves to throw light on his witness to Christ. Going from the comfortable home and well-provided life and fair prospects of a priest's family, he went to the houseless wilderness, and adopted the meagre, comfortless life of an ascetic; not from any necessity, but because he felt that to entangle himself with the affairs of the world would be to blind him to its vices, and to silence his remonstrance, if not to implicate him in its guilt. Like thousands besides in all ages of the world's history, he felt compelled to seek solitude, to subdue the flesh, to meditate undisturbed on things Divine, and discover for himself and for others some better way than religious routine and the "good wine of Mosaic morality turned to the vinegar of Pharisaism." Like the Nazarites of the earlier times of his country, like the old prophets, with whose indignation and deep regret at the national vices he was in perfect sympathy, he left the world, gave up all the usual prospects and ways of life, and betook himself to a life of prayer, and thought, and self-discipline in the wilderness. When first he went there, he could only dimly know what lay before him; but he gathered a few friends of like disposition around him, and, as we learn, "taught them to pray." He formed in the wilderness a new Israel, a little company of praying souls, who spent their time in considering the needs of their fellow-countrymen, and in interceding with God for them, and who were content to let the pleasures and excitements of the world pass by while they longed for and prepared themselves to meet the great Deliverer.

This adoption of the *rôle* of the ancient prophets, this resuscitation of their long-forgotten function of mourning before God for the people's sin, and addressing the nation authoritatively

as God's voice, was outwardly shown by his assumption of the prophet's dress. The rough skin for a cloak; the long, uncared-for hair; the wiry, weather-beaten frame; the lofty, calm, penetrating eye, were all eloquent as his lips. His whole appearance and habits certified his claim to be the "voice" of one crying in the wilderness, and gave him authority with the people. Slightly altering what has been said of a great modern, we may much more truly say of the Baptist,—

"He took the suffering human race,  
He read each wound, each weakness clear:  
He struck his finger on the place,  
And said, 'Thou ail'st here, and here,'  
He looked on (Isr'el's) dying hour  
Of fitful dreams and feverish power,  
And said, 'The end is everywhere,  
(Christ) still has truth, take refuge there.'"

He was listened to. It is so always, in our own day as in others; the men who are unworldly and have the good of their country or of any class of men at heart, the men who are saintly and of few desires, these are listened to as the commissioned messengers of heaven. It is to these men we look as the salt of the earth, who preserve us still from the corrupting, disintegrating influence of doubt. To these men, no matter how different they be from us in creed, we are forced to listen, because the *Holy Spirit*, wherever He is, is the Spirit of God; and all men instinctively acknowledge that those who are themselves in the kingdom of God have authority to summon others into it, and that those who are themselves unworldly have alone a right to dictate to worldly men. There is no power on earth like the power of a holy, consecrated life, because he who is leading such a life is already above the world, and belongs to a higher kingdom. There is hope for our country, or for any country, when its young men have something of John's spirit; when they school the body until it becomes the ready instrument of a high and spiritual intention, fearless of hardship; when by sympathy with God's purposes they apprehend what is most needed by men, and are able to detect the weaknesses and vices of society, and to bear the burden of their time.

But the Baptist's equipment for the most responsible office of proclaiming the Messiahship of Jesus was not completed by his own saintliness of character and keen perception of the people's needs, and knowledge of Jesus, and incorruptible truthfulness. There was given to him a sign from heaven, that he might be strengthened to bear this responsibility, and that the Messiah might never seem to be only of the Baptist's appointing and not of God's. Some degree of disappointment may be felt that external signs should have intruded on so profoundly spiritual and real an occasion as the baptism of Christ. Some may be ready to ask, with Keim, "Is it, or was it ever, the way of God, in the course of His spiritual world, above all upon the threshold of spiritual decisions affecting the fate of the world, and in contradiction to the wise economy of revelation pursued by His supreme ambassador Himself, to take away from seeking and finding souls the labour of deciding their own destiny?" But this is to suppose that the signs at the baptism of Jesus were mainly for His encouragement, whereas John describes them as being given for the certification of the Baptist. "I knew Him not"—that is, I did not know He was the Messiah—"but He that sent



me to baptise with water, He said unto me, Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and abiding upon Him, the same is He that baptiseth with the Holy Spirit. And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

The baptism of Jesus was, in fact, His anointing as the Messiah: and this anointing by which He became the Christ was an anointing, not with a symbolic oil, but with the Divine Spirit (Acts x. 38). This Spirit descended upon Him "in a bodily shape" (Luke iii. 22), because it was not one member or faculty or power which was communicated to Jesus, but a whole *body* or complete equipment of all needful Divine energies for His work. "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him;" there is no gauge, no metre checking the supply. Now for the first time can the whole Spirit be given, because now for the first time in Jesus is there room to receive it. And that the Baptist may confidently proclaim Him as King the sign is given,—not the outward sign alone, but the outward sign accompanying and tallying with the inward sign; for it was not said to the Baptist, "Upon whomsoever thou shalt see a dove descend," but "upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descend."

This anointing of Jesus to the Messiahship occurred at the moment of His truest identification of Himself with the people. John shrank from baptising One whom he knew to be already pure, and to have no sins to confess. But Jesus insisted, identifying Himself with a polluted people, numbered with transgressors. It was thus He became true King and Head of mankind, by identifying Himself with us, and taking upon Him, through His universal sympathy all our burdens, feeling more shame than the sinner's self for his sin, pained with the suffering in all their pain. It was the Divine Spirit of universal love, attracting Him to all sorrow and suffering, which identified Him in the mind of His first confessor as the Christ, the Son of God. This to the Baptist was the glory of the Only-begotten, this sympathy which felt with all, and shrank from no sorrow or burden.

Thus equipped, the Baptist gives his testimony with confidence. This testimony is manifold, and uttered on several occasions,—to the Sanhedrim's deputation, to the people, and to his own disciples. It is negative as well as positive. He repudiates the suggestions of the deputation from Jerusalem that he himself is the Christ, or that he is in their sense Elijah. But the most remarkable repudiation of honours which could be rendered to Christ alone is found recorded in chap. iii. 22-30, when the growing popularity of Jesus excited the jealousy of those who still adhered to the Baptist. Their complaint was the occasion of calling up clearly in the Baptist's own consciousness the relation in which he stood to Jesus, and of prompting the most emphatic enunciation of the unrivalled dignity of our Lord. He says to his jealous disciples, "If I do not gather a crowd of followers while Jesus does, this is because God has appointed to me one place, to Him another. Beyond God's design no man's destiny and success can extend. What is designed for me I shall receive; beyond that I desire to receive and I can receive nothing. Least of all would I covet to be called the Christ. You know not what you say in even remotely hinting that such a man as I could be the Christ. It is no mere unworldliness or purity

which can raise a man to this dignity. He is from above; not to be named with prophets, but the Son of God, who belongs to the heavenly world of which He speaks."

To make the difference between himself and Christ clear, the Baptist hits upon the happy figure of the Bridegroom and the Bridegroom's friend. "He that has and keeps the Bride is the Bridegroom. He to whom the world is drawn, and on whom all needy souls lean, is the Bridegroom, and to Him alone belongs this special joy of satisfying all human needs. I am not the Bridegroom, because men cannot find in me satisfaction and rest. I cannot be to them the source of spiritual life. Moreover, by instigating me to assume the Bridegroom's place you would rob me of my peculiar joy, the joy of the Bridegroom's friend." The function of the Bridegroom's friend, or paranymp, was to ask the hand of the bride for the bridegroom, and to arrange the marriage. This function the Baptist claims as his. "My joy," he says, "is to have negotiated this matter, to have encouraged the Bride to trust her Lord. It is my joy to hear the glad and loving words that pass between Bridegroom and Bride. Do not suppose I look with sadness on the defection of my followers, and on their preference for Christ. These crowds you complain of are evidence that I have not discharged the function of paranymp in vain. To see my work successful, to see Bride and Bridegroom at length resting in one another with undisturbed, self-forgetting confidence, this is my joy. While the Bridegroom cheers the Bride with His voice, and opens to her prospects which only His love can realise, shall I obtrude myself and claim consideration? Is it not enough for one life to have had the joy of identifying the actually present Christ, and of introducing the Bride to her Lord? Has not that life its ample reward which has been instrumental in achieving the actual union of God and man?"

Probably, then, the Baptist himself would think we waste too much emotion over his self-sacrifice and magnanimity. After all, it not being possible to him to be the Messiah, it was no small glory and joy to be the friend, the next, to the Messiah. The tragic character of the Baptist's death, the despondent doubt which for a time shook his spirit during his imprisonment, the severe life he had previously led, all tend to make us oblivious of the fact that his life was crowned with a deep and solid joy. Even the poet who has most worthily depicted him still speaks of

"John, than which man a *sadder* or a greater—  
Not till this day has been of woman born."

But the Baptist was a big enough man to enjoy an unselfish happiness. He loved men so well that he rejoiced when he saw them forsake him to follow Christ. He loved Christ so well that to see Him honoured was the crown of his life.

Besides this negative repudiation of honours that belonged to Jesus, the Baptist emits a positive and fivefold testimony in His favour, (1) to His dignity (vv. 15, 27, 30), "He that cometh after me is *preferred before me*;" (2) to His pre-existence (vv. 15, 30), which is adduced as the reason of the foregoing, "for He *was* before me;" (3) to His spiritual fulness and power (ver. 33), "He baptiseth with the Holy Ghost;" (4) to the efficacy of His mediation (ver. 29), "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the



sin of the world;" (5) to His unique personality (ver. 34), "this is the Son of God."

1. Three times over the Baptist declared the superiority of Jesus; a superiority so immense that language failed him in trying to represent it. The Rabbis said, "Every office which a servant will do for his master a scholar should perform for his teacher, except loosing his sandal-thong." But this exceptionally menial office the Baptist declares he was not worthy to perform for Jesus. None so well as the Baptist himself knew his limitations. He had evoked in the people cravings he could not satisfy. There had gathered to him a conscience-stricken people, longing for renewal and righteousness, and demanding what he had no power to give. Therefore, not merely his explicit enouncements from time to time, but his entire ministry, pointing to a new order of things which he himself could not inaugurate, declared the incomparable greatness of Him that was to come after him.

2. This superiority of Christ was based on His pre-existence. "He was before me." It may appear unaccountable that the Baptist, standing on Old Testament ground, should have reached the conclusion that Jesus was Divine. But it is at any rate evident that the Evangelist believed the Baptist had done so, for he adduces the Baptist's testimony in support of his own affirmation of the Divine glory of the Incarnate Word (ver. 15). After the wonderful scene at the Baptism, John must have talked closely with Jesus regarding both His work and His consciousness; and even if the passage at the close of the third chapter is coloured by the Evangelist's style, and even by his thought, we must suppose that the Baptist had somehow arrived at the belief that Jesus was "from above," and made known upon earth the things which He, in a pre-existent state, had "heard and seen."

3. The Baptist pointed to Jesus as the source of spiritual life. "He baptiseth with the Holy Ghost." Here the Baptist steps on to ground on which his assertions can be tested. He declares that Jesus can communicate the Holy Ghost—the fundamental article of the Christian Creed, which carries with it all else. No one knew better than the Baptist where human help failed; no one knew better than he what could be effected by rites and rules, by strength of will and asceticism and human endeavour; and no one knew better at what point all these become useless. More and more they seemed to him but a cleansing with water, a washing of the outside. More and more did he understand that, not from without, but from within, true cleansing must proceed, and that all else, save a new creation by the Spirit of God, was inefficacious. Only Spirit can act upon spirit; and for true renewal we need the action upon us of the Divine Spirit. Without this no new and eternal kingdom of God can be founded.

4. The Baptist pointed to Jesus as "the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." That by this title he meant only to designate Jesus as a person full of gentleness and innocence is out of the question. The second clause forbids this. He is the Lamb that takes away sin. And there is only one way in which a lamb can take away sin, and that is, by sacrifice. The expression no doubt suggests the picture in the fifty-third of Isaiah of the servant of Jehovah meekly enduring wrong. But unless the Baptist had been previously speaking of this chapter, the

thoughts of his disciples would not at once turn to it, because in the passage it is not a lamb of sacrifice that is spoken of, but a lamb meekly enduring. In the Baptist's words the sacrifice is the primary idea, and it is needless to discuss whether he was thinking of the paschal lamb or the lamb of morning and evening sacrifice, because he merely used the lamb as the representative of sacrifice generally. Here, he says, is the reality to which all sacrifice has pointed, the Lamb of God.

5. The Baptist proclaims Jesus as "the Son of God." That he should do so need not greatly surprise us, as we read in the other Gospels that Jesus had been thus designated by a voice from heaven at His baptism. Very early in His ministry, not only His disciples, but also the demons ascribe to Him the same dignity. In one sense or other He was designated "Son of God." No doubt we must bear in mind that this was in a rigidly monotheistic community, and in a community in which the same title had been freely applied to Israel and to Israel's king to designate a certain alliance and close relation subsisting between the human and the Divine, but of course not suggesting metaphysical unity. But considering the high functions which clustered round the Messianic dignity, it is not unlikely that the Messiah's forerunner may have supposed that a fuller meaning than had yet been recognised might be latent in this title. Certainly we are safe in affirming that by applying this title to our Lord, the Baptist intended to indicate his unique personality, and to declare that He was the Messiah, God's Viceroy on earth.

Whether we can add to this testimony the thoughts contained in the closing paragraph of the third chapter may be doubted. The thought of the passage moves within the circle of ideas familiar to the Baptist; and that the style is the style of the Evangelist does not prevent us from receiving the ideas as the Baptist's. But there are expressions which it is difficult to suppose that the Baptist could have used. The preceding conversation was occasioned by the growing popularity of Jesus; was this, then, an occasion on which it could be said, "No one receives His testimony"? Is this not more appropriate to the Evangelist than to the Baptist? It would seem, then, that in this paragraph the Evangelist is expanding the Baptist's testimony, in order to indicate its application to the eternal relations subsisting between Jesus and men generally.

The contents of the paragraph are a most emphatic testimony to the pre-existence and heavenly origin of Christ. In contrast to persons of earthly origin, He is "from heaven." He "cometh" from above, as if His entrance into this world were a conscious transition, a voluntary coming from another world. His origin determines also His moral relationships and His teaching. He is "above all," in dignity, in authority, in spirit; and He speaks what He has seen and heard. But in the thirty-fourth verse a new idea is presented. There it is said that He speaks the words of God, not directly, because He is from above, and speaks what He has seen and heard, but "because God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him." What are we to understand by this double Divine inhabitation of the humanity of Jesus? And what are we to understand by the Spirit being given without measure to the Incarnate Word?



In the Old Testament two ideas present themselves regarding the Spirit which illustrate this statement. The one is that which conveys the impression that only a limited amount of spiritual influence was communicated to prophetic men, and that from them it could be conveyed to others. In Numb. xi. 17 the Lord is represented as saying to Moses, "I will take of the Spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them;" and in 2 Kings ii. 9 Elisha is represented as praying that the eldest born's portion, the two-thirds of Elijah's spirit, might be bequeathed to him. The idea is a true and instructive one. The Spirit does, in point of fact, pass from man to man. It is as if in one receptive person the Divine Spirit found entrance through which He might pass to others. But another idea is also frequent in the Old Testament. The Spirit is spoken of rather as conferring a gift here and a power there than as dwelling wholly and permanently in men. One prophet had a dream, another a vision, a third legislated, a fourth wrote a psalm, a fifth founded an institution, a sixth in the power of the Spirit smote the Philistines, or, like Samson, tore a lion in pieces.

In Christ all powers are combined—power over nature, power to teach, power to reveal, power to legislate. And as in the Old Testament the Spirit passed from man to man, so in the New Testament Christ first Himself receives and then communicates to all the whole Spirit. Hence the law noticed at a subsequent stage of this Gospel that "the Spirit was not yet given; because Jesus was not yet glorified" (vii. 39). We cannot see to the bottom of the law, but the fact is apparent, that until Christ received into every part of His own humanity the fulness of the Divine Spirit, that Spirit could not fill with His fulness any man.

But why was the Spirit needed in a personality of which the Word, who had been with God and known God, was the basis? Because the humanity of Christ was a true humanity. Being human, He must be indebted to the Spirit for all impartation to His human nature of what is Divine. The knowledge of God which the Word possesses by experience must be humanly apprehended before it can be communicated to men; and this human apprehension can only be arrived at in the case of Christ by the enlightenment of the Spirit. It was useless for Christ to declare what could not be apprehended by human faculty, and His own human faculty was the measure and test of intelligibility. By the Spirit He was enlightened to speak of things Divine; and this Spirit, interposed, as it were, between the Word and the human nature of Jesus, was as little cumbrous in its operation or perceptible in consciousness as our breath interposed between the thinking mind and the words we speak to declare our mind.

To return to the direct testimony of the Baptist, we must (1) acknowledge its value. It is the testimony of a contemporary, of whom we know from other sources that he was generally reckoned a prophet—a man of unblemished and inviolable integrity, of rugged independence, of the keenest spiritual discernment. There was no man of larger size or more heroic mould in his day. In any generation he would have been conspicuous by his spiritual stature, his fearless unworldliness, his superiority to the common weaknesses of men; and yet this man himself looks up to Jesus as standing on quite a different platform

from his own, as a Being of another order. He can find no expressions strong enough to mark the difference: "I am not worthy to loose His shoe latchet;" "He that is of the earth" (that is, himself) "is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: He that cometh from heaven is above all." He would not have used such expressions of Isaiah, of Elijah, of Moses. He knew his own dignity, and would not have set so marked a difference between himself and any other prophet. But his own very greatness was precisely what revealed to him the absolute superiority of Christ. These crowds that had gathered round him—what could he do for them more than refer them to Christ? Could he propose to himself to found among them a kingdom of God? Could he ask them to acknowledge him and trust in him for spiritual life? Could he promise them his spirit? Could he even link to himself all kinds of men, of all nationalities? Could he be the light of men, giving to all a satisfying knowledge of God and of their relation to Him? No; he was not that light, he could but bear witness of that light. And this he did, by pointing men to Jesus, not as a brother prophet, not as another great man, but as the Son of God, as One who had come down from heaven.

It is, I say, impossible that we can make nothing of such a testimony. Here was one who knew, if any man ever did, spotless holiness when he saw it; who knew what human strength and courage could accomplish; who was himself certainly among the six greatest men the world has seen; and this man, standing thus on the highest altitudes human nature can reach, looks up to Christ, and does not only admit His superiority, but shrinks, as from something blasphemous, from all comparison with Him. What is the flaw in his testimony, or why are we not accepting Christ as our light, as able to take away our sins, as willing to baptise us with the Holy Ghost?

But (2) even such testimony as John's is not sufficient of itself to carry conviction to the reluctant. None knew better than John's contemporaries that he was a true man, not liable to make mistakes in a matter of this kind. And his testimony to Christ did stagger them, and often held them in check, and no doubt threw a kind of undefined awe over the person of Christ; but, after all, not many believed on account of John's testimony, and those who did were not influenced solely by his testimony, but by his work as well. They had become concerned about sin, sensitive to defilement and failure, and were thus prepared to appreciate the offers of Christ. The two voices chimed, John's voice saying, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" the voice of their own conscience crying for the taking away of sin. It is so still. The sense of sin, the feeling of spiritual weakness and need, the craving for God, direct the eye, and enable us to see in Christ what we do not otherwise see. We are not likely to know Christ until we know ourselves. What is the man's judgment concerning Christ worth who is not conscious of his own littleness and humbled by his own guilt? Let a man first go to school with the Baptist, let him catch something of his unworldliness and earnestness, let him become alive to his own shortcomings by at last beginning to strive after the highest things in life, and by seeking to live, not for pleasure, but for God, and his views of Christ and his relation to Him will become satisfactory and true.



## CHAPTER IV.

## THE FIRST DISCIPLES.

JOHN i. 35-51.

IN the prosecution of his purpose to tell how the Incarnate Word manifested His glory to men, John proceeds to give one or two instances of the eagerness with which prepared souls welcomed Him, and of the instinctive perception with which true and open minds confessed Him Son of God and King of Israel. This paragraph is the continuation of that which begins at ver. 19 with the general title, "This is the witness of John." We are now introduced to some of the results of John's witness, and are shown that Christ is King, not only by official proclamation, but by the free choice of men. These instances here cited are but the first among countless numbers who in every generation have felt and owned the majesty of Christ, and who have felt irresistibly drawn to Him by a unique affinity. In the spell which His personality laid upon these first disciples, in the uninvited yet cordial and assured acknowledgments of His dignity which they felt drawn to make, we see much that is significant and illustrative of the allegiance He evokes from age to age in humble and open-minded men.

In proceeding to gather to Himself subjects who might enter into His purposes and loyally serve Him, Jesus shows a singularly many-sided adaptability and inexhaustible originality in dealing with men. Each of the five disciples here introduced is individually dealt with. "The finding of the one was not the finding of the other. For John and Andrew there was the talk with Jesus through the hours of that never-to-be-forgotten evening; for Simon, the heart-searching word, convincing him he was known and his future read off; for Philip, a peremptory command; and for Nathanael, a gracious courtesy disarming him of prejudice, assuring him of a perfect sympathy in the breast of the Lord. Thus there are those who seek Christ, those who are brought by others to Christ, those whom Christ seeks for Himself, those who come without doubts, and those who come with doubts."\*

The two men who enjoyed the signal distinction of leading the way in owning the majesty and attaching themselves to the person of Christ were Andrew and probably John who wrote this Gospel. The writer, indeed, does not name himself, but this is in accordance with his habit. The suppression of the name is an indication that he himself was the disciple spoken of, since had it been another he could have had no scruple in mentioning his name. We know also that the families of Zebedee and Jonah were partners in trade, and it was likely that the young men of the families would go in company to visit the Baptist when the fishing was slack. These two young men had already attached themselves to the Baptist; had not merely passed through the fashionable ceremony of baptism, and returned home to talk about it, but were laid hold of by John's teaching and character, and had resolved to wait with him till the predicted Deliverer should appear.

And at length the day came when the master whom they trusted as God's prophet suddenly

checked them in their walk, laid his hand breathlessly upon them, and gazing at a passing figure, said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" There in actual bodily presence was He for whom all ages of their people had longed; there within sound of their voice was He who could take away their sin, lift off the burden and the trouble of life, and let them know the blessedness of living. We are ever ready to think it was easy for those who saw Christ to follow Him. Could we read His sympathy and truthfulness in His face, could we hear His words addressed directly to ourselves, could we ask our own questions and have from Him personal guidance, we fancy faith would be easy. And no doubt there is a greater benediction pronounced on those who "have not seen, and yet have believed." Still, the advantage is not wholly theirs who saw the Lord growing up among other boys, learning His trade with ordinary lads, clothed in the dress of a working man. The brothers of Jesus found it hard to believe. Besides, in giving the allegiance of the Spirit, and forming eternal alliance, it is well that the true affinities of our spirit be not disturbed by material and sensible appearances.

These two men, however, felt the spell, and "followed Jesus"—representatives of all those who, scarcely knowing what they do or what they intend, are yet drawn by a mysterious attraction to keep within sight of Him of whom they have ever been hearing, and whom all ages have sought, but who now for the first time stands clear before their sight. Without a word to their teacher or to one another, silent with wonder and excitement, they eagerly follow the passing figure. So does enquiry begin with many a soul. He who is much spoken of by all, but of whom few have personal knowledge, suddenly assumes a reality they scarcely were looking for. It is no longer the hearing of the ear, but now, whispers the soul, mine eye seeth Him. The soul for the first time feels as if some action were demanded of it; it can no longer just sit and listen to descriptions of Christ, it must arise on its own account, and for itself seek further knowledge of this unique Person.

"Then Jesus turned and saw them following,"—turned probably because He heard them following, for He suffers none to follow in vain. Sometimes it may seem as if He did; sometimes it may seem as if the best years of life were spent in following, and all to no purpose. It is not so. If some have spent years in following, and cannot yet say that Christ has turned and made them conscious that He is responding to their search, this is because in their path lie many obstacles, all of which must be thoroughly cleared away. And no man should grudge the time and the toil that are spent on honestly clearing away whatever prevents a perfect cohesion to this eternal Friend.

The question put by Jesus to the following disciples, "What seek ye?" was the first breath of the winnowing fan which the Baptist had warned them the Messiah would use. It was not the gruff interrogation of one who would not have his retirement invaded, nor his own thoughts interrupted, but a kindly invitation to open their minds to Him. It was meant to help them to understand their own purposes, and to ascertain what they expected in following Jesus. "What seek ye?" Have you any object deeper than mere curiosity? For Christ desires to be followed intelligently, or not at all. At all times

\* See Mr. Reith's rich Handbook on "The Gospel of John" (Clark).



He used the winnowing fan to blow away the chaff of the great crowds that followed Him, and leave the few immovably resolute souls. So many follow because a crowd streams after Him and carries them with it; so many follow because it is a fashion, and they have no opinion of their own; so many follow experimentally, and drop off at the first difficulty; so many follow under misapprehension, and with mistaken expectations. Some who came to Him with great expectations left in shame and sorrow; some who thought to make use of Him for party ends left Him in anger when they found themselves unmasked; and one who thought skilfully to use Him for the gratification of his own selfish worldliness, discovered that there was no surer path to eternal ruin. Christ turns away none for mere slowness in apprehending what He is and what He does for sinful men. But by this question He reminds us that the vague and mysterious attraction which, like a hidden magnet, draws men to Him, must be exchanged for a clear understanding at least of what we ourselves need and expect to receive from Him. He will turn from none who, in response to His question, can truly say, We seek God, we seek holiness, we seek service with Thee, we seek Thyself.

The answer which these men returned to the question of Jesus was the answer of men who scarce knew their own minds, and were suddenly confused by being thus addressed. They therefore reply, as men thus confused commonly reply, by asking another question, "Rabbi, where dwellest Thou?" Their concern was about Him, and so far the answer was good; but it implied that they were willing to leave Him with only such information as might enable them to visit Him at some future time, and so far the answer was not the best. Still their shyness was natural, and not without reason. They had felt how the Baptist searched their soul, and of this new Teacher the Baptist himself had said he was not worthy to loose His sandal-thong. To find themselves face to face with this greatest Person, the Messiah, was a trying experience indeed. The danger at this point is hesitation. Many persons fail at this point from a native reluctance to commit themselves, to feel pledged, to accept permanent responsibilities and bind themselves with indissoluble ties. They are past the stage of merely keeping Christ in view, but very little past it. The closer dealings they have had with Him have as yet led to nothing. Their fate hangs in the balance.

Out of this condition our Lord delivers these two men by His irresistible invitation, "Come and see." And well for them it was that He did so, for next day He left that part of the country, and the mere knowledge of His lodging by the Jordan would have availed them nothing; a warning to all who put themselves off with learning more about salvation before they accept it. An eagerness in acquiring knowledge *about* Christ may as effectually as any other pursuit retard us in making acquaintance with Him. It is mere trifling to be always enquiring about One who is Himself with us; the way to secure that we shall have Him when we need Him is to go with Him now. How can we expect our difficulties to be removed while we do not adopt the one method God recognises as effectual for this purpose, fellowship with Christ? Why enquire longer about the way of salvation, and

where we may find it at a future time? Christ offers His friendship now, "Come with Me, now," He says, "and for yourself enter My dwelling as a welcome friend." Can the friendship of Christ do us harm, or retard us in any good thing? May we not most reasonably fear that hesitation now may put Christ beyond our reach? We cannot tell what new influences may enter our life and set an impassable gulf between us and religion.

Sixty years after, when one of these men wrote this Gospel, he remembered as if it had been yesterday the very hour of the day when he followed Jesus into His house. His whole life seemed to date from that hour; as well it might, for what could mark a human life more deeply and lift it more surely to permanent altitude than an evening with Jesus? They felt that at last they had found a Friend with human sympathies and Divine intelligence. How eagerly must these men who had of late been thinking much of new problems, have laid all their difficulties before this master-mind, that seemed at once to comprehend all truth, and to appreciate the little obstacles that staggered them. What boundless regions of thought would His questions open up, and how entirely new an aspect would life assume under the light He shed upon it.

The astonished satisfaction they found in their first intercourse with Christ is shown in the bursting enthusiasm with which Andrew sought out his brother Simon, and summarily announced, "We have found the Christ." That is how the Gospel is propagated. The closer the tie, the more emphatic the testimony. It is what brother says to brother, husband to wife, parent to child, friend to friend, far more than what preacher says to hearer, that carries in it irresistible persuasive power. When the truth of the utterance is vouched for by the obvious gladness and purity of the life; when the finding of the Christ is obviously as *real* as the finding of a better situation and as satisfying as promotion in life, then conviction will be carried with the announcement. And he who, like Andrew, can do little himself, may, by his simple testimony and honest life, bring to Christ a Simon who may become a conspicuous power for good. The mother whose influence is confined to the four walls of her own house may lodge Christian principle in the heart of a son, who may give it currency in one form or other to the remotest corner of the earth.

The language in which Andrew announced to Simon his great fortune was simple, but, in Jewish lips, most pregnant. "We have found the Christ!" What his people had lived and longed for through all past ages, "*I* have found" and known. The perfect deliverance and joy which God was to bring by dwelling with His people, this at last had come. Taught to believe that all evil and disappointment and thwarting were but temporary, the Jew had waited for the true life of man—a life in the presence and favour and fellowship of the Highest. This was to come in the Messiah, and Andrew had found this. He had entered into life—all darkness and shadow were gone; the light shone round him, making all things bright, and piercing into eternity with clear radiance.

The words with which Jesus welcomes Simon are remarkable: "Thou art Simon, son of John: thou shalt be called Cephas." This greeting yields its meaning when we recall the character



of the person addressed. Simon was hot-headed, impulsive, rash, unstable. When his name was mentioned on the Lake of Galilee there rose before the mind a man of generous nature, frank and good-hearted, but a man whose uncertainty and hastiness had brought him and his into many troubles, and with whom, perhaps, it was well to have no very binding connection in trade or in the family. What must the thoughts of such a man have been when he was told that the Messiah was present, and that the Messianic kingdom was standing with open gates? Must he not have felt that this might concern others,—decent steady men like Andrew,—but not himself? Must he not have felt that instead of being a strength to the new kingdom he would prove a weakness? Would not that happen now which so often before had happened—that any society he joined he was sure to injure with his hasty tongue or rash hand? Other men might enter the kingdom and serve it well, but he must remain without.

Coming in this mood, he is greeted with words which seem to say to him, I know the character identified with the name "Simon, son of John;" I know all you fear, all the remorseful thoughts that possess you; I know how you wish now you were a man like Andrew, and could offer yourself as a serviceable subject of this new kingdom. But no! thou art Simon; nothing can change that, and such as you are you are welcome; but "thou shalt be called Rock," Peter. The men standing round, and knowing Simon well, might turn away to hide a smile; but Simon knew the Lord had found him, and uttered the very word which could bind him for ever to Him. And the event showed how true this appellation was. Simon became Peter,—bold to stand for the rest, and beard the Sanhedrim. By believing that this new King had a place for him in His kingdom, and could give him a new character which should fit him for service, he became a new man, strong where he had been weak, helpful and no longer dangerous to the cause he loved.

Such are the encouragements with which the King of men welcomes the diffident. He gives men the consciousness that they are known; He begets the consciousness that it is not with sin in the abstract He undertakes to do, but with sinners He can name, and whose weaknesses are known to Him. But He begets this consciousness that we may trust Him when He gives us assurance that a new character awaits us and a serviceable place in His kingdom. He assures the most despondent that for them also a useful life is possible.

As Andrew, in the exuberant joy of his discovery of the Messiah, had first imparted the news to his own brother Simon, so Philip, when invited by Jesus to accompany Him to Galilee, sought to bring with him his friend Nathanael Bartholomew (son of Tolmai). This was one of the devout Jews who had long been wondering who that mysterious Personage should be of whom all the prophets had spoken, and for whom the world waited that He might complete it. The news that He was found seemed only too good to be true. He had come too easily and unostentatiously, and from so unlooked-for a quarter. "Can any good come out of Nazareth?" Good men, as well as others, have their narrow views and illiberal prejudices, and mark off in their own minds as hopeless and barren whole religions, sects, or countries out of which

God determines to bring that which is for the healing of the nations. To rise above such prejudices we must refuse to accept current rumours, traditional opinions, proverbial or neat dicta which seem to settle a matter; we must conscientiously examine for ourselves,—as Philip says, "Come and see." He instinctively knew how useless it was to reason with men about Christ's claims so long as they were not in His presence. One look, one word from Himself will go further to persuade a man of His majesty and love than all that any one else can say. To make Christ known is the best way to prove the truth of Christianity.

The shade of the fig-tree is the natural summer-house or arbour under which Eastern families delight to take their meals or their mid-day rest. Nathanael had used the dense foliage of its large and thick leaves as a screen behind which he found retirement for devotional purposes. It is in such absolute seclusion, retirement, and solitude that a man shows his true self. It was here Nathanael had uttered himself to his Father who seeth in secret; here he had found liberty to pour out his true and deepest cravings. His guilelessness had been proved by his carrying into retirement the same simple and unreserved godliness he professed abroad. And he is astonished to find that the eye of Jesus had penetrated this leafy veil, and had been a witness to his prayers and vows. He feels that he is known best at the very point in which he had most carefully contrived concealment, and he recognises that no one is more likely to be the fulfiller of his prayers than that same Person who has manifestly been somehow present at them and heard them.

To the man of prayer a suitable promise is given, as to the man of uncertain character a promise fitting his need had come. Under his fig-tree Nathanael had often been in sympathy with his forefather Jacob in his great experience of God's attentiveness to prayer. When Jacob fled from home and country, a criminal and outcast, he no doubt felt how completely he had himself fallen into the pit he had digged. Instead of the comforts of a well-provided household, he had to lie down like a wild beast with nothing between him and the earth, with nothing between him and the sky, with nothing but an evil conscience to speak to him, and no face near save the haunting faces of those he had wronged. A more miserable, remorseful, abandoned-looking creature rarely lay down to sleep; but before he rose he had learned that God knew where he was, and was with him; that on that spot which he had chosen as a hiding, because no one could find him, and scarcely his own dog track him to it, he was waited for and met with a loving welcome by Him whom he had chiefly wronged. He saw heaven opened, and that from the lowest, most forlorn spot of earth to the highest and brightest point of heaven there is a close connection and an easy, friendly communication. If Jesus, thought Nathanael, could reopen heaven in that style, He would be worthy of the name of King of Israel. But he is now to learn that He will do far more; that henceforth it was to be no visionary ladder, swept away by the dawn, which was to lead up to heaven, but that in Jesus God Himself is permanently made over to us; that He, in His one, visible person, unites heaven and earth, God and man; that there is an ever-living union between the highest height of



heaven and the lowest depth of earth. Profound and wide as the humanity of Christ, to the most forgotten and remote outcast, to the most sunken and despairing of men, do God's love and care and helpfulness now come; high and glorious as the divinity of Christ may the hopes of all men now rise. He who understands the Incarnation of the Son of God has a surer ground of faith, and a richer hope and a straighter access to heaven, than if the ladder of Jacob stood at his bed-head and God's angels were ministering to him.

## CHAPTER V.

### *THE FIRST SIGN—THE MARRIAGE IN CANA.*

JOHN ii. 1-11.

HAVING recorded the testimony borne to Jesus by the Baptist, and having cited instances in which the overmastering personality of Jesus elicited from simple-hearted and godly men the acknowledgment of His majesty, John now proceeds to relate the homely incident which gave occasion to the first public act in which His greatness was exhibited. Testimony comes first; inward and intuitive recognition of the greatness declared by that testimony second; perception that His works are beyond the reach of human power comes last. But in the case of these first disciples, while this order was indeed maintained, there was no great interval between each step in it. It was but the "third day" after they had in their hearts felt His impressiveness that He "manifested forth His glory" to them in this first sign.

From the place where they first met Him to Cana of Galilee was a distance of twenty-one or twenty-two miles. Thither Jesus repaired to be present at a marriage. His mother was already there, and when Jesus arrived, accompanied by His new-found friends, all were invited to remain and share in the festivities. Owing probably to this unexpected increase to the number of the guests, the wine begins to fail. Among the minor trials of life there are few which produce more awkwardness than the failure to provide suitable entertainment for a specially festive occasion. Mary, with the practised eye of a woman whose business it was to observe such matters, and perhaps with a near relative's charge and liberty in the house, perceives the predicament and whispers to her Son, "They have no wine." This she said, not to hint that Jesus would do well to retire with His too many friends, nor that He would cover the lack of wine by brilliant conversation, but because she had ever been accustomed to turn to this Son in all her difficulties, and now that she sees Him acknowledged by others her own faith in Him is stimulated.

Considering the simple manner in which He had walked in, and taken His place among the other guests, and partaken of the refreshment, and joined in the conversation and mirth of the day, it would seem more likely that she should have had no definite expectation as to the way in which He would extricate the host from his difficulty, but only turned to Him on whom she was accustomed to lean. But His answer shows that He felt Himself urged to action of some kind by her appeal; and her instructions to the

servants to do whatever He ordered indicates that she definitely expected Him to relieve the embarrassment. How He would do so she could not know, and had she definitely expected a miracle she would probably have thought the help of the servants unnecessary.

But though Mary did not anticipate a miracle, it had already occurred to our Lord that this was a fit occasion for manifesting His kingly power. His words grate somewhat on the ear, but this is partly due to the difficulty of translating fine shades of meaning, and to the impossibility of conveying in any words that modification of meaning which is given in the tone of voice and expression of face, and which arises also from the familiarity and affection of speaker and hearer. In His use of the word "Woman" there is really no harshness, this being the ordinary Greek term of address to females of all classes and relationships, and being commonly used with the utmost reverence and affection. The phrase "What have I to do with thee?" is a needlessly strong translation, although it might be difficult to find a better. It "implies a certain resistance to a demand in itself, or to something in the way of urging it;" but might be quite sufficiently rendered by such an expression as "I have other thoughts than thine." There is nothing approaching angry resentment at Mary's inviting His aid, nothing like repudiation of any claim she might have upon Him, but only a calm and gentle intimation that in the present instance she must allow Him to act in His own way. The whole phrase might be rendered, "Mother, you must let Me act here in My own way: and My time for action is not yet come." She herself was perfectly satisfied with the answer. Knowing her Son well, every gleam of His expression, every tone of His voice, she recognised that He meant to do something, and accordingly left the matter in His hands, giving orders to the servants to do whatever He required.

But there was more in the words of Jesus than even Mary understood. There were thoughts in His mind which not even she could fathom, and which, had He explained them to her then, she could not have sympathised with. For these words, "Mine hour is not yet come," which she took to be the mere intimation of a few minutes' delay before granting her request, became the most solemn watchword of His life, marking the stages by which He drew near to His death. "They sought to take Him, but no man laid hands on Him, because His hour was not yet come." So again and again. From the first He knew what would come of His manifesting His glory among men. From the first He knew that His glory could not be fully manifested till He hung upon the cross.

Can we wonder, then, that when He recognised in His mother's request the invitation from God, though not from her, that He should work His first miracle and so begin to manifest His glory, He should have said, "My thoughts are not yours; Mine hour is not yet come"? With compassion He looked upon her through whose soul a sword was to pass; with filial tenderness He could only look with deep pity on her who was now the unconscious instrument of summoning Him to that career which He knew must end in death. He saw in this simple act of furnishing the wedding guests with wine a very different significance from that which she saw. It was here at



this wedding feast table that He felt Himself impelled to take the step which altered the whole character of His life.

For from a private person He became by His first miracle a public and marked character with a definite career. "To live henceforth in the vortex of a whirlwind; to have no leisure so much as to eat, no time to pray save when others slept, to be the gazing-stock of every eye, the common talk of every tongue; to be followed about, to be thronged and jostled, to be gaped upon, to be hunted up and down by curious vulgar crowds; to be hated, and detested, and defamed, and blasphemed; to be regarded as a public enemy; to be watched and spied upon and trapped and taken as a notorious criminal"—is it possible to suppose that Christ was indifferent to all this, and that without shrinking He stepped across the line which marked the threshold of His public career?

And this was the least of it, that in this act He became a public and marked character. The glory that here shed a single ray into the rustic home of Cana must grow to that dazzling and perfect noon which shone from the cross to the remotest corner of earth. The same capacity and willingness to bless mankind which here in a small and domestic affair brought relief to His embarrassed friends, must be adapted to all the needs of men, and must undauntedly go forward to the utmost of sacrifice. He who is true King of men must flinch from no responsibility, from no pain, from no utter self-abandonment to which the needs of men may call Him. And Jesus knew this: in those quiet hours and long, untroubled days at Nazareth He had taken the measure of this world's actual state, and of what would be required to lift men out of selfishness and give them reliance upon God. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me"—this was even now present to His mind. His glory was the glory of absolute self-sacrifice, and He knew what that involved. His kingship was the rendering of service no other could render.

The *manner* in which the miracle was performed deserves attention. Christ does all while the servants seem to do all. The servants fill in the water and the servants draw off the wine, and there is no apparent exercise of Divine power, no mysterious words of incantation uttered over the water-pots, not so much as a command given that the water should become wine. What is seen by the spectators is men at work, not God creating out of nothing. The means seem to be human, the result is found to be Divine. Jesus says, "Fill the water pots with water," and they *filled* them; and filled them not as if their doing so were a mere form, and as if they would leave room for Christ to add to their work; no, they filled them up to the brim. Again He says, "Draw out now, and bear to the governor of the feast," and they *bore*. They knew very well they had only put in water, and they knew that to offer water to the governor of a marriage feast would be to insure their own punishment; but they did not hesitate. There seemed every reason why they should refuse to do this, or why they should at least ask some explanation or security that Jesus would bear the evil consequences; but there was one reason on the other side which outweighed all these—they had the command of Him whom they had been ordered to obey. And so, where reasoning would have led them to folly, obedient faith makes them fel-

low-workers in a miracle. They took their place and served, and they who serve Christ and do His will must do great things; for Christ wills nothing that is useless, futile, not worth doing. But this is how we are tried: we are commanded to do things which seem unreasonable, and which we have no natural ability to do. We are commanded to repent, and are yet told that repentance is the gift of Christ; we are commanded to come to Christ, and are at the same time assured that we cannot come except the Father draw us; we are commanded to be perfectly holy, and yet we know that as the leopard cannot change his spots, nor one of us add a cubit to his stature, so neither can we put away the sins that stain our souls and walk uprightly before God. And yet these commands are plainly given us, not only to make us feel our helplessness, but to be performed. We feel our inability, we may say it is unreasonable to demand from us what we cannot perform, to require that out of the thin and watery substance of our human souls we should produce wine that may be poured out as an offering on the holy altar of God; but this is not unreasonable. It is our part in simplicity to obey God; what is commanded we are to do, and while we work He Himself will also work. He may do so in no visible way, as Christ here did nothing visibly, but He will be with us, effectually working. As the will of Christ pervaded the water so that it was endowed with new qualities, so can His will pervade our souls, with every other part of His creation, and make them conformable to His purpose. "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it;" this is the secret of miracle-working. Do it, though you seem to be but wasting your strength and laying yourself open to the scorn of onlookers; do it, though in yourself there is no ability to effect what you are aiming at; do it wholly, up to the brim, as if you were the only worker, as if there were no God to come after you and supply your deficiencies, but as if any shortcoming on your part would be fatal; do not stand waiting for God to work, for it is only in you and by you that He performs His work among men.

The significance of this incident is manifold. First, it gives us the key to the miracles of our Lord. It has become the fashion to depreciate miracles, and it is often thought that they hamper the gospel and obscure the true claim of Christ. It is often felt that so far from the miracles verifying Christ's claim to be the Son of God, they are the greatest obstacle to His acceptance. This is, however, to misunderstand their significance. The miracles unquestionably formed a most important element in Christ's life; and, if so, they must have served an important purpose; and to wish them away just because they are so important and make so large a demand upon faith seems to me preposterous. To wish them away precisely because they alter the very essence of the religion of Christ, and give it that very power which through all past ages it has exerted, seems unreasonable.

When the Jews discussed His claims among themselves or with Him, the power to work miracles was always taken into account as weighing heavily in His favour. He Himself distinctly stated that the crowning condemnation of those who rejected His claims arose from the circumstance that He had done among them the works which none other man had done. He challenges them to deny that it was by the finger of God



that He wrought these works. After His withdrawal from earth the miracle of the Resurrection was still appealed to as the convincing proof that He was all He had given Himself out for. There can be no doubt, therefore, that the power of working miracles was one great evidence of the Divine mission of Christ.

But though this is so, we are not on that account warranted in saying that the only purpose for which He wrought miracles was to win men's belief in His mission. On the contrary, we are told that it was one of His temptations, a temptation constantly resisted by Him, to use His power for this object without any other motive. It was the reproach He cast upon the people that except they saw signs and wonders they would not believe. He would never work a miracle merely for the sake of manifesting His glory. Whenever the unsympathetic, ignorant crowd clamoured for a sign; whenever with ill-concealed dislike they cried, "How long dost Thou make us to doubt? Show us a sign from heaven, that we may believe," He was silent. To create a mere compulsory consent in minds which had no sympathy with Him was never a sufficient motive. Was there a sick child tossing in fever, was there a blind beggar by the roadside, was there a hungry crowd, was there even the joy of a feast interrupted: in these He could find a worthy occasion for a miracle; but never did He work a miracle merely for the sake of removing the doubts of reluctant men. Where there was not even the beginning of faith miracles were useless. He could not work miracles in some places because of their unbelief.

What then was the motive of Christ's miracles? He was, as these first disciples owned Him, the King of God's kingdom among men: He was the ideal Man, the new Adam, the true Source of human goodness, health, and power. He came to do us good, and the Spirit of God filled His human nature to its utmost capacity, that it might do all that man can do. Having these powers, He could not but use them for men. Having power to heal, He could not but heal, irrespective of the result which the miracle might have on the faith of those who saw it; nay, He could not but heal, though He straitly charged the healed person to let no man know what had been done. His miracles were His kingly acts, by which He suggested what man's true life in God's kingdom should be and will be. They were the utterance of what was in Him, the manifestation of His glory, the glory of One who came to utter the Father's heart to His strayed children. They expressed good-will to men; and to the spiritual eye of a John they became "signs" of spiritual wonders, symbols and pledges of those greater works and eternal blessings which Jesus came to bestow. The miracles revealed the Divine compassion, the grace and helpfulness that were in Christ, and led men to trust Him for all their needs.

We must, therefore, beware of falling into the error that lies at either extreme. We must neither, on the one hand, suppose that Christ's miracles were wrought solely for the purpose of establishing His claim to be God's Viceroy on earth; nor, on the other hand, are we to suppose that the marvels of beneficence by which He was known did nothing to prove His claim or promote His kingdom. The poet writes because he is a poet, and not to convince the world that he is a poet; yet by writing he does convince

the world. The benevolent man acts just as Christ did when He seemed to lay His finger on His lips and warned the healed person to make no mention of this kind act to any one; and therefore all who do discover his actions know that he is really charitable. The act that a man does in order that he may be recognised as a good and benevolent person exhibits his love of recognition much more strikingly than his benevolence; and it is because the miracles of Christ were wrought from the purest and most self-denying compassion that ever explored and bound up the wounds of men, that we acknowledge Him as incontestably our King.

2. In what respects, then, did this first miracle manifest the glory of Christ? What was there in it to stir the thought and attract the adoration and trust of the disciples? Was it worthy to be the medium of conveying to their minds the first ideas of His glory they were to cherish? And what ideas must these have been? The first impression they must have received from the miracle was, no doubt, simple amazement at the power which so easily and unostentatiously turned the water into wine. This Person, they must have felt, stood in a peculiar relation to Nature. In fact, what John laid as the foundation of His Gospel,—that the Christ who came to redeem was He by whom all things were at first made,—Jesus also advanced as the first step in His revelation of Himself. He appears as the Source of life, whose will pervades all things. He comes, not as a stranger or interloper who has no sympathy with existing things, but as the faithful Creator, who loves all that He has made, and can use all things for the good of men. He is at home in the world, and enters physical nature as its King, who can use it for His high ends. Never before has He wrought a miracle, but in this first command to Nature there is no hesitation, no experimenting, no anxiety, but the easy confidence of a Master. He is either Himself the Creator of the world. He comes to restore to worth and peace, or He is the delegate of the Creator. We see in this first miracle that Christ is not an alien or an usurper, but one who has already the closest connection with us and with all things. We receive assurance that in Him God is present.

3. But it was not only the Creator's power which was shown in this miracle, but some hint was given of the ends for which that power would be used by Christ. Perhaps the disciples who had known and admired the austere life of the Baptist would expect that He whom the Baptist proclaimed as greater than himself would be greater in the same line, and would reveal His glory by a sublime abstemiousness. They had confessed Him to be the Son of God, and might naturally expect to find in Him an independence of earthly joys. They had followed Him as the king of Israel; was His kingly glory to find a suitable sphere in the little family difficulties that poverty begets? It is almost a shock to our own ideas of our Lord to think of Him as one of a marriage party; to hear Him uttering the ordinary salutations, civilities, and enquiries of a friendly and festive gathering; to see Him standing by while others are the principal figures in the room. And we know that many who had opportunity to observe His habits could never understand or reconcile themselves to His easy familiarity with all kinds of people, and to His



freedom in partaking in mirthful scenes and hilarious entertainments.

And just because of this difficulty we find in reconciling religion with joy, God with nature, does Christ reveal His glory first at a marriage-feast,—not in the temple, not in the synagogue, not by taking His disciples apart to teach them to pray, but at a festive gathering, that thus they may recognise in Him the Lord of all human life, and see that His work of redemption is co-extensive with human experience. He comes among us, not to crush or pour contempt on human feelings, but to exalt them by sharing in them; not to show that it is possible to live separate from all human sympathies, but to deepen and intensify them; not to do away with the ordinary business and social relations of life, but to sanctify them. He comes sharing in all pure feelings and joys, sanctioning all natural relationships; Himself human, with interest in all human interests; not a mere spectator or censor of human affairs, but Himself a man implicated in things human. He shows us the folly of fancying that God looks with an austere and morose eye upon outbursts of human affection and joy, and teaches us that to be holy as He is holy we are not required to abandon the ordinary affairs of life, and that however we make them the apology for worldliness, it is not the necessary duties or relations of life that prevent our being Christlike, but these are the very material in which His glory may be most clearly seen, the soil in which must grow and ripen all Christian graces and fruits of righteousness.

This, then, was the glory Christ wished His disciples first of all to see. He was to be their King, not by drilling men to fight for Him, nor by interrupting the natural order and upsetting the established ways of men, but by entering into these with a gladdening, purifying, elevating spirit. His glory was not to be confined to a palace or to a small circle of courtiers, or to one particular department of activity, but was to be found irradiating all human life in its most ordinary forms. He came, indeed, to make all things new, but the new creation was the fulfilment of the original idea: it was not to be achieved by thwarting nature, nor by a one-sided development of some elements of nature, but by guiding the whole to its original destination, by lifting the whole into harmony with God. We see the glory of Christ, and accept Him as our Ruler and Redeemer, because we see in Him perfect sympathy with all that is human.

4. While enjoying the bounty of Christ at the marriage feast, John cannot have yet understood all that was involved in His Master's purpose to bring new life and happiness to this world of men. Afterwards, no doubt, he saw how appropriately this miracle took the first place, and through it read his Lord's own thoughts about His whole work on earth. For it is impossible that Christ Himself should not have had His own thoughts about the significance of this miracle. He had, during the previous six weeks, passed through a time of violent mental disturbance and of supreme spiritual exaltation. The measureless task laid upon Him had become visible to Him. Already He was aware that only through His death could the utmost of blessing be imparted to men. Is it possible that while He first put forth His power to restore the joy of these wedding guests, He should not have

seen in the wine a symbol of the blood He was to shed for the refreshment and revival of men? The Baptist, whose mind was nourished with Old Testament ideas, called Christ the Bridegroom, and His people the Bride. Must not Jesus also have thought of those who believed in Him as His bride, and must not the very sight of a marriage have set His thoughts working regarding His whole relation to men? So that in His first miracle He no doubt saw a summary of His whole work. In this first manifestation of His glory there is, to Himself at least, a reminder that only by His death will that glory be perfected. Without Him, as He saw, the joy of this wedding feast had been brought to an untimely close; and without His free outpouring of His life for men there could be no presenting of men to God unblemished and blameless, no fulfilment of those high hopes of mankind that nourish pure characters and noble deeds, but a swift and dreary extinction of even natural joys. It is to the marriage supper of the *Lamb*, of Him who was slain, and has redeemed us by His blood, that we are invited. It is the "Lamb's wife" that John saw adorned as a bride for her Husband. And whosoever would sit down at that feast which consummates the experience of this life, terminating all its vacillation of trust and love, and which opens eternal and unlimited joy to the people of Christ, must wash and make white his garments in this blood. He must not shrink from the closest fellowship with the purifying love of Christ.

5. His disciples, when they saw His power and His goodness in this miracle, felt more than ever that He was the rightful King. They "believed on Him." To us this first of signs is merged in the last, in His death. The joy, the self-sacrifice, the holiness, the strength and beauty of human character which that death has produced in the world, is the great evidence which enables many now to believe in Him. The fact is indubitable. The intelligent secular historian, who surveys the rise and growth of European nations, counts the death of Christ among the most vital and influential of powers for good. It has touched all things with change, and been the source of endless benefit to men. Are we then to repudiate Him or to acknowledge Him? Are we to act like the master of the feast, who enjoyed the good wine without asking where it came from; or are we to own ourselves debtors to the actual Creator of our happiness? If the disciples believed on Him when they saw Him furnish these wedding guests with wine, shall we not believe, who know that through all these ages He has furnished the pained and the poor with hope and consolation, the desolate and broken-hearted with restoring sympathy, the outcast with the knowledge of God's love, the sinner with pardon, with heaven, and with God? Is not the glory He showed at this marriage in Cana precisely what still attracts us to Him with confidence and affection? Can we not wholly trust this Lord who has a perfect sympathy guiding His Divine power, who brings the presence of God into all the details of human life, who enters into all our joys and all our sorrows, and is ever watchful to anticipate our every need, and supply it out of His inexhaustible and all-sufficient fulness? Happy they who know His heart as His mother knew it, and are satisfied to name their want and leave it with Him.



## CHAPTER VI.

*THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE.*

JOHN ii. 12-22.

WHETHER the Nazareth family returned from Cana to their own town before going down to Capernaum, John does not inform us. Neither are we told why they went to Capernaum at all at this time. It may have been in order to join one of the larger caravans going up to Jerusalem for the approaching Feast. Not only the disciples, some of whom had their homes on the lake-side, accompanied Jesus, but also His mother and His brothers. The manner in which the brothers are spoken of in connection with His mother suggests that He and they bore to her the same relation. They remained in Capernaum "not many days," because the Passover was at hand. Having come to Jerusalem, and appearing there for the first time since His baptism, He performed several miracles. These John omits, and selects as more significant and worthy of record one authoritative act.

The circumstances which occasioned this act were familiar to the Jerusalem Jew. The exigencies of Temple worship had bred a flagrant abuse. Worshippers coming from remote parts of the Holy Land, and from countries beyond, found it a convenience to be able to purchase on the spot the animals used in sacrifice, and the material for various offerings—salt, meal, oil, frankincense. Traders were not slow to supply this demand, and vying with one another they crept nearer and nearer to the sacred precincts, until some, under pretence perhaps of driving in an animal for sacrifice, made a sale within the outer court. This court had an area of about fourteen acres, and was separated from the inner court by a wall breast-high, and bearing intimations which forbade the encroachment of Gentiles on pain of death. Round this outer court ran marble colonnades, richly ornamented and supported by four rows of pillars, and roofed with cedar, affording ample shade to the traders.

There were not only cattle-dealers and sellers of pigeons, but also money-changers; for every Jew had to pay to the Temple treasury an annual tax of half a shekel, and this tax could be paid only in the sacred currency. No foreign coin, with its emblem of submission to an alien king, was allowed to pollute the Temple. Thus there came to be need of money-changers, not only for the Jew who had come up to the feast from a remote part of the empire, but even for the inhabitant of Palestine, as the Roman coinage had displaced the shekel in ordinary use.

There might seem, therefore, to be room to say much in favour of this convenient custom. At any rate, it was one of those abuses which, while they may shock a fresh and unsophisticated mind, are allowed both because they contribute to public convenience and because they have a large pecuniary interest at their back. In point of fact, however, the practice gave rise to lamentable consequences. Cattle-dealers and money-changers have always been notorious for making more than their own out of their bargains, and facts enough are on record to justify our Lord calling this particular market "a den of thieves."

The poor were shamefully cheated, and the worship of God was hindered and impoverished instead of being facilitated and enriched. And even although this traffic had been carried on under careful supervision, and on unimpeachable principles, still it was unseemly that the worshipper who came to the Temple seeking quiet and fellowship with God should have to push his way through the touts of the dealers, and have his devotional temper dissipated by the wrangling and shouting of a cattle market. Yet although many must have lamented this, no one had been bold enough to rebuke and abolish the glaring profanation.

Jesus on entering the Temple finds Himself in the midst of this incongruous scene—the sounds and movements of a market, the loud and eager exclamations of competing traders, the bustle of selecting one animal out of a flock, the loud talk and laughter of the idle groups of on-lookers. Jesus cannot stand it. Zeal for the honour of His Father's house possesses Him. The Temple claims Him as its vindicator from abuse. Nowhere can He more appropriately assert His authority as Messiah. Out of the cords lying about He quickly knots together a formidable scourge, and silently, leaving the public conscience to justify His action, He proceeds single-handed to drive out cattle and traders together. A scene of violence ensued,—the cattle rushing hither and thither, the owners trying to preserve their property, the money-changers holding their tables as Jesus went from one to another upsetting them, the scattered coin scrambled for; and over all the threatening scourge and the commanding eye of the Stranger. Never on any other occasion did our Lord use violence.

The audacity of the act has few parallels. To interfere in the very Temple with any of its recognised customs was in itself a claim to be King in Israel. Were a stranger suddenly to appear in the lobby of the House of Commons, and by sheer dignity of demeanour, and the force of integrity, to rectify an abuse of old standing involving the interests of a wealthy and privileged class, it could not create a greater sensation. The Baptist might be with Him, cowing the truculent with his commanding eye; but there was no need of the Baptist: the action of Christ awakening conscience in the men themselves was enough to quell resistance.

No doubt Jesus began His work at the house of God because He knew that the Temple was the real heart of the nation; that it was belief in God which was their strength and hope, and that the loss of that belief, and the consequent irreverence and worldliness, were the most dangerous features of Jewish society. The state of matters He found in the Temple could not have been tolerated had the people really believed God was present in the Temple.

Such an act could not pass without being criticised. It would be keenly discussed that evening in Jerusalem. At every table it would be the topic of conversation, and a most serious one wherever men in authority were meeting. Many would condemn it as a piece of pharisaic ostentation. If He is a reformer, why does He not turn His attention to the licentiousness of the people? Why show such extravagant and unseemly zeal about so innocent a custom when flagrant immoralities abound? Why not spend His zeal in clearing out from the land the pollut-



ing foreigner? Such charges are easy. No man can do everything, least of all can he do everything at once. And yet the advocate of temperance is twitted with his negligence of other causes which are perhaps as necessary; and he who pleads for foreign missions is reminded that we have heathen at home. These are the carping criticisms of habitual fault-finders, and of men who have no hearty desire for the advancement of what is good.

Others, again, who approved the act could not reconcile themselves to the manner of it. Might it not have been enough to have pointed out the abuse, and to have made a strong representation to the authorities? Was it fair to step in and usurp the authority of the Sanhedrim or Temple officials? Was it consistent with prophetic dignity to drive out the offenders with His own hand? Even those most friendly to Him may have felt a little jarred as they saw Him with uplifted scourge and flaming eyes violently driving before Him men and beasts. But they remembered that it was written, "The zeal of Thine house will consume Me." They remembered perhaps how the most popular king of Israel had danced before the ark, to the scandal indeed of dull-souled conventionalists, but with the approval of all clear-seeing and spiritually-judging men. They might also have remembered how the last of their prophecies had said, "Behold, the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to His temple. But who may abide the day of His coming, and who shall stand when He appeareth?"

This zeal at once explained and justified His action. Some abuses may be reformed by appeal to the constituted authorities; others can be abolished only by the blazing indignation of a righteous soul who cannot longer endure the sight. This zeal, conquering all consideration of consequences and regard to appearances, acts as a cleansing fire, sweeping before it what is offensive. It has always its own risks to run: the authorities at Jerusalem never forgave Jesus this first interference. By reforming an abuse they should never have allowed, He damaged them in the eyes of the people, and they could never forget it. Zeal also runs the risk of acting indiscreetly and taking too much upon it. In itself zeal is a good thing, but it does not exist "in itself." It exists in a certain character, and where the character is imperfect or dangerous the zeal is imperfect or dangerous. The zeal of the proud or selfish man is mischievous, the zeal of the ignorant fraught with disaster. Still, with all risks, give us by all means rather the man who is eaten up, possessed and carried away, by a passionate sympathy with the oppressed and neglected, or with unquenchable zeal for rectitude and honourable dealing or for the glory of God, than the man who can stand and be a spectator of wrong because it is no business of his to see that injustice be withstood, who can connive at unrighteous practices because their correction is troublesome, invidious, hazardous. He who lays a sudden hand on wrong-doing may have no legal authority to plead in his defence when challenged, but to all good men such an act justifies itself. It was a similar zeal which at all times governed Christ. He could not stand by and wash His hands of other men's sins. It was this which brought Him to the cross, this which in the first place brought Him to this world at all. He had to interfere. Zeal for His

father's glory, zeal for God and man, possessed Him.

It was therefore no concern of Jesus to make Himself very intelligible to those who could not understand the action itself and demanded a sign. They did not understand His answer; and it was not intended they should. Frequently our Lord's answers are enigmatical. Men have opportunity to stumble over them, if they will. For frequently they asked foolish questions, which admitted only of such answers. The present question, "What sign showest Thou unto us, seeing that Thou doest these things?" was absurd. It was to ask for a light to see light with, a sign of a sign. His zeal for God that carried the crowd before it, and swept God's house clean of the profane, was the best proof of His authority and Messiahship. But there was one sign which He could promise them without violating His principle to do no miracle merely for the sake of convincing reluctant minds. There was one sign which formed an integral part of His work; a sign which He must work, irrespective of its effect on their opinion of Him—the sign of His own Resurrection. And therefore, when they ask Him for a sign of His authority to reform the abuses of the Temple, He promises them this sign, that He will raise the Temple again when they destroy it. If He can give them a Temple He has authority in it. "Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

What did He mean by this enigmatical saying, which not even His disciples understood till long afterwards? We cannot doubt that in their resistance to His first public act, righteous and necessary, and welcome to all right-hearted men, as it was, He plainly saw the symptom of a deep-seated hatred of all reform, which would lead them on to reject His whole work. He had meditated much on the tone of the authorities, on the religious state of His country—what young man of thirty with anything in him has not done so? He had made up His mind that He would meet with opposition at every point, and that while a faithful few would stand by Him, the leaders of the people would certainly resist and destroy Him. Here in His very first act He is met by the spirit of hatred, and jealousy, and godlessness which was at last to compass His death. But His rejection He also knew was to be the signal for the downfall of the nation. In destroying Him He knew they were destroying themselves, their city, their Temple. As Daniel had long ago said, "The Messiah shall be cut off . . . and the people of a prince who shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary."

To Himself therefore His words had a very definite meaning: Destroy this Temple, as you certainly will by disowning My authority and resisting My acts of reform, and at length crucifying Me, and in three days I will raise it. As by denying My authority and crucifying My Person you destroy this house of My Father, so by My resurrection will I put men in possession of God's true dwelling-place, and introduce a new and spiritual worship. "It is in Christ's person this great drama is enacted. The Messiah perishes: the Temple falls. The Messiah lives again: the true Temple rises on the ruins of the symbolical temple. For in the kingdom of God there is no simple restoration. Every revival is at the same time an advance" (Godet). A living Temple is better than a Temple of stone.



Human nature itself, possessed and inspired by the Divine, that is the true Temple of God.

This sign was in two years given to them. As Jesus drew His last breath on the cross the veil of the Temple was rent. There was no longer anything to veil; the unapproachable glory was for ever gone. The Temple in which God had so long dwelt was now but a shell, mocking and pathetic in the extreme, as the clothes of a departed friend, or as the familiar dwelling that remains, itself the same, but changed to us for ever. The Jews in crucifying the Messiah had effectually destroyed their Temple. A few years more and it was in ruins, and has been so ever since. That building which had once the singular, wonderful dignity of being the spot where God was specially to be found and to be worshipped, and where He dwelt upon earth in a way apprehensible by men, was from the hour of Christ's death doomed to vacuity and destruction.

But in three days a new and better Temple was raised in Christ's body, glorified by the presence of the indwelling God. Forty and six years had the Jews spent in rearing the magnificent pile that astonished and awed their conquerors. They had thus themselves rebuilt more splendidly the Temple of Solomon. But to rebuild the Temple they destroyed in crucifying the Lord was beyond them. The sign of rebuilding their Temple of marble, which they scouted as a ridiculous extravagance, was really a far less stupendous and infinitely less significant sign than that which He actually gave them in rising from the dead. If it was impossible to rear that magnificent fabric in three days, yet something might be done towards it: but towards the raising of the dead body of Christ nothing could be done by human skill, diligence, or power.

But it is not the stupendous difficulty of this sign which should chiefly engage our attention. It is rather its significance. Christ rose from the dead, not to startle godless and truth-hating men into faith, but to furnish all mankind with a new and better Temple, with the means of spiritual worship and constant fellowship with God. There was a necessity for the resurrection. Those who became intimately acquainted with Christ slowly but surely became aware that they found more of God in Him than ever they had found in the Temple. Gradually they acquired new thoughts about God; and instead of thinking of Him as a Sovereign veiled from the popular gaze in the hidden Holy of holies, and receiving through consecrated hands the gifts and offering of the people, they learned to think of Him as a Father, to whom no condescension was too deep, no familiarity with men too close. Unconsciously to themselves, apparently, they began to think of Christ as the true Revealer of God, as the living Temple who at all hours gave them access to the living God. But not till the Resurrection was this transference complete—nay, so fixed had their hearts been, in common with all Jewish hearts, upon the Temple, that not until the Temple was destroyed did they wholly grasp what was given them in the Resurrection of Jesus. It was the Resurrection which confirmed their wavering belief in Him as the Son of God. As Paul says, it was the resurrection

which "declared Him to be the Son of God with power." Being the Son of God, it was impossible He should be held by death. He had come to the Temple calling it by an unheard-of name, "My Father's house." Not Moses, not Solomon, not Ezra, not the holiest of high priests, would have dreamt of so identifying himself with God as to speak of the Temple, not even as "our Father's house" or "your Father's house," but "my Father's house." And it was the Resurrection which finally justified His doing so, declaring Him to be, in a sense no other was, the Son of God.

But it was not in the body of Christ that God found His permanent dwelling among men. This sacred presence was withdrawn in order to facilitate the end God has from the first had in view, the full indwelling and possession of each and all men by His Spirit. This intimate fellowship with all men, this free communication of Himself to all, this inhabitation of all souls by the ever-living God, was the end aimed at by all that God has done among men. His dwelling among men in the Temple at Jerusalem, His dwelling among men in the living Person of Christ, were preliminary and preparatory to His dwelling in men individually. "Ye," says Paul, "are built up a spiritual house." "Ye are built together for a habitation of God." "Ye are the temple of the living God." This is the great reality towards which men have been led by symbol—the complete pervasion of all intelligence and of all moral beings by the Spirit of God.

For us this cleansing of the Temple is a sign. It is a sign that Christ really means to do thoroughly the great work He has taken in hand. Long ago had it been said, "Behold the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His Temple; and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver." He was to come where holiness was professed, and to sift the true from the false, the worldly and greedy religious from the devoted and spiritual. He was not to make pretence of doing so, but actually to accomplish the separation. To reform abuses such as this marketing in the Temple was no pleasant task. He had to meet the gaze and defy the vindictiveness of an exasperated mob; He had to make enemies of a powerful class in the community. But He does what is called for by the circumstances: and this is but a part and a sample of the work He does always. Always He makes thorough, real work. He does not blink the requirements of the case. We shrug our shoulders and pass by where matters are difficult to mend; we let the flood take its course rather than risk being carried away in attempting to stem it. Not so Christ. The Temple was shortly to be destroyed, and it might seem to matter little what practices were allowed in it; but the sounds of bargaining and the greedy eye of trade could not be suffered by Him in His Father's house: how much more shall He burn as a consuming fire when He cleanses that Church for which He gave Himself that it might be without spot or blemish. *He will cleanse it.* We may yield ourselves with gladness to His sanctifying power, or we may rebelliously question His authority; but cleansed the house of God must be.



## CHAPTER VII.

## NICODEMUS.

JOHN ii. 23-iii. 8.

THE first visit of Jesus to Jerusalem was not without considerable effect on the popular mind. Many who saw the miracles He did believed that He was a messenger from God. They saw that His miracles were not the clever tricks of an impostor, and they were prepared to listen to His teaching and enrol themselves as members of the kingdom He came to found. Yet our Lord did not encourage them. He saw that they misunderstood Him. He recognised their worldliness of heart and of aim, and did not admit them to the intimacy He had established with the five simple-minded Galileans. The Jerusalem Jews were glad to fall in with one who seemed likely to do honour to their nation, and their belief in Him was the belief men give to a statesman whose policy they approve. The difference between them and those who rejected Christ was not a difference of disposition such as exists between godly and ungodly men, but consisted merely in the circumstance that they were convinced that His miracles were genuine. Had our Lord encouraged these men they would ultimately have been disappointed in Him. It was better that from the first they should be stimulated to reflect on the whole matter by being coldly received by the Lord.

It is always a point that calls for reflection: we have to consider not only whether we have faith in Christ, but whether He has faith in us—not only whether we have committed ourselves to Him, but whether that committal is so genuine that He can build upon and trust it. Can He count upon us for all service, for fidelity in times when much is needed? Thorough-going confidence must always be reciprocal. The person you believe in so utterly that you are entirely his believes in you and trusts himself to you—his reputation, his interests are safe in your keeping. So is it with Christ. Faith cannot be one-sided here any more than elsewhere. He gives Himself to those who give themselves to Him. They who so trust Him that He is sure they will follow Him even when they cannot see where He is going; they who trust Him, not in one or two matters which they see He can manage, but absolutely and in all things,—to these He will give Himself freely, sharing with them His work, His Spirit, His reward.

To illustrate the state of mind of the Jerusalem Jews and Christ's mode of treating them, John selects the case of Nicodemus. He was one of those who were much impressed by the miracles of Jesus, and were prepared to attach themselves to any movement in His favour. He belonged to the Pharisees; to that party which, with all its narrowness, pedantry, dogmatism, and bigotry, still preserved a salt of genuine patriotism and genuine godliness, and reared high-toned and cultivated men like Gamaliel and Saul. Nicodemus, whether a member of the Sanhedrim's deputation to the Baptist or not, certainly knew the result of that deputation, and was aware that a crisis in the national history had arrived. He could not wait for the community to move, but felt that whatever conclusion regarding Christ the Pharisees

as a body might arrive at, he must on his own responsibility be at the bottom of those extraordinary events and signs that clustered round the person of Jesus. He was a modest, reserved, cautious man, and did not wish openly to commit himself till he was sure of his ground. He has been blamed for timidity. I would only say that, if he felt it dangerous to be seen in the company of Jesus, it was a bold thing to visit Him at all. He went by night; but he went. And would that there were more like him, who, whether cautious to excess or not, do still feel constrained to judge for themselves about Christ; who feel that, no matter what other men think of Him, there is an interest in Him which they cannot wait for others to settle, but must for themselves settle before they sleep.

Probably Nicodemus made his visit by night because he did not wish to precipitate matters by calling undue attention to the position and intentions of Jesus. He probably went with the purpose of urging some special plan of action. This inexperienced Galilean could not be supposed to understand the populace of Jerusalem as well as the old member of the Sanhedrim, who was familiar with all the outs and ins of party politics in the metropolis. Nicodemus would therefore go and advise Him how to proceed in proclaiming the kingdom of God; or at least sound Him, and, if he found Him amenable to reason, encourage Him to proceed, and warn Him against the pitfalls that lay in His path. Modestly, and as if speaking for others as much as for himself, he says: "Rabbi, we know that Thou art a Teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest except God be with Him!" There is here neither patronising acknowledgment nor flattery, but merely the natural first utterance of a man who must say something to show the state of his mind. It served to reveal the point at which Nicodemus had arrived, and the ground on which the conversation might proceed. But "Jesus knew what was in man." In this acknowledgment of His miracles on the part of Nicodemus, Jesus saw the whole mental attitude of the man. He saw that if Nicodemus had uttered all that was in his mind he would have said: "I believe you are sent to restore the kingdom to Israel, and I am come to advise with you on your plan of operation, and to urge upon you certain lines of action." And therefore Jesus promptly cuts him short by saying: "The kingdom of God is quite another thing than you are thinking of; and the way to establish it, to enlist citizens in it, is very different from the way you have been meditating."

In fact, Jesus was becoming embarrassed by His own miracles. They were attracting the wrong kind of people—the superficial worldly people; the people who thought a daring and strong hand with a dash of magic would serve all their turn. His mind was full of this, and as soon as He has an opportunity of uttering Himself on this point He does so, and assures Nicodemus, as a representative of a large number of Jews who needed this teaching, that all their thoughts about the kingdom must be ruled by this principle, and must start from this great truth, that it was a kingdom into which the Spirit of God alone could give entrance, and could give entrance only by making men spiritual. That is to say, that it was a spiritual kingdom, an inward rule over the hearts of men, not



an outward empire—a kingdom to be established, not by political craft and midnight meetings, but by internal change and submission in heart to God—a kingdom, therefore, into which admission could be given only on some more spiritual ground than the mere circumstance of a man's natural birth as a Jew.

In our Lord's *language* there was nothing that need have puzzled Nicodemus. In religious circles in Jerusalem there was nothing being talked of but the kingdom of God which John the Baptist had declared to be at hand. And when Jesus told Nicodemus that in order to enter this kingdom he must be born again, He told him just what John had been telling the whole people. John had assured them that, though the King was in their midst, they must not suppose they were already within His kingdom by being the children of Abraham. He excommunicated the whole nation, and taught them that it was something different from natural birth that gave admission to God's kingdom. And just as they had compelled Gentiles to be baptised, and to submit to other arrangements when they wished to partake of Jewish privileges, so John compelled them to be baptised. The Gentile who wished to become a Jew had to be symbolically born again. He had to be baptised, going down under the cleansing waters, washing away his old and defiled life, being buried by baptism, disappearing from men's sight as a Gentile, and rising from the water as a new man. He was thus born of water, and this time born, not a Gentile, but a Jew.

The language of our Lord then could scarcely puzzle Nicodemus, but the idea did stagger him that not only Gentiles but Jews must be born again. John had indeed required the same preparation for entrance to the kingdom; but the Pharisees had not listened to John, and were offended precisely on the ground of his baptism. But now Jesus presses upon Nicodemus the very same truth, that as the Gentile had to be naturalised and born again that he might rank as a child of Abraham, and enjoy the external privileges of the Jew, so must the Jew himself be born again if he is to rank as a child of God and to belong to the kingdom of God. He must submit to the double baptism of water and of the Spirit—of water for the pardon and cleansing of past sin, and defilement, of the Spirit for the inspiration of a new and holy life.

Our Lord here speaks of the second birth as completed by two agencies, water and the Spirit. To make the one of these merely the symbol of the other is to miss His meaning. The Baptist baptised with water for the remission of sins, but he was always careful to disclaim power to baptise with the Holy Ghost. His baptism with water was of course symbolical; that is to say, the water itself exercised no spiritual influence, but merely represented to the eye what was invisibly done in the heart. But that which it symbolised was not the life-giving influence of the Holy Spirit, but the washing away of sin from the soul. Assurance of pardon John was empowered to give. Those who humbly submitted to his baptism with confession of their sins went from it forgiven and cleansed. But more than that was needed to make them new men—and yet more he could not give. For that which would fill them with new life they must go to a greater than he, who alone could bestow the Holy Ghost.

These then are the two great incidents of the second birth—the pardon of sin, which is preparatory, and which cuts our connection with the past; the communication of life by the Spirit of God, which fits us for the future. Both of these are represented by Christian baptism because in Christ we have both; but those who were baptised by John's baptism were only *prepared* for receiving Christ's Spirit by receiving the forgiveness of their sins.

Having thus declared to Nicodemus the necessity of the second birth, He goes on to give the reason of this necessity. Birth by the Spirit is necessary, because that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and the kingdom of God is spiritual. Of course our Lord does not mean by flesh the mere tangible substance of the body; He does not mean that our first and natural birth puts us in possession of nothing but a material frame. By the word "flesh" He signifies the appetites, desires, faculties, which animate and govern the body, as well as the body itself—the whole equipment with which nature furnishes a man for life in this world. This natural birth gives a man entrance into much, and for ever determines much, that has important bearings on his person, character, and destiny. It determines all differences of nationality; of temperament, of sex; apart altogether from any choice of his it is determined whether he shall be a South Sea Islander or a European; an antediluvian living in a cave or an Englishman of the nineteenth century. But the kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom, into which entrance can be had only by a man's own will and spiritual condition, only by an attachment to God which is no part of a man's natural equipment.

As soon as we clearly see what the kingdom of God is, we see also that by nature we do not belong to it. The kingdom of God, so far as man is concerned, is a state of willing subjection to Him—a state in which we are in our right relation to Him. All irrational creatures obey God and do His will: the sun runs his course with an exactness and punctuality we cannot rival; the grace and strength of many of the lower animals, their marvellous instincts and aptitudes, are so superior to anything in ourselves that we cannot even comprehend them. But what we have as our specialty is to render to God a willing service; to understand His purposes and enter sympathetically into them. The lower creatures obey a law impressed upon their nature; they cannot sin; their performance of God's will is a tribute to the power which made them so skilfully, but it lacks all conscious recognition of His worthiness to be served and all knowledge of His object in creation. It is God serving Himself: He made them so, and therefore they do His will. So it is with men who merely obey their nature: they may do kindly, noble, heroic actions, but they lack all reference to God; and however excellent these actions are, they give no guarantee that the men who do them would sympathise with God in all things, and do His will gladly.

Indeed, to establish the proposition that flesh or nature does not give us entrance into God's kingdom, we need go no further than our own consciousness. Remove the restraints which grace puts upon our nature, and we are aware that we are not in sympathy with God, fond of His will, disposed for His service. Let nature have its swing, and every man knows it is not



the kingdom of God it takes him to. To all men it is natural to eat, drink, sleep, think; we are born to these things, and need to put no constraint on our nature to do them; but can any man say it has come naturally to him to be what he ought to be to God? Do we not this hour feel drawn away from God as if we were not in our element in His presence? Flesh, nature, in God's presence is as much out of its element as a stone in the air or a fish out of water. Men who have had the deepest religious experience have seen it most clearly, and have felt, like Paul, that the flesh lusts against the spirit, and draws us ever back from entire submission to God and delight in Him.

Perhaps the necessity of the second birth may be more clearly apprehended if we consider it from another point of view. In this world we find a number of creatures which have what is known as animal life. They can work, and feel, and, in a fashion, think. They have wills, and certain dispositions, and distinctive characteristics. Every creature that has animal life has a certain nature according to its kind, and determined by its parentage; and this nature which the animal receives from its parents determines from the first the capabilities and sphere of the animal's life. The mole cannot soar in the face of the sun like the eagle; neither can the bird that comes out of the eagle's egg burrow like the mole. No training can possibly make the tortoise as swift as the antelope, or the antelope as strong as the lion. If a mole began to fly and enjoy the sunlight it must be counted a new kind of creature, and no longer a mole. The very fact of its passing certain limitations shows that another nature has somehow been infused into it. Beyond its own nature no animal can act. You might as well attempt to give the eagle the appearance of the serpent as try to teach it to crawl. Each kind of animal is by its birth endowed with its own nature, fitting it to do certain things, and making other things impossible. So it is with us: we are born with certain faculties and endowments, with a certain nature; and just as all animals, without receiving any new, individual, supernatural help from God, can act according to their nature, so can we. We, being human, have a high and richly-endowed animal nature, a nature that leads us not only to eat, drink, sleep, and fight like the lower animals, but a nature which leads us to think and to love, and which, by culture and education, can enjoy a much richer and wider life than the lower creatures. Men need not be in the kingdom of God in order to do much that is admirable, noble, lovely, because their nature as animals fits them for that. If we were to exist at all as a race of animals superior to all others, then all this is just what must be found in us. Irrespective of any kingdom of God at all, irrespective of any knowledge of God or reference to Him, we have a life in this world, and a nature fitting us for it. And it is this we have by our natural birth, a place among our kind, an animal life. The first man, from whom we all descend, was, as St. Paul profoundly says, "a living soul," that is to say, an animal, a living human being; but he had not "a quickening spirit," could not give to his children spiritual life and make them children of God.

Now if we ask ourselves a little more closely, What is human nature? what are the characteristics by which men are distinguished from all

other creatures? what is it which marks off our kind from every other kind, and which is always produced by human parents? we may find it hard to give a definition, but one or two things are obvious and indisputable. In the first place, we could not deny human nature to men who do not love God, or who even know nothing of Him. There are many whom we should naturally speak of as remarkably fine specimens of human nature, who yet never think of God, nor in any way acknowledge Him. It is plain, therefore, that the acknowledgment and love of God, which give us entrance into His kingdom, are *not* a part of our nature, are not the gifts of our birth.

And yet is there anything that so distinctly separates us from the lower animals as our *capacity* for God and for eternity? Is it not our capacity to respond to God's love, to enter into His purposes, to measure things by eternity, that is our real dignity? The capacity is there, even when unused; and it is this capacity which invests man and all his works with an interest and a value which attach to no other creature. Man's nature is capable of being born again, and that is its peculiarity; there is in man a dormant or dead capacity which nothing but contact with God, the touch of the Holy Ghost, can vivify and bring into actual exercise.

That there should be such a capacity, born as if dead, and needing to be quickened by a higher power before it can live and be of use, need not surprise us. Nature is full of examples of such capacities. All seeds are of this nature, dead until favouring circumstances and soil quicken them into life. In our own body there are similar capacities, capacities which may or may not be quickened into life. In the lower animal-creation many analogous capacities are found, which depend for their vivification on some external agency over which they have no control. The egg of a bird has in it the capacity to become a bird like the parent, but it remains a dead thing and will corrupt if the parent forsakes it. There are many of the summer insects which are twice-born, first of their insect parents, and then of the sun: if the frost comes in place of the sun, they die. The caterpillar has already a life of its own, with which, no doubt, it is well content, but enclosed in its rare nature as a creeping thing it has a capacity for becoming something different and higher. It may become a moth or a butterfly; but in most the capacity is never developed, they die before they reach this end—their circumstances do not favour their development. These analogies show how common it is for capacities of life to lie dormant: how common a thing it is for a creature in one stage of its existence to have a capacity for passing into a higher stage, a capacity which can be developed only by some agency peculiarly adapted to it.

It is in this condition man is born of his human parents. He is born with a capacity for a higher life than that which he lives as an animal in this world. There is in him a capacity for becoming something different, better and higher than that which he actually is by his natural birth. He has a capacity which lies dormant or dead until the Holy Ghost comes and quickens it. There are many things, and great things, man can do without any further Divine assistance than that which is lodged for the whole race in the natural laws which make no distinction between godly and ungodly; there are many



and great things man may do by virtue of his natural birth; but one thing he cannot do—he cannot quicken within himself the capacity to love God and to live for Him. For this there is needed an influence from without, the efficient touch of the Holy Spirit, the impartation of His life. The capacity to be a child of God is man's, but the development of this lies with God. Without the capacity a man is not a man, has not that which is most distinctive of human nature. Every man is born with that in him which the Spirit of God may quicken into Divine life. This is human nature; but when this capacity is so quickened, when the man has begun to live as a child of God, he has not lost his human nature, but has over and above become a partaker of the Divine nature. When the image of God, as well as of his earthly parents, becomes manifest in a man, then his human nature has received its utmost development,—he is born again.

Of the Agent who accomplishes this great transformation there is need only to say that He is free in His operation and also inscrutable. He is like the wind, our Lord tells us, that blows where it lists. We cannot bring the Spirit at will; we cannot use Him as if He were some unintelligent passive instrument; neither can we subject all His operations to our control. The grub must wait for those natural influences which are to transform it; it cannot command them. We cannot command the Spirit; but we, being free agents also, can do more than wait,—we can pray, and we can strive to put ourselves in line with the Spirit's operation. Seamen cannot raise the wind nor direct its course, but they can put themselves in the way of the great regular winds. We can do the same: we can slowly, by mechanical helps, creep into the way of the Spirit; we can set our sails, doing all we think likely to catch and utilise His influences—believing always that the Spirit is more desirous than we are to bring us all to good. Why He breathes in one place while all around lies in a dead calm we do not know; but as for the wind's variations so for His, there are doubtless sufficient reasons. We need not expect to see the Spirit's working separate from the working of our own minds; we cannot see the Spirit in Himself—we cannot see the wind that moves the ships, but we can see the ships moving, and we know that without the wind they could not move.

If this, then, be the line on which our human nature can alone be developed, if a profound harmony with God be that which can alone give permanence and completeness to our nature, if in accordance with all that we see in the world around us some men fail of attaining the end of their creation, and lie for ever blighted and useless, while others are carried forward to fuller and more satisfying life, we cannot but ask with some anxiety to which class we belong. Good and evil *are* in the world, happiness and misery, victory and defeat; do not let us deceive ourselves by acting as if there were no difference between these opposites, or as if it mattered little in our case whether we belong to the one side or the other. It matters everything: it is just the difference between eternal life and eternal death. Christ did not come to play with us, and startle us with idle tales. He is the centre and fountain of all truth, and what He says fits in with all we see in the world around us.

But in endeavouring to ascertain whether the great change our Lord speaks of has passed upon us, our object must be not so much to ascertain the time and manner of our new birth as its reality. A man may know that he has been born though he is not able to recall, as no man can recall, the circumstances of his birth. Life is the great evidence of birth, natural or spiritual. We may desire to know the time and place of birth for some other reason, but certainly not for this, to make sure we have been born. Of that there is sufficient evidence in the fact of our being alive. And spiritual life quite as certainly implies spiritual birth.

Again, we must keep in view that a man may be born though not yet full grown. The child of a day old has as truly and certainly a human nature as the man in his prime. He has a human heart and mind, every organ of body and soul, though as yet he cannot use them. So the second birth impresses the image of God on every regenerate soul. It may not as yet be developed in every part, but all its parts are there in germ. It is not a partial, but a complete result which regeneration effects. It is not one member, a hand or a foot that is born, but a body, a complete equipment of the soul in all graces. The whole character is regenerated, so that the man is fitted for all the duties of the Divine life whensoever these duties shall come before him. A human child does not need additions made to it to fit it for new functions: it requires growth, it requires nurture, it requires education and the practice of human ways, but it requires no new organ to be inserted into its frame; once born it has but to grow in order to adapt itself with ease and success to all human ways and conditions. And if regenerate we have that in us which with care and culture will grow till it brings us to perfect likeness to Christ. If we are not growing, if we remain small, puny, childish while we should be adult and full grown, then there is something seriously wrong, which calls for anxious enquiry.

But above all let us bear in mind that it is a new birth that is required; that no care spent on our conduct, no improvement and refinement of the natural man suffices. For flying it is not an improved caterpillar that is needed, it is a butterfly; it is not a caterpillar of finer colour or more rapid movement or larger proportions, it is a new creature. We recognise that in this and that man we meet there is something more than men naturally have; we perceive in them a taming, chastening, inspiring principle. We rejoice all the more when we see it, because we know that no man can give it, but only God. And we mourn its absence because even when a man is dutiful, affectionate, temperate, honourable, yet if he have not grace, if he have not that peculiar tone and colour which overspread the whole character, and show that the man is living in the light of Christ, and is moved by love to God, we instinctively feel that the defect is radical, that as yet he has not come into connection with the Eternal, that there is that wanting for which no natural qualities, however excellent, can compensate—nay, the more lovely and complete the natural character is, the more painful and lamentable is the absence of grace, of Spirit.



## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

JOHN iii. 9-21.

THERE are two great obstacles to human progress, two errors which retard the individual and the race, two inborn prejudices which prevent men from choosing and entering into true and lasting prosperity. The first is that men will always persist in seeking their happiness in something outside themselves; the second is that even when they come to see where true happiness lies they cannot find the way to it. In our Lord's time even wise and godly people thought the permanent glory and happiness of men were to be found in a free state, in self-government, lightened taxes, impregnable fortresses, and a purified social order. And they were not altogether wrong; but the way to this condition, they thought, lay through the enthronement of a strong-handed monarch, who could gather round his throne wise counsellors and devoted followers. This was the form of worldliness which our Lord had to contend with. This was the tendency of the unspiritual mind in His day. But in every generation and in all men the same radical misconceptions exist, although they may not appear in the same forms.

In dealing with Nicodemus, a sincere and thoroughly decent but unspiritual man, our Lord had difficulty in lifting his thoughts off what was external and worldly and fixing them on what was inward and heavenly.\* And in order to effect this, He told him, among other things, that the Son of man was indeed to be lifted up—yes, but not on a throne set up in Herod's palace. He was to be conspicuous, but it was as the Brazen Serpent was conspicuous, hanging on a pole for the healing of the people. His lifting up, His exaltation, was secure; He was to be raised above every name that is named; He was destined to have the pre-eminence in all things, to be exalted above all principalities and powers; He was to have all power in heaven and in earth; He was to be the true and supreme Lord of all,—yes; but this dignity and power were to be attained by no mere official appointment, by no accidental choice of the people, by no mere hereditary title, but by the sheer force of merit, by His performing services for men which made the race His own, by His leaving no depth of human degradation unexplored, by a sympathy with the race and with individuals which produced in Him a total self-abandonment, and suffered Him to leave no grievance unconsidered, no wrong unthought of, no sorrow untouched. There is no royal road to human excellence; and Jesus could reach the height He reached by no swift ascension of a throne amidst the blare of trumpets, the flaunting of banners, and the acclamations of the

crowd, but only by being exposed to the keenest tests with which this world can confront and search human character, by being put through the ordeal of human life, and being found the best man among us; the humblest, the truest; the most faithful, loving, and enduring; the most willing servant of God and man.

It was this which Christ sought to suggest to Nicodemus, and which we all find it hard to learn, that true glory is excellence of character, and that this excellence can be reached only through the difficulties, trials, and sorrows of a human life. Christ showed men a new glory and a new path to it—not by arms, not by statesmanship, not by inventions, not by literature, not by working miracles, but by living with the poor and becoming the friend of forsaken and wicked men, and by dying, the Just for the unjust. He has been lifted up as the Brazen Serpent was, He has become conspicuous by His very lowliness; by a self-sacrifice so complete that He gave His all, His life, He has won to Himself all men and made His will supreme, so that it and no other shall one day everywhere rule. He gave Himself for the healing of the nations, and the very death which seemed to extinguish His usefulness has made Him the object of worship and trust to all.

This is certainly the point of analogy between Himself and the Brazen Serpent which our Lord chiefly intended to suggest—that as the serpent was *lifted up* so as to be seen from every part of the camp, even so the death of the Son of man was to make Him conspicuous and easily discernible. It is by their death that many men have become immortalised in the memory of the race. Deaths of gallantry, of heroism, of self-devotion have often wiped out and seemed to atone for preceding lives of dissipation and uselessness. The life of Christ would have been inefficient without His death. Had He only lived and taught, we should have known more than was otherwise possible, but it is doubtful whether His teaching would have been much listened to. It is His death in which all men are interested. It appeals to all. A love that gave its life for them, all men can understand. A love that atoned for sin appeals to all, for all are sinners.

But though this is the chief point of analogy there are others. We do not know *precisely* what the Israelites would think of the Brazen Serpent. We need not repeat from the sacred narrative the circumstances in which it was formed and lifted up in the wilderness. The singularity of the remedy provided for the plague of serpents under which the Israelites were suffering, consisted in this, that it resembled the disease. Serpents were destroying them, and from this destruction they were saved by a serpent. This special mode of cure was obviously not chosen without a reason. To those among them who were instructed in the symbolic learning of Egypt there might be in this image a significance which is lost to us. From the earliest times the serpent had been regarded as man's most dangerous enemy—more subtle than any beast of the field, more sudden and stealthy in its attack, and more certainly fatal. The natural revulsion which men feel in its presence, and their inability to cope with it, seemed to fit it to be the natural representative of the powers of spiritual evil. And yet, strangely enough, in the very countries in which it was recognised as

\* In saying, "Art thou the teacher of Israel, and knowest not these things?" our Lord hints that it is bad enough for an ordinary Israelite to be so ignorant, but for a teacher how much worse. If the teacher is thus obtuse, what are the taught likely to be? Is this the state of matters I must confront? And in saying that the subjects of conversation were "earthly" (ver. 12), He meant that the necessity of regeneration for entrance into the kingdom of God was a matter open to observation, and its occurrence a fact which might be tested here upon earth.



the symbol of all that was deadly, it was also recognised as the symbol of life. Having none of the ordinary members or weapons of the wilder lower creatures, it was yet more agile and more formidable than any of them; and, casting its skin annually it seemed to renew itself with eternal youth. And as it was early discovered that the most valuable medicines are poisons, the serpent, as the very "personification of poison," was looked upon as not only the symbol of all that was deadly, but also of all that was health-giving. And so it has continued to be, even to our own days, the recognised symbol of the healing art, and, wreathed round a staff, as Moses had it, it may still be seen sculptured on our own hospitals and schools of medicine.

But whatever else the agonised people saw in the brazen image, they must at any rate have seen in its limp and harmless form a symbol of the power of their God to make all the serpents round about them as harmless as this one. The sight of it hanging with drooping head and motionless fangs was hailed with exultation as the trophy of deliverance from all the venomous creatures it represented. They saw in it their danger at an end, their enemy triumphed over, their death slain. They knew that the manufactured serpent was only a sign, and had in itself no healing virtue, but in looking at it they saw, as in a picture, God's power to overcome the most noxious of evils.

That which Moses lifted up for the healing of the Israelites was a likeness, not of those who were suffering, but of that from which they were suffering. It was an image, not of the swollen limbs and discoloured face of the serpent-bitten, but of the serpents that poisoned them. It was this image, representing as slain and harmless the creature which was destroying them, which became the remedy for the pains it inflicted. Similarly, our Lord instructs us to see in the cross not so much our own nature suffering the extreme agony and then hanging lifeless, as sin suspended harmless and dead there. As the virus seemed to be extracted from the fiery, burning fangs of the snakes, and hung up innocuous in that brazen serpent; so all the virulence and venom of sin, all that is dangerous and deadly in it, our Lord bids us believe is absorbed in His person and rendered harmless on the cross.

With this representation the language of Paul perfectly agrees. God, he tells us, "made Christ to be sin for us." It is strong language; yet no language that fell short of this would satisfy the symbol. Christ was not merely made man, He was made sin for us. Had He merely become man, and thus become involved in our sufferings, the symbol of the serpent would scarcely have been a fair one. A better image of Him would in that case have been a poisoned Israelite. His choice of the symbol of the brazen serpent to represent Himself upon the cross justifies Paul's language, and shows us that He habitually thought of His own death as the death of sin.

Christ being lifted up, then, meant this, whatever else, that in His death sin was slain, its power to hurt ended. He being made sin for us, we are to argue that what we see done to Him is done to sin. Is He smitten, does He become accursed, does God deliver Him to death, is He at last slain and proved to be dead, so certainly dead that not a bone of Him need be broken?

Then in this we are to read that sin is thus doomed by God, has been judged by Him, and was in the cross of Christ slain and put an end to—so utterly slain that there is left in it not any so faint a flicker or pulsation of life that a second blow need be given to prove it really dead.

When we strive to get a little closer to the reality and understand in what sense, and how, Christ represented sin on the cross, we recognise first of all that it was not by His being in any way personally tainted by sin. Indeed, had He Himself been in the faintest degree tainted by sin this would have prevented Him from representing sin on the cross. It was not an actual serpent Moses suspended, but a serpent of brass. It would have been easy to kill one of the snakes that were biting the people, and hang up its body. But it would have been useless. To exhibit one slain snake would only have suggested to the people how many were yet alive. Being itself a real snake, it could have no virtue as a symbol. Whereas the brazen serpent represented all snakes. In it each snake seemed to be represented. Similarly, it was not one out of a number of real sinners that was suspended on the cross, but it was one made "in the likeness of sinful flesh." So that it was not the sins of one person which were condemned and put an end to there, but sin generally.

This was easily intelligible to those who saw the crucifixion. John the Baptist had pointed to Jesus as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. How does a Lamb take away sin? Not by instruction, not by example, but by being sacrificed; by standing in the room of the sinner and suffering instead of him. And when Jesus, Himself without sin, hung upon the cross, those who knew His innocence perceived that it was as the Lamb of God He suffered, and that by His death they were delivered.

Another point of analogy between the lifting-up of the serpent and the lifting-up of the Son of Man on the cross is to be found in the circumstance that in each case the healing result is effected through a moral act on the part of the healed person. A look at the brazen serpent was all that was required. Less could not have been asked: more, in some cases, could not have been given. If deliverance from the pain and danger of the snake-bite had been all that God desired, he might have accomplished this without any concurrence on the part of the Israelites. But their present agony was the consequence of their unbelief, and distrust, and rebellion; and in order that the cure may be complete they must pass from distrust to faith, from alienation to confidence and attachment. This cannot be accomplished without their own concurrence. But this concurrence may be exercised and may be exhibited in connection with a small matter quite as decisively as in connection with what is difficult. To get a disobedient and stubborn child to say, "I am sorry," or to do the smallest and easiest action, is quite as difficult, if it be a test of submission, as to get him to run a mile, or perform an hour's task. So the mere uplifting of the eye to the brazen serpent was enough to show that the Israelite believed God's word, and expected healing. It was in this look that the will of man met and accepted the will of God in the matter. It was by this look the pride which had led them to resist God and rely upon themselves was broken down; and in the momentary gaze at the remedy appointed by God the tor-



mented Israelite showed his reliance upon God, his willingness to accept His help, his return to God.

It is by a similar act we receive healing from the cross of Christ. It is by an act which springs from a similar state of mind. "Every one that *believeth*,"—that is all that is required of any who would be healed of sin and its attendant miseries. It is a little and an easy thing in itself, but it indicates a great and difficult change of mind. It is so slight and easy an action that the dying can do it. The feeblest and most ignorant can turn in thought to Him who died upon the cross, and can, with the dying thief, say, "Lord, remember me." All that is required is a sincere prayer to Christ for deliverance. But before any one can so pray, he must hate the sin he has loved, and must be willing to submit to the God he has abandoned. And this is a great change; too difficult for many. Not all these Israelites were healed, though the cure was so accessible. There were those who were already insensible, torpid with the heavy poison that ran through their blood. There were those whose pride could not be broken, who would rather die than yield to God. There were those who could not endure the thought of a life in God's service. And there are those now who, though they feel the sting of sin, and are convulsed and tormented by it, cannot bring themselves to seek help from Christ. There are those who do not believe Christ can deliver them; and there are those to whom deliverance weighted with obligation to God, and giving health to serve Him, seems equally repugnant with death itself. But where there is a sincere desire for reconciliation with God, and for the holiness which maintains us in harmony with God, all that is needed is trust in Christ, the belief that God has appointed Him to be our Saviour, and the daily use of Him as our Saviour.

In proceeding to make a practical use of what our Lord here teaches, our first duty, plainly, is to look to Him for life. He is exhibited crucified—it is our part to trust in Him, to appropriate for our own use His saving power. We need it. We know something of the deadly nature of sin, and that with the first touch of its fang death enters our frame. We have found our lives poisoned by it. Nothing can well be a fitter picture of the havoc sin makes than this plague of serpents—the slender weapon sin uses, the slight *external* mark it leaves, but, within, the fevered blood, the fast dimming sight, the throbbing heart, the convulsed frame, the rigid muscles no longer answering to our will. Do we not find ourselves exposed to sin wherever we go? In the morning our eyes open on its vibrating fangs ready to dart upon us; as we go about our ordinary employments we have trodden on it and been bitten ere we are aware; in the evening, as we rest, our eye is attracted, and fascinated, and held by its charm. Sin is that from which we cannot escape, from which we are at no time, nor in any place, secure; from which, in point of fact, no one of us has escaped, and which in every case in which it has touched a man has brought death along with it. Death may not at once appear; it may appear at first only in the form of a gayer and intenser life; as, they tell us, there is one poison which causes men to leap and dance, and another which distorts the face of the dying with a hideous imitation of laughter. Is that not a diseased soul which has no vigour for righteous

and self-sacrificing work; whose vision is so dim it sees no beauty in holiness?

Of this condition, faith in God through Christ is the true remedy. Return to God is the beginning of all healthy spiritual life. Faith means that all distrust, all resentment at what has happened in our life, all proud and all despondent thoughts, are laid aside. To believe that God is loving us tenderly and wisely, and to put ourselves unreservedly into His hand, is eternal life begun in the soul.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA.

JOHN iv. 1-16.

JESUS left Jerusalem because His miracles were attracting the wrong kind of people, and creating a misconception of the nature of His kingdom. He went into the rural districts, where He had simpler, less sophisticated persons to deal with. Here He gained many disciples, who accepted baptism in His name. But here again His very success endangered His attainment of His great end. The Pharisees, hearing of the numbers who flocked to His baptism, fomented a quarrel between His disciples and those of John; and would, moreover, have probably called Him to account for presuming to baptise at all. But why should He have feared a collision with the Pharisees? Why should He not have proclaimed Himself the Messiah? The reason is obvious. The people had not had sufficient opportunity to ascertain the character of His work; and only by going about among them could He impress upon susceptible spirits a true sense of the nature of the blessings He was willing to bestow. To the woman of Samaria He did not hesitate to proclaim Himself, because she was a simple-minded woman, who was in need of sympathy and spiritual strength. But from controversial Pharisees, who were prepared to settle His claims by one or two trifling theological tests, He withdrew. The time would come when, after conferring on many humble souls the blessings of the kingdom, He must publicly proclaim Himself King; but as yet that time had not arrived, and therefore He left Judæa for Galilee.

A line drawn from Jerusalem to Nazareth would pass through the entire breadth of Samaria, and quite close to the town of Sychar. Between Judæa, where Jesus was, and Galilee, where He wished to be, the province of Samaria intervened. It stretched right across from the sea to the Jordan, so that the Jews, who were too scrupulous to pass through Samaritan territory, were compelled to cross the Jordan twice, and make a considerable *détour* if they wished to go to Galilee. Our Lord had no such scruples; besides, the springs near Salim, where John was baptising, were not far from Sychar, and He might wish to see John on His way north. He took, therefore, the great north road, and one day at noon\* found Himself at Jacob's well, where the road divides, and where, at any rate, it was natural that a tired traveller should rest during the mid-day hours. Jacob's well is still extant, and is one of the few undisputed localities

\* Some good authorities hold that John reckoned the hours of the day from midnight, not from sunrise. It is, however, probable that John adopted the Roman reckoning, and counted noon the sixth hour.



associated with our Lord's life. Travellers of all shades of theological opinion and of no theological opinion are agreed that the deep well, now much choked with *débris*, lying twenty minutes east of Nablûs, is the veritable well on the stone rim of which our Lord sat. Ten minutes' walk north of this well lies a village now called El-Askar, which represents in name and partly in locality the Sychar of the text. Partly in locality I say, for "Palestine was ten times as populous in the days of our Lord as it is at present;" and there is therefore good ground for the supposition that although now but a little village or hamlet, Sychar was then considerably larger, and extended nearer to the well. Coming, then, to this well and being tired with the forenoon's walk, our Lord sat down, while the disciples went forward to the town to buy bread.

And thus arose that conversation with the woman of Sychar, which has brought hope and comfort to many a thirsting and weary soul besides. That which struck the woman herself and the disciples is not that which is likely to impress us most distinctly. We all feel the unsurpassed delicacy and grace of the whole scene. No poet ever imagined a situation in which the free movements of human nature, the picturesqueness of outward circumstance, and the profoundest spiritual interest were so happily, easily, and effectively combined. Yet the chief thing which struck the woman herself and the disciples was the ease with which Jesus broke down the wall of partition which the hatred of centuries had erected between Jew and Samaritan.

To estimate aright the magnanimity and originality of our Lord's action in making Himself and His salvation accessible to this woman, the marked separation that had hitherto existed must be borne in mind. The Samaritans were of heathen origin. In the Second Book of Kings, chap. xvii., we read that Shalmaneser, King of Assyria, pursuing the usual policy of his empire, carried the Israelites to Babylonia, and sent colonists from Babylonia to occupy their cities and land. These colonists found the country overrun by wild beasts, which had multiplied during the years of depopulation; and accepting this as proof that the God of the land was not pleased, they begged their monarch to send them an Israelitish priest, who would teach them the manner of the God of the land. Their application was granted, and an adulterated Judaism was grafted on their native religion. They accepted the five Books of Moses, and looked for a Messiah—as indeed they still do. The origin of their hatred of the Jews is told in Ezra. When the Jews returned from exile and began to rebuild the temple, the Samaritans begged to be allowed to share in the work. "Let us build with you," they said, "for we seek your God as ye do; and we sacrifice unto Him since the days of Esarhaddon." But their request was bluntly refused; they were treated as heathens, who had no part in the religion of Israel. Hence the implacable religious enmity which for centuries manifested itself in all sorts of petty annoyances, and, when occasion offered, more serious injuries.

This Samaritan woman, then, was taken quite aback when the quiet figure on the well, which by dress and accent she had recognised as that of a Jew, uttered the simple request, "Give me to drink." As any Samaritan would have done, she twitted the Jew with showing a frank-

ness and friendliness which she supposed were wholly due to His own keen thirst and helplessness to quench it. But, to her still greater surprise, He does not wince before her thrust, nor awkwardly apologise, or seek to explain, but gravely and earnestly, and with dignity, utters the perplexing but thought-provoking words: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." He perceived the interest of the situation, saw with compassion her entire ignorance of the presence in which she stood, and of the possibilities within her reach. So do the most important issues often hinge on slight, trivial, every-day incidents. The turning-points in our career have often nothing to show that they are turning-points. We unconsciously determine our future, and bind ourselves with chains we can never break, by the way in which we deal with apparent trifles. We do not know the forces that lie hidden all around us; and for want of knowledge we miss a thousand opportunities. The sick man drags out a miserable existence, incapacitated and useless, while within his reach, but unrecognised, is a remedy which would give him health. It is often by a very little that the scientific or philosophical student fails to make the discovery he seeks; one more fact known, one idea fitted into its proper place, and the thing is done. The gold-digger throws aside his pick in despair at the very point where another stroke would have turned up the ore. So with some among ourselves; they pass through life alongside of that which would make all eternity different to them, and yet for lack of knowledge, for lack of consideration, the thin veil continues to hide from them their true blessedness. Like the crew that were perishing from thirst, though surrounded by the fresh waters of the River Amazon that penetrated far into the salt ocean, so we, surrounded on all hands by God and upheld by Him, and living in Him, yet do not know it, and refrain from dipping our buckets and drawing out of His life-giving fulness. How often, looking on those who, like this Samaritan woman, have gone wrong and know no recovery, who go through their daily duties sad and heavy at heart and weary of sin—how often do these words rise to our lips, "If only thou knewest." How often does one long to be able to shed a sudden and universal light into the minds of men that would reveal to them the goodness, the power, the all-conquering love of God. Yes, and even in those who can speak intelligently of things Divine and eternal, how much blindness remains. For the knowledge of words is one thing, the knowledge of things, of realities, is another. And many who can speak of God's love have never yet seen what that means for themselves. Certainly it is true of us all, that if we are not deriving from Christ what we recognise as living water, it is because there is a defect in our knowledge, because we do not know the gift of God.

In two particulars this woman's knowledge was defective: she did not know the gift of God, nor who it was that spoke to her.

She did not know the gift of God. She was not expecting anything from that quarter. Her expectations were limited by her earthly condition and her physical wants. With her affections worn out, with character gone, with no purify-



ing joy, she came out listlessly day by day, filled her pitcher, and went her weary way. She had no thought of God's gift, no belief that the Eternal was with her, and desired to communicate to her a spring of deep and ever-flowing joy. Doubtless she would have acknowledged God as the Giver of all good; but she had no idea of the completeness of His giving, of the freeness of His love, of His perception and understanding of our actual wants, of the joy with which He provides for them all. Through all ages and for all men there remains this gift of God, sought and found by those who know it; different from and superior to the best human gifts, inheritances, and acquisitions; not to be drawn out of the deepest, most cherished well of human sinking; steadily arrogating to itself an infinite superiority to all that men have regarded and busily sunk their pitchers in; a gift which each man must ask for himself, and having for himself knows to be the gift of God to him, the recognition by God of his personal wants, and the assurance to him of God's everlasting regard. This gift of God, that carries to each soul the sense of His love, is His deliverance from evil. It is His answer to the misery and vanity of the world which He has resolved to redeem to worth and blessedness. It is all that is given in Christ, the hope, the holy impulses, the new views of life—but above all it is the means of conveyance that brings God to us, His love to our hearts.

What, then, can teach a man to know this gift? What can make a man for a while forget the lesser gifts that perish in the using? What can reasonably induce him to turn from the accredited sources round which men in all ages have crowded, what can induce him to forego fame, wealth, bodily comfort, domestic happiness, and seek first of all God's righteousness? May we not all well pray with Paul, "that we may have not the spirit of the world but the Spirit of God, *that we may know the things that are freely given us of God*;" that we may see the small value of wealth or power or any of those things which can be won by mere worldly prudence or greed; and may learn fixedly to believe that the things of true value are the internal, spiritual possessions, which the unsuccessful may have as well as the successful, and which are not so much won by us as given by God?

Jesus further describes this gift as "living water," a description suggested by the circumstances, and only figurative. Yet it is a figure of the same kind as pervades all human language. Water is an essential of animal and vegetable life. With a constantly recurring appetite we seek it. To have no thirst is a symptom of disease or death. But the soul also, not having life in itself, needs to be sustained from without; and when in a healthy state it seeks by a natural appetite that which will sustain it. And as most of our mental acts are spoken of in terms of the body, as we speak of *seeing* truth and *grasping* it, as if the mind had hands and eyes, so David naturally exclaims, "My soul *thirsts* for the living God." In the living soul there is a craving for that which maintains and revives its life, which is analogous to the thirst of the body for water. The dead alone feel no thirst for God. The soul that is alive sees for a moment the glory and liberty and joy of the life to which God calls us; it feels the attraction

of a life of love, purity, and righteousness, but it seems continually to sink from this and to tend to become dull and feeble, and to have no joy in goodness. Just as the healthy body delights in work, but wearies and cannot go on exerting itself for many hours together, but must repair its strength, so the soul soon wearies and sinks back from what is difficult, and needs to be revived by its appropriate refreshment.

And this woman, if for a moment she felt as if Christ were playing with her or making her enigmatical offers that could never bring her any substantial good, was immediately made aware that He who made these offers had fully in view the harshest facts of her domestic life. Mystified, she is also attracted and expectant. She cannot mistake the sincerity of Jesus; and, scarcely knowing what she asks, and with her mind still running on relief from her daily drudgery, she says, "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw." In prompt response to her faith Jesus says, "Go, call thy husband, and come hither." The water which He means to give cannot be given before thirst for it is awakened. And in order to awaken her thirst He turns her back upon the shameful wretchedness of her life, that she may forget the water of Jacob's well in thirst for relief from shame and misery. In requiring her thus to face the facts of her guilty life, in encouraging her to bring clear before Him all her sinful entanglement, He responds to her request, and gives her the first draught of living water. For there is no abiding spiritual satisfaction which does not begin with a fair and frank consideration of our past, and which does not proceed upon the actual facts of our own life. If this woman is to enter into a hopeful and cleansed life, she must enter through confession of her need of cleansing. No one can slink out of his past life, forgetting or huddling up what is shameful. It is only through truth and straightforwardness we can enter into that life which is all truth and integrity. Before we drink the living water we must truly thirst for it.

If the inquiry be more closely pressed, and if it be asked what this Samaritan woman would find to be living water to her, what it was which, after Christ had gone, would daily renew in her the purpose to live a better life and to bear her burden cheerfully and hopefully, it will be seen that it must have been simply the remembrance of Christ; the knowledge that in Christ God had sought her, had claimed her in the midst of her evil life for some better and holier thing, had, in a word, loved her through all her sin, and sent deliverance to her. It is still, and always, this knowledge which comes with fresh exhilarating power to every disconsolate, despairing, fainting soul. The knowledge that there is One, the Holiest of all, who loves us, and who will be satisfied with nothing short of the purest blessedness for us; the knowledge that our God follows us, forgives us, elevates and purifies us by His love, this is living water to our souls; this revives us to the love of goodness, and braces us for all effort. It is not a little cistern that soon runs dry. To the end of a Christian's life this fact of God's love in Christ comes as fresh and as reviving to the soul as at first; to us this day it has the same power of supplying motive to our life as it had when Christ spoke to the woman.



He further defines the gift as "a well of water *in the soul* itself springing up to everlasting life." This peculiarity of the water He would give was remarked upon here for the sake of contrasting it with the well outside the city to which the woman in all weathers had to repair; often wishing, no doubt, as she went out in the heat or in the rain, that she had a well at her door. The source of spiritual life is within; it cannot be inaccessible; it does not depend on anything from which we may be separated. And this is man's victory and end when within himself he has the source of life and joy, so that he is independent of circumstances, of position, of things present and things to come. It was a commonplace even of heathen philosophy, that no man is happy until he is superior to fortune; that his happiness must have an inward source, must depend on his own spiritual state, and not on outward circumstances. Similarly Solomon thought it a saying worthy of preservation that "the good man is satisfied from himself;" that is, he shall not look to success in life, or to comfortable circumstances, or even to domestic happiness or the society of old friends, as a sure and unfailing source of joy; but shall be at bottom independent of everything save what he carries always and everywhere in himself. Nothing is more pitiable than the restlessness one sees in some people; how they can find nothing in themselves, but are ever going from place to place, from entertainment to entertainment, from friend to friend, seeking something to give them rest, and finding nothing, because they seek it without and not within. It is Christ dwelling in the heart by faith that is alone the fountain of living water. It is His inward presence, apprehended by faith, by imagination, by knowledge, that revives the soul continually. It is thus that God makes us partakers of the life that is only in Him, linking us to Himself by our will, by all that is deepest in us, and so producing true and lasting spiritual life.

The woman was blinded by her ignorance on a second point; she did not know who it was that said to her, "Give Me to drink." Until we know Christ we cannot know God: it is to Christ we owe all our best thoughts about God. This woman, when she had met the absolute goodness and kindness of Christ, had for ever different thoughts of God. So as we look at Christ our thought of God expands, and we learn to expect substantial good from Him. Yet often, like this woman, we are in Christ's presence without knowing it, and listen, like her, to His appeals without understanding the majesty of His person and the greatness of our opportunity. He does offer largely; He speaks as if, He were perfect master of the human heart, knew its every experience, and could satisfy it. He speaks of the gift He has to bestow in terms which convict Him of silly and heartless extravagance if that gift be not perfect; He has, in plain words, misled and deceived a large part of mankind, and especially those who were well inclined and thirsting for righteousness, if He cannot perfectly satisfy the soul. He challenges men in the most grievous and undone conditions to come to Him; He calls them off from every other source and stay, and bids them trust to Him for everything. If a man expects to find in Him all that the human heart can contain of joy, and all that the human nature is susceptible of, he does not expect more

than the explicit offers of Christ Himself warrant. Manifestly such offers are at least worth considering. May it not be true that if we were to awake to the knowledge of Christ, *we* might now find His pretensions to be well founded? He professes to bestow what is worth our immediate acceptance, His friendship, His Spirit. What if it should be now that He seeks to come to *our* heart with these words, "If *thou* knewest who it is that speaketh." Yes, if but for one hour we saw God's gift, and Him through whom He offers it, *we* should become the suppliants. Christ would no longer need to knock at our door; we should wait and knock at His.

For in truth it is always the same request He urges to all. In His words to the woman, "Give Me to drink," there was more than the mere request that she would lift her pitcher to His lips. Driven from Judæa, wearied as much with the blindness of men as with His journey, He sat on the well. Everything He saw had that day some spiritual meaning for Him. The bread His disciples brought reminded Him of His true support, the consciousness that He was doing His Father's will; the fields whitening for harvest suggested to Him the nations unconsciously ripening for the great Christian ingathering. And when He said to the woman, "Give Me to drink," He thought of the intenser satisfaction she could give Him by confiding in Him and accepting His help. In her person there stands before Him a new, untried race. Oh that she may prove more accessible than the Jews, and may allay His thirst for the salvation of men! His parched tongue seems forgotten in the interest of His talk with her. And to which of us has He not in this sense said, "Give Me to drink"? Is it cruelty to refuse a cup of cold water to a thirsting child, and none to refuse to quench the thirst of Him who hung upon the cross for us? Ought we to feel no shame that the Lord is still in want of what we can give? This woman knew it was a real thirst which could induce a Jew to ask drink from her. Has He not sufficiently shown the reality of His thirst for our friendship and trust? Could it be a feigned desire that led Him to do all He has done? Are we never to have the joy of appropriating His love as spent upon us; are we never with humble ecstasy to exclaim:—

"Weary satst Thou seeking *me*,  
Diedst redeeming on the tree.  
Can in vain such labour be?"

## CHAPTER X.

### JESUS DECLARES HIMSELF.

JOHN iv. 17-26.

IN this conversation at Jacob's well the woman for some time, quite naturally, misses the point of what Jesus says. It does not occur to her that by "water" He means anything else than what she could carry in her pitcher. Even when He speaks of causing a well to spring up "within herself," she still thinks merely of the domestic convenience of some such arrangement, and begs Him to give what would save her the endless trouble of coming to draw water out of Jacob's well. This simplicity has its good side, as also has her obvious confidence in His words. Jesus sees in this child-like simplicity



and directness a much more hopeful soil for His message than He had found even in a thoughtful man of education like Nicodemus. He seeks, therefore, to prepare the soil further by quickening within her a sense of spiritual want. This may best be effected by backing her into her actual life. Therefore He says, "Go, call thy husband, and come hither." And in this simple way He leads the woman at once to recognise His prophetic insight into her condition, and to bring His offers into connection with her character and her life. And there was that in her manner of owning Him as a prophet, a frankness and a simplicity in uttering her mind and listening to His explanations, that prompted Him explicitly to say, "I that speak unto thee am the Messiah."

To this unfortunate and ill-living alien woman, then, Jesus declared Himself as He had not declared Himself to the well-to-do, respectable Jewish rabbis. The reason of this difference in our Lord's treatment of individuals arises from the different dispositions they manifest. Acknowledgment of His power to work miracles may seem at first sight as good a certificate for Christian discipleship as acknowledgment of His prophetic power. But it is not so; because such an acknowledgment of His prophetic insight as this woman made is an acknowledgment of His power over the human heart and life. He who is thus felt to penetrate to the hidden acts, and to lay His hand upon the deepest secrets of the heart, is recognised as in a personal connection with the individual; and this is the foundation on which Christ can build, this is the beginning of that vital connection with Him which gives newness of life. Those who are merely solving a problem when they are considering the claims of Christ, are not likely to have any personal revelation made to them. But to every one, who, like this woman, shows some desire to receive His gifts, and who is not above owning that life is a very poor affair without some such thing as He offers; to every one who is conscious of sin, and who looks to Him as able to deliver from all its foul entanglement, He does make Himself known. To such persons He will disclose Himself when He sees that they are ripe for the disclosure. To such the moment of moments will come, when to them He will say: "I that speak unto thee am He."

This distinction between the chemist who analyses the living water, and the thirsting soul that uses it, runs very deep, and may be commended to the consideration of any who are apt to be carried away by the current of unbelief that characterises much of our literature. I think it may be said that in writers distinguished by a lack of Christian belief there will commonly be found an absence of what is popularly and fitly called "an awakened conscience." It will be found that they do not know what it is to look at Christ from the point of view of this woman, from the point of view of a shattered and wretched life, and a conscience that day by day is saying, It is I myself who have broken my life, and doing so I have become a transgressor, and need pardon, guidance, strength. Acute thought, an admirable faculty of explaining and enforcing what is thought, we find in abundance; but we certainly do not find a spirit humbled by a sense of sin and a conscience alive to the deepest obligations. So

far as can be gathered from the writings of the most conspicuous unbelievers, they do not possess the first requisite for discerning a Saviour—namely, a sense of need. They lack the prime preparation for speaking on such a subject; they have never dealt fairly with their own sin. We do not consult a deaf man if we wish to ascertain whether the noise we have heard is thunder or the rumbling of a cart; neither can we expect that those will be the best teachers regarding God in whom the faculty by which we chiefly discern God—viz., the conscience—has been less exercised than any other. It is through the conscience God makes Himself most distinctly felt: it is in connection with the moral law we come most clearly in contact with Him; and convictions of God's Being and connection with us root themselves in the soul that a sense of sin has ploughed.

I am far from saying that in deciding upon the claims of Christ the understanding is to have no voice. The understanding must have a voice here as elsewhere. But it is a strong presumption in Christ's favour that He offers precisely what sinners need; and it is decisive in His favour when we find that He actually gives what sinners need. If it is practically found that He is the force that lifts thousands and thousands of human beings out of sin; if He has, in point of fact, brought light to those in deep darkness, comfort and courage to the desolate and heavily burdened, consecration and purity to the outcast, and the corrupt, then, plainly, He is what He claims to be, and we owe Him our faith.

If God is to reveal Himself at all, the revelation must be made not solely or chiefly to the understanding, but to that part of us which determines character, and is capable of appreciating character. The revelation must be moral, not intellectual. As our Lord's ministry proceeded He recognised that it was always the simple who most readily accepted and trusted Him; and He recognised that this was a thing to be thankful for: "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." And every one who thinks of it sees that it must be so—that a man's destiny must be decided not by his understanding, but by his character and leanings; not by his ability or disability to believe this or that, or to prove that his belief is well grounded, but by his aspirations, by the real bent of his heart. We should feel that there was something very far wrong if our faith depended upon proofs that not every one could master, and if thus the clever man had an advantage over the humble and contrite. "The evidence must be such that spiritual character shall be an element in the acceptance of it." And such we find it to be. The reality and the significance of the revelation of God in Christ are more readily apprehended by the spiritually than by the intellectually gifted. Persons who are either by nature humble and docile, or whom life has taught to be so, persons who feel their need of God, and deeply long for an eternal state of peace and purity, these are the persons to whom God finds it possible to make Himself known. And if it be thought that this circumstance, that simple and docile spirits are convinced while hard-headed men are unconvinced, throws some suspicion on the reality of the revelation, if it be thought that the God and the eternity they be-



lieve in are but fancies of their own, it may fairly be replied that there is no more reason for such a thought than for supposing that the rapture of a trained musician is fanciful and self-created, and not excited by any corresponding reality, because it is not shared by those whose taste for music is unawakened.

Convinced that Jesus was a prophet, the woman proposes to Him the standing subject of debate between Jews and Samaritans. Her statement of it is abrupt, and offers some appearance of being intended to turn the conversation away from herself; but this does not harmonise with her simple and direct character, and it is quite possible that in the midst of her confused and disappointed life she had sometimes wondered whether all her misery did not arise from her being a Samaritan. She knew what the Jews said of the Samaritan worship. She knew that they mocked at the Temple which stood on the hill over against Jacob's well; and when she found how very little her worship had helped her, she may have begun to suspect that there was truth in the Jewish allegations. Evidently the aspect of the Messiah, which had chiefly struck her, was His power to lead men into all truth, to teach them all things. Persons in her station, and quite as much overborne by sin as she, often retain their hold upon religious teaching; and in the midst of much that is superstitious they have a spark of true hope and longing for redemption. Jesus shows by the gravity and importance of His answer that He considered the woman sincere in the statement of her difficulty, and anxious to know where God might really be found. Perplexed and bewildered by her earthly experience, as so many of us are, she suddenly awakes to the consciousness that here, before her, and conversing with her, is a prophet; and at once she utters to Him what had been in her burning heart, "Where, where is God to be found?"

And so in reply to the inquiry of one sincere woman Jesus makes that great announcement which has ever since stood as the manifesto of spiritual worship. Not in any particular and isolated place, He tells the woman, is God to be found, not in the Temple at Jerusalem, nor in the rival structure on Gerizim, but in spirit. "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth." As our Lord intimates, this was a new kind of worship, essentially different from that to which Jews and Samaritans, and indeed all men, had hitherto been accustomed.

The magnitude of the contents of such sayings can as little be comprehended as their significance can be exhausted. We have first of all the central affirmation: "God is a Spirit." To fill out this definition with intelligible ideas is difficult. It implies that He is a Personal Being, that He is self-conscious, possessed of intelligence and will; but although Personal His Personality transcends our conception. So far as regards the immediate application of the definition by our Lord at this time, it suffices to note its primary meaning that God has not a body, and consequently is subject to none of the limitations and conditions to which the possession of a body subjects human persons. He needs no local dwelling-place, no temple, no material offerings. In local worship there was an advantage while the world was young, and men could best be taught by symbols. A house in

their midst, of which they might say, "God is there," was undoubtedly an aid to faith. But it had its disadvantages. For the more a worshipper fixed his mind on the one local habitation, the less could he carry with him the consciousness of God's presence in all places.

Very slowly do we learn that God is a Spirit. We think nothing is more surely believed among us. Alas! make almost any application of this radical truth, and we find how little it is believed. Take, for example, the appearances and voices by which intimations were made to godly men in Old Testament times. Why are many people reluctant to allow that these manifestations were inward and to conscience, that they came as convictions wrought by an unseen power, rather than as outward appearances or audible voices? Is it not because the truth that God is a Spirit is not adequately apprehended? Or why again do we so crave for signs, for clearer demonstrations of God's being and of His presence? Ought we not to be satisfied if He responds to spiritual aspirations, and if we find that our craving for holiness is met and gratified?

The inference drawn by our Lord from the truth that God is a Spirit is one which needs still to be pressed. God seeks to be worshipped not by outward forms or elaborate ritual, but in spirit. Ordinary teachers would have put in a saving clause to preserve some forms of worship; Christ puts in none. Let men worship God in spirit, and let forms take their chance. To worship God in spirit is to yield the unseen but motive powers within us to the unseen but Almighty influences which we recognise as Divine. It is to prostrate our spirit before the Divine Spirit. It is in our deepest being, in will and intention, to offer ourselves up to Him in whom goodness is personified. When a man is doing that, what does it matter what he says to God, or with what forms of worship he comes before Him? That alone is acceptable worship which consists in the devout approach of the human spirit to the Divine; and that is accomplished often as effectually in our business intercourse with men when tempted to injustice, or in our homes when tempted to anger or to laxity, as when we are in the house of God. Worship in the spirit needs no words, no appointed place, but only a human soul that bows inwardly before the goodness of God, and submits itself cordially to His sovereign and loving will.

This certainly is a strong argument for simplicity of worship. Why, it may indeed be said, why have any outward worship at all? Why have churches and why have Divine service? Well, it would have been better for the Church if there had been far less outward worship than there commonly has been. For by its elaborate services the Church has far too much identified religion with that worship which can only be rendered in church. No one can be surprised that in utter disgust at the disproportion between outward and spiritual worship, between the gorgeous and fussy services that profess so much, and the slender and rare devotion of the soul to God, discerning men should have turned their back on the whole business, and declined to be partakers in so huge and profane a farce. Milton in his later years attended no Church and belonged to no communion. This certainly is to run to the opposite extreme. No doubt that worship may be real and acceptable which is offered in the silence and solitude of a man's



spirit; but we naturally utter what we feel, and by the utterance strengthen the feelings that are good, and rid ourselves of the bitterness and strain of those that are painful and full of sorrow. Besides, the Church is, before all else, a society. Our religion is meant to bring us together, and though it does so more effectually by inspiring us with kindness and helpfulness in life than by a formal meeting together for no purposes of active charity, yet the one fellowship aids the other, as many of us well know.

While, then, we accept Christ's statement in its fullest significance, and maintain that our "reasonable service" is the offering of ourselves as living sacrifices, that spiritual worship is offered not in church only or mainly, but in doing God's will with a hearty goodwill, we all the rather see how needful it is to utter ourselves to God as we do in our social worship; for as the wife would need some patience who was cared for indeed by her husband in the supply of her common wants, but had never a word of affection spoken to her, so our relations to God are not satisfactory unless we utter to Him our devotion as well as show it in our life. He was one of the wisest of English writers who said, "I always thought fit to keep up some mechanical forms of good breeding (in my family), without which freedom ever destroys friendship." Precisely so, he who omits the outward and verbal expression of regard to God, will soon lose that regard itself.

But if the words of Christ were not intended to put an end to outward worship altogether, they do, as I have said, form a strong argument for simplicity of worship. No forms whatever are needed that our spirit may come into communion with God. Let us begin with this. As true and perfect worship may be rendered by the dying man, who cannot lift an eyelid or open his lips, as by the most ornate service that combines perfect liturgical forms with the richest music man has ever written. Rich music, striking combinations of colour and of architectural forms, are nothing to God so far as worship goes, except in so far as they bring the human spirit into fellowship with Him. Persons are differently constituted, and what is natural to one will be formal and artificial to another. Some worshippers will always feel that they get closer to God in private, in their own silent room, and with nothing but their own circumstances and wants to stimulate them; they feel that a service carefully arranged and abounding in musical effects does indeed move them, but does not make it easier for them to address themselves to God. Others, again, feel differently; they feel that they can best worship God in spirit when the forms of worship are expressive and significant. But in two points all will agree: first, that in external worship, while we strive to keep it simple we should also strive to make it good—the best possible of its kind. If we are to sing God's praise at all, then let the singing be the best possible, the best music a congregation can join in, and executed with the utmost skill that care can develop. Music which cannot be sung save by persons of exceptional musical talent is unsuitable for congregational worship; but music which requires no consideration, and admits of no excellence, is hardly suitable for the worship of God. I do not know what idea of God's worship is held by persons who never put themselves

to the least trouble to improve it so far as they are concerned.

The other point in which all will agree, is that where the spirit is not engaged there is no worship at all. This goes without saying. And yet, subtract from our worship all that is merely formal, and how much do you leave? Worse still, there are those who do not even strive after the fit and decorous form, who do not bow their heads in prayer, who are not ashamed to be seen looking about them during the most solemn acts of worship, who show that they are indevout, thoughtless, profane.

The true worshippers shall worship the Father not only "in spirit," but also "in truth." The word "truth" here probably covers two ideas—the ideas of reality and of accuracy. It is opposed to symbolic worship and to ignorant worship. It does not mean that worship was now to be sincere, for that it had already been both among Samaritans and Jews. But among the Jews the worship of God had been symbolical, and among the Samaritans it had been ignorant.

The Jewish worship had been symbolical, every person and thing, every colour, gesture, movement, having a meaning for the initiated. The time for this, says our Lord, is past. We are to worship really. They need no longer take an animal to the temple to symbolise that they gave themselves to God; they were to spend their whole care on the *real* thing, on giving themselves to God; they were not to set candles about their altars to show that light was come into the world, they were themselves to shine as lights lit by Christ; they were not to swing censers to symbolise the sweet-smelling prayers of the saints, they were to offer prayers from humble hearts. In effect Christ said, You are grown up now, and can understand the realities; put away then these childish things. And those who continue to worship with various robes, and prescribed gesticulations and movements, and pictures, and altars, and everything to impress the senses, write themselves down children among grown-up people.

Truth is opposed also to error or misconception about the object of worship. Christ, by His presence, enables men to worship the Father in truth. He gives them the true idea of God. He makes God real, giving an actuality to our thought of God which we could not otherwise arrive at; and He shows us God as He truly is, connected with ourselves by love; holy, merciful, just.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE SECOND SIGN IN GALILEE.

JOHN iv. 31-54.

THE disciples, when they went forward to buy provisions in Sychar, left Jesus sitting on the well, wearied and faint. On their return they find Him, to their surprise, elate and full of renewed energy. Such transformations one has often had the pleasure of seeing. Success is a better stimulant than wine. Our Lord had found one who believed Him and valued His message; and this brought fresh life to His frame. The disciples go on eating, and are too busy with their meal to lift their eyes; but as they eat they talk over the prospects of the harvest in the rich fields through which they have just walked. Mean-



while our Lord sees the men of Sychar coming out of the town in obedience to the woman's request, and calls His disciples' attention to a harvest more worthy of their attention than the one they were discussing: "Were you not saying that we must wait four months till harvest comes again\* and cheapens the bread for which you have paid so dear in Sychar? But lift up your eyes and mark the eager crowd of Samaritans, and say if you may not expect to reap much this very day. Are not the fields white already to harvest? Here in Samaria, which you only wished quickly to pass through, where you were looking for no additions to the Kingdom, and where you might suppose sowing and long waiting were needed, you see the ripened grain. Others have laboured, the Baptist and this woman and I, and ye have entered into their labours."

All labourers in the Kingdom of God need a similar reminder. We can never certainly say in what state of preparedness the human heart is; we do not know what providences of God have ploughed it, nor what thoughts are sown in it, nor what strivings are being even now made by the springing life that seeks the light. We generally give men credit, not perhaps for less thought than they have, for that is scarcely possible, but for less capacity of thought. The disciples were good men, but they went into Sychar judging the Samaritans good enough to trade with, but never dreaming of telling them the Messiah was outside their town. They must have been ashamed to find how much more capable an apostle the woman was than they. I think they would not wonder another time that their Lord should condescend to talk with a woman. The simple, unthinking, untroubled directness of a woman will often have a matter finished while a man is meditating some ponderous and ingenious contrivance for bringing it to pass. Let us not fall into the mistake of the disciples, and judge men good enough to buy and sell with, but quite alien to the matters of the Kingdom.

"There is a day in spring  
When under all the earth the secret germs  
Begin to stir and glow before they bud.  
The wealth and festal pomps of midsummer  
Lie in the heart of that inglorious hour  
Which no man names with blessings, though its work  
Is bless'd by all the world. Such days there are  
In the slow story of the growth of souls."

Such days may be passing in those around us, though all unknown to us. We can never tell how many months there are till harvest. We never know who or what has been labouring before we appear on the scene.

The woman's testimony was enough to excite curiosity. The men, on her word, came out to judge for themselves. What they saw and heard completed their conviction; "And they said to the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy speaking: for we have heard for ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world." This growth of faith is one of the subjects John delights to exhibit. He is fond of showing how a weak and ill-founded faith may grow into a faith that is well rooted and strong.

This Samaritan episode is significant as an integral part of the Gospel, not only because it shows how readily unsophisticated minds perceive the inalienable majesty of Christ, but also

\* The words (ver. 35) have quite the ring of a proverb—a proverb peculiar to seed-time and for the encouragement of the sower. If uttered on this occasion in seed-time, this gives December as the date.

because it forms so striking a foil to the reception our Lord had met with in Jerusalem, and was shortly to meet with in Galilee. In Jerusalem He did many miracles; but the people were too political and too prejudiced to own Him as a spiritual Lord. In Galilee He was known, and might have expected to be understood; but there the people longed only for physical blessings and the excitement of miracles. Here in Samaria, on the contrary, He did no miracles, and had no forerunner to herald His approach. He was found a weary wayfarer, sitting by the roadside, begging for refreshment. Yet, through this appearance of weakness, and dependence, and lowliness, there shone His native kindness, and truth, and kingliness, to such a degree, that the Samaritans, although naturally suspicious of Him as a Jew, believed in Him, delighted in Him, and proclaimed Him "Saviour of the world."

After two days of happy intercourse with the Samaritans Jesus continues His journey to Galilee. The proverbial expression which our Lord used regarding His relation to Galilee—that a prophet has no honour in his own country—is one we have frequent opportunity of verifying. The man that has grown up among us, whom we have seen struggling up through the ignorance, and weakness, and folly of boyhood, whom we have had to help and to protect, can scarcely receive the same respect as one who presents himself a mature man, with already developed faculties, no longer a learner, but prepared to teach. Montaigne complained that in his own country he had to purchase publishers, whereas elsewhere publishers were anxious to purchase him. "The farther off I am read from my own home," he says, "the better I am esteemed." The men of Anathoth sought Jeremiah's life when he began to prophesy among them.

It is not the truth of the proverb that presents any difficulty, but its application to the present case. For the fact that a prophet has no honour in his own country would seem to be a reason for His declining to go to Galilee, whereas it is here introduced as His reason for going there. The explanation is found in the beginning of the chapter, where we are told that it was in search of retirement He was now leaving the popularity and publicity of Judæa, and repairing to His own country.

But, as frequently on other occasions, He now found that He could not be hid. His countrymen, who had thought so little of Him previously, had heard of His Judæan fame, and echoed the recognition and applause of the south. They had not discovered the greatness of this Galilean, although He had lived among them for thirty years; but no sooner do they hear that He has created a sensation in Jerusalem than they begin to be proud of Him. Every one has seen the same thing a hundred times. A lad who has been despised as almost half-witted in his native place goes up to London and makes a name for himself as poet, artist, or inventor, and when he returns to his village everybody claims him as cousin. Such a change of sentiment was not likely to escape the observation of Jesus nor to deceive Him. It is with an accent of disappointment, not unmingled with reproach, that He utters His first recorded words in Galilee: "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will in no wise believe."

This sets us in the point of view from which



we can clearly see the significance of the one incident which John selects from all that happened during our Lord's stay in Galilee at that time. John wishes to illustrate the difference between the Galilean and the Samaritan faith, and the possibility of the one growing into the other; and he does so by introducing the brief narrative of the courtier from Capernaum. Accounts, more or less accurate, of the miracles of Jesus in Jerusalem had found their way even into the household of Herod Antipas. For no sooner was He known to have arrived in Galilee than one of the royal household sought Him out to obtain a boon which no royal favour could grant. The supposition is not without plausibility that this nobleman was Chuza, Herod's chamberlain, and that this miracle, which had so powerful an effect on the family in which it was wrought, was the origin of that devotion to our Lord which was afterwards shown by Chuza's wife.

The nobleman, whoever he was, came to Jesus with an urgent request. He had come twenty miles to appeal to Jesus, and he had been unable to trust his petition to a messenger. But instead of meeting this distracted father with words of sympathy and encouragement, Jesus merely utters a general and chilling observation. Why is this? Why does He seem to lament that this father should so urgently plead for his son? Why does He seem only to submit to the inevitable, if He grants the request at all? Might it not even seem as if He wrought the miracle of healing rather for His own sake than for the boy's or for the father's sake, since He says, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will in no wise believe"—that is, will not believe *in Me*?

But these words did not express any reluctance on the part of Jesus to heal the nobleman's son. Possibly they were intended, in the first instance, to rebuke the desire of the father that Jesus should go with him to Capernaum and pronounce over the boy words of healing. The father thought the presence of Christ was necessary. He had not attained to the faith of the centurion, who believed that an expression of will was enough. Jesus, therefore, demands a stronger faith; and in His presence that stronger faith which can trust His words is developed.

The words, however, were especially a warning that His physical gifts were not the greatest He had to bestow, and that a faith which required to be buttressed by the sight of miracles was not the best kind of faith. Our Lord was always in danger of being looked upon as a mere thaumaturge, who could dispense cures merely as a physician could within his own limits order a certain treatment. He was in danger of being considered a dispenser of blessings to persons who had no faith in Him as the Saviour of the world. It is therefore with the accent of one who submits to the inevitable that He says, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will in no wise believe."

But especially did our Lord wish to point out that the faith He approves and delights in is a faith which does not require miracles as its foundation. This higher faith He had found among the Samaritans. Many of them believed, as John is careful to note, because of His conversation. There was that in Himself and in His talk which was its own best evidence. Some men who introduce themselves to us, to win our countenance to some enterprise, carry integrity in their whole

bearing; and we should feel it to be an impertinence to ask them for credentials. If they offer to prove their identity and trustworthiness we wave such proof aside, and assure them that they need no certificate. This had been our Lord's experience in Samaria. There no news of His miracles had come from Jerusalem. He came among the Samaritans from nobody knew where. He came without introduction and without certificate, yet they had discernment to see that they had never met His like before. Every word He spoke seemed to identify Him as the Saviour of the world. They forgot to ask for miracles. They felt in themselves His supernatural power, lifting them into God's presence, and filling them with light.

The Galilean faith was of another kind. It was based on His miracles; a kind of faith He deplored, although He did not quite repudiate it. To be accepted not on His own account, not because of the truth He spoke, not because His greatness was perceived and His friendship valued, but because of the wonders He performed—this could not be a pleasant experience. We do not greatly value the visits of a person who cannot get on without our advice or assistance; we value the friendship of him who seeks our company for the pleasure he finds in it. And although we must all be ceaselessly and infinitely dependent on the good offices of Christ, our faith should be something more than a counting upon His ability and willingness to discharge these good offices. A faith which is merely selfish, which recognises that Christ can save from disaster in this life or in the life to come, and which cleaves to Him solely on that account, is scarcely the faith that Christ approves. There is a faith which responds to the glory of Christ's personality, which rests on what He is, which builds itself on the truth He utters, and recognises that all spiritual life centres in Him; it is this faith He approves. They who find in Him the link they have sought with the spiritual world, the pledge they have needed to certify them of an eternal righteousness, they to whom the supernatural is revealed more patently in Himself than in His miracles, are those whom the Lord delights in.

But the lower kind of faith may be a step to the higher. The agony of the father can make nothing of general principles, but can only reiterate the one petition, "Come down ere my child die." And Jesus, with His perfect knowledge of human nature, sees that it is vain trying to teach a man in this absorbed condition of mind, and that probably the very best way to clarify his faith and lead him to higher and worthier thoughts is to grant his request—a hint not to be overlooked or despised by those who seek to do good, and who are, possibly, sometimes a little prone to obtrude their teaching at most inopportune seasons—at seasons when it is impossible for the mind to admit anything but the one absorbing topic. Circumstances are, in general, much better educators of men than any verbal teaching; and that verbal teaching can only do harm which interposes between the moving events that are occurring and the person who is passing through them. The success of our Lord's method was proved by the result; which was, that the slender faith of this nobleman became a genuine faith in Christ as the Lord, a faith which his whole household shared.

From the very greatness of Christ, and our



consequent inability to bring Him into comparison with other men, we are apt to miss some of the significant features of His conduct. In the circumstances before us, for example, most teachers at an early stage in their career would have been in some excitement, and would probably have shown no reluctance to accede to the nobleman's request, and go down to his house, and so make a favorable impression on Herod's court. It was an opportunity of getting a footing in high places which a man of the world could not have overlooked. But Jesus was well aware that if the foundations of His kingdom were to be solidly laid, there must be excluded all influence of a worldly kind, all the overpowering constraint which fashion and great names exercise over the mind. His work, He saw, would be most enduringly, if most slowly, done in a more private manner. His own personal influence on individuals must first of all be the chief agency. He speaks, therefore, to this nobleman without any regard to his rank and influence; indeed, rather curtly dismisses him with the words, "Go, thy son lives." The total absence of display is remarkable. He did not go to Capernaum, to stand by the sickbed, and be acknowledged as the healer. He made no bargain with the nobleman that if his son recovered he would let the cause be known. He simply did the thing, and said nothing at all about it.

Though it was only one in the afternoon when the nobleman was dismissed he did not go back to Capernaum that night—why, we do not know. A thousand things may have detained him. He may have had business for Herod in Cana or on the road as well as for himself; the beast he rode may have gone lame where he could not procure another; at any rate, it is quite uncalled for to ascribe his delay to the confidence he had in Christ's word, an instance of the truth, "He that believeth shall not make haste." The more certainly he believed Christ's word the more anxious would he be to see his son. His servants knew how anxious he would be to hear, for they went to meet him; and were no doubt astonished to find that the sudden recovery of the boy was due to Him whom their master had visited. The cure had travelled much faster than he who had received the assurance of it.

The process by which they verified the miracle and connected the cure with the word of Jesus was simple, but perfectly satisfactory. They compared notes regarding the time, and found that the utterance of Jesus was simultaneous with the recovery of the boy. The servants who saw the boy recover did not ascribe his recovery to any miraculous agency; they would no doubt suppose that it was one of those unaccountable cases which occasionally occur, and which most of us have witnessed. Nature has secrets which the most skilful of her interpreters cannot disclose; and even so marvellous a thing as an instantaneous cure of a hopeless case may be due to some hidden law of nature. But no sooner did their master assure them that the hour in which the boy began to amend was the very hour in which Jesus said he would get better, than they all saw to what agency the cure was due.

Here lies the special significance of this miracle; it brings into prominence this distinctive peculiarity of a miracle, that it consists of a marvel which is coincident with an express announcement of it, and is therefore referable to a

personal agent.\* It is the two things taken together that prove that there is a superhuman agency. The marvel alone, a sudden return of sight to the blind, or of vigour to the paralysed, does not prove that there is anything supernatural in the case; but if this marvel follows upon the word of one who commands it, and does so in all cases in which such a command is given, it becomes obvious that this is not the working of a hidden law of nature, nor a mere coincidence, but the intervention of a supernatural agency. That which convinced the nobleman's household that a miracle had been wrought was not the recovery of the boy, but his recovery in connection with the word of Jesus. What they felt they had to account for was not merely the marvellous recovery, but his recovery at that particular time. Even though it could be shown, then,—as it can never be,—that every cure reported in the Gospels might possibly be the result of some natural law, even though it could be shown that men born blind might receive their sight without a miracle, and that persons who had consulted the best physician suddenly recovered strength—this, we are to remember, is by no means the whole of what we have to account for. We have to account not only for sudden, and certainly most extraordinary cures, but also for these cures following uniformly, and in every case, the word of One who said the cure would follow. It is this coincidence which puts it beyond a doubt that the cures can be referred only to the will of Christ.

Another striking feature of this miracle is that the Agent was at a distance from the subject of it. This is, of course, quite beyond our comprehension. We cannot understand how the will of Jesus, without employing any known physical means of communication between Himself and the boy, without even appearing before him so as to seem to inspire him by look or word, should instantaneously effect his cure. The only possible link of such a kind between the boy and Jesus was that he may have been aware that his father had gone to seek help for him, from a renowned physician, and may have had his hopes greatly excited. This supposition is, however, gratuitous. The boy may quite as likely have been delirious, or too young to know anything; and even though this slender link did exist, no sensible person will build much on that. And certainly it is encouraging to find that even while on earth our Lord did not require to be in contact with the person healed. "His word was as effective as His presence." And if it is credible that while on earth He could heal at the distance of twenty miles, it is difficult to disbelieve that He can from heaven exercise the same omnipotent will.

NOTE.—It is not apparent why John appends the remark, "This is again the second sign that Jesus did, having come out of Judæa into Galilee." He may, perhaps, have only intended to call our attention more distinctly to the place where the miracle was wrought. This idea is supported by the fact that John shows, on parallel lines, the manifestation of Christ in Judæa and in Galilee. It is just possible that he may have wished to warn readers of the Synoptical Gospels, that Jesus had not yet begun the Galilean ministry with which these Gospels open.

\* This is lucidly taught in Mozley's "Bampton Lectures."



## CHAPTER XII.

*SABBATH CURE AT BETHESDA.*

JOHN v. 1-14.

THE miracle here recorded is selected by John because in it Jesus plainly signified that He had power to quicken whom He would (v. 21), and because it became the occasion for the unbelief of the Jews to begin the hardening process and appear as opposition.

The miracle was wrought when Jerusalem was full; although whether at the Feast of Tabernacles, or Purim, may be doubted. The pool at the sheep-gate or sheep-market has recently been discovered on the north side of the Temple area, a short distance from the Church of St. Anne. It seems to have been an intermittent spring, which possessed some healing virtue for a certain class of ailments. Its repute was well established, for a great multitude of hopeful patients waited for the moving of the waters.\*

To this natural hospital Jesus wended His way on the Sabbath of the feast. And as the trained eye of the surgeon quickly selects the worst case in the waiting-room, so is the eye of Jesus speedily fixed on "a man which had an infirmity thirty and eight years," a man paralysed apparently in mind as well as in body. Few employments could be more utterly paralysing than lying there, gazing dreamily into the water, and listening to the monotonous drone of the cripples detailing symptoms every one was sick of hearing about. The little periodic excitement caused by the strife to be the first down the steps to the bubbling up of the spring was enough for him. Hopeless imbecility was written on his face. Jesus sees that for him there will never be healing by waiting here.

Going up to this man our Lord confronts him with the arousing question, "Are you desiring to be made whole?" The question was needful. Not always are the miserable willing to be relieved. Medical men have sometimes offered to heal the mendicant's sores, and their aid has been rejected. Even the invalid who does not trade pecuniarily on his disease is very apt to trade upon the sympathy and indulgence of friends, and sometimes becomes so debilitated in character as to shrink from a life of activity and toil. Those who have sunk out of all honest ways of living into poverty and wretchedness are not always eager to put themselves into the harness of honest labour and respectability. And this reluctance is exhibited in its extreme form in those who are content to be spiritual imbeciles, because they shrink from all arduous work and responsible position. Life, true life such as Christ calls us to, with all its obligations to others, its honest and spontaneous devotion to spiritual ends, its risks, its reality, and purity, does not seem attractive to the spiritual valetudinarian. In fact, nothing so thoroughly reveals a man to himself, nothing so clearly discloses to him his real aims and likings, as the answer he finds he can give to the simple question, "Are you willing to be made whole? Are you willing to be fitted for the highest and purest life?"

The man is sufficiently alive to feel the im-

plied rebuke, and apologetically answers, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool. It is not that I am resigned to this life of uselessness, but I have no option." The very answer, however, showed that he was hopeless. It had become the established order of things with him that some one anticipated him. He speaks of it as regularly happening—"another steps down before me." He had no friend—no one that would spare time to wait beside him and watch for the welling up of the water. And he had no thought of help coming from any other quarter. But there is that in the appearance and manner of Jesus that quickens the man's attention, and makes him wonder whether He will not perhaps stand by him and help him at the next moving of the waters. While these thoughts are passing through his mind the words of Jesus ring with power in his ears, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." And he who had so long waited in vain to be healed at the spring, is instantaneously made whole by the word of Jesus.

John habitually considered the miracles of Jesus as "signs" or object lessons, in which the spiritual mind might read unseen truth. They were intended to present to the eye a picture of the similar but greater works which Jesus wrought in the region of the spirit. He heals the blind, and therein sets Himself before men as the Light of the world. He gives the hungry bread, but is disappointed that they do not from this conclude that He is Himself the Bread sent by the Father to nourish to life everlasting. He heals this impotent man, and marvels that in this healing the people do not see a sign that He is the Son who does the Father's works, and who can give life to whom He will. It is legitimate, therefore, to see in this cure the embodiment of spiritual truth.

This man represents those who for many years have known their infirmity, and who have continued, if not very definitely to hope for spiritual vigour, at least to put themselves in the way of being healed—to give themselves, as invalids do, all the chances. This crowding of the pool of Bethesda—the house of mercy or grace—strongly resembles our frequenting of ordinances, a practice which many continue in very much the state of mind of this paralytic. They are still as infirm as when they first began to look for cure; it seems as if their turn were never to come, though they have seen many remarkable cures. Theoretically they have no doubt of the efficacy of Christian grace; practically they have no expectation that they shall ever be strong, vigorous, useful men in His Kingdom. If you asked them why they are so punctual in attendance on all religious services, they would say, "Why, is it not a right thing to do?" Press them further with our Lord's question, "Are you expecting to be made whole? Is this your purpose in coming here?" They will refer you to their past, and tell you how it has always seemed to be some other person's case that was thought of, how the Spirit of God seemed always to have other work than that which concerned them. But here they are still—and commendably and wisely so; for if this man had begun to disbelieve in the virtue of the water because he himself had never experienced its power, and had shut himself up in some wretched solitude of his own, then the eye of the Lord had never rested upon him—here they are still; for

\* Verse 4 is omitted by recent editors on the authority of the best ancient MSS.



the best part of a lifetime they had been on the brink of health, and yet have never got it; for eight-and-thirty years this man had seen that water, knew that it healed people, put his hand in it, gazed on it,—yes, there it was, and *could* heal him, and yet his turn never came. So do these persons frequent the ordinances, hear the word that can save them, touch the bread of communion, and know that by the blessing of God the bread of life is thereby conveyed, and yet year by year goes past, and for them all remains unblessed. They begin despairingly to say—

“Thy saints are comforted, I know,  
And love Thy house of prayer;  
I therefore go where others go,  
But find no comfort there.”

This miracle shows such persons that there is a shorter way to health than a languid attendance on ordinances—an attendance that is satisfied if there seems to be still in operation what may be useful to others: It is the voice of Christ they need to hear. It is that voice summoning to thought and to hope that we all need to hear, “Wilt thou be made whole?” Are you weary and ashamed of your infirmity; would you fain be a whole man in Christ, able at last to walk through life as a living man, seeing the beauty of God and of His work, and meeting with gladness the whole requirements of a life in God? Does the very beauty of Christ’s manhood, as He stands before you, make you at once ashamed of your weakness and covetous of His strength? Do you see in Him what it is to be strong, to enter into life, to begin to live as a man ought always to live, and are you earnestly looking to receive power from on high? To such come the life-giving voice of the Word who utters God, and the life that is in God.

It is important to notice that in Christ’s word to the sick, “Rise, take up thy bed, and walk,” three things are implied—

1. There must be a prompt response to Christ’s word. He does not heal any one who lies sluggishly waiting to see what that word will effect. There must be a hearty and immediate recognition of the speaker’s truth and power. We cannot say to what extent the impotent man would feel a current of nervous energy invigorating him. Probably this consciousness of new strength would only succeed his cordial reliance on the word of Christ. Obey Christ, and you will find strength enough. Believe in His power to give you new life, and you will have it. But do not hesitate, do not question, do not delay.

2. There must be no thought of failure, no making provision for a relapse; the bed must be rolled up as no longer needed. How do those diseased men of the Gospels rebuke us! We seem always half in doubt whether we should make bold to live as whole men. We take a few feeble steps, and return to the bed we have left. From life by faith in Christ we sink back to life as we knew it without Christ—a life attempting little, and counting it a thing too high for us to put ourselves and our all at God’s disposal. If we set out to swim the Channel we take care to have a boat within hail to pick us up if we become exhausted. To make provision for failure is in the Christian life to secure failure. It betrays a half-heartedness in our faith, a lurking unbelief which must bring disaster. Have we rolled up our bed and tossed it aside?

If Christ fails us, have we nothing to fall back upon? Is it faith in Him that really keeps us going? Is it His view of the world and of all that is in it that we have accepted; or do we merely take a few steps on His principles, but in the main make our bed in the ordinary, unenlightened worldly life?

3. There must be a continuous use made of the strength Christ gives. The man who had lain for thirty-eight years was told to *walk*. We must confront many duties without any past experience to assure us of success. We must proceed to do them in faith—in the faith that He who bids us do them will give us strength for them. Take your place at once among healthy men; recognise the responsibilities of life. Find an outlet for the new strength in you. Be no longer a burden, a charge to others, but begin yourself to bear the burdens of others, and be a source of strength to others.

Before the man could get home with his bed he was challenged for carrying it on the Sabbath. They must surely have known that he himself, and many more, had that very morning been carried to Bethesda. But we can scarcely conclude from the Jews thus challenging the healed man that they sought occasion against Jesus. They would have stopped any one going through the streets of Jerusalem with a bundle on the Sabbath. They had Scripture on their side, and founded on the words of Jeremiah (xvii. 21), “Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath day.” Even in our own streets a man carrying a large package on Sunday would attract the suspicion of the religious, if not of the police. We must not, then, find a malicious intention towards Jesus, but merely the accustomed thoughtless bigotry and literalism, in the challenge of the Jews.

But to their “It is not lawful,” the man promptly answers, perhaps only meaning to screen himself by throwing the blame on another, “He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed.” The man quite naturally, and without till now reflecting on his own conduct, had listened to Christ’s word as authoritative. He that gave me strength told me how to use it. Intuitively the man lays down the great principle of Christian obedience. If Christ is the source of life to me, He must also be the source of law. If without Him I am helpless and useless, it stands to reason that I must consider His will in the use of the life He communicates. This must always be the Christian’s defence when the world is scandalised by anything he does in obedience to Christ; when he goes in the face of its traditions and customs; when he is challenged for singularity, overpreciseness, or innovation. This is the law which the Christian must still bear in mind when he fears to thwart any prejudice of the world, when he is tempted to bide his time among the impotent folk, and not fly in the face of established usage; when, though he has distinctly understood what he ought to do, so many difficulties threaten, that he is tempted to withdraw into obscurity and indolence. It is the same Voice which gives life and directs it. Shall I then refuse it in both cases, or choose it in both? Shall I shrink from its directions, and lie down again in sin; or shall I accept life, and with it the still greater boon of spending it as Christ wills?

But though the man had thus instinctively



obeyed Jesus, he actually had not had the curiosity to ask who He was. It is almost incredible that he should have so immediately lost sight of the person to whom he was so indebted. But so taken up is he with his new sensations, so occupied with gathering up his mats, so beset by the congratulations and inquiries of his comrades at the porch, that before he bethinks himself Jesus is gone. Among those who do undoubtedly profit by Christ's work there is a lamentable and culpable lack of interest in His person. It does not seem to matter *from whom* they have received these benefits so long as they have them; they do not seem drawn to His person, ever following to know more of Him and to enjoy His society, as the poor demoniac would have done, who would gladly have left home and country, and who cared not what line of life he might be thrown into or what thrown out of, if only he might be with Christ. If one were to put the case, that my prospects were eternally and in each particular changed by the intervention of one whose love is itself infinite blessing, and if it were asked what would be my feeling towards such a person, doubtless I would say, He would have an unrivalled interest for me, and I should be irresistibly drawn into the most intimate personal knowledge and relations; but no—the melancholy truth is otherwise; the gift is delighted in, the giver is suffered to be lost in the crowd. The spectacle is presented of a vast number of persons made blessed through the intervention of Christ, who are yet more concerned to exhibit their own new life and acquirements, than to identify and keep hold of Him to whom they owe all.

Although the healed man seems to have had little interest in Christ, Christ kept His eye upon him. Finding him in the Temple, where he had gone to give thanks for his recovery, or to see a place he had so long been excluded from, or merely because it was a place of public resort, our Lord addressed him in the emphatic words, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee." The natural inference from these words is that his disease had been brought on by sin in early life—another instance of the life-long misery a man may incur by almost his earliest responsible acts, of the difficulties and shame with which a lad or a boy may unwittingly fill his life, but an instance also of the willingness with which Christ delivers us even from miseries we have rashly brought upon ourselves. Further still, it is an instance of the vitality of sin. This man's life-long punishment had not broken the power of sin within him. He knew why he was diseased and shattered. Every pain he felt, every desire which through weakness he could not gratify, every vexing thought of what he might have made of life, made him hate his sin as the cause of all his wretchedness; and yet at the end of these thirty-eight years of punishment Christ recognised in him, even in the first days of restored health, a liability to return to his sin. But every day we see the same; every day we see men keeping themselves down, and gathering all kinds of misery round them by persisting in sin. We say of this man and that, "How is it possible he can still cleave to his sin, no better, no wiser for all he has come through? One would have thought former lessons sufficient." But no amount of mere suffering purifies from sin. One has sometimes a kind of satisfaction in reaping

the consequences of sin, as if that would deter from future sin; but if this will not hold us back, what will? Partly the perception that already God forgives us, and partly the belief that when Christ commands us to sin no more He can give us strength to sin no more. Who believes with a deep and abiding conviction that Christ's will can raise him from all spiritual impotence and uselessness? He, and he only, can hope to conquer sin. To rely upon Christ's word, "Sin no more," with the same confident faith with which this man acted on His word, "Rise, take up thy bed"—this alone gives victory over sin. If our own will is too weak, Christ's will is always mighty. Identify your will with Christ's, and you have His strength.

But the fear of punishment has also its place. The man is warned that a worse thing will fall upon him if he sins. Sinning after the beginning of deliverance, we not only fall back into such remorse, darkness, and misery as have already in this life followed our sin, but a *worse* thing will come upon us. But "worse." What can be worse than the loss of an entire life; like this man, passing in disappointment, in uselessness, in shame, the time which all naturally expect shall be filled with activity, success, and happiness; losing, and losing early, and losing by one's own fault, and losing hopelessly, everything that makes life desirable? Few men so entirely miss life as this man did, though perhaps our activities are often more hurtful than his absolute inactivity, and under an appearance of prosperity the heart may have been torn with remorse as painful as his. Yet let no man think that he knows the worst that sin can do. After the longest experience we may sink deeper still, and indeed must do so unless we listen to Christ's voice saying, "Behold thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee."

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### JESUS, LIFE-GIVER AND JUDGE.

JOHN v. 15-47.

As soon as the impotent man discovered who it was that had given him strength, he informed the authorities, either from sheer thoughtlessness, or because he considered that they had a right to know, or because he judged that, like himself, they would rather admire the miracle than take exception to the Sabbath-breaking. If this last was his idea, he had not gauged the obtuseness and self-righteous spite of honest and pious literalism. "For this cause did the Jews persecute Jesus, because He did these things on the Sabbath." \* In what particular form the charge of Sabbath-breaking was brought against our Lord, whether formal or conversational and tentative, John does not say. He is more concerned to give us in full the substance of His apology. For the first time our Lord now gave in public an explanation of His claims; and this five minutes' talk with the Jews contains probably the most important truth ever uttered upon earth.

The passage embodies the four following assertions: that the healing of the incurable on

\* Similarly in the Synoptical Gospels the hostility of the Jews is traced to His apparent breach of the Sabbath law.



the Sabbath resulted from and exhibited His perfect unison with the Father; that this giving of life to an impotent man was an illustration or sign of His power to quicken whom He would, to communicate life Divine and eternal to all in whatsoever stage of spiritual or physical deadness they were; that His claim to possess this supreme power was not mere idle assertion, but was both guaranteed by this miracle, and otherwise was amply attested; and that the real root of their rejection of Him and His claims was to be found, not in their superior knowledge of God and regard for His will, but in their worldly craving for the applause of men.\*

1. Our Lord's reply to the charge of Sabbath-breaking is, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." He did not make any comment on the Sabbath law. He did not defend Himself by showing that works of mercy such as He had done were admissible. On other occasions he adopted this line of defence, but now He took higher ground. The rest of God is not inactivity. God does not on the Sabbath cease to communicate life to all things. He does not refrain from blessing men till the sun of the Sabbath is set. The tides rise and fall; the plants grow; the sun completes his circuit on the Sabbath as on other days. "Why does not God keep the Sabbath?" a caviller asked of a Jew. "Is it not lawful," was the answer, "for a man to move about in his own house on the Sabbath? The house of God is the whole realm above and the whole realm below." For God the Sabbath has no existence; it is a boon He has given to His creatures because they need it. His untiring beneficence is needful for the upholding and for the happiness of all. And it is the same superiority to the Sabbath which Jesus claims for Himself. He claims that His unceasing work is as necessary to the world as His Father's—or rather, that He and the Father are together carrying out one work, and that in this miracle the Jews find fault with He has merely acted as the Father's agent.

From this statement the Jews concluded that he made himself equal with God: And they were justified in so concluding. It is only on this understanding of His words that the defence of Jesus was relevant. If He meant only to say that He imitated God, and that because God did not rest on the Sabbath, therefore He, a holy Jew, might work on the Sabbath, His defence was absurd. Our Lord did not mean that He was imitating the Father, but that His work was as indispensable as the Father's, *was* the Father's. My Father from the beginning up till now worketh, giving life to all; and I work in the same sphere, giving life as His agent and almoner to men. The work of quickening the impotent man was the Father's work. In charging Him with breaking the Sabbath they were charging the Father with breaking it.

But this gives Jesus an opportunity of more clearly describing His relation to God. He declares He is in such perfect harmony with God that it is impossible for Him to do either that

\* The following division of the former part of this Apology may help the reader to follow the sequence of thought. In vv. 19, 20, Jesus enounces the general features of His relation to the Father. In vv. 21-23 the works dictated by this relation and resulting from it are spoken of generally as "quickenings" and "judgings." These works are in vv. 24-27 exhibited in the spiritual sphere, and in vv. 28, 29, in the physical sphere. The first part of the defence is closed in ver. 30 with a re-affirmation of His absolute unison with the Father.

miracle or any other work at His own instigation. "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father doing." "I can of myself do nothing." He had power to do it, but no will. He had life in Himself, and could give it to whom He pleased; but so perfect was His sympathy with God, that it was impossible for Him to act where God would not have Him act. So trained was he to perceive the Divine purpose, so habituated to submit Himself to it, that He could neither mistake His Father's will nor oppose it. As a conscientious man when pressed to do a wrong thing says, No, really I *cannot* do it; as a son who might happen to be challenged for injuring his father's business would indignantly repudiate the possibility of such a thing. "What do I live for," he would "but to further my father's views? My father's interests and mine are identical, our views and purposes are identical. I *cannot* do anything antagonistic to him." So Jesus had from the first recognised God as His Father, and had so true and deep a filial feeling that really it was the joy of His life to do His will.

This, then, was the idea the Lord sought to impress upon the people on the first occasion on which he had a good opportunity of speaking in public. He cannot do anything save what is suggested to Him by consideration of God's will. Even as a boy He had begun to have this filial feeling. "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" That in Him which is most conspicuous and which he wishes to be most conspicuous is perfect sonship; filial trust and duty carried to its perfect height. It is this perfect filial unanimity with the Father which makes His life valuable, significant, different from all other lives. It is this which makes Him the perfect representative of the Father; which enables Him to be God's perfect messenger to men, doing always and only the will of God in men's sight. He is in the world not for the sake of fulfilling any private schemes of His own, but having it as His sole motive and aim to do the Father's will.

This perfect filial feeling had, no doubt, its root in the eternal relation of the Son to the Father. It was the continuance, upon earth and under new conditions, of the life He already had enjoyed with the Father. Having assumed human nature, He could reveal Himself only so far as that nature allowed Him. His revelation, for example, was not universal, but local, confined to one place; His human nature being necessarily confined to one place. He did not assert superiority to all human law; He paid taxes; He recognised lawful authority; He did not convince men of His Divinity by superiority to all human infirmities; He ate, slept, died as ordinary men. But through all this He maintained a perfect harmony with the Divine will. It was this which differentiated Him from ordinary men, that he maintained throughout His life an attitude of undoubting trust in the Father and devotion to Him. It was through the human will of the Lord that the Divine will of the Eternal Son uniformly worked and used the whole of His human nature.

It is in this perfect sonship of Christ we first learn what a son should be. It is by His perfect loyalty to the Father's will, by His uniform adoption of it as the best, the only, thing He can do, that we begin to understand our connection with God, and to recognise that in His



will alone is our blessedness. Naturally we resent the rule of any will but our own; we have not by nature such love for God as would put His will first. To our reason it becomes manifest that there is nothing higher or happier for us than to sink ourselves in God; we see that there is nothing more elevating, nothing more essential to a hopeful life than that we make God's purposes in the world our own, and do that very thing which He sees to be worth doing and which He desires to do. Yet we find that the actual adoption of this filial attitude, natural, rational, and inviting as it seems, is just the most difficult of all difficulties, is indeed the battle of life. Who among us can say that we do nothing of ourselves, nothing at our own instance, that our life is entirely at God's disposal?

To this filial disposition on the part of the Son the Father responds: "The Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth" (ver 20). If we ask how Jesus saw the Father's works, or how, for example, He saw that the Father wished Him to heal the impotent man, the answer must be that it is by inward sympathy the Son apprehends what the Father wills. We in our measure can see what God is doing in the world, and can forward God's work. But not by mere observation of what God had done and was doing through others did Jesus see what the Father did, but rather by His own inward perception of the Father's will. By His own purity, love, and goodness He knew what the Father's goodness willed. But the Father was not passive in the matter, merely allowing the Son to discover what He could of His will. Godet illustrates this active revelation on the Father's part by the simile of the father in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth showing the son the things he made and the method of making them. This simile, however, being external, is apt to misdirect the mind. It was by a wholly inward and spiritual process the Father made known to the Son His purposes and mind.

2. This quickening of the impotent man was meant to be an object lesson, a sign of the power of Jesus to communicate life, Divine and Eternal, to whom He would. "Greater works" than this of curing the paralytic "will the Father show to the Son, that ye may marvel" (ver 20). As through His word vigour had been imparted to the impotent man, so all who listen to His word will receive everlasting life (ver 24). As the impotent man, after thirty-eight years of deadness, found life on the moment by believing Christ's word, so every one who listens to that same voice as the word of God receives life eternal. Through that word he connects himself with the source of life. He becomes obedient to the life-giving will of God.

The question, How can the spiritually dead hear and believe? is the question. How could the impotent man rise in response to Christ's word? Psychologically inexplicable it may be, but happily it is practically possible. And here, as elsewhere, theory must wait upon fact. One thing is plain: that faith is the link between the Divine life and human weakness. Had the impotent man not believed, he would not have risen. Christ quickens "whom He will;" that is to say, there is no limit to His life-giving power; but He cannot quicken those who will not have life or who do not believe He can give it. Hence necessarily "the Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son." To the

impotent man Jesus put the question, "Wilt thou be made whole?" and by that question the man was judged. By the answer he gave to it he determined whether he would remain dead or receive life. Had he not on the moment believed, he would have doomed himself to permanent and hopeless imbecility. Christ's question judged him.

Precisely so, says Jesus, are all men judged by My presence among them, and My offer of life to them. For the Father has not only given to the Son to have life in Himself, that He may thus communicate it (ver 26), but "He hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is a Son of man." For these words do not mean that Jesus will be Judge because men should be judged by one who shares their nature,\* or because they must be judged by the holiest and most loving of men†—as if God Himself were not sufficiently loving—but, as the object-lesson shows us, Jesus is necessarily Judge by appearing as God's messenger, and by offering to men life everlasting. By becoming a son of man, by living in human form as the embodied love and life of God, and by making intelligible God's good-will and His invitation to life, Christ necessarily sifts men and separates them into two classes. Every one who hears the word of Jesus is judged. He either accepts quickening and passes into life, or he rejects it and abides in death. This human appearance, Jesus seems to say, which stumbles you, and makes you think that My pretensions of judging all men are absurd, is the very qualification which makes judgment one of My necessary functions.

And this explains why we find Christ uttering apparent contradictions: at one time saying, "For judgment came I into this world," and at another time saying, "I came not to judge the world." The object of His coming into the world was to give life, not to condemn men, not to cut them off finally from life and from God, but to open a way to the Father, and to be their life. But this very coming of Christ and the offers He makes to men constitute the critical test of every soul that is brought into contact with them. Judgment is the necessary accompaniment of salvation. Man's will being free, it must be so. And this judgment, determined in this life, will one day appear in final, irreversible, manifested result. "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

3. But naturally the Jews would say: "These are extraordinary and apparently extravagant claims to make. It is not easily credible that this voice which now so quietly speaks to us is one day to wake the dead. It is not easily credible that one whom we can carry before our courts is to judge all men." To which thoughts Jesus replies: "I do not expect you to take My word for these things, but there are three guarantees of My truth to which I point you. There is first of all (1) the testimony of John‡—a man in whose prophetic gift you for a while prided yourselves, rejoicing that God had sent you so

\* Westcott.

† Stier.

‡ It is very doubtful whether ver. 32 refers to John. I think it refers to the Father. Still Jesus, in vv. 33-35, refers the Jews to the testimony of John, although for His own part He depends on higher testimony.



powerful and enlightening a messenger. His whole function was to testify of Me. This lamp, in the light of which you rejoiced, was lit solely for the purpose of making quite visible to you that which you now say you cannot see. But this is not the best witness I have, although those of you who cannot see for themselves might be saved if only you would believe John's testimony. But (2) I have greater witness than that of John. John said that I should come as the Father's agent. Well, if you cannot believe John's words, can you not believe the things you see? This impotent man raised to health, is this not a little hint of the Divine power that is in your midst? And are not all the works I do the Father's works, done by His power and for His purposes? Is not My whole career its own best evidence? But besides, (3) the Father Himself has borne witness to Me. He has not appeared to you. You have not heard His voice nor seen His shape, but His *word*, His own sufficient account of His nature and connection with you, you have. You search the Scriptures, and rightly, for they are they which testify of Me. They are the Father's word which, had you listened to, you would have known Me as sent by Him. Had you not mumbled only the husk of Scripture, counting its letters and wearing it on your foreheads, but had you, through God's law, entered into sympathy with His purpose on earth, had you, through all that Scripture tells you of Him, learned His nature, and learned to love Him, you would at once have recognised me as His messenger. "Ye have not His word abiding in you;" ye have not let it lie in your minds and colour them; ye have not chewed, and digested, and assimilated the very quintessence of it, for had you done so you would have learned to know God and seen Him in Me.\* But "whom He sent, Him ye believe not."

The very Scriptures which had been given to guide them to Christ they used as a veil to blind themselves to His presence. Jesus points out where their mistake lay. "You search the Scriptures, because you suppose that in them, a mere book, you have eternal life; the truth being that life is in Me. The Scriptures do not give life, they lead to the Life-giver. The Scriptures, by your superstitiously reverent and shallow use of them, actually prevent you from finding the life they were meant to point you to. You think you have life in them, and therefore will not come to Me." So may a book, lifted out of its subordinate place, be entirely perverted from its use, and actually hinder the purpose it was given to promote. To worship the Bible as if it were Christ is to mistake a finger-post for a house of shelter. It is possible to have a great zeal for the Bible and yet quite to misapprehend its object; and to misapprehend its object is to make it both useless and dangerous. To set it on a level with Christ is to do both it, Him, and ourselves the gravest injustice. Many who seem to exalt the Scriptures degrade them; and those who give them a subordinate place truly exalt them. God speaks in

Scripture, as this passage shows, but He speaks for a definite purpose, to reveal Christ; and this fact is the key to all difficulties about the Bible and inspiration.

4. The unbelief of the Jews is traced by Jesus to a moral root. They seemed very zealous for God's law, but beneath this superficial and ostentatious championing of God there was detected a deep-seated alienation from God which unfitted them for knowing either Him or His messenger. "Glory from men I do not receive (ver. 41). But the reason of this is that ye have not the love of God in you, and cannot appreciate Divine glory or recognise it when you see it. How can you believe, when your hearts crave the glory you can give to one another, your ambition rising no higher than to be spoken of by ignorant people as the upholders of religion? You have taught yourselves to measure men by a wholly spurious standard, and cannot believe in one who is a transparency through which the glory of God shines upon you." Had some one come in his own name, seeking a glory the Jews could give him, adapting himself to their poor conceptions, him they would have received. But Jesus, being sent by God, had that glory which consisted in being a perfect medium of the Father's will, doing the Father's work and never seeking His own glory.

This, then, was the reason why the Jews could not believe in Jesus. Their idea of glory was earthly, and they were unfitted to see and appreciate such glory as He showed in deeds of kindness. And those sayings of Jesus penetrate deeply into the permanent roots of unbelief.

It was certainly a great demand on their faith which Jesus made. He asked them to believe that the most Divine of prerogatives, life-giving and judging, belonged to Him. But he gave them evidence. He only asks them to believe what they have seen exemplified. He does not as yet even ask them to draw inferences. He does not blame them for not seeing what is implied regarding His eternal relation to the Father. He adduces evidence "that they may be saved;" that they may be induced to partake of the life He dispenses; and He laments that they will not believe that He is commissioned by God to speak words of life to men, although he has given them demonstration of His commission and power to give life.

To us also he speaks—for plainly such powers as He here claims are not such as can be capriciously given and withdrawn, rendered accessible to one age but not to another, exhibited on earth once but never more to be exercised. They are not powers that could be given to more than one messenger of God. To suppose more than one source of spiritual life or more than one seat of judgment is against reason.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

#### JESUS, THE BREAD OF LIFE.

JOHN vi. 1-59.

IN this chapter John follows the same method as in the last. He first relates the sign, and then gives our Lord's interpretation of it. As to the Samaritan woman, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so now to the Galileans, Jesus mani-

\* The same idea is resumed in vv. 45-47. If you have not understood the writings of Moses which you have heard from Sabbath to Sabbath, and have not received the knowledge of God they were meant to give you, how shall ye believe the once heard words of Him whose coming was meant to be prepared for, and His identification made easy by all that Moses wrote and by the institutions he established?



feasts Himself as sent to communicate to man life eternal. The sign by means of which He now manifests Himself is, however, so new that many fresh aspects of His own person and work are disclosed.

The occasion for the miracle arose, as usual, quite simply. Jesus had retired to the east side of the sea of Tiberias, probably to a spot near Bethsaida Julias, that He might have some rest. But the people, eager to see more miracles, followed Him round the head of the lake, and, as they went, their number was augmented by members of a Passover caravan which was forming in the neighbourhood or was already on the march. This inconsiderate pursuit of Jesus, instead of offending Him, touched Him; and as he marked them toiling up the hill in groups, or one by one, some quite spent with a long and rapid walk, mothers dragging hungry children after them, His first thought was, What can these poor tired people get to refresh them here? He turns therefore to Philip with the question, "Whence are we to buy bread that these may eat?" This He said, John tells us, "to prove" or test Philip. Apparently this disciple was a shrewd business man, quick to calculate ways and means, and rather apt to scorn the expectations of faith. Every man must rid himself of the defects of his qualities, and Jesus now gave Philip an opportunity to overcome his weakness-in-strength by at last boldly confessing his inability and the Lord's ability,—by saying, We have neither meat nor money, but we have Thee. But Philip, like many another, missed his opportunity, and, wholly oblivious of the resources of Jesus, casts his eye rapidly over the crowd and estimates that "two hundred pennyworth"\* of bread would scarcely suffice to give each enough to stay immediate cravings. Philip's friend Andrew as little as himself divines the intention of Jesus, and naïvely suggests that the whole provision he can hear of in the crowd is a little boy's five loaves and two fishes. These helpless, meagrely furnished and meagrely conceiving disciples, meagre in food and meagre in faith, are set in contrast to the calm faith and infinite resource of Jesus.

The moral ground being thus prepared for the miracle in the confessed inability of the disciples and of the crowd, Jesus takes the matter in hand. With that air of authority and calm purpose which must have impressed the onlookers at all His miracles, He says, "Make the men sit down." And there where they happened to be, and without further preparation, on a grassy spot near the left bank of the Jordan, and just where the river flows into the lake of Galilee, with the evening sun sinking behind the hills on the western shore and the shadows lying across the darkened lake, the multitude breaks up into groups of hundreds and fifties, and seat themselves in perfect confidence that somehow food is to be furnished. They seat themselves as those who expect a full meal, and not a mere snack they could eat standing, though where the full meal was to come from who could tell? This expectation must have deepened into faith as the thousands listened to their Host *giving thanks* over the scanty provision. One would fain have heard the words in which Jesus addressed the Father, and by which He caused all to feel how near to each was infinite resource. And then, as He proceeded to distribute the ever-mul-

tiplying food, the first awe-struck silence of the multitude gave way to exclamations of surprise and to excited and delighted comments. The little lad, as he watched with widening eyes his two fishes doing the work of two thousand, would feel himself a person of consequence, and that he had a story to tell when he went back to his home on the beach. And ever and anon, as our Lord stood with a smile on His face enjoying the congenial scene, the children from the nearest groups would steal to His side to get their supplies from His own hand.

1. Before touching upon the points in this sign emphasised by our Lord Himself, it is perhaps legitimate to indicate one or two others. And among these it may first of all be remarked that our Lord sometimes, as here, gives not medicine but food. He not only heals, but prevents disease. And however valuable the one blessing is—the blessing of being healed—the other is even greater. The weakness of starvation exposes men to every form of disease; it is a lowered vitality which gives disease its opportunity. In the spiritual life it is the same. The preservative against any definite form of sin is a strong spiritual life, a healthy condition not easily fatigued in duty, and not easily overcome by temptation. Perhaps the gospel has come to be looked upon too exclusively as a remedial scheme, and too little as the means of maintaining spiritual health. So marked is its efficacy in reclaiming the vicious, that its efficacy as the sole condition of healthy human life is apt to be overlooked. Christ is needful to us not only as sinners; He is needful to us as men. Without Him human life lacks the element which gives reality, meaning, and zest to the whole. Even to those who have little present sense of sin He has much to offer. A sense of sin grows with the general growth of the Christian life; and that at first it should be small need not surprise us. But the present absence of a profound sorrow for sin is not to bar our approach to Christ. To the impotent man conscious of his living death, Christ offered a life that healed and strengthened—healed by strengthening. But equally to those who now conversed with Him, and who, conscious of life, asked Him how they might *work* the work of God, He gave the same direction, that they must believe in Him as their life.

2. Our Lord here supplied the same plain food to all.

In the crowd were men, women, and children, old and young, hard-working peasants, shepherds from the hillside, and fishermen from the lake, as well as traders and scribes from the towns. No doubt it elicited remark that fare so simple should be acceptable to all. Had the feast been given by a banqueting Pharisee, a variety of tastes would have been provided for. Here the guests were divided into groups merely for convenience of distribution, not for distinction of tastes. There are few things which are not more the necessity of one class of men than of another, or that while devotedly pursued by one nation are not despised across the frontier, or that do not become antiquated and obsolete in this century though considered essential in the last. But among these few things is the provision Christ makes for our spiritual well-being. It is like the supply of our deep natural desires and common appetites, in which men resemble one another from age to

\* Roughly speaking, £8.



age, and by which they recognise their common humanity. All the world round you may find wells whose water you could not say was different from what you daily use, at any rate they quench your thirst as well. You could not tell what country you were in nor what age by the taste of the water from a living well. And so what God has provided for our spiritual life bears in it no peculiarities of time or place; it addresses itself with equal power to the European of to-day as it did to the Asiatic during our Lord's own lifetime. Men have settled down by hundreds and by fifties, they are grouped according to various natures and tastes, but to all alike is this one food presented. And this, because the want it supplies is not fictitious, but as natural and veritable a want as is indicated by hunger or thirst.

We must beware then of looking with repugnance on what Christ calls us to, as if it were a superfluity that may reasonably be postponed to more urgent and essential demands; or as if He were introducing our nature to some region for which it was not originally intended, and exciting within us spurious and fanciful desires which are really alien to us as human beings. This is a common thought. It is a common thought that religion is not an essential, but a luxury. But in point of fact all that Christ calls us to, perfect reconciliation with God, devoted service of His will, purity of character,—these are the essentials for us, so that until we attain them we have not begun to live, but are merely nibbling at the very gate of life. God, in inviting us to these things, is not putting a strain on our nature it can never bear. He is proposing to impart new strength and joy to our nature. He is not summoning us to a joy that is too high for us, and that we can never rejoice in, but is recalling us to that condition in which alone we can live with comfort and health, and in which alone we can permanently delight. If we cannot now desire what Christ offers, if we have no appetite for it, if all that He speaks of seems uninviting and dreary, then this is symptomatic of a fatal loss of appetite on our part. But as Jesus would have felt a deeper compassion for any in that crowd who were too faint to eat, or as He would quickly have laid His healing hand on any diseased person who could not eat, so does he still more deeply compassionate all of us who would fain eat and drink with His people, and yet nauseate and turn from their delights as the sickly from the strong food of the healthy.

3. But what Jesus especially emphasises in the conversation arising out of the miracles is that the food He gives is Himself. He is the Bread of Life, the Living Bread. What is there in Christ which constitutes Him the Bread of Life? There is, first of all, that which He Himself constantly presses, that He is sent by the Father, that He comes out of heaven, bringing from the Father a new source of life into the world.

When our Lord pointed out to the Galileans that the work of God was to believe in Him, they demanded a further sign as evidence that He was God's messenger: "What sign dost Thou that we may see and believe Thee? What dost Thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; they had bread from heaven, not common barley loaves such as we got from You yesterday. Have You any such sign as this to give? If You are sent from God, we may surely

expect You to rival Moses."\* To which Jesus replies: "The bread which your fathers received did not prevent them dying; it was meant to sustain physical life, and yet even in that respect it was not perfect. God has a better bread to give, a bread which will sustain you in spiritual life, not for a few years, but for ever" (vv. 49, 50). "I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever."

This they could not understand. They believed that the manna came from heaven. Not the richest field of Egypt had produced it. It seemed to come direct from God's hand. The Israelites could neither raise it nor improve upon it. But how Jesus, "whose father and mother we know," whom they could trace to a definite human origin, could say that He came from heaven they could not understand. And yet, even while they stumbled at His claim to a superhuman origin, they felt there might be something in it. Every one with whom He came in contact felt there was in Him something unaccountable. The Pharisees feared while they hated Him. Pilate could not classify him with any variety of offender he had met with. Why do men still continually attempt afresh to account for Him, and to give at last a perfectly satisfactory explanation, on ordinary principles, of all that He was and did? Why, but because it is seen that as yet He has not been so accounted for? Men do not thus strive to prove that Shakespeare was a mere man, or that Socrates or Epictetus was a mere man. Alas! that is only too obvious. But to Christ men turn and turn again with the feeling that here is something that human nature does not account for; something different, and something more than what results from human parentage and human environment, something which He Himself accounts for by the plain and unflinching statement that He is "from heaven."

For my part, I do not see that this can mean anything less than that Christ is Divine, that in Him we have God, and in Him touch the actual Source of all life. In Him we have the one thing within our reach that is not earth-grown, the one uncorrupted Source of life to which we can turn from the inadequacy, impurity, and emptiness of a sin-sick world. No pebble lies hid in this bread on which we can break our teeth; no sweetness in the mouth turning afterwards to bitterness, but a new, uncontaminated food, prepared independently of all defiling influences, and accessible to all. Christ is the Bread from heaven, because in Christ God gives Himself to us, that by His life we may live.

There is another sense in which Christ probably used the word "living." In contrast to the dead bread He had given them He was alive. The same law seems to hold good of our physical and of our spiritual life. We cannot sustain physical life except by using as food that which has been alive. The nutritive properties of the earth and the air must have been assimilated for us by living plants and animals before we can use them. The plant sucks sustenance out of the earth—we can live upon the plant but not on the earth. The ox finds ample nourishment in grass; we can live on the ox but not on the grass. And so with spiritual nutriment. Abstract truth we can make little of at first hand; it needs to be

\* From Psalm lxxii. 16 the Rabbis gathered that the Messiah when He came would renew the gift of manna.



embodied in a living form before we can live upon it. Even God is remote and abstract, and non-Christian theism makes thin-blooded and spectral worshippers; it is when the Word becomes flesh; when the hidden reason of all things takes human form and steps out on the earth before us, that truth becomes nutritive, and God our life.

4. Still more explicitly Christ says: "The bread which I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." For it is in this great act of dying that He becomes the Bread of Life. God sharing with us to the uttermost; God proving that His will is our righteousness; God bearing our sorrows and our sins; God coming into our human race and becoming a part of its history—all this is seen in the cross of Christ; but it is also seen that absolute love for men, and absolute submission to God, were the moving forces of Christ's life. He was obedient even unto death. This was *His* life, and by the cross He made it ours. The cross subdues our hearts to Him, and gives us to feel that self-sacrifice is the true life of man.

A man in a sickly state of *body* has sometimes to make it matter of consideration, or even of consultation, what he shall eat. Were any one to take the same thought about his spiritual condition, and seriously ponder what would bring health to his spirit, what would rid it of distaste for what is right, and give it strength and purity to delight in God and in all good, he would probably conclude that a clear and influential exhibition of God's goodness, and of the fatal effects of sin, a convincing exhibition, an exhibition in real life, of the unutterable hatefulness of sin, and inconceivable desirableness of God; an exhibition also which should at the same time open for us a way from sin to God—this, the inquirer would conclude, would bring life to the spirit. It is such an exhibition of God and of sin, and such a way out of sin to God, as we have in Christ's death.

5. How are we to avail ourselves of the life that is in Christ? As the Jews asked, *How* can this man give us His flesh to eat? Our Lord Himself uses several terms to express the act by which we make use of Him as the Bread of Life. "He that believeth on Me," "He that cometh to Me," "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life." Each of these expressions has its own significance. Belief must come first—belief that Christ is sent to give us life; belief that it depends upon our connection with that one Person whether we shall or shall not have life eternal. We must also "come to Him." The people He was addressing had followed Him for miles, and had found Him and were speaking to Him, but they had not *come* to Him. To come to Him is to approach Him in spirit and with submissive trust; it is to commit ourselves to Him as our Lord; it is to rest in Him as our all; it is to come to Him with open heart, accepting Him as all He claims to be; it is to meet the eye of a present living Christ, who knows what is in man, and to say to Him "I am Thine, Thine most gladly, Thine for evermore."

But most emphatically of all does our Lord say that we must "eat His flesh and drink His blood" if we are to partake of His life. That is to say, the connection between Christ and us must be of the closest possible kind; so close that the assimilation of the food we eat is not

too strong a figure to express. The food we eat becomes our blood and flesh; it becomes our life, our self. And it does so by our eating it, not by our talking of it, not by our looking at it and admiring its nutritive properties, but only by eating it. And whatever process can make Christ entirely ours, and help us to assimilate all that is in Him, this process we are to use. The flesh of Christ was given for us; by the shedding of Christ's blood, by the pouring out of His life upon the cross, spiritual life was prepared for us. Cleansing from sin and restoration to God were provided by the offering of His life in the flesh; and we eat His flesh when we use in our own behalf the death of Christ, and take the blessings it has made possible to us; when we accept the forgiveness of sins, enter into the love of God, and adopt as our own the spirit of the cross. His flesh or human form was the *manifestation* of God's love for us, the visible material of His sacrifice; and we eat His flesh when we make this our own, when we accept God's love and adopt Christ's sacrifice as our guiding principle of life. We eat His flesh when we take out of His life and the death the spiritual nutriment that is actually there; when we let our nature be penetrated by the spirit of the cross, and actually make Christ the Source and the Guide of our spiritual life.

This figure of *eating* has many lessons for us. Above all, it reminds us of the poor appetite we have for spiritual nourishment. How thoroughly by this process of eating does the healthy body extract from its food every particle of real nutriment. By this process the food is made to yield all that it contains of nourishing substance. But how far is this from representing our treatment of Christ. How much is there in Him that is fitted to yield comfort and hope, and yet to us it yields none. How much that should fill us with assurance of God's love, yet how fearfully we live. How much to make us admire self-sacrifice and fill us with earnest purpose to live for others, and yet how little of this becomes in very deed *our* life. God sees in Him all that can make us complete, all that can fill and gladden and suffice the soul, and yet how bare and troubled and defeated do we live.\*

6. The mode of distribution was also significant. Christ gives life to the world not directly, but through His disciples. The life He gives is Himself, but He gives it through the instrumentality of men. The bread is His. The disciples may manipulate it as they will, but it remains five loaves only. None but He can relieve the famishing multitude. Still not with His own hands does He feed them, but through the believing service of the Twelve. And this He did not merely for the sake of teaching us that only through the Church is the world supplied with the life He furnishes, but primarily because it was the natural and fit order then, as it is the natural and fit order now, that they who themselves believe in the power of the Lord to feed the world should be the means of distributing what He gives. Each of the disciples received from the Lord no more than would

\* The figure of eating reminds us that the acceptance of Christ is an act which each man must do for himself. No other man can eat for me. It also reminds us that as the food we eat is distributed, without our own will or supervision, to every part of the body, giving light to the eye and strength to the arm, making bone or skin in one place, nerve or blood-vessel in another, so, if only we make Christ our own, the life that is in Him suffices for all the requirements of human nature and human duty.



satisfy himself, yet held in his hand what would through the Lord's blessing satisfy a hundred besides. And it is a grave truth we here meet, that every one of us who has received life from Christ has thereby in possession what may give life to many other human souls. We may give it or we may withhold it; we may communicate it to the famishing souls around us or we may hear unconcerned the weary heart-faint sigh; but the Lord knows to whom He has given the bread of life, and He gives it not solely for our own consumption, but for distribution. It is not the privilege of the more enlightened or more fervent disciple, but of all. He who receives from the Lord what is enough for himself holds the lives of some of his fellows in his hand.

Doubtless the faith of the disciples was severely tried when they were required to advance each man to his separate hundred with his morsel of bread. There would be no struggling for the first place then. But encouraged in their faith by the simple and confident words of prayer their Master had addressed to the Father, they are emboldened to do His bidding, and if they give sparingly and cautiously at first, their parsimony must soon have been rebuked and their hearts enlarged.

Theirs is also our trial. We know we should be more helpful to others; but in presence of the sorrowful we seem to have no word of comfort; seeing this man and that pursuing a way the end of which is death, we have yet no wise word of remonstrance, no loving entreaty; lives are trifled away at our side, and we are conscious of no ability to elevate and dignify; lives are worn out in crushing toil and misery, and we feel helpless to aid. The habit grows upon us of expecting rather to get good than to do good. We have long recognised that we are too little influenced by God's grace, and only at long intervals now are we ashamed of this; it has become our acknowledged state. We have found that we are not the kind of people who are to influence others. Looking at our slim faith, our stunted character, our slender knowledge, we say, "What is this among so many?" These feelings are inevitable. No man seems to have enough even for his own soul. But giving of what he has to others he will find his own store increased. "There is that scattereth abroad and yet increaseth," is the law of spiritual growth.

But the thought which shines through all others as we read this narrative is the genial tenderness of Christ. He is here seen to be considerate of our wants, mindful of our weaknesses, quick to calculate our prospects and to provide for us, simple, practical, earnest in His love. We see here how He withholds no good thing from us, but considers and gives what we actually need. We see how reasonable it is that He should require us to trust Him. To every fainting soul, to every one who has wandered far and whose strength is gone, and round whom the shadows and chills of night are gathering, He says through this miracle: "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Harken diligently unto Me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."\*

## CHAPTER XV.

## THE CRISIS IN GALILEE.

JOHN vi. 60-71.

THE situation in which our Lord found Himself at this stage of His career is full of pathos. He began His ministry in Judæa, and His success there seemed to be all that could be desired. But it soon became apparent that the crowds who followed Him misunderstood or wilfully ignored His purpose. They resorted to Him chiefly, if not solely, for material advantages and political ends. He was in danger of being accounted the most skilful metropolitan physician; or in the greater danger of being courted by politicians as a likely popular leader, who might be used as a revolutionary flag or party cry. He, therefore, left Jerusalem at an early period in His ministry and betook Himself to Galilee; and now, after some months' preaching and mingling with the people, things have worked round in Galilee to precisely the same point as they had reached in Judæa. Great crowds are following Him to be healed and to be fed, while the politically inclined have at last made a distinct effort to make Him a king, to force Him into a collision with the authorities. His proper work is in danger of being lost sight of. He finds it necessary to sift the crowds who follow Him. And He does so by addressing them in terms which can be acceptable only to truly spiritual men—by plainly assuring them that He was among them, not to give them political privileges and the bread that perisheth, but the bread that endureth. They found Him to be what they would call an impracticable dreamer. They profess to go away because they cannot understand Him; but they understand Him well enough to see He is not the person for their purposes. They seek earth, and heaven is thrust upon them. They turn away disappointed, and many walk no more with Him. The great crowd melts away, and He is left with His original following of twelve men. His months of teaching and toil seem to have gone for nothing. It might seem doubtful if even the twelve would be faithful—if any result of His work would remain, if any would cordially and lovingly adhere to Him.

One cannot, I think, view this situation without perceiving how analogous it is in many respects to the aspect of things in our own day. In all ages of course this sifting of the followers of Christ goes on. There are experiences common to all times and places which test men's attachment to Christ. But in our own day exceptional causes are producing a considerable diminution of the numbers who follow Christ, or at least are altering considerably the grounds on which they profess to follow Him. When one views the defection of men of influence, of thought, of learning, of earnest and devout spirit, one cannot but wonder what is to be the end of this, and how far it is to extend. One cannot but look anxiously at those who seem to remain, and to say, "Will ye also go away?" No doubt such times of sifting are of eminent service in winnowing out the true from the mistaken followers, and in summoning all men to revise the reason of their attachment to Christ. When we see men of serious mind and of great attainments deliberately abandoning the Chris-

\* On verses 37, 44, and 45 see note on p. 197.



tian position, we cannot but anxiously inquire whether we are right in maintaining that position. When the question comes to us, as in Providence it does, "Will ye also go away?" we must have our answer ready.

The answer of Peter clearly shows what it was that bound the faithful few to Jesus; and in his answer three reasons for faith may be discerned.

1. Jesus satisfied their deepest spiritual wants. They had found in Him provision for their whole nature, and had learned the truth of His saying, "He that cometh to Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst." They could now say, "Thou hast the words of eternal life." His words made water into wine, and five loaves into five thousand, but His words did what was far more to their purpose,—they fed their spirit. His words brought them nearer to God, promised them eternal life, and began it within them. From the lips of Jesus had actually fallen words which quickened within them a new life—a life which they recognised as eternal, as lifting them up into another world. These words of His had given them new thoughts about God and about righteousness, they had stirred hopes and feelings of an altogether new kind. And this spiritual life was more to them than anything else. No doubt these men, like their neighbours, had their faults, their private ambitions, their hopes. Peter could not forget that He had left all for his Master, and often thought of his home, his plentiful table, his family, when wandering about with Jesus. They all, probably, had an expectation that their abandonment of their occupations would not be wholly without compensation in this life, and that prominent position and worldly advantage awaited them. Still, when they discovered that these were mistaken expectations, they did not grumble nor go back, for such were not their chief reasons for following Jesus. It was chiefly by His appeal to their spiritual leanings that He attracted them. It was rather for eternal life than for present advantage they attached themselves to Him. They found more of God in Him than elsewhere, and listening to Him they found themselves better men than before; and having experienced that His words were "spirit and life" (ver. 63), they could not now abandon Him though all the world did so.

So is it always. When Christ sifts His followers those remain who have spiritual tastes and wants. The spiritual man, the man who would rather be like God than be rich, whose efforts after worldly advancement are not half as earnest and sustained as his efforts after spiritual health; the man, in short, who seeks first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and lets other things be added or not to this prime requisite, cleaves to Christ because there is that in Christ which satisfies his taste and gives him the life he chiefly desires. There is in Christ a suitability to the wants of men who live in view of God and eternity, and who seek to adjust themselves, not only to the world around them so as to be comfortable and successful in it, but also to the things unseen, to the permanent laws which are to govern human beings and human affairs throughout eternity. Such men find in Christ that which enables them to adjust themselves to things eternal. They find in Christ just that revelation of God, and that reconciliation to Him, and that help to abiding in Him,

which they need. They cannot imagine a time, they cannot picture to themselves a state of society, in which the words and teaching of Jesus would not be the safest guide and the highest law. Life eternal, life for men as men, is taught by Him; not professional life, not the life of a religious rule that must pass away, not life for this world only, but life eternal, life such as men everywhere and always ought to live—this is apprehended by Him and explained by Him; and power and desire to live it are quickened within men by His words. Coming into His presence we recognise the assuredness of perfect knowledge, the simplicity of perfect truth. That which outrides all such critical times as the disciples were now passing through is true spirituality of mind. The man who is bent on nourishing his spirit to life everlasting simply cannot dispense with what he finds in Christ.

We need not then greatly fear for our own faith if we are sure that we covet the words of eternal life more than the path to worldly advantage. Still less need we tremble for the faith of others if we know that their tastes are spiritual, their leanings Godward. Parents are naturally anxious about their children's faith, and fear it may be endangered by the advances of science or by the old props of faith being shaken. Such anxiety is in great measure misdirected. Let parents see to it that their children grow up with a preference for purity, unselfishness, truth, unworldliness; let parents set before their children an example of real preference for things spiritual, and let them with God's aid cultivate in their children an appetite for what is heavenly, a craving to live on terms with God and with conscience; and this appetite will infallibly lead them to Christ. Does Christ supply the wants of our spirits? Can He show us the way to eternal life? Have men found in Him all needed help to godly living? Have the most spiritual and ardent of men been precisely those who have most clearly seen their need of Him, and who have found in Him everything to satisfy and feed their own spiritual ardour? Has He, that is to say, the words of eternal life? Is He the Person to whom every man must listen if he would find his way to God and a happy eternity? Then, depend upon it, men will believe in Christ in every generation, and none the less firmly because their attention is called off from non-essential and external evidences to the simple sufficiency of Christ.

2. Peter was convinced not only that Jesus had the words of eternal life, but that no one else had. "To whom shall we go?" Peter had not an exhaustive knowledge of all sources of human wisdom; but speaking from his own experience he affirmed his conviction that it was useless to seek life eternal anywhere else than in Jesus. And it seems equally hopeless still to look to any other quarter for sufficient teaching, for words that are "spirit and life." Where but in Christ do we find a God we can accept as God? Where but in Him do we find that which can not only encourage men in striving after virtue, but also reclaim the vicious? To put any one alongside of Christ as a revealer of God, as a pattern of virtue, as a Saviour of men, is absurd. There is that in Him which we recognise as not merely superior, but of another kind. So that those who reject Him, or set Him on a level with other teachers, have first of all to reject the chief part of what His contemporaries were struck



with and reported, and to fashion a Christ of their own.

And it should be observed that Christ claims this exceptional homage from His people. The "following" He requires is not a mere acceptance of His teaching alongside of other teaching, nor an acceptance of His teaching apart from Himself, as if a man should listen to Him and go home and try to practise what he has heard; but He requires men to form a connection with Himself as their King and Life, as that One who can alone give them strength to obey Him. To call Him "the Teacher," as if this were His sole or chief title, is to mislead.

The alternative, then, as Peter saw, was Christ or nothing. And every day it is becoming clearer that this is the alternative, that between Christianity and the blankest Atheism there is no middle place. Indeed we may say that between Christianity, with its supernatural facts, and materialism, which admits of no supernatural at all, and of nothing spiritual and immortal, there is no logical standing-ground. A man's choice lies between these two—either Christ with His claims in all their fulness, or a material universe working out its life under the impulse of some inscrutable force. There are of course men who are neither Christians nor materialists; but that is because they have not yet found their intellectual resting-place. As soon as they obey reason, they will travel to one or other of these extremes, for between the two is no logical standing-ground. If there is a God, then there seems nothing incredible, nothing even very surprising, in Christianity. Christianity becomes merely the flower or fruit for which the world exists, the element in the world's history which gives meaning and glory to the whole of it: without Christianity and all it involves the world lacks interest of the highest kind. If a man finds he cannot admit the possibility of such an interference in the world's monotonous way as the Incarnation implies, it is because there is in his mind an Atheistic tendency, a tendency to make the laws of the world more than the Creator; to make the world itself God, the highest thing. The Atheist's position is thorough-going and logical; and against the Atheist the man who professes to believe in a Personal God and yet denies miracle is helpless. And in point of fact Atheistic writers are rapidly sweeping the field of all other antagonists, and the intermediate positions between Christianity and Atheism are daily becoming more untenable.

Any one, then, who is offended at the supernatural in Christianity, and is disposed to turn away and walk no more with Christ, should view the alternative, and consider what it is with which he must throw in his lot. To retain what is called the Spirit of Christ, and reject all that is miraculous and above our present comprehension, is to commit oneself to a path which naturally leads to disbelief in God. We must choose between Christ as He stands in the Gospels, claiming to be Divine, rising from the dead and now alive; and a world in which there is no God manifest in the flesh or anywhere else, a world that has come into being no one knows how or whence, and that is running on no one knows whither, unguided by any intelligence outside of itself, wholly governed by laws which have grown out of some impersonal force of which nobody can give any good account. Difficult as it is to believe in Christ, it is surely still more

difficult to believe in the only alternative, a world wholly material, in which matter rules and spirit is a mere accident of no account. If there are inexplicable things in the gospel, there are also in us and around us facts wholly inexplicable on the atheistic theory. If the Christian must be content to wait for the solution of many mysteries, so certainly must the materialist be content to leave unsolved many of the most important problems of human life.

3. The third reason which Peter assigns for the unalterable loyalty of the Twelve is expressed in the words, "We have believed and know that Thou art the Holy One of God." By this he probably meant that he and the rest had come to be convinced that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah, the consecrated One, whom God had set apart to this office. The same expression was used by the demoniac in the synagogue at Capernaum. But although the idea of consecration to an office rather than the idea of personal holiness is prominent in the word, it may very well have been the personal holiness of their Master which bore in upon the minds of the disciples that He was indeed the Messiah. By His life with them from day to day He revealed God to them. They had seen Him in a great variety of circumstances. They had seen His compassion for every form of sorrow and misery, and His regardlessness of self; they had marked His behaviour when offered a crown and when threatened with the cross; they had seen Him at table in gay company, and they had seen Him fasting and in houses of mourning, in danger, in vehement discussion, in retirement; and in all circumstances and scenes they had found Him holy, so holy that to turn from Him they felt would be to turn from God.

The emphasis with which they affirm their conviction is remarkable: "We have believed and we know." It is as if they felt, We may be doubtful of much and ignorant of much, but this at least we are sure of. We see men leaving our company who are fit to instruct and guide us in most matters, but they do not know our Lord as we do. What they have said has disturbed our minds and has caused us to revise our beliefs, but we return to our old position, "We have believed and we know." It may be true that devils have been cast out by the prince of the devils; we do not know. But a stainless life is more miraculous and Divine than the casting out of devils; it is more unknown in the world, referable to no freak of nature, accomplished by no sleight of hand or jugglery, but due only to the presence of God. Here we have not the sign or evidence of the thing but the thing itself, God not using man as an external agent for operating upon the material world, but God present in the man, living in his life, one with him.

Upon our faith nothing is more influential than the holiness of Christ. Nothing is more certainly Divine. Nothing is more characteristic of God—not His power, not His wisdom, not even His eternal Being. He who in his own person and life represents to us the holiness of God is more certainly superhuman than he who represents God's power. A power to work miracles has often been delegated to men, but holiness cannot be so delegated. It belongs to character, to the man's self; it is a thing of nature, of will, and of habit; a king may give to his ambassador ample powers, he may fill his hands with credentials, and load him with gifts which shall be ac-



ceptable to the monarch to whom he is sent, but he cannot give him a tact he does not naturally possess, a courtesy he has not acquired by dealing with other princes, nor the influence of wise and magnanimous words, if these do not inherently belong to the ambassador's self. So the holiness of Christ was even more convincing than His power or His message. It was such a holiness as caused the disciples to feel that He was not a mere messenger. His holiness revealed *Himself* as well as Him that sent Him; and the self that was thus revealed they felt to be more than human. When, therefore, their faith was tried by seeing the multitudes abandon their Lord, they were thrown back on their surest ground of confidence in Him; and that surest ground was not the miracles which all had seen, but the consecrated and perfect life which was known to them.

To ourselves, then, I say, by the circumstances of our time this question comes, "Will ye also go away?" Will you be like the rest, or will exceptional fidelity be found in you? Is your attachment to Christ so based on personal conviction, is it so truly the growth of your own experience, and so little a mere echo of popular opinion, that you say in your heart, "Though all men should forsake Thee, yet will I not"? It is difficult to resist the current of thought and opinion that prevails around us; difficult to dispute or even question the opinion of men who have been our teachers, and who have first awakened our mind to see the majesty of truth and the beauty of the universe; it is difficult to choose our own way, and thus tacitly condemn the choice and the way of men we know to be purer in life, and in every essential respect than ourselves. And yet, perhaps, it is well that we are thus compelled to make up our own mind, to examine the claims of Christ for ourselves, and so follow Him with the resolution that comes of personal conviction. It is this our Lord desires. He does not compel nor hasten our decision. He does not upbraid His followers for their serious misunderstandings of His person. He allows them to be familiar with Him even while labouring under many misconceptions, because He knows that these misconceptions will most surely pass away in His society and by further acquaintance with Him. One thing He insists upon, one thing He asks from us—that we follow Him. We may only have a vague impression that He is quite different from all else we know; we may be doubtful, as yet, in what sense some of the highest titles are ascribed to Him; we may be quite mistaken about the significance of certain important parts of His life; we may disagree among ourselves regarding the nature of His kingdom and regarding the conditions of entrance into it; but, if we follow Him, if we join our fortunes to His, and wish nothing better than to be within the sound of His voice and to do His bidding; if we truly love Him, and find that He has taken a place in our life we cannot ever give to another; if we are conscious that our future lies His way, and that we must in heart abide with Him, then all our slowness to understand is patiently dealt with, all our underrating of His real dignity is forgiven us, and we are led on in His company to perfect conformity, perfect union, and perfect knowledge.

All that He desires, then, is, in the first place, not something we cannot give, not a belief in

certain truths about which doubt may reasonably be entertained, not an acknowledgment of facts that are as yet beyond our vision; but, that we follow Him, that we be in this world as He was in it. Shall we, then, let Him pursue His way alone, shall we do nothing to forward His purposes, shall we show no sympathy, address no word to Him, and pretend not to hear when He speaks to us? To drag ourselves along murmuring, doubting, making difficulties, a mere dead weight on our Leader, this is not to follow as He desires to be followed. To take our own way in the main, and only appear here and there on the road He has taken; to be always trying to combine the pursuit of our own private ends with a dead weight on our Leader, this is not to follow. Had we seen these men asking leave of absence two or three times a month to go and look after the fishing, even though they promised to overtake their Master somewhere on the road, we should scarcely have recognised them as His followers. Had we found them, on reaching a village at night, leaving Him, and preferring to spend their leisure with His enemies, we should have been inclined to ask an explanation of conduct so inconsistent. Yet is not our own following very much of this kind? Is there not too little of the following that says, "What is enough for the Lord is enough for me; His aims are enough for me"? Is there not too little of the following that springs from a frank and genuine dealing with the Lord from day to day, and from a conscientious desire to meet His will with us, and satisfy His idea of how we should follow Him? May we each have the peace and joy of the man who, when this question, "Will ye also go away?" comes to him, quickly and from the heart responds, "I will never forsake Thee."

## CHAPTER XVI.

### JESUS DISCUSSED IN JERUSALEM.

#### JOHN vii.

AFTER describing how matters were brought to a crisis in Galilee, and pointing out that, as the result of our Lord's work there, only twelve men adhered to Him, and in even this final selection not all were to be trusted,—John passes on to describe the state of feeling towards Jesus in Jerusalem, and how the storm of unbelief gathered until it broke in violence and outrage.\* This seventh chapter is intended to put us in the right point of view by exhibiting the various estimates that were formed of the work and person of Jesus, and the opinions which any one might hear uttered regarding Him at every table in Jerusalem.

But the motive of His going to Jerusalem at all calls for remark. His brothers, who might have been expected to understand His character best, were very slow to believe in Him. They only felt He was different from themselves, and they were nettled by His peculiarity. But they felt that the credit of the family was involved, and also that *if* His claims should turn out to be true, their position as brothers of the Mes-

\* It will be observed that the remaining part of the Gospel goes into very small compass as regards time. Chapters vii.-x. 21 are occupied with what was said and done at the Feast of Tabernacles, chapters xii.-xx. with the last Passover.



siah would be flattering. Accordingly they betray considerable anxiety to have His claims pronounced upon; and seeing that His work in Galilee had come to so little, they do their utmost to provoke Him to appeal at once to the central authority at Jerusalem. They did not as yet believe in Him, they could not entertain the idea that the boy they had knocked about and made to run their messages could be the long-expected King; and yet there was such trustworthy report of the extraordinary things He had done, that they felt there was something puzzling about Him, and for the sake of putting an end to their suspense they do what they can to get Him to go again to Jerusalem. The lever they use to move Him is a taunt: "If these works of yours are genuine miracles, don't hang about villages and little country towns, but go and show yourself in the capital. No one who is really confident that he has a claim on public attention wanders about in solitary places, but repairs to the most crowded haunts of men. Go up now to the feast, and your disciples will gather round you, and your claims will be settled once for all."

To this Jesus replies that the hour for such a proclamation of Himself has not yet come. That hour *is* to come. At the following Passover He entered Jerusalem in the manner desired by His brethren, and the result, as He foresaw, was His death. As yet such a demonstration was premature. The brothers of Jesus did not apprehend the virulence of hatred which Jesus aroused, and did not perceive how surely His death would result from His going up to the feast as the acknowledged King of the Galileans. He Himself sees all this plainly, and therefore declines the plan of operation proposed by His brothers; and instead of going up with them as the proclaimed Messiah, He goes up quietly by Himself a few days after. To go up as His brothers' nominee, or to go up in the way they proposed, was counter to the whole plan of His life. Their ideas and proposals were made from a point of view wholly different from His. Very often we can do at our own instance, in our own way and in our own time, what it would be a vast mistake to do at the instigation of people who look at the matter differently from ourselves, and have quite another purpose to serve. Jesus could safely do without display what He could not do ostentatiously; and He could do as His Father's servant what He could not do at the whim of His brothers.

The feast to which He thus quietly went up was the Feast of Tabernacles. The feast was a kind of national harvest home; and consequently in appointing it God commanded that it should be held "in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field;" that is to say, in the end of the *natural* year, or in early autumn, when the farm operations finished one rotation and began a new series. It was a feast, therefore, full of rejoicing.\* Every Israelite appeared in holiday attire, bearing in his hands a palm-branch, or wearing some significant emblem of earth's fruitfulness. At night the city was brilliantly illuminated, especially round the Temple, in which great lamps, used only on these occasions, were lit, and which possibly occasioned our Lord's remark at this time, as re-

ported in the following chapter, "I am the Light of the world." There can be little doubt that when, on the last day of the feast, He stood and cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink," the form of His invitation was moulded by one of the customs of the feast. For one of the most striking features of the feast was the drawing of water in a golden vessel from the pool of Siloam, and carrying it in procession to the Temple, where it was poured out with such a burst of triumph from the trumpets of the Levites, aided by the Hallelujahs of the people, that it became a common Jewish saying, "He who has not seen the rejoicing at the pouring out of water from the pool of Siloam has never seen rejoicing in His life." This pouring out of the water before God seemed to be an acknowledgment of His goodness in watering the corn-lands and pastures, and also a commemoration of the miraculous supply of water in the desert; while to some of the more enlightened it bore also a spiritual significance, and recalled the words of Isaiah, "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation."

But this feast was not solely a celebration of the ingathering, or a thanksgiving for the harvest. The name of it reminds us that another feature was quite as prominent. In its original institution God commanded, "Ye shall dwell in booths or tabernacles seven days, all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths," the reason being added, "that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt." The particular significance of the Israelites dwelling in booths seems to be that it marked their deliverance from a life of bondage to a life of freedom; it reminded them how they had once no settled habitation, but yet found a booth in the desert preferable to the well-provided residences of Egypt. And every Feast of Tabernacles seemed intended to recall these thoughts. In the midst of their harvest, at the end of the year, when they were once more laying up store for winter, and when every one was reckoning whether it would be an abundant and profitable year for him or no, they were told to live for a week in booths, that they might think of that period in their fathers' experience when God was their all, when they had no provision for the morrow, and which was yet the most triumphant period of their history. All wealth, all distinctions of rank, all separation between rich and poor, were for a while forgotten, as each man dwelt in his little green hut as well sheltered as his neighbour. And to every one was suggested the thought, that let the coming winter be well provided or ill provided, let it be bleak to some and bright to others, at bottom the provision of this world is to all alike but as a green bough between them and destitution; but that all alike, reduce them if you will to a booth which has neither store nor couch in it, have still the Most High God for their deliverer, and provider, and habitation.\*

Even before Jesus appeared at this feast He was the subject of much talk and exchange of opinions.

1. The first characteristic of the popular mind, as exhibited here by John, is its subservience to authority. Those who had a favourable opinion of Jesus uttered it with reserve and caution, "for

\* A mixture of religious thanksgiving and unrestrained social hilarity, analogous to the English celebration of Christmas.

\* Psalm xc. 1.



fear of the Jews"—that is, of the Jerusalem Jews, who were known to be adverse to His claims. And the authorities, knowing the subservience of the people, considered it a sufficient reply to the favourable reports brought them by their own officers, to say, "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on Him?" This seems a very childish mode of settling a great question, and we are ready to charge the Jews with a singular lack of independence; but we reflect that among ourselves great questions are settled very much by authority still. In politics we take our cue from one or two newspapers, conducted by men who show themselves quite fallible; and in matters of even deeper moment, how many of us can say we have thought out a creed for ourselves, and have not accepted our ideas from recognised teachers? And whether these teachers be the accredited representatives of traditional theology, or have secured an audience by their departure from ordinary views, we have in our own conscience a surer guide to the truth about Christ. For much that we may build upon the foundation we must be indebted to others; but for that which is radical, for the determination of the relation we ourselves are to hold to Christ, we must follow not authority, but our own conscience.

Our equanimity need not, then, be greatly disturbed by the fact that so many of the rulers of public opinion do not believe in Christ. We need not tremble for Christianity when we see how widely extended is the opinion that miracles are the fancy of a credulous age. We need not be over-anxious or altogether downcast when we hear philosophers sublimely talk as if they had seen all round Christ, and taken His measure, and rendered satisfactory account of the pious delusions He Himself was subject to, and the groundless hallucinations which misled His followers into unheard-of virtue, and made them good men by mistake. Consider the opinions of men of insight and of power, but do not be overawed by them, for you have in yourself a surer guide to truth. Look at Christ with your own eyes, frankly open your own soul before Him, and trust the impression He makes upon you.

2. Again, John notices the *perplexity* of the people. They saw that, much as the authorities desired to put Him out of the way, they shrank from decisive measures. And from this they naturally gathered that the rulers had some idea that this was the Christ. Then besides, they saw the miracles Jesus did, and asked whether the Christ would do more miracles. They saw, too, that He was "a good Man," and on the whole, therefore, they were disposed to look favourably on His claims; but then there always recurred the thought, "We know this Man whence He is; but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is." They thought they could account for Christ and trace Him to His origin; and therefore they could not believe He was from God. This is the common difficulty. Men find it difficult to believe that One who was really born on earth and did not suddenly appear, nobody knew whence, can in any peculiar sense be from God. They dwell upon the truly human nature of Christ, and conceive that this precludes the possibility of His being from God in any sense in which we are not from God.

To this perplexity Jesus addresses Himself in the words (ver. 28), "Me you do in a sense know, and also whence I come, but that does not

give you the full knowledge you need, for it is not of Myself I am come; your knowledge of Me cannot solve your perplexity, because I am not sent by Myself; He that sent Me is the real \* one, and Him you do not know. I know Him because I am from Him, and He hath sent Me." That is to say: Your knowledge of Me is insufficient, because you do not, through Me, recognise God. Your knowledge of Me is insufficient so long as you construe Me into a mere earthly product. To know Me, as you know Me, is not enough; for not in Myself can you find the originating cause of what I am and what I do. You must go behind my earthly origin, and the human appearance which you know, if you are to account for My presence among you, and for My conduct and teaching. It matters little what you know of Me, if through Me you are not brought to the knowledge of God. He is the real One, He is the Supreme Truth; and Him, alas! you do not know while you profess to know Me.

3. John notes the insufficient tests used both by the people and by the authorities for ascertaining whether Jesus was or was not their promised King. The tests they used were such as these, "Will Christ do more miracles?" "Will He come from the same part of the country?" and so forth. Among ourselves it has become customary to speak as if it were impossible to find or apply any sufficient test to the claims of Christ; impossible to ascertain whether He is, in a peculiar sense, Divine, and whether we can absolutely trust all He said, and accept the views of God He cherished and proclaimed. Certainly Christ Himself does not countenance this mode of speaking. In all His conversations with the unbelieving Jews He condemned them for their unbelief, ascribed it to moral defects, and persistently maintained that it was within the reach of any man to ascertain whether He was true or a pretender. There is a class of expressions which occur in this Gospel which clearly show what Jesus Himself considered to be the root of unbelief. To Pilate He says, "Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice." To the Jews He says, "He that is of God, heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." And again in this seventh chapter, "If any man is desirous to do the will of God, he will know of My doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself." All these statements convey the impression that Christ's person and teaching will uniformly be acceptable to those who love the truth, and who are anxious to do the will of God.

Faith in Christ is thus represented as an act rather of the spiritual nature than of the intellect, and as the result of sympathy with the truth rather than of critical examination of evidence. A painter or art-critic familiar with the productions of great artists feels himself insulted if you offer him evidence to convince him of the genuineness of a work of art over and above the evidence which it carries in itself, and which to him is the most convincing of all. If one of the lost books of Tacitus were recovered, scholars would not judge it by any account that might be given of its preservation and discovery, but would say, Let us see it and read it, and we will very soon tell you whether it is genuine or not. When the man you have seen every day for years, and whose character you have looked

\* ἀληθινός.



into under the strongest lights, is accused of dishonesty, and damaging evidence is brought against him, does it seriously disturb your confidence in him? Not at all. No evidence can countervail the knowledge gained by intercourse. You *know* the man, directly, and you believe in him without regard to what others persons advance in his favour or against him. Christ expects acceptance on similar grounds. Look at Him, listen to Him, pass with Him from day to day of His life, and say whether it is possible that He can be a deceiver, or that He can be deceived. He Himself is confident that those who seek the truth, and are accustomed to acknowledge and follow the truth always, will follow Him. He is confident that they will find that He so fits in with what they have already learnt, that naturally and instinctively they will accept Him.

It is at the point in which all men are interested that Christ appeals to us—at the point of life or conduct; and He says that whoever truly desires to do God's will, will find that His teaching leads him right. And if men would only acknowledge Christ in this respect, and begin, as conscience bids them, by accepting His life as exhibiting the highest rule of conduct, they would sooner or later acknowledge Him in all. A man may not at once see all that is involved in the fact that Christ exhibits, as no one else exhibits, the will of God; but if He will but acknowledge Him as *the Teacher of God's will*, not coming to Him with a spirit of suspicion, but of earnest desire to do God's will, that man will become a convinced follower of Christ. There are, of course, persons of a sound moral disposition who get entangled intellectually in perplexing difficulties about the person of Christ and His relation to God; but if such persons are humble—and humility is a virtue of decisive consequence—they will, by virtue of their experience in moral questions, and by their practical knowledge of the value of harmony with God, prize the teaching of Christ, and recognise its superiority, and submit themselves to its influence.

It was on the last day of the feast that our Lord made the most explicit revelation of Himself to the people. For seven days the people dwelt in their booths; on the eighth day they celebrated their entrance into the promised land, forsook their booths, and, as it is said in the end of the chapter, "went every man to his own house." But on this great day of the feast no water was drawn from the pool of Siloam. On each of the preceding days the golden pitcher was in request, and the procession that followed the priest who carried it praised God who had brought water out of the rock in the desert; but on the eighth day commemorating their entrance into "a land of springs of water," this rite of drawing the water ceased.

But the true worshippers among these Israelites had been seeing a spiritual meaning in the water, and had been conscious of an uneasy feeling of thirst still in the midst of these Temple services—an uneasy questioning whether even yet Israel had passed the thirsty desert, and had received the full gift God had meant to give. There were thinking men and thirsty souls then as there are now; and to these, who stood perhaps a little aside, and looked half in compassion, half in envy, at the merry-making of the rest, it seemed a significant fact that, in the Temple itself, with all its grandeur and skilful ap-

pliances, there was yet no living fountain to quench the thirst of men—a significant fact that to find water the priest had to go outside the gorgeous Temple to the modest "waters of Siloah that go softly." All through the feast these men wondered morning by morning when the words of Joel were to come true, when it should come to pass that "a fountain should come forth of the house of the Lord," or when that great and deep river should begin to flow which Ezekiel saw in vision issuing from the threshold of the Lord's house, and waxing deeper and wider as it flowed. And now once more the last day of the feast had come, the water was no longer drawn, and yet no fountain had burst up in the Temple itself, their souls were yet perplexed, unsatisfied, craving, athirst, when suddenly, as if in answer to their half-formed thoughts and longings, a clear, assured, authoritative voice passed through their ear to their inmost soul: "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

In these words Christ proclaims that He is the great Temple-fountain; or rather, that He is the true Temple, and that the Holy Ghost proceeding from Him, and dwelling in men, is the life-giving fountain.\* All the cravings after a settled and eternal state, all the longings for purity and fellowship with the Highest, which the Temple services rather quickened than satisfied, Christ says He will satisfy. The Temple service had been to them as a screen on which the shadows of things spiritual were thrown; but they longed to see the realities face to face, to have God revealed, to know the very truth of things, and set foot on eternal verity. This thirst is felt by all men whose whole nature is alive, whose experience has shaken them out of easy contentment with material prosperity; they thirst for a life which does not so upbraid and mock them as their own life does; they thirst to be able to live, so that the one-half of their life shall not be condemned by the other half; they thirst to be once for all in the "ampler ether" of happy and energetic existence, not looking through the bars and fumbling at the lock. This thirst and all legitimate cravings we feel Christ boldly and explicitly promises to satisfy; nay more, all illegitimate cravings, all foolish discontent, all vicious dissatisfaction with life, all morbid thirst that is rapidly becoming chronic disease in us, all weak and false views of life, He will rid us of, and give us entrance into the life that God lives and imparts—into pure, healthy, hopeful life.

Christ stands and cries still in the midst of a thirsting world: "Whosoever will let him take of the water of life freely." Has His voice become so familiar that it has lost all significance? For all who can hear and believe, His truth remains. There is life—abundant life for us. Drink of any other fountain, and you only intensify thirst, and make life more difficult, spending energy without renewing it. Live in Christ and you live in God. You have found the centre, the heart, the eternal life. As Christ stood and cried to the people He was conscious of power to impart to them a freshly welling spring of life—a life that would overflow for the strengthening and gladdening of others besides themselves. He has the same consciousness today; the deep, living benefits He confers are as open to all ages as the sunshine and the air; there

\* On verse 39 see p. 129 of this volume.



is no necessity binding any one soul to feel that life is a failure, an empty, disappointing husk, serving no good purpose, bringing daily fresh misery and deeper hopelessness, a thing perhaps manfully to fight our way through but certainly not to rejoice in. If any one has such views of life it is because he has not honestly, believingly, and humbly responded to Christ's word and come to Him.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE WOMAN TAKEN IN ADULTERY.

JOHN vii. 53-viii. 11.

THIS paragraph, from chap. vii. 53-viii. 11 inclusive, is omitted from modern editions of the Greek text on the authority of the best manuscripts. Internal evidence is also decidedly against its admission. The incident may very well have happened, and it bears every appearance of being accurately reported. We are glad to have so characteristic an exposure of the malignity of the Jews, and a view of our Lord which, although from a novel standpoint, is yet quite consistent with other representations of His manner and spirit. But here it is out of place. No piece of literary work is so compact and homogeneous as this Gospel. And an incident such as this, which would be quite in keeping with the matter of the synoptical Gospels, is felt rather to interrupt than to forward the purpose of John to record the most characteristic and important self-manifestations of Christ.

But as the paragraph is here, and has been here from very early times, and as it is good Gospel material, it may be well briefly to indicate its significance.

1. First, it reveals the unscrupulous malignity of the leading citizens, the educated and religious men, "the Scribes and Pharisees." They brought to Jesus the guilty woman, "tempting Him" (ver. 6); not because they were deeply grieved or even shocked at her conduct; nay, so little were they impressed with that aspect of the case, that, with a cold-blooded indelicacy which is well-nigh incredible, they actually used her guilt to further their own designs against Jesus. They conceived that by presenting her before Him for judgment, He would be transfixed on one or other horn of the following dilemma: If He said, Let the woman die, in accordance with the law of Moses, they would have a fair ground on which they could frame a dangerous accusation against Him, and would inform Pilate that this new King was actually adjudging life and death. If, on the other hand, He bid them let the woman go, then He could be branded before the people as traversing the law of Moses.

Underhand scheming of this kind is of course always to be condemned. Setting traps and digging pitfalls are illegitimate methods even of slaughtering wild animals, and the sportsman disdains them. But he who introduces such methods into human affairs, and makes his business one concatenated plot, does not deserve to be a member of society at all, but should be banished to the unreclaimed wilderness. These men posed as sticklers for the Law, as the immovably orthodox, and yet had not the common indignation at crime which would have saved them

from making a handle of this woman's guilt. No wonder that their unconscious and brazen depravity should have filled Jesus with wonder and embarrassment, so that for a space He could not utter a word, but could only fix His eyes on the ground.

Making all allowance for the freedom of Oriental manners from some modern refinements, one cannot but feel some surprise that such a scene should be possible on the streets of Jerusalem. It reveals a hardened and insensible condition of public opinion which one is scarcely prepared for. And yet it may well be questioned whether it was a more ominous state of public sentiment than that in the midst of which we are living, when scenes, in *character*, if not in appearance similar to this, are constantly reproduced by our novelists and play-writers, who harp upon this one vile string, professing, like these Pharisees, that they drag such things before the public gaze for the sake of exposing vice and making it hateful, but really because they know that there is a large constituency to whom they can best appeal by what is sensational, and prurient, and immoral, though to the masculine and healthy mind disgusting. Many of our modern writers might take a hint from our German forefathers, who, in their barbarian days, held that some vices were to be punished in public, but others buried quickly in oblivion, and who, therefore, punished crime of this sort by binding it in a wicker crate, and sinking it in a pit of mud out of sight for ever. We certainly cannot congratulate ourselves on our advancement in moral perception so long as we pardon, to persons of genius and rank, what would be loathed in persons of no brilliant parts and in our own circles. When such things are thrust upon us, either in literature or elsewhere, we have always the resource of our Lord; we can turn away, as though we heard not; we can refuse to inquire further into such matters, and turn away our eyes from them.

Few positions could be more painful to a pure-minded man than that in which our Lord was placed. What hope could there be for a world where the religious and righteous had become even more detestable than the coarse sin they proposed to punish? No wonder our Lord was silent, silent in sheer disturbance of mind and sympathetic shame. He stooped down and wrote on the ground, as one who does not wish to answer a question will begin drawing lines on the ground with his foot or his stick. His silence was a broad hint to the accusers; but they take it for mere embarrassment, and all the more eagerly press their question. They think Him at a loss when they see Him with hanging head tracing figures on the ground; they fancy their plot is successful, and, flushed with expected victory, they close in and lay their hands on his shoulder as He stoops, and demand an answer. And so He lifts Himself up, and they have their answer: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." They fall into the pit they have digged.

This answer was not a mere clever retort, such as a self-possessed antagonist can always command. It was not a mere dexterous evasion. What these scribes would say of it to one another afterwards, or with what nervous anxiety they would altogether avoid the subject, we can scarcely conjecture; but probably none of them would affect to say, as has since been said, that



it was a confounding of things that differ, that by demanding that every one who brought an accusation against another should himself be open to no accusation Jesus subverted the whole administration of law. For what criminal could fear condemnation, if his doom were to be suspended until a judge whose heart is as pure as his ermine be found who may pronounce it? Might not these scribes have replied that they were quite aware that they themselves were guilty men, but no law could lay hold of any outward actions of theirs, and that they were there not to talk of their relation to God or of purity of heart, but to vindicate the outward purity of the morals of their city by bringing to judgment this offender? They did not thus bandy words with our Lord, and they could not; because they knew that it was not He who was trying to confound private morality and the administration of law, but themselves. They had brought this woman to Jesus as if He were a magistrate, though often enough He had declined to interfere with civil affairs and with the ordinary administration of justice. And in His answer He still shows the same spirit of non-interference. He does not pronounce upon the woman's guilt at all. Had they taken her before their ordinary courts He would have raised no word in her favour; did her husband after this prosecute her he can have feared no interference on the part of Jesus. His answer is the answer not of one pronouncing from a judgment-seat, nor of a legal counsel, but of a moral and spiritual teacher. And in this capacity He had a perfect right to say what He did. We have no right to say to an official who in condemning culprits or in prosecuting them is simply discharging a public duty, "See that your own hands be clean, and your own heart pure, before you condemn another," but we have a perfect right to silence a private individual who is officiously and not officially exposing another's guilt, by bidding him remember that he has a beam in his own eye which he must first be rid of, a stain on his own hands he must first wash out. The public prosecutor or judge is a mere mouthpiece and representative among us of absolute justice; in him we see not his own private character at all, but the purity and rectitude of law and order. But these scribes were acting as private individuals, and came to Jesus professing that they were so shocked with this woman's sin that they wished the long-disused punishment of stoning to be revived. And therefore Jesus had not only a perfect right, as any other man would have had, to say to them, "Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery?" but also, as the searcher of hearts, as He who knew what is in man, He could risk the woman's life on the chance of there being a single man of them who was really as shocked as he pretended to be, who was prepared to say he had in his own soul no taint of the sin he was loudly professing his abhorrence of, who was prepared to say, "Death is due to this sin," and then to accept such proportionate punishment as would fall to his own share.

Having given His answer His eye again falls, His former stooping attitude is resumed. He does not mean to awe them by a defiant look; He lets their own conscience do the work. But that their conscience should have produced such a result deserves our attention. The woman, when she heard His answer, may for a moment

have trembled and shrunk together, expecting the crashing blow of the first stone. Could she expect that these Pharisees, some of them at least good men, were all involved somehow in her sin, tainted in heart with the pollution that had wrought such destruction in herself, or supposing they were so tainted, did they know it; or supposing they knew it, would they not be ashamed to own it in the face of the surrounding crowd; would they not sacrifice her life rather than their own character? But every man waited for some other to lift the first stone; every man thought that some one of their number would be pure enough and bold enough, if not to throw the first stone, at least to assert that he fulfilled the condition of doing so that Jesus had laid down. None was willing to put himself forward to be searched by the eyes of the crowd, and to be exposed to the still more trying judgment of Jesus and to risk the possibility of His, in some more definite way, revealing his past life. And so they edged their way out through the crowd from before Him, each desiring to have no more to do with the business; the oldest not so old as to forget his sin, the youngest not daring to say he was not already corrupt.

This reveals two things, the amount of unascertained guilt every man carries with him, guilt that he is not distinctly conscious of, but that a little shake awakens, and that weakens him all through his life in ways that he may be unable to trace.

Further, this encounter of Jesus with the leading men gives significance to His subsequent challenge: "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" He had shown them how easy it was to convict the guilty; but the very ease and boldness with which He had touched their conscience convinced them His own was pure. In a society honeycombed with vice He stood perfect, untouched by evil.

This searching purity, this stainless mirror, the woman felt it more difficult to face than the accusing scribes. Alone with Him who had so easily unmasked their wickedness, she feels that now she has to do with something much more awful than the accusations of men—the actual irrevocable sin. There was no voice now accusing her, no hand laid in arrest upon her. Why does she not go? Because, now that others are silent, her own conscience speaks; now that her accusers are silenced, she must listen to Him whose purity has saved her. The presence among us of a true and perfect human holiness in the person of Christ, that is the true touchstone of character; and he who does not feel that this is what actually judges all his own ways and actions, has but a dim apprehension of what human life is—of its dignity, its responsibilities, its risks, its reality. Our sin, no doubt, hems us round with a thousand disabilities, and fears, and anxieties in this world, often dreadful to bear as the shame of this woman; there gradually gathers round us a brood of mischiefs we have given birth to by overstepping God's law, a brood that throngs our steps, and makes a peaceful and happy life impossible. Other men come to recognise some of our infirmities, and we feel the depressing influence of their unfavourable judgment, and in the secrecy of our own self-reflection we think meanly of ourselves; but this, overwhelming as it sometimes becomes, is not the worst of sin. Were all these evil consequences abated or removed, were we as free from accus-



ing voices, either from the reflected judgment of the world or from our own memory, as that woman when she stood *alone* in the midst, yet there would then only the more clearly emerge into view the essential and inseparable evil of sin, the actual breach between us and holiness. The accusation and misery which sin brings generally either make us feel that we are expiating sin by what we suffer, or put us into a self-defensive attitude. It is when Jesus lifts His true eye to meet ours that the heart sinks humbled, and recognises that apart from all punishment and in itself sin is sin, an injury to God's love, a grievous wrong to our own humanity. In the attitude of Christ towards sin and the sinner there is an exposure of the real nature of sin which makes an ineffaceable impression.

But what will Jesus do with this woman thus left on His hands? Will *He* not visit her with punishment, and so assert His superiority to the accusers who had slunk away? He shows His superiority in a much more real fashion. He sees that now the woman is self-condemned, lies under that condemnation in which alone there is hope, and which alone leads to good. She could not misunderstand the significance of her acquittal. Her surprise must only have deepened her gratitude. He who had stood her friend and brought her through so critical a passage in her history could scarcely be forgotten. And yet, considering the net she had thrown around herself, could our Lord say "Sin no more" with any hope? He knew what she was going back to—a blighted home-life, a life full now of perplexity, of regret, of suspicion, probably of ill-usage, of contempt, of everything that makes men and woman bitter and drives them on to sin. Yet He implies that the legitimate result of forgiveness is renunciation of sin. Others might expect her to sin; He expected her to abandon sin. If the love shown us in forgiveness is no barrier to sin, it is because we have not been in earnest as yet about our sin, and forgiveness is but a name. Do we need an external scene such as that before us as the setting which may enable us to believe that we are sinners, and that there is forgiveness for us? The entrance to life is through forgiveness. Possibly we have sought forgiveness; but if there follows us no serious estimate of sin, no fruitful remembrance of the holiness of Him who forgave us, then our severance from sin will last only until we meet the first substantial temptation.

We do not know what became of this woman, but she had an opportunity of regarding Jesus with reverence and affection, and thus of bringing a saving influence into her life. This scene, in which He was the chief figure, must always have remained the most vivid picture in her memory; and the more she thought of it the more clearly must she have seen how different He was from all besides. And unless in our hearts Christ finds a place, there is no other sufficient purifying influence. We may be convinced He is all He claims to be, we may believe He is sent to save, and that He can save; but all this belief may be without any cleansing effect upon us. What is wanted is an attachment, a real love that will prompt us always to regard His will, and to make our life a part of His. It is our likings that have led us astray, and it is by new likings implanted within us that we can be restored. So long as our knowledge of Christ is in our head only, it may profit us a little, but it

will not make new creatures of us. To accomplish that, He must command our heart. He must control and move what is most influential within us; there must arise in us a real and ruling enthusiasm for Him.

Perhaps, however, the chief lesson taught by this incident is that the best way to reform society is to reform ourselves. There is of course a great deal done in our own day to reclaim the vicious, to succour the poor, and so on; and nothing is to be said against these efforts when they are the outcome of a humble and sympathising charity. But they are very often adulterated with a spirit of condemnation and a sense of superiority, which on closer inspection is found to be unjust. These scribes and Pharisees, when they dragged this woman before Jesus, felt themselves on quite another platform than that which she occupied; but a word from Christ convinced them how hollow this self-righteous spirit was. He made them feel that they too were sinners even as she, and none of them was sufficiently hardened to lift a stone against her. This is creditable to the Pharisees. There are many among us who would very quickly have lifted the stone. Even while striving to reclaim the drunkard, for example, they arraign him with an implacable ferocity that shows they are quite unconscious of being sharers in his sin. If you challenged them, they would clear themselves by vehemently protesting that they had not touched strong drink for years; but do they not consider that the almost universal intemperance of the lowest class in society has a far deeper root than individual appetite; that it is rooted in the whole miserable condition of that class, and cannot be cured till the luxuries of the rich are by some means sacrificed for the bitter need of the poor, and the rational enjoyments which save the well-to-do from coarse and open vice are put within reach of the whole population? Poverty, and the necessity it entails of being content with a wage which barely keeps in life, are not the sole roots of vice, but they are roots; and so long as we ourselves, in common with the society in which we live, are involved in the guilt of upholding a social condition which tempts to every kind of iniquity, we dare not cast the first stone at the drunkard, the thief, or even their more sunken associates. No one man, and no one class, is more guilty than another in this great blot on our Christianity. *Society* is guilty; but as members who happen by the accident of our birth to have enjoyed advantages saving us from much temptation which we know we could not have stood, we must learn at least to *consider* those who in a very real sense are sacrificed for us. Among certain savage tribes, when a chief's house is built, slaughtered slaves are laid in pits as its foundation; the structure of our vaunted civilisation has a very similar basement.

Still it is one of the most hopeful features of present-day Christianity that men are becoming sensible that they are not mere individuals, but are members of a society; and that they must bear the shame of the existing condition of things in society. Intelligent Christian men now feel that the saving of their own souls is not enough, and that they cannot with complacency rest satisfied with their own happy condition and prospects if the society to which they belong is in a state of degradation and misery. It is by the growth of this sympathetic shame that reformation on a great scale will be brought



about. It is by men learning to see in all misery and vice their own share of guilt that society will gradually be leavened. To those who cannot own their connection with their fellow-men in any such sense, to those who are quite satisfied if they themselves are comfortable, I do not know what can be said. They break themselves off from the social body, and accept the fate of the amputated limb.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### *CHRIST, THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.*

JOHN viii. 12-19.

At the Feast of Tabernacles Jesus, who knew that He was sent to confer upon men the realities which had been symbolised and promised in all religious rites, proclaimed that He was the fountain of life (vii. 37); and thus responded to the unuttered prayer of those who looked with some weariness at the old routine of drawing water in remembrance of the provision God had made for their fathers in the desert. Another feature of the same Feast leads Him now to declare a further characteristic of His person. In commemoration of the Pillar of Fire that led their fathers in the trackless desert, the people lit large lamps round the Temple, and gave themselves up to dancing and revelry. But this, too, was no doubt felt to be for the superficial souls that can live upon rites and symbols, and do not seek to lay bare their inmost being to the very touch of eternal reality. Not merely the cynic would smile as venerable men joined in the lamp-light dance, but possibly even the grave and pious onlooker, looking back on his own mistakes in life, and conscious of the blind way in which he was still blundering on, stood wondering where the true Guide of Israel, the real Light of human life, was to be found. In sympathy with all such longing after truth and clear vision Jesus cries, "I am the light of the world; he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

His words must be interpreted by their reference to the light which was then being celebrated. Of that light we read that "the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way, and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light." This was a customary mode of directing the movements of large bodies of men, whether caravans or armies. In the case of an army a tall pole was erected in front of the chief's tent, and from it a basket of fire was suspended, so that the glare of it was visible by night, and its smoke by day. The head of a marching column could thus be descried from a great distance, especially in wide level tracts with little or no vegetation and few inequalities of surface to interrupt the view. The distinctive peculiarity of the Israelitish march was that Jehovah was in the fire, and that He alone controlled its movements, and thereby the movements of the camp. When the pillar of cloud left its place and advanced the tents were struck, lest they should be separated from Jehovah and be found unfaithful to Him. During the whole course of their sojourn in the wilderness their movements were thus controlled and ordered. The beacon-fire that led them was unaffected by atmospheric influences. Dispelled by no gales,

and evaporated by no fiercest heat of the Eastern sun, it hovered in the van of the host as the guiding angel of the Lord. The guidance it gave was uninterrupted and unerring; it was never mistaken for an ordinary cloud, never so altered its shape as to become unrecognisable. And each night the flame shot up, and assured the people they might rest in peace.

Two obvious characteristics of this guiding Light must be kept in view.

1. God's people were not led by a road already made and used, and which they could have studied from beginning to end on a map before starting; but they were led day by day, and step by step, by a living guide, who chose a route never before trodden. In the morning they did not know whether they were to go forward or back, or to stay where they were. They had to wait in ignorance till their guiding pillar moved, and follow in ignorance till it halted. Our passage through life is similar. It is not a chart we are promised, but a guide. We cannot tell where next year or next month may be spent. We are not informed of any part of our future, and have no means of ascertaining the emergencies which may try us, the new ingredients which may suddenly be thrown into our life, and reveal in us what till now has lain hidden and dormant. We cannot tell by what kind of path we shall be led onwards to our end; and our security from day to day consists not at all in this, that we can penetrate the future, and see no dangers in it, but our security is that we shall always be guided by infallible and loving wisdom. We have learned a chief article of human wisdom if we have learned to leave to-morrow to God and faithfully follow Him to-day. A road as it lies in the distance often looks impassably steep, but as we approach and walk it step by step, we find it almost level and fairly easy.

2. This light was to guide, not their conduct, but their movements. All men need similar guidance. All men have practical matters to determine which often greatly perplex them; they must make a choice between one or other course of action that is possible. Steps which will determine their whole subsequent life must be taken or declined; and for the determining of such alterations in the place or mode of their life there is often felt great need of a guidance which can be entirely relied upon. Sometimes, indeed, our course is determined for us, and we are not consulted in the matter; as the pillar of fire was silent, assigning no reasons, condescending to no persuasion or argument, but simply moving forwards; passing over rugged and steep mountain ridges, past inviting and sheltered glens, offering no present explanation of the route, but justified always by the result. So we often find that our course is determined apart from our own choice, wishes, judgment, or prayers. But this we commonly resent, and crave a guidance which shall approve itself to our own judgment and yet be infallible; which shall leave us our freedom of choice, and yet carry us forwards to all possibilities of good. In fact, we would rather have our freedom of choice and the responsibility of guiding our own life, with all its risks, than be carried forward without choice of our own.

This is the great distinction between the light which Christ is and the light by which the Israelites were led from day to day. They had an external means of ascertaining promptly which



way they should go. Their whole life was circumscribed, and its place and mode determined for them. The guidance offered to us by Christ is of an inward kind. A God without might seem perfect as a guide, but a God within is the real perfection. God does not now lead us by a sign which we could follow, though we had no real sympathy with Divine ways and no wisdom of our own; but He leads us by communicating to us His own perceptions of right and wrong, by inwardly enlightening us, and by making us ourselves of such a disposition that we naturally choose what is good.

When matters difficult to handle and to manage come into our life, and when we are tempted to long for some external sign which would show us infallibly the right thing to do and the right way to follow, let this be our consolation, that this very exercise of judgment and bearing of responsibility in matters where right and wrong are not broadly distinguished are among the chief instruments for the formation of character; and that *even though we err* in the choice we make, yet by our error and by all honest effort to keep right with God in the matter, we shall certainly have made growth in ability to understand and to do what is right. No doubt it is easier to believe in a guide we can see and that moves before us like a pillar of fire; but supposing for a moment that this dispensation under which we are living is not a great deception, supposing for a moment that God is doing that one thing which He pledged Himself to do, namely, giving a Divine Spirit to men, Himself dwelling with men and in them, then we cannot fail to see that this guidance is of a much higher kind, and has much more lasting results than any external guidance could have. If, by allowing us to determine our own course and find our own way through all the hazards and perplexities of life, God is teaching us to estimate actions and their results more and more by their moral value, and if thereby He is impregnating you with His own mind and character, surely that is a much better thing than if He were keeping us in the right way merely by outward signs and irrespective of our own growth in wisdom.

Persons whose opinion is not to be lightly esteemed say that if we honestly seek God's guidance in any matter we cannot err, and have no business to reflect afterwards on our conduct as if we had made a wrong choice. I cannot think that is so. Sincere people who ask God's guidance, it seems to me, frequently make mistakes. In fact, our past mistakes are a great part of our education. Unless we are *habitually* in sympathy with God we are not infallible even in matters where a moral judgment is all that is required; and sometimes more is required of us than to say what is right and what is wrong. Other points have to be considered—points which call for a knowledge of life, of places, and professions, of the trustworthiness of other men, and a thousand matters in which we are liable to err. It is of course a great satisfaction to know that we wished to do right, even if we discover we have blundered; and it is also a satisfaction to know that God can use us for good in any position, even in that we have blundered into, although meanwhile we have lost some present good.

The light which Christ brought to the world was the light "of life." This additional description "of life" He commonly appended to

distinguish the real and eternal good He bestowed from the figure by which it had been hinted at. He calls Himself the Bread *of life*, the Water *of life*, to point out that He is really and eternally what these material things are in the present physical world. All this present constitution of things may pass away, and the time may come when men shall no longer need to be sustained by bread, but the time shall never come when they shall not need life; and this fundamental gift Christ pledges Himself evermore to give. And when He names Himself the light *of life* he indicates that it is on the true, eternal life of man He sheds light.

There may, then, be many things and important things on which Christ sheds no direct light, although there is nothing of importance on which He does not shed light indirectly. He brought into the world no direct light upon scientific questions; He did not hasten the development of art by any special light thrown on its objects and methods. There was no great need for light on such matters. These are not the distressing difficulties of human existence. Indeed, men find stimulus and joy in overcoming these difficulties, and resent being told nature's secrets, and not being allowed to find them out. But the darkness that settles on the life of the individual, and upon the condition of large classes of people through what is human, personal, and practical, is often overwhelming, and compels men to cry for light. The strange miscarriage of justice in the life of many individuals; the compulsion put upon them to sin and to disbelieve through the pressure of unceasing failure and privation; the triumph of cold-hearted villainy; the bitterness of separation and death; the impenetrable darkness of the future; the incomprehensible dimness in which the most important truths are involved—all this men find no pleasure in, but rather a torment that is sometimes maddening, often destructive of all faith, and always painful. This is the kind of darkness that causes men to sink; they run upon the rocks, and go down in darkness, no living soul hearing their cry. This is the darkness which wrings from many a heart at this moment the question of despair, "What has become of God?"

The darkness regarding conduct in which men are involved has largely a moral root. Men are blinded by their appetites and passions, so that they cannot see the best ends and enjoyments of life. It is the strong craving we have for gratifications of sense and of worldly desire that misleads us in life. As some creatures have the faculty of emitting a dark and turbid matter that discolours the water, and hides them from their pursuers, so it is a self-evolved and home-made darkness that involves us. False expectations are the atmosphere of our life; we live in an unreal world created by our own tastes and desires, which misinform us, and bid us seek the good of life where it is not to be found.

It is then this light that Christ is and brings, light upon human life, light upon all that most intimately concerns human character, human conduct, and human destiny. What each of us chiefly needs to know is, what is the best kind of human life—how can I best spend my energies, and how can I best sustain them? Are there any results of life which are satisfying and which are certain; and if so, how can I attain them? Do not all things happen alike to all; is it not with the wise man and the righteous as



with the fool? Is life worth serious devotion; will it repay what is spent upon it? Is not cynical indifference, or selfish caring for present interests, the most philosophical as well as the most pleasant and easy attitude towards life to assume? These are the questions which we find answered in Christ.

The expression, "the light of life," may, however, have a somewhat different meaning. It may mean that he who follows Christ shall have that light which accompanies, and is fed by, the life which Christ gives. At the outset of the Gospel John declared that "the Life was the light of men." And this is true in the sense that they who accept Christ as their life, and truly live in Him and by Him, walk in light and not in darkness. The clouds and gloom which overhung their life are dissipated. Their horizon is widened, their prospect cleared, and all things with which they have presently to do are seen in their true dimensions and relations. They who live with the life of Christ have a clear light regarding duty. The man who has entered into the life Christ opens to us, however slow and dull in intellect he may be, may indeed make many mistakes, but he will find his way through life, and issue from it, in his measure, triumphant.

It is further to be remarked that Jesus does not content Himself with a place beside other teachers, saying, "I will give you light," but affirms that the light is inseparable from His own person. "I am the light." By this He means, as already observed, that it is by receiving Him as our life that we have light. But His words also mean that He imparts this light not by oral teaching, but by being what He is, and living as He does. Teaching by word and precept is well, when nothing better can be had; but it is the Word made flesh that commands the attention of all. This is a language universally intelligible. "A life, the highest conceivable, on almost the lowest conceivable stage, and recorded in the simplest form, with indifference to all outward accompaniments attractive whether to the few or to the many, is set before us as the final and unalterable ideal of human life, amid all its continual and astonishing changes." It is by this life led here on earth He becomes our Light. It is by His faith maintained in the utmost of trial; His calmness and hopefulness amidst all that shrouds human life in darkness; His constant persuasion that God is in this world, present, loving, and working. It is by His habitual attitude towards this life, and towards the unseen, that we receive light to guide us. In His calmness we take refuge from our own dismay. In His hopefulness we refresh ourselves in every time of weariness. In His confidence our timorous anxieties are rebuked. Upon the darkest parts of our life there falls from Him some clear ray that brightens and directs. Thousands of His followers, in every age, have verified His words: "I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

And as the Teacher taught by living so must the scholar learn by living. Christ brings light by passing through all human experiences and situations, and "he that followeth" Him, not he that reads about Him, "shall have the light of life." There are very few men in the world who can think to much purpose on truths so abstruse and complicated as the Divinity of Christ and the Atonement and Miracles; but there is no

man so dull as not to see the difference between Christ's life and His own. Few men may be able to explain satisfactorily the relation Christ holds to God on the one hand and to us on the other; but every man who knows Christ at all even as he knows his friend or his father, is conscious that a new light falls upon sin of all kinds, upon sins of appetite and sins of temper and sins of disposition, since Christ lived. It is in this light Christ would have us walk, and if we follow as He leads on, we shall never lack the light of life. We need not be seriously disturbed about the darkness that hangs round the horizon if light falls on our own path; we need not be disturbed by our ignorance of many Divine and human things, nor by our inability to answer many questions which may be put to us, and which indeed we naturally put to ourselves, so long only as we are sure we are living so as to please and satisfy Christ. If our life runs on the lines His life marked out, we shall certainly arrive where He now is, in the happiest and highest human condition.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### *JESUS REJECTED IN JERUSALEM.*

JOHN viii. 21-59.

JOHN has now briefly detailed the self-manifestations of Jesus which He considered sufficient to induce the Jews to believe in Him; and he has shown us how, both in Galilee and in Jerusalem, the people, with few exceptions, remained unconvinced. He has also very clearly shown the reason of His rejection in Galilee. The reason was that the blessings He proposed to bestow were spiritual, while the blessings they craved were physical. Their Messianic expectation was not satisfied in Him. So long as He healed their sick, and by His mere will furnished famishing thousands with food, they thought, This is the King for us. But when He told them that these things were mere signs of higher blessings, and when He urged them to seek these spiritual gifts, they left Him in a body.

In Jerusalem opinion has followed a similar course. There also Jesus has exemplified His power to impart life. He has carefully explained the significance of that sign, and has explicitly claimed Divine prerogatives. But although individuals believe, the mass of the people are only perplexed, and the authorities are exasperated. The rulers, however, find it impossible to proceed against Him, owing to the influence He has with the people, and even with their own servants. This state of matters, however, was not destined to continue; and in the eighth chapter John traces the course of popular opinion from a somewhat hopeful perplexity to a furious hostility that, at length, for the first time, broke out in actual violence (viii. 59). Jesus did not indeed immediately retire, as if further efforts to induce faith were useless, but when the storm broke out a second time (x. 39, 40) He finally withdrew, and taught only such as sought Him out.

At this point, then, in the history we are invited to inquire what grounds of faith Jesus had presented, and what were the true reasons of His rejection.

I. But first we must ask, In what character or capacity did Jesus present Himself to men?



What did He declare Himself to be? What demand did He make on the faith of those to whom He presented Himself? When He required that they should believe in Him, what exactly did He mean? Certainly He did not mean less than that they should believe He was the Messiah, and should accept Him as such. The "Messiah" was an elastic title, perhaps not conveying to any two minds in Israel precisely the same idea. It had indeed for all Israelites some contents in common. It meant that here was One upon earth and accessible, who was sent to be the Bearer of God's good-will to men, a Mediator through whom God meant to make His presence felt and His will known. But some who believed Jesus was the Christ had so poor a conception of the Christ, that He could not accept theirs as a sound faith. The minimum of acceptable faith must believe in the actual Jesus, and allow the idea of the Christ to be formed by what was seen in Jesus. Those who believed must so trust Jesus as to be willing that He should fashion the Messiahship as He saw fit. It was therefore primarily in Himself the true believer trusted. He did not, in the first instance, believe He was this or that, but he felt, "Here is the greatest and best I know; I give myself to Him." Of course this involved that whatever Christ claimed to be, He was believed to be. But it is of importance to observe that the confession, "I believe that Jesus is the Christ," was not enough in Christ's own day to guarantee the soundness of the faith of the confessor. He had further to answer the question, "What do you mean by 'the Christ'?" For if you mean a national Messiah, coming to give you political freedom and social blessings only, this faith cannot be trusted." But if any one could say, "I believe in Jesus," and if by this he meant, "I so believe in Him that whatever He says He is, I believe He is, and whatever be the contents with which He fills the Messianic name, these contents I accept as belonging to the office," this faith was sound and acceptable.

And, according to this Gospel, Jesus at once made it plain that His idea of the Messianic office was not the popular idea. It was "eternal life" He constantly proclaimed as the gift the Father had commissioned Him to bestow; not physical life, not revived political life. So that it very shortly became impossible for any one to make the confession that Jesus was the Christ, in ignorance of what He Himself judged the Christ to be. It may be said, therefore, that when Jesus required men to believe in Him, He meant that they should trust Him as mediating efficiently between God and them, and should accept His view of all that was needful for this mediation. He meant that they should look to Him for life eternal and for perfect fellowship with God. What was doctrinally involved in this, what was implied in His claim regarding His eternal nature, might or might not at once be understood. What must be understood and believed was, that Jesus was empowered by God to act for Him, to represent Him, to impart to men all that God would impart.

II. This being so, we may now inquire, what sufficient reason Jesus, as already reported in this Gospel, has given why the people should accept Him as the Christ. In these eight chapters what do we find related which should have furnished the Jews with all the evidence which reasonable minds would require?

1. He was definitely identified as the Christ by the Baptist. It was John's function to recognise the person sent by God to fulfil all His will, and to found a kingdom of God among men. For this John lived; and if any man was in a position to say "yes" or "no" in response to the question, Is this the Christ, the Anointed and commissioned of God? John was that man. No man was in himself better qualified to judge, and no man had such material for judging, and his judgment was explicit and assured. To put aside this testimony as valueless is out of the question. It is more reasonable to ask whether it is even possible that in this matter the Baptist should be mistaken.

Jesus Himself indeed did not rest upon this testimony. For His own certification of His dignity He did not require it. He did not require the corroborative voice of one human being. It was not by what He was told regarding Himself that He became conscious of His Sonship; nor was it by an external testimony, even from such a man as John, that He was encouraged to make the claims He made. John was but a mirror reflecting what was already in Him, possibly stimulating self-consciousness, but adding nothing to His fitness for His work.

2. He expected that His claim to have come forth from God would be believed *on His own word*. The Samaritans believed Him on His own word. This does not mean that they believed a mere assertion; they believed the assertion of One whom they felt to be speaking the truth. There was that in His character and bearing which compelled their faith. Through all He said there shone the self-evidencing light of truth. They might not have been able to stand a cross-examination as to the reason of the faith that was in them, they might not have been able to satisfy any other person or induce him to believe, but they were justified in following an instinct which said to them, This man is neither deceiver nor deceived. There was nothing in the claim of Jesus absolutely incredible. Nay, it rather fell in with their idea of God and with the knowledge of their own needs. They wished a revelation, and saw nothing impossible in it. This may nowadays be judged a homely rather than a philosophical view to take of God and of His relation to men. But primary and universal instincts have their place, and, if scientific knowledge does not contradict them, should be trusted. It was because the Samaritans had not tampered with their natural cravings and hopes, and had not allowed their idea of the Messiah to harden into a definite conception, that they were able to welcome Jesus with a faith which He rarely met with elsewhere.

And the main authentication of Christ's claim at all times is simply this, that He makes the claim, and that there is that in Him which testifies to His truth, while there is that in the claim itself which is congruous to our instincts and needs. There was that in the bearing of Christ which commanded belief in natures which were not numbed and blunted by prejudice. The Capernaum courtier who came to Jesus expecting to bring Him down with him to heal his boy, when he saw Him felt he could trust Him, and returned alone. Jesus was conscious that He spoke of what He knew, and spoke of it truly. "I speak that which I have seen with My Father" (ver. 38). "My record is true" (ver. 14). "If I say the truth, why do ye not believe



Me?" (ver. 46). This consciousness, both of an intention to speak the truth and of a knowledge of the truth, in a mind so pellucid and sane, justly impressed candid minds in His own day, and is irresistibly impressive still.

Again, we judge of what is probable or improbable, credible or incredible, mainly by its congruity with our previous belief. Is our idea of God such that a personal revelation seems credible and even likely? Does this supposed revelation in Christ consist with previous revelations and with the knowledge of God and His will which those revelations have fostered? Does this final revelation actually bring us the knowledge of God, and does it satisfy the longings and pure aspirations, the thirst for God and the hunger for righteousness, which assert themselves in us like natural appetites? If so, then the untutored human heart accepts this revelation. It is its own verification. Light is its own authentication. Christ brings within our ken a God whom we cannot but own as God, and who is nowhere else so clearly revealed. It is this immediacy of authentication, this self-verification, to which our Lord constantly appeals.

3. But a great part of the self-revelation of Christ could best be made in action. Such a work as the healing of the impotent man was visible to all and legible by the dullest. If His words were sometimes enigmatic, such an action as this was full of significance and easily understood. By this compassionate restoration of the vital powers He proclaimed Himself the Father's Delegate, commissioned to express the Divine compassion and to exercise the Divine power to communicate life. This was meant to be an easy lesson by which men might learn that God is full of compassion, ceaselessly working for the good of men; that He is present among us seeking to repair the mischief resulting from sin, and to apply to our needs the fulness of His own life, and that Jesus Christ is the medium through whom He makes Himself accessible to us and available for us.

These works were done by our Lord not only to convince the people that they should listen to Him, but also to convince them that God Himself was present. "If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not. But if I do, though ye believe not Me, believe the works, that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in Me, and I in Him." It was this He strove to impress on the people, that God was with them. It was not Himself He wished them to recognise, but the Father in Him. "I seek not Mine own glory" (ver. 50). And therefore it was the kindness of the works He pointed to: "Many good works have I showed you from My Father" (x. 32). He sought through these works to lead men to see how in His Person the Father was applying Himself to the actual needs of mankind. To accept God for one purpose is to accept Him for all. To believe in Him as present to heal naturally leads to belief in Him as our Friend and Father. Hence these signs, manifesting the presence and goodwill of God, were a call upon men to trust Him and accept His messenger. They spoke of gifts still more akin to the Divine nature, of gifts not merely physical, but spiritual and eternal. Possibly in allusion to these intelligible and earthly signs our Lord said to Nicodemus, "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?" If ye are

blind to these earthly signs, what hope is there of your understanding things eternal in their own impalpable essence?

III. What were the true reasons of our Lord's rejection?

1. The first reason, no doubt, was that He so thoroughly disappointed the popular Messianic expectation. This comes out very conspicuously in His rejection in Galilee, where the people were on the point of crowning Him, but at once deserted Him as soon as it became clear that His idea of the needs of men was quite different from theirs. The same reason lies at the root of His rejection by the authorities and people of Jerusalem. This is brought out in this eighth chapter. "Many had believed on Him" (ver. 30); that is to say, they believed on Him as Nicodemus had believed; they believed He was the Christ. But as soon as He explained to them (vers. 32, 34) that the freedom He brought was a freedom attained through knowing the truth, a freedom from sin, they either were unable to understand Him or were repelled, and from believers became enemies and assailants.

It may have been with reluctance our Lord disclosed to those who had some faith in Him, that in order to be His disciples (ver. 31) they must accept His word, and find in it the freedom He proclaimed. He knew that this was not the freedom they sought. But it was compulsory that He should leave them in no doubt regarding the blessings He promised. It was impossible that they should accept the eternal life He brought to them, unless there was quickened within them some genuine desire for it. For what prevented them from receiving Him was not a mere easily rectified blunder about the Messianic office, it was an alienation in heart from a spiritual conception of God. And accordingly, in depicting the climax of unbelief, John is careful in this chapter to bring out that our Lord traced His rejection by the Jews to their inveterate repugnance to spiritual life, and their consequent blinding of themselves to the knowledge of God. "He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God" (ver. 47). "Ye seek to kill Me, because My word hath no place in you [finds no room in you]. I speak that which I have seen with My Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father" (vv. 37, 38).

2. Here, as elsewhere, therefore, our Lord traces the unbelief of the Jews to the blindness induced by alienation from the Divine. They do not understand Him, because they have not that thirst for truth and righteousness which is the best interpreter of His words. "Why do ye not understand My speech? even because ye cannot bear My word." It was this word of His, the truth regarding sin and the way out of it, which sifted men. Those who eagerly welcomed salvation from sin because they knew that bondage to sin was the worst of bondages (ver. 34), accepted Christ's word, and continued in it, and so became His disciples (ver. 31). Those who rejected Him were prompted to do so by their indifference to the Kingdom of God as exhibited in the person of Christ. He was not their ideal. And He was not their ideal, because however much they boasted of being God's people God was not their ideal. "If God were your Father, ye would love Me; for I proceeded forth and came from God" (ver. 42). Jesus is conscious of adequately representing God, so that to be



repelled by Him is to be repelled by God. It is really God in Him that they dislike. This is not only His own judgment of the matter. It is not a mere fancy of His own that He truly represents the Father, for "neither came I of Myself, but He sent me." He was sent into the world because He could represent the Father.

The rejection of Jesus by the Jews was therefore due to their moral condition. Their condition is such that our Lord does not scruple pungently to say, "Ye are of your father the devil." Their blindness to the truth and virulent opposition to Him proved their kinship with him who was from the beginning a liar and a murderer. They are so completely under the influence of sin that they are unable to appreciate emancipation from it. They look for satisfaction so determinedly in an anti-spiritual direction, that they are positively enraged at One who certainly has power, but who steadfastly uses it for spiritual purposes. Out of this condition they can be rescued by believing in Christ. Into the mystery which surrounds the possibility that such a belief should be cherished by any one in this condition, our Lord does not here enter. That it is possible He implies by blaming them for not believing.

It is, then, those who are unconscious of the bondage of sin who reject Christ. One of the sayings with which He sifted His profoundly attached followers from the mass is this: "If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." The "word" of which Jesus here speaks is His whole revelation, all He taught by word and action, by His own habitual conduct and by His miracles. This it is which gives knowledge of the truth. That is to say, all the truth which men require for living they have in Christ. All knowledge of duty, and all that knowledge of our spiritual relations, out of which we can draw perennial motive and un-failing hope, we have in Him. The "truth" disclosed in Christ, and which emancipates from sin, must not be too carefully defined. But while leaving it in all its comprehensiveness, it must be noted that the truth which especially emancipates from sin and gives us our place as children in God's house, is the truth revealed in Christ's Sonship, the truth that God, in love and forgiveness, claims us as His children. In its own measure every truth we learn gives us a sense of liberty. The truth emancipates from superstition, from timorous waiting upon the opinion of authorities, from all that cramps mental movement and stunts mental growth; but the freedom here in view is freedom from sin, and the truth which brings that freedom is the truth about God our Father, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent.

## CHAPTER XX.

### SIGHT GIVEN TO THE BLIND.

#### JOHN ix.

WE have already considered the striking use our Lord made of the Temple illumination to proclaim Himself the Light of the world. A still more striking physical symbol of this aspect of our Lord's person and work is found in His

healing of the blind man. It is, as we have already had occasion to see, the manner of this evangelist to select for narration those miracles of Christ's which are especially "signs," outward embodiments of spiritual truth. Accordingly he now proceeds to exhibit Christ as the Light of the world in His bestowal of sight on the blind.

The disciples of Jesus had apparently been exercised by one of the outstanding problems of human life which perplex all thoughtful men: What regulates the distribution of suffering? why it is that while many of the most criminal and noxious men are prosperous and exempt from pain, many of the gentlest and best are broken and tortured by constant suffering? Why is it that inexplicable suffering seems so often to fall on the wrong people, on the innocent, not on the guilty; on those who already are of refined and chastened disposition, not on those who seem urgently to need correction and the rod? Is suffering sent that character may be improved? But in Job's case it was sent because he was already irreproachable, not to make him so. Is it sent because of a man's early transgressions? But this man was *born* blind; his punishment preceded any possible transgression of his own. Was he then the victim of his parent's wrongdoing? But suffering is often the result of accident or of malice, or of mistake, which cannot be referred to hereditary sin. Are we then to accept the belief that this world is far from perfect as yet; that God begins at the beginning in all His works, and only slowly works towards perfection, and that in the progress, and while we are only moving towards an eternal state, there must be pains manifold and bitter? They are the shavings and sawdust and general disorder of the carpenter's workshop, which are necessarily thrown off in the making of the needful article.\* It is to it, to the finished work, we must look, and not to the shavings, if we would understand and be reconciled to the actual state of things around us.

When Jesus said, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him," He of course did not mean to suggest that there is no such thing as suffering for individual or hereditary sin. By breaking the great moral laws of human life men constantly involve both themselves and their children in life-long suffering. There is often so direct a connection between sin and suffering that the most hardened and insensible do not dream of denying that their pain and misery are self-inflicted. Sometimes the connection is obscure, and though every one else sees the source of a man's misfortunes in his own careless habits, or indolence, or bad temper, he himself may constantly blame his circumstances, his ill-luck, his partners, or his friends. It was our Lord's intention to warn the disciples against a curious and uncharitable scrutiny of any man's life to find the cause of his misfortunes. We have to do rather with the future than with the past, rather with the question how we can help the man out of his difficulties than with the question how he got himself into them. The one question may indeed be involved in the other, but all suffering is, in the first place, a field in which the works of God may be exhibited. Wherever suffering has come from, there can be no manner of doubt that it calls out all that is best in human nature—sympathy, self-de-

\* See the "Meditations" of Marcus Aurelius.



nial, gentleness, compassion, forgiveness of spirit, patient forbearance, all that is most Divine in man. To seek for the cause of suffering in order to blame, and exonerate ourselves from all responsibility and claim on our pity and charity, is one thing, quite another to inquire into the cause for the sake of more effectually dealing with the effect. No matter what has caused the suffering, here certainly it is always with us, and what we have to do with it is to find in it material and opportunity for a work of God. To rid the world of evil, of wretchedness, lonely sorrow, destitution, and disease is, if anything, the work of God; if God is doing anything He is carrying the world on towards perfection, and if the world is ever to be perfect it must be purged from agony and wretchedness, irrespective of where these come from. Our duty, then, if we would be fellow-workers with God in what is real and abiding, is plain.

To the work of healing the blind man Jesus at once applies Himself. While the lifted stones were yet in His pursuers' hands He paused to express His Father's love. He must, He says, work the works of Him who sent Him. He represented the Father not mechanically, not by getting well off by rote the task His Father had set Him, not by a studied imitation, but by being Himself of one mind with the Father, by loving that blind man just as the Father loved him, and by doing for him just what the Father would have done for him. We do the works of God when in our measure we do the same, becoming eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, help any way to the helpless. We cannot lay our hand on the diseased and heal them; we cannot give sight to the blind and make a man thus feel, this is God's power reaching me; this is God stooping to me and caring for my infirmity; but we can cause men to feel that God is thinking of them, and has sent help through us to them. If we will only be humble enough to run the risk of failure, and of being held cheap, if we will only in sincerity take by the hand those who are ill-off and strive to better them, then these persons will think of God gratefully; or if they do not, there is no better way of making them think of God, for this was Christ's way; who had rarely need to add much explanation to His kind deeds, but letting them speak for themselves, heard the people giving God the glory. If men can be induced to believe in the love of their fellow-men, they are well on the road to belief in the love of God. And even though it should *not* be so, though all *our* endeavours to help men should fail to make them think of God as their helper, who has sent us and all help to them, yet we have helped them, and some at least of God's love for these suffering people has got itself expressed through us. God has got at least a little of His work done, has in one direction stopped the spread of evil.

Neither are we to wait until we can do things on a great scale, and attack the evils of human life with elaborate machinery. Our Lord was not a great organiser. He did not busy Himself with forming societies for this, that, and the other charitable work. He did not harangue assemblies convened to consider the relief of the poor; He did not press the abolition of slavery; He did not found orphanages or hospitals; but "as He passed by," He saw one blind man, and judged this a call sufficiently urgent. Sometimes we feel that, confronted as we are with a whole

world full of deep-rooted and inveterate evils, it is useless giving assistance to an individual here and there. It is like trying to dry up the ocean with a sponge. We feel impatient with individual acts, and crave national action and radical measures. And that is very well, so long as we do not omit to use the opportunities we actually have of doing even little kindnesses, of undergirding the shattered life of individuals, and so enabling them to do what otherwise they could not do. But we shall never do our part, either to individuals or on a large scale, until we apprehend that it is only through us and others that God works, and that when we pass by a needy person we prevent God's love from reaching him, and disappoint the purpose of God. It was this feeling that imparted to Christ so intense and wakeful an energy. He felt it was God's work He was on earth to do. "I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day." He recognised that God was in the world looking with compassion on all human sorrow, but that this compassion could find expression only through His own instrumentality and that of all other men. We are the channels or pipes through which the inexhaustible source of God's goodness flows to the world; but it is in our power to turn off that flow, and prevent it from reaching those for whom it is intended. We do less than we ought for our fellow-men until we believe that we are the bearers of God's gifts to men; that to however few a number and in however small a way we are the media through which God finds way for His love to men, and that if we refuse to do what we can we disappoint and thwart His love and His purpose of good.

The blind man, with the quickened hearing of the blind, heard with interest the talk about himself; and a new awe fell upon his spirit as he heard that his blindness was to be the object of a work of God. He had learned to judge of men by the tones of their voice; and the firm, clear, penetrating voice which had just uttered these all-important words, "I am the Light of the world," could not, he knew, belong to a deceiver. In other ways also Jesus compensated for his lack of sight, and encouraged his faith by touching him and by laying on the closed eyes an extemporised ointment. But the miracle was not completed on the spot. The patient was required to go to the pool of Siloam and wash. John tells us that the name Siloam means Sent, and evidently connects this name with the claim Jesus constantly made to be the Sent of God.

But as the peculiarity of the miracle consisted in this, that the man was sent to the pool to be healed, we may be sure this arrangement was made to meet some element in the case. The man, with his bespattered eyes, had to grope his way to the pool, or get some kindly soul to lead him through the scoffing, doubting crowd. And whatever this taught the man himself, it is to us a symbol of the truth that light does not come by the instantaneous touch of Christ's hand so much as by our faithfully doing His bidding. It is He who gives and is the light; but it does not stream in suddenly upon the soul, but comes upon the man who, though blindly, yet faithfully, gropes his way to the place Christ has bid him to, and uses the means prescribed by Him. "He that doeth the will of God shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." All the commands of Christ are justified in their perform-



ance; and clear light upon the meaning of much that we are commanded to do is only found in the doing of it.

But no doubt the special significance of the man's being sent to the pool of Siloam lay in the circumstance that it was in John's eyes a symbol of Christ Himself. He was sent by God. The people found it difficult to believe this, because He had slowly and unostentatiously grown up like any other man. "We know this Man, whence He is." "Is not this the carpenter's Son?" "How sayest Thou, I came down from heaven?" They could trace Him to His source. He did not appear full-grown in their midst, without home, without any one who watched over His boyhood and growth. He was like the river whose sources were known, not like the stream bursting in full volume from the rock. The people felt ashamed to laud and celebrate as sent by God One who had grown up so quietly among themselves, and whose whole demeanour was so unostentatious. So had their fathers despised the waters of Siloam, "because they went softly;" because there was no mighty stream and roar, but a quiet pool and a little murmuring stream.

So might this blind man have reasoned when sent to Siloam: "Why, herein is a marvellous thing that I am to be healed by what has been within my reach since I was born, by the pool I used to dip my hand in when a boy, and wonder what like was the coolness to the sight. What hidden virtue can there be in that spring? Am I not exposing myself to the ridicule of all Jerusalem?" But, as this blind man's conduct afterwards showed, he was heedless of scorn and independent of other people's opinion, a fearless and trenchant reasoner who stands alone in the Gospel history for the firmness and sarcasm with which he resisted the bullying tone of the Pharisees, and compelled them to face, even though they would not acknowledge, the consequences of incontrovertible facts. This characteristic contempt of contempt, and scorn of scorn served him well now, for straight he went to the pool in the face of discouragements, and had his reward.

And the Pharisees might, with their gift of interpreting trifles, have deduced from this cure at the humble and noiseless Siloam some suggestion that Jesus did seem a powerless and common Man, and though for thirty years His life had been flowing quietly on without violently changing the established order of things, yet He might, like this pool, be the Sent of God, to whom if a man came, feeling his need of light and expecting in Him to find it, there was a likelihood of his blindness being taken away. This, however, as our Lord had afterwards occasion to tell them, was precisely what they could not submit to do. They could not, in the presence of a wondering and scorning crowd, admit that they needed light, nor could they condescend to seek for light from so commonplace a source. And no doubt it was a very severe trial—it was well-nigh impossible, that men in high esteem for religious knowledge, and who had been accustomed to reckon themselves the protectors of the faith, should own that they were in darkness, and should seek to be instructed by a youth from the benighted district of Galilee. Even now, when the dignity of Jesus is understood, many are prevented from giving themselves cordially to the life He insists upon by mere pride.

There are men in such repute as leaders of opinion, and so accustomed to teach rather than to learn, and to receive homage rather than to give it, that scarcely any greater humiliation could be required of them, than to publicly profess themselves followers of Christ. For ourselves even, who might not seem to have much on which to pride ourselves, it is yet sometimes difficult to believe that a mere application to Christ, a mere sprinkling of this fountain, can change our in-born disposition, and make us so different from our former selves, that close observers might well doubt our identity, some saying, "This is he," others more cautiously only venturing to assert, "He is like him."

Though very pleasant to contemplate, it is impossible adequately to imagine the sensations of a man who for the first time *sees* the world in which he has for years been living blind. The sensation of light itself, the new sense of room and distance, the expansion of the nature, as if ushered into a new and ampler world, the glory of colour, of the skies, of the sun, of the moon walking in brightness, the first recognition of the "human face Divine," and the joy of watching the unspoken speech of its ever-changing expression, the thrill of first meeting parent, child, or friend eye to eye; the sublimity of the towers of Jerusalem, the glittering Temple, the marble palaces, by the base of which he had before dimly crept, feeling with his hand or tapping with his stick. To a man who, by the opening of one sealed sense, was thus ushered into so new a world, nothing can have seemed "too grand and good" for him to expect. He was prepared to believe in the glory and perfectness of God's world, and in Christ's power to bring him into contact with that glory. If the opening of his bodily organs of vision had given him such exquisite pleasure, and given him entrance to so new a life, what might not the opening of his inward eye accomplish? He had no patience with the difficulties raised by those who had not his experience: "How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?" "Give God the praise; we know that this man is a sinner." To all these slow-brained, bewildered pedants, he had but one answer, "Whether He be a sinner or no, I know not; *one* thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." No arguments, happily, can rob me of the immense boon this Man has conferred upon me. If it gives you any satisfaction to apply your paltry tests to Him, and prove that He cannot have done this miracle, you are welcome to your conclusions; but you cannot alter the facts that I was blind, and that now I see. He who has given me so Divine a gift seems to me to carry with Him in some true form the Divine presence. I believe Him when He says, "I am the Light of the world."

This miracle was so public as to challenge scrutiny. It was not performed in the privacy of a sick-room, with none present but one or two disciples, who might be supposed ready to believe anything. It was performed on a public character and in broad day. And we nowadays may congratulate ourselves that there was a strong party in the community whose interest it was to minimise the miracles of our Lord, and who certainly did what they could to prove them fictitious. In the case of this blind man, the authorities took steps to sift the matter; the parents were summoned, and then the man him-



self. They did precisely what sceptical writers in recent years have desiderated; they instituted a jealous examination of the affair. And so straightforward was the man's testimony, and so well-known was he in Jerusalem, that instead of denying the miracle, they adopted the easier course of excommunicating him for acknowledging Jesus as the Christ.

Ready-witted, bold, and independent as this man was, he cannot but have felt keenly this punishment. His hope of employment was gone, and even his new joy in seeing would scarcely compensate for his being shunned by all as a tainted person. Had he been of a fainthearted and moody disposition he might have thought it had been as well had he been left in his blindness, and not become an object of abhorrence to all. But Jesus heard of his punishment, and sought him out, and declared to him more fully who He Himself was. He thus gave to the man assurance of a friendship outweighing in value what he had lost. He made him feel that though cut off from the fellowship of the visible Church, he was made a member of the true commonwealth of men—numbered among those who are united in friendship, and in work, and in destiny to Him who heads the real work of God, and promotes the abiding interests of men. And such is ever the reward of those who make sacrifices for Christ, who lose employment or friends by too boldly confessing their indebtedness to Him. They will themselves tell you that Christ makes up to them for their losses by imparting clearer knowledge of Himself, by making them conscious that they are remembered by Him, and by giving them a conscience void of offence, and a spirit superior to worldly misfortunes.

As a final reflection on the miracle and its results our Lord says: "For judgment am I come into the world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind." A kind of sad humour betrays itself in His language as He sees how easily felt-blindness is removed, but how absolutely blind presumed knowledge is. Humility ever wins the day. The blind man now saw because he knew he was blind, and trusted that Christ could give him sight; the Pharisees were stone-blind to the world Christ opened to them and carried in His person, because they thought that already they had all the knowledge they required. And wherever Christ comes men thus form themselves around him in two groups, blind and seeing. "For judgment" for testing and dividing men, He is come. Nothing goes more searchingly into a man's character than Christ's offer to be to him the Light of life, to be his leader to a perfect life. This offer discloses what the man is content with, and what he really sighs for. This offer, which confronts us with the possibility of living in close fellowship and love with God, discloses whether our real bent is towards what is pure, and high, and holy, or towards what is earthly. This man who eagerly asked, "Who is the Son of God that I might believe on Him?" acknowledged his blindness and his longing for light, and he got it. The Pharisees, who claimed to see, condemned themselves by their rejection of Christ. "If," says our Lord, "ye were blind, if you were ignorant like this poor man, your ignorance would excuse you. But now ye say, We see, you boast that you can discern the Christ, you have tests

of all kinds that you plume yourselves on, therefore your darkness and your sin remain." That is to say, the one sufficient test of Christ's claim is need. He presents Himself as the Light of the world, but if we are unconscious of darkness we cannot appreciate Him. But surely there are many of us who feel as if we were born blind, unable to see things spiritual as we ought; as if we had a sense too little, and could not find our way satisfactorily through this life. We hear of God with the hearing of the ear, but do not see Him; we have not the close and unmistakable discernment that comes by sight.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### *JESUS, THE GOOD SHEPHERD.*

#### JOHN X. 1-18.

THIS paragraph continues the conversation which arose out of the healing of the blind man. Jesus has pointed out to the Pharisees that they are affected with a more deplorable blindness than the born-blind beggar; He now proceeds to contrast their harsh treatment of the healed man with His own care of him, and uses this contrast as evidence of the illegitimacy of their usurpation of authority and the legitimacy of His own claim. It has been related (ix. 34) that the Jews had excommunicated the blind man because he had presumed to think for himself, and acknowledge the Christ One regarding whom they had quietly enacted (ver. 22) that if any one acknowledged Him he should be banished from the synagogue. Very naturally the poor man would feel that this was a heavy price to pay for his eyesight. Brought up as he had been to consider the ecclesiastical authorities of Jerusalem as representing the Divine voice, he would feel that this excommunication cut him off from fellowship with all good men, and from the sources of a hopeful and godly life. Therefore, in pity for this poor sheep, and in indignation at those who thus assumed authority, Jesus explicitly declares, "I am the door." Not through the word of men who tyrannise over the flock to serve their own ends are you either admitted to or debarred from the real sources of spiritual life and fellowship with the true and good. Through Me only can you find access to permanent security and the free enjoyment of all spiritual nutriment: "By Me if any man enter in he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."

The primary object, then, of this allegorical passage is to impart to those who believe in Jesus the truest independence of spirit. This our Lord accomplishes by explicitly claiming for Himself the sole right of admission or rejection from the true fold of God's people. He comes into direct collision with the ecclesiastical authorities, denying that they are the true spiritual guides of the people, and presenting Himself as the supreme authority in matters spiritual. This uncompromising assertion of His own authority He makes in parabolic language; but that no one may misapprehend His meaning He Himself appends the interpretation. And in this interpretation it will be observed that, while the great ideas are explained and applied, there is no attempt to make these ideas square with the figure in every particular. In the figure, for example, the Door and the Shepherd are neces-



sarily distinct; but our Lord does not on that account scruple to apply both figures to Himself. The rigidly logical explanation is thrown to the winds to make way for the substantial teaching.

I. First, then, Jesus here claims to be the sole means of access to security and life eternal. "I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." Prompted by consideration for the feelings of the blind man, this expression would by him be interpreted as meaning, These arrogant Pharisees, then, can after all do me no injury; they can neither exclude nor admit; but only this Person, who has shown Himself so compassionate, so courageous, so ready to be my champion and my friend. He is the door. And this simple and memorable claim has remained through all the Christian centuries the bulwark against ecclesiastical tyranny, not indeed preventing injustice and outrage, but entirely robbing excommunication of its sting in the conscience that is right with its Lord. Outcast from the fellowship and privileges of so-called Churches of Christ many have been, who had yet the assurance in their own heart that by their attachment to Him they had entered into a more lasting fellowship and unspeakably higher privileges.

By this claim to be the Door, Jesus claims to be the Founder of the one permanent society of men. Through Him alone have men access to a position of security, to association with all that is worthiest among men, to a never-failing life and a boundless freedom. He did not use His words at random, and this at least is contained in them. He gathers men round His Person, and assures us that He holds the key to life; that if He admits us, words of exclusion pronounced by others are but idle breath; that if He excludes us, the approval and applause of the world will not waft us in. No claim could possibly be greater.

II. Jesus also claims to be the Good Shepherd, and sets Himself in contrast to hirelings and robbers. This claim he proves in five particulars: He uses a legitimate mode of access to the sheep; His object is the welfare of the sheep; His Spirit is self-devoted; He knows and is known by His sheep; and all He does the Father has given Him commandment to do.

1. First, then, Jesus proves His claim to be the Good Shepherd by using the legitimate means of access to the sheep. He enters by the door. The general description of the relation between sheep and shepherd was drawn from what might be seen any morning in Palestine. At night the sheep are driven into a fold, that is, a walled enclosure, such as may be seen on our own sheep farms, only with higher walls for protection, and with a strongly-barred door in place of a hurdle or light gate. Here the sheep rest all night, guarded by a watchman or porter. In the morning the shepherds come, and at the recognised signal or knock are admitted by the porter, and each man calls his own sheep. The sheep, knowing his voice, follow him, and if any are lazy, or stubborn, or stupid, he goes in and drives them out, with a gentle, kindly compulsion. A stranger's voice they do not recognise, and do not heed. Besides, not only do they disregard a stranger's voice, but the porter also would do so, so that no robber thinks of appealing to the porter, but climbs the wall and lays hold of the sheep he wants.

Here, then, we have a picture of the legitimate

and illegitimate modes of finding access to men and of gaining power over them. The legitimate leader of men comes by the door and invites: the illegitimate gets in anyhow and compels. The true shepherd is distinguished from the robber by both the action of the porter and the action of the sheep. But who is the porter who gives Christ access to the fold? Possibly, as some have suggested, the mind of Christ's contemporaries would revert to John the Baptist. The claim of Jesus to deal with men as their spiritual protector and leader had been legitimated by John, and no other pretended Messiah had been. And certainly, if any individual is indicated by the porter, it must be John the Baptist. But probably the figure includes all that introduces Jesus to men, His own life, His miracles, His loving words, providential circumstances. At all events, He makes His appeal openly, and has the requisite pass-word. There is nothing of the thief or the robber about His approach—nothing underhand or stealthy, nothing audaciously violent. On the other hand, "All that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers." The contemporary authorities in Jerusalem had come "before" Jesus, in so far as they had prepossessed the minds of the people against Him, and forcibly kept the sheep from Him. Their prior claims were the great obstacle to His being admitted. They held the fold against Him. It must have been plain to the people who heard His words that their own ecclesiastical authorities were meant. And this is not contradicted by the added clause, "but the sheep did not hear them." For these usurping leaders did not find the ear of the people, although they terrified them into obedience.

2. The Good Shepherd is identified and distinguished from the hireling by His object and His spirit of devotion—for these two characteristics may best be considered together (vv. 10-13). The hireling takes up this business of shepherding for his own sake, and just as he might take to keeping swine, or watching vineyards, or making bricks. It is not the work nor the sheep he has any interest in, but the pay. It is for himself he does what he does. His object is to make gain for himself, and his spirit is therefore a spirit of self-regard. Necessarily he flees from danger, having more regard for himself than for the sheep. The object of the good shepherd, on the contrary, is to find for the sheep a more abundant life. It is regard for them that draws him to the work. Consequently, as all love is self-devoting, so the regard of the shepherd for the sheep prompts him to devote himself, and, at the risk or expense of his own life, to save them from danger.

This differentiation of the hireling and the good shepherd was, in the first instance, exemplified in the different conduct of the authorities and Jesus towards the blind man. The authorities having fallen into the idea which commonly ensnares ecclesiastical magnates, that the people existed for them, not they for the people, persecuted him because he had followed his conscience: Jesus, by interposing in his favour, risked his own life. This collision with the Pharisees materially contributed to their determination to put Him to death.

Probably our Lord intended that a larger meaning should be found in His words. To all His sheep He acts the part of a good shepherd by



interposing, at the sacrifice of Himself, between them and all that threatens (vv. 17, 18). His death was voluntary, not necessitated either by the machinations of men or by His being human. His life was His own, to use as He saw best; and when He laid it down He did so freely. It was not that He succumbed to the wolf, to any power stronger than His own will and His own discernment of what was right. We may resign ourselves to death or choose it; but even though we did not, we could not escape it. Christ could. He "laid down" His life; and He did so, moreover, that He might "take it again." His sheep were not to be left defenceless, shepherdless: on the contrary, He died that He might free them from all danger and become to them an ever-living, omnipresent Shepherd. In these words the figure is lost in the reality.

In the words themselves, indeed, there is no direct suggestion that the penalty of sin is that which chiefly threatens Christ's sheep, but Christ could hardly use the words, and His people can hardly read them, without having this idea suggested. It was by interposing between us and sin that our Shepherd was slain. At first sight, indeed, we seem to be exposed to the very danger that slew the Shepherd: the wolf seems to be alive even after slaying Him. In spite of His death, we also die. What, then, is the danger from which He by His death has saved us?

The danger which threatened us was not bodily death, for from that we are not delivered. But it was something with which the death of the body is intimately connected. Bodily death is as it were the symptom, but not the disease itself. It is that which reveals the presence of the pestilence, but is not itself the real danger. It is like the plague-spot that causes the beholder to shudder, though the spot itself is only slightly painful. Now a skilful physician does not treat symptoms, does not apply his skill to allay superficial distresses, but endeavours to remove the radical disease. If the eye becomes bloodshot he does not treat the eye, but the general system. If an eruption comes out on the skin, he does not treat the skin, but alters the condition of the blood; and it is a small matter whether the symptom goes on to its natural issue, if thereby the eradication of the disease is rather helped than hindered. So it is with death: it is not our danger; no man can suppose that the mere transference from this state to another is injurious; only, death is in our case the symptom of a deep disease, of a real, fatal ailment of soul. We know death not as a mere transference from one world to another, but as our transference from probation to judgment, which sin makes us dread; and also as a transference which in form forcibly exhibits the weakness, the imperfection, the shame of our present state. Thus death connects itself with sin, which our conscience tells us is the great root of all our present misery. It is to us the symptom of the punishment of sin, but the punishment itself is not the death of the body, but of the soul; the separation of the soul from all good, from all hope,—in a word, from God. This is the real danger from which Christ delivers us. If this be removed, it is immaterial whether bodily death remain or not; or rather, bodily death is used to help out our complete deliverance, as a symptom of the disease sometimes promotes the cure. Christ has tasted death for every man, and out of each man's cup has sucked the poison, so that

now, as we in turn drink it, it is but a sleeping draught. There was a chemistry in His love and perfect obedience which drew the poison to His lips; and absorbing into His own system all the virulence of it, by the immortal vigour of His own constitution, He overcame its effects, and rose again triumphing over its lethargic potency.

It was not mere bodily death, then, which our Lord endured. That was not the wolf which the Good Shepherd saved us from. It was death with the sting of sin in it. It is this fact which shows us, from one point of view, the place of Christ's death in the work of atonement. Death sets the seal on a man's spiritual condition. It utters the final word: He that is holy, let him be holy still; he that is filthy, let him be filthy still. The biblical view of death is that it marks the transition from a state of probation to a state of retribution. "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after death the judgment." There is no coming back again to make another preparation for judgment. We cannot have two lives, one after the flesh, and another after the spirit, but one life, one death, one judgment. Bodily death therefore thus becomes not only the evidence of spiritual death, but its seal. But this, falling upon Christ, fell harmless. Separation from God must be separation of the will, separation accomplished by the soul's self. In Christ there was no such separation. Sinners abide in death, because not only are they judicially separated, but they are in will and disposition separate. Plunge iron and wood into water: the one sinks, the other rises immediately, cannot be kept under, has a native buoyancy of its own that brings it to the surface, immerse it as often as we please. And Christ is as the wood cut by the prophet, that not only floats itself, but brings to the surface the heaviest weight.

3. It is the mutual recognition of sheep and shepherd which decisively exhibits the difference between the true shepherd and the robber. The timid animals that start and flee at the sound of a stranger's voice suffer their own shepherd to come among them and handle them. As the ownership of a dog is easily determined by his conduct towards two claimants, at one of whom he growls and round the other of whom he joyously barks and jumps; so you can tell who is the shepherd and who is the stranger by the different way in which a sheep behaves in the presence of each. If a shepherd's claim were doubtful, it might be settled either by his familiarity with its marks and ways, or by its familiarity with him, its sufferance of his hand, its answer to his voice. Christ stakes His claim on a similar mutual recognition. If the soul does not respond to His call and follow Him, He will admit that His claim is ill-founded. He may require to enter the fold, to rouse the slumbering by a tap of His staff, to lift the sickly, to use a measure of severity with the dull and slow; but ultimately and mainly He bases His claim to be the true Leader and Lord of men simply on His power to attract them to Him. If there is not that in Him which causes us to mark Him off from all other persons, and makes us expect different things from Him, and causes us to trust ourselves with Him, then He does not expect that any other force will draw us to acknowledge Him.

The application of this to the attitude the blind man had assumed towards the Pharisees and



towards Jesus was sufficiently obvious. He had disowned the Pharisees; he had acknowledged Jesus. It was plain therefore that Jesus was the Shepherd, and it was also plain that the Pharisees were not among Christ's sheep; they might be in the fold, but as they did not recognise and follow Christ they showed that they did not belong to His flock. And Christ trusts still to His own attractiveness and fitness to our needs. It is very remarkable how insufficient an account of their own conversion highly educated persons can give. Professor Clifford's favourite pupil was, like himself, an atheist; but racked by distress on account of Clifford's death, and being obliged to pass through other circumstances fitted to disclose the weakness of human nature, this pupil became an ardent Christian. One reads the record of this conversion, expecting to find the reasoning power of the mathematician adding something to the demonstration of God's personality, or building a sure foundation for Christian faith. There is nothing of the kind. The experience of life gave new meaning to Christ's offer and to His revelation—that was all. So too in criticising Renan's "Life of Christ," a French critic more profound than himself says:—"The characteristic thing in this analysis of Christianity is that sin does not appear in it at all. Now if there is anything which explains the success of the Good News among men, it is that it offered deliverance from sin—salvation. It certainly would have been more appropriate to explain a religion religiously, and not to evade the very core of the subject. This 'Christ in white marble' is not He who made the strength of the martyrs." All this just means that if men have no sense of need they will not own Christ; and that if Christ's own presence and words do not draw them, they are not to be drawn. Of course much may be done in the way of presenting Christ to men, but beyond the simple exhibition of His person by word or in conduct not much can be done. It is a mystery, often oppressive, that men seem quite unattracted and unmoved by the Figure that so transcends all others, and gives a heart to the world. But Christ is known by His own.

This great fact of the mutual recognition of Christ and His people has an application not only to the first acceptance of Christ by the soul, but also to the Christian experience throughout. A mutual recognition and deep-lying affinity not only at first forms but for ever renews and maintains the bond between Christ and the Christian. He knows His sheep and is known by them. Often they do not know themselves;\* but the Shepherd knows them. Many of us are frequently brought into doubt of our interest in Christ, but the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, "The Lord knoweth them that are His." We go astray, and get so torn with thorns, so fouled with mire, that few can tell to what fold we belong—our owner's marks are obliterated; but the Good Shepherd in telling His sheep has missed us, and come after us, and recognises and claims us even in our pitiable state. Who could tell to whom we belong when we lie absolutely content with the poisonous pasture of this world's vanities and rank gains; when the soul is stained with impurity, torn with passion, and has every mark that distinguishes Christ's people obscured? Is it surprising we should begin then ourselves to doubt whether

\* St. Augustine.

we belong to the true fold or whether there is any true fold? Shameful are the places where Christ has found us, among prayerless days, unrestrained indulgences, with hardened heart and cynical thoughts, far from any purpose of good; and still again and again His presence has met us, His voice recalled us, His nearness awakened once more in us the consciousness that with Him we have after all a deeper sympathy than with any besides.

The whole experience of Christ as our Shepherd gives Him an increasing knowledge of us. The shepherd is the first to see the lamb at its birth, and not one day goes by but he visits it. So needful and merciful a work is it that it has no Sabbath, but as on the day of rest the shepherd feeds his own children, so he cares for the lambs of his flock, sees that no harm is befalling them, remembers their dependence on him, observes their growth, removes what hinders it, hangs over the pale of the fold, watching with a pleased and fond observance their ways, their beauty, their comfort. And thus he becomes intimately acquainted with his sheep. So Christ becomes increasingly acquainted with us. We have thought much of Him; we have again and again pondered His life, His death, His words. We have endeavoured to understand what He requires of us, and day by day He has somehow been in our thoughts. Not less, but far more constantly have we been in His thoughts, not a day has passed without His recurrence to this subject. He has looked upon and considered us, has marked the working of our minds, the forming of our purposes. He knows our habits by watching against them; our propensities by turning us from them. We are not left alone with our awful secret of sin: there is another who comprehends our danger, and is bent upon securing us against it.

Slowly but surely does Christ thus win the confidence of the soul; doing for it a thousand kind offices that are not recognised, patiently waiting for the recognition and love which He knows must at last be given; quietly making Himself indispensable to the soul ere ever it discerns what it is that is bringing to it so new a buoyancy and hope. Slowly but surely grows in every Christian a reciprocal knowledge of Christ. More and more clearly does His Person stand out as the one on whom our expectation must rest. With Him we are brought into connection by every sin of ours, and by every hope. Is it not He before whom and about whom our hearts thrill and tremble time after time with a depth and awe of emotion which nothing else excites? Is it not to Him we owe it that this day we live in peace, knowing that our God is a loving Father? is it not still His grace we must learn more deeply, His patient righteous way we must more exactly fall in with, if we are to forget our loved sin in the love of God, ourselves in the Eternal One? What is growth in grace but the laying bare of the sinner's heart to Christ, fold after fold being removed, till the very core of our being opens to Him and accepts Him, and the reciprocal laying bare of the heart of Christ toward the sinner?

For this growth in mutual understanding must advance till that perfect sympathy is attained which Christ indicates in the words: "I know My sheep and am known of Mine, as the Father knoweth Me and I know the Father." The mutual understanding between the Eternal Father



and the Son is the only parallel to the mutual understanding of Christ and His people. In the loving union of husband and wife we see how intimate is the understanding, how the one is dissatisfied if any anxiety is not uttered and shared, how there can be no secret on either side. We see how a slight movement, a look, betrays intention more than many words of a stranger could reveal it; we see what confidence in one another is established, how the one is not satisfied until his thought is ratified by the other, his opinion reflected and better judged in the other, his emotion partaken of and again expressed by the other. But even this, though suggestive, is but a suggestion of the mutual intelligence subsisting between the Father and the Son, the absolute confidence in one another, the perfect harmony in purpose and feeling, the delight in knowing and being known. Into this perfect harmony of feeling and of purpose with the Supreme does Christ introduce His people. Gradually their thoughts are disengaged from what is trivial, and expand to take in the designs of the Eternal Mind. Gradually their tastes and affections are loosened from lower attachments, and are wrought to a perfect sympathy with what is holy and abiding.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### *JESUS, SON OF GOD.*

JOHN X. 22-42.

AFTER our Lord's visit to Jerusalem at the Feast of Tabernacles, and owing to His collision with the authorities in regard to the blind man whom He healed, He seems to have retired from the metropolis for some weeks, until the Feast of the Dedication. This Feast had been instituted by the Maccabees to celebrate the Purification of the Temple after its profanation by Antiochus Epiphanes. It began about the 20th December, and lasted eight days. As it was winter, possibly raining, and certainly cold, Jesus walked about in Solomon's Porch, where at all events He was under cover and had some shelter. Here the Jews gradually gathered, until at length He found Himself ringed round by hostile questioners, who bluntly, almost threateningly asked Him, "How long dost Thou make us to doubt? If Thou be the Christ, tell us plainly," a question which shows that, although they inferred from the assertions He had made regarding Himself that He claimed to be the Messiah, He had not directly and explicitly proclaimed Himself in terms no one could misunderstand.

At first sight their request seems fair and reasonable. In fact it is neither. The mere affirmation that He was the Christ would not have helped those whom His works and words had only prejudiced against Him. As He at once explained to them, He had made the affirmation in the only way possible, and their unbelief arose not from any want of explicitness on His part, but because they were not of His sheep (ver. 26). "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." Here, as elsewhere, He points in confirmation of His claim to the works His Father had given Him to do, and to the response His manifestation awakened in those who were hungering for truth and for God. Those who were given to Him by the Father, who were

taught and led by God, acknowledged Him, and to such He imparted all those eternal and supreme blessings He was commissioned to bestow upon men.

But in describing the safety of those who believe in Him, Jesus uses an expression which gives umbrage to those who hear it—"I and the Father are one." Those who trust themselves to Christ shall not be plucked out of His hand: they are eternally secure. The guarantee of this is, that those who thus trust in Him are given to Him by the Father for this very purpose of safe-keeping: the Father Himself therefore watches over and protects them. "No man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one." In this matter Christ acts merely as the Father's agent. The Pharisees might excommunicate the blind man and threaten him with penalties present and to come, but he is absolutely beyond their reach. Their threats are the pattering of hail on a bomb-proof shelter. The man is in Christ's keeping, and thereby is in God's keeping.

But this assertion the Jews at once construed into blasphemy, and took up stones to stone Him. With marvellous calmness Jesus arrests their murderous intention with the quiet question: "Many good works have I showed you from My Father; for which of these do you stone Me? You question whether I am the Father's Agent: does not the benignity of the works I have done prove Me such? Do not My works evince the indwelling power of the Father?"

The Jews reply, and from their point of view quite reasonably: "For a good work we stone Thee not; but because Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God." How far they were justified in this charge we must inquire.

In this conversation two points are of the utmost significance.

1. The comparative equanimity with which they consider the claims of Jesus to be the Messiah is changed into fury when they imagine that He claims also equality with God. Their first appeal, "If Thou be the Christ, tell us plainly," is calm; and His answer, though it distinctly involved an affirmation that He was the Christ, was received without any violent demonstration of rage or of excitement. But their attitude towards Him changed in a moment, and their calmness gives place to uncontrollable indignation as soon as it appears that He believes Himself to be one with the Father. They themselves would not have dreamed of putting such a question to Him: the idea of any man being equal with God was too abhorrent to the rigid monotheism of the Jewish mind. And when it dawned upon them that this was what Jesus claimed, they could do nothing but stop their ears and lift stones to end such blasphemy. No incident could more distinctly prove that the claim to be the Messiah was in their judgment one thing, the claim to be Divine another thing.

2. The contrast our Lord draws between Himself and those who had in Scripture been called "gods" is significant. It is the eighty-second Psalm He cites; and in it the judges of Israel are rebuked for abusing their office. It is of these unjust judges the psalm represents God as saying, "I have said, Ye are gods, and all of you are children of the Most High. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes." To these judges this word of God, "Ye are gods," had come at their consecration to their office. Hav-



ing been occupied with other work they were now set apart to represent to men the authority and justice of God. But, argues our Lord, if men were called gods, to whom God's word came,—and they are so called in Scripture, which cannot be broken,—appointing them to their office, may He not rightly be called Son of God who is Himself sent to men; whose original and sole destiny it was to come into the world to represent *the Father*? The words are over-weighted with manifold contrast. The judges were persons "to whom" the word of God came, as from without; Jesus was a person Himself "sent into the world" from God, therefore surely more akin to God than they were. The judges represented God by virtue of a commission received in the course of their career—the word of God *came* to them: Jesus, on the other hand, represented God because "sanctified," that is, set apart or consecrated for this purpose before He came into the world, and therefore obviously occupying a higher and more important position than they. But, especially, the judges were appointed to discharge one limited and temporary function, for the discharge of which it was sufficient that they should know the law of God; whereas it was "the Father," the God of universal relation and love, who consecrated Jesus and sent Him into the world, meaning now to reveal to men what lies deepest in His nature, His love, His fatherhood. The idea of the purpose for which Christ was sent into the world is indicated in the emphatic use of "the Father." He was sent to do the works of the Father (ver. 37); to manifest to men the benignity, tenderness, compassion of the Father; to encourage them to believe that the Father, the Source of all life, was in their midst, accessible to them. If Jesus failed to reveal the Father, He had no claim to make. "If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not." But if He did such works as declared the Father to be in their midst, then, as bearing the Father in Him and doing the Father's will, He might well be called "the Son of God." "Though ye believe not Me, believe the works; that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in Me, and I in Him."

There can be no question, then, of the conclusiveness with which our Lord rebutted the charge of blasphemy. By a single sentence He put them in the position of presumptuously contradicting their own Scriptures. But weightier questions remain behind. Did Jesus merely seek to parry their thrust, or did He mean positively to affirm that He was God? His words do not carry a direct and explicit affirmation of His Divinity. Indeed, to a hearer His comparison of Himself with the judges would necessarily rather tend to veil the full meaning of His previous claims to pre-existence and superhuman dignity. On reflection, no doubt the hearers might see that a claim to Divinity was implied in His words; but even in the saying which first gave them offence, "I and the Father are one," it is rather what is implied than what is expressed that carries with it such a claim. For Calvin is unquestionably right in maintaining that these words were not intended to affirm identity of substance with the Father. An ambassador whose actions or claims were contested might very naturally say, "I and my Sovereign are one"; not meaning thereby to claim royal dignity, but meaning to assert that what he did, his Sovereign did; that his signature carried his Sovereign's guarantee, and that his

pledges would be fulfilled by the entire resources of his sovereign. And as God's delegate, as the great Messianic Viceroy among men, it was no doubt this that our Lord wished in the first place to affirm, that He was the representative of God, doing His will, and backed by all His authority. "See the Father in Me," was His constant demand. All His self-assertion and self-revelation were meant to reveal the Father.

But although He does not directly and explicitly say, "I am God"; although He does not even use such language of Himself as John uses, when he says, "The Word was God"; yet is not His Divine nature a reasonable inference from such affirmations as that which we are here considering? Some interpreters very decidedly maintain that when Christ says, "I and the Father are One," He means one in power. They affirm that this assertion is made to prove that none of His sheep will be plucked out of His hand, and that this is secured because His Father is "greater than all," and He and His Father are one. Accordingly they hold that neither the old orthodox interpretation nor the Arian is correct: not the orthodox, because not unity of essence but unity of power is meant; not the Arian, because something more is meant than moral harmony. This, however, is difficult to maintain, and it is safer to abide by Calvin's interpretation, and believe that what Jesus means is that what He does will be confirmed by the Father. It is the Father's power He introduces as the final guarantee, not His own power.

Still, although the very terms He here uses may not even by implication affirm His Divinity, it remains to be asked whether there are not parts of Christ's work as God's commissioner on earth which could be accomplished by no one who was not Himself Divine. An ambassador may recommend his offers and guarantees by affirming that his power and that of his Sovereign are one, but in many cases he must have actual power on the spot. If a commissioner is sent to reduce a mutinous army or a large, war-like tribe in rebellion, or to define a frontier in the face of an armed claimant, he must in such cases be no mere lay-figure, whose uniform tells what country he belongs to, but he must be a man of audacity and resource, able to act for himself without telegraphing for orders, and he must be backed by sufficient military force on the spot. It comes therefore to be a question whether the work on which Christ was sent was a work which could be accomplished by a man, however fully equipped. Jesus, though nothing more than human, might have said, if commissioned by God to say so, "The promises I make, God will perform. The guarantees I give, God will respect." But is it possible that a man, however holy, however wise, however fully possessed by the Holy Spirit, could reveal the Father to men and adequately represent God. Could He influence, guide, and uplift individuals? Could He give life to men, could He assume the function of judging, could He bear the responsibility of being sole mediator between God and men? Must we not believe that for the work Christ came to do it was needful that he should be truly Divine?

While therefore it is quite true that Christ here rebuts the charge of blasphemy in His usual manner, not by directly affirming His Divine nature, but only by declaring that



His office as God's representative gave Him as just a claim to the Divine name as the judges had, this circumstance cannot lead us to doubt the Divine nature of Christ, or prompt us to suppose He Himself was shy in affirming it, because the question is at once suggested whether the office He assumed is not one which only a Divine Person could undertake. It need not stumble our faith, if we find that not only in this passage, but everywhere Jesus refrains from explicitly saying: "I am God." Not even among His Apostles, who were so much in need of instruction, does He definitely announce His Divinity. This is consistent with His entire method of teaching. He was not aggressive nor impatient. He sowed the seed, and knew that in time the blade would appear. He trusted more to the faith which slowly grew with the growth of the believer's mind than to the immediate acceptance of verbal assertions. He allowed men gradually to find their own way to the right conclusions, guiding them, furnishing them with sufficient evidence, but always allowing the evidence to do its work, and not breaking in upon the natural process by His authoritative utterances. But when, as in Thomas's case, it did dawn on the mind of any that this Person was God manifest in the flesh, He accepted the tribute paid. The acceptance of such a tribute proves Him Divine. No good man, whatever his function or commission on earth, could allow another to address him, as Thomas addressed Jesus, "My Lord and my God."

In the paragraph we are considering a very needful reminder is given us that the Jews of our Lord's time used the terms "God" and "Son of God" in a loose and inexact manner. Where the sense was not likely to be misunderstood, they did not scruple to apply these terms to officials and dignitaries. The angels they called sons of God; their own judges they called by the same name. The whole people considered collectively was called "God's son." And in the 2d Psalm, speaking of the Messianic King, God says, "Thou art My Son: this day have I begotten Thee." It was therefore natural that the Jews should think of the Messiah not as properly Divine, but merely as being of such surpassing dignity as to be worthily, though loosely, called "Son of God." No doubt there are passages in the Old Testament which intimate with sufficient clearness that the Messiah would be truly Divine: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever;" "Unto us a Child is born . . . and His name shall be called the Mighty God;" "Behold the days come that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and this is the name whereby He shall be called, Jehovah our Righteousness." But though these passages seem decisive to us, looking on the fulfilment of them in Christ, we must consider that the Jewish Bible did not lie on every table for consultation as our Bibles do, and also that it was easy for the Jews to put a figurative sense on all such passages.

In a word, it was a Messiah the Jews looked for, not the Son of God. They looked for one with Divine powers, the delegate of God, sent to accomplish His will and to establish His kingdom, the representative among them of the Divine presence; but they did not look for a real dwelling of a Divine Person among them. It is quite certain that the Jews of the second century thought it silly of the Christians to hold

that the Christ pre-existed from eternity as God, and condescended to be born as man. "No Jew would allow," says a writer of that time, "that any prophet ever said that a Son of God would come; but what the Jews do say is that the Christ of God will come."

This circumstance, that the Jews did not expect the Messiah to be a Divine Person, throws light upon certain passages in the Gospels. When, for example, our Lord put the question, "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He?" The Pharisees promptly answer, "He is the Son of David." And, that they had no thought of ascribing to the Messiah a properly Divine origin, is shown by their inability to answer the further question, "How then does David call Him Lord?"—a question presenting no difficulty at all to any one who believed that the Messiah was to be Divine as well as human.\*

So, too, if the Jews had expected the Messiah to be a Divine person, the ascription of Messianic dignity to one who was not the Messiah was blasphemy, being equivalent to ascribing Divinity to one who was not Divine. But in no case in which Jesus was acknowledged as the Messiah were those who so acknowledged Him proceeded against as blasphemous. The blind men who appealed to Him as the Son of David were told to be quiet; the crowd who hailed His entrance to Jerusalem scandalised the Pharisees but were not proceeded against. And even the blind beggar who owned Him was excommunicated by a special act passed for the emergency, which proves that the standing statute against blasphemy could not in such a case be enforced.

Again, this fact, that the Jews did not expect the Messiah to be strictly Divine, sheds light on the real ground of accusation against Jesus. So long as it was supposed that He merely claimed to be the promised Christ, and used the title "Son of God" as equivalent to a Messianic title, many of the people admitted His claim and were prepared to own Him. But when the Pharisees began to apprehend that He claimed to be the Son of God in a higher sense, they accused Him of blasphemy, and on this charge He was condemned. The account of His trial as given by Luke is most significant. He was tried in two courts, and in each upon two charges. When brought before the Sanhedrim he was first asked, "Art Thou the Christ?" a question which, as He at once pointed out, was useless; because He had taught quite openly, and there were hundreds who could testify to the claims He had put forward. He merely says that they themselves will one day own His claim. "Hereafter shall the Son of Man sit on the right hand of the power of God." This suggests to them that His claim was to something more than they ordinarily considered to be involved in the claim to Messiahship, and at once they pass to their second question, "Art Thou then the Son of God?" And on His refusing to disown this title, the High Priest rends His clothes, and Jesus is there and then convicted of blasphemy.

The different significance of the two claims is

\* In this passage I borrow the convincing argument of Treffry in his too little read treatise "On the Eternal Sonship." He says, p. 89: "Had the Jews regarded the Messiah as a Divine person, the claims of Jesus to that character had been in all cases equivalent to the assertion of His Deity. But there is not upon record one example in which any considerable emotion was manifested against these claims; while, on the other hand, a palpable allusion to His higher nature never failed to be instantly and most indignantly resented. The conclusion is obvious."



brought out more distinctly in the trial before Pilate. At first Pilate treats Him as an amiable enthusiast who fancies Himself a King and supposes He has been sent into the world to lead men to the truth. And accordingly after examining Him he presents Him to the people as an innocent person, and makes light of their charge that He claims to be King of the Jews. On this the Jews with one voice cry out, "We have a law, and by our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God." The effect of this charge upon Pilate is immediate and remarkable: "When Pilate heard that saying *he was the more afraid*, and went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art Thou?" But Jesus gave him no answer.

It is plain then that it was for blasphemy Christ was condemned; and not simply because He claimed to be the Messiah. But if this is so, then how can we evade the conclusion that He was in very truth a Divine person? The Jews charged Him with making Himself equal with God; and, if He was not equal with God, they were quite right in putting Him to death. Their law was express, that no matter what signs and wonders a man performed, if he used these to draw them from the worship of the true God he was to be put to death. They crucified Jesus on the ground that He was a blasphemer, and against this sentence He made no appeal. He showed no horror at the accusation, as any good man must have shown. He accepted the doom, and on the Cross prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." That which they considered an act of piety was in truth the most frightful of crimes. But if He was not Divine, it was no crime at all, but a just punishment.

But no doubt that which lodges in the heart of each of us the conviction that Christ is Divine is the general aspect of His life, and the attitude He assumes towards men and towards God. We may not be able to understand in what sense there are Three Persons in the Godhead, and may be disposed with Calvin to wish that theological terms and distinctions had never become necessary. We may be unable to understand how if Christ were a complete Person before the Incarnation, the humanity He assumed could also be complete and similar to our own. But notwithstanding such difficulties, which are the necessary result of our inability to comprehend the Divine nature, we are convinced, when we follow Christ through His life and listen to His own assertions, that there is in Him something unique and unapproached among men; that while He is one of us He yet looks at us also from the outside, from above. We feel that He is Master of all, that nothing in nature or in life can defeat Him; that, while dwelling in time, He is also in Eternity, seeing before and after. The most stupendous claims He makes seem somehow justified; assertions which in other lips would be blasphemous are felt to be just and natural in His. It is felt that somehow, even if we cannot say how, God is in Him.

### CHAPTER XXIII.

#### JESUS, THE RESURRECTION AND LIFE.

JOHN xi. 1-44.

IN this eleventh chapter it is related how the death of Jesus was finally determined upon, on

the occasion of His raising Lazarus. The ten chapters which preceded have served to indicate how Jesus revealed Himself to the Jews in every aspect that was likely to win faith, and how each fresh revelation only served to embitter them against Him, and harden their unbelief into hopeless hostility. In these few pages John has given us a wonderfully compressed but vivid summary of the miracles and conversations of Jesus, which served to reveal His true character and work. Jesus has manifested Himself as the Light of the world, yet the darkness does not comprehend Him; as the Shepherd of the Sheep, and they will not hear His voice; as the Life of men, and they will not come unto Him that they might have Life; as the impersonated love of God come to dwell among men, sharing their sorrows and their joys, and men hate Him the more, the more love He shows; as the Truth which could make men free, and they choose to serve the father of lies, and to do his work. And now, when He reveals Himself as the Resurrection and the Life, possessed of the key to what is inaccessible to all others, of the power most essential to man, they resolve upon His death. There was an appropriateness in this. His love for His friends drew Him back at the risk of His life to the neighbourhood of Jerusalem: it is as if to His eye Lazarus represented all His friends, and He feels constrained to come out from His safe retreat, and, at the risk of His own life, deliver them from the power of death.

That this was in the mind of Jesus Himself is obvious. When He expresses His resolve to go to His friends in Bethany, He uses an expression which shows that He anticipated danger, and which at once suggested to the disciples that He was running a great risk. "Let us go," not "to Bethany," but "into Judæa again." His disciples say unto Him, "Master, the Jews of late sought to stone Thee, and goest Thou thither again?" The answer of Jesus is significant: "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" That is to say: Has not every man his allotted time to work, his day of light, in which he can walk and work, and which no danger nor calamity can shorten? Can men make the sun set one hour earlier? So neither can they shorten by one hour the day of life, of light, and toil your God has appointed to you. Wicked men may grudge that God's sun shine on the fields of their enemies and prosper them, but their envy cannot darken or shorten the course of the sun: so may wicked men grudge that I work these miracles, and do these deeds of My loving Father, but I am as far above their reach as the sun in the heavens; until I have run My appointed course their envy is impotent. The real danger begins when a man tries to prolong his day, to turn night into day; the danger begins when a man through fear turns aside from duty; he then loses the only true guide and light of his life. A man's knowledge of duty, of God's will, is the only true light he has to guide him in life: that duty God has already measured, to each man his twelve hours; and only by following duty into all hazards and confusion can you live out your full term; if, on the other hand, you try to extend your term, you find that the sun of duty has set for you, and you have no power to bring light on your path. A man may preserve his life on earth for a year or two more by declining dangerous duty, but his day is done, he is henceforth only stum-



bling about on earth in the outer cold and darkness, and had far better have gone home to God and been quietly at sleep, far better have acknowledged that his day was done and his night come, and not have striven to wake and work on. If through fear of danger, of straitened circumstances, of serious inconvenience, you refuse to go where God—*i. e.*, where duty—calls you, you make a terrible mistake; instead of thereby preserving your life you lose it, instead of prolonging your day of usefulness and of brightness and comfort, you lose the very light of life, and stumble on henceforward through life without a guide, making innumerable false steps as the result of that first false step in which you turned in the wrong direction; not dead indeed, but living as “the very ghost of your former self” on this side the grave—miserable, profitless, *benighted*.

John apparently had two reasons for recording this miracle; firstly, because it exhibited Jesus as the Resurrection and the Life; secondly, because it more distinctly separated the whole body of the Jews into believers and unbelievers. But there are two minor points which may be looked at before we turn to these main themes.

First, we read that when Jesus saw Mary weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, He *groaned in spirit* and was troubled, and then wept. But why did He show such emotion? The Jews who saw Him weep supposed that His tears were prompted, as their own were, by sorrow for their loss and sympathy with the sisters. To see a woman like Mary casting herself at His feet, breaking into a passion of tears, and crying with intense regret, if not with a tinge of reproach, “Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died,” was enough to bring tears to the eyes of harder natures than our Lord’s. But the care with which John describes the disturbance of His spirit, the emphasis he lays upon His groaning, the notice he takes of the account the Jews give of His tears,—all seem to indicate that something more than ordinary grief or sympathy was the fountain of these tears, the cause of the distress which could vent itself only in audible groans. He was in sympathy with the mourners and felt for them, but there was that in the whole scene with which He had no sympathy; there was none of that feeling He required His disciples to show at His own death, no rejoicing that one more had gone to the Father. There was a forgetfulness of the most essential facts of death, an unbelief which seemed entirely to separate this crowd of wailing people from the light and life of God’s presence. “It was the darkness between God and His creatures that gave room for, and was filled with, their weeping and wailing over their dead.” It was the deeper anguish into which mourners are plunged by looking upon death as extinction, and by supposing that death separates from God and from life, instead of giving closer access to God and more abundant life,—it was this which caused Jesus to groan. He could not bear this evidence that even the best of God’s children do not believe in God as greater than death, and in death as ruled by God.

This gives us the key to Christ’s belief in immortality, and to all sound belief in immortality. It was Christ’s sense of God, His uninterrupted consciousness of God, His distinct knowledge that God the loving Father is *the* existence in whom all live,—it was this which made it im-

possible for Christ to think of death as extinction or separation from God. For one who consciously lived in God to be separated from God was impossible. For one who was bound to God by love, to drop out of that love into nothingness or desolation was inconceivable. His constant and absolute sense of God gave Him an unquestioning sense of immortality. We cannot conceive of Christ having any shadow of doubt of a life beyond death; and if we ask why it was so, we further see it was because it was impossible for Him to doubt of the existence of God—the ever-living, ever-loving God.

And this is the order of conviction in us all. It is vain to try and build up a faith in immortality by natural arguments, or even by what Scripture records. As Bushnell truly says: “The faith of immortality depends on a sense of it begotten, not on an argument for it concluded.” And this sense of immortality is begotten when a man is truly born again, and instinctively feels himself an heir of things beyond this world into which his natural birth has ushered him; when he begins to live in God; when the things of God are the things among which and for which he lives; when his spirit is in daily and free communication with God; when he partakes of the Divine nature, finding his joy in self-sacrifice and love, in those purposes and dispositions which can be exercised in any world where men are, and with which death seems to have no conceivable relation. But, on the other hand, for a man to live for the world, to steep his soul in carnal pleasures and blind himself by highly esteeming what belongs only to earth,—for such a man to expect to have any intelligent sense or perception of immortality is out of the question.

2. Another question, which may, indeed, be inquisitive, but can scarcely be reprehended, is sure to be asked: What was the experience of Lazarus during these four days? To speculate on what he saw or heard or experienced, to trace the flight of his soul through the gates of death to the presence of God, may perhaps seem to some as foolish as to go with those curious Jews who flocked out to Bethany to set eyes on this marvel, a man who had passed to the unseen world and yet returned. But although no doubt good and great purposes are served by the obscurity that involves death, our endeavour to penetrate the gloom, and catch some glimpses of a life we must shortly enter, cannot be judged altogether idle. Unfortunately, it is little we can learn from Lazarus. Two English poets, the one fitted to deal with this subject by an imagination that seems capable of seeing and describing whatever man can experience, the other by an insight that instinctively apprehends spiritual things, and both by reverential faith, have taken quite opposite views of the effect of death and resurrection upon Lazarus. The one describes him as living henceforth a dazed life, as if his soul were elsewhere; as if his eye, dazzled with the glory beyond, could not adjust itself to the things of earth. He is thrown out of sympathy with the ordinary interests of men, and seems to live at cross purposes with all around him. This was a very inviting view of the matter to a poet: for here was an opportunity of putting in a concrete way an experience quite unique. It was a task worthy of the highest poetic genius to describe what would be the sensations, thoughts, and ways of a man who had passed



through death and seen things invisible, and been "exalted above measure," and become certified by face-to-face vision of all that we can only hope and believe, and had yet been restored to earth. The opportunity of contrasting the paltriness of earth with the sublimity and reality of the unseen was too great to be resisted. The opportunity of flouting our professed faith by exhibiting the difference between it and a real assurance, by showing the utter want of sympathy between one who had seen and all others on earth who had only believed,—this opportunity was too inviting to leave room for a poet to ask whether there was a basis in fact for this contrast; whether it was likely that in point of fact Lazarus did conduct himself, when restored to earth, as one who had been plunged into the full light and thronging life of the unseen world. And, when we consider the actual requirements of the case, it seems most unlikely that Lazarus can have been recalled from a clear consciousness and full knowledge of the heavenly life—unlikely that he should be summoned to live on earth, with a mind too large for the uses of earth, overcharged with knowledge he could not use, as a poor man suddenly enriched beyond his ability to spend, and thereby only confused and stupefied. Apparently the idea of the other poet is the wiser when he says:—

"Where wert thou, brother, those four days?  
There lives no record of reply,  
Which, telling what it is to die,  
Had surely added praise to praise.

"From every house the neighbours met,  
The streets were fill'd with joyful sound,  
A solemn gladness even crown'd  
The purple brows of Olivet."

"Behold a man raised up by Christ!  
The rest remaineth unrevealed;  
He told it not; or something seal'd  
The lips of that Evangelist."

The probability is, he had nothing to reveal. As Jesus said, He came "to awake him out of sleep." Had he learned anything of the spirit world, it must have oozed out. The burden of a secret which all men craved to know, and which the scribes and lawyers from Jerusalem would do all in their power to elicit from him, would have damaged his mind and oppressed his life. His rising would be as the awaking of a man from deep sleep, scarcely knowing what he was doing, tripping and stumbling in the grave-clothes and wondering at the crowd. What Mary and Martha would prize would be the unchanged, love that shone in his face as he recognised them, the same familiar tones and endearments,—all that showed how little change death brings, how little rupture of affection or of any good thing, how truly he was their own brother still.

To our Lord Himself it was a grace that so shortly before His own death, and in a spot so near where He Himself was buried, He should be encouraged by seeing a man who had been three days in the grave rise at His word. The narrative of His last hours reveals that such encouragement was not useless. But for us it has a still more helpful significance. Death is a subject of universal concern. Every man must have to do with it; and in presence of it every man feels his helplessness. Nowhere do we so come to the limit and end of our power as at the door of a vault; nowhere is the weakness of man so keenly felt. There is the clay, but who shall find

the spirit that dwelt in it? Jesus has no such sense of weakness. Believing in the fatherly and undying love of the Eternal God, He knows that death cannot harm, still less destroy, the children of God. And in this belief He commands back to the body the soul of Lazarus; through the ear of that dead and laid-aside body He calls to His friend, and bids him from the unseen world. Surely we also may say, with Himself, we are glad that He was not with Lazarus in his sickness, that we might have this proof that not even death carries the friend of Christ beyond His reach and power.

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

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

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

This miracle is itself more significant than the explanation of it. The act which embodies and gives actuality to a principle is its best exposition. But the main teaching of the miracle is enounced in the words of Jesus: "I am the Resurrection and the Life." In this statement two truths are contained: (1) that resurrection and life are not future only, but present; and (2) that they become ours by union with Christ.

(1) Resurrection and Life are not blessings laid up for us in a remote future: they are present. When Jesus said to Martha, "Thy brother shall rise again," she answered, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day,"—meaning to indicate that this was small consolation. There was her brother lying in the tomb dead, and there he would lie for ages dead; no more to move about in the home she loved for his sake, no more to exchange with her one word or look. What comfort did the vague and remote hope of reunion after long ages of untold change bring? What comfort is to sustain her through the interval? When parents lose the children whom they could not bear to have for a day out of their sight, whom they longed for if they were absent an hour beyond their time, it is no doubt some comfort to know that



one day they will again fold them to their breast. But this is not the comfort Christ gives Martha. He comforts her, not by pointing her to a far-off event which was vague and remote, but to His own living person, whom she knew, saw, and trusted. And He assured her that in Him were resurrection and life; that all, therefore, who belonged to Him were uninjured by death, and had in Him a present and continuous life.

Christ, then, does not think of immortality as we do. The thought of immortality is with Him involved in and absorbed by, the idea of life. Life is a present thing, and its continuance a matter of course. When life is full, and abundant, and glad, the present is enough, and past and future are unthought of. It is life, therefore, rather than immortality, Christ speaks of; a present, not a future, good; an expansion of the nature now, and which necessarily carries with it the idea of permanence. Eternal life He defines, not as a future continuance to be measured by ages, but as a present life, to be measured by its depth. It is the quality, not the length of life He looks at. Life prolonged without being deepened by union with the living God were no boon. Life with God, and in God, must be immortal; life without God He does not call life at all.

In evidence of this present continued life Lazarus was called back, and shown to be still alive. In him the truth of Christ's words was exemplified: "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." He will doubtless, like all men, undergo that change which we call death; he will become disconnected from this present earthly scene, but his life in Christ will suffer no interruption. Dissolution may pass on his body, but not on his life. His life is hid with Christ in God. It is united to the unfailing source of all existence.

(2) Such life, now abundant and evermore abiding, Christ affords to all who believe in Him. To Martha He intimates that He has power to raise the dead, and that this power is so much His own that He needs no instrument or means to apply it; that He Himself, as He stood before her, contained all that was needful for resurrection and life. He intimates all this, but He intimates much more than this. That He had the power to raise the dead it would, no doubt, revive the heart of Martha to hear, but what guarantee, what hope, was there that He would exercise that power? And so Christ does not say, I have the power, but, I am. Is any one, is Lazarus, joined to Me? has he attached himself confidingly to My Person: then whatever I am finds exercise in him. It is not only that I have this power to exercise on whom I may; but I am this power, so that if he be one with Me I cannot withhold the exercise of that power from him.

They who have learned to obey Christ's voice in life will most quickly hear it, and recognise its authority, when they sleep in death. They who have known its power to raise them out of spiritual death will not doubt its power to raise them from bodily death to a more abundant life than this world affords. They once felt as if nothing could deliver them; they were dead—deaf to Christ's commands, bound in bonds which they thought would hold them till they themselves should rot away from within them;

they were buried out of sight of all that could give spiritual life, and the heavy stone of their own hardened will lay on their ruined and out-cast condition. But Christ's love sought them out and called them into life. Assured that He has had power to do this, conscious in themselves that they are alive with a life given by Christ, they cannot doubt that the grave will be but a bed of rest, and that neither things present nor things to come can separate them from a love which already has shown itself capable of the utmost.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### JESUS, THE SCAPEGOAT.

JOHN xi. 45-54.

WHEN Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead He was quite aware that He was risking His own life. He knew that a miracle so public, so easily tested, so striking, could not be overlooked, but must decisively separate between those who yielded to what was involved in the miracle, and those who hardened themselves against it. It is remarkable that none had the hardihood to deny the fact. Those who most determinedly proceeded against Jesus did so on the very ground that His miracles were becoming too numerous and too patent. They perceived that in this respect Jesus answered so perfectly to the popular conception of what the Messiah was to be, that it was quite likely He would win the multitude to belief in Him as the long-looked-for King of the Jews. But if there were any such popular enthusiasm aroused, and loudly declared, then the Romans would interfere, and, as they said, "come and take away both our place and nation." They felt themselves in a great difficulty, and looked upon Jesus as one of those fatal people who arise to thwart the schemes of statesmen, and spoil well-laid plans, and introduce disturbing elements into peaceful periods.

Caiaphas, astute and unscrupulous, takes a more practical view of things, and laughs at their helplessness. "Why!" he says, "do you not see that this Man, with His *éclat* and popular following, instead of endangering us and bringing suspicion on our loyalty to Rome, is the very person we can use to exhibit our fidelity to the Empire. Sacrifice Jesus, and by His execution you will not merely clear the nation of all suspicion of a desire to revolt and found a kingdom under Him, but you will show such a watchful zeal for the integrity of the Empire as will merit applause and confidence from the jealous power of Rome." Caiaphas is the type of the bold, hard politician, who fancies he sees more clearly than all others, because he does not perplex himself by what lies below the surface, nor suffer the claims of justice to interfere with his own advantage. He looks at everything from the point of view of his own idea and plan, and makes everything bend to that. He had no idea that in making Jesus a scapegoat he was tampering with the Divine purposes.

John, however, in looking back upon this council, sees that this bold, unflinching diplomatist, who supposed he was moving Jesus and the council and the Romans as so many pieces in his own game, was himself used as God's mouthpiece to predict the event which brought



to a close his own and all other priesthood. In the strange irony of events he was unconsciously using his high-priestly office to lead forward that one Sacrifice which was for ever to take away sin, and so to make all further priestly office superfluous. Caiaphas saw and said that it was expedient that one man die for the nation; but, as in all prophetic utterance, so in these words, says John, a very much deeper sense lay than was revealed by their primary application. It is, says John, quite true that Christ's death would be the saving of a countless multitude, only it was not from the Roman legions that it would long save men, but from an even more formidable visitation. Caiaphas saw that the Romans were within a very little of terminating the ceaseless troubles which arose out of this Judæan province, by transporting the inhabitants and breaking up their nationality; and he supposed that by proclaiming Jesus as an aspirant to the throne and putting Him to death, he would cleanse the nation of all complicity in His disloyalty and stay the Roman sword. And John says, that in carrying out this idea of his, he unwittingly carried out the purpose of God that Jesus should die for that nation—"and not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad."

Now it must be owned that it is much easier to understand what Caiaphas meant than what John meant; much easier to see how fit Jesus was to be a national scapegoat than to understand how His death removes the sin of the world. There are, however, one or two points regarding the death of Christ which become clearer in the light of Caiaphas's idea.

First, the very characteristics of Christ which made Caiaphas think of Him as a possible scapegoat for the nation, are those which make it possible that His death should serve a still larger purpose. When the brilliant idea of propitiating the Roman government by sacrificing Jesus flashed into the mind of Caiaphas, he saw that Jesus was in every respect suited to this purpose. He was in the first place a person of sufficient importance. To have seized an unknown peasant, who never had, and never could have, much influence in Jewish society, would have been no proof of zeal in extinguishing rebellion. To crucify Peter or John or Lazarus, none of whom had made the most distant claim to kingship, would not serve Caiaphas's turn. But Jesus was the head of a party. In disposing of Him they disposed of His followers. The sheep must scatter, if the Shepherd were put out of the way.

Then, again, Jesus was innocent of everything but this. He was guilty of attaching men to Himself, but innocent of everything besides. This also fitted Him for Caiaphas's purpose, for the high priest recognised that it would not do to pick a common criminal out of the prisons and make a scapegoat of him. That had been a shallow fiction, which would not for a moment stay the impending Roman sword. Had the Russians wished to conciliate our Government and avert war, this could not have been effected by their selecting for execution some political exile in Siberia, but only by recalling and degrading such an outstanding person as General Komaroff. In every case where any one is to be used as a scapegoat these two qualities must meet—he must be a really, not fictitiously, rep-

resentative person, and he must be free from all other claims upon his life. It is not everyone who can become a scapegoat. The mere agreement between the parties, that such and such a person be a scapegoat, is only a hollow fiction which can deceive no one. There must be underlying qualities which constitute one person, and not another, representative and fit.

Now John does not expressly say that the deliverance Jesus was to effect for men generally was to be effected in a similar manner to that which Caiaphas had in view. He does not expressly say that Jesus was to become the scapegoat of the race: but impregnated as John's mind was with the sacrificial ideas in which he had been nurtured, the probability is that the words of Caiaphas suggested to him the idea that Jesus was to be the scapegoat of the race. And, certainly, if Jesus was the scapegoat on whom our sins were laid, and who carried them all away, He had these qualities which fitted Him for this work: He had a connection with us of an intimate kind, and He was stainlessly innocent.

This passage then compels us to ask in what sense Christ was our sacrifice.

With remarkable, because significant, unanimity the consciences of men very differently situated have prompted them to sacrifice. And the idea which all ancient nations, and especially the Hebrews, entertained regarding sacrifice is fairly well ascertained. Both the forms of their rites and their explicit statements are conclusive on this point,—that in a certain class of sacrifices they looked on the victim as a substitute bearing the guilt of the offerer and receiving the punishment due to him. This seems, after all discussion, to be the most reasonable interpretation to put upon expiatory sacrifice. Both heathens and Jews teach that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins; that the life of the sinner is forfeited, and that in order to the sparing of his life, another life is rendered instead; and that as the life is in the blood, the blood must be poured out in sacrifice. Heathens were as punctilious as Hebrews in their scrutiny of the victims, to ascertain what animals were fit for sacrifice by the absence of all blemish. They used forms of deprecation as exactly expressing the doctrines of substitution and of atonement by vicarious punishment. In one significant, though repulsive, particular some of the heathen went farther than the Hebrews: occasionally, the sinner who sought cleansing from defilement was actually washed in the blood of the victim slain for him. By an elaborate contrivance the sinner sat under a stage of open woodwork on which the animal was sacrificed, and through which its blood poured upon him.

The idea expressed by all sacrifices of expiation was, that the victim took the place of the sinner, and received the punishment due to him. The sacrifice was an acknowledgment on the sinner's part that by his sin he had incurred penalty; and it was a prayer on the sinner's part that he might be washed from the guilt he had contracted, and might return to life with the blessing and favour of God upon him. Of course, it was seen, and said by the heathen themselves, as well as by the Jews, that the blood of bulls and goats had in itself no relation to moral defilement. It was used in sacrifice merely as a telling way of saying that sin was



acknowledged and pardon desired, but always with the idea of substitution more or less explicitly in the mind. And the ideas which were inevitably associated with sacrifice were transferred to Jesus by His immediate disciples. And this transference of the ideas connected with sacrifice to Himself and His death was sanctioned—and indeed suggested—by Jesus, when, at the Last Supper, He said, "This cup is the New Testament in My Blood, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins."

But here the question at once arises: In what sense was the Blood of Christ shed for the remission of sins? In what sense was He a substitute and victim for us? Before we try to find an answer to this question, two preliminary remarks may be made—first, that our salvation depends not on our understanding how the death of Christ takes away sin, but upon our believing that it does so. It is very possible to accept the pardon of our sin, though we do not know how that pardon has been obtained. We do not understand the methods of cure prescribed by the physician, nor could we give a rational account of the efficacy of his medicines, but this does not retard our cure if only we use them. To come into a perfect relation to God we do not require to understand how the death of Christ has made it possible for us to do so; we need only to desire to be God's children, and to believe that it is open to us to come to Him. Not by the intellect, but by the will, are we led to God. Not by what we know, but by what we desire, is our destiny determined. Not by education in theological requirements, but by thirst for the living God, is man saved.

And, second, even though we carry over to the death of Christ the ideas taught by Old Testament sacrifice, we commit no enormous or misleading blunder. Christ Himself suggested that His death might be best understood in the light of these ideas, and even though we are unable to penetrate through the letter to the spirit, through the outward and symbolic form to the real and eternal meaning of the sacrifice of Christ, we are yet on the road to truth, and hold the germ of it which will one day develop into the actual and perfect truth. Impatience is at the root of much unbelief and misconception and discontent: the inability to reconcile ourselves to the fact that in our present stage there is much we must hold provisionally, much we must be content to see through a glass darkly, much we can only know by picture and shadow. It is quite true the reality has come in the death of Christ, and symbol has passed away; but there is such a depth of Divine love, and so various a fulfilment of Divine purpose in the death of Christ, that we cannot be surprised that it baffles comprehension. It is the key to a world's history; for aught we know, to the history of other worlds than ours; and it is not likely that we should be able to gauge its significance and explain its *rationale* of operation. And therefore, if, without any sluggish indifference to further knowledge, or merely worldly contentment to know of spiritual things only so much as is absolutely necessary, we yet are able to use what we do know and to await with confidence further knowledge, we probably act wisely and well. We do not err if we think of Christ as our Sacrifice; nor even if we somewhat too literally think of Him as the Victim substituted for us, and ascribe to His Blood the expiatory and

cleansing virtue which belonged symbolically to the blood of the ancient sacrifices.

And, indeed, there are grave difficulties in our path as soon as we strive to advance beyond the sacrificial idea, and try to grasp the very truth regarding the death of Christ. The Apostles with one voice affirm that Christ's death was a propitiation for the sins of the world: that He died *for* us; that He suffered not only for His contemporaries, but for all men; that He was the Lamb of God, the innocent Victim, whose blood cleansed from sin. They affirm, in short, that in Christ's death we are brought face to face, not with a symbolic sacrifice, but with that act which really takes away sin.

If we read the narrative given us in the Gospels of the death of Christ, and the circumstances that led to it, we see that the sacrificial idea is not kept in the foreground. The cause of His death, as explained in the Gospels, was His persistent claim to be the Messiah sent by God to found a spiritual kingdom. He steadily opposed the expectations and plans of those in authority until they became so exasperated that they resolved to compass His death. The real and actual cause of His death was His fidelity to the purpose for which He had been sent into the world. He might have retired and lived a quiet life in Galilee or beyond Palestine altogether; but He could not do so, because He could not abandon the work of His life, which was to proclaim the truth about God and God's kingdom. Many a man has felt equally constrained to proclaim the truth in the face of opposition; and many a man has, like Jesus, incurred death thereby. That which makes the death of Jesus exceptional in this aspect of it is, that the truth He proclaimed was what may be called *the* truth, the essential truth for men to know—the truth that God is the Father, and that there is life in Him for all who will come to Him. This was the kingdom of God among men—He proclaimed a kingdom based only on love, on spiritual union between God and man; a kingdom not of this world, and that came not with observation; a kingdom within men, real, abiding, universal. It was, because He proclaimed this kingdom, exploding the cherished expectations and merely national hopes of the Jews, that the authorities put Him to death.

So much is obvious on the very face of the narrative. No one can read the life of Christ without perceiving this at least—that He was put to death because He persisted in proclaiming truths essential to the happiness and salvation of men. By submitting to death for the sake of these truths He made it for ever clear that they are of vital consequence. Before Pilate He calmly said: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." He knew that it was this witnessing to the truth that had enraged the Jews against Him, and even in prospect of death He could not refrain from proclaiming what He felt it was vital for men to know. In this very true sense, therefore, He died for our sakes—died because He sought to put us in possession of truths without which our souls cannot be lifted into life eternal. He has given us life by giving us the knowledge of the Father. His love for us, His ceaseless and strong desire to bring us near to God, was the real cause of His death. And, recognising this, we cannot but feel that He has a claim upon us



of the most commanding kind. Not for His contemporaries alone, not for one section of men only, did Christ die, but for all men, because the truths which He sealed by His death are of universal import. No man can live eternal life without them.

But again, Jesus Himself explained to His disciples in what sense His death would benefit them. "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you." The spiritual kingdom He proclaimed could not be established while He was visibly present. His death and ascension put an end to all hopes that diverted their minds from that which constituted their real union to God and satisfaction in Him. When He disappeared from earth and sent the Holy Spirit to them, what remained to them was God's kingdom within them, His true rule over their spirits, their assimilation to Him in all things. What they now clearly saw to be still open to them was to live in Christ's spirit, to revive in their memories the truths His life had proclaimed, to submit themselves entirely to His influence, and to make known far and near the ideas He had communicated to them, and especially the God he had revealed. It was His death which set their minds free from all other expectations and fixed them exclusively on what was spiritual. And this salvation they at once proclaimed to others. What were they to say about Jesus and His death? How were they to win men to Him? They did so in the first days by proclaiming Him as raised by God to be a Prince and a Saviour, to rule from the unseen world, to bless men with a spiritual salvation, by turning them from their iniquities. And the instrumentality, the actual spiritual experience through which this salvation is arrived at, is the belief that Jesus was sent by God and did reveal Him, that in Jesus God was present revealing Himself, and that His Spirit can bring us also to God and to His likeness.

Still further, and not going beyond the facts apparent in the Gospel, it is plain that Christ died for us, in the sense that all He did, His whole life on earth from first to last, was for our sake. He came into the world, not to serve a purpose of His own, and forward His own interests, but to further ours. He took upon Him our sins and their punishment in this obvious sense, that He voluntarily entered into our life, polluted as it was all through with sin and laden with misery in every part. Our condition in this world is such that no person can avoid coming in contact with sin, or can escape entirely the results of sin in the world. And in point of fact persons with any depth of sympathy and spiritual sensibility cannot help taking upon them the sins of others, and cannot help suffering their own life to be greatly marred and limited by the sins of others. In the case of our Lord this acceptance of the burden of other men's sins was voluntary. And it is the sight of a holy and loving person, enduring sorrows and opposition and death wholly undeserved, that is at all times affecting in the experience of Christ. It is the sight of this suffering, borne with meekness and borne willingly, that makes us ashamed of our sinful condition, which inevitably entails such suffering on the self-sacrificing and holy. It enables us to see, more distinctly than anything besides, the essential hatefulness and evil of sin. Here is an innocent person, filled with love and

compassion for all, His life a life of self-sacrifice and devotion to human interests, carrying in His person infinite benefits to the race—this person is at all points thwarted and persecuted and finally put to death. In this most intelligible sense He very truly sacrificed Himself for us, bore the penalty of our sins, magnified the law, illustrated and rendered infinitely impressive the righteousness of God, and made it possible for God to pardon us, and in pardoning us to deepen immeasurably our regard for holiness and for Himself.

Still further, it is obvious that Christ gave Himself a perfect sacrifice to God by living solely for Him. He had in life no other purpose than to serve God. Again and again during His life God expressed His perfect satisfaction with the human life of Christ. He who searches the heart saw that into the most secret thought, down to the most hidden motive, that life was pure, that heart in perfect harmony with the Divine will. Christ lived not for Himself, He did not claim property in His own person and life, but gave Himself up freely and to the uttermost to God: more thoroughly, more spontaneously, and with an infinitely richer material did He offer Himself to God than ever burnt-offering had been offered. And God, with an infinite joy in goodness, accepted the sacrifice, and found on earth in the person of Jesus an opportunity for rejoicing in man with an infinite satisfaction.

And this sacrifice which Christ offered to God tends to reproduce itself continually among men. As Christ said, no sooner was He lifted up than He drew all men to Him. That perfect life and utter self-surrender to the highest purposes, that pure and perfect love, and devotion to God and man, commands the admiration and cordial worship of serious men. It stands in the world for ever as the grand incentive to goodness, prompting men and inspiring them to sympathy and imitation. It is in the strength of that perfect sacrifice men have ceaselessly striven to sacrifice themselves. It is through Christ they strive to come themselves to God. In Him we see the beauty of holiness; in Him we see holiness perfected, and making the impression upon us which a perfect thing makes, standing as a reality, not as a theory; as a finished and victorious achievement, not as a mere attempt. In Christ we see what love to God and faith in God really are; in Him we see what a true sacrifice is and means; and in Him we are drawn to give ourselves also to God as our true life.

Looking then only at those facts which are apparent to every one who reads the life of Christ, and putting aside all that may over and above these facts have been intended in the Divine mind, we see how truly Christ is our Sacrifice; and how truly we can say of Him that He gave Himself, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. We see that in the actual privation, disappointments, temptations, mental strain, opposition, and suffering of His life, and in the final conflict of death, He bore the penalty of our sins; underwent the miseries which sin has brought into human life. We see that He did so with so entire and perfect a consent to all God's will, and with so ready and unreserved a sacrifice of Himself, that God found infinite satisfaction in this human obedience and righteousness, and on the basis of this sacrifice pardons us.

Some may be able to assure themselves better



of the forgiveness of God, if they look at what Christ has done as a satisfaction for or reparation of the ill that we have done. He properly satisfies for an offence who offers to the offended party that which he loves as well or better than he hates the offence. If your child has through carelessness broken or spoiled something you value, but seeing your displeasure is at pains to replace it, and does after long industry put into your hands an article of greater value than was lost to you, you are satisfied, and more than forgive your child. If a man fails in business, but after spending a life-time to recover himself restores to you not only what you lost by him, but more than could possibly have been made by yourself with the original sum lost, you ought to be satisfied. And God is satisfied with the work of Christ because there is in it a love and an obedience to Him, and a regard to right and holiness, that outweigh all our disobedience and alienation. Often, when some satisfaction or reparation of injury or loss is made to ourselves, it is done in so good-hearted a manner, and displays so much right feeling, and sets us on terms of so much closer intimacy with the party who injured us, that we are really glad, now that all is over, that the misunderstanding or injury took place. The satisfaction has far more than atoned for it. So is it with God: our reconciliation to Him has called out so much in Christ that would otherwise have been hidden, has so stirred the deepest part, if we may say so, of the Divine nature in Christ, and has called out also so signally the whole strength and beauty of human nature, that God is more than satisfied. We cannot see how without sin there could have been that display of love and obedience that there has been in the death of Christ. Where there is no danger, nothing tragic, there can be no heroism: human nature, not to speak of Divine, has not scope for its best parts in the ordinary traffic and calm of life. It is when danger thickens, and when death draws near and bares his hideous visage, that devotion and self-sacrifice can be exercised. And so, in a world filled with sin and with danger, a world in which each individual's history has something stirring and tragic in it, God finds room for the full testing and utterance of our natures and of His own. And in the redemption of this world there occurred an emergency which called forth, as nothing else conceivably could call forth, everything that the Divine and human natures of Christ are capable of.

Another result of Christ's death is mentioned by John: "That the children of God which were scattered abroad might be gathered together in one." It was for a unity Christ died, for that which formed one whole. When Caiaphas sacrificed Christ to propitiate Rome, he knew that none but Christ's own countrymen would benefit thereby. The Romans would not recall their legions from Africa or Germany because Judæa had propitiated them. And supposing that the Jews had received some immunities and privileges from Rome as an acknowledgment of its favour, this would affect no other nation. But if any members of other nations cov-

eted these privileges, their only course would be to become naturalised Jews, members and subjects of the favoured community. So Christ's death has the effect of gathering into one all those who see God's favour and fatherhood, no matter in what ends of the earth they be scattered. It was not for separate individuals Christ died, but for a people, for an indivisible community; and we receive the benefits of His death no otherwise than as we are members of this people or family. It is the attractive power of Christ that draws us all to one centre, but being gathered round Him we should be in spirit, and are in fact, as close to one another as to Him.

#### NOTE ON CHAP. VI. VERS. 37, 44, 45.

Three terms are used in these verses which call for examination,—“giving,” “drawing,” “teaching.” The two latter are used in a connection which leaves little room for doubt as to their meaning. “No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him. . . . It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me;” but, by implication, no man who has not so learned. Both verses express the thought that without special aid from God no man can come to Christ. There must be a Divine illumination of the human faculties, enabling the man to apprehend that Jesus is the Christ, and to receive Him as such. These expressions cannot refer to the outward illumination which is communicated by Scripture, by the miracles of Christ, and so forth; because the whole of the crowd addressed by our Lord had such illumination, and yet not all of them were “taught of God.” The “hearing,” and “learning,” or “being taught of God,” here spoken of, must signify the opening of the inner ear by the unseen operation of God Himself. Most emphatically does Jesus affirm that without this exercise of the Divine will and Divine power upon the individual no man can receive Him. The mere manifestation of God in the flesh is not enough: an inward and special enlightenment is required to enable a man to recognise God manifest in the flesh. The words, then, of ver. 44 can only mean that in order to apprehend the significance of Christ and to yield ourselves to Him we must be aided individually and inwardly by God.

Whether the “giving” of ver. 37 is intended to signify an act prior to the teaching and drawing may reasonably be doubted. It is prior to the “coming” to Christ, as the terms of the verse prove: “All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me: and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Principal Reynolds says it is “the present activity of the Father's grace that is meant, not a foregone conclusion.” No doubt that is in strictness true. Our Lord, in the face of general unbelief, is comforting Himself with the assurance that after all He will draw to Himself all whom the Father gives Him; and this implies that the Father's giving is the main factor in His success.



## PART II.

## CHAPTER I.

## THE ANOINTING OF JESUS.

JOHN xii. 1-II.

THIS twelfth chapter is the watershed of the Gospel. The self-manifestation of Jesus to the world is now ended; and from this point onwards to the close we have to do with the results of that manifestation. He hides Himself from the unbelieving, and allows their unbelief full scope; while He makes further disclosures to the faithful few. The whole Gospel is a systematic and wonderfully artistic exhibition of the manner in which the deeds, words, and claims of Jesus produced,—on the one hand, a growing belief and enthusiasm; on the other, a steadily hardening unbelief and hostility. In this chapter the culmination of these processes is carefully illustrated by three incidents. In the first of these incidents evidence is given that there was an intimate circle of friends in whose love Jesus was embalmed, and His work and memory insured against decay; while the very deed which had riveted the faith and affection of this intimate circle is shown to have brought the antagonism of His enemies to a head. In the second incident the writer shows that on the whole popular mind Jesus had made a profound impression, and that the instincts of the Jewish people acknowledged Him as King. In the third incident the influence He was destined to have and was already to some extent exerting beyond the bounds of Judaism is illustrated by the request of the Greeks that they might see Jesus.

In this first incident, then, is disclosed a devotedness of faith which cannot be surpassed, an attachment which is absolute; but here also we see that the hostility of avowed enemies has penetrated even the inner circle of the personal followers of Jesus, and that one of the chosen Twelve has so little faith or love that he can see no beauty and find no pleasure in any tribute paid to his Master. In this hour there meet a ripeness of love which suddenly reveals the permanent place which Jesus has won for Himself in the hearts of men, and a maturity of alienation which forebodes that His end cannot be far distant. In this beautiful incident, therefore, we turn a page in the Gospel and come suddenly into the presence of Christ's death. To this death He Himself freely alludes, because He sees that things are now ripe for it, that nothing short of His death will satisfy His enemies, while no further manifestation can give Him a more abiding place in the love of His friends. The chill, damp odour of the tomb first strikes upon the sense, mingling with and absorbed in the perfume of Mary's ointment. If Jesus dies, He cannot be forgotten. He is embalmed in the love of such disciples.

On His way to Jerusalem for the last time Jesus reached Bethany "six days before the Passover"—that is to say, in all probability\*

\* It is uncertain whether the "six days" are inclusive or exclusive of the day of arrival and of the first day of the Feast. It is also uncertain on what day of the week the Crucifixion happened.

on the Friday evening previous to His death. It was natural that He should wish to spend His last Sabbath in the congenial and strengthening society of a family whose welcome and whose affection He could rely upon. In the little town of Bethany He had become popular, and since the raising of Lazarus He was regarded with marked veneration. Accordingly they made Him a feast, which, as Mark informs us, was given in the house of Simon the leper. Any gathering of His friends in Bethany must have been incomplete without Lazarus and his sisters. Each is present, and each contributes an appropriate addition to the feast. Martha serves; Lazarus, mute as he is throughout the whole story, bears witness by his presence as a living guest to the worthiness of Jesus; while Mary makes the day memorable by a characteristic action. Coming in, apparently after the guests had reclined at table, she broke an alabaster of very costly spikenard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair.

This token of affection took the company by surprise. Lazarus and his sisters may have been in sufficiently good circumstances to admit of their making a substantial acknowledgment of their indebtedness to Jesus; and although this alabaster of ointment had cost as much as would keep a labouring man's family for a year, this could not seem an excessive return to make for service so valuable as Jesus had rendered. It was the manner of the acknowledgment which took the company by surprise. Jesus was a poor man, and His very appearance may have suggested that there were other things He needed more urgently than such a gift as this. Had the family provided a home for Him or given Him the price of this ointment, no one would have uttered a remark. But this was the kind of demonstration reserved for princes or persons of great distinction; and when paid to One so conspicuously humble in His dress and habits, there seemed to the uninstructed eye something incongruous and bordering on the grotesque. When the fragrance of the ointment disclosed its value, there was therefore an instantaneous exclamation of surprise, and at any rate in one instance of blunt disapproval. Judas, instinctively putting a money value on this display of affection, roundly and with coarse indelicacy declared it had better have been sold and given to the poor.

Jesus viewed the act with very different feelings. The rulers were determining to put Him out of the way, as not only worthless, but dangerous; the very man who objected to this present expenditure was making up his mind to sell Him for a small part of the sum; the people were scrutinising His conduct, criticising Him;—in the midst of all this hatred, suspicion, treachery, coldness, and hesitation comes this woman and puts aside all this would-be wisdom and caution, and for herself pronounces that no tribute is rich enough to pay to Him. It is the rarity of such action, not the rarity of the nard, that strikes Jesus. This, He says, is a noble deed she has done, far rarer, far more difficult to produce, far more penetrating and lasting in its fragrance than the richest perfume that man has compounded. Mary has the experience that all those have who for Christ's sake expose themselves to the misunderstanding and abuse of vulgar and unsympathetic



minds; she receives from Himself more explicit assurance that her offering has given pleasure to Him and is gratefully accepted. We may sometimes find ourselves obliged to do what we perfectly well know will be misunderstood and censured; we may be compelled to adopt a line of conduct which seems to convict us of heedlessness and of the neglect of duties we owe to others; we may be driven to action which lays us open to the charge of being romantic and extravagant; but of one thing we may be perfectly sure—that however our motives are mis-read and condemned by those who first make their voices heard, He for whose sake we do these things will not disparage our action nor misunderstand our motives. The way to a fuller intimacy with Christ often lies through passages in life we must traverse alone.

But we are probably more likely to misunderstand than to be misunderstood. We are so limited in our sympathies, so scantily furnished with knowledge, and have so slack a hold upon great principles, that for the most part we can understand only those who are like ourselves. When a woman comes in with her effusiveness, we are put out and irritated; when a man whose mind is wholly uneducated utters his feelings by shouting hymns and dancing on the street, we think him a semi-lunatic; when a member of our family spends an hour or two a day in devotional exercises, we condemn it as waste of time which might be better spent on practical charities or household duties.

Most liable of all to this vice of misjudging the actions of others, and indeed of misapprehending generally wherein the real value of life consists, are those who, like Judas, measure all things by a utilitarian, if not a money, standard. Actions which have no immediate results are pronounced by such persons to be mere sentiment and waste, while in fact they redeem human nature and make life seem worth living. The charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava served none of the immediate purposes of the battle, and was indeed a blunder and waste from that point of view; yet are not our annals enriched by it as they have been by few victories? On the Parthenon there were figures placed with their back hard against the wall of the pediment; these backs were never seen and were not intended to be seen, but yet were carved with the same care as was spent upon the front of the figures. Was that care waste? There are thousands of persons in our own society who think it essential to teach their children arithmetic, but pernicious to instil into their minds a love of poetry or art. They judge of education by the test, Will it pay? can this attainment be turned into money? The other question, Will it enrich the nature of the child and of the man? is not asked. They proceed as if they believed that the man is made for business, not business for the man; and thus it comes to pass that everywhere among us men are found sacrificed to business, stunted in their moral development, shut off from the deeper things of life. The pursuits which such persons condemn are the very things which lift life out of the low level of commonplace buying and selling, and invite us to remember that man liveth not by bread alone, but by high thoughts, by noble sacrifice, by devoted love and all that love dictates, by the powers of the unseen, mightier by far than all that we see.

In the face, then, of so much that runs counter to such demonstrations as Mary's and condemns them as extravagance, it is important to note the principles upon which our Lord proceeds in His justification of her action.

First, He says, this is an occasional, exceptional tribute. "The poor always ye have with you, but Me ye have not always." Charity to the poor you may continue from day to day all your life long: whatever you spend on me is spent once for all. You need not think the poor defrauded by this expenditure. Within a few days I shall be beyond all such tokens of regard, and the poor will still claim your sympathy. This principle solves for us some social and domestic problems. Of many expenses common in society, and especially of expenses connected with scenes such as this festive gathering at Bethany, the question always arises, Is this expenditure justifiable? When present at an entertainment costing as much and doing as little material good as the spikenard whose perfume had died before the guests separated, we cannot but ask, Is not this, after all, mere waste? had it not been better to have given the value to the poor? The hunger-bitten faces, the poverty-stricken outcasts, we have seen during the day are suggested to us by the superabundance now before us. The effort to spend most where least is needed suggests to us, as to these guests at Bethany, gaunt, pinched, sickly faces, bare rooms, cold grates, feeble, dull-eyed children—in a word, starving families who might be kept for weeks together on what is here spent in a few minutes; and the question is inevitable, Is this right? Can it be right to spend a man's ransom on a mere good smell, when at the end of the street a widow is pining with hunger? Our Lord replies that so long as one is day by day considering the poor and relieving their necessities, he need not grudge an occasional outlay to manifest his regard for his friends. The poor of Bethany would probably appeal to Mary much more hopefully than to Judas, and they would appeal all the more successfully because her heart had been allowed to utter itself thus to Jesus. There is, of course, an expenditure for display under the guise of friendship. Such expenditure finds no justification here or anywhere else. But those who in a practical way acknowledge the perpetual presence of the poor are justified in the occasional outlay demanded by friendship.

2. But our Lord's defence of Mary is of wider range. "Let her alone," He says, "against the day of My burying hath she kept this." It was not only occasional, exceptional tribute she had paid to Him; it was solitary, never to be repeated. Against My burial she has kept this unguent; for Me ye have not always. Would you blame Mary for spending this, were I lying in My tomb? Would you call it too costly a tribute, were it the last? Well, it is the last.\* Such is our Lord's justification of her action. Was Mary herself conscious that this was a parting tribute? It is possible that her love and womanly instinct had revealed to her the nearness of that death of which Jesus Himself so often spoke, but which the disciples refused to think of. She may have felt that this was the last time she would have an opportunity of expressing her devotion. Drawn to Him with unutterable tenderness, with admiration, gratitude,

\* So Stier.



anxiety mingling in her heart, she hastens to spend upon Him her costliest. Passing away from *her* world she knows he is; buried so far as she was concerned she knew Him to be if He was to keep the Passover at Jerusalem in the midst of His enemies. Had the others felt with her, none could have grudged her the last consolation of this utterance of her love, or have grudged Him the consolation of receiving it. For this made Him strong to die, this among other motives—the knowledge that His love and sacrifice were not in vain, that He had won human hearts, and that in their affection He would survive. This is His true embalming. This it is that forbids that His flesh see corruption, that His earthly manifestation die out and be forgotten. To die before He had attached to Himself friends as passionate in their devotion as Mary would have been premature. The recollection of His work might have been lost. But when He had won men like John and women like Mary, He could die assured that His name would never be lost from earth. The breaking of the alabaster box, the pouring out of Mary's soul in adoration of her Lord—this was the signal that all was ripe for His departure, this the proof that His manifestation had done its work. The love of His own had come to maturity and burst thus into flower. Jesus therefore recognises in this act His true embalming.

And it is probably from this point of view that we may most readily see the appropriateness of that singular commendation and promise which our Lord, according to the other Gospels, added: "Verily I say unto you, wherever this Gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken for a memorial of her."

At first sight the encomium might seem as extravagant as the action. Was there, a Judas might ask, anything deserving of immortality in the sacrifice of a few pounds? But no such measurements are admissible here. The encomium was deserved because the act was the irrepressible utterance of all-absorbing love—of a love so full, so rich, so rare that even the ordinary disciples of Christ were at first not in perfect sympathy with it. The absolute devotedness of her love found a fit symbol in the alabaster box or vase which she had to break that the ointment might flow out. It was not a bottle out of which she might take the stopper and let a carefully measured quantity dribble out, reserving the rest for other and perhaps very different uses—fit symbol of our love to Christ; but it was a hermetically sealed casket or flask, out of which, if she let one drop fall, the whole must go. It had to be broken; it had to be devoted to one sole use. It could not be in part reserved or in part diverted to other uses. Where you have such love as this, have you not the highest thing humanity can produce? Where is it now to be had on earth, where are we to look for this all-devoting, unreserving love, which gathers up all its possessions and pours them out at Christ's feet, saying, "Take all, would it were more"?

The encomium, therefore, was deserved and appropriate. In her love the Lord would ever live: so long as she existed the remembrance of Him could not die. No death could touch her heart with his chilly hand and freeze the

warmth of her devotion. Christ was immortal in her, and she was therefore immortal in Him. Her love was a bond that could not be broken, the truest spiritual union. In embalming Him, therefore, she unconsciously embalmed herself. Her love was the amber in which He was to be preserved, and she became inviolable as He. Her love was the marble on which His name and worth were engraven, on which His image was deeply sculptured, and they were to live and last together. Christ "prolongs His days" in the love of His people. In every generation there arise those who will not let His remembrance die out, and who to their own necessities call out the living energy of Christ. In so doing they unwittingly make themselves undying as He; their love of Him is the little spark of immortality in their soul. It is that which indissolubly and by the only genuine spiritual affinity links them to what is eternal. To all who thus love Him Christ cannot but say, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

Another point in our Lord's defence of Mary's conduct, though it is not explicitly asserted, plainly is, that tributes of affection paid directly to Himself are of value to Him. Judas might with some plausibility have quoted against our Lord His own teaching that an act of kindness done to the poor was kindness to Him. It might be said that, on our Lord's own showing, what He desires is, not homage paid to Himself personally, but loving and merciful conduct. And certainly any homage paid to Himself which is not accompanied by such conduct is of no value at all. But as love to Him is the spring and regulator of all right conduct, it is necessary that we should cultivate this love; and because He delights in our well-being and in ourselves, and does not look upon us merely as so much material in which He may exhibit His healing powers, He necessarily rejoices in every expression of true devotedness that is paid to Him by any of us.

And on our side wherever there is true and ardent love it must crave direct expression. "If ye love Me," says our Lord, "keep My commandments"; and obedience certainly is the normal test and exhibition of love. But there is that in our nature which refuses to be satisfied with obedience, which craves fellowship with what we love, which carries us out of ourselves and compels us to express our feeling directly. And that soul is not fully developed whose pent-up gratitude, cherished admiration, and warm affection do not from time to time break away from all ordinary modes of expressing devotion and choose some such direct method as Mary chose, or some such straightforward utterance as Peter's: "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee."

It may, indeed, occur to us, as we read of Mary's tribute to her Lord, that the very words in which He justified her action forbid our supposing that any so grateful tribute can be paid to Him by us. "Me ye have not always" may seem to warn us against expecting that so direct and satisfying an intercourse can be maintained now, when we no longer have Him. And no doubt this is one of the standing difficulties of Christian experience. We can love those who live with us, whose eye we can meet, whose



voice we know, whose expression of face we can read. We feel it easy to fix our affections on one and another of those who are alive contemporaneously with ourselves. But with Christ it is different: we miss those sensible impressions made upon us by the living bodily presence; we find it difficult to retain in the mind a settled idea of the feeling He has towards us. It is an effort to accomplish by faith what sight without any effort effectually accomplishes. We do not *see* that He loves us; the looks and tones that chiefly reveal human love are absent; we are not from hour to hour confronted, whether we will or no, with one evidence or other of love. Were the life of a Christian nowadays no more difficult than it was to Mary, were it brightened with Christ's presence as a household friend, were the whole sum and substance of it merely a giving way to the love He kindled by palpable favours and measurable friendship, then surely the Christian life would be a very simple, very easy, very happy course.

But the connection between ourselves and Christ is not of the body that passes, but of the spirit which endures. It is spiritual, and in such a connection may be seriously perverted by the interference of sense and of bodily sensations. To measure the love of Christ by His expression of face and by His tone of voice is legitimate, but it is not the truest measurement: to be drawn to Him by the accidental kindnesses our present difficulties must provoke is to be drawn by something short of perfect spiritual affinity. And, on the whole, it is well that our spirit should be allowed to choose its eternal friendship and alliance by what is specially and exclusively its own, so that its choice cannot be mistaken, as the choice sometimes is when there is a mixture of physical and spiritual attractiveness. So much are we guided in youth and in the whole of our life by what is material, so freely do we allow our tastes to be determined and our character to be formed by our connection with what is material, that the whole man gets blunted in his *spiritual* perceptions and incapable of appreciating what is not seen. And the great part of our education in this life is to lift the spirit to its true place and to its appropriate company, to teach it to measure its gains apart from material prosperity, and to train it to love with ardour what cannot be seen.

Besides, it cannot be doubted that this incident itself very plainly teaches that Christ came into this world to win our love and to turn all duty into a personal acting towards Him; to make the *whole* of life like those parts of it which are now its bright exceptional holiday times; to make all of it a pleasure by making all of it, and not merely parts of it, the utterance of love. Even a little love in our life is the sunshine that quickens and warms and brightens the whole. There seems at length to be a reason and a satisfaction in life when love animates us. It is easy to act well to those whom we really love, and Christ has come for the express purpose of bringing our whole life within this charmed circle. He has come not to bring constraint and gloom into our lives, but to let us out into the full liberty and joy of the life that God Himself lives and judges to be the only life worthy of His bestowal upon us.

## CHAPTER II.

## THE ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM.

JOHN xii. 12-19.

IF our Lord arrived in Bethany on Friday evening and spent the Sabbath with His friends there, "the next day" of ver. 12 is Sunday; and in the Church year this day is known as Palm Sunday, from the incident here related. It was also the day, four days before the Passover, on which the Jews were enjoined by the law to choose their paschal lamb. Some consciousness of this may have guided our Lord's action. Certainly He means finally to offer Himself to the people as the Messiah. Often as He had evaded them before, and often as He had forbidden His disciples to proclaim Him, He is now conscious that His hour has come, and by entering Jerusalem as King of peace He definitely proclaims Himself the promised Messiah. As plainly as the crowning of a new monarch and the flourish of trumpets and the kissing of his hand by the great officers of state proclaim Him king, so unmistakably does our Lord by riding into Jerusalem on an ass and by accepting the hosannas of the people proclaim Himself the King promised to men through the Jews, as the King of peace who was to win men to His rule by love and sway them by a Divine Spirit.

The scene must have been one not easily forgotten. The Mount of Olives runs north and south parallel to the east wall of Jerusalem, and separated from it by a gully through which flows the brook Kidron. The Mount is crossed by three paths. One of these is a steep footpath, which runs direct over the crest of the hill; the second runs round its northern shoulder; while the third crosses the southern slope. It was by this last route the pilgrim caravans were accustomed to enter the city. On the occasion of our Lord's entry the road was probably thronged with visitors making their way to the great annual feast. No fewer than three million persons are said to have been sometimes packed together in Jerusalem at the Passover; and all of them being on holiday, were ready for any kind of excitement. The idea of a festal procession was quite to their mind. And no sooner did the disciples appear with Jesus riding in their midst than the vast streams of people caught the infection of loyal enthusiasm, tore down branches of the palms and olives which were found in abundance by the roadside, and either waved them in the air or strewed them in the line of march. Others unwrapped their loose cloaks from their shoulders and spread them along the rough path to form a carpet as He approached—a custom which is still, it seems, observed in the East in royal processions, and which has indeed sometimes been imported into our own country on great occasions. Thus with every demonstration of loyalty, with ceaseless shoutings that were heard across the valley in the streets of Jerusalem itself, and waving the palm branches, they moved towards the city.

Those who have entered the city from Bethany by this road tell us that there are two striking points in it. The first is when at a turn of the broad and well-defined mountain track



the southern portion of the city comes for an instant into view. This part of the city was called "the city of David," and the suggestion is not without probability that it may have been at this point the multitude burst out in the words that linked Jesus with David. "Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is the King that cometh in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the kingdom of our father David. Hosanna, peace and glory in the highest." This became the watchword of the day, so that even the boys who had come out of the city to see the procession were heard afterwards, as they loitered in the streets, still shouting the same refrain.

After this the road again dips, and the glimpse of the city is lost behind the intervening ridge of Olivet; but shortly a rugged ascent is climbed and a ledge of bare rock is reached, and in an instant the whole city bursts into view. The prospect from this point must have been one of the grandest of its kind in the world, the fine natural position of Jerusalem not only showing to advantage, but the long line of city wall embracing, like the setting of a jewel, the marvellous structures of Herod, the polished marble and the gilded pinnacles glittering in the morning sun and dazzling the eye. It was in all probability at this point that our Lord was overcome with regret when He considered the sad fate of the beautiful city, and when in place of the smiling palaces and impregnable walls His imagination filled His eye with smoke-blackened ruins, with pavements slippery with blood, with walls breached at all points and choked with rotting corpses.

Our Lord's choice of the ass was significant. The ass was commonly used for riding, and the well-cared-for ass of the rich man was a very fine animal, much larger and stronger than the little breed with which we are familiar. Its coat, too, is as glossy as a well-kept horse's—"shiny black, or satiny white, or sleek mouse-colour." It was not chosen by our Lord at this time that He might show His humility, for it would have been still humbler to walk like His disciples. So far from being a token of humility, He chose a colt which apparently had never borne another rider. He rather meant by claiming the ass and by riding into Jerusalem upon it to assert His royalty; but He did not choose a horse, because that animal would have suggested royalty of quite another kind from His—royalty which was maintained by war and outward force; for the horse and the chariot had always been among the Hebrews symbolic of warlike force. The disciples themselves, strangely enough, did not see the significance of this action, although, when they had time to reflect upon it, they remembered that Zechariah had said: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and He shall speak peace unto the heathen."

When John says, "these things understood not His disciples at the first," he cannot mean that they did not understand that Jesus by this act claimed to be the Messiah, because even the mob perceived the significance of this entry into Jerusalem and hailed Him "Son of David."

What they did not understand, probably, was why He chose this mode of identifying Himself with the Messiah. At any rate, their perplexity brings out very clearly that the conception was not suggested to Jesus. He was not induced by the disciples nor led on by the people to make a demonstration which He Himself scarcely approved or had not intended to make. On the contrary, from His first recorded act that morning He had taken command of the situation. Whatever was done was done with deliberation, at His own instance and as His own act.\*

This then in the first place; it was His own deliberate act. He put Himself forward, knowing that He would receive the hosannas of the people, and intending that He should receive them. All His backwardness is gone; all shyness of becoming a public spectacle is gone. For this also is to be noted—that no place or occasion could have been more public than the Passover at Jerusalem. Whatever it was He meant to indicate by His action, it was to the largest possible public He meant to indicate it. No longer in the retirement of a Galilean village, nor in a fisherman's cottage, nor in dubious or ambiguous terms, but in the full blaze of the utmost publicity that could possibly be given to His proclamation, and in language that could not be forgotten or misinterpreted, He now declared Himself. He knew He must attract the attention of the authorities, and His entrance was a direct challenge to them.

What was it, then, that with such deliberation and such publicity He meant to proclaim? What was it that in these last critical hours of His life, when He knew He should have few more opportunities of speaking to the people, He sought to impress upon them? What was it that, when free from the solicitations of men and the pressure of circumstances, He sought to declare? It was that He was the Messiah. There might be those in the crowd who did not understand what was meant. There might be persons who did not know Him, or who were incompetent judges of character, and supposed He was a mere enthusiast carried away by dwelling too much on some one aspect of Old Testament prophecy. In every generation there are good men who become almost crazed upon some one topic, and sacrifice everything to the promotion of one favourite hope. But however He might be misjudged, there can be no question of His own idea of the significance of His action. He claims to be the Messiah.

Such a claim is the most stupendous that could be made. To be the Messiah is to be God's Viceroy and Representative on earth, able to represent God adequately to men, and to bring about that perfect condition which is named "the kingdom of God." The Messiah must be conscious of ability perfectly to accomplish the will of God with man, and to bring men into absolute harmony with God. This is claimed by Jesus. He stands in His sober senses and claims to be that universal Sovereign, that true King of men, whom the Jews had been encouraged to expect, and who when He came would reign over Gentiles as well as Jews. By this demonstration, to which His previous career had been naturally leading up, He claims to take command of earth, of this world in all its generations, not in the easier sense of laying down

\* This is more distinctly brought out in the Synoptic Gospels than in St. John: cp. Mark xi. 1-10.



upon paper a political constitution fit for all races, but in the sense of being able to deliver mankind from the source of all their misery and to lift men to a true superiority. He has gone about on earth, not secluding Himself from the woes and ways of men, not delicately isolating Himself, but exposing Himself freely to the touch of the malignities, the vulgarities, the ignorance and wickedness of all; and He now claims to rule all this, and implies that earth can present no complication of distress or iniquity which He cannot by the Divine forces within Him transform into health and purity and hope.

This then is His deliberate claim. He quietly but distinctly proclaims that He fulfils all God's promise and purpose among men; is that promised King who was to rectify all things, to unite men to Himself, and to lead them on to their true destiny; to be practically God upon earth, accessible to men and identified with all human interests. Many have tested His claim and have proved its validity. By true allegiance to Him many have found that they have gained the mastery over the world. They have entered into peace, have felt eternal verities underneath their feet, and have attained a connection with God such as must be everlasting. They are filled with a new spirit towards men and see all things with purged eyes. Not abruptly and unintelligibly, by leaps and bounds, but gradually and in harmony with the nature of things, His kingdom is extending. Already His Spirit has done much: in time His Spirit will everywhere prevail. It is by Him and on the lines which He has laid down that humanity is advancing to its goal.

This was the claim he made; and this claim was enthusiastically admitted by the popular instinct.\* The populace was not merely humouring in holiday mood a whimsical person for their own diversion. Many of them knew Lazarus and knew Jesus, and taking the matter seriously gave the tone to the rest. The people indeed did not, any more than the disciples, understand how different the kingdom of their expectation was from the kingdom Jesus meant to found. But while they entirely misapprehended the purpose for which He was sent, they believed that He was sent by God: His credentials were absolutely satisfactory, His work incomprehensible. But as yet they still thought He must be of the same mind as themselves regarding the work of the Messiah. To His claim, therefore, the response given by the people was loud and demonstrative. It was indeed a very brief reign they accorded to their King, but their prompt acknowledgment of Him was the instinctive and irrepressible expression of what they really felt to be His due. A popular demonstration is notoriously untrustworthy, always running to extremes, necessarily uttering itself with a loudness far in excess of individual conviction, and gathering to itself the loose and floating mass of people who have no convictions of their own, and are thankful to any one who leads them and gives them a cue, and helps them to feel that they have after all a place in the community. Who has not stood by as an onlooker at a public demonstration and smiled at the noise and glare that a mass of people will produce when their feelings are ever so little stirred, and marked how even against their own individual

sentiments they are carried away by the mere tide of the day's circumstances, and for the mere sake of making a demonstration? This crowd which followed our Lord with shoutings very speedily repented and changed their shouts into a far blinder shriek of rage against Him who had been the occasion of their folly. And it must indeed have been a humbling experience for our Lord to have Himself ushered into Jerusalem by a crowd through whose hosannas He already heard the mutter of their curses. Such is the homage He has to content Himself with—such is the homage a perfect life has won.

For He knew what was in man; and while His disciples might be deceived by this popular response to His claim, He Himself was fully aware how little it could be built upon. Save in His own heart, there is no premonition of death. More than ever in His life before does His sky seem bright without a cloud. He Himself is in His early prime with life before Him; His followers are hopeful, the multitude jubilant; but through all this gay enthusiasm He sees the scowling hate of the priests and scribes; the shouting of the multitude does not drown in His ear the mutterings of a Judas and of the Sanhedrim. He knew that the throne He was now hailed to was the cross, that His coronation was the reception on His own brows of all the thorns and stings and burdens that man's sin had brought into the world. He did not fancy that the redemption of the world to God was an easy matter which could be accomplished by an afternoon's enthusiasm. He kept steadily before His mind the actual condition of the men who were by His spiritual influence to become the willing and devoted subjects of God's kingdom. He measured with accuracy the forces against Him, and understood that His warfare was not with the legions of Rome, against whom this Jewish patriotism and indomitable courage and easily roused enthusiasm might tell, but with principalities and powers a thousand-fold stronger, with the demons of hatred and jealousy, of lust and worldliness, of carnality and selfishness. Never for a moment did He forget His true mission and sell His spiritual throne, hard-earned as it was to be, for popular applause and the glories of the hour. Knowing that only by the utmost of human goodness and self-sacrifice, and by the utmost of trial and endurance could any true and lasting rule of men be gained, He chose this path and the throne it led to. With the most comprehensive view of the kingdom He was to found, and with a spirit of profound seriousness strangely contrasting in its composed and self-possessed insight with the blind tumult around Him, He claimed the crown of the Messiah. His suffering was not formal and nominal, it was not a mere pageant; equally real was the claim He now made and which brought Him to that suffering.

## THE CORN OF WHEAT.

### CHAPTER III.

JOHN xii. 20-26.

ST. JOHN now introduces a third incident to show that all is ripe for the death of Jesus. Already he has shown us that in the inmost circle of His friends He has now won for Himself

\* According to the reading of the scene by St. John, the people needed no prompting.



a permanent place, a love which ensures that His memory will be had in everlasting remembrance. Next, He has lifted into prominence the scene in which the outer circle of the Jewish people were constrained, in an hour when their honest enthusiasm and instincts carried them away, to acknowledge Him as the Messiah who had come to fulfil all God's will upon earth. He now goes on to tell us how this agitation at the centre was found rippling in ever-widening circles till it broke with a gentle whisper on the shores of the isles of the Gentiles. This is the significance which St. John sees in the request of the Greeks that they might be introduced to Jesus.

These Greeks were "of those that came up to worship at the feast." They were proselytes, Greeks by birth, Jews by religion. They suggest the importance for Christianity of the leavening process which Judaism was accomplishing throughout the world. They may not have come from any remoter country than Galilee, but from traditions and customs separate as the poles from the Jewish customs and thoughts. From their heathen surroundings they came to Jerusalem, possibly for the first time, with wondering anticipations of the blessedness of those who dwelt in God's house, and feeling their thirst for the living God burning within them as their eyes lighted on the pinnacles of the Temple, and as at last their feet stood within its precincts. But up through all these desires grew one that overshadowed them, and, through all the petitions which a year or many years of sin and difficulty had made familiar to their lips, this petition made its way: "Sir, we would see Jesus."

This petition they address to Philip, not only because he had a Greek name, and therefore presumably belonged to a family in which Greek was spoken and Greek connections cultivated, but because, as St. John reminds us, he was "of Bethsaida of Galilee," and might be expected to understand and speak Greek, if, indeed, he was not already known to these strangers in Jerusalem. And by their request they obviously did not mean that Philip should set them in a place of vantage in which they might have a good view of Jesus as He passed by, for this they could well have accomplished without Philip's friendly intervention. But they wished to question and make Him out, to see for themselves whether there were in Jesus what even in Judaism they felt to be lacking—whether He at last might not satisfy the longings of their Divinely awakened spirits. Possibly they may even have wished to ascertain His purposes regarding the outlying nations, how the Messianic reign was to affect them. Possibly they may even have thought of offering Him an asylum where He might find shelter from the hostility of His own people.

Evidently Philip considered that this request was critical. The Apostles had been charged not to enter into any Gentile city, and they might naturally suppose that Jesus would be reluctant to be interviewed by Greeks. But before dismissing the request, he lays it before Andrew his friend, who also bore a Greek name; and after deliberation, the two make bold, if not to urge the request, at least to inform Jesus that it had been made. At once in this modestly urged petition He hears the whole Gentile world uttering its weary, long-disappointed sigh, "We would see." This is no mere Greek inquisitiveness; it is the craving of thoughtful men recognising

their need of a Redeemer. To the eye of Jesus, therefore, this meeting opens a prospect which for the moment overcomes Him with the brightness of its glory. In this little knot of strangers He sees the firstfruits of the immeasurable harvest which was henceforth to be continuously reaped among the Gentiles. No more do we hear the heart-broken cry, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!" no longer the reproachful "Ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life," but the glad consummation of His utmost hope utters itself in the words, "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified."

But while promise was thus given of the glorification of the Messiah by His reception among all men, the path which led to this was never absent from the mind of our Lord. Second to the inspiring thought of His recognition by the Gentile world came the thought of the painful means by which alone He could be truly glorified. He checks, therefore, the shout of exultation which He sees rising to the lips of His disciples with the sobering reflection: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." As if He said, Do not fancy that I have nothing to do but to accept the sceptre which these men offer, to seat Myself on the world's throne. The world's throne is the Cross. These men will not know My power until I die. The manifestation of Divine presence in My life has been distinct enough to win them to inquiry; they will be forever won to Me by the Divine presence revealed in My death. Like the corn of wheat, I must die if I would be abundantly fruitful. It is through death My whole living power can be disengaged and can accomplish all possibilities.

Two points are here suggested: (I.) That the life, the living force that was in Christ, reached its proper value and influence through His death; and (II.) that the proper value of Christ's life is that it propagates similar lives.

I. The life of Christ acquired its proper value and received its development through His death. This truth He sets before us in the illuminating figure of the corn of wheat. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." There are three uses to which wheat may be put: it may be stored for sale, it may be ground and eaten, it may be sown. For our Lord's purposes these three uses may be considered as only two. Wheat may be eaten or it may be sown. With a pickle of wheat or a grain of oats you may do one of two things: you may eat it and enjoy a momentary gratification and benefit; or you may put it in the ground, burying it out of sight, and suffering it to pass through uncomely processes, and it will reappear multiplied a hundredfold, and so on in everlasting series. Year by year men sacrifice their choicest sample of grain, and are content to bury it in the earth instead of exposing it in the market, because they understand that except it die it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit. The proper life of the grain is terminated when it is used for immediate gratification: it receives its fullest development and accomplishes its richest end when it is cast into the ground, buried out of sight, and apparently lost.

As with the grain, so is it with each human life. One of two things you can do with your life; both you cannot do, and no third thing



is possible. You may consume your life for your own present gratification and profit, to satisfy your present cravings and tastes and to secure the largest amount of immediate enjoyment to yourself—you may eat your life; or you may be content to put aside present enjoyment and profits of a selfish kind and devote your life to the uses of God and men. In the one case you make an end of your life, you consume it as it goes; no good results, no enlarging influence, no deepening of character, no fuller life, follows from such an expenditure of life—spent on yourself and on the present, it terminates with yourself and with the present. But in the other case you find that you have entered into a more abundant life; by living for others your interests are widened, your desire for life increased, the results and ends of life enriched. "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." It is a law we cannot evade. He that consumes his life now, spending it on himself—he who cannot bear to let his life out of his own hand, but cherishes and pampers it and gathers all good around it, and will have the fullest present enjoyment out of it,—this man is losing his life; it comes to an end as certainly as the seed that is eaten. But he who devotes his life to other uses than his own gratification, who does not so prize self that everything must minister to its comfort and advancement, but who can truly yield himself to God and put himself at God's disposal for the general good,—this man, though he may often seem to lose his life, and often does lose it so far as present advantage goes, keeps it to life everlasting.

The law of the seed is the law of human life. Use your life for present and selfish gratification and to satisfy your present cravings, and you lose it for ever. Renounce self, yield yourself to God, spend your life for the common good, irrespective of recognition or the lack of it, personal pleasure or the absence of it, and although your life may thus seem to be lost, it is finding its best and highest development and passes into life eternal. Your life is a seed now, not a developed plant, and it can become a developed plant only by your taking heart to cast it from you and sow it in the fertile soil of other men's needs. This will seem, indeed, to disintegrate it and fritter it away, and leave it a contemptible, obscure, forgotten thing; but it does, in fact, set free the vital forces that are in it; and give it its fit career and maturity.

Looking at the thing itself, apart from figure, it is apparent that "he that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." The man who most freely uses his life for others, keeping least to himself and living solely for the common interests of mankind, has the most enduring influence. He sets in motion forces which propagate fresh results eternally. And not only so. He who freely sows his life has it eternally, not only in so far as he has set in motion an endless series of beneficent influences, but inasmuch as he himself enters into life eternal. An immortality of influence is one thing and a very great thing; but an immortality of personal life is another, and this also is promised by our Lord when He says (ver. 26), "Where I am there shall also My servant be."

This, then, being the law of human life, Christ, being man, must not only enounce, but observe

it. He speaks of Himself even more directly than of us when He says, "He that loveth his life shall lose it." His disciples thought they had never seen such promise in His life as at this hour: seedtime seemed to them to be past, and the harvest at hand. Their Master seemed to be fairly launched on the tide that was to carry Him to the highest pinnacle of human glory. And so he was, but not, as they thought, by simply yielding Himself to be set as King and to receive adoration from Jew and Gentile. He saw with different eyes, and that it was a different exaltation which would win for Him lasting sovereignty: "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." He knew the law which governed the development of human life. He knew that a total and absolute surrender of self to the uses and needs of others was the one path to permanent life, and that in His case this absolute surrender involved death.

A comparison of the good done by the life of Christ with that done by His death shows how truly He judged when He declared that it was by His death He should effectually gather all men to Him. His death, like the dissolution of the seed, seemed to terminate His work, but really was its germination. So long as He lived, it was but His single strength that was used; He abode alone. There was great virtue in His life—great power for the healing, the instruction, the elevation, of mankind. In His brief public career He suggested much to the influential men of His time, set all men who knew Him a-thinking, aided many to reform their lives, and removed a large amount of distress and disease. He communicated to the world a mass of new truth, so that those who have lived after Him have stood at quite a different level of knowledge from that of those who lived before Him. And yet how little of the proper results of Christ's influence, how little understanding of Christianity, do you find even in His nearest friends until He died. By the visible appearance and the external benefits and the false expectations His greatness created, the minds of men were detained from penetrating to the spirit and mind of Christ. It was expedient for them that He should go away, for until He went they depended on His visible power, and His spirit could not be wholly received by them. They were looking at the husk of the seed, and its life could not reach them. They were looking for help from Him instead of themselves becoming like Him.

And therefore He chose from an early age to cease from all that was marvellous and beneficent in His life among men. He might, as these Greeks suggested, have visited other lands and have continued His healing and teaching there. He might have done more in His own time than He did, and His time might have been indefinitely prolonged; but He chose to cease from all this and voluntarily gave Himself to die, judging that thereby He could do much more good than by His life. He was straitened until this was accomplished; He felt as a man imprisoned and whose powers are held in check. It was winter and not spring-time with Him. There was a change to pass upon Him which should disengage the vital forces that were in Him and cause their full power to be felt—a change which should thaw the springs of life in Him and let them flow forth to all. To use His own figure, He was as a seed unsown so long as He lived,



valuable only in His own proper person; but by dying His life obtained the value of seed sown, propagating its kind in everlasting increase.

II. The second point suggested is, that the proper value of Christ's life consists in this—that it propagates similar lives. As seed produces grain of its own kind, so Christ produces men like Christ. He ceasing to do good in this world as a living man, a multitude of others by this very cessation are raised in His likeness. By His death we receive both inclination and ability to become with Him sons of God. "The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge that if one died for all, then all died; and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him that died for them." By His death He has effected an entrance for this law of self-surrender into human life, has exhibited it in a perfect form, and has won others to live as He lived. So that, using the figure He used, we may say that the company of Christians now on earth are Christ in a new form, His body indeed. "That which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body which shall be, but bare grain: but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body." Christ having been sown, lives now in His people. They are the body in which He dwells. And this will be seen. For standing and looking at a head of barley waving on its stalk, no amount of telling would persuade you that that had sprung from a seed of wheat; and looking at any life which is characterised by selfish ambition and eagerness for advancement and little regard for the wants of other men, no persuasion can make it credible that that life springs from the self-sacrificing life of Christ.

What Christ here shows us, then, is that the principle which regulates the development of seed regulates the growth, continuance, and fruitfulness of human life; that whatever is of the nature of seed gets to its full life only through death; that our Lord, knowing this law, submitted to it, or rather by His native love was attracted to the life and death which revealed this law to Him. He gave His life away for the good of men, and thereby prolongs His days and sees His seed eternally. There is not one way for Him and another for us. The same law applies to all. It is not peculiar to Christ. The work He did was peculiar to Him, as each individual has his own place and work; but the principle on which all right lives are led is one and the same universally. What Christ did He did because He was living a human life on right principles. We need not die on the cross as He did, but we must as truly yield ourselves as living sacrifices to the interests of men. If we have not done so, we have yet to go back to the very beginning of all lasting life and progress; and we are but deceiving ourselves by attainments and successes which are not only hollow, but are slowly cramping and killing all that is in us. Whoever will choose the same destiny as Christ must take the same road to it that He took. He took the one right way for men to go, and said, "If any man follow Me, where I am there will he be also." If we do not follow Him, we really walk in darkness and know not whither we go. We cannot live for selfish purposes and then enjoy the common happiness and glory of the race. Self-seeking is self-destroying.

And it is needful to remark that this self-renunciation must be real. The law of sacrifice is the law not for a year or two in order to gain some higher selfish good—which is not self-sacrifice, but deeper self-seeking; it is the law of all human life, not a short test of our fidelity to Christ, but the only law on which life can ever proceed. It is not a barter of self I make, giving it up for a little that I may have an enriched self to eternity; but it is a real foregoing and abandonment of self for ever, a change of desire and nature, so that instead of finding my joy in what concerns myself only I find my joy in what is serviceable to others.

Thus only can we enter into permanent happiness. Goodness and happiness are one—one in the long-run, if not one in every step of the way. We are not asked to live for others without any heart to do so. We are not asked to choose as our eternal life what will be a constant pain and can only be reluctantly done. The very heathen would not offer in sacrifice the animal that struggled as it was led to the altar. All sacrifice must be willingly made; it must be the sacrifice which is prompted by love. God and this world demand our best work, and only what we do with pleasure can be our best work. Sacrifice of self and labour for others are not like Christ's sacrifice and labour unless they spring from love. Forced, reluctant, constrained sacrifice or service—service which is no joy to ourselves through the love we bear to those for whom we do it—is not the service that is required of us. Service into which we can throw our whole strength, because we are convinced it will be of use to others, and because we long to see them enjoying it—this is the service required. Love, in short, is the solution of all. Find your happiness in the happiness of many rather than in the happiness of one, and life becomes simple and inspiring.

Nor are we to suppose that this is an impracticable, high-pitched counsel of perfection with which plain men need not trouble themselves. *Every* human life is under this law. There is no path to goodness or to happiness save this one. Nature herself teaches us as much. When a man is truly attracted by another, and when genuine affection possesses his heart, his whole being is enlarged, and he finds it his best pleasure to serve that person. The father who sees his children enjoying the fruit of his toil feels himself a far richer man than if he were spending all on himself. But this family affection, this domestic solution of the problem of happy self-sacrifice, is intended to encourage and show us the way to a wider extension of our love, and thereby of our use and happiness. The more love we have, the happier we are. Self-sacrifice looks miserable, and we shrink from it as from death and destitution, because we look at it in separation from the love it springs from. Self-sacrifice without love is death; we abandon our own life and do not find it again in any other. It is a seed ground under the heel, not a seed lightly thrown into prepared soil. It is in love that goodness and happiness have their common root. And it is this love which is required of us and promised to us. So that as often as we shudder at the dissolution of our own personal interests, the scattering of our own selfish hopes and plans, the surrender of our life to the service of others, we are to remember that this, which looks so



very like death, and which often throws around our prospects the chilling atmosphere of the tomb, is not really the termination, but the beginning, of the true and eternal life of the spirit. Let us keep our heart in the fellowship of the sacrifice of Christ, let us feel our way into the meanings and uses of that sacrifice, and learn its reality, its utility, its grace, and at length it will lay hold of our whole nature, and we shall find that it impels us to regard other men with interest and to find our true joy and life in serving them.

#### CHAPTER IV.

#### THE ATTRACTIVE FORCE OF THE CROSS.

JOHN xii. 27-36.

THE presence of the Greeks had stirred in the soul of Jesus conflicting emotions. Glory by humiliation, life through death, the secured happiness of mankind through His own anguish and abandonment,—well might the prospect disturb Him. So masterly is His self-command, so steadfast and constant His habitual temper, that one almost inevitably underrates the severity of the conflict. The occasional withdrawal of the veil permits us reverently to observe some symptoms of the turmoil within—symptoms which it is probably best to speak of in His own words: “Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy name.” This Evangelist does not describe the agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. It was needless after this indication of the same conflict. Here is the same shrinking from a public and shameful death, conquered by His resolution to deliver men from a still darker and more shameful death. Here is the same foretaste of the bitterness of the cup as it now actually touches His lips, the same clear reckoning of all it meant to drain that cup to the dregs, together with the deliberate assent to all that the will of the Father might require Him to endure.

In response to this act of submission, expressed in the words, “Father, glorify Thy name,” there came a voice from heaven, saying, “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.” The meaning of this assurance was, that as in all the past manifestation of Christ the Father had become better known to men, so in all that was now impending, however painful and disturbed, however filled with human passions and to all appearance the mere result of them, the Father would still be glorified. Some thought the voice was thunder; others seemed almost to catch articulate sounds, and said, “An angel spake to Him.” But Jesus explained that it was not “to Him” the voice was specially addressed, but rather for the sake of those who stood by. And it was indeed of immense importance that the disciples should understand that the events which were about to happen were overruled by God that He might be glorified in Christ. It is easy for us to see that nothing so glorifies the Father’s name as these hours of suffering; but how hard for the onlookers to believe that this sudden transformation of the Messianic throne into the crim-

inal’s cross was no defeat of God’s purpose, but its final fulfilment. He leads them, therefore, to consider that in His judgment the whole world is judged, and to perceive in His arrest and trial and condemnation not merely the misguided and wanton outrage of a few men in power, but the critical hour of the world’s history.

This world has commonly presented itself to thoughtful minds as a battle-field in which the powers of good and evil wage ceaseless war. In the words He now utters the Lord declares Himself to be standing at the very crisis of the battle, and with the deepest assurance He announces that the opposing power is broken and that victory remains with Him. “Now is the prince of this world cast out; and I will draw all men unto Me.” The prince of this world, that which actually rules and leads men in opposition to God, was judged, condemned, and overthrown in the death of Christ. By His meek acceptance of God’s will in the face of all that could make it difficult and dreadful to accept it, He won for the race deliverance from the thralldom of sin. At length a human life had been lived without submission at any point to the prince of this world. As man and in the name of all men Jesus resisted the last and most violent assault that could be made upon His faith in God and fellowship with Him, and so perfected His obedience and overcame the prince of this world,—overcame him not in one act alone—many had done that—but in a completed human life, in a life which had been freely exposed to the complete array of temptations that can be directed against men in this world.

In order more clearly to apprehend the promise of victory contained in our Lord’s words, we may consider (I.) the object He had in view—to “draw all men” to Him; and (II.) the condition of His attaining this object—namely, His death.

I. The object of Christ was to draw all men to Him. The opposition in which He here sets Himself to the prince of this world shows us that by “drawing” He means attracting *as a king attracts*, to His name, His claims, His standard, His person. Our life consists in our pursuance of one object or another, and our devotion is continually competed for. When two claimants contest a kingdom, the country is divided between them, part cleaving to the one and part to the other. The individual determines to which side he shall cleave,—by his prejudices or by his justice, as it may be; by his knowledge of the comparative capacity of the claimants, or by his ignorant predilection. He is taken in by sounding titles, or he penetrates through all bombast and promises and douceurs to the real merit or demerit of the man himself. One person will judge by the personal manners of the respective claimants; another by their published manifesto, and professed object and style of rule; another by their known character and probable conduct. And while men thus range themselves on this side or on that, they really pass judgment on themselves, betraying as they do what it is that chiefly draws them, and taking their places on the side of good or evil. It is thus that we all judge ourselves by following this or that claimant to our faith, regard, and devotion, to ourself and our life. What we spend ourselves on, what we aim at and pursue, what we make our object, that



judges us and that rules us and that determines our destiny.

Christ came into the world to be our King, to lead us to worthy achievements. He came that we might have a worthy object of choice and of the devotion of our life. He serves the same purpose as a king: He embodies in His own person, and thereby makes visible and attractive, the will of God and the cause of righteousness. Persons who could only with great difficulty apprehend His objects and plans can appreciate His person and trust Him. Persons to whom there would seem little attraction in a cause or in an undefined "progress of humanity" can kindle with enthusiasm towards Him personally, and unconsciously promote His cause and the cause of humanity. And therefore, while some are attracted by His person, others by the legitimacy of His claims, others by His programme of government, others by His benefactions, we must beware of denying loyalty to any of these. Expressions of love to His person may be lacking in the man who yet most intelligently enters into Christ's views for the race, and sacrifices his means and his life to forward these views. Those who gather to His standard are various in temperament, are drawn by various attractions, and must be various in their forms of showing allegiance. And this, which is the strength of His camp, can only become its weakness when men begin to think there is no way but their own; and that allegiance which is strenuous in labour but not fluent in devout expression, or loyalty which shouts and throws its cap in the air but lacks intelligence, is displeasing to the King. The King, who has great ends in view, will not inquire what it is precisely which forms the bond between Him and His subjects so long as they truly sympathise with Him and second His efforts. The one question is, Is He their actual leader?

Of the kingdom of Christ, though a full description cannot be given, one word or two of the essential characteristics may be mentioned.

1. It is a *kingdom*, a community of men under one head. When Christ proposed to attract men to Himself, it was for the good of the race He did so. It could achieve its destiny only if He led it, only if it yielded itself to His mind and ways. And those who are attracted to Him, and see reason to believe that the hope of the world lies in the universal adoption of His mind and ways, are formed into one solid body or community. They labour for the same ends, are governed by the same laws, and whether they know one another or not they have the most real sympathy and live for one cause. Being drawn to Christ, we enter into abiding fellowship with all the good who have laboured or are labouring in the cause of humanity. We take our places in the everlasting kingdom, in the community of those who shall see and take part in the great future of mankind and the growing enlargement of its destiny. We are hereby entered among the living, and are joined to that body of mankind which is to go on and which holds the future—not to an extinct party which may have memories, but has no hopes. In sin, in selfishness, in worldliness, individualism reigns, and all profound and abiding unity is impossible. Sinners have common interests only for a time, only as a temporary guise of selfish interests. Every man out of Christ is really an isolated individual. But passing into Christ's

kingdom we are no longer isolated, abandoned wretches stranded by the stream of time, but members of the undying commonwealth of men in which our life, our work, our rights, our future, our association with all good, are assured.

2. It is a *universal* kingdom. "I will draw *all* men unto Me." The one rational hope of forming men into one kingdom shines through these words. The idea of a universal monarchy has visited the great minds of our race. They have cherished their various dreams of a time when all men should live under one law and possibly speak one language, and have interests so truly in common that war should be impossible. But an effectual instrument for accomplishing this grand design has ever been wanting. Christ turns this grandest dream of humanity into a rational hope. He appeals to what is universally present in human nature. There is that in Him which every man needs,—a door to the Father; a visible image of the unseen God; a gracious, wise, and holy Friend. He does not appeal exclusively to one generation, to educated or to uneducated, to Orientals or to Europeans alone, but to man, to that which we have in common with the lowest and the highest, the most primitive and most highly developed of the species. The attractive influence He exerts upon men is not conditioned by their historical insight, by their ability to sift evidence, by this or that which distinguishes man from man, but by their innate consciousness that some higher power than themselves exists, by their ability, if not to recognise goodness when they see it, at least to recognise love when it is spent upon them.

But while our Lord affirms that there is that in Him which all men can recognise and learn to love and serve, He does not say that His kingdom will therefore be quickly formed. He does not say that this greatest work of God will take a shorter time than the common works of God which prolong one day of our hasty methods into a thousand years of solidly growing purpose. If it has taken a million ages for the rocks to knit and form for us a standing-ground and dwelling-place, we must not expect that this kingdom, which is to be the one enduring result of this world's history, and which can be built up only of thoroughly convinced men and of generations slowly weeded of traditional prejudices and customs, can be completed in a few years. No doubt interests are at stake in human destiny and losses are made by human waste which had no place in the physical creation of the world; still, God's methods are, as we judge, slow, and we must not think that He who "works hitherto" is doing nothing because the swift processes of jugglery or the hasty methods of human workmanship find no place in the extension of Christ's kingdom. This kingdom has a firm hold of the world and must grow. If there is one thing certain about the future of the world, it is that righteousness and truth will prevail. The world is bound to come to the feet of Christ.

3. Christ's kingdom being universal, it is also and necessarily *inward*. What is common to all men lies deepest in each. Christ was conscious that He held the key to human nature. He knew what was in man. With the penetrating sight of absolute purity He had gone about among men, freely mixing with rich and with poor, with the sick and the healthy, with the religious and the irreligious. He was as much



at home with the condemned criminal as with the blameless Pharisee; saw through Pilate and Caiaphas alike; knew all that the keenest dramatist could tell Him of the meannesses, the depravities, the cruelties, the blind passions, the obstructed goodness of men; but knew also that He could sway all that was in man and exhibit that to man which should cause the sinner to abhor his sin and seek the face of God. This He would do by a simple moral process, without violent demonstration or disturbance or assertion of authority. He would "draw" men. It is by inward conviction, not by outward compulsion, men are to become His subjects. It is by the free and rational working of the human mind that Jesus builds up His kingdom. His hope lies in a fuller and fuller light, in a clearer and clearer recognition of facts. Attachment to Christ must be the act of the soul's self; everything, therefore, which strengthens the will or enlightens the mind or enlarges the man brings him nearer to the kingdom of Christ, and makes it more likely he will yield to His drawing.

And because Christ's rule is inward it is therefore of universal application. The inmost choice of the man being governed by Christ, and his character being thus touched at its inmost spring, all his conduct will be governed by Christ and be a carrying out of the will of Christ. It is not the frame of society Christ seeks to alter, but the spirit of it. It is not the occupations and institutions of human life which the subject of Christ finds to be incompatible with Christ's rule, so much as the aim and principles on which they are conducted. The kingdom of Christ claims all human life as its own, and the spirit of Christ finds nothing that is essentially human alien from it. If the statesman is a Christian, it will be seen in his policy; if the poet is a Christian, his song will betray it; if a thinker be a Christian, his readers soon find it out. Christianity does not mean religious services, churches, creeds, Bibles, books, equipment of any kind; it means the spirit of Christ. It is the most portable and flexible of all religions, and therefore the most pervasive and dominant in the life of its adherent. It needs but the spirit of God and the spirit of man, and Christ mediating between them.

II. Such being Christ's object, what is the condition of His attaining it? "*I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.*" The elevation requisite for becoming a visible object to men of all generations was the elevation of the Cross. His death would accomplish what His life could not accomplish. The words betray a distinct consciousness that there was in His death a more potent spell, a more certain and real influence for good among men than in His teaching or in His miracles or in His purity of life.

What is it, then, in the death of Christ which so far surpasses His life in its power of attraction? The life was equally unselfish and devoted; it was more prolonged; it was more directly useful,—why, then, would it have been comparatively ineffective without the death? It may, in the first place, be answered, because His death presents in a dramatic and compact form that very devotedness which is diffused through every part of His life. Between the life and the death there is the same difference as between sheet lightning and forked lightning, between the diffused heat of the sun and the same heat focussed on a point through a lens. It

discloses what was actually but latently there. The life and the death of Christ are one and mutually explain each other. From the life we learn that no motive can have prompted Christ to die but the one motive which ruled him always—the desire to do all God willed in men's behalf. We cannot interpret the death as anything else than a consistent part of a deliberate work undertaken for men's good. It was not an accident; it was not an external necessity: it was, as the whole life was, a willing acceptance of the uttermost that was required to set men on a higher level and unite them to God. But as the life throws this light upon the death of Christ, how that light is gathered up and thrown abroad in world-wide reflection from the death of Christ! For here His self-sacrifice shines completed and perfect; here it is exhibited in that tragic and supreme form which in all cases arrests attention and commands respect. Even when a man of wasted life sacrifices himself at last, and in one heroic act saves another by his death, his past life is forgotten or seems to be redeemed by his death, and at all events we own the beauty and the pathos of the deed. A martyr to the faith may have been but a poor creature, narrow, harsh, and overbearing, vain and vulgar in spirit; but all the past is blotted out, and our attention is arrested on the blazing pile or the bloody scaffold. So the death of Christ, though but a part of the self-sacrificing life, yet stands by itself as the culmination and seal of that life; it catches the eye and strikes the mind, and conveys at one view the main impression made by the whole life and character of Him who gave Himself upon the Cross.

But Christ is no mere hero or teacher sealing his truth with his blood; nor is it enough to say that His death renders, in a conspicuous form, the perfect self-sacrifice with which He devoted Himself to our good. It is conceivable that in a long-past age some other man should have lived and died for his fellows, and yet we at once recognise that, though the history of such a person came into our hands, we should not be so affected and drawn by it as to choose him as our king and rest upon him the hope of uniting us to one another and to God. Wherein, then, lies the difference? The difference lies in this—that Christ was the representative of God. This He Himself uniformly claimed to be. He knew He was unique, different from all others; but He advanced no claim to esteem that did not pass to the Father who sent Him. Always He explained His powers as being the proper equipment of God's representative. "The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of Myself." His whole life was the message of God to man, the Word made flesh. His death was but the last syllable of this great utterance—the utterance of God's love for man, the final evidence that nothing is grudged us by God. Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. His death draws us because there is in it more than human heroism and self-sacrifice. It draws us because in it the very heart of God is laid bare to us. It softens, it breaks us down, by the irresistible tenderness it discloses in the mighty and ever-blessed God. Every man feels it has a message for him, because in it the God and Father of us all speaks to us.

It is this which is special to the death of Christ, and which separates it from all other deaths



and heroic sacrifices. It has a universal bearing—a bearing upon every man, because it is a Divine act, the act of that One who is the God and Father of all men. In the same century as our Lord many men died in a manner which strongly excites our admiration. Nothing could well be more noble, nothing more pathetic than the fearless and loving spirit in which Roman after Roman met his death. But beyond respectful admiration these heroic deeds win from us no further sentiment. They are the deeds of men who have no connection with us. The well-worn words, "What's Hecuba to *me* or I to Hecuba?" rise to our lips when we try to fancy any deep connection. But the death of Christ concerns all men without exception, because it is the greatest declarative act of the God of all men. It is the manifesto all men are concerned to read. It is the act of One with whom all men are already connected in the closest way. And the result of our contemplation of it is, not that we admire, but that we are drawn, are attracted, into new relations with Him whom that death reveals. This death moves and draws us as no other can, because here we get to the very heart of that which most deeply concerns us. Here we learn what our God is and where we stand eternally. He who is nearest us of all, and in whom our life is bound up, reveals Himself; and seeing Him here full of most ungrudging and most reliable love, of tenderest and utterly self-sacrificing devotedness to us, we cannot but give way to this central attraction, and with all other willing creatures be drawn into fullest intimacy and firmest relations with the God of all.

The death of Christ, then, draws men chiefly because God here shows men His sympathy, His love, His trustworthiness. What the sun is in the solar system, Christ's death is in the moral world. The sun by its physical attraction binds the several planets together and holds them within range of its light and heat. God, the central intelligence and original moral Being, draws to Himself and holds within reach of His life-giving radiance all who are susceptible of moral influences; and He does so through the death of Christ. This is His supreme revelation. Here, if we may say so with reverence, God is seen at His best—not that at any time or in any action He is different, but here He is *seen* to be the God of love He ever is. Nothing is better than self-sacrifice; that is the highest point a moral nature can touch. And God, by the sacrifice which is rendered visible on the cross, gives to the moral world a real, actual, immovable centre, round which moral natures will more and more gather, and which will hold them together in self-effacing unity.

To complete the idea of the attractiveness of the Cross, it must further be kept in view that this particular form of the manifestation of the Divine love was adapted to the needs of those to whom it was made. To sinners the love of God manifested itself in providing a sacrifice for sin. The death on the cross was not an irrelevant display, but was an act required for the removal of the most insuperable obstacles that lay in man's path. The sinner, believing that in the death of Christ his sins are atoned for, conceives hope in God and claims the Divine compassion in his own behalf. To the penitent the Cross is attractive as an open door to the prisoner, or the harbour-heads to the storm-tossed ship.

Let us not suppose then, that we are not welcome to Christ. He desires to draw us to Himself and to form a connection with us. He understands our hesitations, our doubts of our own capacity for any steady and enthusiastic loyalty; but He knows also the power of truth and love, the power of His own person and of His own death to draw and fix the hesitating and wavering soul. And we shall find that as we strive to serve Christ in our daily life it is still His death that holds and draws us. It is His death that gives us compunction in our times of frivolity, or selfishness, or carnality, or rebellion, or unbelief. It is there Christ appears in His own most touching attitude and with His own most irresistible appeal. We cannot further wound One already so wounded in His desire to win us from evil. To strike One already thus nailed to the tree in helplessness and anguish, is more than the hardest heart can do. Our sin, our infidelity, our unmoved contemplation of His love, our blind indifference to His purpose—these things wound Him more than the spear and the scourge. To rid us of these things was His purpose in dying, and to see that His work is in vain and his sufferings unregarded and unfruitful is the deepest injury of all. It is not to the mere sentiment of pity He appeals: rather He says, "Weep not for Me; weep for yourselves." It is in our power to recognise perfect goodness and to appreciate perfect love. He appeals to our power to see below the surface of things, and through the outer shell of this world's life to the spirit of good that is at the root of all and that manifests itself in Him. Here is the true stay of the human soul: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden"; "I am come a light into the world: walk in the light."

## CHAPTER V.

### RESULTS OF CHRIST'S MANIFESTATION.

JOHN xii. 37-50.

IN this Gospel the death of Christ is viewed as the first step in His glorification. When He speaks of being "lifted up," there is a double reference in the expression, a local and an ethical reference.\* He is lifted up on the cross, but lifted up on it as His true throne and as the necessary step towards His supremacy at God's right hand. It was, John tells us, with direct reference to the cross that Jesus now used the words: "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." The Jews, who heard the words, perceived that, whatever else was contained in them, intimation of His removal from earth was given. But, according to the current Messianic expectation, the Christ "abideth for ever," or at any rate, for four hundred or a thousand years. How then could this Person, who announced His immediate departure, be the Christ? The Old Testament gave them ground for supposing that the Messianic reign would be lasting; but had they listened to our Lord's teaching they would have learned that this reign was spiritual, and not in the form of an earthly kingdom with a visible sovereign.

Accordingly, although they had recognised Jesus as the Messiah, they are again stumbled by this

\* See iii. 14.



fresh declaration of His. They begin to fancy that perhaps after all by calling Himself "the Son of man" He has not meant exactly what they mean by the Messiah. From the form of their question it would seem that Jesus had used the designation "the Son of man" in intimating His departure; for they say, "How sayest Thou, The Son of man must be lifted up?" Up to this time, therefore, they had taken it for granted that by calling Himself the Son of man He claimed to be the Christ, but now they begin to doubt whether there may not be two persons signified by those titles.

Jesus furnishes them with no direct solution of their difficulty. He never betrays any interest in these external identifications. The time for discussing the relation of the Son of man to the Messiah is past. His manifestation is closed. Enough light has been given. Conscience has been appealed to and discussion is no longer admissible. "Ye have light: walk in the light." The way to come to a settlement of all their doubts and hesitations is to follow Him. There is still time for that. "Yet a little while is the light among you." But the time is short; there is none to waste on idle questionings, none to spend on sophisticating conscience—time only for deciding as conscience bids.

By thus believing in the light they will themselves become "children of light." The "children of light" are those who live in it as their element,—as "the children of this world" are those who wholly belong to this world and find in it what is congenial; as "the son of perdition" is he who is identified with perdition. The children of light have accepted the revelation that is in Christ, and live in the "day" that the Lord has made. Christ contains the truth for them—the truth which penetrates to their inmost thought and illuminates the darkest problems of life. In Christ they have seen that which determines their relation to God; and that being determined, all else that is of prime importance finds a settlement. To know God and ourselves; to know God's nature and purpose, and our own capabilities and relation to God,—these constitute the light we need for living by; and this light Christ gives. It was in a dim, uncertain twilight, with feebly shining lanterns, the wisest and best of men sought to make out the nature of God and His purposes regarding man; but in Christ God has made noonday around us.

They, therefore, that stood, or that stand, in His presence, and yet recognise no light, must be asleep, or must turn away from an excess of light that is disagreeable or inconvenient. If we are not the fuller of life and joy the more truth we know, if we shrink from admitting the consciousness of a present and holy God, and do not feel it to be the very sunshine of life in which alone we thrive, we must be spiritually asleep or spiritually dead. And this cry of Christ is but another form of the cry that His Church has prolonged: "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

The "little while" of their enjoyment of the light was short indeed, for no sooner had He made an end of these sayings than He "departed, and did hide Himself from them." He probably found retirement from the feverish, inconstant, questioning crowd with His friends in Bethany. At any rate this removal of the light, while it

meant darkness to those who had not received Him and who did not keep His words, could bring no darkness to His own, who had received Him and the light in Him. Perhaps the best comment on this is the memorable passage from "Comus":

"Virtue could see to do what virtue would  
By her own radiant light, though sun and moon  
Were in the great sea sunk.  
He that has light within his own clear breast  
May sit i' the centre and enjoy bright day;  
But he that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts  
Benighted walks under the midday sun,  
Himself is his own dungeon."

And now the writer of this Gospel, before entering upon the closing scenes, pauses and presents a summary of the results of all that has hitherto been related. First, he accounts for the unbelief of the Jews. It could not fail to strike his readers as remarkable that, "though He had done so many miracles before the people, yet they believed not in Him." In this John sees nothing inexplicable, however sad and significant it may be. At first sight it is an astounding fact that the very people who had been prepared to recognise and receive the Messiah should not have believed in Him. Might not this to some minds be convincing evidence that Jesus was not the Messiah? If the same God who sent Him forth had for centuries specially prepared a people to recognise and receive Him when He came, was it possible that this people should repudiate Him? Was it likely that such a result should be produced or should be allowed? But John turns the point of this argument by showing that a precisely similar phenomenon had often appeared in the history of Israel. The old prophets had the very same complaint to make: "Who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" The people had habitually, as a people, with individual exceptions, refused to listen to God's voice or to acknowledge His presence in prophet and providence.

Besides, might it not very well be that the blindness and callousness of the Jews in rejecting Jesus was the inevitable issue of a long process of hardening? If in former periods of their history, they had proved themselves unworthy of God's training and irresponsible to it, what else could be expected than that they should reject the Messiah when He came? This hardening and blinding process was the inevitable, natural result of their past conduct. But what nature does, God does; and therefore the Evangelist says "they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts; that they should not see with their eyes nor understand with their heart." The organ for perceiving spiritual truth was blinded, and their susceptibility to religious and moral impressions had become callous and hardened and impervious.

And while this was no doubt true of the people as a whole, still there were not a few individuals who eagerly responded to this last message from God. In the most unlikely quarters, and in circumstances calculated to counteract the influence of spiritual forces, some were convinced. "Even among the chief rulers many believed on Him." This belief, however, did not tell upon the mass, because, through fear of excommunication, those who were convinced dared not utter their conviction. "They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."



They allowed their relations to men to determine their relation to God. Men were more real to them than God. The praise of men came home to their hearts with a sensible relish that the praise of God could not rival. They reaped what they had sown; they had sought the esteem of men, and now they were unable to find their strength in God's approval. The glory which consisted in following the lowly and outcast Jesus, the glory of fellowship with God, was quite eclipsed by the glory of living in the eye of the people as wise and estimable persons.

In the last paragraph of the chapter John gives a summary of the claims and message of Jesus. He has told us (ver. 36) that Jesus had departed from public view and had hidden Himself, and he mentions no return to publicity. It is therefore probable that in these remaining verses, and before he turns to a somewhat different aspect of Christ's ministry, he gives in rapid and brief retrospect the sum of what Jesus had advanced as His claim. He introduces this paragraph, indeed, with the words, "Jesus cried and said"; but as neither time nor place is mentioned, it is quite likely that no special time or place is supposed; and in point of fact each detail adduced in these verses can be paralleled from some previously recorded utterance of Jesus.

First, then, as everywhere in the Gospel, so here, He claims to be the representative of God in so close and perfect a manner that "he that believeth on Me, believeth not on Me, but on Him that sent Me. And he that seeth Me, seeth Him that sent Me." No belief terminates in Christ Himself: to believe in Him is to believe in God, because all that He is and does proceeds from God and leads to God. The whole purpose of Christ's manifestation was to reveal God. He did not wish to arrest thought upon Himself, but through Himself to guide thought to Him whom He revealed. He was sustained by the Father, and all He said and did was of the Father's inspiration. Whoever, therefore, "saw" or understood Him "saw" the Father; and whoever believed in Him believed in the Father.

Second, as regards men, He is "come a light into the world." Naturally there is in the world no sufficient light. Men feel that they are in darkness. They feel the darkness all the more appalling and depressing the more developed their own human nature is. "More light" has been the cry from the beginning. What are we? where are we? whence are we? whither are we going? what is there above and beyond this world? These questions are echoed back from an unanswering void, until Christ comes and gives the answer. Since He came men have no sufficient light. Men feel that they are in darkness. They see where they are going, and they see why they should go.

And if it be asked, as among the Jews it certainly must have been asked, why, if Jesus is the Messiah, does He not punish men for rejecting Him? the answer is, "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world." Judgment, indeed, necessarily results from His coming. Men are divided by His coming. "The words that I have spoken, the same shall judge men in the last day." The offer of God, the offer of righteousness, is that which judges men. Why are they still dead, when life has been offered? This is the condemnation. "The commandment of the Father is life everlasting." This is the sum of the message of God to men in Christ;

this is "the commandment" which the Father has given Me; this is Christ's commission: to bring God in the fulness of His grace and love and life-giving power within men's reach. It is to give life eternal to men that God has come to them in Christ. To refuse that life is their condemnation.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE FOOT-WASHING.

JOHN xiii. 1-17.

ST. JOHN, having finished his account of the public manifestation of Jesus, proceeds now to narrate the closing scenes, in which the disclosures He made to "His own" form a chief part. That the transition may be observed, attention is drawn to it. At earlier stages of our Lord's ministry He has given as His reason for refraining from proposed lines of action that His hour was not come: now He "knew that His hour was come, that He should depart out of this world unto the Father." This indeed was the last evening of His life. Within twenty-four hours He was to be in the tomb. Yet according to this writer it was not the paschal supper which our Lord now partook of with His disciples; it was "before the feast of the Passover." Jesus being Himself the Paschal Lamb was sacrificed on the day on which the Passover was eaten, and in this and the following chapters we have an account of the preceding evening.

In order to account for what follows, the precise time is defined in the words "supper being served" or "supper-time having arrived"; not, as in the Authorised Version, "supper being ended," which plainly was not the case; \* nor, as in the Revised Version, "during supper." The difficulty about washing the feet could not have arisen after or during supper, but only as the guests entered and reclined at table. In Palestine, as in other countries of the same latitude, shoes were not universally worn, and were not worn at all within doors; and where some protection to the foot was worn, it was commonly a mere sandal, a sole tied on with a thong. The upper part of the foot was thus left exposed, and necessarily became heated and dirty with the fine and scorching dust of the roads. Much discomfort was thus produced, and the first duty of a host was to provide for its removal. A slave was ordered to remove the sandals and wash the feet. † And in order that this might be done, the guest either sat on the couch appointed for him at table, or reclined with his feet protruding beyond the end of it, that the slave, coming round with the pitcher and basin, ‡ might pour cool water gently over them. So necessary to comfort was this attention that our Lord reproached the Pharisee who had invited Him to dinner with a breach of courtesy because he had omitted it.

On ordinary occasions it is probable that the disciples would perform this humble office by turns, where there was no slave to discharge it for all. But this evening, when they gathered for the last supper, all took their places at the table with a studied ignorance of the necessity, a feigned unconsciousness that any such attention

\* See ver. 2.

† ὑπολύετε, παῖδες, καὶ ἀπονίσετε.

‡ The "tāsht" and "ibriek" of modern Palestine.



was required. As a matter of course, the pitcher of cool water, the basin, and the towel had been set as part of the requisite furnishing of the supper chamber; but no one among the disciples betrayed the slightest consciousness that he understood that any such custom existed. Why was this? Because, as Luke tells us (xxii. 24), "there had arisen among them a contention, which of them is accounted to be the greatest." Beginning, perhaps, by discussing the prospects of their Master's kingdom, they had passed on to compare the importance of this or that faculty for forwarding the interests of the kingdom, and had ended by easily recognised personal allusions and even the direct pitting of man against man. The assumption of superiority on the part of the sons of Zebedee and others was called in question, and it suddenly appeared how this assumption had galled the rest and rankled in their minds. That such a discussion should arise may be disappointing, but it was natural. All men are jealous of their reputation, and crave that credit be given them for their natural talent, their acquired skill, their professional standing, their influence, or at any rate for their humility. Heated, then, and angry and full of resentment, these men hustle into the supper-room and seat themselves like so many sulky schoolboys. They streamed into the room and doggedly took their places; and then came a pause. For any one to wash the feet of the rest was to declare himself the servant of all; and that was precisely what each one was resolved he, for his part, would not do. No one of them had humour enough to see the absurdity of the situation. No one of them was sensitive enough to be ashamed of showing such a temper in Christ's presence. There they sat, looking at the table, looking at the ceiling, arranging their dress, each resolved upon this—that he would not be the man to own himself servant of all.

But this unhealthy heat quite unfits them to listen to what their Lord has to say to them that last evening. Occupied as they are, not with anxiety about Him nor with absorbing desire for the prosperity of His kingdom, but with selfish ambitions that separate them alike from Him and from one another, how can they receive what He has to say? But how is He to bring them into a state of mind in which they can listen wholly and devotedly to Him? How is He to quench their heated passions and stir within them humility and love? "He riseth from the supper-table, and laid aside His garments, and took a towel, and girded Himself. After that He poureth water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded." Each separate action is a fresh astonishment and a deeper shame to the bewildered and conscience-stricken disciples. "Who is not able to picture the scene,—the faces of John and James and Peter; the intense silence, in which each movement of Jesus was painfully audible; the furtive watching of Him, as He rose, to see what He would do; the sudden pang of self-reproach as they perceived what it meant; the bitter humiliation and the burning shame?"

But not only is the time noted, in order that we may perceive the relevancy of the foot-washing, but the Evangelist steps aside from his usual custom and describes the mood of Jesus that we may more deeply penetrate into the significance of the action. Around this scene in

the supper chamber St. John sets lights which permit us to see its various beauty and grace. And first of all he would have us notice what seems chiefly to have struck himself as from time to time he reflected on this last evening—that Jesus, even in these last hours, was wholly possessed and governed by love. Although He knew "that His hour had come, that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, yet having loved His own which were in the world He loved them unto the end." Already the deep darkness of the coming night was touching the spirit of Jesus with its shadow. Already the pain of the betrayal, the lonely desolation of desertion by His friends, the defenceless exposure to fierce, unjust, ruthless men, the untried misery of death and dissolution, the critical trial of His cause and of all the labour of His life, these and many anxieties that cannot be imagined, were pouring in upon His spirit, wave upon wave. If ever man might have been excused for absorption in His own affairs Jesus was then that man. On the edge of what He knew to be the critical passage in the world's history, what had He to do attending to the comfort and adjusting the silly differences of a few unworthy men? With the weight of a world on His arm, was He to have His hands free for such a trifling attention as this? With His whole soul pressed with the heaviest burden ever laid on man, was it to be expected He should turn aside at such a call?

But His love made it seem no turning aside at all. His love had made Him wholly theirs, and though standing on the brink of death He was disengaged to do them the slightest service. His love was love, devoted, enduring, constant. He had loved them, and He loved them still. It was their condition which had brought Him into the world, and His love for them was that which would carry him through all that was before Him. The very fact that they showed themselves still so jealous and childish, so unfit to cope with the world, drew out His affection towards them. He was departing from the world and they were remaining in it, exposed to all its opposition and destined to bear the brunt of hostility directed against Him—how then can He but pity and strengthen them? Nothing is more touching on a death-bed than to see the sufferer hiding and making light of his own pain, and turning the attention of those around him away from him to themselves, and making arrangements, not for his own relief, but for the future comfort of others. This which has often dimmed with tears the eyes of the bystanders struck John when he saw his Master ministering to the wants of His disciples, although He knew that His own hour had come.

Another side-light which serves to bring out the full significance of this action is Jesus' consciousness of His own dignity. "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He came forth from God, and goeth unto God," riseth from supper, and took a towel and girded Himself. It was not in forgetfulness of His Divine origin, but in full consciousness of it, He discharged this menial function. As He had divested Himself of the "form of God" at the first, stripping Himself of the outward glory attendant upon recognised Divinity, and taken upon Him the form of a servant, so now He "laid aside His garments and girded Himself," assuming the guise of a house-



hold slave. For a fisherman to pour water over a fisherman's feet was no great condescension; but that He, in whose hands are all human affairs and whose nearest relation is the Father, should thus condescend is of unparalleled significance. It is this kind of action that is suitable to One whose consciousness is Divine. Not only does the dignity of Jesus vastly augment the beauty of the action, but it sheds new light on the Divine character.

Still another circumstance which seemed to John to accentuate the grace of the foot-washing was this—that Judas was among the guests, and that “the devil had now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him.” The idea had at last formed itself in Judas' mind that the best use he could make of Jesus was to sell Him to His enemies. His hopes of gain in the Messianic kingdom were finally blighted, but he might still make something out of Jesus and save himself from all implication in a movement frowned upon by the authorities. He clearly apprehended that all hopes of a temporal kingdom were gone. He had probably not strength of mind enough to say candidly that he had joined the company of disciples on a false understanding, and meant now quietly to return to his trading at Kerioth. If he could break up the whole movement, he would be justified in his dissatisfaction, and would also be held to be a useful servant of the nation. So he turns traitor. And John does not whitewash him, but plainly brands him as a traitor. Now, much may be forgiven a man; but treachery—what is to be done with it; with the man who uses the knowledge only a friend can have, to betray you to your enemies? Suppose Jesus had unmasked him to Peter and the rest, would he ever have left that room alive? Instead of unmasking him, Jesus makes no difference between him and the others, kneels by his couch, takes his feet in His hands, washes and gently dries them. However difficult it is to understand why Jesus chose Judas at the first, there can be no question that throughout His acquaintance with him He had done all that was possible to win him. The kind of treatment that Judas had received throughout may be inferred from the treatment he received now. Jesus knew him to be a man of a low type and impenitent; He knew him to be at that very time out of harmony with the little company, false, plotting, meaning to save himself by bringing ruin on the rest. Yet Jesus will not denounce him to the others. His sole weapon is love. Conquests which He cannot achieve with this He will not achieve at all. In the person of Judas the utmost of malignity the world can show is present to Him, and He meets it with kindness. Well may Astié exclaim: “Jesus at the feet of the traitor—what a picture! what lessons for us!”

Shame and astonishment shut the mouths of the disciples, and not a sound broke the stillness of the room but the tinkle and splash of the water in the basin as Jesus went from couch to couch. But the silence was broken when He came to Peter. The deep reverence which the disciples had contracted for Jesus betrays itself in Peter's inability to suffer Him to touch his feet. Peter could not endure that the places of master and servant should thus be reversed. He feels that shrinking and revulsion which we feel when a delicate person or one much above us in station proceeds to do some service from

which we ourselves would shrink as beneath us. That Peter should have drawn up his feet, started up on the couch, and exclaimed, “Lord, do you actually propose to wash my feet!” is to his credit, and just what we should have expected of a man who never lacked generous impulses. Our Lord therefore assures him that his scruples will be removed, and that what he could not understand would be shortly explained to him. He treats Peter's scruples very much as He treated the Baptist's when John hesitated about baptising Him. Let Me, says Jesus, do it now, and I will explain My reason when I have finished the washing of you all. But this does not satisfy Peter. Out he comes with one of his blunt and hasty speeches: “Lord, Thou shalt never wash my feet!” He knew better than Jesus, that is to say, what should be done. Jesus was mistaken in supposing that any explanation could be given of it. Hasty, self-confident, knowing better than anybody else, Peter once again ran himself into grave fault. The first requirement in a disciple is entire self-surrender. The others had meekly allowed Jesus to wash their feet, cut to the heart with shame as they were, and scarcely able to let their feet lie in His hands; but Peter must show himself of a different mind. His first refusal was readily forgiven as a generous impulse; the second is an obstinate, proud, self-righteous utterance, and was forthwith met by the swift rebuke of Jesus: “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me.”

Superficially, these words might have been understood as intimating to Peter that, if he wished to partake of the feast prepared, he must allow Jesus to wash his feet. Unless he was prepared to leave the room and reckon himself an outcast from that company, he must submit to the feet-washing which his friends and fellow-guests had submitted to. There was that in the tone of our Lord which awakened Peter to see how great and painful a rupture this would be. He almost hears in the words a sentence of expulsion pronounced on himself; and as rapidly as he had withdrawn from the touch of Christ, so rapidly does he now run to the opposite extreme and offer his whole body to be washed —“not my feet only, but my hands and my head.” If this washing means that we are Thy friends and partners, let me be all washed, for every bit of me is Thine. Here again Peter was swayed by blind impulse, and here again he erred. If he could only have been quiet! If he could only have held his tongue! If only he could have allowed his Lord to manage without his interference and suggestion at every point! But this was precisely what Peter had as yet not learned to do. In after-years he was to learn meekness; he was to learn to submit while others bound him and carried him whither they would; but as yet that was impossible to him. His Lord's plan is never good enough for him; Jesus is never exactly right. What He proposes must always be eked out by Peter's superior wisdom. What gusts of shame must have stormed through Peter's soul when he looked back on this scene! Yet it concerns us rather to admire than to condemn Peter's fervour. How welcome to our Lord as He passed from the cold and treacherous heart of Judas must this burst of enthusiastic devotion have been! “Lord, if washing be any symbol of my being Thine, wash hands and head as well as feet.”



Jesus throws a new light upon His action in His reply: "He that is washed, needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all." The words would have more readily disclosed Christ's meaning had they been literally rendered: He that has bathed needeth not save to wash his feet. The daily use of the bath rendered it needless to wash more than the feet, which were soiled with walking from the bath to the supper-chamber. But that Christ had in view as He washed the disciples' feet something more than the mere bodily cleansing and comfort is plain from His remark that they were not all clean. All had enjoyed the feet-washing, but all were not clean. The feet of Judas were as clean as the feet of John or Peter, but his heart was foul. And what Christ intended when He girt Himself with the towel and took up the pitcher was not merely to wash the soil from their feet, but to wash from their hearts the hard and proud feelings which were so uncongenial to that night of communion and so threatening to His cause. Far more needful to their happiness at the feast than the comfort of cool and clean feet was their restored affection and esteem for one another, and that humility that takes the lowest place. Jesus could very well have eaten with men who were unwashed; but He could not eat with men hating one another, glaring fiercely across the table, declining to answer or to pass what they were asked for, showing in every way malice and bitterness of spirit. He knew that at bottom they were good men; He knew that with one exception they loved Him and one another; He knew that as a whole they were clean, and that this vicious temper in which they at present entered the room was but the soil contracted for the hour. But none the less must it be washed off. *And He did effectually wash it off by washing their feet.* For was there a man among them who, when he saw his Lord and Master stooping at his couch-foot, would not most gladly have changed places with Him? Was there one of them who was not softened and broken down by the action of the Lord? Is it not certain that shame must have cast out pride from every heart; that the feet would be very little thought of, but that the change of feeling would be marked and obvious? From a group of angry, proud, insolent, implacable, resentful men, they were in five minutes changed into a company of humbled, meek, loving disciples of the Lord, each thinking hardly of himself and esteeming others better. They were effectually cleansed from the stain they had contracted, and could enter on the enjoyment of the Last Supper with pure conscience, with restored and increased affection for one another, and with deepened adoration for the marvellous wisdom and all-accomplishing grace of their Master.

Jesus, then, does not mistake present defilement for habitual impurity, nor partial stain for total uncleanness. He knows whom He has chosen. He understands the difference between deep-seated alienation of spirit and the passing mood which for the hour disturbs friendship. He discriminates between Judas and Peter: between the man who has not been in the bath, and the man whose feet are soiled in walking from it; between him who is at heart unmoved and unimpressed by His love, and him who has for a space fallen from the consciousness of it.

He does not suppose that because we have sinned this morning we have no real root of grace in us. He knows the heart we bear Him; and if just at present unworthy feelings prevail, He does not misunderstand as men may, and straightway dismiss us from His company. He recognises that our feet need washing, that our present stain must be removed, but not on this account does He think we need to be all washed and have never been right in heart towards Him.

These present stains, then, Christ seeks to remove, that our fellowship with Him may be unembarrassed; and that our heart, restored to humility and tenderness, may be in a state to receive the blessing He would bestow. It is not enough to be once forgiven, to begin the day "clean every whit." No sooner do we take a step in the life of the day than our footfall raises a little puff of dust which does not settle without sullying us. Our temper is ruffled, and words fall from our lips that injure and exasperate. In one way or other stain attaches to our conscience, and we are moved away from cordial and open fellowship with Christ. All this happens to those who are at heart as truly Christ's friends as those first disciples. But we must have these stains washed away even as they had. Humbly we must own them, and humbly accept their forgiveness and rejoice in their removal. As these men had with shame to lay their feet in Christ's hands, so must we. As His hands had to come in contact with the soiled feet of the disciples, so has His moral nature to come in contact with the sins from which He cleanses us. His heart is purer than were His hands, and He shrinks more from contact with moral than with physical pollution; and yet without ceasing we bring Him into contact with such pollution. When we consider what those stains actually are from which we must ask Christ to wash us, we feel tempted to exclaim with Peter, "Lord, Thou shalt never wash my feet!" As these men must have shivered with shame through all their nature, so do we when we see Christ stoop before us to wash away once again the defilement we have contracted; when we lay our feet soiled with the miry and dusty ways of life in His sacred hands; when we see the uncomplaining, un-reproachful grace with which He performs for us this lowly and painful office. But only thus are we prepared for communion with Him and with one another. Only by admitting that we need cleansing, and by humbly allowing Him to cleanse us, are we brought into true fellowship with Him. With the humble and contrite spirit which has thrown down all barriers of pride and freely admits His love and rejoices in His holiness does He abide. Whoso sits down at Christ's table must sit down clean; he may not have come clean, even as those first guests were not clean, but he must allow Christ to cleanse him, must honestly suffer Christ to remove from his heart, from his desire and purpose, all that He counts defiling.

But our Lord was not content to let His action speak for itself; He expressly explains (vv. 12-17) the meaning of what He had now done. He meant that they should learn to wash one another's feet, to be humble and ready to be of service to one another even when to serve seemed to compromise their dignity.\* No disciple of

\* For the formal Foot-washing by the Lord High Almoner, the Pope, or other officials, see Augustine's "Letters"



Christ need go far to find feet that need washing, feet that are stained or bleeding with the hard ways that have been trodden. To recover men from the difficulties into which sin or misfortune has brought them—to wipe off some of the soil from men's lives—to make them purer, sweeter, readier to listen to Christ, even unostentatiously to do the small services which each hour calls for—is to follow Him who girt Himself with the slave's apron. As often as we thus condescend we become like Christ. By putting Himself in the servant's place, our Lord has consecrated all service. The disciple who next washed the feet of the rest would feel that he was representing Christ, and would suggest to the minds of the others the action of their Lord; and as often as we lay aside the conventional dignity in which we are clad, and gird ourselves to do what others despise, we feel that we are doing what Christ would do, and are truly representing Him.

## CHAPTER VII.

### JUDAS.

JOHN xiii. 18-30.

WHEN Jesus had washed the disciples' feet, apparently in dead silence save for the interruption of Peter, He resumed those parts of His dress He had laid aside, and reclined at the table already spread for the supper. As the meal began, and while He was explaining the meaning of His act and the lesson He desired them to draw from it, John, who lay next Him at table, saw that His face did not wear the expression of festal joy, nor even of untroubled composure, but was clouded with deep concern and grief. The reason of this was immediately apparent; already, while washing Peter's feet, He had awakened the attention and excited the consciences of the disciples by hinting that on some one of them at least, if not on more, uncleansed guilt still lay, even though all partook in the symbolic washing. And now in His explanation of the foot-washing He repeats this limitation and warning, and also points at the precise nature of the guilt, though not yet singling out the guilty person. "I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen; I have not been deceived: but it was necessary that this part of God's purpose be fulfilled, and that this Scripture, 'He that eateth bread with Me, hath lifted up his heel against Me,' receive accomplishment in Me."

It was impossible that Jesus should undisturbedly eat out of the same dish with the man whom He knew to have already sold Him to the priests; it were unfair to the other disciples and a violence to His own feelings to allow such a man any longer to remain in their company. But our Lord does not name the traitor and denounce him; He singles him out and sends him from the table on his hateful mission by a process that left every man at the table unaware on what errand he was despatched. In this process there were three steps. First of all, our Lord indicated that among the disciples there was a traitor. With dismay these true-hearted men hear the firmly pronounced statement "one

of you shall betray Me" (ver. 21). All of them, as another Evangelist informs us, were exceeding sorrowful, and looked on one another in bewilderment; and unable to detect the conscious look of guilt in the face of any of their companions, or to recall any circumstance which might fix even suspicion on any of them, each conscious of the deep, unfathomed capacity for evil in his own heart, can but frankly ask of the Master, "Lord, is it I?" It is a question that at once proves their consciousness of actual innocence and possible guilt. It was a kindness in the Lord to give these genuine men, who were so shortly to go through trial for His sake, an opportunity of discovering how much they loved Him and how closely knit their hearts had really become to Him. This question of theirs expressed the deep pain and shame that the very thought of the possibility of their being false to Him gave them. They must at all hazards be cleared of this charge. And from this shock of the very idea of being untrue their hearts recoiled towards Him with an enthusiastic tenderness that made this moment possibly as moving a passage as any that occurred that eventful night. But there was one of them that did not join in the question "Lord, is it I?"—else must not our Lord have broken silence? The Twelve are still left in doubt, none noticing in the eagerness of questioning who has not asked, each only glad to know he himself is not charged.

The second step in the process is recorded in the 26th chapter of Matthew, where we read that, when the disciples asked "Lord, is it I?" Jesus answered, "He that dippeth his hand with Me in the dish, the same shall betray Me." It was a large company, and there were necessarily several dishes on the table, so that probably there were three others using the same dish as our Lord: John we know was next Him, Peter was near enough to John to make signs and whisper to him; Judas was also close to Jesus, a position which he either always occupied as treasurer and purveyor of the company, or into which he thrust himself this evening with the purpose of more effectually screening himself from suspicion. The circle of suspicion is thus narrowed to the one or two who were not only so intimate as to be eating at the same table, but as to be dipping in the same dish.

The third step in the process of discovery went on almost simultaneously with this. The impatient Peter, who had himself so often unwittingly given offence to his Master, is resolved to find out definitely who is pointed at, and yet dare not say to Christ "Who is it?" He beckons therefore to John to ask Jesus privately, as he lay next to Jesus. John leans a little back toward Jesus and puts in a whisper the definite question "Who is it?" and Jesus in the ear of the beloved disciple whispers the reply, "He it is to whom I shall give a sop when I have dipped it." And when He had dipped the sop He gave it to Judas Iscariot. This reveals to John, but to no one else, who the traitor was, for the giving of the sop was no more at that table than the handing of a plate or the offer of any article of food is at any table. John alone knew the significance of it. But Judas had already taken alarm at the narrowing of the circle of suspicion, and had possibly for the moment ceased dipping in the same dish with Jesus, lest he should be identified with the traitor. Jesus therefore dips for

LV.; Herzog, art. "Fusswaschung"; Smith's "Dict. of Christian Antiqu." art. "Maundy Thursday."



him and offers him the sop which he will not himself take, and the look that accompanies the act, as well as the act itself, shows Judas that his treachery is discovered. He therefore mechanically takes up in somewhat colder form the question of the rest, and says, "Master, is it I?" His fear subdues his voice to a whisper, heard only by John and the Lord; and the answer, "Thou hast said. That thou doest, do quickly," is equally unobserved by the rest. Judas need fear no violence at their hands; John alone knows the meaning of his abrupt rising and hurrying from the room, and John sees that Jesus wishes him to go unobserved. The rest, therefore, thought only that Judas was going out to make some final purchases that had been forgotten, or to care for the poor in this season of festivity. But John saw differently. "The traitor," he says, "went immediately out; and it was night." As his ill-omened, stealthy figure glided from the chamber, the sudden night of the Eastern twilightless sunset had fallen on the company; sadness, silence, and gloom fell upon John's spirit; the hour of darkness had at length fallen in the very midst of this quiet feast.

This sin of Judas presents us with one of the most perplexed problems of life and character that the strange circumstances of this world have ever produced. Let us first of all look at the connection of this betrayal with the life of Christ, and then consider the phase of character exhibited in Judas. In connection with the life of Christ the difficulty is to understand why the death of Christ was to be brought about in this particular way of treachery among his own followers. It may be said that it came to pass "that Scripture might be fulfilled," that this special prediction in the 41st Psalm might be fulfilled. But why was such a prediction made? It was of course the event which determined the prediction, not the prediction which determined the event. Was it, then, an accident that Jesus should be handed over to the authorities in this particular way? Or was there any significance in it, that justifies its being made so prominent in the narrative? Certainly if our Lord was to be brought into contact with the most painful form of sin, He must have experience of treachery. He had known the sorrow that death brings to the survivors; He had known the pain and disappointment of being resisted by stupid, obstinate, bad-hearted men; but if He was to know the utmost of misery which man can inflict upon man, He must be brought into contact with one who could accept His love, eat His bread, press His hand with assurance of fidelity, and then sell Him.

When we endeavour to set before our minds a clear idea of the character of Judas and to understand how such a character could be developed, we have to acknowledge that we could desire a few more facts in order to certify us of what we can now only conjecture. Obviously we must start from the idea that with extraordinary capacity for wickedness Judas had also more than ordinary leanings to what was good. He was an Apostle, and had, we must suppose, been called to that office by Christ under the impression that he possessed gifts which would make him very serviceable to the Christian community. He was himself so impressed with Christ as to follow Him: making those pecuniary sacrifices of which Peter boastfully spoke, and which must have been specially sore to Ju-

das. It is possible, indeed, that he may have followed Jesus as a speculation, hoping to receive wealth and honour in the new kingdom; but this motive mingled with the attachment to Christ's person which all the Apostles had, and mingles in a different form with the discipleship of all Christians. With this motive therefore, there probably mingled in the mind of Judas a desire to be with One who could shield him from evil influences; he judged that with Jesus he would find continual aid against his weaker nature. Possibly he wished by one bold abandonment of the world to get rid for ever of his covetousness. That Judas was trusted by the other Apostles is manifest from the fact that to him they committed their common fund—not to John, whose dreamy and abstracted nature ill-fitted him for minute practical affairs; not to Peter, whose impulsive nature might often have landed the little company in difficulties; not even to Matthew, accustomed as he was to accounts; but to Judas, who had the economical habits, the aptitude for finance, the love of bargaining, which regularly go hand in hand with the love of money. This practical faculty for finance and for affairs generally might, if rightly guided, have become a most serviceable element in the Apostolate, and might have enabled Judas more successfully than any other of the Apostles to mediate between the Church and the world. That Judas in all other respects conducted himself circumspectly is proved by the fact that, though other Apostles incurred the displeasure of Christ and were rebuked by Him, Judas committed no glaring fault till this last week. Even to the end he was unsuspected by his fellow-Apostles; and to the end he had an active conscience. His last act, were it not so awful, would inspire us with something like respect for him: he is overwhelmed with remorse and shame; his sense of guilt is stronger even than the love of money that had hitherto been his strongest passion: he judges himself fairly, sees what he has become, and goes to his own place; recognises as not every man does recognise what is his fit habitation, and goes to it.

But this man, with his good impulses, his resolute will, his enlightened conscience, his favouring circumstances, his frequent feelings of affection towards Christ and desire to serve Him, committed a crime so unparalleled in wickedness that men practically make very little attempt to estimate it or measure it with sins of their own. Commonly we think of it as a special, exceptional wickedness—not so much the natural product of a heart like our own and what may be reproduced by themselves, as the work of Satan using a man as his scarcely responsible tool to effect a purpose which needs never again to be effected.

If we ask what precisely it was in the crime of Judas that makes us so abhor it, manifestly its most hateful ingredient was its treachery. "It was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it; but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance." Cæsar defended himself till the dagger of a friend pierced him; then in indignant grief he covered his head with his mantle and accepted his fate. You can forgive the open blow of a declared enemy against whom you are on your guard; but the man that lives with you on terms of the greatest intimacy for years, so that he learns your ways and habits, the state of your affairs



and your past history—the man whom you so confide in and like that you communicate to him freely much that you keep hidden from others, and who, while still professing friendship, uses the information he has gained to blacken your character and ruin your peace, to injure your family or damage your business,—this man, you know, has much to repent of. So one can forgive the Pharisees who knew not what they did, and were throughout the declared opponents of Christ; but Judas attached himself to Christ, knew that His life was one of unmixed benevolence, was conscious that Christ would have given up anything to serve him, felt moved and proud from time to time by the fact that Christ loved him, and yet at the last used all these privileges of friendship against his Friend.

And Judas did not scruple to use this power that only the love of Jesus could have given him, to betray Him to men whom he knew to be unscrupulous and resolved to destroy Him. The garden where the Lord prayed for His enemies was not sacred to Judas; the cheek that a seraph would blush to kiss, and to salute which was the beginning of joy eternal to the devout disciple, was mere common clay to this man into whom Satan had entered. The crime of Judas is invested with a horror altogether its own by the fact that this Person whom he betrayed was the Son of God and the Saviour of the world, the Best-beloved of God and every man's Friend. The greatest blessing that God had ever given to earth Judas was forward to reject: not altogether unaware of the majesty of Christ, Judas presumed to use Him in a little money-making scheme of his own.

The best use that Judas could think of putting Jesus to, the best use he could make of *Him* whom all angels worship, was to sell Him for £5.\* He could get nothing more out of Christ than that. After three years' acquaintanceship and observation of the various ways in which Christ could bless people, this was all he could get from Him. And there are still such men: men for whom there is nothing in Christ; men who can find nothing in Him that they sincerely care for; men who, though calling themselves His followers, would, if truth were told, be better content and feel that they had more substantial profit if they could turn Him into money.

So difficult is it to comprehend how any man who had lived as the friend of Jesus could find it in his heart to betray Him, should resist the touching expressions of love that were shown him, and brave the awful warning uttered at the supper-table—so difficult is it to suppose that any man, however infatuated, would so deliberately sell his soul for £5, that a theory has been started to explain the crime by mitigating its guilt. It has been supposed that when he delivered up his Master into the hands of the chief priests he expected that our Lord would save Himself by a miracle. He knew that Jesus meant to proclaim a kingdom; he had been waiting for three years now, eagerly expecting that this proclamation and its accompanying gains would arrive. Yet he feared the opportunity was once more passing: Jesus had been brought into the city in triumph, but seemed indisposed to make use of this popular excitement for any temporal advantage. Judas was weary of this inactivity: might he not himself bring matters to a crisis

by giving Jesus into the hands of His enemies, and thus forcing Him to reveal his real power and assert by miracle His kingship? In corroboration of this theory it is said that it is certain Judas did not expect Jesus to be condemned; for when he saw that he was condemned he repented of his act.

This seems a shallow view to take of Judas' remorse, and a feeble ground on which to build such a theory. A crime seems one thing before, another after, its commission. The murderer expects and wishes to kill his victim, but how often is he seized with an agony of remorse as soon as the blow is struck? Before we sin, it is the gain we see; after we sin, the guilt. It is impossible to construe the act of Judas into a mistaken act of friendship or impatience; the terms in which he is spoken of in Scripture forbid this idea; and one cannot suppose that a keen-sighted man like Judas could expect that, even supposing he did force our Lord to proclaim Himself, his own share in the business would be rewarded. He could not suppose this after the terrible denunciation and explicit statement that still rang in his ears when he hanged himself: "The Son of man goeth as it is written of Him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born."

We must then abide by the more commonplace view of this crime. The only mitigating circumstance that can be admitted is, that possibly among the many perplexed thoughts entertained by Judas he may have supposed that Jesus would be acquitted, or would at least not be punished with death. Still, this being admitted, the fact remains that he cared so little for the love of Christ, and regarded so little the good He was doing, and had so little common honour in Him, that he sold his Master to His deadly enemies. And this monstrous wickedness is to be accounted for mainly by his love of money. Naturally covetous, he fed his evil disposition during those years he carried the bag for the disciples: while the rest are taken up with more spiritual matters, he gives more of his thought than is needful to the matter of collecting as much as possible; he counts it his special province to protect himself and the others against all "the probable emergencies and changes of life." This he does, regardless of the frequent admonitions he hears from the Lord addressed to others; and as he finds excuses for his own avarice in the face of these admonitions, and hardens himself against the better impulses that are stirred within him by the words and presence of Christ, his covetousness roots itself deeper and deeper in his soul. Add to this that now he was a disappointed man: the other disciples, finding that the kingdom of Christ was to be spiritual, were pure and high-minded enough to see that their disappointment was their great gain. The love of Christ had transformed them, and to be like Him was enough for them; but Judas still clung to the idea of earthly grandeur and wealth, and finding Christ was not to give him these he was soured and embittered. He saw that now, since that scene at Bethany the week before, his covetousness and earthliness would be resisted and would also betray him. He felt that he could no longer endure this poverty-stricken life, and had some rage at himself and at Christ that he had been inveigled into it by what he might be pleased to say to himself were false pre-

\* More exactly, £ 3 10 8, the legal value of a slave.



tences. His self-restraint, he felt, was breaking down; his covetousness was getting the better of him; he felt that he must break with Christ and his followers; but in doing so he would at once win what he had lost during these years of poverty, and also revenge himself on those who had kept him poor, and finally would justify his own conduct in deserting this society by exploding it and causing it to cease from among men.

The sin of Judas, then, first of all teaches us the great power and danger of the love of money. The mere thirty pieces of silver would not have been enough to tempt Judas to commit so dastardly and black a crime; but he was now an embittered and desperate man, and he had become so by allowing money to be all in all to him for these last years of his life. For the danger of this passion consists very much in this—that it infallibly eats out of the soul every generous emotion and high aim: it is the failing of a sordid nature—a little, mean, earthly nature—a failing which, like all others, may be extirpated through God's grace, but which is notoriously difficult to extirpate, and which notoriously is accompanied by or produces other features of character which are among the most repulsive one meets. The love of money is also dangerous, because it can be so easily gratified; all that we do in the world day by day is in the case of most of us connected with money, so that we have continual and not only occasional opportunity of sinning if we be inclined to the sin. Other passions are appealed to only now and again, but our employments touch this passion at all points. It leaves no long intervals as other passions do, for repentance and amendment; but steadily, constantly, little by little, increases in force. Judas had his fingers in the bag all day; it was under his pillow and he dreamt upon it all night; and it was this that accelerated his ruin. And by this constant appeal it is sure to succeed at one time or other, if we be open to it. Judas could not suppose that his quiet self-aggrandisement by pilfering little coins from the bag could ever bring him to commit such a crime against his Lord: so may every covetous person fancy that his sin is one that is his own business, and will not damage his religious profession and ruin his soul as some wild lust or reckless infidelity would do. But Judas and those who sin with him in making continually little gains to which they have no right are wrong in supposing their sin is less dangerous; and for this reason—that covetousness is more a sin of the *will* than sins of the flesh or of a passionate nature; there is more choice in it; it is more the sin of the whole man unresisting; and therefore it, above all others, is called idolatry—it, above all others, proves that the man is in his heart choosing the world and not God. Therefore it is that even our Lord Himself spoke almost despairingly, certainly quite differently, of covetous men in comparison with other sinners.

Disappointment in Christ is not an unknown thing among ourselves. Men still profess to be Christians who are so only in the degree in which Judas was. They expect *some* good from Christ, but not all. They attach themselves to Christ in a loose, conventional way, expecting that, though they are Christians, they need not lose anything by their Christianity, nor make any great efforts or sacrifices. They retain command of their own life, and are prepared to go with Christ only so far as they find it agreeable or

inviting. The eye of an observer may not be able to distinguish them from Christ's true followers; but the distinction is present and is radical. They are seeking to use Christ, and are not willing to be used by Him. They are not wholly and heartily His, but merely seek to derive some influences from Him. The result is that they one day find that, through all their religious profession and apparent Christian life, their characteristic sin has actually been gaining strength. And finding this, they turn upon Christ with disappointment and rage in their hearts, because they become aware that they have lost both this world and the next—have lost many pleasures and gains they might have enjoyed, and yet have gained no spiritual attainment. They find that the reward of double-mindedness is the most absolute perdition, that both Christ and the world, to be made anything of, require the whole man, and that he who tries to get the good of both gets the good of neither. And when a man awakes to see that this is the result of his Christian profession, there is no deadliness of hatred to which the bitter disappointment of his soul will not carry him. He has himself been a dupe, and he calls Christ an impostor. He knows himself to be damned, and he says there is no salvation in Christ.

But to this disastrous issue *any* cherished sin may also in its own way lead; for the more comprehensive lesson which this sin of Judas brings with it is the rapidity of sin's growth and the enormous proportions it attains when the sinner is sinning against light, when he is in circumstances conducive to holiness and still sins. To discover the wickedest of men, to see the utmost of human guilt, we must look, not among the heathen, but among those who know God; not among the profligate, dissolute, abandoned classes of society, but among the Apostles. The good that was in Judas led him to join Christ, and kept him associated with Christ for some years; but the devil of covetousness that was cast out for a while returned and brought with him seven devils worse than himself. There was everything in his position to win him to unworldliness: the men he lived with cared not one whit for comforts or anything that money could buy; but instead of catching their spirit he took advantage of their carelessness. He was in a public position, liable to detection; but this, instead of making him honest perforce, made him only the more crafty and studiously hypocritical. The solemn warnings of Christ, so far from intimidating him, only made him more skilful in evading all good influence, and made the road to hell easier. The position he enjoyed, and by which he might have been for ever enrolled among the foremost of mankind, one of the twelve foundations of the eternal city, he so skilfully misused that the greatest sinner feels glad that he has yet not been left to commit the sin of Judas. Had Judas not followed Christ he could never have attained the pinnacle of infamy on which he now for ever stands. In all probability he would have passed his days as a small trader with false weights in the little town of Kerioth, or, at the worst, might have developed into an extortionous publican, and have passed into oblivion with the thousands of unjust men who have died and been at last forced to let go the money that should long ago have belonged to others. Or had Judas followed Christ truly, then there lay before him the noblest of all



lives, the most blessed of destinies. But he followed Christ and yet took his sin with him: and thence his ruin.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### JESUS ANNOUNCES HIS DEPARTURE.

JOHN xiii. 31-xiv. 4.

WHEN Judas glided out of the supper-room on his terrible mission, a weight seemed to be lifted from the spirit of Jesus. The words which fell from Him, however, indicated that He not only felt the relief of being rid of a disturbing element in the company, but that He recognised that a crisis in His own career had been reached and successfully passed through. "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him." In sending Judas forth He had in point of fact delivered Himself to death. He had taken the step which cannot be withdrawn, and He is conscious of taking it in fulfilment of the will of the Father. The conflict in His own mind is revealed only by the decision of the victory. No man in soundness of body and of mind can voluntarily give himself to die without seeing clearly other possibilities, and without feeling it to be a hard and painful thing to relinquish life. Jesus had made up His mind. His death is the beginning of His glorification. In choosing the cross He chooses the crown. "The Son of man is glorified" in His perfect self-sacrifice that wins all men to Him; and God is glorified in Him because this sacrifice is a tribute at once to the justice and the love of God. The Cross reveals God as nothing else does.

Not only has this decision glorified the Son of man and God through Him and in Him, but as a consequence "God will glorify" the Son of man "in Himself." He will lift Him to participation in the Divine glory. It was well that the disciples should know that this would "straightway" result from all that their Master was now to pass through; that the perfect sympathy with the Father's will which He was now showing would be rewarded by permanent participation in the authority of God. It must be through such an one as their Lord, who is absolutely at one with God, that God fulfils His purpose towards men. By this life and death of perfect obedience, of absolute devotedness to God and man, Christ necessarily wins dominion over human affairs and exercises a determining influence on all that is to be. In all that Christ did upon earth God was glorified; His holiness, His fatherly love were manifested to men: in all that God now does upon earth Christ will be glorified; the uniqueness and power of His life will become more manifest, the supremacy of His Spirit be more and more apparent.

This glorification was not the far-off result of the impending sacrifice. It was to date from the present hour and to begin in the sacrifice. God will glorify Him "straightway." "Yet a little while" was He to be with His disciples. Therefore does He tenderly address them, recognising their incompetence, their inability to stand alone, as "little children"; and in view of the exhibition of bad feeling, and even of treachery, which the Twelve had at that very hour given, His commandment, "Love one an-

other," comes with a tenfold significance. I am leaving you, He says: put away, then, all heart-burnings and jealousies; cling together; do not let quarrels and envyings divide you. This was to be their safeguard when He left them and went where they could not come. "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples; if ye have love one to another."

The commandment to love our neighbour as ourselves was no new commandment. But to love "as I have loved you" was so new that its practice was enough to identify a man as a disciple of Christ. The manner and the measure of the love that is possible and that is commanded could not even be understood until Christ's love was revealed. But probably what Jesus had even more directly in view was the love that was to bind His followers together\* and make them one solid body. It was on their mutual attachment that the very existence of the Christian Church depended; and this love of men to one another springing out of the love of Christ for them, and because of their acknowledgment and love of a common Lord, was a new thing in the world. The bond to Christ proved itself stronger than all other ties, and those who cherished a common love to Him were drawn to one another more closely than even to blood relations. In fact, Christ, by His love for men, has created a new bond, and that the strongest by which men can be bound to one another. As the Christian Church is a new institution upon earth, so is the principle which forms it a new principle. The principle has, indeed, too often been hidden from sight, if not smothered, by the institution; too little has love been regarded as the one thing by which the disciple of Christ is to be recognised, the one note of the true Church. But that this form of love was a new thing upon earth is apparent.†

Tenderly as Jesus made the announcement of His departure, it filled the minds of the disciples with consternation. Even the buoyant and hardy Peter felt for the moment staggered by the intelligence, and still more by the announcement that he was not able to accompany his Lord. He was assured that one day he should follow Him, but at present this was impossible. This, Peter considered a reflection upon his courage and fidelity; and although his headlong self-confidence had only a few minutes before been so severely rebuked, he exclaims, "Lord, why cannot I follow Thee now? I will lay down my life for Thy sake." This was the true expression of Peter's present feeling, and he was allowed in the end to give proof that these vehement words were not mere bluster. But as yet he had not at all apprehended the separateness of his Lord and the uniqueness of His work. He did not know precisely what Jesus alluded to, but he thought a strong arm would

\* "That ye love *one another*" is the twice-expressed commandment.

† "Any Church that professes to be *the* Church of Christ cannot be that Church. The true Church refuses to be circumscribed or parted by any denominational wall. It knows that Christ is repudiated when His people are repudiated. Not even a Biblical creed can yield satisfactory evidence that a specified Church is the true Church. True Christians are those who love one another across denominational differences, and exhibit the spirit of Him who gave Himself to death upon the cross that His murderers might live.



not be out of place in any conflict that was coming. The offers which even true fidelity makes are often only additional hindrances to our Lord's purposes, and additional burdens for Him to bear. On Himself alone must He depend. No man can counsel Him, and none can aid save by first receiving from Him His own spirit.

Peter thus rebuked falls into unwonted silence, and takes no further part in the conversation. The rest, knowing that Peter has more courage than any of them, fear that if he is thus to fall it cannot be hopeful for themselves. They feel that if they are left without Jesus they have no strength to make head against the rulers, no skill in argument such as made Jesus victorious when assailed by the scribes, no popular eloquence which might enable them to win the people. Eleven more helpless men could not well be. "Sheep without a shepherd" was not too strong an expression to depict their weakness and want of influence, their incompetence to effect anything, their inability even to keep together. Christ was their bond of union and the strength of each of them. It was to be with Him that they had left all. And in forsaking all—father and mother, wife and children, home and kindred and calling—they had found in Christ that hundredfold more even in this life which He had promised. He had so won their hearts, there was about Him something so fascinating, that they felt no loss when they enjoyed His presence, and feared no danger in which He was their leader. They had perhaps not thought very definitely of their future; they felt so confident in Jesus that they were content to let Him bring in His kingdom as He pleased; they were so charmed with the novelty of their life as His disciples, with the great ideas that dropped from His lips, with the wonderful works He did, with the new light He shed upon all the personages and institutions of the world, that they were satisfied to leave their hope undefined. But all this satisfaction and secret assurance of hope depended upon Christ. As yet He had not given to *them* anything which could enable them to make any mark upon the world. They were still very ignorant, so that any lawyer could entangle and puzzle them. They had not received from Christ any influential position in society from which they could sway men. There were no great visible institutions with which they could identify themselves and so become conspicuous.

It was with dismay, therefore, that they heard that He was going where they could not accompany Him. A cloud of gloomy foreboding gathered on their faces as they lay round the table and fixed their eyes on Him as on one whose words they would interpret differently if they could. Their anxious looks are not disregarded. "Let not your heart be troubled," He says: "believe in God, and in Me, too, believe." Do not give way to disturbing thoughts; do not suppose that only failure, disgrace, helplessness, and calamity await you. Trust God. In this, as in all matters, He is guiding and ruling and working His own good ends through all present evil. Trust Him, even when you cannot penetrate the darkness. It is His part to bring you successfully through; it is your part to follow where He leads. Do not question and debate and vex your soul, but leave all to Him. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for

I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance and my God."

"And in Me, too, trust." I would not leave you had I not a purpose to serve. It is not to secure My own safety or happiness I go. It is not to occupy the sole available room in My Father's house. There are many rooms there, and I go to prepare a place for you. Trust Me. In order that they may fully understand the reasonableness of His departure He assures them, first of all, that it has a purpose. The parent mourns over the son who in mere waywardness leaves his home and his occupation; but with very different feelings does he follow one who has come to see that the greater good of the family requires that he should go, and who has carefully ascertained where and how he can best serve those he leaves behind. To such an absence men can reconcile themselves. The parting is bitter, but the greater good to be gained by it enables them to approve its reasonableness and to submit. And what our Lord says to His disciples is virtually this: I have not wearied of earth and tired of your company, neither do I go because I must. I could escape Judas and the Jews. But I have a purpose which requires that I should go. You have not found Me impulsive, neither am I now acting without good reason. Could I be of more use to you by staying, I would stay.

This is a new kind of assertion to be made by human lips: "I am going into the other world to effect a purpose." Often the sense of duty has been so strong in men that they have left this world without a murmur. But no one has felt so clear about what lies beyond, or has been so confident of his own power to effect any change for the better in the other world, that he has left this for a sphere of greater usefulness. This is what Christ does.

But He also explains what His purpose is: "In My Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you." The Father's house was a new figure for heaven. The idea of God's house was, however, familiar to the Jews. But in the Temple the freedom and familiarity which we associate with home were absent. It was only when One came who felt that His real home was in God that the Temple could be called "the Father's house." Yet there is nothing that the heart of man more importunately craves than the freedom and ease which this name implies. To live unafraid of God, not shrinking from Him, but so truly at one with Him that we live as one household brightened by His presence—this is the thirst for God which is one day felt in every heart. And on His part God has many mansions in His house, proclaiming that He desires to have us at home with Him; that He wishes us to know and trust Him, not to change our countenances when we meet Him at a corner, save by an added brightness of joy. And this is what we have to look forward to—that after all our coldness and distrust have been removed and our hearts thawed by His presence, we shall live in the constant enjoyment of a Father's love, feeling ourselves more truly at home with Him than with any one else, delighting in the perfectness of His sympathy and the abundance of His provision.

Into this intimacy with God, this freedom of the universe, this sense that "all things are ours" because we are His, this entirely attractive heaven, we are to be introduced by Christ. "I



go to prepare a place for you." It is He who has transformed the darkness of the grave into the bright gateway of the Father's home, where all His children are to find eternal rest and everlasting joy. As an old writer says, "Christ is the quartermaster who provides quarters for all who follow Him." He has gone on before to make ready for those whom He has summoned to come after Him.

If we ask why it was needful that Christ should go forward thus, and what precisely He had to do in the way of preparation, the question may be answered in different ways. These disciples in after years compared Christ's passing into the Father's presence to the high priest's entrance within the veil to present the blood of sprinkling and to make intercession. But in the language of Christ there is no hint that such thoughts were in His mind. It is the Father's house that is in His mind, the eternal home of men; and He sees the Father welcoming Him as the leader of many brethren, and with gladness in His heart going from room to room, always adding some new touch for the comfort and surprise of the eagerly expected children. If God, like a grieved and indignant father whose sons have preferred other company to his, had dismantled and locked the rooms that once were ours, Christ has made our peace, and has given to the yearning heart of the Father opportunity to open these rooms once more and deck them for our home-coming. With the words of Christ there enters the spirit a conviction that when we pass out of this life we shall find ourselves as much fuller of life and deeper in joy as we are nearer to God, the source of all life and joy; and that when we come to the gates of God's dwelling it will not be as the vagabond and beggar unknown to the household and who can give no good account of himself, but as the child whose room is ready for him, whose coming is expected and prepared for, and who has indeed been sent for.

This of itself is enough to give us hopeful thoughts of the future state. Christ is busied in preparing for us what will give us satisfaction and joy. When we expect a guest we love and have written for, we take pleasure in preparing for his reception,—we hang in his room the picture he likes; if he is infirm, we wheel in the easiest chair; we gather the flowers he admires and set them on his table; we go back and back to see if nothing else will suggest itself to us so that when he comes he may have entire satisfaction. This is enough for us to know—that Christ is similarly occupied. He knows our tastes, our capabilities, our attainments, and he has identified a place as ours and holds it for us. What the joys and the activities and occupations of the future shall be we do not know. With the body we shall lay aside many of our appetites and tastes and proclivities, and what has here seemed necessary to our comfort will at once become indifferent. We shall not be able to desire the pleasures that now allure and draw us. The need of shelter, of retirement, of food, of comfort, will disappear with the body; and what the joys and the requirements of a spiritual body will be we do not know. But we do know that at home with God the fullest life that man can live will certainly be ours.

It is a touching evidence of Christ's truthfulness and fidelity to His people that is given in the words, "If it were not so, I would have

told you"—that is to say, if it had not been possible for you to follow Me into the Father's presence and find a favourable reception there, I would have told you this long ago. I would not have taught you to love Me, only to have given you the grief of separation. I would not have encouraged you to hope for what I was not sure you are to receive. He had all along seen how the minds of the disciples were working; He had seen that by being admitted to familiarity with Him they had learnt to expect God's eternal favour; and had this been a deceitful expectation He would have undeceived them. So it is with Him still. The hopes His word begets are not vain. These dreams of glory that pass before the spirit that listens to Christ and thinks of Him are to be realised. If it were not so, He would have told us. We ourselves feel that we are scarcely acting an honest part when we allow persons to entertain false hopes, even when these hopes help to comfort and support them, as in the case of persons suffering from disease. So our Lord does not beget hopes He cannot satisfy. If there were still difficulties in the way of our eternal happiness, He would have told us of these. If there were any reason to despair, He Himself would have been the first to tell us to despair. If eternity were to be a blank to us, if God were inaccessible, if the idea of a perfect state awaiting us were mere talk, He would have told us so.

Neither will the Lord leave His disciples to find their own way to the Father's home: "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Present separation was but the first step towards abiding union. And as each disciple was summoned to follow Christ in death, he recognised that this was the summons, not of an earthly power, but of his Lord; he recognised that to him the Lord's promise was being kept, and that he was being taken into eternal union with Jesus Christ. From many all the pain and darkness of death have been taken away by this assurance. They have accepted death as the needful transition from a state in which much hinders fellowship with Christ to a state in which that fellowship is all in all.

## CHAPTER IX.

### *THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE.*

JOHN xiv. 5-7.

It surprises us to find that words which have become familiar and most intelligible to us should have been to the Apostles obscure and puzzling. Apparently they were not yet persuaded that their Master was shortly to die; and, accordingly, when He spoke of going to His Father's house, it did not occur to them that He meant passing into the spiritual world. His assuring words, "Where I am, there ye shall be also," therefore fell short. And when He sees their bewilderment written on their faces, He tentatively, half interrogatively, adds, "And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." \* Unless they knew where He was going, there was less consolation even in the prom-

\* Or, "And whither I go ye know the way."



ise that He would come for them after He had gone and prepared a place for them. And when He thus challenges them candidly to say whether they understood where He was going, and where He would one day take them also, Thomas, always the mouthpiece for the despondency of the Twelve, at once replies, "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way?"

This interruption by Thomas gives occasion to the great declaration, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." It is, then, to the Father that Christ is the Way. And He is the Way by being the Truth and the Life. We must first, then, consider in what sense He is the Truth and the Life.

1. I am the Truth. Were these words merely equivalent to "I speak the truth," it would be much to know this of One who tells us things of so measureless a consequence to ourselves. The faith of the disciples was being strained by what He had just been saying to them. Here was a man in most respects like themselves: a man who got hungry and sleepy, a man who was to be arrested and executed by the rulers, assuring them that He was going to prepare for them everlasting habitations, and that He would return to take them to these habitations. He saw that they found it hard to believe this. Who does not find it hard to believe all our Lord tells us of our future? Think how much we trust simply to His word. If He is not true, then the whole of Christendom has framed its life on a false issue, and is met at death by blank disappointment. Christ has aroused in our minds by His promises and statements a group of ideas and expectations which nothing but His word could have persuaded us to entertain. Nothing is more remarkable about our Lord than the calmness and assurance with which He utters the most astounding statements. The ablest and most enlightened men have their hesitations, their periods of agonising doubt, their suspense of judgment, their laboured inquiries, their mental conflicts. With Jesus there is nothing of this. From first to last He sees with perfect clearness to the utmost bound of human thought, knows with absolute certainty whatever is essential for us to know. His is not the assurance of ignorance, nor is it the dogmatism of traditional teaching, nor the evasive assurance of a superficial and reckless mind. It is plainly the assurance of One who stands in the full noon of truth and speaks what He knows.

But in His endeavours to gain the confidence of men there is discernible no anger at their incredulity. Again and again He brings forward reasons why His word should be believed. He appeals to their knowledge of His candour: "If it were not so, I would have told you." It was the *truth* He came into the world to bear witness to. Lies enough were current already. He came to be the Light of the world, to dispel the darkness and bring men into the very truth of things. But with all His impressiveness of asseveration there is no anger, scarcely even wonder that men did not believe, because He saw as plainly as we see that to venture our eternal hope on His word is not easy. And yet He answered promptly and with authority the questions which have employed the lifetime of many and baffled them in the end. He answered them as if they were the very alphabet of knowl-

edge. These alarmed and perturbed disciples ask Him: "Is there a life beyond? is there another side of death?" "Yes," He says, "through death I go to the Father." "Is there," they ask, "for us also a life beyond? shall such creatures as we find sufficient and suitable habitation and welcome when we pass from this warm, well-known world?" "In My Father's house," He says, "are many mansions." Confronted with the problems that most deeply exercise the human spirit, He without faltering pronounces upon them. For every question which our most anxious and trying experiences dictate He has the ready and sufficient answer. "He is the Truth."

But more than this is contained in His words. He says not merely "I speak the truth," but "I am the Truth." In His person and work we find all truth that it is essential to know. He is the true Man, the revelation of perfect manhood, in whom we see what human life truly is. In His own history He shows us our own capacities and our own destiny. An angel or an inanimate law might *tell* us the truth about human life, but Christ is the Truth. He is man like ourselves. If we are extinguished at death, so is He. If for us there is no future life, neither is there for Him. He is Himself human.

Further and especially, He is the truth about God: "If ye had known Me, ye had known My Father also." Strenuous efforts are being made in our day to convince us that all our search after God is vain, because by the very nature of the case it is impossible to know God. We are assured that all our imaginations of God are but a reflection of ourselves magnified infinitely; and that what results from all our thinking is not God, but only a magnified man. We form in our thoughts an ideal of human excellence—perfect holiness and perfect love; and we add to this highest moral character we can conceive a supernatural power and wisdom, and this we call God. But this, we are assured, is but to mislead ourselves; for what we thus set before our minds as Divine is not God, but only a higher kind of man. But God is not a higher kind of man: He is a different kind of being—a Being to whom it is absurd to ascribe intelligence, or will, or personality, or anything human.

We have felt the force of what is thus urged; and feeling most deeply that for us the greatest of all questions is, What is God? we have been afraid lest, after all, we have been deluding ourselves with an image of our own creating very different from the reality. We have felt that there is a great truth lying at the heart of what is thus urged, a truth which the Bible makes as much of as philosophy does—the truth that we cannot find out God, cannot comprehend Him. We say certain things about Him, as that He is a Spirit; but which of us knows what a pure spirit is, which of us can conceive in our minds a distinct idea of what we so freely speak of as a spirit? Indeed, it is because it is impossible for us to have any sufficient idea of God as He is in Himself that He has become man and manifested Himself in flesh.

This revelation of God in man implies that there is an affinity and likeness between God and man—that man is made in God's image. Were it not so, we should see in Christ, not God at all, but only man. If God is manifest in Christ, it is because there is that in God which can find suitable expression in a human



life and person. In fact, this revelation takes for granted that in a sense it is quite true that God is a magnified Man—that He is a Being in whom there is much that resembles what is in man. And it stands to reason that this must be so. It is quite true that man can only conceive what is like himself; but that is only half the truth. It is also true that God can only create what is consistent with His own mind. In His creatures we see a reflection of Himself. And as we ascend from the lowest of them to the highest, we see what He considers the highest qualities. Finding in ourselves these highest qualities—qualities which enable us to understand all lower creatures and to use them—we gather that in God Himself there must be something akin to our mind and to our inner man.

Christ, then, is "the Truth," because He is the Revealer of God. In Him we learn what God is and how to approach Him. But knowledge is not enough. It is conceivable that we should have learned much about God and yet have despaired of ever becoming like Him. It might gradually have become our conviction that we were for ever shut out from all good, although that is incompatible with a true knowledge of God; for if God is known at all, He must be known as Love, as self-communicating. But the possibility of having knowledge which we cannot use is precluded by the fact that He who is the Truth is also the Life. In Him who is the Revealer we at the same time find power to avail ourselves of the revelation. For:

II. "I am the Life." The declaration need not be restricted to the immediate occasion. Christ imparts to men power to use the knowledge of the Father He gives them. He gives men desire, will, and power to live with God and in God. But is not all life implied in this? This is life as men are destined to know it.

In every man there is a thirst for life. Everything that clogs, impedes, or retards life we hate; sickness, imprisonment, death, whatever diminishes, enfeebles, limits, or destroys life, we abhor. Happiness means abundant life, great vitality finding vent for itself in healthy ways. Great scope or opportunity of living to good purpose is useless to the invalid who has little life in himself; and, on the other hand, abundant vitality is only a pain to the man who is shut up and can spend his energy only in pacing a cell eight feet by four. Our happiness depends upon these two conditions—perfect energy and infinite scope.

But can we assure ourselves of either? Is not the one certainty of life, as we know it, that it must end? Is it not certain that, no matter what energy the most vigorous of us enjoy, we shall all one day "lie in cold obstruction"? Naturally we fear that time, as if all life were then to end for us. We shrink from that apparent termination, as if beyond it there could be but a shadowy, spectral life in which nothing is substantial, nothing lively, nothing delightful, nothing strong. That state which we shrink from our Lord chooses as a condition of perfect life, abundant and untrammelled. And what He has chosen for Himself He means to bestow upon us.

Why should we find it so hard to believe in that abundant life? There is a sufficient source of physical life which upholds the universe and is not burdened, which in continuance and ex-

uberantly brings forth life in inconceivably various forms. The world around us indicates a source of life which seems always to grow and expand rather than to be exhausted. So there is a source of spiritual life, a force sufficient to uphold all men in righteousness and in eternal vitality of spirit, and which can give birth to ever new and varied forms of heroic, holy, godly living—a force which is ever pressing forward to find expression through all moral beings, and capable of making all human action as perfect, as beautiful, and infinitely more significant than the products of physical life which we see around us. If the flowers profusely scattered by the wayside are marvels of beauty, if the bodily frame of man and of the other animals is continually surprising us with some new revelation of exquisite arrangement of parts, if nature is so lavish and so perfect in physical life, may we not believe that there is as rich a fountain of moral and spiritual life? Nay, "the youths may faint and be weary, and the young men utterly fall," physical life may fail and in the nature of things must fail, "but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall run and not be weary."

It is Jesus Christ who brings us into connection with this source of life eternal—He bears it in His own person. In Him we receive a new spirit; in Him our motive to live for righteousness is continually renewed; we are conscious that in Him we touch what is undying and never fails to renew spiritual life in us. Whatever we need to give us true and everlasting life we have in Christ. Whatever we need to enable us to come to the Father, whatever we shall need between this present stage of experience and our final stage, we have in Him.

The more, then, we use Christ, the more life we have. The more we are with Him and the more we partake of His Spirit, the fuller does our own life become. It is not by imitating successful men we become influential for good, but by living with Christ. It is not by adopting the habits and methods of saints we become strong and useful, but by accepting Christ and His Spirit. Nothing can take the place of Christ. Nothing can take His words and say to us, "I am the Life." If we wish life, if we see that we are doing little good and desire energy to overtake the good that needs to be done, it is to Him we must go. If we feel as if all our efforts were vain, and as if we could not bear up any longer against our circumstances or against our wicked nature, we can receive fresh vigour and hopefulness only from Christ. We need not be surprised at our failures if we are not receiving from Christ the life that is in Him. And nothing can give us the life that is in Him but our own personal application to Him, our direct dealing with Himself. Ordinances and sacraments help to bring Him clearly before us, but they are not living and cannot give us life. It is only in so far as through and in them we reach Christ and receive Him that we partake of that highest of all forms of life—the life that is in Him, the living One, by whom all things were made, and who in the very face of death can say, "Because I live ye shall live also."

III. Being the Revealer of the Father, and giving men power to approach God and live in Him, Jesus legitimately designates Himself "the Way." Jesus never says "I am the



Father"; He does not even say "I am God," for that might have produced misunderstanding. He uniformly speaks as if there were One on whom He Himself leant, and to whom He prayed, and with whom, as with another person, He had fellowship. "I am the Way," He says; and a way implies a goal beyond itself, some further object to which it leads and brings us. He is not the Being revealed, but the Revealer; not the terminal object of our worship, but the image of the invisible God, the Priest, the Sacrifice.

Christ announces Himself to Thomas as the Way, in order to remove from the mind of the disciple the uncertainty he felt about the future. He knew there were heights of glory and blessedness to which the Messiah would certainly attain, but which seemed dim and remote and even quite unattainable to sinful men. Jesus defines at once the goal and the way. All our vague yearnings after what will satisfy us He reduces to this simple expression: "the Father." This, He implies, is the goal and destiny of man; to come to the Father, who embraces in His loving care all our wants, our incapacities, our sorrows; to reach and abide in a love that is strong, wise, educated, imperishable; to reach this love and be so transformed by it as to feel more at home with this perfectly holy God than with any besides. And to bring us to this goal is the function of Christ, the Way. It is His to bring together what is highest and what is lowest. It is His to unite those who are separated by the most real obstacles: to bring us, weak and unstable and full of evil imaginings, into abiding union with the Supreme, glad to be conformed to Him and to accomplish His purposes. In proclaiming Himself "the Way," Christ pronounces Himself able to effect the most real union between parties and conditions as separate as heaven and earth, sin and holiness, the poor creature I know myself to be and the infinite and eternal God who is so high I cannot know Him.

Further, the way to which we commit ourselves when we seek to come to the Father through Christ is a *Person*. "I am the Way." It is not a cold, dead road we have to make the most of for ourselves, pursuing it often in darkness, in weakness, in fear. It is a living way—a way that renews our strength as we walk in it, that enlivens instead of exhausting us, that gives direction and light as we go forward. Often we seem to find our way barred; we do not know how to get farther forward; we wonder if there is no book in which we can find direction; we long for some wise guide who could show us how to proceed. At such times Christ would have us hear Him saying, "I am the Way. If you abide in Me, if you continue in My love, you are in the way and must be carried forward to all good." Often we seem to lose ourselves and cannot tell whether our faces and our steps are directed aright or not; we become doubtful whether we have been making any progress or have not rather been going back. Often we lose heart and begin to doubt whether it is possible for us men ever to reach any purer, higher life; we are going, we say, we know not whither; this life is full of blunders and failures. Many of the best and most earnest and gifted men have owned their ignorance of the purpose of life and of its end. No voice comes to us out of the unseen world to give

us assurance that there is life there. How can lonely, ignorant, irresolute, weak, and helpless creatures such as we are ever attain to anything we can call blessedness? To all such gloom and doubting Christ, with the utmost confidence, says, "I am the Way. Wherever you are, at whatever point of experience, at whatever stage of sin, this way begins where you are, and you have but to take it and it leads to God, to that unknown Highest you yearn for even while you shrink from Him. From your person, as you are at this moment, there leads a way to the Father."

## CHAPTER X.

### THE FATHER SEEN IN CHRIST.

JOHN xiv. 8-21.

A THIRD interruption on the part of one of the disciples gives the Lord occasion to be still more explicit. Philip is only further bewildered by the words, "from henceforth ye know the Father and have seen Him." He catches, however, at the idea that the Father can be seen, and eagerly exclaims, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." In this exclamation there may be a little of that vexed and almost irritated feeling that every one at times has felt in reading the words of Christ. We feel as if He might have made things plainer. We unconsciously reproach Him with making a mystery, with going about and about a subject and refusing to speak straight at it. Philip felt that if Christ could show the Father, then there was no need of any more enigmatical talk.

Ignorant as this request may be, it sprang from the thirst for God which was felt by an earnest and godly man. It arose from the craving that now and again visits every soul to get to the heart of all mystery. Here in this life we are much in the dark. We feel ourselves to be capable of better enjoyments, of a higher life. The whole creation groaneth and travaileth, as if striving towards some better and more satisfying state. There is a something not yet attained which we feel that we must reach. Were this life all, we should pronounce existence a failure. And yet there is great uncertainty over our future. There is no familiar intercourse with those who have passed on and are now in the other world. We have no opportunity of informing ourselves of their state and occupations. We go on in great darkness and often with a feeling of great insecurity and trepidation; feeling lost, in darkness, not knowing whither we are going, not sure that we are in the way to life and happiness. Why, we are tempted to ask, should there be so much uncertainty? Why should we live so remote from the centre of things, and have to grope our way to life and light, clouded by doubts, beset by misleading and disturbing influences? "Show us the Father," we are tempted to say with Philip—show us the Father and it sufficeth us. Show us the Supreme. Show us the eternal One who governs all. Take us but once to the centre of things and show us the Father in whom we live. Take us for once behind the scenes and let us see the hand that moves all things; let us know all that can be known, that we may see what it is we are going to, and what is to be-



come of us when this visible world is done. Give us assurance that behind all this dumb, immovable mask of outward things there is a living God whose love we can trust and whose power can preserve us to life everlasting.

To Philip's eager request Jesus replies: "Have I been so long time with you, and hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou, Show us the Father?" And it is thus our Lord addresses all whose unsatisfied craving finds voice in Philip's request. To all who crave some more immediate, if not more sensible manifestation of God, to all who live in doubt and feel as if more might be done to give us certitude regarding the relation we hold to God and to the future, Christ says: No further revelation is to be made, because no further revelation is needed or can be made. All has been shown that can be shown. There is no more of the Father you can see than you have seen in Me. God has taken that form which is most comprehensible to you—your own form, the form of man. You have seen the Father. I am the truth, the reality. It is no longer a symbol telling you something about a distant God, but the Father Himself is in Me, speaking and acting among you through Me.

What do we find in Christ? We find perfection of moral character, superiority to circumstances, to the elements, to disease, to death. We find in Him One who forgives sin and brings peace of conscience, who bestows the holy spirit and leads to perfect righteousness. We cannot imagine anything in God which is not made present to us in Christ. In any part of the universe we should feel secure with Christ. In the most critical spiritual emergency we should have confidence that He could right matters. In the physical and in the spiritual world He is equally at home and equally commanding. We can believe Him when He says that He that has seen Him has seen the Father.

What precisely does this utterance mean? Does it only mean that Jesus in His holy and loving ways and in the whole of His character was God's very image? As you might say of a son who strongly resembles his father, "If you have seen the one, you have seen the other." It is true that the self-sacrifice and humility and devotedness of Jesus did give men new views of the true character of God, that His conduct was an exact transcript of God's mind and conveyed to men new thoughts of God.

But it is plain that the connection between Jesus and God was a different *kind* of connection from that which subsists between every man and God. Every man might in a sense say, "I am in the Father and the Father in Me." But plainly the very fact that Jesus said to Philip, "Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in Me?" is proof that it was not this ordinary connection He had in view. Philip could have had no difficulty in perceiving and acknowledging that God was in Jesus as He is in every man. But if that were all that Jesus meant, then it was wholly out of place to appeal to the works the Father had given Him to do in proof of this assertion.

When, therefore, Jesus said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," He did not merely mean that by His superior holiness He had revealed the Father as no other man had done (although even this would be a most sur-

prising assertion for any mere man to make—that He was so holy that whoever had seen Him had seen the absolutely holy God), but He meant that God was present with Him in a special manner.

So important was it that the disciples should firmly grasp the truth that the Father was in Christ that Jesus proceeds to enlarge upon the proof or evidence of this. In the course of doing so He imparts to them three assurances fitted to comfort them in the prospect of His departure: first, that so far from being weakened by His going to the Father, they will do greater works than even those which had proved that the Father was present with Him; second, that He would not leave them friendless and without support, but would send them the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth, who should abide with them; and third, that although the world would not see Him, they would, and would recognise that He was the maintainer of their own life.

But all this experience would serve to convince them that the Father was in Him. He had, He says, lived among them as the representative of the Father, uttering His will, doing His works. These works might have convinced them even if they were not spiritual enough to perceive that His words were Divine utterances. But a time was coming when a satisfying conviction of the truth that God had been present with them in the presence of Jesus would be wrought in them. When, after His departure, they found *themselves* doing the works of God, greater works than Jesus had done, when they found that the Spirit of truth dwelt in them, imparting to them the very mind and life of Christ Himself, then they should be certified of the truth that Jesus now declared, that the Father was in Him and He in the Father. "At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you." What their understanding could not at present quite grasp, the course of events and their own spiritual experience would make plain to them. When in the prosecution of Christ's instructions they strove to fulfil His commands and carry out His will upon earth, they would find themselves countenanced and supported by powers unseen, would find their life sustained by the life of Christ.

Jesus, then, speaks here of three grades of conviction regarding His claim to be God's representative: three kinds of evidence—a lower, a higher, and the highest. There is the evidence of His miracles, the evidence of His words or His own testimony, and the evidence of the new spiritual life He would maintain in His followers.

Miracles are not the highest evidence, but they are evidence. One miracle might not be convincing evidence. Many miracles of the same kind, such as a number of cures of nervous complaints, or several successful treatments of blind persons, might only indicate superior knowledge of morbid conditions and of remedies. A physician in advance of his age might accomplish wonders. Or had all the miracles of Jesus been such as the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, it might, with a shade of plausibility, have been urged that this was legerdemain. But what we see in Jesus is not power to perform an occasional wonder to make men stare or to win for Himself applause, but power as God's representative on earth to do whatever is needful for the manifestation of God's presence and for the



fulfilment of God's will. It may surely at this time of day be taken for granted that Jesus was serious and true. The works are given Him by the Father to do: it is as an exhibition of God's power He performs them. They are therefore performed not in one form only, but in every needed form. He shows command over all nature, and gives evidence that spirit is superior to matter and rules it.

The miracles of Christ are also convincing because they are performed by a miraculous Person. That an ordinary man should seem to rule nature, or should exhibit wonders on no adequate occasion, must always seem unlikely, if not incredible. But that a Person notoriously exceptional, being what no other man has ever been, should do things that no other man has done, excites no incredulity. That Christ was supremely and absolutely holy no one doubts; but this itself is a miracle; and that this miraculous Person should act miraculously is not unlikely. Moreover, there was adequate occasion both for the miracle of Christ's person and the miracle of His life and separate acts. There was an end to be served so great as to justify this interruption of the course of things as managed by men. If miracles are possible, then they could never be more worthily introduced. If at any time it might seem appropriate and needful that the unseen, holy, and loving God should assert His power over all that touches us His children, so as to give us the consciousness of His presence and of His faithfulness, surely that time was precisely then when Christ came forth from the Father to reveal His holiness and His love, to show men that supreme power and supreme holiness and love reside together in God.

At present men are swinging from an excessive exaltation of miracles to an excessive depreciation of them. They sometimes speak as if no one could work a miracle, and sometimes as if any one could work a miracle. Having discovered that miracles do not convince every one, they leap to the conclusion that they convince no one; and perceiving that Christ does not place them on the highest platform of evidence, they proceed to put them out of court altogether. This is inconsiderate and unwise. The miracles of Christ are appealed to by Himself as evidence of His truth; and looking at them in connection with His person, His life, and His mission or object, considering their character as works of compassion, and their instructive revelation of the nature and purpose of Him who did them, we cannot, I think, but feel that they carry in them a very strong claim upon our most serious attention and do help us to trust in Christ.

But Christ Himself, in the words before us, expects that those who have listened to His teaching and seen His life should need no other evidence that God is in Him and He in God—should not require to go down and back to the preliminary evidence of miracles which may serve to attract strangers. And, obviously, we get closer to the very heart of any person, nearer to the very core of their being, through their ordinary and habitual demeanour and conversation than by considering their exceptional and occasional acts. And it is a great tribute to the power and beauty of Christ's personality that it actually is not His miracles which solely or chiefly convince us of His claims upon our confidence, but rather His own character as it shines through

His talks with His disciples and with all men He met. This we feel, is the Person for us. Here we have the human ideal. The characteristics here disclosed are those which ought everywhere to prevail.

But the crowning evidence of Christ's unity with the Father can be enjoyed only by those who share His life. The conclusive evidence which for ever scatters doubt and remains abidingly as the immovable ground of confidence in Christ is our individual acceptance of His Spirit. Christ's life in God, His identification with the ultimate source of life and power, is to become one of the unquestioned facts of consciousness, one of the immovable data of human existence. We shall one day be as sure of His unity with the Father, and that in Christ our life is hid in God, as we are sure that now we are alive. Faith in Christ is to become an unquestioned certainty. How, then, is this assurance to be attained? It is to be attained when we ourselves as Christ's agents do greater work than He Himself did, and when by the power of His spiritual presence with us we live as He lived.

Christ calls our attention to this with His usual formula when about to declare a surprising but important truth: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me shall do greater works than these." Beginning with such evidence and such trust as we can attain, we shall be encouraged by finding the practical strength which comes of union with Christ. It speedily became apparent to the disciples that our Lord meant what He said when He assured them that they would do greater works than He had done. His miracles had amazed them and had done much good. And yet, after all, they were necessarily very limited in number, in the area of their exercise, and in the permanence of their results. Many were healed; but many, many more remained diseased. And even those who were healed were not rendered permanently unassailable by disease. The eyes of the blind which were opened for a year or two must close shortly in death. The paralysed, though sent from Christ's presence healed, must yield to the debilitating influences of age and betake themselves again to the crutch or the couch. Lazarus, given back for a time to his sorrowing sisters, must again, and this time without recall, own the power of death. And how far did the influence of Christ penetrate into these healed persons? Did they all obey His words and sin no more? or did some worse thing than the disease He freed them from fall upon some of them? Was there none who used his restored eyesight to minister to sin, his restored energies to do more wickedness than otherwise would have been possible? In one word, the miracles of Christ, great as they were and beneficent as they were, were still confined to the body, and did not directly touch the spirit of man.

But was this the object of Christ's coming? Did He come to do a little less than several of the great medical discoverers have done? Assuredly not. These works of healing which he wrought on the bodies of men were, as John regularly calls them, "signs"; they were not acts terminating in themselves, and finding their full significance in the happiness communicated to the healed persons; they were signs pointing to a power over men's spirits, and suggesting to men analogous but everlasting benefits. Christ wrought His miracles that men, beginning with



what they could see and appreciate, might be led on to believe in and trust Him for power to help them in all their matters. And now He expressly announces to His disciples that these works which He had been doing were not miracles of the highest kind; that miracles of the highest kind were works of healing and renewal wrought not on the bodies but on the souls of men, works whose effects would not be deleted by disease and death, but would be permanent, works which should not be confined to Palestine, but should be coextensive with the human race. And these greater works He would now proceed to accomplish through His disciples. By His removal from earth His work was not to be stopped, but to pass into a higher stage. He had come to earth not to make a passing display of Divine power, not to give a tantalising glimpse of what the world might be were His power acting freely and continuously in it; but He had come to lead us to apprehend the value of spiritual health and to trust Him for that. And now that He had won men's trust and taught a few to love Him and to value His Spirit, He removes Himself from their sight, and puts Himself beyond the reach of those who merely sought for earthly benefits, that He may through the Spirit come to all who understood how much greater are spiritual benefits.

This crowning evidence of Christ's being with the Father and in Him the disciples very soon enjoyed. On the day of Pentecost they found such results following from their simple word as had never followed the word of Christ. Thousands were renewed in heart and life. And from that day to this these greater works have never ceased. And why? "Because I go to the Father." And two reasons are given in these simple words. In the first place, no such results could be accomplished by Christ because not till He died was the Father's love fully known. It was the death and resurrection of Christ that convinced men of the truth of what Christ had proclaimed in His life and in His words regarding the Father. The tender compunction which was stirred by His death gave a purchase to the preacher of repentance which did not previously exist. It is Christ's death and resurrection which have been the converting influence through all the ages, and these Christ Himself could not preach. It was only when He had gone to the Father that the greater works of His kingdom could be done. Besides, it was only then that the greater works could be understood and longed for. The fact is, that the death and resurrection of Christ radically altered men's conceptions of a spiritual world, and gave them a belief in the future life of the spirit such as they previously had not and could not have. When men came experimentally into contact with One who had passed through death, and who now entered the unseen world full of plans and of vitality to execute them, a new sense of the value of spiritual benefits was born within them. The fact of being associated with a living Christ at God's right hand has refined the spiritual conceptions of men, and has given a quality to holiness which was not previously conspicuous. The spiritual world is now real and near, and men no longer think of Christ as a worker of miracles on physical nature, but as the King of the world unseen and the willing Source of all spiritual good. We sometimes wonder Christ preached so little and spoke so little as men do now in directing sin-

ners to Him; but He knew that while He lived this was almost useless, and that events would proclaim Him more effectually than any words.

But when Christ gives as a reason for the greater works of His disciples that He Himself went to the Father, He also means that, being with the Father, He would be in the place of power, able to respond to the prayers of His people. "I go unto the Father, and whatsoever ye shall ask in My name—that will I do." No man in Christ's circumstances would utter such words at random. They are uttered with a perfect knowledge of the difficulties and in absolute good faith. But praying "in Christ's name" is not so easy an achievement as we are apt to think. Praying in Christ's name means, no doubt, that we go to God, not in our own name, but in His. He has given us power to use His name, as when we send a messenger we bid him use our name. Sometimes when we send a person to a friend we are almost afraid to give him our name, knowing that our friend will be anxious for our sakes to do all he can and perhaps too much for the applicant. And in going to God in the name of Christ, as those who can plead His friendship and are identified with Him, we know we are sure of a loving and liberal reception.

But praying in Christ's name means more than this. It means that we pray for such things as will promote Christ's kingdom. When we do anything in another's name, it is for him we do it. When we take possession of a property or a legacy in the name of some society, it is not for our own private advantage, but for the society, we take possession. When an officer arrests any one in the Queen's name, it is not to satisfy his private malice he does so; and when he collects money in the name of government, it is not to fill his own pocket. Yet how constantly do we overlook this obvious condition of acceptable prayer! To pray in Christ's name is to seek what He seeks, to ask aid in promoting what He has at heart. To come in Christ's name and plead selfish and worldly desires is absurd. To pray in Christ's name is to pray in the spirit in which He Himself prayed and for objects He desires. When we measure our prayers by this rule, we cease to wonder that so few seem to be answered. Is God to answer prayers that positively lead men away from Him? Is He to build them up in the presumption that happiness can be found in the pursuit of selfish objects and worldly comfort? It is when a man stands, as these disciples stood, detached from worldly hopes and finding all in Christ, so clearly apprehending the sweep and benignity of Christ's will as to see that it comprehends all good to man, and that life can serve no purpose if it do not help to fulfil that will—it is then a man prays with assurance and finds his prayer answered. Christ had won the love of these men and knew that their chief desire would be to serve Him, that their prayers would always be that they might fulfil His purposes. Their fear was, not that He would summon them to live wholly for the ends for which He had lived, but that when He was gone they should find themselves unfit to contend with the world.

And therefore He gives them the final encouragement that He would still be with them, not indeed in a visible form apparent to all eyes, but in a valid and powerful spiritual manner appreciable by those who loved Christ and



strove to do His will. "If ye love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another comforter," another *Advocate*, one called to your aid, and who shall so effectually aid you that in His presence and help you will know Me present with you. "I will not leave you comfortless, like orphans: I will come to you." Christ Himself was still to be with them. He was not merely to leave them His memory and example, but was to be with them, sustaining and guiding and helping them even as He had done. The only difference was to be this—that whereas up to this time they had verified His presence by their senses, seeing His body, hearing His words, and so forth, they should henceforward verify His presence by a spiritual sense which the world of those who did not love Him could not make use of. "Yet a little while, and the world seeth Me no more; but ye see Me: because I live ye shall live also." They would find that their life was bound up in His; and as that new life of theirs grew strong and proved itself victorious over the world and powerful to subdue men's hearts to Christ and win the world to Christ's kingdom, they should feel a growing persuasion, a deepening consciousness, that this life of theirs was but the manifestation of the continued life of Christ. "At that day they would know that Christ was in the Father, and they in Him, and He in them."

Consciousness, then, of Christ's present life and of His close relation to ourselves is to be won only by loving Him and living in Him and for Him. Lower grades of faith there are on which most of us stand, and by which, let us hope, we are slowly ascending to this assured and ineradicable consciousness. Drawn to Christ we are by the beauty of His life, by His evident mastery of all that concerns us, by His knowledge, by the revelation He makes; but doubts assail us, questionings arise, and we long for the full assurance of the personal love of God and of the continued personal life and energy of Christ which would give us an immovable ground to stand on. According to Christ's explanation given in this passage to His disciples, this deepest conviction, this unquestionable consciousness of His presence, is attained only by those who proceed upon the lower grades of faith, and with true love for Him seek to find their life in Him. It is a conviction which can only be won experimentally. The disciples passed from the lower to the higher faith at a bound. The sight of the risen Lord, the new world vividly present to them in His person, gave their devotedness an impulse which carried them at once and for ever to certainty. There are many still who are so drawn by spiritual affinity to Christ that unhesitatingly and unrepentingly they give themselves wholly to Him, and have the reward of a conscious life in Christ. Others have more slowly to win their way upwards, fighting against unbelief, striving to give themselves more undividedly to Christ, and encouraging themselves with the hope that from their hearts also all doubts will one day for ever vanish. Certain it is that Christ's life can only be given to those who are willing to receive it—certain it is that only those who seek to do His work seek to be sustained by His life. If we are not striving to attain those ends which He gave His life to accomplish, we cannot be surprised if we are not sensible of receiving

His aid. If we aim at worldly ends, we shall need no other energy than what the world supplies; but if we throw ourselves heartily into the Christian order of things and manner of life, we shall at once be sensible of our need of help, and shall know whether we receive it or not.

Christ's promise is explicit—a promise given as the stay of His friends in their bitterest need: "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love Him, and will manifest Myself to Him." It will still be a spiritual manifestation which can be perceived only by those whose spirits are exercised to discern such things; but it will be absolutely satisfying. We shall find one day that Christ's work has been successful, that He has brought men and God into a perfect harmony. "That day" shall arrive for us also, when we shall find that Christ has actually accomplished what He undertook, and has set our life and ourselves on an enduring foundation—has given us eternal life in God, a life of perfect joy. Things are under God's guidance progressive, and Christ is the great means He uses for the progress of all that concerns ourselves. And what Christ has done is not to be fruitless or only half effective; He will see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied—satisfied because in us the utmost of happiness and the utmost of good have been attained, because greater and richer things than man has conceived have been made ours.

These utterances are fitted to dispel a form of unbelief which seriously hinders many sincere inquirers. It arises from the difficulty of believing in Christ as now alive and able to afford spiritual assistance. Many persons who enthusiastically admit the perfectness of Christ's character and of the morality He taught, and who desire above all else to make that morality their own, are yet unable to believe that He can give them any real and present assistance in their efforts after holiness. A teacher is a very different thing from a Saviour. They are satisfied with Christ's teaching; but they need more than teaching—they need not only to see the road, but to be enabled to follow it. Unless a man can find some real connection between himself and God, unless he can rely upon receiving inward support from God, he feels that there is nothing which can truly be called salvation.

This form of unbelief assails almost every man. Very often it results from the slow-growing conviction that the Christian religion is not working in ourselves the definite results we expected. When we read the New Testament, we see the reasonableness of faith, we cannot but subscribe to the *theory* of Christianity; but when we endeavour to practise it we fail. We have tried it, and it does not seem to work. At first we think this is something peculiar to ourselves, and that through some personal carelessness or mistake we have failed to receive all the benefit which others receive. But as time goes on the suspicion strengthens in some minds that faith is a delusion: prayer seems to be unanswered; effort seems to be unacknowledged. The power of an almighty spirit within the human spirit cannot be traced. Perhaps this suspicion, more than all other causes put together, produces undecided, heartless Christians.

What, then, is to be said in view of such doubts? Perhaps it may help us past them if we consider that spiritual things are spiritually dis-



cerned, and that the one proof of His ascension to God's right hand which Christ Himself promised was the bestowal of His Spirit. If we find that, however slowly, we are coming into a truer harmony with God; if we find that we can more cordially approve the Spirit of Christ and give to that spirit a more real place in our life; if we are finding that we can be satisfied with very little in the way of selfish and worldly advancement, and that it is a greater satisfaction to us to do good than to get good; if we find ourselves in any degree more patient, more temperate, more humble,—then Christ is manifesting in us His present life in the only way in which He promised to do so. Even if we have more knowledge, more perception of what moral greatness is, if we see through the superficial formalisms which once passed for religion with us, this is a step in the right direction, and if wisely used may be the foundation of a superstructure of intelligent service and real fellowship with God. Every discovery and abandonment of error, every unmasking of delusion, every attainment of truth, is a step nearer to permanent reality, and is a true spiritual gain; and if in times past we have had little experience of spiritual joy and confidence, if our thoughts have been sceptical and questioning and perplexed, all this may be the needful preliminary to a more independent and assured and truer faith, and may be the very best proof that Christ is guiding our mind and attending to our prayers. It is for "the world" to refuse to believe in the Spirit, because "it beareth Him not, neither knoweth Him."

It may also be said that to think of Christ as a good man who has passed away like other good men, leaving an influence and no more behind Him, to think of Him as lying still in His tomb outside Jerusalem, is to reverse not only the belief of those who knew Christ best, but the belief of godly men in all ages. For in all ages both before and after Christ it has been the clear conviction of devout souls that God sought them much more ardently and persistently than they sought God. The truth which shines most conspicuously in the experience of all the saved is that they were saved by God and not by themselves. If human experience is to be trusted at all, if it in any case reflects the substantial verities of the spiritual world, then we may hold it as proved in the uniform experience of men that God somehow communicated to them a living energy, and not only taught them what to do, but gave them strength to do it. If under the Christian dispensation we are left to make the best we can for ourselves of the truth taught by Christ and of the example He set us in His life and death, then the Christian dispensation, so far from being an advance on all that went before, fails to supply us with that very thing which is sought through all religions—actual access to a living source of spiritual strength. I believe that the resurrection of Christ is established by stronger evidence than exists for any other historical fact; but apart altogether from the historical evidence, the entire experience of God's people goes to show that Christ, as the mediator between God and man, as the representative of God and the channel of His influence upon us, must be now alive, and must be in a position to exert a personal care and a personal influence, and to yield a present and inward assistance. Were it otherwise, we should be left without a Saviour to struggle against the enemies of the

soul in our own strength, and this would be a complete reversal of the experience of all those who in past ages have been engaged in the same strife and have been victorious.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE BEQUEST OF PEACE.

JOHN xiv. 22-31.

THE encouraging assurances of our Lord are interrupted by Judas Thaddeus. As Peter, Thomas, and Philip had availed themselves of their Master's readiness to solve their difficulties, so now Judas utters his perplexity. He perceives that the manifestation of which Jesus has spoken is not public and general, but special and private; and he says, "Lord, what has happened, that Thou art to manifest Thyself to us, and not to the world?" It would seem as if Judas had been greatly impressed by the public demonstration in favour of Jesus a day or two previously, and supposed that something must have occurred to cause Him now to wish to manifest Himself only to a select few.

Apparently Judas' construction of the future was still entangled with the ordinary Messianic expectation. He thought Jesus, although departing for a little, would return speedily in outward Messianic glory, and would triumphantly enter Jerusalem and establish Himself there. But how this could be done privately he could not understand. And if Jesus had entirely altered His plan, and did not mean immediately to claim Messianic supremacy, but only to manifest Himself to a few, was this possible?

By His reply our Lord shows for the hundredth time that outward proclamation and external acknowledgment were not in His thoughts. It is to the individual and in response to individual love He will manifest Himself. It is therefore a spiritual manifestation He has in view. Moreover, it was not to a specially privileged few, whose number was already complete, that He would manifest Himself. Judas supposed that to him and his fellow-Apostles, "us," Jesus would manifest Himself, and over against this select company he set "the world." But this mechanical line of demarcation our Lord obliterates in His reply, "If any man loveth Me, . . . We will come to him." He enounces the great spiritual law that they who seek to have Christ's presence manifested to them must love and obey Him. He that longs for more satisfying knowledge of spiritual realities, he that thirsts for certainty and to see God as if face to face, must expect no sudden or magical revelation, but must be content with the true spiritual education which proceeds by loving and living. To the disciples the method might seem slow—to us also it often seems slow; but it is the method which nature requires. Our knowledge of God, our belief that in Christ we have a hold of ultimate truth and are living among eternal verities, grow with our love and service of Christ. It may take us a lifetime—it will take us a lifetime—to learn to love Him as we ought, but others have learned and we also may learn, and there is no possible experience so precious to us.

It is, then, to those who serve Him that Christ



manifests Himself, and manifests Himself in an abiding, spiritual, influential manner. That those who do not serve Him do not believe in His presence and power is to be expected. But were those who have served Him asked if they had become more convinced of His spiritual and effectual presence, their voice would be that this promise had been fulfilled. And this is the very citadel of the religion of Christ. If Christ does not now abide with and energetically aid those who serve Him, then their faith is vain. If His spiritual presence with them is not manifested in spiritual results, if they have no evidence that He is personally and actively employed in and with them, their faith is vain. To believe in a Christ long since removed from earth and whose present life cannot now influence or touch mankind is not the faith which Christ Himself invites. And if His promise to abide with those who love and serve Him is not actually performed, Christendom has been produced by a mistake and has lived on a delusion.

At this point (ver. 25) Jesus pauses; and feeling how little He had time to say of what was needful, and how much better they would understand their relation to Him after He had finally passed from their bodily sight, He says: "These things I have spoken to you, while yet I remain with you; but the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, which the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and will remind you of all that I have said to you." Jesus cannot tell them all He would wish them to know; but the same Helper whom He has already promised will especially help them by giving them understanding of what has already been told them, and by leading them into further knowledge. He is to come "in the name" of Jesus—that is to say, as His representative—and to carry on His work in the world.

Here, then, the Lord predicts that one day His disciples will know more than He has taught them. They were to advance in knowledge beyond the point to which He had brought them. His teaching would necessarily be the foundation of all future attainment, and whatever would not square with that they must necessarily reject; but they were to add much to the foundation He had laid. We cannot therefore expect to find in the teaching of Jesus all that His followers ought to know regarding Himself and His connection with them. All that is absolutely necessary we shall find there; but if we wish to know all that He would have us know, we must look beyond. The teaching which we receive from the Apostles is the requisite and promised complement of the teaching which Christ Himself delivered. He being the subject taught as much as the teacher, and His whole experience as living, dying, rising, and ascending, constituting the facts which Christian teaching was to explain, it was impossible that He Himself should be the final teacher. He could not at once be text and exposition. He lived among men, and by His teaching shed much light on the significance of His life; He died, and was not altogether silent regarding the meaning of His death, but it was enough that He furnished matter for His Apostles to explain, and confined Himself to sketching the mere outline of Christian truth.

Again and again throughout this last conversation Jesus tries to break off, but finds it im-

possible. Here (ver. 27), when He has assured them that, although He Himself leaves them in ignorance of many things, the Spirit will lead them into all truth, He proceeds to make His parting bequest. He would fain leave them what will enable them to be free from care and distress; but He has none of those worldly possessions which men usually lay up for their children and those dependent on them. House, lands, clothes, money, He has none. He could not even secure for those who were to carry on His work an exemption from persecution which He Himself had not enjoyed. He did not leave them, as some initiators have done, stable though new institutions, an empire of recent origin but already firmly established. "Not as the world giveth, give I unto you."

But He does give them that which all other bequests aim at producing: "Peace I leave unto you." Men may differ as to the best means of attaining peace, or even as to the kind of peace that is desirable, but all agree in seeking an untroubled state. We seek a condition in which we shall have no unsatisfied desires gnawing at our heart and making peace impossible, no stings of conscience, dipped in the poison of past wrong-doing, torturing us hour by hour, no foreboding anxiety darkening and disturbing a present which might otherwise be peaceful. The comprehensive nature of this possession is shown by the fact that peace can be produced only by the contribution of past, present, and future. As health implies that all the laws which regulate bodily life are being observed, and as it is disturbed by the infringement of any one of these, so peace of mind implies that in the spiritual life all is as it should be. Introduce remorse or an evil conscience, and you destroy peace; introduce fear or anxiety, and peace is impossible. Introduce anything discordant, ambition alongside of indolence, a sensitive conscience alongside of strong passions, and peace takes flight. He, therefore, who promises to give peace promises to give unassailable security, inward integrity, and perfectness, all which goes to make up that perfect condition in which we shall be for ever content to abide.

Jesus further defines the peace which He was leaving to the disciples as that peace which He had Himself enjoyed: "*My peace I give unto you*,"—as one hands over a possession he has himself tested, the shield or helmet that has served him in battle. "That which has protected Me in a thousand fights I make over to you." The peace which Christ desires His disciples to enjoy is that which characterised Himself; the same serenity in danger, the same equanimity in troublous circumstances, the same freedom from anxiety about results, the same speedy recovery of composure after anything which for a moment ruffled the calm surface of His demeanour. This is what He makes over to His people; this is what He makes possible to all who serve Him.

There is nothing which more markedly distinguishes Jesus and proves His superiority than His calm peace in all circumstances. He was poor, and might have resented the incapacitating straitness of poverty. He was driven from place to place, His purpose and motives were suspected, His action and teaching resisted, the good He strove to do continually marred; but He carried Himself through all with serenity.



It is said that nothing shakes the nerve of brave men so much as fear of assassination: our Lord lived among bitterly hostile men, and was again and again on the brink of being made away with, but He was imperturbably resolute to do the work given Him to do. Take Him at an unguarded moment, tell Him the boat is sinking underneath Him, and you find the same undisturbed composure. He was never troubled at the results of His work or about His own reputation; when He was reviled, He reviled not again.

This unruffled serenity was so obvious a characteristic of the demeanour of Jesus, that as it was familiar to His friends, so it was perplexing to His judges. The Roman governor saw in His bearing an equanimity so different from the callousness of the hardened criminal and from the agitation of the self-condemned, that he could not help exclaiming in astonishment, "Dost Thou not know that I have power over Thee?" Therefore without egotism our Lord could speak of "My peace." The world had come to Him in various shapes, and He had conquered it. No allurements of pleasure, no opening to ambition had distracted Him and broken up His serene contentment; no danger had filled His spirit with anxiety and fear. On one occasion only could He say, "Now is My soul troubled." Out of all that life had presented to Him He had wrought out for Himself and for us peace.

By calling it specifically "My peace" our Lord distinguishes it from the peace which men ordinarily pursue. Some seek it by accommodating themselves to the world, by fixing for themselves a low standard and disbelieving in the possibility of living up to any high standard in this world. Some seek peace by giving the fullest possible gratification to all their desires; they seek peace in external things—comfort, ease, plenty, pleasant connections. Some stifle anxiety about worldly things by impressing on themselves that fretting does no good, and that what cannot be cured must be endured; and any anxiety that might arise about their spiritual condition they stifle by the imagination that God is too great or too good to deal strictly with their shortcomings. Such kinds of peace, our Lord implies, are delusive. It is not outward things which can give peace of mind, any more than it is a soft couch which can give rest to a fevered body. Restfulness must be produced from within.

There are, in fact, two roads to peace—we may conquer or we may be conquered. A country may always enjoy peace, if it is prepared always to submit to indignities, to accommodate itself to the demands of stronger parties, and absolutely to dismiss from its mind all ideas of honour or self-respect. This mode of obtaining peace has the advantages of easy and speedy attainment—advantages to which every man naturally attaches too high a value. For in the individual life we are daily choosing either the one peace or the other; the unrighteous desires which distract us we are either conquering or being conquered by. We are either accepting the cheap peace that lies on this side of conflict, or we are attaining or striving towards the peace that lies on the other side of conflict. But the peace we gain by submission is both short-lived and delusive. It is short-lived, for a gratified desire is like a relieved beggar, who will quickly

find his way back to you with his request rather enlarged than curtailed; and it is delusive, because it is a peace which is the beginning of bondage of the worst kind. Any peace that is worth the having or worth the speaking about lies beyond, at the other side of conflict. We cannot long veil this from ourselves: we may decline the conflict and put off the evil day; but still we are conscious that we have not the peace our natures crave until we subdue the evil that is in us. We look and look for peace to distil upon us from without, to rise and shine upon us as to-morrow's sun, without effort of our own, and yet we know that such expectation is the merest delusion, and that peace must begin within, must be found in ourselves and not in our circumstances. We know that until our truest purposes are in thorough harmony with our conscientious convictions we have no right to peace. We know that we can have no deep and lasting peace until we are satisfied with our own inward state, or are at least definitely on the road to satisfaction.

Again, the peace which Christ here speaks may be called His, as being wrought out by Him, and as being only attainable by others through His communication of it to them. We do at first inquire with surprise how it is possible that any one can bequeath to us his own moral qualities. This, in fact, is what one often wishes were possible—that the father who by long discipline, by many painful experiences, has at last become meek and wise, could transmit these qualities to his son who has life all before him. As we read the notices of those who pass away from among us, it is the loss of so much moral force we mourn; it may be, for all we know, as indispensable elsewhere, but nevertheless it is our loss, a loss for which no work done by the man, nor any works left behind him, compensate; for the man is always, or generally, greater than his works, and what he has done only shows us the power and possibilities that are in him. Each generation needs to raise its own good men, not independent, certainly, of the past, but not altogether inheriting what past generations have done; just as each new year must raise its own crops, and only gets the benefit of past toil in the shape of improved land, good seed, better implements and methods of agriculture. Still, there is a transmission from father to son of moral qualities. What the father has painfully acquired may be found in the son by inheritance. And this is *analogous* to the transfusion of moral qualities from Christ to His people. For it is true of all the graces of the Christian, that they are first acquired by Christ, and only from Him derived to the Christian. It is of His fulness we all receive, and grace for grace. He is the Light at whom we must all kindle, the Source from whom all flows.

How, then, does Christ communicate to us His peace or any of His own qualities—qualities in some instances acquired by personal experience and personal effort? He gives us peace, first, by reconciling us to God by removing the burden of our past guilt and giving us access to God's favour. His work sheds quite a new light upon God; reveals the fatherly love of God following us into our wandering and misery, and claiming us in our worst estate as His, acknowledging us and bidding us hope. Through Him we are brought back to the Father. He



comes with this message from God, that He loves us. Am I, then, troubled about the past, about what I have done? As life goes on, do I only see more and more clearly how thoroughly I have been a wrong-doer? Does the present, as I live through it, only shed a brighter and brighter light on the evil of the past? Do I fear the future as that which can only more and more painfully evolve the consequences of my past wrong-doing? Am I gradually awaking to the full and awful import of being a sinner? After many years of a Christian profession, am I coming at last to see that above all else my life has been a life of sin, of shortcoming or evasion of duty, of deep consideration for my own pleasure or my own purpose, and utter or comparative regardlessness of God? Are the slowly evolving circumstances of my life at length effecting what no preaching has ever effected? are they making me understand that sin is the real evil, and that I am beset by it and my destiny entangled and ruled by it? To me, then, what offer could be more appropriate than the offer of peace? From all fear of God and of myself I am called to peace in Christ.

Reconcilement with God is the foundation, manifestly and of course, of all peace; and this we have as Christ's direct gift to us. But this fundamental peace, though it will eventually pervade the whole man, does in point of fact only slowly develop into a peace such as our Lord Himself possessed. The peace which our Lord spoke of to His disciples, peace amidst all the ills of life, can only be attained by a real following of Christ, and a hearty and profound acceptance of His principles and spirit. And it is not the less His gift because we have thus to work for it, to alter or be altered wholly in our own inward being. It is not therefore a deceptive bequest. When the father gives his son a good education, he cannot do so irrespective of the hard work of the son himself. When the general promises victory to his men, they do not expect to have it without fighting. And our Lord does not upset or supersede the fundamental laws of our nature and of our spiritual growth. He does not make effort of our own unnecessary; He does not give us a ready-made character irrespective of the laws by which character grows, irrespective of deep-seated thirst for holiness in ourselves and long-sustained conflict with outward obstacles and internal weaknesses and infidelities.

But He helps us to peace, not only, though primarily, by bringing us back to God's favour, but also by showing us in His own person and life how peace is attained and preserved, and by communicating to us His Spirit to aid us in our efforts to attain it. He found out more perfectly than any one else the secret of peace; and we are stirred by His example and success, not only as we are stirred by the example of any dead saint or sage with whom we have no present personal living fellowship, but as we are stirred by the example of a living Father who is always with us to infuse new heart into us, and to give us effectual counsel and aid. While we put forth our own efforts to win this self-conquest, and so school all within us as to enter into peace, Christ is with us, securing that our efforts shall not be in vain, giving us the fixed and clear idea of peace as our eternal condition, and giving us also whatever we need to win it.

These words our Lord uttered at a time when, if ever, He was not likely to use words of course, to adopt traditional or misleading phrases. He loved the men He was speaking to, He knew He was after this to have few more opportunities of speaking with them, His love interpreted to Him the difficulties and troubles which would fall upon them, and this was the armour which He knew would bear them scathless through all. That His promise was fulfilled we know. We do not know what became of the majority of the Apostles, whether they did much or little; but if we look at the men who stood out prominently in the early history of the Church, we see how much they stood in need of this peace and how truly they received it. Look at Stephen, sinking bruised and bleeding under the stones of a cursing mob, and say what characterises him—what makes his face shine and his lips open in prayer for his murderers? Look at Paul, driven out of one city, dragged lifeless out of another, clinging to a spar on a wild sea, stripped by robbers, arraigned before magistrate after magistrate—what keeps his spirit serene, his purpose unshaken through a life such as this? What put into his lips these valued words and taught him to say to others, "Rejoice evermore, and let the peace of God which passeth understanding keep your heart and mind"? It was the fulfilment of this promise—a promise which is meant for us as for them. It will be fulfilled in us as in these men, not by a mere verbal petition, not by a craving however strong, or a prayer however sincere, but by a true and profound acceptance of Christ, by a conscientious following of Him as our real leader, as that One from whom we take our ideas of life, of what is worthy and what is unworthy.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES.

JOHN xiv. 31-xv. 12.

LIKE a friend who cannot tear himself away and has many more last words after he has bid us good-bye, Jesus continues speaking to the disciples while they are selecting and putting on their sandals and girding themselves to face the chill night air. He had to all appearance said all he meant to say. He had indeed closed the conversation with the melancholy words, "Henceforth I will not talk much with you." He had given the signal for breaking up the feast and leaving the house, rising from table Himself and summoning the rest to do the same. But as He saw their reluctance to move, and the alarmed and bewildered expression that hung upon their faces, He could not but renew His efforts to banish their forebodings and impart to them intelligent courage to face separation from Him. All He had said about His spiritual presence with them had fallen short: they could not as yet understand it. They were possessed with the dread of losing Him whose future was their future, and with the success of whose plans all their hopes were bound up. The prospect of losing Him was too dreadful; and though He had assured them He would still be with them, there was an appearance of mystery and unreality



about that presence which prevented them from trusting it. They knew they could effect nothing if He left them: their work was done, their hopes blighted.

As Jesus, then, rises, and as they all fondly cluster round Him, and as He recognises once more how much He is to these men, there occurs to His mind an allegory which may help the disciples to understand better the connection they have with Him, and how it is still to be maintained. It has been supposed that this allegory was suggested to Him by some vine trailing round the doorway or by some other visible object, but such outward suggestion is needless. Recognising their fears and difficulties and dependence on Him as they hung upon Him for the last time, what more natural than that He should meet their dependence and remove their fears of real separation by saying, "I am the Vine, ye the branches"? What more natural, when He wished to set vividly before them the importance of the work He was bequeathing to them, and to stimulate them faithfully to carry on what He had begun, than to say, "I am the Vine, ye the fruit-bearing branches: abide in Me, and I in you"?

Doubtless our Lord's introduction of the word "true" or "real"—"I am the true Vine"—implies a comparison with other vines, but not necessarily with any vines then outwardly visible. Much more likely is it that as He saw the dependence of His disciples upon Him, He saw new meaning in the old and familiar idea that Israel was the vine planted by God. He saw that in Himself\* and His disciples all that had been suggested by this figure was in reality accomplished. God's intention in creating man was fulfilled. It was secured by the life of Christ and by the attachment of men to Him that the purpose of God in creation would bear fruit. That which amply satisfied God was now in actual existence in the person and attractiveness of Christ. Seizing upon the figure of the vine as fully expressing this, Christ fixes it for ever in the mind of His disciples as the symbol of His connection with them, and with a few decisive strokes He gives prominence to the chief characteristics of this connection.

I. The first idea, then, which our Lord wished to present by means of this allegory is, that He and His disciples together form one whole, neither being complete without the other. The vine can bear no fruit if it has no branches; the branches cannot live apart from the vine. Without the branches the stem is a fruitless pole; without the stem the branches wither and die. Stem and branches together constitute one fruit-bearing tree. I, for my part, says Christ, am the Vine; ye are the branches, neither perfect without the other, the two together forming one complete tree, essential to one another as stem and branches.

The significance underlying the figure is obvious, and no more welcome or animating thought could have reached the heart of the disciples as they felt the first tremor of separation from their Lord. Christ, in His own visible person and by His own hands and words, was no longer to extend His kingdom on earth. He was to continue to fulfil God's purpose among men, no longer however in His own person, but through His

disciples. They were now to be His branches, the medium through which He could express all the life that was in Him, His love for man, His purpose to lift and save the world. Not with His own lips was He any longer to tell men of holiness and of God, not with His own hand was He to dispense blessing to the needy ones of earth, but His disciples were now to be the sympathetic interpreters of His goodness and the unobstructed channels through which He might still pour out upon men all His loving purpose. As God the Father is a Spirit and needs human hands to do actual deeds of mercy for Him, as He does not Himself in His own separate personality make the bed of the sick poor, but does it only through the intervention of human charity, so can Christ speak no audible word in the ear of the sinner, nor do the actual work required for the help and advancement of men. This He leaves to His disciples, His part being to give them love and perseverance for it, to supply them with all they need as His branches.

This, then, is the last word of encouragement and of quickening our Lord leaves with these men and with us: I leave you to do all for Me; I entrust you with this gravest task of accomplishing in the world all I have prepared for by My life and death. This great end, to attain which I thought fit to leave the glory I had with the Father, and for which I have spent all—this I leave in your hands. It is in this world of men the whole results of the Incarnation are to be found, and it is on you the burden is laid of applying to this world the work I have done. You live for Me. But on the other hand I live for you. "Because I live, ye shall live also." I do not really leave you. If I say, "Abide in Me," I none the less say, "and I in you." It is in you I spend all the Divine energy you have witnessed in My life. It is through you I live. I am the Vine, the life-giving Stem, sustaining and quickening you. Ye are the branches, effecting what I intend, bearing the fruit for the sake of which I have been planted in the world by My Father, the Husbandman.

II. The second idea is that this unity of the tree is formed by unity of life. It is a unity brought about, not by mechanical juxtaposition, but by organic relationship. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, but must abide in the vine, so neither can ye except ye abide in Me." A ball of twine or a bag of shot cannot be called a whole. If you cut off a yard of the twine, the part cut off has all the qualities and properties of the remainder, and is perhaps more serviceable apart from the rest than in connection with it. A handful of shot is more serviceable for many purposes than a bagful, and the quantity you take out of the bag retains all the properties it had while in the bag; because there is *no common life* in the twine or in the shot, making all the particles one whole. But take anything which is a true unity or whole—your body, for example. Different results follow here from separation. Your eye is useless, taken from its place in the body. You can lend a friend your knife or your purse, and it may be more serviceable in his hands than in yours; but you cannot lend him your arms or your ears. Apart from yourself, the members of your body are useless, because here there is one common life forming one organic whole.

\* That the vine was a recognised symbol of the Messiah is shown by Delitzsch in the *Expositor*, 3d series, vol. iii. pp. 68, 69. See also his "Iris," pp. 180-190, E. Tr.



It is thus in the relation of Christ and His followers. He and they together form one whole, *because* one common *life* unites them. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, so neither can ye." Why can the branch bear no fruit except it abide in the vine? Because it is a *vital* unity that makes the tree one. And what is a vital unity between persons? It can be nothing else than spiritual unity—a unity not of a bodily kind, but inward and of the spirit. In other words, *it is a unity of purpose and of resources for attaining that purpose*. The branch is one with the tree because it draws its life from the tree and bears the fruit proper to the tree. We are one with Christ when we adopt His purpose in the world as the real governing aim of our life, and when we renew our strength for the fulfilment of that purpose by fellowship with His love for mankind and His eternal purpose to bless men.

We must be content, then, to be branches. We must be content not to stand isolated and grow from a private root of our own. We must utterly renounce selfishness. Successful selfishness is absolutely impossible. The greater the apparent success of selfishness is, the more gigantic will the failure one day appear. An arm severed from the body, a branch lopped off the tree, is the true symbol of the selfish man. He will be left behind as the true progress of mankind proceeds, with no part in the common joy, stranded and dying in cold isolation. We must learn that our true life can only be lived when we recognise that we are parts of a great whole, that we are here not to prosecute any private interest of our own and win a private good for ourselves, but to forward the good that others share in and the cause that is common.

How this unity is formed received no explanation on this occasion. The manner in which men become branches of the true Vine was not touched upon in the allegory. Already the disciples were branches, and no explanation was called for. It may, however, be legitimate to gather a hint from the allegory itself regarding the formation of the living bond between Christ and His people. However ignorant we may be of the propagation of fruit trees and the processes of grafting, we can at any rate understand that no mere tying of a branch to a tree, bark to bark, would effect anything save the withering of the branch. The branch, if it is to be fruitful, must form a solid part of the tree, must be grafted so as to become of one structure and life with the stem. It must be cut through, so as to lay bare the whole interior structure of it, and so as to leave open all the vessels that carry the sap; and a similar incision must be made in the stock upon which the branch is to be grafted, so that the cut sap-vessels of the branch may be in contact with the cut sap-vessels of the stock. Such must be our grafting into Christ. It must be a laying bare of our inmost nature to His inmost nature, so that a vital connection may be formed between these two. What we expect to receive by being connected with Christ is the very Spirit which made Him what He was. We expect to receive into the source of conduct in us all that was the source of conduct in Him. We wish to be in such a connection with Him that His principles, sentiments, and aims shall become ours.

On His side Christ has laid bare His deepest feelings and spirit. In His life and in His death

He submitted to that severest operation which seemed to be a maiming of Him, but which in point of fact was the necessary preparation for His receiving fruitful branches. He did not hide the true springs of His life under a hard and rough bark; but submitting Himself to the Husbandman's knife, He has suffered us through His wounds to see the real motives and vital spirit of His nature—truth, justice, holiness, fidelity, love. Whatever in this life cut our Lord to the quick, whatever tested most thoroughly the true spring of His conduct, only more clearly showed that deepest within Him and strongest within Him lay holy love. And He was not shy of telling men His love for them: in the public death He died He loudly declared it, opening His nature to the gaze of all. And to this open heart He declined to receive none; as many as the Father gave Him were welcome; He had none of that aversion we feel to admit all and sundry into close relations with us. He at once gives His heart and keeps back nothing to Himself; He invites us into the closest possible connection with Him, with the intention that we should grow to Him and for ever be loved by Him. Whatever real, lasting, and influential connection can be established between two persons this He wishes to have with us. If it is possible for two persons so to grow together that separation in spirit is for ever impossible, it is nothing short of this Christ seeks.

But when we turn to the cutting of the branch, we see reluctance and vacillation and much to remind us that, in the graft we now speak of, the Husbandman has to deal, not with passive branches which cannot shrink from His knife, but with free and sensitive human beings. The hand of the Father is on us to sever us from the old stock and give us a place in Christ, but we feel it hard to be severed from the root we have grown from and to which we are now so firmly attached. We refuse to see that the old tree is doomed to the axe, or after we have been inserted into Christ we loosen ourselves again and again, so that morning by morning as the Father visits His tree He finds us dangling useless with signs of withering already upon us. But in the end the Vinedresser's patient skill prevails. We submit ourselves to those incisive operations of God's providence or of His gentler but effective word which finally sever us from what we once clung to. We are impelled to lay bare our heart to Christ and seek the deepest and truest and most influential union.

And even after the graft has been achieved the husbandman's care is still needed that the branch may "abide in the vine," and that it may "bring forth more fruit." There are two risks—the branch may be loosened, or it may run to wood and leaves. Care is taken when a graft is made that its permanent participation in the life of the tree be secured. The graft is not only tied to the tree, but the point of juncture is cased in clay or pitch or wax, so as to exclude air, water, or any disturbing influence. Analogous spiritual treatment is certainly requisite if the attachment of the soul to Christ is to become solid, firm, permanent. If the soul and Christ are to be really one, nothing must be allowed to tamper with the attachment. It must be sheltered from all that might rudely impinge upon it and displace the disciple from the attitude towards Christ he has assumed. When the graft and the stock have grown together into one, then the



point of attachment will resist any shock; but, while the attachment is recent, care is needed that the juncture be hermetically secluded from adverse influences.

The husbandman's care is also needed that after the branch is grafted it may bring forth fruit increasingly. Stationariness is not to be tolerated. As for fruitfulness, that is out of the question. More fruit each season is looked for, and arranged for by the vigorous prunings of the husbandman. The branch is not left to nature. It is not allowed to run out in every direction, to waste its life in attaining size. Where it seems to be doing grandly and promising success, the knife of the vinedresser ruthlessly cuts down the flourish, and the fine appearance lies withering on the ground. But the vintage justifies the husbandman.

III. This brings us to the third idea of the allegory—that the result aimed at in our connection with Christ is fruit-bearing. The allegory bids us think of God as engaged in the tendance and culture of men with the watchful, fond interest with which the vinedresser tends his plants through every stage of growth and every season of the year, and even when there is nothing to be done gazes on them admiringly and finds still some little attention he can pay them; but all in the hope of fruit. All this interest collapses at once, all this care becomes a foolish waste of time and material, and reflects discredit and ridicule on the vinedresser, if there is no fruit. God has prepared for us in this life a soil than which nothing can be better for the production of the fruit He desires us to yield; He has made it possible for every man to serve a good purpose; He does His part not with reluctance, but, if we may say so, as His chief interest; but all in the expectation of fruit. We do not spend days of labour and nights of anxious thought, we do not lay out all we have at command, on that which is to effect nothing and give no satisfaction to ourselves or any one else; and neither does God. He did not make this world full of men for want of something better to do, as a mere idle pastime. He made it that the earth might yield her increase, that each of us might bring forth fruit. Fruit alone can justify the expense put upon this world. The wisdom, the patience, the love that have guided all things through the slow-moving ages will be justified in the product. And what this product is we already know: it is the attainment of moral perfection by created beings. To this all that has been made and done in the past leads up. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth,"—for what? "For the manifestation of the sons of God." The lives and acts of good men are the adequate return for all past outlay, the satisfying fruit.

The production of this fruit became a certainty when Christ was planted in the world as a new moral stem. He was sent into the world not to make some magnificent outward display of Divine power, to carry us to some other planet, or alter the conditions of life here. God might have departed from His purpose of filling this earth with holy men, and might have used it for some easier display which for the moment might have seemed more striking. He did not do so. It was human obedience, the fruit of genuine human righteousness, of the love and goodness of men and women, that He was resolved to reap from earth. He was resolved to

train men to such a pitch of goodness that in a world contrived to tempt there should be found nothing so alluring, nothing so terrifying, as to turn men from the straight path. He was to produce a race of men who, while still in the body, urged by appetites, assaulted by passions and cravings, with death threatening and life inviting, should prefer all suffering rather than flinch from duty, should prove themselves actually superior to every assault that can be made on virtue, should prove that spirit is greater than matter. And God set Christ in the world to be the living type of human perfection, to attract men by their love for Him to His kind of life, and to furnish them with all needed aid in becoming like Him—that as Christ had kept the Father's commandments, His disciples should keep His commandments, that thus a common understanding, an identity of interest and moral life, should be established between God and man.

Perhaps it is not pressing the figure too hard to remark that the fruit differs from timber in this respect—that it enters into and nourishes the life of man. No doubt in this allegory fruit-bearing primarily and chiefly indicates that God's purpose in creating man is satisfied. The tree He has planted is not barren, but fruitful. But certainly a great distinction between the selfish and the unselfish man, between the man who has private ambitions and the man who labours for the public good, lies in this—that the selfish man seeks to erect a monument of some kind for himself, while the unselfish man spends himself in labours that are not conspicuous, but assist the life of his fellows. An oak carving or a structure of hard wood will last a thousand years and keep in memory the skill of the designer: fruit is eaten and disappears, but it passes into human life, and becomes part of the stream that flows on for ever. The ambitious man longs to execute a monumental work, and does not much regard whether it will be for the good of men or not; a great war will serve his turn, a great book, anything conspicuous. But he who is content to be a branch of the True Vine will not seek the admiration of men, but will strive to introduce a healthy spiritual life into those he can reach, even although in order to do so he must remain obscure and must see his labours absorbed without notice or recognition.

Does the teaching of this allegory, then, accord with the facts of life as we know them? Is it a truth, and a truth we must act upon, that apart from Christ we can do nothing? In what sense and to what extent is association with Christ really necessary to us?

Something may of course be made of life apart from Christ. A man may have much enjoyment and a man may do much good apart from Christ. He may be an inventor, who makes human life easier or safer or fuller of interest. He may be a literary man, who by his writings enlightens, exhilarates, and elevates mankind. He may, with entire ignorance or utter disregard of Christ, toil for his country or for his class or for his cause. But the best uses and ends of human life cannot be attained apart from Christ. Only in Him does the reunion of man with God seem attainable, and only in Him do God and God's aim and work in the world become intelligible. He is as necessary for the spiritual life of men as the sun is for this physical life. We may effect something by candle-light; we may be quite proud of electric



light, and think we are getting far towards independence; but what man in his senses will be betrayed by these attainments into thinking we may dispense with the sun? Christ holds the key to all that is most permanent in human endeavour, to all that is deepest and best in human character. Only in Him can we take our place as partners with God in what He is really doing with this world. And only from Him can we draw courage, hopefulness, love to prosecute this work. In Him God does reveal Himself, and in Him the fulness of God is found by us. He is in point of fact the one moral stem apart from whom we are not bearing and cannot bear the fruit God desires.

If, then, we are not bringing forth fruit, it is because there is a flaw in our connection with Christ; if we are conscious that the results of our life and activity are not such results as He designs, and are in no sense traceable to Him, this is because there is something about our adherence to Him that is loose and needs rectification. Christ calls us to Him and makes us sharers in His work; and he who listens to this call and counts it enough to be a branch of this Vine and do His will is upheld by Christ's Spirit, is sweetened by His meekness and love, is purified by His holy and fearless rectitude, is transformed by the dominant will of this Person whom he has received deepest into his soul, and does therefore bring forth, in whatever place in life he holds, the same kind of fruit as Christ Himself would bring forth; it is indeed Christ who brings forth these fruits, Christ at a few steps removed—for every Christian learns, as well as Paul, to say, "Not I, but Christ in me." If, then, the will of Christ is not being fulfilled through us, if there is good that it belongs to us to do, but which remains undone, then the point of juncture with Christ is the point that needs looking to. It is not some unaccountable blight that makes us useless; it is not that we have got the wrong piece of the wall, a situation in which Christ Himself could bear no precious fruit. The Husbandman knew His own meaning when He trained us along that restricted line and nailed us down; He chose the place for us, knowing the quality of fruit He desires us to yield. The reason of our fruitlessness is the simple one that we are not closely enough attached to Christ.

How, then, is it with ourselves? By examining the results of our lives, would any one be prompted to exclaim, "These are trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord that He may be glorified"? For this examination is made, and made not by one who chances to pass, and who, being a novice in horticulture, might be deceived by a show of leaves or poor fruit, or whose examination might terminate in wonder at the slothfulness or mismanagement of the owner who allowed such trees to cumber his ground; but the examination is made by One who has come for the express purpose of gathering fruit, who knows exactly what has been spent upon us and what might have been made of our opportunities, who has in His own mind a definite idea of the fruit that should be found, and who can tell by a glance whether such fruit actually exists or no. To this infallible Judge of produce what have we to offer? From all our busy engagement in many affairs, from all our thought, what has resulted that we can offer as a satisfactory return for all that has been spent

upon us? It is deeds of profitable service such as men of large and loving nature would do that God seeks from us. And He recognises without fail what is love and what only seems so. He infallibly detects the corroding spot of selfishness that rots the whole fair-seeming cluster. He stands undeceivable before us, and takes our lives precisely for what they are worth.

It concerns us to make such inquiries, for fruitless branches cannot be tolerated. The purpose of the tree is fruit. If, then, we would escape all suspicion of our own state and all reproach of fruitlessness, what we have to do is, not so much to find out new rules for conduct, as to strive to renew our hold upon Christ and intelligently to enter into His purposes. "Abide in Him." This is the secret of fruitfulness. All that the branch needs is in the Vine; it does not need to go beyond the Vine for anything. When we feel the life of Christ ebbing from our soul, when we see our leaf fading, when we feel sapless, heartless for Christian duty, reluctant to work for others, to have anything to do with the relief of misery and the repression of vice, there is a remedy for this state, and it is to renew our fellowship with Christ—to allow the mind once again to conceive clearly the worthiness of His aims, to yield the heart once again to the vitalising influence of His love, to turn from the vanities and futilities with which men strive to make life seem important to the reality and substantial worth of the life of Christ. To abide in Christ is to abide by our adoption of His view of the true purpose of human life after testing it by actual experience; it is to abide by our trust in Him as the true Lord of men, and as able to supply us with all that we need to keep His commandments. And thus abiding in Christ we are sustained by Him; for He abides in us, imparts to us, His branches now on earth, the force which is needful to accomplish His purposes.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### NOT SERVANTS, BUT FRIENDS.

JOHN xv. 13-17.

THESE words of our Lord are the charter of our emancipation. They give us entrance into true freedom. They set us in the same attitude towards life and towards God as Christ Himself occupied. Without this proclamation of freedom and all it covers we are the mere drudges of this world,—doing its work, but without any great and far-reaching aim that makes it worth doing; accepting the tasks allotted to us because we must, not because we will; living on because we happen to be here, but without any part in that great future towards which all things are running on. But this is of the very essence of slavery. For our Lord here lays His finger on the sorest part of this deepest of human sores when He says, "The slave knows not what his master does." It is not that his back is torn with the lash, it is not that he is underfed and overworked, it is not that he is poor and despised; all this would be cheerfully undergone to serve a cherished purpose and accomplish ends a man had chosen for himself. But when all this must be endured to work out the purposes of another, purposes never hinted to him, and



with which, were they hinted, he might have no sympathy, this is slavery, this is to be treated as a tool for accomplishing aims chosen by another, and to be robbed of all that constitutes manhood. Sailors and soldiers have sometimes mutinied when subjected to similar treatment, when no inkling has been given them of the port to which they are shipped or the nature of the expedition on which they are led. Men do not feel degraded by any amount of hardship, by going for months on short rations or lying in frost without tents; but they do feel degraded when they are used as weapons of offence, as if they had no intelligence to appreciate a worthy aim, no power of sympathising with a great design, no need of an interest in life and a worthy object on which to spend it, no share in the common cause. Yet such is the life with which, apart from Christ, we must perforce be content, doing the tasks appointed us with no sustaining consciousness that our work is part of a great whole working out the purposes of the Highest. Even such a spirit as Carlyle is driven to say: "Here on earth we are soldiers, fighting in a foreign land, that understand not the plan of campaign and have no need to understand it, seeing what is at our hand to be done,"—excellent counsel for slaves, but not descriptive of the life we are meant for, nor of the life our Lord would be content to give us.

To give us true freedom, to make this life a thing we choose with the clearest perception of its uses and with the utmost ardour, our Lord makes known to us all that He heard of the Father. What He had heard of the Father, all that the Spirit of the Father had taught Him of the need of human effort and of human righteousness, all that as He grew up to manhood He recognised of the deep-seated woes of humanity, and all that He was prompted to do for the relief of these woes, He made known to His disciples. The irresistible call to self-sacrifice and labour for the relief of men which He heard and obeyed, He made known and He makes known to all who follow Him. He did not allot clearly defined tasks to His followers; He did not treat them as slaves, appointing one to this and another to that: he showed them His own aim and His own motive, and left them as His friends to be attracted by the aim that had drawn Him, and to be ever animated with the motive that sufficed for Him. What had made His life so glorious, so full of joy, so rich in constant reward, He knew would fill their lives also; and He leaves them free to choose it for themselves, to stand before life as independent, unfettered, undriven men, and choose without compulsion what their own deepest convictions prompted them to choose. The "friend" is not compelled blindly to go through with a task whose result he does not understand or does not sympathise with; the friend is invited to share in a work in which he has a direct personal interest and to which he can give himself cordially. All life should be the forwarding of purposes we approve, the bringing about of ends we earnestly desire: all life, if we are free men, must be matter of choice, not of compulsion. And therefore Christ, having heard of the Father that which made Him feel straitened until the great aim of His life could be accomplished, which made Him press forward through life attracted and impelled by the consciousness of its infinite value as achieving endless good, imparts to us what

moved and animated Him, that we may freely choose as He chose and enter into the joy of our Lord.

This, then, is the point of this great utterance; Jesus takes our lives up into partnership with His own. He sets before us the same views and hopes which animated Himself, and gives us a prospect of being useful to Him and in His work. If we engage in the work of life with a dull and heartless feeling of its weariness, or merely for the sake of gaining a livelihood, if we are not drawn to labour by the prospect of result, then we have scarcely entered into the condition our Lord opens to us. It is for the merest slaves to view their labour with indifference or repugnance. Out of this state our Lord calls us, by making known to us what the Father made known to Him, by giving us the whole means of a free, rational, and fruitful life. He gives us the fullest satisfaction moral beings can have, because He fills our life with intelligent purpose. He lifts us into a position in which we see that we are not the slaves of fate or of this world, but that *all things are ours*, that we, through and with Him, are masters of the position, and that so far from thinking it almost a hardship to have been born into so melancholy and hopeless a world, we have really the best reason and the highest possible object for living. He comes among us and says, "Let us all work together. Something can be made of this world. Let us with heart and hope strive to make of it something worthy. Let unity of aim and of work bind us together." This is indeed to redeem life from its vanity.

He says this, and lest any should think, "This is fantastic; how can such an one as I am forward the work of Christ? It is enough if I get from Him salvation for myself," He goes on to say, "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain. It was." He says, "precisely in view of the eternal results of your work that I selected you and called you to follow Me." It was true then, and it is true now, that the initiative in our fellowship with Christ is with Him. So far as the first disciples were concerned Jesus might have spent His life making ploughs and cottage furniture. No one discovered Him. Neither does any one now discover Him. It is He who comes and summons us to follow and to serve Him. He does so because He sees that there is that which we can do which no one else can: relationships we hold, opportunities we possess, capacities for just this or that, which are our special property into which no other can possibly step, and which, if we do not use them, cannot otherwise be used.

Does He, then, point out to us with unmistakable exactness what we are to do, and how we are to do it? Does He lay down for us a code of rules so multifarious and significant that we cannot mistake the precise piece of work He requires from us? He does not. He has but one sole commandment, and this is no commandment, because we cannot keep it on compulsion, but only at the prompting of our own inward spirit: He bids us love one another. He comes back and back to this with significant persistence, and declines to utter one other commandment. In love alone is sufficient wisdom, sufficient motive, and sufficient reward for human life. It alone has adequate wisdom for all situations, new resource



for every fresh need, adaptability to all emergencies, an inexhaustible fertility and competency; it alone can bring the capability of each to the service of all. Without love we beat the air.

That love is our true life is shown further by this—that it is its own reward. When a man's life is in any intelligible sense proceeding from love, when this is his chief motive, he is content with living, and looks for no reward. His joy is already full; he does not ask, What shall I be the better of thus sacrificing myself? what shall I gain by all this regulation of my life? what good return in the future shall I have for all I am losing now? He cannot ask these questions, if the motive of his self-sacrificing life be love; just as little as the husband could ask what reward he should have for loving his wife. A man would be astounded and would scarcely know what you meant if you asked him what he expected to get by loving his children or his parents or his friends. Get? Why he does not expect to get anything; he does not love for an object: he loves because he cannot help it; and the chief joy of his life is in these unrewarded affections. He no longer looks forward and thinks of a fulness of life that is to be; he already lives and is satisfied with the life he has. His happiness is present; his reward is that he may be allowed to express his love, to feed it, to gratify it by giving and labouring and sacrificing. In a word, he finds in love eternal life—life that is full of joy, that kindles and enlivens his whole nature, that carries him out of himself and makes him capable of all good.

This truth, then, that whatever a man does from love is its own reward, is the solution of the question whether virtue is its own reward. Virtue is its own reward when it is inspired by love. Life is its own reward when love is the principle of it. We know that we should always be happy were we always loving. We know that we should never weary of living nor turn with distaste from our work were all our work only the expression of our love, of our deep, true, and well-directed regard for the good of others. It is when we disregard our Lord's one commandment and try some other kind of virtuous living that joy departs from our life, and we begin to hope for some future reward which may compensate for the dulness of the present—as if a change of time could change the essential conditions of life and happiness. If we are not joyful now, if life is dreary and dull and pointless to us, so that we crave the excitement of a speculative business, or of boisterous social meetings, or of individual success and applause, then it should be quite plain to us that as yet we have not found life, and have not the capacity for eternal life quickened in us. If we are able to love one human being in some sort as Christ loved us—that is to say, if our affection is so fixed upon any one that we feel we could give our life for that person—let us thank God for this; for this love of ours gives us the key to human life, and will better instruct us in what is most essential to know, and lead us on to what is most essential to be and to do than any one can teach us. It is profoundly and widely true, as John says, that every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. If we love one human being, we at least know that a life in which love is the main element needs no reward and looks for none. We see that God looks for no

reward, but is eternally blessed because simply God is eternally love. Life eternal must be a life of love, of delight in our fellows, of rejoicing in their good and seeking to increase their happiness.

Sometimes, however, we find ourselves grieving at the prosperity of the wicked: we think that they should be unhappy, and yet they seem more satisfied than ourselves. They pay no regard whatever to the law of life laid down by our Lord; they never dream of living for others; they have never once proposed to themselves to consider whether His great law, that a man must lose his life if he is to have it eternally, has any application to them; and yet they seem to enjoy life as much as anybody can. Take a man who has a good constitution, and who is in easy circumstances, and who has a good and pure nature; you will often see such a man living with no regard to the Christian rule, and yet enjoying life thoroughly to the very end. And of course it is just such a spectacle, repeated everywhere throughout society, that influences men's minds and tempts all of us to believe that such a life is best after all, and that selfishness as well as unselfishness can be happy; or at all events that we can have as much happiness as our own disposition is capable of by a self-seeking life. Now, when we are in a mood to compare our own happiness with that of other men, our own happiness must obviously be at a low ebb; but when we resent the prosperity of the wicked, we should remember that, though they may flourish like the green bay tree, their fruit does not remain: living for themselves, their fruit departs with themselves, their good is interred with their bones. But it is also to be considered that we should never allow ourselves to get the length of putting this question or of comparing our happiness with that of others. For we can only do so when we are ourselves disappointed and discontented and have missed the joy of life; and this again can be only when we have ceased to live lovingly for others.

But this one essential of Christian service and human freedom—how are we to attain it? Is it not the one thing which seems obstinately to stand beyond our grasp? For the human heart has laws of its own, and cannot love to order or admire because it ought. But Christ brings, in Himself, the fountain out of which our hearts can be supplied, the fire which kindles all who approach it. No one can receive His love without sharing it. No one can dwell upon Christ's love for him and treasure it as his true and central possession without finding his own heart enlarged and softened. Until our own heart is flooded with the great and regenerating love of Christ, we strive in vain to love our fellows. It is when we fully admit it that it overflows through our own satisfied and quickened affections to others.

And perhaps we do well not too curiously to question and finger our love, making sure only that we are keeping ourselves in Christ's fellowship and seeking to do His will. Affection, indeed, induces companionship, but also companionship produces affection, and the honest and hopeful endeavour to serve Christ loyally will have its reward in a deepening devotion. It is not the recruit, but the veteran, whose heart is wholly his chief's. And he who has long and faithfully served Christ will not need to ask where his heart is. We hate those whom we



have injured, and we love those whom we have served; and if by long service we can win our way to an intimacy with Christ which no longer needs to question itself or test its soundness, in that service we may most joyfully engage. For what can be a happier consummation than to find ourselves finally overcome by the love of Christ, drawn with all the force of a Divine attraction, convinced that here is our rest, and that this is at once our motive and our reward?

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### *THE SPIRIT CHRIST'S WITNESS.*

JOHN XV. 18-xvi. 15.

HAVING shown His disciples that by them only can His purposes on earth be fulfilled, and that He will fit them for all work that may be required of them, the Lord now adds that their task will be full of hazard and hardship: "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he offereth service unto God." This was but a dreary prospect, and one to make each Apostle hesitate, and in the privacy of his own thoughts consider whether he should face a life so devoid of all that men naturally crave. To live for great ends is no doubt animating, but to be compelled in doing so to abandon all expectation of recognition, and to lay one's account for abuse, poverty, persecution, calls for some heroism in him that undertakes such a life. He forewarns them of this persecution, that when it comes they may not be taken aback and fancy that things are not falling out with them as their Lord anticipated. And He offers them two strong consolations which might uphold and animate them under all they should be called upon to suffer.

I. "If the world hateth you, ye know that it hath hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." Persecution is thus turned into a joy, because it is the testimony paid by the world to the disciples' identity with Christ. The love of the world would be a sure evidence of their unfaithfulness to Christ and of their entire lack of resemblance to Him; but its hate was the tribute it would pay to their likeness to Him and successful promotion of His cause. They might well question their loyalty to Christ if the world which had slain Him fawned upon them. The Christian may conclude he is reckoned a helpless and harmless foe if he suffers no persecution, if in no company he is frowned upon or felt to be uncongenial, if he is treated by the world as if its aims were his aims and its spirit his spirit. No faithful follower of Christ who mixes with society can escape every form of persecution. It is the seal which the world puts on the choice of Christ. It is proof that a man's attachment to Christ and endeavour to forward His purposes have been recognised by the world. Persecution, then, should be welcome as the world's testimony to the disciple's identity with Christ.

No idea had fixed itself more deeply in the mind of John than this of the identity of Christ and His people. As he brooded upon the life of Christ and sought to penetrate to the hidden

meanings of all that appeared on the surface, he came to see that the unbelief and hatred with which He was met was the necessary result of goodness presented to worldliness and selfishness. And as time went on he saw that the experience of Christ was exceptional only in degree; that His experience was and would be repeated in every one who sought to live in His Spirit and to do His will. The future of the Church accordingly presented itself to him as a history of conflict, of extreme cruelty on the part of the world and quiet conquering endurance on the part of Christ's people. And it was this which he embodied in the Book of Revelation. This Book he wrote as a kind of detailed commentary on the passage before us, and in it he intended to depict the sufferings and final conquest of the Church. The one book is a reflex and supplement to the other; and as in the Gospel he had shown the unbelief and cruelty of the world against Christ, so in the Revelation he shows in a series of strongly coloured pictures how the Church of Christ would pass through the same experience, would be persecuted as Christ was persecuted, but would ultimately conquer. Both books are wrought out with extreme care and finished to the minutest detail, and both deal with the cardinal matters of human history—sin, righteousness, and the final result of their conflict. Underneath all that appears on the surface in the life of the individual and in the history of the race there are just these abiding elements—sin and righteousness. It is the moral value of things which in the long run proves of consequence, the moral element which ultimately determines all else.

II. The second consolation and encouragement the Lord gave them was that they would receive the aid of a powerful champion—the Paraclete, the one effectual, sufficient Helper. "When the Paraclete is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness of Me: and ye also bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning." Inevitably the disciples would argue that, if the words and works of Jesus Himself had not broken down the unbelief of the world, it was not likely that anything which they could say or do would have that effect. If the impressive presence of Christ Himself had not attracted and convinced all men, how was it possible that mere telling about what He had said and done and been would convince them? And He has just been reminding them how little effect His own words and works had had. "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: . . . if I had not done among them the works which none other did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father." What power, then, could break down this obstinate unbelief?

Our Lord assures them that together with their witness-bearing there will be an all-powerful witness—"the Spirit of truth"; one who could find access to the hearts and minds to which they addressed themselves and carry truth home to conviction. It was on this account that it was "expedient" that their Lord should depart, and that His visible presence should be superseded by the presence of the Spirit. It was necessary that His death, resurrection, and ascension to the right hand of the Father should take place, in order that His supremacy might be secured.



And in order that He might be everywhere and inwardly present with men, it was necessary that He should be visible nowhere on earth. The inward spiritual presence depended on the bodily absence.

Before passing to the specific contents of the Spirit's testimony, as stated in vv. 8-11, it is necessary to gather up what our Lord indicates regarding the Spirit Himself and His function in the Christian dispensation. First, the Spirit here spoken of is a personal existence. Throughout all that our Lord says in this last conversation regarding the Spirit personal epithets are applied to Him, and the actions ascribed to Him are personal actions. He is to be the substitute of the most marked and influential Personality with whom the disciples had ever been brought in contact. He is to supply His vacated place. He is to be to the disciples as friendly and staunch an ally and a more constantly present and efficient teacher than Christ Himself. What as yet was not in their minds He was to impart to them; and He was to mediate and maintain communication between the absent Lord and themselves. Was it possible that the disciples should think of the Spirit otherwise than as a conscious and energetic Person when they heard Him spoken of in such words as these: "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He shall guide you into all the truth: for He shall not speak from Himself; but what things soever He shall hear, these shall He speak: and He shall declare unto you the things that are to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall take of Mine, and shall declare it unto you"? From these words it would seem as if the disciples were justified in expecting the presence and aid of One who was very closely related to their Lord, but yet distinct from Him, who could understand their state of mind and adapt Himself to them, who is not identical with the Master they are losing, and yet comes into still closer contact with them. What underlies this, and what is the very nature of the Spirit and His relation to the Father and the Son, we do not know; but our Lord chose these expressions which to our thought involve personality because this is the truest and safest form under which we can now conceive of the Spirit.

The function for the discharge of which this Spirit is necessary is the "glorification" of Christ. Without Him the manifestation of Christ will be lost. He is needed to secure that the world be brought into contact with Christ, and that men recognise and use Him. This is the most general and comprehensive aspect of the Spirit's work: "He shall glorify Me" (ver. 14). In making this announcement our Lord assumes that position of commanding importance with which this Gospel has made us familiar. The Divine Spirit is to be sent forth, and the direct object of His mission is the glorifying of Christ. The meaning of Christ's manifestation is the essential thing for men to understand. In manifesting Himself He has revealed the Father. He has in His own person shown what a Divine nature is; and therefore in order to His glorification all that is required is that light be shed upon what He has done and been, and that the eyes of men be opened to see Him and His work. The recognition of Christ and of God in Him is the blessedness of the human race; and to bring this about is the function of the Spirit. As Jesus Himself had constantly pre-

sented Himself as the revealer of the Father and as speaking His words, so, in "a rivalry of Divine humility," the Spirit glorifies the Son and speaks "what He shall hear."

To discharge this function a twofold ministry is undertaken by the Spirit: He must enlighten the Apostles, and He must convince the world.

He must enlighten the Apostles. From the nature of the case much had to be left unsaid by Christ. But this would not prevent the Apostles from understanding what Christ had done, and what applications His work had to themselves and their fellow-men. "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all the truth." A great untravelled country lay before them. Their Master had led them across its border, and set their faces in the right direction; but who was to find a way for them through all its intricacies and perplexities? The Spirit of truth, He who is Himself perfect knowledge and absolute light, "will guide you"; He will go before you and show you your way.\* There may be no sudden impartation of truth, no lifting of the mist that hangs on the horizon, no consciousness that now you have mastered all difficulties and can see your way to the end; there may be no violation of the natural and difficult processes by which men arrive at truth; the road may be slow, and sometimes there may even be an appearance of ignominious defeat by those who use swifter but more precarious means of advance; much will depend on your own patience and wakefulness and docility; but if you admit the Spirit, He will guide you into all the truth.

This promise does not involve that the Apostles, and through them all disciples, should know everything. "All the truth" is relative to the subject taught. All that they need to know regarding Christ and His work for them they will learn. All that is needed to glorify Christ, to enable men to recognise Him as the manifestation of God, will be imparted. To the truth which the Apostles learn, therefore, nothing need be added. Nothing essential has been added. Time has now been given to test this promise, and what time has shown is this—that while libraries have been written on what the Apostles thought and taught, their teaching remains as the sufficient guide into all the truth regarding Christ. Even in non-essentials it is marvellous how little has been added. Many corrections of misapprehensions of their meaning have been required, much laborious inquiry to ascertain precisely what they meant, much elaborate inference and many buildings upon their foundations; but in their teaching there remain a freshness and a living force which survive all else that has been written upon Christ and His religion.

This instruction of the Apostles by the Spirit was to recall to their minds what Christ Himself had said, and was also to show them things to come. The changed point of view introduced by the dispensation of the Spirit and the abolition of earthly hopes would cause many of the sayings of Jesus which they had disregarded and considered unintelligible to spring into high relief and ray out significance, while the future also would shape itself quite differently in their conception. And the Teacher who should superin-

\* ὁδηγήσει.



tend and inspire this altered attitude of mind is the Spirit.\*

Not only must the Spirit enlighten the Apostles; He must also convince the world. "He shall bear witness of Me," and by His witness-bearing the testimony of the Apostles would become efficacious. They had a natural fitness to witness about Christ, "because they had been with Him from the beginning." No more trustworthy witnesses regarding what Christ had said or done or been could be called than those men with whom He had lived on terms of intimacy. No men could more certainly testify to the identity of the risen Lord. But the significance of the facts they spoke of could best be taught by the Spirit. The very fact of the Spirit's presence was the greatest evidence that the Lord had risen and was using "all power in heaven" in behalf of men. And possibly it was to this Peter referred when he said: "We are His Witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him." Certainly the gifts of the Holy Ghost, the power to speak with tongues or to work miracles of healing, were accepted by the primitive Church as a seal of the Apostolic word and as the appropriate evidence of the power of the risen Christ.

But it is apparent from our Lord's description of the subject-matter of the Spirit's witness that here He has especially in view the function of the Spirit as an inward teacher and strengthener of the moral powers. He is the fellow-witness of the Apostles, mainly and permanently, by enlightening men in the significance of the facts reported by them, and by opening the heart and conscience to their influence.

The subject-matter of the Spirit's testimony is threefold: "He will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment."

I. He should convict the world of sin. No conviction cuts so deeply and produces results of such magnitude as the conviction of sin. It is like subsoil ploughing: it turns up soil that nothing else has got down to. It alters entirely a man's attitude towards life. He cannot know himself a sinner and be satisfied with that condition. This awakening is like the waking of one who has been buried in a trance, who wakes to find himself bound round with grave-clothes, hemmed in with all the insignia of corruption, terror and revulsion distracting and overwhelming his soul. In spirit he has been far away, weaving perhaps a paradise out of his fancies, peopling it with choice and happy society, and living through scenes of gorgeous beauty and comfort in fulness of interest and life and felicity; but suddenly comes the waking, a few brief moments of painful struggle and the dream gives place to the reality, and then comes the certain accumulation of misery till the spirit breaks beneath its fear. So does the strongest heart groan and break when it wakes to the full reality of sin, when the Spirit of Christ takes the veil from a man's eyes and gives him to see what this world is and what he has been in it, when the shadows that have occupied him flee away and the naked inevitable reality confronts him.

Nothing is more overwhelming than this conviction, but nothing is more hopeful. Given a

man who is alive to the evil of sin and who begins to understand his errors, and you know some good will come of that. Given a man who sees the importance of being in accord with perfect goodness and who feels the degradation of sin, and you have the germ of all good in that man. But how were the Apostles to produce this? how were they to dispel those mists which blurred the clear outline of good and evil, to bring to the self-righteous Pharisee and the indifferent and worldly Sadducee a sense of their own sin? What instrument is there which can introduce to every human heart, howsoever armoured and fenced round, this healthy revolution? Looking at men as they actually are, and considering how many forces are banded together to exclude the knowledge of sin, how worldly interest demands that no brand shall be affixed to this and that action, how the customs we are brought up in require us to take a lenient view of this and that immorality, how we deceive ourselves by sacrificing sins we do not care for in order to retain sins that are in our blood, how the resistance of certain sins makes us a prey to self-righteousness and delusion—considering what we have learnt of the placidity with which men content themselves with a life they know is not the highest, does there seem to be any instrument by which a true and humbling sense of sin can be introduced to the mind?

Christ, knowing that men were about to put Him to death because He had tried to convict them of sin, confidently predicts that His servants would by His Spirit's aid convince the world of sin and of this in particular—that they had not believed in Him. That very death which chiefly exhibits human sin has, in fact, become the chief instrument in making men understand and hate sin. There is no consideration from which the deceitfulness of sin will not escape, nor any fear which the recklessness of sin will not brave, nor any authority which self-will cannot override but only this: Christ has died for me, to save me from my sin, and I am sinning still, not regarding His blood, not meeting His purpose. It was when the greatness and the goodness of Christ were together let in to Peter's mind that he fell on his face before Him, saying, "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man." And the experience of thousands is recorded in that more recent confession:

"In evil long I took delight, unawed by shame or fear,  
Till a new object struck my sight and stopped my wild career.  
I saw One hanging on a tree in agonies and blood,  
Who fixed His languid eyes on me as near His cross I stood.  
Sure never till my latest breath can I forget that look;  
It seemed to charge me with His death, though not a word He spoke."

Of other convictions we may get rid; the consequences of sin we may brave, or we may disbelieve that in our case sin will produce any very disastrous fruits; but in the death of Christ we see, not what sin may possibly do in the future, but what it actually has done in the past. In presence of the death of Christ we cannot any longer make a mock of sin or think lightly of it, as if it were on our own responsibility and at our own risk we sinned.

But not only does the death of Christ exhibit the intricate connections of our sin with other persons and the grievous consequence of sin in

\* Godet says: "The saying xiv. 26 gives the formula of the inspiration of our Gospels; ver. 13 gives that of the inspiration of the Epistles and the Apocalypse."



general, but also it exhibits the enormity of this particular sin of rejecting Christ. "He will convince the world of sin, *because they believe not on Me.*" It was this sin in point of fact which cut to the heart the crowd at Jerusalem first addressed by Peter. Peter had nothing to say of their looseness of life, of their worldliness, of their covetousness: he did not go into particulars of conduct calculated to bring a blush to their cheeks; he took up but one point, and by a few convincing remarks showed them the enormity of crucifying the Lord of glory. The lips which a few days before had cried out "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" now cried, Men and brethren, what shall we do, how escape from the crushing condemnation of mistaking God's image for a criminal? In that hour Christ's words were fulfilled; they were convinced of sin because they believed not on Him.

This is ever the damning sin—to be in presence of goodness and not to love it, to see Christ and to see Him with unmoved and unloving hearts, to hear His call without response, to recognise the beauty of holiness and yet turn away to lust and self and the world. This is the condemnation—that light is come into the world and we have loved darkness rather than the light. "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin. He that hateth Me, hateth My Father also." To turn away from Christ is to turn away from absolute goodness. It is to show that however much we may relish certain virtues and approve particular forms of goodness, goodness absolute and complete does not attract us.

II. The conviction of righteousness is the complement, the other half, of the conviction of sin. In the shame of guilt there is the germ of the conviction of righteousness. The sense of guilt is but the acknowledgment that we ought to be righteous. No guilt attaches to the incapable. The sting of guilt is poisoned with the knowledge that we were capable of better things. Conscience exclaims against all excuses that would lull us into the idea that sin is insuperable, and that there is nothing better for us than a moderately sinful life. When conscience ceases to condemn, hope dies. A mist rises from sin that obscures the clear outline between its own domain and that of righteousness, like the mist that rises from the sea and mingles shore and water in one undefined cloud. But let it rise off the one and the other is at once distinctly marked out; and so in the conviction of sin there is already involved the conviction of righteousness. The blush of shame that suffuses the face of the sinner as the mist-dispelling Sun of righteousness arises upon him is the morning flush and promise of an everlasting day of righteous living.

For each of us it is of the utmost importance to have a fixed and intelligent persuasion that righteousness is what we are made for. The righteous Lord loveth righteousness and made us in His image to widen the joy of rational creatures. He waits for righteousness and cannot accept sin as an equally grateful fruit of men's lives. And though in the main perhaps our faces are turned towards righteousness, and we are on the whole dissatisfied and ashamed of sin, yet the conviction of righteousness has much to struggle against in us all. Sin, we unconsciously plead, is so finely interwoven with all the ways of the world that it is impossible to live wholly free from it. As well cast a sponge

into the water and command that it absorb none nor sink as put me in the world and command that I do not admit its influences or sink to its level. It presses in on me through all my instincts and appetites and hopes and fears; it washes ceaselessly at the gateways of my senses, so that one unguarded moment and the torrent bursts in on me and pours over my wasted bulwarks, resolves, high aims, and whatever else. It is surely not now and here that I am expected to do more than learn the rudiments of righteous living and make small experiments in it; endeavours will surely stand for accomplishment, and pious purposes in place of heroic action and positive righteousness. Men take sin for granted and lay their account for it. Will not God also, who remembers our frailty, consider the circumstances and count sin a matter of course? Such thoughts haunt and weaken us; but every man whose heart is touched by the Spirit of God clings to this as his hopeful prayer: "Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God: Thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness."

But, after all, it is by fact men are convinced; and were there no facts to appeal to in this matter conviction could not be attained. It does seem that we are made for righteousness, but sin is in this world so universal that there must surely be some way of accounting for it which shall also excuse it. Had righteousness been to be our life, surely some few would have attained it. There must be some necessity of sin, some impossibility of attaining perfect righteousness, and therefore we need not seek it. Here comes in the proof our Lord speaks of: "The Spirit will convince of righteousness, because I go to the Father." Righteousness has been attained. There has lived One, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, tempted in all points like as we are, open to the same ambitious views of life, growing up with the same appetites and as sensitive to bodily pleasure and bodily pain, feeling as keenly the neglect and hatred of men, and from the very size of His nature and width of His sympathy tempted in a thousand ways we are safe from, and yet in no instance confounding right and wrong, in no instance falling from perfect harmony with the Divine will to self-will and self-seeking; never deferring the commandments of God to some other sphere or waiting for holier times; never forgetting and never renouncing the purpose of God in His life; but at all times, in weariness and lassitude, in personal danger and in domestic comfort, putting Himself as a perfect instrument into God's hand, ready at all cost to Himself to do the Father's will. Here was One who not only recognised that men are made to work together with God, but who actually did so work; who not only approved, as we all approve, of a life of holiness and sacrifice, but actually lived it; who did not think the trial too great, the privation and risk too dreadful, the self-effacement too humbling; but who met life with all it brings to all of us—its conflict, its interests, its opportunities, its allurements, its snares, its hazards. But while out of this material we fail to make a perfect life, He by His integrity of purpose and devotedness and love of good fashioned a perfect life. Thus He simply by living accomplished what the law with its commands and threats had not accomplished: He condemned sin in the flesh.



But it was open to those whom the Apostles addressed to deny that Jesus had thus lived; and therefore the conviction of righteousness is completed by the evidence of the resurrection and ascension of Christ. "Of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more." Without holiness no man shall see God. It was this that the Apostles appealed to when first moved to address their fellow-men and proclaim Christ as the Saviour. It was to His resurrection they confidently appealed as evidence of the truth of His claim to have been sent of God. The Jews had put Him to death as a deceiver; but God proclaimed His righteousness by raising Him from the dead. "Ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you, and killed the Prince of life whom God hath raised from the dead, whereof we are witnesses."

Probably, however, another idea underlies the words "because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more." So long as Christ was on earth the Jews believed that Jesus and His followers were plotting a revolution: when He was removed beyond sight such a suspicion became ludicrous. But when His disciples could no longer see Him, they continued to serve Him and to strive with greater zeal than ever to promote His cause. Slowly then it dawned on men's minds that righteousness was what Christ and His Apostles alone desired and sought to establish on earth. This new spectacle of men devoting their lives to the advancement of righteousness, and confident they could establish a kingdom of righteousness and actually establishing it—this spectacle penetrated men's minds, and gave them a new sense of the value of righteousness, and quite a new conviction of the possibility of attaining it.

III. The third conviction by which the Apostles were to prevail in their preaching of Christ was the conviction "of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." Men were to be persuaded that a distinction is made between sin and righteousness, that in no case can sin pass for righteousness and righteousness for sin. The world that has worldly ends in view and works towards them by appropriate means, disregarding moral distinctions, will be convicted of enormous error. The Spirit of truth will work in men's minds the conviction that all and every sin is mistake and productive of nothing good, and can in no instance accomplish what righteousness would have accomplished. Men will find, when truth shines in their spirit, that they have not to await a great day of judgment in the end, when the good results of sin shall be reversed and reward allotted to those who have done righteously, but that judgment is a constant and universal element in God's government and to be found everywhere throughout it, distinguishing between sin and righteousness in every present instance, and never for one moment allowing to sin the value or the results which only righteousness has. In the minds of men who have been using the world's unrighteous methods and living for the world's selfish ends, the conviction is to be wrought that no good can come of all that—that sin is sin and not valid for any good purpose. Men are to recognise that a distinction is made between human actions, and that condemnation is pronounced on all that are sinful.

And this conviction is to be wrought in the light of the fact that in Christ's victory the prince of this world is judged. The powers by which the world is actually led are seen to be productive of evil, and not the powers by which men can permanently be led or should at any time have been led. The prince of this world was judged by Christ's refusal throughout His life to be in anything guided by him. The motives by which the world is led were not Christ's motives.

But it is in the death of Christ the prince of this world was especially judged. The death was brought about by the world's opposition to unworldliness. Had the world been seeking spiritual beauty and prosperity, Christ would not have been crucified. He was crucified because the world was seeking material gain and worldly glory, and was thereby blinded to the highest form of goodness. And unquestionably the very fact that worldliness led to this treatment of Christ is its most decided condemnation. We cannot think highly of principles and dispositions which so blind men to the highest form of human goodness and lead them to actions so unreasonable and wicked. As an individual will often commit one action which illustrates his whole character, and flashes sudden light into the hidden parts of it, and discloses its capabilities and possible results, so the world has in this one act shown what worldliness essentially is and at all times is capable of. No stronger condemnation of the influences which move worldly men can be found than the crucifixion of Christ.

But, besides, the death of Christ exhibits in so touching a form the largeness and power of spiritual beauty, and brings so vividly home to the heart the charm of holiness and love, that here more than anywhere else do men learn to esteem beauty of character and holiness and love more than all the world can yield them. We feel that to be wholly out of sympathy with the qualities and ideas manifested in the Cross would be a pitiable condition. We adopt as our ideal the kind of glory there revealed, and in our hearts condemn the opposed style of conduct that the world leads to. As we open our understanding and conscience to the meaning of Christ's love and sacrifice and devotedness to God's will, the prince of this world is judged and condemned within us. We feel that to yield to the powers that move and guide the world is impossible for us, and that we must give ourselves to this Prince of holiness and spiritual glory.

In point of fact the world is judged. To adhere to worldly motives and ways and ambitions is to cling to a sinking ship, to throw ourselves away on a justly doomed cause. The world may trick itself out in what delusive splendours it may; it is judged all the same, and men who are deluded by it and still in one way or other acknowledge the prince of this world destroy themselves and lose the future.

Such was the promise of Christ to His disciples. Is it fulfilled in us? We may have witnessed in others the entrance and operation of convictions which to all appearance correspond with those here described. We may even have been instrumental in producing these convictions. But a lens of ice will act as a burning-glass, and itself unmelted will fire the tinder to which it transmits the rays. And perhaps we may be



able to say with much greater confidence that we have done good than that we are good. Convinced of sin we may be, and convinced of righteousness we may be—so far at least as to feel most keenly that the distinction between sin and righteousness is real, wide, and of eternal consequence—but is the prince of this world judged? has the power that claims us as the servants of sin and mocks our strivings after righteousness been, so far as we can judge from our own experience, defeated? For this is the final test of religion, of our faith in Christ, of the truth of His words and the efficacy of His work. Does He accomplish in me what He promised?

Now, when we begin to doubt the efficacy of the Christian method on account of its apparent failure in our own case, when we see quite clearly how it ought to work, and as clearly that it has not worked, when this and that turns up in our life and proves beyond controversy that we are ruled by much the same motives and desires as the world at large, two subjects of reflection present themselves. First, have we remembered the word of Christ, "The servant is not greater than his Lord"? Are we so anxious to be His servants that we would willingly sacrifice whatever stood in the way of our serving Him? Are we content to be as He was in the world?

There are always many in the Christian Church who are, first, men of the world, and, secondly, varnished with Christianity; who do not seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; who do not yet understand that the *whole* of life must be consecrated to Christ and spring from His will, and who therefore without compunction do make themselves greater in every worldly respect than their professed Lord. There are also many in the Christian Church at all times who decline to make more of this world than Christ Himself did, and whose constant study it is to put all they have at His disposal. Now, we cannot too seriously inquire to which of these classes we belong. Are we making a *bona-fide* thing of our attachment to Christ? Do we feel it in every part of our life? Do we strive, not to minimise our service and His claims, but to be wholly His? Have His words, "The servant is not greater than his Lord," any meaning to us at all? Is His service truly the main thing we seek in life? I say we should seriously inquire if this is so; for not hereafter, but now, are we finally determining our relation to all things by our relation to Christ.

But, secondly, we must beware of disheartening ourselves by hastily concluding that in our case Christ's grace has failed. If we may accept the Book of Revelation as a true picture, not merely of the conflict of the Church, but also of the conflict of the individual, then only in the end can we look for quiet and achieved victory—only in the closing chapters does conflict cease and victory seem no more doubtful. If it is to be so with us, the fact of our losing some of the battles must not discourage us from continuing the campaign. Nothing is more painful and humbling than to find ourselves falling into unmistakable sin after much concernment with Christ and His grace; but the very resentment we feel and the deep and bitter humiliation must be used as incentive to further effort, and must not be allowed to sound permanent defeat and surrender to sin.

## CHAPTER XV.

## LAST WORDS.

JOHN xvi. 16-33.

IN the intercourse of Jesus with His disciples He at all times showed one of the most delightful qualities of a friend—a quick and perfect apprehension of what was passing in their mind. They did not require to bring their mental condition before Him by laboured explanations. He knew what was in man, and He especially knew what was in them. He could forecast the precise impression which His announcements would make upon them, the doubts and the expectations they would give rise to. Sometimes they were surprised at this insight, always they profited by it. In fact, on more occasions than one this insight convinced them that Jesus had this clear knowledge of men given to Him that He might effectually deal with all men. It seemed to them, as of course it is, one of the essential equipments of One who is to be a real centre for the whole race and to bring help to each and all men. How could a person who was deficient in this universal sympathy and practical understanding of the very thoughts of each of us offer himself as our helper? There is therefore evidence in the life of Jesus that He was never nonplussed, never at a loss to understand the kind of man He had to do with. There is evidence of this, and it would seem that we all receive this evidence; for are we not conscious that our spiritual condition is understood, our thoughts traced, our difficulties sympathised with? We may feel very unlike many prominent Christians; we may have no sympathy with a great deal that passes for Christian sentiment; but Christ's sympathy is universal, and nothing human comes wrong to Him. Begin with Him as you are, without professing to be, though hoping to be, different from what you are, and by the growth of your own spirit in the sunshine of His presence and under the guidance of His intelligent sympathy your doubts will pass away, your ungodliness be renounced. He is offered for your help as the essential condition of your progress and your growth.

Seeing the perplexity which certain of His expressions had created in the minds of His disciples, He proceeds to remove it. They had great need of hopefulness and courage, and He sought to inspire them with these qualities. They were on the edge of a most bitter experience, and it was of untold consequence that they should be upheld in it. He does not hide from them the coming distress, but he reminds them that very commonly pain and anxiety accompany the birth-throes of a new life; and if they found themselves shortly in depression and grief which seemed inconsolable, they were to believe that this was the path to a new and higher phase of existence and to a joy that would be lasting. Your grief, He says, will shortly end: your joy never. Your grief will soon be taken away: your joy no one shall take away. When Christ rose again, the disciples remembered and understood these words; and a few chapters further on we find John returning upon the word and saying, "When they saw the Lord, they were glad,"—they had this *joy*. It was a joy to them, because love for Christ and hope in Him were



their dominant feelings. They had the joy of having their Friend again, of seeing Him victorious and proved to be all and more than they had believed. They had the first glowing visions of a new world for which the preparation was the life and resurrection of the Son of God. What were they not prepared to hope for as the result of the immeasurably great things they had themselves seen and known? It was a mere question now of Christ's will: of His power they were assured.

The resurrection of Christ was, however, meant to bring lasting joy, not to these men only, but to all. These greatest of all events, the descent to earth of the Son of God with all Divine power and love, and His resurrection as the conqueror of all that bars the path of men from a life of light and joy, became solid facts in this world's history, that all men might calculate their future by such a past, and might each for himself conclude that a future of which such events are the preparation must be great and happy indeed. Death, if not in all respects the most desolating, is the most certain of all human ills. Anguish and mourning it has brought and will bring to many human hearts. Do what we will we cannot save our friends from it; by us it is unconquerable. Yet it is in this most calamitous of human ills God has shown His nearness and His love. It is to the death of Christ men look to see the full brightness of God's fatherly love. It is this darkest point of human experience that God has chosen to irradiate with His absorbing glory. Death is at once our gravest fear and the spring of our hope; it cuts short human intercourse, but in the cross of Christ it gives us a never-failing, divinely loving Friend. The death of Christ is the great compensation of all the ill that death has brought into human life; and when we see death made the medium of God's clearest manifestation, we are almost grateful to it for affording material for an exhibition of God's love which transforms all our own life and all our own hopes.

Lasting joy is the condition in which God desires us to be, and He has given us cause of joy. In Christ's victory we see all that is needed to give us hopefulness about the future. Each man finds for himself assurance of God's interest in us and in our actual condition: assurance that whatever is needful to secure for us a happy eternity has been done; assurance that in a new heavens and a new earth we shall find lasting satisfaction. This true, permanent, all-embracing joy is open to all, and is actually enjoyed by those who have something of Christ's Spirit, whose chief desire is to see holiness prevail and to keep themselves and others in harmony with God. To such the accomplishment of God's will seems a certainty, and they have learned that the accomplishment of that will means good to them and to all who love God. The holiness and harmony with God that win this joy are parts of it. To be the friend of Christ, imbued with His views of life and of God, this from first to last is a thing of joy.

That which the disciples at length believed and felt to be the culmination of their faith was that Jesus had come forth from God. He Himself more fully expresses what He desired them to believe about Him in the words: "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again I leave the world, and go to the Father." No doubt there is a sense in which any man may

use this language of himself. We can all truthfully say we came forth from God and came into the world; and we pass out from the world and return to God. But that the disciples did not understand the words in this sense is obvious from the difficulty they found in reaching this belief. Had Jesus merely meant that it was true of Him, as of all others, that God is the great existence out of whom we spring and to whom we return, the disciples could have found no difficulty and the Jews must all have believed in Him. In some special and exceptional sense, then, He came forth from God. What, then, was this sense?

When Nicodemus came to Jesus, he addressed Him as a teacher "come from God," because, he added, "no man can do these miracles which Thou doest except God be with Him." In Nicodemus' lips, therefore, the words "a teacher come from God" meant a teacher with a Divine mission and credentials. In this sense all the prophets were teachers "come from God." And accordingly many careful readers of the Gospels believe that nothing more than this is meant by any of those expressions our Lord uses of Himself, as "sent from God," "come forth from God," and so on. The only distinction, it is supposed, between Christ and the other prophets is that He is more highly endowed, is commissioned and equipped as God's representative in a more perfect degree than Moses or Samuel or Elijah. He had their power to work miracles, their authority in teaching; but having a more important mission to accomplish, He had this power and authority more fully. Now, it is quite certain that some of the expressions which a careless reader might think conclusive in proof of Christ's divinity were not intended to express anything more than that He was God's commissioner. Indeed, it is remarkable how He Himself seems to wish men to believe this above all else—that He was sent by God. In reading the Gospel of John one is tempted to say that Jesus almost intentionally avoids affirming His divinity explicitly and directly when there seemed opportunity to do so. Certainly His main purpose was to reveal the Father, to bring men to understand that His teaching about God was true, and that He was sent by God.

There are, however, certain expressions which unquestionably affirm Christ's pre-existence, and convince us that before He appeared in this world He lived with God. And among these expressions the words He uses in this passage hold a place: "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father." These words, the disciples felt, lifted a veil from their eyes; they told Him at once that they found an explicitness in this utterance which had been a-wanting in others. And, indeed, nothing could be more explicit: the two parts of the sentence balance and interpret one another. "I leave the world, and go to the Father," interprets "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world." To say "I leave the world" is not the same as to say "I go to the Father": this second clause describes a state of existence which is entered upon when existence in this world is done. And to say "I came forth from the Father" is not the same as to say "I came into the world"; it describes a state of existence antecedent to that which began by coming into the world.



Thus the Apostles understood the words, and felt therefore that they had gained a new platform of faith. This they felt to be plain-speaking, meant to be understood. It so precisely met their craving and gave them the knowledge they sought, that they felt more than ever Christ's insight into their state of mind and His power to satisfy their minds. At length they are able to say with assurance that He has come forth from God. They are persuaded that behind what they see there is a higher nature, and that in Christ's presence they are in the presence of One whose origin is not of this world. It was this pre-existence of Christ with God which gave the disciples assurance regarding all He taught them. He spoke of what he had seen with the Father.

This belief, however, assured though it was, did not save them from a cowardly desertion of Him whom they believed to be God's representative on earth. They would, when confronted with the world's authorities and powers, abandon their Master to His fate, and "would leave Him alone." He had always, indeed, been alone. All men who wish to carry out some novel design or accomplish some extensive reform must be prepared to stand alone, to listen unmoved to criticism, to estimate at their real and very low value the prejudiced calumnies of those whose interests are opposed to their design. They must be prepared to live without reward and without sympathy, strong in the consciousness of their own rectitude and that God will prosper the right. Jesus enjoyed the affection of a considerable circle of friends; He was not without the comfort and strength which come of being believed in; but in regard to His purpose in life He was always alone. And yet, unless He won men over to His views, unless He made some as ardent as Himself regarding them, His work was lost. This was the special hardship of Christ's solitariness. Those whom He had gathered were to desert Him in the critical hour; but the sore part of this desertion was that they were to go "each to his own"—oblivious, that is to say, of the great cause in which they had embarked with Christ.

At all times this is the problem Christ has to solve: how to prevail upon men to look at life from His point of view, to forget their own things and combine with Him, to be as enamoured of His cause as He Himself is. He looks now upon us with our honest professions of faith and growing regard, and He says: Yes, you believe; but you scatter each to his own at the slightest breath of danger or temptation. This scattering, each to his own, is that which thwarts Christ's purpose and imperils His work. The world with its enterprises and its gains, its glitter and its glory, its sufficiency for the present life, comes in and tempts us; and apart from the common good, we have each our private schemes of advantage. And yet there is nothing more certain than that our ultimate advantage is measured by the measure in which we throw in our lot with Christ—by the measure in which we practically recognise that there is an object for which all men in common can work, and that to scatter "each to his own" is to resign the one best hope of life, the one satisfying and remunerative labour.

In revealing what sustained Himself Christ reveals the true stay of every soul of man. His trial was indeed severe. Brought without a single friend to the bar of unsympathetic and un-

scrupulous judges: the Friend of man, loving as no other has ever loved, and craving love and sympathy as no other has craved it, yet standing without one pitying eye, without one voice raised in His favour. Alone in a world He came to convince and to win; at the end of His life, spent in winning men, left without one to say He had not lived in vain; abandoned to enemies, to ignorant, cruel, profane men, He was dragged through the streets where He had spoken words of life and healed the sick, but no rescue was attempted. So outcast from all human consideration was He, that a Barabbas found friendly voices where He found none. Hearing the suborned witnesses swear His life away, He heard at the same time His boldest disciple deny that he knew any person of the name of Jesus. But through this abandonment He knew the Father's presence was with Him. "I am not alone, because the Father is with Me."

Times which in their own degree try us with the same sense of solitariness come upon us all. All pain is solitary; you must bear it alone: kind friends may be round you, but they cannot bear one pang for you. You feel how separate and individual an existence you have when your body is racked with pain and healthy people are by your side; and you feel it also when you visit some pained or sorrowing persons and sit silently in their presence, feeling that the suffering is theirs and that they must bear it. We should not brood much over any apparent want of recognition we may meet with; all such brooding is unwholesome and weak. Many of our minor sufferings we do best to keep to ourselves and say nothing about them. Let us strive to show sympathy, and we shall feel less the pain of not having it. To a large extent every one must be alone in life—forming his own views of things, working out his own idea of life, conquering his own sins, and schooling his own heart. And every one is more or less misunderstood even by his most intimate friends. He finds himself congratulated on occurrences which are no joy to him, applauded for successes he is ashamed of; the very kindnesses of his friends reveal to him how little they understand his nature. But all this will not deeply affect a healthy-minded man, who recognises that he is in the world to do good, and who is not always craving applause and recognition.

But there are occasional times in which the want of sympathy is crushingly felt. Some of the most painful and enduring sorrows of the human heart are of a kind which forbid that they be breathed to the nearest friend. Even if others know that they have fallen upon us they cannot allude to them; and very often they are not even known. And there are times even more trying, when we have not only to bear a sorrow or an anxiety all our own, but when we have to adopt a line of conduct which exposes us to misunderstanding, and to act continuously in a manner which shuts us off from the sympathy of our friends. Our friends remonstrate and advise, and we feel that their advice is erroneous: we are compelled to go our own way and bear the charge of obstinacy and even of cruelty; for sometimes, like Abraham offering Isaac, we cannot satisfy conscience without seeming to injure or actually injuring those we love.

It is in times like these that our faith is tested. We gain a firmer hold of God than ever before when we in actual life prefer His countenance



and fellowship to the approbation and good-will of our friends. When in order to keep conscience clean we dare to risk the good-will of those we depend upon for affection and for support, our faith becomes a reality and rapidly matures. For a time we may seem to have rendered ourselves useless, and to have thrown ourselves out of all profitable relations to our fellow-men: we may be shunned, and our opinions and conduct may be condemned, and the object we had in view may seem to be further off than ever; but such was the experience of Christ also, till even He was forced to cry out, not only *Why have ye, My friends, forsaken Me?* but *"My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"* But as in His case, so in ours—this is only the natural and necessary path to the perfect justification of ourselves and of the principles our conduct has represented. If in obedience to conscience we are exposed to isolation and the various losses consequent upon it, we are not alone—God is with us. It is in the line of our conduct He is working and will carry out His purposes. And well might such an one be envied by those who have feared such isolation and shrunk from the manifold wretchedness that comes of resisting the world's ways and independently following an unworldly and Christian path.

For really in our own life, as in the life of Christ, all is summed up in the conflict between Christ and the world; and therefore the last words of this His last conversation are: *"In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good courage. I have overcome the world."* When Christ speaks of *"the world"* as comprising all that was opposed to Him, it is not difficult to understand His meaning. By *"the world"* we sometimes mean the earth; sometimes all external things, sun, moon, and stars as well as this earth; sometimes we mean the world of men, as when we say *"All the world knows"* such and such a thing, or as when Christ said *"God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son."* But much more commonly Christ uses it to denote all in the present state of things which opposes God and leads man away from God. We speak of worldliness as fatal to the spirit, because worldliness means preference for what is external and present to what is inward and both present and future. Worldliness means attachment to things as they are—to the ways of society, to the excitements, the pleasures, the profits, of the present. It means surrender to what appeals to the senses—to comfort, to vanity, to ambition, to love of display. Worldliness is the spirit which uses the present world without reference to the lasting and spiritual purposes for the sake of which men are in this world. It ignores what is eternal and what is spiritual; it is satisfied with present comfort, with what brings present pleasure, with what ministers to the beauty of this present life, to the material prosperity of men. And no soul whatsoever or wheresoever situated can escape the responsibility of making his choice between the world and God. To each of us the question which determines all else is, *Am I to live for ends which find their accomplishment in this present life, or for ends which are eternal? Am I to live so as to secure the utmost of comfort, of ease, of money, of reputation, of domestic enjoyment, of the good things of this present world? or am I to live so as to do the most I can for the forwarding of God's purposes with men,*

*for the forwarding of spiritual and eternal good?* There is no man who is not living for one or other of these ends. Two men enter the same office and transact the same business; but the one is worldly, the other Christian: two men do the same work, use the same material, draw the same salary; but one cherishes a spiritual end, the other a worldly,—the one works, always striving to serve God and his fellows, the other has nothing in view but himself and his own interests. Two women live in the same street, have children at the same school, dress very much alike; but you cannot know them long without perceiving that the one is worldly, with her heart set on position and earthly advancement for her children, while the other is unworldly and prays that her children may learn to conquer the world and to live a stainless and self-sacrificing life, though it be a poor one. This is the determining probation of life; this it is which determines what we are and shall be. We are, every one of us, living either with the world as our end or for God. The difficulty of choosing rightly and abiding by our choice is extreme; no man has ever found it easy; for every man it is a sufficient test of his reality, of his dependence on principle, of his moral clear-sightedness, of his strength of character.

Therefore Christ, as the result of all His work, announces that He has *"overcome the world."* And on the ground of this conquest of His He bids His followers rejoice and take heart, as if somehow His conquest of the world guaranteed theirs, and as if their conflict would be easier on account of His. And so indeed it is. Not only has every one now who proposes to live for high and unworldly ends the satisfaction of knowing that such a life is possible, and not only has he the vast encouragement of knowing that One has passed this way before and attained His end; but, moreover, it is Christ's victory which has really overcome the world in a final and public way. The world's principles of action, its pleasure-seeking, its selfishness, its childish regard for glitter and for what is present to sense, in a word, its worldliness when set over against the life of Christ, is for ever discredited. The experience of Christ in this world reflects such discredit upon merely worldly ways, and so clearly exhibits its blindness, its hatred of goodness, its imbecility when it strives to counterwork God's purposes, that no man who morally has his eyes open can fail to look with suspicion and abhorrence on the world. And the dignity, the love, the apprehension of what is real and abiding in human affairs, and the ready application of His life to a real and abiding purpose—all this, which is so visible in the life of Christ, gives certainty and attractiveness to the principles opposed to worldliness. We have in Christ's life at once an authoritative and an experimental teaching on the greatest of all human subjects—how life should be spent.

Christ has overcome the world, then, by resisting its influence upon Himself, by showing Himself actually superior to its most powerful influences; and His overcoming of the world is not merely a private victory availing for Himself alone, but it is a public good, because in His life the perfect beauty of a life devoted to eternal and spiritual ends is conspicuously shown. The man who can look upon the conflict between the world and Christ as John has shown it, and say, *"I would rather be one of the Pharisees.*



than Christ," is hopelessly blind to the real value of human life. But what says our life regarding the actual choice we have made?

## CHAPTER XVI.

### CHRIST'S INTERCESSORY PRAYER.

JOHN xvii.

THIS prayer of Christ is in some respects the most precious relic of the past. We have here the words which Christ addressed to God in the critical hour of His life—the words in which He uttered the deepest feeling and thought of His Spirit, clarified and concentrated by the prospect of death. What a revelation it would be to us had we Christ's prayers from His boyhood onwards! what a liturgy and promptuary of devotion if we knew what He had desired from His early years—what He had feared, what He had prayed against, what He had never ceased to hope for; the things that one by one dropped out of His prayers, the things that gradually grew into them; the persons He commended to the Father and the manner of this commendation; His prayers for His mother, for John, for Peter, for Lazarus, for Judas! But here we have a prayer which, if it does not so abundantly satisfy pardonable curiosity, does at least bring us into as sacred a presence. For even among the prayers of Christ this stands by itself as that in which He gathered up the retrospect of His past and surveyed the future of His Church; in which, as if already dying, He solemnly presented to the Father Himself, His work, and His people. Recognising the grandeur of the occasion, we may be disposed to agree with Melancthon, who, when giving his last lecture shortly before His death, said: "There is no voice which has ever been heard, either in heaven or in earth, more exalted, more holy, more fruitful, more sublime, than this prayer offered up by the Son of God Himself."

The prayer was the natural conclusion to the conversation which Jesus and the disciples had been carrying on. And as the Eleven saw Him lifting His eyes to heaven, as if the Father He addressed were visible, they no doubt felt a security which had not been imparted by all His promises. And when in after-life they spoke of Christ's intercession, this instance of it must always have risen in memory and have formed all their ideas of that part of the Redeemer's work. It has always been believed that those who have loved and cared for us while on earth continue to do so when through death they have passed nearer to the source of all love and goodness; this lively interest in us is supposed to continue because it formed so material an element in their life here below; and it was impossible that those who heard our Lord thus awfully commending them to the Father should ever forget this earnest consideration of their state or should ever come to fancy that they were forgotten.

Beginning with prayer for Himself, our Lord passes at the sixth verse into prayer for His disciples, and at the twentieth verse the prayer expands still more widely and embraces the world, all those who should believe on Him.

First, Jesus prays for Himself; and His prayer is, "Father, glorify Thy Son; glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had

with Thee before the world was." The work for which He came into the world was done: "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." There remains no more reason why He should stay longer on earth; "the hour is come," the hour for closing His earthly career and opening to Him a new period and sphere. He does not wish and does not need a prolongation of life. He has found time enough in less than a half of three-score years and ten to do all He can do on earth. It is character, not time, we need to do our work. To make a deep and abiding impression it is not longer life we need, but intensity. Jesus did not find Himself cramped, limited, or too soon hurried out of life. He viewed death as the suitable timely step, and took it with self-command and in order to pass to something better than earthly life.

How immeasurably beneath this level is the vaunted equanimity of the thinker who says, "Death can be no evil because it is universal"! How immeasurably beneath it is the habit of most of us! Which of us can stand in that clear air on that high point which separates life from what is beyond and can say, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do"? A broken column is the fit monument of our life, unfinished, frustrated, useless. Wasted energy, ill-repaired blunders, unfulfilled purposes, fruitless years, much that is positively evil, much that was done mechanically and carelessly and for the day; plans ill conceived and worse executed; imperfect ideals of life imperfectly realised; pursuits dictated by uneducated tastes, unchastened whims, accidental circumstances,—such is the retrospect which most of us have as we look back over life. Few men even recognise the reality of life as part of an eternal order, and, of the few who do so, still fewer seriously and persistently aim at fitting in their life as a solid part of that order.

Before we know whether we have finished the work given us to do we must know what that work is. At the outset of his account of Christ's work John gives us his conception of it. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father." This work was now accomplished, and Jesus can say, "I have glorified Thee on the earth"; "I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world." We may all add our humble responsive "Amen" to this account of His finished work. John has carried us through the scenes in which Jesus manifested the glory of the Father and showed the full meaning of that name, displaying the Father's love in His self-sacrificing interest in men, the Father's holiness and supremacy in His devoted filial obedience. Never again can men separate the idea of the true God from the life of Jesus Christ; it is in that life we come to know God, and through that life His glory shines. This many a man has felt is the true Divine glory; this God yearning over His lost and wretched children, coming down and sharing in their wretchedness to win them to Himself and blessedness—this is the God for us. This alone is glory such as we bow before and own to be infinitely worthy of trust and adoration, almightiness applying itself to the necessities and fears of the weak, perfect purity winning to itself the impure and the outcast, love showing itself to be Divine by its patience, its humility, its absolute sacrifice. It is Christ who



has found entrance for these conceptions of God once for all into the human mind; it is to Christ we owe it that we know a God we can entirely love and increasingly worship. With the most assured truth He could say, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do; I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world."

But Christ recognises a work which ran parallel with this, a work which continually resulted from His manifestation of the Father. By His manifesting the Father He gave eternal life to those who accepted and believed His revelation. The power to reveal the Father which Christ had received He had not on His own account, but that He might give eternal life to men. For "this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." Eternal life is not merely life indefinitely prolonged. It is rather life under new conditions and fed from different sources. It can be entered upon now, but a full understanding of it is now impossible. The grub might as well try to understand the life of the butterfly, or the chick in the shell the life of the bird. To know what Christ revealed, this is the birth to life eternal. To know that love and holiness are the governing powers in conformity with which all things are carried onward to their end; to know what God is, that He is a Father who cannot leave us His children of earth behind and pass on to His own great works and purposes in the universe, but stoops to our littleness and delays that He may carry every one of us with Him,—this is life eternal. This it is that subdues the human heart and cleanses it from pride, self-seeking, and lust, and that inclines it to bow before the holy and loving God, and to choose Him and life in Him. This it is that turns it from the brief joys and imperfect meanings of time and gives it a home in eternity—that severs it in disposition and in destiny from the changing, passing world and gives it an eternal inheritance as God's child. To as many as believed Christ, to them He gave power to become the sons of God. To believe Him and to accept the God He reveals is to become a son of God and is to enter into life eternal. To be conquered by the Divine love shown us; to feel that not in worldly ambition or any self-seeking but only in devotion to interests that are spiritual and general, is the true life for us; to yield ourselves to the Spirit of Christ and seek to be animated and possessed by that Spirit,—this is to throw in our lot with God, to be satisfied in Him, to have eternal life.

The earthly work of Christ, then, being finished, He asks the Father to glorify Him with His own self, with the glory He had with Him before the world was. It seems to me vain to deny that this petition implies on Christ's part a consciousness of a life which He had before He appeared on earth. His mind turns from the present hour, from His earthly life, to eternity, to those regions beyond time into which no created intelligence can follow Him, and in which God alone exists, and in that Divine solitude He claims a place for Himself. If He merely meant that from eternity God had conceived of Him, the ideal man, and if the existence and glory He speaks of were merely existence in God's mind, but not actual, His words do not convey His meaning. The glory which He prayed for

now was a conscious, living glory; He did not wish to become extinct or to be absorbed in the Divine being; He meant to continue and did continue in actual, personal, living existence. This was the glory He prayed for, and this therefore must also have been the glory He had before the world was. It was a glory of which it was proper to say, "*I had it*," and not merely God conceived it: it was enjoyed by Christ before the worlds were, and was not only in the mind of God.

What that glory was, who can tell? We know it was a glory not of position only, but of character—a glory which disposed and prepared Him to sympathise with suffering and to give Himself to the actual needs of men. From that glory He came to share with men in their humiliation, to expose Himself to their scorn and abuse, to win them to eternal life and to some true participation in His glory.

But Christ's removal from the earthly and visible life involved a great change in the condition of the disciples. Hitherto He had been present with them day by day, always exhibiting to them spiritual glory, and attracting them to it in His own person. So long as they saw God's glory in so attractive and friendly a form it was not difficult for them to resist the world's temptations. "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy name"—that is, by revealing the Father to them; but "now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me. Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth." Christ had been the Word Incarnate, the utterance of God to men; in Him men recognised what God is and what God wills. And this sanctified them; this marvellous revelation of God and His love for men drew men to Him; they felt how Divine and overcoming a love this was; they adored the name Father which Christ the Son made known to them; they felt themselves akin to God and claimed by Him, and spurned the world; they recognised in themselves that which could understand and be appealed to by such a love as God's. Their glory was to be God's children.

But now the visible image, the Incarnate Word, is withdrawn, and Christ commits to the Father those whom He leaves on earth. "Holy Father," Thou whose holiness moves Thee to keep men separate to Thyself from every evil contagion, "keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me." It is still by the recognition of God in Christ that we are to be kept from evil, by contemplating and penetrating this great manifestation of God to us, by listening humbly and patiently to this Incarnate Word. Knowledge of the God whose the world and all existence is, knowledge of Him in whom we live and whose holiness is silently judging and ruling all things, knowledge that He who rules all and who is above all gives Himself to us with a love that thinks no sacrifice too great—it is this knowledge of the truth that saves us from the world. It is the knowledge of those abiding realities which Christ revealed, of those great and loving purposes of God to man, and of the certainty of their fulfilment, which recalls us to holiness and to God. There is reality here; all else is empty and delusive.

But these realities are obscured and thrust



aside by a thousand pretentious frivolities which claim our immediate attention and interest. We are in the world, and day by day the world insists that we shall consider it the great reality. Christ had conquered it and was leaving it. Why, then, did He not take with Him all whom He had won to Himself out of the world? He did not do so because they had a work to accomplish which could only be accomplished in the world. As He had consecrated Himself to the work of making known the Father, so must they consecrate themselves to the same work. As Christ in His own person and life had brought clear before their mind the presence of the Father, so must they by their person and life manifest in the world the existence and the grace of Christ. They must make permanent and universal the revelation He had brought, that all the world might believe that He was the true representative of God. Christ had lighted them, and with their light they were to kindle all men, till the world was full of light. A share in this work is given to each of us. We are permitted to mediate between God and men, to carry to some the knowledge which gives life eternal. It is made possible to us to be benefactors in the highest kind, to give to this man and that a God. To parents it is made possible to fill the opening and hungry mind of their child with a sense of God which will awe, restrain, encourage, gladden him all his life through. To relieve the wants of to-day, to refresh any human spirit by kindness, and to forward the interests of any struggler in life is much; but it is little compared with the joy and solid utility of disclosing to a human soul that which he at last recognises as Divine, and before which at last he bows in spontaneous adoration and absolute trust. To the man who has long questioned whether there is a God, who has doubted whether there is any morally perfect Being, any Spirit existent greater and purer than man, you have but to show Christ, and through His unconquerable love and unttemptable holiness reveal to him a God.

But as it was not by telling men about God that Christ convinced men that somewhere there existed a holy God who cared for them, but by showing God's holiness and love present to them in His own person, so our words may fail to accomplish much if our life does not reveal a presence men cannot but recognise as Divine. It was by being one with the Father Christ revealed Him; it was the Father's will His life exhibited. And the extension of this to the whole world of men is the utmost of Christ's desire. All will be accomplished when all men are one, even as Christ and the Father are already one.

This text is often cited by those who seek to promote the union of churches. But we find it belongs to a very different category and much higher region. That all churches should be under similar government, should adopt the same creed, should use the same forms of worship, even if possible, is not supremely desirable; but real unity of sentiment towards Christ and of zeal to promote His will is supremely desirable. Christ's will is all-embracing; the purposes of God are wide as the universe, and can be fulfilled only by endless varieties of dispositions, functions, organisations, labours. We must expect that, as time goes on, men, so far from being contracted into a narrow and monotonous uniformity, will exhibit increasing diversities of

thought and of method, and will be more and more differentiated in all outward respects. If the infinitely comprehensive purposes of God are to be fulfilled, it must be so. But also, if these purposes are to be fulfilled, all intelligent agents must be at one with God, and must be so profoundly in sympathy with God's mind as revealed in Christ that, however different one man's work or methods may be from another's, God's will shall alike be carried out by both. If this will can be more freely carried out by separate churches, then outward separation is no great calamity. Only when outward separation leads one church to despise or rival or hate another is it a calamity. But whether churches abide separate or are incorporated in outward unity, the desirable thing is that they be one in Christ, that they have the same eagerness in His service, that they be as regiments of one army fighting a common foe and supporting one another, diverse in outward appearance, in method, in function, as artillery, infantry, cavalry, engineers, or even as the army and navy of the same country, but fighting for one flag and one cause, and their very diversity more vividly exhibiting their real unity.

But why should unity be the ultimate desire of Christ, the highest point to which the Saviour's wishes for mankind can reach? Because spirit is that which rules; and if we be one with God in spirit the future is ours. This mighty universe in which we find ourselves, apparently governed by forces compared to which the most powerful of human engines are weak as the moth—forces which keep this earth, and orbs immeasurably larger, suspended in space,—this universe is controlled by spirit, is designed for spiritual ends, for ends of the highest kind and which concern conscious and moral beings.

It is as yet only by glimpses we can see the happiness of those who are one with God; it is only by inadequate comparisons and with mental effort we can attain to even a rudimentary conception of the future that awaits those who are thus eternally blessed. Of them well may Paul say, "All things are yours; for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." It is for Christ all things are governed by God; to be in Him is to be above the reach of catastrophe—to be, as Christ Himself expresses it, beside Himself on the throne, from which all things are ruled. Having been attracted by His character, by what He is and does, and having sought here on earth to promote His will, we shall be His agents hereafter, but in a life in which spiritual glory irradiates everything, and in which an ecstasy and strength which this frail body could not contain will be the normal and constant index of the life of God in us. To do good, to utter by word or deed the love and power that are in us, is the permanent joy of man. With what alacrity does the surgeon approach the operation he knows will be successful! with what pleasure does the painter put on canvas the idea which fills his mind and which he knows will appeal to every one who sees it! And whoever learns to do good by partaking of God's spirit of communicative goodness will find everlasting joy in imparting what he has and can. He will do so, not with the feeble and hesitating mind and hand which here make almost every good action partly painful, but with a spontaneity and sense of power which will be wholly pleasure; he will know that being one with God he can do good,



can accomplish and effect some solid and needful work. Slowly, very slowly, is this arrived at; but time is of no consequence in work that is eternal, so long only as we are sure we do not idly miss present opportunities of learning, so long only as we know that our faces are turned in the right direction, and that a right spirit is in us.

If there lingers in our minds a feeling that the end Christ proposes and utters as His last prayer for men does not draw us with irresistible force, it might be enough to say to our own heart that this is our weakness, that certainly in this prayer we do touch the very central significance of human life, and that however dimly human words may be able to convey thoughts regarding eternity we have here in Christ's words sufficient indication of the one abiding end and aim of all wisely directed human life. Whatever the future of man is to be, whatever joy *life* is to become, in whatever far-reaching and prolonged experiences we are to learn the fruitfulness and efficacy of God's love, whatever new sources and conditions of happiness we may in future worlds be introduced to, whatever higher energies and richer affections are to be opened in us, all this can only be by our becoming one with God, in whose will the future now lies. And it may also be said, if we think this the prayer of One who was not in the full current of actual human life, and had little understanding of men's ways, that this prayer is fulfilled in very many who are deeply involved and busily occupied in this world. They give their mind to their employment, but their heart goes to higher aims and more enduring results. To do good is to them of greater consequence than to make money. To see the number of Christ's sincere followers increasing is to them truer joy than to see their own business extending. In the midst of their greatest prosperity they recognise that there is something far better than worldly prosperity, and that is, to be kept from the evil that is in the world and to extend the knowledge of God. They feel in common with all men that it is not always easy to remember that great spiritual kingdom with its mighty but unobtrusive interests, but they are kept by the Father's name, and they do on the whole live under the influence of God and hoping in His salvation. And it would help us all to do so were we to believe that Christ's interest in us is such as this prayer reveals, and that the great subject of His intercession is, that we be kept from the evil that is in the world and be helpful in the great and enduring work of bringing into truer fellowship men's lives and God's goodness. Alongside of all our profitless labour and unworthiness of aim there runs this lofty aim of Christ for us; and while we are greedily following after pleasure, or thoughtlessly throwing ourselves into mere worldliness, our Lord is praying the Father that we be lifted into harmony with Him and be used as channels of His grace to others.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE ARREST.

JOHN xviii. 1-14.

JESUS, having commended to the Father Himself and His disciples, left the city, crossed the Kidron, and entered the Garden of Gethsemane,

where He frequently went for quiet and to pass the night. The time He had spent in encouraging His disciples and praying for them Judas had spent in making preparations for His arrest. In order to impress Pilate with the dangerous nature of this Galilean he asks him for the use of the Roman cohort to effect His capture. It was possible His arrest might occasion a tumult and rouse the people to attempt a rescue. Perhaps Judas also had an alarming remembrance of the miraculous power he had seen Jesus put forth, and was afraid to attempt His apprehension with only the understrappers of the Sanhedrim or the Temple guard; so he takes the Roman cohort of five hundred men, or whatever number he would reckon would be more than a match for a miracle. And though the moon was full, he takes the precaution of furnishing the expedition with lanterns and torches, for he knew that down in that deep Kidron gully it was often dark when there was plenty of light above; and might not Jesus hide Himself in some of the shadows, in some thicket or cavern, or in some garden-shed or tower? He could not have made more elaborate preparations had he been wishing to take a thief or to surprise a dangerous chief of banditti in his stronghold.

The futility of such preparations became at once apparent. So far from trying to hide Himself or slip out by the back of the garden, Jesus no sooner sees the armed men than He steps to the front and asks, "Whom seek ye?" Jesus, in order that He might screen His disciples, wished at once to be identified by His captors themselves as the sole object of their search. By declaring that they sought Jesus of Nazareth, they virtually exempted the rest from apprehension. But when Jesus identified Himself as the person they sought, instead of rushing forward and holding Him fast, as Judas had instructed them, those in front shrank back; they felt that they had no weapons that would not break upon the calmness of that spiritual majesty; they went backward and fell to the ground. This was no idle display; it was not a needless theatrical garnishing of the scene for the sake of effect. If we could imagine the Divine nobility of Christ's appearance at that critical moment when He finally proclaimed His work done and gave Himself up to die, we should all of us sink humbled and overcome before Him. Even in the dim and flickering light of the torches there was that in His appearance which made it impossible for the bluntest and rudest soldier to lay a hand upon Him. Discipline was forgotten; the legionaries who had thrown themselves on spear-points, unawed by the fiercest of foes, saw in this unarmed figure something which quelled and bewildered them.

But this proof of His superiority was lost upon His disciples. They thought that armed force should be met by armed force. Recovering from their discomfiture, and being ashamed of it, the soldiers and servants of the Sanhedrim advance to bind Jesus. Peter, who had with some dim presentiment of what was coming possessed himself of a sword, aims a blow at the head of Malchus, who having his hands occupied in binding Jesus can only defend himself by bending his head to one side, and so instead of his life loses only his ear. To our Lord this interposition of Peter seemed as if he were dashing out of His hand the cup which the Father had



put into it. Disengaging His hands from those who already held them He said, "Suffer ye thus far" \* (Permit Me to do this one thing); and laying His hand on the wound He healed it, this forgiving and beneficent act being the last done by His unbound hands—significant, indeed, that such should be the style of action from which they prevented Him by binding His hands. Surely the Roman officer in command, if none of the others, must have observed the utter incongruity of the bonds, the fatuous absurdity and wickedness of tying hands because they wrought miracles of healing.

While our Lord thus calmly resigned Himself to His fate, He was not without an indignant sense of the wrong that was done Him, not only in His being apprehended, but in the manner of it. "Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and with staves? I sat daily teaching in the Temple, and ye laid no hold on Me." Many of the soldiers must have felt how ungenerous it was to treat such a Person as a common felon,—coming upon Him thus in the dead of night, as if He were one who never appeared in the daylight; coming with bludgeons and military aid, as if He were likely to create a disturbance. Commonly an arrest is considered to be best made if the culprit is seized red-handed in the very act. Why, then, had they not thus taken Him? They knew that the popular conscience was with Him, and they dared not take Him on the streets of Jerusalem. It was the last evidence of their inability to understand His kingdom, its nature, and its aims. Yet surely some of the crowd must have felt ashamed of themselves, and been uneasy till they got rid of their unsuitable weapons, stealthily dropping their sticks as they walked or hurling them deep into the shade of the garden.

This, then, is the result produced by our Lord's labours of love and wisdom. His conduct had been most conciliatory—conciliatory to the point of meekness unintelligible to those who could not penetrate His motives. He had innovated certainly, but His innovations were blessings, and were so marked by wisdom and sanctioned by reason that every direct assault against them had broken down. He did not seek for power further than for the power of doing good. He knew He could lift men to a far other life than they were living, and permission to do so was His grand desire. The result was that He was marked as the object of the most rancorous hatred of which the human heart is capable. Why so? Do we need to ask? What is more exasperating to men who fancy themselves the teachers of the age than to find another teacher carrying the convictions of the people? What is more painful than to find that in advanced life we must revolutionise our opinions and admit the truth taught by our juniors? He who has new truths to declare or new methods to introduce must recognise that he will be opposed by the combined forces of ignorance, pride, self-interest, and sloth. The majority are always on the side of things as they are. And whoever suggests improvement, whoever shows the faultiness and falseness of what has been in vogue, must be prepared to pay the price and endure misunderstanding, calumny, opposition, and ill-usage. If all men speak well of us, it is only while we go with the stream. As soon as we oppose popular customs, explode received

\* Luke xxii. 51.

opinions, introduce reforms, we must lay our account for ill-treatment. It has always been so, and in the nature of things it must always be so. We cannot commit a crime more truly hated by society than to convince it there are better ways of living than its own and a truth beyond what it has conceived, and it has been the consolation and encouragement of many who have endeavoured to improve matters around them and have met with contempt or enmity that they share the lot of Him whose reward for seeking to bless mankind was that He was arrested as a common felon.

When thus treated, men are apt to be embittered towards their fellows. When all their efforts to do good are made the very ground of accusation against them, there is the strongest provocation to give up all such attempts and to arrange for one's own comfort and safety. This world has few more sufficient tests to apply to character than this; and it is only the few who, when misinterpreted and ill-used by ignorance and malignity, can retain any loving care for others. It struck the spectators, therefore, of this scene in the garden as a circumstance worthy of record, that when Jesus was Himself bound He should shield His disciples. "If ye seek Me, let these go their way." Some of the crowd had perhaps laid hands on the disciples or were showing a disposition to apprehend them as well as their Master. Jesus therefore interferes, reminding His captors that they had themselves said that *He* was the object of this midnight raid, and that the disciples must therefore be scathless.

In relating this part of the scene John puts an interpretation on it which was not merely natural, but which has been put upon it instinctively by all Christians since. It seemed to John as if, in thus acting, our Lord was throwing into a concrete and tangible form His true substitution in the room of His people. To John these words He utters seem the motto of His work. Had any of the disciples been arrested along with Jesus and been executed by His side as act and part with Him, the view which the Christian world has taken of Christ's position and work must have been blurred if not quite altered. But the Jews had penetration enough to see where the strength of this movement lay. They believed that if the Shepherd was smitten the sheep would give them no trouble, but would necessarily scatter. Peter's flourish with the sword attracted little attention; they knew that great movements were not led by men of his type. They passed him by with a smile and did not even arrest him. It was Jesus who stood before them as alone dangerous. And Jesus on His side knew that the Jews were right, that He was the responsible person, that these Galileans would have been dreaming at their nets had He not summoned them to follow Him. If there was any offence in the matter, it belonged to Him, not to them.

But in Jesus thus stepping to the front and shielding the disciples by exposing Himself, John sees a picture of the whole sacrifice and substitution of Christ. This figure of his Master moving forward to meet the swords and staves of the party remains indelibly stamped upon his mind as the symbol of Christ's whole relation to His people. That night in Gethsemane was to them all the hour and power of darkness; and in every subsequent hour of dark-



ness John and the rest see the same Divine figure stepping to the front, shielding them and taking upon Himself all the responsibility. It is thus Christ would have us think of Him—as our friend and protector, watchful over our interests, alive to all that threatens our persons, interposing between us and every hostile event. If by following Him according to our knowledge we are brought into difficulties, into circumstances of trouble and danger, if we are brought into collision with those in power, if we are discouraged and threatened by serious obstacles, let us be quite sure that in the critical moment He will interpose and convince us that, though He cannot save Himself, He can save others. He will not lead us into difficulties and leave us to find our own way out of them. If in striving to discharge our duty we have become entangled in many distressing and annoying circumstances, He acknowledges His responsibility in leading us into such a condition, and will see that we are not permanently the worse for it. If in seeking to know Him more thoroughly we have been led into mental perplexities, He will stand by us and see that we come to no harm. He encourages us to take this action of His in shielding His disciples as the symbol of what we all may expect He will do for ourselves. In all matters between God and us He interposes and claims to be counted as the true Head who is accountable, as that One who desires to answer all charges that can be made against the rest of us. If, therefore, in view of much duty left undone, of many sinful imaginings harboured, of much vileness of conduct and character, we feel that it is ourselves the eye of God is seeking and with us He means to take account; if we know not how to answer Him regarding many things that stick in our memory and conscience,—let us accept the assurance here given us that Christ presents Himself as responsible.

It is not without surprise that we read that when Jesus was arrested all the disciples forsook Him and fled. John, indeed, and Peter speedily recovered themselves and followed to the hall of judgment; and the others may not only have felt that they were in danger so long as they remained in His company, but also that by accompanying Him they could not mend matters. Still, the kind of loyalty that stands by a falling cause, and the kind of courage that risks all to show sympathy with a friend or leader, are qualities so very common that one would have expected to find them here. And no doubt had the matter been to be decided in Peter's fashion, by the sword, they would have stood by Him. But there was a certain mysteriousness about our Lord's purpose that prevented His followers from being quite sure where they were being led to. They were perplexed and staggered by the whole transaction. They had expected things to go differently and scarcely knew what they were doing when they fled.

There are times when we feel a slackening of devotion to Christ, times when we are doubtful whether we have not been misled, times when the bond between us and Him seems to be of the slenderest possible description, times when we have as truly forsaken Him as these disciples, and are running no risks for Him, doing nothing to advance His interests, seeking only our own comfort and our own safety. These times will frequently be found to be the result of disappointed expectations. Things have not

gone with us in the spiritual life as we expected. We have found things altogether more difficult than we looked for. We do not know what to make of our present state nor what to expect in the future, and so we lose an active interest in Christ and fall away from any hope that is living and influential.

Another point which John evidently desires to bring prominently before us in this narrative is Christ's willingness to surrender Himself; the voluntary character of all He afterwards suffered. It was at this point of His career, at His apprehension, this could best be brought out. Afterwards He might say He suffered willingly, but so far as appearances went He had no option. Previous to His apprehension His professions of willingness would not have been attended to. It was precisely now that it could be seen whether He would flee, hide, resist, or calmly yield Himself. And John is careful to bring out His willingness. He went to the garden as usual, "knowing all things that should come upon Him." It would have been easy to seek some safer quarters for the night, but He would not. At the last moment escape from the garden could not have been impossible. His followers could have covered His retreat. But He advances to meet the party, avows Himself to be the man they sought, will not suffer Peter to use his sword, in every way shows that His surrender is voluntary. Still, had He not shown His power to escape, onlookers might have thought this was only the prudent conduct of a brave man who wished to preserve His dignity, and therefore preferred delivering Himself up to being ignominiously dragged from a hiding-place. Therefore it was made plain that if He yielded it was not for want of power to resist. By a word He overthrew those who came to bind Him, and made them feel ashamed of their preparations. He spoke confidently of help that would have swept the cohort off the field.\* And thus it was brought out that, if He died, He laid down His life and was not deprived of it solely by the hate and violence of men. The hate and violence were there; but they were not the sole factors. He yielded to these because they were ingredients in the cup His Father wished Him to drink.

The reason of this is obvious. Christ's life was to be all sacrifice, because self-sacrifice is the essence of holiness and of love. From beginning to end the moving spring of all His actions was deliberate self-devotement to the good of men or to the fulfilment of God's will; for these are equivalents. And His death as the crowning act of this career was to be conspicuously a death embodying and exhibiting the spirit of self-sacrifice. He offered Himself on the cross through the eternal Spirit. That death was not compulsory; it was not the outcome of a sudden whim or generous impulse; it was the expression of a constant uniform "eternal" Spirit, which on the cross, in the yielding of life itself, rendered up for men all that was possible. Unwillingly no sacrifice can be made. When a man is taxed to support the poor, we do not call that a sacrifice. Sacrifice must be free, loving, uncompelled; it must be the exhibition in act of love, the freest and most spontaneous of all human emotions. "It is a true Christian instinct in our language which has seized upon the word *sacrifice* to express the self-devotion prompted

\* Matt. xxvi. 53.



by an unselfish love for others: we speak of the *sacrifices* made by a loving wife or mother; and we test the sincerity of a Christian by the *sacrifices* he will make for the love of Christ and the brethren. . . . The reason why Christianity has approved itself a living principle of regeneration to the world is specially because a Divine example and a Divine spirit of self-sacrifice have wrought together in the hearts of men, and thereby an ever-increasing number have been quickened with the desire and strengthened with the will to spend and be spent, for the cleansing, the restoration, and the life of the most guilty, miserable, and degraded of their fellows." It was in Christ's life and death this great principle of the life of God and man was affirmed: there self-sacrifice is perfectly exhibited.

It is to this willingness of Christ to suffer we must ever turn. It is this voluntary, unimpelled, spontaneous devotion of Himself to the good of men which is the magnetic point in this earth. Here is something we can cleave to with assurance, something we can trust and build upon. Christ in His own sovereign freedom of will, and impelled by love of us, has given Himself to work out our perfect deliverance from sin and evil of every kind. Let us deal sincerely with Him, let us be in earnest about these matters, let us hope truly in Him, let us give Him time to conquer by moral means all our moral foes within and without, and we shall one day enter into His joy and His triumph.

But when we thus apply John's words we are haunted with a suspicion that they were perhaps not intended to be thus used. Is John justified in finding in Christ's surrender of Himself to the authorities, on condition that the disciples should escape, fulfilment of the words that of those whom God had given Him He had lost none? The actual occurrence we see here is Jesus arrested as a false Messiah, and claiming to be the sole culprit if any culprit there be. Is this an occurrence that has any bearing upon us or any special instruction regarding the substitution of a sin-bearer in our room? Can it mean that He alone bears the punishment of our sin and that we go free? Is it any more than an illustration of His substitutionary work, one instance out of many of His habit of self-devotion in the room of others? Can I build upon this act in the Garden of Gethsemane and conclude from it that He surrenders Himself that I may escape punishment? Can I legitimately gather from it anything more than another proof of His constant readiness to stand in the breach? It is plain enough that a person who acted as Christ did here is one we could trust; but had this action any special virtue as the actual substitution of Christ in our room as sin-bearer?

It is, I think, well that we should occasionally put to ourselves such questions and train ourselves to look at the events of Christ's life as actual occurrences, and to distinguish between what is fanciful and what is real. So much has been said and written regarding His work, it has been the subject of so much sentiment, the basis of so many conflicting theories, the text of so much loose and allegorising interpretation, that the original plain and substantial fact is apt to be overlaid and lost sight of. And yet it is that plain and substantial reality which has virtue for us, while all else is delusive, howsoever finely sentimental, howsoever rich in coincidences with

Old Testament sayings or in suggestions of ingenious doctrine. The subject of substitution is obscure. Inquiry into the Atonement is like the search for the North Pole: approach it from what quarter we may, there are unmistakable indications that a finality exists in that direction; but to make our way to it and take a survey all round it at once is still beyond us. We must be content if we can correct certain variations of the compass and find so much as one open waterway through which our own little vessel can be steered.

Looking, then, at this surrender of Christ in the light of John's comment, we see clearly enough that Christ sought to shelter His disciples at His own expense, and that this must have been the habit of His life. He sought no companion in misfortune. His desire was to save others from suffering. This willingness to be the responsible party was the habit of His life. It is impossible to think of Christ as in any matter sheltering Himself behind any man or taking a second place. He is always ready to bear the burden and the brunt. We recognise in this action of Christ that we have to do with One who shirks nothing, fears nothing, grudges nothing; who will substitute Himself for others wherever possible, if danger is abroad. So far as the character and habit of Christ go, there is unquestionably here manifest a good foundation for His substitution in our stead wheresoever such substitution is possible.

It is also in this scene, probably more than in any other, that we see that the work Christ had come to do was one which He must do entirely by Himself. It is scarcely exaggeration to say He could employ no assistant even in its minor details. He did indeed send forth men to proclaim His kingdom, but it was to proclaim what He *alone did*. In His miracles He did not use His disciples as a surgeon uses His assistants. Here in the garden He explicitly puts the disciples aside and says that this question of the Messiahship is solely His affair. This separate, solitary character of Christ's work is important: it reminds us of the exceptional dignity and greatness of it; it reminds us of the unique insight and power possessed by Him who alone conceived and carried it through.

There is no question, then, of Christ's willingness to be our substitute; the question rather is, Is it possible that He should suffer for our sin and so save us from suffering? and does this scene in the garden help us to answer that question? That this scene, in common with the whole work of Christ, had a meaning and relations deeper than those that appear on the surface none of us doubts. The soldiers who arrested Him, the judges who condemned Him, saw nothing but the humble and meek prisoner, the bar of the Sanhedrim, the stripes of the Roman scourge, the material cross and nails and blood; but all this had relations of infinite reach, meaning of infinite depth. Through all that Christ did and suffered God was accomplishing the greatest of His designs, and if we miss this Divine intention we miss the essential significance of these events. The Divine intention was to save us from sin and give us eternal life. This is accomplished by Christ's surrender of Himself to this earthly life and all the anxiety, the temptation, the mental and spiritual strain which this involved. By revealing the Father's love to us He wins us back to the Father; and the Father's



love was revealed in the self-sacrificing suffering He necessarily endured in numbering Himself with sinners. Of Christ's satisfying the law by suffering the penalty under which we lay Paul has much to say. He explicitly affirms that Christ bore and so abolished the curse or penalty of sin. But in this Gospel there may indeed be hints of this same idea, but it is mainly another aspect of the work of Christ which is here presented. It is the exhibition of Christ's self-sacrificing love as a revelation of the Father which is most prominent in the mind of John.

We can certainly say that Christ suffered our penalties in so far as a perfectly holy person can suffer them. The gnawing anguish of remorse He never knew; the haunting anxieties of the wrong-doer were impossible to Him; the torment of ungratified desire, eternal severance from God, He could not suffer; but other results and penalties of sin He suffered more intensely than is possible to us. The agony of seeing men He loved destroyed by sin, all the pain which a sympathetic and pure spirit must bear in a world like this, the contradiction of sinners, the provocation and shame which daily attended Him—all this He bore because of sin and for us, that we might be saved from lasting sin and unrelieved misery. So that, even if we cannot take this scene in the garden as an exact representation of the whole substitutionary work of Christ, we can say that by suffering with and for us He has saved us from sin and restored us to life and to God.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### *PETER'S DENIAL AND REPENTANCE.*

JOHN xviii. 12-18, 25-27.

THE examination of Jesus immediately followed His arrest. He was first led to Annas, who at once sent Him to Caiaphas, the high priest, that he might carry out his policy of making one man a scapegoat for the nation. To John the most memorable incident of this midnight hour was Peter's denial of his Master. It happened on this wise. The high priest's palace was built, like other large Oriental houses, round a quadrangular court, into which entrance was gained by a passage running from the street through the front part of the house. This passage or archway is called in the Gospels the "porch," and was closed at the end next the street by a heavy folding gate with a wicket for single persons. This wicket was kept on this occasion by a maid. The interior court upon which this passage opened was paved or flagged and open to the sky, and as the night was cold the attendants had made a fire here. The rooms round the court in one of which the examination of Jesus was proceeding, were open in front—separated, that is to say, from the court only by one or two pillars or arches and a railing, so that our Lord could see and even hear Peter.

When Jesus was led in bound to this palace, there entered with the crowd of soldiers and servants one at least of His disciples. He was in some way acquainted with the high priest, and presuming on this acquaintanceship followed to learn the fate of Jesus. He had seen Peter following at a distance, and after a little he goes to the gate-keeper and induces her to open to his

friend. The maid seeing the familiar terms on which these two men were, and knowing that one of them was a disciple of Jesus, very naturally greets Peter with the exclamation, "Art not thou *also* one of this man's disciples?" Peter, confused by being suddenly confronted with so many hostile faces, and remembering the blow he had struck in the garden, and that he was now in the place of all others where it was likely to be avenged, suddenly in a moment of infatuation, and doubtless to the dismay of his fellow-disciple, denies all knowledge of Jesus. Having once committed himself, the two other denials followed as matter of course.

Yet the third denial is more guilty than the first. Many persons are conscious that they have sometimes acted under what seems an infatuation. They do not plead this in excuse for the wrong they have done. They are quite aware that what has come out of them must have been in them, and that their acts, unaccountable as they seem, have definite roots in their character. Peter's first denial was the result of surprise and infatuation. But an hour seems to have elapsed between the first and the third. He had time to think, time to remember his Lord's warning, time to leave the place if he could do no better. But one of those reckless moods which overtake good-hearted children seems to have overtaken Peter, for at the end of the hour he is talking right round the whole circle at the fire, not in monosyllables and guarded voice, but in his own outspoken way, the most talkative of them all, until suddenly one whose ear was finer than the rest detected the Galilean accent, and says, "You need not deny you are one of this man's disciples, for your speech betrays you." Another, a kinsman of him whose ear Peter had cut off, strikes in and declares that he had seen him in the garden. Peter, driven to extremities, hides his Galilean accent under the strong oaths of the city, and with a volley of profane language asseverates that he has no knowledge of Jesus. At this moment the first examination of Jesus closes and He is led across the court; the first chill of dawn is felt in the air, a cock crows, and as Jesus passes He looks upon Peter; the look and the cock-crow together bring Peter to himself, and he hurries out and weeps bitterly.

The remarkable feature of this sin of Peter's is that at first sight it seems so alien to his character. It was a lie; and he was unusually straightforward. It was a heartless and cruel lie, and he was a man full of emotion and affection. It was a cowardly lie, even more cowardly than common lies, and yet he was exceptionally bold. Peter himself was quite positive that this at least was a sin he would never commit. "Though all men should deny Thee, yet will not I." Neither was this a baseless boast. He was not a mere braggart, whose words found no correspondence in his deeds. Far from it; he was a hardy, somewhat over-venturesome man, accustomed to the risks of a fisherman's life, not afraid to fling himself into a stormy sea, or to face the overwhelming armed force that came to apprehend his Master, ready to fight for him single-handed, and quickly recovering from the panic which scattered his fellow-disciples. If any of his companions had been asked at what point of Peter's character the vulnerable spot would be found, not one of them would have said, "He will fall through cowardice." Besides, Peter had a few hours before been so emphatically warned against



denying Christ that he might have been expected to stand firm this night at least.

Perhaps it was this very warning which betrayed Peter. When he struck the blow in the garden, he thought he had falsified his Lord's prediction. And when he found himself the only one who had courage to follow to the palace, his besetting self-confidence returned and led him into circumstances for which he was too weak. He was equal to the test of his courage which he was expecting, but when another kind of test was applied, in circumstances and from a quarter he had not anticipated, his courage failed him utterly.

Peter probably thought he might be brought bound with his Master before the high priest, and had he been so he would probably have stood faithful. But the devil who was sifting him had a much finer sieve than that to run him through. He brought him to no formal trial, where he could gird himself for a special effort, but to an unobserved, casual question by a slave-girl. The whole trial was over before he knew he was being tried. So do our most real trials come; in a business transaction that turns up with others in the day's work, in the few minutes' talk or the evening's intercourse with friends, it is discovered whether we are so truly Christ's friends that we cannot forget Him or disguise that we are His. A word or two with a person he never saw before and would never see again brought the great trial of Peter's life; and as unexpectedly shall we be tried. In these battles we must all encounter, we receive no formal challenge that gives us time to choose our ground and our weapons; but a sudden blow is dealt us, from which we can be saved only by habitually wearing a shirt of mail sufficient to turn it, and which we can carry into all companies.

Had Peter distrusted himself and seriously accepted his Lord's warning, he would have gone with the rest; but ever thinking of himself as able to do more than other men, faithful where others were faithless, convinced where others hesitated, daring where others shrank, he once again thrust himself forward, and so fell. For this self-confidence, which might to a careless observer seem to underprop Peter's courage, was to the eye of the Lord undermining it. And if Peter's true bravery and promptitude were to serve the Church in days when fearless steadfastness would be above all other qualities needed, his courage must be sifted and the chaff of self-confidence thoroughly separated from it. In place of a courage which was sadly tainted with vanity and impulsiveness Peter must acquire a courage based upon recognition of his own weakness and his Lord's strength. And it was this event which wrought this change in Peter's character.

Frequently we learn by a very painful experience that our best qualities are tainted, and that actual disaster has entered our life from the very quarter we least suspected. We may be conscious that the deepest mark has been made on our life by a sin apparently as alien to our character as cowardice and lying were to the too venturesome and outspoken character of Peter. Possibly we once prided ourselves on our honesty, and felt happy in our upright character, plain-dealing, and direct speech; but to our dismay we have been betrayed into double-dealing, equivocation, evasive or even fraudulent conduct. Or the time was when we were proud of our

friendships; it was frequently in our mind that, however unsatisfactory in other respects our character might be, we were at any rate faithful and helpful friends. Alas! events have proved that even in this particular we have failed, and have, through absorption in our own interests, acted inconsiderately and even cruelly to our friend, not even recognising at the time how his interests were suffering. Or we are by nature of a cool temperament, and judged ourselves safe at least from the faults of impulse and passion; yet the mastering combination of circumstances came, and we spoke the word, or wrote the letter, or did the deed which broke our life past mending.

Now, it was Peter's salvation, and it will be ours, when overtaken in this unsuspected sin, to go out and weep bitterly. He did not frivolously count it an accident that could never occur again; he did not sullenly curse the circumstances that had betrayed and shamed him. He recognised that there was that in him which could render useless his best natural qualities, and that the sinfulness which could make his strongest natural defences brittle as an egg-shell must be serious indeed. He had no choice but to be humbled before the eye of the Lord. There was no need of words to explain and enforce his guilt: the eye can express what the tongue cannot utter. The finer, tenderer, deeper feelings are left to the eye to express. The clear cock-crow strikes home to his conscience, telling him that the very sin he had an hour or two ago judged impossible is now actually committed. That brief space his Lord had named as sufficient to test his fidelity is gone, and the sound that strikes the hour rings with condemnation. Nature goes on in her accustomed, inexorable, unsympathetic round; but he is a fallen man, convicted in his own conscience of empty vanity, of cowardice, of heartlessness. He who in his own eyes was so much better than the rest had fallen lower than all. In the look of Christ Peter sees the reproachful loving tenderness of a wounded spirit, and understands the dimensions of his sin. That he, the most intimate disciple, should have added to the bitterness of that hour, should not only have failed to help his Lord, but should actually at the crisis of His fate have added the bitterest drop to His cup, was humbling indeed. There was that in Christ's look that made him feel the enormity of his guilt; there was that also that softened him and saved him from sullen despair.

And it is obvious that if we are to rise clear above the sin that has betrayed us we can do so only by as lowly a penitence. We are all alike in this: that we have fallen; we cannot any more with justice think highly of ourselves; we have sinned and are disgraced in our own eyes. In this, I say, we are all alike; that which makes the difference among us is, how we deal with ourselves and our circumstances in connection with our sin. It has been very well said by a keen observer of human nature that "men and women are often more fairly judged by the way in which they bear the burden of their own deeds, the fashion in which they carry themselves in their entanglements, than by the prime act which laid the burden on their lives and made the entanglement fast knotted. The deeper part of us shows in the manner of accepting consequences." The reason of this is that, like Peter, we are often *betrayed* by a weakness; the part



of our nature which is least able to face difficulty is assaulted by a combination of circumstances which may never again occur in our life. There was guilt, great guilt, it may be, concerned in our fall, but it was not deliberate, wilful wickedness. But in our dealing with our sin and its consequences our whole nature is concerned and searched; the real bent and strength of our will are tried. We are therefore in a crisis, *the crisis*, of our life. Can we accept the situation? Can we humbly, frankly own that, since that evil has appeared in our life, it must have been, however unconsciously, in ourselves first? Can we with the genuine manliness and wisdom of a broken heart say to ourselves and to God, Yes, it is true I am the wretched, pitiful, bad-hearted creature that was capable of doing, and did that thing? I did not think that was my character; I did not think it was in me to sink so very low; but now I see what I am. Do we thus, like Peter, go out and weep bitterly?

Every one who has passed through a time such as this single night was to Peter knows the strain that is laid upon the soul, and how very hard it is to yield utterly. So much rises up in self-defence; so much strength is lost by the mere perplexity and confusion of the thing; so much is lost in the despondency that follows these sad revelations of our deep-seated evil. What is the use, we think, of striving, if even in the point in which I thought myself most secure I have fallen? What is the meaning of so perplexed and deceiving a warfare? Why was I exposed to so fatal an influence? So Peter, had he taken the wrong direction, might have resented the whole course of the temptation, and might have said, Why did Christ not warn me by His look before I sinned, instead of breaking me by it after? Why had I no inkling of the enormity of the sin before as I have after the sin? My reputation now is gone among the disciples; I may as well go back to my old obscure life and forget all about these perplexing scenes and strange spiritualities. But Peter, though he was cowed by a maid, was man enough and Christian enough to reject such falsities and subterfuges. It is true we did not see the enormity, never do see the enormity, of the sin until it is committed; but is it possible it can be otherwise? Is not this the way in which a blunt conscience is educated? Nothing seems so bad until it finds place in our own life and haunts us. Neither need we despond or sour because we are disgraced in our own eyes, or even in the eyes of others; for we are hereby summoned to build for ourselves a new and different reputation with God and our own consciences—a reputation founded on a basis of reality and not of seeming.

It may be worth while to note the characteristics and danger of that special form of weakness which Peter here exhibited. We commonly call it moral cowardice. It is originally a weakness rather than a positive sin, and yet it is probably as prolific of sin and even of great crime as any of the more definite and vigorous passions of our nature, such as hate, lust, avarice. It is that weakness which prompts a man to avoid difficulties, to escape everything rough and disagreeable, to yield to circumstances, and which, above all, makes him incapable of facing the reproach, contempt, or opposition of his fellow-men. It is often found in combination with much amiability of character. It is commonly found in persons who have some natural

leanings to virtue, and who, if circumstances would only favour them, would prefer to lead, and would lead, at least an inoffensive and respectable, if not a very useful, noble, or heroic life. Finely strung natures that are very sensitive to all impressions from without, natures which thrill and vibrate in response to a touching tale or in sympathy with fine scenery or soft music, natures which are housed in bodies of delicate nervous temperament, are commonly keenly sensitive to the praise or blame of their fellows, and are therefore liable to moral cowardice, though by no means necessarily a prey to it.

The examples of its ill-effects are daily before our eyes. A man cannot bear the coolness of a friend or the contempt of a leader of opinion, and so he stifles his own independent judgment and goes with the majority. A minister of the Church finds his faith steadily diverging from that of the creed he has subscribed, but he cannot proclaim this change because he cannot make up his mind to be the subject of public astonishment and remark, of severe scrutiny on the one side and still more distasteful because ignorant and canting sympathy on the other. A man in business finds that his expenditure exceeds his income, but he is unable to face the shame of frankly lowering his position and curtailing his expenses, and so he is led into dishonest appearances; and from dishonest appearances to fraudulent methods of keeping them up the step, as we all know, is short. Or in trade a man knows that there are shameful, contemptible, and silly practices, and yet he has not moral courage to break through them. A parent cannot bear to risk the loss of his child's goodwill even for an hour, and so omits the chastisement he deserves. The schoolboy, fearing his parents' look of disappointment, says he stands higher in his class than he does; or fearing to be thought soft and unmanly by his schoolfellows, sees cruelty or a cheat or some wickedness perpetrated without a word of honest anger or manly condemnation. All this is moral cowardice, the vice which brings us down to the low level which bold sinners set for us, or which at any rate sweeps the weak soul down to a thousand perils, and absolutely forbids the good there is in us from finding expression.

But of all the forms into which moral cowardice develops this of denying the Lord Jesus is the most iniquitous and disgraceful. One of the fashions of the day which is most rapidly extending and which many of us have opportunity to resist is the fashion of infidelity. Much of the strongest and best-trained intellect of the country ranges itself against Christianity—that is, against Christ. No doubt the men who have led this movement have adopted their opinions on conviction. They deny the authority of Scripture, the divinity of Christ, even the existence of a personal God, because by long years of painful thought they have been forced to such conclusions. Even the best of them cannot be acquitted of a contemptuous and bitter way of speaking of Christians, which would seem to indicate that they are not quite at ease in their belief. Still, we cannot but think that so far as any men can be quite unbiassed in their opinions, they are so; and we have no right to judge other men for their honestly formed opinions. The moral cowards of whom we speak are not these



men, but their followers, persons who with no patience or capacity to understand their reasonings, adopt their conclusions because they seem advanced and are peculiar. There are many persons of slender reading and no depth of earnestness who, without spending any serious effort on the formation of their religious belief, presume to disseminate unbelief and treat the Christian creed as an obsolete thing merely because part of the intellect of the day leans in that direction. Weakness and cowardice are the real spring of such persons' apparent advance and new position regarding religion. They are ashamed to be reckoned among those who are thought to be behind the age. Ask them for a reason of their unbelief, and they are either unable to give you any, or else they repeat a time-worn objection which has been answered so often that men have wearied of the interminable task and let it pass unnoticed.

Such persons we aid and abet when we do either of two things: when we either cleave to what is old as unreasoningly as they take up with what is new, refusing to look for fresh light and better ways and acting as if we were already perfect; or when we yield to the current and adopt a hesitating way of speaking about matters of faith, when we *cultivate* a sceptical spirit and seem to connive at, if we do not applaud, the cold, irreligious sneer of ungodly men. Above all, we aid the cause of infidelity when in our own life we are ashamed to live godly, to act on higher principles than the current prudential maxims, when we hold our allegiance to Christ in abeyance to our fear of our associates, when we find no way of showing that Christ is our Lord and that we delight in opportunities of confessing Him. The confessing of Christ is a duty explicitly imposed on all those who expect that He will acknowledge them as His. It is a duty to which we might suppose every manly and generous instinct in us would eagerly respond, and yet we are often more ashamed of our connection with the loftiest and holiest of beings than of our own pitiful and sin-infected selves, and as little practically stimulated and actuated by a true gratitude to Him as if His death were the commonest boon and as if we were expecting and needing no help from Him in the time that is yet to come.\*

## CHAPTER XIX.

### JESUS BEFORE PILATE.

JOHN xviii. 28-xix. 16.

JOHN tells us very little of the examination of Jesus by Annas and Caiaphas, but he dwells at considerable length on His trial by Pilate. The reason of this different treatment is probably to be found in the fact that the trial before the Sanhedrim was ineffective until the decision had been ratified by Pilate, as well as in the circumstance noted by John that the decision of Caiaphas was a foregone conclusion. Caiaphas was an unscrupulous politician who allowed nothing to stand between him and his objects. To the weak counsellors who had expressed a fear that it

might be difficult to convict a person so innocent as Jesus he said with supreme contempt: "Ye know nothing at all. Do you not see the opportunity we have of showing our zeal for the Roman Government by sacrificing this man who claims to be King of the Jews? Innocent of course He is, and all the better so, for the Romans cannot think He dies for robbery or wrong-doing. He is a Galilean of no consequence, connected with no good family who might revenge His death." This was the scheme of Caiaphas. He saw that the Romans were within a very little of terminating the incessant troubles of this Judæan province by enslaving the whole population and devastating the land; this catastrophe might be staved off a few years by such an exhibition of zeal for Rome as could be made in the public execution of Jesus.

So far as Caiaphas and his party were concerned, then, Jesus was prejudged. His trial was not an examination to discover whether he was guilty or innocent, but a cross-questioning which aimed at betraying Him into some acknowledgment which might give colour to the sentence of death already decreed. Caiaphas or Annas invites Him to give some account of His disciples and of His doctrines. In some cases His disciples carried arms, and among them was one zealot, and there might be others known to the authorities as dangerous or suspected characters. And Annas might expect that in giving some account of His teaching the honesty of Jesus might betray Him into expressions which could easily be construed to His prejudice. But he is disappointed. Jesus replies that it is not for Him, arraigned and bound as a dangerous prisoner, to give evidence against Himself. Thousands had heard Him in all parts of the country. He had delivered those supposed inflammatory addresses not to midnight gatherings and secret societies, but in the most public places He could find—in the Temple, from which no Jew was excluded, and in the synagogues, where official teachers were commonly present. Annas is silenced; and mortified though he is, he has to accept the ruling of his prisoner as indicating the lines on which the trial should proceed. His mortification does not escape the notice of one of those poor creatures who are ever ready to curry favour with the great by cruelty towards the defenceless, or at the best of that large class of men who cannot distinguish between official and real dignity; and the first of those insults is given to the hitherto sacred person of Jesus, the first of that long series of blows struck by a dead, conventional religion seeking to quench the truth and the life of what threatens its slumber with awakening.

Had the Roman governor not been present in the city the high priests and their party might have ventured to carry into effect their own sentence. But Pilate had already shown during his six years of office that he was not a man to overlook anything like contempt of his supremacy. Besides, they were not quite sure of the temper of the people; and a rescue, or even an attempted rescue, of their prisoner would be disastrous. Prudence therefore bids them hand Him over to Pilate, who had both legal authority to put Him to death and means to quell any popular disturbance. Besides, the purpose of Caiaphas could better be served by bringing before the governor this claimant to the Messiahship.

Pilate was present in Jerusalem at this time

\* Some of the ideas in this chapter were suggested by a sermon of Bishop Temple's.



in accordance with the custom of the Roman procurators of Judæa, who came up annually from their usual residence at Cæsarea to the Jewish capital for the double purpose of keeping order while the city was crowded with all kinds of persons who came up to the feast, and of trying cases reserved for his decision. And the Jews no doubt thought it would be easy to persuade a man who, as they knew to their cost, set a very low value on human blood, to add one victim more to the robbers or insurgents who might be awaiting execution. Accordingly, as soon as day dawned and they dared to disturb the governor, they put Jesus in chains as a condemned criminal and led Him away, all their leading men following, to the quarters of Pilate, either in the fortress Antonia or in the magnificent palace of Herod. Into this palace, being the abode of a Gentile, they could not enter lest they should contract pollution and incapacitate themselves for eating the Passover,—the culminating instance of religious scrupulosity going hand in hand with cruel and bloodthirsty criminality. Pilate with scornful allowance for their scruples goes out to them, and with the Roman's instinctive respect for the forms of justice demands the charge brought against this prisoner, in whose appearance the quick eye, so long trained to read the faces of criminals, is at a loss to discover any index to His crime.

This apparent intention on Pilate's part, if not to reopen the case at least to revise their procedure, is resented by the party of Caiaphas, who exclaim, "If He were not a malefactor we would not have delivered Him up unto thee. Take our word for it; He is guilty; do not scruple to put Him to death." But if they were indignant that Pilate should propose to revise their decision, he is not less so that they should presume to make him their mere executioner. All the Roman pride of office, all the Roman contempt and irritation at this strange Jewish people, come out in his answer, "If you will make no charge against Him and refuse to allow me to judge Him, take Him yourselves and do what you can with Him," knowing well that they dared not inflict death without his sanction, and that this taunt would pierce home. The taunt they did feel, although they could not afford to show that they felt it, but contented themselves with laying the charge that He had forbidden the people to give tribute to Cæsar and claimed to be Himself a king.

As Roman law permitted the examination to be conducted within the prætorium, though the judgment must be pronounced outside in public, Pilate re-enters the palace and has Jesus brought in, so that apart from the crowd he may examine Him. At once he puts the direct question, Guilty or not guilty of this political offence with which you stand charged?—"Art Thou the King of the Jews?" But to this direct question Jesus cannot give a direct answer, because the words may have one sense in the lips of Pilate, another in His own. Before He answers He must first know in which sense Pilate uses the words. He asks therefore, "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee?" Are you inquiring because you are yourself concerned in this question? or are you merely uttering a question which others have put in your mouth? To which Pilate with some heat and contempt replies, "Am I a Jew? How can you expect me to take any personal interest in the matter? Thine

own nation and the chief priests have delivered Thee unto me."

Pilate, that is to say, scouts the idea that he should take any interest in questions about the Messiah of the Jews. And yet was it not possible that, like some of his subordinates, centurions and others, he too should perceive the spiritual grandeur of Jesus and should not be prevented by his heathen upbringing from seeking to belong to this kingdom of God? May not Pilate also be awakened to see that man's true inheritance is the world unseen? may not that expression of fixed melancholy, of hard scorn, of sad, hopeless, proud indifference, give place to the humble eagerness of the inquiring soul? may not the heart of a child come back to that bewildered and world-encrusted soul? Alas! this is too much for Roman pride. He cannot in presence of this bound Jew acknowledge how little life has satisfied him. He finds the difficulty so many find in middle life of frankly showing that they have in their nature deeper desires than the successes of life satisfy. There is many a man who seals up his deeper instincts and does violence to his better nature because, having begun his life on worldly lines, he is too proud now to change, and chushes down, to his own eternal hurt, the stirrings of a better mind within him, and turns from the gentle whisperings that would fain bring eternal hope to his heart.

It is possible that Jesus by His question meant to suggest to Pilate the actual relation in which this present trial stood to His previous trial by Caiaphas. For nothing could more distinctly mark the baseness and malignity of the Jews than their manner of shifting ground when they brought Jesus before Pilate. The Sanhedrim had condemned Him, not for claiming to be King of the Jews, for that was not a capital offence, but for assuming Divine dignity. But that which in their eyes was a crime was none in the judgment of Roman law; it was useless to bring Him before Pilate and accuse Him of blasphemy. They therefore accused Him of assuming to be King of the Jews. Here, then, were the Jews "accusing Jesus before the Roman governor of that which, in the first place, they knew that Jesus denied in the sense in which they urged it, and which, in the next place, had the charge been true, would have been so far from a crime in their eyes that it would have been popular with the whole nation."

But as Pilate might very naturally misunderstand the character of the claim made by the accused, Jesus in a few words gives him clearly to understand that the kingdom He sought to establish could not come into collision with that which Pilate represented: "My kingdom is not of this world." The most convincing proof had been given of the spiritual character of the kingdom in the fact that Jesus did not allow the sword to be used in forwarding His claims. "If My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My kingdom not from hence." This did not quite satisfy Pilate. He thought that still some mystery of danger might lurk behind the words of Jesus. There was nothing more acutely dreaded by the early emperors than secret societies. It might be some such association Jesus intended to form. To allow such a society to gain influence in his province would be a gross oversight on Pilate's



part. He therefore seizes upon the apparent admission of Jesus and pushes Him further with the question, "Thou art a king then?" But the answer of Jesus removes all fear from the mind of His judge. He claims only to be a king of the truth, attracting to Himself all who are drawn by a love of truth. This was enough for Pilate. "Aletheia" was a country beyond his jurisdiction, a Utopia which could not injure the Empire. "Tush!" he says, "what is Aletheia? Why speak to me of ideal worlds? What concern have I with provinces that can yield no tribute and offer no armed resistance?"

Pilate, convinced of the innocence of Jesus, makes several attempts to save Him. All these attempts failed, because, instead of at once and decidedly proclaiming His innocence and demanding His acquittal, he sought at the same time to propitiate His accusers. One generally expects from a Roman governor some knowledge of men and some fearlessness in his use of that knowledge. Pilate shows neither. His first step in dealing with the accusers of Jesus is a fatal mistake. Instead of at once going to his judgment-seat and pronouncing authoritatively the acquittal of the Prisoner, and clearing his court of all riotously disposed persons, he in one breath declared Jesus innocent and proposed to treat Him as guilty, offering to release Him as a boon to the Jews. A weaker proposal could scarcely have been made. There was nothing, absolutely nothing, to induce the Jews to accept it, but in making it he showed a disposition to treat with them—a disposition they did not fail to make abundant use of in the succeeding scenes of this disgraceful day. This first departure from justice lowered him to their own level and removed the only bulwark he had against their insolence and blood-thirstiness. Had he acted as any upright judge would have acted and at once put his Prisoner beyond reach of their hatred, they would have shrunk like cowed wild beasts; but his first concession put him in their power, and from this point onwards there is exhibited one of the most lamentable spectacles in history, —a man in power tossed like a ball between his convictions and his fears; a Roman not without a certain doggedness and cynical hardness that often pass for strength of character, but held up here to view as a sample of the weakness that results from the vain attempt to satisfy both what is bad and what is good in us.

His second attempt to save Jesus from death was more unjust and as futile as the first. He scourges the Prisoner whose innocence he had himself declared, possibly under the idea that if nothing was confessed by Jesus under this torture it might convince the Jews of His innocence, but more probably under the impression that they might be satisfied when they saw Jesus bleeding and fainting from the scourge. The Roman scourge was a barbarous instrument, its heavy thongs being loaded with metal and inlaid with bone, every cut of which tore away the flesh. But if Pilate fancied that when the Jews saw this lacerated form they would pity and relent, he greatly mistook the men he had to do with. He failed to take into account the common principle that when you have wrongfully injured a man you hate him all the more. Many a man becomes a murderer, not by premeditation, but having struck a first blow and seeing his victim in agony he cannot bear that that eye should live to reproach him and that tongue to

upbraid him with his cruelty. So it was here. The people were infuriated by the sight of the innocent, un murmuring Sufferer whom they had thus mangled. They cannot bear that such an object be left to remind them of their barbarity, and with one fierce yell of fury they cry, "Crucify Him, crucify Him."\*

A third time Pilate refused to be the instrument of their inhuman and unjust rage, and flung the Prisoner on their hands: "Take Him yourselves, and crucify Him: for I find no crime in Him." But when the Jews answered that by their law He ought to die, because "He made Himself the Son of God," Pilate was again seized with dread, and withdrew his Prisoner for the fourth time into the palace. Already he had remarked in His demeanour a calm superiority which made it seem quite possible that this extraordinary claim might be true. The books he had read at school and the poems he had heard since he grew up had told stories of how the gods had sometimes come down and dwelt with men. He had long since discarded such beliefs as mere fictions. Still, there was something in the bearing of this Prisoner before him that awakened the old impression, that possibly this single planet with its visible population was not the whole universe, that there might be some other unseen region out of which Divine beings looked down upon earth with pity, and from which they might come and visit us on some errand of love. With anxiety written on his face and heard in his tone he asks, "Whence art Thou?" How near does this man always seem to be to breaking through the thin veil and entering with illumined vision into the spiritual world, the world of truth and right and God! Would not a word now from Jesus have given him entrance? Would not the repetition of the solemn affirmation of His divinity which He had given to the Sanhedrim have been the one thing wanted in Pilate's case, the one thing to turn the scale in the favour of Jesus? At first sight it might seem so; but so it seemed not to the Lord. He preserves an unbroken silence to the question on which Pilate seems to hang in an earnest suspense. And certainly this silence is by no means easy to account for. Shall we say that He was acting out His own precept, "Give not that which is holy to dogs"? Shall we say that He who knew what was in man saw that though Pilate was for the moment alarmed and in earnest, yet there was beneath that earnestness an ineradicable vacillation? It is very possible that the treatment He had received at Pilate's hand had convinced Him that Pilate would eventually yield to the Jews; and what need, then, of protracting the process? No man who has any dignity and self-respect will make declarations about his character which he sees will do no good: no man is bound to be at the beck of every one to answer accusations they may bring against him; by doing so he will often only involve himself in miserable, petty wranglings, and profit no one. Jesus therefore was not going to make revelations about Himself which He saw would only make Him once again a shuttlecock driven between the two contending parties.

Besides—and this probably is the main reason of the silence—Pilate was now forgetting altogether the relation between himself and his Pris-

\* The cry, according to the best reading, was simply "Crucify, crucify," or, as it might be rendered, "The cross, the cross."



oner. Jesus had been accused before him on a definite charge which he had found to be baseless. He ought therefore to have released Him. This new charge of the Jews was one of which Pilate could not take cognisance; and of this Jesus reminds him by His silence. Jesus might have made influence for Himself by working upon the superstition of Pilate; but this was not to be thought of.

Offended at His silence, Pilate exclaims: "Speakest Thou not unto me? Knowest Thou not that I have power to release Thee, and have power to crucify Thee?" Here was an unwonted kind of prisoner who would not curry favour with His judge. But instead of entreating Pilate to use this power in His favour Jesus replies: "Thou wouldest have no power against Me, except it were given thee from above; therefore he that delivered Me unto thee hath greater sin." Pilate's office was the ordinance of God, and therefore his judgments should express the justice and will of God; and it was this which made the sin of Caiaphas and the Jews so great: they were making use of a Divine ordinance to serve their own God-resisting purposes. Had Pilate been a mere irresponsible executioner their sin would have been sufficiently heinous; but in using an official who is God's representative of law, order, and justice to fulfil their own wicked and unjust designs they recklessly prostitute God's ordinance of justice and involve themselves in a darker criminality.

More impressed than ever by this powerful statement falling from the lips of a man weakened by the scourging, Pilate makes one more effort to save Him. But now the Jews play their last card and play it successfully. "If thou release this man, thou art not Cæsar's friend." To lay himself open to a charge of treason or neglect of the interests of Cæsar was what Pilate could not risk. At once his compassion for the Prisoner, his sense of justice, his apprehensions, his proud unwillingness to let the Jews have their way, are overcome by his fear of being reported to the most suspicious of emperors. He prepared to give his judgment, taking his place on the official seat, which stood on a tessellated pavement, called in Aramaic "Gabbatha," from its elevated position in sight of the crowds standing outside. Here, after venting his spleen in the weak sarcasm "Shall I crucify your King?" he formally hands over his Prisoner to be crucified. This decision was at last come to, as John records, about noon of the day which prepared for and terminated in the Paschal Supper.

Pilate's vacillation receives from John a long and careful treatment. Light is shed upon it, and upon the threat which forced him at last to make up his mind, from the account which Philo gives of his character and administration. "With a view," he says, "to vex the Jews, Pilate hung up some gilt shields in the palace of Herod, which they judged a profanation of the holy city, and therefore petitioned him to remove them. But when he steadfastly refused to do so, for he was a man of very inflexible disposition and very merciless as well as very obstinate, they cried out, 'Beware of causing a tumult, for Tiberius will not sanction this act of yours; and if you say that he will, we ourselves will go to him and supplicate your master.'" This threat exasperated Pilate in the highest degree, as he feared that they might really go to the Emperor

and impeach him with respect to other acts of his government—his corruption, his acts of insolence, his habit of insulting people, his cruelty, his continual murders of people untried and uncondemned, and his never-ending and gratuitous and most grievous inhumanity. Therefore, being exceedingly angry, and being at all times a man of most ferocious passions, he was in great perplexity, neither venturing to take down what he had once set up nor wishing to do anything which could be acceptable to his subjects, and yet fearing the anger of Tiberius. And those who were in power among the Jews, seeing this and perceiving that he was inclined to change his mind as to what he had done, but that he was not willing to be thought to do so, appealed to the Emperor.\* This sheds light on the whole conduct of Pilate during this trial—his fear of the Emperor, his hatred of the Jews and desire to annoy them, his vacillation and yet obstinacy; and we see that the mode the Sanhedrim now adopted with Pilate was their usual mode of dealing with him: now, as always, they saw his vacillation, disguised as it was by fierceness of speech, and they knew he must yield to the threat of complaining to Cæsar.

The very thing that Pilate feared, and to avoid which he sacrificed the life of our Lord, came upon him six years after. Complaints against him were sent to the Emperor; he was deposed from his office, and so stripped of all that made life endurable to him, that, "wearied with misfortunes," he died by his own hand. Perhaps we are tempted to think Pilate's fate severe; we naturally sympathise with him; there are so many traits of character which show well when contrasted with the unprincipled violence of the Jews. We are apt to say he was weak rather than wicked, forgetting that moral weakness is just another name for wickedness, or rather is that which makes a man capable of any wickedness. The man we call wicked has his one or two good points at which we can be sure of him. The weak man we are never sure of. That he has good feelings is nothing, for we do not know what may be brought to overcome these feelings. That he has right convictions is nothing; we may have thought he was convinced to-day, but to-morrow his old fears have prevailed. And who is the weak man who is thus open to every kind of influence? He is the man who is not single-minded. The single-minded worldly man makes no pretension to holiness, but sees at a glance that that interferes with his real object; the single-minded, godly man has only truth and righteousness for his aim, and does not listen to fears or hopes suggested by the world. But the man who attempts to gratify both his conscience and his evil or weak feelings, the man who fancies he can so manipulate the events of his life as to secure his own selfish ends as well as the great ends of justice and righteousness, will often be in as great a perplexity as Pilate, and will come to as ruinous if not to so appalling an end.

In this would-be equitable Roman governor, exhibiting his weakness to the people and helplessly exclaiming, "What shall I do with Jesus which is called Christ?"\* we see the predicament of many who are suddenly confronted with Christ—disconcerted as they are to have such a prisoner thrown on their hands, and wishing that anything had turned up rather than a necessity

\* Philo, "Ad Caium," c. 38.

† Mark xv. 12.



for answering this question, What shall I do with Jesus? Probably when Jesus was led by the vacillating Pilate out and in, back and forward, examined and re-examined, acquitted, scourged, defended, and abandoned to His enemies, some pity for His judge mingled with other feelings in His mind. This was altogether too great a case for a man like Pilate, fit enough to try men like Barabbas and to keep the turbulent Galileans in order. What unhappy fate, he might afterwards think, had brought this mysterious Prisoner to his judgment-seat, and for ever linked in such unhappy relation his name to the Name that is above every name? Never with more disastrous results did the resistless stream of time bring together and clash together the earthen and the brazen pitcher. Never before had such a prisoner stood at any judge's bar. Roman governors and emperors had been called to doom or to acquit kings and potentates of all degrees and to determine every kind of question, forbidding this or that religion, extirpating old dynasties, altering old landmarks, making history in its largest dimensions; but Pilate was summoned to adjudicate in a case that seemed of no consequence at all, yet really eclipsed in its importance all other cases put together.

Nothing could save Pilate from the responsibility attaching to his connection with Jesus, and nothing can save us from the responsibility of determining what judgment we are to pronounce on this same Person. It may seem to us an unfortunate predicament we are placed in; we may resent being called upon to do anything decided in a matter where our convictions so conflict with our desires; we may inwardly protest against human life being obstructed and disturbed by choices that are so pressing and so difficult and with issues so incalculably serious. But second thoughts assure us that to be confronted with Christ is in truth far from being an unfortunate predicament, and that to be compelled to decisions which determine our whole after-course and allow fullest expression of our own will and spiritual affinities is our true glory. Christ stands patiently awaiting our decision, maintaining His inalienable majesty, but submitting Himself to every test we care to apply, claiming only to be the King of the truth by whom we are admitted into that sole eternal kingdom. It has come to be our turn, as it came to be Pilate's to decide upon His claims and to act upon our decision—to recognise that we men have to do, not merely with pleasure and place, with earthly rewards and relations, but above all with the truth, with that which gives eternal significance to all these present things, with the truth about human life, with the truth embodied for us in Christ's person and speaking intelligibly to us through His lips, with God manifest in the flesh. Are we to take part with Him when He calls us to glory and to virtue, to the truth and to eternal life, or, yielding to some present pressure the world puts upon us, attempt some futile compromise and so renounce our birth-right?

Could Pilate really persuade himself he made everything right with a basin of water and a theatrical transference of his responsibility to the Jews? Could he persuade himself that by merely giving up the contest he was playing the part of a judge and of a man? Could he persuade himself that the mere words, "I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man: see ye to it,"

altered his relation to the death of Christ? No doubt he did. There is nothing commoner than for a man to think himself forced when it is his own fear or wickedness that is his only compulsion. Would every man in Pilate's circumstances have felt himself forced to surrender Jesus to the Jews? Would even a Gallio or a Claudius Lysias have done so? But Pilate's past history made him powerless. Had he not feared exposure, he would have marched his cohort across the square and cleared it of the mob and defied the Sanhedrim. It was not because he thought the Jewish law had any true right to demand Christ's death, but merely because the Jews threatened to report him as conniving at rebellion, that he yielded Christ to them; and to seek to lay the blame on those who made it difficult to do the right thing was both unmanly and futile. The Jews were at least willing to take their share of the blame, dreadful in its results as that proved to be.

Fairly to apportion blame where there are two consenting parties to a wickedness is for us, in many cases, impossible; and what we have to do is to beware of shifting blame from ourselves to our circumstances or to other people. However galling it is to find ourselves mixed up with transactions which turn out to be shameful, or to discover that some vacillation or imbecility on our part has made us partakers in sin, it is idle and worse to wash our hands ostentatiously and try to persuade ourselves we have no guilt in the matter. The fact that we have been brought in contact with unjust, cruel, heartless, fraudulent, unscrupulous, worldly, passionate people may explain many of our sins, but it does not excuse them. Other people in our circumstances would not have done what we have done; they would have acted a stronger, manlier, more generous part. And if we have sinned, it only adds to our guilt and encourages our weakness to profess innocence now and transfer to some other party the disgrace that belongs to ourselves. Nothing short of physical compulsion can excuse wrong-doing.

The calmness and dignity with which Jesus passed through this ordeal, alone self-possessed, while all around Him were beside themselves, so impressed Pilate that he not only felt guilty in giving Him up to the Jews, but did not think it impossible that He might be the Son of God. But what is perhaps even more striking in this scene is the directness with which all these evil passions of men—fear, and self-interest, and injustice, and hate—are guided to an end fraught with blessing. Goodness finds in the most adverse circumstances material for its purposes. We are apt in such circumstances to despair and act as if there were never to be a triumph of goodness; but the little seed of good that one individual can contribute even by hopeful and patient submission is that which survives and produces good in perpetuity, while the passion and the hate and the worldliness cease. In so wild a scene what availed it, we might have said, that one Person kept His steadfastness and rose superior to the surrounding wickedness? But the event showed that it did avail. All the rest was scaffolding that fell away out of sight, and this solitary integrity remains as the enduring monument. In our measure we must pass through similar ordeals, times when it seems vain to contend, useless to hope. When all we have done seems to be lost, when our way is hid and



no further step is visible, when all the waves and billows of an ungodly world seem to threaten with extinction the little good we have cherished, then must we remember this calm, majestic Prisoner, bound in the midst of a frantic and blood-thirsty mob, yet superior to it because He was living in God.

## CHAPTER XX.

### MARY AT THE CROSS.

JOHN xix. 17-27.

IF we ask on what charge our Lord was condemned to die, the answer must be complex, not simple. Pilate indeed, in accordance with the usual custom, painted on a board the name and crime of the Prisoner, that all who could understand any of the three current languages might know who this was and why He was crucified. But in the case of Jesus the inscription was merely a ghastly jest on Pilate's part. It was the coarse retaliation of a proud man who found himself helpless in the hands of people he despised and hated. There was some relish to him in the crucifixion of Jesus when by his inscription he had turned it into an insult to the nation. A gleam of savage satisfaction for a moment lit up his gloomy face when he found that his taunt had told, and the chief priests came begging him to change what he had written.

Pilate from the first look he got of his Prisoner understood that he had before him quite another kind of person than the ordinary zealot, or spurious Messiah, or turbulent Galilean. Pilate knew enough of the Jews to feel sure that if Jesus had been plotting rebellion against Rome He would not have been informed against by the chief priests. Possibly he knew enough of what had been going on in his province to understand that it was precisely because Jesus would *not* allow Himself to be made a king in opposition to Rome that the Jews detested and accused Him. Possibly he saw enough of the relations of Jesus to the authorities to despise the abandoned malignity and baseness which could bring an innocent man to his bar and charge Him with what in their eyes was no crime at all and make the charge precisely because He was innocent of it.

Nominally, but only nominally, Jesus was crucified for sedition. If we pass, in search of the real charge, from Pilate's judgment-seat to the Sanhedrim, we get nearer to the truth. The charge on which He was in this court condemned was the charge of blasphemy. He was indeed examined as to His claims to be the Messiah, but it does not appear that they had any law on which He could have been condemned for such claims. They did not expect that the Messiah would be Divine in the proper sense. Had they done so, then any one falsely claiming to be the Messiah would thereby have falsely claimed to be Divine, and would therefore have been guilty of blasphemy. But it was not for claiming to be the Christ that Jesus was condemned; it was when He declared Himself to be the Son of God that the high priest rent His garments and declared Him guilty of blasphemy.

Now, of course it was very possible that many members of the Sanhedrim should sincerely believe that blasphemy had been uttered. The

unity of God was the distinctive creed of the Jew, that which had made his nation, and for any human lips to claim equality with the one infinite God was not to be thought of. It must have fallen upon their ears like a thunder-clap; they must have fallen back on their seats or started from them in horror when so awful a claim was made by the human figure standing bound before them. There were men among them who would have advocated His claim to be the Messiah, who believed Him to be a man sent from God; but not a voice could be raised in His defence when the claim to be Son of God in a Divine sense passed His lips. His best friends must have doubted and been disappointed, must have supposed He was confused by the events of the night, and could only await the issue in sorrow and wonder.

Was the Sanhedrim, then, to blame for condemning Jesus? They sincerely believed Him to be a blasphemer, and their law attached to the crime of blasphemy the punishment of death. It was in ignorance they did it; and knowing only what they knew, they could not have acted otherwise. Yes, that is true. But they were responsible for their ignorance. Jesus had given abundant opportunity to the nation to understand Him and to consider His claims. He did not burst upon the public with an uncertified demand to be accepted as Divine. He lived among those who were instructed in such matters; and though in some respects He was very different from the Messiah they had looked for, a little openness of mind and a little careful inquiry would have convinced them He was sent from God. And had they acknowledged this, had they allowed themselves to obey their instincts and say, This is a true man, a man who has a message for us—had they not sophisticated their minds with quibbling literalities, they would have owned His superiority and been willing to learn, from Him. And had they shown any disposition to learn, Jesus was too wise a teacher to hurry them and overleap needed steps in conviction and experience. He would have been slow to extort from any a confession of His divinity until they had reached the belief of it by the working of their own minds. Enough for Him that they were willing to see the truth about Him and to declare it as they saw it. The great charge He brought against His accusers was that they did violence to their own convictions. The uneasy suspicions they had about His dignity they suppressed; the attraction they at times felt to His goodness they resisted; the duty to inquire patiently into His claims they refused. And thus their darkness deepened, until in their culpable ignorance they committed the greatest of crimes.

From all this, then, two things are apparent. First, that Jesus was condemned on the charge of blasphemy—condemned because He made Himself equal with God. His own words, pronounced upon oath, administered in the most solemn manner, were understood by the Sanhedrim to be an explicit claim to be the Son of God in a sense in which no man could without blasphemy claim to be so. He made no explanation of His words when He saw how they were understood. And yet, were He not truly Divine, there was no one who could have been more shocked than Himself by such a claim. He understood, if any man did, the majesty of God; He knew better than any other the differ-



ence between the Holy One and His sinful creatures; His whole life was devoted to the purpose of revealing to men the unseen God. What could have seemed to Him more monstrous, what could more effectually have stultified the work and aim of His life, than that He, being a man, should allow Himself to be taken for God? When Pilate told Him that He was charged with claiming to be a king, He explained to Pilate in what sense He did so, and removed from Pilate's mind the erroneous supposition this claim had given birth to. Had the Sanhedrim cherished an erroneous idea of what was involved in His claim to be the Son of God, He must also have explained to them in what sense He made it, and have removed from their minds the impression that He was claiming to be properly Divine. He did not make any explanation; He allowed them to suppose He claimed to be the Son of God in a sense which would be blasphemous in a mere man. So that if any one gathers from this that Jesus was Divine in a sense in which it were blasphemy for any other man to claim to be, he gathers a legitimate, even a necessary, inference.

Another reflection which is forced upon the reader of this narrative is, that disaster waits upon stifled inquiry. The Jews honestly convicted Christ as a blasphemer because they had dishonestly denied Him to be a good man. The little spark which would have grown into a blazing light they put their heel upon. Had they at the first candidly considered Him as He went about doing good and making no claims, they would have become attached to Him as His disciples did, and, like them, would have been led on to a fuller knowledge of the meaning of His person and work. It is these beginnings of conviction we are so apt to abuse. It seems so much smaller a crime to kill an infant that has but once drawn breath than to kill a man of lusty life and busy in his prime; but the one, if fairly dealt with, will grow to be the other. And while we think very little of stifling the scarcely breathed whisperings in our own heart and mind, we should consider that it is only such whisperings that can bring us to the loudly proclaimed truth. If we do not follow up suggestions, if we do not push inquiry to discovery, if we do not value the smallest grain of truth as a seed of unknown worth and count it wicked to kill even the smallest truth in our souls, we can scarcely hope at any time to stand in the full light of reality and rejoice in it. To accept Christ as Divine may be at present beyond us; to acknowledge Him as such would simply be to perjure ourselves; but can we not acknowledge Him to be a true man, a good man, a teacher certainly sent from God? If we do know Him to be all that and more, then have we thought this out to its results? Knowing Him to be a unique figure among men, have we perceived what this involves? Admitting Him to be the best of men, do we love Him, imitate Him, ponder His words, long for His company? Let us not treat Him as if He were non-existent because He is not as yet to us all that He is to some. Let us beware of dismissing *all* conviction about Him because there are some convictions spoken of by other people which we do not feel. It is better to deny Christ than to deny our own convictions; for to do so is to extinguish the only light we have, and to expose ourselves to all disaster. The man who has put out his own

eyes cannot plead blindness in extenuation of his not seeing the lights and running the richly laden ship on the rocks.

Guided by the perfect taste which reverence gives, John says very little about the actual crucifixion. He shows us indeed the soldiers sitting down beside the little heap of clothes they had stripped off our Lord, parcelling them out, perhaps already assuming them as their own wear. For the clothes by which our Lord had been known these soldiers would now carry into unknown haunts of drunkenness and sin, emblems of our ruthless, thoughtless desecration of our Lord's name with which we outwardly clothe ourselves and yet carry into scenes the most uncongenial. John, writing long after the event, seems to have no heart to record the poor taunts with which the crowd sought to increase the suffering of the Crucified, and force home upon His spirit a sense of the desolation and ignominy of the cross. Gradually the crowd wearies and scatters, and only here and there a little whispering group remains. The day waxes to its greatest heat; the soldiers lie or stand silent; the centurion sits motionless on his motionless, statue-like horse; the stillness of death falls upon the scene, only broken at intervals by a groan from one or other of the crosses. Suddenly through this silence there sound the words, "Woman, behold thy son: son, behold thy mother,"—words which remind us that all this dreadful scene which makes the heart of the stranger bleed has been witnessed by the mother of the Crucified. As the crowd had broken up from around the crosses, the little group of women whom John had brought to the spot edged their way nearer and nearer till they were quite close to Him they loved, though their lips apparently were sealed by their helplessness to minister consolation.

These hours of suffering, as the sword was slowly driven through Mary's soul, according to Simeon's word, who shall measure? Hers was not a hysterical, noisy sorrow, but quiet and silent. There was nothing wild, nothing extravagant, in it. There was no sign of feminine weakness, no outcry, no fainting, no wild gesture of uncontrollable anguish, nothing to show that she was the exceptional mourner and that there was no sorrow like unto her sorrow. Her reverence for the Lord saved her from disturbing His last moments. She stood and saw the end. She saw His head lifted in anguish and falling on His breast in weakness, and she could not gently take it in her hands and wipe the sweat of death from His brow. She saw His pierced hands and feet become numbed and livid, and might not chafe them. She saw Him gasp with pain as cramp seized part after part of His outstretched body, and she could not change His posture nor give liberty to so much as one of His hands. And she had to suffer this in profound desolation of spirit. Her life seemed to be buried at the cross. To the mourning there often seems nothing left but to die with the dying. One heart has been the light of life, and now that light is quenched. What significance, what motive, can life have any more? \* We valued no past where that heart was not; we had no future which was not concentrated upon it or in which it had no part. But the absorption of common love must have been far surpassed in Mary's case. None had been blessed with such a love as hers. And now none estimated as she did the spotless innocence

\* See Faber's "Bethlehem."



of the Victim; none could know as she knew the depth of His goodness, the unfathomable and unconquerable love He had for all; and none could estimate as she the ingratitude of those whom He had healed and fed and taught and comforted with such unselfish devotedness. She knew that there was none like Him, and that if any could have brought blessing to this earth it was He, and there she saw Him nailed to the cross, the end actually reached. We know not if in that hour she thought of the trial of Abraham; we know not whether she allowed herself to think at all, whether she did not merely suffer as a mother losing her son; but certainly it must have been with intensest eagerness she heard herself once more addressed by Him.

Mary was commended to John as the closest friend of Jesus. These two would be in fullest sympathy, both being devoted to Him. It was perhaps an indication to those who were present, and through them to all, that nothing is so true a bond between human hearts as sympathy with Christ. We may admire nature, and yet have many points of antipathy to those who also admire nature. We may like the sea, and yet feel no drawing to some persons who also like the sea. We may be fond of mathematics, and yet find that this brings us into a very partial and limited sympathy with mathematicians. Nay, we may even admire and love the same person as others do, and yet disagree about other matters. But if Christ is chosen and loved as He ought to be, that love is a determining affection which rules all else within us, and brings us into abiding sympathy with all who are similarly governed and moulded by that love. That love indicates a certain past experience and guarantees a special type of character. It is the characteristic of the subjects of the kingdom of God.

This care for His mother in His last moments is of a piece with all the conduct of Jesus. Throughout His life there is an entire absence of anything pompous or excited. Everything is simple. The greatest acts in human history He does on the highway, in the cottage, among a group of beggars in an entry. The words which have thrilled the hearts and mended the lives of myriads were spoken casually as He walked with a few friends. Rarely did He even gather a crowd. There was no advertising, no admission by ticket, no elaborate arrangements for a set speech at a set hour. Those who know human nature will know what to think of this unstudied ease and simplicity, and will appreciate it. The same characteristic appears here. He speaks as if He were not an object of contemplation; there is an entire absence of self-consciousness, of ostentatious suggestion that He is now making atonement for the sins of the world. He speaks to His mother and cares for her as He might have done had they been in the home at Nazareth together. One despairs of ever learning such a lesson, or indeed of seeing others learn it. How like an ant-hill is the world of men! What a fever and excitement! what a fuss and fret! what an ado! what a sending of messengers, and calling of meetings, and raising of troops, and magnifying of little things! what an absence of calmness and simplicity! But this at least we *may* learn—that no duties, however important, can excuse us for not caring for our relatives. They are deceived people who spend all their charity and sweetness out of doors, who have a reputation for godliness, and are to be seen in the

forefront of this or that Christian work, but who are sullen or imperious or quick-tempered or indifferent at home. If while saving a world Jesus had leisure to care for His mother, there are no duties so important as to prevent a man from being considerate and dutiful at home.

Those who witnessed the hurried events of the morning when Christ was crucified might be pardoned if their minds were filled with what their eyes saw, and if little but the outward objects were discernible to them. We are in different circumstances, and may be expected to look more deeply into what was happening. To see only the mean scheming and wicked passions of men, to see nothing but the pathetic suffering of an innocent and misjudged person, to take our interpretation of these rapid and disorderly events from the casual spectators without striving to discover God's meaning in them, would indeed be a flagrant instance of what has been called "reading God in a prose translation," rendering His clearest and most touching utterance to this world in the language of callous Jews or barbarous Roman soldiers. Let us open our ear to God's own meaning in these events, and we hear Him uttering to us all His Divine love, and in the most forcible and touching tones. These are the events in which His deepest purposes and tenderest love find utterance. How He is striving to win His way to us to convince us of the reality of sin and of salvation! To be mere spectators of these things is to convict ourselves of being superficial or strangely callous. Scarcely any criminal is executed but we all have our opinion on the justice or injustice of his condemnation. We may well be expected to form our judgment in *this* case, and to take action upon it. If Jesus was unjustly condemned, then we as well as His contemporaries have to do with His claims. If these claims were true, we have something more to do than merely to say so.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE CRUCIFIXION.

JOHN xix. 23, 24, 28-37.

POSSIBLY the account which John gives of the Crucifixion is somewhat spoiled to some readers by his frequent reference to apparently insignificant coincidences with Old Testament prophecy. It is, however, to be remembered that John was himself a Jew, and was writing for a public which laid great stress on such literal fulfilments of prophecy. The wording of the narrative might lead us to suppose that John believed Jesus to be intentionally fulfilling prophecy. Where he says, "After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst," it might be fancied that John supposed that Jesus said "I thirst" in order that Scripture might be fulfilled. This is, of course, to misconceive the Evangelist's meaning. Such a fulfilment would have been fictitious, not real. But John believed that in each smallest act and word of our Lord the will of God was finding expression, a will which had long since been uttered in the form of Old Testament prophecy. In these hours of dismay, when Jesus was arrested, tried, and crucified before the eyes of His disciples, they tried to be-



lieve that this was God's will; and long afterwards, when they had found time to think, and when they had to deal with men who felt the difficulty of believing in a crucified Saviour, they pointed to the fact that even in small particulars the sufferings of the Messiah had been anticipated and were to be expected.

The first instance of this which John cites is the manner in which the soldiers dealt with His clothes. After fixing Jesus to the cross and raising it, the four men who were detailed to this service sat down to watch. Such was the custom, lest friends should remove the crucified before death supervened. Having settled themselves for this watch, they proceeded to divide the clothes of Jesus among them. This also was customary among the Romans, as it has been everywhere usual that the executioners should have as their perquisite some of the articles worn by the condemned. The soldiers parted the garments of Jesus among them, each of the four taking what he needed or fancied—turban, shoes, girdle, or under-coat; while for the large seamless plaid that was worn over all they cast lots, being unwilling to tear it. All this fulfilled an old prediction to the letter. The reason why it had been spoken of was that it formed a weighty element in the suffering of the crucified. Few things can make a dying man feel more desolate than to overhear those who sit round his bed already disposing of his effects, counting him a dead man who can no longer use the apparatus of the living, and congratulating themselves on the profit they make by his death. How furious have old men sometimes been made by any betrayal of eagerness on the part of their heirs! Even to calculate on a man's death and make arrangements for filling his place is justly esteemed indecorous and unfeeling. To ask a sick man for anything he has been accustomed to use, and must use again if he recovers health, is an act which only an indelicate nature could be guilty of. It was a cruel addition, then, to our Lord's suffering to see these men heartlessly dividing among them all He had to leave. It forced on His mind the consciousness of their utter indifference to His feelings. His clothes were of some little value to them: He Himself of no value. Nothing could have made Him feel more separated from the world of the living—from their hopes, their ways, their life—as if already He were dead and buried.

This distribution of His clothes was also calculated to make Him intensely sensible of the reality and finality of death. Jesus knew He was to rise again; but let us not forget that Jesus was human, liable to the same natural fears, and moved by the same circumstances as ourselves. He knew He was to rise again; but how much easier had it been to believe in that future life had all the world been expecting Him to rise! But here were men showing that they very well knew He would never again need these clothes of His.

A comparison of this narrative with the other Gospels brings out that the words "I thirst" must have been uttered immediately after the fearful cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" For when the soldier was mercifully pressing the sponge steeped in vinegar to His parched lips, some of the bystanders called out, "Let be; let us see whether Elias will come to save Him," referring to the words of Jesus, which they had not rightly understood. And

this expression of bodily suffering is proof that the severity of the spiritual struggle was over. So long as that deep darkness covered His spirit He was unconscious of His body; but with the agonised cry to His Father the darkness had passed away; the very uttering of His desolation had disburdened His spirit, and at once the body asserts itself. As in the wilderness at the opening of His career He had been for many days so agitated and absorbed in mind that He did not once think of food, but no sooner was the spiritual strife ended than the keen sensation of hunger was the first thing to demand His attention, so here His sense of thirst is the sign that His spirit was now at rest.

The last act of the Crucifixion, in which John sees the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy, is the omission in the case of Jesus of the common mode of terminating the life of the crucified by breaking the legs with an iron bar. Jesus being already dead, this was considered unnecessary; but as possibly He might only have swooned, and as the bodies were immediately taken down, one of the soldiers makes sure of His death by a lance thrust. Medical men and scholars have largely discussed the causes which might produce the outflow of blood and water which John affirms followed this spear thrust, and various causes have been assigned. But it is a point which has apparently only physiological interest. John indeed follows up his statement of what he saw with an unusually strong asseveration that what he says is true. "He that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe." But this strong asseveration is introduced, not for the sake of persuading us to believe that water as well as blood flowed from the lance wound, but for the sake of certifying the actual death of Jesus. The soldiers who had charge of the execution discharged their duty. They made sure that the Crucified was actually dead. And John's reason for insisting on this and appending to his statement so unusual a confirmation is sufficiently obvious. He was about to relate the Resurrection, and he knows that a true resurrection must be preceded by a real death. If he has no means of establishing the actual death, he has no means of establishing the Resurrection. And therefore for the first and only time in his narrative he departs from simple narration, and most solemnly asseverates that he is speaking the truth and was an eyewitness of the things he relates.

The emphatic language John uses regarding the certainty of Christ's death is, then, only an index to the importance he attached to the Resurrection. He was aware that whatever virtue lay in the life and death of Christ, this virtue became available for men through the Resurrection. Had Jesus not risen again, all the hopes His friends had cherished regarding Him would have been buried in His tomb. Had He not risen, His words would have been falsified and doubt thrown upon all His teaching. Had He not risen, His claims would have been unintelligible and His whole appearance and life a mystery suggesting a greatness not borne out—different from other men, yet subject to the same defeat. Had He not risen, the very significance of His life would have been obscured; and if for a time a few friends cherished His memory in private, His name would have fallen back to an obscure, possibly a dishonoured, place.



It is not at once obvious what we are to make of the physical sufferings of Christ. Certainly it is very easy to make too much of them. For, in the first place, they were very brief and confined to one part of His life. He was exempt from the prolonged weakness and misery which many persons endure throughout life. Born, as we may reasonably suppose, with a healthy and vigorous constitution, carefully reared by the best of mothers, finding a livelihood in His native village and in His father's business, His lot was very different from the frightful doom of thousands who are born with diseased and distorted body, in squalid and wicked surroundings, and who never see through the misery that encompasses them to any happy or hopeful life. And even after He left the shelter and modest comforts of the Nazareth home His life was spent in healthy conditions, and often in scenes of much beauty and interest. Free to move about through the country as He pleased, passing through vineyards and olive-groves and cornfields, talking pleasantly with His little company of attached friends or addressing large audiences, He lived an open-air life of a kind in which of necessity there must have been a great deal of physical pleasure and healthful enjoyment. At times He had not where to lay His head; but this is mentioned rather as a symptom of His want of friends than as implying any serious physical suffering in a climate like that of Palestine. And the suffering at the close of His life, though extreme, was brief, and was not to be compared in its cruelty to what many of His followers have endured for His sake.

Two things, however, the physical sufferings of Christ do secure: they call attention to His devotedness, and they illustrate His willing sacrifice of self. They call attention to His devotedness and provoke a natural sympathy and tenderness of spirit in the beholder, qualities which are much needed in our consideration of Christ. Had He passed through life entirely exempt from suffering, in high position, with every want eagerly ministered to, untouched by any woe, and at last passing away by a painless decease, we should find it much harder to respond to His appeal or even to understand His work. Nothing so quickly rivets our attention and stirs our sympathy as physical pain. We feel disposed to listen to the demands of one who is suffering, and if we have a lurking suspicion that we are somehow responsible for that suffering and are benefited by it, then we are softened by a mingled pity, admiration, and shame, which is one of the fittest attitudes a human spirit can assume.

Besides, it is through the visible suffering we can read the willingness of Christ's self-surrender. It was always more difficult for Him to suffer than for us. We have no option: He might have rescued Himself at any moment. We, in suffering, have but to subdue our disposition to murmur and our sense of pain: He had to subdue what was much more obstinate—His consciousness that He might if He pleased abjure the life that involved pain. The strain upon His love for us was not once for all over when He became man. He Himself intimates, and His power of working miracles proves, that at each point of His career He might have saved Himself from suffering, but would not.

When we ask ourselves what we are to make of these sufferings of Christ, we naturally seek

aid from the Evangelist and ask what he made of them. But on reading his narrative we are surprised to find so little comment or reflection interrupting the simple relation of facts. At first sight the narrative seems to flow uninterruptedly on, and to resemble the story which might be told of the closing scenes of an ordinary life terminating tragically. The references to Old Testament prophecy alone give us the clue to John's thoughts about the significance of this death. These references show us that he considered that in this public execution, conducted wholly by Roman soldiers, who could not read a word of Hebrew and did not know the name of the God of the Jews, there was being fulfilled the purpose of God towards which all previous history had been tending. That purpose of God in the history of man was accomplished when Jesus breathed His last upon the cross. The cry "It is finished" was not the mere gasp of a worn-out life; it was not the cry of satisfaction with which a career of pain and sorrow is terminated: it was the deliberate utterance of a clear consciousness on the part of God's appointed Revealer that now all had been done that could be done to make God known to men and to identify Him with men. God's purpose had ever been one and indivisible. Declared to men in various ways, a hint here, a broad light there, now by a gleam of insight in the mind of a prophet, now by a deed of heroism in king or leader, through rude symbolic contrivances and through the tenderest of human affections and the highest human thoughts, God had been making men ever more and more sensible that His one purpose was to come closer and closer into fellowship with them and to draw them into a perfect harmony with Him. Forgiveness and deliverance from sin were provided for them, knowledge of God's law and will that they might learn to know and to serve Him—all these were secured when Jesus cried, "It is finished."

Why, then, does John just at this point of the life of Jesus see so many evidences of the fulfilment of all prophecy? Need we ask? Is not suffering that which is the standing problem of life? Is it not grief and trouble and sorrow which press home upon our minds most convincingly the reality of sin? Is it not death which is common to all men of every age, race, station, or experience? And must not One who identifies Himself with men identify Himself in this, if in anything? It is the cross of Jesus that stands before the mind of John as the completion of that process of incarnation, of entrance into human experience, which fills his Gospel; it is here he sees the completion and finishing of that identification of God with man he has been exhibiting throughout. The union of God with man is perfected when God submits Himself to the last darkest experience of man. To some it seems impossible such a thing should be; it seems either unreal, unthought-out verbiage, or blasphemy. To John, after he had seen and pondered the words and the life of Jesus, all his ideas of the Father were altered. He learned that God is love, and that to infinite love, while there remains one thing to give, one step of nearness to the loved to be taken, love has not its perfect expression. It came upon him as a revelation that God was really in the world. Are we to refuse to God any true participation in the strife between good and evil? Is God to be kept out of all reality? Is He merely to look



on, to see how His creatures will manage, how this and that man will bear himself heroically, but Himself a mere name, a lay figure crowned but otiose, doing nothing to merit His crown, doing nothing to warrant the worship of untold worlds, commanding others to peril themselves and put all to the proof, but Himself well out of range of all risk, of all conflict, of all tragedy? How can we hope to love a God we remove to a throne remote and exalted, from which He looks down on human life, and cannot look on it as we do from the inside! Is God to be only a dramatist, who arranges thrilling situations for others to pass through, and assigns to each the part he is to play, but Himself has no real interests at stake and no actual entrance into the world of feeling, of hope, of trial?

And if a Divine Person were in the course of things to come into this human world, to enter into our actual experiences, and feel and bear the actual strain that we bear, it is obvious He must come incognito—not distinguished by such marks as would bring the world to His feet, and make an ordinary human life and ordinary human trials impossible to Him. When sovereigns wish to ascertain for themselves how their subjects live, they do not proclaim their approach and send in advance an army of protection, provision, and display; they do not demand to be met by the authorities of each town, and to be received by artificial, stereotyped addresses, and to be led from one striking sight to another and from one comfortable palace to another: but they leave their robes of state behind them, they send no messenger in advance, and they mix as one of the crowd with the crowd, exposed to whatever abuse may be going, and living for the time on the same terms as the rank and file. This has been done often in sport, sometimes as matter of policy or of interest, but never as the serious method of understanding and lifting the general habits and life of the people. Christ came among us, not as a kind of Divine adventure to break the tedium of eternal glory, nor merely to make personal observations on His own account, but as the requisite and only means available for bringing the fulness of Divine help into practical contact with mankind. But as all filth and squalor are hidden away in the slums from the senses of the king, so that if he is to penetrate into the burrows of the criminal classes and see the wretchedness of the poor, he must do it incognito, so if Christ sought to bring Divine mercy and might within reach of the vilest, He must visit their haunts and make Himself acquainted with their habits.

It is also obvious that such a Person would concern Himself not with art or literature, not with inventions and discoveries, not even with politics and government and social problems, but with that which underlies all these and for which all these exist—with human character and human conduct, with man's relation to God. It is with the very root of human life He concerns Himself.

The sufferings of Christ, then, were mainly inward, and were the necessary result of His perfect sympathy with men. That which has made the cross the most significant of earthly symbols, and which has invested it with so wonder-

ful a power to subdue and purify the heart, is not the fact that it involved the keenest physical pain, but that it exhibits Christ's perfect and complete identification with sinful men. It is this that humbles us and brings us to a right mind towards God and towards sin, that here we see the innocent Son of God involved in suffering and undergoing a shameful death through our sin. It was His sympathy with men which brought Him into this world, and it was the same sympathy which laid Him open to suffering throughout His life. The mother suffers more in the illness of a child than in her own; the shame of wrong-doing is often more keenly felt by a parent or friend than by the perpetrator himself.

If Paul's enthusiasm and devoted life for man made him truly say, "Who is weak, and I am not weak?" who shall measure the burden Christ bore from day to day in the midst of a sinning and suffering world? With a burning zeal for God, He was plunged into an arctic region where thick-ribbed ice of indifference met His warmth; consumed with devotion to God's purposes, He saw everywhere around Him ignorance, carelessness, self-seeking, total misunderstanding of what the world is for; linked to men with a love which irrepressibly urged Him to seek the highest good for all, He was on all hands thwarted; dying to see men holy and pure and godly, He everywhere found them weak, sinful, gross. It was this which made Him a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief—loving God and man with a love which was the chief element in His being, He could not get man reconciled to God. The mere sorrows of men doubtless affected Him more than they affect the most tender-hearted of men; but these sorrows—poverty, failure, sickness—would pass away and would even work for good, and so might well be borne. But when He saw men disregarding that which would save them from lasting sorrow; when He saw them giving themselves to trivialities with all their might, and doing nothing to recover their right relation to God, the spring of all good; when He saw them day by day defeating the purpose He lived to accomplish, and undoing the one only work He thought worth doing,—who can measure the burden of shame and grief He had to bear?

But it is not the suffering that does us good and brings us to God, but the love which underlies the suffering. The suffering convinces us that it is love which prompts Christ in all His life and death,—a love we may confidently trust to, since it is staggered at no difficulty or sacrifice; a love which aims at lifting and helping us; a love that embraces us, not seeking to accomplish only one thing for us, but necessarily, because it is love for us, seeking our good in all things. The power of earthly love, of the devotedness of mother, wife, or friend, we know;—we know what length such love will go: shall we then deny to God the happiness of sacrifice, the joy of love? Let it not enter our thoughts that He who is more closely related to us than any, and who will far less disclaim this relationship than any, does not love us in practical ways, and cannot fit us by His loving care for all that His holiness requires.



## CHAPTER XXII.

## THE RESURRECTION.

JOHN XX. 1-18.

JOHN gives no narrative of the Resurrection itself. He gives us what is much more valuable—a brief account of the manner in which he himself was convinced that a resurrection had taken place. His shy nature, his modest reluctance to put himself forward or use the first person in his narrative, does not prevent him from seeing that the testimony of one who, like himself, was an eyewitness of the facts, is invaluable; and nothing but additional interest and reality is added to his testimony by the varied periphrases with which he veils his identity, as “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” “that other disciple,” and so forth.

When Mary brought the startling intelligence that the tomb was empty, Peter and John instantly made for the spot at the top of their speed. The older man was left behind by John, but natural reverence kept him from entering the rocky chamber. He looked in, however, and to his surprise saw enough to convince him that the body had not been removed for interment elsewhere or to be cast out with the bodies of criminals. For there were the linen cloths in which He had been wrapped, carefully taken off and left behind. The impression made by this circumstance was confirmed when Peter came up, and they both entered and examined the tomb and made their inferences together. For then they saw still clearer evidence of deliberation; the napkin which had been tied round the head of the dead body was there in the tomb, and it was folded and laid in a place by itself, suggesting the leisurely manner of a person changing his clothes, and convincing them that the body had not been removed to be laid elsewhere. At once John was convinced that a resurrection had taken place; his Lord's words took a new meaning in this empty tomb. Standing and gazing at the folded cloths, the truth flashed into his mind: Jesus has Himself risen and disencumbered Himself from these wrappings, and has departed. It was enough for John: he visited no other tomb; he questioned no one; he made no inquiries of his friends in the high priest's household,—he went to his own house, filled with astonishment, with a thousand thoughts chasing one another through his mind, scarcely listening to Peter's voluble tongue, but convinced that Jesus lived.

This simple narrative will be to many minds more convincing than an accumulation of elaborate arguments. The style is that of an eyewitness. Each movement and every particular is before his eye: Mary bursting, breathless, and gasping out the startling news; the hasty springing up of the two men, and their rapid racing along the streets and out through the city gates to the garden; John standing panting at the rock-hewn sepulchre, his stooping down and peering into the dark chamber; Peter toiling up behind, but not hesitating a moment, and entering and gazing at this and that till the dumb articles tell their story; and the two men leave the sepulchre together, awed and convinced. And the eyewitness who thus graphically relates what he knew of that great morning adds with

the simplicity of a truthful nature, “he saw and believed”—believed then for the first time; for as yet they had not seen the significance of certain scriptures which now seemed plainly enough to point to this.

To some minds this simple narrative will, I say, carry home the conviction of the truth of the Resurrection more than any elaborate argumentation. There is an assuring matter-of-factness about it. Sceptics tell us that visions are common, and that excited people are easily deceived. But we have no word of visions here. John does not say he saw the Lord: he tells us merely of two fishermen running; of solid, commonplace articles such as grave-clothes; and of observations that could not possibly be mistaken, such as that the tomb was empty and that they two were in it. For my part I feel constrained to believe a narrative like this, when it tells me the grave was empty. No doubt their conclusion, that Jesus had Himself emptied the tomb, was not a certain but only a probable inference, and, had nothing more occurred, even John himself might not have continued so confident; but it is important to notice how John was convinced, not at all by visions or voices or embodied expectations of his own, but in the most matter-of-fact way and by the very same kind of observation that we use and rely upon in common life. And, moreover, more did occur; there followed just such results as were in keeping with so momentous an event.

One of these immediately occurred. Mary, exhausted with her rapid carrying of the news to Peter and John, was not able to keep pace with them as they ran to the tomb, and before she arrived they were gone. Probably she missed them in the streets as she came out of the city; at any rate, finding the tomb still empty and none present to explain the reason of it, she stands there desolate and pours out her distress in tears. That grave being empty, the whole earth is empty to her: the dead Christ was more to her than a living world. She could not go as Peter and John had gone, for she had no thought of resurrection. The rigid form, the unanswering lips and eye, the body passive in the hands of others, had fixed on her heart, as it commonly does, the one impression of death. She felt that all was over, and now she had not even the poor consolation of paying some slight additional attention. She can but stand and lay her head upon the stone and let her tears flow from a broken heart. And yet again in the midst of her grief she cannot believe it true that He is lost to her; she returns, as love will do, to the search, suspects her own eyesight, seeks again where she had sought before, and cannot reconcile herself to a loss so total and overwhelming. So absorbing is her grief that the vision of angels does not astonish her; her heart, filled with grief, has no room for wonder. Their kindly words cannot comfort her; it is another voice she longs for. She had but the one thought, “They have taken away my Lord,”—*my* Lord, as if none felt the bereavement as she. She supposes, too, that all must know about the loss and understand what she is seeking, so that when she sees the gardener she says, “Sir, if thou hast borne *Him* hence.” What need to say who? Can any one be thinking of any other but of Him who engrosses her thought?



In all this we have the picture of a real and profound grief, and therefore of a real and profound love. We see in Mary the kind of affection which a knowledge of Jesus was fitted to kindle. And to Mary our Lord remembered His promise: "He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him." None is so unable as He to leave any who love Him without any response to their expressions of affection. He could not coldly look on while this woman was eagerly seeking Him; and it is as impossible that He should hide Himself now from any who seek Him with as true a heart. Sometimes it would seem as if real thirst for God were not at once allayed, as if many were allowed to spend the best part of their days in seeking; but this does not invalidate the promise, "He that seeketh, findeth." For as Christ is again and again removed from the view of men, and as He is allowed to become a remote and shadowy figure, He can be restored to a living and visible influence in the world only by this man and that man becoming sensible of the great loss we sustain by His absence, and working his own way to a clear apprehension of His continued life. No experience which an honest man has in his search for the truth is worthless; it is the solid foundation of his own permanent belief and connection with the truth, and it is useful to other men.

Mary standing without at the sepulchre weeping is a concrete representation of a not uncommon state of mind. She stands wondering why she was ever so foolish, so heartless, as to leave the tomb at all—why she had allowed it to be possible to become separated from the Lord. She looks despairingly at the empty grave-clothes which so lately held all that was dear to her in the world. She might, she thinks, had she been present, have prevented the tomb from being emptied, but now it is empty she cannot fill it again. It is thus that those who have been careless about maintaining communion with Christ reproach themselves when they find He is gone. The ordinances, the prayers, the quiet hours of contemplation, that once were filled with Him are now, like the linen cloths and the napkin, empty, cold, pale forms, remembrances of His presence that make His absence all the more painful. When we ask where we can find Him, only the hard, mocking echo of the empty tomb replies. And yet this self-reproach is itself a seeking to which He will respond. To mourn His absence is to desire and to invite His presence; and to invite His presence is to secure it.\*

The Evangelist Mark saw more in the Lord's appearance to Mary than a response to her seeking love. He reminds his readers that this was the woman out of whom the Lord had cast seven devils, meaning apparently to suggest that those who have most need of encouragement from Him are surest to get it. He had not appeared to Peter and John, though these men were to build up His Church and be responsible for His cause. To the man whom He loved, who had stood by Him at His trial and in His death, who had received His mother and was now to be in His place to her, He made no sign, but allowed him to examine the empty tomb and retire. But to this woman He discloses Himself at once. The love which sprang from a sense

\* See Pusey's sermon on this subject.

of what she owed Him kept her at the tomb and threw her in His way. Her sense of dependence was the magnetic point on earth which attracted and disclosed His presence. Observe the situation. Earth lay uncertain; some manifestation is needed to guide men at this critical time; blank disappointment or pointless waiting broods everywhere. At what point shall the presence of Christ break through and quicken expectation and faith? Shall He go to the high priest's palace or to Pilate's prætorium and triumph over their dismay? Shall He go and lay busy plans with this and that group of followers? On the contrary, He appears to a poor woman who can do nothing to celebrate His triumph and might only discredit it, if she proclaimed herself His friend and herald. But thus continuous is the character of Jesus through death and resurrection. The meekness, the true perception of the actual sorrows and wants of men, the sense for spiritual need, the utter disregard of worldly powers and glory characterise Him now as before. The sense of need is what always effectually appeals to Him. The soul that truly recognises the value and longs for the fellowship and possession of Christ's purity, devotion to God, superiority to worldly aims and interests, always wins His regard. When a man prays for these things not with his lips but with his life's effort and his heart's true craving, his prayer is answered. To seek Christ is to feel as Mary felt, to see with practical constraining clearness as she saw, that He is the most precious of all possessions, that to be like Him is the greatest of all attainments; it is to see His character with clearness, and to be persuaded that, if the world gives us opportunity of becoming like Him and actually makes us like Him, it has done for us all that is vital and permanently important.

As Mary answered the angels she heard a step behind or saw the tomb darkened by a shadow, and on turning discerns dimly through her tears a figure which, naturally enough, she supposes to be the gardener—not because Jesus had assumed the clothes or lifted the tools of the gardener, but because he was the likeliest person to be going about the garden at that early hour. As the heart overburdened with grief is often unconscious of the presence of Christ and refuses to be comforted because it cannot see Him for its sorrow, so Mary through the veil of her tears can see only a human form, and turns away again, unconscious that He for whom she seeks is with her. As she turns, one word wipes the tears from her eyes and penetrates her heart with sudden joy. The utterance of her name was enough to tell her it was some one who knew her that was there; but there were a responsive thrill and an awaking of old memories and a vibration of her nature under the tone of that voice, which told her whose alone it could be. The voice seemed a second time to command a calm within her and turn her whole soul to Himself only. Once before, that voice had banished from her nature the foul spirits that had taken possession of her; she had "awaked from hell beneath the smile of Christ," and now again the same voice brought her out of darkness into light. From being the most disconsolate, Mary became at a word the happiest creature in the world.

Mary's happiness is easily understood. No explanation is needed of the peace and bliss she



experienced when she heard herself owned as the friend of the risen Lord, and called by her name in the familiar tone by Him who stood now superior to all risk, assault, and evil. This perfect joy is the reward of all in the measure of their faith. Christ rose, not that He might bring ecstasy to Mary alone, but that He might fill all things with His presence and His fullness, and that our joy also might be full. Has He not called us also by name? Has He not given us at times a consciousness that He understands our nature and what will satisfy it, that He claims an intimacy no other can claim, that His utterance of our name has a significance which no other lips can give it? Do we find it difficult to enter into true intercourse with Him; do we envy Mary her few minutes in the garden? As truly as by the audible utterance of our name does Christ now invite us to the perfect joy there is in His friendship; so truly as if He stood with us alone, as with Mary in the garden, and as if none but ourselves were present; as if our name alone filled His lips, our wants alone occupied His heart. Let us not miss true personal intercourse with Christ. Let nothing cheat us of this supreme joy and life of the soul. Let us not slothfully or shyly say, "I can never be on such terms of intimacy with Christ,—I who am so unlike Him; so full of desires He cannot gratify; so frivolous, superficial, unreal, while He is so real, so earnest; so unloving while He is so loving; so reluctant to endure hardness, with views of life and aims so opposed to His; so unable to keep a pure and elevated purpose steadfastly in my mind." Mary was once trodden under foot of evil, a wreck in whom none but Christ saw any place for hope. It is what is in *Him* that is powerful. He has won His supremacy by love, by refusing to enjoy His private rights without our sharing them; and He maintains His supremacy by love, teaching all to love Him, subduing to devotedness the hardest heart—not by a remote exhibition of cold, unemotional perfection, but by the persistence and depth of His warm and individual love.

Mary had no time to reason and doubt. With one quick exclamation of ecstatic recognition and joy she sprang towards Him. The one word "my Master,"\* uttered all her heart. It is related of George Herbert that when he was inducted into the cure of Bemerton he said to a friend: "I beseech God that my humble and charitable life may so win upon others as to bring glory to my Jesus, whom I have this day taken to be my Master and my Governor, and I am so proud of His service that I will always call Him Jesus, my Master." His biographer adds: "He seems to rejoice in that word Jesus, and says that the adding these words 'my Master' to it and the often repetition of them seemed to perfume his mind." With Mary the title was one of infinite respect; she found in Jesus one she could always reverence and trust. The firm, loving hand that admits no soft evasion of duty; the steadfast step that with equanimity ever goes straight forward; the strong heart that has always room for the distresses of others; the union with God which made Him a medium to earth of God's superiority and availing compassion,—these things had made the words "my

Master" His proper designation in her lips. And our spirit cannot be purified and elevated but by worthy love and deserved reverence, by living in presence of that which commands our love and lifts up our nature to what is above it. It is by letting our heart and mind be filled by what is above us that we grow in abiding stature and become in our turn helpful to what is at a still lower stage than we are.

But as Mary sprang forward, and in a transport of affection made as though she would embrace the Lord, she is met by these quick words: "Touch Me not, for I am not yet ascended to My Father." Various conjectural reasons for this prohibition have been supposed,—as, that it was indecorous, an objection which Christ did not make when at a dinner-table a woman kissed His feet, scandalising the guests and provoking the suspicions of the host; or, that she wished to assure herself by touch of the reality of the appearance, an assurance which He did not object to the disciples making, but rather encouraged them to make, as He would also have encouraged Mary had she needed any such test, which she did not; or, that this vehement embrace would disturb the process of glorification which was proceeding in His body! It is idle to conjecture reasons, seeing that He Himself gives the reason, "for I am not yet ascended," implying that such "touching" would no longer be prohibited when He was ascended. Mary seems to have thought that already the "little while" of His absence was past, and that now He was to be always with them upon earth, helping them in the same familiar ways and training them by His visible presence and spoken words. This was a misconception. He must first ascend to the Father, and those who love Him on earth must learn to live without the physical appearance, the actual seeing, touching, hearing, of the well-known Master. There must be no more kissing of His feet, but homage of a sterner, deeper sort; there must be no more sitting at table with Him, and filling the mind with His words, until they sit down with Him in the Father's presence. Meanwhile His friends must walk by faith, not by sight—by their inward light and spiritual likings; they must learn the truer fidelity that serves an absent Lord; they must acquire the independent and inherent love of righteousness which can freely grow only when relieved from the overmastering pressure of a visible presence, encouraging us by sensible expressions of favour, guaranteeing us against defeat and danger. Thus only can the human spirit freely grow, showing its native bent, its true tastes and convictions; thus only can its capacities for self-development and for choosing and fulfilling its own destiny be matured.

And if these words of Jesus seemed at first chilling and repellent, they were followed by words of unmistakable affection: "Go to My brothers, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God." This is the message of the risen Lord to men. He has become the link between us and all that is highest and best. We know that He has overcome all evil and left it behind; we know that He is worthy of the highest place, that by His righteousness and love He merits the highest place. We know that if such an one as He cannot go boldly to the highest heaven and claim God as His God and Father, there is no such thing as moral worth, and all

\* "Rabboni" had more of reverence in it than would be conveyed by "my Teacher," and it is legitimate here to use "Master" in its wider sense.



effort, conscience, hope, responsibility, are vain and futile. We know that Christ must ascend to the highest, and yet we know also that He will not enter where we cannot follow. We know that His love binds Him to us as strongly as His rights carry Him to God. We can as little believe that He will abandon us and leave us out of His eternal enjoyment, as we can believe that God would refuse to own Him as Son. And it is this which Christ puts in the forefront of His message as risen and ascending: "I ascend unto My Father and your Father." The joy that awaits Me with God awaits you also; the power I go to exercise is the power of your Father. This affinity for heaven which you see in Me is coupled with affinity for you. The holiness, the power, the victory, I have achieved and now enjoy are yours; I am your Brother: what I claim, I claim for you.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### THOMAS' TEST.

JOHN xx. 19-29.

ON the evening of the day whose dawning had been signalled by the Resurrection, the disciples, and, according to Luke, some others, were together. They expected that the event which had restored hope in their own hearts would certainly excite the authorities and probably lead to the arrest of some of their number. They had therefore carefully closed the doors, that some time for parley and possibly for escape might be interposed. But to their astonishment and delight, while they were sitting thus with closed doors, the well-known figure of their Lord appeared in their midst, and His familiar greeting, "Peace be with you," sounded in their ears. Further to identify Himself and remove all doubt or dread He showed them His hands and His side; and, as St. Luke tells us, even ate before them. There is here a strange mingling of identity and difference between the body He now wears and that which had been crucified. Its appearance is the same in some respects, but its properties are different. Immediate recognition did not always follow His manifestation. There was something baffling in His appearance, suggesting a well-known face, and yet not quite the same. The marks on the body, or some characteristic action or movement or utterance, were needed to complete the identification. The properties of the body also were not reducible to any known type. He could eat, speak, walk, yet He could dispense with eating and could apparently pass through physical obstacles. His body was a glorified, spiritual body, not subject to the laws which govern the physical part of man in this life. These characteristics are worth noticing, not only as giving us some inkling of the type of body which awaits ourselves, but in connection with the identification of the risen Lord. Had the appearance been the mere fancy of the disciples, how should they have required any identification?

Having saluted them and removed their consternation, He fulfils the object of His appearance by giving them their commission, their equipment, and their authority as His Apostles:

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"As the Father hath sent Me, even so send I you"—to fulfil still the same purpose, to complete the work begun, to stand to Him in the same intimate relation as He had occupied to the Father. To impart to them at once all that they required for this commission, He bestows upon them the Holy Spirit, breathing on them, to convey to them the impression that He was actually there and then communicating to them that which constituted the very breath of His own life. This is His first act as Lord of all power in heaven and on earth, and it is an act which inevitably conveys to them the assurance that His life and theirs is one life. Impulse and power to proclaim Him as risen they did not yet experience. They must be allowed time to settle to some composure of mind and to some clear thoughts after all the disturbing events of these last days. They must also have the confirmatory testimony to the Resurrection, which could only be furnished after repeated appearances of the Lord to themselves and to others. The gift of the Spirit, therefore, as a spirit of powerful witness-bearing, was reserved for six weeks.

With this perfect equipment our Lord added the words: "Whosoever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." These words have been the occasion of endless controversy.\* They certainly convey the idea that the Apostles were appointed to mediate between Christ and their fellow-men, that the chief function they should be required to discharge in this mediation was the forgiving and retention of sins, and that they were furnished with the Holy Spirit to guide them in this mediation. Apparently this must mean that the Apostles were to be the agents through whom Christ was to proclaim the terms of admission to His kingdom. They received authority to say in what cases sins were to be forgiven and in what to be retained. To infer from this that the Apostles have successors, that these successors are constituted by an external ordinance or nomination, that they have power to exclude or admit individuals seeking entrance into the kingdom of God, is to leave logic and reason a long way behind, and to erect a kind of government in the Church of Christ which will never be submitted to by those who live in the liberty wherewith His truth has made them free. The presence of the Holy Spirit, and no bare external appointment, is that which gives authority to those who guide the Church of Christ. It is because they are inwardly one with Christ, not because they happen to be able to claim a doubtful outward connection with Him, that they have that authority which Christ's people own.

But when our Lord thus appeared on the day of His resurrection to His disciples one of their number was absent. This might not have been noticed had not the absentee been of a peculiar temper, and had not this peculiarity given rise to another visit of the Lord and to a very significant restoration of belief in the mind of a sceptical disciple. The absent disciple was commonly known as Thomas or Didymus, the Twin. On various occasions he appears somewhat prominently in the gospel-story, and his conduct and conversation on those occasions show him to have been a man very liable to take a desponding view of the future, apt to see the

\* See Steitz' article "Schlüsselgewalt" in "Herzog."



darker side of everything, but at the same time not wanting in courage, and of a strong and affectionate loyalty to Jesus. On one occasion, when our Lord intimated to the disciples His intention of returning within the dangerous frontier of Judæa, the others expostulated, but Thomas said, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him"—an utterance in which his devoted loyalty to his Master, his dogged courage, and his despondent temperament are all apparent. And when, some time afterwards, Jesus was warning His disciples that He must shortly leave them and go to the Father, Thomas sees in the departure of his Master the extinction of all hope; life and the way to life seem to him treacherous phrases, he has eyes only for the gloom of death: "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way?"

The absence of such a man from the first meeting of the disciples was to be expected.\* If the bare possibility of his Lord's death had plunged this loving and gloomy heart in despondency, what dark despair must have preyed upon it when that death was actually accomplished! How the figure of his dead Master had burnt itself into his soul is seen from the manner in which his mind dwells on the print of the nails, the wound in the side. It is by these only, and not by well-known features of face or peculiarities of form, he will recognise and identify his Lord. His heart was with the lifeless body on the cross, and he could not bear to see the friends of Jesus or speak with those who had shared his hopes, but buried his disappointment and desolation in solitude and silence. His absence can scarcely be branded as culpable. None of the others expected resurrection any more than himself, but his hopelessness acted on a specially sensitive and despondent nature. Thus it was that, like many melancholy persons, he missed the opportunity of seeing what would effectually have scattered his darkness.

But though he might not be to blame for absentsenting himself, he was to blame for refusing to accept the testimony of his friends when they assured him they had seen Jesus risen. There is a tone of doggedness that grates upon us in the words, "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and *put my finger* into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe." Some deference was due to the testimony of men whom he knew to be truthful and as little liable to delusion as himself. We cannot blame him for not being convinced on the spot; a man cannot compel himself to believe anything which does not itself compel belief. But the obstinate tone sounds as if he was beginning to nurse his unbelief, than which there is no more pernicious exercise of the human spirit. He demands, too, what may never be possible—the evidence of his own senses. He claims that he shall be on the same footing as the rest. Why is he to believe on less evidence than they? It has cost him pain enough to give up his hope: is he then to give up his hopelessness as cheaply as all this? He is supremely miserable; his Lord dead and life left to him—a life which already during these few days had grown far too long, a weary, intolerable burden. Is he in a moment and on their mere word to rise from his misery? A man of Thomas' temperament hugs his wretchedness. You seem

to do him an injury if you open the shutters of his heart and let in the sunshine.

Obviously, therefore, the first inference we naturally draw from this state of mind is that it is weak and wrong to lay hold of one difficulty and insist that except this be removed we will not believe. Let this difficulty about the constitution of Christ's person, or this about the impossibility of proving a miracle, or this about the inspiration of Scripture be removed, and I will accept Christianity; let God grant me *this* petition, and I will believe that He is the hearer of prayer; let me see this inconsistency or that explained, and I will believe He governs the course of things in this world. The understanding begins to take a pride in demanding evidence more absolute and strict than has satisfied others, and seems to display acuteness and fairness in holding to one difficulty. The test which Thomas proposed to himself seemed an accurate and legitimate one; but that he should have proposed it shows that he was neglecting the evidence already afforded him, the testimony of a number of men whose truthfulness he had for years made proof of. True, it was a miracle they required him to believe; but would his own senses be better authentication of a miracle than the unanimous and explicit declaration of a company of veracious men? He could have no doubt that they believed they had seen the Lord. If they could be deceived, ten of them, and many more, why should his senses prove more infallible? Was he to reject their testimony on the ground that their senses had deceived them, and accept the testimony of his own senses? Was the ultimate test in his own case to be that very evidence which in the case of others he maintained was insufficient?

But if this tells seriously against Thomas, we must not leave out of account what tells in his favour. It is true he was obstinate and unreasonable and a shade vain in his refusal to accept the testimony of the disciples, but it is also true that he was with the little Christian community on the second Lord's Day. This puts it beyond a doubt that he was not so unbelieving as he seemed. That he did not now avoid the society of those happy, hopeful men shows that he was far from unwilling to become, if possible, a sharer in their hope and joy. Perhaps already he was repenting having pledged himself to unbelief, as many another has repented. Certainly he was not afraid of being convinced that his Lord had arisen; on the contrary, he sought to be convinced of this and put himself in the way of conviction. He had doubted because he wished to believe, doubted because it was the full, entire, eternal confidence of his soul that he was seeking a resting-place for. He knew the tremendous importance to him of this question—knew that it was literally everything to him if Christ was risen and was now alive and to be found by His people, and therefore he was slow to believe. Therefore also he kept in the company of believers; it was on their side he wished to get out of the terrible mire and darkness in which he was involved.

It is this which distinguishes Thomas and all right-minded doubters from thorough-going and depraved unbelievers. The one wishes to believe, would give the world to be free from doubt, will go mourning all his days, will pine in body and sicken in life because he cannot believe: "he *waits* for light, but behold obscurity,

\* In this chapter there are reminiscences of Trench.



for brightness, but he walks in darkness." The other, the culpable unbeliever, thrives on doubt; he likes it, enjoys it, sports it, lives by it; goes about telling people his difficulties, as some morbid people have a fancy for showing you their sores or detailing their symptoms, as if everything which makes them different from other men, even though it be a disease, were a thing to be proud of. Convince such a man of the truth and he is angry with you; you seem to have done him a wrong, as the mendicant impostor who has been gaining his livelihood by a bad leg or a useless eye is enraged when a skilled person restores to him the use of his limb or shows him that he can use it if he will. You may know a dishonest doubter by the fluency with which he states his difficulties or by the affectation of melancholy which is sometimes assumed. You may always know him by the reluctance to be convinced, by his irritation when he is forced to surrender some pet bulwark of unbelief. When you find a man reading one side of the question, courting difficulties, eagerly seizing on new objections, and provoked instead of thankful when any doubt is removed, you may be sure that this is not a scepticism of the understanding so much as an evil *heart* of unbelief.

The hesitancy and backwardness, the incredulity and niggardliness of faith of Thomas have done as much to confirm the minds of succeeding believers as the forward and impulsive confidence of Peter. Then, as now, this critical intellect, when combined with a sound heart, wrought two great boons for the Church. The doubts which such men entertain continually provoke fresh evidence, as here this second appearance of Christ to the Eleven seems due to the doubt of Thomas. So far as one can gather, it was solely to remove this doubt our Lord appeared. And, besides, a second boon which attends honest and godly doubt is the attachment to the Church of men who have passed through severe mental conflict, and therefore hold the faith they have reached with an intelligence and a tenacity unknown to other men.

These two things were simply brought about in Thomas' instance. The disciples were again assembled on the following Sunday, probably in the same place, consecrated for ever in their memories as the place where their risen Lord had appeared. It is doubtful whether they were more expectant of a fresh appearance of their Lord this day than they had been any day throughout the week, but certainly every reader feels that it is not without significance that after a blank and uneventful week the first day should again be singled out to have this honour put upon it. Some sanction is felt to be given to those meetings of His followers which ever since have assembled on the first day of the week; and the experience of thousands can testify that this day seems still the favourite with our Lord for manifesting Himself to His people, and for renewing the joy which a week's work has somewhat dimmed. Silently and suddenly as before, without warning, without opening of doors, Jesus stood in their midst. But there was no terror now—exclamation, only of delight and adoration. And perhaps it was not in human nature to resist casting a triumphant interrogation at Thomas, a look of inquiry to see what he would make of this. Surprise, unutterable surprise, undiminished by all he had been led to expect, must have been written on Thomas' wide-gazing

eyes and riveted look. But this surprise was displaced by shame, this eager gaze cast down, when he found that his Lord had heard his obstinate ultimatum and had been witness of his sullen unbelief. As Jesus repeats almost in the same words the hard, rude, bare, material test which he had proposed, and as He holds forth His hands for his inspection, shame and joy struggle for the mastery in his spirit, and give utterance to the humble but glowing confession, "My Lord and my God." His own test is superseded; he makes no movement to put it in force; he is satisfied of the identity of his Lord. It is the same penetrating knowledge of man's inmost thoughts, the same loving treatment of the erring, the same subduing presence.

And thus it frequently happens that a man who has vowed that he will not believe except this or that be made plain finds, when he does believe, that something short of his own requirements has convinced him. He finds that though he was once so express in his demands for proof, and so clear and accurate in his declarations of the precise amount of evidence required, at the last he believes and could scarcely tell you why, could not at least show his belief as the fine and clean result of a logical process. Thomas had maintained that the rest were too easily satisfied, but at the last he is himself satisfied with precisely the same proof as they. And it is somewhat striking that in so many cases unbelief gives way to belief, not by the removal of intellectual difficulties, not by such demonstration as was granted to Thomas, but by an undefinable conquest of the soul by Christ. The glory, holiness, love of His person subdue the soul to Him.

The faith of Thomas is full of significance. First, it is helpful to our own faith to hear so decisive and so full a confession coming from the lips of such a man. John himself felt it to be so decisive that after recording it he virtually closes the Gospel he had undertaken to write in order to persuade men that Jesus is the Son of God. After this confession of Thomas he feels that no more can be said. He stops not for want of matter; "many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples" which are not written in this Gospel. These seemed sufficient. The man who is not moved by this will not be moved by any further proof. Proof is not what such a doubter needs. Whatever we think of the other Apostles, it is plain that Thomas at least was not credulous. If Peter's generous ardour carried him to a confession unwarranted by the facts, if John saw in Jesus the reflection of his own contemplative and loving nature, what are we to say of the faith of Thomas? He had no determination to see only what he desired, no readiness to accept baseless evidence and irresponsible testimony. He knew the critical nature of the situation, the unique importance of the matter presented to his faith. With him there was no frivolous or thoughtless underrating of difficulties. He did not absolutely deny the possibility of Christ's resurrection, but he went very near doing so, and showed that practically he considered it either impossible or unlikely in the extreme. But in the end he believes. And the ease with which he passes from doubt to faith proves his honesty and sound-heartedness. As soon as evidence which to him is convincing is produced, he proclaims his faith.



His confession, too, is fuller than that of the other disciples. The week of painful questioning had brought clearly before his mind the whole significance of the Resurrection, so that he does not hesitate to own Jesus as his God. When a man of profound spiritual feeling and good understanding has doubts and hesitations from the very intensity and subtlety of his scrutiny of what appears to him of transcendent importance; when he sees difficulties unseen by men who are too little interested in the matter to recognise them even though they stare them in the face,—when such a man, with the care and anxiety that befit the subject, considers for himself the claims of Christ, and as the result yields himself to the Lord, he sees more in Christ than other men do, and is likely to be steadier in his allegiance than if he had slurred over apparent obstacles instead of removing them, and stifled objections in place of answering them. It was not the mere seeing of Christ risen which prompted the full confession of Thomas. But slowly during that week of suspense he had been taking in the full significance of the Resurrection, coming at the close of such a life as he knew the Lord had lived. The very idea that such a thing was believed by the rest forced his mind back upon the exceptional character of Jesus, his wonderful works, the intimations He had given of His connection with God. The sight of Him risen came as the keystone of the arch, which being wanting all had fallen to the ground, but being inserted clenched the whole, and could now bear any weight. The truths about His person which Thomas had begun to explain away return upon his mind with resistless force, and each in clear, certain verity. He saw now that his Lord had performed all His word, had proved Himself supreme over all that affected men. He saw Him after passing through unknown conflict with principalities and powers come to resume fellowship with sinful men, standing with all things under His feet, yet giving His hand to the weak disciple to make him partake in His triumph.

This was a rare and memorable hour for Thomas, one of those moments that mark a man's spirit permanently. He is carried entirely out of himself, and sees nothing but his Lord. The whole energy of his spirit goes out to Him undoubtingly, unhesitatingly, unrestrained. Everything is before him in the person of Christ; nothing causes the least diversion or distraction. For once his spirit has found perfect peace. There is nothing in the unseen world that can dismay him, nothing in the future on which he can spend a thought; his soul rests in the Person before him. He does not draw back, questioning whether the Lord will now receive him; he fears no rebuke; he does not scrutinise his spiritual condition, nor ask whether his faith is sufficiently spiritual. He cannot either go back upon his past conduct, or analyse his present feelings, or spend one thought of any kind upon himself. The scrupulous, sceptical man is all devoutness and worship; the thousand objections are swept from his mind; and all by the mere presence of Christ. He is rapt in this one object; mind and soul are filled with the regained Lord; he forgets himself; the passion of joy with which he regains in a transfigured form his lost Leader absorbs him quite: "he had lost a possible king of the Jews; he finds his Lord and his God." There

can be no question here about himself, his prospects, his interests. He can but utter his surprise, his joy, and his worship in the cry, "My Lord and my God."

On such a man even the Lord's benediction were useless. This is the highest, happiest, rarest state of the human soul. When a man has been carried out of himself by the clear vision of Christ's worth; when his mind and heart are filled with the supreme excellence of Christ; when in His presence he feels he can but worship, bowing in his soul before actually achieved human perfection rooted in and expressing the true Divine glory of love ineffable; when face to face, soul to soul, with the highest and most affecting known goodness, conscious that he now in this very moment stands within touch of the Supreme, that he has found and need never more lose perfect love, perfect goodness, perfect power,—when a man is transformed by such a recognition of Christ, this is the true ecstasy, this is man's ultimate blessedness.

And this blessedness is competent not only to those who saw with the bodily eye, but much more to those who have not seen and yet have believed. Why do we rob ourselves of it, and live as if it were not so—as if such certitude and the joy that accompanies it had passed from earth and were no more possible? We cannot apply Thomas' test, but we can test his test; or, like him, we can forego it, and rest on wider, deeper evidence. Was he right in so eagerly confessing his belief? And are we right to hesitate, to doubt, to despond? Should we have counted it strange if, when the Lord addressed Thomas, he had sullenly shrunk back among the rest, or merely give a verbal assent to Christ's identity, showing no sign of joy? And are we to accept the signs He gives us of His presence as if it made little difference to us and did not lift us into heaven? Have we so little sense of spiritual things that we cannot believe in the life of Him round whom the whole fortunes of our race revolve? Do we not know the power of Christ's resurrection as Thomas could not possibly know it? Do we not see as he could not see the boundless spiritual efficacy and results of that risen life? Do we not see the full bearing of that great manifestation of God's nearness more clearly? Do we not feel how impossible it was that such an one as Christ should be holden of death, that the supremacy in human affairs which He achieved by absolute love and absolute holiness should be proved inferior to a physical law, and should be interrupted in its efficacious exercise by a physical fact? If Thomas was constrained to acknowledge Christ as his Lord and his God, much more may we do so. By the nature of the case our conviction, implying as it does some apprehension of spiritual things, must be more slowly wrought. Even if at last the full conviction that human life is a joy because Christ is with us in it, leading us to eternal partnership with Himself,—even if this conviction flash suddenly through the spirit, the material for it must have been long accumulating. Even if at last we awake to a sense of the present glory of Christ with the suddenness of Thomas, yet in any case this must be the result of purified spiritual affinities and leanings. But on this very account is the conviction more indissolubly intertwined with all that we truly are, forming an essential and necessary part of our inward growth, and leading each of us to re-



spond with a cordial amen to the benediction of our Lord, "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed."

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### *APPEARANCE AT SEA OF GALILEE.*

JOHN xxi. 1-14.

THE removal of the doubts of Thomas restored the Eleven to unity of faith, and fitted them to be witnesses of the Lord's resurrection. And the Gospel might naturally have closed at this point, as indeed the last verses of the twentieth chapter suggest that the writer himself felt that his task was done. But as throughout his Gospel he had followed the plan of adducing such of Christ's miracles as seemed to throw a strong light on His spiritual power, he could not well close without mentioning the last miracle of all, and which seemed to have only a didactic purpose. Besides, there was another reason for John adding this chapter. He was writing at the very close of the century. So long had he survived the unparalleled events he narrates that an impression had gone abroad that he would never die. It was even rumoured that our Lord had foretold that the beloved disciple should tarry on earth till He Himself should return. John takes the opportunity of relating what the Lord had really said, as well as recounting the all-important event out of which the misreported conversation had arisen.

When the disciples had spent the Passover week at Jerusalem, they naturally returned to their homes in Galilee. The house of the old fisherman Zebedee was probably their rendezvous. We need not listen to their talk as they relate what had passed in Jerusalem, in order to see that they are sensible of the peculiarity of their situation and are in a state of suspense.

They are back among the familiar scenes, the boats are lying on the beach, their old companions are sitting about mending their nets, as they themselves had been doing a year or two before when summoned by Jesus to follow Him on the moment. But though old associations are thus laying hold of them again, there is evidence that new influences are also at work; for with the fishermen are found Nathanael and others who were there, not for the sake of old associations, but of the new and common interest they had in Christ. The seven men have kept together; they participate in an experience of which their fellow-townsmen know nothing; but they must live. Hints have been thrown out that seven strong men must not depend on other arms than their own for a livelihood. And as they stand together that evening and watch boat after boat push off, the women wishing their husbands and sons good-speed, the men cheerily responding and busily getting their tackle in trim, with a look of pity at the group of disciples, Peter can stand it no longer, but makes for his own or some unoccupied boat with the words, "I go a-fishing." The rest were only needing such an invitation. The whole charm and zest of the old life rush back upon them, each takes his own accustomed place in the boat, each hand finds itself once more at home at the long-suspended task, and with an ease that sur-

prises themselves they fall back into the old routine.

And as we watch their six oars flashing in the setting sun, and Peter steering them to the familiar fishing ground, we cannot but reflect in how precarious a position the whole future of the world is. That boat carries the earthly hope of the Church; and as we weigh the feelings of the men that are in it, what we see chiefly is, how easily the whole of Christianity might here have broken short off, and never have been heard of, supposing it to have depended for its propagation solely on the disciples. Here they were, not knowing what had become of Jesus, without any plan for preserving His name among men, open to any impulse or influence, unable to resist the smell of the fishing boats and the freshness of the evening breeze, and submitting themselves to be guided by such influences as these, content apparently to fall back into their old ways and obscure village life, as if the last three years were a dream, or were like a voyage to foreign parts, which they might think of afterwards, but were not to repeat. All the facts they were to use for the conversion of the world were already in their possession; the death of Christ and His resurrection were not a fortnight old; but as yet they had no inward impulse to proclaim the truth; there was no Holy Ghost powerfully impelling and possessing them; they were not endued with power from on high. One thing only they seemed to be decided and agreed about—that they must live; and therefore they go a-fishing.

But apparently they were not destined to find even this so easy as they expected. There was One watching that boat, following it through the night as they tried place after place, and He was resolved that they should not be filled with false ideas about the satisfactoriness of their old calling. All night they toiled, but caught nothing. Every old device was tried; the fancies of each particular kind of fish were humoured, but in vain. Each time the net was drawn up, every hand knew before it appeared that it was empty. Weary with the fruitless toil, and when the best part of the night was gone, they made for a secluded part of the shore, not wishing to land from their first attempt empty in the presence of the other fishermen. But when about one hundred yards from the shore a voice hails them with the words, "Children"—or, as we would say, "Lads"—"have you taken any fish?" It has been supposed that our Lord asks this question in the character of a trader who had been watching for the return of the boats that he might buy, or that it was with the natural interest every one takes in the success of a person that is fishing, so that we can scarcely pass without asking what take they have had. The question was asked for the purpose of arresting the boat at a sufficient distance from the shore to make another cast of the net possible. It has this effect; the rowers turned round to see who is calling them, and at the same time tell Him they have no fish. The Stranger then says, "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find"; and they do so, not thinking of a miracle, but supposing before any man would give them such express instructions he must have had some good reason for believing there were fish there. But when they found that the net was at once absolutely loaded with fish, so that they could not draw it into the boat, John



looks again at the Stranger, and whispers to Peter, "It is the Lord." This was no sooner heard by Peter than he snatched up and threw over him his upper garment, and throwing himself into the water, swam or waded ashore.

In every trifling act character betrays itself. It is John who is first to recognise Jesus; it is Peter who casts himself into the sea, just as he had done once before on that same lake, and as he had been first to enter the sepulchre on the morning of the Resurrection. John recognises the Lord, not because he had better eyesight than the rest, nor because he had a better position in the boat, nor because while the rest were busied with the net he was occupied with the figure on the beach, but because his spirit had a quicker and profounder apprehension of spiritual things, and because in this sudden turn of their fortune he recognised the same hand which had filled their nets once before and had fed thousands with one or two little fishes.

The reason of Peter's impetuosity on this occasion may partly have been that their fishing vessel was now as near the land as they could get it, and that he was unwilling to wait until they should get the small boat unfastened. The rest, we read, came ashore, not in the large vessel in which they had spent the night, but in the little boat they carried with them, the reason being added, "for they were not far from land"—that is to say, not far enough to use the larger vessel any longer. Peter, therefore, ran no risk of drowning. But his action reveals the eagerness of love. No sooner has he only heard from another that his Lord is near, than the fish for which he had been watching and waiting all night are forgotten, and for him, the master of the vessel, the net and all its contents might have sunk to the bottom of the lake. What this action of Peter suggested to the Lord is apparent from the question which a few minutes later He put to him: "Lovest thou Me more than these?"

Neither would Peter have sustained any serious loss even though his nets had been carried away, for when he reaches the shore he finds that the Lord was to be their host, not their guest. A fire is ready lit, fish laid on it, and bread baking. He who could so fill their nets could also provide for His own wants. But there was to be no needless multiplication of miracles; the fish already on the fire was not to be multiplied in their hands when plenty were lying in the net. He directs them, therefore, to bring of the fish they had caught. They go to the net, and mechanically, in their old fashion, count the fish they had taken, one hundred and fifty and three; and John, with a fisher's memory, can tell you sixty years after, the precise number. From these miraculously provided fish they break their long fast.

The significance of this incident has perhaps been somewhat lost by looking at it too exclusively as symbolical. No doubt it was so; but it carried in the first place a most important lesson in its bare literal facts. We have already noticed the precarious position in which the Church at this time was. And it will be useful to us in many ways to endeavour to rid our mind of all fancies about the beginning of the Christian Church, and look at the simple, unvarnished facts here presented to our view. And the plain and significant circumstance which first invites our attention is, that the nucleus of the Church,

the men on whom the faith of Christ depended for its propagation, were fishermen.

This was not merely the picturesque drapery assumed by men of ability so great and character so commanding that all positions in life were alike to them. Let us recall to memory the group of men we have seen standing at a corner in a fishing village or with whom we have spent a night at sea fishing, and whose talk has been *at the best* old stories of their craft or legends of the water. Such men were the Apostles. They were men who were not at home in cities, who simply could not understand the current philosophies, who did not so much as know the names of the great contemporary writers of the Roman world, who took only so much interest in politics as every Jew in those troublous times was forced to take—men who were at home only on their own lake, in their fishing boat, and who could quite contentedly, even after all they had recently gone through, have returned to their old occupation for life. They were in point of fact now returning to their old life—returning to it partly because they had no impulse to publish what they knew, and partly because, even though they had, they must live, and did not know how they should be supported but by fishing.

And this is the reason of this miracle; this is the reason why our Lord so pointedly convinced them that without Him they could not make a livelihood: that they might fish all the night through and resort to every device their experience could contrive and yet could catch nothing, but that He could give them sustenance as He pleased. If any one thinks that this is a secular, shallow way of looking at the miracle, let him ask what it is that chiefly keeps men from serving God as they think they should, what is it that induces men to live so much for the world and so little for God, what it is that prevents them from following out what conscience whispers is the right course. Is it not mainly the feeling that by doing God's will we ourselves are likely to be not so well off, not so sufficiently provided for? Above all things, therefore, both we and the Apostles need to be convinced that our Lord, who asks us to follow Him, is much better able to provide for us than we ourselves are. They had the same transition to make as every man among ourselves has to make; we and they alike have to pass from the natural feeling that we depend on our own energy and skill for our support to the knowledge that we depend on God. We have to pass from the life of nature and sense to the life of faith. We have to come to know and believe that the fundamental thing is God, that it is He who can support us when nature fails, and *not* that we must betake ourselves to nature at many points where God fails—that we live, not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God, and are much safer in doing His bidding than in struggling anxiously to make a livelihood.

And if we carefully read our own experience, might we not see, as clearly as the Apostles that morning saw, the utter futility of our own schemes for bettering ourselves in the world? Is it not the simple fact that we also have toiled through every watch of the night, have borne fatigue and deprivation, have abandoned the luxuries of life and given ourselves to endure hardness, have tried contrivance after contrivance to win our cherished project, and all in



vain? Our net is empty and light at the rising sun as it was at the setting. Have we not again and again found that when every boat round was being filled we drew nothing but disappointment? Have we not many times come back empty-handed to our starting-place? But no matter how much we have thus lost or missed every man will tell you it is much better so than if he had succeeded, if only his own ill-success has induced him to trust Christ, if only it has taught him really what he used with everybody else verbally to say,—that in that Person dimly discerned through the light that begins to glimmer round our disappointments there is all power in heaven and on earth—power to give us what we have been trying to win, power to give us greater happiness without it.

But this being so, it being the case that our Lord came the second time and called them away from their occupations to follow Him, and showed them how amply He could support them, they could not but remember how He had once before in very similar circumstances summoned them to leave their occupation as fishermen and to become fishers of men. They could not but interpret the present by the former miracle, and read in it a renewed summons to the work of catching men, and a renewed assurance that in that work they should not draw empty nets. Most suitably, then, does this miracle stand alone, the only one wrought after the Resurrection, and most suitably does it stand last, giving the Apostles a symbol which should continually reanimate them to their laborious work. Their work of preaching was well symbolised by *sowing*; they passed rapidly through the field of the world, at every step scattering broadcast the words of everlasting life, not examining minutely the hearts into which these words might fall, not knowing where they might find prepared soil and where they might find inhospitable rock, but assured that after a time whoso followed in their track should see the fruit of their words. Not less significant is the figure of the net; they let down the net of their good tidings, not seeing what persons were really enclosed in it, but trusting that He who had said, "Cast your net on the right side of the ship," knew what souls it would fall over. By this miracle He gave the Apostles to understand that not only when with them in the flesh could He give them success. Even now after His resurrection and when they did not recognise him on the shore He blessed their labour, that they might even when they did not see Him believe in His nearness and in His power most effectually to give them success.

This is the miracle which has again and again restored the drooping faith and discouraged spirit of all Christ's followers who endeavour to bring men under His influence, or in any way to spread out this influence over a wider surface. Again and again their hope is disappointed and their labour vain; the persons they wish to influence glide out from below the net, and it is drawn up empty; new opportunities are watched for, and new opportunities arrive and are used, but with the same result; the patient doggedness of the fisherman long used to turns of ill-success is reproduced in the persevering efforts of parental love or friendly anxiety for the good of others, but often the utmost patience is at last worn out, the nets are piled

away, and the gloom of disappointment settles on the mind. Yet this apparently is the very hour which the Lord often chooses to give the long-sought-for success; in the dawn, when already the fish might be supposed to see the net and more vigilantly to elude it, our last and almost careless effort is made, and we achieve a substantial, countable success—a success not doubtful, but which we could accurately detail to others, which makes a mark in the memory like the hundred and fifty and three of these fishers, and which were we to relate to others they must acknowledge that the whole weary night of toil is amply repaid. And it is then a man recognises who it is that has directed his labour—it is then he for a moment forgets even the success in the more gladdening knowledge that such a success could only have been given by One, and that it is the Lord who has been watching his disappointments, and at last turning them into triumph.

The Evangelist adds, "None of the disciples durst ask Him, Who art Thou? knowing that it was the Lord"—a remark which unquestionably implies that there was some ground for the question, Who art Thou? They knew it was the Lord from the miracle He had wrought and from His manner of speaking and acting; but yet there was in His appearance something strange, something which, had it not also inspired them with awe, would have prompted the question, Who art Thou? The question was always on their lips, as they found afterwards by comparing notes with one another, but none of them durst put it. There was this time no certification of His identity further than the aid He had given, no showing of His hands and feet. It was, that is to say, by faith now they must know Him, not by bodily eyesight; if they wished to deny Him, there was room for doing so, room for questioning who He was. This was in the most delicate correspondence with the whole incident. The miracle was wrought as the foundation and encouraging symbol of their whole vocation as fishers of men during His bodily absence; it was wrought in order to encourage them to lean on One whom they could not see, whom they could at best dimly descry on another element from themselves, and whom they could not recognise as their Lord apart from the wonderful aid He gave them; and accordingly even when they come ashore there is something mysterious and strange about His appearance, something that baffles eyesight, something that would no longer have satisfied a Thomas, something therefore which is the fit preparation for a state in which they were to live altogether by faith and not at all by sight. This is the state in which we now live. He who believes will know that his Lord is near him; he who refuses to believe will be able to deny His nearness. It is faith, then, that we need: we need to know our Lord, to understand His purposes and His mode of fulfilling them, so that we may not need the evidence of eyesight to say where He is working and where He is not. If we are to be His followers, if we are to recognise that He has made a new life for us and all men, if we are to recognise that He has begun and is now carrying forward a great cause in this world, and if we see that, let our lives deny it as they may, there is nothing else worth living for than this cause, and if we are seeking to help it, then let us confirm our faith by this miracle and



believe that our Lord, who has all power in heaven and on earth, is but beyond eyesight, has a perfectly distinct view of all we are doing, and knows when to give us the success we seek.

This, then, explains why it was that our Lord appeared only to His friends after His resurrection. It might have been expected that on His rising from the dead He would have shown Himself as openly as before He suffered, and would have specially shown Himself to those who had crucified Him; but this was not the case. The Apostles themselves were struck with this circumstance, for in one of his earliest discourses Peter remarks that He showed Himself "not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead." And it is obvious from the incident before us and from the fact that when our Lord showed Himself to five hundred disciples at once in Galilee, probably a day or two after this, some even of them doubted—it is obvious from this that no good or permanent effect could have been produced by His appearing to all and sundry. It might have served as a momentary triumph, but even this is doubtful; for plenty would have been found to explain away the miracle or to maintain it was a deception, and that He who appeared was not the same as He who died.

Or even supposing the miracle had been admitted, why was this miracle to produce any more profound spiritual effect in hearts unprepared than the former miracles had produced. It was not by any such sudden process men could become Christians and faithful witnesses of Christ's resurrection. "Men are not easily wrought upon to be faithful advocates of any cause." They advocate causes to which they are by nature attached, or else they become alive to the merit of a cause only by gradual conviction and by deeply impressed and often repeated instruction. To such a process the Apostles were submitted; and even after this long instruction their fidelity to Christ was tested by a trial which shook to the foundations their whole character, which threw out one of their number for ever, and which revealed the weaknesses of others.

In other words, they needed to be able to certify Christ's spiritual identity as well as His physical sameness. They were so to know Him and so to sympathise with His character that they might be able after the Resurrection to recognise Him by the continuity of that character and the identity of purpose He maintained. They were by daily intercourse with Him to be gradually led to dependence upon Him, and to the strongest attachment to His person; so that when they became witnesses to Him they might not only be able to say, "Jesus whom you crucified rose again," but might be able to illustrate His character by their own, to represent the beauty of His holiness by simply telling what they had seen Him do and heard Him say, and to give convincing evidence in their own persons and lives that He whom they loved on earth lives and rules now in heaven.

And what we need now and always is, not men who can witness to the fact of resurrection, but who can bear in upon our spirits the impression that there is a risen Lord and a risen life through dependence on Him.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### RESTORATION OF PETER.

JOHN xxi. 15-17.

To the interpretation of this dialogue between the Lord and Peter we must bring a remembrance of the immediately preceding incident. The evening before had found several of those who had followed Jesus standing among the boats that lay by the Sea of Galilee. Boat after boat put out from shore; and as the familiar sights and smells and sounds awakened slumbering instincts and stirred old associations, Peter with characteristic restlessness and independence turned away to where his own old boat lay, saying, "I go a-fishing." The rest only needed the example. And as we watch each man taking his old place at the oar or getting ready the nets, we recognise how slight a hold the Apostolic call had taken of these men, and how ready they were to fall back to their old life. They lack sufficient inward impulse to go and proclaim Christ to men; they have no plans; the one inevitable thing is that they must earn a livelihood. And had they that night succeeded as of old in their fishing, the charm of the old life might have been too strong for them. But, like many other men, their failure in accomplishing their own purpose prepared them to discern and to fulfil the Divine purpose, and from catching fish worth so much a pound they became the most influential factors in this world's history. For the Lord had need of them, and again called them to labour for Him, showing them how easily He could maintain them in life and how full their nets would be when cast under His direction.

When the Lord made Himself known by His miraculous action while yet the disciples were too far off to see His features, Peter on the moment forgot the fish he had toiled for all night, and, though master of the vessel, left the net to sink or go to pieces for all he cared, and sprang into the water to greet his Lord. Jesus Himself was the first to see the significance of the act. This vehemence of welcome was most grateful to Him. It witnessed to an affection which was at this crisis the most valuable element in the world. And that it was shown not by solemn protestations made in public or as part of a religious service, but in so apparently secular and trivial an incident, makes it all the more valuable. Jesus hailed with the deepest satisfaction Peter's impetuous abandonment of his fishing gear and impatient springing to greet Him, because as plainly as possible it showed that after all Christ was incomparably more to him than the old life. And therefore, when the first excitement had cooled down, Jesus gives Peter an opportunity of putting this in words by asking him, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?" Am I to interpret this action of yours as really meaning what it seems to mean—that I am more to you than boat, nets, old ways, old associations? Your letting go the net at the critical moment, and so risking the loss of all, seemed to say that you love Me more than your sole means of gaining a livelihood. Well, is it so? Am I to draw this conclusion? Am I to understand that with a mind made up you do love



Me more than these things? If so, the way is again clear for Me to commit to your care what I love and prize upon earth—to say again, “Feed My sheep.”

Thus mildly does the Lord rebuke Peter by suggesting that in his recent conduct there were appearances which must prevent these present expressions of his love from being accepted as perfectly genuine and trustworthy. Thus gracefully does He give Peter opportunity to renew the profession of attachment he had so shamefully denied by three times over swearing that he not only did not love Jesus, but knew nothing whatever about the man. And if Peter at first resented the severity of the scrutiny, he must afterwards have perceived that no greater kindness could have been done him than thus to press him to clear and resolved confession. Peter had probably sometimes compared himself to Judas, and thought that the difference between his denial and Judas’ betrayal was slight. But the Lord distinguished. He saw that Peter’s sin was unpremeditated, a sin of surprise, while his heart was essentially sound.

We also must distinguish between the forgetfulness of Christ, to which we are carried by the blinding and confusing throng of this world’s ways and fashions and temptations, and a betrayal of Christ that has in it something deliberate. We admit that we have acted *as if* we had no desire to serve Christ and to bring our whole life within His kingdom; but it is one thing to deny Christ through thoughtlessness, through inadvertence, through sudden passion or insidious, unperceived temptation—another thing consciously and habitually to betake ourselves to ways which He condemns, and to let the whole form, appearance, and meaning of our life plainly declare that our regard for Him is very slight when compared with our regard for success in our calling or anything that nearly touches our personal interests. Jesus lets Peter breakfast first, He lets him settle, before He puts His question, because it matters little what we say or do in a moment of excitement. The question is, what is our deliberate choice and preference—not what is our judgment, for of that there can be little question; but when we are self-possessed and cool, when the whole man within us is in equilibrium, not violently pulled one way or other, when we feel, as sometimes we do, that we are seeing ourselves as we actually are, do we then recognise that Christ is more to us than any gain, success, or pleasure the world can offer?

There are many who, when the alternative is laid before them in cold blood, choose without hesitation to abide with Christ at all costs. Were we at this moment as conscious as Peter was when this question fell from the lips of the living Person before him, whose eyes were looking for his reply, that we now must give our answer, many of us, God helping us, would say with Peter, “Thou knowest that I love Thee.” We could not say that our old associations are easily broken, that it costs us nothing to hang up the nets with which so skilfully we have gathered in the world’s substance to us, or to take a last look of the boat which has so faithfully and merrily carried us over many a threatening wave and made our hearts glad within us. But our hearts are not set on these things; they do not command us as Thou dost; and we can abandon whatever hinders us from following and

serving Thee. Happy the man who with Peter feels that the question is an easily answered one, who can say, “I may often have blundered, I may often have shown myself greedy of gain and glory, but Thou knowest that I love Thee.”

In this restoration of Peter our Lord, then, tests not the conduct, but the heart. He recognises that while the conduct is the legitimate and normal test of a man’s feeling, yet there are times at which it is fair and useful to examine the heart itself apart from present manifestations of its condition; and that the solace which a poor soul gets after great sin, in refusing to attempt to show the consistency of his conduct with love to Christ, and in clinging simply to the consciousness that with all his sin there is most certainly a surviving love to Christ, is a solace sanctioned by Christ, and which He would have it enjoy. This is encouraging, because a Christian is often conscious that, if he is to be judged solely by his conduct, he must be condemned. He is conscious of blemishes in his life that seem quite to contradict the idea that he is animated by a regard for Christ. He knows that men who see his infirmities and outbreaks may be justified in supposing him a self-deceived or pretentious hypocrite, and yet in his own soul he is conscious of love to Christ. He can as little doubt this as he can doubt that he has shamefully denied this in his conduct. He would rather be judged by omniscience than by a judgment that can scrutinise only his outward conduct. He appeals in his own heart from those who know in part to Him who knows all things. He knows perfectly well that if men are to be expected to believe that he is a Christian he must prove this by his conduct; nay, he understands that love must find for itself a constant and consistent expression in conduct; but it remains an indubitable satisfaction to be conscious that, despite all his conduct has said to the contrary, he does in his soul love the Lord.

The determination of Christ to clear away all misunderstanding and all doubtfulness about the relation His professed followers hold to Him is strikingly exhibited in His subjecting Peter to a second and third interrogation. He invites Peter to search deeply into his spirit and to ascertain the very truth. It is the most momentous of all questions; and our Lord positively refuses to take a superficial, careless, matter-of-course answer. He will thus question and thrice question, and probe to the quick all His followers. He seeks to scatter all doubt about our relation to Him, and to make our living connection with Him clear to our own consciousness, and to place our whole life on this solid basis of a clear, mutual understanding between Him and us. Our happiness depends upon our meeting His question with care and sincerity. Only the highest degree of human friendship will permit this persistent questioning, this beating of us back and back on our own feelings, deeper and deeper into the very heart of our affections, as if still it were doubtful whether we had not given an answer out of mere politeness or profession of sentiment. The highest degree of human friendship demands certainty, a basis on which it can build, a love it can entirely trust. Christ had made good His right thus to question His followers and to require a love that was sure of itself, because



on His part He was conscious of such a love and had given proof that His affection was no mere sentimental, unfruitful compassion, but a commanding, consuming, irrepressible, unconquerable love—a love that left Him no choice, but compelled Him to devote Himself to men and do them all the good in His power.

Peter's self-knowledge is aided by the form the question now takes. He is no longer asked to compare the hold Christ has upon him with his interest in other things; but he is asked simply and absolutely whether love is the right name for that which connects him with his Lord. "*Lovest thou Me?*" Separating yourself and Me from all others, looking straight and simply at Me only, is "love" the right name for that which connects us? Is it love, and not mere impulse? Is it love, and not sentiment or fancy? Is it love, and not sense of duty or of what is becoming? Is it love, and not mere mistake? For no mistake is more disastrous than that which takes something else for love.

Now, to apprehend the significance of this question is to apprehend what Christianity is. Our Lord was on the point of leaving the world; and He left its future, the future of the sheep He loved so well and had spent His all upon, in the keeping of Peter and the rest, and the one security He demanded of them was the confession of love for Himself. He did not draw up a creed or a series of articles binding them to this and that duty, to special methods of governing the Church or to special truths they were to teach it; He did not summon them into the house of Peter or of Zebedee, and bid them affix their signatures or marks to such a document. He rested the whole future of the work He had begun at such cost on their love for Him. This security alone He took from them. This was the sufficient guarantee of their fidelity and of their wisdom. It is not great mental ability that is wanted for the furtherance of Christ's aims in the world. It is love of what is best, devotion to goodness. No question is made about their knowledge; they are not asked what views they have about the death of Christ; they are not required to analyse their feelings and say whence their love has sprung—whether from a due sense of their indebtedness to Him for delivering them from sin and its consequence, or from the grace and beauty of His character, or from His tender and patient consideration of them. There is no omission of anything vital, owing to His being hurried in these morning hours. Three times over the question comes, and the third is as the first, a question solely and exclusively as to their love. Three times over the question comes, and three times over, when love is unhesitatingly confessed, comes the Apostolic commission, "Feed My sheep." Love is enough—enough not only to save the Apostles themselves, but enough to save the world.

The significance of this cannot be exaggerated. What is Christianity? It is God's way of getting hold of us, of attaching us to what is good, of making us holy, perfect men. And the method He uses is the presentation of goodness in a personal form. He makes goodness supremely attractive by exhibiting to us its reality and its beauty and its permanent and multiplying power in Jesus Christ. Absolutely simple and absolutely natural is God's method. The building up of systems of theology, the elaborate

organisation of churches, the various expensive and complicated methods of men, how artificial do they seem when set alongside of the simplicity and naturalness of God's method! Men are to be made perfect. Show them, then, that human perfection is perfect love for them, and can they fail to love it and themselves become perfect? That is all. The mission of Christ and the salvation of men through Him are as natural and as simple as the mother's caress of her child. Christ came to earth because He loved men and could not help coming. Being on earth, He expresses what is in Him—His love, His goodness. By His loving all men and satisfying all their needs, men came to feel that this was the Perfect One, and humbly gave themselves to Him. As simply as love works in all human affairs and relationships, so simply does it work here.

And God's method is as effectual as it is simple. Men do learn to love Christ. And this love secures everything. As a bond between two persons, nothing but love is to be depended upon. Love alone carries us out of ourselves and makes other interests than our own dear to us.

But Christ requires us to love Him and invites us to consider whether we do now love Him, because this love is an index to all that is in us of a moral kind. There is so much implied in our love of Him, and so much inextricably intertwined with it, that its presence or absence speaks volumes regarding our whole inward condition. It is quite true that nothing is more difficult to understand than the causes of love. It seems to ally itself with equal readiness with pity and with admiration. It is attracted sometimes by similarity of disposition, sometimes by contrast. It is now stirred by gratitude and again by the conferring of favours. Some persons whom we feel we ought to love we do not draw to. Others who seem comparatively unattractive strongly draw us. But there are always some persons in every society who are universally beloved; and these are persons who are not only good, but whose goodness is presented in an attractive form—who have some personal charm, in appearance or manner or disposition. If some churlish person does not own the ascendancy, you know that the churlishness goes deep into the character.

But this poorly illustrates the ascendancy of Christ and what our denial of it implies. His goodness is perfect and it is complete. Not to love Him is not to love goodness; it is to be out of sympathy with what attracts pure and loving spirits. For whatever be the apparent or obscure causes of love, this is certain—that we love that which best fits and stimulates our whole nature. Love lies deeper than the will; we cannot love because we wish to do so, any more than we can taste honey bitter because we wish to do so. We cannot love a person because we know that his influence is needful to forward our interests. But if love lies deeper than the will, what power have we to love what at present does not draw us? We have no power to do so immediately; but we can use the means given us for altering, purifying, and elevating our nature. We can believe in Christ's power to regenerate us, we can faithfully follow and serve Him, and thus we shall learn one day to love Him.

But the presence of absence in us of the love of Christ is an index not only to our present



state, but a prophecy of all that is to be. The love of Christ was that which enabled and impelled the Apostles to live great and energetic lives. It was this simple affection which made a life of aggression and reformation possible to them. This gave them the right ideas and the sufficient impulse. And it is this affection which is open to us all and which, equally now as at first, impels to all good. Let the love of Christ possess any soul and that soul cannot avoid being a blessing to the world around. Christ scarcely needed to say to Peter, "Feed My sheep; be helpful to those for whom I died," because in time Peter must have seen that this was his calling. Love gives us sympathy and intelligence. Our conscience is enlightened by sympathy with the person we love; through their desires, which we wish to gratify, we see higher aims than our own, aims which gradually become our own. And wherever the love of Christ exists, there sooner or later will the purposes of Christ be understood, His aims be accepted, His fervent desire and energetic endeavour for the highest spiritual condition of the race become energetic in us and carry us forward to all good. Indeed, Jesus warns Peter of the uncontrollable power of this affection he expressed. "When you were younger," He says, "you girded yourself and walked where you would; but when you are old another shall gird you, and carry you on to martyrdom." For he who is possessed by the love of Christ is as little his own master and can as little shrink from what that love carries him to as the man that is carried to execution by a Roman guard. Self-possession terminates when the soul can truly say, "Thou knowest that I love Thee." There is henceforth no choosing of ways of our own; our highest and best self is evoked in all its power, and asserts itself by complete abnegation of self and eager identification of self with Christ. This new affection commands the whole life and the whole nature. No more can the man spend himself in self-chosen activities, in girding himself for great deeds of individual glorification, or in walking in ways that promise pleasure or profit to self; he willingly stretches forth his hands, and is carried to much that flesh and blood shrink from, but which is all made inevitable, welcome, and blessed to him through the joy of that love that has appointed it.

But are we not thus pronouncing our own condemnation? This is, it is easy to see, the true and natural education of the human spirit—to love Christ, and so learn to see with His eyes and become enamoured of His aims and grow up to His likeness. But where in us is this absorbing, educating, impelling, irresistible power? To recognise the beauty and the certainty of God's method is not the difficulty; the difficulty is to use it, to find in ourselves that which carries us into the presence of Christ, saying, "Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee." Admiration we have; reverence we have; faith we have; but there is more than these needed. None of these will impel us to lifelong obedience. Love alone can carry us away from sinful and selfish ways. But this testing question, "Lovest thou Me?" was not the first but the last put to Peter by our Lord. It was only put after they had passed through many searching experiences together. And if we feel that for us to adopt as our own Peter's assured

answer would only be to deceive ourselves and trifle with the most serious of matters, we are to consider that Christ seeks to win our love also, and that the ecstasy of confessing our love with assurance is reserved even for us. It is possible we may already have more love than we think. It is no uncommon thing to love a person and not know it until some unusual emergency or conjuncture of circumstances reveals us to ourselves. But if we are neither conscious of love nor can detect any marks of it in our life, if we know ourselves to be indifferent to others, deeply selfish, unable to love what is high and self-sacrificing, let us candidly admit the full significance of this, and even while plainly seeing what we are, let us not relinquish the great hope of being at length able to give our heart to what is best and of being bound by an ever-increasing love to the Lord.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### CONCLUSION.

JOHN xxi. 18-25.

PETER, springing up in the boat, and snatching his fisher's coat, and girding it round him, and dashing into the water, seemed to Jesus a picture of impetuous, inexperienced, fearless love. And as He looked upon it another picture began to shine through it from behind and gradually take its place—the picture of what was to be some years later when that impetuous spirit had been tamed and chastened, when age had damped the ardour though it had not cooled the love of youth, and when Peter should be bound and led out to crucifixion for his Lord's sake. As Peter wades and splashes eagerly to the shore the eye of Jesus rests on him with pity, as the eye of a parent who has passed through many of the world's darkest places rests on the child who is speaking of all he is to do and to enjoy in life. Fresh from His own agony, our Lord knows how different a temper is needed for prolonged endurance. But little disposed to throw cold water on genuine, however miscalculating enthusiasm, having it for His constant function to fan, not to quench, the smoking flax, He does not disclose to Peter all His forebodings, but merely hints, as the disciple comes dripping out of the water, that there are severer trials of love awaiting him than those which mere activity and warmth of feeling can overcome. "When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not."

To a man of Peter's impulsive and independent temperament no future could seem less desirable than that in which he should be unable to choose for himself and do as he pleased. Yet this was the future to which the love he was now expressing committed him. This love, which at present was a delightful stimulus to his activities, diffusing joy through all his being, would gain such mastery over him that he would be impelled by it to a course of life full of arduous undertaking and entailing much suffering. The free, spontaneous, self-considering life to which Peter had been accustomed; the spirit of independence and right of choosing his own employ-



ments which had so clearly shown itself the evening before in his words "I go a-fishing"; the inability to own hindrances and recognise obstacles which so distinctly betrayed itself in his leaping into the water,—this confident freedom of action was soon to be a thing of the past. This ardour was not useless; it was the genuine heat which, when plunged in the chilling disappointments of life, would make veritable steel of Peter's resolution. But such trial of Peter's love did await it; and it awaits all love. The young may be arrested by suffering, or they may be led away from the directions they had chosen for themselves; but the chances of suffering increase with years, and what is possible in youth becomes probable and almost certain in the lapse of a lifetime. So long as our Christian life utters itself in ways we choose for ourselves and in which much active energy can be spent and much influence exerted, there is so much in this that is pleasing to self that the amount of love to Christ required for such a life may seem very small. Any little disappointment or difficulty we meet with acts only as a tonic, like the chill of the waters of the lake at dawn. But when the ardent spirit is bound in the fetters of a disabled, sickly body; when a man has to lay himself quietly down and stretch forth his hands on the cross of a complete failure that nails him down from ever again doing what he would, or of a loss that makes his life seem a living death; when the irresistible course of events leads him past and away from the hopefulness and joy of life; when he sees that his life is turning out weak and ineffectual, even as the lives of others,—then he finds he has a more difficult part to play than when he had to choose his own form of activity and vigorously put forth the energy that was in him. To suffer without repining, to be laid aside from the stir and interest of the busy world, to submit when our life is taken out of our own hands and is being moulded by influences that pain and grieve us—this is found to test the spirit more than active duty.

The contrast drawn by our Lord between the youth and age of Peter is couched in language so general that it throws light on the usual course of human life and the broad characteristics of human experience. In youth attachment to Christ will naturally show itself in such gratuitous and yet most pardonable and even touching exhibitions of love as Peter here made. There is a girding of oneself to duty and to all manner of attainment. There is no hesitation, no shivering on the brink, no weighing of difficulties; but an impulsive and almost headstrong committal of oneself to duties unthought of by others, an honest surprise at the laxity of the Church, much brave speaking, and much brave acting, too. Some of us, indeed, taking a hint from our own experience, may affirm that a good deal we hear about youth being warmer in Christ's service than maturity is not true, and that it had been a very poor prospect for ourselves if it had been true, and that with greater truth it may be said that youthful attachment to Christ is often delusive, selfish, foolish, and sadly in need of amendment. This may be so.

But however this may be, there can be no doubt that in youth we are free to choose. Life lies before us like the unhewn block of marble, and we may fashion it as we please. Circum-

stances may seem to necessitate our departing from one line of life and choosing another; but, notwithstanding, all the possibilities are before us. We may make ours a high and noble career; life is not as yet spoiled for us, or determined, while we are young. The youth is free to walk whither he will; he is not yet irrecoverably pledged to any particular calling; he is not yet doomed to carry to the grave the marks of certain habits, but may gird on himself whatever habit may fit him best and leave him freest for Christ's service.

Peter heard the words "Follow Me," and rose and went after Jesus; John did the same without any special call. There are those who need definite impulses, others who are guided in life by their own constant love. John would always absorbedly follow. Peter had yet to learn to follow, to own a leader. He had to learn to seek the guidance of his Lord's will, to wait upon that will and to interpret it—never an easy thing to do, and least of all easy to a man like Peter, fond of managing, of taking the lead, too hasty to let his thoughts settle and his spirit fixedly consider the mind of Christ.

It is obvious that when Jesus uttered the words "Follow Me," He moved away from the spot where they had all been standing together. And yet, coming as they did after so very solemn a colloquy, these words must have carried to Peter's mind a further significance than merely an intimation that the Lord wished his company then. Both in the mind of the Lord and of Peter there seems still to have been a vivid remembrance of Peter's denial; and as the Lord has given him opportunity of confessing his love, and has hinted what this love will lead him to, He appropriately reminds him that any penalties he might suffer for his love were all in the path which led straight to where Christ Himself for ever is. The superiority to earthly distresses which Christ now enjoyed would one day be his. But while he is beginning to take in these thoughts Peter turns and sees John following; and, with that promptness to interfere which characterised him, he asked Jesus what was to become of this disciple. This question betrayed a want of steadiness and seriousness in contemplating his own duty, and met therefore with rebuke: "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou Me." Peter was prone to intermeddle with matters beyond his sphere, and to manage other people's affairs for them. Such a disposition always betrays a lack of devotion to our own calling. To brood over the easier lot of our friend, to envy him his capacity and success, to grudge him his advantages and happiness, is to betray an injurious weakness in ourselves. To be unduly anxious about the future of any part of Christ's Church, as if He had omitted to arrange for that future, to act as if we were essential to the well-being of some part of Christ's Church, is to intermeddle like Peter. To show astonishment or entire incredulity or misunderstanding if a course in life quite different from ours is found to be quite as useful to Christ's people and to the world as ours; to show that we have not yet apprehended how many men, how many minds, how many methods, it takes to make a world, is to incur the rebuke of Peter. Christ alone is broad as humanity and has sympathy for all. He alone can find a place in His Church for every variety of man.



Coming to the close of this Gospel, we cannot but most seriously ask ourselves whether in our case it has accomplished its object. We have admired its wonderful compactness and literary symmetry. It is a pleasure to study a writing so perfectly planned and wrought out with such unflinching beauty and finish. No one can read this Gospel without being the better for it, for the mind cannot pass through so many significant scenes without being instructed, nor be present at so many pathetic passages without being softened and purified. But after all the admiration we have spent upon the form and the sympathy we have felt with the substance of this most wonderful of literary productions, there remains the question: Has it accomplished its object? John has none of the artifice of the modern teacher who veils his didactic purpose from the reader. He plainly avows his object in writing: "These signs are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His name." After half a century's experience and consideration, he selects from the abundant material afforded him in the life of Jesus those incidents and conversations which had most powerfully impressed himself and which seemed most significant to others, and these he presents as sufficient evidence of the divinity of his Lord. The mere fact that he does so is itself very strong evidence of his truth. Here is a Jew, trained to believe that no sin is so heinous as blasphemy, as the worshipping more gods than one or making any equal with God—a man to whom the most attractive of God's attributes was His truth, who felt that the highest human joy was to be in fellowship with Him in whom is no darkness at all, who knows the truth, who is the truth, who leads and enables men to walk in the light as He is in the light. What has this hater of idolatry and of lying found as the result of a holy, truth-seeking life? Has he found that Jesus, with whom he lived on terms of the most intimate friendship, whose words he listened to, the working of whose feelings he had scanned, whose works he had witnessed, was the Son of God. I say the mere fact that such a man as John seeks to persuade us of the divinity of Christ goes far to prove that Christ was Divine. This was the impression His life left on the man who knew Him best, and who was, judging from his own life and Gospel, better able to judge than any man who has since lived. It is sometimes even objected to this Gospel that you cannot distinguish between the sayings of the Evangelist and the sayings of his Master. Is there any other writer who would be in the smallest danger of having his words confounded with Christ's? Is not this the strongest proof that John was in perfect sympathy with Jesus, and was thus fitted to understand Him? And it is this man, who seems alone capable of being compared with Jesus, that explicitly sets Him immeasurably above himself, and devotes his life to the promulgation of this belief.

John, however, does not expect that men will believe this most stupendous of truths on his mere word. He sets himself therefore to reproduce the life of Jesus, and to retain in the world's memory those salient features which gave it its character. He does not argue nor draw inferences. He believes that what impressed him will impress others. One by one he cites his wit-

nesses. In the simplest language he tells us what Christ said and what He did, and lets us hear what this man and that man said of Him. He tells us how the Baptist, himself pure to asceticism, so true and holy as to command the submission of all classes in the community, assured the people that he, though greater and felt to be greater than any of their old prophets, was not of the same world as Jesus. This man who stands on the pinnacle of human heroism and attainment, revered by his nation, feared by princes for the sheer purity of his character, uses every contrivance of language to make the people understand that Jesus is infinitely above him, incomparable. He himself, he said, was of the earth: Jesus was from above and above all; He was from heaven, and could speak of things He had seen; He was the Son.

The Evangelist tells us how the incredulous but guileless Nathanael was convinced of the supremacy of Jesus, and how the hesitating Nicodemus was constrained to acknowledge Him a teacher sent by God. And so he cites witness after witness, never garbling their testimony, not making all bear the one uniform testimony which he himself bears; nay, showing with as exact a truthfulness how unbelief grew, as how faith rose from one degree to another, until the climax is reached in Thomas' explicit confession, "My Lord and my God!" No doubt some of the confessions which John records were not acknowledgments of the full and proper divinity of Christ. The term "Son of God" cannot, wherever used, be supposed to mean that Christ is God. We, though human, are all of us sons of God—in one sense by our natural birth, in another by our regeneration. But there are instances in which the interpreter is compelled to see in the term a fuller significance, and to accept it as attributing divinity to Christ. When, for example, John says, "No man hath seen God at any time: the *only-begotten Son*, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him," it is evident that he thinks of Christ as standing in a unique relation to God, which separates Him from the ordinary relation in which men stand to God. And that the disciples themselves passed from a more superficial use of the term to a use which had a deeper significance is apparent in the instance of Peter. When Peter in answer to the inquiry of Jesus replied, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus replied, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee"; but this was making far too much of Peter's confession if he only meant to acknowledge Him to be the Messiah. In point of fact, flesh and blood did reveal the Messiahship of Jesus to Peter, for it was his own brother Andrew who told Peter that he had found the Messiah, and brought him to Jesus. Plainly therefore Jesus meant that Peter had now made a further step in his knowledge and in his faith, and had learned to recognise Jesus as not only Messiah, but as Son of God in the proper sense.

In this Gospel, then, we have various forms of evidence. We have the testimonies of men who had seen and heard and known Jesus, and who, though Jews, and therefore intensely prejudiced against such a conception, enthusiastically owned that Christ was in the proper sense Divine. We have John's own testimony, who writes his Gospel for the purpose of winning men to faith in Christ's Sonship, who calls Christ Lord, apply-



ing to Him the title of Jehovah, and who in so many words declares that "the Word was God"—the Word who became flesh in Jesus Christ. And what is perhaps even more to the purpose, we have affirmations of the same truth made by Jesus Himself: "Before Abraham was I am"; "I and the Father are one"; "The glory which I had with Thee before the world was"; "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Who that listens to these sayings can marvel that the horrified Jews considered that He was making Himself equal with God and took up stones to stone Him for blasphemy? Who does not feel that when Jesus allowed this accusation to be brought against Him at the last, and when He allowed Himself to be condemned to death on the charge, He must have put the same meaning on His words that they put? Otherwise, if He did not mean to make Himself equal with the Father, would he not have been the very first to unmask and protest against so misleading a use of language? Had He not known Himself to be Divine, no member of the Sanhedrim could have been so shocked as He to listen to such language or to use it.

But in reading this Gospel one cannot but remark that John lays great stress on the miracles which Christ wrought. In fact, in announcing his object in writing it is especially to the miracles he alludes when he says, "These signs are written that ye might believe." In recent years there has been a reaction against the use of miracles as evidence of Christ's claim to be sent by God. This reaction was the necessary consequence of a defective view of the nature, meaning, and use of miracles. For a long period they were considered as merely wonders wrought in order to prove the power and authority of the Person who wrought them. This view of miracles was so exclusively dwelt upon and urged, that eventually a reaction came; and now this view is discredited. This is invariably the process by which steps in knowledge are gained. The pendulum swings first to the one extreme, and the height to which it has swung in that direction measures the momentum with which it swings to the opposite side. A one-sided view of the truth, after being urged for a while, is found out and its weakness is exposed, and forthwith it is abandoned as if it were false; whereas it is only false because it claimed to be the whole truth. Unless it be carried with us, then, the opposite extreme to which we now pass will in time be found out in the same way and its deficiencies be exposed.

In regard to miracles the two truths which must be held are: first, that they were wrought to make known the character and purposes of God; and, secondly, that they serve as evidence that Jesus was the revealer of the Father. They not only authenticate the revelation; they themselves reveal God. They not only direct attention to the Teacher; they are themselves the lessons He teaches.

During the Irish famine agents were sent from England to the distressed districts. Some were sent to make inquiries, and had credentials explaining who they were and on what mission; they carried documents identifying and authenticating them. Other agents went with money and waggon-loads of flour, which were their own authentication. The charitable gifts told their own story; and while they accomplished the object the charitable senders of the mission had

in view, they made it easy of belief that they came from the charitable in England. So the miracles of Christ were not bare credentials accomplishing nothing else than this—that they certified that Christ was sent from God; they were at the same time, and in the first place, actual expressions of God's love, revealing God to men as their Father.

Our Lord always refused to show any bare authentication. He refused to leap off a pinnacle of the Temple, which could serve no other purpose than to prove He had power to work miracles. He resolutely and uniformly declined to work mere wonders. When the people clamoured for a miracle, and cried, "How long dost Thou make us doubt?" when they pressed Him to the uttermost to perform some marvellous work solely and merely for the sake of proving His Messiahship or His mission, He regularly declined. On no occasion did He admit that such authentication of Himself was a sufficient cause for a miracle. The main object, then, of the miracles plainly was not evidential. They were not wrought chiefly, still less solely, for the purpose of convincing the onlookers that Jesus wielded superhuman power.

What, then, was their object? Why did Jesus so constantly work them? He wrought them because of His sympathy with suffering men,—never for Himself, always for others; never to accomplish political designs or to aggrandise the rich, but to heal the sick, to relieve the mourning; never to excite wonder, but to accomplish some practical good. He wrought them because in His heart He bore a Divine compassion for men and felt for us in all that distresses and destroys. His heart was burdened by the great, universal griefs and weaknesses of men: "Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses." But this was the very revelation He came to make. He came to reveal God's love and God's holiness, and every miracle He wrought was an impressive lesson to men in the knowledge of God.

Men learn by what they see far more readily than by what they hear, and all that Christ taught by word of mouth might have gone for little had it not been sealed on men's minds by these consistent acts of love. To tell men that God loves them may or may not impress them, may or may not be believed; but when Jesus declared that He was sent by God, and preached His gospel by giving sight to the blind, legs to the lame, health to the hopeless, that was a form of preaching likely to be effectual. And when these miracles were sustained by a consistent holiness in Him who worked them; when it was felt that there was nothing ostentatious, nothing self-seeking, nothing that appealed to mere vulgar wonder in them, but that they were dictated solely by love,—when it was found that they were thus a true expression of the character of Him who worked them, and that that character was one in which human judgment at least could find no stain, is it surprising that He should have been recognised as God's true representative?

Supposing, then, that Christ came to earth to teach men the fatherhood and the fatherliness of God—could He have more effectually taught it than by these miracles of healing? Supposing He wished to lodge in the minds of men the conviction that man, body and soul, was cared for by God; that the diseased, the help-



less, the wretched were valued by Him,—were not these works of healing the most effectual means of making this revelation? Have not these works of healing in point of fact proved the most efficient lessons in those great truths which form the very substance of Christianity? The miracles are themselves, then, the revelation, and carry to the minds of men more directly than any words or arguments the conception of a loving God, who does not abhor the affliction of the afflicted, but feels with His creatures and seeks their welfare.

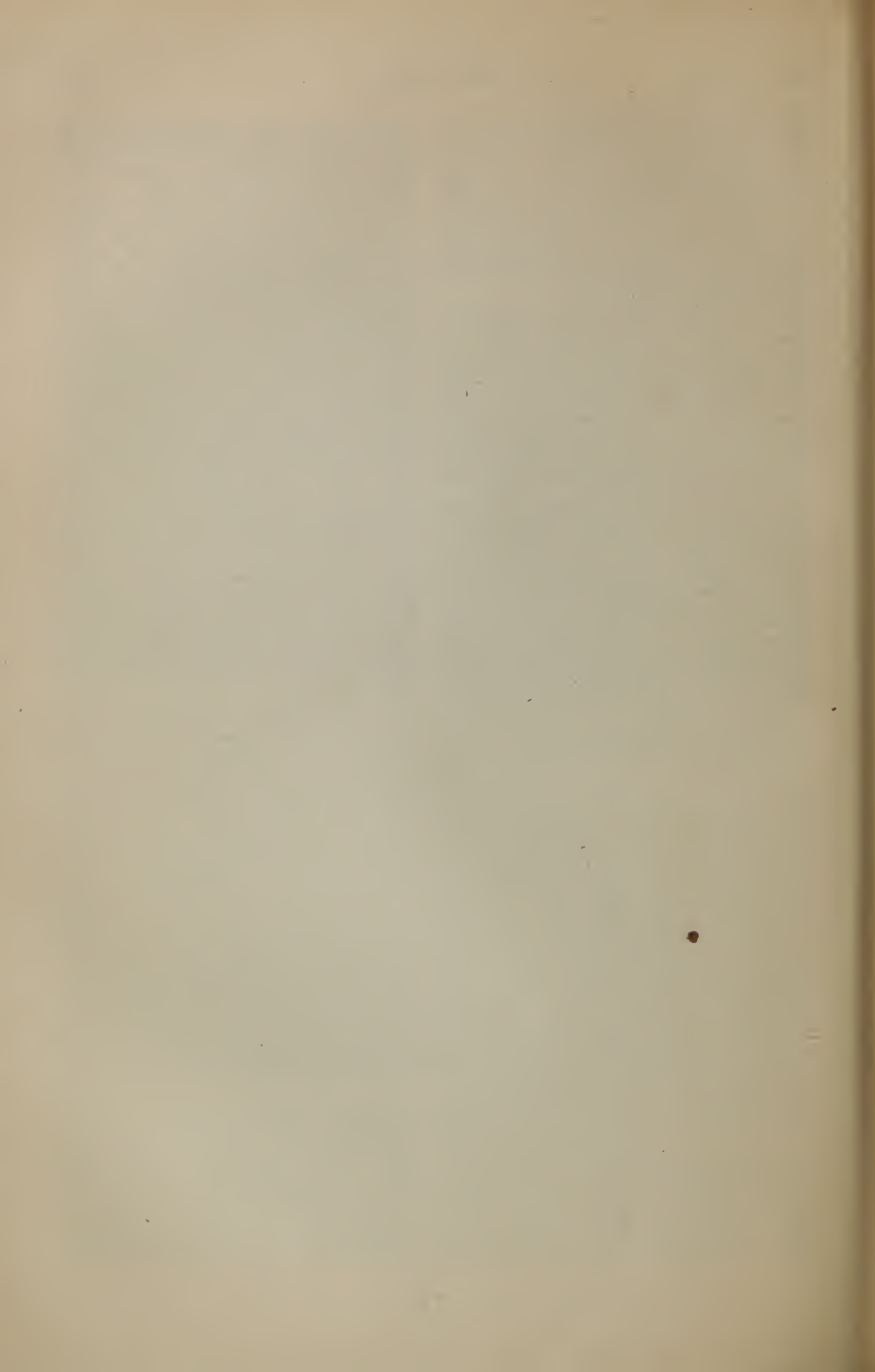
And, as John is careful throughout his Gospel to show, they suggest even more than they directly teach. John uniformly calls them "signs," and on more than one occasion explains what they were signs of. He that loved men so keenly and so truly could not be satisfied with the bodily relief He gave to a few. The power He wielded over disease and over nature seemed to hint at a power supreme in all departments. If He gave sight to the blind, was He not also the light of the world? If He fed the hungry, was He not Himself the bread which came down from heaven?

The miracles, then, are evidences that Christ is the revealer of the Father, because they do reveal the Father. As the rays of the sun are evidences of the sun's existence and heat, so are the miracles evidences that God was in Christ. As the natural and unstudied actions of a man are the best evidences of his character; as almsgiving that is not meant to disclose a charitable spirit, but for the relief of the poor, is evidence of charity; as irrepressible wit, and not clever sayings studied for effect, is the best evidence of wit—so these miracles, though not

wrought for the sake of proving Christ's union with the Father, but for the sake of men, do most effectually prove that He was one with the Father. Their evidence is all the stronger because it was not their primary object.

But for us the question remains, What has this Gospel with its careful picture of Christ's character and work done for us? Are we to close the Gospel and shut away from us this great revelation of Divine love as a thing in which we claim no personal share? This exhibition of all that is tender and pure, touching and hopeful, in human life—are we to look at it and pass on as if we had been admiring a picture and not looking into the very heart of all that is eternally real? This accessibility of God, this sympathy with our human lot, this undertaking of our burdens, this bidding us be of good cheer—is it all to pass by us as needless for us? The presence that shines from these pages, the voice that sounds so differently from all other voices—are we to turn from these? Is all that God can do to attract us to be in vain? Is the vision of God's holiness and love to be without effect? In the midst of all other history, in the tumult of this world's ambitions and contentings, through the fog of men's fancies and theories, shines this clear, guiding light: are we to go on as if we had never seen it? Here we are brought into contact with the truth, with what is real and abiding in human affairs; here we come into contact with God, and can for a little look at things as He sees them: are we, then, to write ourselves fools and blind by turning away as if we needed no such light—by saying, "We see, and need not be taught?"







# THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

## *PART I.*







## PREFACE.

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THIS Part contains an exposition of the Acts of the Apostles down to, but not including, the conversion of St. Paul and the baptism of Cornelius. There is a natural division at that point. Prior to these events, the inspired narrative is engaged with what the late Bishop Lightfoot of Durham called great "representative facts," prophetic or typical of the future developments of the Church, whether among Jews or Gentiles;\* while the subsequent course of the history deals almost entirely with missionary work among the heathen and the labours of St. Paul.†

We are dependent for the story of these earliest days of the Church's life upon the Acts of the Apostles. I have endeavoured, however, to illustrate the narrative by copious references to ancient documents, some of which may appear of dubious value and authority, such as the "Acts of the Saints" and the writings of the mediæval Greek hagiologist, Simeon Metaphrastes, who lived in the tenth century.‡ The latter writer has been hitherto regarded as more famous for his imagination than for his historical accuracy. This age of ours is a noted one, however, for clearing characters previously regarded as very doubtful, and Simeon Metaphrastes has come in for his own share of this process of rehabilitation. The distinguished writer just referred to, Dr. Lightfoot, has proved that Metaphrastes embodied in his works valuable early records, dating back to the second century, which in critical hands can shed much light upon primitive Christian history.§ In fact, students of Holy Scripture and of early Christianity are learning every day to look more and more to ancient Greek, Syriac, and Armenian writers, and to the libraries of the Eastern Churches, for fresh light on these important subjects. It is only natural we should do so. Writers like Simeon Metaphrastes and Photius, the student Patriarch of Constantinople, lived a thousand years nearer the apostolic times than we do. They flourished in an age of the highest civilisation, when precious literary works, in hundreds and thousands, which are no longer known amongst us, lay all around them and at their command. These men and their friends gathered them up and extracted them, and common sense alone teaches that a critical study of their writings will reveal to us somewhat of the treasures they possessed. The libraries of the East again form a great field for investigation. During the last fifty years we have paid some little attention to them, which has been amply rewarded. The recovery of the complete works of Hippolytus and of Clement of Rome, the discovery of the "Teaching of the Apostles" and of the "Diatessaron" of Tatian, are only specimens of what we may yet hope to exhume from the dust of ages.

\* See the treatise on the Christian Ministry in his "Philippians," p. 186.

† Dr. Goulburn, in his "Acts of the Deacons," suggested this view of the Acts of the Apostles nearly thirty years ago.

‡ For an account of Simeon Metaphrastes the English reader should consult Dr. Schaff's valuable "Encyclopædia of Historical Theology."

§ See Professor Ramsay on "The Tale of Saint Abercius" in the *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, vol. iii. p. 338, for a full account of this new source of early Church history which his travels and excavations have brought to our notice.



The testimony, too, borne by these finds has been of the greatest importance. The "Diatessaron" alone has formed the most triumphant reply to the argument against the Gospels, specially against St. John's Gospel, formulated some years ago by the author of "Supernatural Religion." And the process of discovery is still going on. I have said something in the notes to the final lecture of this Part concerning the latest discovery of this kind which throws some light upon the composition of the Acts. I refer to the lost "Apology" of Aristides, which has just been brought to light. Let me very briefly tell its story and show its bearing on the age and date of the Acts. Eusebius, the historian of the fourth century, mentions in his "Chronicle," under the year 124, the two earliest apologies written in defence of Christianity; one by Quadratus, a hearer of the Apostles, the other by Aristides, a philosopher of Athens. Now this year 124 was about twenty years after St. John's death. These apologies have hitherto been best known by this historian's notice, though Eusebius says they were widely circulated in his time. The "Apology" or defence of Aristides has often been sought for. In the seventeenth century it was said to have been extant in a monastery near Athens,\* but no Western had ever seen it in a complete shape in modern times. Two years ago, however, Professor J. Rendel Harris, M. A., of Cambridge and of Haverford College, Pennsylvania, discovered it in a Syriac version in the library of the convent of St. Catharine on Mount Sinai, whence he has published it with an English translation in a new series of "Texts and Studies in Biblical and Patristic Literature," the first number of which has appeared at Cambridge within the last few weeks.†

I need not go farther into the story of the recovery of this document, which raises high our expectations of others still more interesting. The "Apology" of Quadratus would be even more important, as it bore direct testimony to the miracles of our Lord. The brief extract from it which Eusebius gives in his "History," book iv. chap. 3, proves how precious would be the complete work. "The deeds of our Saviour, says Quadratus, were always before you, for they were true; those that were healed, those that were raised from the dead, who were seen, not only when healed and when raised, but were always present. They remained for a long time, not only whilst the Saviour was sojourning with us, but likewise when He had been removed. So that some of them have also survived to our own times."

In the "Apology" of Quadratus we should obtain a picture of the popular theology of the Church during that dark period which elapsed between the days of Clement of Rome and Ignatius, and those of Justin Martyr. The "Apology" of Aristides which has been found reveals something indeed in the same direction, but is more occupied

\* Cellier, "Hist. des Auteurs Ecclésiastiques," i. 403.

† Mr. Harris's discovery is not the first find of this ancient apologist in modern times. The Armenian Mechitarites of Venice published what they called two sermons of Aristides in 1878; which Cardinal Pitra, the learned librarian of the Vatican, reprinted in 1883, in his *Analecta Sacra*, t. iv. pp. x. xi. 6-11, 282-86. One of these sermons was a fragment of the "Apology" of Aristides, which the Mechitarites scarcely at first recognised as such. M. Renan, in his "Origines de Christianisme," vol. vi. p. vi. (Paris, 1879), scoffed at this fragment, declaring that, from the technical theological terms, such as Theotokos, therein used, it was evidently posterior to the fourth century. Doucet, in the *Revue des Questions Historiques* for October, 1880, pp. 601-12, made an effective reply with the materials at hand at the time; but Mr. Harris's publication of the complete work triumphantly demonstrates that M. Renan's objections were worthless (see Harris, pp. 2, 3, 27). It is another proof that Christians have everything to hope and nothing to fear from such discoveries of early documents. Mr. Harris's preface is specially interesting, because it shows that we have had the "Apology" of Aristides all the time, though we knew it not, as it was worked up in the quasi-oriental tale of Barlaam and Joasaph printed among the works of St. John of Damascus.



with an attack upon paganism than in a statement of the Christian faith. Here, however, consists its bearing on the Acts of the Apostles, not directly, but by way of contrast. Let me explain what I mean. In lecture xvii., when treating of the story of Simon Magus, I have shown how the simple narrative of the Acts concerning that man became elaborated in the second century till it formed at last a regular romance; whence I conclude that if the Acts had been written in the second century the story of Simon Magus would not be the simple matter we read in St. Luke's narrative. Now our argument for the date of the Acts derived from the "Apology" of Aristides is of much the same kind. This document shows us what the tone and substance of second-century addresses to the pagans were. It is the earliest of a series of apologies extending over the whole of that century. The "Apology" of Aristides, the numerous writings of Justin Martyr, specially the "Oratio" and the "Cohortatio ad Græcos" attributed to him, the "Oration" of Tatian addressed to the Greeks, the "Apologeticus" and the treatise "Ad Nationes" of Tertullian, the "Epistle to Diognetus," the writings of Athenagoras, all deal with the same topics, the theories and absurdities of Greek philosophy, the immoral character of the pagan deities, and the purity of Christian doctrine and practice.\* If the Acts of the Apostles had been composed in the second century, the address of St. Paul to the Athenians would have been very different from what it is, and must necessarily have partaken of those characteristics which we find common to all the numerous treatises addressed to the heathen world of that date. If the Acts were written in the second century, why does not the writer put arguments into St. Paul's mouth like those which were current among the Christian apologists of that time? The philosophical argument of Aristides, which is followed by Justin Martyr† and the later apologists, when contrasted with the simplicity of St. Paul, is a conclusive proof of the early date of the composition of the Acts.‡ But this is not the only argument of this kind which modern research furnishes. Aristides shows us what the character of Christian controversy with the pagans was in the generation succeeding the Apostles. We can draw the same conclusion when we examine Christian controversy as carried on against the Jews of the same period.

We have a number of treatises directed against the Jews by Christian writers of the second century: the "Dialogue" of Justin Martyr with Trypho the Jew, of Jason and Papiscus, and the treatise of Tertullian directed "Ad Judæos." When compared with one another we find that the staple arguments of these writings are much the same.§ They were evidently framed upon the model of St. Stephen's address at Jerusalem, of St. Paul at Antioch in Pisidia, and of the Epistle to the Galatians.

\* The apologists of the second century will be found in a collected shape in Otto's "Corpus Apologetarum," in nine vols. (Jena, 1842-72). Most of those mentioned above will be found in an English shape in Clarke's Ante-Nicene Library. See also Harnack in "Texte und Untersuchungen," bd. i., hft. i. (Leipzig, 1882).

† St. Jerome, in "Ep." 70, addressed to Magnus, a Roman rhetorician, expressly says that Justin Martyr imitated Aristides. The "Cohortatio ad Græcos" attributed to him is much liker the treatise of Aristides than Justin's admitted first and second apologies.

‡ Overbeck, Zeller, and Schweigler fix the composition of the Acts between 110 and 130, the very date of the "Apology" of Aristides. See Zeller's "Acts of the Apostles" p. 71 (London: Williams & Norgate, 1875).

§ For an account of the Jewish controversy in the second century see Gebhardt and Harnack's "Texte," bd. i., hft. 3 (Leipzig, 1883), where Harnack seeks to critically restore the substance of the dialogue between Jason and Papiscus. An article on "Apologists" in the "Dictionary of Christian Biography," vol. i. pp. 140-47, and another on "Theophilus" (13) in the same work, vol. iv. p. 1009, should be consulted.



They deal with the transitory and temporary character of the Jewish law, they enter very largely into the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy, and they notice Jewish objections. The second century works are, however, elaborate treatises, dealing with a great controversy in a manner which experience had showed to be far the most effective and telling. The Jewish controversy in the Acts, whether in the mouth of St. Peter, St. Stephen, or St. Paul, is treated in a much simpler way. The speakers think, speak, write, like men who are making their first essays in controversy, and have no experience of others to guide them. Had the Acts been written in the second century, the writer must have composed the addresses to the Jews as well as those to the Gentiles after the model of the age when he was writing. The more carefully, however, we examine and contrast these two controversies, as conducted in the Acts and in the writings of the second century respectively, the more thoroughly shall we be convinced of the apostolic date of St. Luke's narrative, of its genuine character, and of its historic worth.

I have written this book from my own standpoint as a decided Churchman, but I hope that I have said nothing which can really hurt the feelings of any one who thinks otherwise, or which may tend to widen those differences between Christians which are such a terrible hindrance to the cause of true religion and its progress in the world.

I have tried to use the Revised Version consistently throughout my expositions, but I fear that my attempt has been but vain. In my formal quotations I think I have succeeded. But then, in commenting upon Scripture, a writer constantly refers to and quotes passages without formal reference. Here is where I must have failed. The Authorised Version is so bound up with all our earliest thoughts and associations that its language unconsciously colours all our ideas and expressions. Any one who at present makes such an attempt as I have done will find illustrated in himself the phenomena which we behold in writings of the fifth and sixth centuries. St. Jerome published a Revised Version of the Latin translation of the Scripture about the year 400 A. D. For hundreds of years afterwards Latin writers are found using indiscriminately the old Latin and the new Latin translations. St. Patrick's "Confession," for instance, was composed about the middle of the fifth century. Quotations from both versions of the New Testament are found in that document, affording a conclusive indication of its date; just as the mixture of the Revised and Authorised Versions will form a prominent feature in theological works composed towards the close of the nineteenth century.

I have to acknowledge the kind assistance of the Rev. H. W. Burgess, LL. D., who has patiently read all my proofs, and called my attention to many a solecism or mistake which might have otherwise disfigured my pages.

GEORGE T. STOKES.

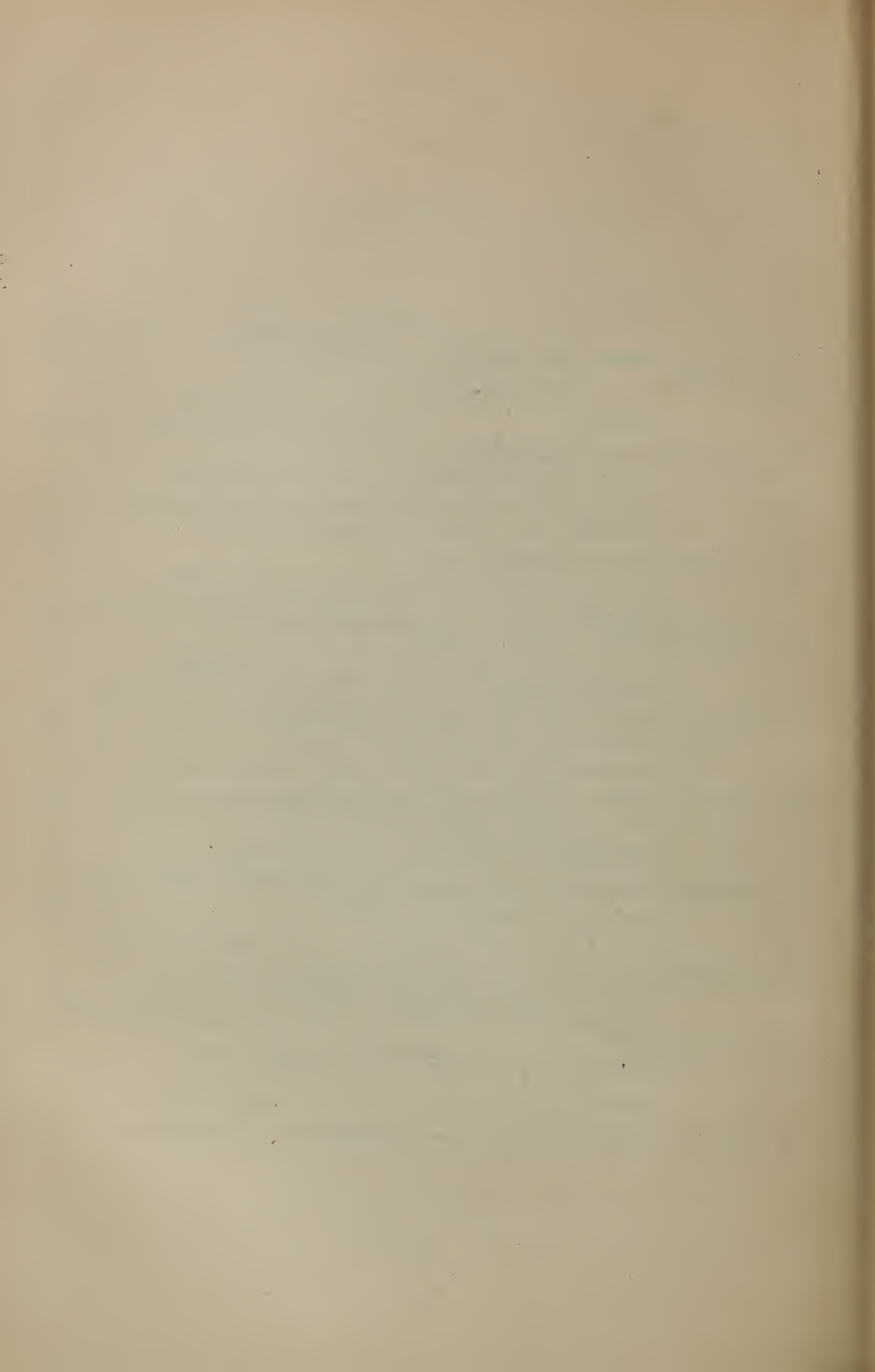


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# THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

BY THE REV. G. T. STOKES, D. D.

## PART I.

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE ORIGIN AND AUTHORITY OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

##### ACTS i. 1, 2.

THESE words constitute the very brief preface which the writer thought sufficient for the earliest ecclesiastical history ever produced in the Church of God. Let us imitate him in his brevity and conciseness, and without further delay enter upon the consideration of a book which raises vital questions and involves all-important issues.

Now when a plain man comes to the consideration of this book one question naturally strikes him at once: How do I know who wrote this book, or when it was written? What evidence or guarantee have I for its authentic character? To these questions we shall apply ourselves in the present chapter.

The title of the book as given in our Bibles does not offer us much help. The title varies in different manuscripts and in different ancient authors. Some writers of the second century who touched upon apostolic times call it by the name our Bibles retain, *The Acts of the Apostles*; others call it *The Acts of the Holy Apostles*, or at times simply *The Acts*. This title of "*Acts*" was indeed a very common one, in the second and third centuries, for a vast variety of writing purporting to tell the story of apostolic lives, as an abundance of extant apocryphal documents amply proves. *The Acts of Paul and Thecla*, the *Acts of St. Thomas*, of *St. Peter*, and of *St. John*, were imitations, doubtless, of the well-known name by which our canonical book was then called. Imitation is universally acknowledged to be the sincerest form of flattery, and the imitation of the title and form of our book is an evidence of its superior claim and authority. One of the oldest of these apocryphal Acts is a document celebrated in Christian antiquity as the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*. We know all about its origin. It was forged about the year 180 or 200 by a presbyter of Asia Minor who was an enthusiastic admirer of the Apostle St. Paul. But when we take up the narrative and read it, with its absurd legends and its manifold touches and realistic scenes drawn from the persecutions of the second century, and well known to every student of the original records of those times, we can at a glance see what the canonical Acts of the Apostles would have been had the composition been postponed to the end of the second century. The Acts of Paul and Thecla are useful, then, as illustrating, by way of contrast in title and in substance, the genuine Acts of the New Testament which they imitated.\*

\* See a copious account of this strange second-century forgery in Dr. Gwynne's article on Thecla in the fourth volume of the "*Dictionary of Christian Biography*." Dr.

But then, some one might say, how do we know that the genuine Acts of the Apostles existed prior to the Acts of Paul and Thecla and the time of Tertullian, who first mentions these apocryphal Acts, and tells us of their forged origin? The answer to that query is easy enough. Yet it will require a somewhat copious statement in order to exhibit its full force, its convincing power.

Tertullian is a writer who connects the age of apostolic men, as we may call the men who knew the Apostles—Ignatius, Polycarp, Clement of Rome, and such like—with the third century. Tertullian was born about the middle of the second century, and he lived till the third century was well advanced. He was one of those persons whose chronological position enables them to transmit historical facts and details from one critical point to another. Let me illustrate what I mean by a modern example. Every unprejudiced thinker will acknowledge that the Rev. John Wesley was a man who exercised an extraordinary religious influence. He not only originated a vast community of world-wide extent, which calls itself after his name, but he also imparted a tremendous impetus to spiritual life and work in the Church of England. After the departure of Mr. Wesley from this life his mantle fell upon a certain number of his leading followers, men like Adam Clarke, the commentator; Jabez Bunting, the organiser of modern Wesleyanism; Thomas Coke, Robert Newton, and Richard Watson, the author of the "*Institutes of Theology*." Several of these men lived far into this century, and there are at the present day thousands still alive who recollect some of them, while there are many still alive who can recollect all of them. Now let us draw a parallel with all reverence, and yet with perfect fairness. John Wesley began his life at the beginning of the eighteenth century as our Lord began His human life at the beginning of the first century. John Wesley's immediate disciples perpetuated their lives till the middle of the present century. Our Lord's apostles and immediate followers perpetuated their lives in some cases till well into the second century. At the close of the nineteenth century there are hundreds, to say the least, who remember Adam Clarke and Thomas Coke, who in turn were personally acquainted with John Wesley. In the last quarter of the second century there must have been many still alive—apostolic men, I have called them—whose youthful memories could bear them back to the days when the Apostle St. John, and men like St. Mark, and St. Luke, and St. Ignatius, still testified what they had personally seen and heard and known. Why, the simple fact is this, that in the year 1950 there will be still living numerous persons who will be able to say that they have personally known many individuals who were the friends and acquaintances of John Wesley's immediate disciples. Four long lives of ninety

Salmon, in his "*Introduction to the N. T.*," chap. xix., gives a most interesting description of the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, which even the unlearned can enjoy.



years, and one overlapping the other, will easily cover three centuries of time.

Let us dwell a little more on this point, for it bears very directly on Tertullian's witness, not only to the canon of the New Testament, but also to the whole round of Christian doctrine. It is simply wonderful what vast tracts of time can be covered by human memory even at the present day, when that faculty has lost so much of its power for want of exercise, owing to the printing-press. I can give a striking instance from my own knowledge. There is at present an acquaintance of mine living in this city of Dublin where I write. He is hale and hearty, and able still to take the keenest interest in the affairs of religion and of politics. He is about ninety-five years of age, and he has told me within the last twelve months that he remembers quite well a grand-aunt of his born in the reign of Queen Anne, who used to tell him all the incidents connected with the earliest visits of John and Charles Wesley to Ireland about 1745. If Tertullian's experience was anything like my own, he may quite easily have known persons at Rome or elsewhere who had heard the tale of St. Paul's preaching, labour, and miracles from the very men whom the Apostle had converted at Antioch, Damascus, and Rome. I can give a more striking instance still, which any reader can verify for himself. Mr. S. C. Hall was a writer known far and wide for the last seventy years. About the middle of this century Mr. Hall was at the height of his popularity, though he only passed to the unseen world within the last year or so. In the year 1842 he, in union with his accomplished and well-known wife, composed a beautifully illustrated work, published in three volumes, called "Picturesque Ireland," which now finds an honoured place in many of our libraries. In the second volume of that work Mr. Hall mentions the following curious fact bearing on our argument. He states that he was then (in 1842) staying at the house of a gentleman, Sir T. Macnaghten, whose father had commanded at the siege of Derry in 1689, one hundred and fifty-three years before. Yet, vast as the distance of time was, the explanation which he offered was easy enough. The Macnaghten Clan was summoned to assist in the celebrated siege of Derry. They refused to march unless headed by their chief, who was then a boy of seven. The child was placed on a horse and duly headed his clan, who would follow him alone. That child married when a very old man, and his eldest son attained to an equally patriarchal age, carrying with him the traditions of Jacobite times down to the reign of Queen Victoria. I could give many other similar instances, illustrating my contention that vivid and accurate traditions of the past can be transmitted over vast spaces of time, and that through persons who come into living contact with one another.

Tertullian must have had ample means, then, of ascertaining the facts concerning the books of the New Testament from living witnesses. There is again another point we must bear in mind, and it is this: the distance of time with which Tertullian's investigations had to deal was not so vast as we sometimes imagine. It was by no means so great as the spaces we have just now referred to. We naturally think of Tertullian as living about the year 200, and then, remembering that our Saviour was born just two centuries before, we ask, What is the value of a

man's testimony concerning events two centuries old? But we must bear in mind the exact point at issue. We are not inquiring at all about events two centuries old, but we are inquiring as to Tertullian's evidence with respect to the canonical Gospels and the Acts; and none of these was one hundred years old when Tertullian was born, about 150 A.D., while the Gospel of St. John may not have been more than sixty years old, or thereabouts, at the same date. Now if we take up the writings of Tertullian, which are very copious indeed, we shall find that the Acts of the Apostles are quoted at least one hundred times in them, long passages being in some cases transcribed, and the whole book treated by him as Scripture and true history. If we accept the ordinary view, that the Acts were written previously to St. Paul's death, the book was only a century old at Tertullian's birth. But we can come nearer to the apostolic times.

The Muratorian fragment is a document which came to light by chance one hundred and fifty years ago. It illustrates the age of the Acts, and shows what wondrous testimonies to the New Testament scriptures we may yet gain. Its story is a very curious and interesting one for ourselves. St. Columbanus was an Irish missionary who, about the year 600 A. D., established a monastery at Bobbio, a retired spot in North Italy. He gathered a library there, and imparted a literary impulse to his followers which never left them.\* Some Irish monk, a hundred years later than Columbanus, employed his time in copying into a book an ancient manuscript of the second century giving a list of the books of the New Testament then received at Rome. This second-century manuscript enumerated among these the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and thirteen Epistles of St. Paul. Concerning the Acts of the Apostles, the Roman writer of this document, who lived about A. D. 170, says: "The Acts of all the Apostles are written in one book. Luke explains to the most excellent Theophilus everything which happened in his presence, as the omission of Peter's martyrdom and of Paul's journey into Spain manifestly proves;" a passage which clearly shows that about the middle of the second century the Acts of the Apostles was well known at Rome, and its authorship ascribed to St. Luke.† But this is not all. We have another most interesting second-century document, which proves that at the very same period our canonical book was known and authoritatively quoted far away in the south of France. It is hard to exaggerate the evidential value of the Epistle of the Churches of Lyons and Vienne written about the year 177, and addressed to their brethren in Asia Minor. That letter quotes the books of the New Testament in the amplest manner, and without any formal references, just as a modern preacher or writer would quote them, showing how common and authoritative was their use. Leader-writers in the *Times* or the *Sunday Review* often garnish their articles with a scriptural quotation; the late Mr. John Bright, in his great popular orations, loved to point them with an apt citation from Holy Writ; but he never thought it necessary, nor do journalists ever think it necessary, to prefix a formal statement

\* See two articles on St. Columbanus and his library in the *Expositor* for June and August, 1889.

† Dr. Salmon in his "Introd. N. T.," pp. 48-54, describes the Muratorian Fragment.



of the place whence their texts have been derived. They presume a wide knowledge and a formal recognition of the text of the Bible. So it was in this epistle written from Lyons and Vienne, and in it we find an exact quotation from the Acts of the Apostles—"According as Stephen the perfect martyr prayed, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."

But this is not the whole of the argument which can be derived from the Epistle of the Lyonese Christians, which is given to us at full length in the fifth book of the "Church History" of the celebrated historian Eusebius. Their incidental notice of the Acts involves a vast deal when duly considered. The Epistle from Lyons implies that the Acts were received as authoritative and genuine in the churches of towns like Ephesus, Philadelphia, Smyrna, Miletus, where the memories and traditions of the Apostles were still vivid and living. Then, too, the Bishop of Lyons had suffered in this persecution. His name was Pothinus. He was the first Bishop of the Church of Lyons, and he died when he was more than ninety years of age, and may have been a disciple of an apostle, or of one of the first generation of Christians. At any rate, his memory would easily carry him back to the days of Domitian and the times of the first century; and yet the Church over which this first-century Christian presided accepted the Acts of the Apostles. The testimony of Pothinus helps then to carry back the Acts of the Apostles to the year 100 at least. But we can go farther still, and closer to apostolic times.

The Gospel of St. Luke and the Acts of the Apostles are, we may say, universally admitted to be by the same writer. The reference of the Acts to the Gospel, the unity of style and tone of thought, all demonstrate them to be the production of one mind. Any circumstance therefore which proves the early existence of the Gospel equally proves the existence of the Acts of the Apostles. Now we have proof positive that the Gospel of St. Luke occupied an authoritative position and was counted an apostolic and sacred writing at Rome in the early years of the second century, say between 100 and 150, because when Marcion, whom we might call a primitive Antinomian, wished to compile a gospel suited to his own purposes, he took St. Luke's Gospel, cut out whatever displeased him, and published the remainder as the true version. The perversion and mutilation of St. Luke's work show that it must already have held a high position in the Church at Rome, or else there would have been no object in mutilating it. Marcion's treatment of St. Luke proves the use and position the Gospel and the Acts must have occupied in days when the converts and companions of the Apostles were still alive.\* That is as far as we can go back by external testimony. But then we must remember what these facts involve—that the Gospel and the Acts occupied authoritative positions in various parts of the world, and specially in Rome, Gaul, Africa, and Asia Minor, in the generation next after the Apostles. Then let us take up the Book of Acts itself, and what does this book, known at Rome and throughout the Christian world at that early period, tell us? It informs us that it was the work of the writer of the Gospel, and that the writer was a companion of the Apostle Paul throughout the por-

tion of his career sketched in the latter part of the book. The Christian Church has never pinned its faith to the Lukian authorship of either the Gospel or the Acts. The question of the authorship of these books is an open one, like that of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The Acts has been attributed to Silas, to Timothy, to Titus; but I may say, without going into any further details on this question, that every attempt to ascribe the Acts to any one else save to the beloved physician has failed, and must fail, because he was the real author, well known to the living tradition of the Church of Rome in the early part of the second century, as that tradition is handed down to us in the language of the Muratorian Fragment.

If we were writing a critical treatise, we should of course have to enter upon the full discussion of many questions which might here be raised. The Acts of the Apostles in its latter chapters plainly claims to be the work of an eye-witness. In its opening words, placed at the head of this dissertation, it claims to be the work of the author of the Gospel. All the facts fall into a simple, natural order if we accept the traditional testimony of the Church that the Acts and the Gospel were both of them written before the martyrdom of St. Paul, and were indited by the hands of St. Paul's companion St. Luke. Any other solution is forced, unnatural, and involves inconsistencies on every side. We may turn aside from this brief outline of the critical question, to some more purely spiritual reflections, simply referring those who desire more information on the questions of date and authorship to such exhaustive works as those of Dr. Salmon's "Introduction to the New Testament"; Dr. Westcott on the "New Testament Canon"; Dr. Charteris on "Canonicity," or Meyer's "Introduction to the Acts."

First, then, it may strike the intelligent reader, how comes it that we have not much fuller testimony in early Christian writers to the Acts of the Apostles, and to all the books of the Old Testament? How is it that the writings of Polycarp, Ignatius, Clement of Rome, do not abound with references, not merely to the Acts, but also to the four Gospels and to the other works of the New Testament? How is it that we have to depend on this obscure reference and that dubious quotation? These are questions which had often puzzled my own mind before I had investigated, and must often have raised anxiety and thought in other minds sincerely desirous of being rooted and grounded in the truth. But now, after having investigated and thought, I think I can see solid reasons why things are as they are; clear evidences of the truth of the Christian story in the apparent difficulties. Historic imagination is one of the necessary requisites in such an investigation, and historic imagination is one of the qualities in which our German cousins, from whom most of the objections to the canon of the New Testament have been derived, are conspicuously deficient. They are gifted with prodigious industry, and an amazing capacity for patient investigation. They live secluded lives, however, and no one is a worse judge of practical life, or forms wilder conclusions as to what men actually do in practical life, than the academic pure and simple. A dear friend, now with God, himself a distinguished resident of a well-known college, used

\* See Dr. Sanday's "The Gospels in the Second Century," and Dr. Salmon's "Introd. N. T.," pp. 204-208.



often to say to me, "Never trust the opinion of a mere college fellow or professor upon any practical point; they know nothing about life." This dictum, begotten of long experience, bears on our argument. German thought and English thought offer sharp and strong contrasts on many points, and on none more than in this direction. English students mix more in the world, are surrounded by the atmosphere of free institutions, and realise more vividly how men spontaneously act under the conditions of actual existence. The German thinker evolves his men of the past and the facts of their existence out of his own consciousness, without submitting them to the necessary corrections which experience dictates to his English brother; and the result is that while we may be very ready to accept the premises of the Germans, we should be in general somewhat suspicious of their conclusions. Scholarship alone does not entitle a man to pronounce on questions of history. It is only one of the elements requisite for the solution of such problems. Knowledge of men, experience of life, enabling a man to form a just and true mental picture of the past and of the motives by which men are influenced,—these are elements equally necessary. Now let us try and throw ourselves back by an effort of historical imagination into the age of Polycarp, Ignatius, and Clement of Rome, and I think we shall at once see that the omission of such abundant references to the New Testament as men at times desiderate was quite natural in their case.

Let us reflect a little. The manner in which the early Christians learned the facts and truths of Christianity was quite different from that which now prevails. If men wish now to learn about original Christianity they resort to the New Testament. In the age of Polycarp they resorted to the living voice of the elders who had known the Apostles, and had heard the truth from their lips. Thus Irenæus, who had the four Gospels before him, tells us: "I can recall the very place where Polycarp used to sit and teach, his manner of speech, his mode of life, his appearance, the style of his address to the people, his frequent references to St. John and to others who had seen our Lord; how he used to repeat from memory the discourses which he had heard from them concerning our Lord, His miracles, and His mode of teaching; and how, being instructed himself by those who were eye-witnesses of the Life of the Word, there was in all that he said a strict agreement with the Scriptures." And it is very natural that men, though possessed of the Gospels, should thus have delighted in the testimony of elders like Polycarp. There is a charm in the human voice, there is a force and power in living testimony, far superior to any written words. Take, for instance, the account of a battle contributed to a newspaper by the best-informed correspondent. Yet how men will hang on the lips and follow with breathless attention the narrative of the humblest actor in the actual contest. This one fact, known to common experience, shows how different the circumstances of the early Christians were as touching the canonical books from those which now exist, or existed in the third and fourth centuries. Again, we must remember that in the age of Polycarp there was no canon of the New Testament as we have it. There were a number of books here and there known to have been written by the Apostles and their immediate fol-

lowers. One Church could show the Epistle written by St. Paul to the Ephesians, another that written to the Colossians. Clement of Rome, when writing to the Corinthians, expressly refers them to the First Epistle to the Corinthians, which possibly was treasured by them as their one sacred document of the new covenant; and so it was doubtless all over the Christian world till well-nigh the close of the second century. The New Testament was dispersed in portions, a few leading Churches possessing perhaps all or most of the books, and a few remote ones probably only a few detached epistles, or a solitary gospel. A Greek document found in the National Library at Paris within the last few years illustrates this point. The Scillitan martyrs were a body of Africans who sealed their testimony to the faith by suffering martyrdom in the year 180, about three years after the sufferings of the Christians of Lyons and Vienne. North Africa, now the chosen home of the false prophet, was then the most fruitful field for the religion of the Crucified, yielding doctors, saints, confessors, in multitudes. The document which has now come to light tells the story of these North Africans and their testimony to the truth. The details of their judicial examination are there set forth, and in one question, proposed by the heathen magistrate, we have an interesting glimpse of the very point upon which we are insisting, the scattered and detached nature of the New Testament writings at that period. The President of the Roman Court, in the course of his examination, asks the leader of the martyrs, St. Speratus, "What are those books in your cases?" "They are," he replied, "the epistles of that holy man Paul." So that apparently the Scillitan Church depended for instruction, in the closing years of the second century, upon the Epistles of St. Paul alone.\*

The canon of the New Testament grew up by degrees, somehow thus. While the Apostles and their followers and the friends of their followers lived and flourished, men naturally sought after their living testimonies, consulting doubtless such documents as well which lay within their reach. But when the living witnesses and their friends had passed away, the natural instinct of the Church, guided by that Spirit of Truth which in the darkest times has never wholly left Christ's Spouse, led her to treasure up and dwell with greater love upon those written documents which she had possessed from the beginning. It is no wonder, then, that we do not find large quotations and copious references to the canonical books in the earliest writers—simply because it was impossible they should then have occupied the same place in the Christian consciousness as they now do. Rather, on the contrary, we should be inclined to say that, had they been largely quoted and frequently referred to by Polycarp, Ignatius, or Clement, men might naturally have derived therefrom a forcible argument against the genuine character of the works of these primitive Fathers, as such quotations would have been contrary to the principles of human nature. It is very important for us to remember these facts. They have a very clear bearing upon present-day controversies. Friends

\* An interesting account of the second-century document will be found in the "Texts," edited by Gebhardt and Harnack, or in the "Dict. Christ. Biog." under "Scillitan Martyrs." Every scrap of second-century evidence is of the greatest importance for biblical criticism.



and foes of Christianity have often thought that the truth of our religion was bound up with the traditional view of the canon of the New Testament, or with some special theory of inspiration; forgetting the self-evident truth that Christianity existed at the beginning without a canon of the New Testament, that the early Christians depended upon personal testimony alone, and that if the Apostles and their friends had never written a line or left a solitary document behind them, yet that we should have abundant information concerning the work and teachings of our Lord and His Apostles in the writings of the successors of the Apostles, compared with and fortified by contemporaneous pagan testimony. Men have sometimes thought and spoken as if the New Testament descended from heaven in its present shape, like the image that fell down from Jupiter which the Ephesians worshipped, forgetting the true history of its upgrowth and origin. The critical theories that have been advanced in abundance of late years would have troubled a second-century Christian very little. If the Johannine authorship of the fourth Gospel were denied, or the Pauline authorship of Colossians or Ephesians questioned; what does it matter? would have been his reply. These documents may have been forgeries, but there are plenty of other documents which tell the same story, and I have myself known many men who have suffered and died because they had embraced the truths, from the lips of the Apostles themselves, which they have taught me. The simple fact is, that if all the books of the New Testament were proved impudent forgeries except the Epistle to the Romans, the two Epistles to the Corinthians, and the Galatians, which every person admits, we should have ample and convincing statements of Christian truth and doctrine. The devout Christian may, then, make his mind easy, certain that no efforts and no advances in the field of biblical criticism are likely to ruffle even a feather of the faith once delivered to the saints.

But then, some one may come forward and say, is not this a very uncomfortable position for us? Would it not have been much more easy and consoling for Christians to have had the whole canon of Scripture infallibly decided by Divine authority once for all, so as to save all doubts and disputations on the whole subject? Would it not have been better had the Acts of the Apostles expressly named St. Luke as its author, and appended ample proofs that its statement was true? This objection is a very natural one, and springs up at times in every mind; and yet it is merely part and parcel of the larger objection, Why has Revelation been left a matter of doubt and disputation in any respect? Nay, it is part of a still wider and vaster question, Why has truth in any department, scientific, philosophical, ethical, or historical, been left a matter of debate? Why has it not shone forth by its own inherent light and compelled the universal consent of admiring mankind? Why has not the great fundamental truth of all, the existence and nature of God, been made so clear, that an atheist could not possibly exist? A century and a half ago Bishop Butler, in his immortal "Analogy," disposed of this objection, which still crops up afresh in every generation as if that work had never been written.\* God has placed us here in a state of probation, and

neither in temporal nor in spiritual matters is the evidence for what is true, and right, and wise so clear and overwhelming that no room is left for mistake or error. As it is in every other department of life, so is it especially with reference to the canon of Scripture. It would doubtless be very convenient for us if the whole question were settled authoritatively and no doubts possible, but would it be good for us? would it be wholesome for our spiritual life? I trow not. We have, indeed, a living and speaking example of the blessings of uncertainty in the state of the Roman Catholic Church, which has tried to better the Divine method of training mankind, and banish all uncertainty. That communion undertakes to settle infallibly all questions of theology, and to leave nothing in doubt; and with what result? The vast body of the laity take no interest whatsoever in theological questions. They regard theology as outside their sphere, and belonging to the clergy exclusively. The clergy in turn believe that the Pope, in his office of infallible and universal pastor and teacher, has alone the right and authority to settle doctrines, and they leave it to him. They have made a solitude, and that they call peace, and the pretence alone of an authority which undertakes to release man from doubt and the need of investigation has paralysed theological inquiry among Roman Catholics.

The same results on a vastly larger scale must have happened throughout the Christian world had God made His revelation so clear that no doubt could arise concerning it. Man is a lazy animal by nature, and that laziness would at once have been developed by the very abundance of the light vouchsafed. Religion would have been laid aside as a thing settled once for all. All interest would have been lost in it, and human attention would have been concentrated on those purely mundane matters where uncertainty arises, and therefore imperiously demands the mind's thought and care. The blessings of uncertainty would offer a very wide topic for meditation. The man of vast wealth whose bread is certain can never know the childlike faith whereby the poor man waits upon his God and receives from Him day by day his daily dole. The uncertainties of life hide from us much future sorrow, teach us to walk by faith, not by sight, and lead us to depend completely on the loving guidance of that Fatherly Hand which does all things well. The uncertainties of life develop the spiritual life of the soul. The doubts and questions which arise about religion bring their own blessings with them too. They develop the intellectual life of the spirit. They prevent religion becoming a matter of superstition, they offer opportunities for the exercise of the graces of honesty, courage, humility, and love; and thus form an important element in that Divine training by which man is fitted here below for the beatific vision which awaits him hereafter. Human nature ever craves with longing desire to walk by sight. The Divine method evermore prescribes, on the contrary, that man must for the present walk by faith. Very wisely indeed, and with truest spiritual instinct, the poet of the "Christian Year" has sung, in words applicable to life and to theology alike:—

"There are who, darkling and alone,  
Would wish the weary night were gone,  
Though dawning morn should only show  
The secret of their unknown woe :

\* See Butler's "Analogy," Part II. chap. vi.



Who pray for sharpest throbs of pain  
To ease them of doubt's galling chain:  
'Only disperse the cloud,' they cry,  
'And if our fate be death, give light and let us die.'

"Unwise I deem them, Lord, unmeet  
To profit by Thy chastenings sweet,  
For Thou wouldst have us linger still  
Upon the verge of good or ill,  
That on Thy guiding hand unseen  
Our undivided hearts may lean,  
And this our frail and foundering bark  
Glide in the narrow wake of Thy beloved ark." \*

The thoughts with which we have hitherto dealt connect themselves with the opening words of the text with which we have begun this chapter, "The former treatise I made, O Theophilus." There are two other points in this passage which are worthy of devout attention. The writer of the Acts took a thoroughly historical view of our Lord's life after the resurrection as well as before that event. He considered that our Lord's person, no matter how it may have been modified by His death and resurrection, was still as real after these events as in the days when He ministered and wrought miracles in Galilee and Jerusalem. His whole life was continuous, from the day of the birth in Bethlehem "until the day He was taken up."

Then again St. Luke recognises the dual personality of our Lord. As we shall afterwards have frequently to notice, St. Luke realised His Divine character. In the opening verses of this book he recognises His complete and perfect humanity—"After that He had given commandment through the Holy Ghost unto the Apostles." There was an ancient heresy about the nature of our Lord's person, which denied the perfection of our Lord's humanity, teaching that His Divinity took the place of the human spirit in Christ. Such teaching deprives us of much comfort and instruction which the Christian can draw from a meditation upon the true doctrine as taught here by St. Luke. Jesus Christ was God as well as man, but it was through the manhood He revealed the life and nature of God. He was perfect Man in all respects, with body, soul, and spirit complete; and in the actions of His manhood, in the exercise of all its various activities, He required the assistance and support of the Holy Ghost just as really as we ourselves do. He taught, gave commandments, worked miracles through the Holy Ghost. The humanity of the Eternal Son required the assistance of the Divine Spirit. Christ sought that Divine aid in prolonged communion with His Father and His God, and then went forth to work His miracles and give His commandments. Prayer and the gift of the Spirit and the works and marvels of Christ were closely connected together, even before the open descent of the Spirit and the wonders of Pentecost. There was a covenant blessing and a covenant outpouring of the Spirit peculiar to Christianity which was not vouchsafed till Christ had ascended. But the Divine Spirit had been given in a measure long before Christ came. It was through the Spirit that every blessing and every gift came to patriarchs, prophets, warriors, teachers, and workers of every kind under the Jewish dispensation. The Spirit of God came upon Bezaleel and Aholiab, qualifying them to work cunningly for the honour and glory of Jehovah when a tabernacle was to be reared. The Spirit of God came upon

\* J. Keble, "The Sixth Sunday after Epiphany."

Samson, and roused his natural courage when Israel was to be delivered. The Spirit of God could rest even upon a Saul, and convert him for a time into a changed character. And just as really the Holy Ghost rested upon the human nature of Jesus Christ, guiding Him in the utterance of those commandments, the outcome and development of which we trace in the book of the Acts of the Apostles.

## CHAPTER II.

### *THE CONVERSATIONS OF THE GREAT FORTY DAYS.*

Acts i. 6-9.

THE conversations and intercourse between our Lord and His apostles during the forty days which elapsed from the resurrection to the ascension must have been of intensest interest, yet, like so much that we should esteem interesting concerning the heroes of Scripture and their lives, these things are wrapped round with thickest darkness. We get a glimpse of the risen Christ here and there. We are told He was conversing with His disciples touching the things concerning the kingdom of God. And then we are practically referred to the Acts of the Apostles if we wish to know what topics His resurrection discourses dealt with. And when we do so refer to the Acts we find that His disciples moved along the line of Christian development with steps sure, unfaltering, and decided, because they doubtless felt themselves nerved by the well-remembered directions, the conscious guidance of the Eternal Son of God, vouchsafed in the commandments given by Him in the power of the Holy Ghost.

Let us reflect for a little on the characteristics of Christ's risen appearances to His disciples. I note then in the first place that they were intermittent, and not continuous,—here and there, to Mary Magdalene at one time; to the disciples journeying to Emmaus, to the assembled twelve, to five hundred brethren at once, at other times. Such were the manifestations of our Lord; and some may feel inclined to cavil at them, and ask, Why did He not dwell continuously and perpetually with His disciples as before His resurrection? And yet, reading our narrative in the light of other scriptures, we might expect the resurrection appearances of Christ to have been of this description. In one place in the Gospel narrative we read that our Lord replied thus to a section of His adversaries: "In the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as angels in heaven." Now we often read of angelic appearances in Holy Scripture, in the Old and New Testament alike. We read too of appearances of Old Testament saints, as of Moses and Elias on the Mount of Transfiguration. And they are all like those of our Lord Jesus Christ after His resurrection. They are sudden, independent of time or space or material barriers, and yet are visible and tangible though glorified. Such in Genesis was Abraham's vision of angels at the tent door, when they did eat and drink with him. Such was Lot's vision of angels who came and lodged with him in wicked Sodom. Such was Peter's vision when an angel released him, guided him through the intricate mazes of Jerusalem's streets; and such



were Christ's appearances when, as on this occasion, His disciples, now accustomed to His risen and glorified form, tested Him as of old with the question, "Lord, dost Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

I. Now let us here notice the naturalness of this query concerning the restoration of the kingdom. The Apostles evidently shared the national aspirations of the Jews at that time. A large number of books have come to light of late years, which show what a keen expectation of the Messiah's kingdom and His triumph over the Romans existed at the time, and prior to the time, of our Saviour. The book of Enoch, discovered one hundred years ago in Abyssinia, and translated into English in the beginning of the present century, was written a century at least before the Incarnation. The book of Jubilees was written in Palestine about the time of our Lord's birth; the Psalter of Solomon dates from the same period. All these works give us clearest glimpses into the inner mind, the religious tone, of the Jewish nation at that time. The pious unsophisticated people of Galilee were daily expecting the establishment of the Messianic kingdom; but the kingdom they expected was no spiritual institution, it was simply an earthly scene of material glory, where the Jews would once again be exalted above all surrounding nations, and the hated invader expelled from the fair plains of Israel. We can scarcely realise or understand the force and naturalness of this question, "Dost Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" as put by these Galilean peasants till one takes up Archbishop Laurence's translation of the book of Enoch, and sees how this eager expectation dominated every other feeling in the Jewish mind of that period, and was burned into the very secrets of their existence by the tyranny of Roman rule. Thus, let us take the forty-seventh chapter of the book of Enoch, which may very possibly have been in the thoughts of the Apostles as they presented this query to their Lord. In that chapter we read the following words, attributed unto Enoch: "There I beheld the Ancient of Days, whose head was like white wool; and with Him another, whose countenance resembled that of man. His countenance was full of grace, like that of one of the holy angels. Then I inquired of one of the angels who went with me, and who showed me every secret thing concerning this Son of Man, who He was, whence He was, and why He accompanied the Ancient of Days. He answered and said to me, This is the Son of Man, to whom righteousness belongs, with whom righteousness has dwelt, and who will reveal all the treasures of that which is concealed. For the Lord of Spirits has chosen Him, and His portion has surpassed all before the Lord of Spirits in everlasting uprightness. This Son of Man whom thou beholdest shall raise up kings and the mighty from their couches, and the powerful from their thrones; shall loosen the bridles of the powerful, and break in pieces the teeth of sinners. He shall hurl kings from their thrones and their dominions, because they will not exalt and praise Him, nor humble themselves before Him, by whom their kingdoms were granted to them. The countenance likewise of the mighty shall He cast down, filling them with confusion. Darkness shall be their habitation, and worms shall be their bed; nor from that their bed shall they hope to be again

raised, because they exalted not the Name of the Lord of Spirits." This is one specimen of the Messianic expectations, which were just then worked up to fever pitch among the Galileans especially, and were ever leading them to burst out into bloody rebellion against the power of the Romans. We might multiply such quotations fourfold did our space permit. This one extract must suffice to show the tone and quality of the religious literature upon which the souls of the Apostles had fed and been sustained, when they proposed this query, "Dost Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" They were thinking simply of such a kingdom as the book of Enoch foretold.

This very point seems to us one of the special and most striking evidences for the inspiration and supernatural direction of the writers of the New Testament. Their natural, purely human, and national conception of the kingdom of God was one thing; their final, their divinely taught and inspired conception of that kingdom is quite another thing. I cannot see how, upon any ground of mere human experience or human development, the Apostles could have risen from the gross, material conceptions of the book of Enoch, wherein the kingdom of the Messiah would have simply been a purified, reformed, and exalted copy of the Roman Empire of that day, to the spiritual and truly catholic idea of a kingdom not of this world, which ruled over spirits rather than over bodies. Some persons maintain that Christianity in its doctrines, organisation, and discipline was but the outcome of natural forces working in the world at that epoch. But take this doctrine alone, "My kingdom is not of this world," announced by Christ before Pilate, and impressed upon the Apostles by revelation after revelation, and experience after experience, which they only very gradually assimilated and understood. Where did it come from? How was it the outcome of natural forces? The whole tendency of Jewish thought was in the opposite direction. Nationalism of the most narrow, particular, and limited kind was the predominant idea, specially among those Galilean provincials who furnished the vast majority of the earliest disciples of Jesus Christ. Our minds have been so steeped in the principles of Christian liberalism, we have been so thoroughly taught the rejection of race-prejudice, that we can scarcely realise the narrow and limited ideas which must have ruled the minds of the first Christians, and therefore we miss the full force of this argument for the Divine character of the Christian religion. A Roman Catholic peasant from Connaught, an Ulster Orangeman, a Celtic Presbyterian Highlander, none of these will take a wide, tolerant, generous view of religion. They view the question through their own narrow provincial spectacles. And yet any one of them would have been broad, liberal, and comprehensive when contrasted with the tone and thought of the Galilean provincials of our Lord's day. They lived lonely, solitary lives, away from the din, the pressure, and the business of daily life; they knew nothing of what the great outside world was thinking and doing; they fed their spirits on the glories of the past, and had no room in their gloomy fanaticism for aught that was liberal and truly spiritual. How could men like them have developed the idea of the Catholic Church, boundless as the earth itself, limited by no hereditary or fleshly bonds, and tram-



melled by no circumstances of race, climate, or kindred? The magnificence of the idea, the grandeur of the conception, is the truest and most sufficient evidence of the divinity of its origin. "In Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female," the rapt expression of an inspired and illuminated Apostle, when compared with this query, "Dost Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" the darkened utterance of carnal and uninspired minds groping after truth, furnishes to the thinking soul the clearest evidence of the presence of a supernatural power, of a Divine enlightenment, vouchsafed to the Apostles upon the Day of Pentecost. If this higher knowledge, this nobler conception, this spiritualised ideal, came not from God, whence did it come?

I do not think we can press this point of the catholicity and universality of the Christian idea and the Christian society too far. We cannot possibly make too much of it. There were undoubtedly Christian elements, or elements whence Christian ideas were developed, prevalent in the current Judaism of the day. Many a clause of the Lord's Prayer and of the Sermon on the Mount can be paralleled almost word for word from the Jewish teachers and writings of the times immediately preceding our Lord. There was nothing in Christ of that petty vanity of little minds which craves after complete originality, and which will be nothing if not completely new. He was indeed the wise and the good householder, who brought forth out of His treasures things old as well as things new. Many a teacher and thinker, like Philo, whose ideas had been broadened by the Divine training of banishment and enforced exile in Alexandria or in Asia Minor, had risen to nobler and wider views than were current in Palestine. But it was not among these, or such as these, that the catholic ideas of the gospel took their rise. Christianity took its rise among men whose ideas, whose national aspirations, whose religious hopes, were of the narrowest and most limited kind; and yet, amid such surroundings and planted in such a soil, Christianity assumed at once a world-wide mission, rejected at once and peremptorily all mere Judaic exclusiveness, and claimed for itself the widest scope and development. The universality of the Gospel message, the comprehensive, all-embracing character of the Gospel teaching, as set forth in our Lord's parting words, is, we conclude, an ample evidence of its Divine and superhuman origin.

II. In this passage again there lies hidden the wisest practical teaching for the Church of all ages. We have warnings against the folly which seeks to unravel the future and penetrate that veil of darkness by which our God in mercy shrouds the unknown. We have taught us the benefits which attend the uncertainties of our Lord's return and of the end of this present dispensation. "It is not for you to know times or seasons." Let us endeavour to work out this point, together with the manifold illustrations of it which the history of the Church affords.

(a) The wisdom of the Divine answer will best be seen if we take the matter thus, and suppose our Lord to have responded to the apostolic appeal fixing some definite date for the winding-up of man's probation state, and for that manifestation of the sons of God which will take place at His appearing and His kingdom. Our Lord, in fixing upon some such definite date,

must have chosen one that was either near at hand or else one that was removed far off into the distant future. In either of these cases He must have defeated the great object of the Divine society which He was founding. That object was simply this, to teach men how to lead the life of God amid the children of men. The Christian religion has indeed sometimes been taunted with being an unpractical religion, turning men's eyes and attention from the pressing business and interests of daily life to a far-away spiritual state with which man has nothing to do, at least for the present. But is this the case? Has Christianity proved itself unpractical? If so, what has placed Christendom at the head of civilisation? The tendencies of great principles are best shown in the actions of vast masses. Individuals may be better or worse than their creeds, but if we wish to see the average result of doctrines we must take their adherents in the mass and inquire as to their effect on them. Here, then, is where we may triumph. The religions of Greece and of Rome are identical in principle, and even in their deities, with the paganism of India, as the investigations of comparative historians have abundantly shown. Compare Christendom and India from the simply practical point of view, and which can show the better record? The paganism of India, Persia, and Western Asia was the parent of the paganism of Greece and Rome. The child has passed away and given place to a noble and spiritual religion, while the parent still remains. And now what is the result? Can the boldest deny that while barbarism, decay, and death reign over the realms of Asiatic paganism, though starting with every advantage upon its side, concerning the religion of the Cross, which is taunted with being an unpractical religion, and concerning that religion alone, can it be said in the language of the rapt Jewish seer, "Wheresoever the waters of that river have come, behold there is life," and that the fair plains, and crowded cities, and the massive material development and civilisation of Europe and of America alike proclaim the truth, that Christianity has the promise of the life which now is as well as of that which is to come?

(b) Our Lord's answer to His Apostles was couched in words suited to develop this practical aspect of His religion. It refused to minister to mere human curiosity, and left men uncertain as to the time of His return, that they might be fruitful workers in the great field of life. And now behold what ill results would have followed had He acted otherwise! The Master in fact says, It is not well for you to know the times or seasons, because such knowledge would strike at the root of practical Christianity. Uncertainty as to the time of the end is the most healthful state for the followers of Christ. Christ holds out the prospect of His own return for a twofold purpose: first, to comfort His people under the daily troubles of life—"Rejoice in the Lord alway: again I will say, Rejoice. Let your forbearance be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand;" "Whatever our hope or joy or crown of glorying, are not even ye, before our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming;" "If we believe that Jesus Christ died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with Him"—these and dozens of other passages, which will recur in a moment to every student of St. Paul's writings,



prove the power to comfort and sustain exercised by the doctrine of Christ's second coming. But there was another and still more powerful influence exercised by this doctrine. It stirred men up to perpetual watchfulness and untiring care. "Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour;" "Therefore be ye also ready, for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh;" "The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light,"—these and many a similar exhortation of the Master and of his chosen Apostles alike, indicate to us that another great object of this doctrine was to keep Christians perpetually alive with an intense anxiety and a sleepless watchfulness directed towards the person and appearing of Christ. The construction of the gospel narrative shows this.

(c) There are in the New Testament, taken as a whole, two contrasted lines of prophecy concerning the Second Coming of Christ. If in one place the Lord Jesus speaks as if the date of His coming were fixed for His own generation and age, "Verily, I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away till all these things shall be fulfilled," in the very same context He indicates that it is only *after a long time* that the Lord of the servants will return, to take account of their dealings with the property entrusted to them. If St. Paul in one place seems to indicate to the Thessalonians the speedy appearing of Christ and the end of the dispensation, in another epistle he corrects such a misapprehension of his meaning. If the Revelation of St. John in one place represents the awful Figure who moves amid the Churches, watching their works and spying out their secret sins, as saying, "Behold, I come quickly," the same book pictures a long panorama of events, extending over vast spaces of time, destined yet to elapse before the revelation of the city of God and the final triumph of the saints. The doctrine of Christ's second appearing is like many another doctrine in the New Testament. Like the doctrine of God's election, which is undoubtedly there, and yet side by side with election appears as really and truly the doctrine of man's free will; like the doctrine of God's eternal and almighty love, side by side with which appears the existence of a personal devil, and of an abounding iniquity and sorrow which seems to contradict this doctrine; like the doctrine of the Godhead itself, where the Unity of the Divine Nature is most clearly taught, yet side by side therewith appears the manifold personality of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost as existing in that Nature;—so too is it in the case of the doctrine of Christ's Second Coming. We have a twofold antinomy. In one line of prophecy we have depicted the nearness and suddenness of Christ's appearing; in another line we behold that tremendous event thrown into the dim and distant future. And what is the result upon the human mind of such opposite views? It is a healthy, useful, practical result. We are taught the certainty of the event, and the uncertainty of the time of that event; so that hope is stirred, comfort ministered, and watchfulness evoked. We can see this more clearly by imagining the opposite. Suppose Christ had responded to the spirit of the apostolic query, "Dost Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" and fixed the precise date of His com-

ing? He would in that case have altogether defeated the great end of His own work and labour. Suppose He had fixed it a thousand years from the time of His Ascension. Then indeed the doctrine of Christ's Second Coming would have lost all personal and practical power over the lives of the generation of Christians then living, or who should live during the hundreds of years which were to elapse till the date appointed. The day of their death, the uncertainty of life, these would be the inspiring motives to activity and devotion felt by the early Christians; while, as a matter of fact, St. Paul never appeals to either of them, but ever appeals to the coming of Christ and His appearing to judgment as the motives to Christian zeal and diligence. But a more serious danger in any such prediction lurks behind. What would have been the result of any such precise prophecy upon the minds of the Christians who lived close to the time of its fulfilment? It would have at once defeated the great end of the Christian religion, as we have already defined it. The near approach of the great final catastrophe would have completely paralysed all exertion, and turned the members of Christ's Church into idle, useless, unpractical religionists. We all know how the near approach of any great event, how the presence of any great excitement, hinders life's daily work. A great joy or a great sorrow, either of them is utterly inconsistent with tranquil thought, with steady labour, with persistent and profitable exertions. The expectation of some tremendous change, whether it be for happiness or misery, creates such a flutter in the spirit that steady application is simply out of the question. So would it have been in our supposed case. As the time fixed for the appearance of our Lord drew nigh, all work, business, labour, the manifold engagements of life, the rearing of families, the culture of the ground, the development of trade and commerce, would be considered a grand impertinence, and man's powers and man's life would be prostrated in view of the approaching catastrophe.

(d) Again and again has history verified and amply justified the wisdom of the Master's reply, "It is not for you to know times or seasons." It was justified in apostolic experience. The Second Epistle to the Thessalonians is a commentary on our Lord's teaching in this passage. The Christians of Thessalonica imbibed the notion from St. Paul's words that Christ's appearance to judgment was at hand. Perhaps St. Paul's words in his first Epistle led them into the mistake. The Apostle was not infallible on all questions. He was richly inspired, but he knew nothing of the future save what was expressly revealed, and beyond such express revelations he could only surmise and guess like other men. The Thessalonians, however, were led by him to expect the immediate appearance of Christ, and the result was just what I have depicted. The transcendent event, which they thought impending, paralysed exertion, destroyed honest and useful labour, scandalised the gospel cause, and compelled St. Paul to use the sternest, sharpest words of censure and rebuke. The language of St. Paul completely justifies our line of argument. He tells us that the spirits of the Thessalonians had been upset, the natural result of a great expectation had been experienced as we might humanly have predicted. The beginning of the second chapter of his Sec-



and Epistle proves this: "Now we beseech you, brethren, touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto Him; to the end that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled, either by spirit, or by word, or by epistle as from us, as that the day of the Lord is present." See here how he dwells on mental perturbation as the result of high-strung expectation; and that is bad, for mental peace, not mental disturbance, is the portion of Christ's people. Then again he indicates another result of which we have spoken as natural under such circumstances. Idleness and its long train of vices had followed hard upon the mental strain which found place for a time at Thessalonica, and so in the third chapter of the Epistle he writes, "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly;" and then he defines the disorderliness of which he complains, "For we hear of some that walk among you disorderly, that work not at all, but are busybodies." Or, to put the matter in a concise shape, and interpret St. Paul into modern language, the expectation of the near approach of the judgment and the personal appearing of Christ had upset the spirits of the Thessalonians; it had so fluttered them they could not attend to ordinary business. Human nature then asserted itself. Idleness resulted from the mental disturbance. Idleness begot gossip, disorder, and scandals. The idlers indeed professed that they ceased from labour in order to give their whole attention to devotion. But St. Paul knew that there was no incompatibility between work and prayer, while he was convinced there was the closest union between idleness and sin. Idleness put on an appearance of great spirituality, but St. Paul effectually met the difficulty. He knew that an idler, no matter how spiritual he pretended to be, must eat, and so he strikes at the root of such mock religion by laying down, "If any will not work, neither let him eat,"—a good healthy practical rule, which soon restored the moral and spiritual tone of the Macedonian Church to its normal condition.

(e) The experiences of Thessalonica have been often repeated down through the ages till we come to our own day. I remember a curious instance that I once read of exactly the same spirit, and exactly the same method of cure, as St. Paul used, in the case of an Egyptian monastery in the fifth century. The monks were then divided into two classes. There were monks who laboured diligently and usefully in communities, and there were others who lived idle lives as solitaries, pretending to a spirituality too great to permit them to engage in secular pursuits. A solitary one day entered a monastery presided over by a wise abbot. He found the monks all diligently employed, and, addressing them from his superior standpoint, said, "Labour not for the meat that perisheth." "That is very good, brother," said the abbot. "Take our brother away to his cell," he said to one of his attendants, who left him there to meditate. Nature, after a time, began to assert its sway, and the solitary became hungry. He heard the signal for the midday meal, and wondered that no man came to summon him. Time passed, and the evening meal was announced, and yet no invitation came. At last the solitary left his cell and proceeded in search of food, when

the wise abbot impressed on him the Pauline rule that it was quite possible to unite work and worship, labouring for the bread that perisheth while feeding on the bread that is eternal.

The tenth century again verified the wisdom of the Divine denial to reveal the future, or fix a date for Christ's second coming. The year 1000 was regarded in the century immediately preceding it as the limit of the world's existence and the date of Christ's appearing. The belief in this view spread all over Europe, and the result was just the same as at Thessalonica. Men abandoned all work, they left their families to starve, and thought the one great object worth living for was devotion and preparation for their impending change. And the result was widespread misery, famine, disease, and death, while, instead of working any beneficial change upon society at large, the terror through which men had passed brought about, when the dreaded time had gone by, a reaction towards carelessness and vice, all the greater from the self-denial which they had practised for a time. And as it was in the earlier ages so has it been in later times. The people of London were, in the middle of the last century, deluded into a belief that on a certain day the Lord would appear to judgment, with the result that the business of London was suspended for the time. The lives of John Wesley and his fellow-evangelists tell us how diligently they seized the opportunity of preaching repentance and preparation for the coming of Christ, though they shared not the belief in the prediction which gained them their audience. While again in the present century there was a widespread opinion about the year 1830 that the coming of Christ was at hand. It was the time when the Irvingite and Darbyite bodies sprang into existence, in which systems the near approach of the Second Coming forms an important element. Men then thought that it was a mere matter of day or weeks, and in consequence they acted just like the Thessalonians. In their ardour their minds were upset, their business and families neglected, and, as far as in them lay, the work of life and of civilisation was utterly destroyed. While when again we come to later times experience has taught that no men have been more profitless and unpractical Christians than the numbers, by no means inconsiderable, who have spent their lives in vain attempts to fix new for this year, and again for that day, the exact time when the Son of Man should appear. The wisest Christians have acted otherwise. It is told of a foreign bishop, eminent for his sanctity and for the wise guidance which he could give in the spiritual life, that he was once engaged in playing a game of bowls. One of the bystanders was of a critical disposition, and was scandalised at the frivolity of the bishop's occupation, so much beneath the dignity, as it was thought, of his character. "If Christ was to appear the next moment, what would you do?" he asked the bishop. "I would make the next stroke the best possible one," was the wise man's reply. And the reply involved the true principle which the Lord Himself by His refusal to gratify the Apostles' curiosity desired to impress on His people. The uncertainty of the time of Christ's coming, combined with the certainty of the event itself, should stir us up to intensity of purpose, to earnestness of life, to a hallowed enthusiasm to do thoroughly every lawful deed, to think thoroughly every law-



ful thought, conscious that in so doing we are fulfilling the will and work of the great Judge Himself. Blessed indeed shall be those servants whom the Lord when He cometh shall find so doing.

III. Christ, after He had reproved the spirit of vain curiosity which strikes at the root of all practical effort, then indicates the source of their strength and the sphere of its activity. "Ye shall receive power after the Holy Ghost is come upon you." They were wanting then, as yet, in power, and the Holy Ghost was to supply the want. Intellect, talent, eloquence, wit, all these things are God's gifts, but they are not the source of spiritual power. A man may possess them one and all, and yet be lacking in that spiritual power which came upon the Apostles through the descent of the Spirit. And the sphere of their appointed activity is designated for them. Just as in the earliest days of Christ's public ministry He spake words indicative of the universal spirit of the gospel, and prophesied of a time when men from the east and west should come and sit down in the kingdom of God, while the children of the kingdom should be cast out, so, too, one of His few recorded resurrection sayings now indicates the same: "Ye shall be My witnesses, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Jerusalem, Judæa,—the Apostles were to begin their great practical life of witnessing at home, but they were not to stay there. Samaria was next to have its opportunity, and so we shall find it to have been the case; and then, working from home as centre, the uttermost parts of the earth, a distant Spain from Paul, and a distant India from Thomas, and a barbarous Scythia from Andrew, and a frigid, ocean-girt Britain from a Joseph of Arimathæa, were to learn tidings of the new life in Christ.

### CHAPTER III.

#### *THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST AND ITS LESSONS.*

##### Acts i. 9.

IN this passage we have the bare literal statement of the fact of Christ's ascension. Let us now consider this supernatural fact, the Ascension, and meditate upon its necessity, and even naturalness, when taken in connection with the whole earthly existence of Incarnate God, and then strive to trace the results and blessings to mankind which followed from it in the gift of the new power, the covenanted gift of the Spirit, and in the spread of the universal religion.

I. The ascension of our Lord is a topic whereon familiarity has worked its usual results; it has lost for most minds the sharpness of its outline and the profundity of its teaching because universally accepted by Christians; and yet no doctrine raises deeper questions, or will yield more profitable and far-reaching lessons. First, then, we may note the place this doctrine holds in apostolic teaching. Taking the records of that teaching contained in the Acts and the Epistles, we find that it occupies a real substantial position. The ascension is there referred to, hinted at, taken as granted, pre-supposed, but it is not obtruded nor dwelt upon overmuch. The resurrection of Christ was the great central point of

apostolic testimony; the ascension of Christ was simply a portion of that fundamental doctrine, and a natural deduction from it. If Christ had been raised from the dead and had thus become the firstfruits of the grave, it required but little additional exercise of faith to believe that He had passed into that unseen and immediate presence of Deity where the perfected soul finds its complete satisfaction. In fact, the doctrine of the resurrection apart from the doctrine of the ascension would have been a mutilated fragment, for the natural question would arise, not for one age but for every age, If Jesus of Nazareth has risen from the dead, where is He? Produce your risen Master, and we will believe in Him, would be the triumphant taunt to which Christians would be ever exposed. But then, when we closely examine the teaching of the Apostles, we shall find that the doctrine of the ascension was just as really bound up with all their preaching and exhortations as the doctrine of the resurrection; the whole Christian idea as conceived by them just as necessarily involved the doctrine of the ascension as it did that of the resurrection. St. Peter's conception of Christianity, for instance, involved the ascension. Whether in his speech at the election of Matthias, or in his sermon on the day of Pentecost, or in his address in Solomon's Porch after the healing of the crippled beggar, his teaching ever presupposes and involves the ascension. He takes the doctrine and the fact for granted. Jesus is with him the Being "whom the heavens must receive until the times of restoration of all things." So is it too with St. John in his Gospel. He never directly mentions the fact of Christ's ascension, but he always implies it. So too with St. Paul and the other apostolic writers of the New Testament. It would be simply impossible to exhibit in detail the manner in which this doctrine pervades and underlies all St. Paul's teaching. The ascended Saviour occupies the same position in St. Paul's earliest as in his latest writings. Is he speaking of the lives of the Thessalonians in his First Epistle to that Church: "they are waiting for God's Son from heaven." Is he pointing them forward to the second advent of Christ: it is of that day he speaks when "the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven." Is he in Rom. viii. dwelling upon the abiding security of God's elect: he enlarges upon their privileges in "Christ Jesus, who is at the right hand of God, making intercession for us." Is he exhorting the Colossians to a supernatural life: it is because they have supernatural privileges in their ascended Lord. "If ye then were raised with Christ, seek the things above, where Christ is seated on the right hand of God." The more closely the teaching of the Apostles is examined, the more clearly we shall perceive that the ascension was for them no ideal act, no imaginary or fantastic elevation, but a real actual passing of the risen Saviour out of the region and order of the seen and the natural into the region and order of the unseen and supernatural. Just as really as they believed Christ to have risen from the dead, just as really did they in turn believe Him to have ascended into the heavens.

II. But some one may raise curious questions as to the facts of the ascension. Whither, for instance, it may be asked, did our Lord depart when He left this earthly scene? The childish notion that He went up and up far above the



most distant star will not of course stand a moment's reflection. It suits the apprehension of childhood, and the innocent illusion should not be too rudely broken; but still, as the advance of years and of wisdom dispels other illusions, so too will this one depart, when the child learns that there is neither up nor down in this visible universe of ours, and that if we were ourselves transported to the moon, which seems shining over our heads, we should see the earth suspended in the blue azure which would overhang the moon and its newly-arrived inhabitants. The Book of the Acts of the Apostles does not describe our Saviour as thus ascending through infinite space. It simply describes Him as removed from off this earthly ball, and then, a cloud shutting Him out from view, Christ passed into the inner and unseen universe wherein He now dwells. The existence of that inner and unseen universe, asserted clearly enough in Scripture, has of late years been curiously confirmed by scientific speculation. Scripture asserts the existence of such an unseen universe, and the ascension implies it. The second coming of our Saviour is never described as a descent from some far-off region. No, it is always spoken of as an Apocalypse,—a drawing back, that is, of a veil which hides an unseen chamber. The angels, as the messengers of their Divine Master, are described by Christ in Matt. xiii. as "coming forth" from the secret place of the Most High to execute His behests. What a solemn light such a scriptural view sheds upon life! The unseen world is not at some vast distance, but, as the ascension would seem to imply, close at hand, shut out from us by that thin veil of matter which angelic hands will one day rend for ever. And then how wondrously the speculations of that remarkable book to which I have referred, "The Unseen Universe," lend themselves to this scriptural idea, pointing out the necessity imposed by modern scientific thought for postulating some such interior spiritual sphere, of which the external and material universe may be regarded as a temporary manifestation and development. The doctrine of the ascension, when rightly understood, presents then no difficulties from a scientific point of view, but is rather in strictest accordance with the highest and subtlest forms of modern thought. But when we advance still closer to the heart of this doctrine, and endeavour, quite apart from all mere carping criticism, to realise its meaning and its power, we shall perceive a profound fitness, beauty, and harmony in this mysterious fact. Laying apart all carping criticism, I say, because the critical spirit is not appreciative, it is on the look-out for faults, it necessarily involves a certain assumption of superiority in the critic to the thing or doctrine criticised; and most certainly it is not to the proud critic, but to the humble soul alone, that the doctrines of the Cross yield of their sweetness, and make revelation of their profound depths. We can perceive a fitness and a naturalness in the ascension; we can advance even farther still, and behold an absolute necessity for it, if Christ's work was to be perfected in all its details, and Christianity to become, not a narrow local religion, but a universal and catholic Church.

III. The ascension was a fitting and a natural termination of Christ's earthly ministry, considering the Christian conception of His sacred Personality. When the Second Person of the

Eternal Trinity wished to reveal the life of God among men, and to elevate humanity by associating it for ever with the person of Him who was the eternal God, He left the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, and entered upon the world of humanity through a miraculous door. "The Son, which is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, and of one substance with the Father, took Man's nature in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, of her substance." These are the careful, accurate, well-balanced words of the second Article of the Church of England, in which all English-speaking Christians substantially agree. They are accurate, I say, and well-balanced, avoiding the Scylla of Nestorianism, which divides Christ's person, on the one side, and the Charybdis of Eutychianism, which denies His humanity, on the other. The Person of God, the Eternal Word, assumed human nature, not a human person, but human nature, so that God might be able, acting in and through this human nature as His instrument, to teach mankind and to die for mankind. God entered upon the sphere of the seen and the temporal by a miraculous door. His life and work were marked all through by miracle, His death and resurrection were encompassed with miracle; and it was fitting, considering the whole course of His earthly career, that His departure from this world should be through another miraculous door. The departure of the Eternal King was, like His first approach, a part of a scheme which forms one united and harmonious whole. The Incarnation and the Ascension were necessarily related the one to the other.

IV. Again, we may advance a step further, and say that not only was the ascension a natural and fitting termination to the activities of the Eternal Son manifest in the flesh, it was a necessary completion and finish. "It is expedient," said Christ Himself, "that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come to you." For some reason secret from us but hidden in the awful depths of that Being who is the beginning and the end, the source and the condition of all created existence, the return of Christ to the bosom of the Father was absolutely necessary before the outpouring of the Divine Spirit of Life and Love could take place. How this can have been we know not. We only know the fact as revealed to us by Jesus Christ and affirmed by His Apostles. "Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath poured forth this which ye see and hear," is the testimony of the illuminated Apostle St. Peter on the day of Pentecost, speaking in strict unison with the teaching of Jesus Christ Himself as reported in St. John's Gospel. But without endeavouring to intrude into these mysteries of the Divine nature, into which even the angels themselves pry not, we behold in the character and constitution of Christ's Church and Christ's religion sufficient reasons to show us the Divine expediency of our Lord's ascension. Let us take the matter very plainly and simply thus. Had our Lord not ascended into the unseen state whence He had emerged for the purpose of rescuing mankind from that horrible pit, that mire and clay of pollution, immorality, and selfishness in which it lay at the epoch of the Christian Era, He must



in that case (always proceeding on the supposition that He had risen from the dead, because we always suppose our readers to be believers) have remained permanently or temporarily resident in some one place. He might have chosen Jerusalem, the city of the great King, as His abode, and this would have seemed to the religious men of His time quite natural. The same instinct of religious conservatism which made the Twelve to tarry at Jerusalem even when persecution seemed to threaten the infant Church with destruction, would have led the risen Christ to fix His abode at the city which every pious Jew regarded as the special seat of Jehovah. There would have been nothing to tempt Him to Antioch, or Athens, or Alexandria, or Rome. None of these cities could have held out any inducement or put forward any claim comparable for one moment with that which the name, the traditions, and the circumstances of Jerusalem triumphantly maintained. Nay, rather the tone and temper of those cities must have rendered them abhorrent as dwelling-places to the great Teacher of holiness and purity.

At any rate, the risen Saviour, if He remained upon earth, must have chosen some one place where His presence and His personal glory would have been manifested. Now let us contemplate, and work out in some detail, the results which would have inevitably followed. The place chosen by our Lord as His visible dwelling-place must then have become the centre of the whole Church. At that spot pilgrims from every land must necessarily have assembled. To it would have resorted the doubter to have his difficulties resolved, the sick and weak to have their ailments cured, the men of profound devotion to bathe themselves and lose themselves in the immediate presence of the Incarnate Deity. All interest in local Churches or local work would have been destroyed, because every eye and every heart would be perpetually turning towards the one spot where the risen Lord was dwelling, and where personal adoration could be paid to Him. All honest, manly self-reliance would have been lost for individuals, for Churches, and for nations. Whenever a difficulty or controversy arose, either in the personal or ecclesiastical, the social or political sphere, men, instead of trying to solve it for themselves under the guidance of the Divine Spirit, would have hurried off with it to the Fount of supernatural wisdom, as an oracle, like the fabled pagan ones of old, whence direction would infallibly be gained. Judaism would have triumphed, and the dispensation of the Spirit would have ceased.

The whole idea, too, of Christianity as a scheme of moral probation would have been overthrown. Christ as belonging to the supernatural sphere would of course have been raised above the laws of time and space. For Him the powers of earth and the terrors of earth would have had no meaning, and heavenly glory, shooting forth from His sacred Person, would have compelled obedience and acceptance of His laws at the hands of His most deadly and obstinate foes. Sight would have taken the place of faith, and the terrified submission of slaves would have been substituted for the moral, loving obedience of the regenerate soul. The whole social order of life would also have been overthrown. God has now placed men in families,

societies, and nations, that they might be proved by the very difficulties of their positions. The probation which God thereby exercises over men extends not to those alone who are subject to government, but to those as well who are entrusted with government. God by His present system tries governors and governed, kings and subjects, magistrates and people, parents and children, teachers and pupils, all alike. Any one who has ever made the experiment knows, however, how impossible it is to give full play to one's power and faculties, whether of government or of teaching, when overlooked by the conscious presence of one who can supersede and control all arrangements made or all the instructions offered. Nervousness comes in, and paralyses the best efforts a man might otherwise make. So would it have been had Christ remained upon earth. Neither those placed in authority nor those set under authority would have done their best or played their part effectually, feeling there was One standing by whose all-piercing gaze could see the imperfection of their noblest actions. A modern illustration or two will perhaps exhibit more plainly what we mean. London, with its enormous and ever-growing population, constitutes in many respects a portentous danger to our national life. But thoughtful colonists often see in it a danger which does not strike us here at home. London has a tendency to sap the springs of local interest and local self-reliance. Every colonist who attains to wealth and position feels himself an exile till he can get back to London, which he regards as the one centre of the empire worth living at; while the colonies, viewing London as the centre of England's wealth, power, and resources, feel naturally inclined to fling upon London the care and responsibility of the empire's protection, in which all its separate parts should take their proportionate share.

Or again, let us take an illustration from the ecclesiastical sphere. M. Renan is a writer who has depicted the early history of the Church from a sceptical point of view. He has done so with all the skill of a novelist, aided by the resources of immense erudition. Before Renan became a sceptic he was a Roman Catholic, and a student for the priesthood in one of those narrow seminaries wherein exclusively the Roman Church now trains her clergy. Renan can never, therefore, view Christianity save through a Roman medium, and from a Roman Catholic standpoint. Descended himself from a Jewish stock, and trained up in Roman Catholic ideas, Renan, sceptic though he be, is lost in admiration of the Papacy, because it has combined the Jewish and the ancient imperial ideas, so that Rome having taken the place which Jerusalem once occupied in the spiritual organisation, has now become the local centre of unity for the Latin Church, where Christ's vicar visibly bears sway, to whom resort can be had from every land as an authoritative guide, and whence he and he alone dispenses with more than imperial sway the gifts and graces of Divine love. Rome is for the Latin Church the centre of the earth, and upon Rome and its spiritual ruler all interest is concentrated as Christ's earthly representative and deputy. Now what London is to our colonists, what Rome is for its adherents, such, and infinitely more, would the localised presence of Jesus Christ have been for the Christian world had not the ascension taken place. The Papacy, instead of securing the



universality of the Church, strikes a deadly blow at it. The Papacy, with its centralised ecclesiastical despotism, is not the Catholic Church, it is simply the local Church of Rome spread out into all the world; just as Judaism never was and never could have been catholic in its ideal, no matter how widely spread it was, from the shores of the British Islands in the West to the far-distant regions of China in the East. Its adherents, like the eunuch of Ethiopia, never felt a local interest in their religion,—their eyes ever turned towards Zion, the city of the great King. And so would it have been with the bodily presence of Christ manifested in one spot; the Christian Church would still have remained a purely local institution, and the place where the risen Saviour was manifested would have been for Christian people the one centre towards which all their thoughts would gravitate, to the complete neglect of those home interests and labours in which each individual Church ought to find the special work appointed for it by the Master. It was expedient for the Church that Christ should go away, to deepen faith, to strengthen Christian self-reliance, to offer play and scope for the power and work of the Holy Ghost, to render life a testing-ground, and a place of probation for the higher life to come. But above all, it was expedient that Christ should go away in order that the Church might rise out of and above that narrow provincialism in which the Jewish spirit would fain bind it, might attain to a truly universal and catholic position, and thus fulfil the Master's magnificent prophecy to the woman of Samaria, when, viewing in spirit the Church's onward march, beholding it bursting all local and national bonds, recognising it as the religion of universal humanity, He proclaimed its destiny in words which shall never die—"Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem shall ye worship the Father. God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." The ascension of Jesus Christ was absolutely necessary to equip the Church for its universal mission, by withdrawing the bodily presence of Christ into that unseen region which bears no special relation to any terrestrial locality, but is the common destiny, the true fatherland, of all the sons of God.\*

V. We have now seen how the ascension was needful for the Church, by rendering Christ an ideal object of worship for the whole human race, thus saving it from that tendency to mere localism which would have utterly changed its character. We can also trace another great blessing involved in it. The ascension glorified humanity as humanity, and ennobled man viewed simply as man. The ascension thus transformed life by adding a new dignity to life and to life's duties.

This was a very necessary lesson for the ancient world, especially the ancient Gentile world, which Christ came to enlighten and to save. Man, considered by himself as man, had no peculiar dignity in the popular religious estimate of Greece and Rome. A Greek or a Roman was a dignified person, not, however, in virtue of his humanity, but in virtue of his Greek or Roman citizenship. The most pious Greeks or Romans simply de-

spised mankind as such, regarding all other nations as barbarians, and treating them accordingly. Roman law exempted Roman citizens from degrading and cruel punishments, which they reserved for men outside the limits of Roman citizenship, because that humanity as humanity had no dignity attached to it in their estimation. The gladiatorial shows were the most striking illustration of this contempt for human nature which paganism inculcated.\*

It is a notable evidence, too, of the firm grasp upon the popular mind this contempt had taken, of the awful depths to which the fatal infection had permeated the public conscience, that it was not till four hundred years after the Incarnation, and not till one hundred years after the triumph of Christianity, that these frightful carnivals of human blood and slaughter yielded to the gentler and nobler principles of the religion of the Cross. No name indeed in the long roll of Christian martyrs, who for truth and righteousness have laid down their lives, deserves higher mention than that of Telemachus, the Asiatic monk, who, in the year 404, hearing that the city where the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul had suffered was still disgraced by the gladiatorial shows, made his way to Rome, and by the sacrifice of his own life terminated them forever within the bounds of Christendom. Telemachus rushed between the combatants in the arena, flung them asunder, and then was stoned to death by the mob, infuriated at the interruption of their favourite amusement.† A tragic but glorious ending indeed, showing clearly how little the Roman mob realised as yet the doctrine of the sanctity of human nature; how powerful was the sway which paganism and pagan modes of thought held as yet over the populace of nominally Christian Rome; the tradition of which even still perpetuates itself in the cruel bull-fights of Spain. From the beginning, however, Christianity took exactly the opposite course, declaring to all the dignity and glory of human nature in itself. The Incarnation was in itself a magnificent proclamation of this great elevating and civilising truth. The title Son of Man, which Christ, rising above all narrow Jewish nationalism, assumed to Himself, was a republication of the same dogma; and then, to crown the whole fabric, comes the doctrine of the ascension, wherein mankind was taught that human nature as joined to the person of God has ascended into the holiest place of the universe, so that henceforth the humblest and lowliest can view his humanity as allied with that elder Brother who in the reality of human flesh—glorified, indeed, spiritualised and refined by the secret, searching processes of death—has passed within the veil, now to appear in the presence of God for us. What new light must have been shed upon life—the life of the barbarian and of the slave—crushed beneath the popular theory of St. Paul's day!‡ What new dignity this doc-

\* The gladiatorial shows form an interesting standard by which we may compare the practical effects of Christianity and the very highest pagan sentiment. Tertullian denounced them in the strongest language in his treatise "De Spectaculis." Cicero, in the "Tusculan Disputations," ii. 17, defends them warmly as the best discipline against fear of pain and death.

† The original authority for the story of Telemachus is Theodoret's "Eccles. Hist.," v. 26. It is vigorously told by Gibbon in the thirtieth chapter of his "Decline and Fall."

‡ The doctrine of the sanctity of human life was unknown under paganism. Tacitus tells us, about the year A. D. 61, how that Peditius Secundus, prefect of the city, having been murdered by one of his slaves, the whole

\* The line of thought here worked out was originally suggested to me by Canon Liddon's sermon, *Our Lord's Ascension the Church's Gain*, in his first series of University sermons.



trine imparted to the bodies of the outcast and despised, counted fit food only for the cross, the stake, or the arena! Man might despise them and ill-treat them, yet their bodies were made like unto the one glorious Body for ever united to God, and therefore they were comforted, elevated, enabled to endure as seeing Him who is invisible. Cannot we see many examples of the consoling, elevating power of the ascension in the New Testament? Take St. Paul's writings, and there we trace the influence of the ascension in every page. Take the very lowest case. Slaves under the conditions of ancient society occupied the most degraded position. Their duties were of the humblest type, their treatment of the worst description, their punishments of the most terrible character. Yet for even these oppressed and degraded beings the doctrine of the ascension transformed life, because it endowed that menial service which they rendered with a new dignity. "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye service, as men pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God." And why? Because life has been enriched with a new motive: "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ." *Ye serve the Lord Christ.* That was the supreme point. The cooking of a dinner, the dressing of an imperious lady's hair, the teaching of a careless or refractory pupil—all these things were transfigured into the service of the ascended Lord. And as with the servants, so was it with their masters. The ascension furnished them with a new and practical motive, which, at first leading to kindly treatment and generous actions, would one day, by the force of logical deduction as well as of Christian principle, lead to the utter extinction of slavery. "Masters, render unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven." The doctrine of the ascension diffused sweetness and light throughout the whole Christian system, furnishing a practical motive, offering an ever-present and eternal sanction, urging men upwards and onwards; without which neither the Church nor the world would ever have reached that high level of mercy, charity, and purity which men now enjoy. Perhaps here again the present age may see the doctrine of the ascension asserting its glory and its power in the same direction. Much of modern speculation tends to debase and belittle the human body, teaching theories respecting its origin which have a natural tendency to degrade the popular standard. If people come to think of their bodies as derived from a low source, they will be apt to think a low standard of morals as befitting bodies so descended. The doctrine of evolution has not, to say the least, an elevating influence upon the masses. I say nothing against it. One or two passages in the Bible, as Gen. ii. 7, seem to support it, appearing, as that verse does, to make a division between the creation of the body of man and the creation of his spirit.\* But the broad tendency of such speculation lies in a downward moral direction. Here the doctrine of the ascension steps in to raise for us, as it raised for the materialists

body of his slaves, numbering more than four hundred persons, of every age and sex, were put to death ("Annals," xiv., 42-45).

\* See St. George Mivart, "Genesis of Species," p. 282. The whole chapter (xii.) on Theology and Evolution is well worth careful study.

of St. Paul's day, the standard of current conceptions, and to teach men a higher and a nobler view. We leave to science the investigation of the past and of the lowly sources whence man's body may have come; but the doctrine of the ascension speaks of its present sanctity and of its future glory, telling of the human body as a body of humiliation and of lowliness indeed, but yet proclaiming it as even now, in the person of Christ, ascended into the heavens, and seated on the throne of the Most High. It may have been once humble in its origin; it is now glorious in its dignity and elevation; and that dignity and that elevation shed a halo upon human nature, no matter how degraded and wherever it may be found, because it is like unto that Body, the first-fruits of humanity, which stands at the right hand of God. Thus the doctrine of the ascension becomes for the Christian the ever-flowing fountain of dignity, of purity, and of mercy, teaching us to call no man common or unclean, because all have been made like unto the image of the Son of God.

#### CHAPTER IV.

#### THE ELECTION OF MATTHIAS.

ACTS i. 24-26.

WE have selected the incident of this apostolic election as the central point round which to group the events of the ten days' expectation which elapsed between the Ascension and Pentecost. But though this election is a most important fact, in itself and in the principles involved therein, yet there are numerous other circumstances in this waiting time which demand and will amply repay our thoughtful attention.

I. There is, for instance, the simple fact that ten days were allowed to elapse between Christ's departure and the fulfilment of His promise to send the Comforter to take His place with His bereaved flock. The work of the world's salvation depended upon the outcome of this Divine agent. "Tarry ye in the city till ye be endued with power from on high;" and all the time souls were hurrying on to destruction, and society was becoming worse and worse, and Satan's hold upon the world was daily growing in strength. God, however, acted in this interval according to the principles we see illustrated in nature as well as in revelation. He does nothing in a hurry. The Incarnation was postponed for thousands of years. When the Incarnation took place, Christ grew up slowly, and developed patiently, till the day of His manifestation to Israel. And now that Christ's public work on earth was done, there is no haste in the further development of the plan of salvation, but ten days are suffered to elapse before His promise is fulfilled. What a rebuke we read in the Divine methods of that faithless, unbelieving haste which marks and mars so many of our efforts for truth and righteousness, and specially so in these concluding years of the nineteenth century. Never did the Church stand more in need of the lesson so often thus impressed upon her by her Divine Teacher. As Christ did not strive nor cry, neither did any man hear His voice in the streets, so neither did He make haste, because He lived animated by Divine strength and wisdom, which make even apparent



delay and defeat conduce to the attainment of the highest ends of love and mercy. And so, too, Christ's Church still does not need the bustle, the haste, the unnatural excitement which the world thinks needful, because she labours under a sense of Divine guidance, and imitates His example who kept His Apostles waiting ten long days before He fulfilled His appointed promise. What a lesson of comfort, again, this Divine delay teaches! We are often inclined to murmur in secret at the slow progress of God's Church and kingdom. We think that if we had the management of the world's affairs things would have been ordered otherwise, and the progress of truth be one long-continued march of triumph. A consideration of the Divine delays in the past helps us to bear this burden, though it may not explain the difficulty. God's delays have turned out to His greater glory in the past, and they who wait patiently upon Him will find the Divine delays of the present dispensation equally well ordered.

II. Then again, how carefully, even in His delays, God honours the elder dispensation, though now it had grown old and was ready to vanish away. Christianity had none of that revolutionary spirit which makes a clean sweep of old institutions to build up a new fabric in their stead. Christianity, on the contrary, rooted itself in the past, retained old institutions and old ideas, elevating indeed and spiritualising them, and thus slowly broadened down from precedent to precedent. This truly conservative spirit of the new dispensation is manifest in every arrangement, and specially reveals itself in the times selected for the great events of our Lord's ministry—Easter, Ascension, then the ten days of expectation, and then Pentecost. And it was most fitting that it should be so. The old dispensation was a shadow and picture of the higher and better covenant one day to be unfolded. Moses was told to make the tabernacle after the pattern shown to him in the mount, and the whole typical system of Judaism was modelled after a heavenly original to which Christ conformed in the work of man's salvation.

At the first Passover, the paschal lamb was offered up and the deliverance from Egypt effected; and so, too, at the Passover the true Paschal Lamb, Jesus Christ, was presented unto God as an acceptable sacrifice, and the deliverance effected of the true Israel from the spiritual Egypt of the world. Forty days after the Passover, Israel came to the mount of God, into which Moses ascended that he might receive the gifts for the people; and forty days after the last great Paschal Offering, the great spiritual Captain and Deliverer ascended into the Mount of God, that He, in turn, might receive highest spiritual blessings and a new law of life for God's true people. Then there came the ten days of expectation and trial, when the Apostles were called to wait upon God and prove the blessings of patient abiding upon Him, just as the Israelites were called to wait upon God while Moses was absent in the mount. But how different the conduct of the Apostles from that of the more carnal Jews! How typical of the future of the two religions—the Jewish and the Christian! The Jews walked by sight, and not by faith; they grew impatient, and made an image, the golden calf, to be their visible Deity. The Apostles tarried in patience, because they were walking by faith, and they received in return the blessing of an ever-

present unseen Guide and Comforter to lead them, and all who like them seek His help, into the ways of truth and peace. And then, when the waiting time is past, the feast of Pentecost comes, and at Pentecost, the feast of the giving of the old law, as the Jews counted it, the new law of life and power, written not on stony tables, but on the fleshy tables of the heart is granted in the gift of the Divine Comforter. All the lines of the old system are carefully followed, and Christianity is thus shown to be, not a novel invention, but the development and fulfilment of God's ancient purposes. We can scarcely appreciate nowadays the importance and stress laid upon this view among the ancient expositors and apologists. It was a favourite taunt used by the pagans of Greece and Rome against Christianity that it was only a religion of yesterday, a mere novelty, as compared with their own systems, which descended to them from the dawn of history. This taunt has been indeed most useful in its results for us moderns, because it led the ancient Christians to pay the most careful attention to chronology and historical studies, producing as the result works like "The Chronicle of Eusebius," to which secular history itself owes the greatest obligations.

The heathens reproached Christians with the novelty of their faith, and then the early Christians replied by pointing to history, which proved that the Jewish religion was far older than any other, maintaining at the same time that Christianity was merely the development of the Jewish religion, the completion and fulfilment in fact and reality of what Judaism had shadowed forth in the ritual of the Passover and of Pentecost.

III. We notice again in this connection the place where the Apostles met, and the manner in which they continued to assemble after the ascension, and while they waited for the fulfilment of the Master's promise: "They returned unto Jerusalem, and they went up into an upper chamber." Round this upper room at Jerusalem has gathered many a story dating from very early ages indeed. The upper room in which they assembled has been identified with the chamber in which the Last Supper was celebrated, and where the gift of the Holy Ghost was first received, and that from ancient times. Epiphanius, a Christian writer of the fourth century, to whom we owe much precious information concerning the early ages of the Church, tells us that there was a church built on this spot even in Hadrian's time, that is, about the year 120 A. D.\* The Empress Helena, again, the mother of Constantine the Great, identified or thought she identified the spot, and built a splendid church to mark it out for all time; and succeeding ages have spent much care and thought upon it. St. Cyril of Jerusalem was a writer little referred to and little known in our day, who yet has much precious truth to teach us. He was a learned bishop of Jerusalem about the middle of the fourth century, and he left us catechetical lectures, showing what pains and trouble the Early Church took in the inculcation of the fundamental articles of the Christian creed. His catechetical lectures, delivered to the candidates for baptism, contain much valuable evidence of the belief, the practice, and the discipline of the early ages, and they mention among other points the church built upon Mount Zion on the spot once occupied by this

\* Epiphanius, "On Weights and Measures," ch. xiv.



upper room. The tradition, then, which deals with this chamber and points out its site goes back to the ages of persecution; and yet it is notable how little trouble the book of the Acts of the Apostles takes in this matter. It is just the same with this upper chamber as with the other localities in which our Lord's mighty works were wrought. The Gospels tell us not where His temptations occurred, though man has often tried to fix the exact locality. The site of the Transfiguration and of the true Mount of Beatitudes has engaged much human curiosity; the scene of Peter's vision at Joppa and of St. Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus,—all these and many other divinely honoured localities of the Old as well as of the New Testament have been shrouded from us in thickest darkness, that we might learn not to fix our eyes upon the external husk, the locality, the circumstances, the time, which are nothing, but upon the interior spirit, the love, the unity, the devotion and self-sacrifice which constitute in the Divine sight the very heart and core of our holy religion. They assembled themselves, too, in this upper chamber in a united spirit, such as Christianity, though only in an undeveloped shape, already dictated. The Apostles "continued steadfastly in prayer, with the women also, and Mary, the mother of Jesus." The spirit of Christianity was, I say, already manifesting itself.

In the temple, as in the synagogues to this day, the women prayed in a separate place; they were not united with the men, but parted from them by a screen. But in Christ Jesus there was to be neither male nor female. The man in virtue of his manhood had no advantage or superiority over the woman in virtue of her womanhood; and so the Apostles gathered themselves at the footstool of their common Father in union with the women, and with Mary the mother of Jesus. How simple, again, this last mention of the Blessed Virgin Mother of the Lord! how strangely and strongly contrasted the scriptural record is with the fables and legends which have grown up round the memory of her whom all generations must ever call blessed. Nothing, in fact, shows more plainly the historic character of the book we are studying than a comparison of this last simple notice with the legend of the assumption of the Blessed Virgin as it has been held since the fifth century, and as it is now believed in the Church of Rome. The popular account of this fabled incident arose in the East amid the controversies which rent the Church concerning the Person of Christ in the fifth century. It taught that the Holy Virgin, a year or so after the ascension, besought the Lord to release her; upon which the angel Gabriel was sent to announce her departure in three days' time. The Apostles were thereupon summoned from the different parts of the world whither they had departed. John came from Ephesus, Peter from Rome, Thomas from India, each being miraculously wafted on a cloud from his special sphere of labour, while those of the apostolic company who had died were raised for the occasion. On the third day the Lord descended from heaven with the angels, and took to Himself the soul of the Virgin. The Jews then attempted to burn the body, which was miraculously rescued and buried in a new tomb, prepared by Joseph of Arimathea in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. For two days the angels were

heard singing at the tomb, but on the third day their songs ceased, and the Apostles then knew that the body had been transferred to Paradise. St. Thomas was indeed vouchsafed a glimpse of her ascension, and at his request she dropped him her girdle as a token, whereupon he went to his brother Apostles and declared her sepulchre to be empty. The Apostles regarded this as merely a sign of his customary incredulity, but on production of the girdle they were convinced, and on visiting the grave found the body gone.\*

Can any contrast be greater or more striking between the inspired narrative, composed for the purpose of ministering to godly life and practice, and such legendary fables as this, invented to gratify mere human curiosity, or to secure a temporary controversial triumph? The Divine narrative shrouds in thickest darkness details which have no spiritual significance, no direct bearing on the work of man's salvation. The human fable intrudes into the things unseen, and revels with a childish delight in the regions of the supernatural and miraculous.

What a striking likeness do we trace between the composition of the Acts and of the Gospels in this direction! The self-restraint of the evangelical writers is wondrous. Had the Evangelists been mere human biographers, how they would have delighted to expatiate on the childhood and youth and earlier years of Christ's manhood. The apocryphal Gospels composed in the second and third centuries show us what our Gospels would have been had they been written by men destitute of an abundant supply of the Divine Spirit. They enter into the most minute incidents of our Lord's childhood, tell us of His games, His schoolboy days, of the flashes of the supernatural glory which ever betrayed the awful Being who lay hidden beneath. The Gospels, on the other hand, fling a hallowed and reverent veil over all the details, or almost all the details, of our Lord's early life. They tell us of His birth, and its circumstances and surroundings, that we might learn the needful lesson of the infinite glory, the transcendent greatness of lowliness and humiliation. They give us a glimpse of our Lord's development when twelve years old, that we may learn the spiritual strength and force which are produced through the discipline of obedience and patient waiting upon God; and then all else is concealed from human vision till the hour was come for the manifestation of the full-orbed God-Man. And as it was with the Eternal Son, so was it with that earthly parent whom the consensus of universal Christendom has agreed to honour as the type of devout faith, of humble submission, of loving motherhood. Fable has grown thick round her in mere human narrative, but when we turn to the inspired Word, whether in the Gospels or in the Acts,—for it is all the same in both,—we find a story simple, restrained, and yet captivating in all its details, ministering indeed to no prurient curiosity, yet rich in all the materials which serve to devout meditation, culminating in this last record, where the earthly parent finally disappears from out of sight, eclipsed by the heavenly glory of the Divine Son:—"These all continued stedfastly in prayer, with the women, and Mary, the mother of Jesus."

\* See, for a fuller account, Salmon's "Introduction N. T.," 4th ed., pp. 384-86, and the references there given.



IV. And then we have the record of the apostolic election, which is rich in teaching. We note the person who took the first step, and his character, so thoroughly in unison with that picture which the four Gospels present. St. Peter was not a forward man in the bad sense of the word, but he possessed that energetic, forcible character to which men yield a natural leadership. Till St. Paul appeared St. Peter was regarded as the spokesman of the apostolic band, just as during our Lord's earthly ministry the same position was by tacit consent accorded to him. He was one of those men who cannot remain inactive, especially when they see anything wanting. There are some men who can see a defect just as clearly, but their first thought is, What have I to do with it? They behold the need, but it never strikes them that they should attempt to rectify it. St. Peter was just the opposite: when he saw a fault or a want his disposition and his natural gifts at once impelled him to strive to rectify it. When our Lord, in view of the contending rumours afloat concerning His ministry and authority, applied this searching test to His Apostles, "But whom do ye say that I am?" it was Peter that boldly responded, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Just as a short time afterwards the same Peter incurred Christ's condemnation when he rebuked the Saviour for the prophecy of His forthcoming death and humiliation. The character of St. Peter as depicted in the Gospels and the Acts is at unison with itself. It is that of one ever generous, courageous, intensely sympathetic, impulsive, but deficient, as impulsive and sympathetic characters often are, in that staying power, that capacity to bear up under defeat, discouragement, and darkness which so conspicuously marked out the great Apostle of the Gentiles, and made him such a pillar in the spiritual temple of the New Jerusalem. Yet St. Peter did his own work, for God can ever find employment suitable to every type of that vast variety of temperament which finds shelter beneath the roof of Christ's Church. St. Peter's impulsiveness, chastened by prayer, solemnised by his own sad personal experience, deepened by the bitter sorrow consequent on his terrible fall, urged him to take the first conscious step as the leader of the newly-constituted society. How very similar the Peter of the Acts is to the Peter of St. Matthew; what an undesigned evidence of the truth of these records we trace in the picture of St. Peter presented by either narrative! Just as St. Peter was in the Gospels the first to confess at Cæsarea, the first to strike in the garden, the first to fail in the high priest's palace, so was he the first "to stand up in these days in the midst of the brethren," and propose the first corporate movement on the Church's part.

Here again we note that his attitude at this apostolic election proves that the interviews which St. Peter held with Christ after the Resurrection must have been lengthened, intimate, and frequent, for St. Peter's whole view of the Christian organisation seems thoroughly changed. Christ had continued with His Apostles during forty days, speaking to them of the things concerning the kingdom of God; and St. Peter, as he had been for years one of the Lord's most intimate friends, so he doubtless still held the same trusted position in these post-res-

urrection days. The Lord revealed to him the outlines of His kingdom, and sketched for him the main lines of its development, teaching him that the Church was not to be a knot of personal disciples, dependent upon His manifested bodily presence, and dissolving into its original elements as soon as that bodily presence ceased to be realised by the eye of sense; but was rather to be a corporation with perpetual succession, to use legal language, whose great work was to be an unceasing witness to Christ's resurrection. If Peter's mind had not been thus illuminated and guided by the personal instruction of Christ, how came it to pass that prior to the descent of the Spirit the Apostles move with no uncertain step in this matter, and unhesitatingly fill up the blank in the sacred college by the election of Matthias into the place left vacant by the terrible fall of Judas? The speech of St. Peter and the choice of this new Apostle reflect light back upon the forty days of waiting. No objection is raised, no warm debate takes place such as heralded the solution of the vexed question concerning circumcision at the council of Jerusalem; no one suggests that as Christ Himself had not supplied the vacancy the choice should be postponed till after the fulfilment of the Master's mysterious promise, because they were all instructed as to our Lord's wishes by the conversations held with Christ during His risen and glorified life.

Let us pause a little to meditate upon an objection which might have been here raised. Why fill up what Christ Himself left vacant? some shortsighted objector might have urged; and yet we see good reason why Christ may have omitted to supply the place of Judas, and may have designed that the Apostles themselves should have done so. Our Lord Jesus Christ gifted His Apostles with corporate power; He bestowed upon them authority to act in His stead and name; and it is not God's way of action to grant power and authority, and then to allow it to remain unexercised and undeveloped. When God confers any gift He expects that it shall be used for His honour and man's benefit. The Lord had bestowed upon the Apostles the highest honour, the most wondrous power ever given to men. He had called them to an office of which He Himself had spoken very mysterious things. He had told them that, in virtue of the apostolic dignity conferred upon them, they should in the regeneration of all things sit upon thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. He had spoken, too, of a mysterious authority with which they were invested, so that their decisions here upon earth would be ratified and confirmed in the region of heavenly realities. Yet when a gap is made by successful sin in the number of the mystical twelve, who are to judge the twelve tribes, He leaves the selection of a new Apostle to the remaining eleven, in order that they may be compelled to stir up the grace of God which was in them, and to exercise the power entrusted to them under a due sense of responsibility. The Lord thus wished to teach the Church from the earliest days to walk alone. The Apostles had been long enough depending on His personal presence and guidance, and now, that they might learn to exercise the privileges and duties of their Divine freedom, He leaves them to choose one to fill that position of supernatural rank and office from which Judas had fallen. The risen



Saviour acted in grace as God ever acts in nature. He bestowed His gifts lavishly and generously and then expected man to respond to the gifts by making that good use of them which earnest prayer, sanctified reason, and Christian common-sense dictated.

St. Peter's action is notable, too, in another aspect. St. Peter was undoubtedly the natural leader of the apostolic band during those earliest days of the Church's history. Our Lord Himself recognised his natural gifts as qualifying him to fulfil this position. There is no necessity for a denial on our part of the reality of St. Peter's privilege as contained in such passages as the verse which says, "I will give unto thee (Peter) the keys of the kingdom of heaven." He was eminently energetic, vigorous, quick in action. But we find no traces of that despotic authority as prince of the Apostles and supreme head over the whole Church with which some would fain invest St. Peter and his successors. St. Peter steps forward first on this occasion, as again on the day of Pentecost, and again before the high priest after the healing of the impotent man, and yet again at the council of Jerusalem; for, as we have already noted, St. Peter possessed in abundance that natural energy which impels a man to action without any desire for notoriety or any wish to thrust himself into positions of undue eminence. But then on every occasion St. Peter speaks as an equal to his equals. He claims no supreme authority; no authority, in fact, at all over and beyond what the others possessed. He does not, for instance, on this occasion claim the right as Christ's vicar to nominate an Apostle into the place of Judas. He merely asserts his lawful place in Christ's kingdom as first among a body of equals to suggest a course of action to the whole body which he knew to be in keeping with the Master's wishes, and in fulfilment of His revealed intentions.

V. The address of St. Peter led the Apostles to practical action. He laid the basis of it in the book of Psalms, the mystical application of which to our Lord and His sufferings he recognises, selecting passages from the sixty-ninth and the one hundredth and ninth Psalms as depicting the sin and the fate of Judas Iscariot; and then sets forth the necessity of filling up the vacancy in the apostolic office, a fact of which he had doubtless been certified by the Master Himself. He speaks as if the College of the Apostles had a definite work and office; a witness peculiar to themselves as Apostles, which no others except Apostles could render. This is manifest from the language of St. Peter. He lays down the conditions of a possible Apostle: he must have been a witness of all that Jesus had done and taught from the time of His baptism to His ascension. But this qualification alone would not make a man an Apostle, or qualify him to bear the witness peculiar to the apostolic office. There were evidently numerous such witnesses, but they were not Apostles, and had none of the power and privileges of the Twelve. He must be chosen by his brother Apostles, and their choice must be endorsed by heaven; and then the chosen witness, who had known the past, could testify to the resurrection in particular, with a weight, authority, and dignity he never possessed before. The apostolic office was the germ out of which the whole Christian ministry was developed, and the apostolic witness was typical of that witness

to the resurrection which is not the duty alone, but also the strength and glory of the Christian ministry; for it is only as the ministers and witnesses of a risen and glorified Christ that they differ from the officials of a purely human association.

After St. Peter had spoken, two persons were selected as possessing the qualifications needful in the successor of Judas. Then when the Apostles had elected they prayed, and cast lots as between the two, and the final selection of Matthias was made. Questions have sometimes been raised as to this method of election, and attempts have been sometimes made to follow the precedent here set. The lot has at times been used to supersede the exercise of human judgment, not only in Church elections, but in the ordinary matters of life; but if this passage is closely examined, it will be seen that it affords no justification for any such practice. The Apostles did not use the lot so as to supersede the exercise of their own powers, or relieve them of that personal responsibility which God has imposed on men, whether as individuals, or as gathered in societies civil or ecclesiastical. The Apostles brought their private judgment into play, searched, debated, voted, and, as the result, chose two persons equally well qualified for the apostolic office. Then, when they had done their best, they left the decision to the lot, just as men often do still; and if we believe in the efficacy of prayer and a particular Providence ordering the affairs of men, I do not see that any wiser course can ever be taken, under similar circumstances, than that which the Apostles adopted on this occasion. But we must be careful to observe that the Apostles did not trust to the lot absolutely and completely. That would have been trusting to mere chance. They first did their utmost, exercised their own knowledge and judgment, and then, having done their part, they prayerfully left the final result to God, in humble confidence that He would show what was best.

The two selected candidates were Joseph Barsabas and Matthias, neither of whom ever appeared before in the story of our Lord's life, and yet both had been His disciples all through His earthly career. What lessons for ourselves may we learn from these men! These two eminent servants of God, either of whom their brethren counted worthy to succeed into the apostolic College, appear just this once in the sacred narrative, and then disappear for ever. Indeed it is with the Apostles as we have already noted in the case of our Lord's life and the story of the Blessed Virgin, the self-restraint of the sacred narrative is most striking. What fields for romance! What wide scope for the exercise of imagination would the lives of the Apostles have opened out if the writers of our sacred books had not been guided and directed by a Divine power outside and beyond themselves. We are not, indeed, left without the materials for a comparison in this respect, most consoling and most instructive for the devout Christian.

Apocryphal histories of all the Apostles abound on every side, some of them dating from the second century itself. Many of them indeed are regular romances. The Clementine Homilies and Recognitions form a religious novel, entering into the most elaborate details of the labours, preaching, and travels of the Apostle Peter. Ev-



ery one of the other Apostles, and many of the earliest disciples too, had gospels forged in their honour; there was the Gospel of Peter, of Thomas, of Nicodemus, and of many others. And so it was with St. Matthias. Five hundred years after Christ the Gospel of Matthias was known and repudiated as a fiction. A mass of tradition, too, grew up round him, telling of his labours and martyrdom, as some said in Ethiopia, and as others in Eastern Asia.

Clement, a writer who lived about the year 200, at Alexandria, recounts for us some sayings traditionally ascribed to St. Matthias, all of a severe and sternly ascetic tone. But in reality we know nothing either of what St. Matthias did or of what he taught. The genuine writings of apostolic times carry their own credentials with them in this respect. They are dignified and natural. They indulge in no details to exalt their heroes, or to minister to that love of the strange and marvellous which lies at the root of so much religious error. They were written to exalt Christ and Christ alone, and they deal, therefore, with the work of Apostles merely so far as the story tends to increase the glory of the Master, not that of His servants. Surely this repression of the human agents, this withdrawal of them into the darkness of obscurity, is one of the best evidences of the genuineness of the New Testament. One or two of the earliest witnesses of the Cross have their story told at some length. Peter and Paul, when compared with James or John or Matthias, figure very largely in the New Testament narrative. But even they have allotted to them a mere brief outline of a portion of their work, and all the rest is hidden from us. The vast majority even of the Apostles have their names alone recorded, while nothing is told concerning their labours or their sufferings. If the Apostles were deceivers, they were deceivers who sought their rewards neither in this life, where they gained nothing but loss of all things, nor in the pages of history, where their own hands and the hands of their friends consigned their brightest deeds to an obscurity no eye can pierce. But they were not deceivers. They were the noblest benefactors of the race, men whose minds and hearts and imaginations were filled with the glory of their risen Redeemer. Their one desire was that Christ alone should be magnified, and to this end they willed to lose themselves in the boundless sea of His risen glory. And thus they have left us a noble and inspiring example. We are not apostles, martyrs, or confessors, yet we often find it hard to take our part and do our duty in the spirit displayed by Matthias and Joseph called Barsabas. We long for public recognition and public reward. We chafe and fret and fume internally because we have to bear our temptations and suffer our trials and do our work unknown and unrecognised by all but God. Let the example of these holy men help us to put away all such vain thoughts. God Himself is our all-seeing and our ever-present Judge. The Incarnate Master Himself is watching us. The angels and the spirits of the just made perfect are witnesses of our earthly struggles. No matter how low, how humble, how insignificant the story of our spiritual trials and struggles, they are all marked in heaven by that Divine Master who will at last reward every man, not according to his position in the world, but in strict accordance with the principles of inflexible justice.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE PENTECOSTAL BLESSING.

#### ACTS ii. 1-4.

IN these words we find the record of the event which completed the Church, and endowed it with that mysterious power which then was, and ever since has been, the source of its true life and of its highest success.

The time when the gift of the Spirit was vouchsafed is marked for us as "when the day of Pentecost was now come." Here again, as in the fact of the ascension and the waiting of the Church, we trace the outline of Christianity in Judaism, and see in the typical ceremonial of the old dispensation the outline and shadow of heavenly realities.

What was the history of the Pentecostal feast? That feast fulfilled in the Jewish system a twofold place. It was one of the great natural festivals whereby God taught His ancient people to sanctify the different portions of the year. The Passover was the feast of the first ripe corn, celebrating the beginning of the barley harvest, as again the Pentecostal loaves set forth, solemnised, and sanctified the close of the wheat harvest. No one was permitted, according to the twenty-third of Leviticus, to partake of the fruits of the earth till the harvest had been sanctified by the presentation to God of the first ripe sheaf, just as at the greatest paschal festival ever celebrated, Christ, the first ripe sheaf of that vast harvest of humanity which is maturing for its Lord, was taken out of the grave where the rest of the harvest still lies, and presented in the inner temple of the universe as the first-fruits of humanity unto God. At Pentecost, on the other hand, it was not a sheaf but a loaf that was offered to signify the completion of the work begun at the Passover. At Pentecost the law is thus laid down: "Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth parts of an ephah: they shall be of fine flour, they shall be baked with leaven, for first-fruits unto the Lord" (Lev. xxiii. 17). Pentecost, therefore, was the harvest festival, the feast of ingathering for the Jews; and when the type found its completion in Christ, Pentecost became the feast of ingathering for the nations, when the Church, the mystical body of Christ, was presented unto God to be an instrument of His glory and a blessing to the world at large. This feast, as we have already intimated, was a fitting season for the gift of the Holy Ghost, and that for another reason. Pentecost was considered by the Jews as a festival commemorative of the giving of the law at Mount Sinai in the third month after they had been delivered from the bondage of Egypt. It was a fitting season, therefore, for the bestowal of the Spirit, whereby the words of ancient prophecy were fulfilled, "I will put My law in their inward parts, and in their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Jer. xxxi. 33).

The time when the Spirit was poured out on the assembled body of Christians, and the Church's foundations laid deep and strong, revealed profound reverence for the old dispensation, raising by anticipation a protest against the heretical teaching which became current among the Gnostics in the second century, and has often



since found place in Christian circles, as amongst the Anabaptists of Germany and the Antinomians at the time of the Reformation. This view taught that there was an essential opposition between the Old and the New Testament, some maintainers of it, like the ancient Gnostics, holding that the Old Testament was the production of a spiritual being inferior and hostile to the Eternal God. The Divine Spirit guided St. Luke, however, to teach the opposite view, and is careful to honour the elder dispensation and the old covenant, showing that Christianity was simply the perfection and completion of Judaism, and was developed therefrom as naturally as the bud of spring bursts forth into the splendid blossom and flower of summer. We trace these evidences of the Divine foreknowledge, as well as of the Divine wisdom, in these Pentecostal revelations, providing for and forecasting future dangers with which, even in its earlier days, the bark of Christ's Church had desperately to struggle.

I. Now let us take the circumstances of the Pentecostal blessing as they are stated, for every separate detail bears with it an important message. The place and the other circumstances of the outpouring of the Spirit are full of instruction. The first disciples were all with one accord in one place. There was unity of spirit and unity in open manifestation to the world at large. Christ's disciples, when they received the gifts of heaven's choicest blessings, were not split up into dozens of different organisations, each of them hostile to the others, and each striving to aggrandise itself at the expense of kindred brotherhoods. They had keenly in remembrance the teaching of our Lord's great Eucharistic supplication when He prayed to His Father for His people that "they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee . . . that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me." There was visible unity among the followers of Christ; there was interior love and charity, finding expression in external union which qualified the disciples for the fuller reception of the spirit of love, and rendered them powerful in doing God's work amongst men. The state of the Apostles and the blessing then received have an important message for the Christianity of our own and of every age. What a contrast the Christian Church—taking the word in its broadest sense as comprising all those who profess and call themselves Christians—presents at the close of the nineteenth when compared with the opening years of the first century! May not many of the problems and difficulties which the Church of to-day experiences be traced up to this woeful contrast? Behold England nowadays, with its two hundred sects, all calling themselves by the name of Christ; take the Christian world, with its Churches mutually hostile, spending far more time and trouble on winning proselytes one from the other than upon winning souls from the darkness of heathenism;—surely this one fact alone, the natural result of our departure from the Pentecostal condition of unity and peace, is a sufficient evidence of our evil plight. We do not purpose now to go into any discussion of the causes whence have sprung the divisions of Christendom. "An enemy hath done this" is a quite sufficient explanation, for assuredly the great enemy of souls and of Christ has counter-worked and traversed the work of the Church and the conversion of the world most effectually thereby. There are some persons who rejoice

in the vast variety of divisions in the Church; but they are shortsighted and inexperienced in the danger and scandals which have flowed, and are flowing, from them. It is indeed in the mission field that the schisms among Christians are most evidently injurious. When the heathen see the soldiers of the Cross split up among themselves into hostile organisations, they very naturally say that it will be time enough when their own divergences and difficulties have been reconciled to come and convert persons who at least possess internal union and concord. The visible unity of the Church was from the earliest days a strong argument, breaking down pagan prejudice. Then, again, not only do the divisions of Christians place a stumbling-block in the way of the conversion of the heathen, but they lead to a wondrous waste of power both at home and abroad. Surely one cannot look at the religious state of a town or village in England without realising at a glance the evil results of our divisions from this point of view. If men believe that the preaching of the Cross of Christ is the power of God unto salvation, and that millions are perishing from want of that blessed story, can they feel contentment when the great work of competing sects consists, not in spreading that salvation, but in building up their own cause by proselytising from their neighbours, and gathering into their own organisation persons who already have been made partakers of Christ Jesus? And if this competition of sects be injurious and wasteful within the bounds of Christendom, surely it is infinitely more so when various contending bodies concentrate all their forces, as they so often do, on the same locality in some unconverted land, and seem as eagerly desirous of gaining proselytes from one another as from the mass of paganism.

Then, too, to take it from another point of view, what a loss in generalship, in Christian strategy, in power of concentration, results from our unhappy divisions? The united efforts made by Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Greeks, are indeed all too small for the vast work of converting the heathen world if they were made with the greatest skill and wisdom. How much more insufficient they must be when a vast proportion of the power employed is wasted, as far as the work of conversion is concerned, because it is used simply in counteracting and withstanding the efforts of other Christian bodies. I say nothing as to the causes of dissensions. In many cases they may have been absolutely necessary, though in too many cases I fear they have resulted merely from views far too narrow and restrained; I merely point out the evil of division in itself as being, not a help, as some would consider it, but a terrible hindrance in the way of the Church of Christ. How different it was in the primitive Church! Within one hundred and fifty years, or little more, of the ascension of Jesus Christ and the outpouring of the Divine Spirit, a Christian writer could boast that the Christian Church had permeated the whole Roman empire to such an extent that if the Christians abandoned the cities they would be turned into howling deserts. This triumphant march of Christianity was simply in accordance with the Saviour's promise. The world saw that Christians loved one another, and the world was consequently converted. But when primitive love cooled down, and divisions and sects in abundance sprang up after the conver-



sion of Constantine the Great, then the progress of God's work gradually ceased, till at last Mahometanism arose to roll back the tide of triumphant success which had followed the preaching of the Cross, and to reduce beneath Satan's sway many a fair region, like North Africa, Egypt, and Asia Minor, which once had been strongholds of Christianity. Surely when one thinks of the manifold evils at home and abroad which the lack of the Pentecostal visible union and concord has caused, as well as of the myriads who still remain in darkness while nominal Christians bite and devour one another, we may well join in the glowing language of Jeremy Taylor's splendid prayer for the whole Catholic Church, as he cries, "O Holy Jesus, King of the saints and Prince of the Catholic Church, preserve Thy spouse whom Thou hast purchased with Thy right hand, and redeemed and cleansed with Thy blood. O preserve her safe from schism, heresy, and sacrilege. Unite all her members with the bands of faith, hope, and charity, and an external communion when it shall seem good in Thine eyes. Let the daily sacrifice of prayer and sacramental thanksgiving never cease, but be for ever presented to Thee, and for ever united to the intercession of her dearest Lord, and for ever prevail for the obtaining for each of its members grace and blessing, pardon and salvation."\*

II. Furthermore, we have brought before us the external manifestations or evidences of the interior gift of the Spirit really bestowed upon the Apostles at Pentecost. There was a sound as of a rushing mighty wind; there were tongues like as of fire, a separate and distinct tongue resting upon each disciple; and lastly there was the miraculous manifestation of speech in divers languages. Let us take these spiritual phenomena in order. First, then, "there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting;" a sign which was repeated in the scene narrated in the fourth chapter and the thirty-first verse, where we are told that "when they had prayed, the place was shaken wherein they were gathered together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." The appearances of things that were seen responded to the movements and powers that were unseen. It was a supernatural moment. The powers of a new life, the forces of a new kingdom were coming into operation, and, as the result, manifestations that never since have been experienced found place among men. We can find a parallel to what then happened in scientific investigations. Geologists and astronomers push back the beginning of the world and of the universe at large to a vast distance, but they all acknowledge that there must have been a period when phenomena were manifested, powers and forces called into operation, of which men have now no experience. The beginning, or the repeated beginnings, of the various epochs must have been times of marvels, which men can now only dream about. Pentecost was for the Christian with a sense of the awful importance of life and of time and of the individual soul a far greater beginning and a grander epoch than any mere material one. It was the beginning of the spiritual life, the inauguration of the spiritual

kingdom of the Messiah, the Lord and Ruler of the material universe; and therefore we ought to expect, or at least not to be surprised, that marvellous phenomena, signs and wonders even of a physical type, should accompany and celebrate the scene. The marvels of the story told in the first of Genesis find a parallel in the marvels told in the second of Acts. The one passage sets forth the foundation of the material universe, the other proclaims the nobler foundations of the spiritual universe. Let us take it again from another point of view. Pentecost was, in fact, Moses on Sinai or Elijah on Horeb over again, but in less terrific form. Moses and Elijah may be styled the founder and the re-founder of the old dispensation, just as St. Peter and the Apostles may be called the founders of the new dispensation. But what a difference in the inaugural scene! No longer with thunder and earthquake, and mountains rent, but in keeping with a new and more peaceful economy, there came from heaven the sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind. It is not, too, the only occasion where the idea of wind is connected with that of the Divine Spirit and its mysterious operations. How very similar, as the devout mind will trace, are the words and description of St. Luke when narrating this first outpouring of the Spirit, to the words of the Divine Master repeated by St. John, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

There appeared, too, tongues, separate and distinct, sitting upon each of them. The outward and visible sign manifested on this occasion was plainly typical of the new dispensation and of the chief means of its propagation. The personality of the Holy Ghost is essentially a doctrine of the new dispensation. The power and influence of God's Spirit are indeed often recognised in the Old Testament. Aholiab and Bezaleel are said to have been guided by the Spirit of God as they cunningly devised the fabric of the first tabernacle. The Spirit of Jehovah began to move Samson at times in the camp of Dan; and, on a later occasion, the same Spirit is described as descending upon him with such amazing force that he went down and slew thirty men of Ashkelon. These and many other similar passages present to us the Jewish conception of the Spirit of God and His work. He was a force, a power, quickening the human mind, illuminating with genius and equipping with physical strength those whom God chose to be champions of His people against the surrounding heathen. Aholiab's skill in mechanical operations, and Samson's strength, and Saul's prophesying, and David's musical art, were all of them the gifts of God. What a noble, what a grand, inspiring view of life and life's gifts and work, is there set before us. It is the old lesson taught by St. James, though so often forgotten by men when they draw a distinction between things sacred and things secular, "Every good gift and every perfect boon is from above, coming down from the Father of light." A deeper view, indeed, of the Divine Spirit and His work on the soul can be traced in the prophets, but then they were watchers upon the mountains, who discerned from afar the approach of a nobler and a brighter day. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me

\* Prayer for all estates of men in the Holy Catholic Church, in Jeremy Taylor's "Holy Living," chap. iv. sec. vii.



to preach the gospel to the poor." That was Isaiah's statement of his work as adopted by our Lord; and now, at the very foundation of the Church, this deeper and nobler tone of thought concerning the Spirit is proclaimed, when there appeared tongues like as of fire sitting upon each of them.

The sign of the Holy Spirit's presence was a tongue of fire. It was a most suitable emblem, pregnant with meaning, and indicative of the large place which the human voice was to play in the work of the new dispensation, while the supernatural fire declared that the mere unaided human voice would avail nothing. The voice needs to be quickened and supported by that Divine fire, that superhuman energy and power, which the Holy Ghost alone can confer. The tongue of fire pointed on the Pentecostal morn to the important part in the Church's life, and in the propagation of the gospel, which prayer, and praise, and preaching would hereafter occupy. It would have been well, indeed, had the Church ever remembered what the Holy Ghost thus taught, specially concerning the propagation of the gospel, for it would have been thereby saved many a disgraceful page of history. The human tongue, illuminated and sanctified by fire from the inner sanctuary, was about to be the instrument of the gospel's advancement,—not penal laws, not the sword and fire of persecution; and so long as the divinely-appointed means were adhered to, so long the course of our holy religion was one long-continued triumph. But when the world and the devil were able to place in the hands of Christ's spouse their own weapons of violence and force, when the Church forgot the words of her Master, "My kingdom is not of this world," and the teachings embodied in the symbol of the tongue of fire, then spiritual paralysis fell upon religious effort; and even where human law and power have compelled an external conformity to the Christian system, as they undoubtedly have done in some cases, yet all vital energy, all true godliness, have been there utterly lacking in the religion established by means so contrary to the mind of Christ. Very good men have made sad mistakes in this matter. Archbishop Ussher was a man whose deep piety equalled his prodigious learning, yet he maintained that the civil sword ought to be used to repress false doctrine; the divines of the Westminster Assembly have left their opinion on record, that it is the duty of the magistrate to use the sword on behalf of Christ's kingdom; Richard Baxter taught that the toleration of doctrines which he considered false was sinful; and all of them forgot the lesson of the day of Pentecost, that the tongue of fire was to be the only weapon permissible in the warfare of the kingdom whose rule is over spirits, not over bodies. The history of religion in England amply proves this. The Church of England enjoyed, about the middle of the last century, the greatest temporal prosperity. Her prelates held high estate, and her security was fenced round by a perfect bulwark of stringent laws. Yet her life-blood was fast ebbing away, and her true hold upon the nation was speedily relaxing. The very highest ranks of society, whom worldly policy attached nominally to her communion, had lost all faith in her supernatural work and commission. A modern historian has shown this right well in his description of the death-scene of Queen Caroline, a woman of eminent

intellectual qualities, who had played no small part in the religious life of this nation during the reign of her husband George II. Queen Caroline came to die, and was passing away surrounded by a crowd of attendants and courtiers. The whole Court, permeated by the spirit of earthliness which then prevailed, was disturbed by the death of the Queen's body, but no one seems to have thought of the Queen's soul, till some one mildly suggested that, for decency's sake, the Archbishop of Canterbury should be sent for that he might offer up prayer with the dying woman. Writing here in Ireland, I cannot forget that it was just the same with us at that very period. Religion was here upheld by worldly power; the Church, which should have been viewed as simply a spiritual power, was regarded and treated as a mere branch of the civil service, and true religion sank to its lowest depths. And we reaped in ourselves the due reward of our deeds. The very men whose voices were loudest in public for the repression of Romanism were privately living in grossest neglect of the offices and laws of religion and morality, because they in their hearts despised an institution which had forgotten the Pentecostal gift, and sought victory with the weapons of the flesh, and not with those of the spirit. May God for evermore protect His Church from such miserable mistakes, and lead her to depend more and more upon the power of the blessed and ever-present Pentecostal gift!

A separate and distinct tongue, too, sat upon each individual assembled in the upper room,—significant of the individual character of our holy religion. Christianity has a twofold aspect, neither of which can with impunity be neglected. Christianity has a corporate aspect. Our Lord Jesus Christ came not so much to teach a new doctrine as to establish a new society, based on newer and higher principles, and working towards a higher and nobler end than any society ever previously founded. This side of Christianity was exaggerated in the Middle Ages. The Church, its unity, its interests, its welfare as a corporation, then dominated every other consideration. Since the Reformation, however, men have run to the other extreme. They have forgotten the social and corporate view of Christianity, and only thought of it as it deals with individuals. Men have looked at Christianity as it deals with the individual alone and have forgotten and ignored the corporate side of its existence. Truth is many-sided indeed, and no side of truth can with impunity be neglected. Some have erred in dwelling too much on the corporate aspect of Christianity; others have erred in dwelling too much on its individual aspect. The New Testament alone combines both in due proportion, and teaches the importance and necessity of a Church, as against the extreme Protestant, on the one hand, who will reduce religion to a mere individual matter; and of a personal religion, an individual interest in the Spirit's presence, as here indicated by the tongues which sat upon each of them, as against the extreme Romanist, on the other hand, who looks upon the Church as everything, to the neglect of the life and progress of the individual. This passage does not at the same time lend any assistance to those who would thence conclude that there was no distinction between clergy and laity, and that no ministerial office was intended to exist under the



dispensation of the kingdom of heaven. The Spirit, doubtless, was poured out upon all the disciples, and not upon the Twelve alone, upon the day of Pentecost, as also upon the occasion of the conversion of Cornelius and his household. Yet this fact did not lead the Apostles and early Christians to conclude that an appointed and ordained ministry might be dispensed with. The Lord miraculously bestowed His graces and gifts at Pentecost and in the centurion's house at Cæsarea, because the gospel dispensation was opened on these occasions first of all to the Jews and then to the Gentiles. But when, subsequently to the formal opening, we read of the gifts of the Spirit, we find that their bestowal is connected with the ministry of the Apostles, of St. Peter and St. John at Samaria, or of St. Paul at Ephesus. The Holy Ghost was poured out upon all the company assembled in the upper room, or in the centurion's house; yet the Apostles saw nothing in this fact inconsistent with a ministerial organisation, else they would not have set apart the seven men full of faith and of the Holy Ghost to minister to the widows at Jerusalem, nor would they have laid hands upon elders in every church which they founded, nor would St. Paul have written, "He that seeketh the office of a bishop desireth a good work," nor would St. Peter have exhorted the elders to a diligent oversight of the flock of God after the model of the Good Shepherd Himself. St. Peter clearly thought that the Pentecostal gifts did not obliterate the distinction which existed between the shepherds and the sheep, between a fixed and appointed ministry and the flock to whom they should minister, though in the very initial stages of the miraculous movement the Spirit was bestowed without any human agency upon men and women alike.

III. Lastly, in this passage we find another external proof of the Spirit's presence in the miraculous gift of tongues. That gift indicated to the Apostles and to all ages the tongue as the instrument by which the gospel was to be propagated, as the symbol fire indicated the cleansing and purifying effects of the Spirit. The gift of tongues is one that has ever excited much speculation, and specially so during the present century, when, as some will remember, an extraordinary attempt to revive them was made, some sixty years ago, by the followers of the celebrated Edward Irving. Devout students of Scripture have loved to trace in this incident at Pentecost, at the very foundation of the new dispensation, a reversal of that confusion of tongues which happened at Babel, and have seen in it the removal of "the covering cast over all peoples, and the veil that is spread over all nations." The precise character of the gift of tongues has of late years exercised many minds, and different explanations have been offered of the phenomena. Some have viewed it as a miracle of hearing, not of speaking, and maintained that the Apostles did not speak different languages at all, but that they all spake the one Hebrew tongue, while the Jews of the various nationalities then assembled miraculously heard the gospel in their own language.

The miracle is in that case intensified one hundredfold, while not one single difficulty which men feel is thereby alleviated. Meyer and a large number of German critics explain the speaking with tongues as mere ecstatic or

rapturous utterances in the ordinary language of the disciples. Meyer thinks too that some foreign Jews had found their way into the band of the earliest disciples. They naturally delivered their ecstatic utterances, not in Aramaic, but in the foreign tongues to which they were accustomed, and legend then exaggerated this natural fact into the form which the Acts of the Apostles and the tradition of the Christian Church have ever since maintained.\* It is, indeed, rather difficult to understand the estimate formed by such critics of the gift of tongues, whether bestowed on the day of Pentecost or during the subsequent ministrations of St. Paul at Corinth and Ephesus. Meyer is obliged to confess that there were some marvellous phenomena in Corinth and other places to which St. Paul bears witness. He describes himself as surpassing the whole Corinthian Church in this particular gift (1 Cor. xiv. 18), so that if St. Paul's testimony is to be relied upon,—and Meyer lays a great deal of weight upon it,—we must accept it as conclusively proving that there existed a power of speaking in various languages among the first Christians. But the explanation offered by many critics of the gift of tongues as undoubtedly exercised at Corinth reduces it to something very like those fanatical exhibitions witnessed among the earliest followers of the Irvingite movement, or, to put it plainly, to a mere uttering of gibberish, unworthy of apostolic notice save in the language of sternest censure, as being a disorderly and foolish proceeding disgraceful to the Christian community.

Meyer's theory and that of many modern expositors seems, then, to me very unsatisfactory, raising up more difficulties than it solves. But it may be asked, what explanation do you offer of the Pentecostal miracle? and I can find no one more satisfactory than the old-fashioned one, that there was a real bestowal of tongues, a real gift of speaking in foreign languages, granted to the Apostles, to be used as occasion required when preaching the gospel in heathen lands. Dean Stanley, in his commentary on Corinthians, gives, as was his wont, a clear and attractive statement of the newer theory, putting in a vigorous shape the objections to the view here maintained. I know there are difficulties connected with this view, but many of these difficulties arise from our ignorance of the state and condition of the early Church, while others may spring from our very imperfect knowledge of the relations between mind and body. But whatever difficulties attend the explanation I offer, they are as nothing compared with the difficulties which attend the modern explanations to which I have referred. What, then, is our theory, which we call the old-fashioned one? It is simply this, that on the day of Pentecost Christ bestowed upon His Apostles the power of speaking in foreign languages, according to His promise reported by St. Mark (xvi. 17), "They shall speak with new tongues." This was the theory of the ancient Church. Irenæus speaks of the tongues as given "that all nations might be enabled to enter into life;" while Origen explains that "St. Paul was made a debtor to different nations, because, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, he had received the gift of speaking in the languages of all nations." This has

\* Meyer on "Acts" (ii. 4), vol. i. pp. 67, 68. Clark's translation.



been the continuous theory of the Church as expressed in one of the most ancient portions of the Liturgy, the proper prefaces in the Communion office. The preface for Whit Sunday sets forth the facts commemorated on that day, as the other proper prefaces state the facts of the Incarnation, the Resurrection, and Ascension. The fact which Whit Sunday celebrates, and for which special thanks are then offered, is this, that then "the Holy Ghost came down from heaven in the likeness of fiery tongues, lighting upon the Apostles, to teach them, and to lead them to all truth; giving them both the gift of divers languages, and also boldness with fervent zeal constantly to preach the gospel unto all nations."\*

Now this traditional interpretation has not only the authority of the past on its side; we can also see many advantages which must have accrued from a gift of this character. The preface we have just cited states that the tongues were bestowed for the preaching of the gospel among all nations. And surely not merely as a striking sign to unbelievers, but also as a great practical help in missionary labours, such a gift of tongues would have been invaluable to the Church at its very birth. There was then neither time, nor money, nor organisation to prepare men as missionaries of the Cross. An universal commission and work were given to twelve men, chiefly Galilean peasants, to go forth and found the Church. How could they have been fitted for this work unless God had bestowed upon them some such gift of speech? The vast diversity of tongues throughout the world is now one of the chief hindrances with which missionary effort has to contend. Years have often to elapse before any effective steps can be taken in the work of evangelisation, simply because the question of the language bars the way. It would have been only in accordance with God's action in nature, where great epochs have been ever signalled by extraordinary phenomena, if such a great era-making epoch as the birth of the Church of Christ had been marked with extraordinary spiritual powers and developments, which supplied the want of that learning and those organisations which the Lord now leaves to the spiritual energies of the Church itself. But it is sometimes said, we never hear of this power as used by the Apostles for missionary purposes. Nothing, however, is a surer rule in historical investigations than this, "Never trust to mere silence," specially when the records are but few, scanty, fragmentary. We know but very little of the ways, worship, actions of the Apostles. Silence is no evidence either as to what they did or did not do. Some of them went into barbarous and distant lands, as history states. Eusebius (III., 1) tells us that St. Thomas received Parthia as his allotted region, while St. Andrew taught in Scythia. Eusebius is an author on whom great reliance is justly placed. He is one, too, whose accuracy and research have been again and again confirmed in our own day by discoveries of every kind. I see, then, no reason why we should not depend upon him upon this point as well as upon others. Now if the Apostles taught in Scythia and Parthia, what an enormous advantage it must

\* The proper preface in the Book of Common Prayer is longer and more minute than the corresponding one in the Missal. The Reformers extended the ancient form, inserting a special reference to the gift of tongues.

have given them in their work among a strange and barbarous people if, by means of the Pentecostal blessing, they could at once proclaim a crucified Saviour. It is sometimes said, however, the gift of speaking with foreign languages was not required by the Apostles for missionary purposes, as Greek alone would carry a man all through the world, and Greek the Apostles evidently knew. But people in saying so forget that there is a great difference between possessing enough of a language to travel over the world, and speaking with such facility as enables one to preach. English will now carry a man over the world, but English will not enable him to preach to the people of India or of China. Greek might carry Apostles all over the Roman Empire, and might enable St. Thomas to be understood by the courtiers of the great kings of Parthia, where traces of the ancient Greek language and civilisation, derived from Alexander's time, long prevailed. But Greek would not enable a primitive Christian teacher to preach fluently among the Celts of Galatia, or of Britain, or among the natives of Spain or of Phrygia, or the barbarians of Scythia. We see from St. Paul's case how powerful was the hold which the Aramaic language had over the people of Jerusalem. When the excited mob heard St. Paul speak in the Hebrew tongue they listened patiently, because their national feelings, the sentiments which sprang up in childhood and were allied with their noblest hopes, were touched. So must it have been all the world over. The Pentecostal gift of tongues was a powerful help in preaching the gospel, because, like the Master's promise to assist their minds and their tongues in the hour of need, it freed the Apostles from care, anxiety, and difficulties, which would have sorely hindered their great work. But while I offer this explanation, I acknowledge that it has its own difficulties; but then every theory has its difficulties, and we can only balance difficulties against difficulties, selecting that theory which seems to have the fewest. The conduct, for instance, of the Corinthians, who seem to have used the gift of tongues simply to minister to the spirit of display, not to edification or to missionary work, seems to some a great difficulty. But after all is not their conduct simply an instance of human sin, perverting and misusing a divine gift, such as we often see still? God still bestows His gifts, the real outcome and work of the Spirit. Man takes them, treats them as his own, and misuses them for his own purposes of sin and selfishness. What else did the Corinthians do, save that the gift which they abused was an exceptional one; but then their circumstances, times, opportunities, punishments, all were exceptional and peculiar. The one thing that was not peculiar was this, the abiding tendency of human nature to degrade Divine gifts and blessings. There must, we again repeat, be difficulties and mystery connected with this subject, no matter what view we take. Perhaps, too, we are no fitting judges of the gifts bestowed on the primitive Church, or the phenomena manifested under such extraordinary circumstances, when everything, every power, every force, every organisation, was arrayed against the company of the twelve Apostles. Surely miracles and miraculous powers seem absolutely necessary and natural in such a case. We are not now sufficient or capable judges of



events as they then existed. Perhaps, too, we are not sufficient judges because we do not possess that spirit which would make us to sympathise with and understand the state of the Church at that time. "They were all together in one place." The Church was then visibly united, and internally united too. A nineteenth-century Christian, with the endless divisions of Christendom, is scarcely the most fitting judge of the Church and the Church's blessings when the Spirit of the Master pervaded it and the prayer of the Master for visible unity was fulfilled in it. Christendom is weak now from its manifold divisions. Even in a mere natural way, and from a mere human point of view, we can see how its divisions destroy its power and efficacy as Christ's witness in the world. But when we take the matter from a spiritual point of view, we cannot even guess what marvellous gifts and endowments, needful for the edification of His people and the conversion of the world, we now lack from want of the Divine charity and peace which ruled the hearts of the twelve as they assembled in the upper room that Pentecostal morn. We shall better understand primitive gifts when we get back primitive union.

## CHAPTER VI.

### ST. PETER'S FIRST SERMON.

Acts ii. 14.

THIS verse contains the opening words of St. Peter's address to the multitude who were roused to wonder and inquiry by the miraculous manifestations of Pentecost. That address is full of interest when viewed aright, freed from all the haze which the long familiarity of ages has brought with it. In this second chapter we have the report of a sermon preached within a few days of Christ's ascension, addressed to men many of whom knew Jesus Christ, all of whom had heard of His work, His life, and His death, and setting forth the apostolic estimate of Christ, His miracles, His teaching, His ascended condition and glory. We cannot realise, unless by an intellectual effort, the special worth of these apostolic reports contained in the Acts. Men are sometimes sceptical about them, asking, how did we get them at all? how were they handed down? This is, however, an easier question to answer than some think. If we take, for instance, this Pentecostal address alone, we know that St. Luke had many opportunities of personal communication with St. Peter. He may have learned from St. Peter's own mouth what he said on this occasion, and he could compare this verbal report with the impressions and remembrances of hundreds who then were present. But there is another solution of the difficulty less known to the ordinary student of Holy Scripture. The ancients made a great use of shorthand, and were quite well accustomed to take down spoken discourses, transmitting them thus to future ages. Shorthand was, in fact, much more commonly used among the ancients than among ourselves. The younger Pliny, for instance, who was a contemporary of the Apostles, never travelled without a shorthand writer, whose business it was to transcribe passages which struck his master in the books

he was perpetually studying. The sermons of Chrysostom were all extemporaneous effusions. In fact, the golden-mouthed patriarch of Constantinople was such an indefatigable pulpit-orator, preaching almost daily, that it would have been impossible to have made any copious preparation. The extensive reports of his sermons which have come down to us, the volumes of his expositions on the books of Scripture which we possess, prove that shorthand must have been constantly used by his hearers. Now what would we give for a few shorthand reports of sermons by Clement of Rome, by St. Luke, by Timothy, by Apollos, preached in Rome, Alexandria, or Antioch? Suppose they were discovered, like the numerous Egyptian manuscripts which have of late years come to light, deposited in the desert sands, and were found to set forth the miracles, the ministry, and the person of Christ exactly as now we preach them, what a marvellous confirmation of the faith we should esteem them! And yet what should we then possess more than we already have in the sermons and discourses of St. Peter and St. Paul, reported by an eye- and ear-witness who wrote the Acts of the Apostles?

I. The congregation assembled to listen to this first Gospel discourse preached by a human agent was a notable and representative one. There were Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia and in Judæa, —or, as an ancient expositor (Tertullian) puts it, in Armenia\* and Cappadocia,—in Pontus and Asia, in Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians. The enumeration of the various nationalities listening to St. Peter begins from the extremest east; it proceeds then to the north, from thence to the south, terminating with Rome, which represents the west. They were all Jews or Jewish proselytes, showing how extremely wide, at the epoch of the Incarnation, was the dispersion of God's ancient people. St. Paul, in one profound passage of the Epistle to the Galatians, notes that "God sent forth His Son in the fulness of time," that is, at the exact moment when the world was prepared for the advent of the truth. This "fulness of time" may be noted in many directions. Roman roads, Roman law, commerce, and civilisation opened channels of communication which bore the tidings of the gospel into every land. A sweet singer of our own time, the late Sir Samuel Ferguson, has depicted in his "Lays of the Western Gael" this diffusion of the gospel through the military organisation of Rome. He represents a Celt from Ireland as present at the crucifixion. This may seem at first somewhat improbable, as Ireland was never included within the bounds of the Roman Empire; and yet the poet's song can be justified from history. Though never included formally within the Empire, Irishmen and Scotch Highlanders must often have served in the ranks of the Roman army, just as at the present day, and especially in India, men of foreign nationalities are often found serving in the ranks of the British army. In later times Irishmen most certainly formed a Roman legion all to themselves. St. Jerome tells us† that he had seen them acting in that

\* Tertullian, "Against the Jews," chap. vii.

† "Adv. Jovin.," lib. ii. cap. 7, in Migne's "Pat. Lat.," t. xxiii., col. 296.



capacity at Treves, in Germany. They were noted for their bravery, which, as Jerome believes, they sustained by consuming human flesh. Three hundred years earlier Irishmen may often have enlisted in the service of those British legions which the Romans withdrew from Britain and located in the East; and thus Sir Samuel Ferguson does not pass the bounds of historic credibility when he represents a certain centurion, who had been present at the crucifixion, as returning to his native land, and there proclaiming the tidings of our Lord's atoning sacrifice:—

“And they say, Centurion Altus, when he to Emania  
came,  
And to Rome's subjection called us, urging Cæsar's  
tribute claim,  
Told that half the world barbarian thrills already with  
the faith,  
Taught them by the God-like Syrian Cæsar lately put  
to death.”

The dispersion of the Jews throughout not only the Roman Empire, but far beyond its limits, served the same end, and hastened the fulness of time needed for the Messiah's appearance. We must remember, however, that the long list of varied nationalities present at this Pentecostal feast were not Gentiles, they were Jews of the dispersion scattered broadcast among the nations as far as Central Asia towards the east, as far as southern Arabia and Aden on the south, and Spain and Britain on the west. The course of modern investigation and discovery amply confirms the statement of this passage, as well as the similar statement of the eighth chapter, which represents a Jewish statesman of Abyssinia or Ethiopia as coming up to Jerusalem for the purposes of devotion. Jewish inscriptions have been found in Aden dating back long before the Christian era. A Jewish colony existed ages before Christ in the region of Southern Arabia, and continued to flourish there down to the Middle Ages. At Rome, Alexandria, and Greece the Jews at this period constituted an important factor in the total population. The dispersion of the Jews had now done its work, and brought with it the fulness of time required by the Divine purposes. The way of the Messiah had been effectually prepared by it. The Divine seed fell upon no unploughed and unbroken soil. Pure and noble ideas of worship and morality had been scattered broadcast throughout the world. Some years ago the Judgment of Solomon was found depicted on the ceiling of a Pompeian house, witnessing to the spread of scriptural knowledge through Jewish artists in the time of Tiberius and of Nero. A race of missionaries, too, equipped for their work, was developed through the discipline of exile. The thousands who hung upon Peter's lips needed nothing but instruction in the faith of Jesus Christ, together with the baptism of the Spirit, and the finest, the most enthusiastic, and the most cosmopolitan of agencies lay ready to the Church's hand. While, again, the organisation of synagogues, which the exigencies of the dispersion had called into existence, was just the one suited to the various purposes of charity, worship, and teaching, which the Christian Church required. Whether, indeed, we consider the persons whom St. Peter addressed, or the machinery they had elaborated, or the diffusion of pure religious ideas they had occasioned, we see in this passage a

splendid illustration of the care and working of Divine Providence bringing good out of evil and real victory out of apparent defeat. Prophet and psalmist had lamented over Zion's ruin and Israel's exile into foreign lands, but they saw not how that God was thereby working out His own purposes of wider blessing to mankind at large, fitting Jews and Gentiles alike for that fulness of time when the Eternal Son should be manifested.

II. The brave, outspoken tone of this sermon evidences the power and influence of the Holy Spirit upon St. Peter's mind. St. Chrysostom, in his famous lectures on the Acts of the Apostles, notes the courageous tone of this address as a clear evidence of the truth of the resurrection. This argument has been ever since a commonplace with apologists and expositors, and yet it is only by an effort that we can realise how very strong it is. Here were St. Peter and his fellow Apostles standing up proclaiming a glorified and ascended Messiah. Just seven weeks before, they had fled from the messengers of the High Priest sent to arrest their Master, leaving Him to His fate. They had seen Him crucified, knew of His burial, and then, feeling utterly defeated, had as much as possible withdrawn themselves from public notice. Seven weeks after, the same band, led by St. Peter, himself a short time before afraid to confess Christ to a maidservant, boldly stand up, charge upon the multitude, who knew all the circumstances of Christ's execution, the crime of having thus killed the Prince of Life, and appeal to the supernatural evidence of the gift of tongues, to which they had just listened, as the best proof of the truth of their message. St. Peter's courage on this occasion is one of the clearest proofs of the truth of his testimony. St. Peter was not naturally a courageous man. He was very impulsive and very sympathetic. He was the creature of his surroundings. If he found himself in the midst of Christ's friends, he was the most forward to uphold Christ's cause, but he had not much moral stamina. He was sadly deficient in staying power. His mind was very Celtic in its tone, to draw an illustration from national characteristics. The Celtic mind is very sympathetic, ardent, enthusiastic. It is swept along in moments of excitement, either of victory or of defeat, by the dominating power of numbers. How often has this quality been manifested by the French people, for instance? They are resistless when victorious; they collapse utterly and at once when defeated. St. Peter was just the same. He was sympathetic, ardent, enthusiastic, and fell, in later as well as in earlier age, into the perils which attend such temperaments. He denied his Master when surrounded by the menials of the high priest. He was ready to die for that Master a few hours before, when sitting surrounded by Christ's disciples in the secrecy of the upper room. Divine grace and the baptism of the Spirit did not at all change his natural character in this respect. Divine grace, whether granted in ancient or in modern times, does not destroy natural character, which is God's gift to man. It merely refines, purifies, elevates it. We find, indeed, a striking illustration of this law of the Divine life in St. Peter's case.

One of the most convincing proofs of the truth of the New Testament is the identity of character we behold in the representations given



of St. Peter by writers who produced their books quite independently of each other. St. Paul wrote his Epistle to the Galatians long prior to any of the Gospel narratives. Yet St. Paul's picture of St. Peter in the Epistle to the Galatians is exactly the same as that drawn by the four Evangelists alike. St. Paul depicts him as the same intensely sympathetic, and therefore the same unstable person whom the Evangelists describe. The brave scene in the upper chamber, and the scene of cowardice and disgrace in the high priest's palace, were in principle re-enacted twenty years after, about the year A. D. 53, at Antioch. St. Peter was very bold in maintaining the right of Gentile freedom, and hesitated not to live like the Gentile Christians at Antioch, so long as none of the strict Jewish Christians of Jerusalem knew about it. St. Peter wished, in fact, to stand well with both parties, and therefore strove to conciliate both. He was, for the time, a type of that famous character Mr. Facing-two-ways. He lived, therefore, as a Gentile, until some of the Jerusalem brethren arrived at Antioch, when he at once quailed before them and retreated, betraying the cause of Christian freedom, and sacrificing, just as men do still, Christian principle and honesty upon the altar of self-seeking popularity. St. Peter, we therefore maintain, always remained at heart the same character. He was bold and forward for Christ so long as all went well, because he was intensely sympathetic; but he had very little of that power of standing alone which marked St. Paul, and nerved him, even though a solitary witness, when the cause of truth was involved. This somewhat lengthened argument is absolutely necessary to show the strength of our conclusion: that it must have been an overpowering sense of the awful reality of Christ's resurrection and ascension which alone could have overcome this natural weakness of St. Peter, and made him on the day of Pentecost as brave in proclaiming Jesus Christ to his red-handed murderers as he was bold to propose a new Apostle in place of the hapless traitor to the assembled disciples in the upper chamber. St. Peter evidently believed, and believed with an intense, overwhelming, resistless conviction, in the truth of Christ's resurrection and ascension, which thus became to him the source of personal courage and of individual power.

III. Again, the tone of St. Peter's sermon was remarkable because of its enlarged and enlightened spirituality. It proved the Spirit's power in illuminating the human consciousness. St. Peter was rapidly gaining a true conception of the nature of the kingdom of God. He enunciates that conception in this sermon. He proclaims Christianity, in its catholic and universal aspect, when he quotes the prophet Joel as predicting the time when the Lord would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh. St. Peter does not indeed seem to have realised all at once the full significance of his own teaching. He did not see that his words applied to the Gentiles equally with the Jews, sounding the death-knell of all national exclusiveness in religion. Had he seen the full meaning of his own words, he would not have hesitated so much about the baptism of Cornelius and the admission of the Gentiles. It has been found true, not only of St. Peter, but of teachers, reformers, politicians, statesmen, that they have not at once recognised all the vast issues and unde-

veloped principles which lay wrapped up in their original message. The stress and trial of life alone draw them out, at times compelling their authors to regret their earlier actions, at other times leading them to follow out with intensified vigour the principles and movements which they had themselves set in operation. Luther, when he protested against indulgences; Erasmus, when he ridiculed the ignorance of the monks and advocated the study of the Greek New Testament; John Hampden, when he refused to pay ship money; or Bishop Ken, when he declined obedience to the orders of King James II.;—none of them saw whereunto their principles would necessarily grow till time had thoroughly threshed their teaching and their actions, separating the husk of external circumstances, which are so variable, from the kernel of principle, which is eternally the same, stern, severe, inexorable, in its operations. So it was with St. Peter, and still earlier with the prophets. They sang of and preached a universal religion, as in this passage, but yet none of them realised the full scope and meaning of the words they had used, till a special revelation upon the housetop at Joppa compelled St. Peter to grasp and understand and apply the principles he had been already proclaiming.

In this respect, indeed, we recognise the greatness, the divinity of the Master Himself towering above the noblest of His followers; above even Peter himself, upon whom He pronounced such an eulogium, and bestowed such privileges. Our Lord Jesus Christ taught this universality of Christianity, and expressly recognised it. St. Peter indeed taught it in this sermon, but he did not recognise the force of his own words. Jesus Christ not only taught it, but realised the meaning of His teaching. It was indeed no part of Christ's earthly ministry to preach to the Gentiles. He came to the house of Israel alone. Yet how clearly He witnesses, how distinctly He prophesies of the future universality of His kingdom. He heals a centurion's servant, proclaiming at the same time that many shall come from the east and west, and sit down in the kingdom, while the children of the kingdom shall be cast out. He risks His life among the inhabitants of the city where He had been brought up, in order that He may deliver this truth. He repeats it to the woman of Samaria, in order that He may chase away her national superstition. He embodies it in His great eucharistic prayer for His Apostles and for His Church at large. The more carefully and the more devoutly we study Christ's words, the more lofty will be our conception of His personality and character, who from the very beginning recognised the full force of His message, the true extent of that Divine society He was about to establish. The avowed catholicity of Christ's teaching is one of the surest proofs of Christ's divinity. He had not to wait as Peter waited, till events explained the meaning of His words; from the beginning He knew all things which should happen.

Still the tone of St. Peter's sermon proved that the Spirit had supernaturally enlightened him. He had already risen to spiritual heights undreamt-of hitherto, even by himself. A comparison of a few passages proves this. In the sixteenth chapter of St. Matthew we have narrated for us the scene where our Lord extracts from St. Peter his celebrated confession, "Thou



art the Christ, the Son of the living God," and then soon after bestows upon him the equally celebrated rebuke, "Get thee behind Me, Satan! thou art a stumbling-block unto Me: for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men." St. Peter, with his horror-struck opposition to the very idea of Christ's death and suffering, evidently cherished the same notions of the kingdom of God, which Christ had come to establish, as James and John did when they petitioned for the highest place in the Master's kingdom. This carnal conception of a temporal kingdom and earthly forces and human weapons St. Peter retained when he armed himself with a sword and prepared to defend his Master in the Garden of Gethsemane; and even later still when, after the resurrection, the Apostles, acting doubtless through Peter as their spokesman, demanded, "Dost Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" But the Spirit was vouchsafed, and new power, of which the Master had spoken, was granted, and that power raised Peter above all such low Jewish ideas, and the kingdom announced to the Jews is no longer a kingdom of earth, with its carnal weapons and its dignities. He now understood what the Master had taught when He witnessed before Pontius Pilate His good confession, "My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is My kingdom not from hence." The carnal conception passes away under the influence of the heavenly solvent, and St. Peter proclaimed a kingdom which was a purely spiritual dominion, dealing with remission of sins and a purified interior life, through the operation and indwelling of the Holy Ghost. The power of the Holy Ghost was shown in St. Peter's case by the vast and complete change which passed at once over his spiritual ideas and outlook. The thoughts and expectations of the pious Jews of Galilee—the very class from whom St. Peter sprang—were just then shaped and formed by the popular apocalyptic literature of the period, as we have already pointed out in the second chapter. The Second Epistle of St. Peter and the Epistle of Jude prove that the Galileans of that time were careful students of works like the Assumption of Moses, the Book of Enoch, and the Ascension of Isaiah, which agree in representing the kingdom of God and the reign of the Messiah as equivalent to the triumph of the Jewish nation over all foreign dominion and bondage. St. Peter and the other eleven Apostles shared these natural ideas and expectations till the Spirit was poured out, when they learned in a profounder spiritual comprehension to estimate aright the scope and meaning of our blessed Lord's teaching. St. Peter dwells, therefore, in his sermon on Christ's person, His sufferings, His resurrection, His ascension, no longer indeed for the purpose of exalting the Jewish nation, or predicting its triumph, but to point a purely spiritual lesson. "Repent ye, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive"—not honour, riches, temporal freedom, but "ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." The subject-matter of St. Peter's sermon, the change in his tone of teaching, is another great proof of a supernatural force and power imparted on the Day of Pentecost.

IV. Let us look somewhat farther into the matter of this earliest Christian sermon, that we may learn the apostolic view of the Christian scheme. Some persons have asserted that the earliest Christians were Ebionites, and taught a system of doctrine akin to modern Unitarianism. This theory can best be tested by an appeal to the Acts of the Apostles. What, for instance, was the conception of Christ's life, work, and ascended state, which St. Peter presented to the astonished multitude? We must not expect, indeed, to find in this sermon a formulated and scientific system of Christian doctrine. St. Peter was as yet far too near the great events he declared, far too close to the superhuman personality of Christ, to co-ordinate his ideas and arrange his views. It is a matter of every-day experience that when a new discovery is suddenly made, when a new revelation takes place in the region of nature, men do not grasp at once all the new relations thereby involved, all the novel applications whereof it is capable. The human mind is so limited in its power that it is not till we get some distance away from a great object that we are enabled to survey it in the fulness of its outline. Inspiration assisted St. Peter, elevated his mind, raised his tone of thought to a higher level, but it did not reverse this fundamental law under which the human mind works. Yet St. Peter's discourse contains all the great principles of Catholic Christianity as opposed to that low view which would represent the earliest Christians as preaching the purely humanitarian scheme of modern Unitarianism. St. Peter taught boldly the miraculous element of Christ's life, describing Him as "a man approved of God by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by Him." Yet he did not dwell as much as we might have expected upon the miraculous side of Christ's ministry. In fact, the earliest heralds of the Cross did not make as much use of the argument from miracles as we might have expected them to have done. And that for a very simple reason. The inhabitants of the East were so accustomed to the practices of magic that they simply classed the Christian missionaries with magicians. The Jewish explanation of the miracles of our Lord is of this description. The Talmudists do not deny that He worked miracles, but assert that He achieved them by a special use of the Tetragrammaton, or the sacred name of Jehovah, which was known only to Himself. The sacred writers and preachers refer, therefore, again and again to the miracles of our Saviour, as St. Peter does in the second chapter, as well-known and admitted facts, whatever explanation may be offered of them, and then turn to other aspects of the question. The Apostles had, however, a more powerful argument in reserve. They preached a spiritual religion, a present peace with God, a present forgiveness of sins; they point forward to a future life of which even here below believers possess the earnest and the pledge. We, with our minds steeped in ages of Christian thought and teaching, can have no idea of the convincing self-evidencing force of teaching like that, to a Jew reared up in a system of barren formalism, and still more to a Gentile, with spiritual instincts longing for satisfaction, and which he was expected to satisfy with the bloodstained shows of the amphitheatre or with the immoralities and impure banquetings of the pagan tem-



ples. To persons in that condition, an argument derived from a mere wonderful work brought little conviction, for they were well accustomed to behold very marvellous and apparently miraculous actions, such as to this day the wandering jugglers of India exhibit.\* But when they beheld lives transfused by the love of God, and heard pure spiritual teaching such as responded to the profoundest depths of their own hearts, then deep answered unto deep. The preaching of the Cross became indeed the power of God unto salvation, because the human soul instinctively felt that the Cross was the medicine fittest for its spiritual maladies.

V. Again, this sermon shows the method of interpreting the Psalms and Prophets popular among the pious Jews of St. Peter's time. St. Peter's method of interpretation is identical with that of our Lord, of St. Paul, and of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. He beholds in the Psalms hints and types of the profoundest doctrines of the Creed. We can see this in both the quotations which he makes. St. Peter finds in the sixteenth Psalm a prophecy of the intermediate state of souls and of the resurrection of our Lord. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades" is a text which has furnished the basis of the article in the Apostles' Creed which teaches that Christ descended into hell. It is a pity indeed that the translation which the last revisers have adopted, "Hades" instead of "Hell," was not used in the English translation of the Apostles' Creed; for the ordinary reading has misled many a thoughtful and serious soul, as if the Creed taught that the pure and sinless spirit of the Saviour had been made partaker of the horrors of eternal misery. Whereas, in truth, the doctrine of Scripture and of the Creed alike merely asserts that our Lord's spirit, when separated from the body, entered and thereby sanctified and prepared the place or state where Christian souls, while separated from their bodies, await the general resurrection of the just and the completion of their happiness. The doctrine of the intermediate state, as taught by Bishop Pearson and other great divines, is primarily based on two texts, the passage before us and the words of our Saviour to the penitent thief, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise" (Luke xxiii. 43). This doctrine accurately corresponds with the catholic doctrine of our Lord's Person. The Arian heresy denied the true deity of our Lord. The second great heresy was the Apollinarian, which denied His true and perfect humanity. The orthodox doctrine taught the tripartite nature of man, that is, that there was in man, first, a body, secondly, the animal soul which man possesses in common with the beasts, and which perishes at death, and, lastly, the human spirit which is immortal and by which he maintains communion with God. Now the Apollinarian heresy asserted that Jesus Christ possessed a body and a soul, but denied His possession of a spirit. Its theory was that the Divine nature took the place of a true human spirit in Christ, so that Christ was unlike His brethren in this respect, that when the body died, and the animal soul perished, He had no human spirit by which He might enter into Hades, or dwell in Paradise. The Divine nature was the only portion of the Incarnate Lord which then survived. Against this view

the words of St. Peter testified beforehand, teaching, by his adaptation of David's prophecy, that our Lord possessed the fulness of humanity in its threefold division, whereby He was enabled to share the experience and lot of His brethren, not only in this life, but also in the intermediate state of Hades, wherein the spirits of the blessed dead await re-union with their bodies, and expect in hope the second advent of their Lord.\*

St. Peter's interpretation again of the Psalms recognised in David's words a prophecy of the resurrection: "Neither wilt Thou give Thy Holy One to see corruption,"—a rendering of the New Testament revisers which, however literal, is not nearly as vigorous or suggestive as the old translation, "Neither wilt Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption." St. Peter then proceeds to point out how impossible it was that this prediction could have been fulfilled in David. David's flesh undoubtedly did see corruption, because every one knew where his tomb was. St. Peter's speech here touches upon a point where we can confirm his accuracy out of ancient historians. David was buried, according to ancient writers, in the city of David (2 Kings ii. 10). The Rabbis went even further, they determined the time of his death. According to a writer quoted by that great seventeenth-century teacher, Dr. John Lightfoot,† "David died at Pentecost, and all Israel bewailed him, and offered their sacrifices the day following." After the return from Babylon the site of the sepulchre was known, as Neh. iii. 16 reports, telling us that Nehemiah the son of Azbuk repaired the wall over against the sepulchre of David; while still later Josephus‡ tells us that Hyrcanus, the high priest, and Herod the Great opened David's tomb, and removed vast treasures from it. St. Peter's words on this occasion possess an important evidential aspect, and suggest one of the gravest difficulties which the assailants of the resurrection have to face. St. Peter appealed to the evidence of David's tomb as demonstrating the fact that he was dead, and that death still held him in its power. Why did not his opponents appeal to the testimony of Christ's tomb? It is evident from St. Peter's argument that Christ's tomb was empty, and was known to be empty. The first witnesses to the resurrection insisted, within a few weeks of our Lord's crucifixion, upon this fact, proclaimed it everywhere, and the Jews made no attempt to dispute their assertions. Our opponents may indeed say, we acknowledge the fact of the emptiness of the tomb, but the body of Christ was removed by St. Peter and his associates. How then, we reply, do you account for St. Peter's action? Did conscious guilt and hypocrisy make him brave and enthusiastic? If they say, indeed, Peter did not remove the body, but that his associates did, then how are we to account for the conversations St. Peter thought he had held with his risen Master, the appearances vouchsafed to him, the close converse, "eating and drinking with him after He was risen from the dead"? St. Peter, by his appeal to David's tomb, and its bearing on the sixteenth Psalm, proves that he believed in no

\* See the article on "Apollinaris the Younger" in the "Dict. Christ. Biog.," vol. i., for concise account of the Apollinarian heresy.

† "Horæ Hebraicæ" on Acts ii. 29.

‡ See Josephus, "Antiqq.," XIII. viii. 4; XVI. vii. 1; "Wars," I. ii. 5.

\* See Moll's "Hypnotism," p. 216, in the "Contemporary Science Series."



ideal resurrection, no phantasm,—no ghost story, to put it plainly; but that he taught the doctrine of the resurrection as the Church now accepts it.

## CHAPTER VII.

### *THE FIRSTFRUITS OF PENTECOST.*

Acts ii. 37-39.

THE sermon of St. Peter on the day of Pentecost and the sermons of our Lord present a striking contrast. Our Lord's sermons were of various kinds; they were at times consoling, yet full of instruction and direction. Such, for instance, was the Sermon on the Mount. At other times His discourses were stern and full of sharp reproof. Such was His teaching in His parting addresses to the Jews delivered in the Temple, recorded in the synoptic Gospels. Yet they apparently failed, for the time at least, in producing any great practical results. In fact, His Temple discourses served only to irritate His foes, and arouse their hostility.

St. Peter delivered a sermon on the day of Pentecost which was quite as stern and quite as calculated to irritate, and yet that discourse was crowned with results exceeding those ever achieved by our Lord, though His discourses far surpassed St. Peter's in literary skill, in spiritual meaning, in eternal significance and value. Whence came this fact? It simply happened in fulfilment of Christ's own prophecy recorded by St. John, where He predicts that His Apostles shall achieve greater works than He had achieved, "because I go unto the Father" (John xiv. 12). The departure of Christ into the true Holy of Holies opened the channel of communication between the eternal Father and the waiting Church; the Spirit was poured out through Christ as the channel, and the result was conviction and conversion; leading the people to cry out, in response to St. Peter's simple statement of facts, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

I. One of the first qualifications absolutely necessary, if a man is to write history tellingly and sympathetically, is a historical imagination. Unless a man can, from a multitude of separate and often independent details, reconstruct the past, realise it vividly for himself, and then depict it with life and force to his readers, he will utterly fail as a historian. The same historical imagination is needed, too, if we wish to realise the full force of the circumstances we are considering. It is hard even for those who do possess such an imagination to throw themselves back into all the circumstances and surroundings of the Apostles at Pentecost; but when we succeed in doing so, then all these circumstances can only be explained on the supposition—the orthodox and catholic supposition—that there must have happened a supernatural occurrence, and that there must have been granted a supernatural power and blessing on the day of Pentecost.

The courage of St. Peter when preaching his sermon is, as we have already noticed, a proof of the descent of the Spirit. The resurrection of his Master had doubtless inspired him with all the power of a new idea. But St. Peter's history, both before the day of Pentecost and after it,

amply proved that mere intellectual conviction could be united with grievous moral cowardice. We cannot doubt, for instance, that St. Peter was intellectually convinced of the justice of the Gentile claims, and their right to a full equality with the Jews, when St. Paul felt compelled to withstand him at Antioch. Yet he was possessed with no such spiritual enthusiasm on the question as that which moved St. Paul or else he never would have fallen into such lamentable hypocrisy as he displayed on that occasion. The gift of the Spirit was needed by St. Peter before an intellectual conviction could be transformed into an overwhelming spiritual movement which swept every obstacle from its path. Again, the conduct of the people is a proof of the descent of the Spirit. St. Peter assails their actions, charges upon them the murder of the Messiah, and proclaims the triumph of Christ over all their machinations. Yet they listen quietly, respectfully, without opposition, as mobs do not usually listen to speeches running counter to their prejudices. Some wondrous phenomena such as the gift of tongues, combined with divinely persuasive eloquence, flinging the ægis of their protection over the preacher's defenceless person, must have so struck the minds of these fanatical Jews as to keep them quiet while St. Peter spoke. But the result of St. Peter's speech was the chiefest evidence that something extraordinary must have happened at Jerusalem in the earliest days of the Church's history. Secular history tells us, as well as the sacred narrative, that Christianity rose again from what seemed its grave at the very spot where, and at the very moment when, the crucifixion had apparently extinguished it for ever.

The evidence of the historian Tacitus is conclusive upon this point. He lived and flourished all through the time when St. Paul's ministry was most active. He was born about the year 50, and had every opportunity of becoming acquainted with the facts concerning the execution of Christ and the rise of Christianity, as they were doubtless laid up in the imperial archives at Rome. His testimony, written at a period when, as some maintain, neither the Acts of the Apostles nor the Gospels of the New Testament were in existence, exactly tallies with the account given by our sacred books. In his "Annals," book xv. chap. 44, he writes concerning Christianity: "Christus, from whom the name of Christian has its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilate, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out in Judæa." So that the pagan historian who knew nothing about Christianity save what official pagan documents or popular report told him, agrees with the Scriptures that Christianity was checked for a moment by the death of its founder, and then gained its earliest and most glorious triumph on the very scene of its apparent defeat where—and this is a very important part of the argument—previously the most marvellous wisdom and the most striking signs and wonders had utterly failed to gain any large measure of success. Whence, then, can we explain this fact, or how account for this conscience-stricken cry, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" unless we assume what the narrative of our text declares, that the Holy Ghost,



in all His convincing and converting power, had been poured out from on high?

And surely our own personal experience daily corroborates this view. There may be intellectual conviction and controversial triumph without any spiritual enthusiasm. Sermons may be clever, powerful, convincing, and yet, unless the Spirit's power be sought, and an unction from on high be vouchsafed, no spiritual harvest can be expected. St. Peter's sermon, if viewed from a human standpoint, could no more have been expected to succeed than the Master's. The one new element, however, which now entered into the combination, explains the difference. The Spirit was now given, and men therefore hearkened to the servant where they had turned a deaf ear to the Master. It is a lesson much needed for our generation, especially in the case of the young, and in our Sunday-school system. The religious instruction of youth is much more carefully looked after than it used to be. Primers, handbooks, elementary commentaries, catechists' manuals, are published in profusion, and many think that provided a Sunday or day school distinguishes itself in the examination list, which is now the one great educational test, religious knowledge has been secured. The contrast between St. Peter's success and our Lord's failure warns us that there is a vast difference between religious life and religious knowledge. The most irreligious people, the most bitter opponents of Christianity, have been produced by schools and systems where religious knowledge was literally crammed down the throats of the children in a hard, mechanical, unloving style. But let there be no mistake. I do not object to organised religious instruction. I think, in fact, that a vast amount of Sunday-school teaching is utterly worthless for want of such organisation. Our Sunday-school system will, in fact, be thoroughly inefficient, if not useless, as a system, till every Sunday-school has its teachers' meeting presided over by a competent instructor, who will carefully teach the teachers themselves in a well-ordered, systematic course. But after all this has been done, we must still remember that Christianity is something more than a system of doctrine, or a Divine scheme of philosophy, which can be worked up like Aristotle's "Ethics" or Mill's "Logic." Christianity is a Divine power, a power which must be sought in faith, in humiliation, and in prayer; and till the Holy Ghost be duly honoured, and His presence be humbly sought, the finest system and the most elaborate organisations will be found devoid of any fruitful life and vigour.

II. There are many other points of interest in this passage; let us take them one by one as they offer themselves. The people, seized by conviction and in acute pain of conscience, cried out, "What shall we do?" St. Peter replied, "Repent, and be baptised." Repent is the Apostle's first rule,—contrasting very strongly with some modern systems which have been devised on a plan very different from that of our Lord and of His Apostles. The preaching of the New Testament is ever the same. John the Baptist came, and his teaching was briefly summed up thus, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." John was removed, and Christ came. The light ceased to shine, and then the true light stood revealed; but the teaching was the same, and the Messiah still proclaims, "Re-

pent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The system of teaching to which I refer carries the force of our Lord's example, as well as of the Baptist's words, by saying, that was the old dispensation. Till Christ died, the new covenant did not come into force, and therefore Christ taught in His public ministry merely as a Jew, speaking on Jewish grounds to Jews. But let us see whether such an explanation, which makes void our Lord's personal teachings and commands, is tenable. A reference to this passage sufficiently settles this point. The Master departs and the Spirit is outpoured, and still the apostolic and inspired teaching is just the same. The cry of the multitude, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" produces, from the illuminated Apostle, the same response, "Repent," coupled with a new requirement, "Be baptised, every one of you, for the remission of sins." And the same message has ever since continued to be the basis of all real spiritual work. Simon Magus is found by St. Peter with his mind intellectually convinced, but with his affections untouched and his heart spiritually dead. To Simon Magus Peter delivers the same message, "Repent of this thy wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." John Wesley was one of the greatest evangelists that ever lived and worked for God. During the whole sixty years of his continuous labours, from the time when he taught his pupils in Oxford College and the prisoners in Oxford jail down to the last sermon that he preached, his ministry and teaching were modelled upon that of the New Testament,—it was ever a preaching of repentance. He counted it utterly useless and hopeless to preach the comforts of the gospel before he had made men feel and wince beneath the terrors of the law and the sense of offended justice. Modern times have seen, however, a strange perversion of the gospel method, and some have taught that repentance was not to be urged or even mentioned to Christian congregations.

This is one of the leading points which the Plymouth Brethren specially press in the course of their destructive and guerilla-like assaults upon the communions of reformed Christendom. The apostolic doctrine of repentance finds no place in their scheme; while again their teaching on this subject, or something very like it, is often reproduced, all unconsciously, it may be, by the conductors of those mission services so common throughout the country. It is as hard now to preserve a just balance in teaching, as it was in the days of St. Paul and St. James. It is no easy matter so to preach repentance as not to discourage the truly humble soul; so to proclaim God's forgiving love as not to encourage presumption and carelessness.

I have said, indeed, that the doctrine of the Plymouth body on this point is a modern one. It is modern, indeed, when compared with the genuine teaching of the New Testament; but still it is, in fact, ancient, for it dates back to the Antinomians, who, two hundred and fifty years ago, created a great sensation among the Puritan divines. A brief historical narrative will prove this. The sermons of Dr. Tobias Crisp and Fisher's "Marrow of Modern Divinity" are books whose very titles are now forgotten, and yet the diligent student will there find all those ideas about repentance, justification, and assurance which are now produced as marvellous new



truths, though reprobated two centuries ago as earnestly by Churchmen like Bull, Beveridge, and Stillingfleet, as by Howe, and Baxter, and Williams among the Nonconformists and Puritans. The denial of the necessity for Christian repentance was based, by the logical Antinomians of the olden time, upon the theory that Christ bore in His own person the literal sins of the elect; so that an elect person has nothing whatsoever to do with his sins save assure himself by an act of faith, that his sins were forgiven and rendered completely non-existent eighteen hundred years ago. The formula which they delight in and I have heard used, even by Churchmen, is this: "Believe that you are saved, and then you are saved." The result of this teaching in every age, wherever it has appeared, is not far to seek. The main stress of all Christian effort is devoted not to the attainment of likeness to Christ, or that pursuit of holiness without which the beatific vision of God is impossible. The great point urged by this party in every age is the supreme importance of assurance which they identify with saving faith.\* Therefore it is that they discourage, aye, and go farther, utterly reject, all teaching of repentance. The words of one of those old writers put the matter in its simplest form. In the reign of James II. and William III. there arose a great controversy in London touching this very point. Dr. Williams, the founder of the well-known library in Grafton Street, London, was the leader on one side, while the sermons of Tobias Crisp were the rallying-point on the other. Williams and Baxter maintained the importance of repentance and the absolute necessity of good works for salvation. On the opposite side, the views and doctrines which we have seen pressed in modern times were explicitly stated, but with far more fearlessness and logical power than are ever now used. Here are a few of the propositions which Dr. Williams felt himself bound to refute. I shall give them at some length, that my readers may see how ancient is this heresy. "The elect are discharged from all their sins by the act of God laying their sins upon Christ on the cross, and consequently that the elect upon the death of Christ ceased to be sinners, and ever since sins committed by them are none of their sins, they are the sins of Christ." Again, the Antinomians taught, in language often still reproduced, "Men have nothing to do in order to salvation, nor is sanctification a jot the way of any person to heaven. Nor can the duties and graces of the elect, nor even faith itself, do them the least good or prevent the least evil; while, on the other hand, the grossest sins which the elect commit cannot do them the least harm, nor ought they to fear the least hurt from their own sins." While again, coming still closer to the point on which we have been insisting, they declared, according to Dr. Williams, that "the covenant of grace hath no condition to be performed on man's part, even though in the strength of Christ. Neither is faith itself the condition of this covenant, but all the saving benefits of this covenant actually and really belong to the elect before they are born, yea, and even against their will;" while as to the nature of faith, they taught "that saving faith is nothing else but our persuasion or absolute conclud-

ing within ourselves that our sins are pardoned, and that Christ is ours." Hence they derived a dogma of their own, directly and plainly contradictory of the teaching of the New Testament on the subject of repentance, "that Christ is offered to blasphemers, murderers, and the worst of sinners, that they, remaining ignorant, unconvinced, and resolved in their purpose to continue such, may be assured they have a full interest in Christ; and this by only concluding in their own minds that Christ is theirs." It is plain to any one fully acquainted with modern religious thought, that all the special doctrines of Plymouthism concerning justification, repentance, and faith, are involved in the statements which Dr. Williams set himself to refute, and which he does refute most ably, in works long since consigned to the oblivion of our great libraries, though well worthy of careful study amid the troubles of the present age. Assurance, a present knowledge of a present salvation, present peace, these are the only topics pressed upon the unconverted. If the multitude at Jerusalem had asked the same question from our modern teachers which they asked from the Apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" the reply would have been, "Do you know you are saved? If not, believe that you are saved, believe that Jesus died for you." But not one of them would have given the apostolic reply, "Repent, and be baptised, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost," because the doctrine of repentance and the value and use of the sacrament of baptism find no place in this new-fangled scheme.

III. "Repent, and be baptised, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins." These words form the basis of a well-known clause in the Nicene Creed, which says, "I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins." They suggest in addition some very important discussions. The position which baptism occupies in apostolic teaching is worthy of careful notice. It is pressed upon the multitude as a present duty, and as a result there were three thousand persons baptised in that one day. It was just the same with Cornelius the centurion, and with the Philippian jailer whom St. Paul converted. Baptism did not then succeed a long course of preparatory training and instruction, as now is the case in the mission field. When men in apostolic times received the rudiments of the faith, the sacrament of baptism was administered, as being the channel or door of admission into Christ's Church; and then, being once admitted into God's house, it was firmly believed that the soul's life would grow and develop at a vastly accelerated rate. A grave question here suggests itself, whether baptism of converts from paganism is not often too long delayed? The apostles evidently regarded the Church as an hospital where the wounds of the soul were to be healed, as a Divine school where the ignorance of the soul was to be dissipated, and therefore at once admitted the converts to the sacrament upon the profession of their rudimentary faith. The church soon reversed this process, and demanded an amount of spiritual knowledge and a development of spiritual life as the conditions of baptism, which should have been looked for as the result of admission within her sacred ranks, forgetful of that great missionary law laid down by the Master Himself, which places baptism first and teaching after-

\* This point has been admirably discussed by Dr. Salmon in his sermon on "Present Salvation" in his volume of sermons styled "The Reign of Law," pp. 295-99.



wards, "Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." We freely admit that there may have been a quickened spiritual vitality, a stronger spiritual life, in the case of the earliest converts, enabling them in the course of a few hours to attain a spiritual level which demanded a more prolonged effort on the part of the later disciples. When we come to the times of the later apostolic age, and inquire from such a book as the lately-discovered "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," what the practice of the Church was then, we see that experience had taught a more regular, a less hasty course of action. The law of Baptism in the "Didache," as the "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles" is usually called, runs thus: "Now concerning baptism, thus baptise ye; having first uttered all these things, baptise into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, in running water. But if thou hast not running water, baptise in other water; and if thou canst not in cold, then in warm. But if thou hast neither, pour water upon the head thrice, into the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit. But before the baptism let the baptiser and the baptised fast, and whatever others can; but the baptised thou shalt command to fast for one or two days before."

From these words it is plain that the immediate baptism of converts had ceased probably with the first organisation of the Church. A pause was instituted between the first conviction of the truth and the complete initiation which baptism involved, but not such a period of delay as the months and even years over which the preparation for baptism was subsequently spread. This delay of baptism sprang out of a mistaken view of this Divine sacrament. Men came to look on it as a charm, whereby not merely admission was obtained to the Divine society which our Lord had founded, but also as bringing with it a complete purgation from the sins of a careless life. Men postponed it, therefore, to the very last, so that all sins might be swept away at once. The Emperor Constantine was a good example of this mischievous extreme. He was a man who took a kind of interest in theological matters. Like our own King James I., he considered it his duty to settle the religious affairs of his empire, even as his predecessors had done in the days of paganism. He presided over Church councils, dictated Church formularies, and exercised the same control in the Church as in the State, being all the time unbaptised. He was scarce aught but a pagan too in disposition and temper. He retained pagan symbols, titles, and observances, and imbrued his hands, Herod-like, in the blood of his own family. Yet he delayed his baptism to the very last, under the notion that then there could be thus effected at one stroke the complete removal of the accumulated sins of a lifetime.

IV. The comparison of the passage just quoted from the "Teaching of the Apostles" with the words of my text suggest other topics. The Plymouth Brethren, at least in some of their numerous ramifications, and other sects, have grounded upon the words, "be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ," a tenet that baptism should not be conferred in the name of the Trinity, but in that of Jesus alone. It is

indeed admitted that while our Lord commanded the use of the historic baptismal formula in the concluding words of St. Matthew's Gospel, the formula itself is never expressly mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles. Not merely on the day of Pentecost, but on several other occasions, Christian baptism is described as if the Trinitarian formula was unknown. In the tenth chapter Cornelius and his household are described as "baptised in the name of Jesus Christ." In the nineteenth chapter St. Paul converts a number of the Baptist's disciples to a fuller and richer faith in Christ. They were at once "baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus." But a reference to the newly-discovered "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles" explains the difficulty, offering an interesting example of the manner in which modern discoveries have helped to illustrate and confirm the Acts of the Apostles. In the "Didache," as in the Acts, the expression "baptism in the name of the Lord" is used. The "Didache" lays down with respect to the communion, "Let no one eat or drink of your Eucharist except those baptised into the name of the Lord." Yet this does not exclude the time-honoured formula of Christendom. The same apostolic manual lays down the rule, a little before this prohibition which we have just quoted, "Baptise into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," and then in the tenth chapter describes baptism thus administered in the threefold name, as baptism in the name of the Lord; and thus it was doubtless in the case of the Acts. For the sake of brevity St. Luke speaks of Christian baptism as baptism in the name of Christ, never dreaming at the same time that this was exclusive of the divinely appointed formula, as certain moderns have taught. The Acts of the Apostles, and the "Didache" prove their primitive character, and show that they deduce their origin from the same early epoch, because they both describe Christian baptism as performed in the name of Christ; and yet this fact does not exclude, according to either, the use of the threefold Name. It is evident that, whether in the Acts or in the "Didache," baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost was regarded as baptism especially in the name of Jesus Christ, because while the Father and the Spirit were known to the Jews, the one new element introduced was that of the name of Jesus, whom God had made both Lord and Christ. Baptism in the Triune name was emphatically baptism in the name of the Lord. This passage, when compared with the "Didache," sheds light on another point. The mode wherein baptism should be administered has been a point often discussed. Some have maintained the absolutely binding and universal character of immersion; others have stood at the opposite extreme, and upheld the method of sprinkling. The Church of England, in union with the ancient Church, has laid down no hard-and-fast rule on the subject. She recognises immersion as the normal idea in a warm Eastern climate, but she allows pouring (not sprinkling) of water to be substituted for immersion, which has, as a matter of fact, taken the place in the Western Church of the more regular and ancient immersion.\* The construction of the ancient

\* The method of sprinkling is completely unknown to the Church ancient or modern, and should be absolutely rejected, as tending to a disuse of the element of water at all.



Churches, with their baptisteries surrounded with curtains, and the female assistants for the service of their own sex, amply proves that in the ancient Church, as to this day in the Eastern Church, baptism was ordinarily administered by immersion. The Church proved its Eastern origin by the mode wherein its initial sacrament was at first applied. But it also showed its power of adaptation to Western nations by allowing the alternative of pouring water when she dealt with the needs of a colder climate. Yet from the beginning the Church cannot have made the validity of her sacrament depend upon the quantity of water that was used. Take the cases reported in the Acts of the Apostles, or the rules prescribed in the apostolic manual, the "Didache." In the latter it is expressly said that pouring with water shall suffice if a larger quantity is not at hand. On the day of Pentecost it was clearly impossible to immerse three thousand persons in the city of Jerusalem. The Ethiopian eunuch baptised by St. Philip in the wilderness could not have been immersed. He came to a stream trickling along, scarce sufficient to lave his feet, or perhaps rather to a well in the desert; the water was deep down, and reached only, as in the case of Jacob's well, by a rope or chain. Even if the water could have been reached, common sense, not to speak of any higher motive, would have forbidden the pollution of an element so needful for human life. The baptism of the eunuch must have been by pouring or affusion, as must also have been the case with the Philippian jailer. The difficulties of the case are forgotten when people insist that immersion must necessarily have been the universal rule in ancient times. Men and women were baptised separately, deaconesses officiating in the case of the women. When immersion was used the men descended naked, or almost so, into the baptistery, which was often a building quite separate and distinct from the church, with elaborate arrangements for changing garments.\* The Church, in the days of earliest freedom and purity, left her children free in those points of minor detail, refusing to hamper herself or limit her usefulness by a restriction which would have equally barred entrance to her fold in the burning deserts or in the ice-bound regions of the frozen north, where baptism by immersion would have been equally impossible.

Again, the extent of the baptismal commission is indicated in this passage. "Make disciples of all the nations by baptism" are the words of our Lord. "Be baptised, every one of you, for the promise is to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off," is St. Peter's application of this passage. St. Peter's language admits of various interpretations. Like much of Scripture, the speaker, when uttering these words, meant probably one thing, while the words themselves mean something much wider, more catholic and universal. When Peter spake thus he proclaimed the world-wide character of Christianity, just as when he quoted the prophet Joel's language he declared the mission of the Comforter in its most catholic aspect, embracing Gentiles as well as Jews. "I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh." But St. Peter never thought of the full scope of his words. He meant, doubtless, that the promise of pardon, and

acceptance, and citizenship in the heavenly kingdom was to those Jews that were present in Jerusalem, and to their children, and to all of the Jews of the dispersion scattered afar off amid the Gentiles. Had Peter thought otherwise, had he perceived the wider meaning of his words, he would have had no hesitation about the reception of the Gentiles, and the baptism of Cornelius would not have demanded a fresh revelation.

We often, indeed, invest the Apostles and the writers of Holy Scripture with an intellectual grasp of a supernatural kind, which prevents us recognising that growth in Divine knowledge which found place in them, as it found place in the Divine Master Himself. We silently vote them infallible on every topic, because the Spirit's presence was abundantly vouchsafed. The inspiration they enjoyed guided their language, and led them to use words which, while expressing their own sentiments, admitted a deeper meaning and embraced a wider scope than the speaker intended. It was just the same with the Apostles' words as with their conduct in other respects. The presence and inspiration of the Spirit did not make them sinless, did not destroy human infirmities. It did not destroy St. Peter's moral cowardice, or St. Paul's hot temper, or St. Barnabas' family partiality and nepotism; and neither did that presence illumine at once St. Peter's natural prejudices and intellectual backwardness, which led him long to restrain the mercies and lovingkindness of the Lord to His ancient people, though here on the day of Pentecost we find him using language which plainly included the Gentiles as well as the Jews within the covenant of grace. A farther question concerning the language of St. Peter here arises. Do not his words indicate that children were fit subjects for baptism? Do they not justify the practice of infant baptism? I honestly confess that, apart from the known practice of the Jews, St. Peter's language would not necessarily mean so much. But then when we take the known practice of the Jews into consideration; when we remember that St. Peter was speaking to a congregation composed of Jews of the dispersion, accustomed, in their own missionary work among the heathen, to baptise children as well as adults, we must admit that, in the absence of any prohibition to the contrary, the effect of the words of St. Peter upon his hearers must have been this; they would have acted when Christians as they had already done as Jews, and baptised proselytes of every age and condition on their admission to the Christian fold. (See Lightfoot, "Hor. Heb.," St. Matt. iii. 6.)

V. Such was St. Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost. The results of it in the unity of doctrine and discipline and the community of goods will come before us in subsequent chapters. One thought stands out prominent as we survey this second chapter. Here in very deed we find an ample fulfilment of our Lord's promise to St. Peter which has been so completely misused and misunderstood, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven;" a passage which has been made one of the scriptural foundations of the monstrous claims of the See of Rome to an absolute supremacy alike over the Christian Church and over the individual conscience. In this respect, however, Scripture is its own best interpreter. Just reflect how

\*See the articles on Baptism and Baptistery in Smith and Cheetham's "Dictionary of Christian Antiquities," vol. i.



it is in this matter. Christ first of all defines, in the celebrated series of parables related in the thirteenth of St. Matthew, what the kingdom of heaven is. It is the kingdom He had come to reveal, the society He was establishing, the Church and dispensation of which He is the Head and Chief. To St. Peter He gave the keys, or power of opening the doors, of this kingdom; and this office St. Peter duly executed. He opened the door of the kingdom of heaven to the Jews on the day of Pentecost, and to the Gentiles by the conversion and baptism of Cornelius. St. Peter himself recognised on one occasion the special Providence which watched over him in this matter. He points out, in his speech to the brethren gathered at the first council held at Jerusalem, that "a good while ago God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel;" a passage which seems a reminiscence of the earlier promise of Christ, which Peter must have so well remembered, and a humble recognition of the glorious fulfilment which that promise had received at the Divine hand.\* The promise was a purely personal one peculiar to St. Peter, as purely personal as the revelation made to him on the housetop at Joppa, and as such received a complete fulfilment in the Church's infant days. But Rome's vaulting ambition would not be content with the fulfilment which satisfied St. Peter himself, and on this text has been built up a series of claims which, culminating in the celebrated traffic in indulgences, precipitated the great revolution involved in the German Reformation.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE FIRST MIRACLE.

Acts iii. 1-6.

THE Acts of the Apostles considered as the first history of the Church may be viewed as typical of all ecclesiastical history. It is in this respect a microcosm wherein, on a small scale, we see represented the triumphs and the mistakes, the strength and the weakness, of God's elect people throughout all the ages. Thus in the incident before us, embracing the whole of the third chapter and the greater portion of the fourth, we have set forth a victory of the Apostles, their subsequent persecution, together with the blessing and strength vouchsafed in and through that persecution. The time of these events cannot be fixed with any great exactness. They occurred probably within a few weeks or months of the day of Pentecost. That is the nearest we can approach to a precise date. There seems indeed to have been a pause after the excitement and success of Pentecost, and for this we think that we can see a good reason. The Apostles must have had plenty to do with the vast multitude gathered upon the day of Pentecost, striving to lead them into a fuller knowledge of the faith. We are apt to imagine at first sight that supernatural enlightenment was vouchsafed to these earliest converts, superseding any necessity for careful and patient instruction, so that upon their baptism the whole work was completed. But when we reflect upon

other cases in the New Testament, we can easily see that the three thousand souls converted by St. Peter's speech must have needed and received a great deal of teaching. The Church of Corinth was one of St. Paul's own founding, and upon it he lavished careful attention for a year and a half; yet we see from his Epistles to the Corinthians how much guidance was needed by them even in elementary questions of morals, how rapidly the Church fell into grossest license when deprived of his personal ministrations. Theophilus again, to whom the Acts were addressed by St. Luke, is reminded, in the preface of the Gospel, of the catechetical instruction in Christian truth which he had received.\* Assuredly, then, the small band of the twelve Apostles and their few male assistants must have had their hands full enough for many weeks after Pentecost, endeavouring to give their converts such an insight into the great principles of the faith as would enable them to carry back to their various distant homes a competent knowledge of the laws and doctrines of the new dispensation. A few moments' reflection will show that the newly-baptised had much to learn about Christ,—the facts of His life, His doctrines, sacraments, the constitution of His Church, and the position allotted to the Apostles,—before they could be considered sufficiently rooted and grounded in the faith. And if this was so with converts from Judaism, then how much more must such careful instruction after baptism have been found needful in the case of the Gentiles when the time came for their admission? Much preparatory work had been done for the Jews by their Old Testament training. They had not much to learn from the Apostles in practical morality; they had a right conception of God, His character, and His service. But as for the Pagans, their whole intellectual and spiritual life, all their notions and conceptions about God, and life, and morals, were all hopelessly wrong. The Apostles and the earliest teachers had then, and missionaries amongst the heathen have still, to make a clearance of the whole pagan ground, laying a new foundation, and erecting thereon a new structure, intellectual, moral, and spiritual. St. Paul recognised the vast importance of such diligent pastoral work and catechetical training after baptism when writing his pastoral Epistles, because bitter experience had taught him their value. At Corinth for more than two years, and at Ephesus for three years, he had laboured diligently in building up his converts. And notwithstanding all his exertions, how quickly the Corinthians fell away into pagan habits of unbridled license as soon as he left them! The Acts of the Apostles, by this pause in evangelistic work which we here trace, strikes a note of warning concerning the future missionary work of the Church, speaking clearly about the necessity of diligent pastoral care, and prophesying of the certain relapses into wild excesses which may be expected to occur among those who have only been just rescued from the mire of paganism. This is one explanation of the pause in apostolic work we here seem to perceive.

Again, the analogy of the faith, the laws of human nature, suggest the need of a period of

\* The apostolic manual called the "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," to which we have already referred, proves that the Church of the Apostles' day required catechisms and introductory formularies just as much as we do.

\* See Dr. John Lightfoot's "Horæ Hebraicæ," St. Matt. xvi. 19.



restful calm after the Pentecostal excitement, and previous to any new and successful advance. So it has been in God's dealing in the past. The excitement connected with the first attempts made by Moses to rescue his people was followed by the forty years' exile in Midian, which again led to their triumphant rescue from bondage. Elijah's victory over Jezebel and her idol priests was followed by the retreat of forty days to Horeb. The excitement of our Lord's baptism was succeeded by the forty days' fast in the wilderness. The human mind cannot be ever on the strain. Excitement must be followed by repose, or else the course of action adopted will be hurried, imperfect, transient in its results. The works of God in nature are never such. As a modern poet has nobly sung—

"One lesson, Nature, let me learn of thee;  
One lesson which in every wind is blown;  
One lesson of two duties kept at one,  
Though the loud world proclaim their enmity;—  
Of toil unsever'd from tranquillity;  
Of labour, that in lasting fruit outgrows  
Far noisier schemes, accomplished in repose,  
Too great for haste, too high for rivalry." \*

There are great calm and dignity in nature; and there were great calm and dignity in grace when God was laying the foundations of His kingdom by the hands of His Apostles. There never was an age which more needed this lesson of nature and grace alike than this nineteenth century.† The religion of the age has been infected by the Spirit of the world, and men think that the fortresses of sin and ignorance will fall, provided there be used a sufficient quantity of noise, of puffing, and of excitement. I do not wish to find the slightest fault with energetic action. The Church of Christ has been in the past perhaps a little too dignified in its methods and operations. It has hesitated, where St. Paul never would have hesitated, to adapt itself to changed circumstances, and has oftentimes refused, like a timorous lawyer, to venture on some new and untried sphere because there was no precedent. The Reformers and their first followers were an illustration of this. The utter lack of missionary spirit and effort among the Reformers is one of the darkest blots upon their history. How sadly they contrast with the Jesuit Society, which started into existence at the same period of the world's history. No one is more keenly alive to the faults and shortcomings of that world-renowned Society than I am, yet I heartily admire the energy and devotion with which, from its earliest days, the Society of Jesus flung itself into missionary work, endeavouring to repair the losses which the Papacy sustained in Europe by fresh conquests in India, China, and America. The Reformers were so busy in bitter controversies among themselves, and so intent upon endeavouring to fathom God's decrees and purposes, that they forgot the primary duty of the Church to spread the light and truth which it has received; they were deficient in Christian energy, and thus brought upon themselves the blight and curse of spiritual barrenness. Controversy evermore brings with it the desolation of spiritual leanness. Men cease to really believe in a religion which they only know upon paper, and only think of as a thing to be discussed. Living contact with human souls and human wants saves religion, because it translates it from a mere dead dogma

\* Sonnet by Matthew Arnold on Rural Work.

† This line of thought has been already touched upon on pp. 311-12.

into a living fact. A man who has come to doubt doctrinal statements which he has never verified, will be brought back to faith by the irresistible evidence of sinful lives changed and broken hearts comforted.

The Church of England has again and again manifested this spirit. In Ireland she refused to give the nation the Liturgy and the Bible in the Irish tongue. In Wales she hesitated in condescending to vulgar wants, and long refused to bestow a native episcopate upon the Celts of England, because the evil tradition of centuries, down from the age of the Norman conquest, had ordained that no Welshman should be a bishop. But still, while I am opposed to the Church binding itself in fetters of that kind, I am equally of opinion that there is a middle course between dignified idleness and extravagant carnal sensationalism. I have heard efforts advocated for home missionary work which, I am sure, would never have met with the approbation of the first missionaries of the Cross. The Church must be energetic, but the Church need not adopt the methods of quack medicine-sellers, or of the strolling circus. Such methods were not unknown in the primitive ages of the Church.

The preachers of the Stoic philosophy strove in the second century to counteract the efforts of the Christian Church by reforming paganism, and by preaching it vigorously. They adopted every means to attract the public attention and interest—eccentricity, vulgarity, coarseness; and yet they failed, and were defeated by a society which trusted, not in human devices and carnal forces, but in the supernatural power of God the Holy Ghost.\* The Montanists again, towards the close of the second century, fell into the same error. The Montanists are in many respects one of the most interesting of the early Christian sects. They tried to retain the customs and the spirit of apostolic Christianity, but they mistook the true methods of action. They confounded physical excitement with spiritual fervour, and strove by weird dances and strange cries, borrowed from the pagans of the Phrygian mountains, to bind to themselves the sweet influences of the Heavenly Comforter. The Church of that period diligently avoided the error of pagan Stoics and of Christian schismatics. As it was in the second century, so was it just after Pentecost. The Church followed close upon its Master's footsteps, of whom it was said, "He shall not strive nor cry, neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets," and developed in quietness and retirement the spiritual life of the thousands who had crowded into the door of faith which Peter had opened.

Again there is a lesson in this period of pause and seclusion, not merely for the Church in its corporate capacity, but for individual souls. The spirit of interior sanctity is nourished most chiefly during such times of retirement and obscurity. Obscurity has indeed many advantages when viewed from the standpoint of the spiritual life. Publicity and high station and multiplicity of affairs bring with them many disadvantages. They deprive us of that peace and calm which enable a man to contrast the things of time

\* This episode in the history of paganism in the second century is very little known. It has been well depicted in an interesting little book, "The Age of the Antonines," by the Rev. W. W. Capes, M. A., which only costs a couple of shillings. Chap. viii. should specially be consulted.



with those of eternity, and to value them in their true light. Over-activity, fussiness, even in the most spiritual matters, is a dire enemy of true heart belief, and therefore of true strength of spirit. The Master Himself felt it so. There were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. Then it was He said, "Come ye into the desert, that ye may rest awhile." The excitement and strain of Pentecost, and all the subsequent efforts which Pentecost entailed, must have told seriously upon the Apostles, and so they imitated the Master, that they might renew their exhausted vigour at its primal fountain. How many a man, busy in missions, or preaching, or the thousand other forms which evangelistic and religious work now takes, would be infinitely better if this apostolic lesson were duly learned. How many a terrible scandal has arisen simply from a disregard and contempt for it. If men will think they can labour, as this passage shows the Apostles could not, without thought and reflection, and interior communion with God; if they will spend all their strength in external effort and never make time and secure seasons for spiritual replenishment, they may create much noise for a time, but their toil will be fruitless, and if they are saved themselves it will only be as by fire.

The period of retirement and obscurity came, however, to an end at last. The Apostles never intended to form an order purely contemplative. Such an idea, in fact, never could have entered into the mind of one of those early Christians. They remembered that their Master had expressly said, "Ye are the salt of the earth," and salt is useless if kept stored up in a vessel by itself, and never applied to any object where its curative properties might have free scope. When the spirit of Eastern gnosticism, springing from the dualism of Persia, invaded the Church, and gained a permanent hold within it, then men began to despise their bodies and life, and all that life entails. Like Eastern fanatics, they desired to abstract themselves as much as possible from the things and duties of the present, and they invented, or rather adopted from the farther East, purely contemplative orders, which spent useless lives, striving, like their prototypes of India, to rise superior to the positions which God had assigned them. Such were not the Apostles. They used rest, contemplation—they did not abuse them; and when their tone and power were restored, they issued forth again upon the field of religious activity, and joined in the public worship of the crowd. "Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour."

The action of Peter and John in thus frequenting the temple worship gives us a glimpse into the state of feeling and thought which prevailed then and for a great many years after in the Church of Jerusalem. The Church of that city naturally clung longest of all to the old Jewish connection. Eusebius, in his "Ecclesiastical History" (iv. 5), tells us that the first fifteen bishops of Jerusalem were Hebrews, and that all the members of the Church were Hebrews too. It was only, in fact, upon the final destruction of Jerusalem, which happened under Hadrian, after the rebellion of Barcochba, A. D. 135, that the Church of Jerusalem shook itself completely free from the trammels of Judaism.\*

\* See the article on Barcochba in the "Dict. Christ. Biog.," vol. i.

But in those earliest days of the Church the Apostles naturally could not recognise the course of the Divine development. They cherished the notion that Judaism and Christianity would be found compatible the one with the other. They had not yet recognised what St. Stephen first of all, and then St. Paul, and most chiefly the author of the Hebrews, came to recognise, that Judaism and Christianity as full-blown systems were absolutely antagonistic; that the Jewish dispensation was obsolete, antiquated, and must utterly fade before a nobler dispensation that was once for all to take its place. It is hard for us to realise the feelings of the Apostles at this great transition epoch, and yet it is well for us to do so, because their conduct is full of lessons specially suited for seasons of transition. The Apostles never seem to me more clearly under the direction of the Divine Spirit than in their whole course of action at this time. They proceeded in faith, but not in haste. They held firmly to the truths they had gained, and they waited patiently upon God, till the course of His providence showed them how to co-ordinate the old system with the new truths,—until He had taught them what parts of the ancient covenant should be dropped and what retained. Their conduct has instruction very suitable for the present age, when God is giving His Church fresh light on many a question through the investigations of science. Well, indeed, will it be for Christian people to have their hearts grounded, as the Apostles' were, in a spirit of Divine love, knowing personally in whom they have believed; and then, strong in that inner revelation of God to the spirit, which surpasses in might and power all other evidences, they may patiently wait the evolution of His purposes. The prophetic declaration is true for every age, "He that believeth will not make haste."

The circumstances of the first apostolic miracle were simple enough. Peter and John were going up into the temple at the hour of the evening sacrifice. They were entering the temple by the gate well known to all dwellers at Jerusalem as the Beautiful Gate, and there they met the cripple whom they healed in the name and by the power of Jesus of Nazareth. The spot where this miracle was performed was familiar to the Jews of that day, though its precise locality is still a matter of controversy. Some hold that this Beautiful Gate was one described by Josephus in his "Wars of the Jews" (v. 5, 3) as surpassingly splendid, being composed of Corinthian brass, and called the Gate of Nicanor. Others think that it was the gate Shushan, which stood in the neighbourhood of Solomon's Porch; while others identify it with the gate Chulda, which led into the court of the Gentiles. It was most probably the first of these which was situated on the eastern side of the outermost court of the temple, looking towards the valley of Kedron. Here was gathered a crowd of beggars, such as then frequented the temples of the pagans as well as of the Jews, and such as still throng the approaches of Eastern and many Western churches. Out of this crowd one man addressed Peter and John, asking an alms. This man was well known to the regular worshippers in the temple. He was a cripple, and one long accustomed to haunt the same spot, for he was above forty years old. Peter replied to his prayer in the well-known words, "Silver and gold have I none, but what



I have, that give I thee. In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, walk " ; and then he performed one of the few miracles ascribed to the direct action of St. Peter. Here it may be asked, Why was this miracle of healing the cripple at the temple gate the only one recorded of those earliest signs and wonders wrought by apostolic hands? The answer seems to be threefold: this miracle was typical of the Church's future work; it was the occasion of St. Peter's testimony before the Sanhedrin; and it led up to the first persecution which the Jewish authorities raised against the Church.

Viewing the Acts of the Apostles as a type of what all Church history was to be, and a Divine exposition of the principles which should guide the Church in times of suffering as well as in times of action, we can see good and solid reasons for the insertion of this particular narrative. First, then, this miracle was typical of the Church's work, for it was a beggar that was healed, and this beggar lay helpless and hopeless at the very doors of the temple. The beggar typified humanity at large. He was laid, indeed, in a splendid position,—before him was extended the magnificent panorama of hills which stood round about Jerusalem; above him rose the splendours of the building upon which the Herods had lavished the riches and wonders of their gorgeous conceptions,—but he was nothing the better for all this material grandeur till touched by the power which lay in the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And the beggar of the Beautiful Gate was in all these respects the fittest object for St. Peter's earliest public miracle, because he was exactly typical of mankind's state. Humanity, Jew and Gentile alike, lay at the very gate of God's temple of the universe. Men could discourse learnedly, too, concerning that sanctuary, and they could admire its beauteous proportions. Poets, philosophers, and wise men had treated of the temple of the universe in works which can never be surpassed, but all the while they lay outside its sacred precincts. They had no power to stand up and enter in, leaping, and walking, and praising God. It is very important, in this age of material civilisation and of intellectual advance, that the Church should insist vigorously upon the great truth taught by this miracle. The age of the Incarnation must have seemed to the men of that time the very acme of civilisation and of knowledge; and yet the testimony of all history and of all literature is that just then mankind was in the most deplorable state of moral and spiritual degradation. The witness of St. Paul in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans is amply borne out by the testimony, conscious and unconscious, of pagan antiquity. A writer of the last century, now to a great extent forgotten, Dr. Leland by name, investigated this point in the fullest manner in his great work on the necessity of a Divine revelation, demonstrating that mankind, even when highly civilised, educated, cultured, lies like a beggar at the door of the temple, till touched by the hand and power of the Incarnate God.

This miracle of healing the beggar was typical of the Church's work again, because it was a beggar who thus received a blessing when the Church roused itself to the discharge of its great mission. The first man healed and benefited by St. Peter was a poor man, and the Church's work has ever led her to deal with the poor,

and to interest herself most keenly in their well-being. This first miracle is typical of Christian work, because Christianity is essentially the religion of the masses. At times, indeed, Christian teachers may have seemed to rank themselves on the side of power and riches alone; but then men should take good care to distinguish between the inconsistent conduct of Christian teachers and the essential principles of Christianity. The founder of Christianity was a carpenter, and its earliest benediction pronounced the blessedness of those that are poor in spirit, and ever since the greatest triumphs of Christianity have been gained amongst the poor. Christian hagiology, Christian legend, and Christian history alike, have combined to attest this truth. The Church calendar is decorated with lists of saints, some of them of very doubtful character, while others of them have stories connected with their careers full of meaning and rich with lessons for this generation. Thus, for instance, October 25th is the feast of a martyr, St. Crispin, from whom the great trade of shoemakers is designated. "The sons of St. Crispin" is a title going back to the earliest ages of the Church's love. St. Crispin was a Roman senator, brought up and nourished amid all that luxury with which pagan Rome surrounded the children of the highest classes. Crispin became acquainted with the faith of the followers of the Carpenter of Nazareth amid the dire persecutions which marked the final struggle between Christianity and paganism under the Emperor Diocletian during the earliest years of the fourth century. He was baptised, and feeling that a life of gilded idleness was inconsistent with his Master's example, he resigned his place, position, and property, retired into Gaul, and there devoted himself to the trade of shoemaking, as being one which could be exercised in great quietness. Manual toil was at that time considered an occupation fitted only for slaves, for we ought never to forget that the dignity of labour is no human invention, nor is it part of the religions of nature. Nay, rather, the dignity of idleness was the doctrine of Greek and Roman paganism. St. Crispin recognised the great law of labour taught by Christ and taught by His Apostles, and became the most successful of shoemakers, preaching at the same time the gospel with such success that the persecutors selected him as one of their earliest victims in that district of Gaul where he resided. It has been just the same in every age. The true power of the Church has been ever displayed in preaching the gospel to the children of toil. An interesting example of this may be gathered from an age which we are apt to think specially dark. In mediæval times the secular or parochial clergy became very lax and careless throughout these islands. The mendicant friars, the followers of St. Francis, came and settled everywhere in the slums of the great towns, devoting themselves to the work of preaching to the poor. And they speedily attained a marvellous power over men. The Franciscans in the thirteenth century were exactly like the early Methodists in the last century. Both societies placed their chapels among the abodes of want; there they laboured, and there they triumphed, because they worked in the spirit and power indicated by this first recorded miracle of the beggar healed at the temple gate. It will be a bad day for religion and for



society when the Church ceases to be the Church and champion of the weak, the down-trodden, the destitute. Here, however, lies a danger. Its work in this direction must be done in no one-sided spirit. Christianity must never adopt the language or the tone of the mere agitator. I fear that some who now pose as specially the champions of the poor are missing that spirit of mental balance and fairness which will alone enable them to be Christian champions, because seeking to do justice unto all men. It is easy enough to flatter any class, rich or poor; and it is specially tempting to do so when the class so flattered chances to hold the reins of political power. It is very hard to render to all their due, shrinking not from telling the truth, even when unpleasant, and reproving the faults of those whose side we favour. A Christianity which triumphs through appeals to popular prejudices, and seeks a mere temporary advantage by riding on the crest of popular ignorance, is not the religion taught by Christ and His Apostles.

But yet, again, the conversion of this beggar was effected through his healing; and here we see a type of the Church's future work. The Church, then, as represented by the Apostles, did not despise the body, or regard efforts after bodily blessing as beneath its dignity. Spiritual work went hand in hand with healing power. This has been a lesson which Christian people, at home and abroad, have been slow enough to learn. The whole principle, for instance, of medical missions is covered by this action on the part of the Apostles. For a long time the Church thought it was its solitary duty to preach the gospel by word of mouth, and it has only been in comparatively modern days that men have learned that one of the most powerful means of preaching the gospel was the exercise of the healing art; for surely if the gift of healing, conveyed from God by supernatural means, could be an effective help towards evangelistic work, the same gift of healing, conveyed from precisely the same source by natural channels indeed, but channels none the less truly Divine, can still be effective to the same great end. The Church should count no human interest beyond its sway, and should take the keenest interest and claim a living share in every portion of life's work. At home or abroad the bodies of men are under her care as well as their souls, because bodies as well as souls have been redeemed by Jesus Christ, and both alike await their perfection and glorification through Jesus Christ. Schools, hospitals, sanitary and medical science, the dwellings and amusements of the people, trade, commerce, all should be the care of the Church, and should be based on Christ's law, and carried out on Christian principles. The Incarnation of Christ has given a deeper meaning that he ever dreamt of to the pagan poet's words,—

"Homo sum ; humani nihil a me alienum puto."

We think, furthermore, that this miracle has been divinely recorded because it was the occasion of St. Peter's testimony both to the people and to their rulers. Let us strive to realise the circumstances and the locality. Peter and John, going up to the temple, met this impotent beggar at the entrance to the Court of the Women, into which the Beautiful Gate led. Our modern notions about churches confuse all true

conceptions concerning the temple. The vast majority of people, when they think of the temple, form to themselves an idea of a vast cathedral, when they ought instead to think of a large college, with square succeeding square and court following court. As Peter and John ascended the temple hill they came first to the Court of the Gentiles, which served as a market and in which a crowd of mendicants were assembled to solicit alms. Out of this Court of the Gentiles the Beautiful Gate led into the Court of the Women, which was reserved for the ordinary religious offices of the Jewish people.\* One of the beggars addressed the Apostles, soliciting a gift; whereupon the Apostles worked the miracle of healing. Upon this a crowd collected, attracted by the excited conduct of the man who had received such an unexpected blessing. They ran together after the manner of all crowds which assemble so easily and so rapidly in a city, and then hurrying into the cloister called Solomon's Porch, which was a remnant of the ancient temple, heard the address of St. Peter. It must have been a spot filled with cherished memories for the Apostle. Every Jew naturally venerated this cloister, because it was Solomon's; just as men in the grandest modern cathedral still love to point out the smallest relic of the original structure out of which the modern building grew. At San Clemente, in Rome, the priests delight to show the primitive structure where they say St. Clement ministered about the year A. D. 100.† At York the vergers will indicate far down in the crypt the fragments of the earliest Saxon church, which once stood where that splendid cathedral now rears its lofty arches. So, too, the Jews naturally cherished this link of continuity between the ancient and the modern temples. But for St. Peter this Solomon's Porch must have had special memories over and above the patriotic ideas that were linked with it. He could not forget that the very last feast of the Dedication which the Master had seen on earth, He walked in this porch, and there in His conversation with the Jews claimed an equality with the Father which led them to make an attempt on His life.

Here, then, it was that within twelve months the Apostle Peter makes a similar claim on his Master's behalf, in a discourse which extends from the twelfth to the twenty-sixth verse of the third chapter. That discourse has two distinct divisions. It sets forth, first, the claims, dignity, and nature of Christ, and then makes a personal appeal to the men of Jerusalem. St. Peter begins his sermon with an act of profound self-renunciation. When the Apostle saw the people running together, he answered and said, "Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we made this man to walk?" The same spirit of renunciation appears at an earlier stage of the miracle. When the beggar solicited an alms, Peter said: "Silver and gold have I none: but what I have, that give I

\* See Lightfoot on the Court of the Women in his "Chorography of the Holy Land," chap. xix. in his "Works," vol. ii. p. 29. The best modern description will be found in Count de Vogüé's "Le Temple de Jérusalem," pp. 53-6 (Paris, 1864), with which may be compared a paper on the site of the Temple by Colonel Warren in the "Transactions" of the Society of Biblical Archaeology, vol. vii. pp. 308-30.

† In the new edition of "Clement of Rome," by Bishop Lightfoot, vol. i. pp. 92, 93, there is an account of this ancient church.



thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." One point is at once manifest when St. Peter's conduct is compared with his Master's under similar circumstances. St. Peter acts as a delegate and a servant; Jesus Christ acted as a principal, a master,—the Prince of Life, as St. Peter calls Him in the fifteenth verse of this third chapter. The distinction between the miracles of Christ and the miracles of the Apostles declares the New Testament conception of Christ's dignity and person. Compare, for instance, the narrative of the healing of the impotent man at the Pool of Bethesda, told in the fifth chapter of St. John, with that of the healing of the impotent man laid at the temple gate. Christ said, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." He made no appeal, He used no prayer, He invoked no higher name. He simply spake and it was done. The Apostle Peter, the rockman, the leader of the apostolic band, takes the greatest care to assure the multitude that he had himself neither power nor efficacy in this matter, and that all the power lay in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Now, leaving aside for the moment any question of the truth or reality of these two miracles, is it not manifest from these two parallel cases that the New Testament writings place Jesus Christ on an exalted standpoint far above that of any human being whatsoever; in a position, in fact, which from the boldness and magnificence of its claims can only be fitly described in the language of the Nicene Creed as "God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God."

St. Peter's words teach another lesson. They are typical of the spirit which should ever animate the Christian preacher or teacher. They turn the attention of his hearers wholly away from himself, and exalt Christ Jesus alone. And such has ever been and ever must be the secret of successful preaching. Self-consciousness, in fact, injures the effect of any kind of labour. The man who does not lose himself in his work, of whatever kind—political, philanthropic, or religious—his work may be, but is ever thinking of himself and the results of his actions upon his own prospects, can never become an enthusiast; and it is only enthusiasm and enthusiastic action which can really affect mankind. And surely the preacher of Christian truth who thinks of himself rather than of the great subject of his mission, who only preaches that he may be thought clever or eloquent, debases the Christian pulpit, and must be an awful failure in that day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ. St. Peter here, John the Baptist in still earlier days, ought to be the models for Christian teachers. Men came to the Baptist, did him homage, yielded him respect; but he pointed them from himself to Christ. He was a lamp, but Christ was the light; and the Baptist's teaching reached its highest, noblest level when he turned his disciples' gaze away from himself, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Let me, however, not be mistaken. I do not mean to say that a Christian teacher, whether writer or speaker, should never allow a single reflex thought as to his own performances to rise in his mind, should never desire to preach ably or eloquently. A man who could set up such a standard must be ignorant of human nature and of Scripture alike. One cannot, for instance, read St. Paul's Second

Epistle to the Corinthians without noting how sorely he was touched by his own unpopularity amongst them and the successful machinations of his opponents. Daily experience will prove that no attainments in the spiritual life will prevent a man from valuing the esteem and recognition of his fellow men. But such a desire to please and be successful must be kept in stern control. It must not be the great object of a Christian. It must never lead him to keep back one jot or tittle of the counsel of God. The natural desire to please must be closely watched. It easily leads men to idolatry, to the installation of human fame, power, influence, gold, in the place of that Eternal Saviour whose worship ought to be the great end and the true life of the soul.

St. Peter, after his act of abnegation and self-humiliation, then proceeds to set forth the claims and to narrate the history of Jesus Christ, and in doing so enters into the particulars of His trial and condemnation, which he charges boldly home upon his listeners, who, as distinguished from his audience on the day of Pentecost, were most probably the permanent residents in Jerusalem. The Apostle narrates the events of our Lord's trial just as we find them in the Gospels—His interviews with Pilate, the outcry of the people, the choice and character of Barabbas. He asserts His resurrection, and implies, without asserting, His ascension, by the words, "Whom the heavens must receive until the times of the restitution of all things." The primitive gospel of St. Peter was just like that taught by St. Paul, as he puts it forward in the fifteenth chapter of First of Corinthians, "Brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I have received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures: and that He was buried, and that He rose again." The earliest message, proclaimed by St. Paul or St. Peter, was one and the same; it was a declaration of certain historical facts, and what it was then such it must ever remain. Whenever the historical facts are disbelieved, then men may speak beautifully of the spiritual ideas and the moral truths symbolised by Christianity, just as Hypatia and the Neo-Platonists of Alexandria could speak in picturesque language concerning the deep poetic meaning of the old pagan legends. Poetry and legends are, however, the veriest husks wherewith to support an immortal soul under the great trials of life; and when that day comes for any soul when the great historical facts set forth in the Creed are rejected, then Christianity may remain in name and appearance, but it will cease to be the gospel of joy and peace and comfort, for the human soul can only sustain itself in the supreme moments of sorrow, separation, and death by the solid realities of fact and truth.

St. Peter, again, in this sermon leaves us a type of what Christian sermons should be. He was plain-spoken, yet he was tender and sympathetic. He was plain-spoken. He does not hesitate to state the crimes of the Jews in the most vigorous language. God had glorified His servant Jesus, but they delivered Him up to the agents of the idolatrous Romans; they denied Him, desired a murderer to be granted in place of the Prince of Life; urged His death when even the Roman judge would have let Him go,—and all this they had done to the long-expected and long-desired Messiah. Peter is not wanting in plainness of speech. And the Christian teacher,



whether clergyman or layman, whether a pastor in the pulpit, a teacher in the Sunday-school, or the editor of a newspaper at his desk, ought to cultivate and exercise the same Christian boldness and courage. The true Christian ideal will be attained by following St. Peter's example on this occasion. He combined boldness and prudence, courage and gentleness. He spoke the truth in all honesty, but he did not adopt an attitude or use language which would arouse unnecessary opposition. What courtesy, what sympathetic, charitable politeness is manifest in St. Peter's excuse, which he offers in the course of his sermon for the Jews, rulers and people alike! "And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers." Some men think that prudence is an idea which should never enter the head of a messenger of Christ, though no one impressed more frequently the necessity of that great virtue than did the Master, for He knew how easily imprudence may undo all the good that faithfulness might otherwise attain. Wisdom like the serpent's, gentleness like the dove's, was Christ's own rule for His Apostles. Boldness, and courage, and honesty, are blessed things, but they should be guided and moderated by charity. Earthly motives easily insinuate themselves into every man's heart, and when a man feels urged on to declare some unpleasant truth, or to raise a violent and determined opposition, he should search diligently, lest that while he imagines himself following a heavenly vision and obeying a Divine command, he should be only yielding to mere human suggestions of pride, or partisanship, or uncharitableness.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE FIRST PERSECUTION.

ACTS iv. 1-3, 5-7.

THE fourth chapter of the Acts brings the Apostles into their first contact with the Jewish state organisation. It shows us the secret springs which led to the first persecution, typical of the fiercest that ever raged against the Church, and displays the calm conviction and moral strength by which the Apostles were sustained. The historical and local circumstances narrated by St. Luke bear all the marks of truth.

I. The miracle of healing the lame man had taken place in Solomon's porch or portico, which overlooked the Kedron valley, and was an usual resort as a promenade or public walk, specially in winter. Thus we read in St. John x. 22, 23, that our Lord walked in Solomon's porch, and it was winter. Solomon's porch looked towards the rising sun, and was therefore a warm and sunny spot. It was popular with the inhabitants of Jerusalem for the same reason which led the Cistercians of the Middle Ages, when building magnificent fabrics like Fountains Abbey, to place their cloister garths, where exercise was taken, on the southern side of their churches, that there they might receive and enjoy the heat and light of our winter sun.

The crowd which was collected by Peter soon attracted the attention of the Temple authorities, who had a regular police under their control. The Jews were permitted by the Romans to exercise the most unlimited freedom within the

bounds of the temple to secure its sanctity. In ordinary cases the Romans reserved to themselves the power of capital punishment, but in the case of the temple and its profanation they allowed it to the Sanhedrin.

An interesting proof of this fact has come to light of late years, attesting in a most striking manner the accuracy of the Acts of the Apostles. Josephus, in his "Antiquities" (xv. xi. 5), when describing the Holy Place, tells us that the royal cloisters of the temple had three walks, formed by four rows of pillars, with which they were adorned. The outermost walk was open to all, but the central walk was cut off by a stone wall, on which were inscriptions forbidding foreigners—that is, Gentiles—to enter under pain of death. Now in the twenty-first chapter of the Acts we read that a supposed breach of this law was the occasion of the riot against St. Paul, wherein he narrowly escaped death.

The Jews were actually about to kill St. Paul when the soldiers came upon them. To this fact, Tertullus the orator, when speaking before the governor Felix, alludes, and that without rebuke, saying of St. Paul, "Whom we took, and would have judged according to our law."\* Here comes in our illustration of the Acts derived from modern archæological research. Some few years ago there was discovered at Jerusalem, and there is now laid up in the Sultan's Museum at Constantinople, a sculptured and inscribed stone, containing one of these very Greek notices upon which the Apostles must have looked, warning Gentiles not to enter within the sacred bounds, and denouncing against transgressors the penalty of death which the Jews sought to inflict upon St. Paul. Now it was just the same about the other details of the temple worship. Inside the sacred area the Jewish law was supreme, and Jewish penalties were enacted. In order, therefore, that the temple might be duly protected the priests watched in three places, and the Levites in twenty-one places, in addition to all their other duties connected with the offering of the sacrifices and the details of public worship. These guards discharged the duties of a sacred or temple police, and their captain was called the captain of the temple, or, as he is denominated in the Talmud, "The ruler of the mountain of the House."

Much confusion has, indeed, arisen concerning this official. He has been confounded, for instance, with the captain of the neighbouring fortress of Antonia. The Romans had erected a strong, square castle, with lofty walls, and towers at the four corners, just north of the temple, and connected with it by a covered way. One of these flanking towers was one hundred and five feet high, and overlooked all the temple area, so that when a riot began the soldiers could hurry to quell it. The captain of the garrison which held this tower is called, in our version, the chief captain, or, more properly, the chiliarch, or colonel of a regiment, as we should put it in modern phraseology. But this official had nothing whatever to say to questions of Jewish law or ritual. He was simply responsible for the peace of Jerusalem; he represented the governor, who lived at Cæsarea, and had no concern with the disputes which might arise amongst the Jews. But it was quite otherwise with the captain of the temple. He was a Jewish official,

\* Acts xxiv. 6.



took cognisance of Jewish disputes, and was responsible in matters of Jewish discipline which Roman law respected and upheld, but in which it did not interfere. This purely Jewish official, a priest by profession, appointed by the Jewish authorities, and responsible to them alone, appears prominently on three distinct occasions. In the twenty-second of St. Luke's Gospel we have the account of the betrayal by the traitor Judas. When he was meditating that action he went first to the chief priests and the captains to consult with them. A Roman commander, an Italian, a Gaul, or possibly even a Briton,—as he might have been, for the Romans were accustomed to bring their Western legionaries into the East, as in turn they garrisoned Britain with the men of Syria,—would have cared very little whether a Galilean teacher was arrested or not. But it was quite natural that a Jewish and a temple official should have been interested in this question. While again on this occasion, and once more upon the arrest of the Apostles after the death of Ananias and Sapphira, the captain of the temple appears as one of the highest Jewish officials.\*

II. We see too the secret source whence the opposition to apostolic teaching arose. The priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them. The captain was roused into action by the Sadducees, who were mingled in the crowd, and heard the words of the Apostles proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus Christ, "being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead." It is noteworthy how perpetually the Sadducees appear as the special antagonists of Christianity during these earliest years. Our Lord's denunciations of the Pharisees were so often repeated that we are apt to think of them as the leading opponents of Christianity during the apostolic age. And yet this is a mistake. There was an important difference between the Master's teaching and that of His disciples, which accounts for the changed character of the opposition. Our Lord's teaching came specially into conflict with the Pharisees and their mode of thought. He denounced mere external worship, and asserted the spiritual and inner character of true religion. That was the great staple of His message. The Apostles, on the other hand, testified and enforced above everything else the risen, the glorified, and the continuous existence in the spirit world of the Man Christ Jesus. And thus they came into conflict with the central doctrine of Sadduceism which denied a future life. Hence at Jerusalem, at least, the Sadducees were ever the chief persecutors of the Apostles, while the Pharisees were favourable to Christianity, or at least neutral. At the meeting of the Sanhedrin of which we read in the fifth chapter, Gamaliel, a Pharisee, proposes the discharge of the imprisoned Apostles. In the twenty-third chapter, when St. Paul is placed before the same Sanhedrin the Pharisees take his side, while the Sadducees are his bitter opponents. We never read of a Sadducee embracing Christianity; while St. Paul, the greatest champion of the gospel, was gained from the ranks of the Pharisees. This fact sheds light on the character of the apostolic teaching. It was not any system of evanescent Christianity; it was not a system of mere ethical teaching; it

was not a system where the facts of Christ's life were whittled away, where, for instance, His resurrection was explained as a mere symbolical idea, typifying the resurrection of the soul from the death of sin to the life of holiness; for in that case the Sadducees would not have troubled themselves on this occasion to oppose such teaching. But apostolic Christianity was a system which based itself on a risen Saviour, and involved, as its fundamental ideas, the doctrines of a future life and of a spiritual world, and of a resurrection where body and soul would be again united.

Some strange representations have been from time to time put forward as to the nature of apostolic and specially of Pauline Christianity, but one of the strangest is what we may call the Matthew Arnold theory, which makes the apostolic teaching a poor, emasculated thing, devoid of any real foundation of historical fact. If Christianity, as proclaimed by St. Peter and St. Paul, was of this type, why, we ask, was it so bitterly opposed by the Sadducees? They at any rate understood the Apostles to teach and preach a Jesus Christ literally risen from the dead and ascended in the truth of human nature into that spiritual and unseen world whose existence they denied. For the Sadducees were materialists pure and simple. As such they prevailed among the rich. The poor, then as ever, furnished very few adherents to a creed which may satisfy persons who are enjoying the good things of this life. It has very few attractions, however, for those with whom life is dealing hardly, and to whom the world presents itself in a stern aspect alone. It is no wonder the new teaching concerning a risen Messiah should have excited the hatred of the rich Sadducees, and should have been welcomed by the poorer classes, among whom the Pharisees had their followers. The system of the Sadducees was a religion indeed. It satisfied a want, for man can never do without some kind of a religion. It recognised God and His revelation to Moses. It asserted, however, that the Mosaic revelation contained nothing concerning a future life, or the doctrine of immortality. It was a religion, therefore, without fear of a future, and which could never indeed excite any enthusiasm, but was very satisfactory and agreeable for the prosperous few as long as they were in prosperity and in health. Peter and John came preaching a very disturbing doctrine to this class of people. If Peter's view of life was right, theirs was all wrong. It was no wonder that the Sadducees brought upon them the priests and the captain of the temple, and summoned the Sanhedrin to deal with them. We should have done the same had we been in their position. In every age, indeed, the bitterest persecutors of Christianity have been men like the Sadducees. It has often been said that persecution on the part of a sceptic or of an unbeliever is illogical. The Sadducees were unbelievers as regards a future life. What matter to them was it, then, if the Apostles preached a future life, and convinced the people of its truth? But logic is always pushed impetuously aside when it comes in contact with deep-rooted human feeling, and the Sadducees instinctively felt that the conflict between themselves and the Apostles was a deadly one; one or other party must perish. And so it was under the Roman empire. The ruling classes of the empire were essentially infidel, or, to use a modern term, we should rather perhaps style them agnostic. They

\* See more on this point in Dr. John Lightfoot's "Horæ Hebraicæ," Luke xxii. 4 and Acts iv.



regarded the Christian teaching as a noxious enthusiasm. They could not understand why Christians should not offer incense to the deity of the emperor, or perform any act of idolatry which was commanded by state law, and regarded their refusal as an act of treason. They had no idea of conscience, because they were essentially like the Sadducees. So was it again in the days of the first French Revolution, and so we find it still. The men who reject all spiritual existence, and hold a Sadducean creed, fear the power of Christian enthusiasm and Christian love, and had they only the power would crush it as sternly and remorselessly as the Sadducees desired to do in Apostolic times, or as the Roman emperors did from the days of Nero to those of Diocletian.

III. The Apostles were arrested in the evening and put in prison. The temple had an abundance of chambers and apartments which could be used as prisons, or, as the Sanhedrin were accustomed to sit in a basilica erected in the court outside the Beautiful Gate, and inside Solomon's porch or cloister, there was probably a cell for prisoners connected with it. The next morning St. Peter and St. John were brought up before the court which met daily in this basilica, immediately after the hour of the morning sacrifices. We can realise the scene, for the persons mentioned as having taken part in the trial are historical characters. The Sanhedrin sat in a semicircle, with the president in the centre, while opposite were three benches for the scholars of the Sanhedrists, who thus practically learned law. The Sanhedrin, when complete, consisted of seventy-one members, comprising chief priests, the elders of the people, and the most renowned of the rabbis; but twenty-three formed a quorum competent to transact business. The high priest when present, as Annas and Caiaphas both were on this occasion, naturally exercised great influence, though he was not necessarily president of the council. The sacred writer has been accused, indeed, of a historical mistake, both here and in his Gospel (iii. 2), in making Annas high priest when Caiaphas was actually occupying that office. Annas, his father-in-law, having been previously deposed by the Romans. St. Luke seems to me, on the other hand, thus to prove his strict accuracy. Caiaphas was of course the legal high priest so far as the Romans were concerned. They recognised him as such, and delivered to him the high priest's official robes, when necessary for the fulfilment of his great office, keeping them safe at other times in the tower of Antonia. But then, as I have already said, so long as the Roman law and constitutions were observed on great state occasions, they allowed the Jews a large amount of Home Rule in the management of their domestic religious concerns, and were not keen in marking offences, if only the offences were not thrust into public notice. Annas was recognised by the Sanhedrin and by the Jews at large as the true high priest, Caiaphas as the legal or official one; and they kept themselves on the safe side, as far as the Romans were concerned, by uniting them in their official consultations in the Sanhedrin. The Sadducees, doubtless, on this occasion made every effort that their own party should attend the council meeting, feeling the importance of crushing the rising sect in the very bud. We read, therefore, that with the high priest came "John and Alexander, and as many

as were of the kindred of the high priest." The priestly families were at this period the aristocracy of the Jews, and they all belonged to the Sadducees, in opposition to the democracy, who favoured the Pharisees. These latter, indeed, had their own representatives in the Sanhedrin, as we shall see on a later occasion,—men of light and leading, like Gamaliel; but the permanent officials of the Jewish senate were for the most part Sadducees, and we know how easily the permanent officials can pack a popular body, such as the Sanhedrin was, with their own adherents, when any special end is to be attained.

It was before such a hostile audience that the Apostles were now called to witness, and here they first proved the power of the Divine words, "When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak."\* St. Peter threw himself upon God, and found that his trust was not in vain. He was at the moment of need filled with the Holy Ghost, and enabled to testify with a power which defeated his determined foes. He had a special promise from the Master, and he acted upon it. But we must observe that this promise was a special one, limited to the Apostles and to those in every age placed in similar circumstances. This promise is no general one. It was given to the Apostles to free them from care, anxiety, and forethought as to the matter and form of the addresses which they should deliver when suddenly called to speak before assemblies like the Sanhedrin. Under such circumstances they would have no time to prepare speeches suitable for ears trained in all the arts of oratory as then practised amongst the ancients, whether Jews or Gentiles. So their Master gave them an assurance of strength and skill such as none of their adversaries could equal or resist. "It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you." This promise has been, however, misunderstood and abused when applied to ordinary circumstances. It was good for the Apostles, and it is good for Christian men placed under similar conditions, persecuted for the sake of their testimony, and deprived of the ordinary means of preparation. But it is not a promise authorising Christian teachers, clerical or lay, to dispense with careful thought and industrious study when communicating the truths of Christianity, or applying the great principles contained in the Bible to the manifold circumstances of modern life. Christ certainly told the Apostles not to premeditate beforehand what they should say. When relying, however, upon the promises of God, we should carefully seek to ascertain how far they are limited, and how far they apply to ourselves; else we may be putting our trust in words upon which we have no right to depend. A presumptuous trust is next door to an act of rebellion, and has often led to unbelief. Our Lord said to the Apostles, "Provide neither gold nor silver nor brass in your purses," because He would provide for them; but He did not say so to us, and if we go out into life presumptuously relying upon a passage of Scripture that does not belong to us, unbelief may overtake us as a strong man armed when we find ourselves disappointed. And so, too, with this promise of supernatural guidance which the Apostles enjoyed, and which saints of every age have proved true when placed in

\* St. Matt. x. 19.



similar circumstances; it is a special one for them, it does not apply to us. Christian teachers, whether in the pulpit, or the Sunday school, or the home circle, must still depend as completely as the Apostles did upon the Holy Ghost as the source of all successful teaching. But in the case of the Apostles the inspiration was immediate and direct. In the case of ordinary Christians like ourselves, placed amid all the helps which God's providence gives, we must use study, thought, meditation, prayer, experience of life, as channels through which the same inspiration is conveyed to us. The Society of Friends, when George Fox established it, testified on behalf of a great truth when it asserted that the Holy Ghost dwelt still, as in apostolic times, in the whole body of the Church, and spake still through the experience of Christian people. Their testimony was a great truth and a much-needed one in the middle of the seventeenth century, when Churchmen were in danger of turning religion into a great machine of state police, such as the Greek Church became under the earlier Christian emperors, and when Puritans were inclined to smother all religious enthusiasm beneath their intense zeal for cold, rigid scholastic dogmas and confessions of faith. The early Friends came proclaiming a Divine power still present, a Church of God still energised and inspired as of old, and it was a revelation for many an earnest soul. But they made a great mistake, and pushed a great truth to a pernicious extreme, when they taught that this inspiration was inconsistent with forethought and study on the part of their teachers as to the substance and character of their public ministrations. The Society of Friends teaches that men should speak forth to their assemblies just what the Holy Ghost reveals on the spot, without any effort on their own part, such as meditation and study involve. They have acted without a promise, and they have fared accordingly. That Society has been noted for its philanthropy, for the peaceful, gentle lives of its members; but it has not been noted for expository power, and its public teachers have held but a low place among those well-instructed scribes who bring forth out of God's treasures things new and old.

Expositors of Scripture, teachers of Divine truth, whether in the public congregation or in a Sunday-school class, must prepare themselves by thought, study, and prayer; then, having made the way of the Lord clear, and removed the hindrances which barred His path, we may humbly trust that the Holy Ghost will speak by us and through us, because we honour Him by our self-denial, and cease to offer burnt sacrifices unto the Lord of that which cost us nothing.

IV. The address of St. Peter to the Sanhedrin is marked by the same characteristics as we find in those directed to the people. It is kindly, for though the Apostles could speak sternly and severely, just as their Master did at times, yet they have left in this special direction an example to public speakers and public teachers of truth in every age. They strove first of all to put themselves in sympathy as much as possible with their audience. They did not despise the art of the rhetorician which teaches a speaker to begin by conciliating the good feelings of his audience towards himself. To the people St. Peter began, "Ye men of Israel;" he recog-

nises their cherished privileges, as well as their sacred memories,—“Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers.” To the bitterly hostile audience of the Sanhedrin, where the Sadducees largely predominated, Peter's exordium is profoundly respectful and courteous, “Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel. The Apostles and the earliest Evangelists did not despise human feelings or outrage human sentiment when setting out to preach Christ crucified. We have known men so wrong-headed that they were never happy unless their efforts to do good or spread their peculiar opinions eventuated in a riot. When evangelistic work or any kind of attempt to spread opinions evokes violent opposition, that very opposition often arises from the injudicious conduct of the promoters; and then when the opposition is once evoked or a riot caused, charity departs, passion and violent feelings are aroused, and all hope of good evaporates for the time. There was profound practical wisdom in that command of our Lord to His Apostles, “When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another,” even taking the matter only from the standpoint of a man anxious to spread his peculiar sentiments.

The Apostles' address was kindly, but it was plain-spoken. The Sanhedrin were sitting as a board of inquisitors. They did not deny the miracle which had been wrought. We are scarcely fit judges of the attitude of mind occupied by an Eastern, specially by an Eastern Jew of those earlier ages, when confronted with a miracle. He did not deny the facts brought under his notice. He was too well acquainted with magic and the strange performances of its professors to do so. He merely inquired as to the sources of the power, whether they were Divine or diabolical. “By what power or by what name have ye done this?” was a very natural inquiry in the mouth of an ecclesiastical body such as the Sanhedrin was. It was disturbed by facts, for which no explanation such as their philosophy furnished could account. It was upset in its calculations just as, to this day, the performances of Indian jugglers or the weird wonders of hypnotism upset the calculations of the hard, narrow man who has restricted all his investigations to some one special branch of science, and has so contracted his horizon that he thinks there is nothing in heaven or in earth which his philosophy cannot explain. We should mark the expression, “By what *name* have ye done this?” for it gives us a glimpse into Jewish life and practice. The Jews were accustomed in their incantations to use several kinds of names; sometimes those of patriarchs, sometimes the name of Solomon, and sometimes that of the Eternal Jehovah Himself. Of late years vast quantities of Jewish and Gnostic manuscripts have come to light in Egypt and Syria containing various titles and forms used by the Jewish magicians and the earlier Christian heretics, who were largely imbued with Jewish notions. It is quite in keeping with what we know of the spirit of the age from other sources that the Sanhedrin should ask, “By what power or by what name have ye done this?” While again, when we turn to the book of the Acts of the Apostles itself we find an illustration of the council's inquiry in the celebrated case of the seven sons of Sceva, the Jewish priest at Ephesus, who strove to use for their own magi-



cal purposes the Divine name of Jesus Christ, and suffered for their temerity. St. Peter's reply to the question of the court proves that the Christian Church adopted in all its Divine offices, whether in the working of miracles then or of baptism and of ordination, as still, the invocation of the Sacred Name, after the Jewish model. The Church still baptises and ordains in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Christ Himself had adopted the formula for baptism, and the Church has extended it to ordination, pleading thus before God and man alike the Divine power by which alone St. Peter healed the cripple, and the Church sends forth its ministers to carry on Christ's work in the world.

St. Peter's address was, as we have already said, very kindly, but very bold and plain-spoken in setting forth the power of Christ's name. He had learnt by his Jewish training the tremendous importance and solemnity of names. Moses at the bush would know God's name before he went as His messenger to the captive Israelites. On Sinai God Himself had placed reverence towards His name as one of the fundamental truths of religion. Prophet and psalmist had conspired together to teach St. Peter that holy and reverend was the name of God, and to impress upon him thus the power and meaning which lies in Christ's name, and indeed in all names, though names are things we count so trifling. St. Peter dwells upon this point all through his addresses. To the people he had said, "His name, through faith in His name, hath made this man strong." To the rulers it was the same. It was "by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, this man doth stand here before you whole." "There is none other name under heaven whereby we must be saved." The Sanhedrin understand the importance of this point, and tell the Apostles they must not teach in this name. St. Peter pointedly refuses, and prays, when come to his own company, "that wonders may be done through the name of Thy holy servant Jesus."

St. Peter realised the sanctity and the power of God's name, whether revealed in its ancient form of Jehovah or its New Testament form of Jesus Christ. Well would it be if the same Divine reverence found a larger place amongst ourselves. Irreverence towards the sacred name is far too prevalent; and even when men do not use God's name in a profane way, there is too much lightness in the manner in which even religious men permit themselves to utter that name which is the expression to man of supreme holiness,—“God bless us,” “Lord help us and save.” How constantly do even pious people garnish their conversations and their epistles with such phrases or with the symbols D. V., without any real feeling that they are thereby appealing to Him who was and is and is to come, the Eternal. The name of God is still holy as of old, and the name of Jesus is still powerful to calm and soothe and bless as of old, and Christian people should sanctify those great names in their conversation with the world.

St. Peter was bold because he was daily comprehending more and more of the meaning of Christ's work and mission, was gaining a clearer insight into the dignity of His person and was experiencing in himself the truth of His supernatural promises. How could a man help being bold, who felt the Spirit's power within, and

really held with intense belief that there was salvation in none other save Christ? Personal experience of religion alone can impart strength and courage and boldness to endure, to suffer, and to testify. St. Peter was exclusive in his views. He would not have suited those easy-going souls who now think one religion just as good as another, and consequently do not regard it as of the slightest moment whether a man be a follower of Christ or of Mahomet. The earliest Christians had none of this diluted faith. They believed that as there was only one God, so there was only one Mediator between God and man, and they realised the tremendous importance of preaching this Mediator. The Apostles, however, must be cleared from a misconception under which they have at times suffered. St. Peter proclaims Christ to the Sanhedrin as the only means of salvation. In his address to Cornelius the centurion of Cæsarea, he declares that in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him. These passages and these two declarations appear inconsistent. Their inconsistency is only superficial, however, as Bishop Burnet has well explained in his exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles, a book not read very much in these times.\* St. Peter taught exclusive salvation through Christ. Christ is the only means, the only channel and way by which God confers salvation. Christ's work is the one meritorious cause which gains spiritual blessing for man. But then, while there is salvation only in Christ, many persons may be saved by Christ who know not of Him consciously; else what shall we say or think about infants and idiots? It is only by Christ and through Christ and for His sake that any soul can be saved. He is the only door of salvation, He is the way as well as the truth and the life. But then it is not for us to pronounce how far the saving merits of Christ may be applied and His saving power extend. St. Peter knew and taught that Jesus Christ was the one Mediator, and that by His name alone salvation could be obtained. Yet he did not hesitate to declare as regards Cornelius the centurion, that in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him. It ought to be sufficient for us, as it was for the Apostles, to believe that the knowledge of Christ is life eternal, while satisfied to leave all other problems in the hands of Eternal Love.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE COMMUNITY OF GOODS.

Acts iv. 32-35.

THE community of goods and its results next claim our attention in the course of this sacred record of primitive Church life. The gift of tongues and this earliest attempt at Christian communism were two special features of apostolic, or perhaps we should rather say of Jerusalem, Christianity. The gift of tongues we find at one or two other places, at Cæsarea on the first conversion of the Gentiles, at Ephesus and at Corinth. It then disappeared. The community of goods was tried at Jerusalem. It lasted

\* See Burnet's exposition of the eighteenth Article in his commentary on the Thirty-Nine Articles.



there a very short time, and then faded from the ordinary practice of the Christian Church. The record of this vain attempt and its manifold results embodies many a lesson suitable to our modern Christianity.

I. The book of the Acts of the Apostles in its earliest chapters relates the story of the triumph of the Cross; it also tells of the mistakes made by its adherents. The Scriptures prove their Divine origin, and display the secret inspiration and guidance of their writers, by their thorough impartiality. If in the Old Testament they are depicting the history of an Abraham or of a David, they do not, after the example of human biographies, tell of their virtues and throw the mantle of obscurity over their vices and crimes. If in the New Testament they are relating the story of apostolic labours, they record the bad as well as the good, and hesitate not to tell of the dissimulation of St. Peter, the hot temper and the bitter disputes of a Paul and a Barnabas.

It is a notable circumstance that, in ancient and modern times alike, men have stumbled at this sacred impartiality. They have mistaken the nature of inspiration, and have busied themselves to clear the character of men like David and the holy Apostles, explaining away the plainest facts,—the lie of Abraham, the adultery of David, the weaknesses and infirmities of the Apostles. They have forgotten the principle involved in the declaration, "Elijah was a man of like passions with ourselves"; and have been so jealous for the honour of scriptural characters that they have made their history unreal, worthless as a living example. St. Jerome, to take but one instance, was a commentator upon Scripture whose expositions are of the greatest value, specially because he lived and worked amid the scenes where Scripture history was written, and while yet living tradition could be used to illustrate the sacred narrative. St. Jerome applied this deceptive method to the dissimulation of St. Peter at Antioch of which St. Paul tells us in the Galatians; maintaining, in opposition to St. Augustine,\* that St. Peter was not a dissembler at all, and that the whole scene at Antioch was a piece of pious acting, got up between the Apostles in order that St. Paul might have the opportunity of condemning Judaizing practices. This is an illustration of the tendency to which I am referring. Men will uphold, not merely the character of the Scriptures, but the characters of the writers of Scripture. Yet how clearly do the Sacred Writings distinguish between these things; how clearly they show that God imparted His treasures in earthen vessels, vessels that were sometimes very earthy indeed, for while in one place they give us the Psalms of David, with all their treasures of spiritual joy, hope, penitence, they in another place give us the very words of the letter written by King David ordering the murder of Uriah the Hittite. This jealousy, which refuses to admit the fallibility and weakness of scriptural personages, has been applied to the doctrine of the community of goods which finds place in the passage under review. Some expositors will not allow that it was a mistake at all; they view the Church at Jerusalem as divinely guided by

the Holy Spirit even in matters of temporal policy; they ascribe to it an infallibility greater and wider than any claimed for the Roman Pontiff. He claims infallibility in matters pertaining to faith and morals, when speaking as universal doctor and teacher of the Universal Church; but those writers invest the Church at Jerusalem with infallibility on every question, whether spiritual or temporal, sacred or secular, because the Holy Ghost had been poured out upon the twelve Apostles on the day of Pentecost. Now it is quite evident that neither the Church of Jerusalem nor the Apostles themselves were guided by an inspiration which rendered them infallible upon all questions. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit which was granted to them was a gift which left all their faculties in precisely the same state as they were before the descent of the Spirit. The Apostles could make moral mistakes, as Peter did at Antioch; they were not infallible in forecasting the future, as St. Paul proved when at Ephesus he told the Ephesian elders that he should not again visit the Church, while, indeed, he spent much time there in after years. The whole early Church was mistaken on the important questions of the calling of the Gentiles, the binding nature of the Levitical law, and the time of Christ's second coming. The Church of Jerusalem, till the conversion of Cornelius, was completely mistaken as to the true nature of the Christian dispensation. They regarded it, not as the new and final revelation which was to supersede all others; they thought of it merely as a new sect within the bounds of Judaism.

It was a similar mistake which led to the community of goods. We can trace the genesis and upgrowth of the idea. It cannot be denied that the earliest Christians expected the immediate return of Christ. This expectation brought with it a very natural paralysis of business life and activity. We have seen the same result happening again and again. At Thessalonica St. Paul had to deal with it, as we have already noted in the second of these lectures. Some of the Thessalonians laboured under a misunderstanding as to St. Paul's true teaching: they thought that Jesus Christ was immediately about to appear, and they gave up work and labour under the pretence of preparing for His second coming. Then St. Paul comes sharply down upon this false practical deduction which they had drawn from his teaching, and proclaims the law, "If any man will not work, neither shall he eat." We have already spoken of the danger which might attend such a time. Here we behold another danger which did practically ensue and bring forth evil fruit. The first Christian Pentecost and the days succeeding it were a period of strained expectation, a season of intense religious excitement, which naturally led to the community of goods. There was no apostolic rule or law laid down in the matter. It seems to have been a course of action to which the converts spontaneously resorted, as the logical deduction from two principles which they held; first, their brotherhood and union in Christ; secondly, the nearness of Christ's second advent. The time was short. The Master had passed into the invisible world whence He would shortly reappear. Why should they not then, as brethren in Christ, have one common purse, and spend the whole time in waiting and watching for that loved presence? This seems a

\* See an interesting letter from St. Augustine to St. Jerome on this question in the "Letters" of St. Augustine (Clark's edition), vol. i. pp. 30-2. With which compare Bishop Lightfoot on "Galatians," p. 128.



natural explanation of the origin of a line of policy which has been often appealed to in the practical life of modern Europe as an example for modern Christians; and yet, when we examine it more closely, we can see that this book of the Acts of the Apostles, while it tells of their mistake, carries with it the correction of the error into which these earliest disciples fell. The community of goods was adopted in no other Church. At Corinth, Ephesus, Rome, we hear nothing of it in those primitive times. No Christian sect or Church has ever tried to revive it, save the monastic orders, who adopted it for the special purpose of cutting their members off from any connection with the world of life and action; and, in later times still, the wild, fanatical Anabaptists at the Reformation period, who thought, like the Christians of Jerusalem, that the kingdom of God, as they fancied it, was immediately about to appear. The Church of Jerusalem, as the apostolic history shows us, reaped the natural results of this false step. They adopted the principles of communism; they lost hold of that principle of individual life and all exertion which lies at the very root of all civilisation and all advancement, and they fell, as the natural result, into the direst poverty. There was no reason in the nature of its composition why the Jerusalem Church should have been more poverty-stricken than the Churches of Ephesus, Philippi, or Corinth. Slaves and very humble folk constituted the staple of these Churches. At Jerusalem a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith, and the priests were, as a class, in easy circumstances. Slaves cannot at Jerusalem have constituted that large element of the Church which they did in the great Greek and Roman cities, simply because slavery never reached among the Jews the same development as in the Gentile world. The Jews, as a nation, were a people among whom there was a widely diffused comfort, and the earliest Church at Jerusalem must have fairly represented the nation. There was nothing to make the mother Church of Christendom that pauper community we find it to have been all through St. Paul's ministry, save the one initial mistake, which doubtless the Church authorities found it very hard afterwards to retrieve; for when men get into the habit of living upon alms it is very difficult to restore the habits of healthy independence.

II. This incident is, however, rich in teaching for the Church of every age, and that in very various directions. It is a significant warning for the mission field. Missionary Churches should strive after a healthy independence amongst their members. It is, of course, absolutely necessary that missionaries should strive to supply temporal employment to their converts in places and under circumstances where a profession of Christianity cuts them off at once from all communication with their old friends and neighbours. The primitive Church found it necessary to give such temporal relief, and yet had to guard against its abuse; and we have been far too remiss in looking for guidance to those early centuries when the whole Church was necessarily one great missionary organisation. The Apostolic Canons and Constitutions are documents which throw much light on many questions which now press for solution in the mission field. They pretend to be the exact words of the Apostles, but are evidently, the work of a later

age. They date back in their present shape, at latest, to the third or fourth century, as is evident from the fact that they contain elaborate rules for the treatment of martyrs and confessors,—and there were no martyrs after that time,—directing that every effort should be made to render them comfort, support, and sympathy. These Constitutions prove that the Church in the third century was one mighty co-operative institution, and an important function of the bishop was the direction of that co-operation. The second chapter of the fourth book of the Apostolic Constitution lays down, "Do you therefore, O bishops, be solicitous about the maintenance of orphans, being in nothing wanting to them; exhibiting to the orphans the care of parents; to the widows the care of husbands; to the artificer, work; to the stranger, an house; to the hungry, food; to the thirsty, drink; to the naked, clothing; to the sick, visitation; to the prisoners, assistance." But these same Constitutions recognise equally clearly the danger involved in such a course. The wisdom of the early Church saw and knew how easily alms promiscuously bestowed sap the roots of independence, and taught therefore, with equal explicitness, the absolute necessity for individual exertion, the duty of Christian toil and labour; urging the example of the Apostles themselves, as in the sixty-third Constitution of the second book, where they are represented as exhorting, "Let the young persons of the Church endeavour to minister diligently in all necessities; mind your business with all becoming seriousness, that so you may always have sufficient to support yourselves and those that are needy, and not burden the Church of God. For we ourselves, besides our attention to the Word of the Gospel, do not neglect our inferior employments; for some of us are fishermen, some tent-makers, some husbandmen, that so we may never be idle." In the modern mission field there will often be occasions when, as in ancient times, the profession of Christianity and the submission of the converts to baptism will involve the loss of all things. And, under such circumstances, Christian love, such as burned of old in the hearts of God's people and led them to enact the rules we have now quoted, will still lead and compel the Church in its organised capacity to lend temporal assistance to those that are in danger of starvation for Christ's sake; but no missionary effort can be in a healthy condition where all, or the greater portion, of the converts are so dependent upon the funds of the mission that if the funds were withdrawn the apparent results would vanish into thin air. Such missions are utterly unlike the missions of the apostolic Church; for the converts of the apostolic age were made by men who went forth without purse or scrip, who could not give temporal assistance even had they desired to do so, and whose great object ever was to develop in their followers a healthy spirit of Christian manliness and honest independence.

III. Then, again, this passage teaches a much-needed lesson to the Church at home about the methods of poor relief and almsgiving. "Blessed," says the Psalmist, "is he that considereth the poor." He does not say, "Blessed is he that giveth money to the poor," but, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor." Well-directed, wise, prudent almsgiving is a good and beneficial thing, but indiscriminate almsgiving;



almsgiving bestowed without care, thought, and consideration such as the Psalmist suggests, brings with it far more evil than it prevents. The Church of Jerusalem very soon had experience of these evils. Jealousies and quarrels soon sprang up even where Apostles were ministering and supernatural gifts of the Spirit were present,—“There arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations;” and it has been ever since the experience of those called to deal with questions of temporal relief and the distribution of alms, that no classes are more suspicious and more quarrelsome than those who are in receipt of such assistance. The chaplains and managers of almshouses, asylums, charitable funds, and workhouses know this to their cost, and oftentimes make a bitter acquaintance with that evil spirit which burst forth even in the mother Church of Jerusalem. Time necessarily hangs heavy upon the recipients’ hands, forethought and care are removed and cease to engage the mind, and people having nothing else to do begin to quarrel. But this was not the only evil which arose: hypocrisy and ostentation, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, deceit, thriftlessness, and idleness showed themselves at Jerusalem, Thessalonica, and other places, as the Epistles of St. Paul amply testify. And so it has been in the experience of the modern Church. I know myself of whole districts where almsgiving has quite demoralised the poor and eaten the heart out of their religion, so that they value religious ministrations, not for the sake of the religion that is taught, but solely for the sake of the temporal relief that accompanies it. I know of a district where, owing to the want of organisation in religious effort and the shattered and broken character of Protestant Christianity, the poor people are visited and relieved by six or seven competing religious communities, so that a clever person can make a very fair income by a judicious manipulation of the different visitors. It is evident that such visitations are doing evil instead of good, and the labour and money expended are worse than useless. The proper organisation of charitable relief is one of the desirable objects the Church should set before it. The great point to be aimed at should be not so much the ministration of direct assistance to the people as the development of the spirit of self-help. And here comes in the action of the Christian state. The institution of the Post Office Savings Bank, where the State guarantees the safety of the depositor’s money, seems a direct exposition and embodiment of the principle which underlay the community of goods in the apostolic Church. That principle was a generous, unselfish, Christlike principle. The principle was right, though the particular shape which the principle took was a mistaken one. Experience has taught the Church of Christ a wiser course, and now the system of State-guaranteed Savings Banks enables the Church to lead the poor committed to her care into wiser courses. Parochial and congregational Savings Banks ought to be attached to all Christian organisations, so as to teach the poor the industrial lessons which they need. We have known a district in a most thriftless neighbourhood where immense sums used to be wasted in indiscriminate almsgiving, and yet where the people, like the woman in the Gospels, were never one whit the better, but rather grew worse. We

have seen such a district in the course of a few years quite regenerated in temporal matters, simply by the action of what is called a parochial Penny Savings Bank. Previously to its institution the slightest fall of snow brought heart-rending appeals for coal funds, blankets, and food; while a few years of its operation banished coal funds and pauperism in every shape, simply by teaching the people the magic law of thrift, and by developing within them the love and the power of self-respecting and industrious independence. And yet efforts in this direction will not be destructive of Christian charity. They tend not to dry up the springs of Christian love. Charity is indeed a blessing to the giver, and we should never desire to see the opportunity wanting for its display. Ill indeed would be the world’s state if we had no longer the poor, the sick, the needy, with us. Our sinful human nature requires its unselfish powers to be kept in action, or else it quickly subsides into a state of unwholesome stagnation. Poor people need to be taught habits of saving, and this teaching will require time and trouble and expense. The clergy and their congregations may teach the poor thrift by offering a much higher interest than the Post Office supplies, while, at the same time, the funds are all deposited in the State Savings Bank. That higher interest will often demand as much money as the doles previously bestowed in the shape of mere gifts of coal and food. But then what a difference in the result! The mere dole has, for the most part, a demoralising tendency, while the money spent in the other direction permanently elevates and blesses.\*

IV. But there is a more important lesson still to be derived from this incident in the apostolic Church. The community of goods failed in that Church when tried under the most favourable circumstances, terminating in the permanent degradation of the Christian community at Jerusalem; just as similar efforts must ever fail, no matter how broad the field upon which they may be tried or how powerful the forces which may be arrayed on their behalf. Christian legislatures of our own age may learn a lesson of warning against perilous experiments in a communistic direction from the disastrous failure in Jerusalem; and there is a real danger in this respect from the tendency of human nature to rush to extremes. Protestantism and the Reformation accentuated the individual and individual independence. The feeling thus taught in religion reacted on the world of life and action, developing an intensity of individualism in the political world which paralysed the efforts which the state alone could make in the various matters of sanitary education and social reform. In the last generation Maurice and Kingsley and men of their school raised in opposition the banner of Christian socialism, because they saw clearly that men had run too far in the direction of individualism,—so far, indeed, that they were inclined to forget the great lesson taught by Christianity, that under the new law we are members one of another, and that all members belong to one body, and that body is Christ. Men are so narrow that they can for the most part

\* It is not generally known that the Post Office offers special facilities for the establishment of such Penny Savings Banks as I advocate. The Post Office will supply books for depositors and permit a deposit account to be opened without any limit. I have seen in my own parish the beneficial working of such an institution, increasing annually in its results for the last twenty years.



take only one view at a time, and so now they are inclined to push Christian socialism to the same extreme as at Jerusalem, and to forget that there is a great truth in individualism as there is another great truth in Christian socialism. Dr. Newman in his valuable but almost forgotten work on the Prophetical Office of the Church defined the position of the English Church as being a *Media Via*, a mean between two extremes. Whatever may be said upon other topics, the office of the Christian Church is most certainly a *Via Media*, a mean between the two opposite extremes of socialism and individualism. Much good has been effected of late years by legislation based upon essentially socialistic ideas. Reformatory and industrial schools, to take but one instance, are socialistic in their foundations and in their tendencies. The whole body of the state undertakes in them responsibilities and duties which God intended individuals to discharge, but which individuals persistently neglect, to the injury of their innocent offspring, and of society at large. Yet even in this simple experiment we can see the germs of the same evils which sprang up at Jerusalem. We have seen this tendency appearing in connection with the Industrial School system, and have known parents who could educate and train their children in family life encouraged by this well-intentioned legislation to fling their responsibilities over upon the State, and neglecting their offspring because they were convinced that in doing so they were not only saving their own pockets, but also doing better for their children than they themselves could. It is just the same, and has ever been the same, with all similar legislation. It requires to be most narrowly watched. Human nature is intensely lazy and intensely selfish. God has laid down the law of individual effort and individual responsibility, and while we should strive against the abuses of that law, we should watch with equal care against the opposite abuses. Foundling hospitals as they were worked in the last century, for instance, form an object-lesson of the dangers inherent in such methods of action. Benevolent persons in the last century pitied the condition of poor children left as foundlings. There was, some sixty years ago, an institution in Dublin of this kind, which was supported by the state. There was a box in which an infant could be placed at any hour of the day or night; a bell was rung, and by the action of a turn-stile the infant was received into the institution. But experience soon taught the same lesson as at Jerusalem. The Foundling Hospital may have temporarily relieved some deserving cases and occasionally prevented some very painful scenes, but the broad results upon society at large were so bad, immorality was so increased, the sense of parental responsibility was so weakened, that the state was compelled to terminate its existence at a very large expense. Socialism when pushed to an extreme must necessarily work out in bad results, and that because there is one constant and fixed quantity which the socialist forgets. Human nature changes not; human nature is corrupt, and must remain corrupt until the end, and so long as the corruption of human nature remains the best-conceived plans of socialism must necessarily fail.

Yet the Jerusalem idea of a voluntary community of goods was a noble one, and sprang

from an unselfish root. It was purely voluntary indeed. There was no compulsion upon any to adopt it. "Not one of them said that aught that he possessed was his own," is St. Luke's testimony on the point. "While it remained did it not remain thine own? And after it was sold was it not in thy power?" are St. Peter's words, clearly testifying that this Christian communism was simply the result and outcome of loving hearts who, under the influence of an overmastering emotion, had cast prudence to the winds. The communism of Jerusalem may have been unwise, but it was the proof of generous and devout spirits. It was an attempt, too, to realise the conditions of the new life in the new heaven and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, while still the old heaven and the old earth remained. It was an enthusiasm, a high, a holy, and a noble enthusiasm; and though it failed in some respects, still the enthusiasm begotten of fervent Christian love succeeded in another direction, for it enabled the Apostles "with great power to give witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus." The union of these two points in the sacred narrative has profound spiritual teaching for the Church of Christ. Unselfishness in worldly things, enthusiasm about the kingdom of Christ, fervent love to the brethren, are brought into nearest contact and united in closest bonds with the possession of special spiritual power over the hearts of the unbelievers. And then, again, the unselfishness existed amongst the body of the Church, the mass of the people at large. We are sure that the Apostles were leaders in the acts of self-denial. No great work is carried out where the natural and divinely-sent leaders hang back. But it is the love and enthusiasm of the mass of the people which excite St. Luke's notice, and which he illustrates by the contrasted cases of Barnabas and Ananias; and he connects this unselfish enthusiasm of the people with the possession of great power by the Apostles. Surely we can read a lesson suitable for the Church of all ages in this collocation. The law of interaction prevails between clergy and people still as it did between the Apostles and people of old. The true minister of Christ will frequently bear before the throne of God those souls with whom the Holy Ghost has entrusted him, and without such personal intercession he cannot expect real success in his work. But then, on the other hand, this passage suggests to us that enthusiasm, fervent faith, unselfish love on the people's part are the conditions of ministerial power with human souls. A people filled with Christ's love, and abounding in enthusiasm, even by a mere natural process produce power in their leaders, for the hearts of the same leaders beat quicker and their tongues speak more forcibly because they feel behind them the immense motive power of hallowed faith and sacred zeal. But we believe in a still higher blessing. When people are unselfish, brimming over with generous Christian love, it calls down a supernatural, a Divine power. The Pentecostal Spirit of love again descends, and in roused hearts and converted souls and purified and consecrated intellects rewards with a blessing such as they desire the men and women who long for the salvation of their brethren, and are willing, like these apostolic Christians, to sacrifice their dearest and their best for it.



## CHAPTER XI.

*HONESTY AND PRETENCE IN THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH.*

ACTS iv. 36, 37; vi. 1-6.

THE exact period in the history of the apostolic Church at which we have now arrived is a most interesting one. We stand at the very first origin of a new development in Christian life and thought. Let us observe it well, for the whole future of the Church is bound up with it. Christianity was at the beginning simply a sect of Judaism. It is plain that the Apostles at first thus regarded it. They observed Jewish rites, they joined in the temple and synagogue worship, they restricted salvation and God's favour to the children of Abraham, and merely added belief in Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Messiah to the common Jewish faith. The spirit of God was indeed speaking through the Apostles, leading them, as it led St. Peter on the day of Pentecost, to speak words with a meaning and scope far beyond their thoughts. They, like the prophets of old, knew not as yet what manner of things the Spirit which was in them did signify.

"As little children lisp, and tell of Heaven,  
So thoughts beyond their thought to those high bards  
were given."

Their speech had a grander and wider application than they themselves dreamt of; but the power of prejudice and education was far too great even for the Apostles, and so, though the nobility and profuseness of God's mercy were revealed and the plenteousness of His grace was announced by St. Peter himself, yet the glory of the Divine gift was still unrecognised. Jerusalem, the Temple, the Old Covenant, Israel after the flesh,—these things as yet bounded and limited the horizon of Christ's Church. How were the new ideas to gain an entrance? How was the Church to rise to a sense of the magnificence and universality of its mission? Joseph, who by the Apostles was surnamed Barnabas, emerges upon the scene and supplies the answer, proving himself in very deed a son of consolation, because he became the occasion of consoling the masses of mankind with that truest comfort, the peace of God which passes all understanding. Let us see how this came about.

I. The Christian leaders belonged originally to the extreme party in Judaism. The Jews were at this time divided into two sections. There was the Hebrew party on the one hand; extreme Nationalists as we might call them. They hated everything foreign. They clung to the soil of Palestine, to its language and to its customs. They trained up their children in an abhorrence of Greek civilisation, and could see nothing good in it. This party was very unprogressive, very narrow-minded, and, therefore, unfit to recognise the developments of God's purposes. The Galileans were very prominent among them. They lived in a provincial district, remote from the influences of the great centres of thought and life, and missed, therefore, the revelations of God's mind which He is evermore making through the course of His providential dealings with mankind. The Galileans furnished the majority of the earliest Chris-

tian leaders, and they were not fitted from their narrowness to grasp the Divine intentions with respect to Christianity and its mission. What a lesson for every age do we behold in this intellectual and spiritual defect of the Galileans. They were conscientious, earnest, devout, spiritually-minded men. Christ loved them as such, and devoted Himself to their instruction. But they were one-sided and illiberal. Their very provincialism, which had sheltered them from Sadduceism and unbelief, had filled them with blind prejudices, and as the result had rendered them unable to read aright the mind of God and the development of His purposes. Man, alas! is a very weak creature, and human nature is very narrow. Piety is no guarantee for wisdom and breadth, and strong faith in God's dealings in the past often hinders men from realising and obeying the Divine guidance and the evolution of His purposes amid the changed circumstances of the present. The Galilean leaders were best fitted to testify with unfaltering zeal to the miracles and resurrection of Christ. They were not best fitted to lead the Church into the possession of the Gentiles.

There was another party among the Jews whom God had trained by the guidance of His providence for this purpose. The Acts of the Apostles casts a strong and comforting light back upon the history of the Lord's dealings with the Jews ever since the days of the Babylonish captivity. We can see in the story told in the Acts the reason why God permitted the overthrow of Jerusalem by the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, and the apparent defeat for the time of His own designs towards the chosen people. The story of the dispersion is a standing example how wonderfully God evolves good out of seeming ill, making all things work together for the good of His Church. The dispersion prepared a section of the Jews, by travel, by foreign civilisation, by culture, and by that breadth of mind and sympathy which is thereby produced, to be mediators between the Hebrew party with all their narrowness and the masses of the Gentile world whom the strict Jews would fain have shut out from the hope of God's mercy. This liberal and progressive party is called in the Acts of the Apostles the Hellenists. They were looked at askance by the more old-fashioned Hebrews. They were Jews, children of Abraham indeed, of the genuine stock of Israel. As such they had a true standing-ground within the Jewish fold, and as true Jews could exercise their influence from within much more effectually than if they stood without; for it has been well remarked by a shrewd observer, that every party, religious or political, is much more powerfully affected by movements springing from within than by attacks directed from without. An explosive operates with much more destructive force when acting from within or underneath a fortification than when brought into play from outside. Such was the Hellenistic party. No one could deny their true Jewish character, but they had been liberalised by their heaven-sent contact with foreigners and foreign lands; and hence it is that we discern in the Hellenistic party, and specially in Joseph, who by the Apostles was surnamed Barnabas, the beginnings of the glorious ingathering of the Gentiles, the very first rift in the thick dark cloud of prejudice which as yet kept back even the Apostles themselves from realising the great object of the gospel dispensation.



The Hellenists, with their wealth, their culture, their new ideas, their sense and value of Greek thought, were the bridge by which the spiritual life, hitherto wrapped in Jewish swaddling clothes, was to pass over to the masses of the Gentile world. The community of goods led Joseph Barnabas to dedicate his substance to the same noble cause of unselfishness. That dedication led to disputes between Hellenists and Hebrews, and these disputes occasioned the election of the seven deacons, who, in part, at least, belonged to the more liberal section. Among these deacons we find St. Stephen, whose teaching and martyrdom were directly followed by St. Paul and his conversion, and St. Paul was the Apostle of the Gentiles and the vindicator of Christian freedom and Christian liberty. St. Barnabas and his act of self-denial and self-sacrifice in surrendering his landed estate are thus immediately connected with St. Paul by direct historic contact, even if they had not been subsequently associated as joint Apostles and messengers of the Churches in their first missionary journeys; while again the mistaken policy of communism is overruled to the world's abiding benefit and blessing. How wonderful, indeed, are the Lord's doings towards the children of men!

II. We have thus suggested one of the main lines of thought which run through the first half of this book of the Acts. Let us now look a little more particularly at this Joseph Barnabas who was the occasion of this great, this new departure. We learn then, upon consulting the sacred text, that Joseph was a Levite, a man of Cyprus by race; he belonged, that is, to the class among the Jews whose interests were bound up with the maintenance of the existing order of things; and yet he had become a convert to the belief proclaimed by the Apostles. At the same time, while we give full credit to this Levite for his action, we must not imagine that either priests or Levites or Jews at that period fully realised all the consequences of their decisions. We find that men at every age take steps blindly, without thoroughly realising all the results which logically and necessarily flow forth from them. Men in religious, political, social matters are blind and cannot see afar off. It is only step by step that the purposes of God dawn upon them, and Joseph Barnabas, the Levite of Cyprus, was no exception to this universal rule. He was not only a Levite, but a native of Cyprus, for Cyprus was then a great stronghold and resort of the Jewish race. It continued to be a great centre of Jewish influence for long afterwards. In the next century, for instance, a great Jewish rebellion burst forth wherever the Jews were strong enough. They rose in Palestine against the power of the Emperor Hadrian, and under their leader Barcochba vindicated the ancient reputation of the nation for desperate and daring courage; while, in sympathy with their brethren on the mainland, the Jews in Cyprus seized their arms and massacred a vast multitude of the Greek and Roman settlers, numbering, it is said, two hundred and forty thousand persons. The concourse of Jews to Cyprus in the time of the Apostles is easily explained. Augustus Cæsar was a great friend and patron of Herod the Great, and he leased the great copper mines of the island to that Herod, exacting a royalty upon their produce, as we learn from Josephus, the well-known Jewish historian ("Antiqq.," xvi. iv. 5). It was only to be expected, then, that

when a Jewish monarch was leaseholder and manager of the great mining industry of the island, his Jewish subjects should flock thither, and it was very natural that amongst the crowds who sought Cyprus there should be found a minister of the Jewish faith whose tribal descent as a Levite reminded them of Palestine, and of the City of God, and of the Temple of Jehovah, and of its solemn, stately worship.\* This residence of Barnabas in Cyprus accounts for his landed property, which he had the right to sell just as he liked. A Levite in Palestine could not, according to the law of Moses when strictly construed, possess any private landed estate save in a Levitical city. Meyer, a German commentator of great reputation, has indeed suggested that Jer. xxxii. 7, where Jeremiah is asked to redeem his cousin's field in the suburbs of Anathoth, proves that a member of the tribe of Levi could possess landed estate in Palestine. He therefore concludes that the old explanation that the landed property of Barnabas was in Cyprus, not in Palestine, could not stand. But the simple fact is that even the cleverest German expositors are not familiar with the text of their Bibles, for had Meyer been thus familiar he would have remembered that Anathoth was a city belonging to the priests and the tribe of Levi, and that the circumstance of Jeremiah the priest possessing a right to landed property in Anathoth was no proof whatsoever that he could hold landed property anywhere else, and, above all, affords no ground for the conclusion that he could dispose of it in the absolute style which Barnabas here displayed.† We conclude then that the action of Barnabas on this occasion dealt with his landed estate in Cyprus, the country where he was born, where he was well-known, and where his memory is even still cherished on account of the work he there performed in conjunction with St. Paul.

III. Let us see what else we can glean concerning this person thus prominent in the early Church, first for his generosity, and then for his missionary character and success. It is indeed one of the most fruitful and interesting lines upon which Bible study can be pursued thus to trace the scattered features of the less known and less prominent characters of Scripture, and see wherein God's grace specially abounded in them.

The very personal appearance of Barnabas can be recalled by the careful student of this book. Though it lies a little out of our way, we shall note the circumstance, as it will help us to form a more lively image of Barnabas, the Son of Consolation. The two Apostles, Paul and Barnabas, were on their first missionary tour when they came to the city of Lystra in Lycaonia. There the multitude, astonished at the miracle wrought upon the cripple by St. Paul, attempted to pay divine honours to the two Christian missionaries. "They called Barnabas Jupiter, and Paul Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker." It must have been their physical characteristics as well as the mode of address used by the Apostles which led to these names; and from

\* Philo was a contemporary of the Apostles. He has left us many works dealing with this period. He speaks of the Jews of Cyprus in the account of his embassy to the Emperor Caius Caligula. See Milman's "History of Jews," iii. 111, 112, and Conybeare and Howson's "Life of St. Paul," chap. v.

† See Lightfoot's "Horæ Heb.," Acts iv. 36; cf. Josh. xxi. 18.



the extant records of antiquity we know that Jupiter was always depicted as a man with a fine commanding presence, while Mercury, the god of eloquent speech, was a more insignificant figure. Jupiter, therefore, struck the Lycaonian people as the fittest name for the taller and more imposing-looking Apostle, while St. Paul, who was in bodily presence contemptible, was designated by the name of the active and restless Mercury. His character again shines through every recorded action of St. Barnabas. He was a thoroughly sympathetic man, and, like all such characters, he was ever swept along by the prevailing wave of thought or action, without allowing that supreme place to the judgment and the natural powers which they should always hold if the feelings and sympathies are not to land us in positions involving dire ruin and loss. He was carried away by the enthusiasm for Christian communism which now seized upon the Jerusalem Church. He was influenced by the Judaising movement at Antioch, so that "even Barnabas was carried away with the Petrine dissimulation." His sympathies got the better of his judgment in the matter of St. Mark's conduct in abandoning the ministry to which St. Paul had called him. His heart was stronger, in fact, than his head. And yet this very weakness qualified him to be the Son of Consolation. A question has, indeed, been raised, whether he should be called the Son of Consolation or the Son of Exhortation, but practically, there is no difference. His consolations were administered through his exhortations. His speech and his advice were of a consoling, healing, comforting kind. There are still such men to be found in the Church. Just as all other apostolic graces and characteristics are still manifested,—the eloquence of a Paul, the courage of a Peter, the speculative flights of a John,—so the sympathetic power of a Barnabas is granted to some. And a very precious gift it is. There are some good men whose very tone of voice and bodily attitudes—their heads thrown back and their arms akimbo and their aggressive walk—at once provoke opposition. They are pugnacious Christians, ever on the lookout for some topic of blame and controversy. There are others, like this Barnabas, whose voices bring consolation, and whose words, even when not the clearest or the most practical, speak counsels of peace, and come to us thick-laden with the blessed dews of charity. Their advice, is not, indeed, always the wisest. Their ardent cry is always, Peace, peace. Such a man on the political stage was the celebrated Lucius Carey, Lord Falkland, in the days of the great civil war, who, though he adhered to the royalist cause, seemed, as the historian tells us, to have utterly lost all heart once that active hostilities commenced. Men of this type appear in times of great religious strife. Erasmus, for instance, at the time of the Reformation, possessed a good deal of this spirit which is devoted to compromise, and ever inclined to place the interests of peace and charity above those of truth and principle, just as Barnabas would have done at Antioch were it not for the protest of his stronger and sterner friend St. Paul. And yet such men, with their sympathetic hearts and speech, have their own great use, infusing a healing, consoling tone into seasons of strife, when others are only too apt to lose sight of the sweet image of Christian love in pursuit of what they consider the supreme interests of re-

ligious or political truth. Such a man was Barnabas all his life, and such we behold him on his first visible entrance upon the stage of Church history, when his sympathies and his generosity led him to consecrate his independent property in Cyprus to his brethren's support, and to bring the money and lay it down at the Apostles' feet.

IV. Now for the contrast drawn for us by the inspired pen of St. Luke, a contrast we find oft repeating itself in Church history. Here we have the generous, sympathetic Son of Consolation on the one side, and here, too, we have a warning and a type for all time that the tares must evermore be mingled with the wheat, the false with the true, the hypocrites with real servants of God, even until the final separation. The accidental division of the book into chapters hinders casual readers from noticing that the action of Ananias and his wife is set by the writer over against that of Barnabas. Barnabas sold his estate and brought the price, the whole price, and surrendered it as an offering to the Church. The spirit of enthusiastic giving was abroad, and had seized upon the community; and Barnabas sympathised with it. Ananias and Sapphira were carried away too, but their spirits were meaner. They desired to have all the credit the Church would give them for acting as generously as Barnabas did, and yet, while getting credit for unselfish and unstinting liberality, to be able to enjoy in private somewhat of that which they were believed to have surrendered. And their calculations were terribly disappointed. They tried to play the hypocrite's part on most dangerous ground just when the Divine Spirit of purity, sincerity, and truth had been abundantly poured out, and when the spirit of deceit and hypocrisy was therefore at once recognised. It was with the Apostles and their spiritual natures then as it is with ourselves and our physical natures still. When we are living in a crowded city we notice not strange scents and ill odours and foul gases: our senses are dulled, and our perceptive powers are rendered obtuse because the whole atmosphere is a tainted one. But when we dwell in the pure air of the country, and the glorious breezes from mountain and moor blow round us fresh and free, then we detect at once, and at a long distance, the slightest ill-odour or the least trace of offensive gas. The outpoured presence of the Spirit, and the abounding love which was produced thereby, quickened the perception of St. Peter. He recognised the hypocrisy, characterised the sin of Ananias as a lie against the Holy Ghost; and then the Spirit and Giver of life, seconding and supporting the words of St. Peter, withdrew His support from the human frame of the sinner, and Ananias ceased to live, just as Sapphira, his partner in deceit, ceased to live a few hours later. The deaths of Ananias and Sapphira have been oftentimes the subject of much criticism and objection, on the part of persons who do not realise the awfulness of their position, the full depths of their hypocrisy, and the importance of the lesson taught by their punishment to the Church of every age. Their position was a specially awful one, for they were brought into closest contact, as no Christian can now be brought, with the powers of the world to come. The Spirit was vouchsafed during those earliest days of the Church in a manner and style which we hear nothing of during the later years of



the Apostles. He proved His presence by physical manifestations, as when the whole house was shaken where the Apostles were assembled; a phenomenon of which we read nothing in the latter portion of the Acts. By the gift of tongues, by miracles of healing, by abounding spiritual life and discernment, by physical manifestations, the most careless and thoughtless in the Christian community were compelled to feel that a supernatural power was present in their midst and specially resting upon the Apostles. Yet it was into such an atmosphere that the spirit of hypocrisy and of covetousness, the two vices to which Christianity was specially opposed, and which the great Master had specially denounced, obtruded itself as Satan gained entrance into Eden, to defile with their foul presence the chosen dwelling-place of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost vindicated His authority therefore, because, as it must be observed, it was not St. Peter sentenced Ananias to death. No one may have been more surprised than St. Peter himself at the consequences which followed his stern rebuke. St. Peter merely declared his sin, "Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God;" and then it is expressly said, "Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost." It was a stern action indeed; but then all God's judgments have a stern side. Ananias and Sapphira were cut off in their sins, but men are every day summoned into eternity in precisely the same state and the same way, and the only difference is that in the case of Ananias we see the sin which provoked the punishment and then we see the punishment immediately following. Men object to this narrative simply because they have a one-sided conception of Christianity such as this period of the world's history delights in. They would make it a religion of pure, unmitigated love; they would eliminate from it every trace of sternness, and would thus leave it a poor, weak, flabby thing, without backbone or earnestness, and utterly unlike all other dispensations of the Lord, which have their stern sides and aspects as well as their loving.

It may well have been that this incident was inserted in this typical church history to correct a false idea which would otherwise have grown up. The Jews were quite well accustomed to regard the Almighty as a God of judgment as well as a God of love. Perhaps we might even say that they viewed Him more in the former light than in the latter. Our Lord was obliged, in fact, to direct some of His most searching discourses to rebuke this very tendency. The Galileans, whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices, the men upon whom the tower of Siloam fell—neither party were sinners above all that were at Jerusalem, or were punished as such. Such was His teaching in opposition to the popular idea. The Apostles were once quite ready to ascribe the infirmity of the man born blind to the direct judgment of the Almighty upon himself or upon his parents. But men are apt to rush from one extreme to another. The Apostles and their followers were now realising their freedom in the Spirit; and some were inclined to run into licentiousness as the result of that same freedom. They were realising, too, their relationship to God as one of pure filial love, and they were in great danger of forgetting that God was a God of justice and judgment as well, till this stern dispensation recalled them to a sense of the fact

that eternal love is also eternal purity and eternal truth, and will by no means clear the guilty. This is a lesson very necessary for every age of the Church. Men are always inclined, and never, perhaps, so much as at the present time, to look away from the severe side of religion, or even to deny that religion can have a severe side at all. This tendency in religious matters is indeed simply an exhibition of the spirit of the age. It is a time of great material prosperity and comfort, when pain is regarded as the greatest possible evil, softness, ease, and enjoyment the greatest possible good. Men shrink from the infliction of pain even upon the greatest criminals; and this spirit infects their religion, which they would fain turn into a mere matter of weakly sentiment. Against such a notion the judicial action of the Holy Ghost in this case raises an eternal protest, warning the Church against one-sided and partial views of truth, and bidding her never to lower her standard at the world's call. Men may ignore the fact that God has His severe aspect and His stern dispensations in nature, but yet the fact remains. And as it is in nature so is it in grace: God is merciful and loving to the penitent, but towards the hypocritical and covetous He is a stern judge, as the punishment of Ananias and Sapphira proved.

V. This seems one of the great permanent lessons for the Church of every age which this passage embodies, but it is not the only one. There are many others, and they most important. An eminent modern commentator and expositor\* has drawn out at great length, and with many modern applications and illustrations, four great lessons which may be derived from this transaction. We shall just note them, giving a brief analysis of each. (1) There is such a thing as acting as well as telling a falsehood. Ananias did not say that the money he brought was the whole price of his land; he simply allowed men to draw this conclusion for themselves, suggesting merely by his conduct that he was doing exactly the same as Barnabas. There was no science of casuistry in the apostolic Church, teaching how near to the borders of a lie a man may go without actually being guilty of lying. The lie of Ananias was a spiritual act, a piece of deception attempted in the abyss of the human soul, and perpetrated, or attempted rather, upon the Holy Spirit. How often men lie after the same example. They do not speak a lie, but they act a lie, throwing dust into the eyes of others as to their real motives and objects, as Ananias did here. He sold his estate, brought the money to the Apostles, and would fain have got the character of a man of extraordinary liberality and unselfishness, just like others who truly sacrificed their all, while he enjoyed in private the portion which he had kept back. Ananias wished to make the best of both worlds, and failed in his object. He sought to obtain a great reputation among men, but had no regard to the secret eye and judgment of the Almighty. Alas! how many of our actions, how much of our piety and of our almsgiving are tainted by precisely the same vice. Our good works are done with a view to man's approbation, and not as in the sight of the Eternal God.

(2) What an illustration we find in this passage of the saying of the Apostle, "The love of

\* C. J. Vaughan, D. D., "The Church of the First Days," pp. 105-11.



money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves with many sorrows!" The other scriptures are full of warnings against this vice of covetousness; and so this typical history does not leave the Church without an illustration of its power and danger. Surely if at a time when the supernatural forces of the unseen life were specially manifested, this vice intruded into the special sphere of their influence, the Church of every age should be on its perpetual guard against this spirit of covetousness which the Bible characterises as idolatry.

(3) What a responsibility is involved in being brought near to God as members of His Son's Church below! There were hypocrites in abundance at Jerusalem at that time, but they had not been blessed as Ananias had been, and therefore were not punished as he. There is a reality in our connection with Christ which must tell upon us, if not for good, then inevitably for evil. Christ is either the savour of life unto life or else the savour of death unto death unto all brought into contact with Him. In a far more awful sense than for the Jews the words of the prophet Ezekiel are true, "That which cometh into your mind shall not be at all, that ye say, We will be as the heathen, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone;"\* or as the poet of the "Christian Year" has well put it in his hymn for the eighteenth Sunday after Trinity:—

"Fain would our lawless hearts escape,  
And with the heathen be,  
To worship every monstrous shape  
In fancied darkness free.

"Vain thought, that shall not be at all,  
Refuse we or obey;  
Our ears have heard th' Almighty's call,  
We cannot be as they.

"We cannot hope the heathen's doom  
To whom God's Son is given,  
Whose eyes have seen beyond the tomb,  
Who have the key of Heaven."

(4) Lastly, let us learn from this history how to cast out the fear of one another by the greater and more awful fear of God. The fear of man is a good thing in a degree. We should have respect to the opinion of our fellows, and strive to win it in a legitimate way. But Ananias and his consort desired the good opinion of the Christian community regardless of the approval or the watchful eye of the Supreme Judge, who interposed to teach His people by an awful example that in the new dispensation of Love, as well as in the old dispensation of Law, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and that they and they alone have a good understanding who order their lives according to that fear, whether in their secret thoughts or in their public actions.

## CHAPTER XII.

### GAMALIEL AND HIS PRUDENT ADVICE.

ACTS v. 38-40.

WE have set forth in these verses an incident in the second appearance before the council of the Apostle Peter and the other Apostles, conspicuous among whom must have been James the brother of John. It is almost certain that James the son of Zebedee was at this time very

\* Ezek. xx. 32.

prominent in the public work of the Church, for we are told in the opening of the twelfth chapter that when Herod would vex and harass and specially weaken the Church, it was neither Peter nor John he first arrested, but he laid hands on James, and placed on him the honour of being the earliest martyr from amongst the sacred band of the Apostles. Peter we may, however, be sure was the centre of Sadducean hate at this period, and one of the most conspicuous members of the Church. We should at the same time beware of exaggeration, and strive to estimate the events of these earliest days of the Church, not as we behold them now, but as they must have then appeared unto the members of the Sanhedrin. The deaths of Ananias and Sapphira seem now to us extraordinary and awe-inspiring, and sufficient to strike terror into the hearts of all unbelievers; but probably the story of them had never reached the ears of the authorities. Human life was but little accounted of among the Romans who ruled Palestine. A Roman master might slay or torture his slaves just as he pleased; and the Romans, scorning the Jews as a conquered race, would trouble themselves but little concerning quarrels or deaths among them, so long as public order and the stated business of society were not interfered with. The public miracles which St. Peter wrought, these were the things which brought matters to a crisis, and called afresh the attention of the Sanhedrin, charged as they were with all religious authority, as the miracle of healing wrought upon the impotent man had led to the arrest of the Apostles on a previous occasion. It is a mistake often made, in studying the history of the past, to imagine that events which we now see to have been important and epoch-making must have been so regarded by persons living at the time when they happened. Men are never worse judges of the true value of current history than when they are placed in the midst of it. It is always the on-lookers who see most of the play. Our minds are so limited, our thoughts are so completely filled up with the present, that it is not till we have got away from the events, and can view them in their due proportion and symmetry, surrounded with all their circumstances, that we can hope to form a just appreciation of their relative importance. I have often seen a hill of a few hundred feet in height occupying a far more commanding position in men's eyes than a really lofty mountain, simply because the one was near, the other far off. The deaths of Ananias and Sapphira are recorded therefore at full length, because they bring eternal lessons of justice, judgment, and truth along with them. The numerous public miracles wrought by Peter when "multitudes came together from the cities round about Jerusalem, bringing sick folk and them that were vexed with unclean spirits, and they were healed every one," seemed to the Sanhedrin and the religious public of Jerusalem the all-important topics, though they are passed wholly over in the Scriptures as matters of no spiritual interest. If it requires a vast exercise of patience and wisdom to estimate events aright in their mere worldly aspect, it requires the operation and guidance of the Holy Ghost to form a sound judgment upon the relative spiritual value of events falling within the sphere of Church history; and there indeed it is most true that matters which seem all-important and strik-



ing to man are judged by God as insignificant and unworthy of notice. So contradictory are oftentimes the ways of God and the opinions of man.

The public miracles wrought by St. Peter had this effect,—the only one noted at length by the sacred writer: they led to the fresh arrest of Peter and the other Apostles by the High Priest and the sect of the Sadducees, and to their incarceration in the public prison attached to the temple. Thence they were delivered by an angel and sent to speak publicly in the temple, where their adversaries officially assembled; just as on a later occasion Peter, when imprisoned by himself, was released by angelic interference. Men looking back upon the history of the primitive Church, and judging of it as if it were the history of an ordinary time and age, have objected to the angelic interventions narrated here and in a few other places in the New Testament. They object because they do not realise the circumstances of the time. Dr. Jortin was a shrewd writer of the last century, now too much neglected. He remarked in one place that, suppose we admit that a special revelation of the good powers of the heavenly world was made in Christ, it was natural and fair that a special manifestation of the powers of evil should have been permitted at the time of Christ's Incarnation, in order that the triumph of good might be the greater; and thus we would account for the diabolical possessions which play such an important part in the New Testament. The principle thus laid down extends much farther indeed. The great miracle of the Incarnation, the great manifestation of God in Christ, naturally brought with it lesser heavenly manifestations in its train. The Incarnation raises for a believer the whole level of the age when it occurred, and makes it an exceptional time. The eternal gates were for a moment lifted up, and angels went in and out for a little; and therefore we accept without endeavouring to explain the words of the narrative which tells us that an angel opened the prison doors for the Apostles, bidding them go and speak in the temple all the words of this life. And then from the temple, where they were teaching early in the morning, about daybreak of the day following their arrest, they are led by the officers before the Sanhedrin which was sitting in the city. Here let us pause to note the marvellous accuracy of detail in St. Luke's narrative. The Sanhedrin used to sit in the temple, but, a few years before the period at which we have arrived, four or five at most, they removed from the temple into the city, a fact which is just hinted at in the fifth verse of the fourth chapter, where we are told that the rulers, and elders, and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem, that is, in the city, not in the temple; while again in this passage we read that when the High Priest came and convened the council and all the senate of the children of Israel, they sent their officers to bring the prisoners before them. These officers after a while returned with the information that the Apostles were preaching in the temple. If the Sanhedrin were meeting in the temple, they would doubtless have learned this fact as soon as they assembled, especially as they did not sit till after the morning sacrifice, several hours after the Apostles appeared in the temple.\* When brought before the council the

Apostles boldly proclaimed their intention to disregard all human threats, and persevere in preaching the death and resurrection of Christ. The majority would then have proceeded to extreme measures against the Apostles, and in doing so would only have acted after their usual manner.

The greater part of the Sanhedrin were Sadducees, and they, as Josephus tells us, were men of a bloodthirsty character, ever ready to proceed to punish in the most cruel manner. The simple fact is this, the Sadducees were materialists. They looked upon man as a mere animated machine, and therefore, like the pagans of the same period, they were utterly regardless of human sufferings, or of the value of human life. We little recognise, reared up as we have been in an atmosphere saturated with Christian principles, how much of our merciful spirit, of our tender care for human suffering, of our reverent respect for human life, is owing to the spiritual ideas of the New Testament, teaching as it does the awful importance of time, the sanctity of the body, and the tremendous issues which depend upon life. Sadducees and pagans knew nothing of these things, because they knew nothing of the inestimable treasure lodged in every human form. Life and time would have been very different for mankind had not the spiritual principles inculcated by Pharisee and by Christian alike triumphed over the cold stern creed which strove on this occasion to stifle the religion of the Cross in its very infancy. When the Sadducees would have adopted extreme measures, the words of one man restrained them and saved the Apostles, and that one man was Gamaliel, whose name and career will again come before us. Now let us apply ourselves to the consideration of his address to the Sanhedrin. Gamaliel saw that the large public gathering to whom he was speaking were thoroughly excited and full of cruel purposes. He therefore, like a true orator, adopts the historical method as the fittest one for dealing with them. He points out how other pretenders had arisen, trading on the Messianic expectations which then existed all over Palestine, and specially in Galilee, and how they had been all destroyed without any action on the part of the Sanhedrin. He instances two cases: Judas, who lived in the days of Cyrenius and the taxing under Augustus Cæsar; and Theudas, who some time previous to that event had arisen, working upon the religious and national hopes of the Jews, as the persons now accused before them seemed also to be doing. He points to the fate of the pretenders he had mentioned, and advises the Sanhedrin to leave the Apostles to the same test of Divine Providence, confident that if mere impostors, like the others, they will meet with the same death at the hands of the Romans, without any interference on their part.

It is evident that Gamaliel must have had some special reason for selecting the risings of Theudas and Judas, beyond the fact that they were rebels against established authority. The closing years of the kingdom of Herod the Great were times when numberless rebellions took place. Josephus gives us the names of several leaders who took part in them, but, as he tells us ("Antiqq." XVII. x. 4), there were then "ten

learned Hebraist seems to support this view, though admitting that there is something to be said on the other side, viz., that the council met in the temple as of old.

\* See Dr. John Lightfoot, "*Horæ Hebraicæ*," on the Acts, iv. 5. Cf. his remarks on St. Mark xv. 1, where that



thousand other disorders," into the details of which he did not enter. All these risings had, however, these distinguishing features, they were all unsuccessful, and they were all quenched in blood. Gamaliel must have seen some feature common to the Christian movement and to those headed by Theudas and Judas some thirty years earlier, leading him to adduce these examples. That common feature was their Messianic character. They all alike proclaimed new hopes for Israel, and appealed to the religious expectations which then excited the people, and still are embodied in works like the book of Enoch, produced about that period; while all the other attempts were animated by a mere spirit of plunder or of personal ambition. But here we are met with a difficulty. The rationalistic commentators of Germany have urged that St. Luke composed a fancy speech and put it into the mouth of Gamaliel, and in doing so made a great historic mistake. They appeal to Josephus as their authority. He states that a Theudas arose about A. D. 44, some ten years later than this meeting of the Sanhedrin, and drew a large number of adherents after him, but was defeated by the Roman governor. On the other hand, the words of Gamaliel refer to the case of a Theudas who lived half a century earlier, and preceded Judas the Galilean. To put the matter plainly, St. Luke is accused of having composed a speech for Gamaliel, and, when doing so, of having committed a great blunder, representing Gamaliel as appealing to an incident which did not happen till ten years later.

This circumstance has long attracted the notice of commentators, and has been explained in different ways. Some maintain that there was an older Theudas, who headed an abortive Messianic rebellion previous to the time of Cyrenius and the days of the taxing. This is a very possible explanation, and the identity of names constitutes no valid objection. The same names often occur in connection with the same movements, political or religious. In the third century, for instance, the Novatian heresy arose at Carthage, and thence was transferred to Rome. It was headed by two men, Novatus and Novatian, the former a Carthaginian, the latter a Roman presbyter. What a fine subject for a mythical theory, were not the facts too indisputably historical! How a German critic would revel in depicting the impossibility of two men with names so like holding precisely the same office and supporting exactly the same views in two cities so widely separated as Rome and Carthage! Or let us take two modern instances. The Tractarian movement is not yet quite sixty years old. It has not therefore yet passed out of the sphere of personal experience. It started in Oxford during the thirties, and there in Oxford we find at that very period two divines named William Palmer, both favouring the Tractarian views, both eminent writers and scholars, but yet tending finally in different directions, for one William Palmer became a Roman Catholic, while the other remained a devoted son of the Reformation. Or to come to still more modern times. There was an Irish movement in 1848 which numbered amongst its most prominent leaders a William Smith O'Brien, and there is now an Irish movement of the same character, and it also numbers a William O'Brien amongst its most prominent leaders. A Parnell leads a movement for the repeal of the Union in

1890. Ninety years earlier, a Parnell resigned high office sooner than consent to the consummation of the same legislative union of Great Britain and Ireland. We might indeed produce parallel cases without number from the range of history, specially of English history, showing how political and religious tendencies run in families, and reproduce exactly the same names, and that at no distant intervals. But the very passage before us, the speech of Gamaliel and its historic argument, affords a sufficient instance. Gamaliel adduced the case of Judas the Galilean as an illustration of an unsuccessful religious movement. Every one admits that here at least Josephus and the Acts of the Apostles are at one. Judas the Gaulonite, as Josephus styles him in one place, or the Galilean as he calls him in another place, was the founder of the sect of Zealots, who "have an inviolable attachment to liberty, and say that God is to be their only ruler and Lord" (Josephus, "*Antiqq.*," XVIII., i. 6). Judas was defeated at the time of the taxing under Cyrenius, and yet more than forty-five years later we find his sons Simon and James suffering crucifixion under the Romans because they were following their father's example.

Another explanation has also been offered. It has been suggested that Theudas was simply another name for one of the many rebels whom Josephus mentions,—for Simon, for instance, who had been a slave of Herod the Great, and had upon his death headed a revolt against authority. Either explanation is quite tenable, as opposed to the view which represents St. Luke as committing a gross historical error. And we are the more justified in offering these suggestions when we reflect upon the numberless instances where modern research has confirmed, and is every year confirming the minute accuracy of this writer, who doubtless derived his information concerning what passed in the Sanhedrin, on this occasion, from St. Paul, who either as a member of the council or a favourite pupil of Gamaliel may have been present listening to the debates, or even sharing in the final decisions.

Let us now turn from the purely historical side of Gamaliel's speech, and view it from a spiritual standpoint.

The address of Gamaliel was so favourable to the Apostles that it has helped to surround his name and memory with much legendary lore. It was the tradition of the ancient Greek Church from the fifth century that he was converted to Christianity and baptised, along with his son Abibus and Nicodemus, by St. Peter and St. John. The story of Gamaliel's secret adherence to Christianity goes even much farther back. There is a curious Christian novel or romance, which dates back to close upon the year 200, called the "*Clementine Recognitions*." We find the same tradition in the sixty-fifth chapter of the first book of these "*Recognitions*." But the sacred narrative itself gives us no hint of all this, contenting itself with setting forth the prudent advice which Gamaliel gave to the assembled council. It was wise advice, and well would it have been for the world if influential religious and political teachers in all ages had given similar counsel. Gamaliel was a man of large scholarship, combined with a wide mind, but he had learned that time is a great solvent, and the greatest of tests. Beneath its influence the most pretentious schemes, the most promis-



ing of structures, fade away if built upon the sand of human wisdom, while opposition only tends to consolidate and develop those that are built upon the foundation of Divine strength and power. The policy of patience recommended by Gamaliel is a wise one, either for the Church or for the state, in things spiritual and things secular alike. And yet it is one from which the natural man recoils with an instinctive repugnance. It speaks well for the Jewish Sanhedrin that on this occasion they yielded accord to the advice of their president. We are glad to recognise this spirit in these men, where we so often have to find matter for blame. Well would it have been for the Church and for the credit of Christianity had the spirit which moved even the Sadducean majority in the Jewish council been allowed to prevail; and yet how little have the men of tolerant mind been regarded in moments of temporary triumph such as the Sanhedrin just then enjoyed. Gamaliel's advice, "Refrain from these men and let them alone. If the work be of man it will be overthrown; if of God, ye will not be able to overthrow them," strikes a blow at the policy of persecution, which is essentially a policy of impatience. The intolerant man is an impatient man, not willing to imitate the Divine gentleness and long-suffering, which waits, endures, and bears with the sins and ignorance of the children of men. And the Church of Christ, when she became intolerant, as she did as soon as ever Constantine placed within her reach the sword of human power, forgot the lesson of the Divine patience, and reaped within herself, in a shallow religion, in a poorer life, in a restrained intellectual and spiritual grasp, the due reward of those who had fallen away from an imitation of the Divine example to a mere human level. It is sad to see, for instance, in the case of a man so thoroughly spiritual as St. Augustine was, how easily he fell into this human infirmity, how quickly he became intolerant when the secular arm was ranged on the side of his own opinions. The Church in his own boyhood, during the days of Julian, had to strive against the intolerance of the pagans; the orthodox, who upheld the Catholic view of the nature of the Godhead and the scriptural doctrine of the Holy Trinity, had to struggle against the intolerance of the Arians. Yet as soon as power was placed in St. Augustine's own hand he thought it right to exercise compulsion against those who differed from him.

It was exactly the same in later days. Men may take up commentators of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Protestant and Roman Catholic alike. There they will find many remarks, acute, devout, heart-searching, but very few of them will be found to have arrived at the mental fairness and balance involved in those words, "Refrain from these men, and let them alone." Cornelius a Lapide was a Jesuit commentator of those times. He wrote many valuable expositions of Holy Scripture, including one dealing with this book of the Acts, filled with thoughts suggesting and stimulating. It is, however, almost ludicrous to notice how he strives to evade the force of Gamaliel's words, and to escape the application of them to his own Protestant opponents. The Sanhedrin were quite right, he thinks, in adopting Gamaliel's advice, and in showing themselves tolerant of the apostolic preaching because the Apostles worked miracles; and so, though they were unconvinced, still they

had just reason to suspend their judgment. But as for the Protestants of his time, they were heretics; they were the opponents of the Church, the bride of Christ, and therefore Gamaliel's words had no application to them; as if the very question that was raised by the Protestants was not this—whether Cornelius a Lapide himself and his Jesuit brethren did not represent Antichrist, and whether the Protestants were not the true Church of God, who therefore on his own principles were quite justified in persecuting their Romish opponents. It is very difficult to get men to acknowledge their own fallibility. Every party, when triumphant, believes that it has a monopoly of truth, and has a Divine right of persecution; and every party when downcast and in adversity sees and admires the beauties of toleration. Verily, societies, churches, families, as well as individuals, have good right diligently to pray, "In all time of our wealth, good Lord, deliver us," for never are men in greater spiritual danger than when prosperity leads them to vote themselves infallible, and to practise intolerance towards their fellow-men on account of their intellectual or religious opinions.

The sentiment of Gamaliel on this occasion may, however, be pushed to a mischievous extreme. He advised the Sanhedrin to exercise patience and self-control, but he did not apparently go any farther. He did not recommend them to adopt the noblest course, which would have been unprejudiced examination into the claims put forward by the Christian teachers. Gamaliel's advice was good, it was perhaps the best he could have given, or at least which could have been expected under the circumstances, but it was not the highest or noblest conceivable. It was the kind of advice always given by men who do not wish to commit themselves untimely, but who are waiters upon Providence, postponing their decision as to which side they shall join until they first see which side will win. Opportunists, the French call them; men who are sitting upon the fence, we in homelier phrase designate them. It is well to be prudent in our actions, because true prudence is only Christian wisdom, and such wisdom will always lead us to take the most effectual ways of doing good. But then prudence may be pushed to the extreme of moral cowardice, or at least the name of prudence may be used as a cloak for a contemptible desire to stand well with all parties, and thereby advance our own selfish interests. Prudence should be united with moral courage; it should be ready to take the unpopular side, and to champion truth and righteousness even when in a depressed and lowly condition. It was easy enough to side with Christ when the multitude cried, "Hosanna in the Highest." But the test of deepest love and unfailing devotion was when the women stood by the cross, and when the Magdalen sought out the grave in the garden that she might anoint the dead body of her loved Lord.

Finally, let us just notice the conduct of the Apostles under those circumstances. The Apostles were freed from the pressing danger of death, but they did not entirely escape. The Sanhedrin were logically inconsistent. They refrained from putting the Apostles to death, as Gamaliel advised, but they flogged them as Roman laws permitted; and a Jewish disciplinary flogging, when forty stripes save one were inflicted, was so severe that death sometimes re-



sulted from it.\* Man is a curiously inconsistent being, and the Sanhedrin showed on this occasion that they had their own share of this weakness. Gamaliel advised not to kill the Apostles, but let time work out the Divine purposes either of success or failure. They adopt the first part of his advice, but are not willing to allow Providence to develop His designs without their interference, and so by their stripes endeavour to secure that failure shall attend the apostolic efforts. But it was all in vain. The Apostles were living under a realised sense of heavenly things. The love of Christ, and communion with Christ and the Spirit of Christ, so raised them above all earthly surroundings that what things seemed loss and shame and grief to others were by them counted highest joy, because they looked at them from the side of God and eternity. Human threats availed nothing with men animated by such a spirit,—nay, rather as proofs of the opposition of the evil one, they only quickened their zeal, so that “every day, in the temple and at home, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus as the Christ.” How wondrously life would be transformed for us all did we view its changes and chances, its sorrows and its pains, as the Apostles regarded them. Poverty and disgrace, undeserved loss and suffering, all alike would be transfigured into surpassing glory when endured for Christ’s sake, while our powers of labour and work, and our active zeal in the holiest of causes, would be quickened, because, like them, we should walk and live and toil in the loved presence of One who is invisible.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### *PRIMITIVE DISSENSIONS AND APOSTOLIC PRECAUTIONS.*

##### ACTS vi. 1-4.

THE sixth chapter of the Acts, and the election of the Seven, mark a distinct advance in the career of the early Church. This sixth chapter is like the twelfth of Genesis and the introduction of Abraham upon the stage of sacred history. We feel at once as if the narrative of Genesis had come into contact with modern times, leaving the mysterious period of darkness all behind. So is it with the Acts of the Apostles. The earliest days of the primitive Church were quite unlike all modern experience. The Church had received a great blessing and a wondrous revelation, and had been enriched with marvellous powers. But just as men act when they have experienced a surpassing joy or a tremendous calamity,—they are upset for a time, they do not realise their position, they do not take all the circumstances in at once, nor can they quite settle what their future course shall be; they must get a little way distant from the joy or the sorrow before they make their future arrangements,—so was it with the Apostles during that space of time which elapsed from the Pentecostal outpouring down to the election of

the Seven. We are so accustomed to think of the Apostles as inspired men, that we forget that inspiration did not destroy their natural powers or infirmities, but rather must have acted in consonance with the laws of their constitution. The Apostles must, to a certain extent, have been upset by the extraordinary events they had witnessed. They sought and found daily guidance in the power of the Spirit; but they had made no settled plans, had not compared or arranged their ideas, had formed no scheme of doctrine or teaching, had realised nothing concerning the future of the society they were unconsciously building up under the Divine leading. God had His plans; the ascended Lord had spoken to the Apostles concerning the future of the kingdom of Heaven; but it would be making the Apostles more than men of like passions and like infirmities with ourselves to imagine that during those stirring and eventful days they had consciously realised the whole scheme of Christian doctrine and government. That period of a few months—for it could not have been more—was a period of Divine chaos, out of which the final settlement of the Church of God began slowly to evolve itself under the direction of God the Holy Ghost. How long, it may be asked, did this period of unsettlement last? A question which resolves itself into the further one bearing directly on our present subject,—what was the date of the election and subsequent martyrdom of Stephen? The answer to this throws much light on the apostolic history and the events recorded in the first five chapters of this book.

I. St. Stephen was put to death some time in the year 37 A. D., after Pontius Plate had been recalled from the government of Palestine, and before his successor had arrived to take up the reins of power.\* The Jewish authorities took advantage of the interregnum in order to gratify their spite against the eminent orator who was doing so much damage to their cause. Under ordinary circumstances the Jewish Sanhedrin could not put a man to death unless they had received the fiat of the Roman authorities. Now, however, during this interval, there was no supreme authority from whom this fiat could be secured, and so they seized the opportunity and executed Stephen as a blasphemer, according to the method prescribed in the law of Moses. This happened in the year 37 A. D., about four years after the Crucifixion. We must, however, observe another point. During the latter years of his administration, Pontius Pilate had been acting in a most tyrannical manner. This fact explains a circumstance which must strike the most casual reader of the Acts. We there read that the supreme Jewish council made two attempts to restrain the Apostles; the first after the healing of the cripple at the Temple Gate, and the second when Gamaliel dissuaded them from their purposes of blood. After that they allowed the Apostles to pursue their course without any hostility. This appears to the casual reader more striking, more difficult to understand, than it was in reality. We are now obliged to think of Judaism and Christianity as opposed and mutually exclusive religions; we cannot conceive of a man being a Jew and a Christian at the same time. But was not so with the Apostles and their followers at the period of which we

\* See the authorities for the chronology of this period as given in Lewin’s “Fasti Sacri,” pp. 247-53.

\* St. Paul, as he tells us in 2 Cor. xi. 24, was five times flogged by the Jews. When the Jews inflicted this punishment the culprit was tied to a pillar in the synagogue; the executioner, armed with a scourge of three distinct lashes, inflicted the punishment; while an official standing by read selected portions of the law between each stroke. Thirteen strokes of the threefold scourge was equivalent to the thirty-nine stripes. This was the flogging the Apostles suffered on this occasion.



are writing. This may seem contradictory to what I have elsewhere stated as to the antagonistic character of the two religions. But the apparent inconsistency is easily explained. As full-blown and realised systems, Judaism and Christianity are inconsistent. The one was a bud, the other an expanded flower. The same individual bulb cannot be at the same moment a bud and a flower. But the Apostles had not as yet realised Christianity as a full-blown system, nor grasped all its consequences. There was no inconsistency when they made a conjoint profession of Judaism and Christianity. The Apostles and their followers were all scrupulous observers of the law of Moses; and no dwellers in Jerusalem were more regular attendants at the Temple worship than the persons who had as yet no distinct name, and were known only as the followers of the prophet of Nazareth. To take an illustration from modern ecclesiastical history, the Apostles and the early Jerusalem Church must have been simply known to the Jewish authorities, just as the first Methodists at Oxford were known to the Church authorities of John Wesley's earlier days, as stricter members of the Church of England than the usual run of people were. This fact alone lessens the difficulty we might find in accounting for the statements made as to the continued activity of the Apostles, and the freedom they enjoyed even after they had been solemnly warned by the Sanhedrin. Neither the Apostles themselves nor the Jewish council recognised as yet any religious opposition in the teaching of Peter and his brethren. The Apostles themselves had not yet formulated their ideas nor perceived where their principles would ultimately lead them. No one indeed would have been more surprised than themselves had they foreseen the antagonistic position into which they would be ultimately forced; and as for the Sanhedrin, the only charge they brought against the apostles was not a religious one at all, but merely that they were challenging the conduct and decision of the authorities concerning the execution of Jesus Christ, and, as the High Priest put it, "intend to bring this Man's blood upon us." \* But then history reveals to us some other facts which completely explain the difficulty and vindicate the historical accuracy of the sacred narrative. St. Stephen was put to death in the year 37. At that time he may have been acting as a deacon for two, or even three, years, during which Christian teaching and views made very rapid progress, all unopposed by the Jewish authorities, simply because their attention was concentrated on other topics of much more pressing interest. Pilate was appointed governor of Palestine in 26 A. D. He ruled it for ten years, till the end of 36 A. D., when he was recalled. God causes all things to work together for good, and overrules even state changes to the development of His purposes. Pilate's whole period of rule was, as I have already said, marked by tyranny; but the concluding years were the worst. The members of the Sanhedrin were then specially excited by two actions which touched themselves most keenly. He seized on the accumulated proceeds of the Temple-tax of two drachmas, about eighteen pence, paid by every

Jew throughout the world, which then amounted to a vast sum, expending it in making an aqueduct for the supply of Jerusalem. This action affected the pecuniary resources of the Jewish authorities. But he attacked them on a dearer point still, for he set up the images of the Emperor in the Holy City, and thus wounded them in their religious feelings, introducing the abomination of desolation into the most sacred places.\*

All the attention of the priests, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the people, was concentrated upon the violent deeds of Pilate. They had no time to think of the Apostles,—who, indeed, must themselves have shared in the national enthusiasm and universal hostility which Pilate's attempts excited. A common opposition stilled for the time the internal strife and controversy about the prophet of Nazareth which had, for a little, rent asunder the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Let us now repeat the dates to which we have attained. St. Stephen was executed in 37 A. D.; his election took place probably in 34 A. D. The first seven chapters of the Acts set before us, then, all we know of the history of the earliest four years of the Church's life and work; and yet, though very briefly told, that history tallies with what we learn from writers like Josephus and Philo.

II. Let us now return to the text of our narrative. This sixth chapter offers a very useful glimpse into the inner life of the primitive Church. It shows us what led up to the election of the Seven in these words: "Now in these days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a murmuring of the Grecian Jews against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration."

(a) The election sprang out of the multiplying, and the multiplying begat a murmuring among the disciples. There is here teaching for the Church of all time, plain and evident to every reader, a lesson which history has repeated from age to age. Increase of numbers does not always mean increase of happiness, increase of devotion, increase of true spiritual life, but has often brought increase of trouble and discontent alone. What a lesson of patient submission under present trials the wise man may here read. God has made all things double one against another; and when he bestows such notable increase as He granted to the apostolic Church, He adds thereto some counter-balancing disadvantage to keep his people low and make them humble. Undiluted joy, unmitigated success, is not to be the portion of God's people while tabernacling here below. How often has the lesson been repeated in this experience of the past as in our own personal experience as well!

The trial of the apostolic Church was typical of the trials which awaited future ages. The Church, in the Diocletian persecution, for instance, was wasted and torn. The records of that last great trial through which the Church passed, just prior to her final triumph over Paganism, are lighted up by the fires of the most determined attempt ever made to crush the faith of the Crucified One. How often during that last persecution God's faithful ones must have wept in secret over the ruin of the holy places and the threatened destruction of the faith! Yet the trials of the hours of adversity were as nothing compared with the dangers which beset the Church when the faith triumphed under Constan-

\* The Church during its earliest years called itself merely the Way, not recognising the term Christian at all. This is brought out clearly in the Revised Version, as in Acts ix. 2, xix. 9, 23, xxiv. 14. The adoption of the name Christian probably marked the more distinct separation of the Church from the synagogue.

\* See Josephus, "Antiqq.," XVIII., iii. 1, 2.



tine, and the multitude of the disciples was increased and multiplied by the power of imperial patronage. The trials of the day of persecution were external, and utterly powerless to affect the spiritual life of Christ's mystical body. The trials of a multiplying and enlarging Church were internal; they arose from unbelief, and hypocrisy, and want of Christian love, and were destructive of the life of God in the human soul. The dangers of success, the subtle temptations of prosperity, making us proud, contemptuous of others, self-conscious, dependent wholly upon man, and independent of God, are the lessons, ecclesiastical, social, and personal, pressed upon us by the opening words of this sixth chapter.

(b) These words, again, correct a popular mistake, and reproduce a warning of our Master too often forgotten. When the disciples were increasing, and the hearts of the Apostles all aglow with the success vouchsafed them, "a murmuring arose between the Grecian Jews and the Hebrews." What a glimpse we get here into the very heart and centre of early Christian social life. It is often the hardest task in historical researches to get such a glimpse as here is given. We know the outer life of societies, of families, of dynasties. We see them in their external form and symmetry: we behold them in their company dress and in their public appearances; but till we get to know and realise their common everyday life, how they ate, drank, slept, how their social intercourse was maintained, we fail to grasp the most important side of their existence. The primitive Church is often thought of and spoken of as if its social and spiritual life were wholly unlike our own; as if sin and infirmity were entirely absent, and perfect holiness there prevailed. This expression, "Now in these days there arose a murmuring," shows us that the presence of supernatural gifts, the power of working miracles and speaking with other tongues, did not raise the spiritual level of individual believers above that we find in the Church of the present day. The distribution of alms is always attended by jealousies and disputes, rendering the work one of the most unpleasant tasks which can be undertaken by any man. No matter how earnestly one strives to be fair and just, no matter how diligently one may seek to balance claim against claim and righteously to satisfy the wants of those who seek relief, still there will always be minds that will never be content, and will strive to detect injustice and wrong and favouritism, no matter how upright the intention may be. What a comfort to God's servant striving to do his duty is the study of this sixth chapter of the Acts! Fretting and worry, weary days and sleepless nights, are often the only reward which the Christian philanthropist receives in return for his exertions. But here comes in the Acts of the Apostles to cheer. It was just the same with the Apostles, for they must have been the chief almoners or distributors of the Church's common fund prior to the election of the Seven. The Apostles themselves did not escape the accusation of favouritism, and we may well be content to bear and suffer what the Apostles were compelled to endure. Let us only take heed that like them we suffer wrongfully, and that our conscience testify that we have striven to do everything in the sight of the Lord Jesus Christ; and then, disregarding all human murmuring and criticism, we should calmly proceed

upon our work, in no way discouraged because the recipients of Christian bounty still act as even the primitive Christians did. This is one important lesson we gain from this passage.

(c) We may, again, learn another great truth from this incident, and that is, that the primitive Church was no ideal communion, but a society with failings and weaknesses and discontent, exactly like those which exist in the Church of our own times. The favourite argument with controversialists of the Church of Rome, when trying to draw proselytes from among Protestants, is, as logicians say, of an *a priori* type. They will enlarge upon the importance of religion and religious truth, and upon the awful consequences which will result from a mistake on such a vital question, and then they will argue that God must have constituted a living infallible guide on such an important topic, and that guide is in their opinion the Pope, as the head of the Catholic Church. The Scriptures are full of warnings—unnoticed warnings they often are, but still they are full of them—as to the untrustworthy character of all such kind of arguments. In this sixth chapter, for instance, the thoughtful and meditative student can see a specimen of these providential admonitions, and a reason for its insertion in the sacred story. Christ came to establish the Christian Church upon earth. For this purpose He lived and suffered and rose again. For this purpose He sent forth the Third Person of the Holy Trinity to lead and guide and dwell in His Church; and surely, *a priori*, we might as well conclude that in the Church so founded, so guided, so ruled by Peter and the rest of the Apostles, there would have been found no such thing as favouritism, or murmuring, or discontent,—sentiments which might exist in the unregenerate world, but which should find no place in the kingdom of the Spirit. But, when we turn to the sacred record of Christ's sayings, and the inspired history of Christ's Church, we find that all our *a priori* presumptions and all our logical anticipations are put to flight, for the Master warns us in the thirteenth of St. Matthew, when speaking His wondrous parables concerning the Kingdom of Heaven, that sin and imperfection will ever find their place in His Church; and then the history of the Acts of the Apostles comes in to confirm the inspired prophecy, and we see from this chapter how the primitive Church of Christ was torn and racked with mere earthly feelings and mere human infirmities, like the ordinary worldly societies which existed all around; "there arose a murmuring" even in the Church where Apostles taught, where the Holy Ghost dwelt, and where the Pentecostal gifts were displayed. The occasion of the murmuring, too, is noteworthy and prophetic. It was like the trial under which man fell and by which Christ was tempted. It was a mere material temptation. Even in the primitive Church, living as it did in the region and presence of the supernatural, expecting every day and hour the return of the ascended Lord, even there material considerations entered, and the world and the things thereof found a place, and caused divisions where they would seem to have been strictly excluded by the very conditions of the Church's existence. The Church and the world there touched and influenced one another; and so it must be always. There is a world indeed against which the Church must ever protest—the world of impure lusts and



wicked desires, the world of which Paganism was the presiding genius; but then there is a world in which the Church must exist and with which it must deal, the world which God has created and ordained, the world of human society and human wants, feelings, desires, appetites. With these the Church must ever come in contact. Monasticism and asceticism have endeavoured indeed in the past to get rid of this world. They cut men and women off from marriage and separated them from society, and reduced human wants to a minimum; and yet nature asserted itself, and the corruptions of monasticism have been a divinely-ordered protest against foolish attempts to separate between things spiritual and things secular, between the Church founded by Christ and the world created by God. The murmuring arose on this occasion because the Apostles made no such mistake, but recognised fearlessly that the Church of Christ took cognisance of such a question as the daily distribution and the temporal wants of its disciples. The apostolic Church did not disdain a mere economic question, and yet the Church of our own time has been slow enough to follow its example; but, thank God, it is learning more and more of its duty in this respect. The time has been when nothing was considered worthy of the notice of the Christian pulpit or of Church synods and Church courts save purely spiritual and doctrinal questions. The vast subjects of education, of the social life, of the amusements of the people, the methods of legislation or statesmanship, were thought outside the region of Christian activity, and were utterly neglected or else left wholly to those who made no profession at least of being guided by Christian principle. But now we have learned the important truth that the Church is a Divine leaven placed in the mass of human society to permeate it through and through; and perhaps the present danger is that the clergy should forget the apostolic warning, true for every age, that while the Church in its totality, priests and people, should take an active interest in these questions, and strive to mould the whole life of man on Christian principles, it is not at the same time "fit that the ministry should forsake the word of God and serve tables."

III. But we have not yet done with this murmuring or with the lessons it furnishes for the Church of the future. What lay at the basis of this murmuring, and of the jealousy thereby indicated? "There arose a murmuring of the Grecian Jews against the Hebrews;" a racial question developed itself, and racial, or perhaps we should rather say, in this case, social and linguistic, differences found place in the apostolic Church, and gave rise to serious quarrels even where the Spirit in fullest measure and in extraordinary power was enjoyed. There was bitter dissension between Jews and Samaritans, though they believed in the same God and revered the same revelation. Political circumstances in the past sufficiently explain that quarrel. There was almost, if not quite, as bitter hostility between the Grecians and the Hebrews, because they spoke different languages and practised diverse customs, and that though they worshipped in the same temple and belonged to the same nation. The origin of these differences in the Christian Church of Jerusalem goes back to a very distant period. Here comes in the use of the Apocrypha, "which the Church

doth read for example of life and instruction of manners." If we wish to understand the course of events in the Acts we must refer to the books of the Maccabees, where is told the romantic story of the struggle of the Jews against the Greek kings of Syria, who tried to force them into conformity with the religion of Greece, which then was counted the religion of civilisation and of culture. The result was that the intensely national party became bitterly hostile to everything pertaining to Greece and its civilisation. The Jews of Palestine of that period became like the purely Celtic Irish of the Reformation epoch. The Irish identified the Reformation with England and English influence, just as the Jews identified Paganism with Greece and Syria, and Greek influence; and the result was that the Irish became the most intensely ultra-montane nation, and the Palestinian Jews became the most intensely narrow and prejudiced nation of their time. The Palestinian or Hebrew Jews, speaking the Aramaic or Chaldee tongue, scorned Greek language and all traces of Greek civilisation, while the Jews of the Dispersion, specially those of Alexandria, strove to recommend the Jewish religion to the Gentile world, whose civilisation and culture they appreciated, and whose language they used. The opposition of the Hebrew to the Grecian Jews was very bitter, and expressed itself in language which has come down to us in the Talmudic writings. "Cursed be he who teacheth his son the learning of the Greeks," was a saying among the Hebrews; while again, we hear of Rabban Simeon, the son of Gamaliel, St. Paul's teacher, who used to embody his hatred of the Grecians in the following story: "There were a thousand boys in my father's school, of whom five hundred learned the law and five hundred the wisdom of the Greeks; and there is not one of the latter now alive, excepting myself here and my uncle's son in Asia."\* Heaven itself was supposed by the Hebrews to have plainly declared its hostility against their Grecian opponents. Hence, naturally, arose the same divisions at Jerusalem. There were in that city nearly five hundred synagogues, a considerable proportion of which belonged to the Grecian Jews. All classes and all the synagogues, Hebrew and Grecian alike, contributed their quota to the earliest converts won by the Apostles; and these converts brought their old jealousies and oppositions with them into the Church of Christ. The Hebrew or the Grecian Jew of yesterday could not forget, to-day, because he had embraced a belief in Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah, all his old feelings and his old hereditary quarrels, and hence sprang the Christian dissensions of which we read, prophetic of so many similar racial and social and linguistic dissensions in the Church down to the present time. The Acts of the Apostles is a kind of magic mirror for Church history. In the olden times men dreamt of a magic mirror into which one could look and see the course of their future life depicted. We can see something of the same in this inspired book. The bitter dissensions which racial and linguistic differences have made in the Church of every age are here depicted in miniature. The quarrels between East and West, between Greeks

\* Lightfoot's "Horæ Heb.," Acts vi. 1, where there is a long and learned discussion, extending over several pages, upon the distinction between the Hebrew and the Grecian Jews.



and Latins, between Latins and Teutons, between Teuton and Celt, between Roman Catholic and Protestant, between the Whites and Negroes, between European Christians and Hindoo converts; the scandalous scenes still enacted round the Holy Place at Jerusalem, where peace is kept between nominal Christians only by the intervention of Mahometan soldiers,—all turn upon the same points and embody the same principles, and may best find solution upon the lines laid down by the Apostles. And what were these lines? They laid down that there are diversities of function and of work in the Church of Christ; there is a ministry of the word, and there is a serving of tables. One class should not absorb every function; for if it does, the highest function of all, the ministry of the word and prayer, will inevitably suffer. Well, indeed, would it have been had this lesson been far more laid to heart. How many a schism and rent in the visible Church of Christ has been caused because no work, no spiritual function, was found for a newly-awakened layman anxious to do something for Him who had done so much for his soul. The principle here laid down in germ is a very fruitful one, suitable for every age. A new crisis, a fresh departure, an unexpected need, has arisen, and a new organisation is therefore at once devised by the Apostles; and well would it have been had their example found closer imitation. We have been too much in the habit of looking upon the Church of Christ as if it were once for all stereotyped in apostolic times, and as if there were nothing to be done in the living present save to adapt these ancient institutions to our modern needs. The Roman Catholic Church has been in many respects more true to apostolic principles than the children of the Reformation. With all her intense conservatism Rome has never hesitated to develop new organisations as new needs have arisen, and that in the boldest manner. It has often been remarked that the Church of Rome would never have lost John Wesley and the Wesleyans as the Church of England did. She would have put a brown cassock upon him, and girded him with a rope, and sent him forth as the head of a new order, to do the work to which he felt impelled and for which God had qualified him. Experience has taught us, however, that we cannot safely neglect apostolic precedent; and the warning implied in the words of the Apostles, "it is not fit that we should forsake the word of God and serve tables," has been amply fulfilled. The highest ministry of the word has been injured by the accumulation of all public work in the Church on one class alone. What minister of Jesus Christ does not feel that, even with the wider and more apostolic views now prevalent, with all the recognition of the service which the godly Christian laymen render, the old tradition is still strong, and clergymen are too absorbed in the mere serving of tables, to the neglect of their higher functions? The laity often complain of the poor, thin, meagre character of the preaching to which they are compelled to listen; but how can it be otherwise when they demand so much purely secular service, so much serving of tables from those whose great work is to teach? The Church of England, in her service for the ordination of priests, demands from the candidates whether they will devote themselves to the study of the Word of God, and such other studies as bear upon the same.

I often wonder how her clergy are now to fulfil this solemn vow, when frequently they have not a night in the week at home, save perhaps Saturday evening, and when, from early morning to late at night, all their energies are swallowed up in the work of schools, and clubs, and charitable organisations, and parochial visitations, leaving little time and still less energy for the work of meditation and thought and study. The clergy are the Lord's prophets, watchmen upon the walls of Zion. It is their great business to explain the Lord's will, to translate the ideas of the Bible into the language of modern life, to apply the Divine principles of doctrine and discipline laid down in the Bible to the ever-varying wants of our complex modern civilisation; and how can this function be discharged unless there be time for reading and for thinking, so as to gain a true notion of what are these modern wants, and to find out how the eternal principles of the Scriptures are to be applied to them? We require a great deal more organised assistance in the work of the Church, and then, when that assistance is forthcoming, we may expect and demand that the highest ministry of all, "the ministry of the Word and prayer," shall be discharged with greater efficiency and blessing. The Apostles, in meeting this crisis, laid down a law of true development and living growth in the divine society. The Church of Christ is ever to have the power to organise herself in the face of new departures, while at the same time they proclaim the absolute necessity and the perpetual obligation of the Christian ministry in its highest aspect; for surely if even for Apostles it was needful that their whole time should be devoted to the ministry of the word of God and prayer, and the Church of that time, with all its wondrous gifts, demanded such a ministry, there ought to exist in the modern Church also an order of men wholly separated unto those solemn duties.

IV. The Apostles, having determined upon the creation of a new organisation to deal with a new need, then appeal to the people for their assistance, and call upon them to select the persons who shall be its members; but they, at the same time, reserve their own rights and authority, and, when the selection has been made, claim the power of ordination and appointment for themselves. The people nominated, while the Apostles appointed. The Apostles took the most effective plan to quiet the trouble which had arisen when they took the people into their confidence. The Church has been often described as the mother of modern freedom. The councils of old time were the models and forerunners of modern parliaments. The councils and synods of the Church set an example of open discussion and of legislative assemblies in ages when tyrannical authority had swallowed up every other vestige of liberty. The Church from the beginning, and in the Acts of the Apostles, clearly showed that its government was not to be an absolute clerical despotism, but a free Christian republic, where clergy and people were to take counsel together. It is a noteworthy thing indeed, that even in the Roman Catholic Church, where the exclusive claims of the clergy have been most pressed, the recognition of the rights of the laity in the matter of Church councils and debates has found place down to modern times. The representatives of the Emperor and other Christian princes took their seats in the Council



of Trent, jointly with bishops and other ecclesiastics; and it was only at the Vatican Council of 1870 that this last lingering trace of lay rights finally disappeared. The Apostles laid down by their action the principle of Church freedom, and the mutual rights of clergy and people; but they also gave a very practical hint for the peaceful management of organisations, whether ecclesiastical, social, or political. They knew what was the right thing to do, but they did not impose their will by the mere exercise of authority; they took counsel with the people, and the result was that a speedy solution of all their difficulties was arrived at. How many a quarrel in life would be avoided, how many a rough place would be made smooth, were the apostolic example always followed. Men naturally resist a law imposed from without without any appearance of consultation with them or of sanction on their part; but men willingly yield obedience to laws, even though they may dislike them, which have been passed with their assent and appeal to their reason. In Church matters especially would this rule apply, and the example of the Apostles be most profitably followed. Autocratic action on the part of the clergy in small matters has often destroyed the unity and harmony of congregations, and has planted roots of bitterness which have ruined ministerial usefulness. While steadily maintaining great fundamental principles, a little tact and thought, a wise condescension to human feeling, will often win the day, and carry measures which would otherwise be vigorously resisted.

Finally, the Apostles enunciate the principles which should guide the Church in its selection of officials, specially when they have to deal with the temporal concerns of the Society. "Look ye out therefore from among you seven men of good report." Attempts have been made to explain why the number was fixed at seven. Some have asserted that it was so determined because it was a sacred number, others because there were now seven congregations in Jerusalem, or seven thousand converts. Perhaps, however, the true reason was a more commonplace one, and that was that seven was a very convenient practical number. In case of a difference of opinion a majority can always be secured on one side or other, and all blocks avoided. The number seven was long maintained in connection with the order of deacons, in imitation of the apostolic institution. A council at Neo-Cæsarea, in the year 314, ordained that the number of seven deacons should never be exceeded in any city, while in the Church of Rome the same limitation prevailed from the second century down to the twelfth, so that the Roman Cardinals, who were the parochial clergy of Rome, numbered among them merely seven deacons down to that late period. The seven chosen by the primitive Church were to be men of good report because they were to be public functionaries, whose decisions were to allay commotions and murmurings; and therefore they must be men of weight, in whom the public had confidence. But, further, they must be men "full of the Spirit and of wisdom." Piety was not the only qualification; they must be wise, prudent, sound in judgment as well. Piety is no security for wisdom, just as in turn wisdom is no security for piety; but both must be combined in apostolic officials. The Apostles thereby teach the Church of all time what are the qualifications necessary for

effective administrators and officials. Even in charitable distributions and financial organisations the Church should hold up the high standard set before her by the Apostles, and seek out men actuated by religious principle, guided by religious truth, swayed by Divine love, the outcome of that Spirit whose grace and blessing are necessary for the due discharge of any office, whether of service, of charity, or of worship, in the Church of Jesus Christ; but possessed withal of strong common sense and vigorous intellectual power, for love and zeal separated from these often fall into mistakes which make religion and its adherents a laughing-stock to the world and a hindrance to the cause of truth and holiness. God can indeed make the weak things of this world to confound the high and mighty, but it would be presumptuous in us to think that we can do the same, and therefore we must seek out the instruments best suited in every way to do God's work and accomplish His purposes.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

#### *ST. STEPHEN AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.*

ACTS vi. 5, 6; 8-11.

THE names of the seven chosen on the suggestion of the Apostles raises very naturally the question, To what office were they appointed? Did the seven elected on this occasion represent the first beginning of that office of deacon which is regarded as the third rank in the Church, bishops being first, and presbyters or priests second. It is agreed by all parties that the title of deacon is not given to them in the sixth chapter of the Acts, and yet such an unprejudiced and fair authority as Bishop Lightfoot, in his *Essay on the Christian Ministry*, maintains that the persons selected and ordained at this crisis constituted the first origin of the diaconate as it is now known. The Seven are not called, either here or wherever else they are mentioned in the Acts, by the name of deacons, though the word *διακονεῖν* (serve), which cannot be exactly rendered into English, as the noun deacon has no equivalent verb answering to it, is applied to the duties assigned to them. But all the best critics are agreed that the ordination of the Seven was the occasion of the rise of a new order and a new office in the Church, whose work dealt more especially with the secular side of the ministerial function. The great German critic, Meyer, commenting on this sixth chapter, puts it well, though not so clearly as we should like. "From the first regular overseership of alms, the mode of appointment to which could not but regulate analogically the practice of the Church, was gradually developed the diaconate, which subsequently underwent further elaboration." This statement is somewhat obscure, and thoroughly after the manner of a German critic; let us develop it a little, and see what the process was whereby the distributors of alms to the widows of the earliest Church organisation became the officials of whom St. Laurence of Rome in the third, and St. Athanasius of Alexandria in the fourth century were such eminent examples.

I. The institutions of the synagogue must necessarily have exercised a great influence over the minds of the Apostles and of their first converts.



One fact alone vividly illustrates this idea. Christians soon began to call their places of assembly by the name of churches or the Lord's houses, but the old habit was at first too strong, and so the churches or congregations of the earliest Christians were called synagogues. This is evident even from the text of the Revised Version of the New Testament, for if we turn to the second chapter of the Epistle of James we read there, "If there come into your *synagogue* a man with a gold ring,"—showing that in St. James's day a Christian Church was called a synagogue. This custom received some few years ago a remarkable confirmation from the records of travel and discovery. The Marcionites were a curious Christian sect or heresy which sprang up in the second century. They were intensely opposed to Judaism, and yet so strong was this tradition that even they seemed to have retained, down to the fourth century, the name of synagogue as the title of their churches, for some celebrated French explorers have discovered in Syria an inscription, still in existence, carved over the door of a Marcionite church, dated A. D. 318, and that inscription runs thus: "The Synagogue of the Marcionites."

Now seeing that the force of tradition was so great as to compel even an anti-Jewish sect to call their meeting-houses by a Jewish name, we may be sure that the tradition of the institutions, forms, and arrangements of the synagogue must have been infinitely more potent with the earliest Christian believers, constraining them to adopt similar institutions in their own assemblies. Human nature is always the same, and the example of our own colonists sheds light upon the course of Church development in Palestine. When the Pilgrim Fathers went to America, they reproduced the English constitution and the English laws in that country with so much precision and accuracy that the expositions of law produced by American lawyers are studied with great respect in England. The American colonists reproduced the institutions and laws with which they were familiar, modifying them merely to suit their own peculiar circumstances; and so has it been all the world over wherever the Anglo-Saxon race has settled—they have done exactly the same thing. They have established states and governments modelled after the type of England, and not of France or Russia. So was it with the early Christians. Human nature compelled them to fall back upon their first experience, and to develop under a Christian shape the institutions of the synagogue under which they had been trained. And now, when we read the Acts, we see that here lies the most natural explanation of the course of history, and specially of this sixth chapter. In the synagogue, as Dr. John Lightfoot expounds it in his "*Horæ Hebraicæ*" (Matt. iv. 23), the government was in the hands of the ruler and the council of elders or presbyters, while under them there were three almoners or deacons, who served in the same capacity as the Seven in superintending the charitable work of the congregation. The great work for which the Seven were appointed was distribution, and we shall see that this was ever maintained, and is still maintained, as the leading idea of the diaconate, though other and more directly spiritual work was at once added to their functions by St. Stephen and St. Philip. Now, just as our colonists brought English insti-

tutions and ideas with them wherever they settled, so was it with the missionaries who went forth from the Mother Church of Jerusalem. They carried the ideas and institutions with them which had been there sanctioned by the Apostles, and thus we find deacons mentioned in conjunction with bishops at Philippi, deacons joined with bishops in St. Paul's Epistle to Timothy, and the existence of the institution at Corinth, and its special work as a charitable organisation, implied in the description given of Phœbe to the Roman Christians in the sixteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. St. Paul's directions to Timothy in the third chapter of his first Epistle deal both with deacons and deaconesses, and in each case lay down qualifications specially suited for distributors of charitable relief, whose duty called upon them to visit from house to house, but say nothing about any higher work. They are indeed "to hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience;" they must be sound in the faith like the Seven themselves; but the special qualifications demanded by St. Paul are those needed in almoners: "The deacons must be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre."

So far as to the testimony of Scripture. When we pass beyond the bounds of the canonical books, and come to the apostolic fathers, the evidence is equally clear. They testify to the universality of the institution, and bear witness to its work of distribution. Clement of Rome was a contemporary of the Apostles. He wrote an Epistle to the Corinthians, which is the earliest witness to the existence of St. Paul's Epistles to the same Church. In Clement's epistle we find express mention of deacons, of their apostolic appointment, and of the universal diffusion of the office. In the forty-third chapter of his epistle Clement writes to the Corinthians concerning the Apostles:—"Thus preaching through countries and cities they appointed bishops and deacons for those who should afterwards believe," clearly implying that deacons then existed at Rome, though we have no express notice of them in the epistle written by St. Paul to the Roman Church.

There is a rule, however, very needful for historical investigations. Silence is no conclusive argument against an alleged fact, unless there be silence where, if the alleged fact had existed, it must have been mentioned. Josephus, for instance, is silent about Christ and Christianity. Yet he wrote when its existence was a matter of common notoriety. But there was no necessity for him to notice it. It was an awkward fact too, and so he is silent. St. Paul does not mention deacons as existing at Rome, though he does mention them at Philippi. But Clement's words expressly assert that universally, in all cities and countries, this order was established wherever the Apostles taught; and so we find it even from Pagan records. Pliny's letter to Trajan, written about A. D. 110, some fifteen or twenty years later than Clement, testifies that the order of deacons existed in far distant Bithynia, among the Christians of the Dispersion to whom St. Peter directed his Epistle. Pliny's words are, "I therefore thought it the more necessary, in order to ascertain what truth there was in this account, to examine two slave-girls who were called deaconesses (*ministrae*), and even to use torture." See the article Trajanus in the "*Dict. Christ. Biog.*," iv. 1040.) It is ex-



actly the same with St. Ignatius in the second chapter of his Epistle to the Trallians, which dates about the same period. The spiritual side of the office had now come more prominently into notice, as the occasion of their first appointment had fallen into disuse; but still Ignatius recognises the origin of the diaconate when he writes that "the deacons are not deacons of meats and drinks, but servants of the Church of God" (Lightfoot, "Apost. Fathers," vol. ii. sec. i. p. 156). While again Polycarp, in his Epistle to the Philippians, ch. v., recognises the same qualities as necessary to deacons which St. Paul requires and enumerates in his Epistle to Timothy. Justin Martyr, a little later, twenty years or so, tells us that the deacons distributed the elements consecrated in the Holy Communion to the believers that were absent (Justin, "First Apol.," ch. lxvii.). This is most important testimony, connecting the order of deacons as then flourishing at Rome and their work with the Seven constituted by the Apostle. The daily distribution of the Apostles' time was closely connected with the celebration of the Eucharist, which indeed in its meal or food, common to all the faithful, and its charitable collections and oblations, of which Justin Martyr speaks, retained still some trace of the daily distribution which prevailed in the early church, and occasioned the choice of the Seven. The deacons in Justin Martyr's day distributed the spiritual food to the faithful, just as in earlier times they distributed all the sustenance which the faithful required, whether in their spiritual or their temporal aspect. It is evident from this recital of the places where the deacons are incidentally referred to, that their origin was never forgotten, and that distribution of charitable relief and help was always retained as the essence, the central idea and notion, of the office of deacon, though at the same time other and larger functions were by degrees entrusted to them, as the Church grew and increased, and ecclesiastical life and wants became more involved and complex. History bears out this view. Irenæus was the disciple of Polycarp, and must have known many apostolic men, men who had companied with the Apostles and knew the whole detail of primitive Church government; and Irenæus, speaking of Nicolas the proselyte of Antioch, describes him as "one of the seven who were first ordained to the diaconate by the Apostles." Now Irenæus is one of our great witnesses for the authenticity of the Four Gospels; surely then he must be an equally good witness to the origin of the order of deacons and the existence of the Acts of the Apostles which is implied in this reference. It is scarcely necessary to go farther in Church history, but the lower one goes the more clearly we shall see that the original notion of the diaconate is never forgotten. In the third century we find that there were still only seven deacons in Rome, though there were forty-six presbyters, a number which was retained down to the twelfth century in the seven cardinal deacons of that Church. The touching story of the martyrdom of St. Laurence, Archdeacon of Rome in the middle of the third century, shows that he was roasted over a slow fire in order to extort the vast sums he was supposed to have in charge for the purpose of relieving the sick and the poor connected with the Roman Church; proving that the original conception of the office as an

executive and charitable organisation was then vigorously retained; just as it is still set forth in the ordinal of the Church of England, where, after reciting how the deacon's office is to help the priest in several subordinate positions, it goes on to say, "Furthermore, it is his office, where provision is so made, to search for the sick, poor, and impotent people of the parish, to intimate their estates, names, and places where they dwell, unto the curate, that by his exhortation they may be relieved by the alms of the parishioners."

The only objection of any value which has been raised to this line of argument is based on a mere assumption. It has been said that the Seven were appointed for a special emergency, and to serve a temporary purpose connected with the community of goods which existed in the early Church of Jerusalem, and therefore when this arrangement ceased the office itself ceased also. But this argument is based on the assumption that the Christian idea of a community of goods wholly passed away, so that services of an order like the Seven were no longer required. This is a pure assumption. The community of goods as practised at Jerusalem was found by experience to be a mistake. The shape of the idea was changed, but the idea itself survived. The old form of community of goods passed away. The Christians retained their rights of private property, but were taught to regard this private property as in a sense common, and liable for all the wants and needs of their poor and suffering brethren. A charitable order, or at least an order charged with the care of the poor, and their relief, must inevitably have sprung up among the Jewish Christians. The relief of the poor was a necessary part of the duty of a synagogue. The Jewish domestic law enforced a poor-rate, and collected it through the organisation of each synagogue, by means of three deacons attached to each. Selden, in his great work on "The Laws of the Hebrews," bk. ii. chap. vi. ("Works," i. 632), tells us that if "any Jew did not pay his fair contribution he was punished with stripes." As soon as the Jewish Christians began to organise themselves, the idea of almoners, with their daily and weekly distributions, after the synagogue model, was necessarily developed.\* We have an unexceptionable piece of evidence upon this point. The satirist Lucian lived at the close of the second century. He was a bitter scoffer, who jeered at every form of religion, and at Christianity above all. He wrote an account of a certain Syrian named Peregrinus Proteus, who was an impostor trading upon the religious principles of various philosophical sects, and specially on those of the Christians. Lucian tells us that the Christians were the easiest persons to be deceived, because of their opinions. Lucian's words are interesting as showing what a second-century pagan, a clever literary man too, thought of Christianity, viewing it from the outside. For this reason we shall quote a little more than the words which immediately bear upon the subject. "It is incredible with what alacrity these people (the Christians) support and defend the public cause. They spare nothing, in fact, to promote it. These poor men have persuaded themselves that they shall be immortal, and live for ever.

\* See Kitto's "Biblical Cyclopædia," articles on Synagogue and Deacon, or Schaff's edition of Herzog's "Cyclopædia," article on Synagogues.



They despise death therefore, and offer up their lives a voluntary sacrifice, being taught by their lawgiver that they are all brethren, and that, quitting our Grecian gods, they must worship their own sophist, who was crucified, and live in obedience to His laws. In compliance with them, they look with contempt upon all worldly treasures, and hold everything in common—a maxim which they have adopted without any reason or foundation. If any cunning impostor, therefore, who knows how to manage matters, come amongst them, he soon grows rich by imposing on the credulity of those weak and foolish men." We can see here that the great outer world of paganism considered a community of goods as still prevailing among the Christians. Their boundless liberality, their intense devotion to the cause of their suffering brethren, proved this, and therefore, because a practical community of goods existed amongst them, an order of men was required to superintend the distribution of their liberality in the second century just as truly as the work of the Seven was needed in the Church of Jerusalem.

II. We thus can see that the office of deacon, as now constituted, had its origin in apostolic times, and is built upon a scriptural foundation; but here we are bound to point out a great difference between the ancient and the modern office. An office or organisation may spring up in one age, and after existing for several centuries may develop into a shape utterly unlike its original. Yet it may be very hard to point out any special time when a vital change was made. All we can say is that the first occupants of the office would never recognise their modern successors. Take the papacy as an instance. There has been at Rome a regular historical succession of bishops since the first century. The succession is known and undoubted. Yet could one of the bishops of Rome of the first three centuries,—above all, could a first-century bishop of Rome like St. Clement—by any possibility recognise himself or his office in the present Pope Leo XIII.? Yet one would find it difficult to fix the exact moment when any vital change was made, or any unwonted claims put forward on behalf of the Roman See.\* So was it in the case of deacons and their office. Their modern successors may trace themselves back to the seven elected in the primitive Church at Jerusalem, and yet the office is now a very different one in practice from what it was then. Perhaps the greatest difference, and the only one we can notice, is this. The diaconate is now merely the primary and lowest rank of the Christian ministry; a kind of apprenticeship, in fact, wherein the youthful minister serves for a year, and is then promoted as a matter of course; whereas in Jerusalem or Rome of old it was a lifelong office, in the exercise of which maturity of judgment, of piety, and of character were required for the due discharge of its manifold duties. It is now a temporary office, it was of old a permanent one. And the apostolical custom was much the best. It avoided many difficulties and solved many a problem. At pres-

\*The College of Cardinals offers another illustration of this. The Cardinals were originally the parochial clergy of Rome. As Rome's ecclesiastical ambition increased, so did that of her parochial clergy, who came to imagine that, standing so close to the Pope, who was the door, they were themselves the hinges (cardines) on whom the door turned. I wonder if one of the original presbyters of Rome would be able to recognise his office in that of a modern cardinal claiming princely rank and precedence!

ent the office of the diaconate is practically in abeyance, and yet the functions which the ancient deacons discharged are not in abeyance, but are placed upon the shoulders of the other orders in the Church, already overwhelmed with manifold responsibilities, and neglecting, while serving tables, the higher aspects of their work. The Christian ministry in its purely spiritual, and specially in its prophetic or preaching aspect, is sorely suffering because an apostolic office is practically set aside. In the ancient Church it was never so. The deacons were chosen to a life-office. It was then but very seldom that a man chosen to the diaconate abandoned it for a higher function. It did not indeed demand the wholesale devotion of time and attention which the higher offices of the ministry did. Men even till a late period, both in East and West, combined secular pursuits with it. Thus let us take one celebrated instance. The ancient Church of England and Ireland alike was Celtic in origin and constitution. It was intensely conservative, therefore, of ancient customs and usages derived from the times of persecution, when Christianity was first taught among the Gauls and Celts of the extreme West. The well-known story of the introduction of Christianity into England under St. Augustine and the opposition he met with prove this. As it was in other matters, so was it with the ancient Celtic deacons; the old customs remained; they held office for life, and joined with it at the same time other and ordinary occupations. St. Patrick, for instance, the apostle of Ireland, tells us that his father Calpornius was a deacon, and yet he was a farmer and a decurion, or alderman, as we should say, of a Roman town near Dumbarton on the river Clyde. This happened about the year 400 of the Christian era.\*

Here indeed, as in so many other cases, the Church of Christ needs to go back to scriptural example and to apostolic rule. We require for the work of the Church deacons like the primitive men who devoted their whole lives to this one object; made it the subject of their thoughts, their cares, their studies, how they might instruct the ignorant, relieve the poor and widows, comfort the prisoners, sustain the martyrs in their last supreme hour; and who, thus using well the office of a deacon, found in it a sufficient scope for their efforts and a sufficient reward for their exertions, because they thereby purchased for themselves a good degree and great boldness in the faith of Jesus Christ. The Church now requires the help of living agencies in vast numbers, and they are not forthcoming. Let her avail herself of apostolic resources, and fall back upon primitive precedents. The real diaconate should be revived. Godly and spiritual men should be called upon to do their duty. Deacons should be ordained without being called to give up their ordinary employments. Work which now unduly accumulates upon overburdened shoulders should be assigned to others suitably to their talents, and thus a twofold blessing would be secured. Christian life would flourish more abundantly, and many a rent and schism, the simple result of energies repressed and unemployed, would be destroyed in their very commencement.

We have devoted much of our space to this

\*I have expanded this subject in "Ireland and the Celtic Church," ch. ii., viii., ix.; and in "Ireland and the Anglo-Norman Church," pp. 352-70.



subject, because it is one of great interest, as touching the origin and authority of the Christian ministry, and also because it has been a subject much debated; but we must hurry on to other points connected with the first appointment of the diaconate. The people selected the person to be ordained to this work. It is probable that they made their choice out of the different classes composing the Christian community. The mode of election of the Seven, and the qualifications laid down by the Apostles, were derived from the synagogue. Thus we read in Kitto's "Cyclopædia," art. "Synagogue:"—"The greatest care was taken by the rulers of the synagogue and of the congregation that those elected almoners should be men of modesty, wisdom, justice, and have the confidence of the people. They had to be elected by the harmonious voice of the people." Seven deacons altogether were chosen. Three were probably Hebrew Christians, three Grecian Christians or Hellenists, and one a representative of the proselytes, Nicolas of Antioch. This would have been but natural. The Apostles wanted to get rid of murmurs, jealousies, and divisions in the Church, and in no way could this have been more effectually done than by the principle of representation. Had the Seven been all selected from one class alone, divisions and jealousies would have prevailed as of old. The Apostles themselves had proved this. They were all Hebrew Christians. Their position and authority might have secured them from blame. Yet murmurings had arisen against them as distributors, and so they devised another plan, which, to have been successful, as it doubtless was, must have proceeded on a different principle. Then when the seven wise and prudent men were chosen from the various classes, the Apostles asserted their supreme position: "When the Apostles had prayed, they laid their hands on them." And as the result peace descended like a shower upon the Church, and spiritual prosperity followed upon internal peace and union.

III. "They laid their hands on them." This statement sets forth the external expression and the visible channel of the ordination to their office which the Apostles conferred. This action of the imposition of hands was of frequent use among the ancient Jews. The Apostles, as well acquainted with Old Testament history, must have remembered that it was employed in the case of designation of Joshua as the leader of Israel in the place of Moses (Num. xxvii. 18-23; compare Deut. xxxiv. 9), that it was used even in the synagogue in the appointment of Jewish rabbis, and had been sanctioned by the practice of Jesus Christ. The Apostles naturally therefore, used this symbol upon the solemn appointment of the first deacons, and the same ceremonial was repeated upon similar occasions. Paul and Barnabas were set apart at Antioch for their missionary work by the imposition of hands. St. Paul uses the strongest language about the ceremony. He does not hesitate to attribute to it a certain sacramental force and efficacy, bidding Timothy "stir up the gift of God which is in thee through the laying on of my hands" (2 Tim. i. 6); while again, when we come down a few years later, we find the "laying on of hands" reckoned as one of the fundamental elements of religion, in the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. But it was not merely in the solemn appointment of officials in the

Church that this ceremony found place. It was employed by the Apostles as the rite which filled up and perfected the baptism which had been administered by others. Philip baptised the Samaritans. Peter and John laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Ghost. The ceremony of imposition of hands was so essential and distinguishing a point that Simon Magus selects it as the one he desires above all others effectually to purchase, so that the outward symbol might be followed by the inward grace. "Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost," was the prayer of the arch-heretic to St. Peter; while again in the nineteenth chapter we find St. Paul using the same visible ceremony in the case of St. John's disciples, who were first baptised with Christian baptism, and then endued by St. Paul with the gift of the Spirit. Imposition of hands in the case of ordination is a natural symbol, indicative of the transmission of function and authority. It fitly indicates and notifies to the whole Church the persons who have been ordained, and therefore has ever been regarded as a necessary part of ordination. St. Jerome, who was a very keen critic as well as a close student of the Divine oracles, fixes upon this public and solemn designation as a sufficient explanation and justification of the imposition of hands in ordinations, lest any one should be ordained without his knowledge by a silent and solitary prayer. Hence every branch of the Church of Christ has rigorously insisted upon imposition of hands after the apostolic example, in the case of ordinations to official positions, with one or two apparent and very doubtful exceptions, which merely prove the binding character of the rule.

IV. The list of names again is full of profit and of warning. How completely different from human histories, for instance, is this Divine record of the first doings of the Church! How thoroughly shaped after the Divine model is this catalogue of the earliest officials chosen by the Apostles! Men have speculated whether they were Hebrews or Grecians, whether they belonged to the seventy sent forth by Christ or to the hundred and twenty who first gathered into the upper room at Jerusalem. All such speculations are curious and interesting, but they have nothing to do with man's salvation; therefore they are sternly put on one side and out of sight. How we should long to know the subsequent history of these men, and to trace their careers! yet Holy Writ tells us but very little about them, nothing certain, in fact, save what we learn about St. Stephen and St. Philip. God bestowed Holy Scripture upon men, not to satisfy or minister to their curiosity, but to nourish their souls and edify their spirits. And surely no lesson is more needed than the one implied in the silences of this passage; there is in truth none more necessary for our publicity-seeking and popularity-hunting age than this, that God's holiest servants have laboured in obscurity, have done their best work in secret, and have looked to God alone and to His judgment for their reward. I have said indeed that concerning the list of names recorded as those of the first deacons, we know nothing but of St. Stephen and St. Philip, whose careers will again come under our notice in later chapters. There is, however, a current tradition that Nicolas, the proselyte of Antioch, did distinguish



himself, but in an unhappy direction. It is asserted by Irenæus in his work "Against Heresies" (Book I. chap. 26), that Nicolas was the founder of the sect of Nicolaitans denounced in the Revelation of St. John (chap. ii. 6, 16). Critics are, however, much divided upon this point. Some clear Nicolas of this charge, while others uphold it. It is indeed impossible to determine this matter. But supposing that Nicolas of Antioch was the author of this heresy, which was of an antinomian character, like so many of the earliest heresies that distracted the primitive Church, this circumstance would teach us an instructive lesson. Just as there was a Judas Iscariot among the Apostles, and a Demas among St. Paul's most intimate disciples, so was there a Nicolas among the first deacons. No place is so holy, no office so sacred, no privileges so great, but that the tempter can make his way there. He can lurk unseen and unsuspected amid the pillars of the temple, and he can find us out, as he did the Son of God Himself, amid the wilds of the desert. Official position and exalted privileges confer no immunity from temptation. Nay, rather, they bring with them additional temptations over and above those which assail the ordinary Christian, and should therefore lead every one called to any similar work to diligent watchfulness, to earnest prayer, lest while teaching others they themselves fall into condemnation. There is, however, another lesson which a different version of the history of Nicolas would teach. Clement of Alexandria, in his celebrated work called the "Stromata" (Book II. chap. 20, and Book III. chap. 4), tells us that Nicolas was a most strictly virtuous man. He was extreme even in his asceticism, and, like many ascetics, used language that might be easily abused to the purposes of wickedness. He was wont to say that the "flesh must be abused," meaning that it must be chastised and restrained. One-sided and extreme teaching is easily perverted by the wicked nature of man, and men of impure lives, listening to the language of Nicolas, interpreted his words as an excuse for abusing the flesh by plunging into the depths of immorality and crime. Men placed in official positions and called to the exercise of the clerical office should weigh their words. Extreme statements are bad unless duly and strictly guarded. The intention of the speaker may be good, and a man's own life thoroughly consistent, but unbalanced teaching will fall upon ground where the life and intention of the teacher will have no power or influence, and bring forth evil fruit, as in the case of the Nicolaitans.

V. The central figure of this whole section of our narrative is St. Stephen. He is introduced into the narrative with the same startling suddenness which we may note in the case of Barnabas and of Elijah. He runs a rapid course, flings all, Apostles and every one else, into the shade for a time, and then disappears, exemplifying those fruitful sayings of inspiration, so true in our every-day experience of God's dealings, "The first shall be last, and the last first." "Paul may plant, Apollos may water, but it is God alone that giveth the increase." Stephen, full of grace and power, did great signs and wonders among the people. These two words, *grace* and *power*, are closely connected. Their union in this passage is significant. It was not the intellect, or the eloquence, or the activity of

St. Stephen which made him powerful among the people and crowned his labours with such success. It was his abundant grace. Eloquence and learning, active days and laborious nights, are good and necessary things. God uses them and demands them from His people. He chooses to use human agencies, and therefore demands that the human agents shall give Him of their best, and not offer to Him the blind and lame of their flock. But these things will be utterly useless and ineffective apart from Christ and the power of His grace. The Church of Christ is a supernatural society, and the work of Christ is a supernatural work, and in that work the grace of Christ is absolutely necessary to make any human gift or exertion effectual in carrying out His purposes of love and mercy. This is an age of organisations and committees and boards; and some good men are so wrapped up in them that they have no time to think of anything else. To this busy age these words, "Stephen, full of grace and power," convey a useful warning, teaching that the best organisations and schemes will be useless to produce Stephen's power unless Stephen's grace be found there as well. This passage is a prophecy and picture of the future in another aspect. The fulness of grace in Stephen wrought powerfully amongst the people. It was the savour of life unto life in some. But in others it was a savour of death unto death, and provoked them to evil deeds, for they suborned men "which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God."

We get in these words, in this false accusation, even through its falsehood, a glimpse into the character of St. Stephen's preaching. A false accusation need not be necessarily altogether false. Perhaps rather we should say that, in order to be effective for mischief, a twisted, distorted charge, with some basis of truth, some semblance of justification about it, is the best for the accuser's purpose, and the most difficult for the defendant to answer. St. Stephen was ripening for heaven more rapidly than the Apostles themselves. He was learning more rapidly than St. Peter himself the true spiritual meaning of the Christian scheme. He had taught in no ambiguous language the universal character of the Gospel and the catholic mission of the Church. He had expanded and applied the magnificent declarations of the Master Himself, "The hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father;" "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." And then the narrow-minded Grecian Jews, anxious to vindicate their orthodoxy, which was doubted by their Hebrew brethren, distorted Stephen's wider and grander conceptions into a charge of blasphemy against the holy man. What a picture of the future of Christ's best and truest witnesses, especially when insisting on some nobler and wider or forgotten aspect of truth. Their teaching has been ever suspected, distorted, accused as blasphemous; and so it must ever be. And yet God's servants, when they find themselves thus misrepresented, can realise to themselves that they are but following the course which the saints of every age have run, that they are being made like unto the image of Stephen the first martyr, and of Jesus Christ Himself, the King of Saints, who suffered under a similar accusation. The



mere popularity-hunter will, of course, carefully eschew such charges and suspicions. His object is human praise and reward, and he shapes his teaching so as to carefully avoid giving offence. But then the mere popularity-hunter seeks his reward here below, and very often gets it. Stephen, however, and every true teacher looks not for reward in this world. Stephen taught truth as God revealed it to his soul. He suffered the consequence, and then received his crown from that Almighty Judge before whose awful tribunal he ever consciously stood. Misrepresentation must ever be expected by God's true servants. It must be discounted, borne with patiently, taken as a trial of faith and patience, and then, in God's own time, it will turn out to our greater blessing. One consideration alone ought to prove sufficient to console us under such circumstances. If our teaching was not proving injurious to his cause, the Evil One would not trouble himself about it. Let us only take good heed lest our own self-love and vanity should lead us to annoy ourselves too much about the slander or the evil report, remembering that misrepresentation and slander is ever the portion of God's servants. Jesus Christ and Stephen were thus treated. St. Paul's teaching was accused of tending to licentiousness; the earliest Christians were accused of vile practices; St. Athanasius in his struggles for truth was accused of rebellion and murder; the Reformers were accused of lawlessness; John Wesley of Romanism and disloyalty; William Wilberforce of being an enemy to British trade; John Howard of being an encourager of crime and immorality. Let us be content then if our lot be with the saints, and our portion be that of the servants of the Most High.

Again, we learn from this place how religious zeal can overthrow religion and work out the purposes of evil. Religious zeal, mere party spirit taking the place of real religion, led the Hellenists to suborn men and falsely accuse St. Stephen. They made an idol of the system of Judaism, and forgot its spirit. They worshipped their idol so much that they were ready to break the commandments of God for its sake. The dangers of party spirit in matters of religion, and the evil deeds which have been done in apparent zeal for God and real zeal for the devil, these are still the lessons true for the future ages of the Church, which we read in this passage. And how true to life has even our own age found this prophetic picture. Men cannot indeed now suborn men and bring fatal charges against them in matters of religion, and yet they can fall into exactly the same crime. Party religion and party zeal lead men into precisely the same courses as they did in the days of St. Stephen. Partisanship causes them to violate all the laws of honour, of honesty, of Christian charity, imagining that they are thereby advancing the cause of Christ, forgetting that they are acting on the rule which the Scriptures repudiate,—they are doing evil that good may come,—and striving to further Christ's kingdom by a violation of His fundamental precepts. Oh for more of the spirit of true charity, which will lead men to support their own views in a spirit of Christian love! Oh for more of that true grasp of Christianity which will teach that a breach of Christian charity is far worse than any amount of speculative error! The error, as we think it, may be in reality God's own truth;

but the violation of God's law implied in such conduct as Stephen's adversaries displayed, and as party zeal now often prompts, can never be otherwise than contrary to the mind and law of Jesus Christ.

## CHAPTER XV.

### *ST. STEPHEN'S DEFENCE AND THE DOCTRINE OF INSPIRATION.*

ACTS vi. 12-14; vii. 1, 2.

ST. STEPHEN and St. Philip are the two prominent names among the primitive deacons. Stephen, however, much surpasses Philip. Devout expositors of Scripture have recognised in his name a prophecy of his greatness. Stephen is Stephanos, a garland or crown, in the Greek language. Garlands or crowns were given by the ancient Greeks to those who rendered good services to their cities, or brought fame to them by winning triumphs in the great national games. And Stephen had his name divinely chosen for him by that Divine Providence which ordereth all things, because he was to win in the fulness of time an imperishable garland, and to gain a crown of righteousness, and to render highest services to the Church of God by his teaching and by his testimony even unto death. St. Stephen had a Greek name, and must have belonged to the Hellenistic division of the Jewish nation. He evidently directed his special energies to their conversion, for while the previous persecutions had been raised by the Sadducees, as the persons whose prejudices had been assailed, the attack on Stephen was made by the Grecian Jews of the synagogues belonging to the Libertines or freedmen, in union with those from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia, and Asia. The Libertines had been slaves, Jewish captives, taken in the various wars waged by the Romans. They had been dispersed among the Romans at Rome and elsewhere. There in their captivity they had learned the Greek language and become acquainted with Greek culture; and now, when they had recovered their freedom through that suppleness and power of adaptation which the Jewish race has ever displayed, they returned to Jerusalem in such numbers that a synagogue of the Libertines was formed. Their captivity and servitude had, however, only intensified their religious feelings, and made them more jealous of any attempts to extend to the Gentiles who had held them captives the spiritual possessions they alone enjoyed. There is, indeed, an extremely interesting parallel to the case of the Libertines in early English history, as told by Bede. The Saxons came to England in the fifth century and conquered the Christian Celts, whom they drove into Wales. The Celts, however, avenged themselves upon their conquerors, for they refused to impart to the Pagan Saxons the glad tidings of salvation which the Celts possessed.\* But the Libertines were not the only assailants of St. Stephen. With them were joined members of synagogues connected with various other important Jewish centres. Jerusalem was then somewhat like Rome at the present time. It was the one city whither a race scattered all over the world and speaking every language tended. Each language was repre-

\* See Bede's "Ecclesiastical History," Book ii. chap. 2.



sented by a synagogue, just as there are English Colleges and Irish Colleges and Spanish Colleges at Rome, where Roman Catholics of those nationalities find themselves specially at home. Among these Hellenistic antagonists of St. Stephen we have mention made of the men of Cilicia. Here, doubtless, was found a certain Saul of Tarsus, enthusiastic in defence of the ancient faith, and urgent with all his might to bring to trial the apostate who had dared to speak words which he considered derogatory of the city and temple of the great king.

Saul, indeed, may have been the great agent in Stephen's arrest. It is a nature and an intellect like his that can discern the logical results of teaching like St. Stephen's, and then found an accusation upon the deductions he makes rather than upon the actual words spoken. Saul may have placed the Church under another obligation on this occasion. To him may be due the report of the speech made by Stephen before the Sanhedrin. Indeed, it is to St. Paul in his unconverted state we feel inclined to attribute the knowledge which St. Luke possessed of the earlier proceedings of the council in the matter of the Christians. After St. Paul's conversion we get no such details concerning the deliberations of the Sanhedrin as we do in the earlier chapters of the Acts, simply because Saul of Tarsus, the rising champion and hope of the Pharisees, was present at the earlier meetings and had access to their inmost secrets, while at the later meetings he never appeared save to stand his trial as an accused person. The question, How was Stephen's speech preserved? has been asked by some critics who wished to decry the historic truth of this narrative, and to represent the whole thing as a fancy sketch or romance, worked up on historic lines indeed, but still only a romance, written many years after the events had happened. Critics who ask this forget what modern research has shown in another department. The "Acts" of the martyrs are sometimes very large documents, containing reports of charges, examinations, and speeches of considerable length. These have often been considered mere fancy history, the work of mediæval monks wishing to celebrate the glory of these early witnesses for truth, and sceptical writers have often put them aside without bestowing even a passing notice upon them.

Modern investigation has taken these documents, critically investigated them, compared them with the Roman criminal law, and has come to the conclusion that they are genuine, affording some of the most interesting and important examples of ancient methods of legal procedure anywhere to be found. How did the Christians get these records? it may be asked. Various hints, given here and there, enable us to see. Bribery of the officials was sometimes used. The notaries, shorthand writers, and clerks attendant upon a Roman court were numerous, and were always accessible to the gifts of the richer Christians when they wished to obtain a correct narrative of a martyr's last trial. Secret Christians among the officials also effected something, and there were numerous other methods by which the Roman judicial records became the property of the Church, to be in time transmitted to the present age. Now just the same may have been the case with the trials of the primitive Christians, and specially of St. Stephen. But we

know that St. Paul was there. Memory among the Jews was sharpened to an extraordinary degree. We have now no idea to what an extent the human memory was then developed. The immense volumes which are filled with the Jewish commentaries on Scripture were in those times transmitted from generation to generation simply by means of this power. It was considered, indeed, a great innovation when those commentaries were committed to writing instead of being intrusted to tradition. It is no wonder then that St. Paul could afford his disciple, St. Luke, a report of what Stephen said on this occasion, even if he had not preserved any notes whatsoever of the process of the trial. Let us, however, turn to the consideration of St. Stephen's speech, omitting any further notice of objections based on our own ignorance of the practices and methods of distant ages.

I. The defence of St. Stephen was a speech delivered by a Jew, and addressed to a Jewish audience. This is our first remark, and it is an important one. We are apt to judge the Scriptures, their speeches, arguments, and discussions, by a Western standard, forgetting that Orientals argued then and argue still not according to the rules of logic taught by Aristotle, nor by the methods of eloquence derived from the traditions of Cicero and Quintilian, but by methods and rules essentially different. What would satisfy Westerns would have seemed to them utterly worthless, just as an argument which now seems pointless and weak appeared to them absolutely conclusive. Parallels, analogies, parables, mystical interpretations were then favourite methods of argument, and if we wish to understand writers like the authors of the scriptural books we must strive to place ourselves at their point of view, or else we shall miss their true interpretation. Let us apply this idea to St. Stephen's defence, which has been often depreciated because treated as if it were an oration addressed to a Western court or audience. Erasmus, for instance, was an exceedingly learned man, who lived at the period of the Reformation. He was well skilled in Latin and Greek learning, but knew nothing of Jewish ideas. He hesitates not, therefore, to say in his Annotations on this passage that "there are many things in Stephen's speech which have no bearing on the question at issue; while Michaelis, another German writer of great repute in the earlier days of this century, remarks that there are many things in this oration of which we cannot perceive the tendency, as regards the accusation brought against the martyr. Let us examine and see if the case be not otherwise, remembering that promise of the Master, given not to supersede human exertion or to indulge human laziness, but given to support and sustain and safeguard His persecuted servants under circumstances like those amid which Stephen found himself. "But when they deliver you up, be not anxious how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." What, then, was the charge brought against Stephen? He was accused of "speaking blasphemous words against Moses, and against God," or, to put it in the formal language used by the witnesses, "We have heard him say that Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered



unto us." Now Stephen, if merely a man of common sense, must have intended to reply to this indictment. Some critics, as we have just noted, think that he failed effectually to do so. We are indeed often in great danger of paying too much attention and lending too great weight to objections of this kind urged by persons who assume to themselves the office of critics; and to counteract this tendency perhaps it is as well to note that a leading German writer of a rationalistic type, named Zeller, who has written a work to decry the historical character of the Acts, finds in St. Stephen's words an oration "not only characteristic, but also better suited to the case and to the accusation raised against him than is usually supposed."

Disregarding, then, all cavils of critics whose views are mutually destructive, let us see if we cannot discern in this narrative the marks of a sound and powerful mind, guided, aided, and directed by the Spirit of God which dwelt so abundantly in him. St. Stephen was accused of irreverence towards Moses and hostility towards the temple, and towards all the Jewish institutions. How did he meet this? He begins his address to the Sanhedrin at the earliest period of their national history, and shows how the chosen people had passed through many changes and developments without interfering with their essential identity amid these changes. His opponents now made idols of their local institutions and of the buildings of the temple, but God's choice and God's promise had originally nothing local about them at all. Abraham, their great father, was first called by God in Ur of the Chaldees, far away across the desert in distant Mesopotamia. Thence he removed to Charran, and then, only after the lapse of years, became a wanderer up and down in Canaan, where he never possessed so much of the land as he could set his foot upon. The promises of God and the covenant of grace were personal things, made to God's chosen children, not connected with lands or buildings or national customs. He next takes up the case of Moses. He had been accused of blasphemy and irreverence towards the great national law-giver. His words prove that he entertained no such feelings; he respected and revered Moses just as much as his opponents and accusers did. But Moses had nothing to say or do with Canaan, or Jerusalem, or the temple. Nay, rather, his work for the chosen people was done in Egypt and in Midian and on the side of Horeb, where the presence and name of Jehovah were manifested not in the temple or tabernacle, but in the bush burning yet not consumed.

The Grecian Jews accused Stephen of irreverence towards Moses. But how had their forefathers treated that Moses whom he recognised as a divinely-sent messenger? "They thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt." Moses, however, led them onward and upward. His motto was hope. His rod and his voice ever pointed forward. He warned them that his own ministry was not the final one; that it was only an intermediate and temporary institution, till the prophet should come unto whom the people should hearken. There was a chosen people before the customs introduced by Moses. There may therefore be a chosen people still when these customs cease, having fulfilled their purpose. The argument of St. Stephen in this passage is the same as

that of St. Paul in the fourth chapter of Galatians, where he sets forth the temporary and intermediate character of the Levitical law and of the covenant of circumcision. So teaches St. Stephen in his speech. His argument is simply this:—I have been accused of speaking blasphemous words against Moses because I proclaimed that a greater Prophet than he had come, and yet this was only what Moses himself had foretold. It is not I who have blasphemed and opposed Moses: it is my accusers rather. But then he remembers that the accusation dealt not merely with Moses. It went farther, and accused him of speaking blasphemous words against the national sanctuary, "saying that Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place." This leads him to speak of the temple. His argument now takes a different turn, and runs thus. This building is now the centre of Jewish thoughts and affections. But it is a mere modern thing as compared with the original choice and promise of God. There was no chosen dwelling-place of the Almighty in the earliest days of all; His presence was then manifested wherever His chosen servants dwelt. Then Moses made a tent or tabernacle, which abode in no certain spot, but moved hither and thither. Last of all, long after Abraham, and long after Moses, and even after David, Solomon built God an house. Even when it was built, and in all its original glory, even then the temporary character of the temple was clearly recognised by the prophet Isaiah, who had long ago, in his sixty-sixth chapter, proclaimed the truth which had been brought forward as an accusation against himself: "Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool; what house will ye build Me, saith the Lord, or what is the place of My rest? Hath not My hand made all these things?"—a great spiritual truth which had been anticipated long before Isaiah by King Solomon, in his famous dedication prayer at the opening of the temple: "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee; how much less this house that I have builded" (1 Kings viii. 27). After St. Stephen had set forth this undeniable truth confirmed by the words of Isaiah, which to the Pharisaic portion of his audience, at least, must have seemed conclusive, there occurs a break in the address.

One would have thought that he would then have proceeded to describe the broader and more spiritual life which had shone forth for mankind in Christ, and to expound the freedom from all local restrictions which should henceforth belong to acceptable worship of the Most High. Most certainly, if the speech had been invented for him and placed in his mouth, a forger would naturally have designed a fuller and more balanced discourse, setting forth the doctrine of Christ as well as the past history of the Jews. We cannot tell whether he actually entered more fully into the subject or not. Possibly the Sadducean portion of his audience had got quite enough. Their countenances and gestures bespoke their horror of St. Stephen's doctrine. Isaiah's opinion carried no weight with them as contrasted with the institutions of Moses, which were their pride and glory; and so, borne along by the force of his oratory, St. Stephen finished with that vigorous denunciation which led to his death: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the



Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye." This exposition of St. Stephen's speech will show the drift and argument of it as it appears to us. But it must have seemed to them much more powerful, plain-spoken, and aggressive. He vindicated himself to any right-thinking and fair mind from the accusation of irreverence towards God, towards Moses, or towards the Divine institutions. But the minds of his hearers were not fair. He had trampled upon their prejudices, he had suggested the vanity of their dearest ideas, and they could not estimate his reasons or follow his arguments, but they could resort to the remedy which every failing, though for the present popular, cause possesses—they could destroy him. And thus they treated the modern as their ancestors had treated the ancient prophets. What a lesson Stephen's speech has for the Church of every age! How wide and manifold the applications of it! The Jewish error is one that is often committed, their mistake often repeated. The Jews identified God's honour and glory with an old order that was fast passing away, and had no eyes to behold a new and more glorious order that was opening upon them. We may blame them then for their murder of St. Stephen, but we must blame them gently, feeling that they acted as human nature has ever acted under similar circumstances, and that good motives were mingled with those feelings of rage and bigotry and narrowness that urged them to their deed of blood. Let us see how this was. Stephen proclaimed a new order and a new development, embracing for his hearers a vast political as well as a vast religious change. His forecast of the future swept away at once all the privileges and profits connected with the religious position of Jerusalem, and thus destroyed the political prospects of the Jewish people. It is no wonder the Sanhedrin could not appreciate his oration. Men do not ever listen patiently when their pockets are being touched, their profits swept away, their dearest hopes utterly annihilated. Has not human experience often repeated the scene acted out that day in Jerusalem? On the political stage men have often seen it,—we ourselves have seen it. The advocates of liberty, civil and religious, have had to struggle against the same spirit and the same prejudices as St. Stephen. Take the political world alone. We now look back and view with horror the deeds wrought in the name of authority and in opposition to the principles of change and innovation. We read the stories of Alva and the massacres in the Netherlands, the bloody deeds of the seventeenth century in England and all over Europe, the miseries and the bloodshed of the American war of independence, the fierce opposition with which the spirit of liberty has been resisted throughout this century; and our sympathies are altogether ranged on the side of the sufferers,—the losers and defeated, it may have been, for the time, but the triumphant in the long run.

The true student, however, of history or of human nature will not content himself with any one-sided view, and he will have some sympathy to spare for those who adopted the stern measures. He will not judge them too harshly. They revered the past as the Jews of Jerusalem did, and reverence is a feeling that is right and blessed. It is no good sign for this age of ours that it possesses so little reverence for the past, thinks so lightly of the institutions, the

wisdom, the ideas of antiquity, and is ready to change them at a moment's notice. The men who now are held up to the execration of posterity, the high priest and the Sanhedrin who murdered Stephen, the tyrants and despots and their agents who strove to crush the supporters of liberty, the writers who cried them down and applauded or urged on the violent measures which were adopted and sometimes triumphed for the time,—we should strive to put ourselves in their position, and see what they had to say for themselves, and thus seek to judge them here below as the Eternal King will judge them at the great final tribunal. They knew the good which the old political institutions had worked. They had lived and flourished under them as their ancestors had lived and flourished before them. The future they knew not. All they knew was that changes were proposed which threatened everything with which their dearest memories were bound up, and the innovators seemed dangerous creatures, obnoxious to God and man, and they dealt with them accordingly.

So it has been and still is in politics. The opponents of political change are sometimes denounced in the fiercest language, as if they were morally wicked. The late Dr. Arnold seems a grievous offender in this respect. No one can read his charming biography by Dean Stanley without recognising how intolerant he was towards his political opponents; how blind he was to those good motives which inspire the timorous, the ignorant, and the aged, when brought face to face with changes which appear to them thickly charged with the most dangerous results. Charity towards opponents is sadly needed in the political as well as in the religious world. And as it has been in politics so has it been in religion. Men reverence the past, and that reverence easily glides into an idolatry blind to its defects and hostile to any improvement. It is in religion too as in politics; a thousand other interests—money, office, expectations, memories of the loved and lost—are bound up with old religious forms, and then when the prophet arises with his Divine message, as Stephen arose before the Sanhedrin, the ancient proverb is fulfilled, the corruption of the best becomes the worst, the good motives mingle with the evil, and are used by the poor human heart to justify the harshest, most unchristian deeds done in defence of what men believe to be the cause of truth and righteousness. Let us be just and fair to the aggressors as well as to the aggrieved, to the persecutors as well as to the persecuted. But let us all the same take good heed to learn for ourselves the lessons this narrative presents. Reverence is a good thing, and a blessed thing; and without reverence no true progress, either in political or spiritual things, can be made. But reverence easily degenerates into blind superstitious idolatry. It was so with the Sanhedrin, it was so at the Reformation, it has ever been so with the opponents of true religious progress. Let us evermore strive to keep minds free, open, unbiassed, respecting the past, yet ready to listen to the voice and fresh revelations of God's will and purposes made to us by the messengers whom He chooses as He pleases. Perhaps there was never an age which needed this lesson of Stephen's speech and its reception more than our own. The attitude of religious men towards science and its numerous and wondrous advances needs guidance such as this incident affords. The



Sanhedrin had their own theory and interpretation of God's dealings in the past. They clung to it passionately, and refused the teaching of Stephen, who would have widened their views, and shown them that a grand and noble development was quite in accordance with all the facts in the case, and indeed a necessary result of the sacred history when truly expounded! What a parable and picture of the future we here find! What a warning as to the attitude religious men should take up with respect to the progress of science! Patience, intellectual and religious patience, is taught us. The Sanhedrin were impatient of St. Stephen's views, which they could not understand, and their impatience made them lose a blessing and commit a sin. Now has it not been at times much the same with ourselves? Fifty or sixty years ago men were frightened at the revelations of geology,—they had their own interpretations of the past and of the Scriptures,—just as three centuries ago men were frightened at the revelations and teaching of modern astronomy. Prejudiced and narrow men then strove to hound down the teachers of the new science, and would, if they could, have destroyed them in the name of God. Patience, here, however, has done its work and has had its reward. The new revelations have been taken up and absorbed by the Church of Christ. Men have learned to distinguish between their own interpretations of religion and of religious documents on the one hand and the religion itself on the other. The old, human, narrow, prejudiced interpretations have been modified. That which could be shaken and was untrue has passed away, while that which cannot be shaken has remained.

The lesson taught us by these instances of astronomy and geology ought not to be thrown away. Patience is again necessary for the Christian and for the scientist alike. New facts are every day coming to light, but it requires much time and thought to bring new facts and old truths into their due correlation, to look round and about them. The human mind is at best very small and weak. It is blind, and cannot see afar off, and it is only by degrees it can grasp truth in its fulness. A new fact, for instance, discovered by science may appear at first plainly contradictory to some old truth revealed in Scripture. But even so, we should not lose our patience or our hope taught us by this chapter. What new fact of science can possibly seem more contradictory to any old truth of the Creeds than St. Stephen's teaching about the universal character of God's promise and the freeness of acceptable worship must have seemed when compared with the Divine choice of the temple at Jerusalem? They appeared to the Sanhedrin's ideas mutually destructive, though now we see them to have been quite consistent one with another. Let this historic retrospect support us when our faith is tried. Let us welcome every new fact and new revelation brought by science, and then, if they seem opposed to something we know to be true in religion, let us wait in confidence, begotten of past experience, that God in His own good time will clear up for His faithful people that which now seems difficult of comprehension. Patience and confidence, then, are two lessons much needed in this age, which St. Stephen's speech and its reception bring home to our hearts.

II. We have now spoken of the general aspect of the discourse, and the broad counsels we

may gather from it. There are some other points, however, points of detail as distinguished from wider views, upon which we would fix our attention. They too will be found full of guidance and full of instruction. Let us take them in the order in which they appear in St. Stephen's address. The mistakes and variations which undoubtedly occur in it are well worthy of careful attention, and have much teaching necessary for these times. There are three points in which Stephen varies from the language of the Old Testament. In the fourteenth verse of the seventh chapter Stephen speaks thus: "Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls;" while, if we turn to the Pentateuch, we shall find that the number of the original Hebrew immigrants is placed three times over at seventy, or threescore and ten, that is in Gen. xlv. 27, Exod. i. 5, and Deut. x. 22. This, however, is only a comparatively minor point. The Septuagint or Greek version of the Pentateuch reads seventy-five in the first of these passages, making the sons of Joseph born in Egypt to have been nine persons, and thus completing the number seventy-five, at which it fixes the roll of the males who came with Jacob. The next two verses, the fifteenth and sixteenth, contain a much more serious mistake. They run thus:—"So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers, and were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor the father of Sychem." Now here there occur several grave errors. Jacob was not carried over and buried at Sychem at all, but at the cave of Machpelah, as is plainly stated in Gen. l. 13. Again, a plot of ground at Sychem was certainly bought, not by Abraham, however, but by Jacob. Abraham bought the field and cave of Machpelah from Ephron the Hittite. Jacob bought his plot at Sychem from the sons of Emmor. There are in these verses, then, two serious historical mistakes; first as to the true burial-place of Jacob, and then as to the purchaser of the plot of ground at Sychem. Yet, again, there is a third mistake in the forty-third verse, where, when quoting a denunciation of Jewish idolatry from Amos. v. 25, 26, he quotes the prophet as threatening, "I will carry you away beyond Babylon," whereas the prophet did say, "Therefore I will cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus." St. Stephen substituted Babylon for Damascus, two cities between which several hundred miles intervened. I have stated the difficulty thus as strongly as possible, because I think that, instead of constituting a difficulty, they are a real source of living help and comfort, as well as a great practical confirmation of the story. Let us take this last point first. I say that these mistakes, admitted mistakes which I make no vain attempt to explain away, constitute a confirmation of the story as given in the Acts against modern rationalistic opponents. It is a favourite theme of many of these writers that the Acts of the Apostles is a mere piece of fancy history, a historical romance composed in the second century for the purpose of reconciling the adherents of St. Paul, or the Gentile Christians, with the followers of St. Peter, or the Jewish Christians. The persons who uphold this view fix the date of the Acts in the earlier half of the second century, and teach that the speeches and ad-



dresses were composed by the author of the book and put into the mouths of the reputed speakers. Now, in the mistake made by St. Stephen, we have a refutation of this theory. Surely any man composing a speech to put into the mouth of one of his favourite heroes and champions would not have represented him as making such grave errors when addressing the supreme Jewish senate. A man might easily make any of these slips which I have noticed in the heat of an oration, and they might have even passed unnoticed, as every speaker who has much practice in addressing the public still makes precisely the same kind of mistake. But a romancer, sitting down to forge speeches suitable to the time and place, would never have put in the mouth of his lay figures grave errors about the most elementary facts of Jewish history. We conclude, then, that the inaccuracies reported as made by St. Stephen are evidences of the genuine character of the oration attributed to him. Then again we see in these mistakes a guarantee of the honesty and accuracy of the reports of the speech. The other day I read the objections of a critic to our Gospels. He wished to know, for instance, how the addresses of our Lord could have been preserved in an age when there was no shorthand. The answer is, however, simple enough, and conclusive: there was shorthand in that age.\* Shorthand was then carried to such perfection that an epigram of Martial (xiv. 208), a contemporary poet, celebrating its triumphs may be thus translated:—

"Swift though the words, the pen still swifter sped;  
The hand has finish'd ere the tongue has said."

While even if the Jews knew nothing of shorthand, the human memory, as we have already noted, was then developed to a degree of which we have no conception. Now, whether transmitted by memory or by notes, this address of St. Stephen bears proofs of the truthfulness of the reporter in the mistakes it contains. A man anxious for the reputation of his hero would have corrected them, as parliamentary reporters are accustomed to make the worst speeches readable, correcting evident blunders, and improving the grammar. The reporter of St. Stephen's words, on the contrary, gave them to us just as they were spoken. But then, I may be asked, how do you account for St. Stephen's mistake? What explanation can you offer? My answer is simple and plain enough. I have no other explanation to offer except that they are mistakes such as a speaker, filled with his subject, and speaking to an excited and hostile audience, might naturally make; mistakes such as truthful speakers every day make in their ordinary efforts. Every man who speaks an extemporaneous discourse such as Stephen's was, full of references to past history, is liable to such errors. Even when the memory retains the facts most accurately, the tongue is apt to make such lapses. Let a number of names be mingled up together in a speech or sermon where frequent mention has to be made of one now and of another again, how easily in that case a speaker substitutes one for another. But it may be objected that it is declared of Stephen that he was "full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom," that "he was full of faith and power," and that his adversaries "were not able to re-

sist the wisdom and the spirit with which he spake." But surely this might be said of able, devoted, and holy men at the present day, and yet no one would say that they were miraculously kept from the most trivial mistakes, and that their memories and tongues were so supernaturally aided that they were preserved from the smallest verbal inaccuracies. We are always inclined to reverse the true scientific method of inquiry, and to form notions as to what inspiration must mean, instead of asking what, as a matter of fact, inspiration did mean and involve in the case of the Bible heroes. People when they feel offended by these mistakes of St. Stephen prove that they really think that Christianity was quite a different thing in the apostolic days from what it is now, and that the words "full of the Holy Ghost" and the presence of the Divine Spirit meant quite a different gift and blessing then from what they imply at the present time. I look upon the mistakes in this speech in quite a different light. St. Luke, in recording them exactly as they took place, proves, not merely his honesty as a narrator, but he also has handed down to us a most important lesson. He teaches us to moderate our notions and to hasten our *a priori* expectations. He shows us we must come and study the Scriptures to learn what they mean by the gift and power of the Holy Spirit. St. Luke expressly tells us that Stephen was full of the Holy Ghost, and then proceeds to narrate certain verbal inaccuracies and certain slips of memory to prove to us that the presence of the Holy Ghost does not annihilate human nature, or supersede the exercise of the human faculties. Just as in other places we find Apostles like St. Peter or St. Paul spoken of as equally inspired, and yet the inspiration enjoyed by them did not destroy their human weakness and infirmities, and, full of the Holy Ghost as they were, St. Paul could wax wroth and engage in bitter dissension with Barnabas, his fellow-labourer; and St. Peter could fall into hypocrisy against which his brother Apostle had publicly to protest. It is wonderful how liable the mind is, in matters of religion, to embrace exactly the same errors age after age, manifesting themselves in different shapes. Men are ever inclined to form their theories beforehand, and then to test God's actions and the course of His Providence by those theories, instead of reversing the order, and testing their theories by facts as God reveals them. This error about the true theory of inspiration and the gifts of the Holy Ghost which Protestants have fallen into is exactly the same as two celebrated mistakes, one in ancient, the other in modern times. The Eutychian heresy was very celebrated in the fifth century. It split the Eastern Church into two parts, and prepared the way for the triumph of Mahometanism. It fell, too, into this same error. It formed an *a priori* theory of God and His nature. It determined that it was impossible for the nature of Deity to be united to a nature which could feel hunger and thirst and weakness, because that God cannot be affected by any human weakness or wants. It denied, therefore, the real humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ and the reality of His human life and actions; teaching that His human body was not real, but merely a phenomenal or apparent one, and then explaining away all the statements and facts of Gospel history which seemed to them to con-

\* See p. 322 above, where I have touched on this point.



flict with their own private theory. In the West we have had ourselves experience of the same erroneous method of argument. The adherents of the Church of Rome argue for the infallibility of the Pope in the same way. They dilate on the awful importance of religious truth, and the fearful consequences of a mistake in such matters. Hence they conclude that it is only natural and fitting that a living, speaking, teaching, infallible guide should be appointed by God to direct the Church, and thence they conclude the infallibility of the Pope; a method of argument which has been amply exposed by Dr. Salmon in his work on the Infallibility of the Church. The Roman Catholics form their theory first, and when they come to facts which conflict with their theory, they deny them or explain them away in the most extraordinary manner.

Protestants themselves, however, are subject to the same erroneous methods. They form a theory about the Holy Ghost and His operations. They conclude, as is true, that He is Himself right and just and true in all His doings, and then they conclude that all the men whom He chose in the earliest age of the Church, and who are mentioned in Scripture as endued with His grace, must have been as free from every form of error as the Holy Spirit Himself. They thus fashion for themselves a mere *a priori* theory like the Eutychian and the Romanist, and then, when they apply their theory to passages like St. Stephen's speech, they feel compelled to deny facts and offer forced explanations, and to reject God's teaching as it is embodied in the divinely taught lessons of history. Let us be honest, fearless students of the Scriptures. St. Stephen was full of the Holy Ghost, and as such his great, broad, spiritual lessons were taught by the Spirit, and commend themselves as Divine teaching to every Christian heart. But these lessons were given through human lips, and had to be conveyed through human faculties, and as such are not free from the imperfections which attach themselves to everything human here below. Surely it is just the same still. God the Holy Ghost dwells with His people as of old. There are men, even in this age, of whom it still may be said, that in a special sense "they are full of the Holy Ghost," a blessing granted in answer to faithful prayer and devout communion and a life lived closely with God. The Holy Spirit speaks through them and in them. Their sermons, even on the simplest topics, speak with power, they teem with spiritual unction, they come home with conviction to the human conscience. Yet surely no one would dream of saying that these men are free from slips of speech and lapses of memory in their extemporaneous addresses, or in their private instructions, or in their written letters, because the Holy Ghost thus proves His presence and His power in His people as of old. The human heart and conscience easily and at once distinguish between that which is due to human weakness and what to Divine grace, according to that most pregnant saying of an Apostle himself gifted above all others, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us." This view may be startling to some persons who have been accustomed to look to the Bible as some persons look to the Pope, as an oracle which will give them infallible guidance on every topic

without the exercise of any thought or intelligence on their own part. Yet it is no original or novel notion of my own, but one that has been luminously set forth by a devout expositor of Scripture, dealing with this very passage many years ago. Dr. Vaughan, in his lectures on the Acts, preaching at Doncaster when vicar of that place, thus states his conclusions on this point:—"Now I will address one earnest word to persons who may have noticed with anxiety in this chapter, or who may have heard it noticed by others in a tone of cavil or disbelief, that in one or two minor points the account here given of Jewish history seems to vary from that contained in the narrative of the Old Testament. For example, the history of the book of Genesis tells us that the burying-place bought by Abraham was in Mamre or Hebron, not at Sychem; and that it was bought by him of Ephron the Hittite, Jacob (not Abraham) being the purchaser of the ground at Shechem of the sons of Hamor, Shechem's father. My friends, can you really suppose that a difference of this nature has anything to do, this way or that, with the substantial truth of the gospel revelation? I declare to you that I would not waste the time in endeavouring (if I was able) to reconcile such a variance. It is to be regretted that Christian persons, in their zeal for the literal accuracy of our Holy Book, have spoken and written as if they thought that anything could possibly depend upon such a question. We all know how easy it is to get two witnesses in a court of justice to give their stories of an occurrence in the same words. We know also how instant is the suspicion of falsehood which that formal coincidence of statement brings upon them. Holy Scripture shows what I may indeed call a noble superiority to all such uniformity. Each book of our Bible is an independent witness; shown to be so, not least, by verbal or even actual differences on some trifling points of detail. And they who drink most deeply at the fountain head of Divine truth learn to estimate these things in the same manner; to feel what we might describe as a lordly disdain for all infidel objections drawn from this sort of petty, paltry, cavilling, carping, creeping criticism. Let our faith at last, God helping us, be strong enough and decided enough to override a few or a multitude of such objections. We will hear them unmoved; we will fearlessly examine them; if we cannot resolve them, then, in the power of a more majestic principle, we will calmly turn from them and pass them by. What we know not now, we may know hereafter; and if we never know we will believe still." These are wise words, very wholesome, very practical, and very helpful in this present age.

III. Let us briefly gather yet another lesson from this passage. The declaration of the Church's catholicity and the universal nature of Christian worship contained in verses 47-50 deserve our attention. What did St. Stephen say?—"But Solomon built Him a house. Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in houses made with hands; as saith the prophet, The heaven is My throne, and the earth the footstool of My feet; what manner of house will ye build Me? saith the Lord; or what is the place of My rest? Did not My hand make all these things?" These words must have sounded as very extraordinary and very revolutionary in Jewish ears, because they most certainly struck at the root of the



exclusive privilege claimed for Jerusalem, that it was the one place upon earth where acceptable worship could be offered, and where the Divine presence could be manifested. It seems no wonder that they should have aroused the Sanhedrin to the pitch of fury which ended in the orator's judicial murder. But these words have been at times pressed farther than Stephen intended. He merely wished to teach that God's special and covenanted presence was not for the future to be limited to Jerusalem. In the new dispensation of the Messiah whom he preached, that special covenanted presence would be found everywhere. Where two or three should be gathered in Christ's name there would God's presence be found. These words of Stephen have sometimes been quoted as if they sounded the death-knell of special places dedicated to the honour and glory of God, such as churches are. It is evident, however, that they have no such application. They sounded the death-knell of the exclusive privilege of one place, the temple, but they proclaimed the freedom which the Church has ever since claimed, and the Jewish Church of the dispersion, by the institution of synagogues, had led the way in claiming; teaching that wherever true hearts and true worshippers are found, there God reveals Himself. But we must bear in mind a distinction. Stephen and the Apostles rejected the exclusive right of the Temple as the one place of worship for the world. They asserted the right to establish special places of worship throughout the world. They rejected the exclusive claims of Jerusalem. But they did not reject the right and the duty of God's people to assemble themselves as a collective body for public worship, and to realise Christ's covenanted presence. This is an important limitation of St. Stephen's statement. The absolute duty of public collective worship of the Almighty cannot be too strongly insisted upon. Men neglect it, and they support themselves by an appeal to St. Stephen's words, which have nothing to do with public worship more than with private worship. The Jews imagined that both public and private worship offered in the Temple had some special blessing attached, because a special presence of God was there granted. St. Stephen attacked this prejudice. His words must, however, be limited to the exact point he was then dealing with, and must not be pressed farther. Private prayer was binding on all God's people in the new and freer dispensation, and so, too, public worship has a special covenant blessing attached to it, and the blessing cannot be obtained if people neglect the duty. Public worship has been by Protestants looked at too much, as if it were only a means of their own edification, and thus, when they have thought that such edification could be as well or better attained at home, by reading a better sermon than they might chance to hear in the public congregation, they have excused their absence to their own conscience. But public worship is much more than a means of edification. It is the payment of a debt of worship, praise, and adoration due by the creature to the Creator. In that duty personal edification finds a place, but a mere accidental and subsidiary place. The great end of public worship is worship, not hearing, not edification even, though edification follows as a necessary result of such public worship when sincerely offered. The teaching of St. Stephen did not then apply

to the erection of churches and buildings set apart for God's service, or to the claim made for public worship as an exercise with a peculiar Divine promise annexed. It simply protests against any attempt to localise the Divine presence to one special spot on earth, making it and it alone the centre of all religious interest. St. Stephen's words are indeed but a necessary result of the ascension of Christ as we have already expounded its expediency. Had Christ remained on earth, His personal presence would have rendered the Church a mere local and not an universal institution; just as the doctrine of Roman Catholics about the Pope as Christ's Vicar, and Rome as his appointed seat, has so far invested Rome with somewhat of the characteristics of Jerusalem and the Temple. But our Lord ascended up on high that the hearts and minds of His people might likewise ascend to that region where, above time and sense and change, their Master evermore dwells, as the loadstone which secretly draws their hearts, and guides their tempest-tossed spirits across the stormy waters of this world to the haven of everlasting rest.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### *THE FIRST CHRISTIAN MARTYRDOM.*

Acts vii. 58-60; viii. 1.

THE apology of Stephen struck the keynote of Christian freedom, traced out the fair proportions of the Catholic Church, while the actual martyrdom of Stephen taught men that Christianity was not only the force which was to triumph, but the power in which they were to suffer, and bear, and die. Stephen's career was a type of all martyr lives, and embraces every possible development through which Christ's Church and His servants had afterwards to pass, — obscurity, fame, activity, death, fixing high the standard for all ages.

I. We have in this passage, telling the story of that martyrdom, a vast number of topics, which have formed the subject-matter of Christian thought since apostolic times. We have already remarked that the earliest quotation from the Acts of the Apostles connects itself with this scene of Stephen's martyrdom. Let us see how this came about. One hundred and forty years later than Stephen's death, towards the close of the second century, the Churches of Vienne and Lyons were sending an account of the terrible sufferings through which they had passed during a similar sudden outburst of the Celtic pagans of that district against the Christians. The aged Pothinus, a man whose life and ministry touched upon the apostolic age, was put to death, suffering violence very like that to which St. Stephen was subjected, for we are told expressly by the historian Eusebius that the mob in its violence flung missiles at him. "Those at a distance, whatsoever they had at hand, every one hurled at him, thinking it would be a great sin if they fell short in wanton abuse against him." The Church of Lyons, according to the loving usage of those early times, sent an account for all their trouble to the brethren in Asia and Phrygia, that they might read it at the celebration of the Eucharist for their own com-



fort and edification. They entered into great details, showing how wonderfully the power of God's grace was manifested, even in the weakest persons, sustaining their courage and enabling them to witness. The letter then goes on to note the marvellous humility of the sufferers. They would not allow any one to call them martyrs. That name was reserved to Jesus Christ, "the true and faithful Martyr," and to those who had been made perfect through death. Then, too, their charity was wonderful, and the Epistle, referring to this very incident, tells how they prayed "like Stephen, that perfect martyr, Lord, impute not this sin to them." The memory of St. Stephen served to nerve the earliest Gallic martyrs, and it has ever since been bound up with the dearest feelings of Christians. The arrangements of the Calendar, with which we are all familiar, are merely an expression of the same feeling as that recorded in the second-century document we have just now quoted. Christmas Day and St. Stephen's Day are closely united,—the commemoration of Christ's birth is joined with that of the martyrdom of St. Stephen, because of a certain spiritual instinct. Christmas Day records the fact of the Incarnation, and then we have according to the order of the Calendar three holy days; St. Stephen's, St. John's, and the Holy Innocents' Day, which follow one another in immediate succession. Many persons will remember the explanation of an old commentator on the Calendar and Liturgy, of which Keble makes a very effective use in his hymns in the "Christian Year" set apart for those days. There are three classes of martyrs: one in will and deed like St. Stephen,—this is the highest class, therefore he has place next to Christ; another in will, but not in deed, like St. John the Divine, who was ready to suffer death, but did not,—this is the second rank, therefore his place comes next to St. Stephen; and lastly come the Holy Innocents, the babes of Bethlehem, martyrs in deed but not in will, and therefore in the lowest position. The Western Church, and especially the Church of Northern Europe, has always loved the Christmas season, with its cheerful fires, its social joys, its family memories; and hence, as it was in the Church of the second century, so with ourselves, none has a higher or dearer place in memory, doubtless largely owing to this conjunction, than the great proto-martyr. Men have delighted, therefore, to trace spiritual analogies and relationships between Stephen and Christ; fanciful perhaps some of them are, but still they are devout fancies, edifying fancies, fancies which strengthen and deepen the Divine life in the soul. Thus they have noted that Christmas Day and St. Stephen's Day are both natal days. In the language of the ancient Church, with its strong realising faith, men spoke of a saint's death or martyrdom as his *dies natalis*. This is, indeed, one of the many traces of primitive usage which the Church of Rome has preserved, like a fly fixed in amber, petrified in the midst of her liturgical uses. She has a Martyrology which the ordinary laity scarcely ever see or use, but which is in daily use among the clergy and the various ecclesiastical communities connected with that Church. It is in the Latin tongue, and is called the "Martyrologium Romanum," giving the names of the various saints whose mem-

ories are celebrated upon each day throughout the year, and every such day is duly styled the natal or birthday of the saint to whom it is appropriated. The Church of Rome retains this beautiful custom of the primitive Church, which viewed the death-day of a saint as his birthday into the true life, and rejoiced in it accordingly. That life was not, in the conception of the primitive believers, a life of ghosts and shadows. It was the life of realities, because it was the life of eternity, and therefore the early Christians lived for it, they longed for it, and counted their entrance upon it their true natal or birthday. The Church brought the two birthdays of Christ and Stephen into closest union, and men saw a beautiful reason for that union, teaching that Christ was born into this lower world in order that Stephen might be born into the heavenly world. The whole of that dreadful scene enacted at Jerusalem was transformed by the power of that beautiful conception. Stephen's death was no longer a brutal murder; faith no longer saw the rage, the violence, the crushed body, the mangled and outraged humanity. The birthday of Jesus Christ, the Incarnation of the Master, transfigured the death-scene of the servant, for the shame and sufferings were changed into peace and glory; the execrations and rage of the mob became angelic songs, and the missiles used by them were fashioned into messengers of the Most High, ushering the faithful martyr through a new birth into his eternal rest. Well would it be for the Church at large if she could rise to this early conception more frequently than she commonly does. Men did not then trouble themselves about questions of assurance, or their Christian consciousness. These topics and ideas are begotten on a lower level, and find sustenance in a different region. Men like Stephen and the martyrs of Vienne and Lyons lived in the other world; it was the world of all their interests, of all their passionate desires, of all their sense of realities. They lived the supernatural life, and they did not trouble themselves with any questions about that life, any more than a man in sound physical health and spirits cares to discuss topics dealing with the constitution of the life which he enjoys, or to debate such unprofitable questions as, How do I know that I exist at all? Christians then knew and felt they lived in God, and that was enough for them. We have wandered far enough afield, however; let us retrace our steps, and seek to discover more in detail the instruction for the life of future ages given us in this first martyr scene.

II. We have brought before us the cause of the sudden outburst against Stephen. For it was an outburst, a popular commotion, not a legal execution. We have already explained the circumstances which led the Sanhedrin to permit the mob to take their own course, and even to assist them in doing so. Pilate had departed; the imperial throne too was vacant in the spring or early summer of the year 37; there was an interregnum when the bonds of authority were relaxed, during which the Jews took leave to do as they pleased, trusting that when the bonds were again drawn tight the misdeeds of the past and the irregularities committed would be forgotten and forgiven. Hence the riot in which Stephen lost his life. But what roused the listeners—Sanhedrists, elders, priests, and people alike—to madness? They heard him pa-



tiently enough, just as they afterwards heard his successor Paul, till he spoke of the wider spiritual hope. Paul, as his speech is reported in the twenty-second chapter, was listened to till he spoke of being sent to the Gentiles. Stephen was listened to till he spoke of the free, universal, spiritual character of the Divine worship, tied to no place, bounded by no locality. Then the Sanhedrin waxed impatient, and Stephen, recognising with all an orator's instinct and tact that his opportunity was over, changes his note—charging home upon his hearers the same spirit of criminal resistance to the leadings of the Most High as their fathers had always shown. The older Jews had ever resisted the Holy Ghost as He displayed His teaching and opened up His purposes under the Old Dispensation; their descendants had now followed their example in withstanding the same Divine Spirit manifested in that Holy One of whom they had lately been the betrayers and murderers. It is scarcely any wonder that such language should have been the occasion of his death. How exactly he follows the example of our Saviour! Stephen used strong language, and so did Jesus Christ. It has even been urged of late years that our Lord deliberately roused the Jews to action, and hastened his end by his violent language of denunciation against the ruling classes recorded in the twenty-third chapter of St. Matthew. There is, however, a great lesson of eternal significance to be derived from the example of St. Stephen as well as of our Lord. There are times when strong language is useful and necessary. Christ's ordinary ministry was gentle, persuasive, mild. He did not strive nor cry, neither did any man hear His voice in the streets. But a time came when, persuasion having failed of its purpose, the language of denunciation took its place, and helped to work out in a way the Pharisees little expected the final triumph of truth. Stephen was skilful and gentle in his speech; his words must at first have sounded strangely flattering to their prejudices, coming from one who was accused as a traitor to his race and religion. Yet when the gentle words failed, stern denunciation, the plainest language, the keenest phrases,—“Stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears,” “Betrayers and murderers of the Righteous One,”—prove that a Christian martyr then, and Christ's martyrs and witnesses of every age, are not debarred under certain circumstances from the use of such weapons. But it is hard to know when the proper time has come for their employment. The object of every true servant and witness of Christ will be to recommend the truth as effectually as possible, and to win for it acceptance. Some people seem to invert this course, and to think that it is unworthy a true follower of Christ to seek to present his message in an attractive shape. They regard every human art and every human motive or principle as so thoroughly bad that men should disregard and despise them. Human eloquence, or motives of policy and prudence, they utterly reject. Their principles lead some of them farther still. They reject the assistance which art and music and literature can lend to the cause of God, and the result is that men, specially as they grow in culture and civilisation, are estranged from the message of everlasting peace. Some people, with a hard, narrow conception of Christianity, are very re-

sponsible for the alienation of the young and the thoughtful from the side of religion through the misconceptions which they have caused. God has made the doctrines of the cross repugnant to the corrupt natural feelings of man, but it is not for us to make them repugnant to those good natural principles as well which the Eternal Father has implanted in human nature, and which are an echo of His own Divine self in the sanctuary of the heart. It is a real breach of charity when men refuse to deal tenderly in such matters with the lambs of Christ's flock, and will not seek, as St. Stephen and the apostles did, to recommend God's cause with all human skill, enlisting therein every good or indifferent human motive. Had St. Stephen thought it his duty to act as some unwise people do now, we should never have had his immortal discourse as a model for faithful and skilful preaching. We should merely have had instead the few words of vigorous denunciation with which the address closed. At the same time the presence of these stern words proves that there is a place for such strong language in the work of the Christian ministry. There is a time and place for all things, even for the use of strong language. The true teacher will seek to avoid giving unnecessary offences, but offence sharp and stern may be an absolute duty of charity when prejudice and bigotry and party spirit are choking the avenues of the soul, and hindering the progress of truth. And thus John the Baptist may call men a generation of vipers, and Paul may style Elymas a child of the devil, and Christ may designate the religious world of His day as hypocrites; and when occasion calls we should not hesitate to brand foul things with plain names, in order that men may be awakened from that deadly torpor into which sin threatens to fling them. The use of strong language by St. Stephen had its effect upon his listeners. They were sawn asunder in their hearts, they gnashed their teeth upon the martyr. His words stirred them up to some kind of action. The Gospel has a double operation, it possesses a twofold force—the faithful teaching of it cannot be in vain. To some it will be the savour of life unto life, to others the savour of death unto death. Opposition may be indeed unwisely provoked. It may be the proof to us of nothing else save our own wilfulness, our own folly and imprudence. But if Christian wisdom be used, and the laws of Christian charity duly observed, then the spirit of opposition and the violence of rage and persecution prove nothing else to the sufferers than that God's word is working out His purposes, and bringing forth fruit, though it be unto destruction.

III. Again, the locality, the circumstances, and the surroundings of Stephen's martyrdom deserve a brief notice. The place of his execution is pointed out by Christian tradition, and that tradition is supported by the testimony of Jewish custom and of Jewish writings. He was tried in the Temple precincts, or within sight of it, as is manifest from the words of the witnesses before the council, “He ceaseth not to speak against *this* holy place. We have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy *this* place.” The mob then rushed upon him. Under ordinary circumstances the Roman garrison stationed in the neighbouring town of Antonia, which overlooked the temple, would have noticed the riot, and have hastened to in-



tervene, as they did many years after, when St. Paul's life was threatened in a similar Jewish outburst. But the political circumstances, as we have already shown, were now different.\* Roman authority was for the moment paralysed in Jerusalem. People living at great centres such as Rome once was, or London now is, have no idea how largely dependent distant colonies or outlying districts like Judæa are upon personal authority and individual lives. In case of a ruler's death the action of the officials and of the army becomes necessarily slow, hesitating; it loses that backbone of energy, decision, and vigour which a living personal authority imparts. The decease of the Roman Emperor, synchronising with the recall of Pontius Pilate, must have paralysed the action of the subordinate officer then commanding at Antonia, who, unaware what turn events might take, doubtless thought that he was safe in restraining himself to the guardianship and protection of purely Roman interests.

The scene of Stephen's murder is sometimes located in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, near the brook Kedron, under the shadow of Olivet, and over against the Garden of Gethsemane. To that spot the gate of Jerusalem, called the Gate of St. Stephen, now leads.† Another tradition assigns the open country northeast of Jerusalem, on the road to Damascus and Samaria, as the place consecrated by the first death suffered for Jesus Christ. It is, however, according to the usual practice of Holy Scripture to leave this question undecided, or rather completely disregarded and overlooked. The Scriptures were not written to celebrate men or places, things temporary and transient in themselves, and without any bearing on the spiritual life. The Scriptures were written for the purpose of setting forth the example of devotion, of love, and of sanctity presented by its heroes, and therefore it shrouds all such scenes as that of Stephen's martyrdom in thickest darkness. There is as little as possible of what is merely local, detailed, particular about the Scriptures. They rise into the abstract and the general as much as is consistent with being a historical narrative. Perhaps no spot in the world exhibits more evident and more abundant proofs of this Divine wisdom embodied in the Scriptures than this same city of Jerusalem as we now behold it. What locality could be more dear to Christian memory, or more closely allied with Christian hope, than the Holy Places, as they are emphatically called—the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and its surroundings? Yet the contending struggles of Roman Catholics, Greeks, and Armenians have made the whole subject a reproach and disgrace, and not an honour to the Christian name, showing how easily strife and partisanship and earthly passions enter in and usurp the ground which is nominally set apart for the honour of Christ Jesus. It is very hard to keep the spirit of the world out of the most sacred seasons or the holiest localities.

Stephen is hurried by the mob to this spot outside the Holy City, and then they proceed in regular judicial style so far as their fury will allow them. Dr. John Lightfoot, in his great

work "*Horæ Hebraicæ*," dealing with this passage, notes how we can trace in it the leading ideas and practices of Jewish legal processes. The Sanhedrin and their supporters dragged St. Stephen out of the city because it was the law as laid down in Lev. xxiv. 14—"Bring forth him that hath cursed without the camp." The Jews still retained vivid memories of their earlier history, just as students of sociology and ethnology still recognise in our own practices traces of ancient prehistoric usages, reminiscences of a time, ages now distant from us, when our ancestors lived the savage life in lands widely separated from our modern homes. So did the Jews still recognise the nomad state as their original condition, and even in the days of our Saviour looked upon Jerusalem as the camp of Israel, outside of which the blasphemer should be stoned.

Lightfoot then gives the elaborate ceremonial used to insure a fair trial, and the re-consideration of any evidence which might turn up at the very last moment. A few of the rules appointed for such occasions are well worth quoting, as showing the minute care with which the whole Jewish order of execution was regulated: "There shall stand one at the door of the Sanhedrin having a handkerchief in his hand, and an horse at such a distance as it was only within sight. If any one therefore say, I have something to offer on behalf of the condemned person, he waves the handkerchief, and the horseman rides and calls the people back. Nay, if the man himself say, I have something to offer in my own defence, they bring him back four or five times one after another, if it be a thing of any moment he has to say." I doubt, adds Lightfoot, they hardly dealt so gently with the innocent Stephen. Lightfoot then describes how a crier preceded the doomed man proclaiming his crime, till the place of execution was reached; where, after he was stripped of his clothes, the two witnesses threw him violently down from a height of twelve feet, flinging upon him two large stones. The man was struck by one witness in the stomach, by the other upon the heart, when, if death did not at once ensue, the whole multitude lent their assistance. Afterwards the body was suspended on a tree. It will be evident from this outline of Lightfoot's more prolonged and detailed statement that the leading ideas of Jewish practice were retained in St. Stephen's case; but as the execution was as much the act of the people as of the Sanhedrin, it was carried out hurriedly and passionately. This will account for some of the details left to us. We usually picture to ourselves St. Stephen as perishing beneath a deadly hail of missiles, rained upon him by an infuriated mob, before whom he is flying, just as men are still maimed or killed in street riots; and we wonder therefore when or where St. Stephen could have found time to kneel down and commend his spirit to Christ, or to pray his last prayer of Divine charity and forgiveness under such circumstances as those we have imagined. The Jews, however, no matter how passionate and enraged, would have feared to incur the guilt of murder had they acted in this rough-and-ready method. The witnesses must first strike their blows, and thus take upon themselves the responsibility for the blood about to be shed if it should turn out innocent. The culprits, too, were urged to confess their sin to God

\* See chap. xiii. p. 355, above.

† See "*Survey of Western Palestine*," iii. 126 and 383-88, where an account is given of the ruins of the ancient church erected in honour of St. Stephen by the Empress Eudocia, about A. D. 440. It is on the north side of Jerusalem.



before they died. Stephen may have taken advantage of this well-known form to kneel down and offer up his parting prayers, which displaying his steadfast faith in Jesus only stirred up afresh the wrath of his adversaries, who thereupon proceeded to the last extremities.

Stephen's death was a type of the vast majority of future martyrdoms, in this among other respects: it was a death suffered for Christ, just as Christ's own death was suffered for the world at large, and that under the forms of law and clothed with its outward dignity. Christianity proclaims the dignity of law and order, and supports it—teaches that the magistrate is the minister of God, and that he does a divinely appointed work, but Christianity does not proclaim the infallibility of human laws or of human magistrates. Christianity does not teach that any human law or human magistrate can dictate to the individual conscience, or intrude itself into the inner temple of the soul. Christianity indeed has, by a long and bitter experience, taught the contrary, and vindicated the rights of a free conscience, by patiently suffering all that could be done against it by the powers of the world assuming the forms and using the powers of law. Christians, I say, have taught the dignity of law and order, and yet they have not hesitated to resist and overturn bad laws, not however so much by active opposition as by the patient suffering of all that fiendish cruelty and lust could devise against the followers of the Cross. Just as it was under the forms of law that our Saviour died and Stephen was executed, and Peter and Paul passed to their rest, so was it under the same forms of law that the primitive Church passed through those ten great persecutions which terminated by seating her on the throne of the Cæsars. Law is a good thing. The absence of law is chaos. The presence of law, even though it be bad law, is better than no law at all. But the individual Christian conscience is higher than any human law. It should yield obedience in things lawful and indifferent. But in things clearly sinful the Christian conscience will honour the majesty of law by refusing obedience and then by suffering patiently and lovingly, as Stephen did, the penalty attached to conscientious disobedience.

IV. Let us now briefly notice the various points of interest, some of them of deep doctrinal importance, which gather round St. Stephen's death. We are told, for instance, that the martyr, seeing his last hour approaching, "looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." Surely critics must have been sorely in want of objections to the historical truth of the narrative when they raised the point that Stephen could not have looked up to heaven because he was in a covered chamber and could not have seen through the roof! This is simply a carping objection, and the expression used about St. Stephen is quite in keeping with the *usus loquendi* of Scripture. In the seventeenth of St. John, and at the first verse, we read of our Lord that "lifting up His eyes to heaven" He prayed His great eucharistic prayer on behalf of His Apostles. He lifted His eyes to heaven though He was in the upper chamber at the time. The Scriptural idea of heaven is not that of the little child, a region placed far away above the bright blue sky and beyond the

distant stars, but rather that of a spiritual world shrouded from us for the present by the veil of matter, and yet so thinly separated that a moment may roll away the temporary covering and disclose the world of realities which lies behind. Such has been the conception of the deepest minds and the profoundest teaching. St. Stephen did not need a keen vision and an open space and a clear sky, free from clouds and smoke, as this objection imagines. Had St. Stephen been in a dungeon and his eyes been blind, the spiritual vision might still have been granted, and the consolation and strength afforded which the sight of his ascended Lord vouchsafed. This view of heaven and the unseen world is involved in the very word revelation, which, in its original Greek shape, apocalypse, means simply an uncovering, a rolling away of something that was flimsy, temporary, and transient, that a more abiding and nobler thing may be seen. The roof, the pillars, the solid structure of the temple, the priests and Levites, the guards and listeners, all were part of the veil of matter which suddenly rolled away from Stephen's intensified view, that he might receive, as the martyrs of every age have received, the special assistance which the King of Martyrs reserves for the supreme hour of man's need. The vision of our Lord granted at this moment has its own teaching for us. We are apt to conjure up thoughts of the sufferings of the martyrs, to picture to ourselves a Stephen perishing under a shower of stones, an Ignatius of Antioch flung to the beasts, a Polycarp of Smyrna suffering at the stake, the victims of pagan cruelty dying under the ten thousand forms of diabolical cruelty subsequently invented; and then we ask ourselves, could we possibly have stood firm against such tortures? We forget the lesson of Stephen's vision. Jesus Christ did not draw back the veil till the last moment; He did not vouchsafe the supporting vision till the need for it had come, and then to Stephen, as to all His saints in the past, and to all His saints in the future, the Master reveals Himself in all His supporting and sustaining power, reminding us in our humble daily spheres that it is our part to do our duty, and bear such burdens as the Lord puts upon us now, leaving to Him all care and thought for the future, content simply to trust that as our day is so shall our grace and our strength be. Stephen's vision has thus a lesson of comfort and of guidance for those fretful souls who, not content with the troubles and trials of the present, and the help which God imparts to bear them, will go on and strive to ascertain how they are to bear imaginary dangers, losses, and temptations which may never come upon them.

Then, again, we have the final words of Stephen, which are full of important meaning, for they bear witness unto the faith and doctrine of the apostolic Church. They stoned Stephen, "calling upon the Lord, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;" while again a few moments later he cried, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." The latter petition is evidently an echo of our Lord's own prayer on the cross, which had set up a high standard of Divine charity in the Church. The first martyr imitates the spirit and the very language of the Master, and prays for his enemies as Christ himself had done a short time before; while the other recorded petition, "Lord Jesus, receive



my spirit," is an echo likewise of our Lord's, when He said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." We note specially about these prayers, not only that they breathe the spirit of Christ Himself, but that they are addressed to Christ, and are thus evidences to us of the doctrine and practice of the early Church in the matter of prayer to our Lord. St. Stephen is the first distinct instance of such prayer, but the more closely we investigate this book of the Acts and the Epistles of St. Paul, the more clearly we shall find that all the early Christians invoked Christ, prayed to Him as one raised to a supernatural sphere and gifted with Divine power, so that He was able to hear and answer their petitions. St. Stephen prayed to Christ, and commended his soul to Him, with the same confidence as Christ Himself commended His soul to the Father. And such commendation was no chance expression, no exclamation of adoring love merely. It was the outcome of the universal practice of the Church, which resorted to God through Jesus Christ. Prayer to Christ and the invocation of Christ were notes of the earliest disciples. Saul went to Damascus "to bind all that called upon the name of Jesus" (chap. ix. 14). The Damascene Jews are amazed at the converted Saul's preaching of Jesus Christ, saying, "Is not this he that in Jerusalem made havoc of them which called on this name?" (chap. ix. 21). While again Rom. x. 12 and 1 Cor. i. 2 prove that the same custom spread forth from Jerusalem to the uttermost parts of the Church. The passage to which I have just referred in the Corinthian Epistle is decisive as to St. Paul's teaching at a much later period than St. Stephen's death, when the Church had had time to formulate its doctrines and to weigh its teaching. Yet even then, he was just as clear on this point as Stephen years before, addressing his Epistle to the Church of God at Corinth, "with all that call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in every place;" while again, when we descend to the generation which came next after the apostolic age, we find, from Pliny's celebrated letter written to Trajan, describing the practices and ideas of the Christians of Bithynia in the earliest years of the second century, that it was then the same as in St. Paul's day. One of the leading features of the new sect as it appeared to an intelligent pagan was this: "They sang an hymn to Christ as God." St. Stephen is the earliest instance of such worship directly addressed to the Lord Jesus Christ, a practice which has ever since been steadily maintained in every branch of the Church of Christ. It has been denied, indeed, in modern times that the Church of England in her formularies gives a sanction to this practice, which is undoubtedly apostolical. A reference, however, to the collect appointed for the memorial day of this blessed martyr would have been a sufficient answer to this assertion, as that collect contains a very beautiful prayer to Christ, beseeching assistance, similar to that given to St. Stephen, amid the troubles of our own lives. The whole structure of all liturgies, and specially of the English liturgy, protests against such an idea. The Book of Common Prayer teems with prayer to Jesus Christ. The *Te Deum* is in great part a prayer addressed to Him; so is the Litany, and so are collects like the prayer of St. Chrysostom, the Collect for the First Sun-

day in Lent, and the well-known prayer for the Third Sunday in Advent—"O Lord Jesu Christ, who at Thy first coming didst send Thy messenger to prepare Thy way."\* The Eastern Church indeed addresses a greater number of prayers to Christ directly. The Western Church, basing itself on the promise of Christ, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My Name, He will give it you," has ever directed the greater portion of her prayers to the Father through the Son; but the few leading cases just mentioned, cases which are common to the whole Western Church, Reformed or unreformed, will prove that the West also has followed primitive custom in calling upon the name and invoking the help of the Lord Jesus Himself. And then when Stephen had given us these two lessons, one of faith, the other of practice; when he had taught us the doctrine of Christ's divinity and the worship due to Him, and the practice of Christian charity and the forgiving spirit which flows forth from it, even towards those who have treated His servants most cruelly, then Stephen "fell asleep," the sacred writer using an expression for death indicative of the new aspect which death had assumed through Christ, and which henceforth gave the name of cemeteries to the last resting-places of Christian people.

V. The execution of St. Stephen was followed by his funeral. The bodies of those that were stoned were also suspended on a tree, but there was no opposition to their removal, as afterwards in the great persecutions. The pagans, knowing that Christians preached the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, strove to prove the absurdity of this tenet by reducing the body to ashes. The Christians, however, repeatedly proved that they entertained no narrow views on this point, and did not expect the resurrection of the identical elements of which the earthly body was composed. They took a broader and nobler view of St. Paul's teaching in the fifteenth of 1st Corinthians, and regarded the natural body as merely the seed out of which the resurrection body was to be developed. This is manifest from some of the stories told us by ancient historians concerning the Christians of the second century. The martyrs of Vienne and Lyons have been already referred to, and their sufferings described. The pagans knew of their doctrine of the resurrection of the body, and thought to defeat it by scattering the ashes of the martyrs upon the waters of the Rhone; but the narrative of Eusebius tells us how foolish was this attempt, as if man could thus overcome God, whose almighty power avails to raise the dead from the ashes scattered over the ocean as easily as from the bones gathered into a sepulchre. Another story is handed down by a writer of Antioch named John Malalas, who lived about A. D. 600, concerning five Christian virgins, who lived some seventy years earlier than these Gallic martyrs, and fell victims to the persecution which raged at Antioch in the days of the Emperor Trajan, when St. Ignatius perished. They were burned to death for their constancy in the faith, and then their ashes were mingled with brass, which was made into basins for the public baths. Every person who used the basins became ill, and then

\* See on this point a note in Liddon's "Bampton Lectures," 14th edition, pp. 531-43, on the worship of Jesus Christ in the services of the Church of England.



the emperor caused the basins to be formed into statues of the virgins, in order, as Trajan said, that "it may be seen that I and not their God have raised them up."\*

But while it is plainly evident from the records of history that the earliest Christians had no narrow views about the relation between the present body of humiliation and the future body of glory, it is equally manifest that they paid the greatest attention to the mortal remains of their deceased friends, and permitted the fullest indulgence in human grief. In doing so they were only following the example of their Master, who sorrowed over Lazarus, and whose own mortal remains were cared for by the loving reverence of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathæa. Christianity was no system of Stoicism. Stoicism was indeed the noblest form of Greek thought, and one which approached most closely to the Christian standpoint, but it put a ban upon human affection and feeling. Christianity acted otherwise. It flung a bright light on death, and illuminated the dark recesses of the tomb through the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the prospect for humanity which that resurrection opens up. But it did not make the vain attempt of Stoicism to eradicate human nature. Nay, rather, Christianity sanctified it by the example of Jesus Christ, and by the brief notice of the mourning of the Church for the loss of their foremost champion, St. Stephen, which we find in our narrative. Such a gratification of natural feeling has never been inconsistent with the highest form of Christian faith. There may be the most joyous anticipation as to our friends who have been taken from us, joined with the saddest reflections as to our own bereavement. We may be most assured that our loss is the infinite gain of the departed, and for them we mourn not; but we cannot help feeling that *we* have sustained a loss, and for *our* loss we must grieve. The feelings of a Christian even now must be thus mixed, and surely much more must this have been the case when "devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him."

The last results we note in this passage of Stephen's death are twofold. Stephen's martyrdom intensified the persecution for a time. Saul of Tarsus was made for a while a more determined and active persecutor. His mental position, his intellectual convictions, had received a shock, and he was trying to re-establish himself, and quench his doubts, by intensifying his exertions on behalf of the ancient creed. Some of the most violent persecutions the Church has ever had to meet were set on foot by men whose faith in their own systems was deeply shaken, or who at times have had no faith in anything at all. The men whose faith had been shaken endeavoured, by their activity in defence of the system in which they once fully believed, to obtain an external guarantee and assurance of its truth; while the secret unbeliever was often the worst of persecutors, because he regarded all religions as equally false, and therefore looked upon the new teachers as rash and mischievous innovators.

The result then of Stephen's martyrdom was to render the Church's state at Jerusalem worse for the time. The members of the Church were

scattered far and wide, all save the Apostles. Here we behold a notable instance of the protecting care of Providence over His infant Church. All save the Apostles were dispersed from Jerusalem. One might have expected that they would have been specially sought after, and would have been necessarily the first to flee. There is an early tradition, however, which goes back to the second century, and finds some support in this passage, that our Lord ordered the Apostles to remain in the city of Jerusalem for twelve years after the Ascension, in order that every one there might have an opportunity of hearing the truth.\* His protecting hand was over the heads of the Church while the members were scattered abroad. But that same hand turned the apparent trial into the Church's permanent gain. The Church now, for the first time, found what it ever after proved to be the case. "They that were scattered abroad went about preaching the word." The Church's present loss became its abiding gain. The blood of the martyrs became the seed of the Church. Violence reacted on the cause of those who employed it, as violence—no matter how it may temporarily triumph—always reacts on those who use it, whether their designs be intrinsically good or bad; till, in a widely disseminated Gospel, and in a daily increasing number of disciples, the eye of faith learned to read the clearest fulfilment of the ancient declaration, "The wrath of man shall praise God, and the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain."

## CHAPTER XVII.

### SIMON MAGUS AND THE CONVERSION OF SAMARIA.

ACTS viii. 5, 9, 10.

THE object of the earlier part of this book of the Acts is to trace the steady, gradual development of the Church among the Jews, the evolution, never ceasing for a moment, of that principle of true catholic and universal life which the Master implanted within her, and which never ceased working till the narrow, prejudiced, illiberal little company of Galileans, who originally composed the Church, became the emancipated Church of all nations. This process of development was carried on, as we have already pointed out, through the agency of the Hellenistic Jews, and specially of the deacons who were so intimately connected with that class. We have in the last few chapters surveyed the history of one deacon, St. Stephen; we are now led to the story of another, St. Philip. His activity, as described in the eighth chapter, runs upon exactly the same lines. St. Stephen proclaims the universal principles of the gospel; St. Philip acts upon these principles, going down to the city of Samaria, and preaching Christ there. The prominent position which the deacons had for the time taken is revealed to us by two notices. Philip leaves Jerusalem and goes to Samaria, where the power of the high priest and of the Sanhedrin does not extend, but would rather be violently resisted. Here he is safe for the time, till the violence of the persecution should blow over. And yet, though Philip has to leave Jerusalem, the Apostles re-

\* See Eusebius, v. 18; Clem. Alex., "Strom.," vi. 5.

\* See Malalas' "Chronographia," lib. xi., and the article on Malalas in the "Dict. Christ. Biog.," where this story is given at length.



main hidden by the obscurity into which they had for a little fallen, owing to the supreme brilliancy of St. Stephen: "They were all scattered abroad except the Apostles." The deacons were obliged to fly, the Apostles could remain: facts which sufficiently show the relative positions the two classes occupied in the public estimation, and illustrate that law of the Divine working which we so often see manifesting itself in the course of the Church's chequered career, the last shall be first and the first last. God, on this occasion, as evermore, chooses His own instruments, and works by them as and how He pleases.

I. This reticence and obscurity of the Apostles may seem to us now somewhat strange, as it certainly does seem most strange how the Apostles could have remained safe at Jerusalem when all others had to fly. The Apostles naturally now appear to us the most prominent members of the Jerusalem, nay, farther, of the Christian Church throughout the world. But then, as we have already observed, one of the great difficulties in historical study is to get at the right point of view, and to keep ourselves at that point under very varying combinations of circumstances. We are apt to fling ourselves back, or, if the expression be allowed, to project ourselves backwards into the past, and to think that men must always have attributed the same importance to particular persons or particular circumstances as we do. We now see the whole course of events, and can estimate them, not according to any mere temporary importance or publicity they may have attained, but according to their real and abiding influence. Viewing the matter in this light, we now can see that the Apostles were much more important persons than the deacons. But the question is, not how we regard the Apostles and the deacons, but how did the Sanhedrin and the Jews of Jerusalem in Stephen's and Philip's time view these two classes. They knew nothing of the Apostles as such. They knew of them simply as unlearned and ignorant men, who had been once or twice brought before the Council. They knew of Stephen, and perhaps, too, of Philip, as cultured Grecian Jews, whose wisdom and eloquence and persuasive power they were not able to resist; and it is no wonder that in the eyes of the Sadducean majority, who then ruled the Jewish senate, the deacons should be specially sought out and driven away.

The action of the Apostles themselves may have conduced to this. Here let us recur to a thought we have already touched upon. We are inclined to view the Apostles as if the Spirit which guided them totally destroyed their human personality and their human feelings. We are apt to cherish towards the Apostles the same reverential but misleading feeling which the believers of the early church cherished towards the prophets, and against which St. James clearly protested when he said, "Elijah was a man of like passions with ourselves." We are inclined to think of them as if there was nothing weak or human or mistaken about them, and yet there was plenty of all these qualities in their character and conduct. The Apostles were older than the deacons, and they were men of much narrower ideas, of a more restricted education. They had less of that facility of temper, that power of adaptation, which learning

and travel combined always confer. They may have been somewhat suspicious too of the headlong course pursued by Stephen and his fellows. Their Galilean minds did not work out logical results so rapidly as their Hellenistic friends and allies. They had been slow of heart to believe with the Master. They were slow of heart and mind to work out principles and to grasp conclusions when taught by His servants and followers. The Apostles were, after all, only men, and they had their treasure in earthen vessels. Their inspiration, and the presence of the Spirit within their hearts, were quite consistent with intellectual slowness, and with mental inability to recognise at once the leadings of Divine Providence. It was just then the same as it has ever been in Church history. The older generation is always somewhat suspicious of the younger. It is slow to appreciate its ideas, hopes, aspirations, and it is well perhaps that the older generation is suspicious, because it thus puts on a drag which gives time for prudence, forethought, and patience to come into play. These may appear very human motives to attribute to the Apostles, but then we lose a great deal of Divine instruction if we invest the Apostles with an infallibility higher even than that which Roman Catholics attribute to the Pope. For them the Pope is infallible only when speaking as universal doctor and teacher, a position which some among them go so far as to assert he has never taken since the Church was founded, so that in their opinion the Pope has never yet spoken infallibly. But with many sincere Christians the Apostles were infallible, not only when teaching, but when thinking, acting, writing on the most trivial topics, or discoursing on the most ordinary subjects.

II. Let us now turn our attention to Philip and his work, and its bearing on the future history and development of the Church. Here, before we go any farther, it may be well to note how St. Luke gained his knowledge of the events which happened at Samaria. We do not pretend indeed, like some critics, to point out all the sources whence the sacred writers gathered their information. Any one who has ever attempted to write history of any kind must be aware how impossible it often is for the writer himself to trace the sources of his information after the lapse of some time. How much more impossible then must it be for others to trace the original sources whence the sacred or any other ancient writers derived their knowledge, when hundreds and even thousands of years have elapsed. Our own ignorance of the past is a very unsafe ground indeed on which to base our rejection of any ancient document whatsoever.

It is well, however, to note, where and when we can, the sources whence information may have been gained, and fortunately this book of the Acts supplies us with instruction on this very point. A quarter of a century later the same Saul who, doubtless, helped to make St. Philip fly on this occasion from Jerusalem, was dwelling for several days beneath his roof at Cæsarea. He was then Paul the Apostle of the Gentiles, who bore in his own person many marks and proofs of his devotion to the cause which Philip had proclaimed and supported while Paul was still a persecutor. The story of the meeting is told us in the twenty-first chapter of this book. St. Paul was on his way to



Jerusalem to pay that famous visit which led to his arrest, and, in the long run, to his visit to Rome and trial before Cæsar. He was travelling up to Jerusalem by the coast road which led from Tyre, where he landed, through Cæsarea, and thence to the Holy City. St. Luke was with him, and when they came to Cæsarea they entered into the house of Philip the Evangelist, with whom they abode several days. What hallowed conversations St. Luke must there have listened to! How these two saints, Paul and Philip, would go over the days and scenes long since past and gone! How they would compare experiences and interchange ideas; and there it was that St. Luke must have had abundant opportunities for learning the history of the rise of Christianity in Samaria which here he exhibits to us.

Let us now look a little closer at the circumstances of the case. The place where Philip preached has raised a question. Some have maintained that it was Samaria itself, the capital city, which Philip visited and evangelised. Others have thought that it was a city,—some indefinite city of the district Samaria, probably Sychar, the town where our Lord had taught the Samaritan woman. Some have held one view, some the other, but the Revised Version would seem to incline to the view that it was the capital city which St. Philip visited on this occasion, and not that city which our Lord Himself evangelised. It may to some appear an additional difficulty in the way of accepting Sychar as the scene of St. Philip's ministry, that our Lord's work and teaching some five years previously would, in that case, seem to have utterly vanished. Philip goes down and preaches Christ to a city which knew nothing of Him. How, some may think, could this have possibly been true, and how could such an impostor as Simon have carried all the people captive, had Christ Himself preached there but a few short years before, and converted the mass of the people to belief in Himself? Now I maintain that it was Samaria, the capital, and not Sychar, some miles distant, that Philip evangelised, but I am not compelled to accept this view by any considerations about Christ's own ministry and its results. Our Lord might have taught in the same city where Philip taught, and in the course of five years the effect of His personal ministry might have entirely vanished.

There is no lesson more plainly enforced by the gospel story than this: Christ's own personal ministry was a comparatively fruitless one. He taught the Samaritan woman, indeed, and the people of the city were converted, as they said, not so much by her witness as by the power of Christ's own words and influence. But then the Holy Ghost was not yet given, the Church was not yet founded, the Divine society which Christ, as the risen Saviour, was to establish, had not yet come into existence; and therefore work like that done at Samaria was a transient thing, passing away like the morning cloud or the early dew, and leaving not a trace behind. Christ came not to teach men a Divine doctrine, so much as to establish a Divine society, and, till this society was established, the work done even by Christ Himself was a fleeting and evanescent thing. The foundation of the Church as a society was absolutely necessary if the doctrine and teaching of Christ were to be preserved. The article of the creed, "I

believe in the Holy Catholic Church," has been neglected, slighted, and undervalued by Protestants. I have heard even of avowed expositors of the Apostles' Creed who, when they came to this article, have passed it over with a hasty notice because it did not fit into their narrow systems. And yet here again the Supreme wisdom of the Divine plan has been amply vindicated, and the experience of the New Testament has shown that if there had not been a Church instituted by Christ, and established with Himself as its foundation, rock, and chief corner-stone, the wholesome doctrine and the supernatural teaching of Christ would soon have vanished. I am here indeed reminded of the words and experience of one of the greatest evangelists who have lived since apostolic times. John Wesley, when dealing with a cognate subject, wrote to one of his earliest preachers about the importance of establishing Methodist societies wherever Methodist preachers found access, and he proceeds to urge the necessity for doing so on precisely the same grounds as those on which we explain the failure of our Lord's personal ministry, so far at least as present results were concerned. Wesley tells his correspondent that wherever Methodist teaching alone has been imparted, and Methodist societies have not been founded as well, the work has been an utter failure, and has vanished away.

So it was with the Master, Christ Jesus. He bestowed His Divine instruction and imparted His Divine doctrine, but as the time for the outpouring of the Spirit and the foundation of the Church had not yet come, the total result of the personal work and labours of the Incarnate God was simply one hundred and twenty, or at most five hundred souls. It constitutes, then, to our mind no difficulty in the way of regarding Sychar as the scene of Philip's teaching, that Christ Himself may have laboured there a few years before, and yet that there should not have been a trace of His labours when St. Philip arrived. The Master might Himself have taught in a town, and yet His disciple's preaching a few years later might have been most necessary, because the Spirit was not yet given. The plain meaning, however, of the words of the Acts is that it was to the city of Samaria, the capital city, that Philip went: and it is most likely that to the capital city a character like Simon would have resorted, and not to any smaller town, as affording him the largest field for the exercise of his peculiar talents, just as afterwards we shall find, in the course of his history, that he resorted to the capital of the world, Rome itself, as the scene most effectual for his purposes.

III. St. Philip went down, then, to Samaria and preached Christ there, and in Samaria he came across the first of those subtle opponents with whom the gospel has ever had to struggle,—men who did not directly oppose the truth, but who corrupted its pure morality and its simple faith by a human admixture, which turned its salutary doctrines into a deadly poison. Philip came to Samaria, and there he found the Samaritans carried away with the teaching and actions of Simon. The preaching of the pure gospel of Jesus Christ, and the exercise of true miraculous power, converted the Samaritans, and were sufficient to work intellectual conviction even in the case of the Magician. All the Samaritans, Simon included, believed and were baptised. This is the introduction upon the



stage of history of Simon Magus, whom the earliest Church writers, such as Hegesippus, the father of Church history, who was born close upon the time of St. John, and flourished about the middle of the second century, and his contemporary Justin Martyr, describe as the first of those Gnostic heretics who did so much in the second and third centuries to corrupt the gospel both in faith and practice. The writings of the second and third centuries are full of the achievements and evil deeds of this man Simon, which indeed are related by some writers with so much detail as to form a very considerable romance. Here, then, we find a corroborative piece of evidence as to the early date of the composition of the Acts of the Apostles. Had the Acts been written in the second century, it would have given us some traces of the second-century tradition about Simon Magus; but having been written at a very early period, upon the termination of St. Paul's first imprisonment, it gives us simply the statement about Simon Magus as St. Luke and St. Paul had heard it from the mouth of Philip the Evangelist. St. Luke tells us nothing more, simply because he had no more to tell about this first to the celebrated heretics. When we come to the second century Simon's story is told with much more embellishment. The main outlines are, however, doubtless correct. All Christian writers agree in setting forth that after the reproof which, as we shall see, Simon Peter the Apostle bestowed upon the magician, he became a determined opponent of the Apostles, especially of St. Peter, whose work he endeavoured everywhere to oppose and defeat. With this end in view he went to Rome, as Justin Martyr says, in the reign of Claudius Cæsar, and as other writers say, in the time of Nero.

There he successfully deceived the people for some time. We have early notices of his success in the Imperial city. Justin Martyr is a writer who came close upon the apostolic age. He wrote an Apology for the Christians, which we may safely assign to some year about 150 A. D. At that time he was a man in middle life, whose elder contemporaries must have been well acquainted with the history and traditions of the previous century. In that first Apology Justin gives us many particulars about Christianity and the early Church, and he tells us, concerning Simon Magus, that his teaching at Rome was so successful in leading the Roman people astray that they erected a statue in his honour, between the two bridges. It is a curious fact, and one, too, which confirms the accuracy of Justin, that in the year 1574 there was dug up on the very spot indicated by Justin, the island in the Tiber, a statue bearing the inscription described by Justin, "Semoni Sanco Deo Fidio." Critics, indeed, are now pretty generally agreed that this statue was the one seen by Justin, but that it was originally erected in honour of a Sabine deity, and not of the arch-heretic as the Apologist supposed; though there are some who think that the appeal of Justin to a statue placed before men's eyes, and about which many at Rome must have known all the facts, could not have been made on such mistaken grounds. It is not altogether safe to build theories or offer explanations based on our ignorance, and opposed to the plain, distinct statements of a writer like Justin, who was a contemporary with the events of which he speaks. It

seems indeed a plausible explanation to say that Justin Martyr mistook the name of a Sabine deity for that of an Eastern heretic. But there may have been two statues and two inscriptions on the island, one to the heretic, another to the ancient Sabine god. Later writers of the second and third centuries improved upon Justin's story, and entered into great details of the struggles between Simon and the two Apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul, terminating in the death of the magician when attempting to fly up to heaven in the presence of the Emperor Nero. His death did not, however, put an end to his influence. The evil which he did and taught lived long afterwards. His followers continued his teaching and proved themselves active opponents of the truth, seducing many proselytes by the apparent depth and subtlety of their views. Such is the history of Simon Magus as it is told in Church history, but we are now concerned simply with the statements put forward in the passage before us.\* There Simon appears as a teacher who led the Samaritans captive by his sorcery, which he used as the basis of his claim to be recognised as "that power of God which is called Great." Magic and sorcery have always more or less prevailed, and do still prevail, in the Eastern world, and have ever been used in opposition to the gospel of Christ, just as the same practices, under the name of Spiritualism, have shown themselves hostile to Christianity in Western Europe and in America. The tales of modern travellers in India and the East, respecting the wondrous performances of Indian jugglers, remind us strongly of the deeds of Jannes and Jambres who withstood Moses, and illustrate the sorcery which Simon Magus used for the deception of the Samaritans. The Jews, indeed, were everywhere celebrated at this period for their skill in magical incantations—a well-known fact, of which we find corroborative evidence in the Acts. Bar-Jesus, the sorcerer who strove to turn the proconsul of Cyprus from the faith, was a Jew (Acts xiii. 6-12). In the nineteenth chapter we find the seven sons of Sceva, the Jewish priest, exercising the same trade of sorcery; while, as is well known from references in the classical writers, the Jews at Rome were famous for the same practices.

These statements of writers sacred and secular alike have been confirmed in the present age. There has been a marvellous discovery of ancient documents in Egypt within the last twelve or fifteen years, which were purchased by the Austrian government and duly transferred to Vienna, where they have been investigated. They are usually called the Fayûm Manuscripts.† They contain some of the oldest documents now existing, and embrace among them large quantities of magical writings, with the Hebrew formulæ used by the Jewish sorcerers when working their pretended miracles. So wondrously

\* The story of the quarrels between Simon Magus and St. Peter has been used by the Tübingen school of critics in Germany to support their theory of a fundamental opposition between St. Paul and St. Peter. See Dr. Salmon's "Introduction," chap. xix., for a full statement of this strange view.

† See about the Fayûm MSS. and their contents a series of articles in the Records of the *Contemporary Review* from December, 1884, and in the *Expositor* for 1885 and 1888. These Fayûm documents go back to the remotest times, one of them being dated so long ago as 1200 B. C. It is very curious that this extraordinary discovery has been apparently overlooked by the great majority of English learned societies.



does modern discovery confirm the statements and details of the New Testament!

It is not necessary now to discuss the question whether the achievements of sorcery and magic, either ancient or modern, have any reality about them, or are a mere clever development of sleight of hand, though we incline to the view which admits a certain amount of reality about the wonders performed, else how shall we account for the doings of the Egyptian magicians, the denunciations of sorcery and witchcraft contained in the Bible, as well as in many statements in the New Testament? A dry and cold age of materialism, without life and fire and enthusiasm, like the last century, was inclined to explain away such statements of the Scriptures. But man has now learned to be more distrustful of himself and the extent of his discoveries. We know so little of the spirit world, and have seen of late such strange psychological manifestations in connection with hypnotism, that the wise man will hold his judgment in suspense, and not hastily conclude, with the men of the eighteenth century, that possession with devils was only another name for insanity, and that the deeds of sorcerers were displays of mere unassisted human skill and subtlety. As it was with the Jews, so was it with the Samaritans. They were indeed bitterly separated the one from the other, but their hopes, ideas, and faith were fundamentally alike. The relations between the Samaritans and the Jews were at the period of which we treat very like those which exist between Protestants and Roman Catholics in Ulster,—professing different forms of the same faith, yet regarding one another with bitterer feelings than if far more widely separated. So it was with the Jews and Samaritans; but the existing hostility did not change nature and its essential tendencies, and therefore as the Jews practised sorcery, so did Simon, who was a native of Samaria; and with his sorcery he ministered to the Messianic expectation which flourished among the Samaritans equally as among the Jews. The Samaritan woman testified to this in her conversation with our Lord, and as she was a woman of a low position and of a sinful character, her language proves that her ideas must have had a wide currency among the Samaritan people. "The woman saith unto Him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when He is come, He will declare unto us all things." Simon took advantage of this expectation, and gave himself out to be "that power of God which is called Great;" testifying by his assertion to the craving which existed all through the Jewish world for the appearance of the long-expected deliverer, a craving which we again find manifesting itself in the many political pretenders who sprang up in the regions of more orthodox Judaism, as Josephus amply shows. The world, in fact, and specially the world which had been affected with Jewish ideas and Jewish thought, was longing for a deeper teaching and for a profounder spiritual life than it had as yet known. It was athirst for God, yea, even for the living God; and when it could find nothing better, it turned aside and strove to quench the soul's desires at the impure fountains which magic and sorcery supplied.

IV. Philip the Evangelist came with his teaching into a society which acknowledged Simon as its guide, and his miracles at once struck the

minds of the beholders. They were miracles worked, like the Master's, without any secret preparations, without the incense, the incantations, the muttered formulæ which accompanied the lying wonders of the magician. They formed a contrast in another direction too,—no money was demanded, no personal aims or low objects were served; the thorough unselfishness of the evangelist was manifest. Then, too, the teaching which accompanied the miracles was their best evidence. It was a teaching of righteousness, of holy living, of charity, of humility; it was transparently unworldly. It was not like Simon's, which gave out that he himself was some great one, and treated of himself alone; but it dealt with "the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ;" and the teaching and the miracles, testifying the one to the other, came home to the hearts of the people, leading them captive to the foot of the Cross. It has often been a debated question whether miracles alone are a sufficient evidence of the truth of a doctrine, or whether the doctrine needs to be compared with the miracles to see if its character be worthy of the Deity. The teaching of the New Testament seems to be plainly this, that miracles, in themselves, are not a sufficient evidence. Our Lord warns His disciples that deceivers shall one day come working mighty signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if it be possible, even the very elect; and He exhorts His disciples to be on their guard against them. But while miracles alone are no sufficient evidence of the truth of a doctrine, they were a very needful assistance to the doctrines of the gospel in the age and country when and where Christianity took its rise. Whether the sorcery and magic and wonders of Simon, and the other false teachers against whom the Apostles had to contend, were true or false, genuine or mere tricks, still they would have given the false teachers a great advantage over the preachers of the gospel, had the latter not been armed with real divine supernatural power which enabled them, as occasion required, to fling the magical performances completely into the shade. The miraculous operations of the Apostles seem to have been restricted in the same way as Christ restricted the working of His own supernatural power. The Apostles never worked miracles for the relief of themselves or of their friends and associates. St. Paul was detained through infirmity of the flesh in Galatia, and that infirmity led him to preach the gospel to the Galatian Celts. He did not, perhaps he could not, employ his miraculous power to cure himself, just as our Lord refused to use His miraculous power to turn stones into bread. St. Paul depended upon human skill and love for his cure, using probably for that purpose the medical knowledge and assistance of St. Luke, whom we find shortly afterwards in his company.\* Miraculous power was bestowed upon the first Christian teachers, not for the purposes of display or of selfish gratification, but simply for the sake of God's kingdom and man's salvation.

And as it was with St. Paul so was it with his companions. Timothy was exhorted to betake himself to human remedies to cure his physical weakness, while when another apostolic man, Trophimus, was sick, he was left behind by the Apostle at Miletus till he should get well

\* See Acts xvi. 6-10, compared with Gal. iv. 13.



(2 Tim. iv. 20). Miracles were for the sake of unbelievers, not of believers, and for this purpose we cannot see how they could have been done without, under the circumstances in which the gospel was launched into the world. Man's nature had been so thoroughly corrupted, the whole moral atmosphere had been so permeated with wickedness, the whole moral tone of society had been so terribly lowered, that the Apostles might have come preaching the purest morality, the most Divine wisdom, and it would have fallen on ears so deaf, and eyes so blind, and hearts so seared and hardened, that it would have had no effect unless they had possessed miraculous power which, as occasion demanded, served to call attention to their teaching. But when the preliminary barriers had been broken down, and the miracles had fulfilled their purpose, then the preaching of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ did their work. Here again a thought comes forward on which we have already said a little. The subject matter of Philip's preaching is described in the fifth verse as Christ, "Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and proclaimed unto them the Christ," and then in the twelfth verse it is expanded for us into "the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ." These two subjects are united. The kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. The Apostles taught no diluted form of Christianity. They preached the name of Jesus Christ, and they also taught a Divine society which He had established and which was to be the means of completing the work of Christ in the world. Our Lord Jesus Christ and His Apostles recognised the great truth, that a mere preaching of a philosophical or religious doctrine would have been of very little use in reforming the world. They therefore preached a Church which should be the pillar and ground of the truth, which should gather up, safeguard, and teach the truth whose principles the Apostles set forth. To put it in plain language, the Evangelist St. Philip must have taught the doctrine of a Church of Jesus Christ as well as of a doctrine of Jesus Christ. Had the doctrine of Jesus Christ been taught without and separate from the doctrine of a Church, the doctrine of Christ's person and character might have vanished, just as the doctrine of Plato or Aristotle or that of any of the great ancient teachers vanished. But Jesus Christ had come into the world to establish a Divine society, with ranks, gradations, and orderly arrangements; He had come to establish a kingdom, and they all knew then what a kingdom meant. For the Greek, Roman, or Jewish mind, a kingdom meant more even than it does for us. It meant in their conceptions a despotism where the king ordered and did just what he liked. The Romans, in fact, abominated the name king, and invented the term emperor instead, because for them the word king connoted what it does not connote for us, the possession and exercise of absolute power. Yet, for all this, the Apostles preached Christ as a King and His society as a kingdom, because in that new society which He had called into existence, the graces, the gifts, the offices of the society are totally dependent upon and entirely subservient to Jesus Christ alone.

How wondrously the life, the activity, the fervour and power of the Church would have been changed had this truth been always recog-

nised. The Church of Jesus Christ, as regards its hidden secret life, is a despotism. It depends upon Christ alone. It depends not upon the State, not upon man, not upon wealth or position or earthly influences of any kind: it depends upon Christ alone. The Church has often forgot this secret of its strength. It has trusted in the arm of flesh, and has relied upon human patronage and power, and then it has grown, perhaps, in grandeur and importance as far as the world is concerned; but, as it has grown in one direction, it has lost in the other, and that the only direction worthy a Church's attention. The temptation to rely on the help of the world alone has assailed the Church in various ways. It assails individual Christians, it assails congregations, it assails the Church at large. All of them, whether individuals, congregations, or churches, are apt to imagine that power and prosperity consist in wealth, or worldly position, or the number of adherents, forgetting that Christ alone is the source of power to the Church or to individual souls, and that where He is wanting, no matter what may be the outward appearance, or the numerical increase, or the political influence, there indeed all true life has departed.

V. The results of Philip's teaching and work in Samaria were threefold.

(1) The Samaritans believed Philip, and among the believers was Simon. There are some people who teach faith and nothing else, and imagine that if they lead men to exercise belief then the whole work of Christianity is done. This incident at the very outset of the Church's history supplies a warning against any such one-sided teaching. The Samaritans believed, and so did Simon the Magician, who had for long deceived them. The very same word is used here for the faith exercised by the Samaritans and by Simon, as we find used to describe the belief of the three thousand on the day of Pentecost, or of the Philippian jailer who accepted St. Paul's teaching amid all the terror of the earthquake and the opened prison. They were all intellectually convinced and had all accepted the Christian faith as a great reality. Intellectual faith in Christ is the basis on which a true living faith which works by love is grounded. A faith of the heart which is not based on a faith of the head is very much akin to a superstition. Of course we know that there are people whose faith is deep-rooted and fruitful who cannot state the grounds of their belief, but they are well aware that others can thus state it, that their faith is capable of being put into words and defended in argument. Intellectual faith in Christianity must ever be regarded as a gift of the Holy Ghost, according to that profound word of the Apostle, "No man can say, Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Ghost." But intellectual faith in the truth and reality of Christ's mission may exist in a heart where there is no sense of sin and of spiritual want, and then belief in Christ avails nothing. There were cravings after righteousness and peace in Samaritan bosoms, but there was none in one heart, at least, and that heart was therefore unblest. The results of St. Philip's work teaches us that faith is not everything in the Christian life.

(2) Again, we find that another result was that the Samaritans were all baptised, including their arch-deceiver Simon. Philip, then, in the



course of his preaching of Christ, must have told them of Christ's law of baptism. The preaching of the name of Jesus Christ and of the kingdom of God must have included a due setting forth of His laws and ordinances. We do no honour to Christ when we neglect any part of His revelation. If God has revealed any doctrine or any practice or any sacrament, it must be of the very greatest importance. The mere fact of its revelation by Him makes it of importance, no matter how we, in our short-sighted wisdom, may think otherwise. Philip set forth therefore the whole counsel of God, and as the result all the Samaritans were baptised, including Simon; but then again, as Simon's case taught that faith by itself availed not to change the heart, so Simon's case teaches that baptism, neither alone nor in conjunction with intellectual faith, avails to convert the soul and purify the character. God offers His graces and His blessings, faith and baptism, but unless there be receptivity, unless there be consent of the will, and a thirst of the soul and a longing of the heart after spiritual things, the graces and gifts of the Spirit will be offered in vain.

(3) And then, lastly, the final and abiding result of Philip's work was, there was great joy in that city. They rejoiced because their souls had found the truth, which alone can satisfy the cravings of the human heart and minister a joy which leaves no sting behind, but is a joy pure and exhaustless. The joys of earth are always mixed, and the more mixed the more unsatisfying. The joy of a Christian soul which knows Christ and His preciousness, which has been delivered by Christ from deceit and impurity and vice, as these Samaritans had, and which feels and enjoys the new light thrown on life by Christ's revelations, that joy is a surpassing one, ravishing the soul, satisfying the intellect, purifying the life. There was great joy in that city, and no wonder, for as the poet has well sung, contrasting the "world's gay garish feast" with God's sacred consolations bestowed upon holy souls,—

"Who, but a Christian, through all life  
That blessing may prolong?  
Who, through the world's sad day of strife,  
Still chant his morning song?

"Such is Thy banquet, dearest Lord;  
O give us grace to cast  
Our lot with Thine to trust Thy word,  
And keep our best till last."\*

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE APOSTLES AND CONFIRMATION.

ACTS viii. 14-18.

IN the last chapter we noticed the work of Philip in Samaria, the present one will deal with the mission of the Apostles Peter and John to complete and perfect that work.

The story, as told in the sacred narrative, is full of instruction. It reveals the ritual of the apostolic Church, the development of its organisation and practice, the spiritual lessons which the earliest gospel teachers imparted and the latest gospel teachers will find applicable. Philip converted the Samaritans and laid the basis of a Christian Church. Word was at once

\* "The Christian Year," 2d Sunday after Epiphany.

brought of this new departure to the Apostles at Jerusalem, because it was a new step, a fresh development which must have given a great shock to the strict Jewish feeling, which regarded the gospel as limited by the bounds of orthodox Judaism. The Apostles may have felt some surprise at the news, but they evidently must have acknowledged the Samaritans as standing on a higher level than the Gentiles, for they do not seem to have raised any such objections to their baptism as were afterwards urged against St. Peter when he preached to and baptised Cornelius. "Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised," was the objection of the Jerusalem Church urged against St. Peter as regards Cornelius. The Samaritans were circumcised, and therefore this objection did not apply. The Jews, indeed, of Judæa and of Galilee hated the Samaritans with a perfect hatred, but neither hatred nor love is ever guided by reason. Our feelings always outrun our judgment, and the judgment of the Jews compelled them to recognise the Samaritans as within the bounds of circumcision, and therefore the Apostles tolerated, or at least did not except against, the preaching of the gospel to the Samaritans, and their admission by baptism into the Messianic kingdom. It is a phenomenon we often see repeated in our own experience. A brother or a relation alienated is harder to be won and is more bitterly regarded than a total stranger with whom we may have quarrelled, though, at the same time, reason, perhaps even pride and self-respect and regard for consistency compel us to recognise that he occupies a different position from that of a perfect stranger. The conversion of the Samaritans must be viewed as one of the divinely appointed steps in the plan of human unification, one of the divinely appointed actions gently leading to the final overthrow of the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile which the earlier chapters of this book trace for us. How beautiful the order, how steady and regular the progress, that is set before us! First we have the call of the strict Jews, then that of the Hellenistic Jews, next that of the Samaritans, and then the step was not a long one from the admission of the hated Samaritans to the baptism of the devout though uncircumcised Gentile, Cornelius. God does His work in grace, as in nature, by degrees. He teaches us that changes must come, and that each age of the Church must be marked by development and improvement; but He shows us here in His word how changes should be made,—not rashly, unwisely, impetuously, and therefore uncharitably, but gently, gradually, sympathetically, and with explanations abundantly vouchsafed to soothe the feelings and calm the fears of the weaker brethren. This method of the Divine government receives an illustration in this passage. God led the Church of the first age very gradually, and therefore we see the apostolic college steadily, though perhaps blindly and unconsciously, advancing on the road of progress and of Christian liberality.

We have in this section of primitive Church history a twofold division: the action of the Apostles on one side, the attitude and conduct of Simon Magus on the other. Each division has quite distinct teaching. Let us in this chapter take note of the Apostles.

I. The Apostles who were at Jerusalem heard of the conversion of Samaria, and they at once



sent thither Peter and John to supervise the work. The deacons had, for a time, appeared to supersede the Apostles before the world, but only in appearance. The Apostles retained the chief government in their own hands, though to the men of the time others seemed the more prominent workers. The Apostles gave free scope to the gifts entrusted to their brilliant subordinates, but none the less they felt their own responsibility as rulers of the Divine society, and never for a moment did they relinquish the authority over that society which God had entrusted to them. They felt that Christ had instituted an organised society with ranks and offices duly graduated, with officials—of whom they were themselves the chief—assigned to their appointed tasks, and never did they surrender to any man their Divinely given power and authority. Philip might preach in Samaria; but though he was successful in winning converts, the Apostles claimed the right of inspecting and controlling his labours. They successfully solved a problem which has often proved a very troublesome one. They combined the exercise of power with the free play of enthusiasm, and the result was that the enthusiasm was shielded from mistakes, and the power was vivified by the touch of enthusiasm and prevented from falling into that cold, heartless, ice-like thing which autocratic rule, in Church and State alike, has so often become. What a picture and guide we here behold for the Church of all ages! What a needed lesson is here taught! What errors and schisms would have been avoided throughout the long ages which have since elapsed, had the example of the apostolic Church been more closely followed, had power been more sympathetic with enthusiasm, and enthusiasm more loving, obedient, and submissive as regards authority!

The Apostles recognised their own responsibility and acted upon their own sense of authority, and they sent forth Peter and John to minister in Samaria and supply what was wanting as soon as they heard of the work done by St. Philip. The persons whom the college of Apostles thus despatched are worthy of notice, and have a direct bearing on some of the great theological and social problems of this age. They sent Peter and John. Peter, then, was the messenger of the Apostles,—the sent one, not the sender. We can find nothing of the supremacy of Peter in these early apostolic days of which men began to dream in later years. The supreme authority in the Church and the burden of the Christian ministry were laid upon the Twelve Apostles as a whole, and they, as a body of men entrusted with co-equal power, exercised their functions. They knew nothing of Peter as the prince of the Apostles; nay, rather, when occasion demanded, they sent Peter as well as John as their delegates. The choice of these two men, just as their previous activity, depended again upon spiritual grounds, upon their love, their zeal, their Christian experience, not upon any official privilege or position which they enjoyed above the other Apostles.

Surely in this view again the Acts of the Apostles may be regarded as a mirror of all Church history. The pretended supremacy of St. Peter above his brethren has been the ground on which the claim of Roman supremacy over all other Christian Churches has been urged.

That claim has been backed up by forgeries like the False Decretals, where fictitious letters of Popes, dating from the first century downwards, have been used to support the papal assertions. But plain men need not go into abstruse questions of Church history, or into debates upon disputed texts. We have one undoubted Church history, admitted by all parties who profess and call themselves Christians. That history is the Acts of the Apostles, and when we examine it we can find nothing about St. Peter, his life or his actions, answering in the remotest degree to that imperial and absolute authority which the Papacy claims in virtue of its alleged descent from that holy Apostle. The Acts knows of St. Peter sometimes as the leader and spokesman of the Apostles, at other times as their delegate, but the Acts knows nothing and hints nothing of St. Peter as the ruler, the prince, the absolute, infallible guide of his fellow Apostles and of the whole Church.

Peter and John were the persons despatched as the apostolic delegates to complete the work begun by Philip. We can see spiritual reasons which may have led to this choice. Peter and John, with James his brother, had been specially favoured with Christ's personal communications, they had been admitted into His most intimate friendship, and therefore they were spiritually eminent in the work of Christ, and peculiarly fitted to do work like that which awaited them in Samaria,—pointing Christian men to the great truth, that eminence in Christ's Church, and cause will evermore depend, not upon official position or hierarchical or ministerial authority, but upon spiritual qualifications and the vigour of the interior life. How wonderfully has the prophecy involved in the pre-eminence of Peter, James, and John been fulfilled. When we look back over the ages of Christian labour which have since elapsed, whose are the foremost names? Whose fame as Christian workers is the greatest? Not popes or princes, or bishops of great cities, but an Augustine, the bishop of an obscure African see; an Origen, a presbyter of Alexandria; a Thomas à Kempis whom no man knows; or presbyters like John Wesley, or George Herbert, or Fletcher of Madeley, or John Keble;—men like them, holy and humble of heart, obscure in station or in scenes of labour, they have lived much with God and they have gained highest places in the saintly army, because they were specially the friends of Jesus Christ. The world knew nothing of them, and the men of affairs and the children of time, whose thoughts were upon rank, and place, and titles, knew nothing of them; and such men had their reward perhaps, they gained what they sought; but the despised ones of the past have had their reward as well, for their names have now become as ointment poured forth, whose sweet fragrance has filled the whole house of the Lord.

II. And now why were Peter and John sent to Samaria from Jerusalem? They were doubtless sent to inspect the work, and see whether the apostolic approval could be given to the step of evangelising the Samaritans. They had to form a judgment upon it; for no matter how highly we may rate the inspiration of the Apostles, it is clear that they had to argue, debate, think, and balance one side against another just like other people. The inspiration they enjoyed did not save them the trouble of thinking and the



consequent danger of disputation; it did not force them to adopt a view, else why the debates we read of concerning the baptism of Cornelius, or the binding character of circumcision? It is clear, from the simple fact that controversy and debate held a prominent place in the early Christian Church, that there was no belief in the existence of infallible guides, local and visible, whose autocratic decisions were final and irreversible, binding the whole Church. It was then believed that the guidance of the Holy Spirit was vouchsafed through the channel of free discussion and interchange of opinion, guided and sanctified by prayer. Peter and John had to go down to Samaria and keenly scrutinise the work, so as to see whether it bore the marks of Divine approval; completing the work by the imposition of their hands and prayer for the gifts of the Holy Ghost. The Apostles duly discharged their mission, and by their ministry the converts received the gift of the Holy Spirit, together with some or all of those external signs and manifestations which accompanied the original blessing on the day of Pentecost at Jerusalem. This portion of our narrative has been always regarded by the Church, whether in the East or the West, as its authority for the practice of the rite of confirmation. The assertion of the Church of England, in one of the collects appointed for use by the bishop in the Confirmation Service, may be taken as expressing on this point the opinion of the Churches—Roman, Greek, and Anglican. "Almighty and everliving God, who makest us both to will and to do those things that be good and acceptable unto Thy Divine Majesty; We make our humble supplications unto Thee for these Thy servants, upon whom (after the example of Thy holy Apostles) we have now laid our hands, to certify them (by this sign) of Thy favour and gracious goodness towards them." Let us reflect for a little on these words. The reference to apostolic example in this collect is not, indeed, merely to this incident at Samaria. The example of St. Paul at Ephesus, as narrated in the nineteenth chapter, is also claimed as another case in point. There we find that St. Paul came to a place where he had previously laboured for a short time. He discovered in Ephesus some disciples who had received the imperfect and undeveloped form of teaching which John the Baptist had communicated. A sect had apparently been already formed to continue John's teaching, such as we still find perpetuated amid the wilds of distant Mesopotamia, in the shape of the semi-Christian society which there practises daily baptism as a portion of its religion.\* St. Paul explains to them the richer and fuller teaching of Christ, commands them to be baptised after the Christian model, by one of his attendants, and then, like Peter and John, completes the baptismal act by the imposition of hands and prayer for the gift of the Spirit. These two apostolic incidents are not, however, the only scriptural grounds which can be alleged for the continued use of confirmation. It might be said that the practice of the Apostles was not sufficient to justify or authorise confirmation as a scriptural rite, unless it can be shown that the imposition of hands, after baptism and as its completion, passed into the ordinary usage of the early

Church. Let me here make a brief digression. The New Testament cannot be used as a guide-book to the whole life and practice of the early Church, because it was merely a selection from the writings of the Apostles and of their companions. If we possessed everything that the Apostles wrote, we doubtless should have information upon many points of apostolic doctrine and ritual concerning which we now can only guess, some of which would doubtless very much surprise us. Thus, to take an example, we should have been left without one single reference to the Holy Communion in all the writings of St. Paul, had not the disorders at Corinth led to grave abuses of that sacrament, and thus caused St. Paul incidentally to mention the subject in the tenth and eleventh chapters of his first epistle to that Church.

Or to take another case. The "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles" has been already referred to and described. It is manifestly a manual dealing with the Church of apostolic times, and there we find reference to customs which were practised in the Apostolic Church, to which no reference, or at least very slight reference, is made in the Epistles or other books of the New Testament. The Apostles practised fasting as a preparation for important Church actions, as we learn from the account of the ordination of Paul and Barnabas at Antioch. The "Teaching of the Apostles" shows us that this practice, derived from the Jews, was the rule before baptism (of this we read nothing in the New Testament), as well as before ordination (of this we do read something), and that not only by the persons to be baptised, but by the ministers of baptism as well.\* It mentions Wednesday and Friday fasts as instituted in opposition to the Monday and Thursday fasts of the Jews; it shows how the lovefeasts of the Primitive Church were celebrated, and sheds much light upon the Order of prophets and their activity, to which St. Paul barely alludes. If we could regain the numberless writings of the Apostles and other early Christians which have perished, we should doubtless possess information upon many other practices and customs of early Church life which would much surprise us. The New Testament cannot then be used as an exhaustive account of the Primitive Church; its silence is no conclusive argument against apostolic origin or sanction as regards any practice, any more than the Old Testament is to be regarded as an exhaustive history of the Jewish nation. And yet, though we speak thus, confirmation or laying on of hands upon the baptised as the completion of the initial sacrament is not left without notice in the Epistles. The imposition of hands as the complement of baptism did not cease with the Apostles and was not tied to them alone, any more than did the use of water in the sacrament of baptism itself cease with the Apostles, as some of the Society of Friends have contended, or the imposition of hands in ordination terminate with apostolic times, as others have argued. This appears from two passages. St. Paul, in the

\* The order for adult baptism in the Book of Common Prayer was drawn up by the divines of the Restoration. They must have been well skilled in Christian antiquity, for they lay down expressly the same rule as the "Teaching of the Apostles." They order that notice shall be given of an adult's baptism a week at least beforehand, that the persons to be baptised may be duly exhorted to prepare themselves by prayer and fasting for that holy ordinance.

\* See about this curious sect of the Hemero-baptists Lightfoot's "Colossians," pp. 402-407.



twenty-second verse of the fifth chapter of 1 Timothy, when dealing with Timothy's conduct in the usual pastoral oversight of the Church, lays down, "Lay hands suddenly on no man." These words referred not to ordination, for St. Paul had passed from that subject and was treating of Timothy's ministerial conduct towards the ordinary members of his flock, directing how he was to care for their souls, reproving publicly the notorious transgressor, and putting him to open shame. We admit, indeed, at once that this notice of the imposition of hands may refer to another use of it which was practised in the early Church. St. Paul may be referring to the imposition of hands when a lapsed or excommunicated member was re-admitted into the Church; or both uses of the ceremony, in confirmation as well as in absolution, may be included under the one reference. But in any case we have another distinct, though incidental, mention of this rite, and that at a time, in a manner, and in a book which clearly proves the practice to have passed into the general custom of the Church. Let us see how this is.

The Epistle to the Hebrews was written by one of the second generation of Christians, one of the generation who could look back to and wonder at the miracles and gifts of the apostolic age. The writer of the Hebrews tells us himself that he was in this position; for when speaking, in the opening of the second chapter, concerning the danger of neglecting the Gospel message, he describes it as a "great salvation; which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard; God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will." So that it is evident that the Church of the Hebrews was the composition of a man who belonged to a time when the Church had passed out of the fluid state in which we find it in the earlier chapters of the Acts. It had passed into a condition when rites and ceremonies and Church government and ecclesiastical organisations had crystallised, and when men repeated with profoundest reverence the forms and ceremonies which had become associated with the names and persons of the earliest teachers of the faith; names and persons which now were surrounded with all that sacred charm and halo which distance, and above all else, death, lend to human memories. There is an interesting passage in Tertullian which shows how this feeling worked among the early Christians, making them anxious in divine worship to repeat most minutely and even absurdly the circumstances of the Church's earliest days. In Tertullian's works we have a treatise on Prayer, in which he expounds the nature of the Lord's Prayer, going through it petition by petition, proving conclusively that Tertullian and the Christians nearest the apostolic age knew nothing of that modern absurdity which asserts that the Lord's Prayer should not be used by Christians. He then proceeds to explain certain useful customs, and to reprove certain superstitious ceremonies practised by the Christians of his day. He approves and explains the custom of praying with hands outstretched, because this is an imitation of our Lord, whose hands were outstretched upon the cross. He disapproves of the practice of

washing the hands before every prayer, which Tertullian says was done in memory of our Lord's Passion, when water was used by Pilate to wash his hands, and designates as superstitious the custom of sitting down upon their couches or beds after they had prayed, in imitation of Hermas who wrote the "Shepherd," of whom it was said, that after finishing his prayer, he sat down on his bed. Now this last instance exactly illustrates what must have happened in the case of the second generation of Christians, to whom the Epistle to the Hebrews was directed. Men at the end of the second century, when Tertullian lived, looked back to the Shepherd of Hermas with the same profound reverence as to the Apostles. They imitated, therefore, every action and ceremony practised by the Shepherd, whom they regarded as inspired, reading his writings with the same reverence as those of the Apostles.

Human nature is ever the same. The latest sect started in the present generation will be found acting on the same principles as the Christians of the apostolic age. The practices and ceremonial of their first founders become the model on which they shape themselves, and every departure from that model is bitterly resented. Human nature is governed universally by principles which are essentially conservative and traditional. So it must have been with the immediate followers of the Apostles; they conformed themselves as exactly as they could to everything—rite, ceremony, form of words—which the Apostles delivered or practised. And the Apostles certainly delivered precepts and laid down rules on various liturgical questions, of which we have now no written record. St. Paul expressly refers to traditions and customs which he had delivered or intended to deliver, some of which we know, others of which we know not. Now wherefore have we made this long excursion into the dim regions of primitive antiquity? Simply to show that it is *a priori* likely that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and men like him of the second and third generation of Christians, would have followed the example of the Apostles, and practised imposition of hands together with prayer for the gift of the Spirit in the case of those baptised into Christ, merely because the Apostles had beforetime practised it. And then, when we come to the actual study of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and read the sixth chapter, we find our anticipations fulfilled. In the first two verses of that chapter the writer lays down the first principles of Christ, the foundation doctrines of the Christian system, which he takes for granted as known and acknowledged by every one; they are, repentance from dead works, faith towards God, the teaching of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of the resurrection of the dead and of eternal judgment. Here the imposition of hands cannot refer to ordination, because, as all the other points are matters of personal religion and individual practice, not of ecclesiastical organisation, so we must restrict the imposition of hands referred to as a principle of the Christian religion, to some imposition of hands needful for every Christian, not for the few merely who should be admitted to the work of the ministry. While, again, its close connection with baptism clearly points to the imposition of hands in Confirmation, which the Apostles practised and



the primitive Christians adopted from their example. And then, when we pass to ecclesiastical antiquity and study the works of Tertullian, the earliest writer who enters into the details of the practices and ritual established in the Churches, we find imposition of hands connected with baptism exactly as stated in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and viewed as the channel by which the gift of the Holy Ghost is conveyed, not in the shape of miraculous gifts, but in all that edifying, consoling, and sanctifying power which every individual needs, and in virtue of which the New Testament writers, in common with Tertullian, call baptised men temples of the Holy Ghost and partakers of the Holy Ghost.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### ST. PETER AND SIMON MAGUS.

Acts viii. 18, 19.

WE have in the last exposition endeavoured to explain the origin of the rite of Confirmation and to connect its development in the second century with the first notice of its rise in germ and principle at Samaria. There have been from time to time modifications and changes in the ordinance. The Church has availed itself of the power she necessarily possesses to insist upon different aspects of Confirmation at different periods. The Church of England at the Reformation brought out into prominence the human side of Confirmation as we may call it, which views the rite as a renewal and strengthening of the baptismal vows of renunciation, faith, and obedience, which had fallen too much out of sight, while still insisting on the Divine side as well, which regards Confirmation as a method of Divine action, a channel of Divine grace, strengthening and blessing the soul. Yet no one can imagine that the Reformers invented a new ordinance because they insisted on a forgotten and latent side of the old rite. So it was during the second century and in Tertullian's time. The exigencies of the Christian Church of that age had led to certain modifications of apostolic customs, but the central idea of solemn imposition of hands continued, and was regarded as of apostolic appointment. If we descend a little lower this is plain enough. St. Cyprian, the contemporary and disciple of Tertullian, expressly attributes the institution of the rite to the action of the Apostles at Samaria, a view which is subsequently attested by those great lights of the ancient Church, St. Jerome and St. Augustine. As my object is, however, not to write a treatise on Confirmation, but to trace the evolution and development of apostolic customs and ritual, and to show how they were connected with the Church of the second century, I restrain myself to Tertullian alone.

I cannot see how this argument is to be evaded without rejecting the testimony of Tertullian and denying what we may call the historic memory and continuity of the Church at the close of the second century. Upon the testimony of Tertullian we very largely depend for our proof of the canonicity of the books of the New Testament. Men when impugning or rejecting Tertullian's witness on this or any simi-

lar question, should bear in mind what the results of their teaching may be; for surely if Tertullian's clear evidence avails not to prove the apostolic character of confirmation, it cannot be of much use to establish the still more important question of the canon of the New Testament or the authorship of the Gospels and Acts. We think, on the other hand, that Tertullian's references to this practice are naturally and easily explained by our theory that the Churches established by the Apostles followed their example. The first converts that were made after the Apostles had founded a Church were treated by the resident bishop and presbyters exactly as the Apostle had treated themselves. Timothy at Ephesus acted as he had seen St. Paul do. Timothy completed his converts' baptism by the imposition of hands, and then his successor followed the example of Timothy, and so confirmation received that universal acceptance which the writings of the Fathers disclose.

I. Let us now return to the consideration of the actual doings of Peter and John at Samaria, and the lessons we may draw from thence as touching the manner in which men should follow the example left by them at this crisis in Church history. The Apostles prayed for those that had been baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus, and then they laid their hands upon them, and the baptised received the Holy Ghost. Prayer went before the imposition of hands, to show that there was nothing mechanical in their proceedings; that it was not by their own power or virtue that any blessing was granted, but that they were only instruments by whom the Lord worked. The Apostles always acted, taught, ordained, confirmed, in the profoundest confidence, the surest faith that God worked in them and through them. St. Paul in his address to the elders of Miletus and Ephesus, whom he had himself ordained, spoke of their ordination, not as the work of man, but of the Holy Ghost. He pierced the veil of sense and saw, far away and behind the human instrument, the power of the Divine Agent who was the real Ordainer. "Take heed unto yourselves and to all the flock, in the which the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops." And so again in his words to Timothy there was not a shadow of doubt when he bid him "stir up the gift of God, which is in thee through the laying on of hands:" a gift which was doubtless no miraculous power, but the purely spiritual endowment, needful now as in ancient times, for the edification and strengthening of human souls. As it was in ancient times so is it still; the Church of Christ unites prayer with imposition of hands. She cannot recognise any difference in the methods of God's dealing with human souls in apostolic times and in modern ages. Human wants are the same, human nature is the same, the promises of God and the ministry of God are the same; and therefore as in Samaria, so in England, the work of baptism is completed when further prayer is offered, and the imposition of hands by the chief ministers of God's Church signifies her holy confidence in the abiding presence and work of the Divine Spirit.

We desire to insist upon this devotional side of confirmation, because the rite of confirmation has been too often treated as a mere mechanical function, just indeed as men in times



of spiritual deadness and torpor come to regard all spiritual functions in a purely mechanical aspect. The New Testament brought to light a religion of the spirit; but human nature ever tends to become formal in its religion, and therefore has persistently striven, and still persistently strives, to turn every external function and office in a mechanical direction. The Apostles prayed and then laid their hands upon the Samaritan converts, and we may be sure that these prayers were intense personal supplications, dealing directly with the hearts and consciences of the individuals. Confirmation, united with fervent prayer, public and private, with searching addresses directed to the conscience, with personal dealing as regards individual hearts, followed by public imposition of hands,—surely every one must acknowledge that such a solemnisation and sanctification of the great crisis when boyhood and girlhood pass into manhood and womanhood must have very blessed effects. Experience has, indeed, proved the wisdom of the ancient Church concerning this ordinance. Confirmation has not developed itself exactly in the East as we know it in the West. In the Eastern Church, as amongst the Lutherans of Germany, confirmation can be administered by a presbyter as well as by a bishop, to whom alone the Western Church limits the function. But whether in the East or West, confirmation is regarded as the transition step connecting baptism and the Eucharist. Christian bodies which have rejected the ancient customs have felt themselves obliged to adopt a similar method. Preparation for first Communion has taken the place of confirmation. There has been the same earnest dealing with conscience, the same fuller instruction in Christian truth and life, and the one thing lacking has been that following of the apostolic example in solemn imposition of hands, which would have thrown back the young mind to the days of the Church's earliest life, and helped it to realise something of the continuity of the Church's work and existence.

Many, as I know, ministering in societies where confirmation after the ancient model has been rejected, have bitterly lamented its disuse as depriving them of a solemn appointed time when they should have been brought into closer contact with the lives, the feelings, and the consciences of the lambs of Christ's flock. I am bound to confess, at the same time, that no one is more alive than I am to the many defects and shortcomings in the modes and fashions in which confirmation is sometimes viewed and conferred. The mere mechanical view of it is far too prevalent. Careful and prayerful preparation, systematic instruction in the field of Christian doctrine, is still in many cases far too little thought of. Confirmation offers a splendid opportunity when an earnest pastor may open out to young minds eager to receive truth, a fuller acquaintance with the deep things of God. Alas! how miserably such earnest young minds are sometimes met. It is stated that it was by injudicious treatment at such a time that the ardent, enthusiastic mind of the late Charles Bradlaugh was alienated from Christian truth. Intelligent sympathy is what the young desire and crave for at such seasons. Then it is that the man who has kept his mind fresh and active by wide and generous study finds the due reward of his labours. He does not at-

tempt to meet doubts and difficulties by foolish denunciations. He knows that such doubts are in the air; that they meet the young in the newspapers, magazines, conversations of the day. He proves by his instructions that he knows of them and enters into them. He encourages frank discussion of them, and thus often proves himself at a very trying time the most helpful and consoling friend to the young and troubled spirit.

Confirmation, if viewed merely from the purely human side, and if we say nothing at all about a Divine blessing, offers a magnificent opportunity for a wise pastor of souls. He will, indeed, treat different ranks in different ways. A class of ploughboys or of village lads and girls need plain speaking on the great facts of life and of the Gospel, while the higher and more educated or sharper inhabitants of cities and towns require teaching which will embrace the problems of modern thought, as well as the foundation truths of morals. A perfunctory repetition of the Church Catechism, as in some parishes, or a brief study of a portion of the Greek Testament, as in some of our public schools, is a miserable substitute for that careful preparation, embracing devotional as well as intellectual preparation, which such an important function demands.\* Then, again, the method in which confirmation is administered calls for improvement and change. The confirmation of immense crowds at central churches tends to confirm the mere mechanical idea about confirmation. Parochial confirmations, a confirmation of the young of each congregation in presence of the congregation itself, that is the standard at which we should aim. The Church of Rome can give us wise suggestions on this point. Some time ago I noticed an account of a Roman Catholic confirmation in the west of Ireland. It was held in a town of twelve or fifteen thousand inhabitants. The bishop took a week for the confirmations in that town, examining all the children beforehand, bringing them thus into direct contact with himself as their supreme pastor, and assuring himself of the sufficiency of their preparation.

II. We have now noted some of the defects connected with modern confirmations; but the conduct of Simon Magus and this incident at Samaria remind us that defects and shortcomings must ever exist, as they existed in the Church of the Apostles. We note here Simon's offer and St. Peter's address, Simon Magus had believed, had been baptised, and doubtless had also been confirmed by the Apostles. In the case of some of the Samaritans, at least, the presence of the Holy Ghost must have been proved by visible or audible signs, for we are told that when Simon *saw* that through the imposition of apostolic hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money to enable him to do the same. His offer sufficiently explains the nature of his faith. He was convinced intellectually of the truth of certain external facts which he had seen. He knew nothing of spiritual want, or the power of sin, or a desire for interior peace and sanctity. He looked upon

\* It seems to me a great pity that owing to the modern public-school system, the confirmation of boys of the upper and middle classes is almost entirely passing from their own home pastors to the masters of public schools, and not always with happy results. This tends to increase the hard mechanical view of confirmation against which I protest.



the Apostles as cleverer jugglers and sorcerers than himself, accessible to precisely the same motives, and therefore he offered them money if they would endow him with the knowledge and power they possessed and exercised. The Acts of the Apostles, as a mirror of all Church history, thus selects for our instruction an event which sounds a warning needful for every age.

Simon Magus had a mere intellectual knowledge of the truth, and that mere intellectual knowledge, apart from a moral and spiritual conception of it, plunged him into a deeper fall than otherwise might have been the case. Simon Magus was a typical example of this, and successive centuries have offered many notable imitations. Julian the Apostate was brought up as a Christian clergyman, and used to read the lessons in Church, whence he would adjourn to join in the polluting rites of paganism; and so it has been from age to age, till in our own time some of the bitterest opponents of Christianity, at home or in the mission field, have been those who, like Simon, knew of the Gospel facts, but had tasted nothing of the Gospel life.

We may derive from this incident guidance in a difficult controversy which has of late made much stir. Men have asserted that Christian missionaries were giving far too much time to mere intellectual training of pagans, instead of devoting themselves to evangelistic work. A writer who has never visited the mission-field has no right to pass judgment on such a matter. But cannot we read in this passage a warning against such a tendency? Intellectual conviction does not mean spiritual conversion. Of course we know that no human effort can ensure spiritual blessings, but if intellectual training of clever pagan youths, and not spiritual work, be regarded as the great object of Christian missions; if the Holy Ghost be not honoured by being made the supreme lord of heart and life and work, we cannot expect any blessed results to follow. We read very little in the earliest ages of the Church about educational missions. The work of education was not despised. The school of Alexandria from the earliest times held high the standard of Christian scholarship. But that school, though open, like all ancient academies, to every class, was primarily intended for the training of Christian youth, placing before all other studies the Divine science of theology.

The offer, again, of Simon Magus, has given a name to a sin which has been found prevalent in every age and in every country. The sin has, indeed, taken different shapes. Simony, throughout the Middle Ages, was a common vice against which some of the more devout Popes strove long and vigorously. In England and according to English law simony means still the purchase of spiritual office or spiritual functions. It would be simoniacal for a bishop to receive money for conferring holy orders or for appointment to a living. It would be an act of simony for a man to offer or give money to attain either holy orders or a living. How then, it may be said, does the unhallowed traffic in Church livings continue to flourish? Simply because, through colourable evasions, men bring themselves to break the spirit of the law while they keep within its strict letter. Simony, however, is a much more extensive and far-reaching corruption than the purchase of ecclesiastical benefices. Simony can take subtler shapes and

can adapt itself to conditions very different from those which prevail under an established Church. Every one recognises, in word at least, the scandalous character of money traffic in Church offices. Even those who really practise it, hide from themselves, by some device or excuse, the character of their action. But the simoniacal spirit, the essence of Simon's sin, is found in many quarters which are never suspected. What is that essence? Simon desired to obtain spiritual power and office, not in the Divine method, but in low earthly ways. Money was his way because it was the one thing he valued and had to offer; but surely there are many other ways in which men may unlawfully seek for spiritual office and influence in the Church of Christ. Many a man who would never dream of offering money in order to obtain a high place in the Church, or would have been horrified at the very suggestion, has yet resorted to other methods just as effective and just as wrong. Men have sought high position by political methods. They have given their support to a political party, and have sold their talents to uphold a cause, hoping thereby to gain their ends. They may not have given gold which comes from the mine to gain spiritual position, but they have all the same given a mere human consideration, and sought by its help to obtain spiritual power; or they preach and speak and vote in Church synods and assemblies with an eye to elections to high place and dignity. An established Church, with its legally secured properties and prizes, may open a way for the exercise of simony in its grosser forms. But a free Church, with its popular assemblies, opens the way for a subtler temptation, leading men to shape their actions, to suppress their convictions, to order their votes and speeches, not as their secret conscience would direct them, but as human nature and earthly considerations would tell them was best for their future prospects. How many a speech is spoken, how many a sermon is preached, how many a vote is given, not as the Holy Ghost directs, but under the influence of that unhallowed spirit of sheer worldliness which led Simon to offer money that he too might be enabled to exercise the power which the unworldly Apostles possessed. The spirit of simony may just as really lead a man to give a vote or to abstain from voting, to make a speech or keep silence, as it led men in a coarser and plainer age to give bribes for the attainment of precisely the same ends. In this respect, again, as warning against the intrusion of low earthly motives in the concerns of the Divine society, the Acts of the Apostles proves itself a mirror of universal Church history.

Then we have the address of St. Peter to this notorious sinner. It is very plain-spoken. The Apostle had been himself a great sinner, but he had not been harshly or roughly dealt with, because he had become a great penitent. St. Peter was most sympathetic, and could never have spoken so sharply as he did to Simon Magus had he not perceived with quick spiritual insight the inborn baseness and hollowness of the man's character. Still he does not cut him off from hope. He speaks plainly, as Christ's ministers should ever do when occasion requires. Simon Magus was a man of great influence in Samaria, but there was no "fear of man which bringeth a snare" about the Apostles, and so St. Peter



fearlessly tells Simon his true position. "He was in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity." He indicates to him, however, the steps which, whether then or now, a person in that position should take if he desires to escape from the due reward of his deeds. "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness." Repentance, then, is the first step which a man whose heart is not right in God's sight has to take. There was no hesitation, as we have already remarked when speaking of St. Peter's preaching at Jerusalem, about pressing upon men the duty of hearty, sincere repentance, embracing sorrow for sin and genuine amendment of life. Then having exhorted to repentance, the Apostle proceeds, "And pray the Lord, if perhaps the thought of thy heart shall be forgiven thee." Prayer is the next step. First comes repentance, then prayer, and then forgiveness. There was nothing in St. Peter's teaching which lends the least countenance to the modern error which teaches that an unconverted man should not pray, that his one duty is to believe, and, till he does so, that his prayer is unacceptable to God. Simon Magus was as estranged from God as a human soul could well have been, yet St. Peter's word to him then, and his word to every sinner still, would be an exhortation to diligent prayer. "Pray God if perhaps the thought of thine heart shall be forgiven thee." The exhortation of Peter was blessed, for the time, to the sinner. It awoke a temporary sense of sin, though it wrought no permanent change. It has left, however, an eternal blessing and a permanent direction to the Church of Christ. In his preaching on the day of Pentecost to the Jews of Jerusalem, he shows us how to deal with those who are not as yet partakers of the Christian covenant. "Repent ye, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ," was his message to the devout Jews of Jerusalem; "Repent and pray" is his message to the sinner who has been brought, all unworthy, into the kingdom of light and grace, but knows nothing of it in heart and life. St. Peter valued the blessings of belief in Christ and admission by baptism into His kingdom, but he knew that these benefits only intensified a man's condemnation, if not realised in heart and lived in practice. St. Peter's visit to Samaria in company with St. John has much to teach the Church on many other points, as we have pointed out, but no lesson which can be derived from it is so important as that which declares the true road for the returning sinner to follow, the value of repentance, the efficacy of heartfelt prayer, the supreme importance of a heart right in the sight of God.

## CHAPTER XX.

### *EVANGELISTIC WORK IN THE PHILISTINES' LAND.*

ACTS viii. 26-28; ix. 32.

I HAVE united these two incidents, the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch and the mission of St. Peter to the people of Lydda, Sharon, and Joppa, because they relate to the same district of country and they happened at the same period, the pause which ensued between the martyrdom of St. Stephen and the conversion of

St. Paul. The writer of the Acts does not seem to have exactly followed chronological order in this part of his story. He had access to different authorities or to different diaries. He selected as best he could the details which he heard or read, and strove to weave them into a connected narrative. St. Luke, when gathering up the story of these earliest days of the Church's warfare, must have laboured under great difficulties which we now can scarcely realise. It was doubtless from St. Philip himself that our author learned the details of the eunuch's conversion and of St. Peter's labours. St. Luke and St. Paul tarried many days with St. Philip at Cæsarea. Most probably St. Luke had then formed no intention of writing either his Gospel or his apostolic history at that period. He was urged on simply by that unconscious force which shapes our lives and leads us in a vague way to act in some special direction. A man born to be a poet will unconsciously display his tendency. A man born to be a historian will be found, even when he has formed no definite project, note-book in hand, jotting down the impressions of the passing hour or of his current studies. So probably was it with St. Luke. He could not help taking notes of conversations he heard, or making extracts from the documents he chanced to meet; and then when he came to write he had a mass of materials which it was at times hard to weave into one continuous story within the limits he had prescribed to himself. One great idea, indeed, to which we have often referred, seems to have guided the composition of the first portion of the apostolic history. St. Luke selected, under Divine guidance, certain representative facts and incidents embodying great principles, typical of future developments. This is the golden thread which runs through the whole of this book, and specially through the chapters concerning which we speak in this volume, binding together and uniting in one organic whole a series of independent narratives.

I. The two incidents which we now consider have several representative aspects. They may be taken as typical of evangelistic efforts and the qualifications for success in them. Philip the deacon is aggressive, many-sided, flexible, and capable of adapting himself to diverse temperaments, whether those of the Grecian Jews at Jerusalem, the Samaritans in central Palestine, or the Jewish proselytes from distant Africa. Peter is older, narrower, cannot so easily accommodate himself to new circumstances. He confines himself, therefore, to quiet work amongst the Jews of Palestine who have been converted to Christ as the result of the four years' growth of the Church. "As Peter went throughout all parts, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda." This incident represents to us the power and strength gained for the cause of Christ by intellectual training and by wider culture. It is a lesson needed much in the great mission field. It has hitherto been too much the fashion to think that while the highest culture and training are required for the ministry at home, any half-educated teacher, provided he be in earnest, will suffice for the work of preaching to the heathen. This is a terrible mistake, and one which has seriously injured the progress of religion. It is at all times a dangerous thing to despise one's adversary, and we have fallen into the snare when we have



despised systems like Buddhism and Hindooism, endeavouring to meet them with inferior weapons.\* The ancient religions of the East are founded on a subtle philosophy, and should be met by men whose minds have received a wide and generous culture, which can distinguish between the chaff and the wheat, rejecting what is bad in them while sympathising with and accepting what is good. The notices of Philip and Stephen and their work, as contrasted with that of St. Peter, proclaimed the value of education, travel, and thought in this the earlier section of the Acts, as the labours of St. Paul declare it in the days of Gentile conversion. The work of the Lord, whether among Jews or Gentiles, is done most effectually by those whose natural abilities and intellectual sympathies have been quickened and developed. A keen race like the Greeks of old or the Hindoos of the present, are only alienated from the very consideration of the faith when it is presented in a hard, narrow, intolerant, unsympathetic spirit. The angel chose wisely when he selected the Grecian Philip to bear the gospel to the Ethiopian eunuch, and left Peter to minister to Æneas, to Tabitha, and to Simon the tanner of Joppa; simple souls, for whom life glided smoothly along, troubled by no intellectual problems and haunted by no fearful doubts.

II. Again, we may remark that these incidents and the whole course of Church history at this precise moment show the importance of clear conceptions as to character, teaching, and objects. The Church at this time was vaguely conscious of a great mission, but it had not made up its mind as to the nature of that mission, because it had not realised its own true character, as glad tidings of great joy unto *all* nations. And the result was very natural: it formed no plans for the future, and was as yet hesitating and undecided in action. It was with the Church then as in our everyday experience of individuals. A man who does not know himself, who has no conception of his own talents or powers, and has formed no idea as to his object or work in life, that man cannot be decided in action, he cannot bring all his powers into play, because he neither knows of their existence, nor where and how to use them. This is my explanation of the great difference manifested on the face of our history as between the Church and its life before and after the conversion of Cornelius. It is plain that there was a great difference in Church life and activity between these two periods. Whence did it arise? The admission of the Gentiles satisfied the unconscious cravings of the Church. She felt that at last her true mission and her real object were

found, and, like a man of vigorous mind who at last discovers the work for which nature has destined him, she flung herself into it, and we read no longer of mere desultory efforts, but of unceasing, indefatigable, skilfully-directed labour; because the Church had at last been taught by God that her great task was to make all men know the riches hidden in Christ Jesus. We have in this fact a representative lesson very necessary for our time. Men are now very apt to mistake mistiness for profundity, and clearness of conception for shallowness of thought. This feeling intrudes itself into religion, and men do not take the trouble to form clear conceptions on any subject, and they lapse therefore into the very weakness which afflicted the Church prior to St. Peter's vision. The root of practical, vigorous action is directly assailed if men have no clear conceptions as to the nature, the value, and the supreme importance of the truth. If, for instance, a man cherishes the notion, now prevalent in some circles, that Mahometanism is the religion suited for the natives of Africa, how will he make sacrifices either of time, of money, or of thought, to make the Gospel known to that great continent? I do not say that we should seek to have sharp and clear conceptions on all points. There is no man harder, more unsympathetic with the weak, more intolerant of the slightest difference, more truly foolish and short-sighted, than the man who has formed the clearest and sharpest conceptions upon the profoundest questions, and is ready to decide offhand where the subtlest and deepest thinkers have spoken hesitatingly. That man does not, in the language of John Locke, recognise the length of his own tether. He wishes to make himself the standard for every one else, and infallibly brings discredit on the possession of clear views on any topics. There are vast tracts of thought upon which we must be content with doubt, hesitancy, and mistiness; but the man who wishes to be a vigorous, self-sacrificing servant of Jesus Christ must seek diligently for clear, broad, strong conceptions on such great questions as the value of the soul, the nature of God, the person of Jesus Christ, the work of the Spirit, and all the other truths which the Apostles' Creed sets forth as essentially bound up with these doctrines. Distinct and strong convictions alone on such points form for the soul the basis of a decided and fruitful Christian activity; as such decided convictions energised the whole life and character of the blessed apostle of love when writing. "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the evil one."

III. Now turning from such general considerations, we may compare the two incidents, St. Philip's activities and St. Peter's labours, in several aspects. *We notice a distinction in their guidance.* Greater honour is placed on Philip than upon Peter. An angel speaks to Philip, while St. Peter seems to have been left to that ordinary guidance of the Spirit which is just as real as any external direction, such as that given by an angel, but yet does not impress the human mind or supersede its own action, as the external direction does. Dr. Goulburn, in an interesting work from which I have derived many important hints,\* suggests that the ex-

\* The primitive Church never made this mistake. The great missionaries who dealt with the heathen in the second century were profoundly skilled in philosophy, several of them being philosophers by profession. Aristides, whose long-lost "Apology" has just been recovered, Justin Martyr, and Tatian were Christian philosophers in the second century, and consecrated their powers to missionary labours. Pantænus, Clement, and Origen, profound scholars of Alexandria, took the greatest trouble to understand Greek paganism before they proceeded to refute it. I think that candidates in training for foreign missions might be taken with great advantage through a course of the second-century apologists. Clement and Origen never poured indiscriminate abuse on the system they opposed; their teaching was no bald negative controversy; they always strove, like St. Paul at Athens, to ascertain what was good and true in their opponents' position, and to work from thence. See pp. 347, 348 above, where much the same line of thought has been insisted upon.

\* "The Acts of the Deacons," p. 276. This work discusses Philip's dealings with the eunuch at very great length. The reader desirous of seeing the spiritual teaching of that incident fully drawn out should consult it.



ternal message of the angel directing Philip where to go may have been God's answer to the thoughts and doubts which were springing up in His servant's mind. The incident of Simon Magus may have disturbed St. Philip. He may have been led to doubt the propriety of his action in thus preaching to the Samaritans and admitting to baptism a race hitherto held accursed. He had dared to run counter to the common opinion of devout men, and one result had been that such a bad character as Simon Magus had crept into the sacred fold. The Lord who watches over His people and sees all their difficulties, comes therefore to his rescue, and by one of His ministering spirits conveys a message which assures His fainting servant of His approval and of His guidance. Such is Dr. Goulburn's explanation, and surely it is a most consoling one, of which every true servant of God has had his own experience. The Lord even still deals thus with His people. They make experiments for Him, as Philip did; engage in new enterprises and in fields of labour hitherto untried; they work for His honour and glory alone; and perhaps they see nothing for a time, but disaster and failure. Then, when their hearts are cast down and their spirits are fainting because of the way, the Lord mercifully sends them a message by some angelic hand or voice, which encourages and braces them for renewed exertion.

An external voice of an angel may, in the peculiar circumstances of the case, have directed St. Philip. But the text does not give us a hint as to the appearance or character of the messenger whom God used on this occasion. The Old and New Testament alike take broader views of Divine messengers, and of angelic appearances generally, than we do. A vision, a dream, a human agent, some natural circumstance or instrument, all these are in Holy Scripture or in contemporary literature styled God's angels or messengers. Men saw then more deeply than we do, recognised the hand of a superintending Providence where we behold only secondary agents, and in their filial confidence spoke of angels where we should only recognise some natural power. Let me quote an interesting illustration of this. Archbishop Trench, speaking, in his "Notes on the Miracles," of the healing of the Impotent Man at Bethesda, and commenting on St. John v. 4, a verse which runs thus, "For an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole, with whatsoever disease he was holden," thus enunciates the principle which guided the ancient Christians, as well as the Jews, in this matter. He explains the origin of this verse, and the manner in which it crept into the text of the New Testament. "At first, probably, a marginal note, expressing the popular notion of the Jewish Christians concerning the origin of the healing power which from time to time the waters of Bethesda possessed, by degrees it assumed the shape in which we now have it." The Archbishop then proceeds to speak of the Hebrew view of the world as justifying such expressions. "For the statement itself, there is nothing in it which need perplex or offend, or which might not find place in St. John. It rests upon that religious view of the world which in all nature sees something beyond and behind nature, which does not be-

lieve that it has discovered causes when, in fact, it has only traced the sequence of phenomena, and which everywhere recognises a going forth of the immediate power of God, invisible agencies of His, whether personal or otherwise, accomplishing His will."\* The whole topic of angelic agencies is one that has been much confused for us by the popular notions about angels, notions which affect every one, no matter how they imagine themselves raised above the vulgar herd. When men speak or think of angelic appearances, they think of angels as they are depicted in sacred pictures. The conception of young men clad in long white and shining raiment, with beautiful wings dependent from their shoulders and folded by their sides, is an idea of the angels and angelic life derived from mediæval painters and sculptors, not from Holy Writ. The important point, however, for us to remember is that Philip here moved under external direction to the conversion of the eunuch. The same Spirit which sent His messenger to direct Philip, led Peter to move towards exactly the same southwestern quarter of Palestine, where he was to remain working, meditating, praying till the hour had come when the next great step should be taken and the Gentiles admitted as recognised members of the Church.

IV. This leads us to the next point. Philip and Peter were both guided, the one externally, the other internally; but whither? They were led by God into precisely the same southwestern district of Palestine. Peter was guided, by one circumstance after another, first to Lydda and Sharon, and then to Joppa, where the Lord found him when he was required at the neighbouring Cæsarea to use the power of the keys and to open the door of faith to Cornelius and the Gentile world. Our narrative says nothing, in St. Peter's case, about providential guidance or heavenly direction, but cannot every devout faithful soul see here the plain proofs of it? The book of the Acts makes no attempt to improve the occasion, but surely a soul seeking for light and help will see, and that with comfort, the hand of God leading St. Peter all unconscious, and keeping him in readiness for the moment when he should be wanted. We are not told of any extraordinary intervention, and yet none the less the Lord guided him as really as He guided Philip, that his life might teach its own lessons, by which we should order our own. And has not every one who has devoutly and faithfully striven to follow Christ experienced many a dispensation exactly like St. Peter's? We have been led to places, or brought into company with individuals, whereby our future lives have been ever afterwards affected. The devout mind in looking back over the past will see how work and professions have been determined for us, how marriages have been arranged, how afflictions and losses have been made to work for good; so that at last, surveying, like Moses, life's journey from some Pisgah summit, when its course is well-nigh run, God's faithful servant is enabled to rejoice in Him because even in direct afflictions He has done all things well. A view of life like that is strictly warranted by this passage, and such a view was, and still is, the sure and secret source of that peace of God which passeth all under-

\* The verse John v. 4 of the Authorised Version has now been relegated to the margin of the Revised Version.



standing. Nothing can happen amiss to him who has Almighty Love as his Lord and Master. St. Peter was led, by one circumstance after another, first to Lydda, which is still an existing village, then, farther, into the vale of Sharon, celebrated from earliest time for its fertility, and commemorated for its roses in the Song of Solomon (Cant. ii. 1, Isa. xxxiii. 9), till finally he settles down at Joppa, to wait for the further indications of God's will.

But how about Philip, to whom the Divine messenger had given a heavenly direction? What was the message so imparted? An angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, "Arise, and go toward the south, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza: the same is desert." Now we should here carefully remark the minute exactness of the Acts of the Apostles in this place, because it is only a specimen of the marvellous geographical and historical accuracy which distinguishes it all through, and is every year receiving fresh illustrations. Gaza has always been the gateway of Palestine. Invader after invader, when passing from Egypt to Palestine, has taken Gaza in his way. It is still the trade route to Egypt, along which the telegraph line runs. It was in the days of St. Philip the direct road for travellers like the Ethiopian eunuch, from Jerusalem to the Nile and the Red Sea. This man was seeking his home in Central Africa, which he could reach either by the Nile or by the sea, and was travelling therefore along the road from Jerusalem to Gaza. The Acts, again, distinguishes one particular road. There were then, and there are still, two great roads leading from Jerusalem to Gaza, one a more northern road, which ran through villages and cultivated land, as it does to this day. The other was a desert road, through districts inhabited then as now by the wandering Arabs of the desert alone. Travellers have often remarked on the local accuracy of the angel's words when directing Philip to a road which would naturally be taken only by a man attended by a considerable body of servants able to ward off attack, and which was specially suitable, by its lonely character, for those prolonged conversations which must have passed between the eunuch and his teacher. Cannot we see, however, a still more suggestive and prophetic reason for the heavenly direction? In these early efforts of the Apostles and their subordinates we read nothing of missions towards the east. All their evangelistic operations lay, in later times, towards the north and north-west, Damascus, Antioch, Syria, and Asia Minor, while in these earlier days they evangelised Samaria, which was largely pagan, and then worked down towards Gaza and Cæsarea and the Philistine country, which were the strongholds of Gentile and European influence,—the Church indicated in St. Luke's selection of typical events; the Western, the European destiny working strong within. It already foretold, vaguely but still surely, that, in the grandest and profoundest sense,

"Westward the course of Empire takes its way;"

that the Gentile world, not the Jewish, was to furnish the most splendid triumphs to the soldiers of the Cross. Our Lord steadily restrained Himself within the strict bounds of the chosen people, because His teaching was for them alone. His Apostles already indicate their

wider mission by pressing close upon towns and cities, like Gaza and Cæsarea, which our Lord never visited, because they were the strongholds and chosen seats of paganism.\* The providential government of God, ordering the future of His Church and developing its destinies, can thus be traced in the unconscious movements of the earliest Christian teachers. Their first missionary efforts in Palestine are typical of the great work of the Church in the conversion of Europe.

V. St. Philip was brought from Samaria, in the centre, to the Gaza road leading from Jerusalem to the coast; and why? Simply in order that he might preach the Gospel to one solitary man, the eunuch who was treasurer to Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians. Here again we have another of those representative facts which are set before us in the earlier portion of this book. On the day of Pentecost, Jews from all parts of the Roman Empire, and from the countries bordering upon the east of that Empire, Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and Arabians, came in contact with Christianity. Philip had ministered in Samaria to another branch of the circumcision, but Africa, outside the Empire at least, had as yet no representative among the first-fruits of the Cross. But now the prophecy of the sixty-eighth Psalm was to be fulfilled, and "Ethiopia was to stretch out her hands unto God." We have the assurance of St. Paul himself that the sixty-eighth Psalm was a prophecy of the ascension of Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. In Eph. iv. 8 he writes, quoting from the eighteenth verse, "Wherefore He saith, when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men." And then he proceeds to enumerate the various offices of the apostolic ministry, with their blessed tidings of peace and salvation, as the gifts of the Spirit which God had bestowed through the ascension of Jesus Christ. And now, in order that no part of the known world might want its Jewish representative, we have the conversion of this eunuch, who, as coming from Ethiopia, was regarded in those times as intimately associated with India.

Let us see, moreover, what we are told concerning this typical African convert. He was

\* See Dean Stanley's "Sinai and Palestine," p. 263, where this thought is further worked out. It is curious that notwithstanding the preaching of St. Philip and St. Peter in its neighbourhood, Gaza remained true to paganism longer than any other city of Palestine. The old Philistine opposition to Israel seems to have perpetuated itself in a pagan opposition to Christianity. Even in the fifth century, when St. Jerome boasted that Bethlehem was so completely Christian that the very ploughmen sang psalms and hymns as they laboured, Gaza still remained devoted to idol-worship. The inhabitants of Gaza, in union with those of Askalon, even rose in rebellion in defence of paganism towards the end of the fourth century (see Neander's "Church History," iii. 105, Bohn's ed.). An interesting illustration of its obstinate paganism has come to light of late years. There were in Gaza eight public temples of idols, including those of the Sun, Venus, Apollo, Proserpine, Hecate, Fortune, and Marnas, dedicated to the Cretan Jupiter, believed by the people to be more glorious than any other temple in the world. All these temples were destroyed by the influence of the Empress Eudoxia, about A. D. 400; the words of the edict which overthrew the temples of Gaza can be read in the Theodosian Code, book xvi., title x., law 16. The statue of Marnas was then hidden by the pagans in the sand outside the city, where it was discovered in 1880. It is now figured and described in the "Survey of Western Palestine," Memoirs, vol. iii. p. 254. It is especially interesting to us Christians, as being a statue which was almost certainly seen by St. Philip. See Selden, "De Dis Syris," p. 215, and Murray's "Handbook for Palestine," pp. 271-73.



an Ethiopian by birth, though he may have been of Jewish descent, or perhaps more probably a proselyte, and thus an evidence of Jewish zeal for Jehovah. He was an eunuch, and treasurer of Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians. He was like Daniel and the three Hebrew children in the court of the Chaldæan monarch. He had utilised his Jewish genius and power of adaptation so well that he had risen to high position. The African queen may have learned, too, as Darius did, to trust his Jewish faith and depend upon a man whose conduct was regulated by Divine law and principle. This power of the Jewish race, leading them to high place amid foreign nations and in alien courts, has been manifested in their history from the earliest times. Moses, Mordecai, and Esther, the Jews in Babylon, were types and prophecies of the greatness which has awaited their descendants scattered among the Gentiles in our own time. This eunuch was treasurer of Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians. Here again we find another illustration of the historical and geographical accuracy of the Acts of the Apostles. We learn from several contemporary geographers that the kingdom of Meroë in Central Africa was ruled for centuries by a line of female sovereigns whose common title was Candace, as Pharaoh was that of the Egyptian monarchs.\* There were, as we have already pointed out, large Jewish colonies in the neighbourhood of Southern Arabia and all along the coast of the Red Sea. It was very natural, then, that Candace should have obtained the assistance of a clever Jew from one of these settlements. A question has been raised, indeed, whether the eunuch was a Jew at all, and some have regarded him as the first Gentile convert. The Acts of the Apostles, however, seems clear enough on this point. Cornelius is plainly put forward as the typical case which decided the question of the admission of the Gentiles to the benefits of the covenant of grace. Our history gives not the faintest hint that any such question was even distantly involved in the conversion and baptism of the Ethiopian. Nay, rather, by telling us that he had come to Jerusalem for the purpose of worshipping God, it indicates that he felt himself bound, as far as he could, to discharge the duty of visiting the Holy City and offering personal worship there once at least in his lifetime. Then, too, we are told of his employment when Philip found him. "He was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet." His attention may have been called to this portion of Holy Scripture during his visit to the temple, where he may have come in contact with the Apostles or with some other adherents of the early Church. At any rate he was employing his time in devout pursuits, he was making a diligent use of the means of grace so far as he knew them; and then God in the course of His providence opened out fresh channels of light and blessing, according to that pregnant saying of the Lord, "If any man will do God's will, he shall know of the doctrine." The soul that is in spiritual perplexity or darkness need not and ought not to content itself with apathy, despair, or idleness. Difficulties will assault us on every side so long as we remain here below.

\* See the article "Meroë" in Smith's "Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography," for a long account of the land whence the eunuch came.

We cannot escape from them because our minds are finite and limited. And some are ready to make these difficulties an excuse for postponing or neglecting all thoughts concerning religion. But quite apart from the difficulties of religion, there are abundant subjects on which God gives us the fullest and plainest light. Let it be ours, like the Ethiopian eunuch, to practise God's will so far as He reveals it, and then, in His own good time, fuller revelations will be granted, and we too shall experience, as this Ethiopian did, the faithfulness of His own promise, "Unto the righteous there ariseth up light in the darkness." The eunuch read the prophet Esaias as he travelled, according to the maxim of the rabbis that "one who is on a journey and without a companion should employ his thoughts on the study of the law." He was reading the Scriptures aloud, too, after the manner of Orientals; and thus seeking diligently to know the Divine will, God vouchsafed to him by the ministry of St. Philip that fuller light which he still grants, in some way or other, to every one who diligently follows Him.

And then we have set forth the results of the eunuch's communion with the heaven-sent messenger. There was no miracle wrought to work conviction. St. Philip simply displayed that spiritual power which every faithful servant of Christ may gain in some degree. He opened the Scriptures and taught the saving doctrine of Christ so effectually that the soul of the eunuch, naturally devout and craving for the deeper life of God, recognised the truth of the revelation. Christianity was for the Ethiopian its own best evidence, because he felt that it answered to the wants and yearnings of his spirit. We are not told what the character of St. Philip's discourse was. But we are informed what the great central subject of his disclosure was. It was Jesus. This topic was no narrow one. We can gather from other passages in the Acts what was the substance of the teaching bestowed by the missionaries of the Cross upon those converted by them. He must have set forth the historic facts which are included in the Apostles' Creed, the incarnation, the miracles, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, and the institution of the sacrament of baptism as the means of entering into the Church. This we conclude from the eunuch's question to Philip, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptised?" Assuredly Philip must have taught him the appointment of baptism by Christ; else what would have led the eunuch to propound such a request? Baptism having been granted in response to this request, the eunuch proceeded on his homeward journey, rejoicing in that felt sense of peace and joy and spiritual satisfaction which true religion imparts; while Philip is removed to another field of labour, where God has other work for him to do. He evangelised all through the Philistine country, preaching in all the cities till he came to Cæsarea, where in later years he was to do a work of permanent benefit for the whole Church, by affording St. Luke the information needful for the composition of the Acts of the Apostles.

VI. Let us in conclusion note one other point. Our readers will have noticed that we have said nothing concerning the reply of Philip to the eunuch's question, "What doth hinder me to be baptised?" The Authorised Version then inserts ver. 37, which runs thus: "And Philip



said, If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." While if we take up the Revised Version we shall find that the revisers have quite omitted this verse in the text, placing it in the margin, with a note stating that some ancient authorities insert it wholly or in part. This verse is now given up by all critics as an integral part of the original text, and yet it is a very ancient interpolation, being found in quotations from the Acts as far back as the second century. Probably its insertion came about somehow thus, much the same as in the case of John v. 4, to which we have already referred in this chapter. It was originally written upon the margin of a manuscript by some diligent student of this primitive history. Manuscripts were not copied in the manner we usually think. A scribe did not place a manuscript before him and then slowly transcribe it, but a single reader recited the original in a scriptorium or copying-room, while a number of writers rapidly followed his words. Hence a marginal note on a single manuscript might easily be incorporated in a number of copies, finding a permanent place in a text upon which it was originally a mere pious reflection. Regarding this thirty-seventh verse, however, not as a portion of the text written by St. Luke, but as the second-century comment or note on the text, it shows us what the practice of the next age after the Apostles was. A profession of faith in Christ was made by the persons brought to baptism, and probably these words, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God," was the local form of the baptismal creed wherever this note was written. Justin Martyr in his first "Apology," chap. 61, intimates that such a profession of belief was an essential part of baptism, and this form, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God," may have been the baptismal formula used in the ritual appointed for these occasions. Some persons indeed have thought that this short statement represented the creed of the Church of the second century. This raises a question which would require a much longer treatment than we can now bestow upon it. Caspari, an eminent Swedish theologian, has discussed this point at great length in a work which the English student will find reviewed and analysed in an article by Dr. Salmon published in the *Contemporary Review* for August, 1878, where that learned writer comes to the conclusion that the substance of the Apostles' Creed dates back practically to the time of the Apostles. And now, as I am concluding this book, an interesting confirmation of this view comes to us from an unexpected quarter. The "Apology" of Aristides was a defence of Christianity composed earlier even than those of Justin Martyr. Eusebius fixes the date of it to the year 124 or 125 A. D. It was at any rate one of the earliest Christian writings outside the

Canon. It had been long lost to the Christian world. We knew nothing of its contents, and were only aware of its former existence from the pages of the Church history of Eusebius. Two years ago it was found by Professor J. Rendel Harris, in Syriac, in the Convent of St. Catharine on Mount Sinai, and has just been published this month of May, 1891, by the Cambridge University Press. It is a most interesting document of early Christian times, showing us how the first Apologists defended the faith and assailed the superstitions of paganism. Professor Harris has added notes to it which are of very great value. He points out the weak points in paganism which the first Christians used specially to assail. Aristides' "Apology" is of peculiar value in this aspect. It shows us how the first generation after the last Apostle was wont to deal with the false gods of Greece, Rome, and Egypt. It is, however, of special importance as setting forth from a new and unexpected source how the early Christians regarded their own faith, how they viewed their own Christianity, and in what formularies they embodied their belief. Professor Harris confirms Dr. Salmon's contention set forth in the article to which we have referred. In the time of Aristides the Christians of Athens, for Aristides was an Athenian philosopher who had accepted Christianity, were at one with those of Rome and with the followers of Catholic Christianity ever since. Aristides wrote, according to Eusebius, in 124 A. D.; but still we can extract from his "Apology" all the statements of the Apostles' Creed in a formal shape. Thus Professor Harris restores the Creed as professed in the time of Aristides, that is, the generation after St. John, and sets it forth as follows:—

"We believe in one God Almighty,  
Maker of Heaven and Earth:  
And in Jesus Christ His Son,  
Born of the Virgin Mary.  
He was pierced by the Jews,  
He died and was buried;  
The third day He rose again;  
He ascended into Heaven.  
He is about to come to judge."

This "Apology" of Aristides is a most valuable contribution to Christian evidence, and raises high hopes as to what we may yet recover when the treasures of the East are explored. The "Diatessaron" of Tatian was a wondrous find, but the recovery of the long-lost "Apology" of Aristides endows us with a still more ancient document, bringing us back close upon the very days of the Apostles. As this discovery has only been published when these pages are finally passing through the press, I must reserve a farther notice of it for the preface to this volume.







# THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

*PART II.*







## PREFACE.

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THE following book terminates my survey and exposition of the Acts of the Holy Apostles. I have fully explained in the body of this work the reasons which led me to discuss the latter portion of that book more briefly than its earlier chapters. I did this of set purpose. The latter chapters of Acts are occupied to a great extent with the work of St. Paul during a comparatively brief period, while the first twenty chapters cover a space of well-nigh thirty years. The riot in Jerusalem and a few speeches at Cæsarea occupy the larger portion of the later narrative, and deal very largely with circumstances in St. Paul's life, his conversion and mission to the Gentiles, of which the earlier portion of this work treats at large. Upon these topics I had nothing fresh to say, and was therefore necessarily obliged to refer my readers to pages previously written. I do not think, however, that I have omitted any topic or passage suitable to the purpose of the "Expositor's Bible." Some may desiderate long notices of German theories concerning the origin and character of the Acts. But, then, an expositor's Bible is not intended to deal at length with critical theories. Critical commentaries and works like Dr. Salmon's "Introduction to the New Testament" take such subjects into consideration and discuss them fully, omitting all mere exposition. My duty is exposition, and the supply or indication of material suitable for expository purposes. If I had gone into the endless theories supplied by German ingenuity to explain what seem to us the simplest and plainest matters of fact demanding no explanation whatsoever, I am afraid there would have been little space left for exposition, and my readers would have been excessively few. Those who are interested in such discussions, which are simply endless, and will last as long as man's fancy and imagination continue to flourish, will find ample satisfaction in the eighteenth chapter of Dr. Salmon's "Introduction." Perhaps I had better notice one point urged by him, as an illustration of the critical methods of English common sense. German critics have tried to make out that the Acts were written in the second century in order to establish a parallel between St. Peter and St. Paul when men wished to reconcile and unite in one common body the Pauline and Petrine parties. This is the view set forth at length by Zeller in his work on the Acts, vol. ii., p. 278, translated and published in the series printed some years ago under the auspices of the Theological Translation Fund. Dr. Salmon's reply seems to me conclusive, as contained in the following passage, *l. c.*, p. 336: "What I think proves conclusively that the making a parallel between Peter and Paul was not an idea present to the author's mind, is the absence of the natural climax of such a parallel—the story of the martyrdom of both the Apostles. Very early tradition makes both Peter and Paul close their lives by martyrdom at Rome—the place where Rationalist critics generally believe the Acts to have been written. The stories told in tolerably ancient times in that Church which venerated with equal honour the memory of either apostle represented both as joined in harmonious resistance to the impostures of Simon Magus. And though I believe these stories to be more modern



than the latest period to which any one has ventured to assign the Acts, yet what an opportunity did that part of the story which is certainly ancient—that both Apostles came to Rome and died there for the faith (Clem. Rom., 5)—offer to any one desirous of blotting out the memory of all differences between the preaching of Peter and Paul, and of setting both on equal pedestals of honour! Just as the names of Ridley and Latimer have been united in the memory of the Church of England, and no count has been taken of their previous doctrinal differences, in the recollection of their first testimony for their common faith, so have the names of Peter and Paul been constantly bound together by the fact that the martyrdom of both has been commemorated on the same day. And if the object of the author of the Acts had been what has been supposed, it is scarcely credible that he could have missed so obvious an opportunity of bringing his book to its most worthy conclusion, by telling how the two servants of Christ—all previous differences, if there had been any, reconciled and forgotten—joined in witnessing a good confession before the tyrant emperor, and encouraged each other to steadfastness in endurance to the end.”

But though I have not dealt in any formal way with the critical theories urged concerning the Acts, I have taken every opportunity of pointing out the evidence for its early date and genuine character furnished by that particular line of historical exposition and illustration which I have adopted. It will be at once seen how much indebted I am in this department to the researches of modern scholars and travellers, especially to those of Professor Ramsay, whose long residence and extended travels in Asia Minor have given him special advantages over all other critics. I have made a diligent use of all his writings, so far as they had appeared up to the time of writing, and only regret that I was not able to use his paper on St. Paul's second journey, which appeared in the *Expositor* for October, after this work had been composed and printed. That article seems to me another admirable illustration of the critical methods used by our own home scholars as contrasted with those current abroad. Professor Ramsay does not set to work to spin criticisms out of his own imagination and elaborate theories out of his own inner consciousness even as a spider weaves its web; but he takes the Acts of the Apostles, compares it with the facts of Asia Minor, its scenery, roads, mountains, ruins, and then points out how exactly the text answers to the facts, showing that the author of it wrote at the time alleged and must have been an eyewitness of the Apostles' doings; while again by a similar comparison in the case of the apocryphal acts of St. Paul and Thecla he demonstrates how easily a forger fell into grievous mistakes. I do not think a better illustration can be found of the difference between sound historical criticism and criticism based on mere imagination than this article by Professor Ramsay.

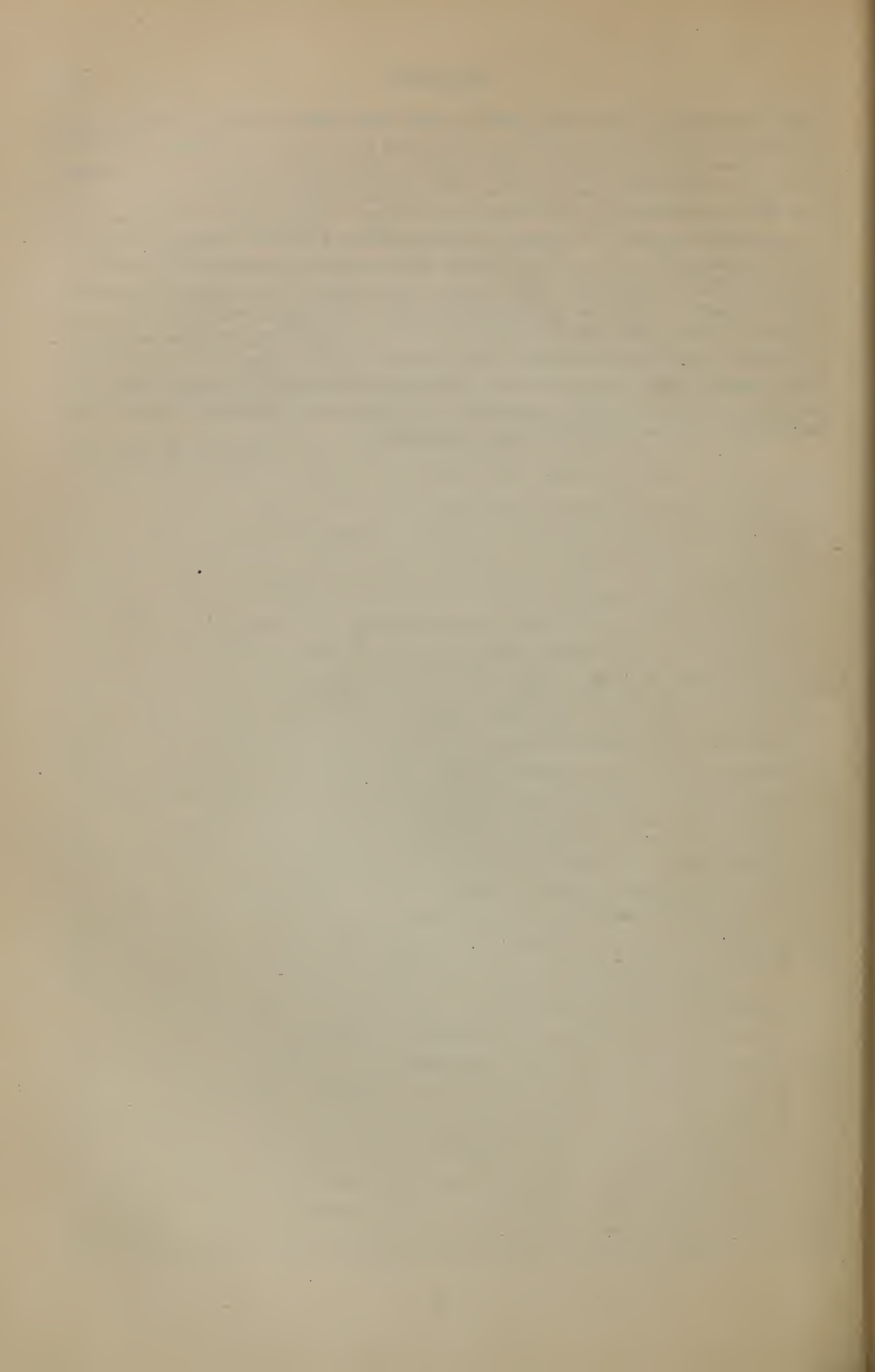
In conclusion I ought to explain that I systematically quote the Fathers whenever I can out of the translations published by Messrs. T. & T. Clark, or in the Oxford Library of the Fathers. It would have been very easy for me to give this book a very learned look by adding the references in Greek or Latin, but I do not think I should have thus conduced much to its practical utility. The Fathers are now a collection of works much spoken of, but very little read, and the references in the original added to theological works are much more overlooked than consulted. It would conduce much to a sound knowledge of primitive antiquity were the works translated of all the Christian writers who flourished down to the triumph of Christianity. Authors who fill their pages with quotations in Latin and Greek which they do not translate forget one simple fact, that ten or twenty years in a country



parish, immersed in its endless details, make the Latin and Greek of even good scholars somewhat rusty. And if so, what must be the case with those who are not good scholars, or not scholars at all, whether bad or good? I am often surprised noting how much more exacting from their readers modern scholars are in this direction than our forefathers of two hundred years ago. Let any one, for instance, take up the works composed in English by Hammond or Thorndike discussing the subject of Episcopacy, and it will be found that in every case when they use a Latin, Greek, or Hebrew quotation, while they give the original they always add the translation. Finally I have to acknowledge, what every page will show, the great assistance I have derived from the Lives of St. Paul written by Archdeacon Farrar, Mr. Lewin, and Messrs. Conybeare and Howson, and to express a hope that this work, together with the previous one, will be found helpful by some as they strive to form a better and truer conception of the manner in which the Church of the living God was founded and built up amongst men.

GEORGE T. STOKES.





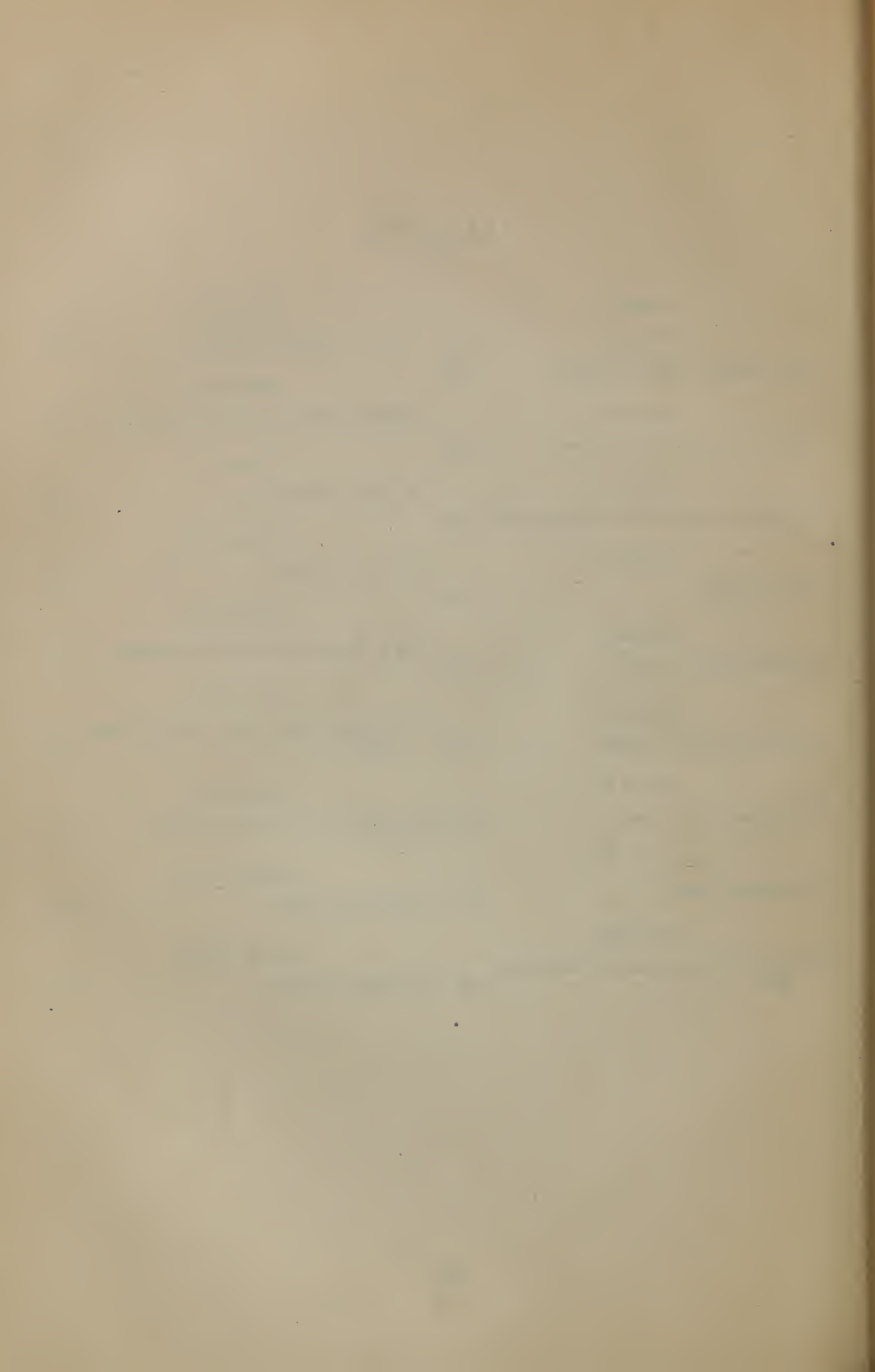


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# THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

BY THE REV. GEORGE T. STOKES, D. D.

## PART II.

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE TRAINING OF SAUL THE RABBI.

ACTS vii. 58; xxii. 3.

THE appearance of St. Paul upon the stage of Christian history marks a period of new development and of more enlarged activity. The most casual reader of the Acts of the Apostles must see that a personality of vast power, force, individuality, has now entered the bounds of the Church, and that henceforth St. Paul, his teaching, methods, and actions, will throw all others into the shade. Modern German critics have seized upon this undoubted fact and made it the foundation on which they have built elaborate theories concerning St. Paul and the Acts of the Apostles. Some of them have made St. Paul the inventor of a new form of Christianity, more elaborate, artificial, and dogmatic than the simple religion of nature which, as they think, Jesus Christ taught. Others have seen in St. Paul the great rival and antagonist of St. Peter, and have seen in the Acts a deliberate attempt to reconcile the opposing factions of Peter and Paul by representing St. Paul's career as modelled upon that of Peter.\* These theories are, we believe, utterly groundless; but they show at the same time what an important event in early Church history St. Paul's conversion was, and how necessary a thorough comprehension of his life and training if we wish to understand the genesis of our holy religion.

Who and whence, then, was this enthusiastic man who is first introduced to our notice in connection with St. Stephen's martyrdom? What can we glean from Scripture and from secular history concerning his earlier career? I am not going to attempt to do what Conybeare and Howson thirty years ago, or Archdeacon Farrar in later times, have executed with a wealth of learning and a profuseness of imagination which I could not pretend to possess. Even did I possess them it would be impossible, for want of space, to write such a biography of St. Paul as these authors have given to the public. Let us, however, strive to gather up such

\* See this portion of Baur's theory refuted in Dr. Salmon's "Introd. to the New Testament," ch. xviii., p. 335, 4th ed., where the writer admits a certain parallelism between the history of SS. Peter and Paul in the Acts, but denies that it was an invented parallelism. He remarks on the next page, "What I think proves decisively that the making a parallel between St. Peter and St. Paul was not an idea present to the author's mind is the absence of the natural climax of such a parallel—the story of the martyrdom of both of the Apostles. . . . If the object of the author of the Acts had been what has been supposed, it is scarcely credible that he could have missed so obvious an opportunity of bringing his book to its most worthy conclusion, by telling how the two servants of Christ—all previous differences, if there had been any, reconciled and forgotten—joined in witnessing a good confession before the tyrant emperor, and encouraged each other in steadfastness in endurance to the end."

details of St. Paul's early life and training as the New Testament, illustrated by history, sets before us. Perhaps we shall find that more is told us than strikes the ordinary superficial reader. His parentage is known to us from St. Paul's own statement. His father and mother were Jews of the Dispersion, as the Jews scattered abroad amongst the Gentiles were usually called; they were residents at Tarsus in Cilicia, and by profession belonged to the Pharisees, who then formed the more spiritual and earnest religious section of the Jewish people. We learn this from three passages. In his defence before the Council, recorded in Acts xxiii. 6, he tells us that he was "a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees." There was no division in religious feeling between the parents. His home life and his earliest years knew nothing of religious jars and strife. Husband and wife were joined not only in the external bonds of marriage, but in the profounder union still of spiritual sentiment and hope, a memory which may have inspired a deeper meaning, begotten of personal experience, in the warning delivered to the Corinthians, "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers." Of the history of his parents and ancestors we know practically nothing more for certain, but we can glean a little from other notices. St. Paul tells us that he belonged to a special division among the Jews, of which we have spoken a good deal in the former volume when dealing with St. Stephen. The Jews at this period were divided into Hebrews and Hellenists: that is, Hebrews who by preference and in their ordinary practice spoke the Hebrew tongue, and Hellenists who spoke Greek and adopted Greek civilisation and customs. St. Paul tells us in Philippians iii. 5 that he was "of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews," a statement which he substantially repeats in 2 Corinthians xi. 22. Now it was almost an impossibility for a Jew of the Dispersion to belong to the Hebrews. His lot was cast in a foreign land, his business mixed him up with the surrounding pagans so that the use of the Greek language was an absolute necessity; while the universal practice of his fellow-countrymen in conforming themselves to Greek customs, Greek philosophy, and Greek civilisation rendered the position of one who would stand out for the old Jewish national ideas and habits a very trying and a very peculiar one. Here, however, comes in an ancient tradition, recorded by St. Jerome, which throws some light upon the difficulty. Scripture tells us that St. Paul was born at Tarsus. Our Lord, in His conversation with Ananias in Acts ix. 11, calls him "Saul of Tarsus," while again the Apostle himself in the twenty-second chapter describes himself as "a Jew born in Tarsus." But then the question arises, how came his parents to Tarsus, and how, being in Tarsus, could they be described as Hebrews while all around and about them their countrymen were universally Hellenists? St. Jerome here steps in to help us. He relates, in his "Catalogue of Illustrious Writers," that "Paul the Apostle, previously called Saul, being



outside the number of the Twelve, was of the tribe of Benjamin and of the city of the Jewish Gischala; on the capture of which by the Romans he migrated with them to Tarsus." Now this statement of Jerome, written four hundred years after the event, is clearly inaccurate in many respects, and plainly contradicts the Apostle's own words that he was born in Tarsus.

But yet the story probably embodies a tradition substantially true, that St. Paul's parents were originally from Galilee. Galilee was intensely Hebrew. It was provincial, and the provinces are always far less affected by advance in thought or in religion than the towns, which are the chosen homes of innovation and of progress. Hellenism might flourish in Jerusalem, but in Galilee it would not be tolerated; and the tough, sturdy Galileans alone would have moral and religious grit enough to maintain the old Hebrew customs and language, even amid the abounding inducements to an opposite course which a great commercial centre like Tarsus held out. Assuredly our own experience affords many parallels illustrating the religious history of St. Paul's family. The Evangelical revival, the development of ritual in the Church of England, made their mark first of all in the towns, and did not affect the distant country districts till long after. The Presbyterianism of the Highlands is almost a different religion from the more enlightened and more cultured worship of Edinburgh and Glasgow. The Low Church and Orange developments of Ulster bring us back to the times of the last century, and seem passing strange to the citizens of London, Manchester, or Dublin, who first make their acquaintance in districts where obsolete ideas and cries still retain a power quite forgotten in the vast tide of life and thought which sways the great cities. And yet these rural backwaters, as we may call them, retain their influence, and show strong evidence of life even in the great cities; and so it is that even in London and Edinburgh and Glasgow and Dublin congregations continue to exist in their remoter districts and back streets where the prejudices and ideas of the country find full sway and exercise. The Presbyterianism of the Highlands and the Orangeism of Ulster will be sought in vain in fashionable churches, but in smaller assemblies they will be found exercising a sway and developing a life which will often astonish a superficial observer.

So it was doubtless in Tarsus. The Hebrews of Galilee would delight to separate themselves. They would look down upon the Hellenism of their fellow-countrymen as a sad falling away from ancient orthodoxy, but their declension would only add a keener zest to the zeal with which the descendants of the Hebrews of Gischala, even in the third and fourth generations, as it may have been, would retain the ancient customs and language of their Galilean forefathers.

St. Paul and his parents might seem to an outsider mere Hellenists, but their Galilean origin and training enabled them to retain the intenser Judaism which qualified the Apostle to describe himself as not only of the stock of Israel, but as a Hebrew of the Hebrews.

St. Paul's more immediate family connections have also some light thrown upon them in the New Testament. We learn, for instance, from Acts xxiii. 16, that he had a married sister, who

probably lived at Jerusalem, and may have been even a convert to Christianity; for we are told that her son, having heard of the Jewish plot to murder the Apostle, at once reported it to St. Paul himself, who thereupon put his nephew into communication with the chief captain in whose custody he lay. While again, in Romans xvi. 7, 11, he sends salutations to Andronicus, Junias, and Herodion, his kinsmen, who were residents in Rome; and in verse 21 of the same chapter joins Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, his kinsmen, with himself in the Christian wishes for the welfare of the Roman Church, with which he closes the Epistle. It is said, indeed, that this may mean simply that these men were Jews, and that St. Paul regarded all Jews as his kinsmen. But this notion is excluded by the form of the twenty-first verse, where he first sends greetings from Timothy, whom St. Paul dearly loved, and who was a circumcised Jew, not a proselyte merely, but a true Jew, on his mother's side, at least; and then the Apostle proceeds to name the persons whom he designates his kinsmen. St. Paul evidently belonged to a family of some position in the Jewish world, whose ramifications were dispersed into very distant quarters of the empire. Every scrap of information which we can gain concerning the early life and associations of such a man is very precious; we may therefore point out that we can even get a glimpse of the friends and acquaintances of his earliest days. Barnabas the Levite was of Cyprus, an island only seventy miles distant from Tarsus. In all probability Barnabas may have resorted to the Jewish schools of Tarsus, or may have had some other connections with the Jewish colony of that city. Some such early friendship may have been the link which bound Paul to Barnabas and enabled the latter to stand sponsor for the newly converted Saul when the Jerusalem Church was yet naturally suspicious of him. "And when he was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: and they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the Apostles" (Acts ix. 26, 27). This ancient friendship enabled Barnabas to pursue the Apostle with those offices of consolation which his nascent faith demanded. He knew Saul's boyhood haunts, and therefore it is we read in Acts xi. 25 that "Barnabas went forth to Tarsus to seek for Saul" when a multitude of the Gentiles began to pour into the Church of Antioch. Barnabas knew his old friend's vigorous, enthusiastic character, his genius, his power of adaptation, and therefore he brought him back to Antioch, where for a whole year they were joined in one holy brotherhood of devout and successful labour for their Master. The friendships and love of boyhood and of youth received a new consecration and were impressed with a loftier ideal from the example of Saul and of Barnabas.

Then again there are other friends of his youth to whom he refers. Timothy's family lived at Lystra, and Lystra was directly connected with Tarsus by a great road which ran straight from Tarsus to Ephesus, offering means for that frequent communication in which the Jews ever delighted. St. Paul's earliest memories carried him back to the devout atmosphere of the pious Jewish family at Lystra, which he had long known, where Lois the grandmother and Eu-



nice the mother had laid the foundations of that spiritual life which under St. Paul's own later teaching flourished so wondrously in the life of Timothy.\* Let us pass on, however, to a period of later development. St. Paul's earliest teaching at first was doubtless that of the home. As with Timothy so with the Apostle; his earliest religious teacher was doubtless his mother, who from his infancy imbued him with the great rudimentary truths which lie at the basis of both the Jewish and the Christian faith. His father too took his share. He was a Pharisee, and would be anxious to fulfil every jot and tittle of the law and every minute rule which the Jewish doctors had deduced by an attention and a subtlety concentrated for ages upon the text of the Old Testament. And one great doctor had laid down, "When a boy begins to speak, his father ought to talk with him in the sacred language, and to teach him the law"; a rule which would exactly fall in with his father's natural inclination.† He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, though dwelling among Hellenists. He prided himself on speaking the Hebrew language alone, and he therefore would take the greatest pains that the future Apostle's earliest teachings should be in that same sacred tongue, giving him from boyhood that command over Hebrew and its dialects which he afterwards turned to the best of uses.

At five years old Jewish children of parents like St. Paul's advanced to the direct study of the law under the guidance of some doctor, whose school they daily attended, as another rabbi had expressly enacted, "At five years old a boy should apply himself to the study of Holy Scripture." Between five and thirteen Saul was certainly educated at Tarsus, during which period his whole attention was concentrated upon sacred learning and upon mechanical or industrial training. It was at this period of his life that St. Paul must have learned the trade of tentmaking, which during the last thirty years of his life stood him in such good stead, rendering him independent of all external aid so far as his bodily wants were concerned. A question has often been raised as to the social position of St. Paul's family; and people, bringing their Western ideas with them, have thought that the manual trade which he was taught betokened their humble rank. But this is quite a mistake. St. Paul's family must have occupied at least a fairly comfortable position, when they were able to send a member of their house to Jerusalem to be taught in the most celebrated rabbinical school of the time. But it was the law of that school—and a very useful law it was too—that every Jew, and especially every teacher, should possess a trade by which he might be supported did necessity call for it. It was a common proverb among the Jews at that time that "He who taught not his son a trade taught him to be a thief." "It is incumbent on the father to circumscribe his son, to redeem him, to teach him the law, and to teach him some occupation, for, as Rabbi Judah saith, whosoever teacheth not his son to do some work is as if he taught him robbery." "Rabbin Gamaliel saith, He that hath a trade in his hand, to what is he like? He is like to a vineyard

that is fenced." Such was the authoritative teaching of the schools, and Jewish practice was in accordance therewith. Some of the most celebrated rabbis of that time were masters of a mechanical art or trade. The vice-president of the Sanhedrin was a merchant for four years, and then devoted himself to the study of the law. One rabbi was a shoemaker; Rabbi Juda, the great Cabalist, was a tailor; Rabbi Jose was brought up as a tanner; another rabbi as a baker, and yet another as a carpenter. And so as a preparation for the office and life work to which his father had destined him, St. Paul during his earlier years was taught one of the common trades of Tarsus, which consisted in making tents either out of the hair or the skin of the Angora goats which browsed over the hills of central Asia Minor. It was a trade that was common among Jews. Aquila and his wife Priscilla were tent-makers, and therefore St. Paul united himself to them and wrought at his trade in their company at Corinth (Acts xviii. 3). It has often been asserted that at this period of his life St. Paul must have studied Greek philosophy and literature, and men have pointed to his quotations from the Greek poets Aratus, Epimenides, and Menander, to prove the attention which the Apostle must have bestowed upon them.\* Tarsus was certainly one of the great universities of that age, ranking in the first place along with Athens and Alexandria. So great was its fame that the Roman emperors even were wont to go to Tarsus to look for tutors to instruct their sons. But Tarsus was at the very same time one of the most morally degraded spots within the bounds of the Roman world, and it is not at all likely that a strict Hebrew, a stern Pharisee, would have allowed his son to encounter the moral taint involved in freely mixing with such a degraded people and in the free study of a literature permeated through and through with sensuality and idolatry. St. Paul doubtless at this early period of his life gained that colloquial knowledge of Greek which was every day becoming more and more necessary for the ordinary purposes of secular life all over the Roman Empire, even in the most backward parts of Palestine. But it is not likely that his parents would have sanctioned his attendance at the lectures on philosophy and poetry delivered at the University of Tarsus, where he would have been initiated into all the abominations of paganism in a style most attractive to human nature.

At thirteen years of age, or thereabouts, young Saul, having now learned all the sacred knowledge which the local rabbis could teach, went up to Jerusalem just as our Lord did, to assume the full obligations of a Jew and to pursue his higher studies at the great Rabbinical University of Jerusalem. To put it in modern language, Saul went up to Jerusalem to be confirmed and admitted to the full privileges and complete obligations of the Levitical Law, and he also went up to enter college. St. Paul himself describes the period of life on which he now entered as that in which he was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. We have already touched in a prior volume upon the subject of Gamaliel's history and his relation to Christianity, but here it is necessary to say something of him as a teacher, in which capacity he laid the foundations of

\* See 2 Tim. i. 5, and iii. 14, 15. It is evident that St. Paul's language implies an acquaintance with Timothy's family of very long standing.

† Schoettgen's "Hor. Hebr.," vol. i. p. 89; Lewin's "St. Paul," vol. i. p. 7.

\* See Acts xvii. 28; Titus i. 12; 1 Cor. xv. 33.



modes of thought and reasoning, the influence of which moulded St. Paul's whole soul and can be traced all through St. Paul's Epistles.

Gamaliel is an undoubtedly historical personage. The introduction of him in the Acts of the Apostles is simply another instance of that marvellous historical accuracy which every fresh investigation and discovery show to be a distinguishing feature of this book. The Jewish Talmud was not committed to writing for more than four centuries after Gamaliel's time, and yet it presents Gamaliel to us in exactly the same light as the inspired record does, telling us that "with the death of Gamaliel I. the reverence for the Divine law ceased, and the observance of purity and abstinence departed." Gamaliel came of a family distinguished in Jewish history both before and after his own time. He was of the royal House of David, and possessed in this way great historical claims upon the respect of the nation. His grandfather Hillel and his father Simeon were celebrated teachers and expounders of the law. His grandfather had founded indeed one of the leading schools of interpretation then favoured by the rabbis. His father Simeon is said by some to have been the aged man who took up the infant Christ in his arms and blessed God for His revealed salvation in the words of the "Nunc Dimittis"; while, as for Gamaliel himself, his teaching was marked by wisdom, prudence, liberality, and spiritual depth, so far as such qualities could exist in a professor of rabbinical learning. Gamaliel was a friend and contemporary of Philo, and this fact alone must have imported an element of liberality into his teaching. Philo was a widely read scholar who strove to unite the philosophy of Greece to the religion of Palestine, and Philo's ideas must have permeated more or less into some at least of the schools of Jerusalem, so that, though St. Paul may not have come in contact with Greek literature in Tarsus, he may very probably have learned much about it in a Judaized, purified, spiritualised shape in Jerusalem. But the influence exercised on St. Paul by Gamaliel and through him by Philo, or men of his school, can be traced in other respects.\*

The teaching of Gamaliel was as spiritual, I have said, as rabbinical teaching could have been; but this is not saying very much from the Christian point of view. The schools at Jerusalem in the time of Gamaliel were wholly engaged in studies of the most wearisome, narrow, petty, technical kind. Dr. Farrar has illustrated this subject with a great wealth of learning and examples in the fourth chapter of his "Life of St. Paul." The Talmud alone shows this, throwing a fearful light upon the denunciations of our Lord as regards the Pharisees, for it devotes a whole treatise to washings of the hands, and another to the proper method of killing fowls. The Pharisaic section of the Jews held, indeed, that there were two hundred and forty-eight commandments and three hundred and sixty-five prohibitions involved in the Jewish Law, all of them equally binding, and all of them so searching that if only one solitary Jew could be found who for one day kept them all and transgressed in no one direction, then the captivity

of God's people would cease and the Messiah would appear.\*

I am obliged to pass over this point somewhat rapidly, and yet it is a most important one if we desire to know what kind of training the Apostle received; for, no matter how God's grace may descend and the Divine Spirit may change the main directions of a man's life, he never quite recovers himself from the effects of his early teaching. Dr. Farrar has bestowed much time and labour on this point. The following brief extract from his eloquent words will give a vivid idea of the endless puerilities, the infinite questions of pettiest, most minute, and most subtle bearing with which the time of St. Paul and his fellow-students must have been taken up, and which must have made him bitterly feel in the depths of his inmost being that, though the law may have been originally intended as a source of life, it had been certainly changed as regards his own particular case, and had become unto him an occasion of death.

"Moreover, was there not mingled with all this nominal adoration of the Law a deeply seated hypocrisy, so deep that it was in a great measure unconscious? Even before the days of Christ the rabbis had learnt the art of straining out gnats and swallowing camels. They had long learnt to nullify what they professed to defend. The ingenuity of Hillel was quite capable of getting rid of any Mosaic regulation which had been found practically burdensome. Pharisees and Sadducees alike had managed to set aside in their own favour, by the devices of the mixtures, all that was disagreeable to themselves in the Sabbath scrupulosity. The fundamental institution of the Sabbatic year had been stultified by the mere legal fiction of the Prosbol. Teachers who were on the high road to a casuistry which could construct rules out of every superfluous particle, had found it easy to win credit for ingenuity by elaborating prescriptions to which Moses would have listened in mute astonishment. If there be one thing more definitely laid down in the Law than another, it is the uncleanness of creeping things; yet the Talmud assures us that 'no one is appointed a member of the Sanhedrin who does not possess sufficient ingenuity to prove from the written Law that a creeping thing is ceremonially clean'; and that there was an unimpeachable disciple at Jabne who could adduce one hundred and fifty arguments in favour of the ceremonial cleanness of creeping things. Sophistry like this was at work even in the days when the young student of Tarsus sat at the feet of Gamaliel; and can we imagine any period of his life when he would not have been wearied by a system at once so meaningless, so stringent, and so insincere?"

These words are true, thoroughly true, in their extremest sense. Casuistry is at all times a dangerous weapon with which to play, a dangerous science upon which to concentrate one's attention. The mind is so pleased with the fascination of the precipice that one is perpetually tempted to see how near an approach can be made without a catastrophe, and then the catastrophe happens when it is least expected. But when the casuist's attention is concentrated upon one volume like the law of Moses, interpreted in the thousand methods and combinations open to the luxuriant imagination of the East, then

\* Philo is the subject of a very long and learned article by Dr. Edersheim in Smith's "Dict. Christ. Biog.," vol. iv., with which may be compared a shorter article in Schaff's "Encyclopædia of Hist. Theol.," vol. ii.

\* These facts throw much light upon our Lord's words in Matt. xv. 1-9 and xxii. 34-40.



indeed the danger is infinitely increased, and we cease to wonder at the vivid, burning, scorching denunciations of the Lord as He proclaimed the sin of those who enacted that "Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor." St. Paul's whole time must have been taken up in the school of Gamaliel with an endless study of such casuistical trifles; and yet that period of his life left marks which we can clearly trace throughout his writings. The method, for instance, in which St. Paul quotes the Old Testament is thoroughly rabbinical. It was derived from the rules prevalent in the Jewish schools, and therefore, though it may seem to us at times forced and unnatural, must have appeared to St. Paul and to the men of his time absolutely conclusive. When reading the Scriptures we Westerns forget the great difference between Orientals and the nations of Western Europe. Aristotle and his logic and his logical methods, with major and minor premises and conclusions following therefrom, absolutely dominate our thoughts. The Easterns knew nothing of Aristotle, and his methods availed nothing to their minds. They argued in quite a different style, and used a logic which he would have simply scorned. Analogy, allegory, illustration, form the staple elements of Eastern logic, and in their use St. Paul was elaborately trained in Gamaliel's classes, and of their use his writings furnish abundant examples; the most notable of which will be found in his allegorical interpretation of the events of the wilderness journey of Israel in 1 Corinthians x. 1-4, where the pillar of cloud, and the passage of the Red Sea, and the manna, and the smitten rock become the emblems and types of the Christian Sacraments; and again, in St. Paul's mystical explanation of Galatians iv. 21-31, where Hagar and Sarah are represented as typical of the two covenants, the old covenant leading to spiritual bondage and the new introducing to gospel freedom.

These, indeed, are the most notable examples of St. Paul's method of exegesis derived from the school of Gamaliel, but there are numberless others scattered all through his writings. If we view them through Western spectacles, we shall be disappointed and miss their force; but if we view them sympathetically, if we remember that the Jews quoted and studied the Old Testament to find illustrations of their own ideas rather than proofs in our sense of the word, studied them as an enthusiastic Shakespeare or Tennyson or Wordsworth student pores over his favourite author to find parallels which others, who are less bewitched, find very slight and very dubious indeed, then we shall come to see how it is that St. Paul quotes an illustration of his doctrine of justification by faith from Habakkuk ii. 4—"The soul of the proud man is not upright, but the just man shall live by his steadfastness"; a passage which originally applied to the Chaldeans and the Jews, predicting that the former should enjoy no stable prosperity, but that the Jews, ideally represented as the just or upright man, should live securely because of their fidelity; and can find an allusion to the resurrection of Christ in "the sure mercies of David," which God had promised to give His people in the third verse of the fifty-fifth of Isaiah.

Rabbinical learning, Hebrew discipline, Greek

experience and life, these conspired together with natural impulse and character to frame and form and mould a man who must make his mark upon the world at large in whatever direction he chooses for his walk in life. It will now be our duty to show what were the earliest results of this very varied education.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE CONVERSION OF THE PERSECUTOR.

Acts viii. 3; ix. 1-6.

WE have in the last chapter traced the course of St. Paul's life as we know it from his own reminiscences, from hints in Holy Scripture, and from Jewish history and customs. The Jewish nation is exactly like all the nations of the East, in one respect at least. They are all intensely conservative, and though time has necessarily introduced some modifications, yet the course of education, and the force of prejudice, and the power of custom have in the main remained unchanged down to the present time. We now proceed to view St. Paul, not as we imagine his course of life and education to have been, but as we follow him in the exhibition of his active powers, in the full play and swing of that intellectual energy, of those religious aims and objects for which he had been so long training.

St. Paul at his first appearance upon the stage of Christian history, upon the occasion of St. Stephen's martyrdom, had arrived at the full stature of manhood both in body and in mind. He was then the young man Saul; an expression which enables us to fix with some approach to accuracy the time of his birth. St. Paul's contemporary Philo in one of his works divides man's life into seven periods, the fourth of which is young manhood, which he assigns to the years between twenty-one and twenty-eight. Roughly speaking, and without attempting any fine-drawn distinctions for which we have not sufficient material, we may say that at the martyrdom of St. Stephen St. Paul was about thirty years of age, or some ten years or thereabouts junior to our Lord, as His years would have been numbered according to those of the sons of men. One circumstance, indeed, would seem to indicate that St. Paul must have been then over and above the exact line of thirty. It is urged, and that upon the ground of St. Paul's own language, that he was a member of the Sanhedrin. In the twenty-sixth chapter, defending himself before King Agrippa, St. Paul described his own course of action prior to his conversion as one of bitterest hostility to the Christian cause: "I both shut up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, and when they were put to death I gave my vote against them"; an expression which clearly indicates that he was a member of a body and possessed a vote in an assembly which determined questions of life and death, and that could have been nothing else than the Sanhedrin, into which no one was admitted before he had completed thirty years. St. Paul, then, when he is first introduced to our notice, comes before us as a full-grown man, and a well-trained, carefully educated, thoroughly disciplined rabbinical scholar, whose prejudices were naturally excited against the new Galilean sect, and who had given



public expression to his feelings by taking decided steps in opposition to its progress. The sacred narrative now sets before us (i) the Conduct of St. Paul in his unconverted state, (ii) his Mission, (iii) his Journey, and (iv) his Conversion. Let us take the many details and circumstances connected with this passage under these four divisions.

I. *The Conduct of Saul.* Here we have a picture of St. Paul in his unconverted state: "Saul, yet breathing threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." This description is amply borne out by St. Paul himself, in which he even enlarges and gives us additional touches of the intensity of his antichristian hate. His ignorant zeal at this period seems to have printed itself deep upon memory's record. There are no less than at least seven different notices in the Acts or scattered through the Epistles, due to his own tongue or pen, and dealing directly with his conduct as a persecutor. No matter how he rejoiced in the fulness and blessedness of Christ's pardon, no matter how he experienced the power and working of God's Holy Spirit, St. Paul never could forget the intense hatred with which he had originally followed the disciples of the Master. Let us note them, for they all bear out, expand, and explain the statement of the passage we are now considering.

In his address to the Jews of Jerusalem as recorded in Acts xxii. he appeals to his former conduct as an evidence of his sincerity. In verses 4 and 5 he says, "I persecuted this Way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and journeyed to Damascus, to bring them also which were there unto Jerusalem in bonds, for to be punished." In the same discourse he recurs a second time to this topic; for, telling his audience of the vision granted to him in the temple, he says, verse 19, "And I said, Lord, they themselves know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on Thee: and when the blood of Stephen Thy witness was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting, and keeping the garments of them that slew him." St. Paul dwells upon the same topic in the twenty-sixth chapter, when addressing King Agrippa in verses 9-11, a passage already quoted in part: "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And this I also did in Jerusalem: and I both shut up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, and when they were put to death, I gave my vote against them. And punishing them oftentimes in all the synagogues, I strove to make them blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto foreign cities." It is the same in his Epistles. In four different places does he refer to his conduct as a persecutor—in 1 Cor. xv. 9; Gal. i. 13; Phil. iii. 6; and 1 Tim. i. 13; while again in the chapter now under consideration, the ninth of Acts, we find that the Jews of the synagogue in Damascus, who were listening to St. Paul's earliest outburst of Christian zeal, asked, "Is not this he that in Jerusalem made havock of them which called on this name? and he had come hither for this intent, that he might bring them bound be-

fore the chief priests"; using the very same word "making havock" as Paul himself uses in the first of Galatians, which in Greek is very strong, expressing a course of action accompanied with fire and blood and murder, such as occurs when a city is taken by storm.

Now these passages have been thus set forth at length because they add many details to the bare statement of Acts ix., giving us a glimpse into those four or five dark and bloody years, the thought of which henceforth weighed so heavily upon the Apostle's mind and memory. Just let us notice these additional touches. He shut up in prison many of the saints, both men and women, and that in Jerusalem before he went to Damascus at all. He scourged the disciples in every synagogue, meaning doubtless that he superintended the punishment, as it was the duty of the Chazan, the minister or attendant of the synagogue, to scourge the condemned, and thus strove to make them blaspheme Christ. He voted for the execution of the disciples when he acted as a member of the Sanhedrin. And lastly he followed the disciples and persecuted them in foreign cities. We gain in this way a much fuller idea of the young enthusiast's persecuting zeal than usually is formed from the words, "Saul yet breathing threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," which seem to set forth Saul as roused to wild and savage excitement by St. Stephen's death, and then continuing that course in the city of Jerusalem, for a very brief period. Whereas, on the contrary, St. Paul's fuller statements, when combined, represent him as pursuing a course of steady, systematic, and cruel repression, which St. Paul largely helped to inaugurate, but which continued to exist as long as the Jews had the power to inflict corporal punishments and death on the members of their own nation. He visited all the synagogues in Jerusalem and throughout Palestine, scourging and imprisoning. He strove—and this is, again, another lifelike touch,—to compel the disciples to blaspheme the name of Christ in the same manner as the Romans were subsequently wont to test Christians by calling upon them to cry anathema to the name of their Master. He even extended his activity beyond the bounds of the Holy Land, and that in various directions. The visit to Damascus may not by any means have been his first journey to a foreign town with thoughts bent on the work of persecution. He expressly says to Agrippa, "I persecuted them even unto foreign cities." He may have visited Tarsus, or Lystra, or the cities of Cyprus or Alexandria itself, urged on by the consuming fire of his blind, restless zeal, before he entered upon the journey to Damascus, destined to be the last undertaken in opposition to Jesus Christ. When we thus strive to realise the facts of the case, we shall see that the scenes of blood and torture and death, the ruined homes, the tears, the heartbreaking separations which the young man Saul had caused in his blind zeal for the law, and which are briefly summed up in the words "he made havock of the Church," were quite sufficient to account for that profound impression of his own unworthiness and of God's great mercy towards him which he ever cherished to his dying day.

II. *The Mission of Saul.* Again, we notice in this passage that Saul, having shown his activity in other directions, now turned his attention



to Damascus. There were political circumstances which may have hitherto hindered him from exercising the same supervision over the synagogue of Damascus which he had already extended to other foreign cities. The political history and circumstances of Damascus at this period are indeed rather obscure. The city seems to have been somewhat of a bone of contention between Herod Antipas, Aretas the king of Petra, and the Romans. About the time of St. Paul's conversion, which may be fixed at A. D. 37 or 38, there was a period of great disturbance in Palestine and Southern Syria. Pontius Pilate was deposed from his office and sent to Rome for judgment. Vitellius, the president of the whole Province of Syria, came into Palestine, changing the high priests, conciliating the Jews, and intervening in the war which raged between Herod Antipas and Aretas, his father-in-law. In the course of this last struggle Damascus seems to have changed its masters, and, while a Roman city till the year 37, it henceforth became an Arabian city, the property of King Aretas, till the reign of Nero, when it again returned beneath the Roman sway. Some one or other, or perhaps all these political circumstances combined may have hitherto prevented the Sanhedrin from taking active measures against the disciples at Damascus. But now things became settled. Caiaphas was deposed from the office of high priest upon the departure of Pontius Pilate. He had been a great friend and ally of Pilate; Vitellius therefore deprived Caiaphas of his sacred office, appointing in his stead Jonathan, son of Annas, the high priest. This Jonathan did not, however, long continue to occupy the position, as he was deposed by the same Roman magistrate, Vitellius, at the feast of Pentecost in the very same year, his brother Theophilus being appointed high priest in his room; so completely was the whole Levitical hierarchy, the entire Jewish establishment, ruled by the political officers of the Roman state. This Theophilus continued to hold the office for five or six years, and it must have been to Theophilus that Saul applied for letters unto Damascus authorising him to arrest the adherents of the new religion.\*

And now a question here arises, How is it that the high priest could exercise such powers and arrest his co-religionists in a foreign town? The answer to this sheds a flood of light upon the state of the Jews of the Dispersion, as they were called. I have already said a little on this point, but it demands fuller discussion.† The high priest at Jerusalem was regarded as a kind of head of the whole nation. He was viewed by the Romans as the Prince of the Jews,‡ with whom they could formally treat, and by whom they could manage a nation which, differing from all others in its manners and customs, was scattered all over the world, and often gave much trouble. Julius Cæsar laid down the lines on which Jewish privileges and Roman policy were based, and that half a century before the Christian era. Julius Cæsar had been greatly assisted in his Alexandrian war by the Jewish

high priest Hyrcanus, so he issued an edict in the year 47 B. C., which, after reciting the services of Hyrcanus, proceeds thus, "I command that Hyrcanus and his children do retain all the rights of the high priest, whether established by law or accorded by courtesy; and if hereafter any question arise touching the Jewish polity, I desire that the determination thereof be referred to him"; an edict which, confirmed as it was again and again, not only by Julius Cæsar, but by several subsequent emperors, gave the high priest the fullest jurisdiction over the Jews, wherever they dwelt, in things pertaining to their own religion. It was therefore in strictest accord with Roman law and custom that, when Saul wished to arrest members of the synagogue at Damascus, he should make application to the high priest Theophilus for a warrant enabling him to effect his purpose.

The description, too, given of the disciples in this passage is very noteworthy and a striking evidence of the truthfulness of the narrative. The disciples were the men of "the Way." Saul desired to bring any of "the Way" found at Damascus to be judged at Jerusalem, because the Sanhedrin alone possessed the right to pass capital sentences in matters of religion. The synagogues at Damascus or anywhere else could flog culprits, and a Jew could get no redress for any such ill-treatment even if he sought it, which would have not been at all likely; but if the final sentence of death were to be passed, the Jerusalem Sanhedrin was the only tribunal competent to entertain such questions. And the persons he desired to hale before this awful tribunal were the men of the Way. This was the name by which, in its earliest and purest day, the Church called itself. In the nineteenth chapter and ninth verse we read of St. Paul's labours at Ephesus and the opposition he endured: "But when some were hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the multitude"; while again, in his defence before Felix (xxiv. 14), we read, "But this I confess unto thee, that after the Way which they call a sect, so serve I the God of our fathers." The Revised translation of the New Testament has well brought out the force of the original in a manner that was utterly missed in the Authorised Version, and has emphasised for us a great truth concerning the early Christians. There was a certain holy intolerance even about the very name they imposed upon the earliest Church. It was the Way, the only Way, the Way of Life. The earliest Christians had a lively recollection of what the Apostles had heard from the mouth of the Master Himself, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no one cometh unto the Father but by Me"; and so, realising the identity of Christ and His people, realising the continued presence of Christ in His Church, they designated that Church by a term which expressed their belief that in it alone was the road to peace, the sole path of access to God. This name, "the Way," expressed their sense of the importance of the truth. Theirs was no easy-going religion which thought that it made not the slightest matter what form of belief a man professed. They were awfully in earnest, because they knew of only one way to God, and that was the religion and Church of Jesus Christ. Therefore it was that they were willing to suffer all things rather

\* The references for all these changes are given in Lewin's "Fasti," and in his "Life of St. Paul," with which Josephus, "Antiqq." XVIII. iv., should be compared.

† See pp. 338-39, 361.

‡ The decree of Julius Cæsar, upon which the Jewish privileges were built, expressly calls the high priest the ethnarch (ἐθνάρχης), or ruler, of the Jews. See Josephus, "Antiqq." XIV. x. 3.



than that they should lose this Way, or that others should miss it through their default. The marvellous, the intense missionary efforts of the primitive Church find their explanation in this expression, the Way. God had revealed the Way and had called themselves into it, and their great duty in life was to make others know the greatness of this salvation; or, as St. Paul puts it, "Necessity is laid upon me; woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel."

The exclusive claims of Christianity are thus early set forth; and it was these same exclusive claims which caused Christianity to be so hated and persecuted by the pagans. The Roman Empire would not have so bitterly resented the preaching of Christ, if His followers would have accepted the position with which other religions were contented. The Roman Empire was not intolerant of new ideas in matters of religion. Previous to the coming of our Lord the pagans had welcomed the strange, mystic rites and teaching of Egypt. They accepted from Persia the curious system and worship of Mithras within the first century after Christ's crucifixion. And tradition tells that at least two of the emperors were willing to admit the image of Christ into the Pantheon, which they had consecrated to the memory of the great and good. But the Christians would have nothing to say or do with such partial honours for their Master. Religion for them was Christ alone or else it was nothing, and that because He alone was the Way. As there was but one God for them, so there was but one Mediator, Christ Jesus.

III. *Saul's Journey.* "As he journeyed, it came to pass that he drew nigh unto Damascus." This is the simple record left us in Holy Writ of this momentous event. A comparison of the sacred record with any of the numerous lives of St. Paul which have been published will show us how very different their points of view. The mere human narratives dwell upon the external features of the scene, enlarge upon the light which modern discoveries have thrown upon the lines of road which connected Jerusalem with Southern Syria, become enthusiastic over the beauty of Damascus as seen by the traveller from Jerusalem, over the eternal green of the groves and gardens which are still, as of old, made glad by the waters of Abana and of Pharpar; while the sacred narrative passes over all external details and marches straight to the great central fact of the persecutor's conversion. And we find no fault with this. It is well that the human narratives should enlarge as they do upon the outward features and circumstances of the journey, because they thus help us to realise the Acts as a veritable history that was lived and acted. We are too apt to idealise the Bible, to think of it as dealing with an unreal world, and to regard the men and women thereof as beings of another type from ourselves. Books like Farrar's and Lewin's and Conybeare and Howson's "*Lives of St. Paul*" correct this tendency, and make the Acts of the Apostles infinitely more interesting by rendering St. Paul's career human and lifelike and clothing it with the charm of local detail. It is thus that we can guess at the very road by which the enthusiastic Saul travelled. The caravans from Egypt to Damascus are intensely conservative in their routes. In fact, even in our own revolutionary West trade and commerce preserve in large measure the same routes to-day as they used two

thousand years ago. The great railways of England, and much more the great main roads, preserve in a large degree the same directions which the ancient Roman roads observed. In Ireland, with which I am still better acquainted, I know that the great roads starting from Dublin preserve in the main the same lines as in the days of St. Patrick.\* And so it is, but only to a much greater degree, in Palestine and throughout the East. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho preserved in St. Jerome's time, four centuries later, the same direction and the same character as in our Lord's day, so that it was then called the Bloody Road, from the frequent robberies; and thus it is still, for the pilgrims who now go to visit the Jordan are furnished with a guard of Turkish soldiers to protect them from the Arab bandits. And to-day, as in the first century, the caravans from Egypt and Jerusalem to Damascus follow either of two roads: one which proceeds through Gaza and Ramleh, along the coast, and then, turning eastward about the borders of Samaria and Galilee, crosses the Jordan and proceeds through the desert to Damascus—that is the Egyptian road; † while the other, which serves for travellers from Jerusalem, runs due north from that city and joins the other road at the entrance to Galilee. This latter was probably the road which St. Paul took. The distance which he had to traverse is not very great. One hundred and thirty-six miles separate Jerusalem from Damascus, a journey which is performed in five or six days by such a company as Saul had with him. We get a hint, too, of the manner in which he travelled. He rode probably on a horse or a mule, like modern travellers on the same road, as we gather from Acts ix. 4 compared with xxii. 7, passages which represent Saul and his companions as falling to the earth when the supernatural light flashed upon their astonished vision.

The exact spot where Saul was arrested in his mad career is a matter of some debate; some fix it close to the city of Damascus, half a mile or so from the south gate on the high road to Jerusalem. Dr. Porter, whose long residence at Damascus made him an authority on the locality, places the scene of the conversion at the village of Caucabe, ten miles away, where the traveller from Jerusalem gets his first glimpse of the towers and groves of Damascus. We are not anxious to determine this point. The great spiritual truth which is the centre and core of the whole matter remains, and that central truth is this, that it was when he drew near to Damascus and the crowning act of violence seemed at hand, then the Lord put forth His power—as He so often still does just when men are about to commit some dire offence—arrested the persecutor, and then, amid the darkness of that abounding light, there rose upon the vision of the astonished Saul at Caucabe, "the place of the star," that true Star of Bethlehem which never ceased its clear shining for him till he came unto the perfect day.‡

IV. Lastly we have the actual conversion of the Apostle and the circumstances of it. We

\* See Petrie's "Tara" in the "*Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy*," t. xviii., and "*Ireland and the Celtic Church*," by G. T. Stokes, pp. 80, 81, for illustrations of this point.

† See Geikie's "*The Holy Land and the Bible*," p. 38.

‡ The question of the site of the conversion is discussed at length in Lewin's "*St. Paul*," vol. i. ch. v. p. 49.



have mention made in this connection of the light, the voice, and the conversation. These leading circumstances are described in exactly the same way in the three great accounts in the ninth, in the twenty-second, and in the twenty-sixth chapters. There are minute differences between them, but only such differences as are natural between the verbal descriptions given at different times by a truthful and vigorous speaker, who, conscious of honest purpose, did not stop to weigh his every word. All three accounts tell of the light; they all agree on that. St. Paul in his speeches at Jerusalem unhesitatingly declares that the light which he beheld was a supernatural one, above the brightness, the fierce, intolerable brightness of a Syrian sun at midday; and boldly asserts that the attendants and escort who were with him saw the light. Those who disbelieve in the supernatural reject, of course, this assertion, and resolve the light into a fainting fit brought upon Saul by the burning heat, or into a passing sirocco blast from the Arabian desert. But the sincere and humble believer may fairly ask, Could a fainting fit or a breath of hot wind change a man who had stood out against Stephen's eloquence and Stephen's death and the witnessed sufferings and patience displayed by the multitudes of men and women whom he had pursued unto the death? But it is not our purpose to discuss these questions in any controversial spirit. Time and space would fail to treat of them aright, specially as they have been fully discussed already in works like Lord Lyttelton on the conversion of St. Paul, wholly devoted to such aspects of these events. But, looking at them from a believer's point of view, we can see good reasons why the supernatural light should have been granted. Next to the life and death and resurrection of our Lord, the conversion of St. Paul was the most important event the world ever saw. Our Lord made to the fiery persecutor a special revelation of Himself in the mode of His existence in the unseen world, in the reality, truth, and fulness of His humanity, such as He never made to any other human being. The special character of the revelation shows the importance that Christ attached to the person and the personal character of him who was the object of that revelation. Just, then, as we maintain that there was a fitness when there was an Incarnation of God that miracles should attend it; so, too, when the greatest instrument and agent in propagating a knowledge of that Incarnation was to be converted, it was natural that a supernatural agency should have been employed. And then, when the devout mind surveys the records of Scripture, how similar we see St. Paul's conversion to have been to other great conversions. Moses is converted from mere worldly thoughts and pastoral labours on which his soul is bent, and sent back to tasks which he had abandoned for forty years, to the great work of freeing the people of God and leading them to the Land of Promise; and then a vision is granted, where light, a supernatural light, the light of the burning bush, is manifested. Isaiah and Daniel had visions granted to them when a great work was to be done and a great witness had to be borne, and supernatural light and glory played a great part in their cases.\* When the Lord was born in Bethlehem, and the revelation of the Incarnate

\* See Exod. iii., Isa. vi., and Dan. x.

God had to be made to humble faith and lowly piety, then the glory of the Lord, a light from out God's secret temple, shone forth to lead the worshippers to Bethlehem. And so, too, in St. Paul's case; a world's spiritual welfare was at stake, a crisis in the world's spiritual history, a great turning-point in the Divine plan of salvation had arrived, and it was most fitting that the veil which shrouds the unseen from mortal gaze should be drawn back for a moment, and that not Saul alone but his attendants should stand astonished at the glory of the light above the brightness of the sun which accompanied Christ's manifestation.

Then, again, we have the voice that was heard. Difficulties have been also raised in this direction. In the ninth chapter St. Luke states that the attendant escort "heard a voice"; in the twenty-second chapter St. Paul states "they that were with me beheld indeed the light, but they heard not the voice of Him that spake to me." This inconsistency is, however, a mere surface one. Just as it was in the case of our Lord Himself reported in John xii. 28, 29, where the multitude heard a voice but understood not its meaning, some saying that it thundered, others that an angel had spoken, while Christ alone understood and interpreted it; so it was in St. Paul's case; the escort heard a noise, but the Apostle alone understood the sounds, and for him alone they formed articulate words, by him alone was heard the voice of Him that spake. And the cause of this is explained by St. Paul himself in chapter xxvi. verse 14, where he tells King Agrippa that the voice spake to him in the Hebrew tongue, the ancient Hebrew that is, which St. Paul as a learned rabbinical scholar could understand, but which conveyed no meaning to the members of the temple-police, the servants, and constables of the Sanhedrin who accompanied him. Many other questions have here been raised and difficulties without end propounded, because we are dealing with a region of man's nature and of God's domain, where-with we have but little acquaintance and to which the laws of ordinary philosophy do not apply. Was the voice which Paul heard, was the vision of Christ granted to him, subjective or objective? is, for instance, one of such idle queries. We know, indeed, that these terms, subjective and objective, have a meaning for ordinary life. Subjective in such a connection means that which has its origin, its rise, its existence wholly within man's soul; objective that which comes from without and has its origin outside man's nature. Objective, doubtless, St. Paul's revelation was in this sense. His revelation must have come from outside, or else how do we account for the conversion of the persecuting Sanhedrist, and that in a moment? He had withstood every other influence, and now he yields himself in a moment the lifelong willing captive of Christ when no human voice or argument or presence is near. But then, if asked, how did he see Christ when he was blinded with the heavenly glory? how did he speak to Christ when even the escort stood speechless? we confess then that we are landed in a region of which we are totally ignorant and are merely striving to intrude into the things unseen. But who is there that will now assert that the human eye is the only organ by which man can see? that the human tongue is the only organ by which the spirit can converse? The investigations of modern psy-



chology have taught men to be somewhat more modest than they were a generation or two ago, when man in his conceit thought that he had gained the very utmost limits of science and of knowledge. These investigations have led men to realise that there are vast tracts of an unknown country, man's spiritual and mental nature, yet to be explored, and even then there must always remain regions where no human student can ever venture and whence no traveller can ever return to tell the tale. But all these regions are subject to God's absolute sway, and vain will be our efforts to determine the methods of His actions in a sphere of which we are well-nigh completely ignorant. For the Christian it will be sufficient to accept on the testimony of St. Paul, confirmed by Ananias, his earliest Christian teacher, that Jesus Christ was seen by him, and that a voice was heard for the first time in the silence of his soul which never ceased to speak until the things of time and sense were exchanged for the full fruition of Christ's glorious presence.

And then, lastly, we have the conversation held with the trembling penitent. St. Luke's account of it in the ninth chapter is much briefer than St. Paul's own fuller statement in the twenty-sixth chapter, and much of it will most naturally come under our notice at a subsequent period. Here, however, we note the expressive fact that the very name by which the future apostle was addressed by the Lord was Hebrew: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me." It is a point that our English translation cannot bring out, no matter how accurate. In the narrative, hitherto the name used has been the Greek form, and he has been regularly called *Σαῦλος*. But now the Lord appeals to the very foundations of his religious life, and throws him back upon the thought and manifestation of God as revealed of old time to His greatest leader and champion under the old covenant, to Moses in the bush; and so Christ uses not his Greek name but the Hebrew, *Σαούλ*, *Σαούλ*. Then we have St. Paul's query, "Who art Thou, Lord?" coupled with our Lord's reply, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest," or, as St. Paul himself puts it in Acts xxii. 8, "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest." Ancient expositors have well noted the import of this language. Saul asks who is speaking to him, and the answer is not, The Eternal Word who is from everlasting, the Son of the Infinite One who ruleth in the heavens. Saul would have acknowledged at once that his efforts were not aimed at Him. But the speaker cuts right across the line of Saul's prejudices and feelings, for He says, "I am Jesus of Nazareth," whom you hate so intensely and against whom all your efforts are aimed, emphasising those points against which his Pharisaic prejudices must have most of all revolted. As an ancient English commentator who lived more than a thousand years ago, treating of this passage, remarks with profound spiritual insight, Saul is called in these words to view the depths of Christ's humiliation that he may lay aside the scales of his own spiritual pride.\* And then finally we have Christ identifying Himself with His people, and echoing for us from heaven the language and

teaching He had used upon earth. "I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest" are words embodying exactly the same teaching as the solemn language in the parable of the Judgment scene contained in Matthew xxv. 31-46: "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these My brethren, ye did it unto Me." Christ and His people are evermore one; their trials are His trials, their sorrows are His sorrows, their strength is His strength. What marvellous power to sustain the soul, to confirm the weakness, to support and quicken the fainting courage of Christ's people, we find in this expression, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest"! They enable us to understand the undaunted spirit which henceforth animated the new convert, and declare the secret spring of those triumphant expressions, "In all these things we are more than conquerors," "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." If Christ in the supra-sensuous world and we in the world of time are eternally one, what matter the changes and chances of earth, the persecutions and trials of time? They may inflict upon us a little temporary inconvenience, but they are all shared by One whose love makes them His own and whose grace amply sustains us beneath their burden. Christ's people faint not therefore, for they are looking not at the things seen, which are temporal, but at the things unseen, which are eternal.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE NEW CONVERT AND HIS HUMAN TEACHER.

ACTS ix. 10, 11.

SAUL of Tarsus was converted outside the city, but the work was only begun there. Christ would put honour upon the work of human ministry, and therefore He directs the stricken sinner to continue his journey and enter into Damascus, where he should be instructed in his future course of action, though Christ Himself might have told him all that was needful. It was much the same on the occasion of the so-called conversion of Cornelius, the pious centurion.\* The Lord made a revelation to the centurion, but it was only a revelation directing him to send for Peter, who should instruct him in the way of salvation. God instituted a human ministry that man might gain light and knowledge by the means and assistance of his brother-man, and therefore in both cases the Lord points the anxious inquirer to men like themselves, who could speak to them in Christ's stead and guide them into fuller knowledge. Why could not Christ have revealed the whole story of His life, the full meaning of His doctrine, without human aid or intervention, save that He wished, even in the very case of the messenger whose call and apostleship were neither by man nor through man, to honour the human agency which He had ordained for the dissemination and establishment of the gospel? If immediate revelation and the conscious pres-

\* See Cornelius à Lapide on Acts ix. 5, quoting from Bede; and St. Chrysostom in Cramer's "Catena," p. 152, as quoted in Conybeare and Howson's "St. Paul," vol. i. ch. iii. p. 111 (London, 1877).

\* Conversion is scarcely a fit word to apply to the Lord's dealings with Cornelius. He had evidently been converted long before the angelic message and Peter's preaching, else whence his prayers and devotion? The Lord simply made by St. Peter a fuller revelation of His will to a soul longing to know more of God.



ence of God and the direct work of the Spirit could ever have absolved penitent sinners from using a human ministry and seeking direction and help from mortals like themselves, surely it was in the cases of Saul of Tarsus and Cornelius of Cæsarea; and yet in both cases a very important portion of the revelation made consisted in a simple intimation where human assistance could be found.

Saul after the vision rose up from the earth and was led by the hand into Damascus. He was there three days without sight, wherein he neither did eat nor drink. This period of his life and this terrible experience is regarded by many as the time to which may be traced the weakness of eyesight and the delicate vision under which he ever afterwards suffered. The question has often been raised, What was St. Paul's thorn, or rather stake, in the flesh? Various opinions have been hazarded, but that which seems to me most likely to be true identifies the thorn or stake with severe ophthalmia. Six substantial reasons are brought forward by Archdeacon Farrar in defence of this view. (1) When writing to the Galatians St. Paul implies that his infirmity might well have made him an object of loathing to them; and this is specially the case with ophthalmia in the East (see Gal. iv. 14). (2) This supposition again gives a deeper meaning to the Apostle's words to these same Galatians that they would at the beginning of their Christian career have plucked out their eyes to place them at his service (Gal. iv. 15). (3) The term "a stake in the flesh" is quite appropriate to the disease, which imparts to the eyes the appearance of having been wounded by a sharp splinter. (4) Ophthalmia of that kind might have caused epilepsy. (5) It would explain the words "See with how large letters I have written unto you with mine own hand," as a natural reference to the difficulties the Apostle experienced in writing, and would account for his constant use of amanuenses or secretaries in writing his Epistles, as noted, for instance, in Romans xvi. 22 and implied in 1 Cor. xvi. 21. (6) Ophthalmia would account for St. Paul's ignorance of the person of the high priest (Acts xxiii. 5).<sup>\*</sup> This question has, however, been a moot point since the days of the second century, when Irenæus of Lyons discussed it in his great work against Heresies, book v. chap. iii., and Tertullian suggested that St. Paul's stake in the flesh was simply an exaggerated head-ache or ear-ache.

Let us now, however, turn to the more certain facts brought before us in the words of the sacred narrative. St. Paul was led by the hand into Damascus just as afterwards, on account, doubtless, of the same bodily infirmity dating from this crisis, he "was sent forth to go as far as to the sea," and then "was conducted as far as Athens" (*cf.* Acts xvii. 10, 14, 15). From this time forth the kindly assistance of friends and companions became absolutely necessary to the Apostle if his footsteps were to be guided aright, and hence it is that he felt solitude such as he endured at Athens a very trying time because he had no sense of security whenever he ventured to walk abroad. He became, in fact, a blind man striving to thread his way through the crowded footpaths of life. The high priest's commissary must then have drawn

near to Damascus under very different circumstances from those which fancy pictured for him a few days before. We know not by what gate he entered the city. We only know that he made his way to the house of Judas, where he remained for three days and three nights, with his whole soul so wrapped up in the wonders revealed to him that he had no thoughts for bodily wants and no sense of their demands.

The sacred narrative has been amply vindicated so far as its topographical accuracy is concerned. Saul, as he was led by the hand, instructed his escort to go to the house of Judas, a leading man we may be sure among the Jews of Damascus. He dwelt in Straight Street, and that street remains to-day, as in St. Paul's time, a thoroughfare running in a direct line from the eastern to the western gate of the city. Like all Oriental cities which have fallen under Turkish dominion, Damascus no longer presents the stately, well-preserved, and flourishing aspect which it had in Roman times; and, in keeping with the rest of the city, Straight Street has lost a great deal of the magnificent proportions which it once possessed. Straight Street in St. Paul's day extended from the eastern to the western gate, completely intersecting the city. It then was a noble thoroughfare one hundred feet broad, divided by Corinthian colonnades into three avenues, the central one for foot passengers, the side passages for chariots and horses going in opposite directions. It was to a house in this principal street in the city, the habitation of an opulent and distinguished Jew, that the escort brought the blind emissary of the Sanhedrin, and here they left him to await the development of God's purposes.

I. Let us now consider the persons who cluster round the new convert, and specially the agent whom Christ used in the reception of Saul into the Church, and see what Scripture or tradition tells about them. One man stands prominent; his name was Ananias, a common one enough among the Jews, as the Acts of the Apostles has already shown us, for when we have surveyed the first beginnings of sin and moral failure in the Jerusalem Church we have found that an Ananias with Sapphira his wife was connected therewith. This Ananias of Damascus deserves special attention, for his case reveals to us a good deal of primitive Church history and is connected with many ancient traditions. Let us first strive to gain all the information we can about him from the direct statements of Scripture and the necessary or legitimate deductions from the same. Ananias was a Christian Jew of Damascus. He must have held a leading position in the local Christian Assembly in that city, within five years of the Ascension, for not only did our Lord select him as His agent or medium of communication when dealing with the new convert, but Ananias was well acquainted, by information derived from many persons, with the course of conduct pursued at Jerusalem by Saul, and knew of the commission lately intrusted to him by the high priest. Ananias was probably the head or chief teacher of the local Christian or Nazarene synagogue. At the same time he was also in all probability one of the original company of Jerusalem Christians who had been scattered abroad by the first great persecution. We are told in Acts xi. 19 that "they that were scattered abroad upon the tribulation that arose about Stephen travelled as far

<sup>\*</sup> See Tertullian's "De Pudicitia," § 13, and compare Bishop Lightfoot's "Galatians," p. 183 note.



as Phœnicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the word to none save only to Jews." Ananias was probably one of these fugitives from Jerusalem who came to Damascus, and there sought refuge from the rage of the destroyer. St. Paul himself tells us of the character which Ananias sustained at Damascus: "He was a devout man according to the law, well reported of by all the Jews that dwell there" (chap. xxii. 12). It is the character given of Zacharias, and Elisabeth, and of Simeon. Ananias was, like all the earliest disciples, a rigid observer of the minutest particulars of Jewish ordinances, though he and they alike rested upon Christ alone as their hope of salvation. Further than this, the Scriptures tell us nothing save that we can easily see from the words of the various narratives of the conversion that Ananias was a man of that clear faith, that deep spiritual life which enjoyed perpetual converse with the Unseen. He was not perturbed nor dismayed when Christ revealed Himself. He conversed calmly with the heavenly Visitor, raised his objections, received their solution, and then departed in humble obedience to fulfil the mission committed to him. There is a marvellous strength and power for the man of any age who lives, as Ananias did, with a clear vision of the eternal world constantly visible to the spiritual eye. Life or death, things present or things to come, the world temporal or the world spiritual, all are one to him who lives in the light of God's countenance and walks beneath the shadow of His wing; for he feels and knows that underneath are the everlasting Arms, and he therefore discharges his tasks with an assured calmness, a quiet dignity, a heavenly strength of which the tempest-tossed and feverish children of time know nothing. Beyond these facts and these traits of character, which we can read between the lines of Holy Scripture, we are told nothing of Ananias. But tradition has not been so reticent. The ancient Church delighted to gather up every notice and every story concerning the early soldiers of the Cross, and Ananias of Damascus was not forgotten. The Martyrologies both of the Greek and Latin Churches give us long accounts of him. They tell that he was born in Damascus, and make him one of the seventy disciples, which is not at all improbable. Then they describe him at one time as bishop, at another time as a simple presbyter, of the Church at Damascus. They relate his abundant labours at Damascus and in the neighbouring cities, terminating with his martyrdom under a Roman prefect called Lucian. But these details, though they may lend colour to the picture, add nothing of spiritual significance to the information vouchsafed in Scripture.

Judas, into whose house Saul was received, is another person brought before us, upon whom a certain eternity of fame has been bestowed by his temporary connection with the Apostle. He must have been a man of position and wealth among the Jews of Damascus to receive the official representative and deputy of the high priest. It is possible that he may have been numbered among those early trophies of St. Paul's zeal which he won in the earliest days of his first love, when he "confounded the Jews, proving that Jesus is Christ." Judas has been by some identified with that Judas who was sent with St. Paul, Silas, and Barnabas as deputies to console the Church at Antioch and restore it

to peace when distracted with debates about circumcision (chap. xv. 22).

And now, to conclude this portion of our subject, we may add that the traditional houses, or at least the sites of the houses, of Ananias and Judas, together with the fountain where St. Paul was baptised, were shown in Damascus till the seventeenth century, as Quaresmius, a traveller of that time, tells us that he visited the Straight Street, which is the bazaar, and saw the house of Judas, a large and commodious building, with traces of having been once a church and then a mosque; that he visited the place of baptism, which is not far off, adding withal a ground plan of the house of Ananias. Dean Stanley, however, declares that the traditional house of Judas is not in the street called Straight at all. Let us turn aside from these details, the mere fringes of the story, to the spiritual heart and core thereof.

II. The conversation between Christ and Ananias next claims our attention. Here we may note that it was the Lord Jesus Christ Himself who appeared to Ananias, and when appearing makes the most tremendous claims for Himself and allows them when made by Ananias. We are so accustomed to the words of the narrative that we do not recognise their bold assumptions and what they imply. The Lord calls Ananias, as He called Samuel of old, and then receives the same answer as Samuel gave, "Behold I am here, Lord." Ananias speaks to Jesus Christ of the disciples, and describes them as "*Thy* saints, who call upon *Thy* name." He knew that prayer to Jesus Christ was practised by them and constituted their special note or mark. Our Lord describes St. Paul "as a chosen vessel unto *Me*, to bear *My name* before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel, for *I* will show him how many things he must suffer for *My name's* sake." While again, when Ananias came into the house of Judas, he is so completely dominated by the idea of Jesus Christ, His presence, His power, His mission, that his words are, "The Lord Jesus hath sent me that thou mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." In these passages we have a view of primitive Christianity and its doctrine as taught by Christ Himself, by His earliest disciples, and as viewed and recorded by the second generation of Christians, and it is all the same from whatever point it is looked at. The earliest form of Christianity was Christ and nothing else. The personality of Christ dominated every other idea. There was no explaining away the historical facts of His life, there was no watering down His supernatural actions and claims; the Lord Jesus—and His ordinary human name was used—the Lord Jesus, whom the Jews had known as the carpenter's son, and had rejected as the prophet of Nazareth, and had crucified as the pretended king of Israel, He was for Ananias of Damascus the supernatural Being who now ruled the universe, and struck down the persecutor of His people, and sent His messengers and apostles that they might with Divine power heal the wounded and comfort the broken-hearted. Ananias felt no difficulty in identifying Jesus the despised, the crucified, with the Lord of glory who had appeared to him, upon whose name he called and with whom he communed. Jesus Christ was not for him a dream or a ghost, or a passing appearance, or a distinguished teacher, or a mighty prophet,



whose spirit lived with the souls of the good and blessed of every age at rest in paradise. The Jesus of Ananias was no inhabitant or child of earth, no matter how pure and exalted. The Jesus of Nazareth was the Being of beings, who had a just right to call God's people "His saints," and to describe the great work of His messengers and ministers to be that of "bearing His name before the Gentiles," because the Christianity of Ananias and of the earliest Church was no poor, weak, diluted system of mere natural religion regarding Jesus Christ as a Divine prophet, but as nothing more. It theorised not, indeed, about the Incarnation and the modes of the Divine existence. It was too much wrapped up in adoring the Divine manifestations to trouble itself about such questions, which came to the front when love waxed cold and men had time to analyse and debate. For Ananias and for men like him it was sufficient to know that Jesus Christ was God manifest in the flesh. For them and for the earliest Church that one fact embodied the whole of Christianity. Jesus Christ, the same when living in Galilee, suffering in Jerusalem, ascending from Olivet, reigning on the right hand of the Majesty on high, or manifesting Himself to His people, was the beginning and end of all religion.

This is a very important point to insist upon in the present age, when men have endeavoured to represent the religion of the primitive Church in quite a different light, and to teach that St. Paul was the inventor of that dogmatic system which insists upon the supreme importance and the essential deity of the Person of Jesus Christ. St. Luke's narrative in this passage seems to me quite decisive against such a theory, and shows us how Christianity struck an independent mind like that of Ananias, and how it was taught at a distant Christian Church like Damascus within five or at most seven years after the Ascension of Jesus Christ.\*

Then, again, we have in the vision granted to Ananias and the revelation made to him a description of Christ's disciples. The description is a twofold one, coming on the one hand from Christ, and on the other from Ananias, and yet they both agree. Ananias describes the religion of Christ when he says, "Lord, I have heard from many of this man, how much evil he did to Thy saints at Jerusalem"; and then he proceeds to identify His "saints" with those that called on Christ's name at Damascus. We have already noted prayer to Christ as a distinguishing feature of His people †; but here we find, for the first time in the New Testament, the term "saints" applied to the ordinary followers of Christ, though in a short time it seems to have become the usual designation for the adherents of the crucified Redeemer, as we shall see by a reference to Rom. i. 7; 1 Cor. i. 2; Eph. i. 1, and to numerous other passages scattered throughout the Epistles. Our Lord Himself sanctions the use of this title, and applies it Himself in a different shape in the fuller account of the divine words given us by St. Paul in his speech before King Agrippa (chap. xxvi. 18). Christ tells St. Paul of his destined work "to turn the

Gentiles from darkness to light, that they may receive an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me." The followers of Christ were recognised as saints in the true sense of the word saint—that is, as separated, dedicated, consecrated persons, who had been made to drink into one Divine Spirit, had been made partakers of a new life, had been admitted to a kingdom of light and a fellowship of love, and who, by virtue of these blessings, had been cut off from the power of Satan and the kingdom of darkness. And all this had been and ever is to be effected "by faith that is in Christ." Christ's saints or separated people are sanctified by faith in Christ. Not that the bare exercise of a faculty or feeling called faith will exercise a sanctifying influence upon human nature,—this would be simply to make man his own sanctifier, and to usurp for his own poor weak wretched self the work and power which belong to the Holy Ghost alone,—but when Christ is realised as including all the parts of God's final revelation, when no partial or limited view is taken of Christ's work as if it were limited to the Incarnation alone, or the Atonement alone, or the Resurrection alone, but when the diverse and various parts and laws of His revelation are recognised as divinely taught, and therefore as tremendously important for the soul's health. When the Holy Ghost and His mission, and good works and their absolute necessity, and Christ's sacraments and His other appointed means of grace are duly honoured and reverently received, then indeed, and then alone, faith is truly exercised in Christ, and men are not merely separated by an external consecration, such as the Jews received at circumcision, and which qualified even that hard-hearted and stubborn people to be called a nation of saints; but when Christ is thus truly and fully received by faith into the hearts and affections of His people, they walk worthy of the high vocation called upon them. Many a mistaken exposition has been offered of St. Paul's Epistles, and many an effort has been made to explain away the plainest statements, because men will apply a false meaning to the word saints which Ananias here uses. If we first determine that the word saint could only have been applied to a truly converted man, clothed in the robe of Christ's imputed righteousness, elected from eternity to everlasting salvation, and who could never finally fall away, and then find the term so defined applied, for instance, to the Corinthian Church as a whole, we shall come to some strange results. If truly converted men, true saints of Christ, could be guilty of sins such as were not named amongst the heathen, or could be drunk at the Lord's Table, or could cherish all that long and dreary catalogue of spiritual crimes enumerated in the Corinthian Epistles, then indeed the words true conversion have completely changed their meaning, and Christianity, instead of being the principle and fountain of a regenerate life, becomes a cloak under which all kinds of maliciousness and evil-doing may have free course and be glorified.

Our Lord protests beforehand unto St. Paul against such a perversion of the gospel of free grace with which His great Apostle had all his life to struggle. Antinomianism is as old as St. Paul's doctrine—so very much misunderstood—of justification. Our Lord raises His voice against it in His earliest commission to St. Paul

\* Massutius, *loc. cit.*, has a long chapter (book ii. ch. i.) on the date of St. Paul's conversion. See Findlay's "Epistles of St. Paul," pp. 5, 6, for a concise statement of the arguments concerning it. Lewin's "Fasti Sacri," pp. lxvi. and 253, contains long dissertations upon this point, a simple reference to which must suffice.

† See pp. 338-41.



when He sends him to the Gentiles "to turn them from darkness to moral and spiritual light," and "from the power of Satan unto God." And the New Testament often enough tells us what is meant by "the power of Satan." It was not any mere system of false beliefs alone, but it was a wicked and impure practice; and St. Paul's work was to turn the Gentiles from a wicked faith, combined with a still more wicked practice, to a life sanctified and purified and renewed after the image of a living Christ.

III. Finally, we notice in this conversation, and that only very briefly, the title given by our Lord to St. Paul, which became the favourite designation of the Apostle of the Gentiles, especially among the Western doctors of the ancient Church. "Go thy way," says Christ to Ananias, "for he is a chosen vessel unto Me," or, as the Revisers put it in the margin, translating still more literally from the original, "for he is a vessel of election." "Vas Electionis" is the usual title for St. Paul in St. Jerome's letter's, as also in St. Chrysostom's homilies, and it expresses a side of his character which is prominent throughout his writings. Saul's early life was so alienated from Christ, his career had been so completely hostile to the gospel, his conversion had been so entirely God's work and God's work alone, that he ever felt and ever insisted more than the other New Testament writers on God's electing love. If we compare the writings of St. John with those of St. Paul, we shall see how naturally and completely they reflect in their tone the history of their lives. St. John's life was one long continuous steady growth in Divine knowledge. There were no great gaps or breaks in that life, and so we find that his writings do not ignore God's electing love and preventing grace as the source of everything good in man. "We love Him because He first loved us" are words which show that St. John's gospel was at bottom the same as St. Paul's. But St. John's favourite topic is the Incarnation and its importance, and its results in purity of heart and in a sweet consciousness of the Divine Spirit. St. Paul's life, on the other hand, was no continuous upgrowth from youth's earliest day to life's latest eventide. There was a great gap, a tremendous yawning chasm separating the one portion from the other, and Paul never could forget that it was God's choice alone which turned the persecuting Rabbi into the Christian Apostle. His Epistles to the Romans, Ephesians, and Galatians amply testify to the effects of this doctrine upon his whole soul, and show that the expositors of the early Church displayed a true instinct and gauged his character aright when they designated him by this title, "Vas Electionis." And yet the Apostle proved his Divine inspiration, for he held and taught this truth in no one-sided manner. He combined the doctrine of electing love with that of intense human free will and awful personal responsibility. He made no effort intellectually to reconcile the two opposite sides of truth, but, wiser than many who followed him, he accepted both, and found in them both matter for practical guidance. God's eternal and electing love made him humble; man's free will and responsibility made him awfully in earnest. Two passages, drawn from different Epistles, sufficiently explain St. Paul's view. Gal. i. 15, 16—"When it was the good pleasure of God, who separated me, even from

my mother's womb, and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me"—are words which show how entirely St. Paul viewed himself as a "Vas Electionis." 1 Cor. ix. 27—"I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage, lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected"—are words showing how real and profound was his fear of final defeat and ruin, how convinced he was that no display of Divine grace or love assured him of his own final perseverance. It is well that people should notice this difference between the tone and spiritual experience of a Paul and of a John. At times sincere Christians have been troubled because their spiritual experience and feelings have been very different from St. Paul's. They have limited to a large extent their own reading of Scripture to his writings, and have not noticed the clear distinction which Scripture makes between the tone and ideas of St. Paul and St. Peter, St. James and St. John; and why? Just to meet this very tendency, and to show us that spiritual experiences, feelings, temptations, must vary with the varying circumstances of each individual. No saintly life can be taken as a universal model or standard; and, above all, the conversion of a persecutor and blasphemer like St. Paul is not to be taken as the normal type of God's dealings with men, who grow up, like St. John or like Timothy, in the paths of Divine love from their earliest childhood.

There is one common feature, however, which can be traced in all religious lives, where sternly and even violently ordered like Saul's, or gently guided like St. John's. They all agree in presenting one feature when the fresh breath of the Spirit blows upon them and the deeper sense of life's importance first dawns upon the vision, and that is, they are all marked by prayer. Of every sincere seeker the Divine watcher, ever on the outlook for the signs of spiritual life, repeats "Behold, he prayeth." Saul, we may be sure, had never forgotten his duty in the matter of the prescribed round of Jewish devotions; but now for the first time he rose above the level of mere mechanical saying of prayer to spiritual communion with God in Christ; now for the first time he prayed a Christian prayer, through Christ and to Christ; now for the first time perhaps he learned one secret of the spiritual life, which is this, that prayer is something wider and nobler than mere asking. Prayer is communion of the spirit with God reconciled in Christ Jesus. That communion is often deepest and most comforting when enjoyed in simple silence. Saul, the converted persecutor, could know but little yet of what to ask from Christ. But in the revelations made in those hours of darkness and penitence and silence, there were vouchsafed to him renewed proofs of the truths already gained, and of the awful trials which those truths, realised and acted out, would demand from him. "I will show him what things he must suffer for My sake."

#### CHAPTER IV.

#### SAUL AND SINAI.

ACTS ix. 19, 20.

WE have bestowed a great deal of attention upon the incidents at Damascus, because the conversion of Saul of Tarsus is more closely



connected with the truth and authenticity of Christianity than any other event save those immediately connected with the life and ministry of our Lord Himself. We shall, however, in this chapter, endeavour to discuss the remaining circumstances of it which the Acts of the Apostles brings under our notice.

I. We are told in verse 17 of the visit of Ananias to Saul. "Ananias departed, and entered into the house; and laying his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, who appeared unto thee in the way which thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." This conversation with Ananias is largely expanded by St. Paul himself in the account which he gives us in Acts xxii., while in his speech to Agrippa in the twenty-sixth chapter he entirely omits all mention of Ananias, and seems to introduce our Lord as the only person who spoke to him, and yet there is no real inconsistency. St. Paul, in fact, in the latter address is intent on setting vividly before Agrippa the sum total of the revelations made by Christ. He ignores, therefore, every secondary agent. Ananias was Christ's messenger. His words were merely those which Christ put into his mouth. St. Paul goes, therefore, to the root of the matter, and attributes everything, whether uttered by our Lord or by Ananias, to the former alone, who was, indeed, the great Inspirer of every expression, the true Director of every minutest portion of this important transaction.

The ninth chapter, on the other hand, breaks the story up into its component parts, and shows us the various actors in the scene. We see the Lord Jesus consciously presiding over all, revealing Himself now to this person and again to that person. We get a glimpse for a moment behind the veil which Divine Providence throws around His doings and the doings of the children of men. We see Christ revealing Himself now to Saul and then to Ananias, informing the latter of the revelations made to the former; just as He subsequently revealed Himself almost simultaneously to Cornelius at Cæsarea and to Simon Peter at Joppa, preparing the one for the other. The Lord thus hints at an explanation of those simultaneous cravings, aspirations, and spiritual desires which we often find unaccountably arising amid far distant lands and in widely separated hearts. The feelings may seem but vague aspirations and their coincidence a mere chance one, but the typical cases of Saul and Ananias, or of Cornelius and St. Peter, teach the believer to see in them the direct action and government of the Lord Jesus Christ, turning the hearts of the fathers to the children and of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just. Surely we have an instance of such simultaneous operations of the Divine Spirit, and that on the largest scale, in the cravings of the world after a Saviour at the age and time when our Lord came! Virgil was then preaching in tones so Christian concerning the coming Saviour whom the world was expecting that the great Italian poet Dante exempts him from hell on account of his dim but real faith. The Wise Men were then seeking Christ from a far country; Caiaphas was prophesying concerning a man who was to die for God's people. Mankind, all the world over, was unconsciously longing with a divinely inspired desire for that very salvation which

God was then revealing; just as, upon the narrower stage of Damascus or Cæsarea, Jesus Christ inspired Saul and Cornelius with a Divine want and prepared Ananias and Peter to satisfy it. John Keble in his poem for Easter Monday has well seized and illustrated this point, so full of comfort and edification, turning it into a practical direction for the life of the human spirit:—

"Even so the course of prayer who knows?  
It springs in silence where it will;  
Springs out of sight, and flows  
At first a lonely rill.

"Unheard by all but angel ears,  
The good Cornelius knelt alone,  
Nor dreamed his prayers and tears  
Could help a world undone.

"The while upon his terraced roof,  
The loved apostle to the Lord,  
In silent thought aloof,  
For heavenly vision soared.

"The saint beside the ocean prayed,  
The soldier in his chosen bower,  
Where all his eye surveyed  
Seemed sacred in that hour.

"To each unknown his brother's prayer,  
Yet brethren true in dearest love  
Were they—and now they share  
Fraternal joys above."

Ananias, guided by Divine Providence, enters into Saul's presence, states his mission, lays his hands upon him, and restores him to sight. Ananias is careful, however, to disclaim all merit, as far as he is himself concerned, in the matter of this miracle. His language is exactly the same in tone as that of the apostles Peter and John when they had healed the impotent man: "Why marvel ye at this man? or why fasten ye your eyes on us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made him to walk? . . . By faith in His name hath His name made this man strong," were their words to the people. "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk," was their command to the man himself. And so in the case of Ananias, he attributes the healing power to Jesus Christ alone. "The Lord Jesus, who appeared unto thee, . . . hath sent me, that thou mayest receive thy sight." The theology and faith of the Church at Damascus were exactly the same as those of the Apostles and Church at Jerusalem. And what a confirmation of Saul's own faith must this miracle have been! It was then no passing vision, no fancy of a heated imagination which he had experienced; but he had the actual proof in his own person of their objective reality, a demonstration that the power of Jesus of Nazareth ordered all things, both in heaven and earth, healing the bodily as it could illuminate the spiritual eye.

II. Ananias restored Saul's sight. According to the ninth of Acts his mission was limited to this one point; but, according to St. Paul's own account in the twenty-second chapter, he made a much longer communication to the future Apostle: "The God of our fathers hath appointed thee to know His will, and to see the Righteous One, and to hear a voice from His mouth. For thou shalt be a witness for Him unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptised, and wash away thy sins, calling on His name." Ananias predicted to Saul his future mission, his apostleship to all nations, and the fact that the



Apostle of the Gentiles would find the root and sustenance of his work in the force of personal conviction with which his miraculous conversion had endowed him. Personal knowledge, individual acquaintance with the things of the eternal world, was then, as it is still, the first condition of successful work for Jesus Christ. There may be intellectual power, intense energy, transcendent eloquence, consummate ability; but in the spiritual order these things avail nothing till there be joined thereto that sense of heavenly force and reality which a personal knowledge of the things unseen imparts. Then heart answers to heart, and the great depths of man's nature respond and open themselves to the voice and teaching of one who speaks as St. Paul did of what "he had seen and heard."

There are two points in this address of Ananias as reported by St. Paul himself to which we would direct special attention. Ananias baptised Saul, and used very decided language on the subject, language from which some would now shrink. These two points embody important teaching. Ananias baptised Saul though Christ had personally called him. This shows the importance which the Holy Scriptures attach to baptism, and shows us something too of the nature of Holy Scripture itself. St. Luke wrote the Acts as a kind of continuation of his Gospel, to give an account to Theophilus of the rise and progress of Christianity down to his own time. St. Luke in doing so tells us of the institution of the Eucharist, but he does not say one word in his Gospel about the appointment of baptism. He does not record the baptismal commission, for which we must turn to St. Matthew xxviii. 19, or to St. Mark xvi. 16. Yet St. Luke is careful to report the baptism of the three thousand on the Day of Pentecost, of the Samaritans, of the eunuch, and now of St. Paul, as afterwards of Cornelius, of Lydia, of the Philippian jailor, and of the Ephesian followers of John the Baptist. He records the universality of Christian baptism, and thus proves its obligation; but he does not give us a hint of the origin of this sacrament, nor does he trace it back to any word or command of the Lord Jesus Christ. He evidently took all these things as quite well known and understood, and merely describes the observance of a sacrament which needed no explanation on his part. The writings of St. Luke were intended to instruct Theophilus in the facts concerning our Lord's life and the labours of certain leading individuals among His earliest followers; but they make no pretence, nor do the other Gospels make any pretence, of being an exhaustive history of our Lord's ministry or of the practice of the earliest Church; and their silence does not necessarily prove that much was not known and practised in the early Church about which they have no occasion to speak.\* The words of Ananias and

the obedience of Saul show us the importance which the Holy Spirit attached to this sacrament of baptism. Here was a man to whom Christ Himself had personally appeared, whom Christ had personally called, and to whom He had made long-continued revelations of His will. Yet He instructed him by the mouth of Ananias to receive the sacrament of baptism. Surely if any man was ever exempted from submission to what some would esteem the outward ordinance, it was this penitent and privileged convert! But no: to him the words of God's messenger are the same as to the humblest sinner, "Arise, and be baptised, and wash away thy sins." I have known of truly good men who showed their want of spiritual humility, or perhaps I should rather say of spiritual thought and reflection, in this direction. I have known of persons aroused from religious torpor and death by powerful though one-sided teaching. God has blessed such teaching to the awakening in them of the first elements of spiritual life, and then they have stopped short. They were called, as Saul was, in an unbaptised state. They had never previously received the sacrament of regeneration according to Christ's appointment, and when Christ aroused them they thought this primal blessing quite sufficient, and judged it unnecessary to obey the full commands of Christ and be united by baptism to His Body the Church. They judged, in fact, that the blessing of conversion absorbed them from the sacrament of responsibility; but such was not the view of the primitive Church. The blessing of conversion as in St. Paul's case, the visible and audible descent of the Holy Ghost as in the case of Cornelius, hindered not the importance nor dispensed with the necessity of the sacrament of baptism, which was the door of admission to the Divine society and to a higher level in the Divine life than any hitherto attained. Persons who act as those misguided individuals of whom we have spoken stop short at the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, and they attain to none of its heights, they sound none of its depths, because they bend not their wills, and learn not the sweetness and the power involved in spiritual humiliation and in lowly self-denying obedience taught by the Master Himself when He said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

The language, again, of Ananias about baptism sounds strange in some ears, and yet the experience of missionaries is a sufficient explanation of it. What is that language? "Arise, and be baptised, and wash away thy sins." These words sound startling to one accustomed to identify the washing away of sin with the exercise of faith, and yet there they stand, and no method of exegesis will avail to make them say anything else than this, that baptism was for Saul the washing away of sin, so that if he did not accept baptism his sins would not have been washed away. The experience, however, of those who labour in the mission field explains the whole difficulty. Baptism is the act of open confession and acknowledgment of Christ. St. Paul himself teaches the absolute importance of this confession: "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."\* Pagan converts are even still abundantly found who are willing to accept the pure morality and

\* Romans x. 10.

\* Archbishop Whately used to make an important distinction between things *anti*-Scriptural and things *un*-Scriptural. Things *anti*-Scriptural cannot be tolerated by the Church, because they contradict the Word of God. Things *un*-Scriptural, that is, things about which Scripture is silent and for which no direct warrant can be produced, may be right or wrong, useful or vicious. Sunday schools, for instance, are in this sense unscriptural. The Scriptures are silent about them, and if direct warrant with chapter and verse be required for them, none such can be produced. Hooker, in his Third Book, ch. v.-viii., has a powerful argument upon this subject as against the ultra-reformers or Puritans of his day, who would have tied the Church with much tighter bonds than ever Judaism submitted to.



the sublime teaching of Christianity, who are willing to believe and see in Jesus Christ the supreme revelation of God made to the human race, but who are not willing to incur loss and persecution and trial for His sake by the reception of Christian baptism and a public confession of their faith. They may believe with the heart in the revelation of righteousness and may lead moral lives in consequence, but they are not willing to make public confession leading them into a state of salvation. They are, in fact, in the position of Saul of Tarsus as he prayed in the house of Judas, but they will go no farther. They will not act as he did, they will not take the decisive step, they will not arise and be baptised and wash away their sins, calling on the name of Jesus Christ. And if Saul of Tarsus had been like them and had acted as they do, he might have received the vision and have been convinced of the truth of Jesus Christ and of His mission, but yet his moral cowardice would have spoilt the whole, and Saul would have remained in his sins, unpardoned, unaccepted, reprobate from Christ, because he remained unbaptised. Christianity, in fact, is a covenant, and forgiveness of sins is one of the blessings attached to this covenant. Until men perform its conditions and actually enter into the covenant the blessings of the covenant are not granted. Baptism is the door of entry into the covenant of grace, and till men humbly enter within the door they do not exercise true faith. They may believe intellectually in the truth and reality of Christianity, but, till they take the decisive step and obey Christ's law, they do not possess that true faith of the heart which alone enables them, like Saul of Tarsus, to obey Christ and therefore enter into peace.

III. The next step taken by the Apostle is equally plainly stated: "Straightway in the synagogues he proclaimed Jesus, that He is the Son of God." But, though the words of the Acts are plain enough, it is not so easy to reconcile them with St. Paul's own account, as given in the Epistle to the Galatians (i. 15, 16, 17), where he states, "When it was the good pleasure of God to reveal His Son in me, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood, but I went away into Arabia, and again I returned to Damascus." In the ninth chapter of the Acts we find the statement made that *immediately* after his baptism he preached Christ in the synagogues of Damascus, while in his own biographical narrative he tells us that *immediately* after his baptism he went away into Arabia. Is there any way in which we can reconcile them? We think so, and that a very simple one. Let us first reflect upon the story as told in the Acts. St. Luke is giving a rapid history, a survey of St. Paul's life of public activity. He is not telling the story of his inner spiritual experiences, his conflicts, temptations, trials, revelations, as St. Paul himself set them forth. He knew not of them, in fact. St. Luke knew merely the exterior public life of which man has cognisance. He knew nothing, or but little, of the interior life of the Apostle, known only to himself and to God. St. Luke therefore tells us of his early work at Damascus. St. Paul himself tells us of that early work, but also shows us how he was prepared for that work by his retirement into Arabia. Both agree in the main point, however, and place the scene of his earliest Chris-

tian efforts in the very spot, Damascus, which he had in his human prevision destined for himself as the field of his bitterest antagonism to the faith of the Crucified. This is an important point. St. Luke wrote his historical narrative twenty-five years or thereabouts after St. Paul's conversion. He may have often visited Damascus. Tradition makes Antioch, a town of the same district, his birthplace. St. Luke must have had abundant opportunities of consulting witnesses who could tell the story of those eventful days, and could describe St. Paul's earliest testimony to his new convictions. But these men only knew St. Paul as he appeared in public. They may have known very little of the inner history of his life as he reveals it in his Epistle to the Galatians when vindicating his apostolic authority and mission.

Let us now see whether we cannot harmonise St. Paul's autobiographical narrative in the Epistle with the Evangelist's narrative in the Acts; always remembering, however, that an imperfect knowledge is never more completely felt than in such cases. When we try to harmonise an account written from the subjective side by one individual with an objective and exterior narrative written by some one else, we are like a man looking at a globe and trying to take it all in at one glance. One side must be hidden from him; and so in this case, many circumstances are necessarily concealed from us which would solve difficulties that now completely puzzle us. But let us to our task, in which we have derived much assistance from the commentary of Bishop Lightfoot upon Galatians. St. Paul, we are told in chap. ix. 19, received meat after the visit of Ananias and was strengthened. St. Paul was never one of those high-wrought fanatics who despise food and the care of the body. There was nothing of the Gnostic or the Manichean about him, leading him to despise and neglect the body which the Lord has given to be the soul's instrument. He recognised under all circumstances that if the human spirit is to do its work, and if God's glory is to be promoted, the human body must be sustained in force and vigour. When he was on board ship and in imminent peril of shipwreck and death, and men thought they should be at their prayers, thinking of the next world alone, he took bread and blessed and set the crew and passengers alike the healthy example of eating a hearty meal, and thus keeping his body in due preparation for whatever deliverances the Lord might work for them; and so, too, at Damascus, his spiritual joy and hallowed peace and deep gratitude for his restoration to sight did not prevent him paying due attention to the wants of his body. "He took food, and was strengthened." And now comes the first note of time. "Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway (*εὐθέως*) he preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God." The very same expression is used by St. Paul in Galatians, where, after speaking of his conversion, he says, "Immediately (*εὐθέως*) I conferred not with flesh and blood, but went away into Arabia, and again returned unto Damascus." Now my explanation, and not mine alone, but that of Bishop Lightfoot, is this. After the new convert had rested for a short time at Damascus, he retired into the Sinaitic desert, where he remained for several months, perhaps for a whole year.



During this period he disappeared from the sight and knowledge of men as if the earth had opened its mouth and swallowed him. Then he returned to Damascus and preached with such power that the Jews formed a plot against his life, enlisting the help of the governor on their side, so that even the gates were watched that he might be arrested. He escaped their hands, however, through the assistance of his converts, and went up to Jerusalem.

But here another difficulty arises. The Acts tells us that "when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple," whereupon Barnabas, fulfilling his office of mediation, explanation, and consolation, took him and introduced him to the Apostles; while on the other hand in the first chapter of Galatians St. Paul himself speaks of his first visit to the Jerusalem Church thus: "Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and tarried with him fifteen days. But other of the Apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother." Now the difficulty consists in this. First, how could the disciples at Jerusalem have been suspicious of St. Paul, if at least a year and a half had elapsed since his conversion? for the Jewish method of counting time would not require three whole years to have elapsed since that event. Secondly, how could Barnabas have brought him to the Apostles as the Acts states, if St. Paul himself says he saw none of them save Peter and James? As to the first difficulty, we acknowledge at once that it seems at first sight a very considerable one, and yet a little reflection will show that there are many explanations of it. If St. Paul kept quiet, as we believe he did, after his conversion and baptism, and departed into the solitudes of Arabia, and then upon his return to Damascus, perhaps after a year's retirement, began his aggressive work, there may not have been time for the Church at large to get knowledge of the facts. Communication, again, may have been interrupted because of the contest between Herod and Aretas, in which Damascus played no small part. Communication may not have been possible between the two Churches. Then, again, the persecution raised by Saul himself seems to have practically extirpated the Jerusalem Church for a time. "They were all scattered abroad except the Apostles," is the account given of the Christian community at Jerusalem. The terror of that persecution may have lasted many a long month. Numbers of the original members may never have ventured back again to the Holy City. The Jerusalem Church may have been a new formation largely composed of new converts who never had heard of a wondrous circumstance which had happened a year or two before to the high priest's delegate, which the Sanhedrin would doubtless desire to keep secret.

These and many other considerations offer themselves when we strive to throw ourselves back into the circumstances of the time and help to a solution of the first difficulty which we have indicated. Human life is such a complex thing that the strangest combinations may easily find place therein. In this particular case we are so ignorant of the facts, so many hypotheses offer themselves to account for the seeming inconsistencies, that we hesitate not to

identify the visit to Jerusalem mentioned in the Acts with that recorded by St. Paul in the Epistle to the Galatians. The second difficulty to which we have alluded is this, How could Barnabas have brought him to the Apostles, if St. Paul himself states that he saw none of the Apostles save Peter and James the Lord's brother? We must remember, however, that St. Luke and St. Paul wrote with two distinct objects. St. Paul, in the Galatians, wished to show the independence of his revelations as regards the Apostles of the circumcision, the Twelve technically so called. Of these Apostles he saw not one, save St. Peter. St. Luke is giving a broad external account of the new convert's earliest religious history, and he tells us that on his first visit to the Holy City his conversion was acknowledged and guaranteed by the apostles,—not the Twelve merely, but the apostles, that is, the senior members of the Christian community, embracing not merely the original company chosen by Christ, but all the senior members of the Church, like Barnabas, James, and others who may have formed a supreme council to guide the affairs of the infant society. The word apostle, in fact, is used very variously in the New Testament; sometimes in a limited sense as confined to the Twelve, sometimes in a wider and more general sense, embracing men like Barnabas, as in Acts xiv. 4, 14; St. James, the Lord's brother, as in 1 Cor. xv. 7; Andronicus and Junias, as in Rom. xvi. 7, and many others. It is quite possible, then, that Barnabas may have brought Saul to the Apostolic council, and told there the tale of his conversion, though not one of the original Twelve was present save St. Peter.\*

We have now endeavoured to explain some of the difficulties which a comparison of St. Paul's own auto-biographical narrative with the Acts discloses. Let us look again at the retirement into Arabia. This retirement seems to us full of instruction and pregnant with meaning for the hidden as well as the practical life of the soul. St. Paul, as soon as he was baptised, retired into Arabia; and why, it may be asked, did he retire thither? Some of the ancient expositors, as St. Chrysostom and St. Jerome, both of whom wrote about the same period, A. D. 400, thought that St. Paul retired into Arabia in order that he might preach to the Arabians. St. Chrysostom, for instance, comments thus: "See how fervent was his soul, he was eager to occupy lands yet untilled. He forthwith attacked a barbarous and savage people, choosing a life of conflict and of much toil." And the explanations of Hilary, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret, and Œcumenius, all of them ancient and acute expositors, are of exactly the same character. Now this would have been a reversal of the Divine order in one important aspect. The power of the keys, the office of opening the kingdom of heaven to the Gentiles, had been committed to St. Peter by Jesus Christ. He had not as yet baptised Cornelius, and thus formally opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. If St. Paul had preached to the Arabians, he would have usurped St. Peter's place and function. We believe, on the other hand, that God led the converted persecutor into the deserts of

\* See Bishop Lightfoot's dissertation upon St. Paul's first visit to Jerusalem, and the use of the term apostle in the New Testament in his "Commentary on Galatians," pp. 91-101. Cf. p. 380 of this Commentary.



Arabia for very different purposes. Let us note a few of them.

The Lord led Saul there for the purpose of quiet and retirement. The great commentators and expositors of the early Church, as we have already noted, used to call St. Paul by the special title of "*Vas Electionis*," the chosen vessel *par excellence*, chosen because surpassing in his gifts and graces and achievements all the other Apostles. Now it was with the "*Vas Electionis*" in the New Testament as with many of his types in the Old Testament. When God would prepare Moses for his life's work in shepherding, ruling, and guiding His people through the deserts of Arabia, He first called him for many a long day into retirement to the Mount of Horeb and the solitudes of the Sinaitic desert. When God would strengthen and console the spirit depressed, wounded, and severely smitten, of his servant Elijah, He brought him to the same mysterious spot, and there restored his moral and spiritual tone, and equipped him with new strength for his warfare by the visions of the Almighty lovingly vouchsafed to him. The Founder or Former of the Jewish Dispensation and the Reformer of the same Dispensation were prepared and sustained for their work amid the Solitudes of the Arabian deserts; and what more fitting place in which the "*Vas Electionis*," the chosen vessel of the New Dispensation, should be trained? What more suitable locality where the Lord Jesus should make those fuller and completer revelations of Christian doctrine and mystery which his soul needed, than there where lightning-blasted cliff and towering mountains all alike spoke of God and of His dealings with mankind in the mysterious ages of a long-departed past? The Lord thus taught St. Paul, and through him teaches the Church of every age, the need of seasons of retirement and communion with God preparatory to and in close connection with any great work or scene of external activity, such as St. Paul was now entering upon. It is a lesson much needed by this age of ours when men are tempted to think so much of practical work which appears at once in evidence, making its presence felt in tangible results, and so very little of devotional work and spiritual retirement which cannot be estimated by any earthly standard or tabulated according to our modern methods. Men are now inclined to think *laborare est orare*, and that active external work faithfully and vigorously rendered can take the place and supply the want of prayer and thought, of quiet study and devout meditation. Against such a tendency the Lord's dealings with St. Paul, yea more, the Divine dealings with and leadings of the eternal Son Himself, form a loud and speaking protest. The world was perishing and men were going down to the grave in darkness and Satan and sin were triumphing, and yet Jesus was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness for forty days, and Saul was brought out into the deserts of Arabia from amid the teeming crowds of Damascus that he might learn those secrets of the Divine life which are best communicated to those who wait upon God in patient prayer and holy retirement. This is a lesson very necessary for this hot and fitful and feverish age of ours, when men are in such a hurry to have everything set right and every abuse destroyed all at once. Their haste is not after the Divine model, and

their work cannot expect the stability and solidity we find in God's. The nineteenth-century extreme is reproved by St. Paul's retirement into Arabia. Man is, however, such a creature that if he avoids one extreme he generally tumbles into another. And so it is in this matter. Men have been ready to push this matter of retirement into an extreme, and have considered that they were following St. Paul's example in retiring into Arabian and similar deserts and remaining there. But they have made a great mistake. St. Paul retired into Arabia for a while, and then "returned again unto Damascus." They have retired into the deserts and have remained there engaged in the one selfish task of saving their own souls, as they thought, by the exercises of prayer and meditation, apart from that life of active good works for the sake of others which constitutes another department of Christianity equally vital to the health of the soul.

The history of Eastern monasticism is marked from its earliest days by an eager desire to follow St. Paul in his retirement into Arabia, and an equal disinclination to return with him unto Damascus. And this characteristic, this intense devotion to a life of solitude, strangely enough passed over to our own Western islands, and is a dominant feature of the monasticism which prevailed in Great Britain and Ireland in the days of Celtic Christianity. The Syrian and Egyptian monks passed over to Lerins and Southern Gaul, whence their disciples came to England and Ireland, where they established themselves, bringing with them all their Eastern love of solitary deserts. This taste they perpetuated, as may be seen especially on the western coast of Ireland, where the ruins of extensive monastic settlements still exist, testifying to this craving. The last islands, for instance, which a traveller sees as he steams away from Cork to America, are called the Skelligs. They are ten miles west of the Kerry coast, and yet there on these rocks where a boat cannot land sometimes for months together the early monks of the fifth and sixth centuries established themselves as in a desert in the ocean. The topography of Ireland is full of evidences and witnesses of this desire to imitate the Apostle of the Gentiles in his Arabian retirement. There are dozens of town lands—subdivisions of the parishes—which are called deserts or diserts, because they constituted solitudes set apart for hermit life after the example of St. Paul in Arabia and John the Baptist in the deserts of Judæa. While, again, when we turn northwards along the western seaboard of Ireland, we shall find numerous islands like the Skelligs, Ardoilen or the High Island, off the coast of Connemara, and Innismurry off the Sligo coast, where hermit cells in the regular Egyptian and Syrian fashion were built, and still exist as they did a thousand years ago, testifying to the longing of the human mind for such complete solitude and close communion with God as Saul enjoyed when he departed from Damascus. The monks of ancient times may have run into one extreme: well would it be for us if we could avoid the other, and learn to cultivate self-communion, meditation, self-examination, and that realisation of the eternal world which God grants to those who wait upon Him apart from the bustle and din and dust of earth, which clog the spiritual senses and dim the heavenly vision.



We can see many other reasons why Paul was led into Arabia. He was led there, for instance, that he might make a thorough scrutiny of his motives. Silence, separation, solitude, have a wondrous tendency to make a man honest with himself and humbly honest before his God. Saul might have been a hypocrite or a formalist elsewhere, where human eyes and jealous glances were bent upon him, but scarcely when there alone with Jehovah in the desert. Again, Saul was led there that his soul might be ennobled and enlarged by the power of magnificent scenery, of high and hallowed associations. Mountain and cliff and flood, specially those which have been magnified and made honourable by grand memories such as must have crowded upon Saul's mind, have a marvellous effect, enlarging, widening, developing, 'upon a soul like Saul's, long cribbed, cabined, and confined within the rigorous bonds of Pharisaic religionism. Saul, too, was led up into those mysterious regions away from the busy life and work, the pressing calls of Damascus, that he might speak a word in season to all, and especially to those young in the Christian life, who think in the first burst of their zeal and faith as if they had nothing to do but go in and possess the whole land. Saul did not set out at once to evangelise the masses of Damascus, or to waste the first weak beginnings of his spiritual life in striving to benefit or awaken others. He was first led away into the deserts of Arabia, in order that there he might learn of the deep things of God and of the weak things of his own nature, and then, when God had developed his spiritual strength, He led him back to Damascus that he might testify out of the fulness of a heart which knew the secrets of the Most High. The teaching of Saul's example speaks loudly to us all. It was the same with Saul as with a greater than he. The Eternal Son Himself was trained amid years and years of darkness and secrecy, and even after His baptism the day of His manifestation unto Israel was delayed yet a little. Jesus Christ was no novice when He came preaching. And Saul of Tarsus was no novice in the Christian life when he appeared as the Christian advocate in the synagogue of Damascus. Well would it have been for many a soul had this Divine example been more closely copied. Again and again have the young and ignorant and inexperienced been encouraged to stand up as public teachers immediately after they have been seriously impressed. They have yielded to the unwise solicitation. The vanity of the human heart has seconded the foolish advice given to them, and they have tried to declare the deep things of God when as yet they have need of learning the very first principles of the doctrine of Christ. Is it any wonder that such persons oftentimes make shipwreck of faith and a sound conscience? Truth is very large and wide and spacious, and requires much time and thought if it is to be assimilated; and even when truth is grasped in all its mighty fulness, then there are spiritual enemies within and without and spiritual pitfalls to be avoided which can be known only by experience. Woe is then to that man who is not assisted by grace and guided by Divine experience, and who knows not God and the powers of the world to come, and the devious paths of his own heart, as these things can only be known and learned as Saul of Tarsus knew and learned them in

the deserts of Arabia. There was marvellous wisdom contained in the brief apostolic law enacted for candidates for holy orders in words gathered from St. Paul's own personal history, "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil."

## CHAPTER V.

### THE FIRST GENTILE CONVERT.

ACTS x. 1-6.

WE have now arrived at another crisis in the history of the early Church of Christ. The Day of Pentecost, the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, the call of Cornelius, and the foundation of the Gentile Church of Antioch are, if we are to pick and choose amid the events related by St. Luke, the turning-points of the earliest ecclesiastical history. The conversion of St. Paul is placed by St. Luke before the conversion of Cornelius, and is closely connected with it. Let us then inquire by what events St. Luke unites the two. German commentators of the modern school, who are nothing unless they are original, have not been willing to allow that St. Luke's narrative is continuous. They have assigned various dates to the conversion of Cornelius. Some have made it precede the conversion of St. Paul, others have fixed it to the time of Paul's sojourn in Arabia, and so on, without any other solid reasons than what their own fancies suggest. I prefer, however, to think that St. Luke's narrative follows the great broad outlines of the Christian story, and sets forth the events of the time in a divinely ordered sequence. At any rate, I prefer to follow the course of events as the narrative suggests them, till I see some good reason to think otherwise. I do not think that the mere fact that the sacred writer states events in a certain order is a sufficient reason to think that the true order must have been quite a different one. Taking them in this light, they yield themselves very naturally to the work of an expositor. Let us reflect then upon that sequence as here set forth for us.

Saul of Tarsus went up to Jerusalem to confer with St. Peter, who had been hitherto the leading spirit of the apostolic conclave. He laboured in Jerusalem among the Hellenistic synagogues for some fifteen days. A conspiracy was then formed against his life. The Lord, ever watchful over His chosen servant, warned him to depart from Jerusalem, indicating to him as he prayed in the Temple the scope and sphere of his future work, saying, "Depart: for I will send thee forth far hence unto the Gentiles" (see Acts xxii. 21). The Christians of Jerusalem, having learned the designs of his enemies, conveyed Saul to Cæsarea, the chief Roman port of Palestine, whence they despatched him to Cilicia, his native province, where he laboured in obscurity and quietness for some time. St. Peter may have been of the rescue party who saved Saul from the hands of his enemies, escorting him to Cæsarea, and this circumstance may have led him to the western district of the country. At any rate we find him soon after labouring in Western Palestine at some distance from Jerusalem. Philip the Evangelist had been over the same ground a short time previously, and St. Peter may have been sent forth by the



mother Church to supervise his work and confer that formal imposition of hands which from the beginning has formed the completion of baptism, and seems to have been reserved to the Apostles or their immediate delegates. Peter's visit to Western Palestine, to Lydda and Sharon and Joppa, may have been just like the visit he had paid some time previously, in company with St. John, to the city of Samaria, when he came for the first time in contact with Simon Magus. St. Luke gives us here a note of time, helping us to fix approximately the date of the formal admission of Cornelius and the Gentiles into the Church. He mentions that the Churches then enjoyed peace and quietness all through Palestine, enabling St. Peter to go upon his work of preaching and supervision. It may perhaps strike some persons that this temporary peace must have been obtained through the conversion of Saul, the most active persecutor. But that event had happened more than two years before, in the spring of 37 A. D., and, far from diminishing, would probably have rather intensified the hostility of the Jewish hierarchy. It was now the autumn of the year 39, and a bitter spirit still lingered at Jerusalem, as Saul himself and the whole Church had just proved. External authorities, Jewish and Roman history, here step in to illustrate and confirm the sacred narrative.

The Emperor Caius Caligula, who ascended the throne of the empire about the time of Stephen's martyrdom, was a strange character. He was wholly self-willed, madly impious, utterly careless of human life, as indeed unregenerate mankind ever is. Christianity alone has taught the precious value of the individual human soul the awful importance of human life as the probation time for eternity, and has thereby ameliorated the harshness of human laws, the sternness of human rulers, ready to inflict capital punishment on any pretence whatsoever. Caligula determined to establish the worship of himself throughout the world. He had no opposition to dread from the pagans, who were ready to adopt any creed or any cult, no matter how degrading, which their rulers prescribed. Caligula knew, however, that the Jews were more obstinate, because they alone were conscious that they possessed a Divine revelation. He issued orders, therefore, to Petronius, the Roman governor of Syria, Palestine, and the East, to erect his statue in Jerusalem and to compel the Jews to offer sacrifice thereto. Josephus tells us of the opposition which the Jews offered to Caligula; how they abandoned their agricultural operations and assembled in thousands at different points, desiring Petronius to slay them at once, as they could never live if the Divine laws were so violated. The whole energies of the nation were for months concentrated on this one object, the repeal of the impious decree of Caligula, which they at last attained through their own determination and by the intervention of Herod Agrippa, who was then at Rome. It was during this awful period of uncertainty and opposition that the infant Church enjoyed a brief period of repose and quiet growth, because the whole nation, from the high priest to the lowest beggar, had something else to think of than how to persecute a new sect that was as yet rigorously scrupulous in observing the law of Moses. During this period of repose from persecution St. Peter made his

tour of inspection "throughout all parts," Samaria, Galilee, Judæa, terminating with Lydda, where he healed, or at least prayed for the healing of Æneas,\* and with Joppa, where his prayer was followed by the restoration of Tabitha or Dorcas, who has given a designation now widely applied to the assistance which devout women can give to their poorer sisters in Christ.

We thus see how God by the secret guidance of His Spirit, shaping his course by ways and roads known only to Himself, led St. Peter to the house of Simon the tanner, where he abode many days, waiting in patience to know God's mind and will which were soon to be opened out to him. We have now traced the line of events which connect the conversion of Saul of Tarsus with that of Cornelius the centurion of Cæsarea. Let us apply ourselves to the circumstances surrounding the latter event, which is of such vital importance to us Gentile Christians as having been the formal Divine proclamation to the Church and to the world that the mystery which had been hid for ages was now made manifest, and that the Gentiles were spiritually on an equality with the Jews. The Church was now about to burst the bonds which had restrained it for five years at least. We stand by the birth of European Christendom and of modern civilisation. It is well, then, that we should learn and inwardly digest every, even the slightest, detail concerning such a transcendent and notable crisis. Let us take them briefly one by one as the sacred narrative reports them.

I. I note, then, in the first place that the *time* of this conversion was wisely and providentially chosen. The time was just about eight years after the Ascension and the foundation of the Church. Time enough therefore had elapsed for Christianity to take root among the Jews. This was most important. The gospel was first planted among the Jews, took form and life and shape, gained its initial impulse and direction among God's ancient people in order that the constitution, the discipline, and the worship of the Church might be framed on the ancient Jewish model and might be built up by men whose minds were cast in a conservative mould. Not that we have the old law with its wearisome and burdensome ritual perpetuated in the Christian Church. That law was a yoke too heavy for man to bear. But, then, the highest and best elements of the old Jewish system have been perpetuated in the Church. There was in Judaism by God's own appointment a public ministry, a threefold public ministry too, exercised by the high priests, the priests, and the Levites. There is in Christianity a threefold ministry exercised by bishops, presbyters or elders, and deacons. There were in Judaism public and consecrated sanctuaries, fixed liturgies, public reading of God's Word, a service of choral worship, hymns of joy and thanksgiving, the sacraments of Holy Communion and baptism in a rudimentary shape; all these were transferred from the old system that was passing away into the new system that was taking its place. Had the Gentiles been admitted much earlier all this might not have so easily happened. Men do not easily change their habits. Habits, indeed, are chains which rivet them-

\* Perhaps it is well to note that this is not the classical word Æneas, which in Greek would be represented by Αἰνέας, but a different name with a short *e*, and is written in Greek Αἰνέας. The latter is found in Thucydides and Xenophon: see Meyer *in loco*.



selves year by year with ever-increasing power round our natures; and the Jewish converts brought their habits of thought and worship into the Church of Christ, establishing there those institutions of prayer and worship, of sacramental communion and preaching which we still enjoy. But we must observe, on the other hand, that, had the Gentiles been admitted a little later, the Church might have assumed too Jewish and Levitical an aspect. This pause of eight years, during which Jews alone formed the Church, is another instance of those delays of the Lord which, whether they happen in public or in private life, are always found in the long run to be wise, blessed, and providential things, though for a time they may seem dark and mysterious, according to that ancient strain of the Psalmist, "Wait on the Lord, . . . and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, upon the Lord."

II. Again, the *place* where the Church burst its Jewish shell and emerged into full gospel freedom is noteworthy. It was at Cæsarea. It is a great pity that people do not make more use of maps in their study of Holy Scripture. Sunday evenings are often a dull time in Christian households, and the bare mechanical reading of Scripture and of good books often only makes them duller. How much more lively, interesting, and instructive they would be were an attempt made to trace the journeys of the Apostles with a map, or to study the scenes where they laboured—Jerusalem, Cæsarea, Damascus, Ephesus, Athens, and Rome—with some of the helps which modern scholarship and commercial enterprise now place within easy reach. I can speak thus with the force of personal experience, for my own keen interest in this book which I am expounding dates from the Sunday evenings of boyhood thus spent, though without many of the aids which now lie within the reach of all. This is essentially the modern method of study, especially in matters historical. A modern investigator and explorer of Bible sites and lands has well expressed this truth when he said, "Topography is the foundation of history. If we are ever to understand history, we must understand the places where that history was transacted." The celebrated historians, the late Mr. Freeman and Mr. Green, worked a revolution in English historical methods by teaching people that an indefatigable use of maps and a careful study of the physical features of any country are absolutely needful for a true conception of its history. In this respect at least secular history and sacred history are alike. Without a careful study of the map we cannot understand God's dealings with the Church of Christ, as is manifest from the case of Cæsarea at which we have arrived. The narratives of the Gospels and of the Acts will be confused, unintelligible, unless we understand that there were two Cæsareas in Palestine, one never mentioned in the Gospels, the other never mentioned in the Acts. Cæsarea Philippi was a celebrated city of North-eastern Palestine. It was when our Lord was within its borders that St. Peter made his celebrated confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," told of in St. Matthew xvi. 13-16. This is the only Cæsarea of which we hear in the Gospels. It was an inland town, built by the Herods in joint honour of themselves and of their patrons the Emperors of Rome, and bore all the traces of its origin.

It was decorated with a splendid pagan temple, was a thoroughly pagan town, and was therefore abhorred by every true Jew. There was another Cæsarea, the great Roman port of Palestine and the capital, where the Roman governors resided. It was situated in the borders of Phœnicia, in a northwesterly direction from Jerusalem, with which it was connected by a fine military road. This Cæsarea had been originally built by Herod the Great. He spent twelve years at this undertaking, and succeeded in making it a splendid monument of the magnificence of his conceptions. The seaboard of Palestine is totally devoid to this day of safe harbours. Herod constructed a harbour at vast expense. Let us hear the story of its foundation in the very words of the Jewish historian. Josephus tells us that Herod, observing "that Joppa and Dora are not fit for havens on account of the impetuous south winds which beat upon them, which, rolling the sands which come from the sea against the shores, do not admit of ships lying in their station; but the merchants are generally there forced to ride at their anchors in the sea itself. So Herod endeavoured to rectify this inconvenience, and laid out such a compass toward the land as might be sufficient for a haven, wherein the great ships might lie in safety; and this he effected by letting down vast stones of above fifty feet in length, not less than eighteen in breadth and nine in depth, into twenty fathoms deep."\* The Romans, when they took possession of Palestine, adopted and developed Herod's plans, and established Cæsarea on the coast as the permanent residence of the procurator of Palestine. And it was a wise policy. The Romans, like the English, had a genius for government. They fixed their provincial capitals upon or near the sea-coast that their communications might be ever kept open. Thus in our own case Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Capetown, Quebec, and Dublin are all seaport towns. And so in ancient times Antioch, Alexandria, Tarsus, Ephesus, Marseilles, Corinth, London, were all seaports and provincial Roman capitals as Cæsarea was in Palestine. And it was a very wise policy. The Jews were a fierce, bold, determined people when they revolted. If the seat of Roman rule had been fixed at Jerusalem, a rebellion might completely cut off all effective relief from the besieged garrison, which would never happen at Cæsarea so long as the command of the sea was vested in the vast navies which the Roman State possessed. Cæsarea was to a large extent a Gentile city, though within some seventy miles of Jerusalem. It had a considerable Jewish population with their attendant synagogues, but the most prominent features were pagan temples, one of them serving for a lighthouse and beacon for the ships which crowded its harbour, together with a theatre and an amphitheatre, where scenes were daily enacted from which every sincere Jew must have shrunk with horror. Such was the place—a most fitting place, Gentile, pagan, idolatrous to the very core and centre—where God chose to reveal Himself as Father of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews, and showed Christ's gospel as a light to lighten the

\* See Josephus, "Antiquities," XV. ix. 6; "Wars of Jews," I. xxi. Mr. Lewin, in his "Life of St. Paul," vol. ii. ch. iv., spends several pages in an elaborate discussion of the buildings and plan of Cæsarea, to which it must here suffice to refer.



Gentiles as well as the glory of His people Israel.

III. Then, again, the *person* chosen as the channel of this revelation is a striking character. He was "Cornelius by name, a centurion of the band called the Italian band." Here, then, we note first of all that Cornelius was a Roman soldier. Let us pause and reflect upon this. In no respect does the New Testament display more clearly its Divine origin than in the manner in which it rises superior to mere provincialism. There are no narrow national prejudices about it like those which nowadays lead Englishmen to despise other nations, or those which in ancient times led a thorough-going Jew to look down with sovereign contempt on the Gentile world as mere dogs and outcasts. The New Testament taught that all men were equal and were brothers in blood, and thus laid the foundations of those modern conceptions which have well-nigh swept slavery from the face of civilised Christendom. The New Testament and its teaching is the parent of that modern liberalism which now rules every circle, no matter what its political designation. In no respect does this universal catholic feeling of the New Testament display itself more clearly than in the pictures it presents to us of Roman military men. They are uniformly most favourable. Without one single exception the pictures drawn for us of every centurion and soldier mentioned in the books of the New Testament are bright with some element of good shining out conspicuously by way of favourable contrast, when brought side by side with the Jewish people, upon whom more abundant and more blessed privileges had been in vain lavished. Let us just note a few instances which will illustrate our view. The soldiers sought John's baptism and humbly received John's penitential advice and direction when priests and scribes rejected the Lord's messenger (Luke iii. 14). A soldier and a centurion received Christ's commendation for the exercise of a faith surpassing in its range and spiritual perception any faith which the Master had found within the bounds and limits of Israel according to the flesh. "Verily I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel," were Christ's almost wondering words as He heard the confession of His God-like nature, His Divine power involved in the centurion's prayer of humility, "I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof: but only say the word, and my servant shall be healed" (*cf.* Matt. viii. 5-13). So was it again with the centurion to whom the details of our Lord's execution were committed. He too is painted in a favourable light. He had an open mind, willing to receive evidence. He received that evidence under the most unfavourable conditions. His mind was convinced of our Lord's mission and character, not by His triumphs, but by His apparent defeat. As the victim of Jewish malice and prejudice yielded up the ghost and committed His pure, unspotted soul to the hands of His Heavenly Father, then it was that, struck by the supernatural spirit of love and gentleness and forgiveness—those great forces of Christianity which never at any other time or in any other age have had their full and fair play—the centurion yielded the assent of his affections and of his intellect to the Divine mission of the suffering Saviour, and cried, "Truly this man was the Son of God" (Matt.

xxvii. 54). So it was again with Julius the centurion, who courteously entreated St. Paul on his voyage as a prisoner to Rome (Acts xxvii. 3); and so again it was with Cornelius the centurion, of the band called the Italian band.

Now how comes this to pass? What a striking evidence of the workings and presence of the Divine Spirit in the writers of our sacred books we may find in this fact! The Roman soldiers were of course the symbols to a patriotic Jew of a hated foreign sway, of an idolatrous jurisdiction and rule. A Jew uninfluenced by supernatural grace, and unguided by Divine inspiration, would never have drawn such pictures of Roman centurions as the New Testament has handed down to us. The picture, indeed, drawn by the opposition press of any country is not generally a favourable one when dealing with the persons and officials of the dominant party. But the Apostles—Jews though they were of narrow, provincial, prejudiced Galilee—had drunk deep of the spirit of the new religion. They recognised that Jesus Christ, the King of the kingdom of heaven, cared nothing about what form of government men lived under. They knew that Christ ignored all differences of climate, age, sex, nationality, or employment. They felt that the only distinctions recognised in Christ's kingdom were spiritual distinctions, and therefore they recognised the soul of goodness wherever found. They welcomed the honest and true heart, no matter beneath what skin it beat, and found therefore in many of these Roman soldiers some of the ablest, the most devoted, and the most effective servants and teachers of the Cross of Jesus Christ. Verily the universal and catholic principles of the new religion which found their first formal proclamation in the age of Cornelius, met with an ample vindication and a full reward in the trophies won and the converts gained from such an unpromising source as the ranks of the Roman army. This seems to me one reason for the favourable notices of the Roman soldiers in the New Testament. The Divine Spirit wished to impress upon mankind that birth, position, or employment has no influence upon a man's state in God's sight, and to prove by a number of typical examples that spiritual conditions and excellence alone avail to find favour with the Almighty.

Another reason, however, may be found for this fact. The Scriptures never make light of discipline or training. "Train up a child in the way he should go," is a Divine precept. St. Paul, in his Pastoral Epistles, lays down one great qualification for a bishop, that he should have this power of exercising discipline and rule at home as well as abroad: "For if he knoweth not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?" (1 Tim. iii. 5). By discipline, the discipline of Egypt and the wilderness, did God prepare His people for Canaan. By the discipline of captivity and dispersion, by the discipline of Greek philosophy spreading novel intellectual ideas, by the discipline of Roman dominion executing mighty public works, carrying roads and intercommunication to the remotest and most barbarous nations, did God prepare the world for the revelation of His Son. By the discipline of life, by joy and sorrow, by strife and suffering, by parting and by loss, does God still prepare His faithful ones for the beatific vision of eternal beauty, for the rest and joy of everlasting peace.



And discipline worked out its usual results on these military men, even though it was only an imperfect and pagan discipline which these Roman soldiers received. Let us note carefully how this was. The world of unregenerate man at the time of our Lord's appearance had become utterly selfish. Discipline of every kind had been flung off. Self-restraint was practically unknown, and the devil and his works flourished in every circle, bringing forth the fruits of wickedness, uncleanness, and impurity in every direction. The army was the only place or region where in those times any kind of discipline or self-restraint was practised. For no army can permit—even if it be an army of atheists—profligacy and drunkenness to rage, flaunting themselves beneath the very eye of the sun. And as the spiritual result we find that this small measure of pagan discipline acted as a preparation for Christianity, and became, under the Divine guidance, the means of fitting men like Cornelius of Cæsarea for the reception of the gospel message of purity and peace.

But we observe that Cornelius the centurion had one special feature which made him peculiarly fitted to be God's instrument for opening the Christian faith to the Gentile world. The choice of Cornelius is marked by all that skill and prudence, that careful adaptation of means to ends which the Divine workmanship, whether in nature or in grace, ever displays. There were many Roman centurions stationed at Cæsarea, yet none was chosen save Cornelius, and that because he was "a devout man who feared God with all his house, praying to God always, and giving much alms to the people." He feared Jehovah, he fasted, prayed, observed Jewish hours of devotion. His habits were much more those of a devout Jew than of a pagan soldier. He was popular with the Jewish people therefore, like another centurion of whom it was said by the Jewish officials themselves "he loveth our nation and hath built us a synagogue." The selection of Cornelius as the leader and first-fruits of the Gentiles unto God was eminently prudent and wise. God when He is working out His plans chooses His instruments carefully and skilfully. He leaves nothing to chance. He does nothing imperfectly. Work done by God will repay the keenest scrutiny, the closest study, for it is the model of what every man's work in life ought as far as possible to be—earnest, wise, complete, perfect.

IV. Again, looking at the whole passage, we perceive therein illustrations of two important laws of the Divine life. We recognise in the case of Cornelius the working of that great principle of the kingdom of God often enunciated by the great Master: "To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly." "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine"; or, to put it in other language, that God always bestows more grace upon the man who diligently uses and improves the grace which he already possesses; a principle which indeed we see constantly exemplified in things pertaining to this world as well as in matters belonging to the spiritual life. Thus it was with Cornelius. He was what was called among the Jews a proselyte of the gate. These proselytes were very numerous. They were a kind of fringe hanging upon the outskirts of the Jewish people. They were admirers of Jewish ideas, doctrines, and practices, but they were not in-

corporated with the Jewish nation nor bound by all their laws and ceremonial restraints. The Levitical Law was not imposed upon them, because they were not circumcised. They were merely bound to worship the true God and observe certain moral precepts said to have been delivered to Noah.\* Such was Cornelius, whom the providence of God had led from Italy to Cæsarea for this very purpose, to fulfil His purposes of mercy towards the Gentile world. His residence there had taught him the truth and beauty of the pure worship of Jehovah rendered by the Jews. He had learned, too, not only that God is, but that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. Cornelius had set himself, therefore, to the diligent discharge of all the duties of religion so far as he knew them. He was earnest and diligent in prayer, for he recognised himself as dependent upon an invisible God. He was liberal in alms, for he desired to show forth his gratitude for mercies daily received. And acting thus he met with the divinely appointed reward. Cornelius is favoured with a fuller revelation and a clearer guidance by the angel's mouth, who tells him to send and summon Peter from Joppa for this very purpose. What an eminently practical lesson we may learn from God's dealings with this earliest Gentile convert! We learn from the Divine dealings with Cornelius that whosoever diligently improves the lower spiritual advantages which he possesses shall soon be admitted to higher and fuller blessings.

It may well have been that God led him through successive stages and rewarded him under each. In distant Italy, when residing amid the abounding superstitions of that country, conscience was the only preacher, but there the sermons of that monitor were heard with reverence and obeyed with diligence. Then God ordered the course of his life so that public duty summoned him to a distant land. Cornelius may have at the time counted his lot a hard one when despatched to Palestine as a centurion, for it was a province where, from the nature of the warfare there prevalent, there were abundant opportunities of death by assassination at the hands of the Zealots, and but few opportunities of distinction such as might be gained in border warfare with foreign enemies. But the Lord was shaping his career, as He shapes all our careers, with reference to our highest spiritual purposes. He led Cornelius, therefore, to a land and to a town where the pure worship of Jehovah was practised and the elevated morality of Judaism prevailed. Here, then, were new opportunities placed within the centurion's reach. And again the same spiritual diligence is displayed, and again the same law of spiritual development and enlarging blessing finds a place. Cornelius is devout and liberal and God-fearing, and therefore a heavenly visitor directs his way to still fuller light and grander revelations, and Cornelius the centurion of the Italian band leads the Gentile hosts into the fulness of blessing, the true land flowing with milk and honey, found only in the dispensation of Jesus Christ and within the borders of the Church of God. This was God's course of dealing with the Roman centurion, and it is the course which the same loving dealing still pursues with human souls truly desirous of Divine guidance.

\* See the article on "Proselytes" in Schaff's "Encyclopædia of Theology."



The Lord imparts one degree of light and knowledge and grace, but withholds higher degrees till full use has been made of the lower. He speaks to us at first in a whisper; but if we reverently hearken, there is a gradual deepening of the voice, till it is as audible in the crowd as it is in the solitude, and we are continually visited with the messages of the Eternal King.

Now cannot these ideas be easily applied to our own individual cases? A young man, for instance, may be troubled with doubts and questions concerning certain portions of the Christian faith. Some persons make such doubts an excuse for plunging into scenes of riot and dissipation, quenching the light which God has given them and making certain their own spiritual destruction. The case of Cornelius points out the true course which should in such a case be adopted. Men may be troubled with doubts concerning certain doctrines of revelation. But they have no doubt as to the dictates of conscience and the light which natural religion sheds upon the paths of morals and of life. Let them then use the light they have. Let them diligently practise the will of God as it has been revealed. Let them be earnest in prayer, pure and reverent in life, honest and upright in business, and then in God's own time the doubts will vanish, the darkness will clear away, and the ancient promises will be fulfilled, "Light is sown for the righteous," "The path of the just shineth more and more unto the perfect day," "In the way of righteousness is life, and in the pathway thereof there is no death."

But the example of Cornelius is of still wider application. The position of Cornelius was not a favourable one for the development of the religious life, and yet he rose superior to all its difficulties, and became thus an eminent example to all believers. Men may complain that they have but few spiritual advantages, and that their station in life is thickly strewn with difficulties, hindering the practices and duties of religion. To such persons we would say, compare yourselves with Cornelius and the difficulties, external and internal, he had to overcome. Servants, for instance, may labour under great apparent disadvantages. Perhaps, if living in an irreligious family, they have few opportunities for prayer, public or private. Men of business are compelled to spend days and nights in the management of their affairs. Persons of commanding intellect or of high station have their own disadvantages, their own peculiar temptations, growing out of their very prosperity. The case of Cornelius shows that each class can rise superior to their peculiar difficulties and grow in the hidden life of the soul, if they but imitate his example as he grew from grace to grace, improving his scanty store till it grew into a fuller and ampler one, till it expanded into all the glory of Christian privilege, when Cornelius, like Peter, was enabled to rejoice in the knowledge and love of a risen and glorified Redeemer.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE PETRINE VISION AT JOPPA.

ACTS x. 9-15.

THERE are two central figures in the conversion of Cornelius. The one is the centurion

himself, the other is St. Peter, the selected and predestined agent in that great work. We have studied Cornelius in the last chapter, and have seen the typical character of all his circumstances. His time, his residence, his training, had all been providential, indicating to us the careful superintendence, the watchful oversight, which God bestows upon the history of individuals as well as of the Church at large. Let us now turn to the other figure, St. Peter, and see if the Lord's providence may not be traced with equal clearness in the circumstances of his case also. We have found Cornelius at Cæsarea, the great Roman port and garrison of Palestine, a very fitting and natural place for a Roman centurion to be located. We find Peter at this very same time at Joppa, a spot that was consecrated by many a memory and specially associated with a mission to the Gentiles in the times of the Elder Dispensation. Here we trace the hand of the Lord providentially ruling the footsteps of Peter though he knew it not, and leading him, as Philip was led a short time before, to the spot where his intended work lay. The sickness and death of Tabitha or Dorcas led St. Peter to Joppa. The fame of his miracle upon that devout woman led to the conversion of many souls, and this naturally induced Peter to make a longer stay in Joppa at the house of Simon the tanner. How natural and unpremeditated, how very ordinary and unplanned to the natural eye seem the movements of St. Peter! So they would have seemed to us had we been living at Joppa, and yet now we can see with the light which the sacred narrative throws upon the story that the Lord was guiding St. Peter to the place where his work was cut out when the appointed time should come. Surely the history of Peter and his actions has abundant comfort and sustaining hope for ourselves! Our lives may be very ordinary and commonplace; the events may succeed one another in the most matter-of-fact style; there may seem in them nothing at all worthy the attention of a Divine Ruler; and yet those ordinary lives are just as much planned and guided by supernatural wisdom as the careers of men concerning whom all the world is talking. Only let us take care to follow St. Peter's example. He yielded himself completely to the Divine guidance, trusted himself entirely to Divine love and wisdom, and then found in such trust not only life and safety, but what is far better, perfect peace and sweetest calm.

There is something very restful in the picture drawn for us of St. Peter at this crisis. There is none of that feverish hurry and restlessness which make some good men and their methods very trying to others. The notices of him have all an air of repose and Christian dignity. "As Peter went throughout all parts, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda"; "Peter put them all forth and prayed"; "Peter abode many days in Joppa"; "Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour." St. Peter, indeed, did not live in an age of telegrams and postcards and express trains, which all contribute more or less to that feverish activity and restlessness so characteristic of this age. But even if he had lived in such a time, I am sure his faith in God would have saved him from that fussiness, that life of perpetual hurry, yet never bringing forth any abiding fruit, which we behold in so many moderns.



This results a good deal, I believe, from the development—I was almost going to say the tyranny, the unwitting tyranny—of modern journalism, which compels men to live so much in public and reports their every utterance. There are men never tired of running from one committee to another, and never weary of seeing their names in the morning papers. They count that they have been busily and usefully employed if their names are perpetually appearing in newspaper reports as speaking, or at any rate being present, at innumerable meetings, leaving themselves no time for that quiet meditation whereby St. Peter gained closest communion with heaven. It is no wonder such men's fussiness should be fruitless, because their natures are poor, shallow, uncultivated, where the seed springs up rapidly, but brings forth no fruit to perfection, because it has no deepness of earth. It is no wonder that St. Peter should have spoken with power at Cæsarea and been successful in opening the door of faith to the Gentiles, because he prepared himself for doing the Divine work by the discipline of meditation and thought and spiritual converse with his Risen Lord. And here we may remark, before we pass from this point, that the conversion of the first Gentile and the full and complete exercise of the power of the keys committed to St. Peter run on lines very parallel to those pertaining to the Day of Pentecost and the conversion of the earliest Jews in one respect at least. The Day of Pentecost was preceded by a period of ten days' waiting and spiritual repose. The conversion of Cornelius and the revelation of God's purposes to St. Peter were preceded by a season of meditation and prayer, when an apostle could find time amid all his pressing cares to seek the housetop for midday prayer and to abide many days in the house of one Simon a tanner. A period of pause, repose, and quietness preceded a new onward movement of development and of action.

I. Now, as in the case of Cornelius, so in the case of St. Peter, we note the *place* where the chief actor in the scene abode. It was at Joppa, and Joppa was associated with many memories for the Jews. It has been from ancient times the port of Jerusalem, and is even now rising into somewhat of its former commercial greatness, specially owing to the late development of the orange trade, for the production of which fruit Jaffa or Joppa has become famous. Three thousand years ago Joppa was a favourite resort of the Phœnician fleets, which brought the cedars of Lebanon to King Solomon for the building of the temple (2 Chron. ii. 16). At a later period, when God would send Jonah on a mission to Gentile Nineveh, and when Jonah desired to thwart God's merciful designs towards the outer world, the prophet fled to Joppa and there took ship in his vain effort to escape from the presence of the Lord. And now again Joppa becomes the refuge of another prophet, who feels the same natural hesitation about admitting the Gentiles to God's mercy, but who, unlike Jonah, yields immediate assent to the heavenly message, and finds peace and blessing in the paths of loving obedience. The very house where St. Peter abode is still pointed out. It is situated in the southwestern part of the town, and commands a view over the bay of Joppa and the waters of that Mediterranean Sea which was soon to be the channel of communi-

cation whereby the gospel message should be borne to the nations of the distant West. We remark, too, that it was with Simon the tanner of Joppa that St. Peter was staying. When a great change is impending various little circumstances occur, all showing the tendencies of the age. By themselves and taken one by one they do not express much. At the time when they happen men do not regard them or understand their meaning, but afterwards, and reading them in the light of accomplished facts, men behold their significance. Thus it was with Simon Peter and his visit to Simon the tanner of Joppa. Tanners as a class were despised and comparatively outcast among the Jews. Tanning was counted an unclean trade, because of the necessary contact with dead bodies which it involved. A tan-yard must, according to Jewish law, be separated by fifty yards at least from human dwellings. If a man married a woman without informing her of his trade as a tanner, she was granted a divorce. The whole trade of tanners was under a ban, and yet it was to a tanner's house that the Apostle made his way, and there he lodged for many days, showing that the mind even of St. Peter was steadily rising above narrow Jewish prejudices into that higher and nobler atmosphere where he learned in fullest degree that no man and no lawful trade are to be counted common or unclean.

II. We note, again, the *time* when the vision was granted to St. Peter and the mind of the Lord was more fully disclosed to him. Joppa is separated from Cæsarea by a distance of thirty miles. The leading coast towns were then connected by an excellent road, along which horses and vehicles passed with ease. The centurion Cornelius, when he received the angelic direction, forthwith despatched two of his household servants and a devout soldier to summon St. Peter to his presence. They doubtless travelled on horseback, leading spare beasts for the accommodation of the Apostle. Less than twenty-four hours after their departure from Cæsarea they drew nigh to Joppa, and then it was that God revealed His purposes to His beloved servant. The very hour can be fixed. Cornelius saw the angel at the ninth hour, when, as he himself tells us, "he was keeping the hour of prayer" (x. 30). Peter saw the vision at the sixth hour, when he went up on the housetop to pray, according to the example of the Psalmist when he sang, "In the evening and morning and at noon-day will I pray, and that instantly."\* St. Peter evidently was a careful observer of all the forms amid which his youthful training had been conducted. He did not seek in the name of spiritual religion to discard these old forms. He recognised the danger of any such course. Forms may often tend to formalism on account of the weakness of human nature. But they also help to preserve and guard the spirit of ancient institutions in times of sloth and decay, till the Spirit from on high again breathes upon the dry bones and imparts fresh life. St. Peter used the forms of Jewish externalism, imparting to them some of his own intense earnestness, and the Lord set His seal of approval upon his action by revealing the purposes of His mercy and love to the Gentile world at the noontide hour of prayer. The wisest masters of the spiritual life have ever fol-

\* This is the rendering of Psalm lv. 18, according to the version in the Book of Common Prayer.



lowed St. Peter's teaching. We may take, for instance, Dr. Goulburn in his valuable treatise on Personal Religion. In the sixth chapter of the fourth part of that work he has some wise thoughts on living by rule in the Christian life, where he points out the use of rules and their abuse, strongly urging upon those who desire to grow in grace the formation of rules by which the practices of religion and the soul's inner life may be directed and shielded. There is, for instance, no law of Christ which ties men down to morning and evening prayer. Yet does not our own daily experience teach that, if this unwritten rule of the Christian life be relaxed under the pretence of higher spirituality, and men pray only when they feel specially inclined to communion with the unseen, the whole practice of private as well as of public prayer ceases, and the soul lives in an atheistic atmosphere without any recognition or thought of God. This danger has been recognised from the earliest times. Tertullian was a man of narrow views, but of the most intense piety. He was a devout student of the New Testament, and a careful observer of the example of our Lord and His Apostles. The early Christians adopted from the Jews the custom of prayer at the various hours of the day, and turned it into a practical rule of Christian discipline, acknowledging at the same time that there was no scriptural obligation in the rule, but that it was a mere wise device for the development of the spiritual life. This was the origin of what are technically called the Canonical Hours, Matins with Lauds, Prime, Tierce, Sext, Nones, Evensong, and Compline, which can be traced back in germ to the age next after the Apostles, and were originally grounded upon the example of the Apostles themselves, and specially upon that of St. Peter's practice at Joppa. Let us hear Tertullian on this matter. He wrote a treatise on prayer, in which he presses upon the men of his time the duty of earnestness and intensity in that holy exercise, and when doing so touches upon this very point: "As respecting the time of prayer the observance of certain hours will not be unprofitable—those common hours, I mean, which mark the intervals of the day—the third, sixth, ninth—which we find in Scripture to have been made more solemn than the rest. The first infusion of the Holy Spirit into the congregated disciples took place at the third hour. Peter saw his vision on the housetop at the sixth hour. Peter and John went into the Temple at the ninth hour when they restored the paralytic to his health." Tertullian then adds the following wise observations, showing that he quite grasped the essential distinction between the slavery of the law and the freedom of the gospel in the matter of external observances: "Albeit these practices stand simply without any Divine precept for their observance; still it may be granted a good thing to establish some definite rule which may both add stringency to the admonition to pray and may, as it were by a law, tear us out of our ordinary business unto such a duty. So that we pray not less than thrice in the day, debtors as we are to three—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—besides of course our regular prayers on the entrance of light and of night." The ecclesiastical practice of the Hours may be turned into a mere formal repetition of certain prescribed tasks; but, like all other ordinances which trace themselves back to primitive Christianity, the

Hours are based on a true conception and a noble ideal of the prevailing and abounding place which prayer should occupy in the soul's life, according to the Saviour's own teaching when He spake a parable to His disciples to this end that men ought always to pray and not to faint.\*

III. We now arrive at the vision which Peter saw upon the housetop. The Apostle, having ascended upon the housetop commanding a view over the blue waters of the Mediterranean lying shimmering and sweltering beneath the rays of the noonday sun, became hungry, as was natural enough, because the usual time of the midday meal was drawing nigh. But there was a deeper reason for the Apostle's felt need of refreshment, and a more immediate providence was watching over his natural powers and their action than ever before had been revealed. The natural hunger was divinely inspired in order that just at that instant when the representatives and delegates of the Gentile world were drawing nigh to his abode he might be prepared to accord to them a fitting reception. To the mere man of sense or to the mere carnal mind the hunger of St. Peter may seem a simple natural operation, but to the devout believer in Christianity who views it as the great and perfect revelation of God to man, who knows that His covenants are in all things well-ordered and sure, and that in His works in grace as well as in His works in nature the Lord leaves nothing to mere chance, but perfectly orders them all down to the minutest detail, to such an one this human hunger of St. Peter's appears as divinely planned in order that a spiritual satisfaction and completeness may be imparted to his soul unconsciously craving after a fuller knowledge of the Divine will. St. Peter's hunger is, in fact, but a manifestation in the human sphere of that superhuman foresight which was directing the whole transaction from behind this visible scene; teaching us, in fact, the lesson so often repeated in Holy Scripture that nothing, not even our feelings, our infirmities, our passions, our appetites, are too minute for the Divine love and care, and encouraging us thereby to act more freely upon the apostolic injunction, "In everything by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known unto God." If St. Peter's hunger were taken up and incorporated with the Divine plan of salvation, we may be sure that our own wants and trials do not escape the omniscient eye of Him who plans all our lives, appointing the end from the very beginning. St. Peter was hungry, and as food was preparing he fell into a trance and then the vision, answering in its form to the hunger which he felt, was granted. Vain questions may here be raised, as we noted before in the case of St. Paul, concerning the trance of the Apostle and the communications he held with the unseen world. They are vain questions for us to raise or to attempt to answer, because they belong to an unexplored land full, as many modern experiments show, of strange mysterious facts peculiar to it. This alone we can say, some communication must have been made to St. Peter which he regarded as a Divine revelation. The conversion and reception by St. Peter of the Gentile centurion are facts, the prejudices of St. Peter against

\* Tertullian's treatise on Prayer will be found in Clark's translation of his work, vol. i. pp. 178-204.



such a reception are also undoubted facts. Hitherto he shared the opinion common to all the Twelve that such a reception was contrary to the Divine law and purposes. He must have received upon the housetop some kind of a heavenly communication which he regarded as equivalent in authority to that ancient rule by which he esteemed the promises and mercy of God limited to the seed of Abraham. But as for any endeavour to understand or explain the mode of God's action on this occasion, it will be just as vain as attempts to pierce the mysteries of God's action in creation, the Incarnation, or, to come lower still, in the processes by which life has been communicated to this world and is now sustained and continued thereon. We are in very deed living and moving amid mysteries, and if we refuse to learn or meditate till the mysteries we meet with, the very first step we take, be cleared, we must cease to think and be content to pass life like the beasts that perish. We know not, indeed, the exact manner in which God communicated with St. Peter, or for that matter with any one else to whom He made revelation of His will. We know nothing of the manner in which He spoke to Moses out of the bush, or to Samuel in the night season, or to Isaiah in the Temple. As with these His servants of the Elder Dispensation, so it was with St. Peter on the housetop. We know, however, how St. Luke received his information as to the nature of the vision and all the other facts of the case. St. Luke and St. Peter must have had many an opportunity for conversation in the thrilling, all-important events amid which they had lived. St. Luke too accompanied St. Paul on that journey to Jerusalem described in the twenty-first chapter, and was introduced to the Christian Sanhedrin or Council over which St. James the Just presided. But even if St. Luke had never seen St. Peter, he had abundant opportunities of learning all about the vision. St. Peter proclaimed it to the world from the very time it happened, and was obliged to proclaim it as his defence against the party zealous for the law of Moses. St. Peter referred to what God had just shown him as soon as he came into the centurion's presence. He described the vision at full length as soon as he came to Jerusalem and met the assembled Church, where its power and meaning were so clearly recognised that the mouths of all St. Peter's adversaries were at once stopped. And again at the council of Jerusalem, held as described in the fifteenth chapter, St. Peter refers to the circumstances of this whole story as well known to the whole Church in that city. St. Luke then would have no difficulty, writing some twenty years later, in ascertaining the facts of this story, and naturally enough, when writing to a Gentile convert and having in mind the needs and feelings of the Gentiles, he inserted the narrative of the vision as being the foundation-stone on which the growing and enlarging edifice of Gentile Christianity had been originally established. The vision too was admirably suited to serve its purpose. It based itself, as I have said, on Peter's natural feelings and circumstances, just as spiritual things ever base themselves upon and respond to the natural shadows of this lower life, just as the Holy Communion, for instance, bases itself upon the natural craving for food and drink, but rises and soars far away, above and beyond the material

sphere to the true food of the soul, the Divine banquet wherewith God's secret and loved ones are eternally fed. Peter was hungry, and a sheet was seen let down from heaven, containing all kinds of animals, clean and unclean, together with creeping things and fowls of heaven. He was commanded to rise and slay and appease his hunger. He states the objection, quite natural in the mouth of a conscientious Jew, that nothing common or unclean had ever been eaten by him. Then the heavenly voice uttered words which struck for him the death-knell of the old haughty Jewish exclusiveness, inaugurating the grand spirit of Christian liberalism and of human equality—"What God hath cleansed, make thou not common." The vision was thrice repeated to make the matter sure, and then the heavens were shut up again, and Peter was left to interpret the Divine teaching for himself. Peter, in the light of the circumstances which a few moments later took place, easily read the interpretation of the vision. The distinction between animals and foods was for the Jew but an emblem and type, a mere object lesson of the distinction between the Jews and other nations. The Gentiles ate every kind of animal and creeping thing; the favourite food of the Roman soldiers with whom the Palestinian Jews came most in contact being pork. The differences which the Divine law compelled the Jew to make in the matter of food were simply the type of the difference and separation which God's love and grace had made between His covenant people and those outside that covenant. And just then, to clinch the matter and interpret the vision by the light of divinely ordered facts, the Spirit announced to the Apostle, as "he was much perplexed in himself what the vision might mean," that three men were seeking him, and that he was to go with them doubting nothing, "for I have sent them." The hour had at last come for the manifestation of God's everlasting purposes, when the sacred society should assume its universal privileges and stand forth resplendent in its true character as God's Holy Catholic Church,—of which the Temple had been a temporary symbol and pledge,—a house of prayer for all nations, the joy of the whole earth, the city of the Great King, until the consummation of all things.

IV. The sacred historian next presents St. Peter at Cæsarea. The Apostle rose up obedient to the Divine communication, admitted the men who sought him, lodged them for the night, departed back the next day along the same road which they had followed, and arrived at Cæsarea on the fourth day from the original appearance to Cornelius; so that if the angel had been seen by the centurion on Saturday or the Sabbath the vision would have been seen at Joppa on the Lord's Day, and then on Tuesday St. Peter must have arrived at Cæsarea. St. Peter did not travel alone. He doubtless communicated the vision he had seen to the Church at Joppa at the evening hour of devotion, and determined to associate with himself six prominent members of that body in the fulfilment of his novel enterprise, that they might be witnesses of God's actions and assistants to himself in the work of baptism and of teaching. As soon as the missionary party arrived at the house of Cornelius, they found a large party assembled to meet them, as Cornelius had called together his kinsmen and acquaintances to hear the message from



heaven. Cornelius received St. Peter with an expression of such profound reverence, prostrating himself on the earth, that St. Peter reproved him: "But Peter raised him up, saying, Stand up: I myself also am a man." Cornelius, with his mind formed in a pagan mould and permeated with pagan associations and ideas, regarded Peter as a superhuman being, and worthy therefore of the reverence usually rendered to the Roman Emperor as the living embodiment of deity upon earth. He fell down and adored St. Peter, even as St. John adored the angel who revealed to him the mysteries of the unseen world (Rev. xxii. 8), till reminded by St. Peter that he was a mere human being like the centurion himself, full of human prejudices and narrow ideas which would have prevented him accepting the invitation of Cornelius if God Himself had not intervened. Cornelius then describes the circumstances of his vision and the angelic directions which he had received, ending by requesting St. Peter to announce the revelation of which he was the guardian. The Apostle then proceeds to deliver an address, of which we have recorded a mere synopsis alone; the original address must have been much longer. St. Peter begins the first sermon delivered to Gentiles by an assertion of the catholic nature of the Church, a truth which he only just now learned: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to Him": a passage which has been much misunderstood. People have thought that St. Peter proclaims by these words that it was no matter what religion a man professed, provided only he led a moral life and worked righteousness. His doctrine is of quite another type. He had already proclaimed to the Jews the exclusive claims of Christ as the door and gate of eternal life. In the fourth chapter and twelfth verse he had told the Council at Jerusalem that "in none other than Jesus Christ of Nazareth is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men wherein we must be saved." St. Peter had seen and heard nothing since which could have changed his views or made him think conscious faith in Jesus Christ utterly unimportant, as this method of interpretation, to which I refer, would teach. St. Peter's meaning is quite clear when we consider the circumstances amid which he stood. He had hitherto thought that the privilege of accepting the salvation offered was limited to the Jews. Now he had learned from heaven itself that the offer of God's grace and mercy was free to all, and that wherever man was responding to the dictates of conscience and yielding assent to the guidance of the inner light with which every man was blessed, there God's supreme revelation was to be proclaimed and for him the doors of God's Church were to be opened wide.

St. Peter then proceeds, in his address, to recapitulate the leading facts of the gospel story. He begins with John's baptism, glances at Christ's miracles, His crucifixion, resurrection, and mission of the apostles, concluding by announcing His future return to be the Judge of quick and dead. St. Peter must, of course, have entered into greater details than we possess in our narrative; but it is not always noticed that he was addressing people not quite ignorant of the story which he had to tell. St. Peter begins

by expressly stating, "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching good tidings of peace by Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)—that saying ye yourselves know." Cornelius and his friends were devout and eager students of Jewish religious movements, and they had heard in Cæsarea vague reports of the words and doings of the great prophet who had caused such commotion a few years before. But then they were outside the bounds of Israel, whose religious authorities had rejected this prophet. The religion of Israel had illuminated their own pagan darkness, and they therefore looked up to the decision of the high priests and of the Sanhedrin with profound veneration, and dared not to challenge it. They had never previously come in personal contact with any of the new prophet's followers, and if they had, these followers would not have communicated to them anything of their message. They simply knew that a wondrous teacher had appeared, but that his teaching was universally repudiated by the men whose views they respected, and therefore they remained content with their old convictions. The information, however, which they had gained formed a solid foundation, upon which St. Peter proceeded to raise the superstructure of Christian doctrine, impressing the points which the Jews denied—the resurrection of Christ and His future return to judge the world.

In this connection St. Peter touches upon a point which has often exercised men's minds. In speaking of the resurrection of Christ he says, "Him God raised up the third day, and gave Him to be made manifest, not to all the people, but unto witnesses that were chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead." From the time of Celsus, who lived in the second century, people have asked, Why did not the risen Saviour manifest Himself to the chief priests and Pharisees? Why did He show Himself merely to His friends? It is evident that from the very beginning this point was emphasised by the Christians themselves, as St. Peter expressly insists upon it on this occasion. Now several answers have been given to this objection. Bishop Butler in his "Analogy" deals with it. He points out that it is only in accordance with the laws of God's dealings in ordinary life. God never gives overwhelming evidence. He merely gives sufficient evidence of the truth or wisdom of any course, and till men improve the evidence which He gives He withholds further evidence. Christ gave the Jews sufficient evidences of the truth of His work and mission in the miracles which He wrought and the gracious words which distilled like Divine dew from His lips. They refused the evidence which He gave, and it would not have been in accordance with the principles of Divine action that He should then give them more convincing evidence. Then, again, the learned Butler argues that it would have been useless, so far as we are concerned, to have manifested Christ to the Jewish nation at large, unless He was also revealed and demonstrated to be the risen Saviour to the Romans, and not to them merely, but also to each successive generation of men as they arose. For surely if men can argue that the apostles and the five hundred brethren who saw Christ were deceived, or were the subjects of a temporary illusion, it might be as justly argued that the high priests and the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem



were in their turn deceived or the subjects of a hallucination which their longing desire for a Messiah had produced. In modern times, again, Dr. Milligan, in an able and acute work on the Resurrection, has argued that it was impossible, from the nature of the resurrection body and the character of the resurrection state, for Christ to be thus manifested to the Jewish nation. He belonged to a different plane. He lived now on a higher level. He could not now be submitted to a coarse contact with gross, carnal men. He was obliged therefore to depend upon the testimony of His chosen witnesses, fortified and confirmed by the evidence of miracles, of prophecy, and of the Holy Ghost speaking in them and working with them. All these arguments are most true and sound, and yet they fail to come home to many minds. They leave something to be desired. They fail in showing the wisdom of the actual course that was adopted. They leave men thinking in their secret hearts, would it not after all have been the best and most satisfactory course if the risen Lord had been manifested to all the people and not merely to witnesses chosen before of God? I think there is an argument which has not been sufficiently worked out, and which directly meets and answers this objection. The risen Saviour was not manifested to all the people because such a course would have wrecked the great cause which He had at heart, and defeated the great end of His Incarnation, which was to establish a Church on the earth where righteousness and joy and peace in the Holy Ghost would find place and abound. Let us take it in this way. Let us inquire what would have been the immediate consequence had Christ been revealed to all the people gathered in their millions for the celebration of the Passover. They would either have rejected Him afresh or they would have accepted Him. If they rejected Him, they would be only intensifying their responsibility and their guilt. If they accepted Him as their long-expected Messiah, then would have come the catastrophe. In their state of strained expectation and national excitement they would have swept away every barrier, they would have rushed to arms and burst into open rebellion against the Romans, initiating a war which would have only ended with the annihilation of the Jewish race or with the destruction of the Roman Empire. The immediate result of the manifestation of the risen Saviour to the chief priests and the people would have been a destruction of human life of such a widespread and awful character as the world had never seen. This we know from history would have been infallibly the case. Again and again during the first and second centuries the Jews burst forth into similar rebellions, urged on by some fanatic who pretended to be the long-expected deliverer, and tens of thousands, aye, even hundreds of thousands of human lives, Jewish and Gentile, were repeatedly sacrificed on the altar of this vain carnal expectation.

We are expressly informed too that our Lord had experience in His own person of this very danger. St. John tells us that Christ Himself had on one occasion to escape from the Jews when they were designing to take Him by force and make Him a King; while again the first chapter of this Book of Acts and the query which the apostles propounded upon the very eve of the Ascension show

that even they with all the teaching which they had received from our Lord concerning the purely spiritual and interior nature of His kingdom still shared in the national delusions, and were cherishing dreams of a carnal empire and of human triumphs. We conclude, then, on purely historical grounds, and judging from the experience of the past, that the course which God actually adopted was profoundly wise and eminently calculated to avoid the social dangers which surrounded the path of the Divine developments. I think that if we strive to realise the results which would have followed the manifestation of Christ in the manner which objectors suggest, we shall see that the whole spiritual object, the great end of Christ's Incarnation, would have been thus defeated. That great end was to establish a kingdom of righteousness, peace, and humility; and that was the purpose attained by the mode of action which was in fact adopted. From the Day of Pentecost onward the Church grew and flourished, developing and putting in practice, however imperfectly, the laws of the Sermon on the Mount. But if Christ had revealed Himself to the unconverted Jews of Jerusalem after the Resurrection, it would not have had the slightest effect towards making them Christians after the model which He desired. Nay, rather, such an appearance would merely have intensified their narrow Judaism and confirmed them in those sectarian prejudices, that rigid exclusiveness from which Christ had come to deliver His people. The spiritual effects of such an appearance would have been absolutely nothing. The temporal effects of it would have been awfully disastrous, unless indeed God had consented to work the most prodigious and astounding miracles, such as smiting the Roman armies with destruction and interfering imperiously with the course of human society.

Then, again, it is worthy of notice that such a method of dealing with the Jews would have been contrary to Christ's methods and laws of action as displayed during His earthly ministry. He never worked miracles for the mere purposes of intellectual conviction. When a sign from heaven was demanded from Him for this very purpose He refused it. He ever aimed at spiritual conversion. An exhibition of the risen Lord to the Jewish nation might have been followed by a certain amount of intellectual conviction as to His Divine authority and mission. But, apart from the power of the Holy Ghost, which had not been then poured out, this intellectual conviction would have been turned to disastrous purposes, as we have now shown, and have proved utterly useless towards spiritual conversion. The case of the Resurrection is, in fact, in many respects like the case of the Incarnation. We think in our human blindness that we would have managed the manifestations and revelations of God much better, and we secretly find fault with the Divine methods, because Christ did not come much earlier in the world's history and thousands of years had to elapse before the Divine Messenger appeared. But, then, Scripture assures us that it was in the fulness of time Christ came, and a profounder investigation will satisfy us that history and experience bear out the testimony of Scripture. In the same way human blindness imagines that it would have managed the Resurrection far better, and it has a scheme of its own whereby



Christ should have been manifested at once to the Jews, who would have been at once converted into Christians of the type of the apostles, and then Christ should have advanced to the city of Rome, casting down the idols in His triumphant march, and changing the Roman Empire into the Kingdom of God. This is something like the scheme which the human mind in secret substitutes for the Divine plan, a scheme which would have involved the most extravagant interruptions of the world's business, the most extraordinary interpositions on God's part with the course of human affairs. For one miracle which the Divine method has necessitated, the human plan, which lies at the basis of the objections we are considering, would have necessitated the working of a thousand miracles and these of a most stupendous type. These considerations will help to show what bad judges we are of the Divine methods of action, and will tend towards spiritual and mental humility by impressing upon us the inextricable confusion into which we should inevitably land the world's affairs had we but the management of them for a very few hours. Verily as we contemplate the Resurrection of Christ and the management of the whole plan of salvation, we gather glimpses of the supernatural wisdom whereby the whole was ordered, and learn thus to sing with a deeper meaning the ancient strain, "Thy way, O God, is in the sea, and Thy paths in the great waters, and Thy footsteps are not known. Thou leddest thy people like sheep, by the hand of Moses and Aaron."

The sacred narrative then tells us that "while Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." The brethren which came from Joppa, strict observers of the law of Moses as they were, beheld the external proofs of God's presence, and were amazed, "because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost," which is further explained by the words, "they heard the Gentiles speaking with tongues and magnifying God." The gift of the Holy Ghost takes the same and yet a different shape from that in which it was manifested on the Day of Pentecost. The gift of tongues on the Day of Pentecost was manifested in a variety of languages, because there was a vast variety of tongues and nationalities then present at Jerusalem. But it would seem as if on this occasion the Holy Ghost and His gift of speech displayed themselves in sacred song and holy praise: "They heard them speak with tongues and magnify God." Greek was practically the one tongue of all those who were present. The new converts had been inhabitants for years of Cæsarea, which was now one of the most thoroughly Greek towns in Palestine, so that the gift of tongues as displayed on this occasion must have been of somewhat different character from that exercised on the Day of Pentecost, when a vast variety of nations heard the company of the disciples and apostles speaking in their own languages. There is another difference too between the original outpouring of the Holy Ghost and this repetition of the gift. The Holy Ghost on the first occasion was poured out upon the preachers of the word to qualify them to preach to the people. The Holy Ghost on the second occasion was poured out upon the persons to whom the word was preached to sanction and confirm the call of the Gentiles. The gifts of

the Holy Spirit are confined to no rank or order. They are displayed as the common property of all Christian people, and indicate the freedom and the plenteousness wherewith God's blessings shall be dispensed under the new covenant which was taking the place of the old Levitical Law.

And then comes the last touch which the narrative puts to the whole story: "Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptised, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ." What a corrective we here find of those ultra-spiritual views which make shipwreck of faith! We have known intelligent men speak as if the apostles laid no stress upon holy baptism, and valued it not one whit as compared with the interior gift of the Holy Ghost. We have known intelligent members of the Society of Friends who could not see that the apostles taught the necessity for what they call water baptism. For both these classes of objectors these words of St. Peter, this incident in the story of Cornelius, have an important lesson. They prove the absolute necessity in the apostolic estimation of the rite of Holy Baptism as perpetually practised in the Church of God. For surely if ever the washing of water in the name of the Holy Trinity could have been dispensed with, it was in the case of men upon whom God had just poured the supernatural gift of the Holy Ghost; and yet, even in their case, the divinely appointed sacrament of entrance into the sacred society could not be dispensed with. They were baptised with water in the sacred name, and then, cherishing that sweet sense of duty fulfilled and obedience rendered and spiritual peace and joy possessed which God bestows upon His elect people, they entered into that fuller knowledge and richer grace, that feast of spiritual fat things which St. Peter could impart, as he told them, from his own personal knowledge of the life and teaching of Christ Jesus. It is no wonder that the history of this critical event should terminate with these words: "Then prayed they him to tarry certain days," expressing their keen desire to drink more deeply of the well of life thus lately opened to their fainting souls.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE HARVEST OF THE GENTILES.

ACTS xi. 26.

THE eleventh chapter of the Acts is clearly divisible into two portions. There is first the narrative of St. Peter's reception at Jerusalem after the conversion of Cornelius, and secondly the story of the origin of the Antiochene Church, the mother and metropolis of Gentile Christendom. They are distinct the one from the other, and yet they are closely connected together, for they both deal with the same great topic, the admission of the Gentiles to full and free communion in the Church of God. Let us then search out the line of thought which runs like a golden thread through this whole chapter, sure that in doing so we shall find light shed upon some modern questions from this divinely written ecclesiastical history.

I. St. Peter tarried a certain time with Cor-



nelius and the other new converts at Cæsarea. There was doubtless much to be taught and much to be set in order. Baptism was in the early Church administered when the converts were yet immature in faith and knowledge. The Church was viewed as a hospital, where the sick and feeble were to be admitted and cured. It was not therefore demanded of candidates for admission that they should be perfectly instructed in all the articles and mysteries of the Christian faith. There were indeed some points in which they were not instructed at all till they had been "buried with Christ through baptism into death." Then when they had taken their stand upon the Christian platform, and were able to view the matter from the true vantage point, they were admitted into fuller and deeper mysteries. Peter too must have had his work cut out for him at Cæsarea in striving to organise the Church. St. Philip may have here lent his aid, and may have been constituted the resident head of the local Church.\* After the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch he worked his way up to Cæsarea, preaching in all the towns and villages of that populous district. There he seems to have fixed his residence, as fifteen years or so later we find him permanently located in that city with his "four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy" (Acts xxi. 8, 9). We may be sure that some such Church organisation was immediately started at Cæsarea. We have already traced the work of organisation in Jerusalem. The apostles originally embraced in themselves all ministerial offices, as in turn these offices were originally all summed up in Jesus Christ. The apostles had taken an important step in the establishment of the order of deacons at Jerusalem, retaining in their own hands the supreme power to which appeal and reports could be made. At Damascus it is evident that at the time of St. Paul's conversion there was an organised Church, Ananias being the head and chief of it, with whom communications were officially held; while the notices about Joppa and the six witnesses of his action whom St. Peter brought with him to Cæsarea, indicate that an assembly or Church, organised after the model of the Jerusalem Church, existed in that town.

Having concluded his work in Cæsarea St. Peter returned to Jerusalem, and there had to render an account of his action and was placed upon his defence. "When Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them." This simple circumstance throws much light upon the character of the earliest Christianity. It was to a large extent a Christian democracy. The apostles exercised the supreme executive power, but the collective Christian assembly claimed the exercise of their private judgment, and, above all, knew not anything of the fancied privilege of St. Peter, as Prince of the Apostles, to lay down on his own authority the laws for the whole Christian Commonwealth. Here was St. Peter exercising his ministry and apostolic power among the earliest Christians. How were his ministry and authority received? Were they treated as if the personal authority and decision of St. Peter settled every question with-

out any further appeal? This will be best seen if we tell a story well known in the annals of ecclesiastical history. The fable of Papal Supremacy began to be asserted about the year 500, when a series of forgeries were circulated concerning the bishops of Rome and their decisions during the ages of persecution. One of these forgeries dealt with a pope named Marcellinus, who presided over the See of Rome during the beginning of the great Diocletian persecution. The story goes on to tell that Marcellinus fell into idolatry in order to save his life. A council of three hundred bishops was summoned at Sinuessa, when the assembled bishops are reported to have refused to pass sentence on the Pope, the successor of St. Peter, saying that the Holy See may be judged by no man. They therefore called upon the Pope to condemn himself, as he alone was a judge competent to exercise such a function. This story, according to Döllinger, was forged about the year 500, and it clearly exhibits the different view taken of the position of St. Peter in the Church of Jerusalem and of his alleged successors in the Church of Rome five centuries later. In the latter case St. Peter's successor cannot be judged or condemned by any mortal. According to the Acts of the Apostles the members of the stricter party in the Church of Jerusalem had no hesitation in challenging the actions and teaching of St. Peter himself, and it was only when he could prove the immediate and manifest approval of Heaven that they ceased their opposition, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life."

We can in this incident see how the Church was slowly but surely developing itself under the Divine guidance. The incident when the order of deacons was instituted was the primary step. There was then first manifested that combination of authority and freedom united with open discussion which, originating in the Christian Church, has been the source of all modern society, of modern governments, and modern methods of legislation. Now we see the same ideas applied to questions of doctrine and discipline, till we come in a short time to the perfection of this method in the celebrated Council of Jerusalem which framed the charter and traced out the main lines of development upon which the Church of the Gentiles and true gospel freedom were established.

II. The centre of Christian interest now shifts its position and fixes itself in the city of Antioch, where a further step in advance was taken. Our attention is first of all recalled to the results of St. Stephen's death. "They therefore that were scattered abroad upon the tribulation that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phœnicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the word to none save only to Jews. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus." This is clearly a case of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, and the question has been raised, Was the action of these men of Cyprus and Cyrene quite independent of the action of St. Peter or an immediate result of the same? Did the men of Cyprus and Cyrene preach the gospel to the Gentiles of Antioch of their own motion, or did they wait till tidings of St. Peter's action had reached them, and then, yielding to the generous instincts which had been long beating in the

\*The Church tradition reports, however, that Cornelius was first bishop of Cæsarea, but without any solid authority for the statement.



hearts of these Hellenistic Jews, did they proclaim at Antioch the glad tidings of salvation which the Gentiles of that gay and brilliant but very wicked city so much needed? Our answer to these queries is very short and plain. We think that the preaching of the Hellenists of Cyprus to the Gentiles of Antioch must have been the result of St. Peter's action at Cæsarea, else why did they wait till Antioch was reached to open their mouths to the pagan world? Surely, if the sight of sin and wickedness and civilised depravity was necessary to stir them up to efforts for the spiritual welfare of the Gentile world, Phœnicia and Cyprus abounded with scenes quite sufficient to unseal their lips. But the force of national prejudice and of religious exclusiveness was too strong till they came to Antioch, where tidings must have reached them of the vision and action of St. Peter at Cæsarea.

It is easy to see why this information reached the missionaries at Antioch. Cæsarea was the Roman capital of Palestine, and was a seaport. Antioch was the Roman capital of the province of Syria, an immense extent of territory, which included not merely the country which we call Syria, but extended to the Euphrates on the west and to the desert intervening between Palestine and Egypt on the south. The prefect of the East resided at Antioch, and he was one of the three or four greatest officials under the Roman emperor. Palestine was, in fact, a part of the province of Syria, and its ruler or president was dependent upon the governor of Syria. It is therefore in strictest accordance with the facts of Roman history when St. Luke tells in his Gospel (ii. 2) concerning the taxation of Augustus Cæsar, "This was the first enrolment made when Quirinus was governor of Syria." Antioch being then the seat of the central government of the eastern division of the Roman Empire, and Cæsarea being the headquarters of an important lieutenant of the Syrian proconsul, it is no wonder there should have been very constant intercourse between the two places. The great magazines of arms for the entire east were located at Antioch, and there too the money was coined necessary to pay the troops and to carry on commercial intercourse. It must have been very easy for an official like Cornelius, or even for any simple private soldier or for an ordinary Jew or Christian of Cæsarea, to communicate with Antioch, and to send word concerning the proceedings of St. Peter and the blessings vouchsafed by God to any devout person who might be there seeking after light and truth.\* It is quite natural therefore that, while the Christians dispersed into various lands by the persecution at Jerusalem restrained themselves to the Jews alone throughout their previous labours, when the men of Cyprus and Cyrene heard tidings at Antioch of St. Peter and his doings and revelations at Cæsarea, they at last allowed free scope to their longings which long ago had found place in their more liberalised hearts, and testified to the Gentiles of Antioch concerning the gladsome story of the gospel. Here again we behold another instance of the value of culture and travel and enlarged intelligence. The Hellenists of Cyprus and Cyrene

were the first to realise and act out the principle which God had taught St. Peter. They saw that God's mercies were not restrained to the particular case of Cornelius. They realised that his was a typical instance, and that his conversion was intended to carry with it and to decide the possibility of Gentile salvation and the formation of a Gentile Church all over the world, and they put the principle in operation at once in one of the places where it was most needed: "When the men of Cyprus and Cyrene were come to Antioch, they spake unto the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus." The method of the Divine development was in the primitive ages very similar to that we often still behold. Some improvement is required, some new principle has to be set in motion. If younger men begin the work, or if souls notorious for their freer thought or less prejudiced understandings, attempt to introduce the novel principle, the vast mass of stolid conservative opposition and attachment to the past is at once quickened into lively action. But then some Peter or another, some man of known rectitude and worth, and yet of equally well-known narrow views and devoted adherence to the past, takes some hesitating step in advance. He may indeed strive to limit its application to the special case before him, and he may earnestly deprecate any wider application of the principle on which he has acted. But it is all in vain. He has served the Divine purposes. His narrowness and respectability and personal weight have done their work, and have sanctioned the introduction of the principle which then is applied upon a much wider scale by men whose minds have been liberalised and trained to seize a great broad principle and put it into practical operation.

III. "When they came to Antioch, they spake the word to the Greeks also." And verily the men of Cyprus and Cyrene chose a fitting spot to open the kingdom of heaven to the Greek world and to found the mother Church of Gentile Christendom, for no city in the whole world was more completely Satan's seat, or more entirely devoted to those works which St. John describes as the lusts of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the vain-glory of life. Let us reflect a little on the history and state of Antioch, and we shall then see the Divine motive in selecting it as the site of the first great Gentile Church, and we shall see too the Divine guidance which led St. Luke in this typical ecclesiastical history to select the Church of Antioch for such frequent notice, exceeding, as it does, all other Churches save Jerusalem in the amount of attention bestowed upon it in the Acts of the Apostles.\*

Antioch and Alexandria were towns dating from the same epoch. They came into existence about the year 300 B. C., being the creation of Alexander the Great himself, or of the generals who divided his empire between them. The city of Antioch was originally built by Seleucus Nicator, the founder of the kingdom of Syria, but was subsequently enlarged, so that in St. Paul's time it was divided into four independent districts or towns, each surrounded by its own walls, and all included within one vast

\* Cæsarea and Antioch were about two hundred miles distant from each other by sea. A Roman trireme travelling at express speed would easily have accomplished this distance in two or at most three days.

\* The various Lives of St. Paul, and Gibbon in his "Decline and Fall," give minute accounts of Antioch, its grandeur and wickedness: K. O. Müller's "Antiquities of Antioch," Göttingen, 1836, is an exhaustive work on the subject; see also Mommsen's "Provinces," Book VIII. ch. x.



wall some fifty feet high, which surmounted mountain tops and was carried at vast expense across valleys and ravines. Antioch was in the first century counted the third city in the world, Rome being first, Alexandria second, and Antioch third. It had marvellous natural advantages. It was blessed with charming mountain scenery. The peaks rising up on all sides could be seen from every part of the city, imparting thus to life in Antioch that sense not merely of beauty and grandeur, but of the nearness of such beauty and grandeur combined with solitude and freedom from the madding crowd which seem so sweet to a man who passes his life amid the noise and hurry of a great city. What a change in the conditions of life in London would be at once brought about could the scenery surrounding Edinburgh or Lucerne be transferred to the world's metropolis, and the toiler in Fleet Street and the Strand be enabled to look amid his daily labours upon cloud-piercing mountains or peaks clad in a robe of virgin white! Antioch was built upon the southern bank of the river Orontes, along which it extended about five miles. The main street of the city, otherwise called the Street of Herod after the celebrated Herod the Great who built it, was four and a half miles long. This street was unrivalled among the cities of the world, and was furnished with an arcade on both sides extending its whole length, beneath which the inhabitants could walk and transact business at all times, free from the heat and from the rain. The water supply of Antioch was its special feature. The great orator Libanius, a native of Antioch, who lived three hundred years later than St. Paul, while the city yet stood in all its grandeur and beauty, thus dwells on this feature of Antioch in a panegyric composed under the Emperor Constantius: "That wherein we beat all other is the water supply of our city; if in other respects any one may compete with us, all give way so soon as we come to speak of the water, its abundance and its excellence. In the public baths every stream has the proportions of a river, in the private baths several have the like, and the rest not much less. One measures the abundance of running water by the number of the dwelling-houses; for as many as are the dwelling-houses, so many are also the running waters. Therefore we have no fighting at the public wells as to who shall come first to draw—an evil under which so many considerable towns suffer, when there is a violent crowding round the wells and outcry over broken jars. With us the public fountains flow for ornament, since every one has water within his doors. And this water is so clear that the pail appears empty, and so pleasant that it invites us to drink."\* Such was the description of a pagan who saw Antioch even as St. Paul saw it, and testified concerning the natural gifts with which God had endowed it. But, alas! as with individuals, so is it with cities. God may lavish His best blessings, and yet instead of bringing forth the fruits of righteousness His choicest gifts of nature may be turned into fruitful seed plots of lust and sin. Sodom and Gomorrha were planted in a vale that was well watered and fair and fruitful, even as the Garden of the

\* The same orator informs us that the streets of Antioch were lighted at night with public lamps. In this respect it stood alone among the cities of antiquity; see Libanius, I. 363, and the notes of Valesius on Ammianus Marcellinus, xiv. 1, 9.

Lord; but the inhabitants thereof were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly; and so it was with Antioch. This city so blessed in situation and in nature's richest and most precious gifts was celebrated for its wicked pre-eminence amid the awful corruption which then overspread the cities of the world. When the Roman satirist Juvenal, writing about this period of which we treat, would fain account for the excessive dissolution of morals which then prevailed at Rome, his explanation of it was that the manners of Antioch had invaded Rome and corrupted its ancient purity:

"Jampridem Syrus in Tiberim defluxit Orontes."

Amid the general wickedness of Antioch there was one element of life and hope and purity. The Jews of Antioch formed a large society in that city governed by their own laws and preserving themselves by their peculiar discipline free from the abounding vices of Oriental paganism. It was at Antioch as it was at Alexandria and Damascus. The Jews at Alexandria had their alabarch to whom they owed special allegiance and by whom alone they were ruled; the Jews of Damascus had their ethnarch who exercised peculiar jurisdiction over them; and so too had the Jews of Antioch a peculiar ruler of their own, forming thus an *imperium in imperio*, running counter to our Western notions which in many respects demand an iron uniformity very foreign to the Eastern mind, and show themselves eminently deficient in that flexibility and diversity which found an abundant play even among the arrangements of the Roman Empire.\* This Jewish quarter of Antioch had for centuries been growing and extending itself, and its chief synagogue had been glorified by the reception of some of the choicest temple spoils which the kings of Syria had at first carried captive from Jerusalem and then in a fit of repentance or of prudent policy had bestowed upon the Jewish colony in their capital city.

Such was the city to which the men of Cyprus and Cyrene were now carrying the news of the gospel, intending, doubtless, to tell merely their Jewish fellow-countrymen and religionists of the Messiah whose love and power they had themselves experienced. Here, however, they were met by the startling information from Cæsarea. They were, however, prepared for it. They were Hellenistic Jews like St. Stephen. They had listened to his burning words, and had followed closely his epoch-making speeches whereby he confounded the Jews and clearly indicated the opening of a new era. But then God's dispensations seemed to have terminated his teaching and put a fatal end to the hopes which he had raised. Men then misread God's dealings with His servants, and interpreted His ways amiss. The death of Stephen seemed perhaps to some minds a visible condemnation of his views, when in reality it was the direct channel by which God would work out a wider propagation of them, as well as the conversion of the agent destined to diffuse them most powerfully. Apparent defeat is not always permanent disaster, whether in things temporal or things spiritual; nay, rather, the temporal check may

\* We shall have frequent occasions to notice the numerous varieties of rule, privileges, and local liberties which prevailed under the Roman Empire. The Romans seem to have scrupulously respected ancient rights and customs wherever possible, provided only the supreme sovereignty of Rome was recognised.



be the necessary condition of the final and glorious victory. So it was in this case, as the men of Cyprus and Cyrene proved, when the news of St. Peter's revelation and his decisive action arrived and they realised in action the principles of Catholic Christianity for which their loved teacher St. Stephen had died. And their brave action was soon followed by blessed success, by a rich harvest of souls: "The hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number that believed turned to the Lord." Thus were laid the foundations of the headquarters, the mother Church of Gentile Christianity.

IV. Now we come to another step in the development. Tidings of the action taken at Antioch came to Jerusalem. The news must have travelled much the same road as that by which, as we have indicated, the story of St. Peter's action was carried to Antioch. The intercourse between Jerusalem and Antioch was frequent enough by land or by sea; and no synagogue and no Jewish society was more liberal in its gifts towards the support of the supreme council and hierarchy at Jerusalem than the Jewish colony and its synagogues at Damascus. And the old custom of communication with Jerusalem naturally led the Nazarenes of Antioch to send word of their proceedings up to the apostles and supreme council who ruled their parent society in the same city. We see a clear indication that the events at Antioch happened subsequently to those at Cæsarea in the manner in which the news was received at Jerusalem. There seems to have been no strife, no discussion, no controversy. The question had been already raised and decided after St. Peter's return. So the apostles simply select a fitting messenger to go forth with the authority of the apostles and to complete the work which, having been initiated in baptism, merely now demanded that imposition of hands which, as we have seen in the case of the Samaritan converts, was one of the special functions of the apostles and chiefs of the Church at Jerusalem. And in choosing Barnabas the apostles made a wise choice. They did not send one of the original Twelve, because not one of them was fitted for the peculiar work now demanded. They were all narrow, provincial, untravelled, devoid of that wide and generous training which God had given to Barnabas. It may be too that they felt restrained from going beyond the bounds of Canaan before the twelve years had elapsed of which ancient Christian tradition tells as the limit of their stay in Jerusalem fixed by our Lord Himself.\* He was a Hellenistic Jew, and he could sympathise with the wider feelings and ideas of the Hellenists. He was a man of Cyprus, a friend and perhaps connection of many, both Jews and Gentiles, among those whose new-born faith and hope were now in question. And above all he was a man of kindly heart and genial temper and loving thought and blessed charity, fitted to soothe jealousies and allay suspicions, and make the long alienated and despised Gentiles feel at home in the Church and family of Jesus Christ. Barnabas was a person peculiarly fitted to prove a mediator and uniting link in a society where divergent elements found a place and asserted themselves. He was not the man to take a new step or to have decided the question of the admission of the Gentiles if it had not been already settled.

\* See Eusebius, "Eccles. Hist.," v. 18.

He must have come therefore fortified by the authority of the apostles, and then, knowing right well what they approved, he was just the man to carry out the details of an arrangement requiring tact and skill and temper; though he was by no means suited to decide a great question on its own merits or to initiate any great movement. In the Church of God then, as in the Church of God still, there are a place and a work for the strong man of keen logic and a vigorous intellect and profound thought. And there are too a place and a work for the man of loving heart and a charity which evermore delights in compromise. "Barnabas, when he was come, and had seen the grace of God, was glad; and he exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and faith; and much people was added unto the Lord." Barnabas had another virtue too. He knew his own weakness. He did not imagine like some men that he was specially strong where he was eminently weak. He felt his want of the active vigorous mind of his friend of boyhood, the new convert Saul. He knew where he was living in comparative obscurity and silence; so after a little experience of the atmosphere of Antioch he departed to Tarsus to seek for him and bring him back where a great work was awaiting his peculiar turn of mind. There is an ancient historian of Antioch who has preserved for us many stories about that city in these apostolic and even in much earlier ages. His name is John Malalas; he lived about six hundred years after Christ and had access to many ancient documents and writers that are no longer known to us. He tells us many things about the primitive Church of Antioch. He has his own version of the quarrel between St. Paul and St. Peter which happened in that city; and he fixes even the very spot where St. Paul first preached, telling us that its name was Singon Street, which stood near the Pantheon. This may seem to us a minuteness of detail too great to be believed. But then we must remember that John Malalas expressly cites ancient chronologers and historians as his authorities, and he himself lived while as yet Antioch retained all the ancient arrangements of streets and divisions. And surely Saul, as he travelled from Tarsus responding at once to the call of Barnabas, must have seen enough to stir his love to Christ and to souls into heartiest exertion. He came doubtless by sea and landed at Seleucia, the port of Antioch, some sixteen miles distant from the city. As he travelled up to Antioch he would get distant glimpses of the groves of Daphne, a park ten miles in circumference, dedicated indeed to the poetic worship of Apollo, but dedicated also to the vilest purposes of wickedness intimately associated with that poetic worship. Poetry, whether ancient or modern, can be very blessed, ennobling and elevating man's whole nature. But the same poetry, as in ancient paganism and in some modern writers, can become a festering plague-spot, the abounding source to its votaries of moral corruption and spiritual death.

Daphne and its associations would rouse the whole soul, the healthy moral nature of Saul of Tarsus, inherited originally from his ancient Jewish training, and now quickened and deepened by the spiritual revelations made to him in



Christ Jesus. It is no wonder then that here we read of St. Paul's first long and continuous period of ministerial work: "It came to pass that even for a whole year they were gathered together with the Church, and taught much people." The results of the new force which Barnabas introduced into the spiritual life of Antioch soon became manifested. "The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch." Saul of Tarsus possessed what Barnabas did not possess. He possessed a powerful, a logical, and a creative intellect. He realised from the beginning what his own principles meant and to what they were leading him. He taught not Judaism or the Law with an addition merely about Jesus of Nazareth. He troubled not himself about circumcision or the old covenant, but he taught from the very beginning Christ Jesus, Christ in His Divine and human nature, Christ in His various offices, Jesus Christ as the one hope for mankind. This was now at Antioch, as before at Damascus, the staple topic of St. Paul's preaching, and therefore the Antiochenes, with their ready wit and proverbial power of giving nicknames, at once designated the new sect not Nazarenes or Galileans as the Jews of Jerusalem called them, but Christians or adherents of Christ. Here, however, I prefer to avail myself of the exposition which one of the great spiritual teachers of the last generation gave us of this expression. The well-known and learned Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. Trench, in his "Study of Words" (21st Ed.: Lond. 1890), p. 189, thus draws out the lesson connected with this word and the time of its appearance: "'The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.' That we have here a notice which we would not willingly have missed all will acknowledge, even as nothing can be otherwise than curious which relates to the infancy of the Church. But there is here much more than a curious notice. Question it a little closer, and how much it will be found to contain, how much which it is waiting to yield up! What light it throws on the whole story of the Apostolic Church to know where and when this name of Christians was first imposed on the faithful; for imposed by adversaries it certainly was, not devised by themselves, however afterwards they may have learned to glory in it as the name of highest dignity and honour. They did not call themselves, but, as is expressly recorded, they 'were called' Christians first at Antioch; in agreement with which statement the name occurs nowhere in Scripture, except on the lips of those alien from or opposed to the faith (Acts xxvi. 28; 1 Peter iv. 16). And as it was a name imposed by adversaries, so among these adversaries it was plainly heathens, and not Jews, who were its authors; for Jews would never have called the followers of Jesus of Nazareth 'Christians,' or those of Christ, the very point of their opposition to Him being, that He was not the Christ, but a false pretender to the name. Starting then from this point that 'Christians' was a title given to the disciples by the heathen, what may we deduce from it further? At Antioch they first obtained this name—at the city, that is, which was the headquarters of the Church's mission to the heathen, in the same sense as Jerusalem had been the headquarters of the mission to the seed of Abraham. It was there and among the faithful there that a conviction of the world-wide destination of the gospel arose; there it was first plainly

seen as intended for all kindreds of the earth. Hitherto the faithful in Christ had been called by their adversaries, and indeed were often still called 'Galileans' or 'Nazarenes'—both names which indicated the Jewish cradle wherein the Church had been nursed, and that the world saw in the new society no more than a Jewish sect. But it was plain that the Church had now, even in the world's eyes, chipped its Jewish shell. The name Christians or those of Christ, while it told that Christ and the confession of Him were felt even by the heathen to be the sum and centre of this new faith, showed also that they comprehended now, not all which the Church would be, but something of this; saw this much, namely, that it was no mere sect and variety of Judaism, but a Society with a mission and a destiny of its own. Now will the thoughtful reader fail to observe that the coming up of this name is by closest juxtaposition connected in the sacred narrative, and still more closely in the Greek than in the English, with the arrival at Antioch, and with the preaching there, of that Apostle who was God's appointed instrument for bringing the Church to a full sense that the message which it had was not for some men only, but for all. As so often happens with the rise of new names, the rise of this one marked a new epoch in the Church's life, and that it was entering upon a new stage of development." This is a long extract, but it sets forth in dignified and aptly chosen words, such as Archbishop Trench always used, the important lessons which the thoughtful student of the Acts may gather from the time and place where the term "Christians" first sprang into existence.

Finally, we notice in connection with Antioch that the foundation of the great Gentile Church was marked by the same universal impulse which we trace wherever Christ was effectually preached. The faith of the Crucified evermore produced love to the brethren. Agabus, a prophet whom we shall again meet many years after in the course of St. Paul's life, and who then predicted his approaching arrest and captivity at Jerusalem, made his earliest recorded appearance at Antioch, where he announced an impending famine. Agabus exercised the office of a prophet, which implied under the New Dispensation rather the office of preaching than of prediction. Prediction, indeed, whether under the Old or the New Dispensation, formed but a small portion of the prophetic office. The work of the prophet was pre-eminently that of telling forth God's will and enforcing it upon a careless generation. Occasionally indeed, as in the case of Agabus, that telling forth involved prediction or announcement of God's chastisements and visitations; but far oftener the prophet's work was finished when he enforced the great principles of truth and righteousness as the Christian preacher does still. Agabus seems to have been specially gifted in the direction of prediction. He announced a famine as impending over the whole world, which came to pass in the age of Claudius, offering to the Gentile Church of Antioch an opportunity, of which they gladly availed themselves, to repay somewhat of the spiritual obligation which the Gentiles owed to the Jews according to St. Paul's own rule: "If the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, they owe it to them also to minister unto them in carnal things."\*

\* This famine is thoroughly historical. It is noticed by



can trace here the force and power of ancient Jewish customs. We can see how the mould and form and external shape of the Church was gained from the Jew. The Jewish colony of Antioch had been of old famous for the liberality of its gifts to the mother community at Jerusalem. The predominant element in the Church of Antioch was now Gentile, but still the ancient customs prevailed. The Gentile Christian community acted towards the Jerusalem Church as the Jewish community had been used to treat their countrymen: "The disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren that dwelt in Judæa: which also they did, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE DEFEAT OF PRIDE.

ACTS xii. 1-3, 23-24.

THE chapter at which we have now arrived is very important from a chronological point of view, as it brings the sacred narrative into contact with the affairs of the external world concerning which we have independent knowledge. The history of the Christian Church and of the outside world for the first time clearly intersect, and we thus gain a fixed point of time to which we can refer. This chronological character of the twelfth chapter of the Acts arises from its introduction of Herod and the narrative of the second notable persecution which the Church at Jerusalem had to endure. The appearance of a Herod on the scene and the tragedy in which he was the actor demand a certain amount of historical explanation, for, as we have already noted in the case of St. Stephen five or six years previously, Roman procurators and Jewish priests and the Sanhedrin then possessed or at least used the power of the sword in Jerusalem, while a word had not been heard of a Herod exercising capital jurisdiction in Judæa for more than forty years. Who was this Herod? Whence came he? How does he emerge so suddenly upon the stage? As great confusion exists in the minds of many Bible students about the ramifications of the Herodian family and the various offices and governments they held, we must make a brief digression in order to show who and whence this Herod was concerning whom we are told, "Now about that time Herod the king put forth his hands to afflict certain of the Church."

This Herod Agrippa was a grandson of Herod the Great, and displayed in the solitary notice of him which Holy Scripture has handed down many of the characteristics, cruel, bloodthirsty, and yet magnificent, which that celebrated sovereign manifested throughout his life. The story of Herod Agrippa his grandson was a real romance. He made trial of every station in life. He had been at times a captive, at times a conqueror. He had at various periods experience of a prison house and of a throne. He had felt the depths of poverty, and had not known where to borrow money sufficient to pay his way to

Rome. He had tasted of the sweetness of affluence, and had enjoyed the pleasures of magnificent living. He had been a subject and a ruler, a dependent on a tyrant, and the trusted friend and councillor of emperors. His story is worth telling. He was born about ten years before the Christian era, and was the son of Aristobulus, one of the sons of Herod the Great. After the death of Herod, his grandfather, the Herodian family were scattered all over the world. Some obtained official positions; others were obliged to shift for themselves, depending on the fragments of the fortune which the great king had left them. Agrippa lived at Rome till about the year 30 A. D., associating with Drusus, the son of the Emperor Tiberius, by whom he was led into the wildest extravagance. He was banished from Rome about that year, and was obliged to retire to Palestine, contenting himself with the small official post of *Ædile* of Tiberias in Galilee, given him by his uncle Herod Antipas, which he held about the time when our Lord was teaching in that neighbourhood. During the next six years the fortunes of Agrippa were of the most chequered kind. He soon quarrelled with Antipas, and is next found a fugitive at the court of Antioch with the Prefect of the East. He there borrowed from a money-lender the sum of £800 at 12 1-2 per cent. interest, to enable him to go to Rome and push his interests at the imperial court. He was arrested, however, for a large debt due to the Treasury just when he was embarking, and consigned to prison, whence the very next day he managed to escape, and fled to Alexandria. There he again raised another timely loan, and thus at last succeeded in getting to Rome. Agrippa attached himself to Caligula, the heir of the empire, and after various chances was appointed by him King of Trachonitis, a dominion which Caligula and subsequently Claudius enlarged by degrees, till in the year 41 he was invested with the kingdom of the whole of Palestine, including Galilee, Samaria, and Judæa, of which Agrippa proceeded to take formal possession about twelve months before the events recorded in the twelfth chapter of Acts.\*

Herod's career had been marked by various changes, but in one respect he had been consistent. He was ever a thorough Jew, and a vigorous and useful friend to his fellow-countrymen. We have already noticed that his influence had been used with Caligula to induce the Emperor to forego his mad project of erecting his statue in the Holy of Holies at Jerusalem.† Herod had, however, one great drawback in the eyes of the priestly faction at Jerusalem. All the descendants of Herod the Great were tainted by their Edomite blood, which they inherited through him. Their kind offices and support were accepted indeed, but only grudgingly. Herod felt this, and it was quite natural therefore for the newly appointed king to strive to gain all the popularity he could with the dominant party at Jerusalem by persecuting the new sect which was giving them so much trouble. No incident could possibly have been more natural, more consistent with the facts of history, as well as with the known dispositions and tendencies of human nature than that recorded in

several who wrote of this time, as Dion., ix. 11; Suetonius, Claud., 20; Aurelius, Victor; and is confirmed by the testimony of the coins: see Eckhel, vi. 238, 239, 240. Cf. Lewin's "Fasti Sacri," p. 274, A. D. 42.

\* See Lewin's "Fasti Sacri," A. D. 41, p. 271, for the authorities on the subject of Herod's career.

† See p. 427 above.



these words—"Now about that time Herod the king put forth his hands to afflict certain of the Church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword." Herod's act was a very politic one from a worldly point of view. It was a hard dose enough for the Jewish people to swallow, to find a king imposed upon them by an idolatrous Gentile power; but it was some alleviation of their lot that the king was a Jew, and a Jew so devoted to the service of the ruling hierarchy that he was willing to use his secular power to crush the troublesome Nazarene sect whose doctrine threatened for ever to destroy all hopes of a temporal restoration for Israel. Such being the historical setting of the picture presented to us, let us apply ourselves to the spiritual application and lessons of this incident in apostolic history. We have here a martyrdom, a deliverance, and a Divine judgment, which will all repay careful study.

I. A martyrdom is here brought under our notice, and that the first martyrdom among the apostles. Stephen's was the first Christian martyrdom, but that of James was the first apostolic martyrdom. When Herod, following his grandfather's footsteps, would afflict the Church, "he killed James the brother of John with the sword." We must carefully distinguish between two martyrs of the same name who have both found a place in the commemorations of Christian hope and love. May-day is the feast devoted to the memory of St. Philip and St. James, July 25th is the anniversary consecrated to the memorial of St. James the Apostle, whose death is recorded in the passage now under consideration. The latter was the brother of John and son of Zebedee; the former was the brother or cousin, according to the flesh, of our Lord. St. James the Apostle perished early in the Church's history. St. James the Just flourished for more than thirty years after the Resurrection. He lived indeed to a comparatively advanced period of the Church's history, as is manifest from a study of the Epistle which he wrote to the Jewish Christians of the Dispersion. He there rebukes shortcomings and faults, respect for the rich and contempt of the poor, oppression and outrage and irreverence, which could never have found place in that first burst of love and devotion to God which the age of our Herodian martyr witnessed, but must have been the outcome of long years of worldly prosperity and ease. James the Just, the stern censor of Christian morals and customs, whose language indeed in its severity has at times caused one-sided and narrow Christians much trouble, must often have looked back with regret and longing to the purer days of charity and devotion when James the brother of John perished by the sword of Herod.

Again, we notice about this martyred apostle that, though there is very little told us concerning his life and actions, he must have been a very remarkable man. He was clearly remarkable for his Christian privileges. He was one of the apostles specially favoured by our Lord. He was admitted by Him into the closest spiritual converse. Thus we find that, with Peter and John, James the Apostle was one of the three selected by our Lord to behold the first manifestation of His power over the realms of the dead when He restored the daughter of Jairus to life; with the same two, Peter and John, he was privileged to behold our Saviour receive the

first foretaste of His heavenly glory upon the Mount of Transfiguration; and with them too he was permitted to behold his great Master drink the first draught of the cup of agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. James the Apostle had thus the first necessary qualification for an eminent worker in the Lord's vineyard. He had been admitted into Christ's most intimate friendship, he knew much of his Lord's will and mind. And the privileges thus conferred upon St. James had not been misused or neglected. He did not hide his talent in the dust of idleness, nor wrap it round with the mantle of sloth. He utilised his advantages. He became a foremost, if not indeed the foremost worker for his loved Lord in the Church of Jerusalem, as is intimated by the opening words of this passage, which tells us that when Herod wished to harass and vex the Church he selected James the brother of John as his victim; and we may be sure that with the keen instinct of a persecutor, Herod selected not the least prominent and useful, but the most devoted and energetic champion of Christ to satisfy his cruel purpose. And yet, though James was thus privileged and thus faithful and thus honoured by God, his active career is shrouded thick round with clouds and darkness. We know nothing of the good works and brave deeds and powerful sermons he devoted to his Master's cause. We are told simply of the death by which he glorified God. All else is hidden with God till that day when the secret thoughts and deeds of every man shall be revealed. This incident in early apostolic Church history is a very typical one, and teaches many a lesson very necessary for these times and for all times. If an apostle so privileged and so faithful was content to do his work, and then to pass away without a single line of memorial, a single word to keep his name or his labours fresh among men, how much more may we, petty, faithless, trifling as we are, be contented to do our duty, and to pass away without any public recognition! And yet how we all do crave after such recognition! How intensely we long for human praise and approval! How useless we esteem our labours unless they are followed by it! How inclined we are to make the fallible judgment of man the standard by which we measure our actions, instead of having the mind's eye ever steadily fixed, as James the brother of John had, on His approval alone who now seeing our secret trials, struggles, efforts, will one day reward His faithful followers openly!

This is one great lesson which this typical passage by its silence as well as by its speech clearly teaches the Church of every age.

Again, this martyrdom of St. James proclaims yet another lesson. God hereby warns the Church against the idolatry of human agents, against vain trust in human support. Let us consider the circumstances of the Church at that time. The Church had just passed through a season of violent persecution, and had lost one of its bravest and foremost soldiers in the person of Stephen, the martyred deacon. And now there was impending over the Church what is often more trying far than a time, short and sharp, of violence and blood,—a period of temporal distress and suffering, trying the principles and testing the endurance of the weaker brethren in a thousand petty trifles. It was a time when the courage, the wisdom, the experience of



the tried and trusted leaders would be specially required to guide the Church amid the many new problems which day by day were cropping up. And yet it was just then, at such a crisis, that the Lord permits the bloody sword of Herod to be stretched forth and removes one of the very chiefest champions of the Christian host just when his presence seemed most necessary. It must have appeared a dark and trying dispensation to the Church of that day; but though attended doubtless with some present drawbacks and apparent disadvantages, it was well and wisely done to warn the Church of every age against mere human dependence, mere temporal refuges; teaching by a typical example that it is not by human might or earthly wisdom, not by the eloquence of man or the devices of earth that Christ's Church and the people must be saved; that it is by His own right hand, and by His own holy arm alone our God will get Himself the victory.

Yet again we may learn from this incident another lesson rich-laden with comfort and instruction. This martyrdom of St. James throws us back upon a circumstance which occurred during our Lord's last journey to Jerusalem before His crucifixion, and interprets it for us. Let us recall it. Our Lord was going up to Jerusalem, and His disciples were following Him with wondering awe. The shadow of the Cross, projecting itself forward, made itself unconsciously felt throughout the little company, and men were astonished, though they knew not why. They simply felt as men do on a close sultry summer's day when a thunderstorm is overhead, that something awful was impending. They had, however, a vague feeling that the kingdom of God would shortly appear, and so the mother of Zebedee's children, with all that boldness which affection lends to feminine minds, drew near and strove to secure a boon before all others for her own children. She prayed that to her two sons might be granted the posts of honour in the temporal kingdom she thought of as now drawing so very near. The Lord replied to her request in very deep and far-reaching language, the meaning of which she then understood not, but learned afterwards through the discipline of pain and sorrow and death: "Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" And then, when James and John had professed their ability, he predicts their future fate: "My cup indeed ye shall drink." The mother and the sons alike spoke bold words, and offered a sincere but an ignorant prayer. Little indeed did the mother dream as she presented her petition—"Command that these my two sons may sit, one on Thy right hand, and one on Thy left hand in Thy kingdom"—how that prayer would be answered, and yet answered it was. To the one son, James, was granted the one post of honour. He was made to sit on the Master's right hand, for he was the first of the apostles called to enter into Paradise through a baptism of blood. While to the other son, St. John, was granted the other post of honour, for he was left the longest upon earth to guide, direct, and sustain the Church by his inspired wisdom, large experience, and apostolic authority. The contrast between the prayer offered up to Christ in ignorance and shortsightedness, and the manner in which the same prayer was answered in richest abundance, suggests to us the comforting reflec-

tion that no prayer offered up in sincerity and truth is ever really left unanswered. We may indeed never *see* how the prayer is answered. The mother of St. James may little have dreamt, as she beheld her son's lifeless body brought home to her, that this trying dispensation was a real answer to her ambitious petition. But we can now see that it was so, and can thus learn a lesson of genuine confidence, of holy boldness, of strong faith in the power of sincere and loving communion with God. Let us only take care to cultivate the same spirit of genuine humility and profound submission which possessed the soul of those primitive Christians, enabling them to say, no matter how their petitions were answered, whether in joy or sorrow, in smiles or tears, in riches or poverty, "Not my will, but Thine, O Lord, be done."

II. We have again in this twelfth chapter the record of a Divine deliverance. Herod, seeing that the Jewish authorities were pleased because they had now a sympathetic ruler who understood their religious troubles and was resolved to help in quelling them, determined to proceed farther in the work of repression. He arrested another prominent leader, St. Peter, and cast him into prison. The details are given to us of Herod's action and Peter's arrest. Peter was now making his first acquaintance with Roman methods of punishment. He had been indeed previously arrested and imprisoned, but his arrest had been carried out by the Jewish authorities, and he had been consigned to the care of the Temple police, and had occupied the Temple prison. But Herod, though a strict Jew in religion, had been thoroughly Romanised in matters of rule and government, and therefore he treated St. Peter after the Roman fashion: "When he had taken him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quarternions of soldiers to guard him; intending after the Passover to bring him forth to the people." He was delivered to sixteen men, who divided the night into four watches, four men watching at a time, after the Roman method of discipline.\* And then, in contrast to all this preparation, we are told how the Church betook herself to her sure refuge and strong tower of defence: "Peter therefore was kept in prison; but prayer was made earnestly of the Church unto God for him." These early Christians had not had their faith limited or weakened by discussions whether petitions for temporal blessings were a proper subject of prayer, or whether spiritual blessings did not alone supply true matter for supplication before the Divine throne. They were in the first fervour of Christian love, and they did not theorise, define, or debate about prayer and its efficacy. They only knew that their Master had told them to pray, and had promised to answer sincere prayer, as He alone knew how; and so they gathered themselves in instant, ceaseless prayer at the foot of the throne of grace. I say "ceaseless" prayer because it seems that the Jerusalem Church, feeling its danger, organised a continuous service of prayer. "Prayer was made earnestly of the Church unto God for him" is the statement of the fifth verse, and then when St. Peter was released "he came to the house of Mary, where many were gathered

\* These elaborate precautions were doubtless taken on account of his escape on the previous occasion, when the Sanhedrin had arrested him, as narrated in the nineteenth verse of the fifth chapter.



together and were praying," though the night must have been far advanced. The crisis was a terrible one; the foremost champion, St. James, had been taken, and now another great leader was threatened, and therefore the Church flung herself at the feet of the Master seeking deliverance, and was not disappointed, as the Church has never since been disappointed when she has cast herself in lowliness and profound submission before the same holy sanctuary. The narrative then proceeds to give us the particulars of St. Peter's deliverance, as St. Peter himself seems to have told it to St. Luke, for we have details given us which could only have come either directly or indirectly from the person most immediately concerned. But of these we shall treat in a little. The story now introduces the supernatural, and for the believer this is quite in keeping with the facts of the case. A great crisis in the history of the Jerusalem Church has arrived. The mother Church of all Christendom, the fountain and source of original Christianity, is threatened with extinction. The life of the greatest existing leader of that Church is at stake, and that before his work is done. The very existence of the Christian revelation seems imperilled, and God sends forth an angel, a heavenly messenger, to rescue His endangered servant, and to prove to unbelieving Jew, to the haughty Herod, and to the frightened but praying disciples alike the care which He ever exercises over His Church and people. Here, however, a question may be raised. How was it that an angel, a supernatural messenger, was despatched to the special rescue of St. Peter? Why was not the same assistance vouchsafed to St. James, who had just been put to death? Why was not the same assistance vouchsafed to St. Peter himself when he was martyred at Rome, or to St. Paul when he lay in the dungeon in the same city of Rome or at Cæsarea? Simply, we reply, because God's hour was not yet come and the Apostle's work was not yet done. St. James's work was done, and therefore the Lord did not immediately interfere, or rather He summoned His servant to His assigned post of honour by the ministry of Herod. The wrath of man became the instrument whereby the praises of God were chanted and the soul of the righteous conveyed to its appointed place. The Lord did not interfere when St. Paul was cast into the prison house at Cæsarea, or St. Peter incarcerated in the Roman dungeon, because they had then a great work to do in showing how His servants can suffer as well as work. But now St. Peter had many a long year of active labour before him and much work to do as the Apostle of the Circumcision in preventing that schism with which the diverse parties and opposing ideas of Jew and Gentile threatened the infant Church, in smoothing over and reconciling the manifold oppositions, jealousies, difficulties, misunderstandings, which ever attend such a season of transition and transformation as now was fast dawning upon the Divine society. The arrest of St. Peter and his threatened death was a great crisis in the history of the primitive Church. St. Peter's life was very precious to the existence of that Church, it was very precious for the welfare of mankind at large, and so it was a fitting time for God to raise up a banner against triumphant pride and worldly force by the hand of a supernatural messenger.

The steps by which St. Peter was delivered are all of them full of edification and comfort. Let us mark them. "When Herod was about to bring him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and guards before the door kept the prison." It was on that fateful night the same as when the angels descended on the Resurrection morning; the guards were in their rightful place and discharging their accustomed duties, but when God intervenes then human precautions are all useless. The words of the narrative are striking in their quiet dignity. There is no working up of details. There is no pandering to mere human curiosity. Everything is in keeping with the sustained force, sublimity, elevation which we ever behold in the Divine action. Peter was sleeping between two soldiers; one chained to each arm, so that he could not move without awaking them. He was sleeping profoundly and calmly, because he felt himself in the hands of an Almighty Father who will order everything for the best. The interior rest amid the greatest trials which an assured confidence like that enjoyed by St. Peter can confer is something marvellous, and has not been confined to apostolic times. Our Lord's servants have in every age proved the same wondrous power. I know of course that criminals are often said to enjoy a profound sleep the night before their execution. But then habitual criminals and hardened murderers have their spiritual natures so completely overmastered and dominated by their lower material powers that they realise nothing beyond the present. They are little better than the beasts which perish, and think as little of the future as they do. But persons with highly strung nervous powers, who realise the awful change impending over them, cannot be as they, specially if they have no such sure hope as that which sustained St. Peter. He slept calmly here as Paul and Silas rejoiced in the Philippian prison house, as the Master Himself slept calmly in the stern of the wave-rocked boat on the Galilean lake, because he knew himself to be reposing in the arms of Everlasting Love, and this knowledge bestowed upon him a sweet and calm repose at the moment of supreme danger of which the fevered children of time know nothing.

And now all the circumstances of the celestial visit are found to be most suitable and becoming. The angel stood by Peter. A light shined in the cell, because light is the very element in which these heavenly beings spend their existence. The chains which bind St. Peter fell off without any effort human or angelic, just as in a few moments the great gate of the prison opened of its own accord, because all these things, bonds and bolts and bars, derive all their coercive power from the will of God, and when that will changes or is withdrawn they cease to be operative, or become the instruments of the very opposite purpose, assisting and not hindering His servants. Then the angel's actions and directions are characteristic in their dignified vigour. He told the awakened sleeper to act promptly: "He smote him on the side, and awoke him, saying, Rise up quickly." But there is no undue haste. As on the Resurrection morning the napkin that was upon Christ's head was found not lying with the rest of the grave-cloths, but rolled up in a place by itself, so too on this occasion the angel shows minute care



for Peter's personal appearance. There must be nothing undignified, careless, untidy even, about the dress of the rescued apostle: "Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals." St. Peter had naturally laid aside his external garments, had unloosed his inner robes, and taken off his sandals when preparing for sleep. Nothing, however, escapes the heavenly messenger, and so he says, "Cast thy garment about thee, and follow Me," referring to the loose upper robe or overcoat which the Jews wore over their underclothes; and then the angel led him forth, teaching the Church the perpetual lesson that external dignity of appearance is evermore becoming to God's people, when not even an angel considered these things beneath his notice amid all the excitement of a midnight rescue, nor did the inspired writer omit to record such apparently petty details. Nothing about St. Peter was too trivial for the angel's notice and direction, as again nothing in life is too trivial for the sanctifying and elevating care of our holy religion. Dress, food, education, marriage, amusements, all of life's work and of life's interests, are the subject matter whereon the principles inculcated by Jesus Christ and taught by the ministry of His Church are to find their due scope and exercise.

Peter's deliverance was now complete. The angel conducted him through one street to assure him that he was really free and secure him from bewilderment, and then departed. The Apostle thereupon sought out the well-known centre of Christian worship, "the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark," where stood the upper chamber, honoured as no other chamber had ever been. There he made known his escape, and then retired to some secret place where Herod could not find him, re-remaining there concealed till Herod was dead and direct Roman law and authority were once more in operation at Jerusalem. There are two or three details in this narrative that are deserving of special notice, as showing that St. Luke received the story most probably from St. Peter himself. These touches are expressions of St. Peter's inner thoughts, which could have been known only to St. Peter, and must have been derived from him. Thus we are told about his state of mind when the angel appeared: "He wist not that it was true which was done by the angel, but thought he saw a vision." Again, after his deliverance, we are told of the thoughts which passed through his mind, the words which rose to his lips when he found himself once again a free man: "When Peter was come to himself he said, Now I know of a truth that the Lord hath sent forth His angel, and delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews." While, again, how true to life and to the female nature is the incident of the damsel Rhoda! She came across the courtyard to hearken and see who was knocking at the outer gate at that late hour: "When she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for joy, but ran in and told that Peter stood before the gate." We behold the impulsiveness of the maid. She quite forgot the Apostle's knocking at the gate in her eager desire to convey the news to his friends. And, again, how true to nature their scepticism! They were gathered praying for Peter's release, but so little did they expect an answer to their prayers that, when the answer does come, and in the precise way that they were asking for it,

and longing for it, they are astonished, and tell the maid-servant who bore the tidings, "Thou art mad." We pray as the primitive Church did, and that constantly; but is it not with us as with them? We pray indeed, but we do not expect our prayers to be answered, and therefore we do not profit by them as we might.

Such were the circumstances of St. Peter's deliverance, which was a critical one for the Church. It struck a blow at Herod's new policy of persecution unto death; it may have induced him to depart from Jerusalem and descend to Cæsarea, where he met his end, leaving the Church at Jerusalem in peace; and the deliverance must have thrown a certain marvellous halo round St. Peter when he appeared again at Jerusalem, enabling him to occupy a more prominent position without any fear for his life.

III. We have also recorded in this chapter a notable defeat of pride, ostentation, and earthly power. The circumstances are well known. Herod, vexed perhaps by his disappointment in the matter of Peter, went down to Cæsarea, which his grandfather had magnificently adorned. But he had other reasons too. He had a quarrel with the men of Tyre and Sidon, and he would take effective measures against them. Tyre and Sidon were great seaports and commercial towns, but their country did not produce food sufficient for the maintenance of its inhabitants, just as England, the emporium of the world's commerce, is obliged to depend for its food supplies upon other and distant lands.\* The men of Tyre and Sidon were not, however, unacquainted with the ways of Eastern courts. They bribed the king's chamberlain, and Herod was appeased. There was another motive which led Herod to Cæsarea. It was connected with his Roman experience and with his courtier-life. The Emperor Claudius Cæsar was his friend and patron. To him Herod owed his restoration to the rich dominions of his grandfather. That emperor had gone in the previous year, A. D. 43, to conquer Britain. He spent six months in our northern regions in Gaul and Britain, and then, when smitten by the cold blasts of mid-winter, he fled to the south again, as so many of our own people do now. He arrived in Rome in the January of the year 44, and immediately ordered public games to be celebrated in honour of his safe return, assuming as a special name the title Britannicus. These public shows were imitated everywhere throughout the empire as soon as the news of the Roman celebrations arrived. The tidings would take two or three months to arrive at Palestine, and the Passover may have passed before Herod heard of his patron's doings. Jewish scruples would not allow him to celebrate games after the Roman fashion at Jerusalem, and for this purpose therefore he descended to the Romanised city of Cæsarea, where all the appliances necessary for that purpose were kept in readiness. There is thus a link which binds together the history of our own nation and this interesting incident in early Christian history. The games were duly cele-

\* It is noteworthy, indeed, that it was with Tyre and Sidon in the days of Herod as it was with them in the earlier days of King Solomon and of the prophets. In 1 Kings v. 10, 11, we see that Hiram, King of Tyre, depended on Solomon for food: "So Hiram gave Solomon timber of cedar and timber of fir according to all his desire. And Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand measures of wheat for food to his household, and twenty measures of pure oil: thus gave Solomon to Hiram year by year"; with which may be compared Ezekiel xxvii. 17.



brated, but they were destined to be Herod's last act. On an appointed day he sat in the theatre of Cæsarea to receive the ambassadors from Tyre and Sidon. He presented himself early in the morning to the sight of the multitude, clad in a robe of silver which flashed in the light, reflecting back the rays of the early sun and dazzling the mixed multitude—supple, crafty Syrians, paganised Samaritans, self-seeking and worldly-wise Phœnicians. He made a speech in response to the address of the envoys, and then the flattering shout arose, "The voice of a god, and not of a man." Whereupon the messenger of God smote Herod with that terrible form of disease which accompanies unbounded self-indulgence and luxury, and the proud tyrant learned what a plaything of time, what a mere creature of a day is a king as much as a beggar, as shown by the narrative preserved by Josephus of this event. He tells us that, when seized by the mortal disease, Herod looked upon his friends, and said, "I, whom you call a god, am commanded presently to depart this life; while Providence thus reproves the lying words you just now said to me; and I, who was by you called immortal, am immediately to be hurried away by death." What a striking picture of life's changes and chances, and of the poetic retributions we at times behold in the course of God's Providence! One short chapter of the Acts shows us Herod triumphant side by side with Herod laid low, Herod smiting apostles with the sword side by side with Herod himself smitten to death by the Divine sword. A month's time may have covered all the incidents narrated in this chapter. But short as the period was, it must have been rich in support and consolation to the apostles Saul and Barnabas, who were doubtless deeply interested spectators of the rapidly shifting scene, telling them clearly of the heavenly watch exercised over the Church. They had come up from Antioch, bringing alms to render aid to their afflicted brethren in Christ. The famine, as we have just now seen from the anxiety of the men of Tyre and Sidon to be on friendly terms with Herod, was rapidly making itself felt throughout Palestine and the adjacent lands, and so the deputies of the Antiochene Church hurried up to Jerusalem with the much-needed gifts. It may indeed be said, how could St. Paul hope to escape at such a time? Would it not have been madness for him to risk his safety in a city where he had once been so well known? But, then, we must remember that it was at the Passover season Saul and Barnabas went from Antioch to Jerusalem. Vast crowds then entered the Holy City, and a solitary Jew or two from Antioch might easily escape notice among the myriads which then assembled from all quarters. St. Paul enjoyed too a wonderful measure of the Spirit's guidance, and that Spirit told him that he had yet much work to do for God. The Apostle had wondrous prudence joined with wondrous courage, and we may be sure that he took wisest precautions to escape the sword of Herod which would have so eagerly drunk his blood. He remained in Jerusalem all the time of the Passover. His clear vision of the spiritual world must then have been most precious and most sustaining. All the apostles were doubtless scattered; James was dead, and Peter doomed to death. The temporal troubles, famine and poverty, which called Saul and Barnabas to Je-

rusalem, brought with them corresponding spiritual blessings, as we still so often find, and the brave words of the chosen vessel, the Vas Electionis, aided by the sweet gifts of the Son of Consolation, may have been very precious and very helpful to those devout souls in the Jerusalem Church who gathered themselves for continuous prayer in the house of Mary the mother of John, teaching them the true character, the profound views, the genuine religion of one whose earlier life had been so very different and whose later views may have been somewhat suspected. Saul and Barnabas arrived in Jerusalem at a terrible crisis, they saw the crisis safely passed, and then they returned to an atmosphere freer and broader than that of Jerusalem, and there in the exercise of a devoted ministry awaited the further manifestation of the Divine purposes.

## CHAPTER IX.

### *ST. PAUL'S ORDINATION AND FIRST MISSIONARY TOUR.*

ACTS xiii. 2-4, 14; xiv. 1, 26.

WE have now arrived at what we might call the watershed of the Acts of the Apostles. Hitherto we have had very various scenes, characters, personages to consider. Henceforth St. Paul, his labours, his disputes, his speeches, occupy the entire field, and every other name that is introduced into the narrative plays a very subordinate part. This is only natural. St. Luke knew of the earlier history by information gained from various persons, but he knew of the later history, and specially of St. Paul's journeys, by personal experience. He could say that he had formed a portion and played no small part in the work of which he was telling, and therefore St. Paul's activity naturally supplies the chief subject of his narrative. St. Luke in this respect was exactly like ourselves. What we take an active part in, where our own powers are specially called into operation, there our interest is specially aroused. St. Luke personally knew of St. Paul's missionary journeys and labours, and therefore when telling Theophilus of the history of the Church down to the year 60 or thereabouts, he deals with that part of it which he specially knows. This limitation of St. Luke's vision limits also our range of exposition. The earlier portion of the Acts is much richer from an expositor's point of view, comprises more typical narratives, scenes, events than the latter portion, though this latter portion may be richer in points of contact, historical and geographical, with the world of life and action.

It is with an expositor or preacher exactly the opposite as with the Church historian or biographer of St. Paul. A writer gifted with the exuberant imagination, the minute knowledge of a Renan or a Farrar naturally finds in the details of travel with which the latter portion of the Acts is crowded matter for abundant discussion. He can pour forth the treasures of information which modern archæological research has furnished, shedding light upon the movements of the Apostle. But with the preacher or expositor it is otherwise. There are numerous incidents which lend themselves to his purpose in the journeys recorded in this latter portion of the book;



but while a preacher might find endless subjects for spiritual exposition in the conversion of St. Paul or the martyrdom of St. Stephen, he finds himself confined to historical and geographical discussions in large portions of the story dealing with St. Paul's journeys. We shall, however, strive to unite both functions, and while endeavouring to treat the history from an expositor's point of view, we shall not overlook details of another type which will impart colour and interest to the exposition.

I. The thirteenth chapter of the Acts records the opening of St. Paul's official missionary labours, and its earliest verses tell us of the formal separation or consecration for that work which St. Paul received. Now the question may here be raised, Why did St. Paul receive such a solemn ordination as that we here read of? Had he not been called by Christ immediately? Had he not been designated to the work in Gentile lands by the voice of the same Jesus Christ speaking to Ananias at Damascus and afterward to Paul himself in the Temple at Jerusalem? What was the necessity for such a solemn external imposition of hands as that here recorded? John Calvin, in his commentary on this passage, offers a very good suggestion, and shows that he was able to throw himself back into the feelings and ideas of the times far better than many a modern writer. Calvin thinks that this revelation of the Holy Ghost and this ordination by the hands of the Antiochene prophets were absolutely necessary to complete the work begun by St. Peter at Cæsarea, and for this reason. The prejudices of the Jewish Christians against their Gentile brethren were so strong, that they would regard the vision at Joppa as applying, not as a general rule, but as a mere personal matter, authorising the reception of Cornelius and his party alone. They would not see nor understand that it authorised the active evangelisation of the Gentile world and the prosecution of aggressive Christian efforts among the heathen. The Holy Ghost therefore, as the abiding and guiding power in the Church, and expressing His will through the agency of the prophets then present, said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them"; and that work to which they were expressly sent forth by the Holy Ghost was the work of aggressive effort beginning with the Jews—but not terminating with them—and including the Gentiles. This seems to me thoroughly true, and shows how Calvin realised the intellectual weakness, the spiritual hardness of heart and slowness of judgment which prevailed among the apostles. The battle of Christian freedom and catholic truth was not won in a moment. Old prejudices did not depart in an hour. New principles were not assimilated and applied in a few days. Those who hold nobler views and higher principles than the crowd must not be surprised or dismayed if they find that year after year they have to fight the same battles and to proclaim the same fundamental truths and to maintain what may seem at times even a losing conflict with the forces of unreasoning prejudices. If this was the case in the primitive Church with all its unity and love and spiritual gifts, we may well expect the same state of affairs in the Church of our time.

An illustration borrowed from Church history will explain this. Nothing can well be more completely contrary to the spirit of Chris-

tianity than religious persecution. Nothing can be imagined more completely consonant with the spirit of the Christian religion than freedom of conscience. Yet how hard has been the struggle for it! The early Christians suffered in defence of religious freedom, but they had no sooner gained the battle than they adopted the very principle against which they had fought. They became religiously intolerant, because religious intolerance was part and parcel of the Roman state under which they had been reared. The Reformation again was a battle for religious freedom. If it were not, the Reformers who suffered in it would have no more claim to our compassion and sympathy on account of the deaths they suffered than soldiers who die in battle. A soldier merely suffers what he is prepared to inflict, and so it was with the martyrs of the Reformation unless theirs was a struggle for religious freedom. Yet no sooner had the battle of the Reformation been won than all the Reformed Churches adopted the very principle which had striven to crush themselves. It is terribly difficult to emancipate ourselves from the influence and ideas of bygone ages, and so it was with the Jewish Christians. They could not bring themselves to adopt missionary work among the Gentiles. They believed indeed intellectually that God had granted unto the Gentiles repentance unto life, but that belief was not accompanied with any of the enthusiasm which alone lends life and power to mental conceptions. The Holy Ghost therefore, as the Paraclete, the loving Comforter, Exhorter, and Guide of the Church, interposes afresh, and by a new revelation ordains apostles whose great work shall consist in preaching to the Gentile world.

There seems to me one great reason for the prominent place this incident at Antioch holds. The work of Gentile conversion proceeded from Antioch, which may therefore well be regarded as the mother Church of Gentile Christendom; and the Apostles of the Gentiles were there solemnly set apart and constituted. Barnabas and Saul were not previously called apostles. Henceforth this title is expressly applied to them, and independent apostolic action is taken by them. But there seems to me another reason why Barnabas and Saul were thus solemnly set apart, notwithstanding all their previous gifts and callings and history. The Holy Ghost wished to lay down at the very beginning of the Gentile Church the law of orderly development, the rule of external ordination, and the necessity for its perpetual observance. And therefore He issued His mandate for their visible separation to the work of evangelisation. All the circumstances too are typical. The Church was engaged in a season of special devotion when the Holy Ghost spoke. A special blessing was vouchsafed, as before at Pentecost, when the people of God were specially waiting upon Him. The Church at Antioch as represented by its leading teachers were fasting and praying and ministering to the Lord when the Divine mandate was issued, and then they fasted and prayed again. The ordination of the first apostles to the Gentiles was accompanied by special prayer and by fasting, and the Church took good care afterwards to follow closely this primitive example. The institution of the four Ember seasons as times for solemn ordinations is derived from this incident. The Ember seasons are periods for solemn prayer and fasting, not only for those



about to be ordained, but also for the whole Church, because she recognises that the whole body of Christ's people are interested most deeply and vitally in the nature and character of the Christian ministry. If the members of that ministry are devoted, earnest, inspired with Divine love, then indeed the work of Christ flourishes in the Church, while, if the ministry of God be careless and unspiritual, the people of God suffer terrible injury. And we observe, further, that not only the Church subsequent to the apostolic age followed this example at Antioch, but St. Paul himself followed it and prescribed it to his disciples. He ordained elders in every Church, and that from the beginning. He acted thus on his very first missionary journey, ordaining by the imposition of hands accompanied with prayer and fasting, as we learn from the fourteenth chapter and twenty-third verse. He reminded Timothy of the gift imparted to that youthful evangelist by the imposition of St. Paul's own hands, as well as by those of the presbytery; and yet he does not hesitate to designate the elders of Ephesus and Miletus who were thus ordained by St. Paul as bishops set over God's flock by the Holy Ghost Himself. St. Paul and the Apostolic Church, in fact, looked behind this visible scene. They realised vividly the truth of Christ's promise about the presence of the Holy Ghost in the Church. They took no miserably low and Erastian views of the sacred ministry, as if it were an office of mere human order and appointment. They viewed it as a supernatural and Divine office, which no mere human power, no matter how exalted, could confer. They realised the human instruments indeed in their true position as nothing but instruments, powerless in themselves, and mighty only through God, and therefore St. Paul regarded his own ordination of the elders whom he appointed at Derbe, Iconium, Lystra, or Ephesus as a separation by the Holy Ghost to their Divine offices. The Church was, in fact, then instinct with life and spiritual vigour, because it thankfully recognised the present power, the living force and vigour of the third person of the Holy Trinity.

II. The Apostles, having been thus commissioned, lost no time. They at once departed upon their great work. And now let us briefly indicate the scope of the first great missionary tour undertaken by St. Paul, and sketch its outline, filling in the details afterwards. According to early tradition the headquarters of the Antiochene Church were in Singon Street, in the southern quarter of Antioch.\* After earnest and prolonged religious services they left their Christian brethren. St. Paul's own practice recorded at Ephesus, Miletus, and at Tyre shows us that prayer marked such separation from the Christian brethren, and we know that the same practice was perpetuated in the early Church; Tertullian, for instance, telling us that a brother should not leave a Christian house until he had been commended to God's keeping. They then crossed the bridge, and proceeded along the northern bank of the Orontes to Seleucia, the port of Antioch, where the ruins still testify to the vastness of the architectural conceptions cherished by the Syrian kings. From Seleucia

the apostles sailed to the island of Cyprus, whose peaks they could see eighty miles distant, shining bright and clear through the pellucid air. Various circumstances would lead them thither. Barnabas was of Cyprus, and he doubtless had many friends there. Cyprus had then an immense Jewish population, as we have already pointed out; and though the apostles were specially designated for work among the Gentiles, they ever made the Jews the starting-point whence to influence the outside world, always used them as the lever whereby to move the stolid mass of paganism. The apostles showed a wholesome example to all missionaries and to all teachers by this method of action. They addressed the Jews first because they had most in common with them. And St. Paul deliberately and of set purpose worked on this principle, whether with Jews or Gentiles. He sought out the ideas or the ground common to himself and his hearers, and then, having found the points on which they agreed, he worked out from them. It is the true method of controversy. I have seen the opposite course adopted, and with very disastrous effects. I have seen a method of controversial argument pursued, consisting simply in attacks upon errors without any attempt to follow the apostolic example and discover the truths which both parties held in common, and the result has been the very natural one that ill-will and bad feeling have been aroused without effecting any changes in conviction. We can easily understand the reason of this, if we consider how the matter would stand with ourselves. If a man comes up to us, and without any attempt to discover our ideas or enter into sympathetic relations with us, makes a very aggressive assault upon all our particular notions and practices, our backs are at once put up, we are thrown into a defensive mood, our pride is stirred, we resent the tone, the air of the aggressor, and unconsciously determine not to be convinced by him. Controversial preaching of that class, hard, unloving, censorious, never does any permanent good, but rather strengthens and confirms the person against whose belief it is directed. Nothing of this kind will ever be found in the wise, courteous teaching of the apostle Paul, whose few recorded speeches to Jews and Gentiles may be commended to the careful study of all teachers at home or abroad as models of mission preaching, being at once prudent and loving, faithful and courageous.

From Seleucia the apostles itinerated through the whole island unto Paphos, celebrated in classical antiquity as the favourite seat of the goddess Venus, where they came for the first time into contact with a great Roman official, Sergius Paulus, the proconsul of the island. From Paphos they sailed across to the mainland of Asia Minor, landed at Perga, where John Mark abandoned the work to which he had put his hand. They do not seem to have stayed for long at Perga. They doubtless declared their message at the local synagogue to the Jews and proselytes who assembled there, for we are not to conclude, because a synagogue is not expressly mentioned as belonging to any special town, that therefore it did not exist. Modern discoveries have shown that Jewish synagogues were found in every considerable town or city of Asia Minor, preparing the way by their pure morality and monotheistic teaching for the fuller and richer truths of Christianity. But St. Paul

\* An elaborate plan of ancient Antioch, accompanied with a description of its various parts and references to the authorities for the same, will be found in Lewin's "St. Paul," vol. i. p. 92.



had fixed his eagle gaze upon Antioch of Pisidia, a town which had been made by Augustus Cæsar the great centre of this part of Asia Minor, whence military roads radiated in every direction, lending thereby the assistance of imperial organisation to the progress of the gospel. Its situation was, in fact, the circumstance which determined the original foundation of Antioch by the Syrian princes.

Facility of access, commercial convenience were points at which they chiefly aimed in selecting the sites of the cities they built, and the wisdom of their choice in the case of Antioch in Pisidia was confirmed when Augustus and Tiberius, some few years previous to St. Paul's visit, made Antioch the centre from which diverged the whole system of military roads throughout this portion of Asia Minor. It was a very large city, and its ruins and aqueducts testify to this day concerning the important position it held as the great centre of all the Roman colonies and fortresses which Augustus planted in the year B. C. 6 along the skirts of the Taurus Range to restrain the incursions of the rude mountaineers of Isauria and Pisidia. When persecution compelled the apostles to retire from Antioch they took their way therefore to Iconium, which was some sixty miles southeast of Antioch along one of those military roads of which we have spoken, constructed for the purpose of putting down the brigands which then, as in modern times, constituted one of the great plagues of Asia Minor. But why did the apostles retire to Iconium? Surely one might say, if the Jews had influence enough at Antioch to stir up the chief men of the city against the missionaries, they would have had influence enough to secure a warrant for their arrest in a neighbouring city. At first sight it seems somewhat difficult to account for the line of travel or flight adopted by the apostles. But a reference to ancient geography throws some light upon the problem. Strabo, a geographer of St. Paul's own day, tells us that Iconium was an independent principality or tetrarchy, surrounded indeed on all sides by Roman territory, but still enjoying a certain amount of independence. The apostles fled to Iconium when persecution waxed hot because they had a good road thither, and also because at Iconium they were secure from any legal molestation, being under a new jurisdiction.

After a time, however, the Jews from Antioch made their way to Iconium and began the same process which had proved so successful at Antioch. They first excited the members of the Jewish synagogue against the apostles, and through them influenced the townspeople at large, so that, though successful in winning converts, St. Paul and his companion were in danger of being stoned by a joint mob of Jews and Gentiles. They had therefore to fly a second time, and when doing so they acted on the same principle as before. They again removed themselves out of the local jurisdiction of their enemies, and passed to Derbe and Lys- tra, cities of Lycaonia, a Roman province which had just been formed by the Emperor Claudius.

Then after a time, when the disturbances which the Jews persistently raised wherever they came had subsided, the apostles turned back over the same ground, no longer indeed publicly preaching, but organising quietly and secretly the Churches which they had founded in the differ-

ent towns through which they had passed, till they arrived back at Perga, where perhaps, finding no ship sailing to Antioch, they travelled to the port of Attalia, where they succeeded in finding a passage to that city of Antioch whence they had been sent forth.\* This brief sketch will give a general view of the first missionary tour made in the realms of paganism, and will show that it dealt with little more than two provinces of Asia Minor, Pisidia and Lycaonia, and was followed by what men would count but scanty results, the foundation and organisation of a few scattered Christian communities in some of the leading towns of these districts.

III. Let us now more particularly notice some of the details recorded concerning this journey. The apostles began their work at Cyprus, where they proclaimed the gospel in the Jewish synagogues. They were attracted as we have said to this island, first, because it was the native land of Barnabas, and then because its population was in large degree Jewish, owing to the possession of the famous copper mines of the island by Herod the Great.† Synagogues were scattered all over the island and proselytes appertained to each synagogue, and thus a basis of operations was ready whence the gospel message might operate. It was just the same even at Paphos, where St. Paul came in contact with the proconsul Sergius Paulus. The Jewish element here again appears, though in more active opposition than seems to have been elsewhere offered. Sergius Paulus was a Roman citizen like Cornelius of Cæsarea. He had become dissatisfied with the belief of his forefathers. He had now come into contact with the mystic East, and had yielded himself to the guidance of a man who professed the Jewish religion, which seems to have charmed by its pure morality and simple monotheism many of the noblest minds of that age. But, like all outsiders, Sergius Paulus did not make accurate and just distinctions between man and man. He yielded himself to the guidance of a man who traded on the name of a Jew, but who really practised those rites of weird sorcery which real Judaism utterly repudiated and denounced. This alone accounts for the stern language of St. Paul: "O full of all guile and all villainy, thou son of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" St. Paul never addressed a lawful opponent in this manner. He did not believe in the efficacy of strong language in itself, nor did he abuse those who withstood him in honest argument. But he did not hesitate, on the other hand, to brand a deceiver as he deserved, or to denounce in scathing terms those who were guilty of conscious fraud. St. Paul might well be taken as a model controversialist in this respect. He knew how to distinguish between the genuine opponent who might be mistaken but was certainly conscientious, and the fraudulent hypocrite devoid of all convictions save the conviction of the value of money. With the former St. Paul was full of courtesy, patience, consideration, because he had in himself experience of the power of blind unthinking prejudice. For the latter class St. Paul had no consideration, and with them he wasted no

\* It is well perhaps to note that the *ι* in this name is long, representing the diphthong *ει*, the Greek name of the town being Ἀττάλεια.

† See p. 348.



time. His honest soul took their measure at once. He denounced them as he did Elymas on this occasion, and then passed on to deal with nobler and purer souls, where honest and good hearts offered more promising soil for the reception of the Word of the Kingdom. Controversy of every kind is very trying to tongue and temper, but religious controversy such as that in which St. Paul spent his life is specially trying to the character. The subject is so important that it seems to excuse an over zeal and earnestness which terminates in bad temper and unwise language. And yet we sometimes cannot shrink from controversy, because conscience demands it on our part. When that happens to be the case, it will be well for us to exercise the most rigorous control over our feelings and our words; from time to time to realise by a momentary effort of introspection Christ hanging upon the cross and bearing for us the unworthy and unjust reproaches of mankind; for thus and thus only will pride be kept down and hot temper restrained and that great advantage for the truth secured which self-control always bestows upon its possessor.

There is an interesting illustration of the historic accuracy of St. Luke connected with the apostolic visit to Paphos and to Sergius Paulus the proconsul. Thrice over in the narrative of St. Luke, Sergius Paulus is called proconsul—first in the seventh verse of the thirteenth chapter, where Elymas the sorcerer is described thus, “who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of understanding,” while again the same title of proconsul is applied to Sergius in the eighth and twelfth verses. This has been the cause of much misunderstanding and of no small reproach hurled against the sacred writer. Let us inquire into its justice and the facts of the case. The Roman provinces were divided into two classes, senatorial and imperial. The senatorial provinces were ruled by proconsuls appointed by the Senate; the imperial by prætors appointed by the emperors. This arrangement was made by Augustus Cæsar, and is reported to us by Strabo, who lived and wrote during St. Paul’s early manhood. But now a difficulty arises. Strabo gives us the list of the provinces senatorial and imperial alike, and expressly classes Cyprus amongst the imperial provinces, which were ruled by prætors and not by proconsuls. In the opinion of the older critics, St. Luke was thus plainly convicted of a mistake and of a flagrant contradiction of that great authority the geographer Strabo. But it is never safe to jump to conclusions of that kind with respect to a contemporaneous writer who has proved himself accurate on other occasions. It is far better and far safer to say, Let us wait a while, and see what further investigations will reveal. And so it has proved in this special case. Strabo tells us of the original arrangement made about thirty years B. C. between the Emperor Augustus and the Senate, when Cyprus was most certainly numbered amongst the imperial provinces; but he omits to tell us what another historian of the same century, Dion Cassius, does relate, that the same Emperor modified this arrangement five years later, handing Cyprus and Gallia Narbonensis over to the rule of the Senate, so that from that date and henceforth throughout the first century of our era Cyprus was governed by proconsuls alone, as St. Luke most accurately,

though only incidentally, reports. Here, too, the results of modern investigation among inscriptions and coins have come in to supplement and support the testimony of historians. The Greek inscriptions discovered prior to and during the earlier half of this century have been collected together in Boeckh’s “Corpus of Greek Inscriptions,” which is, indeed, a vast repertory of original documents concerning the life, Pagan and Christian, of the Greek world. In the inscriptions numbered 2631 and 2632 in that valuable work we have the names of Q. Julius Cordus and L. Annius Bassus expressly mentioned as proconsuls of Cyprus in A. D. 51, 52; while on coins of Cyprus have been found the names of Cominius Proclus and Quadratus, who held the same office. But the very latest investigations have borne striking testimony to the same fact. The name of the very proconsul whom St. Paul addressed appears on an inscription discovered in our own time. Cyprus has been thoroughly investigated since it passed into British hands, specially by General Cesnola, who has written a work on the subject which is well worth reading by those who take an interest in Scripture lands and the scenes where the apostles laboured. In that work, p. 425, Cesnola tells us of a mutilated inscription which he recovered dealing with some subject of no special importance, but bearing the following precious notice giving its date as “Under Paulus the Proconsul”; proving to us by contemporary evidence that Sergius Paulus ruled the island, and ruled it with the special title of proconsul. Surely an instance like this—and we shall have several such to notice—is quite enough to make fair minds suspend their judgment when charges of inaccuracy are alleged against St. Luke dependent upon our own ignorance alone of the entire facts of the case. A wider knowledge, a larger investigation we may well be sure will suffice to clear the difficulty and vindicate the fair fame of the sacred historian.

From Cyprus the apostles passed over to the continent, and opened their missionary work at Antioch of Pisidia, where the first recorded address of St. Paul was delivered. This sermon, delivered in the Pisidian synagogue, is deserving of our special notice because it is the only missionary address delivered by St. Paul to the Jews of the Dispersion which has been handed down to us, unless we include the few words delivered to the Roman Jews reported in the twenty-eighth chapter from the seventeenth to the twenty-eighth verses. Let us briefly analyse it, premising that it should be carefully compared with the addresses of St. Peter to the Jews upon the Day of Pentecost and with the speech delivered by St. Stephen before the Sanhedrin, when all three will be found to run upon the same lines.

The apostles having reached Antioch waited until the Sabbath came round, and then sought the local meeting-place of the Jews. The apostles felt indeed that they were intrusted with a great mission important for the human race, but yet they knew right well that feverish impetuosity or restless activity was not the true way to advance the cause they had in hand. They did not believe in wild irregular actions which only stir up opposition. They were calm and dignified in their methods, because they were consciously guided by the Divine Spirit of Him concerning whom it was said in the days of His flesh, “He



did not strive nor cry, neither did any man hear His voice in the streets." On the Sabbath day they entered the synagogue, and took their place on a bench set apart for the reception of those who were regarded as teachers. At the conclusion of the public worship and the reading of the lessons out of the law and the prophets, such as still are read in the synagogue worship, the Rulers of the Synagogue sent to them the minister or apostle of the synagogue, intimating their permission to address the assembled congregation, whereupon St. Paul arose and delivered an address, of which the following is an analysis. St. Paul opened his sermon by a reference to the lessons which had just been read in the service, which—as all the writers of the Apostle's life, Lewin, Conybeare and Howson, and Archdeacon Farrar, agree—were taken from the first chapter of Deuteronomy and the first of Isaiah. He points out, as St. Stephen had done, the providential dealings of God with their forefathers from the time of the original choice of Abraham down to David. The Jews had been divinely guided throughout their history down to David's days, and that Divine guidance had not then ceased, but continued down to the present, as the Apostle then proceeds to show. In David's seed there had been left a hope for Israel which every true Jew still cherished. He then announces that the long-cherished hope had now at last been fulfilled. This fact depended not on his testimony alone. The Messiah whom they had long expected had been preceded by a prophet whose reputation had spread into these distant regions, and had gained disciples, as we shall afterwards find, at Ephesus. John the Baptist had announced the Messiah's appearance, and proclaimed his own inferiority to Him. But then an objection occurs to the Apostle which might naturally be raised. If John's reputation and doctrine had penetrated to Antioch, the story of the crucifixion of Jesus may also have been reported there, and the local Jews may therefore have concluded that such an ignominious death was conclusive against the claims of Jesus. The Apostle then proceeds to show how that the providential rule of God had been exercised even in that matter. The wrath of man had been compelled to praise God, and even while the rulers at Jerusalem were striving to crush Jesus Christ they were in reality fulfilling the voices of the prophets which went beforehand and proclaimed the sufferings of the Messiah exactly as they had happened. And further still, God had set His seal to the truth of the story by raising Jesus Christ from the dead according to the predictions of the Old Testament, which he expounds after the manner of the Jewish schools, finding a hint of the Resurrection of Christ in Isaiah lv. 3: "I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David"; and a still clearer one in Psalm xvi. 10: "Thou wilt not give Thine Holy One to see corruption." The Apostle, after quoting this text, which from its use by St. Peter on the Day of Pentecost seems to have been a passage commonly quoted in the Jewish controversy, terminates his discourse with a proclamation of the exalted blessings which the Messiah has brought, indicating briefly but clearly the universal character of the gospel promises, and finishing with a warning against stupid obstinate resistance drawn from Habakkuk i. 5, which primarily referred to the disbelief in impending Chaldæan invasion ex-

hibited by the Jews, but which the Apostle applies to the Jews of Antioch and their spiritual dangers arising from similar wilful obstinacy.

We have of course not much more than the heads of the apostolic sermon. Five or seven minutes of a not very rapid speaker would amply suffice to exhaust the exact words attributed to St. Paul. He must have enlarged on the various topics. He could not have introduced John the Baptist in the abrupt manner in which he is noticed in the text of our New Testament. It seems quite natural enough to us that he should be thus named, because John occupies a very high and exalted position in our mental horizon from our earliest childhood. But who was John the Baptist for these Jewish settlers in the Pisidian Antioch? He was simply a prophet of whom they may have heard a vague report, who appeared before Israel for a year or two, and then suffered death at the hands of Herod the Tetrarch: and so it must have been with many other topics introduced into this discourse. They must have been much more copiously treated, elaborated, discussed, or else the audience in the Pisidian synagogue must have loved concentrated discourse more keenly than any other assembly that ever met together. And yet, though the real discourse must have been much longer—and did we only possess the sermon in its fulness many a difficulty which now puzzles us would disappear at once—we can still see the line of the apostolic argument and grasp its force. The Apostle argues, in fact, that God had chosen the original fathers of the Jewish race. He had gone on conferring ever fresh and larger blessings in the wilderness, in Canaan, under the Judges, and then under the Kings, till the time of David, from whose seed God had raised up the greatest gift of all in the person of Jesus Christ, through whom blessings unknown before and unsurpassed were offered to mankind. St. Paul contends exactly as St. Stephen had done, that true religion has been a perpetual advance and development; that Christianity is not something distinct from Judaism, but is essentially one with it, being the flower of a plant which God Himself had planted, the crown and glory of the work which He had Himself begun. This address, as we have already noticed, will repay careful study; for it shows the methods adopted by the early Christian when dealing with the Jews.\* They did not attack any of their peculiar views or practices, but confining themselves to what they held in common strove to convince them that Christianity was the logical outcome of their own principles.

The results of this address were very indicative of the future. The Jews of the synagogue seem to have been for a time impressed by St. Paul's words. Several of them, together with a number of the proselytes, attached themselves to him as his disciples, and were further instructed in the faith. The proselytes especially must have been attracted by the Apostle's words. They were, like Cornelius, Proselytes of the Gate, who observed merely the seven precepts of Noah and renounced idolatry, but were not circumcised or subject to the restrictions and duties of the Jewish ritual. They must have welcomed tidings of a religion embodying all that which they venerated in the Jewish Law and yet devoid of its narrowness and disadvantages.

\* Cf. pp. 293, 368.



Next Sabbath the whole city was stirred with excitement, and then Jewish jealousy burst into a flame. They saw that their national distinctions and glory were in danger. They refused to listen or permit any further proclamation of what must have seemed to them a revolutionary teaching, disloyal to the traditions and existence of their religion and their nation. They used their influence therefore with the chief men of the city, exercising it through their wives, who were in many cases attracted by the Jewish worship, or who may have been themselves of Jewish birth, and the result was that the apostles were driven forth to preach in other cities of the same central region of Asia Minor. This was the first attack made by the Jews upon St. Paul in his mission journeys. He had already had experience of their hostility at Damascus and at Jerusalem, but this hostility was doubtless provoked by reason of their resentment at the apostasy to the Nazarene sect of their chosen champion. But here at Antioch we perceive the first symptom of that bitter hostility to St. Paul because of his catholic principles, his proclamation of salvation as open to all alike, Jew or Gentile, free from any burdensome or restrictive conditions, a hostility which we shall find persistently pursuing him, both within the Church, and still more without the Church at Iconium, at Lystra, at Thessalonica, at Corinth, and at Jerusalem. It would seem indeed as if the invention of the term "Christian" at Antioch marked a crisis in the history of the early Church. Henceforth St. Paul and his friends became the objects of keenest hatred, because the Jews had recognised that they taught a form of belief absolutely inconsistent with the Jewish faith as hitherto known; a hatred which seems, however, to have been limited to St. Paul and his Antiochene friends, for the temporising measures and the personal prejudices, the whole atmosphere, in fact, of the Jerusalem Church led the unbelieving Jews to make a broad distinction between the disciples at Jerusalem and the followers of St. Paul.

IV. So far we have dealt with St. Paul's address at Antioch as typical of his methods in dealing with the Jews, and their treatment of the Apostle as typical of that hostility which the Jews ever displayed to the earliest teachers of Christian truth, as witnessed not only by the New Testament, but also by the writings and histories of Justin Martyr, and of Polycarp of Smyrna, and of all the early apologists. But we are not left in this typical Church history without a specimen of St. Paul's earlier methods when dealing with the heathen. St. Paul, after his rejection at Antioch, escaped to Iconium, sixty miles distant, and thence, when Jewish persecution again waxed hot, betook himself to Lystra, some forty miles to the south. There the Apostle found himself in a new atmosphere and amid new surroundings. Antioch and Iconium had large Jewish populations, and were permeated with Jewish ideas. Lystra was a thoroughly Gentile town with only a very few Jewish inhabitants. The whole air of the place—its manners, customs, popular legends—was thoroughly pagan. This offered St. Paul a new field for his activity, of which he availed himself right diligently, finishing up his work with healing a lifelong cripple, a miracle which so impressed the mob of Lystra that they immediately cried out in the native speech of Ly-

caonia, "The gods are coming down to us in the likeness of men," calling Barnabas Jupiter, on account of his lofty stature and more commanding appearance, and Paul Mercurius or Hermes, because of his more insignificant size and more copious eloquence. Here again we have, in our writer's words, an incidental and even unconscious witness to the truth of our narrative. The cry of the men of Lystra, these rude barbarian people of the original inhabitants of the land, who, though they could understand Greek, naturally fell back on their native Lycaonian language to express their deeper feelings,—this cry, I say, refers to an ancient legend connected with their history, of which we find a lengthened account in the works of the poet Ovid. Jupiter attended by Mercury once descended to visit the earth and see how man was faring. Some scoffed at the deities, and were punished. Others received them, and were blessed accordingly. The wondrous work performed on the cripple naturally led the men of Lystra to think that the Divine Epiphany had been repeated. The colony of Lystra—for Lystra was a Roman colony—was devoted to the worship of Jupiter, in memory doubtless of this celebrated visit. A temple to Jupiter stood before and outside the gate of the city, as the temple of Diana stood outside the gate of Ephesus, lending sanctity and protection to the neighbouring town. The priest and the people act upon the spur of the moment. They bring victims and garlands prepared to offer sacrifice to the deities who, as they thought, had revisited their ancient haunts. They were approaching the house where the apostles were dwelling—perhaps that of Lois and Eunice and Timothy—when Paul sprang forward and delivered a short impassioned address deprecating the threatened adoration. Let us quote the address in order that we may see its full force: "Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and bring you good tidings, that ye should turn from these vain things unto the living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is: who in the generations gone by suffered all the nations to walk in their own ways. And yet He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness." How very different St. Paul's words to the pagans are from those he addressed to the Jews and proselytes, believers in the true God and in the facts of revelation! He proves himself a born orator, able to adapt himself to different classes of hearers, and, grasping their special ideas and feelings, to suit his arguments to their various conditions. St. Paul's short address on this occasion may be compared with his speech to the men of Athens, and the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, and the various apologies composed by the earliest advocates of Christianity during the second century. Take, for instance, the Apology of Aristides, of which we gave an account in the preface to the first Part of this commentary on the Acts. We shall find, when we examine it and compare it with the various passages of Scripture to which we have just referred, that all run upon exactly the same lines. They all appeal to the evidence of nature and of natural religion. They say not one word about Scripture concerning which their hearers know noth-



ing. They are not like unwise Christian advocates among ourselves who think they can overthrow an infidel with a text out of Scripture, begging the question at issue, the very point to be decided being this, whether there is such a thing at all as Scripture. St. Paul does with the men of Lystra and the men of Athens what Aristides did when writing for the Emperor Hadrian, and what every wise missionary will still do with the heathen or the unbeliever whose salvation he is seeking. The Apostle takes up the ground that is common to himself and his hearers. He shows them the unworthiness of the conception they have formed of the God-head. He appeals to the testimony of God's works and to the interior witness of conscience prophesying perpetually in the secret tabernacle of man's heart, and thus appealing in God's behalf to the eternal verities and evidences of nature exterior and interior to man, he vindicates the Divine authority, glorifies the Divine character, and restrains the capricious and ignorant folly of the men of Lystra.

Lastly, we find in this narrative two typical suggestions for the missionary activity of the Church in every age. The men of Lystra with marvellous facility soon changed their opinion concerning St. Paul. M. Renan has well pointed out that to the pagans of those times a miracle was no necessary proof of a Divine mission. It was just as easily a proof to them of a diabolical or magical power. The Jews, therefore, who followed St. Paul, had no difficulty in persuading the men of Lystra that this assailant of their hereditary deities was a mere charlatan, a clever trickster moved by wicked powers to lead them astray. Their character and reputation as Jews, worshippers of one God alone, would lend weight to this charge, and enable them the more easily to effect their purpose of killing St. Paul, in which they had failed at Antioch and Iconium. The fickle mob easily lent themselves to the purposes of the Jews, and having stoned St. Paul dragged his body outside the city walls, thinking him dead. A few faithful disciples followed the crowd, however. Perhaps, too, the eirenarch or local police authority with his subordinates had interfered, and the rioters, apprehensive of punishment for their disturbance of the peace, had retired.\* As the disciples stood around weeping for the loss they had sustained, the Apostle awoke from the swoon into which he had fallen, and was carried into the city by the faithful few, among whom doubtless were Timothy and his parents. Lystra, however, was no longer safe for St. Paul. He retired, therefore, some twenty miles to Derbe, where he continued for some time labouring with success, till the storm and the excitement had subsided at Lystra. Then he turned back over the same ground which he had already traversed. He might have pushed on along the great Eastern Road, nigh as Derbe was to the passes through the Taurus Range which led directly to Cilicia and Tarsus. He wished to go back indeed to Antioch. He had been a year or so absent on this first excursion into the vast fields of Gen-

tile paganism. Wider and more extensive missions had now to be planned. The wisdom gained by personal experience had now to be utilised in consultation with the brethren. But still a work had to be done in Lycaonia and Pisidia if the results of his labours were not to be lost. He had quitted in great haste each town he had visited, forced out by persecution, and leaving the organisation of the Church incomplete. St. Paul came, like his Master, not merely to proclaim a doctrine: he came still more to found and organise a Divine society. He turns therefore back again along the route he had first taken. He does not preach in public, nor run any risks of raising riots anew. His work is now entirely of a character interior to the Church. He strengthens the disciples by his teaching, he points out that earthly trials and persecutions are marks of God's love and favour rather than tokens of His wrath, he notes for them that it is needful "through many tribulations to enter into the kingdom of God," and above all he secures the permanence of his work by ordaining presbyters after the fashion of the Church at Antioch, with prayer and fasting and imposition of hands. This is one great typical lesson taught us here by St. Paul's return journey through Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch of Pisidia. Preaching and evangelistic work are important; but pastoral work and Church consolidation and Church order are equally important, if any permanent fruits are to be garnered and preserved. And the other typical lesson is implied in the few words wherein the termination of his first great missionary journey is narrated. "When they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia; and thence they sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been committed to the grace of God for the work which they had fulfilled."

Antioch was the centre whence Paul and Barnabas had issued forth to preach among the Gentiles, and to Antioch the apostles returned to cheer the Church with the narrative of their labours and successes, and to restore themselves and their exhausted powers with the sweetness of Christian fellowship, of brotherly love and kindness such as then flourished, as never before or since, amongst the children of men. Mission work such as St. Paul did on this great tour is very exhausting, and it can always be best performed from a great centre. Mission work, evangelistic work of any kind, if it is to be successful, makes terrible demands on man's whole nature, physical, mental, spiritual, and bodily. The best restorative for that nature when so exhausted is conversation and intercourse with men of like minds, such as St. Paul found when, returning to Antioch, he cheered the hearts and encouraged the hopes of the Church by narrating the wonders he had seen done and the triumphs he had seen won through the power of the Holy Ghost.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE FIRST CHRISTIAN COUNCIL.

ACTS xv. 1, 2, 6, 19.

I HAVE headed this chapter, which treats of Acts xv. and its incidents, the First Christian Council, and that of set purpose and following

\* The Romans had a local police in Asia Minor, organised after the manner of our own local police. The chief of the police in each town was called the eirenarch, and was annually appointed by the proconsul. The Romans never made the mistake of placing the police in the hands of discontented subjects. See, on this curious topic, Le Bas and Waddington's "Voyage Archéologique," t. iii. pp. 27 and 255.



eminent ecclesiastical example. People often hear the canons of the great Councils quoted, the canons of Nice, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon, those great assemblies which threshed out the controversies concerning the person and nature of Jesus Christ and determined with marvellous precision the methods of expressing the true doctrine on these points, and they wonder where or how such ancient documents have been preserved. Well, the answer is simple enough. If any reader, curious about the doings of these ancient assemblies, desires to study the decrees which proceeded from them, and even the debates which occurred in them, he need only ask in any great library for a history of the Councils, edited either by Hardouin or Labbe and Cossart, or, best and latest of all, by Mansi. They are not externally very attractive volumes, being vast folios; nor are they light or interesting reading. The industrious student will learn much from them, however; and he will find that they all begin the history of the Christian Councils by placing at the very head and forefront thereof the history and acts of the Council of Jerusalem held about the year 48 or 49 A. D., wherein we find a typical example of a Church synod which set a fashion perpetuated throughout the ages in councils, conferences, and congresses down to the present time. Let us inquire then into the origin, the procedure, and the results of this Assembly, sure that a council conducted under such auspices, reported by such a divinely guided historian, and dealing with such burning questions, must have important lessons for the Church of every age.

I. The question, however, naturally meets us at the very threshold of our inquiry as to the date of this assembly, and the position which it holds in the process of development through which the Christian Church was passing. The decision of this Synod at Jerusalem did not finally settle the questions about the law and its obligatory character. The relations between the Jewish and Gentile sections of the Church continued in some places, especially in the East, more or less unsettled well into the second century; for the Jews found it very hard indeed to surrender all their cherished privileges and ancient national distinctions. But the decree of the Jerusalem Assembly, though only a partial settlement, "mere articles of peace," as it has been well called, to tide over a pressing local controversy, formed in St. Paul's hands a powerful weapon whereby the freedom, the unity, and the catholicity of the Church were finally achieved. Where, then, do we locate this Synod in the story of St. Paul's labours?

The narrative of the Acts clearly enough places it between the first and second missionary tours in Asia Minor undertaken by that apostle. Paul and Barnabas laboured for the first time in Asia Minor probably from the autumn of 44 till the spring or summer of 46. Their work at that time must have extended over at least eighteen months or more. Their journeys on foot must alone have taken up no small time. They traversed from Perge, where they landed, to Derbe, whence they turned back upon their work, a space of at least two hundred and fifty miles. They made lengthened sojourns in large cities like Antioch and Iconium. They doubtless visited other places of which we are told nothing. Then, having completed their aggressive work, they retraced their steps along the same route,

and began their work of consolidation and Church organisation, which must have occupied on their return journey almost as much, if not more, time than they had spent in aggressive labour upon their earlier journey. When we consider all this, and strive to realise the conditions of life and travel in Asia Minor at that time, eighteen months will not appear too long for the work which the apostles actually performed. After their return to Antioch they took up their abode in that city for a considerable period. "They tarried no little time with the disciples" are the exact words of St. Luke telling of their stay at Antioch. Then comes the tale of Jewish intrigues and insinuations, followed by debates, strife, and oppositions concerning the universally binding character of the Jewish law, terminating with the formal deputation from Antioch to Jerusalem. These latter events at Antioch may have happened in a few weeks or months, or they may have extended over a couple of years. But then, on the other hand, we note that St. Paul's second missionary journey began soon after the Synod of Jerusalem. That journey was very lengthened. It led St. Paul right through Asia Minor, and thence into Europe, where he must have made a stay of at least two years. He was at Corinth for eighteen months when Gallio arrived as proconsul about the middle of the year 53, and previously to that he had worked his way through Macedonia and Greece. St. Paul on his second tour must have been then at least four years absent from Antioch, which he must therefore have left about the year 49 or 50. The Synod of Jerusalem must therefore be assigned to the year 48 A. D. or thereabouts; or, in other words, not quite twenty years after the Crucifixion.

II. And now this leads us to consider the occasion of the Synod. The time was not, as we have said, quite twenty years after the Crucifixion, yet that brief space had been quite sufficient to raise questions undreamt of in earlier days. The Church was at first completely homogeneous, its members being all Jews; but the admission of the Gentiles and the action of St. Peter in the matter of Cornelius had destroyed this characteristic so dear to the Jewish heart. The Divine revelation at Joppa to St. Peter and the gift of the Holy Ghost to Cornelius had for a time quenched the opposition to the admission of the Gentiles to baptism; but, as we have already said, the extreme Jewish party were only silenced for a time, they were not destroyed. They took up a new position. The case of Cornelius merely decided that a man might be baptised without having been *previously* circumcised; but it decided nothing in their opinion about the *subsequent* necessity for circumcision and admission into the ranks of the Jewish nation. Their view, in fact, was the same as of old. Salvation belonged exclusively to the Jewish nation, and therefore if the converted Gentiles were to be saved it must be by incorporation into that body to which salvation alone belonged. The strict Jewish section of the Church insisted the more upon this point, because they saw rising up in the Church of Antioch, and elsewhere among the Churches of Syria and Cilicia, a grave social danger threatening the existence of their nation as a separate people. There were just then two classes of disciples in these Churches. There were disciples who lived after the Jewish fashion,—abstaining from un-



lawful foods, using food slain by Jewish butchers, and scrupulous in washings and lustrations; and there were Gentiles who lived after the Gentile fashion, and in especial ate pork and things strangled. The strict Jews knew right well the tendency of a majority to swallow up a minority, specially when they were all members of the same religious community, enjoying the same privileges and partakers of the same hope. A majority does not indeed necessarily absorb a minority. Roman Catholicism is the religion of the majority in Ireland and France; yet it has not absorbed the small Protestant minority. The adherents of Judaism were scattered in St. Paul's day all over the world, yet Paganism had not swallowed them up. In these cases, however, the minority have been completely separated from the majority by a middle wall, a barrier of rigid discipline, and of strong, yea even violent religious repugnance. But the prospect now before the strict Jewish party was quite different. In the Syrian Church as they beheld it growing up Jew and Gentile would be closely linked together, professing the same faith, saying the same prayers, joining in the same sacraments, worshipping in the same buildings. All the advantages, too, would be on the side of the Gentile. He was freed from the troublesome restrictions—the more troublesome because so petty and minute—of the Levitical Law. He could eat what he liked, and join in social converse and general life without hesitation or fear. In a short time a Jewish disciple would come to ask himself, What do I gain by all these observances, this yoke of ordinances, which neither we nor our fathers have been able perfectly to bear? If a Gentile disciple can be saved without them, why should I trouble myself with them? The Jewish party saw clearly enough that toleration of the presence of the Gentiles in the Church and their admission to full communion and complete Christian privileges simply involved the certain overthrow of Jewish customs, Jewish privileges, and Jewish national expectations. They saw that it was a case of war to the death, one party or the other must conquer, and therefore in self-defence they raised the cry, "Unless the Gentile converts be circumcised after the manner of Moses they cannot be saved."

Antioch was recognised at Jerusalem as the centre of Gentile Christianity. Certain, therefore, of the zealous, Judaising disciples of Jerusalem repaired to Antioch, joined the Church, and secretly proceeded to organise opposition to the dominant practice, using for that purpose all the authority connected with the name of James the Lord's brother, who presided over the Mother Church of the Holy City.

Now let us see what position St. Paul took up with respect to these "false brethren privily brought in, who came in privily to spy out the liberty he enjoyed in Christ Jesus." Paul and Barnabas both set themselves undauntedly to fight against such teaching. They had seen and known the spiritual life which flourished free from all Jewish observances in the Church of the Gentiles. They had seen the gospel bringing forth the fruits of purity and faith, of joy and peace in the Holy Ghost; they knew that these things prepare the soul for the beatific vision of God, and confer a present salvation here below; and they could not tolerate the idea that a Jewish ceremony was necessary over and above the

life which Christ confers if men are to gain final salvation.

Here, perhaps, is the proper place to set forth St. Paul's view of circumcision and of all external Jewish ordinances, as we gather it from a broad review of his writings. St. Paul vigorously opposed all those who taught the *necessity* of Jewish rites so far as salvation is concerned. This is evident from this chapter and from the Epistle to the Galatians. But on the other hand St. Paul had not the slightest objection to men observing the law and submitting to circumcision, if they only realised that these things were mere national customs and observed them as national customs, and even as religious rites, but not as *necessary* religious rites. If men took a right view of circumcision, St. Paul had not the slightest objection to it. It was not to circumcision St. Paul objected, but to the extreme stress laid upon it, the intolerant views connected with it. Circumcision as a voluntary practice, an interesting historical relic of ancient ideas and customs, he never rejected,—nay, further, he even practised it, as we shall see in the case of Timothy; circumcision as a compulsory practice binding upon all men St. Paul utterly abhorred. We may, perhaps, draw an illustration from a modern Church in this respect. The Coptic and Abyssinian Churches retain the ancient Jewish practice of circumcision. These Churches date back to the earliest Christian times, and retain doubtless in this respect the practice of the primitive Christian Church. The Copts circumcise their children on the eighth day and before they are baptised; but they regard this rite as a mere national custom, and treat it as absolutely devoid of any religious meaning, significance, or necessity. St. Paul would have had no objection to circumcision in this aspect any more than he would have objected to a Turk for wearing a fez, or a Chinaman for wearing a pigtail, or a Hindoo for wearing a turban. National customs as such were things absolutely indifferent in his view. But if Turkish or Chinese Christians were to insist upon all men wearing their peculiar dress and observing their peculiar national customs as being things absolutely necessary to salvation, St. Paul, were he alive, would denounce and oppose them as vigorously as he did the Judaisers of his own day.

This is the explanation of St. Paul's own conduct. Some have regarded him as at times inconsistent with his own principles with regard to the law of Moses. And yet if men will but look closer and think more deeply, they will see that St. Paul never violated the rules which he had imposed upon himself. He refused to circumcise Titus, for instance, because the Judaising party at Jerusalem were insisting upon the absolute necessity of circumcising the Gentiles if they were to be saved. Had St. Paul consented to the circumcision of Titus, he would have been yielding assent, or seeming to yield assent, to their contention (see Gal. ii. 3). He circumcised Timothy at Lystra because of the Jews in that neighbourhood; not indeed because they thought it necessary to salvation that an uncircumcised man should be so treated, but because they knew that his mother was a Jewess, and the principle of the Jewish law, and of the Roman law too, was that a man's nationality and status followed that of his mother, not that of his father, so that the son of a Jewess must be



incorporated with Israel. Timothy was circumcised in obedience to national law and custom, not upon any compromise of religious principle. St. Paul himself made a vow and cut off his hair and offered sacrifices in the Temple, as being the national customs of a Jew. These were things in themselves utterly meaningless and indifferent; but they pleased other people. They cost him a little time and trouble; but they helped on the great work he had in hand, and tended to make his opponents more willing to listen to him. St. Paul, therefore, with his great large mind, willing to please others for their good to edification, gratified them by doing what they thought became a Jew with a true national spirit beating within his breast. Mere externals mattered nothing in St. Paul's estimation. He would wear any vestments, or take any position, or use any ceremony, esteeming them all things indifferent, provided only they conciliated human prejudices and cleared difficulties out of the way of the truth. But if men insisted upon them as things necessary, then he opposed with all his might. This is the golden thread which will rule our footsteps wandering amid the mazes of this earliest Christian controversy. It will amply vindicate St. Paul's consistency, and show that he never violated the principles he had laid down for his own guidance. Had the spirit of St. Paul animated the Church of succeeding ages, how many a controversy and division would have been thereby escaped!

III. Now let us turn our attention to the actual history of the controversy and strife which raged at Antioch and Jerusalem, and endeavour to read the lessons the sacred narrative teaches. What a striking picture of early Church life is here presented! How full of teaching, of comfort, and of warning! How corrective of the false notions we are apt to cherish of the state of the primitive Church! There we behold the Church of Antioch rejoicing one day in the tidings of a gospel free to the world, and on the next day torn with dissension as to the points and qualifications necessary to salvation. For we must observe that the discussion started at Antioch touched no secondary question, and dealt with no mere point of ritual. It was a fundamental question which troubled the Church. And yet that Church had apostles and teachers abiding in it who could work miracles and speak with tongues, and who received from time to time direct revelations from heaven, and were endowed with the extraordinary presence of the Holy Ghost. Yet there it was that controversy with all its troubles raised its head and "Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension" with their opponents. What a necessary warning for every age, and specially for our own, we behold in this narrative! Has not this sacred Book a message in this passage specially applicable to our own time? A great Romeward movement has within the last seventy years, more powerful in the earlier portion of that period than in the latter, extended itself over Europe. English people think that they have themselves been the only persons who have experienced it. But this is a great mistake. Germany forty and fifty years ago felt it also to a large extent. And what was the great predisposing cause of that tendency? Men had simply become tired of the perpetual controversies which raged within the churches and communions outside the sway of Rome. They longed for the perpetual peace

and rest which seemed to them to exist within the Papal domains, and they therefore flung themselves headlong into the arms of a Church which promised them relief from the exercise of that private judgment and personal responsibility which had become for them a crushing burden too heavy to be borne. And yet they forgot several things, the sudden discovery of which has sent many of these intellectual and spiritual cowards in various directions, some back to their original homes, some far away into the regions of scepticism and spiritual darkness. They forgot, for instance, to inquire how far the charmer who was alluring them from the land of their nativity by specious promises could satisfy the hopes she was raising. They hoped to get rid of dissension and controversy; but did they? When they had left their childhood's home and their father's house and sought the house of the stranger, did they find there halcyon peace? Nay, rather, did they not find there as bitter strife, nay, far more bitter strife, on questions like the Immaculate Conception and Papal Infallibility, than ever raged at home? Did they not find, and do they not find still, that no man and no society can put a hook in the jaws of that Leviathan the right of private judgment, which none can tame or restrain, and which asserts itself still in the Roman Communion as vigorously as ever, even now when the decree of Papal infallibility has elevated that dogma into the rank of those necessary to salvation? Else whence come those dissensions and discussions between minimisers and maximisers of that decree? How is it that no two doctors or theologians will give precisely the same explanation of it, and that, as we in Ireland have seen, every curate fresh from Maynooth claims to be able to express his own private judgment and determination whether any special Papal decree or bull is binding or not? This is one important point forgotten by those who have sought the Roman Communion because of its promises of freedom from controversy. They forgot to ask, Can these promises be fulfilled? And many of them, in the perpetual unrest and strife in which they have found themselves involved as much in their new home as in their old, have proved the specious hopes held out to be the veriest mirage of the Sahara desert. But this was not the only omission of which such persons were guilty. They forgot that, suppose the Roman Church could fulfil its promises and prove a religious home of perfect peace and freedom from diverging opinions, it would in that case have been very unlike the primitive Church. The Church of Antioch or of Jerusalem, enjoying the ministry of Peter and John and James and Paul,—these pillar-men, as St. Paul calls some of them,—was much more like the Church of England of fifty years ago than any society which offered perfect freedom from theological strife; for the Churches of ancient times in their earliest and purest days were swept by the winds of controversy and tossed by the tempests of intellectual and religious inquiry just like the Church of England, and they took exactly the same measures for the safety of the souls entrusted to them as she did. They depended upon the power of free debate, of unlimited discussion, of earnest prayer, of Christian charity to carry them on till they reached that haven of rest where every doubt and question shall be perfectly solved in the light of the unveiled vision of God.



Then, again, we learn another important lesson from a consideration of the persons who raised the trouble at Antioch. The opening words of the fifteenth chapter thus describes the authors of it: "Certain men came down from Judæa." It is just the same with the persons who a short time after compelled St. Peter to stagger in his course at the same Antioch: "When certain came from James, then St. Peter separated himself, fearing them of the circumcision" (Gal. ii. 12). Certain bigots, that is, of the Jewish party, came, pretending to teach with the authority of the Mother Church, and secretly disturbing weak minds. But they were only pretenders, as the apostolic Epistle expressly tells us: "Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls; . . . to whom we gave no such commandment." These religious agitators, with their narrow views about life and ritual, displayed the characteristics of like-minded men ever since. They secretly crept into the Church. There was a want of manly honesty about them. Their pettiness of vision and of thought affected their whole nature, their entire conduct. They loved the by-ways of intrigue and fraud, and therefore they hesitated not to claim an authority which they had never received, invoking apostolic names on behalf of a doctrine which the apostles had never sanctioned. The characteristics thus displayed by these Judaisers have ever been seen in their legitimate descendants in every church and society, East and West alike. Narrowness of mind, pettiness and intolerance in thought, have ever brought their own penalty with them and have ever been connected with the same want of moral uprightness. The miserable conception, the wretched fragment of truth upon which such men seize, elevating it out of its due place and rank, seems to destroy their sense of proportion, and leads them to think it worth any lie which they may tell, any breach of Christian charity of which they may be guilty, any sacrifice of truth and honesty which they may make on behalf of their beloved idol. The Judaisers misrepresented religious truth, and in doing so they misrepresented themselves, and sacrificed the great interests of moral truth in order that they might gain their ends.

IV. The distractions and controversies of Antioch were overruled, however, by the Divine providence to the greater glory of God. As the Judaisers continually appealed to the authority of the Church of Jerusalem, the brethren at Antioch determined to send to that body and ask the opinions of the apostles and elders upon this question. They therefore despatched "Paul and Barnabas and certain other of them," among whom was Titus, an uncircumcised Gentile convert, as a deputation to represent their own views. When they came to Jerusalem the Antiochene deputies held a series of private conferences with the leading men of Jerusalem. This we learn, not from the Acts of the Apostles, but from St. Paul's independent narrative in Galatians ii., identifying as we do the visit there recorded with the visit narrated in Acts xv.\* St. Paul here exhibits all that tact and prudence we ever trace in his character. He did not depend solely upon his own authority,

his reputation, his success. He felt within himself the conscious guidance of the Divine Spirit aiding and guiding a singularly clear and powerful mind. Yet he disdained no legitimate precaution. He knew that the presence and guidance of the Spirit does not absolve a man anxious for the truth from using all the means in his power to ensure its success. He recognised that the truth, though it must finally triumph, might be eclipsed or defeated for a time through man's neglect and carelessness; and therefore he engaged in a series of private conferences, explaining difficulties, conciliating the support, and gaining the assistance of the most influential members of the Church, including, of course, "James, Cephas, and John, who were reputed to be pillars."

Is there not something very modern in the glimpse thus given us of the negotiations and private meetings which preceded the formal meeting of the Apostolic Council? Some persons may think that the presence and power of the Holy Ghost must have superseded all such human arrangements and forethought. But the simple testimony of the Bible dispels at once all such objections, and shows us that as the primitive Church was just like the modern Church, torn with dissension, swept with the winds and storms of controversy, so too the divinely guided and inspired leaders of the Church then took precisely the same human means to attain their ends and carry out their views of truth as now find place in the meetings of synods and convocations and parliaments of the present time. The presence of the Holy Ghost did not dispense with the necessity of human exertions in the days of the apostles; and surely we may, on the other hand, believe that similar human exertions in our time may be quite consonant with the presence of the Spirit in our modern assemblies, overruling and guiding human plans and intrigues to the honour of God and the blessing of man. After these private conferences the apostles and elders came together to consider the difficult subject laid before them. And now many questions rise up which we can only very briefly consider. The composition of this Synod is one important point. Who sat in it, and who debated there? It is quite clear, from the text of the Acts, as to the persons who were *present* at this Synod. The sixth verse says, "The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider of this matter"; the twelfth verse tells us that "all the multitude kept silence, and hearkened unto Barnabas and Paul rehearsing what signs and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them"; in the twenty-second verse we read, "Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole Church, to choose men out of their company, and to send them to Antioch"; while, finally, in the twenty-third verse we read the superscription of the final decree of the Council, which ran thus, "The apostles and the elder brethren unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia." It seems to me that any plain man reading these verses would come to the conclusion that the whole multitude, the great body of the Church in Jerusalem, were present and took part in this assembly. A great battle indeed has raged round the words of the Authorised Version of the twenty-third verse, "The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting

\*The reader should consult what Mr. Findlay has written on this point in his "Galatians," chs. vi. and vii., pp. 92-112.



unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles," which are otherwise rendered in the Revised Version. The presence or the absence of the "and" between elders and brethren has formed the battle-ground between two parties, the one upholding, the other opposing the right of the laity to take part in Church synods and councils.

Upon a broad review of the whole affair this Apostolic Assembly seems to me to have an important bearing upon this point. There are various views involved. Some persons think that none but bishops should take part in Church synods; others think that none but clergymen, spiritual persons, in the technical and legal sense of the word "spiritual," should enter these assemblies, specially when treating of questions touching doctrine and discipline. Looking at the subject from the standpoint of the Apostolic Council, we cannot agree with either party. We are certainly told of the speeches of four individuals merely,—Paul, Barnabas, Peter, and James—to whom may be conceded the position of bishops, and even more. But, then, it is evident that the whole multitude of the Church was present at this Synod, and took an active part in it. We are expressly told (vv. 4 and 5): "When they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the Church and the apostles and the elders. . . . But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees who believed, saying, It is needful to circumcise them." This indeed happened at the first meeting of the Church held to receive the Antiochene deputation when they arrived. But there does not seem to have been any difference between the constitution and authority of the first and second meetings. Both were what we should call Ecclesiastical Assemblies. Laymen joined in the discussions of the first, and doubtless laymen joined in the discussions and much questioning of the second.

There is not indeed a hint which would lead us to conclude that the Pharisees, who rose up and argued on behalf of the binding character of the law of Moses, held any spiritual office whatsoever. So far as the sacred text puts it, they may have been laymen pure and simple, such as were the ordinary Pharisees. I cannot, indeed, see how any member of the Church of England can consistently maintain either from Holy Scripture, ancient ecclesiastical history, or the history of his own Church, that laymen are quite shut out from councils debating questions touching Christian faith, and that their consideration must be limited to bishops, or at least clergymen alone. The Apostolic Church seems to have admitted the freest discussion. The General Councils most certainly tolerated very considerable lay interference. The Emperor Constantine, though not even baptised, obtruded much of his presence and exercised much of his influence upon the great Nicene Council. Why, even down to the sixteenth century, till the Tridentine Council, the ambassadors of the great Christian Powers of Europe sat in Church synods as representing the laity; and it was only in the Council of the Vatican, which met in 1870, that even the Roman Catholic Church formally denied the right of the people to exercise a certain influence in the determination of questions touching faith and discipline by the expulsion of the ambassadors who had in every previous council held a certain defined place. While again, when we come to the history of the Church of England, we find that the celebrated

Hooker, the vindicator of its Church polity, expressly defended the royal supremacy as exercised within that Church on the ground that the king represented by delegation the vast body of the laity, who through him exercised a real influence upon all questions, whether of doctrine or discipline. I feel a personal interest in this question, because one of the charges most freely hurled against the Church of Ireland is this, that she has admitted laymen to discussions and votes concerning such questions. I cannot see how, consistently with her past history as an established Church, she could have done otherwise. I cannot see how the Church of England, if she comes in the future to be disestablished, can do otherwise. That Church has always admitted a vast amount of lay interference, even prior to the Reformation, and still more since that important event. Extreme men may scoff at those branches of their own Communion which have admitted laymen to vote in Church synods upon all questions whatsoever; but they forget when doing so that statements and decrees most dear to themselves bear manifest traces of far more extreme lay intervention. The Ornaments Rubric, standing before the order for Morning Prayer, is a striking evidence of this. It is dear to the hearts of many, because it orders the use of eucharistic vestments and the preservation of the chancels in the ancient style; but on what grounds does it do so? Let the precise words of the rubric be the answer: "Here it is to be noted that such ornaments of the Church and of the ministers thereof, at all times of their ministration, shall be retained, and be in use, as were in this Church of England, *by the authority of Parliament*, in the second year of the reign of King Edward the Sixth." Objections to the determinations, rules, and canons of the Irish Church Synod might have some weight did they profess, as this rubric does, to have been ordained and imposed by the order of laymen alone. But when the bishops of a Church have an independent vote, the clergy an independent vote, the free and independent vote of the laity is totally powerless by itself to introduce any novelty, and is only powerful to prevent change in the ancient order. I do not feel bound to defend some ill-judged expressions and foolish speeches which some lay representatives may have made in the Irish Church Synod, as again no member of the Church of England need trouble himself to defend some rash speeches made in Parliament on Church topics. In the first moments of unaccustomed freedom Irish laymen did and said some rash things, and, overawing the clergy by their fierce expressions, may have caused the introduction of some hasty and ill-advised measures. But sure I am that every sincere member of the Church to which I belong will agree that the admission of the lay representatives to a free discussion and free vote upon every topic has had a marvellous influence in broadening their conceptions of Scripture truth and deepening their affections and attachment to their Mother Church which has treated and trusted them thus generously.\*

V. The proceedings of the Apostolic Synod next demand our attention. The account which

\* I may perhaps be allowed to refer to a little tract of my own on this topic, published at the time, on "The Work of the Laity in the Church of Ireland," as embodying the principles of Hooker applied to modern times and needs.



has been handed down is doubtless a mere outline of what actually happened. We are not told anything concerning the opening of the Assembly or how the discussion was begun. St. Luke was intent merely on setting forth the main gist of affairs, and therefore he reports but two speeches and tells of two others. Some Christian Pharisee having put forward his objections to the position occupied by the Gentile converts, St. Peter arose, as was natural, he having been the person through whose action the present trouble and discussion had originated. St. Peter's speech is marked on this occasion by the same want of assumption of any higher authority than belonged to his brethren which we have noted before when objections were taken to his dealings with Cornelius. His speech claims nothing for himself, does not even quote the Scriptures of the Old Testament, but simply repeats in a concise shape the story of the conversion of Cornelius, points out that God put no difference between Jew and Gentile, suggesting that if God had put no difference between them why should man dare to do so, and then ends with proclaiming the great doctrine of grace that men, whether Jews or Gentiles, are saved through faith in Christ alone, which purifies their hearts and lives. After Peter's speech there arose James the Lord's brother, who from ancient times has been regarded as the first bishop of Jerusalem, and who most certainly, from the various references to him both here and elsewhere in the Acts (chaps. xii. 17, xxi. 18) and in the Epistle to the Galatians, seems to have occupied the supreme place in that Church. James was a striking figure. There is a long account of him left us by Hege-sippus, a very ancient Church historian, who bordered on apostolic times, and now preserved for us in the "Ecclesiastical History" of Euse-bius, ii. 23. There he is described as an ascetic and a Nazarite, like John the Baptist, from his earliest childhood. "He drank neither wine nor fermented liquors, and abstained from animal food. A razor never came upon his head, he never anointed with oil, and never used the bath. He alone was allowed to enter the sanctuary. He never wore woollen, but linen garments. He was in the habit of entering the Temple alone, and was often found upon his bended knees, and interceding for the forgiveness of the people; so that his knees became as hard as camels', in consequence of his habitual supplication and kneeling before God. And indeed on account of his exceeding great piety he was called the Just and Oblias, which signifies the Rampart of the People." This description is the explanation of the power and authority of James the Just in the Apostolic Assembly. He was a strict legalist himself. He desired no freedom for his own share, but rejoiced in observances and restrictions far beyond the common lot of the Jews. When such a man pronounced against the attempt made to impose circumcision and the law as a necessary condition of salvation, the Judaizers must have felt that their cause was lost. St. James expressed his views in no uncertain terms. He begins by referring to St. Peter's speech and the conversion of Cornelius. He then proceeds to show how the prophets foretold the ingathering of the Gentiles, quoting a passage (Amos ix. 11, 12) which the Jewish expositors themselves applied to the Messiah. His method of Scriptural interpretation is

exactly the same as that of St. Paul and St. Peter. It is very different from ours, but it was the universal method of his day; and when we wish to arrive at the meaning of the Scriptures, or for that matter of any work, we ought to strive and place ourselves at the standpoint and amid the circumstances of the writers and actors. The prophet Amos speaks of the tabernacle of David as fallen down. The rebuilding of it is then foretold, and James sees in the conversion of the Gentiles this predicted rebuilding. He then pronounces in the most decided language against "troubling those who from among the Gentiles are turned to God" in the matter of legal observances, laying down at the same time the concessions which should be demanded from the Gentiles so as not to cause offence to their Jewish brethren. The sentence thus authoritatively pronounced by the strictest Jewish Christian was naturally adopted by the Apostolic Synod, and they wrote a letter to the disciples in Syria and Cilicia, embodying their decision, which for a time settled the controversy which had been raised. This epistle begins by disclaiming utterly and at once the agitators who had gone forth to Antioch and had raised the disturbances. It declared that circumcision was unnecessary for the Gentile converts. This was the great point upon which St. Paul was most anxious. He had no objection, as we have already said, to the Jews observing their legal rites and ceremonies, but he was totally opposed to the Gentiles coming under any such rule as a thing necessary to salvation. The epistle then proceeds to lay down certain concessions which the Gentiles should in turn make. They should abstain from meats offered in sacrifice unto idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from fornication; all of them points upon which the public opinion of the Gentiles laid no stress, but which were most abhorrent to a true Jew. The decrees of the Synod of Jerusalem, as the inspired historian expressly terms them in ch. xvi. 4, were mere temporary expedients. They determined indeed one important question, that circumcision should not be imposed on the Gentiles—that Judaism, in fact, was not in and by itself a saving dispensation; but left unsolved many other questions, even touching this very subject of circumcision and the Jewish law, which had afterwards to be debated and threshed out, as St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians proves. But, turning our eyes from the obsolete controversy which evoked the Apostolic Epistle, and viewing the subject from a wider and a modern standpoint, we may say that the decrees of this primitive Synod narrated in this typical history bestow their sanction upon the great principles of prudence, wisdom, and growth in the Divine life and in Church work. It was with the apostles themselves as with the Church ever since. Apostles even must not make haste, but must be contented to wait upon the developments of God's providence. Perfection is an excellent thing, but then perfection cannot be attained at once. Here a little and there a little is the Divine law under the New as under the Old Dispensation. Truth is the fairest and most excellent of all possessions, but the advocates of truth must not expect it to be grasped in all its bearings by all sorts and conditions of men at one and the same time. They must be content, as St. Paul was, if one step be taken at a time; if progress be in the right and not in the



wrong direction; and must be willing to concede much to the feelings and long-descended prejudices of short-sighted human nature.

## CHAPTER XI.

### *APOSTOLIC QUARRELS AND THE SECOND TOUR.*

ACTS xv. 36, 39; xvi. 6, 8, 9.

THE second missionary tour of St. Paul now claims our attention, specially because it involves the first proclamation of Christianity by an apostle within the boundaries of Europe. The course of the narrative up to this will show that any Christian effort in Europe by an apostle, St. Peter or any one else prior to St. Paul's work, was almost impossible. To the Twelve and to men like-minded with them, it must have seemed a daring innovation to bring the gospel message directly to bear upon the masses of Gentile paganism. Men of conservative minds like the Twelve doubtless restrained their own efforts up to the time of St. Paul's second tour within the bounds of Israel, according to the flesh, in Palestine and the neighbouring lands, finding there an ample field upon which to exercise their diligence. And then when we turn to St. Paul and St. Barnabas, who had dared to realise the freeness and fulness of the gospel message, we shall see that the Syrian Antioch and Syria itself and Asia Minor had hitherto afforded them scope quite sufficient to engage their utmost attention. A few moments' reflection upon the circumstances of the primitive Christian Church and the developments through which Apostolic Christianity passed are quite sufficient to dispel all such fabulous incrustations upon the original record as those involved in St. Peter's episcopate at Antioch or his lengthened rule over the Church at Rome. If the latter story was to be accepted, St. Peter must have been Bishop of Rome long before a mission was despatched to the Gentiles from Antioch, if not even before the vision was seen at Joppa by St. Peter when the admission of the Gentiles to the Church was first authorised under any terms whatsoever. In fact, it would be impossible to fit the actions of St. Peter into any scheme whatsoever, if we bring him to Rome and make him bishop there for twenty-five years beginning at the year 42, the time usually assigned by Roman Catholic historians. It is hard enough to frame a hypothetical scheme, which will find a due and fitting place for the various recorded actions of St. Peter, quite apart from any supposed Roman episcopate lasting over such an extended period. St. Peter and St. Paul had, for instance, a dispute at Antioch of which we read much in the second chapter of the Galatian epistle. Where shall we fix that dispute? Some place it during the interval of the Synod at Jerusalem and the second missionary tour of which we now propose to treat. Others place it at the conclusion of that tour, when St. Paul was resting at Antioch for a little after the work of that second journey. As we are not writing the life of St. Paul, but simply commenting upon the narratives of his labours as told in the Acts, we must be content to refer to the Lives of St. Paul by Conybeare and Howson, and Archdeacon Farrar, and to Bishop Lightfoot's "*Galatians*," all of whom place this

quarrel before the second tour, and to Mr. Findlay's "*Galatians*" in our own series, who upholds the other view. Supposing, however, that we take the former view in deference to the weighty authorities just mentioned, we then find that there were two serious quarrels which must for a time have marred the unity and Christian concord of the Antiochene Church.

The reproof of St. Peter by St. Paul for his dissimulation was made on a public occasion before the whole Church. It must have caused considerable excitement and discussion, and raised much human feeling in Antioch. Barnabas too, the chosen friend and companion of St. Paul, was involved in the matter, and must have felt himself condemned in the strong language addressed to St. Peter. This may have caused for a time a certain amount of estrangement between the various parties. A close study of the Acts of the Apostles dispels at once the notion men would fain cherish, that the apostles and the early Christians lived just like angels without any trace of human passion or discord. The apostles had their differences and misunderstandings very like our own. Hot tempers and subsequent coolnesses arose, and produced evil results between men entrusted with the very highest offices, and paved the way, as quarrels always do, for fresh disturbances at some future time. So it was at Antioch, where the public reproof of St. Peter by St. Paul involved St. Barnabas, and may have left traces upon the gentle soul of the Son of Consolation which were not wholly eradicated by the time that a new source of trouble arose.

The ministry of St. Paul at Antioch was prolonged for some time after the Jerusalem Synod, and then the Holy Ghost again impelled him to return and visit all the Churches which he had founded in Cyprus and Asia Minor. He recognised the necessity for supervision, support, and guidance as far as the new converts were concerned. The seed might be from heaven and the work might be God's own, but still human effort must take its share and do its duty, or else the work may fail and the good seed never attain perfection. St. Paul therefore proposed to Barnabas a second joint mission, intending to visit "the brethren in every city wherein they had proclaimed the word of the Lord." Barnabas desired to take with them his kinsman Mark, but Paul, remembering his weakness and defection on their previous journey, would have nothing to say to the young man. Then there arose a sharp contention between them, or as the original expression is, there arose a paroxysm between the apostles, so that the loving Christian workers and friends of bygone years, "men who had hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," separated the one from the other, and worked from henceforth in widely different localities.

I. There are few portions of the Acts more fruitful in spiritual instruction, or teeming with more abundant lessons, or richer in application to present difficulties, than this very incident. Let us note a few of them. One thought, for instance, which occurs at once to any reflecting mind is this: what an extraordinary thing it is that two such holy and devoted men as Paul and Barnabas should have had a quarrel at all; and when they did quarrel, would it not have been far better to have hushed the matter up and never have let the world know anything at all about it?



Now I do not say that it is well for Christian people always to proclaim aloud and tell the world at large all about the various unpleasant circumstances of their lives, their quarrels, their misunderstandings, their personal failings and backslidings. Life would be simply intolerable did we live always, at all times, and under all circumstances beneath the full glare of publicity. Personal quarrels too, family jars and bickerings, have a rapid tendency to heal themselves if kept in the gloom, the soft, toned, shaded light of retirement. They have an unhappy tendency to harden and perpetuate themselves when dragged beneath the fierce light of public opinion and the outside world. Yet it is well for the Church at large that such a record has been left for us of the fact that the quarrel between Paul and Barnabas waxed so fierce that they departed the one from the other, to teach us what we are apt to forget—the true character of the apostles. Human nature is intensely inclined to idolatry. One idol may be knocked down, but as soon as it is displaced the heart straightway sets to work to erect another idol in its stead, and men have been ready to make idols of the apostles. They have been ready to imagine them supernatural characters tainted with no sin, tempted by no passion, weakened by no infirmity. If these incidents had not been recorded—the quarrel with Peter and the quarrel with Barnabas—we should have been apt to forget that the apostles were men of like passions with ourselves, and thus to lose the full force—the bracing, stimulating force—of such exhortations as that delivered by St. Paul when he said to a primitive Church, “Follow me, as I, a poor, weak, failing, passionate man, have followed Christ.” We have the thorough humanity of the apostles vigorously presented and enforced in this passage. There is no suppression of weak points, no accentuation of strong points, no hiding of defects and weaknesses, no dwelling upon virtues and graces. We have the apostles presented at times vigorous, united, harmonious; at other times weak, timorous, and cowardly.

Again, we note that this passage not only shows us the human frailties and weaknesses which marked the apostles, and found a place in characters and persons called to the very highest places; it has also a lesson for the Church of all time in the circumstances which led to the quarrel between Paul and Barnabas. We do well to mark carefully that Antioch saw two such quarrels, the one of which, as we have already pointed out, may have had something to say to the other. The quarrel between St. Paul and St. Peter indeed has a history which strikingly illustrates this tendency of which we have just now spoken. Some expositors, jealous of the good fame and reputation and temper of the apostles, have explained the quarrel at Antioch between St. Paul and St. Peter as not having been a real quarrel at all, but an edifying piece of acting, a dispute got up between the apostles to enforce and proclaim the freedom of the Gentiles, a mere piece of knavery and deception utterly foreign to such a truth-loving character as was St. Paul's. It is interesting, however, to note as manifesting their natural characteristics, which were not destroyed, but merely elevated, purified, and sanctified by Divine grace, that the apostles Paul and Barnabas quarrelled about a purely personal matter. They had finished their first missionary tour on which they

had been accompanied by St. Mark, who had acted as their attendant or servant, carrying, we may suppose, their luggage, and discharging all the subordinate offices such service might involve. The labour and toil and personal danger incident to such a career were too much for the young man. So with all the fickleness, the weakness, the want of strong definite purpose we often find in young people, he abandoned his work simply because it involved the exercise of a certain amount of self-sacrifice. And now, when Paul and Barnabas are setting out again, and Barnabas wishes to take the same favourite relative with them, St. Paul naturally objects, and then the bitter, passionate quarrel ensues. St. Paul just experienced here what we all must more or less experience, the crosses and trials of public life, if we wish to pass through that life with a good conscience. Public life, I say—and I mean thereby not a political life, which alone we usually dignify by that name, but the ordinary life which every man and every woman amongst us must live as we go in and out and discharge our duties amid our fellow-men,—public life, the life we live once we leave our closet communion with God in the early morning till we return thereto in the eventide, is in all its departments most trying. It is trying to temper, and it is trying to principle, and no one can hope to pass through it without serious and grievous temptations. I do not wonder that men have often felt, as the old Eastern monks did, that salvation was more easily won in solitude than in living and working amid the busy haunts of men where bad temper and hot words so often conspire to make one return home from a hard day's work feeling miserable within on account of repeated falls and shortcomings. Shall we then act as they did? Shall we shut out the world completely and cease to take any part in a struggle which seems to tell so disastrously upon the equable calm of our spiritual life? Nay, indeed, for such a course would be unworthy a soldier of the Cross, and very unlike the example shown by the blessed apostle St. Paul, who had to battle not only against others, but had also to battle against himself and his own passionate nature, and was crowned as a victor, not because he ran away, but because he conquered through the grace of Christ.

And now it is well that we should note the special trials he had to endure. He had to fight against the spirit of cowardly self-indulgence in others, and he had to fight against the spirit of jobbery. These things indeed caused the rupture in the apostolic friendship. St. Barnabas, apostle though he was, thought far more of the interests of his cousin than of the interests of Christ's mission. St. Paul with his devotion to Christ may have been a little intolerant of the weakness of youth, but he rightly judged that one who had proved untrustworthy before should not be rapidly and at once trusted again. And St. Paul was thoroughly right, and has left a very useful and practical example. Many young men among us are like St. Mark. The St. Marks of our own day are a very numerous class. They have no respect for their engagements. They will undertake work and allow themselves to be calculated upon, and arrangements to be made accordingly. But then comes the stress of action, and their place is found wanting, and the work undertaken by them is found undone. And then they wonder and complain that their



lives are unsuccessful, and that men and women who are in earnest will not trust or employ them in the future! These are the men who are the social wrecks in life. They proclaim loudly in streets and highways the hard treatment which they have received. They tell forth their own misery, and speak as if they were the most deserving and at the same time the most ill-treated of men; and yet they are but reaping as they have sown, and their failures and their misfortunes are only the due and fitting rewards of their want of earnestness, diligence, and self-denial. To the young this episode proclaims aloud: Respect your engagements, regard public employments as solemn contracts in God's sight. Take pains with your work. Be willing to endure any trouble for its sake. There is no such thing as genius in ordinary life. Genius has been well defined as an infinite capacity for taking pains. And thus avoid the miserable weakness of St. Mark, who fled from his work because it entailed trouble and self-denial on his part.

Then, again, we view St. Paul with admiration because he withstood the spirit of jobbery when it displayed itself even in a saint. Barnabas in plain language wished to perpetrate a job in favour of a member of his family, and St. Paul withstood him. And how often since has the same spirit thus displayed itself to the injury of God's cause! Let us note how the case stood. St. Barnabas was a good pious man of very strong emotional feelings. But he allowed himself to be guided, as pious people often do, by their emotions, affections, prejudices, not by their reason and judgment. With such men, when their affections come into play, jobbery is the most natural thing in the world. It is the very breath of their nostrils. It is the atmosphere in which they revel. Barnabas loved his cousin John Mark, with strong, powerful, absorbing love, and that emotion blinded Barnabas to Mark's faults, and led him on his behalf to quarrel with his firmer, wiser, and more vigorous friend. Jobbery is a vice peculiar to no age and to no profession. It flourishes in the most religious as in the most worldly circles. In religious circles it often takes the most sickening forms, when miserable, narrow selfishness assumes the garb and adopts the language of Christian piety. St. Paul's action proclaims to Christian men a very needful lesson. It says, in fact, Set your faces against jobbery of every kind. Regard power, influence, patronage as a sacred trust. Permit not fear, affection, or party spirit to blind your eyes or prejudice your judgment against real merit; so shall you be following in the footsteps of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, with his heroic championship of that which was righteous and true, and of One higher still, for thus you shall be following the Master's own example, whose highest praise was this: "He loved righteousness, and hated iniquity."

We have now bestowed a lengthened notice upon this quarrel, because it corrects a very mistaken notion about the apostles, and shows us how thoroughly natural and human, how very like our own, was the everyday life of the primitive Church. It takes away the false halo of infallibility and impeccability with which we are apt to invest the apostles, making us view them as real, fallible, weak, sinful men like ourselves, and thereby exalts the power of that grace which made them so eminent in Christian character,

so abundant in Christian labours. Let us now apply ourselves to trace the course of St. Paul's second tour.

The effect of the quarrel between the friends was that St. Paul took Silas and St. Barnabas took Mark, and they separated; the latter going to Cyprus, the native country of Barnabas, while Paul and Silas devoted themselves to Syria and Asia Minor and their Churches. The division between these holy men became thus doubly profitable to the Church of Christ. It is perpetually profitable, by way of warning and example, as we have just now shown; and then it became profitable because it led to two distinct missions being carried on, the one in the Island of Cyprus, the other on the continent of Asia. The wrath of man is thus again overruled to the greater glory of God, and human weakness is made to promote the interests of the gospel. We read, too, "they parted asunder, the one from the other." How very differently they acted from the manner in which modern Christians do! Their difference in opinion did not lead them to depart into exactly the same district, and there pursue a policy of opposition the one against the other. They sought rather districts widely separated, where their social differences could have no effect upon the cause they both loved. How very differently modern Christians act, and how very disastrous the consequent results! How very scandalous, how very injurious to Christ's cause, when Christian missionaries of different communions appear warring one with another in face of the pagan world! Surely the world of paganism is wide enough and large enough to afford scope for the utmost efforts of all Christians without European Christendom exporting its divisions and quarrels to afford matter for mockery to scoffing idolaters! We have heard lately a great deal about the differences between Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries in Central Africa, terminating in war and bloodshed and in the most miserable recriminations threatening the peace and welfare of the nations of Europe. Surely there must have been an error of judgment somewhere or another in this case, and Africa must be ample enough to afford abundant room for the independent action of the largest bodies of missionaries without resorting to armed conflicts which recall the religious wars between the Roman Catholic and the Protestant Cantons of Switzerland! With the subsequent labours of Barnabas we have nothing to do, as he now disappears from the Acts of the Apostles, though it would appear from a reference by St. Paul—1 Cor. ix. 6, "Or I only, and Barnabas, have we not a right to forbear working?"—as if at that time, four or five years after the quarrel, they were again labouring together at Ephesus, where First Corinthians was written, or else why should Barnabas be mentioned in that connection at all.

Let us now briefly indicate the course of St. Paul's labours during the next three years, as his second missionary tour must have extended over at least that space of time. St. Paul and his companion Silas left Antioch amid the prayers of the whole Church. Evidently the brethren viewed Paul's conduct with approbation, and accompanied him therefore with fervent supplications for success in his self-denying labours. He proceeded by land into Cilicia and Asia Minor, and wherever he went he de-



livered the apostolic decree in order that he might counteract the workings of the Judaisers. This decree served a twofold purpose. It relieved the minds of the Gentile brethren with respect to the law and its observances, and it also showed to them that the Jerusalem Church and apostles recognised the Divine authority and apostolate of St. Paul himself, which these "false brethren" from Jerusalem had already assailed, as they did four or five years later both in Galatia and at Corinth. We know not what special towns St. Paul visited in Cilicia, but we may be sure that the Church of Tarsus, his native place, where in the first fervour of his conversion he had already laboured for a considerable period, must have received a visit from him. We may be certain that his opponents would not leave such an important town unvisited, and we may be equally certain that St. Paul, who, as his Epistles show, was always keenly alive to the opinion of his converts with respect to his apostolic authority, would have been specially anxious to let his fellow townsmen at Tarsus see that he was no unauthorised or false teacher, but that the Jerusalem Church recognised his work and teaching in the amplest manner.

Starting then anew from Tarsus, Paul and Silas set out upon an enormous journey, penetrating, as few modern travellers even now do, from the southeastern extremity of Asia Minor to the northwestern coast, a journey which, with its necessarily prolonged delays, must have taken them at least a year and a half. St. Paul seems to have carefully availed himself of the Roman road system. We are merely given the very barest outline of the course which he pursued, but then, when we take up the index maps of Asia Minor inserted in Ramsay's "Historical Geography of Asia Minor," showing the road systems at various periods, we see that a great Roman road followed the very route which St. Paul took. It started from Tarsus and passed to Derbe, whence of course the road to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch had already been traversed by St. Paul. He must have made lengthened visits to all these places, as he had much to do and much to teach. He had to expound the decree of the Apostolic Council, to explain Christian truth, to correct the errors and abuses which were daily creeping in, and to enlarge the organisation of the Christian Church by fresh ordinations. Take the case of Timothy as an example of the trouble St. Paul must have experienced. He came to Derbe, where he first found some of the converts made on his earlier tour; whence he passed to Lystra, where he met Timothy, whose acquaintance he had doubtless made on his first journey. He was the son of a Jewess, though his father was a Gentile. St. Paul took and circumcised him to conciliate the Jews. The Apostle must have bestowed a great deal of trouble on this point alone, explaining to the Gentile portion of the Christian community the principles on which he acted and their perfect consistency with his own conduct at Jerusalem and his advocacy of Gentile freedom from the law. Then he ordained him. This we do not learn from the Acts, but from St. Paul's Epistles to Timothy. The Acts simply says of Timothy, "Him would Paul have to go forth with him." But then when we turn to the Epistles written to Timothy, we find that it was not as an ordinary companion that Timothy was taken. He went forth as St. Paul himself had gone forth from the

Church of Antioch, a duly ordained and publicly recognised messenger of Christ. We can glean from St. Paul's letters to Timothy the order and ceremonies of this primitive ordination. The rite, as ministered on that occasion, embraced prophesyings or preachings by St. Paul himself and by others upon the serious character of the office then undertaken. This seems plainly intimated in 1 Tim. i. 18: "This charge I commit unto thee, my child Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee"; while there seems a reference to his own exhortations and directions in 2 Tim. ii. 2, where he writes, "The things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men." After this there was probably, as in modern ordinations, a searching examination of the candidate, with a solemn profession of faith on his part, to which St. Paul refers in 1 Tim. vi. 12, "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on the life eternal, whereunto thou wast called, and *didst confess the good confession in the sight of many witnesses*. I charge thee in the sight of God who quickeneth all things, and of Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed the good confession; that thou keep the commandment without spot, without reproach, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." And finally there came the imposition of hands, in which the local presbyters assisted St. Paul, though St. Paul was so far the guiding and ruling personage that, though in one place (1 Tim. iv. 14) he speaks of the gift of God which Timothy possessed, as given "by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery," in another place he describes it as given to the young evangelist by the imposition of St. Paul's own hands (2 Tim. i. 6). This ordination of Timothy and adoption of him as his special attendant stood at the very beginning of a prolonged tour throughout the central and northern districts of Asia Minor, of which we get only a mere hint in Acts xvi. 6-8: "They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden of the Holy Ghost to speak the word in Asia; and when they were come over against Mysia, they essayed to go into Bithynia; and the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not; and passing by Mysia, they came unto Troas." This is the brief sketch of St. Paul's labours through the northwestern provinces of Asia Minor, during which he visited the district of Galatia and preached the gospel amid the various tribal communities of Celts who inhabited that district.

St. Paul's work in Galatia is specially interesting to ourselves. The Celtic race certainly furnished the groundwork of the population in England, Ireland, and Scotland, and finds to this day lineal representatives in the Celtic-speaking inhabitants of these three islands. Galatia was thoroughly Celtic in St. Paul's day. But how, it may be said, did the Gauls come there? We all know of the Gauls or Celts in Western Europe, and every person of even moderate education has heard of the Gauls who invaded Italy and sacked Rome when that city was yet an unknown factor in the world's history, and yet but very few know that the same wave of invasion which brought the Gauls to Rome led another division of them into Asia Minor, where—as Dr. Lightfoot shows in his Introduction to his Commentary—about three hundred years before St. Paul's day they settled down in the region called after them Galatia, perpetuating in that neighbour-



hood the tribal organisation, the language, the national feelings, habits, and customs which have universally marked the Celtic race, whether in ancient or in modern times. St. Paul on this second missionary tour paid his first visit to this district of Galatia. St. Paul usually directed his attention to great cities. Where vast masses of humanity were gathered together, there St. Paul loved to fling himself with all the mighty force of his unquenchable enthusiasm. But Galatia was quite unlike other districts with which he had dealt in this special respect. Like the Celtic race all the world over, the Gauls of Galatia specially delighted in village communities. They did not care for the society and tone of great towns, and Galatia was wanting in such. St. Paul, too, does not seem originally to have intended to labour amongst the Galatians at all. In view of his great design to preach in large cities, and concentrate his efforts where they could most effectually tell upon the masses, he seems to have been hurrying through Galatia when God laid His heavy hand upon the Apostle and delayed his course that we might be able to see how the gospel could tell upon Gauls and Celts even as upon other nations. This interesting circumstance is made known to us by St. Paul himself in the Epistle to the Galatians iv. 13: "Ye know that because of an infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you for the first time." Paul, to put it in plain language, fell sick in Galatia. He was delayed on his journey by the ophthalmia or some other form of disease, which was his thorn in the flesh, and, then, utilising the compulsory delay, and turning every moment to advantage, he evangelised the village communities of Galatia with which he came in contact, so that his Epistle is directed, not as in other cases to the Church of a city or to an individual man, but the Epistle in which he deals with great fundamental questions of Christian freedom is addressed to the Churches of Galatia, a vast district of country. Mere accident, as it would seem to the eye of sense, produced the Epistle to the Galatians, which shows us the peculiar weakness and the peculiar strength of the Celtic race, their enthusiasm, their genuine warmth, their fickleness, their love for that which is striking, showy, material, exterior. But when we pass from Galatia we know nothing of the course of St. Paul's further labours in Asia Minor. St. Luke was not with him during this portion of his work, and so the details given us are very few. We are told that "the Spirit of Jesus" would not permit him to preach in Bithynia, though Bithynia became afterwards rich in Christian Churches, and was one of the districts to which St. Peter some years later addressed his first Epistle. The Jews were numerous in the districts of Bithynia and Asia, and "the Spirit of Jesus" or "the Holy Ghost"—for the sacred writer seems to use the terms as equivalent the one to the other—had determined to utilise St. Paul in working directly among the Gentiles, reserving the preaching of the gospel to the Dispersion, as the scattered Jews were called, to St. Peter and his friends. It is thus we would explain the restraint exercised upon St. Paul on this occasion. Divine providence had cut out his great work in Europe, and was impelling him westward even when he desired to tarry in Asia. How the Spirit exercised this restraint or communicated His will we know not. St. Paul lived, however, in an atmosphere of

Divine communion. He cultivated perpetually a sense of the Divine presence, and those who do so experience a guidance of which the outer world knows nothing. Bishop Jeremy Taylor, in one of his marvellous spiritual discourses called the "*Via Intelligentiæ*," or the Way of Knowledge, speaks much on this subject, pointing out that they who live closest to God have a knowledge and a love peculiar to themselves. And surely every sincere and earnest follower of Christ has experienced somewhat of the same mystical blessings! God's truest servants commit their lives and their actions in devout prayer to the guidance of their heavenly Father, and then when they look back over the past they see how marvellously they have been restrained from courses which would have been fraught with evil, how strangely they have been led by ways which have been full of mercy and goodness and blessing. Thus it was that St. Paul was at length led down to the ancient city of Troas where God revealed to him in a new fashion his ordained field of labour. A man of Macedonia appeared in a night vision inviting him over to Europe, and saying, "Come over into Macedonia and help us." Troas was a very fitting place in which this vision should appear. Of old time and in days of classic fable Troas had been the meeting-place where, as Homer and as Virgil tell, Europe and Asia had met in stern conflict, and where Europe as represented by Greece had come off victorious, bringing home the spoils which human nature counted most precious. Europe and Asia again meet at Troas, but no longer in carnal conflict or in deadly fight. The interests of Europe and of Asia again touch one another, and Europe again carries off from the same spot spoil more precious far than Grecian poet ever dreamt of, for "when Paul had seen the vision, straightway we sought to go forth into Macedonia, concluding that God called us for to preach the gospel unto them." Whereupon we notice two points and offer just two observations. The vision created an enthusiasm, and that enthusiasm was contagious. The vision was seen by Paul alone, but was communicated by St. Paul unto Silas and to St. Luke, who now had joined to lend perhaps the assistance of his medical knowledge to the afflicted and suffering Apostle. Enthusiasm is a marvellous power, and endows a man with wondrous force. St. Paul was boiling over with enthusiasm, but he could not always impart it. The two non-apostolic Evangelists are marked contrasts as brought before us in this history. St. Paul was enthusiastic on his first tour, but that enthusiasm was not communicated to St. Mark. He turned back from the hardships and dangers of the work in Asia Minor. St. Paul was boiling over again with enthusiasm for the new work in Europe. He has now with him in St. Luke a congenial soul who, when he hears the vision, gathers at once its import, joyfully anticipates the work, and "straightway sought to go forth into Macedonia." Enthusiasm in any kind of work is a great assistance, and nothing great or successful is done without it. But above all in Divine work, in the work of preaching the gospel, the man devoid of enthusiasm begotten of living communion with God, such as St. Paul and St. Luke enjoyed, is sure to be a lamentable and complete failure.

Then, again, and lastly, we note the slow progress of the gospel as shown to us by this inci-



dent at Troas. Here we are a good twenty years after the Crucifixion, and yet the chief ministers and leaders of the Church had not yet crossed into Europe. There were sporadic Churches here and there. At Rome and at possibly a few Italian seaports, whence intercourse with Palestine was frequent, there were small Christian communities; but Macedonia and Greece were absolutely untouched up to the present. We are very apt to overrate the progress of the gospel during those first days of the Church's earliest Church life. We are inclined to view the history of the Church of the first three centuries all on an heap as it were. We have much need to distinguish century from century and decennium from decennium. The first ten years of the Church's history saw the gospel preached in Jerusalem and Palestine, but not much farther. The second decennium saw it proclaimed to Asia Minor; but it is only when the third decennium is opening that Christ despatches a formal mission to that Europe where the greatest triumphs of the gospel were afterwards to be won. Ignorance and prejudice and narrow views had been allowed to hinder the progress of the gospel then, as they are hindering the progress of the gospel still; and an express record of this has been handed down to us in this typical history in order that if we too suffer the same we may not be astonished as if some strange thing had happened, but may understand that we are bearing the same burden and enduring the same trials as the New Testament saints have borne before us.

## CHAPTER XII.

### ST. PAUL IN MACEDONIA.

ACTS xvi. 29-31; xvii. 1, 2, 10.

TROAS was at this time the termination of St. Paul's Asiatic travels. He had passed diagonally right through Asia Minor, following the great Roman roads which determined his line of march. From Troas he proceeded to Philippi, and for exactly the same reason. All the great roads formed under the emperors down to the time of Constantine the Great led to Rome. When the seat of empire was moved to Constantinople, all the Asiatic roads converged upon that city; but in St. Paul's day Rome was the world's centre of attraction, and thither the highways all tended. This fact explains St. Paul's movements. The Egnatian road was one of the great channels of communication established for State purposes by Rome, and this road ran from Neapolis, where St. Paul landed, through Philippi on to Dyrrachium, a port on the Adriatic, whence the traveller took ship to Brundisium, the modern Brindisi, and thence reached Rome. What a striking commentary we find in this simple fact upon the words of St. Paul in Galatians iv. 4: "When the fulness of the time came God sent forth His Son." Roman dominion involved much suffering and war and bloodshed, but it secured the network of communication, the internal peace, and the steady, regular government which now covered Europe as well as Asia, and thus for the first time in the world's history rendered the diffusion of the Gospel possible, as St. Paul's example here shows. The voyage from Troas to Neap-

olis was taken by the Apostle after the usual fashion of the time. Neapolis was the port of Philippi, whence it is distant some eight miles. Travellers from the East to Rome always landed there, and then took the Egnatian Road which started from Neapolis. If they were official persons they could use the public postal service, post-houses being established at a distance of six miles from one another, where relays of horses were kept at the public expense, to carry persons travelling on the imperial service. Paul and Silas, Timothy and Luke, must, however, have travelled on foot along the Egnatian Road from Neapolis to Philippi, which was their first objective point, according to St. Paul's usual policy, of attacking large and important centres of population, and then leaving the sacred leaven to work out into the surrounding mass of paganism. Philippi amply rewarded the wisdom of his plan, and the Philippian Church became noted for its zeal, its faith, its activity, among the Churches which owed their origin to the Apostle, as we learn from the Epistles addressed to the Corinthians and to the Philippians themselves a short time after the foundation of the Philippian Church.

Now let us look at the circumstances under which that foundation was laid. To understand them we must go back upon the course of history. Philippi was a city built by King Philip, the father of Alexander the Great. After the conquest of Macedonia by the Romans, it became famous as the scene of the great battle between Brutus and Cassius on the one hand, and Mark Antony and Augustus on the other, which decided the fate of the empire and influenced the course of the world's history as few other battles have done. At the time of St. Paul's visit the memory of that battle was fresh, and the outward and visible signs thereof were to be seen on every side, as indeed some of them are still to be seen, the triumphal arches, for instance, erected in memory of the victory and the mound or rampart of earth raised by Brutus to hinder the advance of the opposing forces. But these things had for the holy travellers a very slight interest, as their hearts were set upon a mightier conflict and a nobler war far than any ever before waged upon earth's surface. There is no mention made in the sacred narrative of the memories connected with the place, and yet St. Luke, as an honest writer setting down facts of which he had formed an important part, lets slip some expressions which involve and throw us back upon the history of the place for an explanation, showing how impossible it is to grasp the full force and meaning of the sacred writers unless we strive to read the Bible with the eyes of the people who lived at the time and for whom it was written. St. Luke calls Philippi "a city of Macedonia, the first of the district, a colony." Now this means that in that time it was situated in the Roman province of Macedonia, that it was either the capital of the division of Macedonia, in which it was situated, Macedonia being subdivided into four distinct divisions which were kept perfectly separate, or else that it was the first city the traveller met upon entering Macedonia from Asia, and further that it was a Roman colony, and thus possessed peculiar privileges. When we read in the Bible of colonies we must not understand the word in our modern sense. Colonies were then simply transcripts of the original city



whence they had come. Roman colonies were miniatures or copies of Rome itself transplanted into the provinces, and ruling as such amid the conquered races where they were placed. They served a twofold purpose. They acted as garrisons to restrain the turbulence of the neighbouring tribes; and if we study Roman geography carefully we shall find that they were always placed in neighbourhoods where their military importance is plainly manifest; and further still, they were used as convenient places to locate the veteran soldiers of Italy who had served their time, where they were rewarded with grants of land, and were utilising at the same time the skill and experience in military matters which they had gained, for the general benefit of the State.

Augustus made Philippi into a colony, erecting a triumphal arch to celebrate his victory over Brutus, and placing there a large settlement of his veterans who secured for him this important outpost. The colonies which were thus dispersed along the military frontier, as we should put it in modern language, were specially privileged. All the settlers were Roman citizens, and the government of the colony was like that of the mother city itself, in the hands of two magistrates, called, in Greek Strategoi, or in Latin Prætors, who ruled according to the laws of the Twelve Tables and after Roman methods, though perhaps all the neighbouring cities were still using their ancient laws and customs handed down from times long prior to the Roman Conquest. The details given us by St. Luke are in the strictest accordance in all these respects with the facts which we know independently concerning the history and political status of Philippi.

St. Paul and his companions arrived in Philippi in the early part of the week. He was by this time a thoroughly experienced traveller. Five years later, when writing his Second Epistle to Corinth, he tells us that he had been already three times shipwrecked; so that, unless peculiarly unfortunate, he must have already made extended and repeated sea voyages, though up to the present we have only heard of the journeys from Antioch to Cyprus, from Cyprus to Perga, and from Attalia back to Antioch. A two days' voyage across the fresh and rolling waters of the Mediterranean, followed by a steep climb over the mountain Pangæus which intervenes between Philippi and its port Neapolis, made, however, a rest of a day or two very acceptable to the Apostle and his friends. St. Paul never expected too much from his own body, or from the bodies of his companions; and though he knew the work of a world's salvation was pressing, yet he could take and enjoy a well-earned holiday from time to time. There was nothing in St. Paul of that eternal fussiness which we at times see in people of strong imaginations but weak self-control, who, realising the awful amount of woe and wickedness in the world, can never be at rest even for a little. The men of God remained quiet therefore (ch. xvi. 12, 13) till the Sabbath Day, when, after their usual custom, they sought out in the early morning the Jewish place of worship, where St. Paul always first proclaimed the gospel. The Jewish colony resident at Philippi must have been a very small one. The Rabbinical rule was that where ten wise men existed there a synagogue might be established. There cannot therefore

have been ten learned, respectable, and substantial Jews in Philippi competent to act as a local sanhedrin or court. Where, however, the Jews could not establish a synagogue, they did not live without any external expression of religion. They knew how easily neglect of public worship is followed by practical atheism, as we often see. Men may say indeed that God can be realised, and can be worshipped anywhere, — a very great truth and a very precious one for those who are unavoidably cut off from the public worship of the Most High; but a truth which has no application to those who wilfully cut themselves off from that worship which has the covenanted promise of His presence. It is not a good sign for the young men of this generation that so many of them utterly neglect public worship; for as surely as men act so, then present neglect will be followed by a total forgetfulness of the Eternal, and by a disregard of the laws which He has established amongst men. The Jews at Philippi did not follow this example; when they could not establish a synagogue they set apart an oratory or Place of Prayer, whither they resorted on the Sabbath Day to honour the God of their fathers, and to keep alive in their children's hearts the memory of His laws and doings.

The original name of Philippi was Crenides, or Place of Streams. Beside one of these streams the Jews had placed their oratory, and there St. Paul preached his first sermon in Europe and gained Lydia, his first European convert, a Jewess by blood, a woman of Thyatira in Asia Minor by birth, of Philippi in Macedonia by residence, and a dyer in purple by trade. The congregation of women assembled at that oratory must have been a very small one. When Philippi did not afford a sufficient Jewish population for the erection of a synagogue such as was found among the smaller towns of Asia Minor, and such as we shall in the course of the present tour find to have existed at towns and cities of no great size in Greece and Macedonia, then we may be sure that the female population, who assembled that Sabbath morning to pray and listen to the Scriptures, must have been a small one. But St. Paul and his companions had learned already one great secret of the true evangelist's life. They never despised a congregation because of its smallness. I have read somewhere in the writings of St. Francis de Sales, Bishop of Geneva, a remark bearing on this point. De Sales was an extreme Roman Catholic, and his mind was injured and his mental views perverted in many respects by the peculiar training he thus received. But still he was in many respects a very saintly man, and his writings embody much that is good for every one. In one of his letters which I have read he deals with this very point, and speaks of the importance of small congregations, first, because they have no tendency to feed the preacher's pride, but rather help to keep him humble; and secondly, because some of the most effective and fruitful sermons have been preached to extremely small congregations, two or three persons at most, some one of whom has afterwards turned out to be a most vigorous soldier of the Cross of Christ. The most effective sermon perhaps that ever was preached was that delivered to Saul of Tarsus when to him alone came the voice, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" And here



again, in the Philippian Oratory, the congregation was but a small one, yet the Apostle despised it not. He and his companions bent all their powers to the work, threw their whole hearts into it, and as the result the Lord rewarded their earnest, thorough, faithful service as He rewards such service in every department of life's action. The Lord opened the heart of Lydia so that she attended to the apostolic teaching, and she and all her household when duly instructed became baptised disciples of Jesus of Nazareth.

This was an important incident in the history of the Philippian Church, and was attended by far-reaching results. Lydia herself, like so many others of God's most eminent saints, disappears at once and for ever from the scene. But her conversion was a fruitful one. St. Paul and his friends continued quietly but regularly working and teaching at the oratory. Lydia would seem to have been a widow, and must have been a woman of some position in the little community; for she was able to entertain the Apostle and his company as soon as she embraced the faith and felt its exceeding preciousness. When inviting them, too, she uses the language of a woman independent of all other control. "If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there," are words with the tone of one who as a widow owned no superior, and whose will was law within her own household; as well as the language of a woman who felt that the gospel she had embraced demanded and deserved the consecration to its service of all her worldly possessions. Previously to this conversion St. Paul had lived in hired lodgings, but now he moved to Lydia's residence, abiding there, and thence regularly worshipping at the Jewish oratory. The presence of these Jewish strangers soon attracted attention. Their teaching too got noised abroad, exaggerated doubtless and distorted after the manner of popular reports. And the crowd were ready to be suspicious of all Eastern foreigners. The settlers in the colony of Philippi belonged to the rural population of Italy, who, after the manner of countrified folk of every generation, were a good way behind, for good or ill, their city brethren. The excavations made at Philippi have brought to light the fact that the colonists there were worshippers of the primitive Italian rustic gods, specially of the god Silvanus, eschewing the fashionable Greek deities, Jupiter, Juno, Venus, Diana, Apollo, and such like. A temple of Silvanus was erected at Philippi for the hardy Italian veterans, and numerous inscriptions have been found and have been duly described by the French Mission in Macedonia to which we have already referred, telling of the building of the temple and of the persons who contributed towards it. These simple Western soldiers were easily prejudiced against the Eastern strangers by reports spread concerning their doctrines, and specially concerning the Jewish King, of whose kingdom they were the heralds. Political considerations were at once raised. We can scarcely now realise the suspicions which must have been roused against the early preachers of Christianity by the very language they used. Their sacramental language concerning the body and blood of Christ, the language of Christian love and union which they used, designating themselves brethren and sis-

ters, caused for more than two centuries the dissemination of the most frightful rumours concerning the horrible nature of Christian love-feasts. They were accused of cannibalism and of the most degraded and immoral practices; and when we take up the Apologists of the second century, Justin Martyr and such like, we shall find that the efforts of these men are largely directed to the refutation of such dreadful charges. And as it was in morals so was it too in politics. The sacred and religious language of the Christians caused them to be suspected of designs hostile to the Roman Government. The apostles preached about a King who ruled the kingdom of God. Now the Romans abhorred the very name and title of king, which they associated with the cruel acts of the early tyrants who reigned in the times of Rome's fabulous antiquity. The hostility to the title was so great that, though the Roman people endured a despotism worse and more crushing at the hands of the Cæsars, they never would allow them to assume the title of kings, but simply called them emperors, imperators or commanders of the army, a name which to their ears connoted nothing savouring of the kingly office, though for moderns the title of emperor expresses the kingly office and much more. The colonists in Philippi, being Italians, would feel these prejudices in their full force. Easterns indeed would have had no objection to the title of king, as we see from the cry raised by the mob of Jerusalem when they cried in reference to Christ's claim, "We have no king but Cæsar." But the rough and rude Roman veterans, when they heard vague reports of St. Paul's teaching to the Jews who met at the oratory by the river-side, quite naturally mistook the nature of his doctrine, and thought that he was simply a political agitator organising a revolt against imperial authority. An incident which then occurred fanned the sleeping embers into a flame. There was a female slave the property of some crafty men who by her means traded on the simplicity of the colonists. She was possessed with a spirit of divination. What the nature of this spirit was we have not the means of now determining. Some would resolve it into mere epilepsy, but such an explanation is not consistent with St. Paul's action and words. He addressed the spirit, "I charge thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And the spirit, we are told, came out that very hour. The simple fact is that psychology is at the best a very obscure science, and the mysteries of the soul a very puzzling region, even under the Christian dispensation and surrounded by the spiritual blessings of the kingdom of God. But paganism was the kingdom of Satan, where he ruled with a power and freedom he no longer enjoys, and we can form no conception of the frightful disturbances Satanic agency may have raised amid the dark places of the human spirit. Without attempting explanations therefore, which must be insufficient, I am content to accept the statement of the sacred writer, who was an eye-witness of the cure, that the spirit of divination, the spirit of Python, as the original puts it, yielded obedience to the invocation of the sacred Name which is above every name, leaving the damsel's inner nature once more calm and at union within itself. This was the signal for a riot. The slave-owners recognised that their hopes of gain had fled. They were not willing to confess that these despised



Jews possessed a power transcending far that which dwelt in the human instrument who had served their covetous purposes. They may have heard, it may be, of the tumults excited about this same time by the Jews at Rome and of their expulsion from the capital by the decree of the Emperor, so the owners of the slave-girl and the mob of the city dragged the Apostles before the local Duumvirs and accused them of like disturbances: "These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and set forth customs which it is not lawful for us to receive or to observe, being Romans. The accusation was sufficient. No proof was demanded, no time for protest allowed. The magistrates with their own hands dragged the clothes off the backs of the Apostles, and they were flogged at once by the lictors or sergeants, as our translation calls them, in attendance upon the Duumvirs, who then despatched their victims to the common prison. Here a question may be raised, Why did not St. Paul save himself by protesting that he was a Roman citizen, as he did subsequently at Jerusalem when he was about to be similarly treated? Several explanations occur. The colonists were Italians and spoke Latin. St. Paul spoke Hebrew and Greek, and though he may have known Latin too, his Latin may not have been understood by these rough Roman soldiers. The mob again was excited, and when a mob gets excited it is but very little its members attend to an unfortunate prisoner's words. We know too, not only from St. Paul's own words, but from the testimony of Cicero himself, in his celebrated oration against Verres, that in remote districts this claim was often disregarded, even when urged by Italians, and much more when made by despised Jews. St. Paul tells us in 2 Cor. xi. 25, that he received three Roman floggings notwithstanding his Roman citizenship, and though the Philippian magistrates were afraid when they heard next day of the illegal violence of which they had been guilty, the mob, who could not be held accountable, probably took right good care that St. Paul's protest never reached the official ears to which it was addressed. These considerations sufficiently account for the omission of any notice of a protest on the Apostle's part. He simply had not the opportunity, and then when the tumultuous scene was over Paul and Silas were hurried off to the common dungeon, where they were secured in the stocks and thrust into the innermost prison as notorious and scandalous offenders.

No ill-treatment could, however, destroy that secret source of joy and peace which St. Paul possessed in his loved Master's conscious presence. "I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake," is his own triumphant expression when looking back a few years later over the way by which the Lord had led him, and therefore at midnight the astonished prisoners heard the inner dungeon ringing with unwonted songs of praise raised by the Jewish strangers. An earthquake, too, lent its terrors to the strange scene, shaking the prison to its foundations and loosing the staples to which the prisoners' chains were fastened. The jailer, roused from sleep, and seeing the prison doors opened wide, would have committed suicide were it not for Paul's restraining and authoritative voice; and then the astonished official, who must have heard the strange rumours to which the

words of the demoniac alluded—"These men are the servants of the Most High God, which proclaim unto you the way of salvation"—rushed into the presence of the Apostles, crying out in words which have ever since been famous, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" to which the equally famous answer was given, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house." The jailer then took the Apostles, bathed their bruised bodies, set food before them, gathered his household to listen to the glad tidings, which they received so rapidly and grasped so thoroughly that they were at once baptised and enabled to rejoice with that deep spiritual joy which an experimental knowledge of God always confers. The jailer, feeling for the first time in his life the peace which passeth all understanding, realised the truth which St. Augustine afterwards embodied in the immortal words: "Thou, O God, hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee."\*

Let us look for a little at the question of the jailer and the answer of the Apostle. They are words very often used, and very often misused. The jailer, when he rushed into St. Paul's presence crying out "What must I do to be saved?" was certainly not the type of a conscience-stricken sinner, convinced of his own sin and spiritual danger, as men sometimes regard him. He was simply in a state of fright and astonishment. He had heard that these Jewish prisoners committed to him were preaching about some salvation which they had to offer. The earthquake seemed to him the expression of some deity's wrath at their harsh treatment, and so in his terror he desires to know what he must do to be saved from this wrath. His words were notable, but they were not Christian words, for he had yet much to learn of the nature of sin and the nature of the salvation from it which the Apostles were preaching. The Philippian jailer was a specimen of those who are saved violently and by fear. Terror forced him into communion with the Apostles, broke down the barriers which hindered the approach of the Word, and then the power of the Holy Ghost, working through St. Paul, effected the remainder, opening his eyes to the true character of salvation and his own profound need of it. St. Paul's words have been misunderstood. I have heard them addressed to a Christian congregation and explained as meaning that the jailer had nothing to do but just realise Christ Jesus as his Saviour, whereupon he was perfect and complete so far as the spiritual life was concerned; and then they were applied to the congregation present as teaching that, as it was with the jailer, so was it with all Christians; they have simply to believe as he did, and then they have nothing more to do—a kind of teaching which infallibly produces antinomian results.† Such an explanation ignores the fact that there is a great difference between the jailer, who was not a Christian in any sense and knew nothing about Christ when he flung himself at St. Paul's feet, and a Christian congregation, who know about Christ and believe in Him. But this explanation is still more erroneous. It misrepresents what St. Paul meant and what his hearers understood him to mean.

\* Augustine's "Confessions," i. 1.

† See more on this point on pp. 328-29, where I have given conclusive proofs of the misuse of this text from the writers of the seventeenth century.



What did any ordinary Jew or any ordinary pagan with whom St. Paul came in contact understand him to mean when he said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved"? They first had to ask him who Jesus Christ was, whence He had come, what He had taught, what were the obligations of His religion. St. Paul had to open out to them the nature of sin and salvation, and to explain the obligation and blessing of the sacrament of baptism as well as the necessity of bodily holiness and purity. The initial sacrament of baptism must have held a foremost place in that midnight colloquy or conference concerning Christian truth. St. Paul was not the man to perform a rite of which his converts understood nothing, and to which they could attach no meaning. "Believe on the Lord Jesus" involved repentance and contrition and submission to Christian truth, and these things involved the exposition of Christian truth, history, doctrines, and duties.

This text, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved," is often quoted in one-sided and narrow teaching to show that man has nothing to do to be saved. Of course in one sense this is perfectly true. We can do nothing *meritoriously* towards salvation; from first to last our salvation is all of God's free grace; but then, viewing the matter from the human side, we have much to do to be saved. We have to repent, to seek God for ourselves, to realise Christ and His laws in our life, to seek after that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. There were two different types of men who at different times addressed practically the same inquiry to the Apostles. They were both outside the Church, and they were both seekers blindly after God. The Jews on the day of Pentecost said, "Brethren, what shall we do?" and Peter replied, "Repent ye, and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, unto the remission of your sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Such was apostolic teaching to the Jews of Jerusalem. The jailor demanded, "What must I do to be saved?" and St. Paul replied, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved." Such was apostolic teaching to an ignorant pagan at Philippi; more concise than the Jerusalem answer, but meaning the same thing, and involving precisely the same doctrines in the hands of such a great master of the spiritual life as was the Apostle of the Gentiles.

The remainder of the story is soon told. When the morning came there came quiet reflection with it as far as the magistrates were concerned. They became conscious of their illegal conduct, and they sent their lictors to order the release of the Apostles. St. Paul now stood upon his rights. His protest had been disregarded by the mob. He now claimed his rights as a Roman citizen. "They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned men, that are Romans, and have cast us into prison; and do they now cast us out privily? Nay, verily; but let them come themselves and bring us out." These are St. Paul's words, and they are brave, and at the same time wise words. They were brave words because it took a strong man to send back such an answer to magistrates who had treated him so outrageously only the day before. They were wise words, for they give us an apostle's interpretation of our Lord's language in the Sermon upon the Mount concerning the non-resistance of

evil, and shows us that in St. Paul's estimation Christ's law did not bind a man to tolerate foul injustice. Such toleration, in fact, is very wrong if it can be helped; because it is simply an encouragement to the wicked doers to treat others in the same scandalous manner. Toleration of outrage and injustice is unfair and uncharitable towards others, if they can be lawfully redressed or at least apologised for. It is a Christian man's duty to bring public evil-doers and tyrants, instruments of unrighteousness like these Duumvirs of Philippi, to their senses, not for his own sake, but in order that he may prevent the exercise of similar cruelties against the weaker brethren. We may be sure that the spirited action of St. Paul, compelling these provincial magnates to humble themselves before the despised strangers, must have had a very wholesome effect in restraining them from similar violence during the rest of their term of office.

Such was St. Paul's stay at Philippi. It lasted a considerable time, and made its mark, as a flourishing Church was established there, to which he addressed an Epistle when he lay the first time a captive at Rome. This Epistle naturally forms a most interesting commentary on the notices of the Philippian visit in the Acts of the Apostles, a point which is worked out at large in Bishop Lightfoot's Commentary on Philippians and in Paley's "Horæ Paulinæ." The careful student of Holy Writ will find that St. Paul's letter and St. Luke's narrative when compared illuminate one another in a wondrous manner. We cannot afford space to draw out this comparison in detail, and it is the less necessary to do so as Dr. Lightfoot's writings are so generally accessible. Let us, however, notice one point in this Epistle to the Philippians, which was written about the same time (a few months previously, in fact) as the Acts of the Apostles. It corroborates the Acts as to the circumstances under which the Church of Philippi was founded. St. Paul in the Epistle refers again and again to the persecutions and afflictions of the Philippian Church, and implies that he was a fellow-sufferer with them. St. Paul dwells on this in the beginning of the Epistle in words whose force cannot be understood unless we grasp this fact. In the sixth verse of the first chapter he expresses himself as "Confident of this very thing, that He which began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ: even as it is right for me to be thus minded on behalf of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as, both in my bonds and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers with me of grace." St. Paul speaks of the Philippians as personally acquainted with chains and sufferings and prison-houses for Christ's sake, and regards these things as a proof of God's grace vouchsafed not only to the Apostle, but also to the Philippians; for St. Paul was living at that high level when he could view bonds and trials and persecutions as marks of the Divine love. In the twenty-eighth verse of the same chapter he exhorts them to be in no wise "affrighted by the adversaries," and in the next two describes them as persons to whom "it hath been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer in His behalf: having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me," words which can only refer to the violence and afflictions which



they witnessed as practised against himself, and which they were now themselves suffering in turn. While to complete St. Paul's references we notice that in an Epistle written some five years later than his first visit to Philippi he expressly refers to the persecutions which the Philippian Church in common with all the Macedonian Churches seems to have suffered from the very beginning. In 2 Cor. viii. 1, 2, he writes: "Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God ~~which~~ hath been given in the Churches of Macedonia; how that *in much proof of affliction* the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality." Now all these passages put together confirm for us what the Acts expressly affirms, that from the very outset of their Christian career the Philippian Church had endured the greatest trials, and experienced a fellowship in the Apostle's sufferings. And surely we may see in the character of the Philippian Epistle something eminently characteristic of this experience! It has been remarked that the Philippian Epistle is the only Epistle addressed to a Church in which there is no trace of blame or reproof. Temptation and trial and chastisement had there worked their appointed purpose. The Philippian Church had been baptised in blood, and grounded in afflictions, and purified by the cleansing fires of persecution, and consequently the tried Church gathered itself closer to its Divine Lord, and was perfected above all others in His likeness, and profited above all others in the Divine life.

After the terrible experience of Philippi Paul and Silas passed on to other towns of the same province of Macedonia. The Apostle, however, when quitting Philippi to do the same evangelistic work, breaking up the ground in other towns after the manner of a pioneer, did not leave the Church of Philippi devoid of wisest pastoral care. It is most likely, as Dr. Lightfoot points out in the Introduction to his Commentary on Philippians, that St. Luke was left behind to consolidate the work which had been thus begun by such a noble company. Then Paul and Silas and Timotheus proceeded to Thessalonica, one hundred miles west, the capital of the province, where the proconsul resided, and where was a considerable Jewish population, as we see, not only from the fact that a synagogue is expressly said to have existed there, but also because the Jews were able to excite the city pagan mob against the Apostles and drag them before the local magistrates. St. Paul at Philippi had for the first time experienced a purely pagan persecution. He had indeed previously suffered at the hands of the heathen at Lystra, but they were urged on by the Jews. At Philippi he gained his first glimpse of that long vista of purely Gentile persecution through which the Church had to pass till Christianity seated itself in the person of Constantine on the throne of the Cæsars. But as soon as he got to Thessalonica he again experienced the undying hostility of his Jewish fellow-countrymen using for their wicked purposes the baser portion of the city rabble.\* St. Paul remained three weeks in Thessalonica teaching privately and publicly the gospel message, without expe-

riencing any Jewish opposition. It is an interesting fact that to this day St. Paul's visit to Thessalonica is remembered, and in one of the local mosques, which was formerly the Church of Sancta Sophia, a marble pulpit is shown, said to have been the very one occupied by the Apostle, while in the surrounding plains trees and groves are pointed out as marking spots where he tarried for a time. The Jews were at last, however, roused to opposition, possibly because of St. Paul's success among the Gentiles, who received his doctrines with such avidity that there believed "of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few." In Thessalonica, as elsewhere, the spirit of religious selfishness, desiring to have gospel promises and a Messiah all to themselves, was the ruin of the Jewish people. The Jews therefore, assisted by the pagans, assaulted the residence of Jason, with whom St. Paul and his friends were staying. They missed the Apostles themselves, but they seized Jason and some of the apostolic band, or at least some of their converts whom they found in Jason's house, and brought them before the town magistrates, who, acting under the eye of the resident proconsul, did not lend themselves to any irregular proceedings like the Philippian prætors. A charge of treason was formally brought against the prisoners: "These all act contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying that there is another King, one Jesus"; in the words of which charge we get a glimpse of the leading topic upon which the Apostles insisted. Jesus Christ, the crucified, risen, glorified King and Head of His people, was the great subject of St. Paul's teaching as it struck the heathen. The Thessalonian magistrates acted very fairly. They entered the charge, which was a serious one in the eye of Roman law. Bail was then taken for the accused and they were set free. The Apostles, however, escaped arrest, and the local brethren determined that they should incur no danger; so while the accused remained to stand their trial, Paul and Silas and Timotheus were despatched to Berea, where they were for a time welcomed, and free discussion permitted in the synagogue concerning the truths taught by the Evangelists. After a time, however, tidings having reached Thessalonica, agents were despatched to Berea, who stirring up the Jewish residents, St. Paul was despatched in charge of some trusty messengers, who guided the steps of the hunted servant of God to the city of Athens. We see the physical infirmities of St. Paul, the difficulties he had to contend with, hinted at in the fourteenth and fifteenth verses of the seventeenth chapter. "Then immediately the brethren sent forth Paul," and "They that conducted Paul brought him to Athens," words which give us a glimpse of his fearfully defective eyesight. His enemies might be pressing upon him and danger might be imminent, but he could make no unaided effort to save himself. He depended upon the kindly help of others that he might escape his untiring foes and find his way to a place of safety.

Thus ended St. Paul's first visit to Thessalonica so far as the Acts of the Apostles is concerned; but we have interesting light thrown upon it from an Epistle which St. Paul himself wrote to the Thessalonians soon after his departure from amongst them. A comparison of First Thessalonians with the text of the Acts will furnish the careful student with much infor-

\*Mr. Findlay, in a little work lately published, "The Epistles of Paul the Apostle" (Wilbur B. Ketcham, Publisher, New York), has many valuable observations on the subject of the Jewish opposition experienced by the Apostle at Thessalonica.



mation concerning the circumstances of that notable visit, just as we have seen that the text of the Philippian Epistle throws light upon his doings at Philippi. The Thessalonian Epistles are more helpful even than the Philippians in this respect, because they were written only a few months after St. Paul's visit to Thessalonica, while years elapsed, eight or ten at least, before the Philippian Epistle was indited. First Thessalonians shows us, for instance, that St. Paul's visit to Thessalonica lasted a considerable time. In the Acts we read of his discussing in the synagogue three Sabbath days, and then it would appear as if the riot was raised which drove him to Berea and Athens. The impression left on our minds by St. Luke's narrative is that St. Paul's labours were almost entirely concentrated upon the Jews in Thessalonica, and that he bestowed very little attention indeed upon the pagans. The Epistle corrects this impression. When we read the first chapter of First Thessalonians we see that it was almost altogether a Church of converted idolaters, not of converted Jews. St. Paul speaks of the Thessalonians as having turned from idols to serve the living God; he refers to the instructions on various points like the resurrection, the ascension, the second coming of Christ, which he had imparted, and describes their faith and works as celebrated throughout all Macedonia and Achaia. A large and flourishing church like that, composed of former pagans, could not have been founded in the course of three weeks, during which time St. Paul's attention was principally bestowed on the Jewish residents. Then too, when we turn to Philippians iv. 16, we find that St. Paul stayed long enough in Thessalonica to receive no less than two remittances of money from the brethren at Philippi to sustain himself and his brethren. His whole attention too was not bestowed upon mission work; he spent his days and nights in manual labour. In the ninth verse of the second chapter of First Thessalonians he reminds them of the fact that he supported himself in their city, "For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: working night and day, that we might not burden any of you, we preached unto you the Gospel of God." When we realise these things we shall feel that the Apostle must have spent at least a couple of months in Thessalonica. It was perhaps his tremendous success among the heathen which so stirred up the passions of the town mob as enabled the Jews to instigate them to raise the riot, they themselves keeping all the while in the background. St. Paul, in First Thessalonians, describes the riots raised against the Christians as being the immediate work of the pagans: "Ye, brethren, became imitators of the Churches of God which are in Judæa in Christ Jesus. For ye also suffered the same things of your own countrymen as they did of the Jews"; a statement which is quite consistent with the theory that the persecution was originally inspired by the Jews. But we cannot further pursue this interesting line of inquiry which has been thoroughly worked out by Mr. Lewin in vol. ii. ch. xi., by Conybeare and Howson in ch. ix., and by Archdeacon Farrar, as well as by Dr. Salmon in his "Introduction to the New Testament," ch. xx. The careful student will find in all these works most interesting light reflected back upon the Acts from the apostolic letters, and will see how thoroughly the Epistles, which were much the earlier docu-

ments, confirm the independent account of St. Luke, writing at a subsequent period.

Before we terminate this chapter we desire to call attention to one other point where the investigations of modern travel have helped to illustrate the genuineness of the Acts of the Apostles. It has been the contention of the rationalistic party that the Acts was a composition of the second century, worked up by a clever forger out of the materials at his command. There are various lines of proof by which this theory can be refuted, but none appeal so forcibly to ordinary men as the minute accuracy which marks it when describing the towns of Asia Minor and Macedonia. Macedonia is a notable case. We have already pointed out how the Acts gives their proper title to the magistrates of Philippi and recognises its peculiar constitution as a colony. Thessalonica forms an interesting contrast to Philippi. Thessalonica was a free city like Antioch in Syria, Tarsus, and Athens, and therefore, though the residence of the proconsul who ruled the province of Macedonia, was governed by its own ancient magistrates and its own ancient laws without any interference on the part of the proconsul. St. Luke makes a marked distinction between Philippi and Thessalonica. At Philippi the Apostles were brought before the prætors, at Thessalonica they were brought before the politarchs, a title strange to classical antiquity, but which has been found upon a triumphal arch which existed till a few years ago across the main street of the modern city of Thessalonica. That arch has now disappeared; but the fragments containing the inscription were fortunately preserved and have been now placed in the British Museum, where they form a precious relic proving the genuineness of the sacred narrative.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### ST. PAUL IN GREECE.

Acts xvii. 16-18; xviii. 1.

THERE are parallelisms in history which are very striking, and yet these parallelisms can be easily explained. The stress and strain of difficulties acting upon large masses of men evolve and call forth similar types of character, and demand the exercise of similar powers. St. Paul and St. Athanasius are illustrations of this statement. They were both little men, both enthusiastic in their views, both pursued all their lives long with bitter hostility, and both had experience of the most marvellous and hairbreadth escapes. If any reader will take up Dean Stanley's "History of the Eastern Church," and read the account given of St. Athanasius in the seventh chapter of that work, he will be strikingly reminded of St. Paul in these various aspects, but specially in the matter of his wondrous escapes from his deadly enemies, which were so numerous that at last they came to regard Athanasius as a magician who eluded their designs by the help of his familiar spirits. It was much the same with St. Paul. Hairbreadth escapes were his daily experience, as he himself points out in the eleventh chapter of his Second Epistle to Corinth. He there enumerates a few of them, but quite omits his escapes from Jerusalem, from the Pisidian Antioch, from Iconium,



Lystra, Thessalonica, and last of all from Berea, whence he was driven by the renewed machinations of the Thessalonian Jews, who found out after a time whither the object of their hatred had fled. Paul's ministry at Berea was not fruitless, short as it may have been. He established a Church there which took good care of the precious life entrusted to its keeping, and therefore as soon as the deputies of the Thessalonian synagogue came to Berea and began to work upon the Jews of the local synagogue, as well as upon the pagan mob of the town, the Berean disciples took Paul, who was the special object of Jewish hatred, and despatched him down to the sea-coast, some twenty miles distant, in charge of certain trusty messengers, while Silas remained behind, in temporary concealment doubtless, in order that he might consolidate the Church. Here we get a hint, a passing glimpse of St. Paul's infirmity. He was despatched in charge of trusty messengers, I have said, who were to show him the way. "They that conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens." His ophthalmia, perhaps, had become specially bad owing to the rough usage he had experienced, and so he could not escape all solitary and alone as he did in earlier years from Damascus, and therefore guides were necessary who should conduct him "as far as the sea," and then, when they had got that far, they did not leave him alone. They embarked in the ship with him, and, sailing to Athens, deposited him safely in a lodging. The journey was by sea, not by land, because a sea journey was necessarily much easier for the sickly and weary Apostle than the land route would have been, offering, too, a much surer escape from the dangers of pursuit.

The voyage was an easy one, and not too prolonged. The boat or ship in which the Apostle was embarked passed through splendid scenery. On his right hand, as he steered for the south, was the magnificent mountain of Olympus, the fabled abode of the gods, rising a clear ten thousand feet into the region of perpetual snow, while on his left was Mount Athos, upon which he had been looking ever since the day that he left Troas. But the Apostle had no eye for the scenery, nor had St. Luke a word to bestow upon its description, though he often passed through it, absorbed as they were in the contemplation of the awful realities of a world unseen. The sea voyage from the place where St. Paul embarked till he came to Phalerum, the port of Athens, where he landed, lasted perhaps three or four days, and covered about two hundred miles, being somewhat similar in distance, scenery, and surroundings to the voyage from Glasgow to Dublin or Bristol, land in both cases being in sight all the time and splendid mountain ranges bounding the views on either side.

St. Paul landed about November 1, 51, at Phalerum, one of the two ports of ancient Athens, the Piræus being the other, and thence his uncertain steps were guided to the city itself, where he was left alone in some lodging. The Berean Christians to whom he was entrusted returned perhaps in the same vessel in which they had previously travelled, as the winter season, when navigation largely ceased, was now fast advancing, bearing with them a message to Timothy and Silas to come as rapidly as possible to his assistance, the Apostle being practically helpless when deprived of his trusted

friends. At Athens St. Paul for a time moved about examining the city for himself, a process which soon roused him to action and brought matters to a crisis. St. Paul was well used to pagan towns and the sights with which they were filled. From his earliest youth in Tarsus idolatry and its abominations must have been a pain and grief to him; but Athens he found to exceed them all, so that "his spirit was provoked within him as he beheld the city full of idols." We have in ancient Greek literature the most interesting confirmation of the statement here made by St. Luke. We still possess a descriptive account of Greece written by a chatty Greek traveller named Pausanias, in the days of the Antonines, that is, less than a hundred years after St. Paul's visit, and when Athens was practically the same as in the Apostle's day. Pausanias enters into the greatest details about Athens, describing the statues of gods and heroes, the temples, the worship, the customs of the people, bestowing the first thirty chapters of his book upon Athens alone. Pausanias's "Description of Greece" \* is most interesting to every one because he saw Athens in the height of its literary glory and architectural splendour, and it is specially interesting to the Bible student because it amply confirms and illustrates the details of St. Paul's visit.

Thus we are told in words just quoted that St. Paul found "the city full of idols," and this provoked his spirit over and above the usual provocation he received wherever he found dead idols like these usurping the place rightfully belonging to the lord of the universe. Now let us take up Pausanias, and what does he tell us? In his first chapter he tells how the ports of Athens were crowded on every side with temples, and adorned with statues of gold and silver. Phalerum, the port where Paul landed, had temples of Demeter, of Athene, of Zeus, and "altars of gods unknown," of which we shall presently speak. Then we can peruse chapter after chapter crowded with descriptions of statues and temples, till in the seventeenth chapter we read how in their pantheistic enthusiasm they idolised the most impalpable of things: "The Athenians have in the market-place, among other things not universally notable, an altar to Mercy, to whom, though most useful of all the gods to the life of man and its vicissitudes, the Athenians alone of all the Greeks assign honours. And not only is philanthropy more regarded among them, but they also exhibit more piety to the gods than others; for they have also an altar to Shame and Rumour and Energy. And it is clear that those people who have a larger share of piety than others have also a larger share of good fortune." While again, in chapter xxiv., dwelling upon the statues of Hercules and Athene, Pausanias remarks, "I have said before that the Athenians, more than any other Greeks, have a zeal for religion." Athens was, at the time of St. Paul's visit, the leading university of the world, and university life then was permeated with the spirit of paganism, the lovers of philosophy and science delighting to adorn Athens with temples and statues and endowments as expressions of the gratitude they felt for the culture which they had there gained. These things had, however, no charm for the apostle Paul.

\* This important work may be most easily consulted in Shilleto's translation, published in Bohn's Classical Library, Bell & Sons, London, 1886.



Some moderns, viewing him from an unsympathetic point of view, would describe him in their peculiar language as a mere Philistine in spirit, unable to recognise the material beauty and glory which lay around. And this is true. The beauty which the architect and the sculptor would admire was for the Apostle to a large extent non-existent, owing to his defective eyesight; but even when recognised it was an object rather of dislike and of abhorrence than of admiration and pleasure, because the Apostle saw deeper than the man of mere superficial culture and æsthetic taste. The Apostle saw these idols and the temples consecrated to their use from the moral and spiritual standpoint, and viewed them therefore as the outward and visible signs of an inward festering corruption and rottenness, the more beautiful perhaps because of the more awful decay which lay beneath.

The glimpses which St. Paul got of Athens as he wandered about roused his spirit and quickened him to action. He followed his usual course therefore. He first sought his own countrymen the Jews. There was a colony of Jews at Athens, as we know from independent sources. Philo was a Jew the authenticity of whose writings, at least in great part, has never been questioned. He lived at Alexandria at this very period, and was sent, about twelve years earlier, as an ambassador to Rome to protest against the cruel persecutions to which the Alexandrian Jews had been subjected at the time when Caligula made the attempt to erect his statue at Jerusalem, of which we have spoken in a previous chapter. He wrote an account of his journey to Rome and his treatment by the Emperor, which is called "*Legatio ad Caium*," and in it he mentions Athens as one of the cities where a considerable Jewish colony existed. We know practically nothing more about this Jewish colony save what we are told here by St. Luke, that it was large enough to have a synagogue, not a mere oratory like the Philippian Jews. It cannot, however, have been a very large one. Athens was not a seat of any considerable trade, and therefore had no such attractions for the Jews as either Thessalonica or Corinth; while its abounding idolatry and its countless images would be repellent to their feelings. Modern investigations have, indeed, brought to light a few ancient inscriptions testifying to the presence of Jews at Athens in these earlier ages; but otherwise we know nothing about them. The synagogue seems to have imbibed a good deal of the same easy-going contemptuously tolerant spirit with which the whole atmosphere of Athens was infected. Jews and pagans alike listened to St. Paul, and then turned away to their own pursuits. In a city where every religion was represented, and every religion discussed and laughed at, how could any one be very much in earnest? St. Paul then turned from the Jews to the Gentiles. He frequented the market-place, a well-known spot, near to the favourite meeting-place of the Stoic philosophers. There St. Paul entered into discussion with individuals or with groups as they presented themselves. The philosophers soon took notice of the new-comer. His manner, terribly in earnest, would soon have secured attention in any society, and much more in Athens, where whole-souled and intense enthusiasm was the one intellectual quality which was completely wanting. For who but a man that had heard the voice of God and had seen

the vision of the Almighty could be in earnest in a city where residents, and strangers sojourning there, all alike spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing? The philosophers and Stoics and Epicureans alike were attracted by St. Paul's manner. They listened to him as he discoursed of Jesus and the Resurrection, the two topics which absorbed him. They mistook his meaning in a manner very natural to the place, strange as it may seem to us. In Athens the popular worship was thoroughly Pantheistic. Every desire, passion, infirmity even of human nature was deified and adored, and therefore, as we have already pointed out, Pity and Shame and Energy and Rumour, the last indeed the most fitting and significant of them all for a people who simply lived to talk, found spirits willing to prostrate themselves in their service and altars dedicated to their honour. The philosophers heard this new Jewish teacher proclaiming the virtues and blessings of Jesus and the Resurrection, and they concluded Jesus to be one divinity and the Resurrection another divinity, lately imported from the mysterious East. The philosophers were the aristocracy of the Athenian city, revered as the University professors in a German or Scotch town, and they at once brought the new-comer before the court of Areopagus, the highest in Athens, charged, as in the time of Socrates, with the duty of supervising the affairs of the national religion, and punishing all attacks and innovations thereon. The Apostle was led up the steps or stairs which still remain, the judges took their places on the rock-hewn benches, St. Paul was placed upon the defendant's stone, called, as Pausanias tells us, the 'Stone of Impudence, and then the trial began.

The Athenian philosophers were cultured, and they were polite. They demand, therefore, in bland tones, "May we know what this new teaching is, which is spoken by thee? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears; we would know, therefore, what these things mean." And now St. Paul has got his chance of a listening audience. He has come across a new type of hearers, such as he has not enjoyed since those early days of his first Christian love, when, after his escape from Jerusalem, he resided at the university city of Tarsus for a long time, till sought out by Barnabas to come and minister to the crowds of Gentiles who were flocking into the Church at Antioch.\* St. Paul knew right well the tenets of the two classes of men, the Stoics and the Epicureans, with whom he had to contend, and he deals with them effectually in the speech which he delivered before the court. Of that address we have only the barest outline. The report given in the Acts contains about two hundred and fifty words, and must have lasted little more than two minutes if that was all St. Paul said. It embodies, however, merely the leading arguments used by the Apostle as Timothy or some other disciple recollected them and told them to St. Luke. Let us see what these arguments were. He begins with a compliment to the Athenians. The Authorised, and even the Revised, Version represent him indeed as beginning like an unskilled and unwise speaker with giving his audience a slap

\*That period of retirement at Tarsus may have been utilised by St. Paul in studying classical literature and Greek philosophy by way of preparation for that life's work among the Gentiles, to which he was appointed at his conversion.



in the face. "Ye men of Athens, in all things I perceive that ye are somewhat superstitious," would not have been the most conciliatory form of address to a keen-witted assembly like that before which he was now standing. It would have tended to set their backs up at once. If we study St. Paul's Epistles, specially his First Epistle to Corinth, we shall find that even when he had to find the most grievous faults with his disciples, he always began like a prudent man by conciliating their feelings, praising them for whatever he could find good or blessed in them. Surely if St. Paul acted thus with believers living unworthy of their heavenly calling, he would be still more careful not to offend men whom he wished to win over to Christ! St. Paul's exordium was complimentary rather than otherwise, bearing out the description which Pausanias gives of the Athenians of his own day, that "they have more than other Greeks, a zeal for religion." Let us expand his thoughts somewhat that we may grasp their force. "Men of Athens, in all things I perceive that ye are more religious and more devoted to the worship of the deity than other men. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, To the unknown God." St. Paul here displays his readiness as a practised orator. He shows his power and readiness to become all things to all men. He seizes upon the excessive devotion of the Athenians. He does not abuse them on account of it, he uses it rather as a good and useful foundation on which he may build a worthier structure, as a good and sacred principle, hitherto misapplied, but henceforth to be dedicated to a nobler purpose. The circumstance upon which St. Paul seized, the existence of an altar dedicated to the unknown God, is amply confirmed by historic evidence. St. Paul may have noticed such altars as he passed up the road from Phalerum, where he landed, to the city of Athens, where, as we learn from Pausanias, the next-century traveller, such altars existed in his time; or he may have seen them on the very hill of Areopagus on which he was standing, where, from ancient times, as we learn from another writer, altars existed dedicated to the unknown gods who sent a plague upon Athens. St. Paul's argument then was this. The Athenians were already worshippers of the Unknown God. This was the very deity he came proclaiming, and therefore he could not be a setter forth of strange gods nor liable to punishment in consequence. He then proceeds to declare more fully the nature of the Deity hitherto unknown. He was the God that made the world and all things therein. He was not identical therefore with the visible creation as the Pantheism of the Stoics declared; but gave to all out of His own immense fulness life and wealth, and all things; neither was He like the gods of the Epicureans who sat far aloof from all care and thought about this lower world. St. Paul taught God's personal existence as against the Stoics, and God's providence as against the Epicureans. Then he struck straight at the root of that national pride, that supreme contempt for the outside barbaric world, which existed as strongly among these cultured agnostic Greek philosophers as among the most narrow, fanatical, and bigoted Jews: "He made of one every nation of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and

the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him." A doctrine which must have sounded exceeding strange to these Greeks accustomed to despise the barbarian world, looking down upon it from the height of their learning and civilisation, and regarding themselves as the only favourites of Heaven. St. Paul proclaims on the Hill of Mars Christian liberalism, the catholic and cosmopolitan character of the true religion in opposition to this Greek contempt grounded on mere human position and privilege, as clearly and as loudly as he proclaimed the same great truth at Jerusalem or in the synagogues of the Dispersion in opposition to Jewish exclusiveness grounded on the Divine covenant. St. Paul had grasped the great lesson taught by the prophets of the Old Testament as they prophesied concerning Babylon, Egypt, and Tyre. They proclaimed the lesson which Jewish ears were slow to learn, they taught the Jews the truth which Paul preached to the philosophers of Athens, they acted upon the principle which it was the great work of Paul's life to exemplify, that God's care and love and providence are over all His works, that His mercies are not restrained to any one nation, but that, having made of one all nations upon the face of the earth, His blessings are bestowed upon them all alike. This truth here taught by St. Paul has been slow to make its way. Men have been slow to acknowledge the equality of all nations in God's sight, very slow to give up their own claims to exceptional treatment and blessing on the part of the Almighty. The great principle enunciated by the Apostle struck, for instance, at the evil of slavery, yet how slowly it made its way. Till thirty years ago really good and pious men saw nothing inconsistent with Christianity in negro slavery. Christian communions even were established grounded on this fundamental principle, the righteous character of slavery. John Newton was a slave trader, and seems to have seen nothing wrong in it. George Whitefield owned slaves, and bequeathed them as part of his property to be held for his Orphan House in America. But it is not only slavery that this great principle overthrows. It strikes down every form of injustice and wrong. God has made all men of one; they are all equally His care, and therefore every act of injustice is a violation of the Divine law which is thus expressed. Such ideas must have seemed exceedingly strange, and even unnatural to men accustomed to reverence the teaching and study the writings of guides like Aristotle, whose dogma was that slavery was based on the very constitution of nature itself, which formed some men to rule and others to be slaves.

St. Paul does not finish with this. He has not yet exhausted all his message. He had now dealt with the intellectual errors and mistakes of his hearers. He had around him and above him, if he could but see the magnificent figure of Athene, the pride and glory of the Acropolis, with its surrounding temples, the most striking proofs how their intellectual mistakes had led the wise of this world into fatal and degrading practices. In the course of his argument, having shown the nearness of God to man, "In Him we live and move and have our being," and the Divine desire that man should seek after and know God, he quoted a passage common



to several well-known poets, "For we are also His offspring." This was sufficient for St. Paul, who as we see, in all his Epistles, often flies off at a tangent when a word slips as it were by chance from his pen, leading him off to a new train of ideas. We are the offspring of God. How is it then that men can conceive the Godhead, that which is Divine, to be like unto those gold and silver, brass and marble statues, even though wrought with the greatest possible skill. The philosophers indeed pretended to distinguish between the Eternal Godhead and these divinities and images innumerable, which were but representations of his several characteristics and attributes. But even if they distinguished intellectually, they did not distinguish in practice, and the people from the highest to the lowest identified the idol with the deity itself, and rendered thereto the honour due to God.

St. Paul then proceeds to enunciate his own doctrines. He lightly touches upon, as he did previously at Lystra (ch. xiv. 16), a subject which neither the time at his disposal nor the position of his hearers would permit him to discuss. He glances at, but does not attempt to explain, why God had postponed to that late date this novel teaching: "The times of ignorance God overlooked; but now He commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent." This doctrine of repentance, involving a sense of sin and sorrow for it, must have sounded exceeding strange to those philosophic ears, as did the announcement with which the Apostle follows it up, the proclamation of a future judgment by a Man whom God had ordained for the purpose, and authenticated by raising Him from the dead. Here the crowd interrupted him. The Resurrection, or Anastasis, which Paul preached was not then a new deity, but an impossible process through which no man save in fable had ever passed. When the Apostle got thus far the assembly broke up. The idea of a resurrection of a dead man was too much for them. It was too ludicrous for belief. "Some mocked: but others said, We will hear thee again of this matter," and thus ended St. Paul's address, and thus ended too the Athenian opportunity, for St. Paul soon passed away from such a society of learned triflers and scoffers. They sat in the seat of the scorner, and the seat of the scorner is never a good one for a learner to occupy who wishes to profit. He felt that he had no great work to do in such a place. His opportunity lay where hearts were broken with sin and sorrow, where the burden of life weighed upon the soul, and men heavy laden and sore pressed were longing for a real deliverance and for a higher, nobler life than the world could offer. His work, however, was not all in vain, nor were his personal discussions and his public address devoid of results. The Church of Athens was one of those which could look back to St. Paul as its founder. "Not many wise after the flesh were called" in that city of wisdom and beauty, but some were called, among whom was one of those very judges who sat to investigate the Apostle's teaching: "But certain clave unto him, and believed: among whom also was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them." And this Church thus founded became famous; Dionysius the Areopagite became afterwards a celebrated man, because his name was attached some five centuries later to a notorious forgery

which has played no small part in later Christian history. Dionysius was the first bishop of the Athenian Church according to the testimony of another Dionysius, Bishop of Corinth, who lived in the middle of the second century, while persons were yet living who could remember the Areopagite. He was succeeded by Publius, who presided over the Church at an important period of its existence. The Emperor Hadrian came to Athens, and was charmed with it about the year 125 A. D. At that time the Athenian Church must have included among its members several learned men; for the two earliest "Apologies" in defence of Christianity were produced by it. The Athenian Church had just then been purified by the fiery trials of persecution. Quadratus and Aristides stood forth to plead its cause before the Emperor. Of Quadratus and his work we know but little. Eusebius, the great Church historian, had, however, seen it, and gives us ("H. E.," iv. 3) a brief abstract of it, appealing to the miracles of our Saviour, and stating that some of the dead whom Christ had raised had lived to his own time. While as for Aristides, the other apologist, his work, after lying hidden from the sight of Christendom, was printed and published last year, as we have told in the former volume of this commentary. That "Apology" of Aristides has much important teaching for us, as we have there tried to show. There is one point, however, to which we did not allude. The "Apology" of Aristides shows us that the Athenian Church accepted in the fullest degree and preserved the great Pauline doctrine of the freedom and catholic nature of Christianity. In the year 125 Judaism and Christianity were still struggling together within the Church in other places; but at Athens they had clean separated the one from the other. Till that year no one but a circumcised Jewish Christian had ever presided over the Mother Church of Jerusalem, which sixty years after the martyrdom of St. Peter and St. Paul preserved exactly the same attitude as in the days of James the Just. The Church of Athens, on the other hand, as a thoroughly Gentile Church, had from the first enjoyed the ministry of Dionysius the Areopagite, a Gentile of culture and education. He had been attracted by the broad liberal teaching of the Apostle in his address upon Mars' Hill, enunciating a religion free from all narrow national limitations. He embraced this catholic teaching with his whole heart, and transmitted it to his successors, so that when some seventy years later a learned Athenian stood forth in the person of Aristides, to explain the doctrines of the Church, contrasting them with the errors and mistakes of all other nations, Aristides does not spare even the Jews. He praises them indeed when compared with the pagans, who had erred on the primary questions of morals; but he blames them because they had not reached the final and absolute position occupied by the Christians. Listen to the words of Aristides which proclaim the true Pauline doctrine taught in St. Paul's sermons, re-echoed by the Epistles, "Nevertheless the Jews too have gone astray from accurate knowledge, and they suppose in their minds that they are serving God, but in the methods of their service, their service is to angels and not to God, in that they observe Sabbaths and new moons, and the passover, and the great fast, and the fast and circumcision,



and cleanness of meats," words which sound exactly the same note and embody the same conception as St. Paul in his indignant language to the Galatians (iv. 9-11): "Now that ye have come to know God, or rather to be known of God, how turn ye back again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire to be in bondage over again? Ye observe days, and months, and seasons, and years. I am afraid of you, lest by any means I have bestowed labour upon you in vain."

St. Paul did not stay long at Athens. Five or six weeks perhaps, two months at most, was probably the length of his visit, time enough just for his Berean guides to go back to their own city two hundred miles away, and forward their message to Thessalonica fifty miles distant, desiring Timothy and Silas to come to him. Timothy, doubtless, soon started upon his way, tarried with the Apostle for a little, and then returned to Thessalonica, as we learn from 1 Thess. iii. 1: "When we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone, and sent Timothy to establish you and comfort you." And now he was again all alone in that scoffing city where neither the religious, moral, nor intellectual atmosphere could have been pleasing to a man like St. Paul. He quitted Athens therefore and came to Corinth. In that city he laboured for a period of a year and a half at least; and yet the record of his brief visit to Athens, unsuccessful as it was so far as immediate results are concerned, is much longer than the record of his prolonged work in Corinth.

Now if we were writing a life of St. Paul instead of a commentary on the history told us in the Acts, we should be able to supplement the brief narrative of the historical book with the ample details contained in the Epistles of St. Paul, especially the two Epistles written to Corinth itself, which illustrate the life of the Apostle, his work at Corinth, and the state of the Corinthians themselves prior and subsequent to their conversion. A consideration of these points would, however, lead me to intrude on the sphere of the commentator on the Corinthian Epistles, and demand an amount of space which we cannot afford. In addition, the three great biographies of St. Paul to which we have so often referred—Lewin's, Farrar's, and that of Conybeare and Howson—treat this subject at such great length and with such a profusion of archaeological learning as practically leave a fresh writer nothing new to say in this direction. Let us, however, look briefly at the record in the Acts of St. Paul's work in Corinth, viewing it from the expositor's point of view. St. Paul went from Athens to Corinth discouraged, it may have been, by the results of his Athenian labours. Opposition never frightened St. Paul; but learned carelessness, haughty contemptuous indifference to his Divine message, the outcome of a spirit devoid of any true spiritual life, quenched his ardour, chilled his enthusiasm. He must indeed have been sorely repelled by Athens when he set out all alone for the great capital of Achaia, the wicked, immoral, debased city of Corinth. When He came thither he united himself with Aquila, a Jew of Pontus, and Priscilla, his wife, because they were members of the same craft. They had been lately expelled from Rome, and, like the Apostle, were tent-makers: for convenience' sake therefore,

and to save expense, they all lodged together. Here again St. Paul experienced the wisdom of his father's training and of the Rabbinical law, which thus made him in Corinth, as before in Thessalonica, thoroughly independent of all external circumstances, and able with his own hands to minister to his body's wants. And it was a fortunate thing too for the gospel's sake that he was able to do so. St. Paul never permits any one to think for a moment that the claim of Christ's ministry for a fitting support is a doubtful one. He expressly teaches again and again, as in 1 Cor. ix., that it is the Scriptural as well as rational duty of the people to contribute according to their means to the maintenance of Christ's public ministry. But there were certain circumstances at Thessalonica, and above all at Corinth, which made St. Paul waive his just claim and even cramp, limit, and confine his exertions, by imposing on himself the work of earning his daily food. Thessalonica and Corinth had immense Jewish populations. The Jews were notorious in that age as furnishing the greatest number of impostors, quack magicians, and every other kind of agency which traded upon human credulity for the purpose of gain.

St. Paul was determined that neither Jew nor Gentile in either place should be able to hinder the work of the gospel by accusing him of self-seeking or covetous purposes. For this purpose he united with Aquila and Priscilla in working at their common trade as tentmakers, employing the Sabbath days in debating after the usual fashion in the Jewish synagogues; and upon ordinary days improving the hours during which his hands laboured upon the coarse hair cloth of which tents were made, either in expounding to his fellow-workmen the glorious news which he proclaimed or else in meditating upon the trials of his converts in Macedonia, or perhaps, most of all, in that perpetual communion with God, that never-ceasing intercession for which he ever found room and time in the secret chambers of the soul. St. Paul's intercessions, as we read of them in his Epistles, were immense. Intercessory prayers for his individual converts are frequently mentioned by him. It would have been impossible for a man so hard pressed with labours of every kind, temporal and spiritual, to find place for them all in formal prayers if St. Paul did not cultivate the habit of ceaseless communion with his Father in heaven, perpetually bringing before God those cases and persons which lay dearest to his heart. This habit of secret prayer must be the explanation of St. Paul's widespread intercessions, and for this reason. He commends the same practice again and again to his converts. "Pray without ceasing" is his language to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. v. 17). Now this could not mean, prolong your private devotions to an inordinate length, because great numbers of his converts were slaves who were not masters of their time. But it does mean cultivate a perpetual sense of God's presence and of your own communion with Him, which will turn life and its busiest work into a season of refreshing prayer and untiring intercession.

Meanwhile, according to Acts xviii. 5, Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, bringing contributions for the Apostle's support, which enabled him to fling himself entirely into ministerial and evangelistic work. This renewed ac-



tivity soon told. St. Paul had no longer to complain of contemptuous or listless conduct, as at Athens. He experienced at Jewish hands in Corinth exactly the same treatment as at Thessalonica and Berea. Paul preached that Jesus was the Christ. The Jews blasphemed Him, and called Him accursed. Their attitude became so threatening that Paul was at length compelled to retire from the synagogue, and, separating his disciples, Jews and Gentiles alike, he withdrew to the house of one Justus, a man whose Latin name bespeaks his Western origin, who lived next door to the synagogue. Thenceforth he threw himself with all his energy into his work. God too directly encouraged him. The very proximity of the Christian Church to the Jewish Synagogue constituted a special danger to himself personally when he had to deal with fanatical Jews. A heavenly visitor appeared, therefore, to refresh the wearied saint. In his hour of danger and of weakness God's strength and grace were perfected, and assurance was granted that the Lord had much people in the city of Corinth, and that no harm should happen to him while striving to seek out and gather God's sheep that were scattered abroad in the midst of the naughty world of Corinthian life. And the secret vision did not stand alone. External circumstances lent their assistance and support. Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and his family became converts, and were baptised. Gaius and Stephanas were important converts gathered from amongst the Gentiles; so important indeed were these three individuals and their families that St. Paul turned aside from his purely evangelistic and missionary labours and devoted himself to the pastoral work of preparing them for baptism, administering personally that holy sacrament, a duty which he usually left to his assistants, who were not so well qualified for the rough pioneer efforts of controversy, which he had marked out for himself. And so the work went on for a year and a half, till the Jews thought they saw their opportunity for crushing the audacious apostate who was thus making havoc even among the officials of their own organisation, inducing them to join his Nazarene synagogue. Achaia, of which Corinth was the capital, was a Roman province, embracing, broadly speaking, the territory comprised in the modern kingdom of Greece. Like a great many other provinces, and specially like Cyprus, to which we have already called attention, Achaia was at times an imperial, at times a senatorial province. Forty years earlier it was an imperial province. The Acts describes it as just then, that is, about A. D. 53, a senatorial or proconsular province; and Suetonius, an independent Roman historian, confirms this, telling us ("Claud.," 25) that the Emperor Claudius restored it to the senate.

Gallio, a brother of the celebrated philosophic writer Seneca, had been sent to it as proconsul, and the Jews thought they now saw their opportunity. Gallio, whose original and proper name was Annæus Novatus, was a man distinguished by what in Rome was considered his sweet, gentle, and loving disposition. His reputation may have preceded him, and the Jews of Corinth may have thought that they would play upon his easy-going temper. The Jews, being a very numerous community at Corinth, had it of course in their power to prove very unpleasant to any ruler, and specially to one of Gallio's

reputed temper.\* The Roman governors were invested with tremendous powers; they were absolute despots, in fact, for the time being, and yet they were often very anxious to gain popularity, especially with any troublesome body of their temporary subjects. The Roman proconsuls, in fact, adopted a principle we sometimes see still acted out in political life, as if it were the highest type of statesmanship. They were anxious to gain popularity by gratifying those who made themselves specially obnoxious and raised the loudest cries. They petted the naughty, and they neglected the good. So it was with Pontius Pilate, who perpetrated a judicial murder because it contented the multitude; so it was with Festus, who left an innocent man in bonds at Cæsarea because he desired to gain favour with the Jews; and so too, thought the Jews of Corinth, it would be with Gallio. They arrested the Apostle, therefore, using the messengers of the synagogue for the purpose, and brought him to the proconsular court, where they set him before the bema, or elevated platform, whence the Roman magistrates dispensed justice. Then they laid their formal accusation against him: "This man persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law"; expecting perhaps that he would be remitted by the proconsul to the judgment and discipline of their own domestic tribunal, even as Pilate said to the Jews about our Lord and their accusation against Him: "Take ye Him, and judge Him according to your law." But the philosophic brother of the Stoic Seneca had a profound contempt for these agitating Jews. His Stoic education too had trained him to allow external things as little influence upon the mind as possible. The philosophic apathy which the Stoics cultivated must have more or less affected his whole nature, as he soon showed the Jews; for before the Apostle had time to reply to the charge Gallio burst in contemptuously. If it were a matter of law and order, he declares, it would be right to attend to it; but if your complaint is touching your own national law and customs I will have nothing to say to it. And then he commanded his lictors to clear the court. Thus ended the attempt on St. Paul's freedom or life, an attempt which was indeed more disastrous to the Jews themselves than to any one else; for the Gentile mob of Corinth, hating the Jews, and glad to see them balked of their expected prey, seized the chief accuser Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment-seat; while Gallio all the while cared for none of these things, despising the mob, Jew and Gentile alike, and contemptuously pitying them from the height of his philosophic self-contentment. Gallio has been at all times regarded as the type of the mere worldling, who, wrapped in material interests, cares for nothing higher or nobler. But this is scarcely fair to Gallio. The Stoic philosopher was not dead to better things. But he is the type rather of men who, blinded by lower truths and mere intellectual wisdom, are thereby rendered careless of those spiritual matters in which the soul's true life alone consists. He had so thoroughly cultivated a philosophic contempt for the outside world and its business,

\* Cicero, in his oration *Pro Flacco*, ch. xxviii., shows how troublesome and dangerous, even to the very highest persons, the Jews at Rome could be one hundred years earlier than Gallio's day.



the sayings and doings, the joys and the sorrows of the puny mortals who fume and strut and fret their lives away upon this earthly stage, that he lost the opportunity of hearing from the Apostle's lips of a grander philosophy, a deeper contentment, of a truer, more satisfying peace than was ever dreamt of in stoical speculation. And this type of man is not extinct. Philosophy, science, art, literature, politics, they are all great facts, all offer vast fields for human activity, and all may serve for a time so thoroughly to content and satisfy man's inner being as to render him careless of that life in Christ which alone abideth for evermore.

The attempt of the Jews marked the termination of St. Paul's work in Corinth. It was at least the beginning of the end. He had now laboured longer in Corinth than anywhere else since he started out from Antioch. He had organised and consolidated the Church, as we can see from his Corinthian Epistles, and now he longed once more to visit his old friends, and report what God had wrought by his means during his long absence. He tarried, therefore, yet a while, visiting doubtless the various Churches which he had established throughout all the province of Achaia, and then, accompanied by a few companions, set sail for Syria, to declare the results of his eventful mission, taking Ephesus on his way. This was his first visit to that great city, and he was probably led to pay it owing to the commercial necessities of Aquila. Life's actions and deeds, even in the case of an apostle, are moulded by very little things. A glance, a chance word, a passing courtesy, forgotten as soon as done, and life is very different from what it otherwise would have been. And so, too, the tent-making and tent-selling of Aquila brought Paul to Ephesus, shaped the remainder of his career, and endowed the Church with the rich spiritual heritage of the teaching imparted to the Ephesian disciples by word and epistle.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

#### THE EPHESIAN CHURCH AND ITS FOUNDATION.

ACTS xviii. 19-21, 24-26; xix. 1.

EPHESUS has been from very ancient times a distinguished city. It was famous in the religious history of Asia Minor in times long prior to the Christian Era. It was celebrated at the time of the Roman Empire as the chief seat of the worship of Diana and of the magical practices associated with that worship; and Ephesus became more celebrated still in Christian times as the city where one of the great Œcumenical Councils was held which served to determine the expression of the Church's faith in her Divine Lord and Master. It must then be of great interest to the Christian student to note the first beginnings of such a vast transformation as that whereby a chief seat of pagan idolatry was turned into a special stronghold of Christian orthodoxy. Let us then devote this chapter to tracing the upgrowth of the Ephesian Church, and to noting the lessons the modern Church may derive therefrom.

St. Paul terminated his work in Corinth some time about the middle or towards the close of

the year 53 A. D. In the early summer of that year Gallio came as proconsul to Achaia, and the Jewish riot was raised. After a due interval, to show that he was not driven out by Jewish machinations, St. Paul determined to return once more to Jerusalem and Antioch, which he had left some four years at least before. He went down therefore to Cenchreæ, the port of departure for passengers going from Corinth to Ephesus, Asia Minor, and Syria. A Christian Church had been established there by the exertions of St. Paul or some of his Corinthian disciples. As soon as an early Christian was turned from sin to righteousness, from the adoration of idols to the worship of the true God, he began to try and do something for Him whose love and grace he had experienced. It was no wonder that the Church then spread rapidly when all its individual members were instinct with life, and every one considered himself personally responsible to labour diligently for God. The Church of Cenchreæ was elaborately organised. It had not only its deacons, it had also its deaconesses, one of whom, Phœbe, was specially kind and useful to St. Paul upon his visits to that busy seaport, and is by him commended to the help and care of the Roman Church (Rom. xvi. 1, 2).

From Cenchreæ St. Paul, Aquila, and Priscilla sailed for Ephesus, where, as we have already hinted, it is most likely the latter pair had some special business avocations which led them to stay at that city. They may have been large manufacturers of tents, and have had a branch establishment at Ephesus, which was then a great mercantile emporium for that part of Asia Minor.

An incidental remark of the sacred writer "having shorn his head in Cenchreæ, for he had a vow," has raised a controverted question. Some refer this expression to Aquila, and I think with much the greater probability. It was customary with the Jews at that time when in any special danger to take a temporary Nazarite vow, binding themselves to abstain from wine and from cutting their hair till a certain definite period had elapsed. Then when the fixed date had arrived, the hair was cut off and preserved till it could be burned in the fire of a sacrifice offered up at Jerusalem upon the individual's next visit to the Holy City. The grammatical order of the words naturally refer to Aquila as the maker of this vow; but I cannot agree in one reason urged for this latter theory. Some have argued that it was impossible for Paul to have made this vow; that it would, in fact, have been a return to the bondage of Judaism, which would have been utterly inconsistent on his part. People who argue thus do not understand St. Paul's position with respect to Jewish rites as being things utterly unimportant, and, as such, things which a wise born Jew would do well to observe in order to please his countrymen. If St. Paul made a vow at Corinth it would have been simply an illustration of his own principle, "To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order that I might gain the Jews." But further, I must say that the taking of a vow, though derived from Judaism, need not have necessarily appeared to St. Paul and the men of his time a purely Jewish ceremony. Vows, in fact, naturally passed over from Judaism to Christianity. Vows, indeed, of this peculiar character, and with this peculiar external sign of long hair,



are no longer customary amongst Christians; but surely special vows cannot be said to have gone out of fashion, when we consider the wide spread of the teetotal movement, with its vows identical in one important element with that of the Nazarites! But viewing the matter from a still wider standpoint, people, when contending thus, forget what a large part the tradition of ancient customs must have played in the life, manners, and customs of St. Paul. All his early life he was a strict Pharisaic Jew, and down to the end of life his early training must have largely modified his habits. To take but one instance, pork was the common and favourite food of the Romans at this period. Now I am sure that St. Paul would have vigorously resisted all attempts to prevent the Gentile Christians eating bacon or ham; but I should not be in the least surprised if St. Paul, trained in Pharisaic habits, never once touched a food he had been taught to abhor from his earliest youth. Life is a continuous thing, and the memories of the past are very powerful. We can to this day trace among ourselves many customs and traditions dating back to the times antecedent to the Reformation, and much farther. The fires still lighted on St. John's Eve throughout Ireland, and once customary in Scotland, are survivals of the times of Druidical paganism in these islands. The ceremonies and social customs of Shrove Tuesday and Hallow E'en are survivals of the rude mirth of our pre-Reformation forefathers, on the nights before a celebrated fast, Ash Wednesday, in one case, before a celebrated feast, All Saints' Day, in the other. Or perhaps I may take another instance more closely analogous still which every reader can verify for himself. The use of the Church of England has to this day a curious instance of the power of tradition as opposed to written law. There is a general rubric placed in the Book of Common Prayer before the first Lord's Prayer. It runs as follows: "Then the minister shall kneel and say the Lord's Prayer with an audible voice; the people also kneeling and repeating it with him, both here, and wheresoever else it is used in Divine Service." This rubric plainly prescribes that clergy and people shall always say the Lord's Prayer conjointly. And yet, let my readers go into any church of the Anglican Communion on Sunday next, I care not what the tone of its theological thought, and observe the first Lord's Prayer used at the beginning of the Communion Service. They will find that this general rubric is universally neglected, and the celebrating priest says the opening Lord's Prayer by himself with no voice of the people raised to accompany him. Now whence comes this universal fact? It is simply an illustration of the strength of tradition. It is a survival of the practice before the Reformation handed down by tradition to the present time, and overriding a positive and written law. In the days before the Reformation, as in the Roman Catholic Church of the present day, the opening Dominical or Lord's Prayer in the Mass was said by the priest alone. When the service was translated into English the old custom still prevailed, and has lasted to the present day. This was only human nature, which abhors unnecessary changes, and is intensely conservative of every practice which is linked with the fond memories of the past. This human nature was found strong in St. Paul, as in other men, and

it would have argued no moral or spiritual weakness, no desire to play fast and loose with gospel liberties, had he, instead of Aquila, resorted to the old Jewish practice and bound himself by a vow in connection with some special blessing which he had received, or some special danger he had incurred. When we are studying the Acts we must never forget that Judaism gave the tone and form, the whole outer framework to Christianity, even as England gave the outward shape and form to the constitutions of the United States and her own numberless colonies throughout the world. St. Paul did not invent a brand-new religion, as some people think; he changed as little as possible, so that his own practice and worship must have been to mere pagan eyes exactly the same as that of the Jews, as indeed we might conclude beforehand from the fact that the Roman authorities seem to have viewed the Christians as a mere Jewish sect down to the close of the second century.

I. Let us now take a rapid survey of the extensive journey which our book disposes of in very concise fashion. St. Paul and his companions, Aquila and Priscilla, Timothy and Silas, sailed from Cenchreæ to Ephesus, which city up to this seems to have been untouched by Christian influences. St. Paul, in the earlier portion of his second tour, had been prohibited by the Holy Spirit from preaching in Ephesus, or in any portion of the provinces of Asia or Bithynia. Important as the human eye of St. Paul may have viewed them, still the Divine Guide of the Church saw that neither Asia nor Bithynia, with all their magnificent cities, their accumulated wealth, and their political position, were half so important as the cities and provinces of Europe, viewed from the standpoint of the world's conversion. But now the gospel has secured a substantial foothold in Europe, has taken a firm grasp of that imperial race which then ruled the world, and so the Apostle is permitted to visit Ephesus for the first time. He seems to have then paid a mere passing visit to it, lasting perhaps while the ship discharged the portion of her cargo destined for Ephesus. But St. Paul never allowed time to hang heavy on his hands for want of employment. He left Aquila and Priscilla engaged in their mercantile transactions, and, entering himself into the principal synagogue, proceeded to expound his views. These do not seem to have then aroused any opposition; nay, the Jews even went so far as to desire him to tarry longer and open out his doctrines at greater length. We may conclude from this that St. Paul did not remain during this first visit much beyond one Sabbath day. If he had bestowed a second Sabbath day upon the Ephesian synagogue, his ideas and doctrines would have been made so clear and manifest that the Jews would not have required much further exposition in order to see their drift. St. Paul, after promising a second visit to them, left his old friends and associates, Aquila and his wife, with whom he had lived for nearly two years, at Ephesus, and pushed on to Cæsarea, a town which he must have already well known, and with which he was subsequently destined to make a long and unpleasant acquaintanceship, arriving at Jerusalem in time probably for the Feast of Tabernacles, which was celebrated on September 16, A. D. 53. Concerning the details of that visit we know nothing. Four years at least must



have elapsed since he had seen James and the other venerated heads of the Mother Church. We can imagine then how joyously he would have told them, how eagerly they would have heard the glad story of the wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles through the power of Jesus Christ. After a short sojourn at Jerusalem St. Paul turned back to Cæsarea, and thence went on to Antioch, the original seat of the Gentile mission for the propagation of the faith. After refreshing himself with the kindly offices of fraternal intercourse and conversation at this great Christian centre, where broad liberal sentiment and wide Christian culture, free from any narrow prejudices, must have infused a tone into society far more agreeable to St. Paul than the unprogressive Judaising views which flourished in Jerusalem, St. Paul then determined to set off upon his third great tour, which must have begun, at the earliest, some time in the spring of A. D. 54, as soon as the snows of winter had passed away and the passes through the Taurus Range into the central regions of Asia Minor had been opened. We know nothing more concerning the extended journey he took on this occasion. He seems to have avoided towns like Lystra and Derbe, and to have directed his march straight to Galatia, where he had sufficient work to engage all his thought. We have no mention of the names of the particular Churches where he laboured. Ancyra, as it was then called, Angora as it is now named, in all probability demanded St. Paul's attention. If he visited it, he looked as the traveller does still upon the temple dedicated to the deity of Augustus and of Rome, the ruins of which have attracted the notice of every modern antiquary. Glad, however, as we should have been to gratify our curiosity by details like these, we are obliged to content ourselves with the information which St. Luke gives us, that St. Paul "went through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, in order, establishing all the disciples," leaving us a speaking example of the energising power, the invigorating effects, of a visitation such as St. Paul now conducted, sustaining the weak, arousing the careless, restraining the rash, guiding the whole body of the Church with the counsels of sanctified wisdom and heavenly prudence. Then, after his Phrygian and Galatian work was finished, St. Paul betook himself to a field which he long since desired to occupy, and determined to fulfil the promise made a year previously at least to his Jewish friends of the Ephesian Synagogue.

II. Now we come to the foundation of the Ephesian Church some time in the latter part of the year 54 A. D. Here it may strike some reader as an extraordinary thing that more than twenty years after the Crucifixion Ephesus was as yet totally untouched by the gospel, so that the tidings of salvation were quite a novel sound in the great Asiatic capital. People sometimes think of the primitive Church as if, after the Day of Pentecost, every individual Christian rushed off to preach in the most distant parts of the world, and that the whole earth was evangelised straight off. They forget the teaching of Christ about the gospel leaven, and leaven never works all on an heap as it were; it is slow, regular, progressive in its operations. The tradition, too, that the apostles did not leave Jerusalem till twelve years after His ascension ought to be a sufficient corrective of this false

notion; and though this tradition may not have any considerable historical basis, yet it shows that the primitive Church did not cherish the very modern idea that enormous and immediate successes followed upon the preaching of the gospel after Pentecost, and that the conversion of vast populations at once occurred. The case was exactly contrary. For many a long year nothing at all was done towards the conversion of the Gentile world, and then for many another long year the preaching of the gospel among the Gentiles entirely depended upon St. Paul alone. He was the one evangelist of the Gentiles, and therefore it is no wonder he should have said in 1 Cor. i. 17, "Christ sent me not to baptise, but to preach the gospel." He was the one man fitted to deal with the prejudices, the ignorance, the sensuality, the grossness with which the Gentile world was overspread, and therefore no other work, no matter how important, was to be allowed to interfere with that one task which he alone could perform. This seems to me the explanation of the question which might otherwise cause some difficulty, how was it that the Ephesians, Jews and Gentiles alike, inhabiting this distinguished city, were still in such dire ignorance of the gospel message twenty years after the Ascension? Now let us come to the story of the circumstances amid which Ephesian Christianity took its rise. St. Paul, as we have already said, paid a passing visit to Ephesus just a year before when going up to Jerusalem, when he seems to have made a considerable impression in the synagogue. He left behind him Aquila and Priscilla, who, with their household, formed a small Christian congregation, meeting doubtless for the celebration of the Lord's Supper in their own house while yet frequenting the stated worship of the synagogue. This we conclude from the following circumstance, which is expressly mentioned in Acts xviii. 26. Apollos, a Jew, born in Alexandria, and a learned man, as was natural coming from that great centre of Greek and Oriental culture, came to Ephesus. He had been baptised by some of John's disciples, either at Alexandria or in Palestine. It may very possibly have been at Alexandria. St. John's doctrines and followers may have spread to Alexandria by that time, as we are expressly informed they had been diffused as far as Ephesus (see ch. xix. 1-4). Apollos, when he came to Ephesus, entered, like St. Paul, into the synagogue, and "spake and taught carefully the things concerning Jesus, knowing only the baptism of John." He knew about Jesus Christ, but with an imperfect knowledge such merely as John himself possessed. This man began to speak boldly in the synagogue on the topic of the Messiah whom John had preached. Aquila and Priscilla were present in the synagogue, heard the disputant, recognised his earnestness and his defects, and then, having taken him, expounded to him the way of God more fully, initiating him into the full mysteries of the faith by baptism into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This incident has an important bearing upon the foundation and development of the Ephesian Church, but it bears more directly still upon the point on which we have been dwelling. Apollos disputed in the synagogues where Aquila and Priscilla heard him, so that they must have been regular worshippers there, notwithstanding their Christian pro-



fession and their close intercourse with St. Paul for more than eighteen months. After a little time further, Apollos desired to pass over to Greece. The little Christian Church which met at Aquila's house told him of the wonders they had seen and heard in Achaia and of the flourishing state of the Church in Corinth. They gave him letters commendatory to that Church, whither Apollos passed over, and rendered such valuable help that his name a year or two later became one of the watchwords of Corinthian party strife. The way was now prepared for St. Paul's great mission to Ephesus, exceeding in length any mission he had hitherto conducted, surpassing in its duration of three years the time spent even at Corinth itself. His own brief visit of the year before, the visit and work of the Alexandrian Jew, the quiet conversations, the holy lives, the sanctified examples of Aquila and Priscilla, these had done the preliminary work. They had roused expectation, provoked discussion, developed thought. Everything was ready for the great masterful teacher to step upon the ground and complete the work which he had already so auspiciously begun.

I do not propose to discuss the roads by which St. Paul may have travelled through the province of Asia on this eventful visit, nor to discuss the architectural features, or the geographical position of the city of Ephesus. These things I shall leave to the writers who have treated of St. Paul's life. I now confine myself to the notices inserted by St. Luke concerning the Apostle's Ephesian work, and about it I note that upon his arrival St. Paul came in contact with a small congregation of the disciples of John the Baptist, who had hitherto escaped the notice of the small Church existing at Ephesus. This need not excite our wonder. We are apt to think that because Christianity is now such a dominant element in our own intellectual and religious atmosphere it must always have been the same. Ephesus, too, was then an immense city, with a large population of Jews, who may have had many synagogues. These few disciples of John the Baptist may have worshipped in a synagogue which never heard of the brief visit of a Cilician Jew, a teacher named Saul of Tarsus, much less of the quiet efforts of Aquila and Priscilla, the tentmakers, lately come from Corinth. St. Paul, on his second visit, soon came in contact with these men. He at once asked them a question which tested their position and attainments in the Divine life, and sheds for us a vivid light upon apostolic doctrine and practice. "Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?" is plainly an inquiry whether they had enjoyed the blessing connected with the solemn imposition of hands, from which has been derived the rite of confirmation, as I showed in the previous Part. The disciples soon revealed the imperfect character of their religion by their reply: "Nay, we did not so much as hear whether the Holy Ghost was," words which led St. Paul to demand what in that case was the nature of their baptism. "Into what then were ye baptised?" and they said, "Into John's baptism."

Now the simple explanation of the disciples' ignorance was that they had been baptised with John's baptism, which had no reference to or mention of the Holy Ghost. St. Paul, understanding them to be baptised disciples, could not understand their ignorance of the personal

existence and present power of the Holy Ghost, till he learned from them the nature of their baptism, and then his surprise ceased. But then we must observe that the question of the Apostle astonished at their defective state—"Into what then were ye baptised?"—implies that, if baptised with Christian baptism, they would have known of the existence of the Holy Ghost, and therefore further implies that the baptismal formula into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, was of universal application among Christians; for surely if this formula were not universally used by the Church, many Christians might be in exactly the same position as these disciples of John, and never have heard of the Holy Ghost!\* St. Paul, having expounded the difference between the inchoate, imperfect, beginning knowledge, of the Baptist, and the richer, fuller teaching of Jesus Christ, then handed them over for further preparation to his assistants, by whom, after due fasting and prayer, they were baptised,† and at once presented to the Apostle for the imposition of hands; when the Holy Ghost was vouchsafed in present effects, "they spake with tongues and prophesied," as if to sanction in a special manner the decided action taken by the Apostle on this occasion.

The details concerning this affair, given to us by the sacred writer, are most important. They set forth at greater length and with larger fullness the methods ordinarily used by the Apostle than on other similar occasions. The Philippian jailor was converted and baptised, but we read nothing of the imposition of hands. Dionysius and Damaris, Aquila and Priscilla, and many others at Athens and Corinth were converted, but there is no mention of either baptism or any other holy rite. It might have been very possible to argue that the silence of the writer implied utter contempt of the sacraments of the gospel and the rite of confirmation on these occasions, were it not that we have this detailed account of the manner in which St. Paul dealt with half-instructed, unbaptised, and unconfirmed disciples of Christ Jesus. They were instructed, baptised, and confirmed, and thus introduced into the fulness of blessing required by the discipline of the Lord, as ministered by His faithful servant. If this were the routine observed with those who had been taught "carefully the things of Jesus, knowing only the baptism of John," how much more would it have been the case of those rescued out of the pollutions of paganism and called into the kingdom of light!

III. After this favourable beginning, and seeing the borders of the infant Church extended by the union of these twelve disciples, St. Paul, after his usual fashion, flung himself into work amongst the Jews of Ephesus upon whom he had previously made a favourable impression. He was well received for a time. He continued for three months "reasoning and persuading as to the things concerning the kingdom of God." But, as it was elsewhere, so was it at Ephesus, the offence of the Cross told in the long run upon the worshippers of the synagogue. The original Christian Church was Jewish. Aquila and Priscilla, Apollos and Timothy, and the disciples of John the Baptist would have excited no resentment in the minds of the Jews; but when St.

\* See my remarks on this topic on p. 330.

† See the "Didache," or "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," concerning the methods used in preparation for baptism.



Paul began to open out the hope which lay for Gentiles as well as for Jews in the gospel which he preached, then the objections of the synagogue were multiplied, riots and disturbances became, as elsewhere, matters of daily occurrence, and the opposition became at last so bitter that as at Corinth, so here again at Ephesus, the Apostle was obliged to separate his own followers, and gather them into the school of one Tyrannus, a teacher of philosophy or rhetoric, whom perhaps he had converted, where the blasphemous denunciations against the Divine Way which he taught could no longer be heard. In this school or lecture-hall St. Paul continued labouring for more than two years, bestowing upon the city of Ephesus a longer period of continuous labour than he ever vouchsafed to any place else. We have St. Paul's own statement as to his method of life at this period in the address he subsequently delivered to the elders of Ephesus. The Apostle pursued at Ephesus the same course which he adopted at Corinth, in one important direction at least. He supported himself and his immediate companions, Timothy and Sosthenes, by his own labour, and that we may presume for precisely the same reason at Ephesus as at Corinth. He desired to cut off all occasion of accusation against himself. Ephesus was a city devoted to commerce and to magic. It was full of impostors too, many of them Jewish, who made gain out of the names of angels and magical formulæ derived from the pretended wisdom of Solomon handed down to them by secret succession, or derived by them from contact with the lands of the far distant East. St. Paul determined, therefore, that he would give no opportunity of charging him with trading upon the credulity of his followers, or working with an eye to covetous or dishonest gains. "I coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel. Ye yourselves know that these hands ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me," is the description he gave of the manner in which he discharged his apostolic office in Ephesus, when addressing the elders of that city. We can thus trace St. Paul labouring at his trade as a tentmaker for nearly a period of five years, combining the time spent at Ephesus with that spent at Corinth. Notwithstanding, however, the attention and energy which this exercise of his trade demanded, he found time for enormous evangelistic and pastoral work. In fact, we find St. Paul nowhere else so much occupied with pastoral work as at Ephesus. Elsewhere we see the devoted evangelist, rushing in with the pioneers, breaking down all hindrances, heading the stormers to whom were committed the fiercest struggle, the most deadly conflict, and then at once moving into fresh conflicts, leaving the spoils of victory and the calmer work of peaceful pastoral labours to others. But here in Ephesus we see St. Paul's marvellous power of adaptation. He is at one hour a clever artisan, capable of gaining support sufficient for others as well as for himself; then he is the skilful controversialist "reasoning daily in the school of one Tyrannus"; and then he is the indefatigable pastor of souls "teaching publicly, and from house to house," and "ceasing not to admonish every one night and day with tears."

But this was not all, or nearly all, the burden the apostle carried. He had to be perpetually on the alert against Jewish plots. We hear noth-

ing directly of Jewish attempts on his life or liberty during the period of just three years which he spent on this prolonged visit. We might be sure, however, from our previous experience of the synagogues, that he must have run no small danger in this direction; but then when we turn to the same address we hear something of them. He is recalling to the minds of the Ephesian elders the circumstances of his life in their community from the beginning, and he therefore appeals thus: "Ye yourselves know from the first day that I set foot in Asia, after what manner I was with you all the time, serving the Lord with all lowliness of mind, and with tears, *and with trials which befell me with plots of the Jews.*" Ephesus again was a great field wherein he personally worked; it was also a great centre for missionary operations which he superintended. It was the capital of the province of Asia, the richest and most important of all the Roman provinces, teeming with resources, abounding in highly civilised and populous cities, connected with one another by an elaborate network of admirably constructed roads. Ephesus was cut out by nature and by art alike as a missionary centre whence the gospel should radiate out into all the surrounding districts. And so it did. "All they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks," is the testimony of St. Luke with respect to the wondrous progress of the gospel, not in Ephesus alone, but also throughout all the province, a statement which we find corroborated a little lower down in the same nineteenth chapter by the independent testimony of Demetrius the silversmith, who, when he was endeavouring to stir up his fellow-craftsmen to active exertions in defence of their endangered trade, says, "Ye see and hear that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people." St. Paul's disciples laboured, too, in the other cities of Asia, as Epaphras, for instance, in Colossæ. And St. Paul himself, we may be certain, bestowed the gifts and blessings of his apostolic office by visiting these local Churches, as far as he could consistently with the pressing character of his engagements in Ephesus. But even the superintendence of vast missions throughout the province of Asia did not exhaust the prodigious labours of St. Paul. He perpetually bore about in his bosom anxious thoughts for the welfare, trials, and sorrows of the numerous Churches he had established in Europe and Asia alike. He was constant in prayers for them, mentioning the individual members by name, and he was unwearied in keeping up communications with them, either by verbal messages or by written epistles, one specimen of which remains in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, written to them from Ephesus, and showing us the minute care, the comprehensive interest, the intense sympathy which dwelt within his breast with regard to his distant converts all the while that the work at Ephesus, controversial, evangelistic, and pastoral, to say nothing at all of his tentmaking, was making the most tremendous demands on body and soul alike, and apparently absorbing all his attention. It is only when we thus realise bit by bit what the weak, delicate, emaciated Apostle must have been doing, that we are able to grasp the full meaning of his own words to the Corinthians: "Besides those things that are without, there



is that which presseth upon me daily, anxiety for all the Churches."

This lengthened period of intense activity of mind and body terminated in an incident which illustrates the peculiar character of St. Paul's Ephesian ministry. Ephesus was a town where the spiritual and moral atmosphere simply reeked with the fumes, ideas, and practices of Oriental paganism, of which the magical incantations formed the predominant feature. Magic prevailed all over the pagan world at this time. In Rome, however, magical practices were always more or less under the ban of public opinion, though at times resorted to by those whose office called upon them to suppress illegal actions. A couple of years before the very time at which we have arrived, workers in magic, among whom were included astrologers, or mathematicians, as the Roman law called them, were banished from Rome simultaneously with the Jews, who always enjoyed an unenviable notoriety for such occult practices. In Asia Minor and the East they flourished at this time under the patronage of religion, and continued to flourish in all the great cities down to Christian times. Christianity itself could not wholly banish magic, which retained its hold upon the half-converted Christians who flocked into the Church in crowds during the second half of the fourth century; and we learn from St. Chrysostom himself, that when a young man he had a narrow escape for his life owing to the continuance of magical practices in Antioch, more than three hundred years after St. Paul. It is no wonder that when Diana's worship reigned supreme at Ephesus magical practices should also flourish there. If, however, there existed a special development of the power of evil at Ephesus, God also bestowed a special manifestation of Divine power in the person and ministry of St. Paul, as St. Luke expressly declares: "God wrought special miracles by the hand of Paul, insomuch that unto the sick were carried away from his body handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits departed from them." This passage has often been found a stumbling-block by many persons. They have thought that it has a certain legendary air about it, as they in turn think there is a certain air of legend about the similar passage in Acts v. 12-16, which makes much the same statement about St. Peter. When writing about this latter passage in Part I., p. 351, I offered some suggestions which lessen, if they do not quite take away, the difficulty; to these I shall now only refer my readers. But I think we can see a local reason for the peculiar development or manifestation of miraculous power through St. Paul. The devil's seat was just then specially at Ephesus, so far as the great province of Asia was concerned. The powers of evil had concentrated all their force and all their wealth of external grandeur, intellectual cleverness, and spiritual trickery in order to lead men captive; and there God, in order that He might secure a more striking victory for truth upon this magnificent stage, armed His faithful servant with an extraordinary development of the good powers of the world to come, enabling him to work special wonders in the sight of the heathen. Can we not read an echo of the fearful struggle just then waged in the metropolis of Asia in words addressed some years later to the members of the same Church, "For our wrestling is not

against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places"? We make a great mistake when we think of the Apostles as working miracles when and as they liked. At times their evangelistic work seems to have been conducted without any extraordinary manifestations, and then at other times, when the power of Satan was specially put forth, God displayed His special strength, enabling His servants to work wonders and signs in His name. It was much the same as in the Old Testament. The Old Testament miracles will be found to cluster themselves round the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, and its Reformation at the hand of Elijah. So, too, the recorded miracles of the Apostles will be found to gather round St. Peter's earlier work in Jerusalem, where Satan strove to counter-work God's designs in one way, and St. Paul's ministry in Ephesus, where Satan strove to counter-work them in another way. One incident at Ephesus attracted special attention. There was a priestly family, consisting of seven sons, belonging to the Jews at Ephesus. Their father had occupied high position among the various courses which in turn served the Temple, even as Zacharias, the father of the Baptist, did. These men observed the power with which St. Paul dealt with human spirits disordered by the powers of evil, using for that purpose the sacred name of Jesus. They undertook to use the same sacred invocation; but it proved, like the censers of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, a strange fire kindled against their own souls. The man possessed by the evil spirit recognised not their presumptuous efforts, but attacked them, and did them serious bodily injury. This circumstance spread the fame of the man of God wider and wider. The power of magic and of the demons fell before him, even as the image of Dagon fell before the Ark. Many of the nominal believers in Christianity had still retained their magical practices as of yore, even as nominal Christians retained them in the days of St. Chrysostom. The reality of St. Paul's power, demonstrated by the awful example of Sceva's sons, smote them in their inmost conscience. They came, confessed their deeds, brought their magical books together, and gave the greatest proof of their honest convictions; for they burned them in the sight of all, and counting the price thereof found it fifty thousand pieces of silver, or more than two thousand pounds of our money. "So mightily grew the word of the Lord and prevailed" in the very chosen seat of the Ephesian Diana.

## CHAPTER XV.

### *THE EPHESIAN RIOT AND A PRUDENT TOWN CLERK.*

ACTS xix. 23-28.

ST. PAUL'S labours at Ephesus covered, as he informs us himself, when addressing the elders of that city, a space of three years. The greater portion of that period had now expired, and had been spent in peaceful labours so far as the heathen world and the Roman authorities were concerned. The Jews, indeed, had been very troublesome at times. It is in all probability



to them and their plots St. Paul refers when in 1 Cor. xv. 32 he says, "If after the manner of men I fought with beasts at Ephesus, what doth it profit me?" as the unbelieving Gentiles do not seem to have raised any insurrection against his teaching till he felt his work was done, and he was, in fact, preparing to leave Ephesus. Before, however, we proceed to discuss the startling events which finally decided his immediate departure, we must consider a brief passage which connects the story of Sceva's sons and their impious temerity with that of the silversmith Demetrius and the Ephesian riot.

The incident connected with Sceva's sons led to the triumph over the workers in magic, when the secret professors of that art came and publicly acknowledged their hidden sins, proving their reality by burning the instruments of their wickedness. Here, then, St. Luke inserts a notice which has proved to be of the very greatest importance in the history of the Christian Church. Let us insert it in full that we may see its bearing: "Now after these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome. And having sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while." This passage tells us that St. Paul, after his triumph over the practices of magic, and feeling too that the Church had been effectually cleansed, so far as human foresight and care could effect it, from the corroding effects of the prevalent Ephesian vice, now determined to transfer the scene of his labours to Macedonia and Achaia, wishing to visit those Churches which five years before he had founded. It was full five years, at least, since he had seen the Philippian, Thessalonian, and Berean congregations. Better than three years had elapsed since he had left Corinth, the scene of more prolonged work than he had ever bestowed on any other city except Ephesus. He had heard again and again from all these places, and some of the reports, especially those from Corinth, had been very disquieting. The Apostle wished, therefore, to go and see for himself how the Churches of Christ in Macedonia and Achaia were faring. He next wished to pay a visit to Jerusalem to consult with his brethren, and then felt his destiny pushing him still westwards, desiring to see Rome, the world's capital, and the Church which had sprung up there, of which his friends Priscilla and Aquila must have told him much. Such seem to have been his intentions in the spring of the year 57, to which his three years' sojourn in Ephesus seems now to have brought him.

The interval of time covered by the two verses which I have quoted above is specially interesting, because it was just then that the First Epistle to the Corinthians was written. All the circumstances and all the indications of time which the Epistle itself offers conspire to fix the writing of it to this special date and place. The Epistle, for instance, refers to Timothy as having been already sent into Macedonia and Greece: "For this cause I have sent unto you Timothy, who shall put you in remembrance of my ways which be in Christ" (1 Cor. iv. 17). In Acts xix. 22 we have it stated, "Having sent into Macedonia Timothy and Erastus." The Epistle again plainly tells us the very season of the year in which it was written. The references to the

Passover season—"For our passover also hath been sacrificed, even Christ; wherefore let us keep the feast"—are words which naturally were suggested by the actual celebration of the Jewish feast, to a mind like St. Paul's, which readily grasped at every passing allusion or chance incident to illustrate his present teaching. Timothy and Erastus had been despatched in the early spring, as soon as the passes and roads were thoroughly open and navigation established. The Passover in A. D. 57 happened on April 7, and the Apostle fixes the exact date of the First Epistle to Corinth, when in the sixteenth chapter and eighth verse he says to the Corinthians, "I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost." I merely refer now to this point to illustrate the vastness of the Apostle's labours, and to call attention to the necessity for comparing together the Acts and the Epistles in the minute manner exemplified by Paley in the "*Horæ Paulinæ*," if we wish to gain a complete view of a life like St. Paul's, so completely consecrated to one great purpose.

Man may propose, but even an apostle cannot dispose of his fate as he will, or foretell under ordinary circumstances how the course of events will affect him. St. Paul intended to stay at Ephesus till Pentecost, which that year happened on May 28. Circumstances, however, hastened his departure. We have been considering the story of St. Paul's residence in Ephesus, but hitherto we have not heard one word about the great Ephesian deity, Diana, as the Romans called her, or Artemis, as St. Luke, according to the ordinary local use, correctly calls her in the Greek text of the Acts, or Anaitis, as her ancient name had been from early times at Ephesus and throughout Asia Minor. If this riot had not happened, if our attention had not been thus called to Diana and her worship, there might have been a total blank in St. Luke's narrative concerning this famous deity, and her equally famous temple, which was at the time one of the wonders of the world. And then some scoffers reading in ancient history concerning the wonders of this temple, and finding the records of modern discoveries confirming the statements of antiquity, might have triumphantly pointed to St. Luke's silence about Diana and the Ephesian temple as a proof of his ignorance. A mere passing riot alone has saved us from this difficulty. Now this case well illustrates the danger of arguing from silence. Silence concerning any special point is sometimes used as a proof that a particular writer knew nothing about it. But this is not the sound conclusion. Silence proves in itself nothing more than that the person who is silent either had no occasion to speak upon that point or else thought it wiser or more expedient to hold his tongue. Josephus, for instance, is silent about Christianity; but that is no proof that Christianity did not exist in his time, or that he knew nothing about it. His silence may simply have arisen because he found Christianity an awkward fact, and not knowing how to deal with it he left it alone. It is well to bear this simple law of historical evidence in mind, for a great many of the popular objections to the sacred narratives, both of the Old and New Testaments, are based upon the very dangerous ground of silence alone. Let us, however, return to Diana of the Ephesians. The worship of the goddess Artemis dominated the whole city of Ephesus, and helped to shape



the destinies of St. Paul at this season, for while intending to stay at Ephesus till Pentecost at the end of May, the annual celebration of Artemisia, the feast of the patron deity of the city, happened, of which celebration Demetrius took advantage to raise a disturbance which hastened St. Paul's departure into Macedonia.

We have now cleared the way for the consideration of the narrative of the riot, which is full of the most interesting information concerning the progress of the gospel, and offers us the most wonderful instances of the minute accuracy of St. Luke, which again have been illustrated and confirmed in the fullest manner by the researches so abundantly bestowed upon Ephesus within the lifetime of the present generation. Let us take the narrative in the exact order given us by St. Luke: "About that time there arose no small stir about the Way." But why about that special time? We have already said that here we find an indication of the date of the riot. It must have happened during the latter part of April, A. D. 57, and we know that at Ephesus almost the whole month of April, or Artemisius, was dedicated to the honour and worship of Artemis. But here it may be asked, How did it come to pass that Artemis or Diana occupied such a large share in the public worship of Ephesus and the province of Asia? Has modern research confirmed the impression which this chapter leaves upon the mind, that the Ephesian people were above all else devoted to the worship of the deity? The answers to both these queries are not hard to give, and serve to confirm our belief in the honesty and accuracy of the sacred penman. The worship of Artemis, or of Anaitis rather, prevailed in the peninsula of Asia Minor from the time of Cyrus, who introduced it six or seven centuries before. Anaitis was the Asiatic deity of fruitfulness, the same as Ashtoreth of the Bible, whom the Greeks soon identified with their own goddess Artemis. Her worship quickly spread, specially through that portion of the country which afterwards became the province of Asia, and through the adjacent districts; showing how rapidly an evil taint introduced into a nation's spiritual life-blood spreads throughout its whole organisation, and when once introduced how persistently it holds its ground; a lesson taught here in New Testament times, as in Old Testament days it was proclaimed in Israel's case by the oft-repeated statement concerning her kings, "Howbeit from the sins of Jeroboam [king after king] departed not." The spiritual life and tone of a nation is a very precious thing, and because it is so the Church of England does well to bestow so much of her public supplication upon those who have power, like Cyrus and Jeroboam, to taint it at the very foundation and origin thereof. When, for instance, St. Paul landed at Perga in Pamphylia, on the first occasion when he visited Asia Minor as a Christian missionary, his eye was saluted with the splendid temple of Diana on the side of the hill beneath which the city was built, and all over the country at every important town similar temples were erected in her honour, where their ruins have been traced by modern travellers. The cult or worship introduced by Cyrus exactly suited the morals and disposition of these Oriental Greeks, and flourished accordingly.

Artemis was esteemed the protectress of the

cities where her temples were built, which, as in the case of Ephesus and of Perga, were placed outside the gates like the temple of Jupiter at Lystra, in order that their presence might cast a halo of protection over the adjacent communities. The temple of Diana at Ephesus was a splendid building. It had been several times destroyed by fire notwithstanding its revered character and the presence of the sacred image, and had been as often rebuilt with greater splendour than before, till the temple was erected existing in St. Paul's day, which justly excited the wonder of mankind, as its splendid ruins have shown, which Mr. Wood has excavated in our own time at the expense of the English Government. The devotion of the Ephesians to this ancient Asiatic deity had even been increasing of late years when St. Paul visited Ephesus, as a decree still exists in its original shape graven in stone, exactly as St. Paul must have seen it, enacting extended honours to the deity. As this decree bears directly upon the famous riot which Demetrius raised, we insert it here in full, as an interesting confirmation and illustration of the sacred narrative: "To the Ephesian Diana. Forasmuch as it is notorious that not only among the Ephesians, but also everywhere among the Greek nations, temples are consecrated to her, and sacred precincts, and that she hath images and altars dedicated to her on account of her plain manifestations of herself, and that, besides, the greatest token of veneration paid to her, a month is called after her name, by us Artemision, by the Macedonians and other Greek nations and their cities, Artemisius, in which month general gatherings and festivals are celebrated, and more especially in our own city, the nurse of its own, the Ephesian goddess. Now the people of Ephesus deeming it proper that the whole month called by her name should be sacred and set apart to the goddess, have resolved by this decree, that the observation of it by them be altered. Therefore it is enacted, that the whole month Artemision in all the days of it shall be holy, and that throughout the month there shall be a continued celebration of feasts and the Artemisian festivals and the holy days, seeing that the entire month is sacred to the goddess; for from this improvement in her worship our city shall receive additional lustre and enjoy perpetual prosperity." \* Now this decree, which preceded St. Paul's labours perhaps by twenty years or more, has an important bearing on our subject. St. Luke tells us that "about this time there arose no small stir about the Way"; and it was only quite natural and quite in accord with what we know of other pagan persecutions, and of human nature in general, that the precise time at which the Apostle had then arrived should have been marked by this riot. The whole city of Ephesus was then given up to the celebration of the festival held in honour of what we may call the national religion and the national deity. That festival lasted the whole month, and was accompanied, as all human festivals are apt to be accompanied, with a vast deal of drunkenness and vice, as we are expressly told in an ancient Greek romance, written by a Greek of whom little is known, named Achilles Tatius. The people of Ephesus were, in fact, mad with excitement, and it did

\* The original of this decree will be found in Boeckh's "Corp. Inscriptt. Græc.," No. 2954, and the translation in Lewin's "St. Paul," 405.



not require any great skill to stir them up to excesses in defence of the endangered deity whose worship was the glory of their city. We know from one or two similar cases that the attack made upon St. Paul at this pagan festival had exact parallels in these early ages.

This festival in honour of Diana was generally utilised as the meeting-time of the local diet or parliament of the province of Asia, where deputies from all the cities of the province met together to consult on their common wants and transmit their decisions to the proconsul, a point to which we shall later on have occasion to refer. Just ninety years later one of the most celebrated of the primitive martyrs suffered upon the same occasion at Smyrna. Polycarp, the disciple of St. John, lived to a very advanced period, and helped to hand down the tradition of apostolic life and doctrine to another generation. Polycarp is, in fact, through Irenæus, one of the chief historic links uniting the Church of later times with the apostles. Polycarp suffered martyrdom amid the excitement raised during the meeting of the same diet of Asia held, not at Ephesus, but at Smyrna, and attended by the same religious ceremonies and observances. Or let us again turn towards the West, and we shall find it the same. The martyrdoms of Vienne and Lyons described by Eusebius in the fifth book of his history are among the most celebrated in the whole history of the Church, and as such have been already referred to and used in this commentary. These martyrdoms are an illustration of the same fact that the Christians were always exposed to peculiar danger at the annual pagan celebrations. The Gallic tribes, the seven nations of the Gauls, as they were called, were holding their annual diet or assembly, and celebrating the worship of the national deities when their zeal was excited to red-hot pitch against the Christians of Vienne and Lyons, resulting in the terrible outbreak of which Eusebius in his fifth book tells us. As it was in Gaul about 177 A. D. and in Smyrna about 155 A. D., so was it in Ephesus in the year 57; the month's festival, celebrated in honour of Diana, accompanied with eating and drinking and idleness in abundance, told upon the populace, and made them ready for any excess, so that it is no wonder we should read, "About that time there arose no small stir about the Way." Then too there is another circumstance which may have stirred up Demetrius to special violence? His trade was probably falling off owing to St. Paul's labours, and this may have been brought home to him with special force by the results of the festival which was then in process of celebration or perhaps almost finished. All the circumstances fit this hypothesis. The shrine-makers were, we know, a very important element in the population of Ephesus, and the trade of shrine-making and the manufacture of other silver ornaments conducted in no small degree to the commercial prosperity of the city of Ephesus. This is plainly stated upon the face of our narrative: "Ye know that by this business we have our wealth, and ye see and hear that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath turned away much people." Facts which could not have been more forcibly brought home to them than by the decreasing call they were experiencing for the particular articles which they produced.

Now the question may be proposed, Was this

the fact? Was Ephesus celebrated for its shrine-makers, and were shrines and silver ornaments a favourite manufacture in that city? Here modern research comes in to testify to the marked truthfulness, the minute accuracy of St. Luke. We do not now need to appeal to ancient authors, as "Lives of St. Paul" like those written by Mr. Lewin or by Messrs. Conybeare and Howson do. The excavations which have taken place at Ephesus since the publication of these valuable works have amply vindicated the historic character of our narrative on this point. Mr. Wood in the course of his excavations at Ephesus discovered a vast number of inscriptions and sculptures which had once adorned the temple of Ephesus, but upon its destruction had been removed to the theatre, which continued in full operation long after the pagan temple had disappeared.\* Among these inscriptions there was one enormous one brought to light. It was erected some forty years or so after St. Paul's time, but it serves in the minuteness of its details to illustrate the story of Demetrius, the speech he made, and the riot he raised. This inscription was raised in honour of a wealthy Roman named Gaius Vibius Salutaris, who had dedicated to Artemis a large number of silver images weighing from three to seven pounds each, and had even provided a competent endowment for keeping up a public festival in her honour, which was to be celebrated on the birthday of the goddess, which happened in the month of April or May. The inscription, which contains the particulars of the offering made by this Roman, would take up quite too much space if we desired to insert it. We can only now refer our readers to Mr. Wood's book on Ephesus, where they will find it given at full length. A few lines may, however, be quoted to illustrate the extent to which the manufacture of silver shrines and silver ornaments in honour of Artemis must have flourished in Ephesus. This inscription enumerates the images dedicated to the goddess which Salutaris had provided by his endowments, entering into the most minute details as to their treatment and care. The following passage gives a vivid picture of Ephesian idolatry as the Apostle saw it: "Let two statues of Artemis of the weight of three pounds three ounces be religiously kept in the custody of Salutaris, who himself consecrated them, and after the death of Salutaris, let the aforesaid statues be restored to the town-clerk of the Ephesians, and let it be made a rule that they be placed in the public meetings above the seat of the council in the theatre before the golden statue of Artemis and the other statues. And a golden Artemis weighing three pounds and two silver deer attending her, and the rest of the images of the weight of two pounds ten ounces and five grammes, and a silver statue of the Sacred Senate of the weight of four pounds two ounces, and a silver statue of the council of the Ephesians. Likewise a silver Artemis bearing a torch of the weight of six pounds, and a silver statue of the Roman people." And so the inscription proceeds to name and devote silver and golden statues literally by dozens, which Salutaris intended to be borne in solemn procession on the feast-day of Diana. It is quite evident that did

\* The pagan temples were almost universally destroyed about the year 400. The edicts dealing with this matter and an ample commentary upon them will be found in the Theodosian Code, edited by that eminent scholar Godefroy.



we possess but this inscription alone, we have here amply sufficient evidence showing us that one of the staple trades of Ephesus, one upon which the prosperity and welfare of a large section of its inhabitants depended, was this manufacture of silver and gold ornaments directly connected with the worship of the goddess.\* For it must be remembered that the guild of shrine-makers did not depend alone upon the chance liberality of a stray wealthy Roman or Greek like Salutaris, who might feel moved to create a special endowment or bestow special gifts upon the temple. The guild of shrine-makers depended upon the large and regular demand of a vast population who required a supply of cheap and handy shrines to satisfy their religious cravings. The population of the surrounding districts and towns poured into Ephesus at this annual festival of Diana and paid their devotions in her temple. But even the pagans required some kind of social and family religion. They could not live as too many nominal Christians are contented to live, without any family or personal acknowledgment of their dependence upon a higher power. There was no provision for public worship in the rural districts answering to our parochial system, and so they supplied the want by purchasing on occasions like this feast of Diana, shrines, little silver images, or likenesses of the central cell of the great temple where the sacred image rested, and which served as central points to fix their thoughts and excite the gratitude due to the goddess whom they adored. Demetrius and his fellow-craftsmen depended upon the demand created by a vast population of devout believers in Artemis, and when this demand began to fall off Demetrius traced the bad trade which he and his fellows were experiencing to the true source. He recognised the Christian teaching imparted by St. Paul as the deadly enemy of his unrighteous gains, and naturally directed the rage of the mob against the preacher of truth and righteousness. The actual words of Demetrius are deserving of the most careful study, for they too have been illustrated by modern discovery in the most striking manner. Having spoken of the results of St. Paul's teaching in Asia of which they all had had personal experience, he then proceeds to expatiate on its dangerous character, not only as regards their own personal interests, but as regards the goddess and her sacred dignity as well: "And not only is there danger that this our trade come into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana be made of no account, and that she should be deposed from her magnificence whom all Asia and the world worshippeth." Demetrius cleverly but lightly touches upon the self-interest of the workmen. He does not dwell on that topic too long, because it is never well for an orator who wishes to rouse his hearers to enthusiasm to dwell too long or too deeply or too openly upon merely selfish considerations. Man is indeed intensely selfish by nature, but then he does not like to be told so too openly, or to have his own selfishness paraded too fre-

\* An interesting confirmation of this fact came to light in modern times. In the year 1830 there was found in Southern France a piece of such Ephesian silver work wrought in honour of Artemis, and carried into Gaul by one of her worshippers. It is now deposited in the Bibliothèque Nationale, and has been fully described in an interesting article in the *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, vol. iii. pp. 104-106, written by that eminent antiquary C. Waldstein.

quently before his face. He likes to be flattered as if he cherished a belief in higher things, and to have his low ends and baser motives clothed in a similitude of noble enthusiasm. Demetrius hints therefore at their own impoverishment as the results of Paul's teaching, but expatiates on the certain destruction which awaits the glory of their time-honoured and world-renowned deity if free course be any longer permitted to such doctrine. This speech is a skilful composition all through. It shows that the ancient rhetorical skill of the Greeks still flourished in Ephesus, and not the least skilful, and at the same time not the least true touch in speech was that wherein Demetrius reminded his hearers that the world were onlookers and watchers of their conduct, noting whether or not they would vindicate Diana's assailed dignity. It was a true touch, I say, for modern research has shown that the worship of the Ephesian Artemis was world-wide in its extent; it had come from the distant east, and had travelled to the farthest west. We have already noted the testimony of modern travellers showing that her worship extended over Asia Minor in every direction. This fact Demetrius long ago told the Ephesians, and ancient authors have repeated his testimony, and modern travellers have merely corroborated them. But we were not aware how accurate was Demetrius about the whole world worshipping Artemis, till in our own time the statues and temples of the Ephesian goddess were found existing so far west as Southern Gaul, Marseilles, and the coast of Spain, proving that wherever Asiatic sailors and Asiatic merchants came thither they brought with them the worship of their favourite deity.

Let us pass on, however, and see whether the remainder of this narrative will not afford us subject-matter for abundant illustrations. The mob drank in the speech of Demetrius, and responded with the national shout, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians," a cry which has been found inscribed on altars and tablets all over the province of Asia, showing that it was a kind of watchword among the inhabitants of that district. The crowd of workmen whom Demetrius had been addressing then rushed into the theatre, the usual place of assembly for the people of Ephesus, dragging with them "Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel." The Jews too followed the mob, eager to make the unexpected tumult serve their own hostile purposes against St. Paul. News of the riot was soon carried to the Apostle, who learning of the danger to which his friends were exposed desired to enter that theatre the magnificent proportions and ornamentation of which have been for the first time displayed to modern eyes by the labours of Mr. Wood. But the local Christians knew the Ephesian mob and their state of excitement better than St. Paul did, and so they would not allow him to risk his life amid the infuriated crowd. The Apostle's teaching too had reached the very highest ranks of Ephesian and Asiatic society. The very Asiarchs, being his friends, sent unto him and requested him not to enter the theatre. Here again we come across one of those incidental references which display St. Luke's acquaintance with the local peculiarities of the Ephesian constitution, and which have been only really appreciated in the light of modern discoveries. In the time of King James I., when the Authorised Ver-



sion was made, the translators knew nothing of the proof of the sacred writer's accuracy which lay under their hands in the words, "Certain of the Asiarchs or chief officers of Asia," and so they translated them very literally but very incorrectly, "Certain of the chief of Asia," ignoring completely the official rank and title which these men possessed. A few words must suffice to give a brief explanation of the office these men held. The province of Asia from ancient times had celebrated this feast of Artemis at an assembly of all the cities of Asia. This we have already explained. The Romans united with the worship of Artemis the worship of the Emperor of the City of Rome; so that loyalty to the Emperor and loyalty to the national religion went hand in hand. They appointed certain officials to preside at these games, they made them presidents of the local diets or parliaments which assembled to discuss local matters at these national assemblies, they gave them the highest positions in the province next to the proconsul, they surrounded them with great pomp, and endued them with considerable power so long as the festival lasted, and then, being intent on uniting economy with their generosity, they made these Asiarchs, as they were called, responsible for all the expenses incurred in the celebration of the games and diets. It was a clever policy, as it secured the maximum of contentment on the people's part with the minimum of expense to the imperial government. This arrangement clearly limited the position of the Asiarchate to rich men, as they alone could afford the enormous expenses involved. The Greeks, specially those of Asia, as we have already pointed out, were very flashy in their disposition. They loved titles and decorations; so much so that one of their own orators of St. Paul's day, Dion Chrysostom, tells us that, provided they got a title, they would suffer any indignity. There were therefore crowds of rich men always ready to take the office of Asiarch, which by degrees was turned into a kind of life peerage, a man once an Asiarch always retaining the title, while his wife was called the Asiarchess, as we find from the inscriptions. The Asiarchs were, in fact, the official aristocracy of the province of Asia. They had assembled on this occasion for the purpose of sitting in the local parliament and presiding over the annual games in honour of Diana.\* Their interests and their honour were all bound up with the worship of the goddess, and yet the preaching of St. Paul had told so powerfully upon the whole province, that even among the very officials of the State religion St. Paul had friends and supporters anxious to preserve his life, and therefore sent him a message not to adventure himself into the theatre. It is no wonder that Demetrius the silversmith roused his fellow-craftsmen into activity and fanned the flame of their wrath, for the worship of Diana of the Ephesians was indeed in danger when the very men whose office bound them to its support were in league with such an uncompromising opponent as this Paul of Tarsus. St. Luke thus gives a glimpse of the constitution of Ephesus and of the province of Asia in his time. He shows us the peculiar insti-

\* These local parliaments under the Roman Empire have been the subject of much modern investigation at the hands of French and German scholars. See for references to the authorities on the point an article which I wrote in *Macmillan's Magazine* for 1882.

tution of the Asiarchate, and then when we turn to the inscriptions which Mr. Wood and other modern discoverers have unearthed, we find that the Asiarchs occupy a most prominent position in them, vindicating in the amplest manner the introduction of them by St. Luke as assembled at Ephesus at this special season, and there interesting themselves in the welfare of the great Apostle.\*

But now there comes on the scene another official, whose title and office have been the subject of many an illustration furnished by modern research. The Jews who followed the mob into the theatre, when they did not see St. Paul there, put forward one Alexander as their spokesman. This man has been by some identified with Alexander the coppersmith, to whom St. Paul refers (2 Tim. iv. 14) when writing to Timothy, then resident at Ephesus, as a man who had done much injury to the Christian cause. He may have been well known as a brother-tradesman by the Ephesian silversmiths, and he seems to have been regarded by the Jews as a kind of leader who might be useful in directing the rage of the mob against the Christians whom they hated. The rioters, however, did not distinguish as clearly as the Jews would have wished between the Christians and the Jews. They made the same mistake as the Romans did for more than a century later, and confounded Jews and Christians together. They were all, in any case, opponents of idol worship and chiefly of their favourite goddess, and therefore the sight of Alexander merely intensified their rage, so much that for the space of two hours they continued to vociferate their favourite cry, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians."†

Now, however, there appeared another official, whose title and character have become famous through his action on this occasion: "When the town-clerk had quieted the multitude, he saith, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there who knoweth not that the city of the Ephesians is the temple-keeper (or Neocoros) of the great Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter?" Here we have several terms which have been illustrated and confirmed by the excavations of Mr. Wood. The town-clerk or recorder is introduced, because he was the chief executive officer of the city of Ephesus, and, as such, responsible to the Roman authorities for the peace and order of the city. The city of Ephesus was a free city, retaining its ancient laws and customs like Athens and Thessalonica, but only on the condition that these laws were effective and peace duly kept. Otherwise the Roman authorities and their police would step in. These town-clerks or recorders of Ephesus are known from this one passage in the Acts of the Apostles, but they are still better known from the inscriptions which have been brought

\* See the index to Lightfoot's "Ignatius and Polycarp" for extended references to the Asiarchate, and also Mommsen's "Roman Provinces" (Dickson's translation), vol. i. pp. 345-47.

† The Ephesian mob, four hundred years later, displayed at the third General Council held at Ephesus in 431 an extraordinary power of keeping up the same cry for hours. See the story of the Council as told by Hefele in the third volume of his "General Councils" (Clark's translation). Nothing will give such a vigorous idea of the confusion which then prevailed at Ephesus as a glance at Mansi's Acts of that Council. The cry "Anathema to Nestorius," the heretic against whom the Council declared, was maintained so long and so continuously that one would imagine that orthodoxy depended on strength of lungs.



to light at Ephesus. I have mentioned, for instance, the immense inscription which Mr. Wood discovered in the theatre commemorating the gift to the temple of Diana of a vast number of gold and silver images made by one Vibius Salutaris. This inscription lays down that the images should be kept in the custody of the town-clerk or recorder when not required for use in the solemn religious processions made through the city. The names of a great many town-clerks have been recovered from the ruins of Ephesus, some of them coming from the reign of Nero, the very period when this riot took place. It is not impossible that we may yet recover the very name of the town-clerk who gave the riotous mob this very prudent advice, "Ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rash," which has made him immortal. Then, again, a title for the city of Ephesus is used in this pacific oration which is strictly historical, and such as would naturally have been used by a man in the town-clerk's position. He calls Ephesus the "temple-keeper," or "Neocoros," as the word literally is, of the goddess Diana, and this is one of the most usual and common titles in the lately discovered inscriptions. Ephesus and the Ephesians were indeed so devoted to the worship of that deity and so affected by the honour she conferred upon them that they delighted to call themselves the temple-sweepers, or sextons, of the great Diana's temple. In fact, their devotion to the worship of the goddess so far surpassed that of ordinary cities that the Ephesians were accustomed to subordinate their reverence for the Emperors to their reverence for their religion, and thus in the decree passed by them honouring Vibius Salutaris, who endowed their temple with many splendid gifts, to which we have already referred, they begin by describing themselves thus: "In the presidency of Tiberius Claudius Antipater Julianus, on the sixth day of the first decade of the month Poseideon, it was resolved by the Council and the Public Assembly of the Neocori (of Artemis) and lovers of Augustus." The Ephesians must have been profoundly devoted to Diana's worship when in that age of gross materialism they would dare to place any deity higher than that of the reigning emperor, the only god in whom a true Roman really believed; for unregenerate human nature at that time looked at the things alone which are seen and believed in nothing else.

The rest of the town-clerk's speech is equally deserving of study from every point of view. He gives us a glimpse of the Apostle's method of controversy: it was wise, courteous, conciliatory. It did not hurt the feelings nor outrage the sentiments of natural reverence, which ought ever to be treated with the greatest respect, for natural reverence is a delicate plant, and even when directed towards a wrong object ought to be most gently handled. "Ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of our goddess. If therefore Demetrius, and the craftsmen that are with him, have a matter against any man, the courts are open, and there are proconsuls: let them accuse one another." Modern research has thrown additional light upon these words. The Roman system of provincial government anticipated the English system of assize courts, moving from place to place, introduced by Henry II. for the purpose of bring-

ing justice home to every man's door. It was quite natural for the proconsul of Asia to hold his court at the same time as the annual assembly of the province of Asia and the great festival of Diana. The great concourse of people rendered such a course specially convenient, while the presence of the proconsul helped to keep the peace, as, to take a well-known instance, the presence of Pontius Pilate at the great annual Paschal feast at Jerusalem secured the Romans against any sudden rebellion, and also enabled him to dispense justice after the manner of an assize judge, to which fact we would find an allusion in the words of St. Mark (xv. 6), "Now at the feast he used to release unto them one prisoner, whom they asked of him."

It has been said, indeed, that St. Luke here puts into the town-clerk's mouth words which he could never have used, representing him as saying "there are proconsuls" when, in fact, there was never more than one proconsul in the province of Asia. Such criticism is of the weakest character. Surely every man that ever speaks in public knows that one of the commonest usages is to say there are judges or magistrates, using the plural when one judge or magistrate may alone be exercising jurisdiction! But there is another explanation, which completely solves the difficulty and vindicates St. Luke's minute accuracy. Three hundred years ago John Calvin, in his commentary, noted the difficulty, and explained it by the supposition that the proconsul had appointed deputies or assessors who held the courts in his name. There is, however, a more satisfactory explanation. It was the reign of Nero, and his brutal example had begun to debauch the officials through the provinces. Silanus, the proconsul of Asia, was disliked by Nero and by his mother as a possible candidate for the imperial crown, being of the family of Augustus. Two of his subordinates, Celer and Ælius, the collectors of the imperial revenue in Asia, poisoned him, and as a reward were permitted to govern the province, enjoying perhaps in common the title of proconsul and exercising the jurisdiction of the office.\* Finally, the tone of the town-clerk's words as he ends his address is thoroughly that of a Roman official. He feels himself responsible for the riot, and knows that he may be called upon to account for it. Peace was what the Roman authorities sought and desired at all hazards, and every measure which threatened the peace, or every organisation, no matter how desirable, a fire brigade even, which might conceivably be turned to purposes of political agitation, was strictly discouraged.

The correspondence of Pliny with the Emperor Trajan, some fifty years or so later than this riot, is the best commentary upon the town-clerk's speech. We find, for instance, in Pliny's "Letters," Book X., No. 42, a letter telling about a fire which broke out in Nicomedia, the capital of Bithynia, of which province Pliny was proconsul. He wrote to the Emperor describing the damage done, and suggesting that a fire brigade numbering one hundred and fifty men might be instituted. The Emperor would not hear of it, however. Such clubs or societies he considered dangerous, and so he wrote back a letter which proves how continuous was Roman policy, how abhorrent to the imperial authorities were all voluntary organisations which might be used for the purposes of public

\* See Lewin's "St. Paul," i. 337, 338.



agitation: "You are of opinion that it would be proper to establish a company of fire-men in Nicomedia, agreeably to what has been practised in several other cities. But it is to be remembered that societies of this sort have greatly disturbed the peace of the province in general and of those cities in particular. Whatever name we give them, and for whatever purposes they may be founded, they will not fail to form themselves into factious assemblies, however short their meetings will be"; and so Pliny was obliged to devise other measures for the security and welfare of the cities committed to his charge.\* The accidental burning of a city would not be attributed to him as a fault, while the occurrence of a street riot might be the beginning of a social war which would bring down ruin upon the Empire at large.

When the recorder of Ephesus had ended his speech he dismissed the assembly, leaving to us a precious record illustrative of the methods of Roman government, of the interior life of Ephesus in days long gone by, and, above all else, of the thorough honesty of the writer whom the Holy Spirit impelled to trace the earliest triumphs of the Cross amid the teeming fields of Gentile Paganism.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### *ST. PAUL AND THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.*

ACTS xx. 1, 7, 17-19, 28.

THE period of St. Paul's career at which we have now arrived was full of life, vigour, activity. He was in the very height of his powers, was surrounded with responsibilities, was pressed with cares and anxieties; and yet the character of the sacred narrative is very peculiar. From the passover of the year 57, soon after which the Apostle had to leave Ephesus, till the passover of the next year, we learn but very little of St. Paul's work from the narrative of St. Luke. The five verses with which the twentieth chapter begins tell us all that St. Luke apparently knew about the Apostle's actions during that time. He gives us the story of a mere outsider, who knew next to nothing of the work St. Paul was doing. The Apostle left Ephesus and went into Macedonia, whence he departed into Greece. Three months were occupied in teaching at Corinth, and then, intending to sail from Cenchreæ to Ephesus, he suddenly changed his mind upon the discovery of a Jewish plot, altered his route, disappointed his foes, and paid a second visit to Macedonia. In this narrative, which is all St. Luke gives, we have the account, brief and concise, of one who was acquainted merely with the bare outlines of the Apostle's work, and knew nothing of his inner life and trials. St. Luke, in fact, was so much taken up with his own duties at Philippi, where he had been labouring for the previous five years, that he had no time to think of what was going on elsewhere. At any rate his friend and pupil Theophilus had simply asked him for a narrative so far as he knew it of the progress of the gospel. He had no idea

that he was writing anything more than a story for the private use of Theophilus, and he therefore put down what he knew and had experienced, without troubling himself concerning other matters. I have read criticisms of the Acts—proceeding principally, I must confess, from German sources—which seem to proceed on the supposition that St. Luke was consciously writing an ecclesiastical history of the whole early Church which he knew and felt was destined to serve for ages. But this was evidently not the case. St. Luke was consciously writing a story merely for a friend's study, and dreamt not of the wider fame and use destined for his book. This accounts in a simple and natural way, not only for what St. Luke inserts, but also for what he leaves out, and he manifestly left out a great deal. We may take this passage at which we have now arrived as an illustration of his methods of writing sacred history. This period of ten months, from the time St. Paul left Ephesus till he returned to Philippi at the following Easter season, was filled with most important labours which have borne fruit unto all ages of the Church, yet St. Luke dismisses them in a few words. Just let us realise what happened in these eventful months. St. Paul wrote First Corinthians in April A. D. 57. In May he passed to Troas, where, as we learn from Second Corinthians, he laboured for a short time with much success. He then passed into Macedonia, urged on by his restless anxiety concerning the Corinthian Church. In Macedonia he laboured during the following five or six months. How intense and absorbing must have been his work during that time! It was then that he preached the gospel with signs and wonders round about even unto Illyricum, as he notes in Romans xvi. 19, an epistle written this very year from Corinth. The last time that he had been in Macedonia he was a hunted fugitive fleeing from place to place. Now he seems to have lived in comparative peace, so far at least as the Jewish synagogues were concerned. He penetrated, therefore, into the mountainous districts west of Beroëa, bearing the gospel tidings into cities and villages which had as yet heard nothing of them. But preaching was not his only work in Macedonia. He had written his first Epistle to Corinth from Ephesus a few months before. In Macedonia he received from Titus, his messenger, an account of the manner in which that epistle had been received, and so from Macedonia he despatched his second Corinthian Epistle, which must be carefully studied if we desire to get an adequate idea of the labours and anxieties amid which the Apostle was then immersed (see 2 Cor. ii. 13, and vii. 5 and 6). And then he passed into Greece, where he spent three months at Corinth, settling the affairs of that very celebrated but very disorderly Christian community. The three months spent there must have been a period of overwhelming business. Let us recount the subjects which must have taken up every moment of St. Paul's time. First there were the affairs of the Corinthian Church itself. He had to reprove, comfort, direct, set in order. The whole moral, spiritual, social, intellectual conceptions of Corinth had gone wrong. There was not a question, from the most elementary topic of morals and the social considerations connected with female dress and activities, to the most solemn points of doctrine and worship, the Resurrection

\* A similar jealousy of voluntary organisations is still perpetuated in France under the code Napoleon, which largely embodies Roman methods and ideas.



and the Holy Communion, concerning which difficulties, disorders, and dissensions had not been raised. All these had to be investigated and decided by the Apostle. Then, again, the Jewish controversy, and the oppositions to himself personally which the Judaising party had excited, demanded his careful attention. This controversy was a troublesome one in Corinth just then, but it was a still more troublesome one in Galatia, and was fast raising its head in Rome. The affairs of both these great and important churches, the one in the East, the other in the West, were pressing upon St. Paul at this very time. While he was immersed in all the local troubles of Corinth, he had to find time at Corinth to write the Epistle to the Galatians and the Epistle to the Romans. How hard it must have been for the Apostle to concentrate his attention on the affairs of Corinth when his heart and brain were torn with anxieties about the schisms, divisions, and false doctrines which were flourishing among his Galatian converts, or threatening to invade the Church at Rome, where as yet he had not been able to set forth his own conception of gospel truth, and thus fortify the disciples against the attacks of those subtle foes of Christ who were doing their best to turn the Catholic Church into a mere narrow Jewish sect, devoid of all spiritual power and life.

But this was not all, or nearly all. St. Paul was at the same time engaged in organising a great collection throughout all the churches where he had ministered on behalf of the poor Christians at Jerusalem, and he was compelled to walk most warily and carefully in this matter. Every step he took was watched by foes ready to interpret it unfavourably; every appointment he made, every arrangement, no matter how wise or prudent, was the subject of keenest scrutiny and criticism. With all these various matters accumulating upon him it is no wonder that St. Paul should have written of himself at this very period in words which vividly describe his distractions: "Beside those things that are without, there is that which presseth upon me daily, the care of all the churches." And yet St. Paul gives us a glimpse of the greatness of his soul as we read the epistles which were the outcome of this period of intense but fruitful labour. He carried a mighty load, but yet he carried it lightly. His present anxieties were numerous, but they did not shut out all thoughts upon other topics. The busiest man then was just the same as the busiest man still. He was the man who had the most time and leisure to bestow thought upon the future. The anxieties and worries of the present were numerous and exacting, but St. Paul did not allow his mind to be so swallowed up in them as to shut out all care about other questions equally important. While he was engaged in the manifold cares which present controversies brought, he was all the while meditating a mission to Rome, and contemplating a journey still farther to Spain and Gaul,\* and the bounds of the Western ocean. And then, finally, there was the care of St. Paul's own soul, the sustenance and development of his spirit by prayer and meditation and worship and reading, which he never neglected under any

\*I say to Gaul, because I take it that he would have sailed to Marseilles, which was then the great port of communication with Asia Minor, as we have noted above, p. 489, when treating of the worship of Diana and its extension from the East to Marseilles.

circumstances. All these things combined must have rendered this period of close upon twelve months one of the Apostle's busiest and intensest times, and yet St. Luke disposes of it in a few brief verses of this twentieth chapter.

After St. Paul's stay at Corinth, he determined to proceed to Jerusalem according to his pre-determined plan, bringing with him the proceeds of the collection which he had made. He wished to go by sea, as he had done some three years before, sailing from Cenchreæ direct to Syria. The Jews of Corinth, however, were as hostile as ever, and so they hatched a plot to murder him before his embarkation. St. Paul, however, having learned their designs, suddenly changed his route, and took his journey by land through Macedonia, visiting once more his former converts and tarrying to keep the passover at Philippi with the little company of Christian Jews who there resided. This circumstance throws light upon verses 4 and 5 of this twentieth chapter, which run thus: "There accompanied him as far as Asia Sopater of Berea, the son of Pyrrhus; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus. But these had gone before, and were waiting for us at Troas." St. Paul came to Philippi, found St. Luke there, celebrated the passover, and then sailed away with St. Luke to join the company who had gone before. And they had gone before for a very good reason. They were all, except Timothy, Gentile Christians, persons therefore who, unlike St. Paul, had nothing to do with the national rites and customs of born Jews, and who might be much more profitably exercised in working among the Gentile converts at Troas, free from any danger of either giving or taking offence in connection with the passover, a lively instance of which danger Trophimus, one of their number, subsequently afforded in Jerusalem, when his presence alone in St. Paul's company caused the spread of a rumour which raised the riot so fatal to St. Paul's liberty: "For they had seen with him in the city Trophimus the Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple" (xxi. 29). This incident, together with St. Paul's conduct at Jerusalem, as told in the twenty-sixth verse of the twenty-first chapter, illustrates vividly St. Paul's view of the Jewish law and Jewish rites and ceremonies. They were for Jews national ceremonies. They had a meaning for them. They commemorated certain national deliverances, and as such might be lawfully used. St. Paul himself could eat the passover and cherish the feelings of a Jew, heartily thankful to God for the deliverance from Egypt wrought out through Moses centuries ago for his ancestors, and his mind could then go on and rejoice over a greater deliverance still wrought out at this same paschal season by a greater than Moses. St. Paul openly proclaimed the lawfulness of the Jewish rites for Jews, but opposed their imposition upon the Gentiles. He regarded them as *tolerabiles ineptiæ*, and therefore observed them to please his weaker brethren; but sent his Gentile converts on before, lest perhaps the sight of his own example might weaken their faith and lead them to a compliance with that Judaising party who were ever ready to avail themselves of any opportunity to weaken St. Paul's teaching and authority. St. Paul always strove to unite wis-



dom and prudence with faithfulness to principle lest by any means his labour should be in vain.

St. Luke now joined St. Paul at Philippi, and henceforth gives his own account of what happened on this eventful journey. From Philippi they crossed to Troas. It was the spring-time, and the weather was more boisterous than later in the year, and so the voyage took five days to accomplish, while two days had sufficed on a previous occasion. They came to Troas, and there remained for a week, owing doubtless to the exigencies of the ship and its cargo. On the first day of the week St. Paul assembled the Church for worship. The meeting was held on what we should call Saturday evening; but we must remember that the Jewish first day began from sundown on Saturday or the Sabbath.\* This is the first notice in the Acts of the observance of the Lord's Day as the time of special Christian worship. We have, however, earlier notices of the first day in connection with Christian observances. The apostles, for instance, met together on the first day, as we are told in John xx. 19, and again eight days after, as the twenty-sixth verse of the same chapter tells. St. Paul's first Epistle to Corinth was written twelve months earlier than this visit to Troas, and it expressly mentions (chap. xvi. 2) the first day of the week as the time ordered by St. Paul for the setting apart of the Galatian contribution to the collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem; and so here again at Troas we see that the Asiatic Christians observed the same solemn time for worship and the celebration of the Eucharist. Such glimpses—chance notices, we might call them, were there not a higher Providence watching over the unconscious writer—show us how little we can conclude from mere silence about the ritual, worship, and government of the Apostolic Church, and illustrate the vast importance of studying carefully the extant records of the Christian Church in the second century if we wish to gain fresh light upon the history and customs of the apostolic age. If three or four brief texts were blotted out of the New Testament, it would be quite possible to argue from silence merely that the apostles and their immediate followers did not observe the Lord's Day in any way whatsoever, and that the custom of stated worship and solemn eucharistic celebrations on that day were a corruption introduced in post-apostolic times. The best interpreters of the New Testament are, as John Wesley long ago well pointed out in his preface to his celebrated but now almost unknown Christian Library, the apostolic fathers and the writers of the age next following the apostles. We may take it for a certain rule of interpretation that, whenever we find a widely established practice or custom mentioned in the writings of a Christian author of the second century, it originated in apostolic times. It was only natural that this should have been the case. We are all inclined to venerate the past, and to cry it up as the golden age. Now this tendency must have been intensified tenfold in the case of the Christians of the second century. The first century was the time of our Lord and the age of the apostles. Sacred memories clus-

tered thick round it, and every ceremony and rite which came from that time must have been profoundly revered, while every new ceremony or custom must have been rudely challenged, and its author keenly scrutinised as one who presumptuously thought he could improve upon the wisdom of men inspired by the Holy Ghost and miraculously gifted by God. It is for this reason we regard the second-century doctors and apologists as the best commentary upon the sacred writers, because in them we see the Church of the apostolic age living, acting, displaying itself amid the circumstances and scenes of actual life.

Just let us take as an illustration the case of this observance of the first day of the week. The Acts of the Apostles tells us but very little about it, simply because there is but little occasion to mention what must have seemed to St. Luke one of the commonest and best-known facts. But Justin Martyr some eighty years later was describing Christianity for the Roman Emperor. He was defending it against the outrageous and immoral charges brought against it, and depicting the purity, the innocence, and simplicity of its sacred rites. Among other subjects dealt with, he touches upon the time when Christians offered up formal and stated worship. It was absolutely necessary therefore for him to treat of the subject of the Lord's Day. In the sixty-seventh chapter of Justin's First "Apology," we find him describing the Christian weekly festival in words which throw back an interesting light upon the language of St. Luke touching the Lord's Day which St. Paul passed at Troas. Justin writes thus on this topic: "Upon the day called Sunday all who live in cities or in the country gather together unto one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. And those who are well to do and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succours the orphans and widows, and those who through sickness or any other cause are in want, and those who are in bonds, and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need. But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead." This passage gives us a full account of Christian customs in the first half of the second century, when thousands must have been still alive who remembered the times of the apostles, enabling us to realise what must have been the character of the assembly and of the worship in which St. Paul played a leading part at Troas.

There was, however, a difference between the celebration at Troas and the celebrations of which Justin Martyr speaks, though we learn

\* There is to this day a trace of this custom in the Book of Common Prayer in the rubric which prescribes that the collect for Sunday shall be said on Saturday evening. In colleges, too, according to Archbishop Laud's rules, surplices are worn on Saturday evenings as well as on Sundays.



not of this difference from Justin himself, but from Pliny's letter to Trajan, concerning which we have often spoken. St. Paul met the Christians of Troas in the evening, and celebrated the Holy Communion with them about midnight. It was the first day of the week according to Jewish computation, though it was what we should call Saturday evening. The ship in which the apostolic company was travelling was about to sail on the morrow, and so St. Paul gladly joined the local church in its weekly breaking of bread. It was exactly the same here at Troas as reported by St. Luke, as it was at Corinth, where the evening celebrations were turned into occasions of gluttony and ostentation, as St. Paul tells us in the eleventh of First Corinthians. The Christians evidently met at this time in the evening to celebrate the Lord's Supper. It has been often thought that St. Paul, having referred just twelve months before in the First Corinthian Epistle to the gross abuses connected with the evening celebrations at Corinth, and having promised to set the abuses of Corinth in order when he visited that church, did actually change the time of the celebration of Holy Communion from the evening to the morning, when he spent the three months there of which this chapter speaks.\* Perhaps he did make the change, but we have no information on the point; and if he did make the change for Corinth, it is evident that he did not intend to impose it as a rule upon the whole Christian Church, when a few weeks after leaving Corinth he celebrated the Lord's Supper at Troas in the evening. By the second century, however, the change had been made. Justin Martyr indeed does not give a hint as to the time when Holy Communion was administered in the passages to which we have referred. He tells us that none but baptised persons were admitted to partake of it, but gives us no minor details. Pliny, however, writing of the state of affairs in Bithynia,—and it bordered upon the province where Troas was situated,—tells us from the confession extracted out of apostate Christians that "the whole of their fault lay in this, that they were wont to meet together on a stated day, *before it was light*, and sing among themselves alternately a hymn to Christ as God, and to bind themselves by a sacrament (or oath) not to the commission of any wickedness, but not to be guilty of theft or robbery or adultery." After this early service they then separated, and assembled again in the evening to partake of a common meal. The Agape or Love-Feast was united with the Holy Communion in St. Paul's day. Experience, however, showed that such a union must lead to grave abuses, and so in that final consolidation which the Church received during the last quarter of the first century, when the Lord's Second Coming was seen to be not so immediate as some at first expected, the two institutions were divided; the Holy Communion being appointed as the early morning service of the Lord's Day, while the Agape was left in its original position as an evening meal. And so have matters continued ever since. The Agape indeed has almost died out. A trace of it perhaps remains in the blessed bread distributed in Roman Catholic Churches on the Continent; while again the love feasts instituted by John

Wesley and continued among his followers were an avowed imitation of this primitive institution. The Agape continued indeed in vigorous existence for centuries, but it was almost always found associated with grave abuses. It might have been innocent and useful so long as Christian love continued to burn with the fervour of apostolic days, though even then, as Corinth showed, there were lurking dangers in it; but when we reach the fourth and fifth centuries we find council after council denouncing the evils of the Agape, and restricting its celebration with such effect that during the Middle Ages it ceased to exist as a distinctive Christian ordinance. The change of the Holy Communion to the earlier portion of the day took almost universal effect, and that from the earliest times. Tertullian ("De Corona," iii.) testifies that in his time the Eucharist was received before day-break, though Christ had instituted it at a meal-time. Cyprian witnesses to the same usage in his sixty-third Epistle, where he speaks of Christ as instituting the Sacrament in the evening, that "the very hour of the sacrifice might intimate the evening of the world," but then describes himself as "celebrating the resurrection of the Lord in the morning." St. Augustine, as quoted above, writing about 400, speaks of fasting communion as the general rule; so general, indeed, that he regards it as having come down from apostolic appointment. At the same time St. Augustine recognises the time of its original institution, and mentions the custom of the African Church which once a year had an evening communion on Thursday before Easter in remembrance of the Last Supper and of our Lord's action in connection with it. My own feeling on the matter is, that early fasting communion, when there are health and strength, is far the most edifying. There is an element of self-denial about it, and the more real self-denial there is about our worship the more blessed will that worship be. A worship that costs nothing in mind, body, or estate is but a very poor thing to offer unto the Lord of the universe. But there is no ground either in Holy Scripture or the history of the primitive Church justifying an attempt to put a yoke on the neck of the disciples which they cannot bear and to teach that fasting communion is binding upon all Christians. St. Augustine speaks most strongly in a passage we have already referred to (Epist. cxviii., "Ad Januar.") about the benefit of fasting communion; but he admits the lawfulness of non-fasting participation, as does also that great Greek divine St. Chrysostom, who quotes the examples of St. Paul and of our Lord Himself in justification of such a course.

The celebration of the Eucharist was not the only subject which engaged St. Paul's attention at Troas. He preached unto the people as well; and following his example we find from Justin Martyr's narrative that preaching was an essential part of the communion office in the days immediately following the apostles' age; and then, descending to lower times still, we know that preaching is an equally essential portion of the eucharistic service in the Western Church, the only formal provision for a sermon according to the English liturgy being the rubric in the service for the Holy Communion, which lays down that after the Nicene Creed, "Then shall follow the sermon or one of the Homilies already set forth, or hereafter

\* St. Augustine, in "Epist.," cxviii., "Ad Januar.," cc. vi., vii., was one of the first to suggest this idea. The passage is quoted by Bingham, "Antiqq.," XV. vii. 8.



to be set forth, by authority." St. Paul's discourse was no mere mechanical homily, however. He was not what man regarded as a powerful, but he was a ready speaker, and one who carried his hearers away by the rapt, intense earnestness of his manner. His whole soul was full of his subject. He was convinced that this was his last visit to the churches of Asia. He foresaw, too, a thousand dangers to which they would be exposed after his departure, and he therefore prolonged his sermon far into the night, so far indeed that human nature asserted its claims upon a young man named Eutychus, who sat in a window of a room where they were assembled. Human nature indeed was never for a moment absent from these primitive Church assemblies. If it was absent in one shape, it was present in another, just as really as in our modern congregations, and so Eutychus fell fast asleep under the heart-searching exhortations of an inspired apostle, even as men fall asleep under less powerful sermons of smaller men; and as the natural result, sitting in a window left open for the sake of ventilation, he fell down into the courtyard, and was taken up apparently lifeless. St. Paul was not put out, however. He took interruptions in his work as the Master took them. He was not upset by them, but he seized them, utilised them, and then, having extracted the sweetness and blessedness which they brought with them, he returned from them back to his interrupted work. St. Paul descended to Eutychus, found him in a lifeless state, and then restored him. Men have disputed whether the Apostle worked a miracle on this occasion, or merely perceived that the young man was in a temporary faint. I do not see that it makes any matter which opinion we form. St. Paul's supernatural and miraculous powers stand on quite an independent ground, no matter what way we decide this particular case. It seems to me indeed from the language of St. Paul—"Make ye no ado; for his life is in him"—that the young man had merely fainted, and that St. Paul recognised this fact as soon as he touched him. But if any one has strong opinions on the opposite side I should be sorry to spend time disputing a question which has absolutely no evidential bearing. The great point is, that Eutychus was restored, that St. Paul's long sermon was attended by no fatal consequences, and that the Apostle has left us a striking example showing how that, with pastors and people alike, intense enthusiasm, high-strung interest in the affairs of the spiritual world, can enable human nature to rise superior to all human wants, and prove itself master even of the conquering powers of sleep: "And when he was gone up, and had broken the bread, and eaten, and had talked with them a long while, even till break of day, so he departed."

We know nothing of what the particular topics were which engaged St. Paul's attention at Troas, but we may guess them from the subject-matter of the address to the elders of Ephesus, which takes up the latter half of this twentieth chapter. Troas and Ephesus, in fact, were so near and so similarly circumstanced that the dangers and trials of both must have been much alike. He next passed from Troas to Miletus. This is a considerable journey along the western shore of Asia Minor. St. Paul was eagerly striving to get to Jerusalem by Pentecost, or by Whitsuntide, as we should say. He had left

Philippi after Easter, and now there had elapsed more than a fortnight of the seven weeks which remained available for the journey to Jerusalem. How often St. Paul must have chafed against the manifold delays of the trading vessel in which he sailed; how frequently he must have counted the days to see if sufficient time remained to execute his purpose! St. Paul, however, was a rigid economist of time. He saved every fragment of it as carefully as possible. It was thus with him at Troas. The ship in which he was travelling left Troas early in the morning. It had to round a promontory in its way to the port of Assos, which could be reached direct by St. Paul in half the time. The Apostle therefore took the shorter route, while St. Luke and his companions embarked on board the vessel. St. Paul evidently chose the land route because it gave him a time of solitary communion with God and with himself. He felt, in fact, that the perpetual strain upon his spiritual nature demanded special spiritual support and refreshment, which could only be obtained in the case of one who led such a busy life by seizing upon every such occasion as then offered for meditation and prayer. St. Paul left Troas some time on Sunday morning. He joined the ship at Assos, and after three days' coasting voyage landed at Miletus on Wednesday, whence he despatched a messenger summoning the elders of the Church of Ephesus to meet him. The ship was evidently to make a delay of several days at Miletus. We conclude this from the following reason. Miletus is a town separated by a distance of thirty miles from Ephesus. A space therefore of at least two days would be required in order to secure the presence of the Ephesian elders. If a messenger—St. Luke, for instance—started immediately on St. Paul's arrival at Miletus, no matter how quickly he travelled, he could not arrive at Miletus sooner than Thursday at midday. The work of collecting the elders and making known to them the apostolic summons would take up the afternoon at least, and then the journey to Ephesus, either by land or water, must have occupied the whole of Friday. It is very possible that the sermon recorded in this twentieth of Acts was delivered on the Sabbath, which, as we have noted above, was as yet kept sacred by Christians as well as by Jews, or else upon the Lord's Day, when, as upon that day week at Troas, the elders of Ephesus had assembled with the Christians of Miletus in order to commemorate the Lord's resurrection.

We have already pointed out that we know not the subject of St. Paul's sermon at Troas, but we do know the topics upon which he enlarged at Miletus, and we may conclude that, considering the circumstances of the time, they must have been much the same as those upon which he dwelt at Troas. Some critics have found fault with St. Paul's sermon as being quite too much taken up with himself and his own vindication. But they forget the peculiar position in which St. Paul was placed, and the manner in which the truth of the gospel was then associated in the closest manner with St. Paul's own personal character and teaching. The Apostle was just then assailed all over the Christian world wherever he had laboured, and even sometimes where he was only known by name, with the most frightful charges; ambition, pride, covetousness, deceit, lying, all these things and



much more were imputed to him by his opponents, who wished to seduce the Gentiles from that simplicity and liberty in Christ into which he had led them. Corinth had been desolated by such teachers; Galatia had succumbed to them; Asia was in great peril. St. Paul therefore, foreseeing future dangers, warned the shepherds of the flock at Ephesus against the machinations of his enemies, who always began their preliminary operations by making attacks upon St. Paul's character. This sufficiently explains the apologetic tone of St. Paul's address, of which we have doubtless merely a brief and condensed abstract indicating the subjects of a prolonged conversation with the elders of Ephesus, Miletus, and such neighbouring churches as could be gathered together. We conclude that St. Paul's conference on this occasion must have been a long one for this reason. If St. Paul could find matter sufficient to engage his attention for a whole night, from sundown till sunrise, in a place like Troas, where he had laboured but a very short time, how much more must he have found to say to the presbyters of the numerous congregations which must have been flourishing at Ephesus, where he had laboured for years with such success as to make Christianity a prominent feature in the social and religious life of that idolatrous city!

Let us now notice some of the topics of this address. It may be divided into four portions. The first part is retrospective, and autobiographical; the second is prospective, and sets forth his conception of his future course; the third is hortatory, expounding the dangers threatening the Ephesian Church; and the fourth is valedictory.

I. We have the biographical portion. He begins his discourse by recalling to the minds of his hearers his own manner of life,—“Ye yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, after what manner I was with you all the time, serving the Lord with all lowliness of mind, and with tears, and with trials which befell me by the plots of the Jews”; words which show us that from the earliest portion of his ministry at Ephesus, and as soon as they realised the meaning of his message, the Jews had become as hostile to the Apostle at Ephesus as they had repeatedly shown themselves at Corinth, again and again making attempts upon his life. The foundations indeed of the Ephesian Church were laid in the synagogue during the first three months of his work, as we are expressly told in chap. xix. 8; but the Ephesian Church must have been predominantly Gentile in its composition, or else the language of Demetrius must have been exaggerated and the riot raised by him meaningless. How could Demetrius have said, “Ye see that at Ephesus this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods which are made with hands,” unless the vast majority of his converts were drawn from the ranks of those pagans who worshipped Diana? These words also show us that during his extended ministry at Ephesus he was left at peace by the heathen. St. Paul here makes no mention of trials experienced from pagan plots. He speaks of the Jews alone as making assaults upon his work or his person, incidentally confirming the statement of chap. xix. 23, that it was only when he was purposing to retire from Ephesus, and during the celebration of the Artemisian games which

marked his last days there, that the opposition of the pagans developed itself in a violent shape.

St. Paul begins his address by fixing upon Jewish opposition outside the Church as his great trial at Ephesus, just as the same kind of opposition inside the Church had been his great trial at Corinth, and was yet destined to be a source of trial to him in the Ephesian Church itself, as we can see from the Pastoral Epistles. He then proceeds to speak of the doctrines he had taught and how he had taught them; reminding them “how that I shrank not from declaring unto you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and Greeks repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” St. Paul sets forth his manner of teaching. He taught publicly, and public teaching was most effective in his case, because he came armed with a double power, the powers of spiritual and of intellectual preparation. St. Paul was not a man who thought that prayer and spiritual life could dispense with thought and mental culture. Or again, he would be the last to tolerate the idea that diligent visitation from house to house would make up for the neglect of that public teaching which he so constantly and so profitably practised. Public preaching and teaching, pastoral visitation and work, are two distinct branches of labour, which at various periods of the Church's history have been regarded in very different lights. St. Paul evidently viewed them as equally important; the tendency in the present age is, however, to decry and neglect preaching and to exalt pastoral work—including under that head Church services—out of its due position. This is, indeed, a great and lamentable mistake. The “teaching publicly” to which St. Paul refers is the only opportunity which the majority of men possess of hearing the authorised ministers of religion, and if the latter neglect the office of public preaching, and think the fag end of a week devoted to external and secular labours and devoid of any mental study and preparation stirring the soul and refreshing the spirit, to be quite sufficient for pulpit preparation, they cannot be surprised if men come to despise the religion that is presented in such a miserable light and by such inefficient ambassadors.

St. Paul insists in this passage on the publicity and boldness of his teaching. There was no secrecy about him, no hypocrisy; he did not come pretending one view or one line of doctrine, and then, having stolen in secretly, teaching a distinct system. In this passage, which may seem laudatory of his own methods, St. Paul is, in fact, warning against the underhand and hypocritical methods adopted by the Judaising party, whether at Antioch, Galatia, or Corinth. In this division of his sermon St. Paul then sets forth the doctrines which were the sum and substance of the teaching which he had given both publicly and from house to house. They were repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, and that not only in the case of the Jews, but also of the Greeks. Now here we shall miss the implied reference of St. Paul unless we emphasise the words “I shrank not from declaring unto you anything that was profitable.” His Judaising opponents thought there were many other things profitable for men besides these two points round which St. Paul's teaching turned. They regarded cir-



cumcision and Jewish festivals, washings and sacrifices, as very necessary and very profitable for the Gentiles; while, as far as the Jews were concerned, they thought that the doctrines on which St. Paul insisted might possibly be profitable, but were not at all necessary. St. Paul impresses by his words the great characteristic differences between the Ebionite view of Christ and of Christianity and that catholic view which has regenerated society and become a source of life and light to the human race.

II. We have, then, the prospective portion of his discourse. St. Paul announces his journey to Jerusalem, and professes his ignorance of his fate there. He was warned merely by the testimony of the Holy Spirit that bonds and afflictions were his portion in every city. He was prepared for them, however, and for death itself, so that he might accomplish the ministry with which the Lord Jesus Christ had put him in trust. He concluded this part of his address by expressing his belief that he would never see them again. His work among them was done, and he called them to witness that he was pure from the blood of all men, seeing that he had declared unto them the whole counsel of God. This passage has given rise to much debate, because of St. Paul's statement that he knew that he should never see them again, while the Epistles to Timothy and that to Titus prove that after St. Paul's first imprisonment, with the notice of which this book of the Acts ends, he laboured for several years in the neighbourhood of Asia Minor, and paid lengthened visits to Ephesus.

We cannot now bestow space in proving this point, which will be found fully discussed in the various Lives of St. Paul which we have so often quoted: as, for instance, in Lewin, vol. ii. p. 94, and in Conybeare and Howson, vol. ii. p. 547. We shall now merely indicate the line of proof for this. In the Epistle to Philemon, ver. 22, written during his first Roman imprisonment, and therefore years subsequent to this address, he indicates his expectation of a speedy deliverance from his bonds, and his determination to travel eastward to Colossæ, where Philemon lived (*cf.* Philippians i. 25, ii. 24). He then visited Ephesus, where he left Timothy, who had been his companion in the latter portion of his Roman imprisonment (*cf.* Philem. 1 and 1 Tim. i. 3), expecting soon to return to him in the same city (1 Tim. iii. 14); while again in 2 Tim. i. 18 he speaks of Onesiphorus having ministered to himself in Ephesus, and then in the same Epistle (chap. iv. 20), written during his second Roman imprisonment, he speaks of having just left Trophimus at Miletus sick. This brief outline, which can be followed up in the volumes to which we have referred, and especially in Appendix II. in Conybeare and Howson on the date of the Pastoral Epistles, must suffice to prove that St. Paul was expressing a mere human expectation when he told the Ephesian elders that he should see their faces no more. St. Luke, in fact, thus shows us that St. Paul was not omniscient in his knowledge, and that the inspiration which he possessed did not remove him, as some persons think, out of the category of ordinary men or free him from their infirmities. The Apostle was, in fact, supernaturally inspired upon occasions. The Holy Ghost now and again illuminated the darkness of the future when such illumination was necessary for

the Church's guidance; but on other occasions St. Paul and his brother apostles were left to the guidance of their own understandings and to the conclusions and expectations of common sense, else why did not St. Peter and St. John read the character of Ananias and Sapphira or of Simon Magus before their sins were committed? why did St. Peter know nothing of his deliverance from Herod's prison-house before the angel appeared, when his undissembled surprise is sufficient evidence that he had no expectation of any such rescue? These instances, which might be multiplied abundantly out of St. Paul's career and writings, show us that St. Paul's confident statement in this passage was a mere human anticipation which was disappointed by the course of events. The supernatural knowledge of the apostles ran on precisely the same lines as their supernatural power. God bestowed them both for use according as He saw fit and beneficial, but not for common ordinary everyday purposes, else why did St. Paul leave Trophimus at Miletus sick, or endure the tortures of his own ophthalmia, or exhort Timothy to take a little wine on account of his bodily weakness, if he could have healed them all by his miraculous power? Before we leave this point we may notice that here we have an incidental proof of the early date of the composition of the Acts. St. Luke, as we have often maintained, wrote this book about the close of St. Paul's first imprisonment. Assuredly if he had written it at a later period, and above all, if he wrote it twenty years later, he would have either modified the words of his synopsis of St. Paul's speech, or else given us a hint that subsequent events had shown that the Apostle was mistaken in his expectations, a thing which he could easily have done, because he cherished none of these extreme notions about St. Paul's office and dignity which have led some to assume that it was impossible for him ever to make a mistake about the smallest matters.\*

III. This discourse, again, is hortatory, and its exhortations contain very important doctrinal statements. St. Paul begins this third division with an exhortation like that which our Lord gave to His Apostles under the same circumstances, "Take heed unto yourselves." The Apostle never forgot that an effective ministry of souls must be based on deep personal knowledge of the things of God. He knew, too, from his own experience that it is very easy to be so completely taken up with the care of other men's souls and the external work of the Church, as to forget that inner life which can only be kept alive by close communion with God. Then, having based his exhortations on their own spiritual life, he exhorts the elders to diligence in the pastoral office: "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops, to feed the Church of God, which He purchased with His own blood." St. Paul in these words shows us his estimate of the ministerial office. The elders of Ephesus had been all ordained by St. Paul himself with the imposition of hands, a rite that has ever been esteemed essential to ordination. It was derived from the Jewish Church, and was perpetuated into the Christian Church by that same spirit of conservatism, that law of continuity which in every department of life enacts that everything

\* See on this point Dr. Salmon's "Introduction to New Testament," 4th ed., p. 445.



shall continue as it was unless there be some circumstance to cause an alteration. Now there was no cause for alteration in this case; nay, rather, there was every reason to bring about a continuance of this custom, because imposition of hands indicates for the people the persons ordained, and assures the ordained themselves that they have been individually chosen and set apart. But St. Paul by these words teaches us a higher and nobler view of the ministry. He teaches us that he was himself but the instrument of a higher power, and that the imposition of hands was the sign and symbol to the ordained that the Holy Ghost had chosen them and appointed them to feed the flock of God. St. Paul here shows that in ordination, as in the sacraments, we should by faith look away beyond and behind the human instrument, and view the actions of the Church of Christ as the very operations and manifestations in the world of time and sense of the Holy Ghost Himself, the Lord and Giver of life. He teaches the Ephesian elders, in fact, exactly what he taught the Corinthian Church some few months earlier, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves" (2 Cor. iv. 7); the treasure and the power were everything, the only things, in fact, worth naming, the earthen vessels which contained them for a little time were nothing at all. How awful, solemn, heart-searching a view of the ministerial office this was! How sustaining a view when its holders are called upon to discharge functions for which they feel themselves all inadequate in their natural strength! Is it any wonder that the Church, taking the same view as St. Paul did, has ever held and taught that the ministerial office thus conferred by supernatural power is no mere human function to be taken up or laid down at man's pleasure, but is a life-long office to be discharged at the holder's peril,—a savour of life unto life for the worthy recipient, a savour of death unto death for the unworthy and the careless.

In connection with this statement made by St. Paul concerning the source of the ministry we find a title given to the Ephesian presbyters round which much controversy has centred. St. Paul says, "Take heed unto the flock, over which the Holy Ghost has made you *bishops*." I do not, however, propose to spend much time over this topic, as all parties are now agreed that in the New Testament the term *presbyter* and *bishop* are interchangeable and applied to the same persons. The question to be decided is not about a name, but an office, whether, in fact, any persons succeeded in apostolic times to the office of rule and government exercised by St. Paul and the rest of the apostles, as well as by Timothy, Titus, and the other delegates of the Apostle, and whether the term *bishop*, as used in the second century, was applied to such successors of the apostles. This, however, is not a question which comes directly within the purview of an expositor of the Acts of the Apostles, as the appointment of Timothy and Titus to manage the affairs of the Church in Ephesus and in Crete lies beyond the period covered by the text of the Acts, and properly belongs to the commentary on the Pastoral Epistles. St. Paul's words in this connection have, however, an important bearing on fundamental doctrinal questions connected with the person of the Lord

Jesus Christ. St. Paul speaks of the presbyters as called "to feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood." These words are very strong, so strong indeed that various readings have been put forward to mitigate their force. Some have read "Lord" instead of "God," others have substituted Christ for it; but the Revised Version, following the text of Westcott and Hort, have accepted the strongest form of the verse on purely critical ground, and translates it as "the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood." This passage, then, is decisive as to the Christological views of St. Luke and the Pauline circle generally. They believed so strongly in the deity of Jesus Christ and His essential unity with the Father that they hesitated not to speak of His sacrifice on Calvary as a shedding of the blood of God, an expression which some fifty years afterwards we find in the Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians, where St. Ignatius speaks of them as "kindled into living fire by the blood of God," and a hundred years later still, in Tertullian, "Ad Uxor.," ii. 3. This passage has been used in scientific theology as the basis of a principle or theory called the "*Communicatio Idiomatum*," a theory which finds an illustration in two other notable passages of Scripture, St. John iii. 13 and 1 Cor. ii. 8. In the former passage our Lord says of Himself, "No man hath ascended into heaven, but He that descended out of heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven," where the Son of man is spoken of as in heaven as well as upon earth at the same time, though the Son of man, according to His humanity, could only be in one place at a time. In the second passage St. Paul says, "Which none of the rulers of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory," where crucifixion is attributed to the Lord of Glory, a title derived from His Divine nature. Now the term "*Communicatio Idiomatum*," or "transference of peculiar properties," is given to this usage because in all these texts the properties of the nature pertaining either to God or to man are spoken of as if they belonged to the other; or, to put it far better in the stately language of Hooker, v., liii., where he speaks of "those cross and circulatory speeches wherein there are attributed to God such things as belong to manhood, and to man such as properly concern the deity of Jesus Christ, the cause whereof is the association of natures in one subject. A kind of mutual commutation there is, whereby those concrete names, God and man, when we speak of Christ, do take interchangeably one another's room, so that for truth of speech it skilleth not whether we say that the Son of God hath created the world and the Son of man by His death hath saved it, or else that the Son of man did create and the Son of God did die to save the world." This is a subject of profound speculative and doctrinal interest, not only in connection with the apostolic view of our Lord's Person, but also in reference to the whole round of methodised and scientific theology. We cannot, however, afford further space for this subject. We must be content to have pointed it out as an interesting topic of inquiry, and, merely referring the reader to Hooker and to Liddon's Bampton Lectures (Lect. v.) for more information, must hurry on to a conclusion. St. Paul terminates this part of his discourse with expressing his belief in the rapid de-



velopment of false doctrines and false guides as soon as his repressive influence shall have been removed; a belief which the devout student of the New Testament will find to have been realised when in 1 Tim. i. 20, in 2 Tim. i. 15, and ii. 17, 18 he finds the Apostle warning the youthful Bishop of Ephesus against Phygelus and Her-mogenes, who had turned all Asia away from St. Paul, and against Hymenæus, Philetus, and Alexander, who had imbibed the Gnostic error concerning matter, which had already led the Corinthians to deny the future character of the Resurrection. St. Paul then terminates his discourse with a solemn commendation of the Ephesian elders to that Divine grace which is as necessary for an apostle as for the humblest Christian. He exhorts them to self-sacrifice and self-denial, reminding them of his own example, having supported himself and his companions by his labour as a tentmaker at Ephesus, and above all of the words of the Lord Jesus, which they apparently knew from some source which has not come down to us, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

When the Apostle had thus terminated his address, which doubtless was a very lengthened one, he knelt down, probably on the shore, as we shall find him kneeling in the next chapter (xxi. 5, 6) on the shore at Tyre. He then commended them in solemn prayer to God, and they all parted in deep sorrow on account of the final separation which St. Paul's words indicated as imminent; for though the primitive Christians believed in the reality of the next life with an intensity of faith of which we have no conception, and longed for its peace and rest, yet they gave free scope to those natural affections which bind men one to another according to the flesh and were sanctified by the Master Himself when He wept by the grave of Lazarus. Christianity is not a religion of stoical apathy, but of sanctified human affections.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### *A PRISONER IN BONDS.*

ACTS xxi. 2, 3, 17, 33, 39, 40; xxii. 22, 30; xxiv. 1; xxvi. 1.

THE title we have given to this chapter, "A Prisoner in Bonds," expresses the central idea of the last eight chapters of the Acts. Twenty years and more had now elapsed since St. Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus. These twenty years had been times of unceasing and intense activity. Now we come to some five years when the external labours, the turmoil and the cares of active life, have to be put aside, and St. Paul was called upon to stand apart and learn the lesson which every-day experience teaches to all,—how easily the world can get along without us, how smoothly God's designs fulfil themselves without our puny assistance. The various passages we have placed at the head of this chapter cover six chapters of the Acts, from the twenty-first to the twenty-sixth. It may seem a large extent of the text to be comprised within the limits of one of our chapters, but it must be remembered that a great deal of the space thus included is taken up with the narrative of St. Paul's conversion, which is twice set forth at great length, first to the multitude from the

stairs of the tower of Antonia, and then in his defence which he delivered before Agrippa and Bernice and Festus, or else with the speeches delivered by him before the assembled Sanhedrin and before Felix the governor, wherein he dwells on points previously and sufficiently discussed.\* We have already considered the narrative of the Apostle's conversion at great length, and noted the particular directions in which St. Paul's own later versions at Jerusalem and Cæsarea throw light upon St. Luke's independent account. To the earlier chapters of this book we therefore would refer the reader who wishes to discuss St. Paul's conversion, and several of the other subjects which he introduces. Let us now, however, endeavour, first of all, to gather up into one connected story the tale of St. Paul's journeys, sufferings, and imprisonments from the time he left Miletus after his famous address till he set sail for Rome from the port of Cæsarea, a prisoner destined for the judgment-seat of Nero. This narrative will embrace from at least the summer of A. D. 58, when he was arrested at Jerusalem, to the autumn of 60, when he set sail for Rome. This connected story will enable us to see the close union of the various parts of the narrative which is now hidden from us because of the division into chapters, and will enable us to fix more easily upon the leading points which lend themselves to the purposes of an expositor.

I. St. Paul after parting from the Ephesian Church, embarked on board his ship, and then coasted along the western shore of Asia Minor for three days, sailing amid scenery of the most enchanting description, specially in that late spring or early summer season at which the year had then arrived. It was about the first of May, and all nature was bursting into new life, when even hearts the hardest and least receptive of external influences feel as if they were living a portion of their youth over again. And even St. Paul, rapt in the contemplation of things unseen, must have felt himself touched by the beauty of the scenes through which he was passing, though St. Luke tells us nothing but the bare succession of events. Three days after leaving Miletus the sacred company reached Patara, a town at the southwestern corner of Asia Minor, where the coast begins to turn round towards the east. Here St. Paul found a trading ship sailing direct to Tyre and Palestine, and therefore with all haste transferred himself and his party into it. The ship seems to have been on the point of sailing, which suited St. Paul so much the better, anxious as he was to reach Jerusalem in time for Pentecost. The journey direct from Patara to Tyre is about three hundred and fifty miles, a three days' sail under favourable circumstances for the trading vessels of the ancients, and the circumstances were favourable. The northwest wind is to this day the prevailing wind in the eastern Mediterranean during the late spring and early summer season, and the northwest wind would be the most favourable wind for an ancient trader almost entirely depending on an immense mainsail for its motive power. With such a wind the merchantmen of that age could travel at the rate of a hundred to a hundred and fifty miles a day, and would therefore traverse the distance be-

\* Thus in ch. xxiv. 10-16 he enlarges upon the subject of "the Way which they call a sect," a topic and a name fully discussed above on pp. 413-14.



tween Patara and Tyre in three days, the time we have specified. When the vessel arrived at Tyre St. Paul sought out the local Christian congregation. The ship was chartered to bring a cargo probably of wheat or wine to Tyre, inasmuch as Tyre was a purely commercial city, and the territory naturally belonging to it was utterly unable to furnish it with necessary provisions, as we have already noted on the occasion of Herod Agrippa's death. A week, therefore, was spent in unloading the cargo, during which St. Paul devoted himself to the instruction of the local Christian Church. After a week's close communion with this eminent servant of God, the Tyrian Christians, like the elders of Ephesus and Miletus, with their wives and children accompanied him till they reached the shore, where they commended one another in prayer to God's care and blessing. From Tyre he sailed to Ptolemais, thirty miles distant. There again he found another Christian congregation, with whom he tarried one day, and then leaving the ship proceeded by the great coast road to Cæsarea, a town which he already knew right well, and to which he was so soon to return as a prisoner in bonds. At Cæsarea there must now have been a very considerable Christian congregation. In Cæsarea Philip the Evangelist lived and ministered permanently. There too resided his daughters, eminent as teachers, and exercising in their preaching or prophetic functions a great influence among the very mixed female population of the political capital of Palestine. St. Paul and St. Luke abode in Cæsarea several days in the house of Philip the Evangelist. He did not wish to arrive in Jerusalem till close on the Feast of Pentecost, and owing to the fair winds with which he had been favoured he must have had a week or more to stay in Cæsarea. Here Agabus again appears upon the scene. Fourteen years before he had predicted the famine which led St. Paul to pay a visit to Jerusalem when bringing up the alms of the Antiochene Church to assist the poor brethren at Jerusalem, and now he predicts the Apostle's approaching captivity. The prospect moved the Church so much that the brethren besought St. Paul to change his mind and not enter the Holy City. But his mind was made up, and nothing would dissuade him from celebrating the Feast as he had all along proposed. He went up therefore to Jerusalem, lodging with Mnason, "an early disciple," as the Revised Version puts it, one therefore who traced his Christian convictions back probably to the celebrated Pentecost a quarter of a century earlier, when the Holy Ghost first displayed His supernatural power in converting multitudes of human souls. Next day he went to visit James, the Bishop of Jerusalem, who received him warmly, grasped his position, warned him of the rumours which had been industriously and falsely circulated as to his opposition to the Law of Moses, even in the case of born Jews, and gave him some prudent advice as to his course of action. St. James recommended that St. Paul should unite himself with certain Christian Nazarites, and perform the Jewish rites usual in such cases. A Nazarite, as we have already mentioned, when he took the Nazarite vow for a limited time after some special deliverance vouchsafed to him, allowed his hair to grow till he could cut it off in the Temple, and have it burned in the fire of the

sacrifices offered up on his behalf. These sacrifices were very expensive, as will be seen at once by a reference to Num. vi. 13-18, where they are prescribed at full length, and it was always regarded as a mark of patriotic piety when any stranger coming to Jerusalem offered to defray the necessary charges for the poorer Jews, and thus completed the ceremonies connected with the Nazarite vow. St. James advised St. Paul to adopt this course, to unite himself with the members of the local Christian Church who were unable to defray the customary expenses, to pay their charges, join with them in the sacrifices, and thus publicly proclaim to those who opposed him that, though he differed from them as regards the Gentiles, holding, in that matter with St. James himself and with the apostles, yet as regards the Jews, whether at Jerusalem or throughout the world at large, he was totally misrepresented when men asserted that he taught the Jews to reject the Law of Moses. St. Paul was guided by the advice of James, and proceeded to complete the ceremonial prescribed for the Nazarites. This was the turning-point of his fate. Jerusalem was then thronged with strangers from every part of the world. Ephesus and the province of Asia, as a great commercial centre, and therefore a great Jewish resort, furnished a very large contingent.\* To these, then, Paul was well known as an enthusiastic Christian teacher, toward whom the synagogues of Ephesus felt the bitterest hostility. They had often plotted against him at Ephesus, as St. Paul himself told the elders in his address at Miletus, but had hitherto failed to effect their purpose. Now, however, they seemed to see their chance. They thought they had a popular cry and a legal accusation under which he might be done to death under the forms of law. These Ephesian Jews had seen him in the city in company with Trophimus, an uncircumcised Christian belonging to their own city, one therefore whose presence within the temple was a capital offence, even according to Roman law. They raised a cry therefore that he had defiled the Holy Place by bringing into it an uncircumcised Greek; and thus roused the populace to seize the Apostle, drag him from the sacred precincts, and murder him. During the celebration of the Feasts the Roman sentinels, stationed upon the neighbouring tower of Antonia which overlooked the Temple courts, watched the assembled crowds most narrowly, apprehensive of a riot. As soon therefore as the first symptoms of an outbreak occurred, the alarm was given, the chief captain Lysias hurried to the spot, and St. Paul was rescued for the moment. At the request of the Apostle, who was being carried up into the castle, he was allowed to address the multitude from the stairs. They listened to the narrative of his conversion very quietly till he came to tell of the vision God vouchsafed to him in the Temple some twenty years before, warning him to leave Jerusalem, when at the words "Depart, for I will send thee forth far hence unto the Gentiles," all their pent-up rage and pride and national jealousy burst forth anew. St. Paul had been addressing them in the Hebrew language, which the chief captain understood not,

\* See Lightfoot's "Ignatius," vol. i. p. 452, upon the presence of Jews in the towns and cities of Proconsular Asia. Antiochus the Great transported two thousand Jewish families to these parts from Babylonia and Mesopotamia.



and the mob probably expressed their rage and passion in the same language. The chief captain ordered St. Paul to be examined by flogging to know why they were so outrageous against him. More fortunate, however, on this occasion than at Philippi, he claimed his privilege as a Roman citizen, and escaped the torture. The chief captain was still in ignorance of the prisoner's crime, and therefore he brought him the very next day before the Sanhedrin, when St. Paul by a happy stroke caused such a division between the Sadducees and Pharisees that the chief captain was again obliged to intervene and rescue the prisoner from the contending factions. Next day, however, the Jews formed a conspiracy to murder the Apostle, which his nephew discovered and revealed to St. Paul and to Claudius Lysias, who that same night despatched him to Cæsarea.

All these events, from his conference with James to his arrival under guard at Cæsarea, cannot have covered more than eight days at the utmost, and yet the story of them extends from the middle of the twenty-first chapter to the close of the twenty-third, while the record of twelve months' hard work preaching, writing, organising is embraced within the first six verses of the twentieth chapter, showing how very different was St. Luke's narrative of affairs, according as he was present or absent when they were transacted.

From the beginning of the twenty-fourth chapter to the close of the twenty-sixth is taken up with the account of St. Paul's trials, at first before Felix, and then before Festus, his successor in the procuratorship of Palestine. Just let us summarise the course of events and distinguish between them. St. Paul was despatched by Claudius Lysias to Felix, accompanied by a letter in which he contrives to put the best construction on his own actions, representing himself as specially anxious about St. Paul because he was a Roman citizen, on which account indeed he describes himself as rescuing him from the clutches of the mob. After the lapse of five days St. Paul was brought up before Felix and accused by the Jews of three serious crimes in the eyes of Roman law as administered in Palestine. First, he was a mover of seditions among the Jews; second, a ringleader of a new sect, the Nazarenes, unknown to Jewish law; and third, a profaner of the Temple, contrary to the law which the Romans themselves had sanctioned. On all these points Paul challenged investigation and demanded proof, asking where were the Jews from Asia who had accused him of profaning the Temple. The Jews doubtless thought that Paul was a common Jew, who would be yielded up to their clamour by the procurator, and knew nothing of his Roman citizenship. Their want of witnesses brought about their failure, but did not lead to St. Paul's release. He was committed to the custody of a centurion, and freedom of access was granted to his friends. In this state St. Paul continued two full years, from midsummer 58 to the same period of A. D. 60, when Felix was superseded by Festus. During these two years Felix often conversed with St. Paul. Felix was a thoroughly bad man. He exercised, as a historian of that time said of him, "the power of a king with the mind of a slave." He was tyrannical, licentious, and corrupt, and hoped to be bribed by St. Paul, when he would

have set him at liberty. At this period of his life St. Paul twice came in contact with the Herodian house, which thenceforth disappears from sacred history. Felix about the period of St. Paul's arrest enticed Drusilla, the great-granddaughter of Herod the Great, from her husband through the medium, as many think, of Simon Magus. Drusilla was very young and very beautiful, and, like all the Herodian women, very wicked.\* Felix was an open adulterer, therefore, and it is no wonder that when Paul reasoned before the guilty pair concerning righteousness, temperance, and the judgment to come, conscience should have smitten them and Felix should have trembled. St. Paul had another opportunity of bearing witness before this wicked and bloodstained family. Festus succeeded Felix as procurator of Palestine about June, A. D. 60. Within the following month Agrippa II., the son of the Herod Agrippa who had died the terrible death at Cæsarea of which the twelfth chapter tells, came to Cæsarea to pay his respects unto the new governor. Agrippa was ruler of the kingdom of Chalcis, a district north of Palestine and about the Lebanon Range. He was accompanied by his sister Bernice, who afterwards became the mistress of Titus, the conqueror of Jerusalem in the last great siege. Festus had already heard St. Paul's case, and had allowed his appeal unto Cæsar. He wished, however, to have his case investigated before two Jewish experts, Agrippa and Bernice, who could instruct his own ignorance on the charges laid against him by the Jews, enabling him to write a more satisfactory report for the Emperor's guidance. He brought St. Paul therefore before them, and gave the great Christian champion another opportunity of bearing witness for his Master before a family which now for more than sixty years had been more or less mixed up, but never for their own blessing, with Christian history. After a period of two years and three months' detention, varied by different public appearances, St. Paul was despatched to Rome to stand his trial and make his defence before the Emperor Nero, whose name has become a synonym for vice, brutality, and self-will.

II. We have now given a connected outline of St. Paul's history extending over a period of more than two years. Let us omit his formal defences, which have already come under our notice, and take for our meditation a number of points which are peculiar to the narrative.

We have in the story of the voyage, arrest, and imprisonment of St. Paul, many circumstances which illustrate God's methods of action in the world, or else His dealings with the spiritual life. Let us take a few instances. First, then, we direct attention to the steady though quiet progress of the Christian faith as revealed in these chapters. St. Paul landed at Tyre, and from Tyre he proceeded some thirty miles south to Ptolemais. These are both of them towns which have never hitherto occurred in our narrative as places of Christian activity. St. Paul and St. Peter and Barnabas and the other active leaders of the Church must often have passed through these towns, and wherever they went they strove to make known the tidings of the gospel. But we hear nothing in the Acts, and tradition tells us nothing of when or

\* Drusilla perished with her child by this union with Felix in the famous eruption of Vesuvius A. D. 79.



by whom the Christian Church was founded in these localities.\*

We get glimpses, too, of the ancient organisation of the Church, but only glimpses; we have no complete statement, because St. Luke was writing for a man who lived amidst it, and could supply the gaps which his informant left. The presbyters are mentioned at Miletus, and Agabus the prophet appeared at Antioch years before, and now again he appears at Cæsarea, where Philip the Evangelist and his daughters the prophetesses appear. Prophets and prophesying are not confined to Palestine and Antioch, though the Acts tells us nothing of them as existing elsewhere. The Epistle to Corinth shows us that the prophets occupied a very important place in that Christian community. Prophesying indeed was principally preaching at Corinth; but it did not exclude prediction, and that after the ancient Jewish method, by action as well as by word, for Agabus took St. Paul's girdle, and binding his own hands and feet declared that the Holy Ghost told him, "So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles." But how little we know of the details of the upgrowth of the Church in all save the more prominent places! How entirely ignorant we are, for instance, of the methods by which the gospel spread to Tyre and Ptolemais and Puteoli! Here we find in the Acts the fulfilment of our Lord's words as reported in St. Mark iv. 26: "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed upon the earth; . . . and the seed should spring up and grow, he knoweth not how." It was with the last and grander temple of God as it was with the first. Its foundations were laid, and its walls were built, not with sound of axe and hammer, but in the penitence of humbled souls, in the godly testimony of sanctified spirits, in the earnest lives of holy men hidden from the scoffing world, known only to the Almighty.

Again, we notice the advice given by James and the course actually adopted by St. Paul when he arrived at Jerusalem. It has the appearance of compromise of truth, and yet it has the appearance merely, not the reality of compromise. It was in effect wise and sound advice, and such as teaches lessons useful for our own guidance in life. We have already set forth St. Paul's conception of Jewish rites and ceremonies. They were nothing in the world one way or another, as viewed from the Divine standpoint. Their presence did not help on the work of man's salvation; their absence did not detract from it. The Apostle therefore took part in them freely enough, as when he celebrated the passover and the days of unleavened bread at Philippi, viewing them as mere national rites. He had been successful in the very highest degree in converting to this view even the highest and strictest members of the Jerusalem Church. St. James, in advising St. Paul how to act on this occasion, when such prejudices had been excited against him, clearly shows that he had come round to St. Paul's view. He tells St. Paul that the multitude or body of the Judæo-Christian Church at Jerusalem had been excited against him, because they had been informed that he taught the Jews

of the Dispersion to forsake Moses, the very thing St. Paul did not do. St. James grasped, however, St. Paul's view that Moses and the Levitical Law might be good things for the Jews, but had no relation to the Gentiles, and must not be imposed on them. St. James had taught this view ten years earlier at the Apostolic Council. His opinions and teaching had percolated downwards, and the majority of the Jerusalem Church now held the same view as regards the Gentiles, but were as strong as ever and as patriotic as ever so far as the Jews were concerned, and the obligation of the Jewish Law upon them and their children. St. Paul had carried his point as regards Gentile freedom. And now there came a time when he had in turn to show consideration and care for Jewish prejudices, and act out his own principle that circumcision was nothing and uncircumcision was nothing. Concessions, in fact, were not to be all on one side, and St. Paul had now to make a concession. The Judæo-Christian congregations of Jerusalem were much excited, and St. Paul by a certain course of conduct, perfectly innocent and harmless, could pacify their excited patriotic feelings, and demonstrate to them that he was still a true, a genuine, and not a renegade Jew. It was but a little thing that St. James advised and public feeling demanded. He had but to join himself to a party of Nazarites and pay their expenses, and thus Paul would place himself *en rapport* with the Mother Church of Christendom. St. Paul acted wisely, charitably, and in a Christlike spirit when he consented to do as St. James advised. St. Paul was always eminently prudent. There are some religious men who seem to think that to advise a wise or prudent course is all the same as to advise a wicked or unprincipled course. They seem to consider success in any course as a clear evidence of sin, and failure as a proof of honesty and true principle. Concession, however, is not the same as unworthy compromise. It is our duty in life to see and make our course of conduct as fruitful and as successful as possible. Concession on little points has a wondrous power in smoothing the path of action and gaining true success. Many an honest man ruins a good cause simply because he cannot distinguish, as St. Paul did, things necessary and essential from things accidental and trivial. Pig-headed obstinacy, to use a very homely but a very expressive phrase, which indeed is often only disguised pride, is a great enemy to the peace and harmony of societies and churches. St. Paul displayed great boldness here. He was not afraid of being misrepresented, that ghost which frightens so many a popularity hunter from the course which is true and right. How easily his fierce opponents, the men who had gone to Corinth and Galatia to oppose him, might misrepresent his action in joining himself to the Nazarites! They were the extreme men of the Jerusalem Church. They were the men for whom the decisions of the Apostolic Council had no weight, and who held still as of old that unless a man be circumcised he could not be saved. How easily, I say, these men could despatch their emissaries, who should proclaim that their opponent Paul had conceded all their demands and was himself observing the law at Jerusalem. St. Paul was not afraid of this misrepresentation, but boldly took the course which seemed to him right and true, and charitable,

\* See my remarks in the next chapter on the case of the church at Puteoli, which St. Paul found flourishing there on his voyage to Rome.



despite the malicious tongues of his adversaries. The Apostle of the Gentiles left us an example which many still require. How many a man is kept from adopting a course that is charitable and tends to peace and edification, solely because he is afraid of what opponents may say, or how they may twist and misrepresent his action. St. Paul was possessed with none of this moral cowardice which specially flourishes among so-called party-leaders, men who, instead of leading, are always led and governed by the opinions of their followers. St. Paul simply determined in his conscience what was right, and then fearlessly acted out his determination.

Some persons perhaps would argue that the result of his action showed that he was wrong and had unworthily compromised the cause of Christian freedom. They think that had he not consented to appear as a Nazarite in the Temple no riot would have occurred, his arrest would have been avoided, and the course of history might have been very different. But here we would join issue on the spot. The results of his action vindicated his Christian wisdom. The great body of the Jerusalem Church were convinced of his sincerity and realised his position. He maintained his influence over them, which had been seriously imperilled previously, and thus helped on the course of development which had been going on. Ten years before the advocates of Gentile freedom were but a small body. Now the vast majority of the local church at Jerusalem held fast to this idea, while still clinging fast to the obligation laid upon the Jews to observe the law. St. Paul did his best to maintain his friendship and alliance with the Jerusalem Church. To put himself right with them he travelled up to Jerusalem, when fresh fields and splendid prospects were opening up for him in the West. For this purpose he submitted to several days' restraint and attendance in the Temple, and the results vindicated his determination. The Jerusalem Church continued the same course of orderly development, and when, ten years later, Jerusalem was threatened with destruction, the Christian congregations alone rose above the narrow bigoted patriotism which bound the Jews to the Holy City. The Christians alone realised that the day of the Mosaic Law was at length passed, and, retiring to the neighbouring city of Pella, escaped the destruction which awaited the fanatical adherents of the Law and the Temple.\*

Another answer, too, may be made to this objection. It was not his action in the matter of the Nazarites that brought about the riot and the arrest and his consequent imprisonment. It was the hostility of the Jews of Asia; and they would have assailed him whenever and wherever they met him. Studying the matter too, even in view of results, we should draw the opposite conclusion. God Himself approved his course. A Divine vision was vouchsafed to him in the guard-room of Antonia, after he had twice experienced Jewish violence, and bestowed upon him the approbation of Heaven: "The night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer; for as thou hast testified concerning Me at Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." His courageous and at the same time charitable action was vindicated by

its results on the Jerusalem Church, by the sanction of Christ Himself, and lastly, by its blessed results upon the development of the Church at large in leading St. Paul to Rome, in giving him a wider and more influential sphere for his efforts, and in affording him leisure to write epistles like those to Ephesus, Philippi, and Colossæ, which have been so instructive and useful for the Church of all ages.

Another point which has exercised men's minds is found in St. Paul's attitude and words when brought before the Sanhedrin on the day after his arrest. The story is told in the opening verses of the twenty-third chapter. Let us quote them, as they vividly present the difficulty: "And Paul, looking stedfastly on the council, said, Brethren, I have lived before God in all good conscience until this day. And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth. Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: and sittest thou to judge me according to the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law? And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest? And Paul said, I wist not, brethren, that he was high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of a ruler of thy people."

Two difficulties here present themselves. (a) There is St. Paul's language, which certainly seems wanting in Christian meekness, and not exactly modelled after the example of Christ, who, when He was reviled, reviled not again, and laid down in His Sermon on the Mount a law of suffering to which St. Paul does not here conform. But this is only a difficulty for those who have formed a superhuman estimate of St. Paul against which we have several times protested, and against which this very book of the Acts seems to take special care to warn its readers. If people will make the Apostle as sinless and as perfect as our Lord, they will of course be surprised at his language on this occasion. But if they regard him in the light in which St. Luke portrays him, as a man of like passions and infirmities with themselves, then they will feel no difficulty in the fact that St. Paul's natural temper was roused at the brutal and illegal command to smite a helpless prisoner on the mouth because he had made a statement which a member of the court did not relish. This passage seems to me not a difficulty, but a divinely guided passage witnessing to the inspiring influence of the Holy Ghost, and inserted to chasten our wandering fancy, which would exalt the Apostle to a position equal to that which rightly belongs to his Divine Master alone.

(b) Then there is a second difficulty. Some have thought that St. Paul told a lie in this passage, and that, when defending himself from the charge of unscriptural insolence to the high priest, he merely pretended ignorance of his person, saying, "I wist not, brethren, that he was high priest." The older commentators devised various explanations of this passage. Dr. John Lightfoot, in his "*Horæ Hebraicæ*," treating of this verse, sums them all up as follows. Either St. Paul means that he did not recognise Ananias as high priest because he did not lawfully occupy the office, or else because Christ was now the only high priest; or else because there had been so many and so frequent changes that as a matter of fact he did not know who was

\* See Eusebius, "H. E.," iii. 5, and the notes of Valesius on that passage.



the actual high priest." None of these is a satisfactory explanation. Mr. Lewin offers what strikes me as the most natural explanation, considering all the circumstances. Ananias was appointed high priest about 47, continued in office till 59, and was killed in the beginning of the great Jewish war. He was a thoroughly historical character, and his high priesthood is guaranteed for us by the testimony of Josephus, who tells us of his varied fortunes and of his tragic death. But St. Paul never probably once saw him, as he was absent from Jerusalem, except for one brief visit, all the time while he enjoyed supreme office.

Now the Sanhedrin consisted of seventy-one judges, they sat in a large hall with a crowd of scribes and pupils in front of them, and the high priest, as we have already pointed out (p. 340), was not necessarily president or chairman. St. Paul was very short-sighted, and the ophthalmia under which he continually suffered was probably much intensified by the violent treatment he had experienced the day before. Could anything be more natural than that a short-sighted man should not recognise in such a crowd the particular person who had uttered this very brief, but very tyrannical command, "Smite him on the mouth"? Surely an impartial review of St. Paul's life shows him ever to have been at least a man of striking courage, and therefore one who would never have descended to cloak his own hasty words with even the shadow of an untruth!

Again, the readiness and quickness of St. Paul in seizing upon every opportunity of escape have important teaching for us. Upon four different occasions at this crisis he displayed this characteristic. Let us note them for our guidance. When he was rescued by the chief captain and was carried into the castle, the captain ordered him to be examined by scourging to elicit the true cause of the riot; St. Paul then availed himself of his privilege as a Roman citizen to escape that torture. When he stood before the council he perceived the old division between the Pharisees and the Sadducees to be still in existence, which he had known long ago when he was himself connected with it. He skilfully availed himself of that circumstance to raise dissension among his opponents. He grasped the essential principle which lay at the basis of his teaching, and that was the doctrine of the Resurrection and the assertion of the reality of the spiritual world. Without that doctrine Christianity and Christian teaching were utterly meaningless, and in that doctrine Pharisees and Christians were united. Dropping the line of defence he was about to offer, which probably would have proceeded to show how true to conscience and to Divine light had been his course of life, he cried out, "I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees: touching the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question." Grotius, an old and learned commentator, dealing with chap. xxiii. 6, has well summed up the principles on which St. Paul acted on this occasion in the following words: "St. Paul was not lacking in human prudence, making use of which for the service of the gospel, he intermingled the wisdom of the serpent with the gentleness of the dove, and thus utilised the dissensions of his enemies." Yet once more we see the same tact in operation. After the meeting of the Sanhedrin and his rescue from out of

its very midst, a plot was formed to assassinate him, of which he was informed by his nephew. Then again St. Paul did not let things slide, trusting in the Divine care alone. He knew right well that God demanded of men of faith that they should be fellow-workers with God and lend Him their co-operation. He knew too the horror which the Roman authorities had of riot and of all illegal measures; he despatched his nephew therefore to the chief captain, and by his readiness of resource saved himself from imminent danger. Lastly, we find the same characteristic trait coming out at Cæsarea. His experience of Roman rule taught him the anxiety of new governors to please the people among whom they came. He knew that Festus would be anxious to gratify the Jewish authorities in any way he possibly could. They were very desirous to have the Apostle transferred from Cæsarea to Jerusalem, sure that in some way or another they could there dispose of him. Knowing therefore the dangerous position in which he stood, St. Paul's readiness and tact again came to his help. He knew Roman law thoroughly well. He knew that as a Roman citizen he had one resource left by which in one brief sentence he could transfer himself out of the jurisdiction of Sanhedrin and Procurator alike, and of this he availed himself at the critical moment, pronouncing the magic words *Cæsarem Appello* ("I appeal unto Cæsar"). St. Paul left in all these cases a healthy example which the Church urgently required in subsequent years. He had no morbid craving after suffering or death. No man ever lived in a closer communion with his God, or in a more steadfast readiness to depart and be with Christ. But he knew that it was his duty to remain at his post till the Captain of his salvation gave a clear note of withdrawal, and that clear note was only given when every avenue of escape was cut off. St. Paul therefore used his knowledge and his tact in order to ascertain the Master's will and discover whether it was His wish that His faithful servant should depart or tarry yet awhile for the discharge of his earthly duties. I have said that this was an example necessary for the Church in subsequent ages. The question of flight in persecution became a very practical one as soon as the Roman Empire assumed an attitude definitely hostile to the Church. The more extreme and fanatical party not only refused to take any measures to secure their safety or escape death, but rather rushed headlong upon it, and upbraided those as traitors and renegades who tried in any way to avoid suffering. From the earliest times, from the days of Ignatius of Antioch himself, we see this morbid tendency displaying itself; while the Church in the person of several of its greatest leaders—men like Polycarp and Cyprian, who themselves retired from impending danger till the Roman authorities discovered them—showed that St. Paul's wiser teaching and example were not thrown away.\* Quietism

\* St. Ignatius of Antioch was very desirous of martyrdom. St. Polycarp fifty years avoided it till he was arrested. St. Clement of Alexandria, in his "Stromata," iv. 16, 17, condemns the suicidal passion for martyrdom. St. Cyprian, enthusiastic as he was, retired like Polycarp till escape was impossible. These holy men all acted like St. Paul. They waited till God had intimated His will by shutting up all way of escape. The story of Polycarp has an interesting warning against presumptuous rushing upon trials. Quintus, one of St. Polycarp's flock, gave himself up to death. His courage failed him at the last,



was a view which two centuries ago made a great stir both in England and France, and seems embodied to some extent in certain modern forms of thought. It taught that believers should lie quite passive in God's hands and make no effort for themselves. Quietism would never have found a follower in the vigorous mind of St. Paul, who proved himself through all those trials and vicissitudes of more than two years ever ready with some new device wherewith to meet the hatred of his foes.\*

III. We notice lastly in the narrative of St. Paul's imprisonment his interviews with and his testimony before the members of the house of Herod. St. Peter had experience of the father of Herod Agrippa, and now St. Paul comes into contact with the children, Agrippa, Drusilla, and Bernice. And thus it came about. Felix the procurator, as we have already explained, was a very bad man, and had enticed Drusilla from her husband. He doubtless told her of the Jewish prisoner who lay a captive in the city where she was living. The Herods were a clever race, and they knew all about Jewish hopes and Messianic expectations, and they ever seem to have been haunted by a certain curiosity concerning the new sect of the Nazarenes. One Herod desired for a long time to see Jesus Christ, and was delighted when Pilate gratified his longing. Drusilla, doubtless, was equally curious, and easily persuaded her husband to gratify her desire. We therefore read in chap. xxiv. 24, "But after certain days, Felix came with Drusilla, his wife, which was a Jewess, and sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ Jesus."

Neither of them calculated on the kind of man they had to do with. St. Paul knew all the circumstances of the case. He adapted his speech thereto. He made a powerful appeal to the conscience of the guilty pair. He reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and the judgment to come, and beneath his weighty words Felix trembled. His convictions were roused. He experienced a transient season of penitence, such as touched another guilty member of the Herodian house who feared John and did many things gladly to win his approval. But habits of sin had grasped Felix too firmly. He temporised with his conscience. He put off the day of salvation when it was dawning on him, and his words, "Go thy way for this time, and when I have a convenient season I will call thee unto me," became the typical language of all those souls for whom procrastination, want of decision, trifling with spiritual feelings, have been the omens and the causes of eternal ruin.

But Felix and Drusilla were not the only members of the Herodian house with whom Paul came in contact. Felix and Drusilla left Palestine when two years of St. Paul's imprisonment had elapsed. Festus, another procurator, followed, and began his course as all the Roman rulers of Palestine began theirs. The Jews, when Festus visited Jerusalem, besought him to deliver the prisoner lying bound at Cæsarea to the judgment of their Sanhedrin.

Festus, all-powerful as a Roman governor usually was, dared not treat a Roman citizen thus without his own consent, and when that consent was asked Paul at once refused, knowing right well the intentions of the Jews, and appealed unto Cæsar. A Roman governor, however, would not send a prisoner to the judgment of the Emperor without stating the crime imputed to him. Just at that moment Herod Agrippa, king of Chalcis and of the district of Ituræa, together with his sister Bernice, appeared on the scene. He was a Jew, and was well acquainted therefore with the accusations brought against the Apostle, and could inform the procurator what report he should send to the Emperor. Festus therefore brought Paul before them, and gave him another opportunity of expounding the faith of Jesus Christ and the law of love and purity which that faith involved to a family who ever treated that law with profound contempt. St. Paul availed himself of that opportunity. He addressed his whole discourse to the king, and that discourse was typical of those he addressed to Jewish audiences. It was like the sermon delivered to the Jews in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia in one important aspect. Both discourses gathered round the resurrection of Jesus Christ as their central idea. St. Paul began his address before Agrippa with that doctrine, and he ended with the same. The hope of Israel, towards which their continuous worship tended, was the resurrection of the dead. That was St. Paul's opening idea. The same note lay beneath the narrative of his own conversion, and then he turned back to his original statement that the Risen Christ was the hope of Israel and of the world taught by Moses and proclaimed by prophets. But it was all in vain as regards Agrippa and Bernice. The Herods were magnificent, clever, beautiful. But they were of the earth, earthy. Agrippa said indeed to Paul, "With but little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a Christian." But it was not souls like his for whom the gospel message was intended. The Herods knew nothing of the burden of sin or the keen longing of souls desirous of holiness and of God. They were satisfied with the present transient scene, and enjoyed it thoroughly. Agrippa's father when he lay a-dying at Cæsarea consoled himself with the reflection that though his career was prematurely cut short, yet at any rate he had lived a splendid life. And such as the parent had been, such were the children. King Agrippa and his sister Bernice were true types of the stony-ground hearers, with whom "the care of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word." And they choked the word so effectually in his case, even when taught by St. Paul, that the only result upon Agrippa, as St. Luke reports it, was this: "Agrippa said unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Cæsar."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### IN PERILS ON THE SEA.

ACTS xxvii. 1-3; xxviii. 16.

THIS chapter terminates our survey of the Acts of the Apostles, and leads us at the same time to contemplate the Apostle of the Gentiles

and he became an apostate: see on this subject Lightfoot, "Ignatius and Polycarp," vol. i. pp. 38, 393, 603.

\*Quietism, Jansenism, and Quakerism were all manifestations of the same spirit, and arose about the same time. Molinos was the founder of Quietism in Spain. A concise account of the movement will be found in Schaff's "Theological Encyclopædia" in connection with the names of Molinos and Guyon.



in a new light as a traveller and as a prisoner, in both which aspects he has much to teach us. When St. Paul was despatched to the judgment-seat of Cæsar from the port of Cæsarea, he had arrived at the middle of his long captivity. Broadly speaking, he was five years a prisoner from the day of his arrest at Jerusalem till his release by the decision of Nero. He was a prisoner for more than two years when Festus sent him to Rome, and then at Rome he spent two more years in captivity, while his voyage occupied fully six months. Let us now first of all look at that captivity, and strive to discover those purposes of good therein which God hides amidst all his dispensations and chastisements.

We do not always realise what a length of time was consumed in the imprisonments of St. Paul. He must have spent from the middle of 58 to the beginning of 63 as a prisoner, cut off from many of those various activities in which he had previously laboured so profitably for God's cause. That must have seemed to himself and to many others a terrible loss to the gospel; and yet now, as we look back from our vantage-point, we can see many reasons why the guidance of his heavenly Father may have led directly to this imprisonment, which proved exceedingly useful for himself and his own soul's health, for the past guidance and for the perpetual edification of the Church of Christ. There is a text in Ephesians iv. 1 which throws some light on this incident. In that Epistle, written when St. Paul was a captive at Rome, he describes himself thus, "I therefore the prisoner *in* the Lord," or "the prisoner *of* the Lord," as the Authorised Version puts it. These words occur as the beginning of the Epistle for the Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity. Now there is often a marvellous amount of spiritual wisdom and instruction to be gained from a comparison between the epistles and gospels and the collects for each Sunday. All my readers may not agree in the whole theological system which underlies the Prayer Book, but every one will acknowledge that its services and their construction are the result of rich and varied spiritual experiences extending over a period of more than a thousand years. The mere contrast of an epistle and of a collect will often suggest thoughts deep and searching. So it is with this text, "I therefore the prisoner in the Lord." It is preceded by the brief pithy prayer, "Lord, we pray Thee that Thy grace may always prevent and follow us, and make us continually to be given to all good works, through Jesus Christ our Lord." The words of St. Paul to the Ephesians speaking of himself as the prisoner of God and in God suggested immediately the idea of God's grace surrounding, shaping, constraining to His service every external circumstance; and thus led to the formation of the collect which in fact prays that we may realise ourselves as so completely God's as, like the Apostle, continually to be given to all good works. St. Paul realised himself as so prevented, using that word in its ancient sense, preceded and followed by God's grace, guarded before and behind by it, that he looked beyond the things seen, and discarding all secondary agents and all lower instruments, he viewed his imprisonment as God's own immediate work.

I. Let us then see in what way we may regard St. Paul's imprisonment as an arrange-

ment and outcome of Divine love. Take, for instance, St. Paul in his own personal life. This period of imprisonment, of enforced rest and retirement, may have been absolutely necessary for him. St. Paul had spent many a long and busy year building up the spiritual life of others, founding churches, teaching converts, preaching, debating, struggling, suffering. His life had been one of intense spiritual, intellectual, bodily activity on behalf of others. But no one can be engaged in intense activity without wasting some of the spiritual life and force necessary for himself. Religious work, the most direct spiritual activity, visiting the sick, or preaching the gospel, or celebrating the sacraments, make a tremendous call upon our devotional powers and directly tend to lower our spiritual vitality, unless we seek abundant and frequent renewal thereof at the source of all spiritual vitality and life. Now God by this long imprisonment took St. Paul aside once again, as He had taken him aside twenty years before, amid the rocks of Sinai. God laid hold of him in his career of external business, as He laid hold of Moses in the court of Pharaoh, leading him into the wilderness of Midian for forty long years. God made St. Paul His prisoner that, having laboured for others, and having tended diligently their spiritual vineyard, he might now watch over and tend his own for a time. And the wondrous manner in which he profited by his imprisonment is manifest from this very Epistle to the Ephesians, in which he describes himself as God's prisoner—not, be it observed, the prisoner of the Jews, or of the Romans, or of Cæsar, but as the prisoner of God—dealing in the profoundest manner, as that Epistle does, with the greatest mysteries of the Christian faith. St. Paul had an opportunity during those four or five years, such as he never had before, of realising, digesting, and assimilating in all their fulness the doctrines he had so long proclaimed to others, and was thus enabled out of the depth of his own personal experience to preach what he felt and knew to be true, the only kind of teaching which will ever be worth anything.

Again, St. Paul designates himself the prisoner of the Lord because of the benefits his imprisonment conferred upon the Church of Christ in various ways. Take his imprisonment at Cæsarea alone. We are not expressly told anything about his labours during that time. But knowing St. Paul's intense energy we may be sure that the whole local Christian community established in that important centre whence the gospel could diffuse itself as far as the extremest west on the one side and the extremest east on the other, was permeated by his teaching and vitalised by his example. He was allowed great freedom, as the Acts declares. Felix "gave orders to the centurion that he should be kept in charge, and should have indulgence; and not to forbid any of his friends to minister unto him." If we take the various centurions to whom he was intrusted, we may be sure that St. Paul must have omitted no opportunity of leading them to Christ. St. Paul seems to have known how to make his way to the hearts of the Roman soldiers, as his subsequent treatment by Julius the centurion shows, and that permission of the governor would be liberally interpreted when deputies from distant churches sought his presence. Messengers from the va-



rious missions he had founded must have had recourse to Cæsarea during those two years spent there, and thence too was doubtless despatched many a missive of advice and exhortation. At Cæsarea, too, may then have been written the Gospel of St. Luke. Lewin (vol. i. p. 221), indeed, places its composition at Philippi, where St. Luke laboured for several years prior to St. Paul's visit in 57 A. D. after leaving Ephesus; and he gives as his reason for this conclusion that St. Paul called St. Luke in 2 Cor. viii. 18, written about that time, "the brother whose praise is in the Gospel," referring to his Gospel then lately published. I think the suggestion much more likely that St. Luke took advantage of this pause in St. Paul's activity to write his Gospel at Cæsarea when he had not merely the assistance of the Apostle himself, but of Philip the deacon, and was within easy reach of St. James and the Jerusalem Church. St. Luke's Gospel bears evident traces of St. Paul's ideas and doctrine, was declared by Irenæus ("Hær.," iii. 1) to have been composed under his direction, and may with much probability be regarded as one of the blessed results flowing forth from St. Paul's detention as Christ's prisoner given by Him in charge to the Roman governor.

The Apostle's Roman imprisonment again was most profitable to the Church of the imperial capital. The Church of Rome had been founded by the efforts of individuals. Private Christians did the work, not apostles or eminent evangelists. St. Paul came to it first of all as a prisoner, and found it a flourishing church. And yet he benefited and blessed it greatly. He could not, indeed, preach to crowded audiences in synagogues or porticos as he had done elsewhere. But he blessed the Church of Rome most chiefly by his individual efforts. This man came to him into his own hired house, and that man followed him attracted by the magnetic influence he seemed to bear about. The soldiers appointed as his keepers were told the story of the Cross and the glad tidings of the resurrection life, and these individual efforts were fruitful in vast results, so that even into the household and palace of the Cæsars did this patient, quiet, evangelistic work extend its influence. Nowhere else, in fact, not even in Corinth, where St. Paul spent two whole years openly teaching without any serious interruption; not even in Ephesus, where he laboured so long that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word; nowhere else was the Apostle's ministry so effective as here in Rome, where the prisoner of the Lord was confined to individual effort and completely laid aside from more public and enlarged activity. It was with St. Paul as it is with God's messengers still. It is not eloquent or excited public efforts, or platform addresses, or public debates, or clever books that are most fruitful in spiritual results. Nay, it is often the quiet individual efforts of private Christians, the testimony of a patient sufferer perhaps, the witness all-powerful with men, of a life transformed through and through by Christian principle, and lived in the perpetual sunshine of God's reconciled countenance. These are the testimonies that speak most effectually for God, most directly to souls.

Lastly, St. Paul's imprisonment blessed the Church of every age, and through it blessed mankind at large far more than his liberty and

his external activity could have done in one other direction. Is it not a contradiction in terms to say that the imprisonment of this courageous leader, this eloquent preacher, this keen, subtle debater, should have been more profitable to the Church than the exercise of his external freedom and liberty, when all these dormant powers would have found ample scope for their complete manifestation? And yet if Christ had not laid His arresting hand upon the active, external labour in which St. Paul had been absorbed, if Christ had not cast the busy Apostle into the Roman prison-house, the Church of all future time would have been deprived of those masterly expositions of Christian truth which she now enjoys in the various Epistles of the Captivity, and specially in those addresses to the churches of Ephesus, Philippi, and Colossæ. We have now noted some of the blessings resulting from St. Paul's five years' captivity, and indicated a line of thought which may be applied to the whole narrative contained in the two chapters with which we are dealing. St. Paul was a captive, and that captivity gave him access at Cæsarea to various classes of society, to the soldiers, and to all that immense crowd of officials connected with the seat of government, quæstors, tribunes, assessors, apparitors, scribes, advocates. His captivity then led him on board ship, and brought him into contact with the sailors and with a number of passengers drawn from diverse lands. A storm came on, and then the Apostle's self-possession, his calm Christian courage, when every one else was panic-stricken, gave him influence over the motley crowd. The waves flung the ship of Alexandria in which he was travelling upon Malta, and his stay there during the tempestuous winter months became the basis of the conversion of its inhabitants. Everywhere in St. Paul's life and course at this season we can trace the outcome of Divine love, the power of Divine providence shaping God's servant for His own purposes, restraining man's wrath when it waxed too fierce, and causing the remainder of that wrath to praise Him by its blessed results.

II. Let us now gather up into a brief narrative the story contained in these two chapters, so that we may gain a bird's-eye view over the whole. Festus entered upon his provincial rule about June, A. D. 60. According to Roman law the outgoing governor, of whatever kind he was, had to await his successor's arrival and hand over the reins of government—a very natural and proper rule which all civilised governments observe. We have no idea how vast the apparatus of provincial, or, as we should say, colonial government among the Romans was, and how minute their regulations were, till we take up one of those helps which German scholars have furnished towards the knowledge of antiquity, as, for instance, Mommsen's "Roman Provinces," which can be read in English, or Marquardt's "Römische Staatsverwaltung," vol. i., which can be studied either in German or French.\* The very city where first the new governor was to appear and the method of fulfilling his duties as the Judge of Assize were minutely laid down and duly followed a well-established

\*The governors brought with them regular bodies of assessors, who assisted them like a privy council. There is a reference to this council in Acts xxv. 12 and xxvi. 30. These councils served as training schools in law and statesmanship for the young Roman nobility. See Marquardt, *l. c.*, p. 391.



routine. We find these things indicated in the case of Festus. He arrived at Cæsarea. He waited three days till his predecessor had left for Rome, and then he ascended to Jerusalem to make the acquaintance of that very troublesome and very influential city. Festus then returned to Cæsarea after ten days spent in gaining an intimate knowledge of the various points of a city which often before had been the centre of rebellion, and where he might at any moment be called upon to act with sternness and decision. He at once heard St. Paul's cause as the Jews had demanded, brought him a second time before Agrippa, and then in virtue of his appeal to Cæsar despatched him to Rome in care of a centurion and a small band of soldiers, a large guard not being necessary, as the prisoners were not ordinary criminals, but for the most part men of some position, Roman citizens, doubtless, who had, like the Apostle, appealed unto the judgment of Cæsar.\* St. Paul embarked, accompanied by Luke and Aristarchus, as the ship, being an ordinary trading vessel, contained not only prisoners, but also passengers as well. We do not intend to enter upon the details of St. Paul's voyage, because that lies beyond our range, and also because it has been thoroughly done in the various "Lives" of the Apostle, and above all in the exhaustive work of Mr. James Smith of Jordanhills. He has devoted a volume to this one topic, has explored every source of knowledge, has entered into discussions touching the build and rigging of ancient ships and the direction of Mediterranean winds, has minutely investigated the scenery and history of such places as Malta where the Apostle was wrecked, and has illustrated the whole with beautiful plates and carefully drawn maps. That work has gone through four editions at least, and deserves a place in every man's library who wishes to understand the life and labours of St. Paul or study the Acts of the Apostles. We may, however, without trenching on Mr. Smith's field, indicate the outline of the route followed by the holy travellers. They embarked at Cæsarea under the care of a centurion of the Augustan cohort, or regiment, as we should say, whose name was Julius. They took their passage at first in a ship of Adramyttium, which was probably sailing from Cæsarea to lie up for the winter. Adramyttium was a seaport situated up in the northwest of Asia Minor near Troas, and the Sea of Marmora, or, to put it in modern language, near Constantinople. The ship was in fact, about to travel over exactly the same ground as St. Paul himself had traversed more than two years before when he proceeded from Troas to Jerusalem. Surely, some one may say, this was not the direct route to Rome. But then we must throw ourselves back into the circumstances of the period. There was then no regular transport service. People, even the most exalted, had to avail themselves of whatever means of communication chance offered. Cicero, when chief governor of Asia, had, as we have already noted, to travel part of the way from Rome in undecked vessels, while ten years later than St. Paul's voyage the Emperor Vespasian himself, the greatest potentate in the world, had no trireme or war-

ship waiting upon him, but when he wished to proceed from Palestine to Rome, at the time of the great siege of Jerusalem, was obliged to take a passage in an ordinary merchant vessel or corn-ship.\* It is no wonder, then, that the prisoners were put on board a coasting vessel of Asia, the centurion knowing right well that in sailing along by the various ports which studded the shore of that province they would find some other vessel into which they could be transferred. And this expectation was realised. The centurion and his prisoners sailed first of all to Sidon, where St. Paul found a Christian Church. This circumstance illustrates again the quiet and steady growth of the gospel kingdom, and also gave Julius an opportunity of exhibiting his kindly feelings towards the Apostle by permitting him to go and visit the brethren. In fact, we would conclude from this circumstance that St. Paul had already begun to establish an influence over the mind of Julius which must have culminated in his conversion. Here, at Sidon, he permits him to visit his Christian friends; a short time after his regard for Paul leads him to restrain his troops from executing the merciless purposes their Roman discipline had taught them and slaying all the prisoners lest they should escape; and yet once again, when the prisoners land on Italian soil and stand beside the charming scenery of the Bay of Naples, he permits the Apostle to spend a week with the Christians of Puteoli. After this brief visit to the Sidonian Church, the vessel bearing the Apostle pursues its way by Cyprus to the port of Myra at the southwestern corner of Asia Minor, a neighbourhood which St. Paul knew right well and had often visited. It was there at Patara, close at hand, that he had embarked on board the vessel which carried him two years before to Palestine, and it was there too at Perga of Pamphylia that he had first landed on the shores of the Asiatic province, seeking to gather its teeming millions into the fold of Jesus-Christ. Here at Myra the centurion realised his expectations, and finding an Alexandrian transport sailing to Italy he put the prisoners on board. From Myra they seem to have sailed at once, and from the day they left it their misfortunes began. The wind was contrary, blowing from the west, and to make any way they had to sail to the island Cnidus, which lay northwest of Myra. After a time, when the wind became favourable, they sailed southwest till they reached the island of Crete, which lay half-way between Greece and Asia Minor. They then proceeded along the southern coast of this island till they were struck by a sudden wind coming from the northeast, which drove them first to the neighbouring island of Clauda, and then, after a fortnight's drifting through a tempestuous sea, hurled the ship upon the shores of Malta. The wreck took place towards the close of October or early in November, and the whole party were obliged to remain in Malta till the spring season permitted the opening of navigation. During his stay in Malta St. Paul performed several miracles. With his intensely practical and helpful nature the Apostle flung himself into the work of common life, as soon as the shipwrecked

\* Roman citizens had the right of appeal, no matter where they were born or of what race they came or how humble their lot in life. Mere provincials devoid of citizenship, no matter how distinguished their position, had not that right.

\* See Josephus, "Wars," VII. ii. 1. It was exactly the same with Titus, Vespasian's son, after the war ended. He travelled from Alexandria to Italy in a trading vessel. Suet., "Tit.," c. 5.



party had got safe to land. He always did so. He never despised, like some religious fanatics, the duties of this world. On board the ship he had been the most useful adviser to the whole party. He had exhorted the captain of the ship not to leave a good haven; he had stirred up the soldiers to prevent the sailors' escape; he had urged them all alike, crew and passengers and soldiers, to take food, foreseeing the terrible struggle they would have to make when the ship broke up. He was the most practical adviser his companions could possibly have had, and he was their wisest and most religious adviser too. His words on board ship teem with lessons for ourselves, as well as for his fellow-passengers. He trusted in God, and received special revelations from heaven, but he did not therefore neglect every necessary human precaution. The will of God was revealed to him that he had been given all the souls that sailed with him, and the angel of God cheered and comforted him in that storm-driven vessel in Adria, as often before when howling mobs thirsted like evening wolves for his blood. But the knowledge of God's purposes did not cause his exertions to relax. He knew that God's promises are conditional upon man's exertions, and therefore he urged his companions to be fellow-workers with God in the matter of their own salvation from impending death. And as it was on board the ship, so was it on the shore. The rain was descending in torrents, and the drenched passengers were shivering in the cold. St. Paul shows the example, so contagious in a crowd, of a man who had his wits about him, knew what to do and would do it. He gathered therefore a bundle of sticks, and helped to raise a larger fire in the house which had received him. A man is marvellously helpful among a cowering and panic-stricken crowd which has just escaped death who will rouse them to some practical efforts for themselves, and will lead the way as the Apostle did on this occasion. And his action brought its own reward. He had gained influence over the passengers, soldiers, and crew by his practical helpfulness. He was now to gain influence over the barbarian islanders in exactly the same way. A viper issued from the fire and fastened on his hand. The natives expected to see him fall down dead; but after looking awhile and perceiving no change, they concluded him to be a god who had come to visit them. This report soon spread. The chief man therefore of the island sought out St. Paul and entertained him. His father was sick of dysentery and the Apostle healed him, using prayer and the imposition of hands as the outward symbols and means of the cure, which spread his fame still farther and led to other miraculous cures. Three months thus passed away. No distinct missionary work is indeed recorded by St. Luke, but this is his usual custom in writing his narrative. He supposes that Theophilus, his friend and correspondent, will understand that the Apostle ever kept the great end of his life in view, never omitting to teach Christ and Him crucified to the perishing multitudes where his lot was cast. But St. Luke was not one of those who are always attempting to chronicle spiritual successes or to tabulate the number of souls led to Christ. He left that to another day and to a better and more infallible judge. In three months' time, when February's days grew longer

and milder winds began to blow, the rescued travellers joined a corn-ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the island, and all set forward towards Rome. They touched at Syracuse in Sicily, sailed thence to Rhegium, passing through the Straits of Messina, whence, a favourable south wind springing up, and the vessel running before it at the rate of seven knots an hour, the usual speed for ancient vessels under the circumstances, they arrived at Puteoli, one hundred and eighty-two miles distant from Rhegium, in the course of some thirty hours. At Puteoli the sea voyage ended. It may at first seem strange to us with our modern notions that St. Paul was allowed to tarry at Puteoli with the local Christian Church for seven days. But then we must remember that St. Paul and the centurion did not live in the days of telegraphs and railway trains. There was doubtless a guard-room, barrack, or prison in which the prisoners could be accommodated. The centurion and guard were weary after a long and dangerous journey, and they would be glad of a brief period of repose before they set out again towards the capital. This hypothesis alone would be quite sufficient to account for the indulgence granted to St. Paul, even supposing that his Christian teaching had made no impression on the centurion. The Church existing then at Puteoli is another instance of that quiet diffusion of the gospel which was going on all over the world without any noise or boasting. We have frequently called attention to this, as at Tyre, Ptolemais, Sidon, and here again we find a little company of saintly men and women gathered out of the world and living the ideal life of purity and faith beside the waters of the Bay of Naples. And yet it is quite natural that we should find them at Puteoli, because it was one of the great ports which received the corn-ships of Alexandria and the merchantmen of Cæsarea and Antioch into her harbour, and in these ships many a Christian came bringing the seed of eternal life, which he diligently sowed as he travelled along the journey of life. In fact, seeing that the Church of Rome had sprung up and flourished so abundantly, taking its origin not from any Apostle's teaching, but simply from such sporadic effects, we cannot wonder that Puteoli, which lay right on the road from the East to Rome, should also have gained a blessing. A circumstance, however, has come to light within the last thirty years which does surprise us concerning this same neighbourhood, showing how extensively the gospel had permeated and honeycombed the country parts of Italy within the lifetime of the first apostles and disciples of Jesus Christ. Puteoli was a trading town, and Jews congregated in such places, and trade lends an element of seriousness to life which prepares a ground fitted for the good seed of the kingdom. But pleasure pure and unmitigated and a life devoted to its pursuit do not prepare such a soil. Puteoli was a trading city, but Pompeii was a pleasure-loving city thinking of nothing else, and where sin and iniquity consequently abounded. Yet Christianity had made its way into Pompeii in the lifetime of the apostles. How then do we know this? This is one of the results of modern archæological investigations and of epigraphical research, two great sources of new light upon early Christian history which have been only of late years duly appreciated. Pompeii, as every



person of moderate education knows, was totally overthrown by the first great eruption of Mount Vesuvius in the year 79 A. D. It is a curious circumstance that contemporaneous authors make but the very slightest and most dubious references to that destruction, though one would have thought that the literature of the time would have rung with it; proving conclusively, if proof be needed, how little the argument from silence is worth, when the great writers who tell minutely about the intrigues and vices of emperors and statesmen of Rome do not bestow a single chapter upon the catastrophe which overtook two whole cities of Italy.\* These cities remained for seventeen hundred years concealed from human sight or knowledge till revealed in the year 1755 by excavations systematically pursued. All the inscriptions found therein were undoubtedly and necessarily the work of persons who lived before A. D. 79 and then perished. Now at the time that Pompeii was destroyed there was a municipal election going on, and there were found on the walls numerous inscriptions formed with charcoal which were the substitutes then used for the literature and placards with which every election decorates our walls. Among these inscriptions of mere passing and transitory interest, there was one found which illustrates the point at which we have been labouring, for there, amid the election notices of 79 A. D., there appeared, scribbled by some idle hand, the brief words, "Igni gaude, Christiane" ("O Christian, rejoice in the fire"), proving clearly that Christians existed in Pompeii at that time, that they were known as Christians and not under any other appellation, that persecution and death had reached them, and that they possessed and displayed the same undaunted spirit as their great leader and teacher St. Paul, being enabled like him to rejoice even amid the sevenfold-heated fires, and in view of the resurrection life to lift the victorious pæan, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

After the week's rest at Puteoli the centurion marched towards Rome. The Roman congregation had received notice of St. Paul's arrival by this time, and so the brethren despatched a deputation to meet an apostle with whom they were already well acquainted through the epistle he had sent them, as well as through the reports of various private Christians like Phœbe, the deaconess of Cenchreæ. Two deputations from the Roman Church met him, one at Appii Forum, about thirty miles, another at the Three Taverns, about twenty miles from the city. How wonderfully the heart of the Apostle must have been cheered by these kindly Christian attentions! We have before noticed in the cases of his Athenian sojourn and elsewhere how keenly alive he was to the offices of Christian friendship, how cheered and strengthened he was by Christian companionship. It was now the same once again as it was then. Support and sympathy were now more needed than ever before, for St. Paul was going up to Rome not knowing what should happen to him there or what should be his sentence at the hands of that emperor whose cruel character was now famous. And as it was at Athens and at Corinth and else-

\* This point is elaborated by Mr. Cazenove in an article on the Theban Legion contained in the "Dictionary of Christian Biography," iii. 642.

where, so was it here on the Appian Way and amid the depressing surroundings and unhealthy atmosphere of those Pomptine Marshes through which he was passing; "when Paul saw the brethren, he thanked God, and took courage." And now the whole company of primitive Christians proceeded together to Rome, allowed doubtless by the courtesy and thoughtfulness of Julius ample opportunities of private conversation. Having arrived at the imperial city, the centurion hastened to present himself and his charge to the captain of the prætorian guard, whose duty it was to receive prisoners consigned to the judgment of the Emperor. Upon the favourable report of Julius, St. Paul was not detained in custody, but suffered to dwell in his own hired lodgings, where he established a mission station whence he laboured most effectively both amongst Jews and Gentiles during two whole years. St. Paul began his work at Rome exactly as he did everywhere else. He called together the chief of the Jews, and through them strove to gain a lodgment in the synagogue. He began work at once. After three days, as soon as he had recovered from the fatigue of the rapid march along the Appian Way, he sent for the chiefs of the Roman synagogues, which were very numerous.\* How, it may be thought, could an unknown Jew entering Rome venture to summon the heads of the Jewish community, many of them men of wealth and position? But, then, we must remember that St. Paul was no ordinary Jew from the point of view taken by Roman society. He had arrived in Rome a state prisoner, and he was a Roman citizen of Jewish birth, and this at once gave him position entitling him to a certain amount of consideration. St. Paul told his story to these chief men of the Jews, the local Sanhedrin perhaps, recounted the bad treatment he had received at the hands of the Jews of Jerusalem, and indicated the character of his teaching which he wished to expound to them. "For this cause therefore did I entreat you to see and speak with me: for because of the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain," emphasising the Hope of Israel, or their Messianic expectation, as the cause of his imprisonment, exactly as he had done some months before when pleading before King Agrippa (chap. xxvi. 6, 7, 22, 23). Having thus briefly indicated his desires, the Jewish council intimated that no communication had been made to them from Jerusalem about St. Paul. It may have been that his lengthened imprisonment at Cæsarea had caused the Sanhedrin to relax their vigilance, though we see that their hostility still continued as bitter as ever when Festus arrived in Jerusalem and afterwards led to St. Paul's appeal; or perhaps they had not had time to forward a communication from the Jerusalem Sanhedrin to the Jewish authorities at Rome; or perhaps, which is the most likely of all, they thought it useless to prosecute their suit before Nero, who would scoff at the real charges which dealt merely with questions of Jewish customs, and which imperial lawyers therefore would regard as utterly unworthy the imprisonment or death of a Roman citizen. At any rate the Jewish council gave him a hearing, when St. Paul followed exactly the same lines as in the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia and in

\* See for proof of this Harnack's article in the *Princeton Review*, quoted above.



his speech before Agrippa. He pointed out the gradual development of God's purposes in the law and the prophets, showing how they had been all fulfilled in Jesus Christ. It was with the Jews at Rome as with the Jews elsewhere. Some believed and some believed not, as Paul preached unto them. The meeting was much more one for discussion than for addresses. From morning till evening the disputation continued, till at last the Apostle dismissed them with the stern words of the prophet Isaiah, taken from the sixth chapter of his prophecy, where he depicts the hopeless state of those who obsti-

nately close their ears to the voice of conviction. But the Jews of Rome do not seem to have been like those of Thessalonica, Ephesus, Corinth, and Jerusalem in one respect. They did not actively oppose St. Paul or attempt to silence him by violent means, for the last glimpse we get of the Apostle in St. Luke's narrative is this: "He abode two whole years in his own hired dwelling, and received all that went in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, none forbidding him."



THE EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL  
TO THE ROMANS







## PREFACE.

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HE who attempts to expound the Epistle to the Romans, when his sacred task is over, is little disposed to speak about his Commentary ; he is occupied rather with an ever deeper reverence and wonder over the Text which he has been permitted to handle, a Text so full of a marvellous man, above all so full of God.

But it seems needful to say a few words about the style of the running Translation of the Epistle which will be found interwoven with this Exposition.

The writer is aware that the translation is often rough and formless. His apology is that it has been done with a view not to a connected reading, but to the explanation of details. A rough piece of rendering, which would be a misrepresentation in a continuous version, because it would be out of scale with the general style, seems to be another matter when it only calls the reader's attention to a particular point presented for study at the moment.

Again, he is aware that his rendering of the Greek article in many passages (for example, where he has ventured to explain it by "*our*," "*true*" (etc.), is open to criticism. But he intends no more in such places than a suggestion ; and he is conscious, as he has said sometimes at the place, that it is almost impossible to render the article as he has done in these cases without a certain exaggeration, which must be discounted by the reader.

The use of the article in Greek is one of the simplest and most assured things in grammar, as to its main principles. But as regards some details of the application of principle, there is nothing in grammar which seems so easily to elude the line of law.

It is scarcely necessary to say that on questions of literary criticism, which in no respect, or at most remotely, concern exposition, this Commentary says little or nothing. It is well known to literary students of the Epistle that some phenomena in the text, from the close of ch. xiv. onwards, have raised important and complex questions. It has been asked whether the great Doxology (xvi. 25-27) always stood where it now stands ; whether it should stand at the close of our ch. xiv. ; whether its style and wording allow us to regard it as contemporary with the Epistle as a whole, or whether they indicate that it was written later in St. Paul's course ; whether our fifteenth and sixteenth chapters, while Pauline, are not out of place in an Epistle to Rome ; in particular, whether the list of names in ch. xvi. is compatible with a Roman destination.

These questions, with one exception, that which affects the list of names, are not even touched upon in the present Exposition. The expositor, personally convinced that the pages we know as the Epistle to the Romans are not only all genuine but all intimately coherent, has not felt himself called to discuss, in a devotional writing, subjects more proper to the lecture-room and the study ; and which certainly would be out of place in the ministry of the pulpit.

Meantime, those who care to read a masterly *debate* on the literary problems in question may consult the recently published volume (1893) "*Biblical Studies*," by the



late Bishop Lightfoot, of Durham. That volume contains (pp. 287-374) three critical Essays (1869, 1871), two by Bishop Lightfoot, one by the late Dr. Hort, on "The Structure and Destination of the Epistle to the Romans." The two illustrious friends,—Hort criticising Lightfoot, Lightfoot replying to Hort,—examine the phenomena of Rom. xv.-xvi. Lightfoot advocates the theory that St. Paul, some time after writing the Epistle, issued an abridged edition for wider circulation, omitting the direction to Rome, closing the document with our ch. xiv., and then (not before) writing, as a finale, the great Doxology. Hort holds to the practical entirety of the Epistle as we have it, and reasons at length for the contemporaneousness of xvi. 25-27 with the rest.\*

We may note here that both Hort and Lightfoot contend for *the conciliatory* aim of the Roman Epistle. They regard the great passage about Israel (ix.-xi.) as in some sense the heart of the Epistle, and the doctrinal passages preceding this as all more or less meant to bear on the relations not only of the Law and the Gospel, but of the Jew and the Gentile as members of the one Christian Church. There is great value in this suggestion, explained and illustrated as it is in the Essays in question. But the thought may easily be worked to excess. It seems plain to the present writer that when the Epistle is studied from within its deepest spiritual element, it shows us the Apostle fully mindful of the largest aspects of the life and work of the Church, but also, and yet more, occupied with the problem of the relation of the believing sinner to God. The question of personal salvation was never, by St. Paul, forgotten in that of Christian policy.

To return for a moment to this Exposition, or rather to its setting; it may be doubted whether, in imagining the dictation of the Epistle to be begun and completed by St. Paul *within one day* we have not imagined "a hard thing." But at worst it is not an impossible thing, if the Apostle's utterance was as sustained as his thought.

It remains only to express the hope that these pages may serve in some degree to convey to their readers a new *Tolle, Lege* for the divine Text itself; if only by suggesting to them sometimes the words of St. Augustine, "*To Paul I appeal from all interpreters of his writings.*"

\* See also Westcott and Hort's "N. T. in the Original Greek," vol. 2, Appendix, pp. 110-114 (ed. 1).



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# THE EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL TO THE ROMANS.

BY THE REV. HANDLEY C. G. MOULE, M. A., D. D.

## CHAPTER I.

### TIME, PLACE, AND OCCASION.

It is the month of February, in the year of Christ 58.\* In a room in the house of Gaius, a wealthy Corinthian Christian, Paul the Apostle, having at his side his amanuensis Tertius, addresses himself to write to the converts of the mission at Rome.

The great world meanwhile is rolling on its way. It is the fourth year of Nero; he is Consul the third time, with Valerius Messala for his colleague; Poppæa has lately caught the unworthy Prince in the net of her bad influence. Domitius Corbulo has just resumed the war with Parthia, and prepares to penetrate the highlands of Armenia. Within a few weeks, in the full spring, an Egyptian imposter is about to inflame Jerusalem with his Messianic claim, to lead four thousand fanatics into the desert, and to return to the city with a host of thirty thousand men, only to be totally routed by the legionaries of Felix. For himself, the Apostle is about to close his three months' stay at Corinth; he has heard of plots against his life, and will in prudence decline the more direct route from Cenchrea by sea, striking northward for Philippi, and thence over the Ægæan to Troas. Jerusalem he must visit, if possible, before May is over, for he has by him the Greek collections to deliver to the poor converts of Jerusalem. Then, in the vista of his further movements, he sees Rome, and thinks with a certain apprehension, yet with longing hope, about life and witness there.

A Greek Christian woman is about to visit the City, Phœbe, a ministrant of the mission at Cenchrea. He must commend her to the Roman brethren; and a deliberate Letter to them is suggested by this personal need.

His thoughts have long gravitated to the City of the World. Not many months before, at Ephesus, when he had "purposed in the Spirit" to visit Jerusalem, he had said, with an emphasis which his biographer remembered, "I must also see Rome" (Acts xix. 21); "I must," in the sense of a divine decree, which had written this journey down in the plan of his life. He was assured too, by circumstantial and perhaps by supernatural signs, that he had "now no more place in these parts" (Rom. xv. 23)—that is, in the Eastern Roman world where hitherto all his labour had been spent. The Lord, who in former days had shut Paul up to a track which led him through Asia Minor to the Ægæan, and across the Ægæan to Europe (Acts xvi.), now prepared to guide him, though by paths which His servant knew not, from Eastern Europe to Western, and before all things to the City. Amongst these providential preparations was a growing occupation of the Apostle's thought with persons and interests in the Christian circle there. Here, as we have seen, was Phœbe, about to take ship for Italy. Yonder, in the great Capital, were

now resident again the beloved and faithful Aquila and Prisca, no longer excluded by the Claudian edict, and proving already, we may fairly conclude, the central influence in the mission, whose first days perhaps dated from the Pentecost itself, when Roman "strangers" (Acts ii. 10) saw and heard the wonders and the message of that hour. At Rome also lived other believers personally known to Paul, drawn by unrecorded circumstances to the Centre of the world. "His well-beloved" Epænetus was there; Mary, who had sometimes tried hard to help him; Andronicus, and Junias, and Herodion, his relatives; Amplias and Stachys, men very dear to him; Urbanus, who had worked for Christ at his side; Rufus, no common Christian in his esteem, and Rufus' mother, who had once watched over Paul with a mother's love. All these rise before him as he thinks of Phœbe, and her arrival, and the faces and the hands which at his appeal would welcome her in the Lord, under the holy freemasonry of primeval Christian fellowship.

Besides, he has been hearing about the actual state of that all-important mission. As "all roads led to Rome," so all roads led from Rome, and there were Christian travellers everywhere (i. 8) who could tell him how the Gospel fared among the metropolitan brethren. As he heard of them, so he prayed for them, "without ceasing" (i. 9), and made request too for himself, now definitely and urgently, that his way might be opened to visit them at last.

To pray for others, if the prayer is prayer indeed, and based to some extent on knowledge, is a sure way to deepen our interest in them, and our sympathetic insight into their hearts and conditions. From the human side, nothing more than these tidings and these prayers was needed to draw from St. Paul a written message to be placed in Phœbe's care. From this same human side again, when he once addressed himself to write, there were circumstances of thought and action which would naturally give direction to his message.

He stood amidst circumstances most significant and suggestive in matters of Christian truth. Quite recently his Judaist rivals had invaded the congregations of Galatia, and had led the impulsive converts there to quit what seemed their firm grasp on the truth of Justification by Faith only. To St. Paul this was no mere battle of abstract definitions, nor again was it a matter of merely local importance. The success of the alien teachers in Galatia showed him that the same specious mischiefs might win their way, more or less quickly, anywhere. And what would success mean? It would mean the loss of the joy of the Lord, and the strength of that joy, in the misguided Churches. Justification by Faith meant nothing less than *Christ all in all*, literally all in all, for sinful man's pardon and acceptance. It meant a profound simplicity of personal reliance altogether upon Him before the fiery holiness of eternal Law. It meant a look out and up, at once intense and unanxious, from alike the virtues and the guilt

\* See Lewin, "Fasti Sacri," § 1854, etc.



of man, to the mighty merits of the Saviour. It was precisely the foundation-fact of salvation, which secured that the process should be, from its beginning, not humanitarian but divine. To discredit *that* was not merely to disturb the order of a missionary community; it was to hurt the vitals of the Christian soul, tingeing with impure elements the mountain springs of the peace of God. Fresh as he was now from combating this evil in Galatia, St. Paul would be sure to have it in his thoughts when he turned to Rome; for there it was only too certain that his active adversaries would do their worst; probably they were at work already.

Then, he had been just engaged also with the problems of Christian *life*, in the mission at Corinth. There the main trouble was less of creed than of conduct. In the Corinthian Epistles we find no great traces of an energetic heretical propaganda, but rather a bias in the converts towards a strange license of temper and life. Perhaps this was even accentuated by a popular logical assent to the truth of Justification *taken alone*, isolated from other concurrent truths, tempting the Corinthian to dream that he might "continue in sin that grace might abound." If such were his state of spiritual thought, he would encounter (by his own fault) a positive moral danger in the supernatural "Gifts" which at Corinth about that time seem to have appeared with quite abnormal power. An Antinomian theory, in the presence of such exaltations, would lead the man easily to the conception that he was too free and too rich in the supernatural order to be the servant of common duties, and even of common morals. Thus the Apostle's soul would be full of the need of expounding to its depths the vital harmony of the Lord's work *for* the believer and the Lord's work *in* him; the co-ordination of a free acceptance with both the precept and the possibility of holiness. He must show once for all how the justified are bound to be pure and humble, and how they can so be, and what forms of practical dutifulness their life must take. He must make it clear for ever that the Ransom which releases also purchases; that the Lord's freeman is the Lord's property; that the Death of the Cross, reckoned as the death of the justified sinner, leads direct to his living union with the Risen One, including a union of will with will; and that thus the Christian life, if true to itself, *must* be a life of loyalty to every obligation, every relation, constituted in God's providence among men. The Christian who is not attentive to others, even where their mere prejudices and mistakes are in question, is a Christian out of character. So is the Christian who is not a scrupulously loyal citizen, recognising civil order as the will of God. So is the Christian who in any respect claims to live as he pleases, instead of as the bondservant of his Redeemer should live.

Another question had been pressing the Apostle's mind, and that for years, but recently with a special weight. It was the mystery of Jewish unbelief. Who can estimate the pain and greatness of that mystery in the mind of St. Paul? His own conversion, while it taught him patience with his old associates, must have filled him also with some eager hopes for them. Every deep and self-evidencing manifestation of God in a man's soul suggests to him naturally the thought of the glorious things possible in

the souls of others. Why should not the leading Pharisee, now converted, be the signal, and the means, of the conversion of the Sanhedrin, and of the people? But the hard mystery of sin crossed such paths of expectation, and more and more so as the years went on. Judaism outside the Church was stubborn, and energetically hostile. And within the Church, sad and ominous fact, it crept in underground, and sprung up in an embittered opposition to the central truths. What did all this mean? Where would it end? Had Israel sinned, collectively, beyond pardon and repentance? Had God cast off His people? These troublers of Galatia, these fiery rioters before the tribunal of Gallio at Corinth, did their conduct mean that all was over for the race of Abraham? The question was agony to Paul; and he sought his Lord's answer to it as a thing without which he could not live. That answer was full in his soul when he meditated his Letter to Rome, and thought of the Judaists there, and also of the loving Jewish friends of his heart there who would read his message when it came.

Thus we venture to describe the possible outward and inward conditions under which the Epistle to the Romans was conceived and written. Well do we recollect that our account is conjectural. But the Epistle in its wonderful fulness, both of outline and of detail, gives to such conjectures more than a shadow for basis. We do not forget again that the Epistle, whatever the Writer saw around him or felt within him, was, when produced, infinitely more than the resultant of Paul's mind and life; it was, and is, an oracle of God, a Scripture, a revelation of eternal facts and principles by which to live and die. As such we approach it in this book; not to analyse only or explain, but to submit and to believe; taking it as not only Pauline, but Divine. But then, it is not the less therefore Pauline. And this means that both the thought and the circumstances of St. Paul are to be traced and felt in it as truly, and as naturally, as if we had before us the letter of an Augustine, or a Luther, or a Pascal. He who chose the writers of the Holy Scriptures, many men scattered over many ages, used them each in his surroundings and in his character, yet so as to harmonise them all in the Book which, while many, is one. He used them with the sovereign skill of Deity. And that skilful use meant that He used their whole being, which He had made, and their whole circumstances, which He had ordered. They were indeed His amanuenses; nay, I fear not to say they were His pens. But He is such that He can manipulate as His facile implement no mere piece of mechanism, which, however subtle and powerful, is mechanism still, and can never truly cause anything; He can take a human personality, made in His own image, pregnant, formative, causative, in all its living thought, sensibility, and will, and can throw it freely upon its task of thinking and expression—and behold, the product will be His; His matter, His thought, His exposition, His Word, "living and abiding for ever."

Thus we enter in spirit the Corinthian citizen's house, in the sunshine of the early Greek spring, and find our way, invisible and unheard, to where Tertius sits with his reed-pen and strips of papyrus, and where Paul is prepared



to give him, word by word, sentence by sentence, this immortal message. Perhaps the corner of the room is heaped with hair-cloth from Cilicia, and the implements of the tent-maker. But the Apostle is now the guest of Gaius, a man whose means enable him to be "the host of the whole Church"; so we may rather think that for the time this manual toil is intermitted. Do we seem to see the form and face of him who is about to dictate? The mist of time is in our eyes; but we may credibly report that we find a small and much emaciated frame, and a face remarkable for its arched brows and wide forehead, and for the expressive mobility of the lips.\* We trace in looks, in manner and tone of utterance, and even in unconscious attitude and action, tokens of a mind rich in every faculty, a nature equally strong in energy and in sympathy, made both to govern and to win, to will and to love. The man is great and wonderful, a master soul, subtle, wise; and strong. Yet he draws us with pathetic force to his heart, as one who asks and will repay affection.

As we look on his face we think, with awe and gladness, that with those same thought-tired eyes (and are they not also troubled with disease?) he has literally seen, only twenty years ago, so he will quietly assure us, the risen and glorified JESUS. His work during those twenty years, his innumerable sufferings, above all, his spirit of perfect mental and moral sanity, yet of supernatural peace and love—all make his assurance absolutely trustworthy. He is a transfigured man since that sight of Jesus Christ, who now "dwells in his heart by faith," and uses him as the vehicle of His will and work. And now listen. The Lord is speaking through His servant. The scribe is busy with his pen, as the message of Christ is uttered through the soul and from the lips of Paul.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE WRITER AND HIS READERS.

#### ROMANS i. 1-7.

PAUL, a bondservant of Jesus Christ. So the man opens his Lord's message with his own name. We may, if we please, leave it and pass on, for to the letter-writer of that day it was as much a matter of course to prefix the personal name to the letter as it is to us to append it. But then, as now, the name was not a mere word of routine; certainly not in the communications of a religious leader. It avowed responsibility; it put in evidence a person. In a letter of public destination it set the man in the light and glare of publicity, as truly as when he spoke in the Christian assembly, or on the Areopagus, or from the steps of the castle at Jerusalem. It tells us here, on the threshold, that the messages we are about to read are given to us as "truth through personality"; they come through the mental and spiritual being of this wonderful and most real man. If we read his character aright in his letters, we see in him a fineness and dignity of

thought which would not make the publication of himself a light and easy thing. But his sensibilities, with all else he has, have been given to Christ (who never either slights or spoils such gifts, while He accepts them); and if it will the better win attention to the Lord that the servant should stand out conspicuously, to point to Him, it shall be done.

For he is indeed "Jesus Christ's bondservant"; not His ally merely, or His subject, or His friend. Recently, writing to the Galatian converts, he has been vindicating the glorious liberty of the Christian, set free at once from "the curse of the law" and from the mastery of self. But there too, at the close (vi. 17), he has dwelt on his own sacred bondage; "the brand of his Master, Jesus." The liberty of the Gospel is the silver side of the same shield whose side of gold is an unconditional vassalage to the liberating Lord. Our freedom is "in the Lord" alone; and to be "in the Lord," is to belong to Him as wholly as a healthy hand belongs, in its freedom, to the physical centre of life and will. To be a bondservant is terrible in the abstract. To be "Jesus Christ's bondservant" is Paradise, in the concrete. Self-surrender, taken alone, is a plunge into a cold void. When it is surrender to "the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20), it is the bright home-coming of the soul to the seat and sphere of life and power.

This bondservant of His now before us, dictating, is called to be an Apostle. Such is his particular department of servitude in the "great house." It is a rare commission—to be a chosen witness of the Resurrection, a divinely authorised "bearer" of the holy Name, a first founder and guide of the universal Church, a *legatus a latere* of the Lord Himself. Yet the apostleship, to St. Paul, is but a species of the one genus, bondservice. "To every man is his work," given by the one sovereign will. In a Roman household one slave would water the garden, another keep accounts, another in the library would do skilled literary work; yet all equally would be "not their own, but bought with a price." So in the Gospel, then, and now. All functions of Christians are alike expressions of the one will of Him who has purchased, and who "calls."

Meanwhile, this bondservant-apostle, because "under authority," carries authority. His Master has spoken to him, that he may speak. He writes to the Romans as man, as friend, but also as the "vessel of choice, to bear the Name" (Acts ix. 15) of Jesus Christ.

Such is the sole essential work and purpose of his life. He is separated to the Gospel of God; isolated from all other ruling aims to this. In some respects he is the least isolated of men; he is in contact all round with human life. Yet he is "separated." In Christ, and for Christ, he lives apart from even the worthiest personal ambitions. Richer than ever, since he "was in Christ" (xvi. 7), in all that makes man's nature wealthy, in power to know, to will, to love, he uses all his riches always for "this one thing," to make men understand "the Gospel of God." Such isolation, behind a thousand contacts, is the Lord's call for His true followers still.

"The Gospel": word almost too familiar now, till the thing is too little understood.

\* See Lewin, "Life and Epistles of St. Paul," ii. 411, for an engraving of a fine medallion, showing the heads of St. Paul and St. Peter. "The medal is referred to the close of the first century or the beginning of the second."



What is it? In its native meaning, its eternally proper meaning, it is the divine "Good Tidings." It is the announcement of Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour of men, in whom God and man meet with joy. That announcement stands in living relation to a bright chain of precepts, and also to the sacred darkness of convictions and warnings; we shall see this amply illustrated in this Epistle. But neither precepts nor threatenings are properly *the Gospel*. The Gospel saves from sin, and enables for holy conduct. But in itself it is the pure, mere message of redeeming Love.

It is "the Gospel of God"; that is, as the neighbouring sentences show it, the gospel of the blessed Father. Its origin is in the Father's love, the eternal hill whence runs the eternal stream of the work of the Son and the power of the Spirit. "God loved the world"; "The Father sent the Son." The stream leads us up to the mount. "Hereby perceive we the love of God." In the Gospel, and in it alone, we have that certainty, "God is Love."

Now he dilates a little, in passing, on this dear theme, the Gospel of God. He whom it reveals as eternal Love was true to Himself in the preparation as in the event; He promised His Gospel beforehand through His prophets in (the) holy Scriptures. The sunrise of Christ was no abrupt, insulated phenomenon, unintelligible because out of relation. "Since the world began" (Luke i. 70), from the dawn of human history, predictive word and manifold preparing work had gone before. To think now only of the prediction, more or less articulate, and not of the preparation through general divine dealings with man—such had the prophecy been that, as the pagan histories tell us,\* "the whole East" heaved with expectations of a Judæan world-rule about the time when, as a fact, Jesus came. He came, alike to disappoint every merely popular hope and to satisfy at once the concrete details and the spiritual significance of the long forecast. And He sent His messengers out to the world carrying as their text and their voucher that old and multi-fold literature which is yet one Book; those "holy writings" (our own Old Testament, from end to end,) which were to them nothing less than the voice of the Holy Spirit. They always put the Lord, in their preaching, in contact with that prediction.

In this, as in other things, His glorious Figure is unique. There is no other personage in human history, himself a moral miracle, heralded by a verifiable foreshadowing in a complex literature of previous centuries.

"The hope of Israel" was, and is, a thing *sui generis*. Other preparations for the Coming were, as it were, sidelong and altogether by means of nature. In the Holy Scriptures the supernatural led directly and in its own way to the supreme supernatural Event; the Sacred Way to the Sanctuary.

What was the burthen of the vast prophecy, with its converging elements? It was concerning His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Whatever the prophets themselves knew, or did not know, of the inmost import of their records and utterances, the import was this. The Lord

\* *Percrebuerat Oriente toto vetus et constans opinio, esse in fatis ut eo tempore (cir. A. D. 70) profecti Judæa rerum potirentur.*—Suetonius, "Vesp.," c. 4. Tacitus ("Hist.," v. 13) says the same, and that the hope was based on the *antiqui sacerdotum libri*.

and the Apostles do not commit us to believe that the old seers ever had a *full* conscious foresight, or even that in all they "wrote of Him" they knew that it was of Him they wrote; though they *had* insights above nature, and knew it, as when David "in the Spirit called Him Lord," and Abraham "saw His day." But they do amply commit us to believe, if we are indeed their disciples, that the whole revelation through Israel did, in a way quite of its own kind, "concern the Son of God." See this in such leading places as Luke xxiv. 25-27; John v. 39, 46; Acts iii. 21-25, x. 43, xxviii. 23.

A Mahometan in Southern India, not long ago, was first drawn to faith in Jesus Christ by reading the genealogy with which St. Matthew begins his narrative. Such a procession, he thought, must lead up a mighty name; and he approached with reverence the story of the Nativity. That genealogy is, in a certain sense, the prophecies in compendium. Its avenue is the miniature of theirs. Let us sometimes go back, as it were, and approach the Lord again through the ranks of His holy foretellers, to get a new impression of His majesty.

"Concerning His Son." Around that radiant word, full of light and heat, the cold mists of many speculations have rolled themselves, as man has tried to analyse a divine and boundless fact. For St. Paul, and for us, the fact is everything, for peace and life. This Jesus Christ is true Man; that is certain. He is also, if we trust His life and word, true Son of God. He is on the one hand personally distinct from Him whom He calls Father, and whom He loves, and who loves Him with infinite love. On the other hand He is so related to Him that He fully possesses His Nature, while He has that Nature wholly from Him. This is the teaching of Gospels and Epistles; this is the Catholic Faith. Jesus Christ is God, is Divine, truly and fully. He is implicitly called by the incommunicable Name (compare John xii. 41 with Isa. vi. 7).. He is openly called God in His own presence on earth (John xx. 28). But what is, if possible, even more significant, because deeper below the surface—He is regarded as the eternally satisfying Object of man's trust and love (*e. g.*, Phil. iii. 21, Eph. iii. 19). Yet Jesus Christ is always preached as related Son-wise to Another, so truly that the mutual love of the Two is freely adduced as type and motive for our love.

We can hardly make too much, in thought and teaching, of this Divine Sonship, this filial Godhead. It is the very "Secret of God" (Col. ii. 2), both as a light to guide our reason to the foot of the Throne, and as a power upon the heart. "He that hath the Son hath the Father"; "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father"; "He hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His Love."

Who was born of the seed of David, according to the flesh. So the New Testament begins (Matt. i. 1); so it almost closes (Rev. xxii. 6). St. Paul, in later years, recalls the Lord's human pedigree again (2 Tim. ii. 8): "Remember that Jesus Christ, *of the seed of David*, is risen from the dead." The old Apostle in that last passage, has entered the shadow of death; he feels with one hand for the rock of history, with the other for the pulse of eternal love. Here was the rock; the Lord of life was the Child of history, Son and Heir of a historical king, and



then, as such, the Child of prophecy too. And this, against all surface appearances beforehand. The Davidic "ground" (Isa. liii. 2) had seemed to be dry as dust for generations, when the Root of endless life sprang up in it.

"He was born" of David's seed. Literally, the Greek may be rendered, "He became, He came to be." Under either rendering we have the wonderful fact that He who in His higher eternity is, above time and including it, did in His other Nature, by the door of *becoming*, enter time, and thus indeed "fill all things." This He did, and thus He is, "according to the flesh." "Flesh" is, indeed, but a part of Manhood. But a part can represent the whole; and "flesh" is the part most antithetical to the Divine Nature, with which here Manhood is collocated and in a sense contrasted. So it is again below, ix. 5.

And now, of this blessed Son of David, we hear further:—who was designated to be Son of God; literally, "defined as Son of God," betokened to be such by "infallible proof." Never for an hour had he ceased to be, in fact, Son of God. To the man healed of birth-blindness He had said (John ix. 35), "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" But there was an hour when He became openly and so to speak officially what He always is naturally; somewhat as a born king is "made" king by coronation. Historical act then affirmed independent fact, and as it were gathered it into a point for use. This affirmation took place in power, according to the Spirit of Holiness, as a result of resurrection from the dead. "Sown in weakness," Jesus was indeed "raised in" majestic, tranquil "power." Without an effort He stepped from out of the depth of death, from under the load of sin. It was no flickering life, crucified but not quite killed, creeping back in a convalescence mis-called resurrection; it was the rising of the sun. That it was indeed day-light, and not day-dream, was shown not only in His mastery of matter, but in the transfiguration of His followers. No moral change was ever at once more complete and more perfectly healthful than what His return wrought in that large and various group, when they learnt to say, "We have seen the Lord." The man who wrote this Epistle had "seen Him last of all" (1 Cor. xv. 8). That was indeed a sight "in power," and working a transfiguration.

So was the Son of the Father affirmed to be what He is; so was He "made" to be, for us His Church, the Son, in whom we are sons. And all this was, "according to the Spirit of holiness"; answerably to the foreshadowing and foretelling of that Holy Spirit who, in the prophets, "testified of the sufferings destined for the Christ, and of the glories that should follow" (1 Pet. i. 11).

Now lastly, in the Greek of the sentence, as if pausing for a solemn entrance, comes in the whole blessed Name; even Jesus Christ our Lord. Word by word the Apostle dictates, and the scribe obeys. Jesus, the human Name; Christ, the mystic Title; our Lord, the term of royalty and loyalty which binds us to Him, and Him to us. Let those four words be ours for ever. If everything else falls in ruins from the memory, let this remain, "the strength of our heart, and our portion for ever."

Through whom, the Apostle's voice goes on, we received grace and apostleship. The Son

was the Channel "through" which the Father's choice and call took effect. He "grasped" Paul (Phil. iii. 12), and joined him to Himself, and in Himself to the Father; and now through that Union the motions of the Eternal will move Paul. They move him, to give him "grace and apostleship"; that is, in effect, grace for apostleship, and apostleship as grace; the boon of the Lord's presence in him for the work, and the Lord's work as a spiritual boon. He often thus links the word "grace" with his great mission; for example, in Gal. ii. 9, Eph. iii. 2, 8, and perhaps Phil. i. 7. Alike the enabling peace and power for service, and then the service itself, are to the Christian a free, loving, beautifying gift.

Unto obedience of faith among all the Nations. This "obedience of faith" is in fact faith in its aspect as submission. What is faith? It is personal trust, personal self-entrustment to a person. It "gives up the case" to the Lord, as the one only possible Giver of pardon and of purity. It is "*submission* to the righteousness of God" (chap. x. 3). Blessed the man who so obeys, stretching out arms empty and submissive to receive, in the void between them, Jesus Christ.

"Among all the Nations," "all the Gentiles." The words read easily to us, and pass perhaps half unnoticed, as a phrase of routine. Not so to the ex-Pharisee who dictated them here. A few years before he would have held it highly "unlawful to keep company with, or come unto, one of another nation" (Acts x. 2, 8). Now, in Christ, it is as if he had almost forgotten that it had been so. His whole heart, in Christ, is blent in personal love with hearts belonging to many nations; in spiritual affection he is ready for contact with all hearts. And now he, of all the Apostles, is the teacher who by life and word is to bring this glorious catholicity home for ever to all believing souls, our own included. It is St. Paul pre-eminently who has taught man, as man, in Christ, to love man; who has made Hebrew, European, Hindoo, Chinese, Caffre, Esquimaux, actually one in the conscious brotherhood of eternal life.

For His Name's sake; for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ revealed. The Name is the self-unfolded Person, known and understood. Paul had indeed come to know that Name, and to pass it on was now his very life. He existed only to win for it more insight, more adoration, more love. "The Name" deserved that great soul's entire devotion. Does it not deserve our equally entire devotion now? Our lives shall who belong to Him, His personal property, their motto also, "For His Name's sake."

Now he speaks direct of his Roman friends. Among whom, among these multifarious "Nations," you too are Jesus Christ's called ones, men who belong to Him, because "called" by Him. And what is "called"? Compare the places where the word is used—or where its kindred words are used—in the Epistles, and you will find a certain holy specialty of meaning. "Invited" is no adequate paraphrase. The "called" man is the man who has been invited *and has come*; who has obeyed the eternal welcome; to whom the voice of the Lord has been effectual. See the word in the opening paragraphs of 1 Corinthians. There the Gospel is heard, externally, by a host of indifferent or hostile hearts, who think it "folly," or "a



stumbling block." But among them are those who hear, and understand, and believe indeed. To them "Christ is God's power, and God's wisdom." And they are "the called."

In the Gospels, the words "chosen" and "called" are in antithesis; the called are many, the chosen few; the external hearers are many, the hearers inwardly are few. In the Epistles a developed use shows the change indicated here, and it is consistently maintained.

To all who in Rome are God's beloved ones. Wonderful collocation, wonderful possibility! "Beloved ones of God," as close to the eternal heart as it is possible to be, because "in the Beloved"; that is one side. "In Rome," in the capital of universal paganism, material power, iron empire, immeasurable worldliness, flagrant and indescribable sin; that is the other side. "I know where thou dwellest," said the glorified Saviour to much tried disciples at a later day; "even where Satan has his throne" (Rev. ii. 13). That throne was conspicuously present in the Rome of Nero. Yet faith, hope, and love could breathe there, when the Lord "called." They could much more than breathe. This whole Epistle shows that a deep and developed faith, a glorious hope, and the mighty love of a holy life were matters of fact in men and women who every day of the year saw the world as it went by in forum and basilica, in Suburra and Velabrum, in slave-chambers and in the halls of pleasure where they had to serve or to meet company. The atmosphere of heaven was carried down into that dark pool by the believing souls who were bidden to live there. They lived the heavenly life in Rome; as the creature of the air in our stagnant waters weaves and fills its silver diving-bell, and works and thrives in peace far down.

Read some vivid picture of Roman life, and think of this. See it as it is shown by Tacitus, Suetonius, Juvenal, Martial; or as modern hands, Becker's or Farrar's, have restored it from their materials. What a deadly air for the regenerate soul—deadly not only in its vice, but in its magnificence, and in its thought! But nothing is deadly to the Lord Jesus Christ. The soul's regeneration means not only new ideas and likings, but an eternal Presence, the indwelling of the Life itself. That Life could live at Rome; and therefore "God's beloved ones in Rome" could live there also, while it was His will they should be there. The argument comes *a fortiori* to ourselves.

(His) called holy ones; they were "called," in the sense we have seen, and now, by that effectual Voice, drawing them into Christ, they were constituted "holy ones," "saints." What does that word mean? Whatever its etymology may be,\* its usage gives us the thought of dedication to God, connection with Him, separation to His service, His will. *The saints* are those who belong to Him, His personal property, for His ends. Thus it is used habitually in the Scriptures for *all Christians, supposed to be true to their name*. Not an inner circle, but all, bear the title. It is not only a glorified aristocracy, but the believing commonalty; not the stars of the eternal sky, but the flowers sown by the Lord in the common field; even in such a tract of that field as "Cæsar's household" was (Phil. iv. 22).

\*The *linguistic root* seems to point directly not to separation (as often said), but to worship, reverence.

Habitually therefore the Apostle gives the term "saints" to whole communities; as if baptism always gave, or sealed, saintship. In a sense it did, and does. But then, this was, and is, on the assumption of the concurrence of possession with title. The title left the individual still bound to "examine himself, whether *he was in the faith*" (2 Cor. xiii. 5).

These happy residents at Rome are now greeted and blessed in their Father's and Saviour's Name; Grace to you and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. "Grace"; what is it? Two ideas lie there together; favour and gratuity. The grace of God is His favouring will and work for us, and in us; gratuitous, utterly and to the end unearned. Put otherwise (and with the remembrance that His great gifts are but modes of Himself, are in fact Himself in will and action), grace is God for us, grace is God in us, sovereign, willing, kind. "Peace"; what is it? The holy repose within, and so around, which comes of the man's acceptance with God and abode in God; an "all is well" in the heart, and in the believer's contact with circumstances, as he rests in his Father and his Redeemer. "Peace, perfect peace"; under the sense of demerit, and amidst the crush of duties, and on the crossing currents of human joy and sorrow, and in the mystery of death; because of the God of Peace, who has made peace for us through the Cross of His Son, and is peace in us, "by the Spirit which He hath given us."

### CHAPTER III.

#### GOOD REPORT OF THE ROMAN CHURCH: PAUL NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL.

ROMANS i. 8-17.

HE has blessed the Roman Christians in the name of the Lord. Now he hastens to tell them how he blesses God for them, and how full his heart is of them. The Gospel is warm all through with life and love; this great message of doctrine and precept is poured from a fountain full of personal affection.

Now first I thank my God, through Jesus Christ, about you all. It is his delight to give thanks for all the good he knows of in his brethren. Seven of his Epistles open with such thanksgivings, which at once convey the commendations which love rejoices to give, wherever possible, and trace all spiritual virtue straight to its Source, the Lord. Nor only here to "the Lord," but to "*my God*"; a phrase used, in the New Testament, only by St. Paul, except that one utterance of *Eli, Eli*, by his dying Saviour. It is the expression of an indescribable appropriation and reverent intimacy. The believer grudges his God to none; he rejoices with great joy over every soul that finds its wealth in Him. But at the centre of all joy and love is this—"my God"; "Christ Jesus my Lord"; "who loved *me* and gave Himself for *me*." Is it selfish? Nay, it is the language of a personality where Christ has dethroned self in His own favour, but in which therefore reigns now the highest happiness, the happiness which animates and maintains a self-forgetful



love of all. And this holy intimacy, with its action in thanks and petition, is all the while "through Jesus Christ," the Mediator and Brother. The man knows God as "*my God*," and deals with Him as such, never out of that Beloved Son who is equally One with the believer and with the Father, no alien medium, but the living point of unity.

What moves his thanksgivings? Because your faith is spoken of, more literally, is carried as tidings, over the whole world. Go where he will, in Asia, in Macedonia, in Achaia, in Illyricum, he meets believing "strangers from Rome," with spiritual news from the Capital, announcing, with a glad solemnity, that at the great Centre of this world the things eternal are proving their power, and that the Roman mission is remarkable for its strength and simplicity of "faith," its humble reliance on the Lord Jesus Christ, and loving allegiance to Him. Such news, wafted from point to point of that early Christendom, was frequent then; we see another beautiful example of it where he tells the Thessalonians (1 Thess. i. 8-10) how everywhere in his Greek tour he found the news of their conversion running in advance of him, to greet him at each arrival. What special importance would such intelligence bear when it was good news from Rome!

Still in our day over the world of Missions similar tidings travel. Only a few years ago "the saints" of Indian Tinnevely heard of the distress of their brethren of African Uganda, and sent with loving eagerness "to their necessity." But recently (1892) an English visitor to the Missions of Labrador found the disciples of the Moravian Brethren there full of the wonders of grace manifested in those same African believers.

This constant good tidings from the City makes him the more glad because of its correspondence with his incessant thought, prayer, and yearning over them.

For God is my record, my witness, of this; the God whom I serve, at once, so the Greek (*λατρεύω*) implies, with adoration and obedience, in my spirit, in the Gospel of His Son. The "for" gives the connection we have just indicated; he rejoices to hear of their faith, *for* the Lord knows how much they are in his prayers. The divine Witness is the more instinctively appealed to, because these thoughts and prayers are for a mission-Church, and the relations between St. Paul and his God are above all missionary relations. He "serves Him in the Gospel of His Son," the Gospel of the God who is known and believed in His Christ. He "serves Him in the Gospel"; that is, in the *propagation* of it. So he often means, where he speaks of "the Gospel"; take for example ver. 1 above; xv. 16, 19 below; Phil. i. 5, 12; ii. 22. "He serves Him," in that great branch of ministry, "in his spirit," with his whole love, will, and mind, working in communion with his Lord. And now to this eternal Friend and Witness he appeals to seal his assurance of incessant intercessions for them; how without ceasing, as a habit constantly in action, I make mention of you, calling them up by name, specifying before the Father Rome, and Aquila, and Andronicus, and Junias, and Persis, and Mary, and the whole circle, personally known or not, in my prayers; literally, on occasion of my prayers; whenever he found

himself at prayer, stately or as it were casually remembering and beseeching.

The prayers of St. Paul are a study by themselves. See his own accounts of them, to the Corinthians, the Ephesians, the Philippians, the Colossians, the Thessalonians, and Philemon. Observe their topic; it is almost always the growth of grace in the saints, to their Master's glory. Observe now still more their manner; the frequency, the diligence, the resolution which grapples, wrestles, with the difficulties of prayer, so that in Col. ii. 1 he calls his prayer simply "a great wrestling." Learn here how to deal with God for those for whom you work, shepherd of souls, messenger of the Word, Christian man or woman who in any way are called to help other hearts in Christ.

In this case his prayers have a very definite direction; he is requesting, if somehow, now at length, my way shall be opened, in the will of God, to come to you. It is a quite simple, quite natural petition. His inward harmony with the Lord's will never excludes the formation and expression of such requests, with the reverent "if" of submissive reserve. The "indifference" of mystic pietism, which at least discourages articulate contingent petitions, is unknown to the Apostles; "in everything, with thanksgiving, they make their requests known unto God." And they find such expression harmonised, in a holy experience, with a profound rest "*within* this will," this "sweet beloved will of God." Little did he here foresee *how* his way would be opened; that it would lie through the tumult in the Temple, the prisons of Jerusalem and Cæsarea, and the cyclone of the Adrian sea. He had in view a missionary journey to Spain, in which Rome was to be taken by the way.

"So God grants prayer, but in His love  
Makes ways and times His own."

His heart yearns for this Roman visit. We may almost render the Greek of the next clause, For I am homesick for a sight of you; he uses the word by which elsewhere he describes Philippian Epaphroditus' longing to be back at Philippi (Phil. ii. 26), and again his own longing "to see the son of his heart, Timothy (2 Tim. i. 4). Such is the Gospel, that its family affection throws the light of home on even unknown regions where dwell "the brethren." In this case the longing love however has a purpose most practical; that I may impart to you some spiritual gift of grace, with a view to your establishment. The word rendered "gift of grace" is used in some places (see especially 1 Cor. xii. 4, 9, 28, 30, 31) with a certain special reference to the mysterious "Tongues," "Interpretations," and "Prophecies," given in the primeval Churches. And we gather from the Acts and the Epistles that these gifts were not ordinarily made where an Apostle was not there to lay on his hands. But it is not likely that this is the import of this present passage. Elsewhere in the Epistle\* the word "charisma" is used with its largest and deepest reference; God's gift of blessing in Christ. Here, then, so we take it, he means that he pines to convey to them, as his Lord's messenger, some new development of spiritual light and joy; to ex-

\* See verses 15, 16, 23, xi. 29. xii. 6 is the only passage which at all looks the other way, and that passage implies that the Romans *already* possessed the wonder-working gifts.



pound "the Way" to them more perfectly; to open up to them such fuller and deeper insights into the riches of Christ that they, better using their possession of the Lord, might as it were gain new possessions in Him, and might stand more boldly on the glorious certainties they held. And this was to be done ministerially, not magisterially. For he goes on to say that the longed-for visit would be his gain as well as theirs; that is, with a view to my concurrent encouragement among you, by our mutual faith, yours and mine together. Shall we call this a sentence of fine tact; beautifully conciliatory and endearing? Yes, but it is also perfectly sincere. True tact is only the skill of sympathetic love, not the less genuine in its thought because that thought seeks to please and win. He is glad to show himself as his disciples' brotherly friend; but then he first *is* such, and enjoys the character, and has continually found and felt his own soul made glad and strong by the witness to the Lord which far less gifted believers bore, as he and they talked together. Does not every true teacher know this in his own experience? If we are not merely lecturers on Christianity but witnesses for Christ, we know what it is to hail with deep thanksgivings the "encouragement" we have had from the lips of those who perhaps believed long after we did, and have been far less advantaged outwardly than we have been. We have known and blessed the "encouragement" carried to us by little believing children, and young men in their first faith, and poor old people on their comfortless beds, ignorant in this world, illuminated in the Lord. "Mutual faith," the pregnant phrase of the Apostle, faith residing in each of both parties, and owned by each to the other, is a mighty power for Christian "encouragement" still.

But I would not have you ignorant, brethren. This is a characteristic term of expression with him. He delights in confidence and information, and not least about his own plans bearing on his friends. That often I purposed (or better, in our English idiom, have purposed) to come to you, (but I have been hindered up till now,) that I might have some fruits among you too, as actually among the other Nations. He cannot help giving more and yet more intimation of his loving *gravitation* towards them; nor yet of his gracious avarice for "fruit," result, harvest and vintage for Christ, in the way of helping on Romans, as well as Asiatics, and Macedonians, and Achaïans, to live a fuller life in Him. This, we may infer from the whole Epistle, would be the chief kind of "fruit" in his view at Rome; but not this only. For we shall see him at once go on to anticipate an evangelistic work at Rome, a speaking of the Gospel message where there would be a temptation to be "ashamed" of it. Edification of believers may be his main aim. But conversion of pagan souls to God cannot possibly be dissociated from it.

In passing we see, with instruction, that St. Paul made many plans which came to nothing; he tells us this here without apology or misgiving. He claims accordingly no such practical omniscience, actual or possible, as would make his resolutions and forecasts infallible. Tacitly, at least, he wrote "If the Lord will," across them all, unless indeed there came a case where, as when he was guided out of Asia

to Macedonia (Acts xvi. 6-10), direct intimation was given him, abnormal, supernatural, quite *ab extra*, that such and not such was to be his path.

But now, he is not only "homesick" for Rome, with a yearning love; he feels his obligation to Rome, with a wakeful conscience. Alike to Greeks and to Barbarians, to wise men and to unthinking, I am in debt. Mankind is on his heart, in the sorts and differences of its culture. On the one hand were "the Greeks"; that is to say, in the then popular meaning of the word, the peoples possessed of what we now call "classical" civilisation, Greek and Roman; an inner circle of these were "the wise," the literati, the readers, writers, thinkers, in the curriculum of those literatures and philosophies. On the other hand were "the Barbarians," the tongues and tribes outside the Hellenic pale, Pisidian, Pamphylian, Galatian, Illyrian, and we know not who besides; and then, among them, or anywhere, "the unthinking," the numberless masses whom the educated would despise or forget as utterly untrained in the schools, unversed in the great topics of man and the world; the people of the field, the market, and the kitchen. To the Apostle, because to his Lord, all these were now impartially his claimants, his creditors: he "owed them" the Gospel which had been trusted to him for them. Naturally, his will might be repelled alike by the frown or smile of the Greek, and by the coarse earthliness of the Barbarian. But supernaturally, in Christ, he loved both, and scrupulously remembered his *duty* to both. Such is the true missionary spirit still, in whatever region, under whatever conditions. The Christian man, and the Christian Church delivered from the world, is yet its debtor. "Woe is to him, to it, if" that debt is not paid, if that Gospel is "hidden in a napkin."

Thus he is ready, and more than ready, to pay his debt to Rome. So (to render literally) what relates to me is eager, to you too, to the men in Rome, to preach the Gospel. "*What relates to me*"; there is an emphasis on "*me*," as if to say that the hindrance, whatever it is, is not in him, but around him. The doors have been shut, but the man stands behind them, in act to pass in when he may.

His eagerness is no light-heartedness, no carelessness of when or where. This wonderful missionary is too sensitive to facts and ideas, too rich in imagination, not to feel the peculiar, nay the awful greatness, of a summons to Rome. He understands culture too well not to feel its possible obstacles. He has seen too much of both the real grandeur and the harsh force of the imperial power in its extension not to feel a genuine awe as he thinks of meeting that power at its gigantic Centre. There is that in him which fears Rome. But he is therefore the very man to go there, for he understands the magnitude of the occasion, and he will the more deeply retire upon his Lord for peace and power.

Thus with a pointed fitness he tells himself and his friends, just here, that he is "not ashamed of the Gospel." For I am not ashamed; I am ready even for Rome, for this terrible Rome. I have a message which, though Rome looks as if she must despise it, I know is not to be despised. For I am not ashamed



of the Gospel; \* for it is God's power to salvation, for every one who believes, alike for Jew, (first,) and for Greek. For God's righteousness is in it unveiled, from faith on to faith; as it stands written, But the just man on faith shall live.

These words give out the great theme of the Epistle. The Epistle, therefore, is infinitely the best commentary on them, as we follow out its argument and hear its message. Here it shall suffice us to note only a point or two, and so pass on.

First, we recollect that this Gospel, this Glad Tidings, is, in its essence, Jesus Christ. It is, supremely, "He, not it"; Person, not theory. Or rather, it is authentic and eternal theory in vital and eternal connection everywhere with a Person. As such it is truly "*power*," in a sense as profoundly natural as it is divine. It is power, not only in the cogency of perfect principle, but in the energy of an eternal Life, an almighty Will, an infinite Love.

Then we observe that this message of power, which is, in its burthen, the Christ of God, unfolds first, at its foundation, in its front, "the Righteousness of God"; not first His Love, but "His Righteousness." Seven times elsewhere in the Epistle comes this phrase †; rich materials for ascertaining its meaning in the spiritual dialect of St. Paul. Out of these passages, iii. 26 gives us the key. There "the righteousness of God," seen as it were in action, ascertained by its effects, is that which secures "that He shall be just, and the Justifier of the man who belongs to faith in Jesus." It is that which makes wonderfully possible the mighty paradox that the Holy One, eternally truthful, eternally rightful, infinitely "law-abiding" in His jealousy for that Law which is in fact His Nature expressing itself in precept, nevertheless can and does say to man, in his guilt and forfeit, "I, thy Judge, lawfully acquit thee, lawfully accept thee, lawfully embrace thee." In such a context we need not fear to explain this great phrase, in this its first occurrence, to mean the Acceptance accorded by the Holy Judge to sinful man. Thus it stands practically equivalent to—God's way of justifying the ungodly, His method for liberating His love while He magnifies His law. In effect, not as a translation but as an explanation, God's Righteousness is God's Justification.

Then again, we note the emphasis and the repetition here of the thought of *faith*. "To every one that believeth"; "From faith on to faith"; "The just man on faith shall live." Here, if anywhere, we shall find ample commentary in the Epistle. Only let us remember from the first that in the Roman Epistle, as everywhere in the New Testament, we shall see "*faith*" used in its natural and human sense; we shall find that it means personal reliance. *Fides est fiducia*, "Faith is trust," say the masters of Reformation theology. *Refellitur inanis hæreticorum fiducia*, "We refute the heretics' empty 'trust,'" says the Council of Trent ‡ against them; but in vain. Faith is trust. It is in this sense that our Lord Jesus Christ, in the Gospels, invariably uses the word. For this is its human sense, its sense in the street and

market; and the Lord, the Man of men, uses the dialect of His race. Faith, infinitely wonderful and mysterious from some points of view, is the simplest thing in the world from others. That sinners, conscious of their guilt, should be brought so to see their Judge's heart as to take His word of peace to mean what it says, is miracle. But they should trust His word, having seen His heart, is nature, illuminated and led by grace, but nature still. The "faith" of Jesus Christ and the Apostles is trust. It is not a faculty for mystical intuitions. It is our taking the Trustworthy at His word. It is the opening of a mendicant hand to receive the gold of Heaven; the opening of dying lips to receive the water of life. It is that which makes a void place for Jesus Christ to fill, that He may be man's Merit, man's Peace, and man's Power.

Hence the overwhelming prominence of faith in the Gospel. It is the correlative of the overwhelming, the absolute, prominence of Jesus Christ. Christ is all. Faith is man's acceptance of Him as such. "Justification by Faith" is not acceptance because faith is a valuable thing, a merit, a recommendation, a virtue. It is acceptance because of Jesus Christ, whom man, dropping all other hopes, receives. It is, let us repeat it, the sinner's empty hand and parted lips. It has absolutely nothing to do with earning the gift of God, the water and the bread of God; it has all to do with taking it. This we shall see open out before us as we proceed.

So the Gospel "unveils God's righteousness"; it draws the curtains from His glorious secret. And as each fold is lifted, the glad beholder looks on "from faith to faith." He finds that this reliance is to be *his* part; first, last, midst, and without end. He takes Jesus Christ by faith; he holds Him by faith; he uses Him by faith; he lives, he dies, in Him by faith; that is to say, always by Him, by Him received, held, used.

Then lastly, we mark the quotation from the Prophet, who, for the Apostle, is the organ of the Holy Ghost. What Habakkuk wrote is, for Paul, what God says, God's Word. The Prophet, as we refer to his brief pages, manifestly finds his occasion and his first significance in the then state of his country and his people. If we please, we may explain the words as a patriot's contribution to the politics of Jerusalem, and pass on. But if so, we pass on upon a road unknown to our Lord and His Apostles. To Him, to them, the prophecies had more in them than the Prophets knew; and Habakkuk's appeal to Judah to retain the Lord Jehovah among them in all His peace and power, by trusting Him, is known by St. Paul to be for all time an oracle about the work of faith. So he sees in it a message straight to the soul which asks how, if Christ is God's Righteousness, shall I, a sinner, win Christ for me. "Wouldst thou indeed be *just* with God, right with Him as Judge, accepted by the Holy One? Take His Son in the empty arms of mere trust, and He is thine for this need, and for all."

"I am not ashamed of the Gospel." So the Apostle affirms, as he looks toward Rome. What is it about this Gospel of God, and of His Son, which gives occasion for such a word? Why do we find, not here only, but elsewhere in the New Testament, this contemplated possibility that the Christian may be ashamed of

\* The words "of Christ" must be omitted from the text here.

† iii. 5, 21, 22, 23, 26; x. 3 twice.

‡ Session VI., ch. ix.



his creed, and of His Lord? "Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me, and of My words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed" (Luke ix. 26); "Be not thou ashamed of the testimony of our Lord"; "Nevertheless, I am not ashamed" (2 Tim. i. 8, 12). This is paradoxical, as we come to think upon it. There is much about the purity of the Gospel which might occasion, and does too often occasion, an awe and dread of it, seemingly reasonable. There is much about its attendant mysteries which might seem to excuse an attitude, however mistaken, of reverent suspense. But what is there about this revelation of the heart of Eternal Love, this record of a Life equally divine and human, of a Death as majestic as it is infinitely pathetic, and then of a Resurrection out of death, to occasion shame? Why, in view of this, should man be shy to avow his faith, and to let it be known that this is all in all to him, his life, his peace, his strength, his surpassing interest and occupation?

More than one analysis of the phenomenon, which we all know to be fact, may be suggested. But for our part we believe that the true solution lies near the words sin, pardon, self-surrender. The Gospel reveals the eternal Love, but under conditions which remind man that he has done his worst to forfeit it. It tells him of a peace and strength sublime and heavenly; but it asks him, in order to receive them, to kneel down in the dust and take them, unmerited, for nothing. And it reminds them that he, thus delivered and endowed, is by the same act the property of his Deliverer; that not only the highest benefit of his nature is secured by his giving himself over to God, but the most inexorable obligation lies on him to do so. He is not his own, but bought with a price.

Such views of the actual relation, between man and God, even when attended, as they are in the Gospel, with such indications of man's true greatness as are found nowhere else, are deeply repellent to the soul that has not yet seen itself and God in the light of truth. And the human being who *has* got that sight, and has submitted himself indeed, yet, the moment he looks outside the blessed shrine of his own union with his Lord, is tempted to be reticent about a creed which he knows once repelled and angered him. Well did Paul remember his old hatred and contempt; and he felt the temptations of that memory, when he presented Christ either to the Pharisee or to the Stoic, and now particularly when he thought of "bearing witness of Him at Rome" (Acts xxiii. 11), imperial, overwhelming Rome. But then he looked away from them to Jesus Christ, and the temptation was beneath his feet, and the Gospel, everywhere, was upon his lips.

#### CHAPTER IV.

#### NEED FOR THE GOSPEL: GOD'S ANGER AND MAN'S SIN.

ROMANS i. 18-23.

WE have as it were touched the heart of the Apostle as he weighs the prospect of his Roman visit, and feels, almost in one sensation, the tender and powerful attraction, the solemn

duty, and the strange solicitation to shrink from the deliverance of his message. Now his lifted forehead, just lighted up by the radiant truth of Righteousness by Faith, is shadowed suddenly. He is not ashamed of the Gospel; he will speak it out, if need be, in the Cæsar's own presence, and in that of his brilliant and cynical court. For there is a pressing, an awful need that he should thus "despise the shame." The very conditions in human life which occasion an instinctive tendency to be reticent of the Gospel, are facts of dreadful urgency and peril. Man does not like to be exposed to himself, and to be summoned to the faith and surrender claimed by Christ. But man, whatever he likes or dislikes, is a sinner, exposed to the eyes of the All-Pure, and lying helpless, amidst all his dreams of pride, beneath the wrath of God. Such is the logic of this stern sequel to the affirmation, "I am not ashamed."

For God's wrath is revealed, from heaven, upon all godlessness and unrighteousness of men who in unrighteousness hold down the truth. "*God's wrath is revealed*"; Revealed in "the holy Scriptures," in every history, by every Prophet, by every Psalmist; this perhaps is the main bearing of his thought. But revealed also antecedently and concurrently in that mysterious, inalienable conscience, which is more truly part of man than his five senses. Conscience *sees* that there is an eternal difference between right and wrong, and *feels* in the dark the relation of that difference to a law, a Lawgiver, and a doom. Conscience is aware of a fiery light beyond the veil. Revelation meets its wistful gaze, lifts the veil, and affirms the fact of the wrath of God, and of His judgment coming.

Let us not shun that "revelation." It is not the Gospel. The Gospel, as we have seen, is in itself one pure warm light of life and love. But then it can never be fully understood until, sooner or later, we have seen something, and believed something, of the truth of the anger of the Holy One. From our idea of that anger let us utterly banish every thought of impatience, of haste, of what is arbitrary, of what is in the faintest degree unjust, inequitable. It is the anger of Him who never for a moment can be untrue to himself; and He is Love, and is Light. But He is also, so also says His Word, consuming Fire (Heb. x. 31, xii. 29); and it is "a fearful thing to fall into His hands." Nowhere and never is God not Love, as the Maker and Preserver of His creatures. But nowhere also and never is He not Fire, as the judicial Adversary of evil, the Antagonist of the will that chooses sin. Is there "nothing in God to fear"? "Yea," says His Son (Luke xii. 5), "I say unto you, fear Him."

At the present time there is a deep and almost ubiquitous tendency to ignore the revelation of the wrath of God. No doubt there have been times, and quarters, in the story of Christianity, when that revelation was thrown into disproportionate prominence, and men shrank from Christ (so Luther tells us he did in his youth) as from One who was nothing if not the inexorable Judge. They saw Him habitually as He is seen in the vast Fresco of the Sistine Chapel, a sort of Jupiter Tonans, casting His foes forever from His presence; a Being *from* whom, not *to* whom, the guilty soul must fly. But the reaction from such thoughts, at present



upon us, has swung to an extreme indeed, until the tendency of the pulpit, and of the exposition, is to say practically that there is nothing in God to be afraid of; that the words hope and love are enough to neutralise the most awful murmurs of conscience, and to cancel the plainest warnings of the loving Lord Himself. Yet that Lord, as we ponder His words in all the four Gospels, so far from speaking such "peace" as this, seems to reserve it to Himself, rather than to His messengers, to utter the most formidable warnings. And the earliest literature which follows the New Testament shows that few of His sayings had sunk deeper into His disciples' souls than those which told them of the two Ways and of the two Ends.

Let us go to Him, the all-benignant Friend and Teacher, to learn the true attitude of thought towards Him as "the Judge, strong and patient," "but who will in no wise clear the guilty" by unsaying His precepts and putting by His threats. He assuredly will teach us, in this matter, no lessons of hard and narrow denunciation, nor encourage us to sit in judgment on the souls and minds of our brethren. But He will teach us to take deep and awful views for ourselves of both the pollution and also *the guilt* of sin. He will constrain us to carry those views all through our personal theology, and our personal anthropology too. He will make it both a duty and a possibility for us, in right measure, in right manner, tenderly, humbly, governed by His Word, to let others know what our convictions are about the Ways and the Ends. And thus, as well as otherwise, He will make His Gospel to be to us no mere luxury or ornament of thought and life, as it were a decorous gilding upon essential worldliness and the ways of self. He will unfold it as the soul's refuge and its home. From Himself as Judge He will draw us in blessed flight to Himself as Propitiation and Peace. "From Thy wrath, and from everlasting condemnation, Good Lord—Thyself—deliver us."

This wrath, holy, passionless, yet awfully personal, "is revealed, from heaven." That is to say, it is revealed as coming from heaven, when the righteous Judge "shall be revealed from heaven, taking vengeance" (2 Thess. i. 7, 8). In that pure upper world He sits whose wrath it is. From that stainless sky of His presence its white lightnings will fall, "upon all godlessness and unrighteousness of men," upon every kind of violation of conscience, whether done against God or man; upon "godlessness," which blasphemes, denies, or ignores the Creator; upon "unrighteousness," which wrests the claims whether of Creator or of creature. Awful opposites to the "two great Commandments of the Law"! The Law must be utterly vindicated upon them at last. Conscience must be eternally verified at last, against all the wretched suppressions of it that man has ever tried.

For the men in question "hold down the truth in unrighteousness." The rendering "hold down" is certified by both etymology and context; the only possible other rendering, "hold fast," is negated by the connection. The thought given us is that man, fallen from the harmony with God in which Manhood was made, but still keeping manhood, and therefore conscience, is never naturally ignorant of the difference between right and wrong, never natu-

rally, innocently, unaware that he is accountable. On the other hand he is never fully willing, of himself, to do all he knows of right, all he knows he ought, all the demand of the righteous law above him. "In unrighteousness," in a life which at best is not wholly and cordially with the will of God, "he holds down the truth," silences the haunting fact that there is a claim he will not meet, a will he ought to love, but to which he prefers his own. The majesty of eternal right, always intimating the majesty of an eternal Righteous One, he thrusts below his consciousness, or into a corner of it, and keeps it there, that he may follow his own way. More or less, it wrestles with him for its proper place. And its even half-understood efforts may, and often do, exercise a deterrent force upon the energies of his self-will. But they do not dislodge it; he would rather have his way. With a force sometimes deliberate, sometimes impulsive, sometimes habitual, "he holds down" the unwelcome monitor.

Deep is the moral responsibility incurred by such repression. For man has always, by the very state of the case, within him and around him, evidence for a personal righteous Power "with Whom he has to do." Because that which is known in God is manifest in them; for God manifested (or rather, perhaps, in our idiom, has manifested) it to them. "That which is known"; that is, practically, "that which is knowable, that which may be known." There is that about the Eternal which indeed neither is nor can be known, with the knowledge of mental comprehension. "Who can find out the Almighty unto perfection?" All thoughtful Christians are in this respect agnostics that they gaze on the bright Ocean of Deity, and know that they do not know it in its fathomless but radiant depths, nor can explore its expanse which has no shore. They rest before absolute mystery with a repose as simple (if possible more simple) as that with which they contemplate the most familiar and intelligible event. But this is not to know Him. It leaves man quite as free to be sure that He is, to be as certain that He is Personal, and is Holy, as man is certain of his own consciousness, and conscience.

That there is Personality behind phenomena, and that this great Personality is righteous, St. Paul here affirms to be "manifest," disclosed, visible, "in men." It is a fact present, however partially apprehended, in human consciousness. And more, this consciousness is itself part of the fact; indeed it is that part without which all others would be as nothing. To man without conscience—really, naturally, innocently without conscience—and without ideas of causation, the whole majesty of the Universe might be unfolded with a fulness beyond all our present experience; but it would say absolutely nothing of either Personality or Judgment. It is by the world within that we are able in the least degree to apprehend the world without. But having, naturally and inalienably, the world of personality and of conscience within us, we are beings to whom God can manifest, and has manifested the knowable about Himself, in His universe.

For His things unseen, ever since the creation of the universe, are full in (man's) view, presented to (man's) mind by His things made—His everlasting power and Godlikeness



together—so as to leave them inexcusable. Since the ordered world was, and since man was, as its observer and also as its integral part, there has been present to man's spirit—supposed true to its own creation—adequate testimony around him, taken along with that within him, to evince the reality of a supreme and persistent Will, intending order, and thus intimating Its own correspondence to conscience, and expressing Itself in "things made" of such manifold glory and wonder as to intimate the Maker's majesty as well as righteousness. What is That, what is He, to whom the splendours of the day and the night, the wonders of the forest and the sea, bear witness? He is not only righteous Judge but King eternal. He is not only charged with my guidance; He has rights illimitable over me. I am wrong altogether if I am not in submissive harmony with Him; if I do not surrender, and adore.

Thus it has been, according to St. Paul, "ever since the creation of the universe" (and of man in it). And such everywhere is the Theism of Scripture. It maintains, or rather it states as certainty, that man's knowledge of God began with his being as man. To see the Maker in His works is not, according to the Holy Scriptures, only the slow and difficult issue of a long evolution which led through far lower forms of thought, the fetish, the nature-power, the tribal god, the national god, to the idea of a Supreme. Scripture presents man as made in the image of the Supreme, and capable from the first of a true however faint apprehension of Him. It assures us that man's lower and distorted views of nature and of personal power behind it are degenerations, perversions, issues of a mysterious primeval dislocation of man from his harmony with God. The believer in the Holy Scriptures, in the sense in which our Lord and the Apostles believed in them, will receive this view of the primeval history of Theism as a true report of God's account of it. Remembering that it concerns an otherwise unknown moment of human spiritual history, he will not be disturbed by alleged evidence against it from lower down the stream. Meanwhile he will note the fact that among the foremost students of Nature in our time there are those who affirm the rightness of such an attitude. It is not lightly that the Duke of Argyll writes words like these:—

"I doubt (to say the truth, I disbelieve) that we shall ever come to know by science anything more than we now know about the origin of man. I believe we shall always have to rest on that magnificent and sublime outline which has been given us by the great Prophet of the Jews."\*

So man, being what he is and seeing what he sees, is "without excuse": Because, knowing God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor thank Him, but proved futile in their ways of thinking, and their unintelligent heart was darkened. Asserting themselves for wise they turned fools, and transmuted the glory of the immortal God in a semblance of the likeness of mortal man, and of things winged, quadruped, and reptile. Man placed by God in His universe, and himself made in God's image, naturally and inevitably "knew God." Not necessarily in that inner sense of spiritual harmony and union which is (John xvii. 3) the life eternal; but in the sense of a per-

\* "Geology and the Deluge," p. 46 (Glasgow, 1885).

ception of His being and His character adequate, at its faintest, to make a moral claim. But somehow—a somehow which has to do with a revolt of man's will from God to self—that claim was, and is, disliked. Out of that dislike has sprung, in man's spiritual history, a reserve towards God, a tendency to question His purpose, His character, His existence; or otherwise, to degrade the conception of Personality behind phenomena into forms from which the multifold monster of idolatry has sprung, as if phenomena were due to personalities no better and no greater than could be imaged by man or by beast, things of limit and of passion; at their greatest terrible, but not holy; not intimate; not One.

Man has spent on these unworthy "ways of thinking" a great deal of weak and dull reasoning and imbecile imagination, but also some of the rarest and most splendid of the riches of his mind, made in the image of God. But all this thinking, because conditioned by a wrong attitude of his being as a whole, has had "futile" issues, and has been in the truest sense "unintelligent," failing to see inferences aright and as a whole. It has been a struggle "in the dark"; yea, a descent from the light into moral and mental "folly."

Was it not so, is it not so still? If man is indeed made in the image of the living Creator, a moral personality, and placed in the midst of "the myriad world, His shadow," then whatever process of thought leads man away from Him has somewhere in it a fallacy unspeakable, and inexcusable. It must mean that something in him which should be awake is dormant; or, yet worse, that something in him which should be in faultless tune, as the Creator tempered it, is all unstrung; something that should be nobly free to love and to adore is being repressed, "held down." Then only does man fully think aright when he *is* aright. Then only is he aright when he, made by and for the Eternal Holy One, rests willingly in Him, and lives for Him. "The fear of the Lord is," in the strictest fact, "the beginning of wisdom"; for it is that attitude of man without which the creature cannot "answer the idea" of the Creator, and therefore cannot truly follow out the law of its own being.

"Let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Him" (Jer. ix. 24) who necessarily and eternally transcends our cognition and comprehension, yet can be known, can be touched, clasped, adored, as personal, eternal, almighty, holy Love.

## CHAPTER V.

### *MAN GIVEN UP TO HIS OWN WAY: THE HEATHEN.*

ROMANS i. 24-32.

WHEREFORE God gave them up, in the desires of their hearts, to uncleanness, so as to dishonour their bodies among themselves.

There is a dark sequence in the logic of facts, between unworthy thoughts of God and the development of the basest forms of human wrong. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God:—they are corrupt and have done abominable works" (Psal. xiv. 1). And the folly



which does not indeed deny God, but degrades His Idea, always gives its sure contribution to such corruption. It is so in the nature of the case. The individual atheist, or polytheist, may conceivably be a virtuous person, on the human standard; but if he is so it is not because of his creed. Let his creed become a real formative power in human society, and it will tend inevitably to moral disease and death. Is man indeed a moral personality, made in the image of a holy and almighty Maker? Then the vital air of his moral life must be fidelity, correspondence, to his God. Let man think of Him as less than All, and he will think of himself less worthily; not less proudly perhaps, but less worthily, because not in his true and wonderful relation to the Eternal Good. Wrong in himself will tend surely to seem less awful, and right less necessary and great. And nothing, literally nothing, from any region higher than himself—himself already lowered in his own thought from his true idea—can ever come in to supply the blank where God should be, but is not. Man may worship himself, or may despise himself, when he has ceased to “glorify God and thank Him”; but he cannot for one hour be what he was made to be, the son of God in the universe of God. To know God indeed is to be secured from self-worship, and to be taught self-reverence; and it is the only way to those two secrets in their pure fulness.

“God gave them up.” So the Scripture says elsewhere. “So I gave them up unto their own hearts’ lusts” (Ps. lxxx. 12); “God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven” (Acts vii. 42); “God gave them up to passions of degradation”; “God gave them over to an abandoned mind”; (vv. 26, 28). It is a dire thought; but the inmost conscience, once awake, affirms the righteousness of the thing. From one point of view it is just the working out of a natural process, in which sin is at once exposed and punished by its proper results, without the slightest injection, so to speak, of any force beyond its own terrible gravitation towards the sinner’s misery. But from another point it is the personally allotted, and personally inflicted, retribution of Him who hates iniquity with the antagonism of infinite Personality. *He* has so constituted natural process that wrong gravitates to wretchedness; and *He* is in that process, and above it, always and for ever.

So *He* “gave them up, in their desires of their hearts”; *He* left them there where they had placed themselves, “in” the fatal region of self-will, self-indulgence; “unto uncleanness,” described now with terrible explicitness in its full outcome, “to dishonour their bodies,” the intended temples of the Creator’s presence, “among themselves,” or “in themselves”; for the possible dishonour might be done either in a foul solitude, or in a fouler society and mutuality: Seeing that they perverted the truth of God, the eternal fact of His glory and claim, in their lie, so that it was travestied, misrepresented, lost, “in” the falsehood of polytheism and idols; and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. *He* casts this strong Doxology into the thick air of false worship and foul life, as if to clear it with its holy reverberation. For he is writing no mere discussion, no lecture on the genesis and evolution of paganism. It is the story of a vast rebellion, told by one who,

once himself a rebel, is now altogether and for ever the absolute vassal of the King whom he has “seen in His beauty” and whom it is his joy to bless, and to claim blessing for Him from His whole world for ever.

As if animated by the word of benediction, he returns to denounce “the abominable thing which God hateth” with still more terrible explicitness. For this reason, because of their preference of the worse to the infinite Good, God gave them up to passions of degradation; *He* handed them over, self-bound, to the helpless slavery of lust; to “passions,” eloquent word, which indicates how the man who *will* have his own way is all the while a “sufferer,” though by his own fault; *the victim* of a mastery which he has conjured from the deep of sin.

Shall we shun to read, to render, the words which follow? We will not comment and expound. May the presence of God in our hearts, hearts otherwise as vulnerable as those of the old pagan sinners, sweep from the springs of thought and will all horrible curiosity. But if it does so it will leave us the more able, in humility, in tears, in fear, to hear the facts of this stern indictment. It will bid us listen as those who are not sitting in judgment on paganism, but standing beside the accused and sentenced, to confess that we too share the fall, and stand, if we stand, by grace alone. Aye, and we shall remember that if an Apostle thus tore the rags from the spots of the Black Death of ancient morals, he would have been even less merciful, if possible, over the like symptoms lurking still in modern Christendom, and found sometimes upon its surface.

Terrible, indeed, is the prosaic coolness with which vices now called unnameable are named and narrated in classical literature; and we ask in vain for one of even the noblest of the pagan moralists who has spoken of such sins with anything like adequate horror. Such speech, and such silence, have been almost impossible since the Gospel was felt in civilisation. “Paganism,” says Dr. F. W. Farrar, in a powerful passage,\* with this paragraph of Romans in his view, “is protected from complete exposure by the enormity of its own vices. To show the divine reformation wrought by Christianity it must suffice that once for all the Apostle of the Gentiles seized heathenism by the hair, and branded indelibly on her forehead the stigma of her shame.” Yet the vices of the old time are not altogether an antiquarian’s wonder. Now as truly as then man is awfully accessible to the worst solicitations the moment he trusts himself away from God. And this needs indeed to be remembered in a stage of thought and of society whose cynicism, and whose materialism, show gloomy signs of likeness to those last days of the old degenerate world in which St. Paul looked round him, and spoke out the things he saw.

For their females perverted the natural use to the unnatural. So too the males, leaving the natural use of the female, burst out aflame in their craving towards one another, males in males working out their unseemliness—and duly getting in themselves that recompense of their error which was owed them.

And as they did not approve of keeping God in their moral knowledge, God gave them up to an abandoned mind, “a reprobate, God-re-

\* “Darkness and Dawn,” p. 112.



jected mind"; meeting their *disapprobation* with His just and fatal *reprobation*. That *mind*, taking the false premisses of the Tempter, and reasoning from them to establish the autocracy of self, led with terrible certainty and success through evil thinking to evil doing; to do the deeds which are not becoming, to *expose* the being made for God, in a naked and foul *un-seemliness*, to its friends and its foes; filled full of all unrighteousness, wickedness, viciousness, greed; brimming with envy, murder, guile, ill-nature; whisperers, defamers, repulsive to God, outragers, prideful, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, senseless, faithless, loveless, truceless, pitiless; people who morally aware of God's ordinance, that they who practise such things are worthy of death, not only do them, but assent and consent with those who practise them.

Here is a terrible accusation of human life, and of the human heart; the more terrible because it is plainly meant to be, in a certain sense, inclusive, universal. We are not indeed compelled to think that the Apostle charges every human being with sins against nature, as if the whole earth were actually one vast City of the Plain. We need not take him to mean that every descendant of Adam is actually an undutiful child, or actually untrustworthy in a compact, or even actually a boaster, an *ἀλαζών*, a pretentious claimant of praise or credit which he knows he does not deserve. We may be sure that on the whole, in this lurid passage, charged less with condemnation than with "lamentation, and mourning, and woe," he is thinking mainly of the then state of heathen society in its worst developments. Yet we shall see, as the Epistle goes on, that all the while he is thinking not only of the sins of some men, but of the sin of man. He describes with this tremendous particularity the variegated symptoms of one disease—the corruption of man's heart; a disease everywhere present, everywhere deadly; limited in its manifestations by many circumstances and conditions, outward or within the man, but *in itself* quite unlimited in its dreadful possibilities. What man is, as fallen, corrupted, gone from God, is shown, in the teaching of St. Paul, by what bad men are.

Do we rebel against the inference? Quite possibly we do. Almost for certain, at one time or another, we have done so. We look round us on one estimable life and another, which we cannot reasonably think of as regenerate, if we take the strict Scriptural tests of regeneration into account, yet which asks and wins our respect, our confidence, it may be even our admiration; and we say, openly and tacitly, consciously or unconsciously, that *that* life stands clear outside this first chapter of Romans. Well, be it so in our thoughts; and let nothing—no, nothing—make us otherwise than ready to recognise and honour right doing wherever we see it, alike in the saints of God and in those who deny His very Being. But just now let us withdraw from all such looks outward, and calmly and in a silent hour look in. Do we, do you, do I, stand outside this chapter? Are we definitely prepared to say that the heart which we carry in our breast, whatever our friend's heart may be, is such that under no change of circumstances could it, being what it is, conceivably develop the forms of evil branded in this passage? Ah, who, that knows himself, does not

know that there lies in him indefinitely more than he can know of possible evil? "Who can understand his errors?" Who has so encountered temptation in all its typical forms that he can say, with even approximate truth, that he knows his own strength, and his own weakness, exactly as they are?

It was not for nothing that the question was discussed of old, whether there was any man who would always be virtuous if he were given the ring of Gyges, and the power to be invisible to all eyes. Nor was it lightly, or as a piece of pious rhetoric, that the saintliest of the chiefs of our Reformation, seeing a murderer carried off to die, exclaimed that there went John Bradford but for the grace of God. It is just when a man is nearest God for himself that he sees what, but for God, he would be; what, taken apart from God, he is, potentially, if not in act. And it is in just such a mood that, reading this paragraph of the great Epistle, he will smite upon his breast, and say, "God, be merciful to me the sinner" (Luke xviii. 13).

So doing he will be meeting the very purpose of the Writer of this passage. St. Paul is full of the message of peace, holiness, and the Spirit. He is intent and eager to bring his reader into sight and possession of the fulness of the eternal mercy, revealed and secured in the Lord Jesus Christ, our Sacrifice and Life. But for this very purpose he labours first to expose man to himself; to awaken him to the fact that he is before everything else a sinner; to reverse the Tempter's spell, and to let him see the fact of his guilt with open eyes.

"The Gospel," some one has said, "can never be proved except to a bad conscience." If "bad" means "awakened," the saying is profoundly true. With a conscience sound asleep we may discuss Christianity, whether to condemn it, or to applaud. We may see in it an elevating programme for the race. We may affirm, a thousand times, that from the creed that God became flesh there result boundless possibilities for Humanity. But the Gospel, "the power of God unto salvation," will hardly be seen in its own prevailing self-evidence, as it is presented in this wonderful Epistle, till the student is first and with all else a penitent. The man must know for himself something of sin as condemnable guilt, and something of self as a thing in helpless yet responsible bondage, before he can so see Christ given for us, and risen for us, and seated at the right hand of God for us, as to say, "There is now no condemnation; Who shall separate us from the love of God? I know whom I have believed."

To the full sight of Christ there needs a true sight of self, that is to say, of sin.

## CHAPTER VI.

### HUMAN GUILT UNIVERSAL: HE APPROACHES THE CONSCIENCE OF THE JEW.

#### ROMANS ii. 1-17.

WE have appealed, for affirmation of St. Paul's tremendous exposure of human sin, to a solemn and deliberate self-scrutiny, asking the man who doubts the justice of the picture to give up for the present any instinctive wish to



vindicate other men, while he thinks a little while solely of himself. But another and opposite class of mistake has to be reckoned with, and precluded; the tendency of man to a facile condemnation of others, in favour of himself; "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are" (Luke xviii. 11). It is now, as it was of old, only too possible to read, or to hear, the most searching and also the most sweeping condemnation of human sin, and to feel a sort of fallacious moral sympathy with the sentence, a phantom as it were of righteous indignation against the wrong and the doers of it, and yet wholly to mistake the matter by thinking that the hearer is righteous though the world is wicked. The man listens as if he were allowed a seat beside the Judge's chair, as if he were an esteemed assessor of the Court, and could listen with a grave yet untroubled approbation to the discourse preliminary to the sentence. Ah, he is an assessor of the accused; he is an accomplice of his fallen fellows; he is a poor guilty man himself. Let him awake to himself, and to his sin, in time.

With such a reader or hearer in view St. Paul proceeds. We need not suppose that he writes as if such states of mind were to be expected in the Roman mission; though it was quite possible that this might be the attitude of some who bore the Christian name at Rome. More probably he speaks as it were in the presence of the Christians to persons whom at any moment any of them might meet, and particularly to that large element in religious life at Rome, the unconverted Jews. True, they would not read the Epistle; but he could arm those who would read it against their cavils and refusals, and show them how to reach the conscience even of the Pharisee of the Dispersion. He could show them how to seek his soul, by shaking him from his dream of sympathy with the Judge who all the while was about to sentence *him*.

It is plain throughout the passage now before us the Apostle has the Jew in view. He does not name him for a long while. He says many things which are as much for the Gentile sinner as for him. He dwells upon the universality of guilt as indicated by the universality of conscience; a passage of awful import for every human soul, quite apart from its place in the argument here. But all the while he keeps in view the case of the self-constituted *judge* of other men, the man who affects to be essentially better than they, to be, at least by comparison with them, good friends with the law of God. And the undertone of the whole passage is a warning to this man that his brighter light will prove his greater ruin if he does not use it; nay, that he has not used it, and that so it is his ruin already, the ruin of his claim to judge, to stand exempt, to have nothing to do with the criminal crowd at the bar.

All this points straight at the Jewish conscience, though the arrow is levelled from a covert. If that conscience might but be reached! He longs to reach it, first for the unbeliever's own sake, that he might be led through the narrow pass of self-condemnation into the glorious freedom of faith and love. But also it was of first importance that the spiritual pride of the Jews should be conquered, or at least exposed, for the sake of the mission-converts already won. The first Christians, newly

brought from paganism, must have regarded Jewish opinion with great attention and deference. Not only were their apostolic teachers Jews, and the Scriptures of the Prophets, to which those teachers always pointed, Jewish; but the weary Roman world of late years had been disposed to own with more and more distinctness that, if there were such a thing as a true voice from heaven to man, it was to be heard among that unattractive yet impressive race which was seen everywhere, and yet refused to be "reckoned among the nations." The Gospels and the Acts show us instances enough of educated Romans drawn towards Israel and the covenant; and abundant parallels are given us by the secular historians and satirists. The Jews, in the words of Professor Gwatkin, were "the recognised non-conformists" of the Roman world. At this very time the Emperor was the enamoured slave of a brilliant woman who was known to be proselyted to the Jewish creed. It was no slight trial to converts in their spiritual infancy to meet everywhere the question why the sages of Jerusalem had slain this Jewish Prophet, Jesus, and why everywhere the synagogues denounced His name and His disciples. The true answer would be better understood if the bigot himself could be brought to say, "God, be merciful to me the sinner."

Wherefore you are without excuse, O man, every man who judges; when you judge the other party you pass judgment on yourself; for you practise the same things, you who judge. For we know—this is a granted point between us—that God's judgment is truth-wise, is a reality, in awful earnest, upon those who practise such things. Now is this your calculation, O man, you who judge those who practise such things, and do them yourself, that you will escape God's judgment? Do you surmise that some by-way of privilege and indulgence will be kept open for you? Or do you despise the wealth of His kindness, and of His forbearance and longsuffering—despise it, by mistaking it for mere indulgence, or indifference—knowing not that God's kind ways lead you to repentance? No, true to your own hardness, your own unrepentant heart, you are hoarding for yourself a wrath which will be felt in the day of wrath, the day of disclosure of the righteous judgment of God, who will requite each individual according to his works. What will be that requital, and its law? To those who, on the line of perseverance in good work, seek, as their point of gravitation, glory, and honour, and immortality, He will requite life eternal. But for those who side with strife, who take part with man, with self, with sin, against the claims and grace of God, and, while they disobey the truth of conscience, obey unrighteousness, yielding the will to wrong, there shall be wrath and fierce anger, trouble and bewilderment, inflicted on every soul of man, man working out what is evil, alike Jew—Jew first—and Greek. But glory, and honour, and peace shall be for every one who works what is good, alike for Jew—Jew first—and Greek. For there is no favouritism in God's court.

Here he actually touches the Jew. He has named him twice, and in both places recognises that primacy which in the history of Redemption is really his. It is the primacy of the race chosen to be the organ of revelation and the



birth-place of Incarnate God. It was given sovereignly, "not according to the works," or to the numbers, of the nation, but according to unknown conditions in the mind of God. It carried with it genuine and splendid advantages. It even gave the individual righteous Jew (so surely the language of ver. 10 implies) a certain special welcome to his Master's "Well done, good and faithful"; not to the disadvantage, in the least degree, of the individual righteous "Greek," but just such as may be illustrated in a circle of ardent and impartial friendship, where, in one instance or another, kinship added to friendship makes attachment not more intimate, but more interesting. Yes, the Jew has indeed his priority, his primacy, limited and qualified in many directions, but real and permanent in its place; this Epistle (see chap. xi.) is the great Charter of it in the Christian Scriptures. But whatever the place of it is, it has no place whatever in the question of the sinfulness of sin, unless indeed to make guilt deeper where light has been greater. The Jew has a great historical position in the plan of God. He has been accorded as it were an official nearness to God in the working out of the world's redemption. But he is not one whit the less for this a poor sinner, fallen and guilty. He is not one moment for this to excuse, but all the more to condemn, himself. He is the last person in the world to judge others. Wherever God has placed him in history, he is to place himself, in repentance and faith, least and lowest at the foot of Messiah's Cross.

What was and is true of the chosen Nation is now and for ever true, by a deep moral parity, of all communities and of all persons who are in any sense privileged, advantaged by circumstance. It is true, solemnly and formidably true, of the Christian Church, and of the Christian family, and of the Christian man. Later in this second chapter we shall be led to some reflections on Church privilege. Let us reflect here, if but in passing, on the fact that privilege of other kinds must stand utterly aside when it is a question of man's sin. Have we no temptation to forget this? Probably we are not of the mind of the Frenchman of the old *régime* who thought that "the Almighty would hesitate before He condemned for ever a man of a marquis' condition." But are we quite clear on the point that the Eternal Judge will admit no influences from other sides? The member of so excellent, so useful, a family, with many traces of the family character about him! The relative of saints, the companion of the good! A mind so full of practical energy, of literary grace and skill; so capable of deep and subtle thought, of generous words, and even of deeds; so charming, so entertaining, so informing; the man of culture, the man of genius;—shall none of these things weigh in the balance, and mingle some benignant favouritism with the question, Has he done the will of God? Nay, "there is no favouritism in God's court!" No one is acquitted there for his reputable connections, or for his possession of personal "talents" (awful word in the light of its first use!), given him only that he might the better "occupy" for his Lord. These things have nothing to do with that dread thing, the Law, which has everything to do with the accusation and the award.

Before we pass to another section of the passage, let us not forget the grave fact that here, in these opening pages of this great Treatise on gratuitous Salvation, this Epistle which is about to unfold to us the divine paradox of the Justification of the Ungodly, we find this overwhelming emphasis laid upon "perseverance in good work." True, we are not to allow even it to confuse the grand simplicity of the Gospel, which is to be soon explained. We are not to let ourselves think, for example, that ver. 7 depicts a man deliberately aiming through a life of merit at a *quid pro quo* at length in heaven; so much glory, honour, and immortality for so living as it would be sin not to live. St. Paul does not write to contradict the Parable of the Unprofitable Servant (Luke xvii.), any more than to negative beforehand his own reasoning in the fourth chapter below. The case he contemplates is one only to be realised where man has cast himself, without one plea of merit, at the feet of mercy, and then rises up to a walk and work of willing loyalty, covetous of the "Well done, good and faithful," at its close, not because he is ambitious for himself, but because he is devoted to his God, and to His will. And St. Paul knows, and in due time will tell us, that for the loyalty that serves, as well as for the repentance that first submits, the man has to thank mercy, and mercy only, first, midst, and last:

"It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that pitieth" (ix. 16). But then, none the less, he does lay this emphasis, this indescribable stress, upon the "perseverance in good work," as the actual march of the pilgrim who travels heavenward. True to the genius of Scripture, that is to the mind of its Inspirer in His utterances to man, he isolates a main truth for the time, and leaves us alone with it. Justification will come in order. But, that it may do precisely this, that it may come in order and not out of it, he bids us first consider right, wrong, judgment, and retribution, as if there were nothing else in the moral universe. He leads us to the fact of the permanence of the results of the soul's actions. He warns us that God is eternally in earnest when He promises and when He threatens; that He will see to it that time leaves its retributive impress for ever on eternity.

The whole passage, read by a soul awake to itself, and to the holiness of the Judge of men, will contribute from its every sentence something to our conviction, our repentance, our dread of self, our persuasion that somehow from the judgment we must fly to the Judge. But this is not to be unfolded yet.

It was, I believe, a precept of John Wesley's to his evangelists, in unfolding their message, to speak first in general of the love of God to man; then, with all possible energy, and so as to search conscience to its depths, to preach the law of holiness; and then, and not till then, to uplift the glories of the Gospel of pardon, and of life. Intentionally or not, his directions follow the lines of the Epistle to the Romans.

But the Apostle has by no means done with the Jew, and his hopes of heaven by pedigree and by creed. He recurs to the impartiality of "that day," the coming final crisis of human history, ever present to his soul. He dwells now almost wholly on the impartiality of *its severity*, still bearing on the Pharisee's dream



that somehow the Law will be his friend, for Abraham's and Moses' sake.

For all who sinned (or, in English idiom, all who have sinned, all who shall have sinned) not law-wise—even so, not law-wise—shall perish, shall lose the soul; and all who in (or let us paraphrase, under) law have sinned, by law shall be judged, that is to say, practically, condemned, found guilty. For not law's hearers are just in God's court: nay, law's doers shall be justified; for "law" is never for a moment satisfied with applause, with approbation; it demands always and inexorably obedience. For whenever (the) Nations, Nations not having law, by nature—as distinct from express precept—do the things of the Law, when they act on the principles of it, observing in any measure the eternal difference of right and wrong, these men, though not having law, are to themselves law; showing as they do—to one another, in moral intercourse—the work of the Law, that which is, as a fact, its *result* where it is heard, a sense of the dread claims of right, written in their hearts, present to the intuitions of their nature; while their conscience, their sense of violated right, bears concurrent witness, each conscience "concurring" with all; and while, between each other, in the interchanges of thought and discourse, their reasonings accuse, or it may be defend, their actions; now in conversation, now in treatise or philosophic dialogue. And all this makes one vast phenomenon, pregnant with lessons of accountability, and ominous of a judgment coming; in the day when God shall judge the secret things of men, even the secrets hid beneath the solemn robe of the formalist, according to my Gospel, by means of Jesus Christ, to whom the Father "hath committed all judgment, as He is the Son of Man" (John v. 27). So he closes another solemn cadence with the blessed Name. It has its special weight and fitness here; it was the name trampled by the Pharisee, yet the name of Him who was to judge him in the great day.

The main import of the paragraph is plain. It is, to enforce the fact of the accountability of the Jew and the Greek alike, from the point of view of Law. The Jew, who is primarily in the Apostle's thought, is reminded that his possession of *the* Law, that is to say of the one *especially revealed* code not only of ritual but far more of morals,\* is no recommendatory privilege, but a sacred responsibility. The Gentile meanwhile is shown, in passing, but with gravest purpose, to be by no means exempted from accountability simply for his lack of a revealed perceptive code. He possesses, as man, that moral consciousness without which the revealed code itself would be futile, for it would correspond to nothing. Made in the image of God, he has the mysterious sense which sees, feels, handles moral obligation. He is aware of the fact of duty. Not living up to what he is thus aware of, he is guilty.

Implicitly, all through the passage, human failure is taught side by side with human responsibility. Such a clause as that of ver. 14,

\* Manifestly "*the* Law" in this passage means not the ceremonial law of Israel, but the revealed moral law given to Israel, above all in the Decalogue. This appears from the language of ver. 15, which would be meaningless if the reference were to special ordinances of worship. The Gentiles could not "show the work of" *that* kind of "law written in their hearts"; what they showed was, as we have explained, a "work" related to the revealed claims of God and man on the will and life.

"when they do by nature the things of the law," is certainly not to be pressed, *in such a context as this*, to be an assertion that pagan morality ever actually satisfied the holy tests of the eternal Judge. Read in the whole connection, it only asserts that the pagan acts as a moral being; that he knows what it is to obey, and to resist, the sense of duty. That is not to say, what we shall soon hear St. Paul so solemnly deny, that there exists anywhere a man whose correspondence of life to moral law is such that his "mouth" needs *not* to "be stopped," and that he is *not* to take his place as one of a "world guilty before God."

Stern, solemn, merciful argument! Now from this side, now from that, it approaches the conscience of man, made for God and fallen from God. It strips the veil from his gross iniquities; it lets in the sun of holiness upon his iniquities of the more religious type; it speaks in his dull ears the words judgment day, tribulation, wrath, bewilderment, perishing. But it does all this that man, convicted, may ask in earnest what he shall do with conscience and his Judge, and may discover with joy that his Judge Himself has "found a ransom," and stands Himself in act to set him free.

## CHAPTER VII.

### JEWISH RESPONSIBILITY AND GUILT.

ROMANS ii. 17-29.

"THE Jew, first, and also the Greek"; this has been the burthen of the Apostle's thought thus far upon the whole. He has had the Jew for some while in his chief thought, but he has recurred again and again in passing to the Gentile. Now he faces the Pharisee explicitly and on open ground, before he passes from this long exposure of human sin to the revelation of the glorious Remedy.

But if you, you emphatically, the reader or hearer now in view, you who perhaps have excused yourself from considering your own case by this last mention of the responsibility of the non-Jewish world; if you bear the name of Jew, whether or no you possess the corresponding spiritual reality; and repose yourself upon the Law, as if the possession of that awful revelation of duty was your protection, not your sentence; and glory in God, as if He were your private property, the decoration of your national position, whereas the knowledge of Him is given you in trust for the world; and know the Will, His Will, *the* Will supreme; and put the touchstone to things which differ, like a casuist skilled in moral problems, schooled out of the Law, under continuous training (so the Greek present participle bids us explain) by principles and precepts which the Law supplies;—(if) you are sure that you, yourself, whoever else, are a leader of blind men, a light of those who are in the dark, an educator of the thoughtless, a teacher of beginners, possessing, in the Law, the outline, the system, of real knowledge and truth (the outline indeed, but not the power and life related to it):—if this is your estimate of your position and capacities, I turn it upon yourself. Think, and answer—You therefore, your neighbour's teacher, do you not teach yourself? You, who proclaim, Thou shalt not



steal, do you steal? You, who say, Thou shalt not commit adultery, do you commit it? You, who abominate the idols, affecting to loathe their very neighbourhood, do you plunder temples, entering the polluted precincts readily enough for purposes at least equally polluting? You who glory in the Law, as the palladium of your race, do you, by your violation of the Law, disgrace your God? "For the name of our God is, because of you, railed at among the heathen," as it stands written, in Ezekiel's message (xxxvi. 20) to the ungodly Israel of the ancient Dispersion—a message true of the Dispersion of the later day.

We need not overstrain the emphasis of the Apostle's stern invective. Not every non-Christian Jew of the first century, certainly, was an adulterer, a thief, a plunderer. When a few years later (Acts xxviii. 17) St. Paul gathered round him the Jews of Rome, and spent a long day in discussing the prophecies with them, he appealed to them with a noble frankness which in some sense evidently expected a response in kind. But it is certain that the Jews of the Roman Dispersion bore a poor general character for truth and honour. And anywise St. Paul knew well that there is a deeply natural connection between unhallowed religious bigotry and that innermost failure of self-control which leaves man only too open to the worst temptations. Whatever feeds gross personal pride promotes a swift and deadly decay of moral fibre. Did this man pride himself on Abraham's blood, and his own Rabbinic lore and skill, and scorn both the Gentile "sinner" and the *'am-hââretz*, "the people of the land," the rank and file of his own race? Then he was the very man to be led helpless by the Tempter. As a fact, there are maxims of the later Rabbinism, which represent beyond reasonable doubt the spirit if not the letter of the worst watchwords of "the circumcision" of St. Paul's time: "Circumcision is equivalent to all the commandments of the Law"; "To live in Palestine is equal to the Commandments"; "He that hath his abode in Palestine is sure of life eternal." The man who could even for an hour entertain such a creed was ready (however deep below his consciousness the readiness lay) for anything—under fitting circumstances of temptation.

So it is now, very far beyond the limits of the Jewish Dispersion of our time. Now as then, and for the Christian "outwardly" as for the Jew "outwardly," there is no surer path to spiritual degeneracy than spiritual pride. What are the watchwords which have succeeded to those of the Rabbinists who encountered St. Paul? Are they words, or thoughts, of self-applause because of the historic orthodoxy of your creed? Because of the Scriptural purity of your theory of salvation? Because of the illustrious annals of your national Church, older than the nation which it has so largely welded and developed? Because of the patient courage, under contempt and exclusion, of the community which some call your denomination, your sect, but which is to you indeed your Church? Because of your loyalty to order? Because of your loyalty to liberty? Take heed! The best, corrupted, becomes inevitably the worst. In religion, there is only one altogether safe "glorying." It is when the man can say from the soul, with open eyes, and therefore

with a deeply humbled heart, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. vi. 14). All other "glorying is not good." Be thankful for every genuine privilege. But for Christ's sake, and for your own soul's sake, do not, even in the inmost secret of your soul, "value *yourself*" upon them. It is disease, it is disaster, to do so.

And shall not we of the Christian Dispersion take home also what Ezekiel and St. Paul say about the blasphemies, the miserable railings at our God, caused by the sins of those who bear His Name? Who does not know that, in every region of heathendom, the missionary's plea for Christ is always best listened to where the pagan, or the Mussulman, has *not* before his eyes the Christianity of "treaty-ports," and other places where European life is to be seen lived without restraint? The stumbling-block may be the drunken sailor, or the unchaste merchant, or civilian, or soldier, or traveller. Or it may be just the man who, belonging to a race reputed Christian, merely ignores the Christian's holy Book, and Day, and House, and avoids all semblance of fellowship with his countrymen who have come to live beside him that they may preach Christ where He is not known. Or it may be the government, reputed Christian, which, amidst all its noble benefits to the vast races it holds in sway, allows them to know, to think, at least to suspect, that there are cases where it cares more for revenue than for righteousness. In all these cases the Christian Dispersion gives occasion for railing at the Christian's God: and the reckoning will be a grave matter "in that Day."

But shall the Christians of the Christendom at home stand exempt from the charge? Ah! let us who name the blessed Name with even the least emphasis of faith and loyalty, dwelling amongst the masses who only passively, so to speak, are Christian, who "profess nothing," though they are, or are supposed to be, baptised—let us, amidst "the world" which understands not a little of what we ought to be, and watches us so keenly, and so legitimately—let us take home this message, sent first to the old inconsistent Israel. Do we, professing godliness, show the mind of Christ in our secular intercourse? Do we, on the whole, give the average "world" cause to expect that "a Christian," as such, is a man to trust in business, in friendship? Is the conviction quietly forced upon them that a Christian's temper, and tongue, are not as other men's? That the Christian minister habitually lives high above self-seeking? That the Christian tradesman faithfully remembers his customers' just interests, and is true in all his dealings? That the Christian servant, and the Christian master, are alike exceptionally mindful of each other's rights, and facile about their own? That the Christian's time, and his money, are to a remarkable degree applied to the good of others, for Christ's sake? This is what the members of the Christian Society, in the inner sense of the word Christian, are expected to be in what we all understand by "the world." If they are so, God be thanked. If they are not so—who shall weigh the guilt? Who shall adequately estimate the dishonour so done to the blessed Name? And "the Day" is coming.

But he has more to say about the position of the Jew. He would not even seem to forget



the greatness of the God-given privilege of Israel; and he will use that privilege once more as a cry to conscience.

For circumcision indeed profits you, if you carry law into practice; in that case circumcision is for you God's seal upon God's own promises to the true sons of Abraham's blood and faith. Are you indeed a practiser of the holy Code whose summary and essence is love to God and love to man? Can you look your Lord in the face and say—not, "I have satisfied all Thy demands; pay me that Thou owest," but, "Thou knowest that I love Thee, and therefore oh how I love Thy law"? Then you are indeed a child of the covenant, through His grace; and the seal of the covenant speaks to you the certainties of its blessing. But if you are a transgressor of law, your circumcision is turned uncircumcision; the divine seal is to you nothing, for you are not the rightful holder of the deed of covenant which it seals. If therefore the uncircumcision, the Gentile world, in some individual instance, carefully keeps the ordinances of the Law, reverently remembers the love owed to God and to man, shall not his uncircumcision, the uncircumcision of the man supposed, be counted as if circumcision? Shall he not be treated as a lawful recipient of covenant blessings even though *the seal* upon the document of promise is, not at all by his fault, missing? And thus shall not this hereditary uncircumcision, this Gentile born and bred, fulfilling the law of love and duty, judge you, who by means of letter and circumcision are—law's transgressor, using as you practically do use the terms, the letter, of the covenant, and the rite which is its seal, as means to violate its inmost import, and claiming, in the pride of privilege, blessings promised only to self-forgetting love? For not the (Jew) in the visible sphere is a Jew; nor is circumcision in the visible sphere, in the flesh, circumcision. No, but the Jew in the hidden sphere; and circumcision of heart, in Spirit, not letter; circumcision in the sense of a work on the soul, wrought by God's Spirit, not in that of a legal claim supposed to rest upon a routine of prescribed observances. His praise, the praise of such a Jew, the Jew in this hidden sense, thus circumcised in heart, does not come from men, but does come from God. Men may, and very likely will, give Him anything but praise; they will not like him the better for his deep divergence from their standard, and from their spirit. But the Lord knows him, and loves him, and prepares for him His own welcome; "Well done, good and faithful."

Here is a passage, far-reaching, like the paragraphs which have gone before it. Its immediate bearing needs only brief comment, certainly brief explanation. We need do little more than wonder at the moral miracle of words like these written by one who, a few years before, was spending the whole energy of his mighty will upon the defence of ultra-Judaism. The miracle resides not only in the vastness of the man's change of view, but in the manner of it. It is not only that he denounces Pharisaism, but he denounces it in a tone entirely free from its spirit, which he might easily have carried into the opposite camp. What he meets it with is the assertion of truths as pure and peaceable as they are eternal; the truths of the supreme and ultimate importance of the right attitude of

man's heart towards God, and of the inexorable connection between such an attitude and a life of unselfish love towards man. Here is one great instance of that large spiritual phenomenon, the transfiguration of the first followers of the Lord Jesus from what they had been to what under His risen power they became. We see in them men whose convictions and hopes have undergone an incalculable revolution; yet it is a revolution which disorders nothing. Rather, it has taken fanaticism for ever out of their thoughts and purposes. It has softened their whole souls towards man, as well as drawn them into an unimagined intimacy with God. It has taught them to live above the world; yet it has brought them into the most practical and affectionate relations with every claim upon them in the world around them. "Your life is hid with Christ in God"; "Honour all men"; "He that loveth not, knoweth not God."

But the significance of this particular passage is indeed far-reaching, permanent, universal. As before, so here, the Apostle warns us (not only the Jew of that distant day) against the fatal but easy error of perverting privilege into pride, forgetting that every gift of God is "a talent" with which the man is to trade for his Lord, and for his Lord alone. But also, more explicitly here, he warns us against that subtle tendency of man's heart to substitute, in religion, the outward for the inward, the mechanical for the spiritual, the symbol for the thing. Who can read this passage without reflections on the privileges, and on the seals of membership, of the Christian Church? Who may not take from it a warning not to put in the wrong place the sacred gifts, as sacred as they can be, because divine, of Order, and of Sacrament? Here is a great Hebrew doctor dealing with that primary Sacrament of the Elder Church of which such high and urgent things are said in the Hebrew Scriptures; a rite of which even mediæval theologians have asserted that it was the Sacrament of the same grace as that which is the grace of Baptism now.\* But when he has to consider the case of one who has received the physical ordinance apart from the right attitude of soul, he speaks of the ordinance in terms which a hasty reader might think slighting. He does not slight it. He says it "profits," and he is going soon to say more to that purpose. For him it is nothing less than God's own Seal on God's own Word, assuring the individual, as with a literal touch divine, that all is true *for him*, as he claims grace in humble faith. But then he contemplates the case of one who, by no contempt but by force of circumstance, has never received the holy seal, yet believes, and loves, and obeys. And he lays it down that the Lord of the Covenant will honour that man's humble claim as surely as if he brought the covenant-document ready sealed in his hand. Not that even for him the seal, if it may be had, will be nothing; it will assuredly be divine still, and will be sought as God's own gift, His seal *ex post facto*. But the principle remains that the ritual seal and the spiritual reality are separable; and that the greater thing, the thing of absolute and ultimate necessity between the soul and God, is the spiritual reality; and that where that is, present there God accepts.

It was the temptation of Israel of old to put

\* So Bernard, "Sermo in Cœna," c. 2.



Circumcision in the place of faith, love, and holiness, instead of in its right place, as the divine imperial seal upon the covenant of grace, the covenant to be claimed and used by faith. It is the temptation of some Christians now to put the sacred order of the Church, and particularly its divine Sacraments, the holy Bath and the holy Meal, in the place of spiritual regeneration, and spiritual communion, rather than in their right place as divine imperial seals on the covenant which guarantees both to faith. For us, as for our elder brethren, this paragraph of the great argument is therefore altogether to the purpose. "Faith is greater than water," says even Peter Lombard,\* the *Magister* of the mediæval Schools. So it is. And the thought is in perfect unison with St. Paul's principle of reasoning here. Let it be ours to reverence, to prize, to use the ordinances of our Master, with a devotion such as we might seem sure we should feel if we saw Him dip His hand in the Font, or stretch it out to break the Bread, and hallow it, and give it, at the Table. But let us be quite certain, for our own souls' warning, that it is true all the while—in the sense of this passage—that "he is not a Christian which is one outwardly, neither is that Baptism, or Communion, which is outward; but he is a Christian which is one inwardly, and Baptism and Communion are those of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter."

Sacred indeed are the God-given externals of Christian order and ordinance. But there are degrees of greatness in the world of sacred things. And the moral work of God direct upon the soul of man is greater than His sacramental work done through man's body.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### JEWISH CLAIMS: NO HOPE IN HUMAN MERIT.

#### ROMANS iii. 1-20.

As the Apostle dictates, there rises before his mind a figure often seen by his eyes, the Rabbinic disputant. Keen, subtle, unscrupulous, at once eagerly in earnest yet ready to use any argument for victory, how often that adversary had crossed his path, in Syria, in Asia Minor, in Macedonia, in Achaia! He is present now to his consciousness, within the quiet house of Gaius; and his questions come thick and fast, following on this urgent appeal to his, alas! almost impenetrable conscience.

"What then is the advantage of the Jew? Or what is the profit of circumcision?" "If some did not believe, what of that? Will their faithlessness cancel God's good faith?" "But if our unrighteousness sets off God's righteousness, would God be unjust, bringing His wrath to bear?"

We group the questions together thus, to make it the clearer that we do enter here, at this opening of the third chapter, upon a brief controversial dialogue; perhaps the almost verbatim record of many a dialogue actually spoken. The Jew, pressed hard with moral proofs of his responsibility, must often have turned thus upon his pursuer, or rather have tried thus to escape

from him in the subtleties of a false appeal to the faithfulness of God.

And first he meets the Apostle's stern assertion that circumcision without spiritual reality will not save. He asks, where then is the advantage of Jewish descent? What is the profit, the good, of circumcision? It is a mode of reply not unknown in discussions on Christian ordinances; "What then is the good of belonging to a historic Church at all? What do you give the divine Sacraments to do?" The Apostle answers his questioner at once; Much, in every way; first, because they were entrusted with the Oracles of God. "First," as if there were more to say in detail. Something, at least, of what is here left unsaid is said later, ix. 4, 5, where he recounts the long roll of Israel's spiritual and historical splendours; "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the law-giving, and the worship, and the promises, and the Fathers, and the Christ." Was it nothing to be bound up with things like these, in a bond made at once of blood-relationship, holy memories, and magnificent hopes? Was it nothing to be exhorted to righteousness, fidelity, and love by finding the individual life thus surrounded? But here he places "first" of even these wonderful treasures this, that Israel was "entrusted with the Oracles of God," the Utterances of God, His unique Message to man "through His prophets, in the Holy Scriptures." Yes, here was something which gave to the Jew an "advantage" without which the others would either have had no existence, or no significance. He was the trustee of Revelation. In his care was lodged the Book by which man was to live and die; through which he was to know immeasurably more about God and about himself than he could learn from all other informants put together. He, his people, his Church, were the "witness and keeper of Holy Writ." And, therefore, to be born of Israel and ritually entered into the covenant of Israel, was to be born into the light of revelation, and committed to the care of the witnesses and keepers of the light.

To insist upon this immense privilege is altogether to St. Paul's purpose here. For it is a privilege which evidently carries an awful responsibility with it. What would be the guilt of the soul, and of the Community, to whom those Oracles were—not given as property, but *entrusted*—and who did not do the things they said?

Again the message passes on to the Israel of the Christian Church. "What advantage hath the Christian? What profit is there of Baptism?" "Much, in every way; first, because to the Church is entrusted the light of revelation." To be born in it, to be baptised in it, is to be born into the sunshine of revelation, and laid on the heart and care of the Community which witnesses to the genuineness of its Oracles and sees to their preservation and their spread. Great is the talent. Great is the accountability.

But the Rabbinist goes on. For if some did not believe, what of that? Will their faithlessness cancel God's good faith? These Oracles of God promise interminable glories to Israel, to Israel as a community, a body. Shall not that promise hold good for the whole mass, though some (bold euphemism for the faithless multitudes!) have rejected the Promiser? Will not the unbelieving Jew, after all, find his way

\* See "Sententiæ," iv., iv., 3-7.



to life eternal for his company's sake, for his part and lot in the covenant community? "Will God's faith," His good faith, His plighted word, be reduced to empty sounds by the bad Israelite's sin? Away with the thought, the Apostle answers. Anything is more possible than that God should lie. Nay, let God prove true, and every man prove liar; as it stands written (Ps. li. 4), "That Thou mightest be justified in Thy words, and mightest overcome when Thou impleadedest." He quotes the Psalmist in that deep utterance of self-accusation, where he takes part against himself, and finds himself guilty "without one plea," and, in the loyalty of the regenerate and now awakened soul, is jealous to vindicate the justice of his condemning God. The whole Scripture contains no more impassioned, yet no more profound and deliberate, utterance of the eternal truth that God is always in the right or He would be no God at all; that it is better, and more reasonable, to doubt anything than to doubt His righteousness, whatever cloud surrounds it, and whatever lightning bursts the cloud.

But again the caviller, intent not on God's glory, but on his own position, takes up the word. But if our unrighteousness exhibits, sets off, God's righteousness, if our sin gives occasion to grace to abound, if our guilt lets the generosity of God's Way of Acceptance stand out the more wonderful by contrast—what shall we say? Would God be unjust, bringing His (τῆν) wrath to bear on us, when our pardon would illustrate His free grace? Would He be unjust? Would He *not* be unjust?

We struggle, in our paraphrase, to bring out the bearing, as it seems to us, of a passage of almost equal grammatical difficulty and argumentative subtlety. The Apostle seems to be "in a strait" between the wish to represent the caviller's thought, and the dread of one really irreverent word. He throws the man's last question into a form which, grammatically, expects a "no" when the drift of the thought would lead us up to a shocking "yes." And then at once he passes to his answer. "I speak as man," man-wise; as if this question of balanced rights and wrongs were one between man and man, not between man and eternal God. Such talk, even for argument's sake, is impossible for the regenerate soul except under urgent protest. Away with the thought that He would *not* be righteous, in His punishment of any given sin. "Since how shall God judge the world?" How, on such conditions, shall we repose on the ultimate fact that He is the universal Judge? If He *could* not, righteously, punish a deliberate sin because pardon, under certain conditions, illustrates His glory, then He could not punish any sin at all. But He *is* the Judge; He *does* bring wrath to bear!

Now he takes up the caviller on his own ground, and goes all lengths upon it, and then flies with abhorrence from it. For if God's truth, in the matter of my lie, has abounded, has come more amply out, to His glory, why am I too called to judgment as a sinner? And why not say, as the slander against us goes, and as some assert that we do say, "Let us do the ill that the good may come"? So they assert of us. But their doom is just,—the doom of those who would utter such a maxim, finding shelter for a lie under the throne of God.

No doubt he speaks from a bitter and frequent experience when he takes this particular case, and with a solemn irony claims exemption for himself from the liar's sentence of death. It is plain that the charge of untruth was, for some reason or another, often thrown at St. Paul; we see this in the marked urgency with which, from time to time, he asserts his truthfulness; "The things which I say, behold, before God I lie not" (Gal. i. 20); "I speak the truth in Christ and lie not" (ix. 1). Perhaps the manifold sympathies of his heart gave innocent occasion sometimes for the charge. The man who could be "all things to all men" (1 Cor. ix. 22), taking with a genuine insight their point of view, and saying things which showed that he took it, would be very likely to be set down by narrower minds as untruthful. And the very boldness of his teaching might give further occasion, equally innocent; as he asserted at different times, with equal emphasis, opposite sides of truth. But these somewhat subtle excuses for false witness against this great master of holy sincerity would not be necessary where genuine malice was at work. No man is so truthful that he cannot be charged with falsehood; and no charge is so likely to injure even where it only feigns to strike. And of course the mighty paradox of Justification lent itself easily to the distortions, as well as to the contradictions, of sinners. "Let us do evil that good may come" no doubt represented the report which prejudice and bigotry would regularly carry away and spread after every discourse, and every argument, about free Forgiveness. It is so still: "If this is true, we may live as we like; if this is true, then the worst sinner makes the best saint." Things like this have been current sayings since Luther, since Whitefield, and till now. Later in the Epistle we shall see the unwilling evidence which such distortions bear to the nature of the maligned doctrine; but here the allusion is too passing to bring this out.

"Whose doom is just." What a witness is this to the inalienable truthfulness of the Gospel! This brief stern utterance absolutely repudiates all apology for means by end; all seeking of even the good of men by the way of saying the thing that is not. Deep and strong, almost from the first, has been the temptation to the Christian man to think otherwise, until we find whole systems of casuistry developed whose aim seems to be to go as near the edge of untruthfulness as possible, if not beyond it, in religion. But the New Testament sweeps the entire idea of the pious fraud away, with this short thunder-peal, "Their doom is just." It will hear of no unholiness that leaves out truthfulness; no word, no deed, no habit, that even with the purest purpose belies the God of reality and veracity.

If we read aright Acts xxiv. 20, 21, with Acts xxiii. 6, we see St. Paul himself once, under urgent pressure of circumstances, betrayed into an equivocation, and then, publicly and soon, expressing his regret of conscience. "I am a Pharisee, and a Pharisee's son; about the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question." True, true in fact, but not the whole truth, not the unreserved account of his attitude towards the Pharisee. Therefore, a week later, he confesses, does he not? that in this one thing there *was* "evil in him, while he stood before the council." Happy the Christian, happy



indeed the Christian public man, immersed in management and discussion, whose memory is as clear about truth-telling, and whose conscience is as sensitive!

What then? are we superior? Say not so at all. Thus now he proceeds, taking the word finally from his supposed antagonist. Who are the "we," and with whom are "we" compared? The drift of the argument admits of two replies to this question. "We" may be "we Jews"; as if Paul placed himself in instinctive sympathy, by the side of the compatriot whose cavils he has just combated, and gathered up here into a final assertion all he has said before of the (at least) equal guilt of the Jew beside the Greek. Or "we" may be "we Christians," taken for the moment as men apart from Christ; it may be a repudiation of the thought that he has been speaking from a pedestal, or from a tribunal. As if he said, "Do not think that I, or my friends in Christ, would say to the world, Jewish or Gentile, that we are holier than you. No; we speak not from the bench, but from the bar. Apart from Him who is our peace and life, we are 'in the same condemnation.' It is exactly because we are in it that we turn and say to you, 'Do not ye fear God?'" On the whole, this latter reference seems the truer to the thought and spirit of the whole context.

For we have already charged Jews and Greeks, all of them, with being under sin; with being brought under sin, as the Greek bids us more exactly render, giving us the thought that the race has fallen *from* a good estate *into* an evil; self-involved in an awful super-incumbent ruin. As it stands written, that there is not even one man righteous; there is not a man who understands, not a man who seeks his (τὸν) God. All have left the road; they have turned worthless together. There is not a man who does what is good, there is not even so many as one. A grave set open is their throat, exhaling the stench of polluted words; with their tongues they have deceived; asp's venom is under their lips; (men) whose mouth is brimming with curse and bitterness. Swift are their feet to shed blood; ruin and misery for their victims are in their ways; and the way of peace they never knew. There is no such thing as fear of God before their eyes.

Here is a tessellation of Old Testament oracles. The fragments, hard and dark, come from divers quarries; from the Psalms (v. 9, x. 7, xiv. 1-3, xxxvi. 1, cxl. 3), from the Proverbs (i. 16), from Isaiah (lix. 7). All in the first instance depict and denounce classes of sins and sinners in Israelite society; and we may wonder at first sight how their evidence convicts all men everywhere, and in all time, of condemnable and fatal sin. But we need not only, in submission, own that somehow it must be so, for "it stands written" here; we may see, in part, how it is so. These special charges against certain sorts of human lives stand in the same Book which levels the general charge against "the human heart" (Jerem. xvii. 9), that it is "deceitful above all things, hopelessly diseased," and incapable of knowing all its own corruption. The crudest surface phenomena of sin are thus never isolated from the dire underlying epidemic of the race of man. The actual evil of men shows the potential evil of man. The tiger-strokes of open wickedness show the tiger-nature, which

is always present, even when its possessor least suspects it. Circumstances infinitely vary, and among them those internal circumstances which we call special tastes and dispositions. But everywhere amidst them all is the human heart, made upright in its creation, self-wrecked into moral wrongness when it turned itself from God. That it is turned from Him, not to Him, appears when its direction is tested by the collision between His claim and its will. And in this, aversion from the Holy One, who claims the whole heart, there lies at least the potency of "all unrighteousness."

Long after this, as his glorious rest drew near, St. Paul wrote again of the human heart, to "his true son" Titus (iii. 3). He reminds him of the wonder of that saving grace which he so fully unfolds in this Epistle; how, "not according to our works," the "God who loveth man" had saved Titus, and saved Paul. And what had he saved them from? From a state in which they were "disobedient, deceived, the slaves of divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another." What, the loyal and laborious Titus, the chaste, the upright, the unutterably earnest Paul? Is not the picture greatly, lamentably exaggerated, a burst of religious rhetoric? Adolphe Monod\* tells us that he once thought it must be so; he felt himself quite unable to submit to the awful witness. But years moved, and he saw deeper into himself, seeing deeper into the holiness of God; and the truthfulness of that passage grew upon him. Not that its difficulties all vanished, but its truthfulness shone out, "and sure I am," he said from his death-bed, "that when this veil of flesh shall fall I shall recognise in that passage the truest portrait ever painted of my own natural heart."

Robert Browning, in a poem of terrible moral interest and power,† confesses that, amidst a thousand doubts and difficulties, his mind was anchored to faith in Christianity by the fact of its doctrine of Sin:

"I still, to suppose it true, for my part  
See reasons and reasons; this, to begin;  
'Tis the faith that launched point-blank her dart  
At the head of a lie; taught Original Sin,  
The Corruption of Man's Heart."

Now we know that whatever things the Law says, it speaks them to those in the Law, those within its range, its dominion; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may prove guilty with regard to God. "The Law"; that is to say, here, the Old Testament Revelation. This not only contains the Mosaic and Prophetic moral code, but has it for one grand pervading object, in all its parts, to prepare man for Christ by exposing him to himself, in his shame and need. It shows him in a thousand ways that "he cannot serve the Lord" (Josh. xxiv. 19), on purpose that in that same Lord he may take refuge from both his guilt and his impotency. And this it does for "those in the Law"; that is to say here, primarily, for the Race, the Church, whom it surrounded with its light of holy fire, and whom in this passage the Apostle has in his first thoughts. Yet they, surely, are not alone upon his mind. We have seen already how "the Law" is, after all, only the more full and direct enunciation of

\* "Adieux," § 1.

† "Gold Hair, a Legend of Pornic."



"law"; so that the Gentile as well as the Jew has to do with the light, and with the responsibility, of a knowledge of the will of God. While the chain of stern quotations we have just handled lies heaviest on Israel, it yet binds the world. It "shuts every mouth." It drags man in guilty before God.

"That every mouth may be stopped." Oh, solemn silence, when at last it comes! The harsh or muffled voices of self-defence, of self-assertion are hushed at length. The man, like one of old, when he saw his *righteous* self in the light of God, "lays his hand on his mouth" (Job xl. 4). He leaves speech to God, and learns at last to listen. What shall he hear? An external repudiation? An objurgation, and then a final and exterminating anathema? No, something far other, and better, and more wonderful. But there must first be silence on man's part, if it is to be heard. "Hear—and your souls shall live."

So the great argument pauses, gathered up into an utterance which at once concentrates what has gone before, and prepares us for a glorious sequel. Shut thy mouth, O man, and listen now:

Because by means of works of law there shall be justified no flesh in His presence; for by means of law comes—moral knowledge of sin.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE ONE WAY OF DIVINE ACCEPTANCE.

#### ROMANS iii. 21-31.

So then "there is silence" upon earth, that man may hear the "still, small voice," "the sound of stillness" (1 Kings xix. 12), from the heavens. "The Law" has spoken, with its heart-shaking thunder. It has driven in upon the soul of man, from many sides, that one fact—guilt; the eternity of the claim of righteousness, the absoluteness of the holy Will of God, and, in contrast, the failure of man, of the race, to meet that claim and do that will. It has told man, in effect, that he is "depraved," \* that is to say, morally distorted. He is "totally depraved," that is, the distortion has affected his whole being, so that he can supply on his own part no adequate recovering power which shall restore him to harmony with God. And the Law has nothing more to say to him, except that this condition is not only deplorable, but guilty, accountable, condemnable; and that his own conscience is the concurrent witness that it is so. He is a sinner. To be a sinner is before all things to be a transgressor of law. It is other things besides. It is to be morally diseased, and in need of surgery and medicine. It is to be morally unhappy, and an object of compassion. But first of all it is to be morally guilty, and in urgent need of justification, of a reversal of sentence, of satisfactory settlement with the offended—and eternal—Law of God.

That Law, having spoken its inexorable conditions, and having announced the just sentence of death, stands stern and silent beside the now silent offender. It has no commission to re-

lieve his fears, to allay his grief, to pay his debts. Its awful, merciful business is to say, "Thou shalt not sin," and "The wages of sin is death." It summons conscience to attention, and tells it in its now hearing ear far more than it had realised before of the horror and the doom of sin; and then it leaves conscience to take up the message and alarm the whole inner world with the certainty of guilt and judgment. So the man lies speechless before the terribly reticent Law.

Is it a merely abstract picture? Or do our hearts, the writer's and the reader's, bear any witness to its living truthfulness? God knoweth, these things are no curiosities of the past. We are not studying an interesting phase of early Christian thought. We are reading a living record of the experiences of innumerable lives which are lived on earth this day. There is such a thing indeed in our time, at this hour, as conviction of sin. There is such a thing now as a human soul, struck dumb amidst its apologies, its doubts, its denials, by the speech and then the silence of the Law of God. There is such a thing at this hour as a real man, strong and sound in thought, healthy in every faculty, used to look facts of daily life in the face, yet broken down in the indescribable conviction that he is a poor, guilty, lost sinner, and that his overwhelming need is not now—not just now—the solution of problems of being, but the assurance that his sin is forgiven. He must be justified, or he dies. The God of the Law must somehow say He has no quarrel with him, or he dies a death which he sees, as by an intuition peculiar to conviction of sin, to be in its proper nature a death without hope, without end.

Is this "somehow" possible?

Listen, guilty and silent soul, to a sound which is audible now. In the turmoil of either secular indifference or blind self-justification you could not hear it; at best you heard a meaningless murmur. But listen now; it is articulate, and it speaks to you. The earthquake, the wind, the fire, have passed; and you are indeed awake. Now comes "the sound of stillness" in its turn. But now, apart from Law, God's righteousness stands displayed, attested by the Law and the Prophets; but—though attested by them, in the Scriptures which all along, in word and in type, promise better things to come, and above all a Blessed One to come—(it is) God's righteousness, through faith in Jesus Christ, prepared for all and bestowed upon all who believe in Him. For there is no distinction; for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God, being justified giftwise, gratuitously, by His grace, through the redemption, the ransom-rescue, which is in Christ Jesus. Yes, it resides always in Him, the Lord of saving Merit, and so is to be found in Him alone; whom God presented, put forward, as Propitiation, through faith in His blood, His blood of death, of sacrifice, of the altar; so as to demonstrate, to explain, to clear up, His righteousness, His way of acceptance and its method. The Father "presented" the Son so as to show that His grace meant no real connivance, no indulgence without a lawful reason. He "presented" Him because of His passing-by of sins done before; because the fact *asked explanation* that, while He proclaimed His Law, and had not yet revealed His Gospel, He did nevertheless bear with sinners, reprieving them, condoning them, in the forbearance of

\* "Depravatus": twisted, wrenched from the straight line.



God, in the ages when He was seen to "hold back" His wrath, but did not yet disclose the reason why. It was with a view, he says again, to this demonstration of His righteousness in the present period, the season, the *καιρός*, of the manifested Gospel; that He may be, in our view, as well as in divine fact, at once just, true to His eternal Law, and Justifier of him who belongs to faith in Jesus.

This is the voice from heaven, audible when the sinner's mouth is shut, while his ears are opened by the touch of God. Without that spiritual introduction to them, very likely they will seem either a fact in the history of religious thought, interesting in the study of development, but no more; or a series of assertions corresponding to unreal needs, and in themselves full of disputable points. Read them in the hour of conviction of sin; in other words, bring to them your whole being, stirred from above to its moral depths, and you will not take them either indifferently, or with opposition. As the key meets the lock they will meet your exceeding need. Every sentence, every link of reasoning, every affirmation of fact, will be precious to you beyond all words. And you will never *fully* understand them except in such hours, or in the life which has such hours amongst its indelible memories.

Listen over again, in this sacred silence, thus broken by "the pleasant voice of the Mighty One."

"But now"; the happy "now" of present fact, of waking certainty. It is no day-dream. Look, and see; touch, and feel. Turn the blessed page again; *γέγραπται*, "It stands written." There is indeed a "Righteousness of God," a settled way of mercy which is as holy as it is benignant, an acceptance as good in eternal Law as in eternal Love. It is "attested by the Law and the Prophets"; countless lines of prediction and foreshadowing meet upon it, to negative for ever the fear of illusion, of delusion. Here is no fortuitous concourse, but the long-laid plan of God. Behold its procuring Cause, magnificent, tender, divine, human, spiritual, historic. It is the beloved Son of the Father; no antagonist power from a region alien to the blessed Law and its Giver. The Law-Giver is the Christ-Giver; He has "set Him forth," He has provided in Him an expiation which—does not persuade Him to have mercy, for He is eternal Love already, but liberates His love along the line of a wonderfully satisfied Holiness, and explains that liberation (to the contrite) so as supremely to win their worship and their love to the Father and the Son. Behold the Christ of God; behold the blood of Christ. In the Gospel, He is everywhere, it is everywhere; but what is your delight to find Him, and it, here upon the threshold of your life of blessing? Looking upon the Crucified, while you still "lay your hand upon your mouth," till it is removed that you may bless His Name, you understand the joy with which, age after age, men have spoken of a Death which is their life, of a Cross which is their crown and glory. You are in no mood, here and now, to disparage the doctrine of the Atoning Blood; to place it in the background of your Christianity; to obscure the Cross behind even the roofs of Bethlehem. You cannot now think well of any Gospel that does not say, "*First of all*, Christ died for our sins,

according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. xv. 3). You are a sinner, and you know it; "guilty before God"; and for you as such the Propitiation governs your whole view of man, of God, of life, of heaven. For you, however it may be for others, "Redemption" cannot be named, or thought of, apart from its first precious element, "remission of sins," justification of the guilty. It is steeped in ideas of Propitiation; it is red and glorious with the Redeemer's blood, without which it could not have been. The all-blessed God, with all His attributes, His character, is by you seen evermore as "just, yet the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." He shines on you through the Word, and in your heart's experience, in many another astonishing aspect. But all those others are qualified for you by this, that He is the God of a holy Justification; that He is the God who has accepted you, the guilty one, in Christ. All your thoughts of Him are formed and followed out at the foot of the Cross. Golgotha is the observatory from which you count and watch the lights of the moving heaven of His Being, His Truth, His Love.

How precious to you now are the words which once, perhaps, were worse than insipid, "Faith," "Justification," "the Righteousness of God"! In the discovery of your necessity, and of Christ as the all-in-all to meet it, you see with little need of exposition the place and power of Faith. It means, you see it now, simply your reception of Christ. It is your contact with Him, your embrace of Him. It is not virtue; it is absolutely remote from merit. But it is necessary; as necessary as the hand that takes the alms, or as the mouth that eats the unbought meal. The meaning of "Justification" is now to you no riddle of the schools. Like all the great words of scriptural theology it carries with it in divine things the meaning it bears in common things, only for a new and noble application; you see this with joy, by the insight of awakened conscience. He who "justifies" you does exactly what the word always imports. He does not educate you, or inspire you, up to acceptability. He pronounces you acceptable, satisfactory, at peace with Law. And this He does for Another's sake; on account of the Merit of Another, who has so done and suffered as to win an eternal welcome for Himself and everything that is His, and therefore for all who are found in Him, and therefore for you who have fled into Him, believing. So you receive with joy and wonder "the righteousness of God," His way to bid you, so deeply guilty in yourself, welcome without fear to your Judge. You are "righteous," that is to say, satisfactory to the inexorable Law. How? Because you are transfigured into a moral perfectness such as could constitute a claim? No, but because Jesus Christ died, and you, receiving Him, are found in Him.

"There is no difference." Once, perhaps, you resented that word, if you paused to note it. Now you take all its import home. Whatever otherwise your "difference" may be from the most disgraceful and notorious breakers of the Law of God, you know now that there is none in *this* respect—that you are as hopelessly, whether or not as distantly, remote as they are from "the glory of God." His moral "glory," the inexorable perfectness of His Character, with its inherent demand that you must per-



fectly correspond to Him in order so to be at peace with Him—you are indeed “short of” this. The harlot, the liar, the murderer, are short of it; but so are you. Perhaps they stand at the bottom of a mine, and you on the crest of an Alp; but you are as little able to touch the stars as they. So you thankfully give yourself up, side by side with them, if they will but come too, to be “carried” to the height of divine acceptance, by the gift of God, “justified gift-wise by His grace.”

Where then is our boasting? It is shut out. By means of what law? Of works? No, but by means of faith’s law, the institute, the ordinance, which lays it upon us not to deserve, but to confide. And who can analyse or describe the joy and rest of the soul from which at last is “shut out” the foul inflation of a religious “boast”? We have praised ourselves, we have valued ourselves, on one thing or another supposed to make us worthy of the Eternal. We may perhaps have had some specious pretexts for doing so; or we may have “boasted” (such boastings are not unknown) of nothing better than being a little less ungodly, or a little more manly, than some one else. But this is over now forever, in principle; and we lay its practice under our Redeemer’s feet to be destroyed. And great are the rest and gladness of sitting down at His feet, while the door is shut and the key is turned upon our self-applause. There is no holiness without that “exclusion”; and there is no happiness where holiness is not.

For we reckon, we conclude, we gather up our facts and reasons thus, that man is justified by faith, apart from, irrespective of, works of law. In other words, the meriting cause lies wholly in Christ, and wholly outside the man’s conduct. We have seen, implicitly, in the passage above, verses 10-18, what is meant here by “works of Law,” or by “works of the Law.” The thought is not of ritual prescription, but of moral rule. The law-breakers of verses 10-18 are men who commit violent deeds, and speak foul words, and fail to do what is good. The law-keeper, by consequence, is the man whose conduct in such respects is right, negatively and positively. And the “works of the law” are such deeds accordingly. So here “we conclude” that the justification of fallen man takes place, as to the merit which procures it, irrespective of his well-doing. It is respective only of Christ, as to merit; it has to do only, as to personal reception, with the acceptance of the meriting Christ, that is to say, with faith in Him.

Then come, like a short “coda” following a full musical cadence, two brief questions and their answers, spoken almost as if again a Rabbinist were in discussion.

Is God the Jews’ God only? Not of the Nations too? Yes, of the Nations too; assuming that God is one, the same Person in both cases; who will justify Circumcision on the principle of faith, and Uncircumcision by means of faith. He takes the fact, now ascertained, that faith, still faith, that is to say Christ received, is the condition to justification for all mankind; and he reasons back to the fact (so amply “attested by the Law and the Prophets,” from Genesis onwards) that the true God is equally the God of all. Probably the deep inference is suggested that the fence of privilege drawn for ages round Israel was meant ultimately for the

whole world’s blessing, and not to hold Israel in a selfish isolation.

We cancel Law, then, by this faith of ours? We open the door, then, to moral license? We abolish code and precept, then, when we ask not for conduct, but for faith? Away with the thought; nay, we establish Law; we go the very way to give a new sacredness to its every command, and to disclose a new power for the fulfilment of them all. But how this is, and is to be, the later argument is to show.

#### DETACHED NOTE TO ROMANS III.

It would be a deeply interesting work to collect and exhibit together examples of the conveyance of great spiritual blessing, in memorable lives, through the perusal of the Epistle to the Romans. Augustine’s final crisis (see below, on xiii. 14) would be one such example. As specimens of what must be a multitude we quote two cases, in each of which one verse in this third chapter of the Epistle proved the means of the divine message in a life of historical interest.

Padre Paola Sarpi (1552-1623), “Councillor and Theologian” to the Venetian Republic, and historian of the Council of Trent, was one of the many eminent men of his day who never broke with the Roman Church, yet had genuine spiritual sympathies with the Reformation. The record of his last hours is affecting and instructive, and shows him reposing his hope with great simplicity on the divine message of this chapter, though the report makes him quote it inexactly. “Night being come, and want of spirits increasing upon him, he ceased another reading of the Passion written by St. John. He spake of his own misery, and of the trust and confidence which he had in the blood of Christ. He repeated very often those words, *Quem proposuit Deus Mediatorem per fidem in sanguine suo*, ‘Whom God hath set forth to be a Mediator through faith in His blood.’ In which He seemed to receive an extreme consolation. He repeated (though with much faintness) divers places of Saint Paul. He protested that of his part he had nothing to present God with but miseries and sins, yet nevertheless he desired to be drowned in the abyss of the divine mercy; with so much submission on one side, and yet so much cheerfulness on the other side, that he drew tears from all that were present.”\*

It was through the third chapter of the Romans that heavenly light first came to the terribly troubled soul of William Cowper, at St. Albans, in 1764. Some have said that Cowper’s religion was to blame for his melancholy. The case was far different. The first tremendous attack occurred at a time when, by his own clear account, he was quite without serious religion; it had nothing whatever to do with either Christian doctrine or Christian practice. The recovery from it came with his first sight, in Scripture, of the divine mercy in our Lord Jesus Christ. His own account of this crisis is as follows:†

“But the happy period which was to afford me a clear opening of the free mercy of God

\* “The Life of Father Paul the Venetian, translated out of Italian:” London, 1676.

† “Memoir of the Early Life of William Cowper, written by Himself.”



in Christ Jesus, was now arrived. I flung myself into a chair near the window, and, seeing a Bible there, ventured once more to apply to it for comfort and instruction. The first verse I saw was the 25th of the 3d of Romans; 'Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.'

"Immediately I received strength to believe it, and the full beams of the Sun of Righteousness shone upon me. I saw the sufficiency of the atonement He had made, my pardon sealed in His blood, and all the fulness and completeness of His justification. Unless the Almighty arm had been under me, I think I should have died with gratitude and joy. I could only look up to heaven in silent fear, overwhelmed with love and wonder. But the work of the Holy Ghost is best described in His own words; it is 'joy unspeakable and full of glory.'"

## CHAPTER X.

### ABRAHAM AND DAVID.

#### ROMANS iv. 1-12.

THE Jewish disputant is present still to the Apostle's thought. It could not be otherwise in this argument. No question was more pressing on the Jewish mind than that of Acceptance; thus far, truly, the teaching and discipline of the Old Testament had not been in vain. And St. Paul had not only, in his Christian Apostleship, debated that problem countless times with Rabbinic combatants; he had been himself a Rabbi, and knew by experience alike the misgivings of the Rabbinist's conscience, and the subterfuges of his reasoning.

So now there rises before him the great name of Abraham, as a familiar watchword of the controversy of Acceptance. He has been contending for an absolutely inclusive verdict of "guilty" against man, against every man. He has been shutting with all his might the doors of thought against human "boasting," against the least claim of man to have merited his acceptance. Can he carry this principle into quite impartial issues? Can he, a Jew in presence of Jews, apply it without apology, without reserve, to "the Friend of God" himself? What will he say to that majestic Example of man? His name itself sounds like a claim to almost worship. As he moves across the scene of Genesis, we—even we Gentiles—rise up as it were in reverent homage, honouring this figure at once so real and so near to the ideal; marked by innumerable lines of individuality, totally unlike the composed picture of legend or poem, yet walking with God Himself in a personal intercourse so habitual, so tranquil, so congenial. Is this a name to becloud with the assertion that here, as everywhere, acceptance was hopeless but for the clemency of God "gift-wise, without deeds of law"? Was not at least Abraham accepted because he was morally worthy of acceptance? And if Abraham, then surely, in abstract possibility, others also. There must be a group of men, small or large, there is at least one man, who can "boast" of his peace with God.

On the other hand, if with Abraham it was not thus, then the inference is easy to all other

men. Who but he is called "the Friend" (2 Chron. xx. 7, Isai. xli. 8)? Moses himself, the almost deified Lawgiver, is but "the Servant," trusted, intimate, honoured in a sublime degree by his eternal Master. But he is never called "the Friend." That peculiar title seems to preclude altogether the question of a legal acceptance. Who thinks of his friend as one whose relation to him needs to be good in law at all? The friend stands as it were behind law, or above it, in respect of his fellow. He holds a relation implying personal sympathies, identity of interests, contact of thought and will, not an anxious previous settlement of claims, and remission of liabilities. If then the Friend of the Eternal Judge proves, nevertheless, to have needed Justification, and to have received it by the channel not of his personal worth but of the grace of God, there will be little hesitation about other men's need, and the way by which alone other men shall find it met.

In approaching this great example, for such it will prove to be, St. Paul is about to illustrate all the main points of his inspired argument. By the way, by implication, he gives us the all-important fact that even an Abraham, even "the Friend," did need justification somehow. Such is the Eternal Holy One that no man can walk by His side and live, no, not in the path of inmost "friendship," without an acceptance before His face as He is Judge. Then again, such is He, that even an Abraham found this acceptance, as a matter of fact, not by merit but by faith; not by presenting himself, but by renouncing himself, and taking God for all; by pleading not, "I am worthy," but, "Thou art faithful." It is to be shown that Abraham's justification was such that it gave him not the least ground for self-applause; it was not in the least degree based on merit. It was "of grace, not of debt." A promise of sovereign kindness, connected with the redemption of himself, and of the world, was made to him. He was not morally worthy of such a promise, if only because he was not morally perfect. And he was, humanly speaking, physically incapable of it. But God offered Himself freely to Abraham, in His promise; and Abraham opened the empty arms of personal reliance to receive the unearned gift. Had he stayed first to earn it he would have shut it out; he would have closed his arms. Rightly renouncing himself, because seeing and trusting his gracious God, the sight of whose holy glory annihilates the idea of man's claims, he opened his arms, and the God of peace filled the void. The man received his God's approval, because he interposed nothing of his own to intercept it.

From one point of view, the all-important view-point here, it mattered not what Abraham's conduct had been. As a fact, he was already devout when the incident of Gen. xv. occurred. But he was also actually a sinner; that is made quite plain by Gen. xii., the very chapter of the Call. And potentially, according to Scripture, he was a great sinner; for he was an instance of the human heart. But this, while it constituted Abraham's urgent need of acceptance, was not in the least a barrier to his acceptance, when he turned from himself, in the great crisis of absolute faith, and accepted God in His promise.

The principle of the acceptance of "the Friend" was identically that which underlies the



acceptance of the most flagrant transgressor. As St. Paul will soon remind us, David in the guilt of his murderous adultery, and Abraham in the grave walk of his worshipping obedience, stand upon the same level here. Actually or potentially, each is a great sinner. Each turns from himself, unworthy, to God in His promise. And the promise is his, not because his hand is full of merit, but because it is empty of himself.

It is true that Abraham's justification, unlike David's, is not explicitly connected in the narrative with a moral crisis of his soul. He is not depicted, in Gen. xv., as a conscious penitent, flying from justice to the Judge. But is there not a deep suggestion that something not unlike this did then pass over him, and through him? That short assertion, that "he trusted the Lord, and he counted it to Him for righteousness," is an anomaly in the story, if it has not a spiritual depth hidden in it. Why, just then and there, should we be told this about his acceptance with God? Is it not because the vastness of the promise had made the man see in contrast the absolute failure of a corresponding merit in himself? Job (xlii. 1-6) was brought to self-despairing penitence not by the fires of the Law but by the glories of Creation. Was not Abraham brought to the same consciousness, whatever form it may have taken in his character and period, by the greater glories of the Promise? Surely it was there and then that he learnt that secret of self-rejection in favour of God which is the other side of all true faith, and which came out long years afterwards, in its mighty issues of "work," when he laid Isaac on the altar.\*

It is true, again, that Abraham's faith, his justifying reliance, is not connected in the narrative with any articulate expectation of an atoning Sacrifice. But here first we dare to say, even at the risk of that formidable charge, an antique and obsolete theory of the Patriarchal creed, that probably Abraham knew much more about the Coming One than a modern critique will commonly allow. "He rejoiced to see My day; and he saw it, and was glad" (John viii. 56). And further, the faith which justifies, though what it touches in fact is the blessed Propitiation, or rather God in the Propitiation, does not always imply an articulate knowledge of the whole "reason of the hope." It assuredly implies a true submission to all that the believer knows of the revelation of that reason. But he may (by circumstances) know very little of it, and yet be a believer. The saint who prayed (Psal. cxliii. 2) "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, O Lord, for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified," cast himself upon a God who, being absolutely holy, yet can somehow, just as He is, justify the sinner. Perhaps he knew much of the reason of Atonement, as it lies in God's mind, and as it is explained, as it is demonstrated, in the Cross. But perhaps he did not. What he did was to cast himself up to the full light he had, "without one plea," upon his Judge, as a man awfully conscious of his need, and trusting only in a sovereign mercy, which *must* also be a righteous, a law-honouring mercy, because it is the mercy of the Righteous Lord.

Let us not be mistaken, meanwhile, as if such

words meant that a definite creed of the Atoning Work is not possible, or is not precious. This Epistle will help us to such a creed, and so will Galatians, and Hebrews, and Isaiah, and Leviticus, and the whole Scripture. "Prophets and kings desired to see the things we see, and did not see them" (Luke x. 24). But that is no reason why we should not adore the mercy that has unveiled to us the Cross and the blessed Lamb.

But it is time to come to the Apostle's words as they stand.

What then shall we say that Abraham has found—"has found," the perfect tense of abiding and always significant fact—"has found," in his great discovery of divine peace—our forefather according to the flesh? "According to the flesh"; that is to say, (having regard to the prevailing moral use of the word "flesh" in this Epistle,) "in respect of self," "in the region of his own works and merits." For if Abraham was justified as a result of works, he has a boast; he has a right to self-applause. Yes, such is the principle indicated here; if man merits, man is entitled to self-applause. May we not say, in passing, that the common instinctive sense of the moral discord of self-applause, above all in spiritual things, is one among many witnesses to the truth of our justification by faith only? But St. Paul goes on; ah, but not towards God; not when even an Abraham looks Him in the face, and sees himself in that Light. As if to say, "If he earned justification, he might have boasted rightly; but 'rightful boasting,' when man sees God, is a thing unthinkable; therefore his justification was given, not earned." For what says the Scripture, the passage, the great text (Gen. xv. 6)? "Now Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." Now to the man who works, his reward, his earned requital, is not reckoned grace-wise, as a gift of generosity, but debt-wise; it is to the man who does not work, but believes, confides, in Him who justifies the ungodly one, that "his faith is reckoned as righteousness." "The ungodly one"; as if to bring out by an extreme case the glory of the wonderful paradox. "The ungodly" is undoubtedly a word intense and dark; it means not the sinner only, but the open, defiant sinner. Every human heart is *capable* of such sinfulness, for "*the* heart is deceitful above all things." In this respect, as we have seen, in the potential respect, even an Abraham is a great sinner. But there are indeed "sinners and sinners," in the experiences of life; and St. Paul is ready now with a conspicuous example of the justification of one who was truly, at one miserable period, by his own fault, "an ungodly one."

"Thou hast given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme" (2 Sam. xii. 14). He had done so indeed. The faithful photography of the Scriptures shows us David, the chosen, the faithful, the man of spiritual experiences, acting out his lustful look in adultery, and half covering his adultery with the most base of constructive murders, and then, for long months, refusing to repent. Yet was David justified: "I have sinned against the Lord"; "The Lord also hath put away thy sin." He turned from his awfully ruined self to God, and *at once* he received remission. Then, and to the last, he was chastised. But then and there he was

\* On St. James' use of that great incident, see detached note, p. 546.



unreservedly justified, and with a justification which made him sing a loud beatitude.

Just as David too speaks his felicitation of the man (and it was himself) to whom God reckons righteousness irrespective of works, "Happy they whose iniquities have been remitted, and whose sins have been covered; happy the man to whom the Lord will not reckon sin" (Ps. xxxii. 1, 2). Wonderful words, in the context of the experience out of which they spring! A human soul which has greatly transgressed, and which knows it well, and knows too that to the end it will suffer a sore discipline because of it, for example and humiliation, nevertheless knows its pardon, and knows it as a happiness indescribable. The iniquity has been "lifted"; the sin has been "covered," has been struck out of the book of "reckoning," written by the Judge. The penitent will never forgive himself; in this very Psalm he tears from his sin all the covering woven by his own heart. But his God has given him remission, has reckoned him as one who has not sinned, so far as access to Him and peace with Him are in question. And so his song of shame and penitence begins with a beatitude, and ends with a cry of joy.

We pause to note the exposition implied here of the phrase, "to reckon righteousness." It is to treat the man as one whose account is clear. "Happy the man to whom the Lord will not reckon sin." In the phrase itself, "*to reckon righteousness*" (as in its Latin equivalent, "*to impute righteousness*"), the question, *what clears the account*, is not answered. Suppose the impossible case of a record kept absolutely clear by the man's own sinless goodness; then the "reckoned," the "imputed, righteousness" would mean the Law's contentment with him on his own merits. But the context of human sin fixes the actual reference to an "imputation" which means that the awfully defective record is treated, for a divinely valid reason, as if it were, what it is not, good. The man is at peace with his Judge, though he has sinned, because the Judge has joined him to Himself, and taken up his liability, and answered for it to His own Law. The man is dealt with as righteous, being a sinner, for his glorious Redeemer's sake. It is pardon, but more than pardon. It is no mere indulgent dismissal; it is a welcome as of the worthy to the embrace of the Holy One.

Such is the Justification of God. We shall need to remember it through the whole course of the Epistle. To make Justification a mere synonym for Pardon is always inadequate. Justification is the contemplation and treatment of the penitent sinner, found in Christ, as righteous, as satisfactory to the Law, not merely as one whom the Law lets go. Is this a fiction? Not at all. It is vitally linked to two great spiritual facts. One is, that the sinner's Friend has Himself dealt, in the sinner's interests, with the Law, honouring its holy claim to the uttermost under the human conditions which He freely undertook. The other is that he has mysteriously, but really, joined the sinner to Himself, in faith, by the Spirit; joined him to Himself as limb, as branch, as bride. Christ and His disciples are *really* One in the order of spiritual life. And so the community between Him and them is real, the community of their debt on the one side, of His merit on the other.

Now again comes up the question, never far distant in St. Paul's thought, and in his life, what these facts of Justification have to do with Gentile sinners. Here is David blessing God for his unmerited acceptance, an acceptance by the way wholly unconnected with the ritual of the altar. Here above all is Abraham, "justified in consequence of faith." But David was a child of the covenant of circumcision. And Abraham was the father of that covenant. Do not their justifications speak only to those who stand, with them, inside that charmed circle? Was not Abraham justified by faith *plus circumcision*? Did not the faith act only because he was already one of the privileged? This felicitation therefore, this cry of "Happy are the freely justified," is it upon the circumcision, or upon the uncircumcision? For we say that to Abraham, with an emphasis\* on "Abraham," his faith was reckoned as righteousness. The question, he means, is legitimate, "for" Abraham is not at first sight a case in point for the justification of the outside world, the non-privileged races of man. But consider: How then was it reckoned? To Abraham in circumcision or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision; fourteen years at least had to pass before the covenant rite came in. And he received the sign of circumcision (with a stress upon "sign," as if to say that the "thing," the reality signed, was his already), as a seal on the righteousness of the faith that was in his uncircumcision, a seal on the acceptance which he received, antecedent to all formal privilege, in that bare hand of faith. And all this was so, and was recorded so, with a purpose of far-reaching significance: that he might be father, exemplar, representative, of all who believe notwithstanding uncircumcision, that to them righteousness should be reckoned; and father of circumcision, exemplar and representative within its circle also, for those who do not merely belong to circumcision, but for those who also step in the track of the uncircumcision-faith of our father Abraham.

So privilege had nothing to do with acceptance, except to countersign the grant of a grace absolutely free. The Seal did nothing whatever to make the Covenant. It only verified the fact, and guaranteed the *bona fides* of the Giver. As the Christian Sacraments are, so was the Patriarchal Sacrament; it was "a sure testimony and effectual sign of God's grace and good will." But the grace and the good will come not through the Sacrament as through a medium, but straight from God to the man who took God at His word. "The means whereby he received," the mouth with which he fed upon the celestial food, "was faith." The rite came not between the man and his accepting Lord, but as it were was present at the side to assure him with a physical concurrent fact that all was true. "Nothing between" was the law of the great transaction; nothing, not even a God-given ordinance; nothing but the empty arms receiving the Lord Himself;—and empty arms indeed put "nothing between."

#### DETACHED NOTE TO CHAPTER X.

The following is extracted from the Commentary on this Epistle in "The Cambridge Bible" (p. 261):

\* By the position of the name in the Greek sentence.



"[What shall we say to] the verbal discrepancy between St. Paul's explicit teaching that 'a man is justified by faith *without works*,' and St. James' equally explicit teaching that 'by *works* a man is justified, and *not by faith only*'? With only the New Testament before us, it is hard not to assume that the one Apostle has in view some distortion of the doctrine of *the other*. But the fact (see Lightfoot's 'Galatians,' detached note to chap. iii.) that Abraham's faith was a staple Rabbinic text alters the case, by making it perfectly possible that St. James (writing to members of the Jewish Dispersion) had not Apostolic but Rabbinic teaching in view. And the line such teaching took is indicated by James ii. 19, where an example is given of the faith in question; and that example is concerned wholly with the grand point of *strictly Jewish orthodoxy*—*GOD IS ONE*. . . . The persons addressed [were thus those whose] idea of faith was not *trustful acceptance*, a belief of the heart, but *orthodox adherence*, a belief of the head. And St. James [took] these persons strictly on their own ground, and assumed, for his argument, their own very faulty account of faith to be correct.

"He would thus be proving the point, equally dear to St. Paul, that mere theoretic orthodoxy, apart from effects on the will, is valueless. He would not, in the remotest degree, be disputing the Pauline doctrine that the guilty soul is put into a position of acceptance with the Father only by vital connection with the Son, and that this connection is effectuated, *absolutely and alone*, not by personal merit, but by trustful acceptance of the Propitiation and its all-sufficient vicarious merit. From such trustful acceptance 'works' (in the profoundest sense) will inevitably follow; not as antecedents but as consequences of justification. And thus . . . 'it is faith alone which justifies; but the faith which justifies can never be alone.'"

## CHAPTER XI.

### ABRAHAM (ii).

#### ROMANS iv. 13-25.

AGAIN we approach the name of Abraham, Friend of God, Father of the Faithful. We have seen him justified by faith, personally accepted because turning altogether to the sovereign Promiser. We see him now in some of the glorious issues of that acceptance; "Heir of the world," "Father of many nations." And here too all is of grace, all comes through faith. Not works, not merit, not ancestral and ritual privilege, secured to Abraham the mighty Promise; it was his because he, pleading absolutely nothing of personal worthiness, and supported by no guarantees of ordinance, "believed God."

We see him as he steps out from his tent under that glorious canopy, that Syrian "night of stars." We look up with him to the mighty depths, and receive their impression upon our eyes. Behold the innumerable points and clouds of light! Who can count the half-visible rays which make white the heavens, gleaming behind, beyond, the thousands of more numerable luminaries? The lonely old man who stands gazing there, perhaps side by side with his di-

vine Friend manifested in human form, is told to try to count. And then he hears the promise, "So shall thy seed be."

It was then and there that he received justification by faith. It was then and there also that, by faith, as a man uncovenanted, unworthy, but called upon to take what God gave, he received the promise that he should be "heir of the world."

It was an unequalled paradox—unless indeed we place beside it the scene when, eighteen centuries later, in the same land, a descendant of Abraham's, a Syrian Craftsman, speaking as a religious Leader to His followers, told them (Matt. xiii. 37, 38) that the "field was the world," and He the Master of the field.

"Heir of the world"! Did this mean, of the universe itself? Perhaps it did, for Christ was to be the Claimant of the promise in due time; and under His feet all things, literally all, are set already in right, and shall be hereafter set in fact. But the more limited, and probably in this place the fitter, reference is vast enough; a reference to "the world" of earth, and of man upon it. In his "seed," that childless senior was to be King of Men, Monarch of the continents and oceans. To him, in his seed, "the utmost parts of the earth" were given "for his possession." Not his little clan only, encamped on the dark fields around him, nor even the direct descendants only of his body, however numerous, but "all nations," "all kindreds of the earth," were "to call him blessed," and to be blessed in him, as their patriarchal Chief, their Head in covenant with God. "We see not yet all things" fulfilled of this astonishing grant and guarantee. We shall not do so, till vast promised developments of the ways of God have come to sight. But we do see already steps taken towards that issue, steps long, majestic, never to be retraced. We see at this hour in literally every region of the human world the messengers—an always more numerous army—of the Name of "the Son of David, the Son of Abraham." They are working everywhere; and everywhere, notwithstanding innumerable difficulties, they are winning the world for the great Heir of the Promise. Through paths they know not these missionaries have gone out; paths hewn by the historical providence of God, and by His eternal life in the Church, and in the soul. When "the world" has seemed shut, by war, by policy, by habit, by geography, it has opened, that they may enter; till we see Japan throwing back its castle-doors, and inner Africa not only discovered but become a household word for the sake of its missions, of its martyrdoms, of the resolve of its native chiefs to abolish slavery even in its domestic form.\*

No secular conscious programme has had to do with this. Causes entirely beyond the reach of human combination have been, as a fact, combined; the world has been opened to the Abrahamic message just as the Church has been inspired anew to enter in, and has been awakened to a deeper understanding of her glorious mission. For here too is the finger of God; not only in the history of the world, but in the life of the Church and of the Christian. For a long century now, in the most living centres of Christendom, there has been waking and rising a mighty revived consciousness of the glory of

\* In Uganda, 1895.



the Gospel, of the Cross, and of the Spirit; of the grace of Christ, and also of His claim. And at this hour, after many a gloomy forecast of unbelieving and apprehensive thought, there are more men and women ready to go to the ends of the earth with the message of the Son of Abraham, than in all time before.

Contrast these issues, even these—leaving out of sight the mighty future—with the starry night when the wandering Friend of God was asked to believe the incredible, and was justified by faith, and was invested through faith with the world's crown. Is not God indeed in the fulfilment? Was He not indeed in the promise? We are ourselves a part of the fulfilment; we, one of the "many Nations" of whom the great Solitary was then made "the Father." Let us bear our witness, and set to our seal.

In doing so, we attest and illustrate the work, the ever blessed work, of faith. That man's reliance, at that great midnight-hour, merited nothing, but received everything. He took in the first place acceptance with God, and then with it, as it were folded and embedded in it, he took riches inexhaustible of privilege and blessing; above all, the blessing of being made a blessing. So now, in view of that hour of Promise, and of these ages of fulfilment, we see our own path of peace in its divine simplicity. We read, as if written on the heavens in stars, the words, "Justified by Faith." And we understand already, what the Epistle will soon amply unfold to us, how for us, as for Abraham, blessings untold of other orders lie treasured in the grant of our acceptance "Not for him only, but for us also, believing."

Let us turn again to the text.

For not through law came the promise to Abraham, or to his seed, of his being the world's heir, but through faith's righteousness; through the acceptance received by uncovenanted, unprivileged faith. For if those who belong to law inherit Abraham's promise, faith is *ipso facto* void, and the promise is *ipso facto* annulled. For wrath is what the Law works out; it is only where law is not that transgression is not, either. As much as to say, that to suspend eternal blessing, the blessing which in its nature can deal only with ideal conditions, upon man's obedience to law, is to bar fatally the hope of a fulfilment. Why? Not because the Law is not holy; not because disobedience is not guilty; as if man were ever, for a moment, mechanically compelled to disobey. But because as a fact man is a fallen being, however he became so, and whatever is his guilt as such. He is fallen, and has no true self-restoring power. If then he is to be blessed, the work must begin in spite of himself. It must come from without, it must come unearned, it must be of grace, through faith. Therefore it is on (literally, "out of") faith, in order to be grace-wise, to make secure the promise, to all the seed, not only to that which belongs to the Law, but to that which belongs to the faith of Abraham, to the "seed" whose claim is no less and no more than Abraham's faith; who is father of all us, as it stands written (Gen. xvii. 5), "Father of many Nations\* have I appointed thee"—in the sight of the God whom he believed, who vivifies

the dead, and calls, addresses, deals with, things not-being as being. "In the sight of God"; as if to say, that it matters little what Abraham is for "us all" in the sight of *man*, in the sight and estimate of the Pharisee. The Eternal Justifier and Promiser dealt with Abraham and in him with the world, before the birth of that Law which the Pharisee has perverted into his rampart of privilege and isolation. He took care that the mighty transaction should take place not actually only, but significantly, in the open field and beneath the boundless cope of stars. It was to affect not one tribe, but all the nations. It was to secure blessings which were not to be demanded by the privileged, but taken by the needy. And so the great representative Believer was called to believe before Law, before legal Sacrament, and under every personal circumstance of humiliation and discouragement. Who, past hope, on hope, believed; stepping from the dead hope of nature to the bare hope of the promise, so that he became father of many Nations; according to what stands spoken, "So shall thy seed be." And, because he failed not in his faith, he did not notice his own body, already turned to death, near a century old as he now was, and the death-state of the womb of Sarah. No, on the promise of God—he did not waver by his unbelief, but received strength by his faith, giving glory to God, the "glory" of dealing with Him as being what He is, Almighty and All-true, and fully persuaded that what He has promised He is able actually to do. Wherefore actually it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Not because such a "giving to God the glory" which is only His eternal due was morally meritorious, in the least degree. If it were so, Abraham "would have whereof to glory." The "wherefore" is concerned with the whole record, the whole transaction. Here was a man who took the right way to receive sovereign blessing. He interposed nothing between the Promiser and himself. He treated the Promiser as what He is, all-sufficient and all-faithful. He opened his empty hand in that persuasion, and so, because the hand was empty, the blessing was laid upon its palm.

Now it was not written only on his account, that it was reckoned to him, but also on account of us, to whom it is sure to be reckoned, in the fixed intention of the divine Justifier, as each successive applicant comes to receive; believing as we do on the Raiser-up of Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered up on account of our transgressions, and was raised up on account of our justification.

Here the great argument moves to a pause, to the cadence of a glorious rest. More and more, as we have pursued it, it has disengaged itself from the obstructions of the opponent, and advanced with a larger motion into a positive and rejoicing assertion of the joys and wealth of the believing. We have left far behind the pertinacious cavils which ask, now whether there is any hope for man outside legalism, now whether within legalism there can be any danger even for deliberate unholiness, and again whether the Gospel of gratuitous acceptance does not cancel the law of duty. We have left the Pharisee for Abraham, and have stood beside him to look and listen. He, in the simplicity of a soul which has seen itself and seen the Lord, and so has not one word, one thought,

\*It is impossible to convey in English the point of the word *ἐθνῶν* here, with its faint reference to the *Gentiles* (in the sense common in later Judaism), spiritually "naturalised" among Abraham's descendants.



about personal privilege, claim, or even fitness, receives a perfect acceptance in the hand of faith, and finds that the acceptance carries with it a promise of unimaginable power and blessing. And now from Abraham the Apostle turns to "us," "us all," "us also." His thoughts are no longer upon adversaries and objections, but on the company of the faithful, on those who are one with Abraham, and with each other, in their happy willingness to come, without a dream of merit, and take from God His mighty peace in the name of Christ. He finds himself not in synagogue or in school, disputing, but in the believing assembly, teaching, unfolding in peace the wealth of grace. He speaks to congratulate, to adore.

Let us join him there in spirit, and sit down with Aquila and Priscilla, with Nereus, and Nymphas, and Persis, and in our turn remember that "it was written for us also." Quite surely, and with a fulness of blessing which we can never find out in its perfection, to us also "faith is sure to be reckoned, μέλλει λογίζεσθαι, as righteousness, believing as we do, τοῖς πιστεύουσιν, on the Raiser-up of Jesus our Lord, *ours also*, from the dead." To us, as to them, the Father presents Himself as the Raiser-up of the Son. He is known by us in that act. It gives us His own warrant for a boundless trust in His character, His purposes, His unreserved intention to accept the sinner who comes to His feet in the name of His Crucified and Risen Son. He bids us—not forget that He is the Judge, who cannot for a moment connive. But He bids us believe, He bids us *see*, that He, being the Judge, and also the Law-Giver, has dealt with His own Law, in a way that satisfies it, that satisfies Himself. He bids us thus understand that He now "is sure to" justify, to accept, to find not guilty, to find righteous, satisfactory, the sinner who believes. He comes to us, He, this eternal Father of our Lord, to assure us, in the Resurrection, that He has sought, and has "found, a Ransom"; that He has not been prevailed upon to have mercy, a mercy behind which there may therefore lurk a gloomy reserve, but has Himself "set forth" the beloved Propitiation, and then accepted Him (not it, but Him) with the acceptance of not His word only but His deed. He is the God of Peace. How do we know it? We thought He was the God of the tribunal, and the doom. Yes; but He has "brought the great Shepherd from the dead, in the blood of the everlasting Covenant" (Heb. xiii. 20). Then, O eternal Father of our Lord, we will believe Thee; we will believe in Thee; we will, we do, in the very letter of the words Thou didst bid Thy messenger write down here, "believe upon Thee," ἐπὶ τὸν Ἐγέλπαρτα, as in a deep repose. Truly, in *this* glorious respect, though Thou art consuming Fire, "there is nothing in Thee to dread."

"Who was delivered up because of our transgressions." So dealt the Father with the Son, who gave Himself. "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him"; "He spared not His own Son." "Because of our transgressions"; to meet the fact that we had gone astray. What, was that fact thus to be met? Was our self-will, our pride, our falsehood, our impurity, our indifference to God, our resistance to God, to be thus met? Was it to be met at all, and not rather left utterly alone to its own horrible issues?

Was it eternally necessary that, if met, it must be met thus, by nothing less than the delivering up of Jesus our Lord? It was even so. Assuredly if a milder expedient would have met our guilt, the Father would not have "delivered up" the Son. The Cross was nothing if not an absolute *sine qua non*. There is that sin, and in God, which made it eternally necessary that—if man was to be justified—the Son of God must not only live, but die, and not only die, but die thus, delivered up, given over to be done to death, as those who do great sin are done.

Deep in the heart of the divine doctrine of Atonement lies this element of it, the "because of our transgressions"; the exigency of Golgotha, due to our sins. The remission, the acquittal, the acceptance, was not a matter for the verbal *fiat* of Divine autocracy. It was a matter not between God and creation, which to Him is "a little thing," but between God and His Law, that is to say, Himself, as He is eternal Judge. And this, to the Eternal, is *not* a little thing. So the solution called for no little thing, but for the Atoning Death, for the laying by the Father on the Son of the iniquities of us all, that we might open our arms and receive from the Father the merits of the Son.

"And was raised up because of our justification;" because our acceptance had been won, by His deliverance up. Such is the simplest explanation of the grammar, and of the import. The Lord's Resurrection appears as, so to speak, the mighty sequel, and also the demonstration, warrant, proclamation, of His acceptance as the Propitiation, and therefore of our acceptance in Him. For indeed it *was* our justification, when He paid our penalty. True, the acceptance does not accrue to the individual till he believes, and so receives. The gift is not put into the hand till it is open, and empty. But the gift has been bought ready for the recipient long before he kneels to receive it. It was his, in provision, from the moment of the purchase; and the glorious Purchaser came up from the depths where He had gone down to buy, holding aloft in His sacred hands the golden Gift, ours because His for us.

A little while before he wrote to Rome St. Paul had written to Corinth, and the same truth was in his soul then, though it came out only passingly, while with infinite impressiveness. "If Christ is not risen, idle is your faith; you are yet in your sins" (1 Cor. xv. 17). That is to say, so the context irrefragably shows, you are yet in the guilt of your sins; you are still unjustified. "In your sins" cannot possibly there refer to the moral condition of the converts; for as a matter of fact, which no doctrine could negative, the Corinthians *were* "changed men." "In your sins" refers therefore to guilt, to law, to acceptance. And it bids them look to the Atonement as the objective *sine qua non* for that, and to the Resurrection as the one possible, and the only necessary, warrant to faith that the Atonement had secured its end.

"Who was delivered up; who was raised up." When? About twenty-five years before Paul sat dictating this sentence in the house of Gaius. There were at that moment about three hundred known living people, at least (1 Cor. xv. 6), who had seen the Risen One with open eyes, and heard Him with conscious ears. From one point of view, all was eternal,



spiritual, invisible. From another point of view our salvation was as concrete, as historical, as much a thing of place and date, as the battle of Actium, or the death of Socrates. And what was done, remains done.

"Can length of years on God Himself exact,  
And make that fiction which was once a fact?"

## CHAPTER XII.

### PEACE, LOVE, AND JOY FOR THE JUSTIFIED.

#### ROMANS V. I-II.

WE reached a pause in the Apostle's thought with the close of the last paragraph. We may reverently imagine, as in spirit we listen to his dictation, that a pause comes also in his work; that he is silent, and Tertius puts down the pen, and they spend their hearts awhile on worshipping recollection and realisation. The Lord delivered up; His people justified; the Lord risen again, alive for evermore—here was matter for love, joy, and wonder.

But the Letter must proceed, and the argument has its fullest and most wonderful developments yet to come. It has now already expounded the tremendous *need* of justifying mercy, for every soul of man. It has shown how *faith*, always and only, is the way to appropriate that mercy—the way of God's will, and manifestly also in its own nature the way of deepest fitness. We have been allowed to see faith in illustrative action, in Abraham, who by faith, absolutely, without the least advantage of traditional privilege, received justification, with the vast concurrent blessings which it carried. Lastly we have heard St. Paul dictate to Tertius, for the Romans and for us, those summarising words (iv. 25) in which we now have God's own certificate of the triumphant efficacy of that Atoning Work, which sustains the Promise in order that the Promise may sustain us believing.

We are now to approach the glorious theme of the Life of the Justified. This is to be seen not only as a state whose basis is the reconciliation of the Law, and whose gate and walls are the covenant Promise. It is to appear as a state warmed with eternal Love; irradiated with the prospect of glory. In it the man, knit up with Christ his Head, his Bridegroom, his all, yields himself with joy to the God who has received him. In the living power of the heavenly Spirit, who perpetually delivers him from himself, he obeys, prays, works, and suffers, in a liberty which is only not yet that of heaven, and in which he is maintained to the end by Him who has planned his full personal salvation from eternity to eternity.

It has been the temptation of Christians sometimes to regard the truth and exposition of Justification as if there were a certain hardness and as it were dryness about it; as if it were a topic rather for the schools than for life. If excuses have ever been given for such a view, they must come from other quarters than the Epistle to the Romans. Christian teachers, of many periods, may have discussed Justification as coldly as if they were writing a law-book. Or again they may have examined it as if it

were a truth terminating in itself, the Omega as well as the Alpha of salvation; and then it has been misrepresented, of course. For the Apostle certainly does not discuss it drily; he lays deep indeed the foundations of Law and Atonement, but he does it in the manner of a man who is not drawing the plan of a refuge, but calling his reader from the tempest into what is not only a refuge but a home. And again he does not discuss it in isolation. He spends his fullest, largest, and most loving expositions on its intense and vital connection with concurrent truths. He is about now to take us, through a noble vestibule, into the sanctuary of the life of the accepted, the life of union, of surrender, of the Holy Ghost.

Justified therefore on terms of faith, we have peace towards our God, we possess in regard of Him the "quietness and assurance" of acceptance, through our Lord Jesus Christ, thus delivered up, and raised up, for us; through whom we have actually found our introduction, our free admission, by our faith, into this grace, this unearned acceptance for Another's sake, in which we stand, instead of falling ruined, sentenced, at the tribunal. And we exult, not with the sinful "boasting" of the legalist, but in hope (literally, "on hope," as *reposing on* the promised prospect) of the glory of our God, the light of the heavenly vision and fruition of our Justifier, and the splendour of an eternal service of Him in that fruition. Nor only so, but we exult too in our tribulations, with a better fortitude than the Stoic's artificial serenity, knowing that the tribulation works out, develops, patient persistency, as it occasions proof after proof of the power of God in our weakness, and thus generates *the habit* of reliance; and then the patient persistency develops proof, brings out in experience, as a proved fact, that through Christ we are not what we were; and then the proof develops hope, solid and definite expectation of continuing grace and final glory, and, in particular, of the Lord's Return; and the hope does not shame, does not disappoint; it is a hope sure and steadfast, for it is the hope of those who now know that they are objects of eternal Love; because the love of our God has been poured out in our hearts; His love to us has been as it were diffused through our consciousness, poured out in a glad experience as rain from the cloud, as floods from the rising spring, through the Holy Spirit that was given to us.

Here first is mentioned explicitly, in the Apostle's argument (we do not reckon chap. i. 4 as in the argument), the blessed Spirit, the Lord the Holy Ghost. Hitherto the occasion for the mention has hardly arisen. The considerations have been mainly upon the personal guilt of the sinner, and the objective fact of the Atonement, and the exercise of faith, of trust in God, as a genuine personal act of man. With a definite purpose, we may reverently think, the discussion of faith has been kept thus far clear of the thought of anything lying behind faith, of any "grace" *giving* faith. For whether or no faith is the gift of God, it is most certainly the act of man; none should assert this more decidedly than those who hold (as we do) that Eph. ii. 8\* *does* teach that where saving faith is, it is there because God has "given" it. But how does He

\*The writer ventures to refer to his Commentary on Ephesians in "The Cambridge Bible."



"give" it? Not, surely, by implanting a new faculty, but by so opening the soul to God in Christ that the divine magnet effectually draws the man to a willing repose upon such a God. But the man does this, as an act, himself. He trusts God as genuinely, as personally, as much with his own faculty of trust, as he trusts a man whom he sees to be quite trustworthy and precisely fit to meet an imperative need. Thus it is often the work of the evangelist and the teacher to insist upon the *duty* rather than the *grace* of faith; to bid men rather thank God for faith *when they have believed* than wait for the sense of an afflatus before believing. And is this not what St. Paul does here? At this point of his argument, *and not before*, he reminds the believer that his possession of peace, of happiness, of hope, has been attained and realised not, ultimately, of himself, but through the working of the Eternal Spirit. The insight into mercy, into a propitiation provided by divine love, and so into the holy secret of the divine love itself, has been given him by the Holy Ghost, who has taken of the things of Christ, and shown them to him, and secretly handled his "heart" so that the fact of the love of God is a part of experience at last. The man has been told of his great need, and of the sure and open refuge, and has stepped through its peaceful gate in the act of trusting the message and the will of God. Now he is asked to look round, to look back, and bless the hand which, when he was outside in the naked field of death, opened his eyes to see, and guided his will to choose.

What a retrospect it is! Let us trace it from the first words of this paragraph again. First, here is the *sure fact* of our acceptance, and the reason of it, and the method. "Therefore"; let not that word be forgotten. Our Justification is no arbitrary matter, whose causelessness suggests an illusion, or a precarious peace. "Therefore"; it rests upon an antecedent, in the logical chain of divine facts. We have read that antecedent, chap. iv. 25; "Jesus our Lord was given up because of our transgressions, and was raised up because of our justification." We assented to that fact; we have accepted Him, only and altogether, in this work of His. *Therefore* we are justified, *δικαιωθέντες*,\* placed by an act of divine Love, working in the line of divine Law, among those whom the Judge accepts, that He may embrace them as Father. Then, in this possession of the "peace" of our acceptance, thus *led in* (*προσαγωγή*), through the gate of the promise, with the footstep of faith, we find inside our Refuge far more than merely safety. We look up from within the blessed walls, sprinkled with atoning blood, and we see above them the hope of glory, invisible outside. And we turn to our present life within them (for all our life is to be lived within that broad sanctuary now), and we find resources provided there for a present as well as a prospective joy. We address ourselves to the discipline of the place; for it *has* its discipline; the refuge is home, but it is also school; and we find, when we begin to try it, that the discipline is full of joy. It brings out into a joyful consciousness the power we now have, in Him who has accepted us, in Him who is our Acceptance, to suffer and to serve in love. Our life has become a life not of peace only, but of the hope

\* Observe the aorist form of the participle.

which animates peace, and makes it flow "as a river." From hour to hour we enjoy the never-disappointing hope of "grace for grace," new grace for the next new need; and beyond it, and above it, the certainties of the hope of glory. To drop our metaphor of the sanctuary for that of the pilgrimage, we find ourselves upon a pathway, steep and rocky, but always mounting into purer air, and so as to show us nobler prospects; and at the summit—the pathway will be continued, and transfigured, into the golden street of the City; the same track, but within the gate of heaven.

Into all this the Holy Ghost has led us. He has been at the heart of the whole internal process. He made the thunder of the Law articulate to our conscience. He gave us faith by manifesting Christ. And, in Christ, He has "poured out in our hearts the love of God."

For now the Apostle takes up that word, "the Love of God," and holds it to our sight, and we see in its pure glory no vague abstraction, but the face, and the work, of Jesus Christ. Such is the context into which we now advance. He is reasoning on; "For Christ, when we still were weak." He has set justification before us in its majestic lawfulness. But he has now to expand its mighty love, of which the Holy Ghost has made us conscious in our hearts. We are to see in the Atonement not only a guarantee that we have a valid title to a just acceptance. We are to see in it the love of the Father and the Son, so that not our security only, but our bliss, may be full.

For Christ, we still being weak (gentle euphemism for our utter impotence, our guilty inability to meet the sinless claim of the Law of God), in season, in the fulness of time, when the ages of precept and of failure had done their work, and man had learnt something to purpose of the lesson of self-despair, for the ungodly—died. "For the ungodly," "concerning them," "with reference to them," that is to say, in this context of saving mercy, "in their interests, for their rescue, as their propitiation." "The ungodly," or, more literally still, without the article, "ungodly ones"; a designation general and inclusive for those for whom He died. Above (iv. 5) we saw the word used with a certain limitation, as of the worst among the sinful. But here, surely, with a solemn paradox, it covers the whole field of the Fall. The ungodly here are not the flagrant and disreputable only; they are all who are not in harmony with God; the potential as well as the actual doers of grievous sin. For them "Christ died"; not "lived," let us remember, but "died." It was a question not of example, nor of suasion, nor even of utterances of divine compassion. It was a question of law and guilt; and it was to be met only by the death-sentence and the death-fact; such death as He died of whom, a little while before, this same Correspondent had written to the converts of Galatia (iii. 13); "Christ bought us out from the curse of the Law, when He became a curse for us." All the untold emphasis of the sentence, and of the thought, lies here upon those last words, upon each and all of them, "for ungodly ones—He died." The sequel shows this to us; he proceeds: For scarcely, with difficulty, and in rare instances, for a just man will one die; "scarcely," he will not say "never," for, for the good man, the man answering in some measure



the ideal of gracious and not only of legal goodness, perhaps someone actually ventures to die. But God commends, as by a glorious contrast, His love, "His" as above all current human love, "His own love," towards us, because while we were still sinners, and as such repulsive to the Holy One, Christ for us did die.

We are not to read this passage as if it were a statistical assertion as to the facts of human love and its possible sacrifices. The moral argument will not be affected if we are able, as we shall be, to adduce cases where unregenerate man has given even his life to save the life of one, or of many, to whom he is not emotionally or naturally attracted. All that is necessary to St. Paul's tender plea for the love of God is the certain fact that the cases of death even on behalf of one who *morally deserves* a great sacrifice are relatively very, very few. The thought of merit is the ruling thought in the connection. He labours to bring out the sovereign Lovingkindness, which went even to the length and depth of death, by reminding us, that, whatever moved it, it was not moved, even in the lowest imaginable degree, by any merit, no, nor by any "congruity," in us. And yet we were sought, and saved. He who planned the salvation, and provided it, was the eternal Lawgiver and Judge. He who loved us is Himself eternal Right, to whom all our wrong is unutterably repellent. What then is He as Love, who, being also Right, stays not till He has given His Son to the death of the Atonement?

So we have indeed a warrant to "believe the love of God" (1 John iv. 16). Yes, to believe it. We look within us, and it is incredible. If we have really seen ourselves, we have seen ground for a sorrowful conviction that He who is eternal Right must view us with aversion. But if we have really seen Christ, we have seen ground for—not feeling at all, it may be, at this moment, but—believing that God is Love, and loves us. What is it to believe Him? It is to take Him at His word; to act altogether not upon our internal consciousness but upon His warrant. We look at the Cross, or rather, we look at the crucified Lord Jesus in His Resurrection; we read at His feet these words of His Apostle; and we go away to take God at His assurance that we, unlovely, are beloved.

"My child," said a dying French saint, as she gave a last embrace to her daughter, "I have loved you because of what you are; my heavenly Father, to whom I go, has loved me *malgré moi*."

And how does the divine reasoning now advance? "From glory to glory"; from acceptance by the Holy One, who is Love, to present and endless preservation in His Beloved One. Therefore much more, justified now in His blood, as it were "in" its laver of ablution, or again "within" its circle of sprinkling as it marks the precincts of our inviolable sanctuary, we shall be kept safe through Him, who now lives to administer the blessings of His death, from the wrath, the wrath of God, in its present imminence over the head of the unreconciled, and in its final fall "in that day." For if, being enemies, with no initial love to Him who is Love, nay, when we were hostile to His claims, and as such subject to the hostility of His Law, we were reconciled to our God through the death of His Son (God coming to judicial peace

with us, and we brought to submissive peace with Him), much more, being reconciled, we shall be kept safe in His life, in the life of the Risen One who now lives for us, and in us, and we in Him. Nor, only so, but we shall be kept exulting too in our God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom now we have received this reconciliation.

Here, by anticipation, he indicates already the mighty issues of the act of Justification, in our life of Union with the Lord who died for us, and lived again. In the sixth chapter this will be more fully unfolded; but he cannot altogether reserve it so long. As he has advanced from the law-aspect of our acceptance to its love-aspect, so now with this latter he gives us at once the life-aspect, our vital incorporation with our Redeemer, our part and lot in His resurrection-life. Nowhere in this whole Epistle is that subject expounded so fully as in the later Epistles, Colossians and Ephesians; the Inspirer led His servant all over that region then, in his Roman prison, but not now. But He had brought him into the region from the first, and we see it here present to his thought, though not in the foreground of his discourse. "Kept safe in His life"; not "by" His life, but "in" His life. We are livingly knit to Him the Living One. From one point of view we are accused men, at the bar, wonderfully transformed, by the Judge's provision, into welcomed and honoured friends of the Law and the Lawgiver. From another point of view we are dead men, in the grave, wonderfully vivified, and put into a spiritual connection with the mighty life of our Lifegiving Redeemer. The aspects are perfectly distinct. They belong to different orders of thought. Yet they are in the closest and most genuine relation. The Justifying Sacrifice procures the possibility of our regeneration into the Life of Christ. Our union by faith with the Lord who died and lives brings us into actual part and lot in His justifying merits. And our part and lot in those merits, our "acceptance in the Beloved," assures us again of the permanence of the mighty Love which will maintain us in our part and lot "in His life." This is the view of the matter which is before us here.

Thus the Apostle meets our need on every side. He shows us the holy Law satisfied for us. He shows us the eternal love liberated upon us. He shows us the Lord's own Life clasped around us, imparted to us; "our life is hid in God with Christ, who is our Life" (Col. iii. 3, 4). Shall we not "exult in God through Him"?

And now we are to learn something of that great Covenant-Headship, in which we and He are one.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### CHRIST AND ADAM.

##### ROMANS v. 12-21.

We approach a paragraph of the Epistle pregnant with mystery. It leads us back to Primal Man, to the Adam of the first brief pages of the Scripture record, to his encounter with the suggestion to follow himself rather than his Maker, to his sin, and then to the results of that



sin in his race. We shall find those results given in terms which certainly we should not have devised *a priori*. We shall find the Apostle teaching, or rather stating, for he writes as to those who know, that mankind inherits from primal Man, tried and fallen, not only taint but guilt, not only moral hurt but legal fault.

This is "a thing heard in the darkness." It has been said that Holy Scripture "is not a sun, but a lamp." The words may be grievously misused, by undue emphasis on the negative clause; but they convey a sure truth, used aright. Nowhere does the Divine Book undertake to tell us all about everything it contains. It undertakes to tell us truth, and to tell it from God. It undertakes to give us pure light, yea, "to bring life and immortality out into the light," (2 Tim. i. 10). But it reminds us that we know "in part," and that even prophecy, even the inspired message, is "in part" (1 Cor. xiii. 9). It illuminates immensely much, but it leaves yet more to be seen hereafter. It does not yet kindle the whole firmament and the whole landscape like an oriental sun. It sheds its glory upon our Guide, and upon our path.

A passage like this calls for such recollections. It tells us, with the voice of the Apostle's Lord, great facts about our own race, and its relations to its primeval Head, such that every individual man has a profound moral and also judicial *nexus* with the first Man. It does not tell us how those inscrutable but solid facts fit into the whole plan of God's creative wisdom and moral government. The lamp shines *there*, upon the edges of a deep ravine beside the road; it does not shine sun-like over the whole mountain-land.

As with other mysteries which will meet us later, so with this; we approach it as those who "know in part," and who know that the apostolic Prophet, by no defect of inspiration, but by the limits of the case, "prophesies in part." Thus with awful reverence, with godly fear, and free from the wish to explain away, yet without anxiety lest God should be proved unrighteous, we listen as Paul dictates, and receive his witness about our fall and our guilt in that mysterious "First Father."

We remember also another fact of this case. This paragraph deals only incidentally with Adam; its main theme is Christ. Adam is the illustration; Christ is the subject. We are to be shown in Adam, by contrast, some of "the unsearchable riches of Christ." So that our main attention is called not to the brief outline of the mystery of the Fall, but to the assertions of the related splendour of the Redemption.

St. Paul is drawing again to a close, a cadence. He is about to conclude his exposition of the Way of Acceptance, and to pass its junction with the Way of Holiness. And he shows us here last, in the matter of Justification, this fragment from "the bottoms of the mountains"—the union of the justified with their redeeming Lord as race with Head; the *nexus* in that respect between them and Him which makes His "righteous act" of such infinite value to them. In the previous paragraph, as we have seen, he has gravitated toward the deeper regions of the blessed subject; he has indicated our connection with the Lord's Life as well as with His Merit. Now, recurring to the thought of the Merit, he still tends to the depths of truth, and Christ our Righteousness is lifted before our eyes from those pure depths as not

the Propitiation only, but the Propitiation who is also our Covenant-Head, our Second Adam, holding His mighty merits for a new race, bound up with Himself in the bond of real unity.

He "prophesies in part," meanwhile, even in respect of this element of his message. As we saw just above, the fullest explanations of our union with the Lord Christ *in His life* were reserved by St. Paul's Master for other Letters than this. In the present passage we have not, what probably we should have had if the Epistle had been written five years later, a definite statement of the connection between our Union with Christ in His covenant and our Union with Him in His life; a connection deep, necessary, significant. It is not quite absent from this passage, if we read verses 17, 18 aright; but it is not prominent. The main thought is of merit, righteousness, acceptance; of covenant, of law. As we have said, this paragraph is the climax of the Epistle to the Romans as to its doctrine of our peace with God through the merits of His Son. It is enough for the purpose of that subject that it should indicate, and only indicate, the doctrine that His Son is also our Life, our indwelling Cause and Spring of purity and power.

Recollecting thus the scope and the connection of the passage, let us listen to its wording.

On this account, on account of the aspects of our justification and reconciliation "through our Lord Jesus Christ" which he has just presented, it is just as through one man sin entered into the world, the world of man, and, through sin, death, and so to all men death travelled, penetrated, pervaded, inasmuch as all sinned; the Race sinning in its Head, the Nature in its representative Bearer. The facts of human life and death show that sin *did* thus pervade the race, as to liability, and as to penalty: For until law came sin was in the world; it was present all along, in the ages previous to the great Legislation. But sin is not imputed, is not put down as debt for penalty, where law does not exist, where in no sense is there statute to be obeyed or broken, whether that statute takes articulate expression or not. But death became king, from Adam down to Moses, even over those who did not sin on the model of the transgression of Adam—who is (in the present tense of the plan of God) pattern of the Coming One.

He argues from the fact of death, and from its universality, which implies a universality of liability, of guilt. According to the Scriptures, death is essentially *penal* in the case of man, who was created not to die but to live. How that purpose would have been fulfilled if "the image of God" had not sinned against Him, we do not know. We need not think that the fulfilment would have violated any natural process; higher processes might have governed the case, in perfect harmony with the surroundings of terrestrial life, till perhaps that life was transfigured, as by a necessary development, into the celestial and immortal. But, however, the record *does* connect, for man, the fact of death with the fact of sin, offence, transgression. And the fact of death is universal, and so has been from the first. And thus it includes generations most remote from the knowledge of a revealed *code*. And it includes individuals most incapable of a conscious act of transgression such as Adam's was; it includes the heathen, and the infant, and the imbecile. Therefore wherever there is human nature, since Adam fell, there is sin, in its form



of guilt. And therefore, in some sense which perhaps only the Supreme Theologian Himself fully knows, but which we can follow a little way, all men offended in the First Man—so favourably conditioned, so gently tested. The guilt contracted by him is possessed also by them. And thus is he “the pattern of the Coming One.”

For now the glorious Coming One, the Seed of the Woman, the blessed Lord of the Promise, rises on the view, in His likeness and in His contrast. Writing to Corinth from Macedonia, about a year before, St. Paul had called him (1 Cor. xv. 45, 47) “the Second Adam,” “the Second Man”; and had drawn in outline the parallel he here elaborates. “In Adam all die; even so in Christ all shall be made alive.” It was a thought which he had learned in Judaism, but which his Master had affirmed to him in Christianity; and noble indeed and far-reaching is its use of it in this exposition of the sinner’s hope.

But not as the transgression, so the gracious gift. For if, by the transgression of the one, the many, the many affected by it, died, much rather did the grace of God, His benignant action, and the gift, the grant of our acceptance, in the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, (“in His grace,” because *involved* in His benignant action, in His redeeming work) abound unto the many whom it, whom He, affected.

We observe here some of the phrases in detail. “The One”; “the One Man”:—“the one,” in each case, is related to “the many” involved, in bane or in blessing respectively. “The One Man”:—so the Second Adam is designated, not the First. As to the First, “it goes unsaid” that he is man. As to the Second, it is infinitely wonderful, and of eternal import, that He, as truly, as completely, is one with us, is Man of men. “*Much rather* did the grace, and the gift, *abound*”:—the thought given here is that while the dread secret of the Fall was solemnly *permitted*, as good in law, the sequel of the divine counter-work was gladly *sped* by the Lord’s willing love, and was carried to a glorious overflow, to an altogether unmerited effect, in the present and eternal blessing of the justified. “*The many*,” twice mentioned in this verse, are the whole company which, in each case, stands related to the respective Representative. It is the whole race in the case of the Fall; it is the “many brethren” of the Second Adam in the case of the Reconciliation. The question is not of numerical comparison between the two, but of the numerousness of each host in relation to the oneness of its covenant Head. What the numerousness of the “many brethren” will be we know—and we do not know; for it will be “a great multitude, which no one can number.” But that is not in the question here. The emphasis, the “*much rather*,” the “*abundance*,” lies not on the compared numbers, but on the amplitude of the blessing which overflows upon “the many” from the justifying work of the One.

He proceeds, developing the thought. From the act of each Representative, from Adam’s Fall and Christ’s Atonement, there issued results of dominion, of royalty. But what was the contrast of the cases! In the Fall, the sin of the One brought upon “the many” judgment, sentence, and the reign of death over them. In the Atonement, the righteousness of the One brought upon “the many” an “abundance,” an overflow, a generous largeness and love of acceptance, and the power of life eternal, and a

prerogative of royal rule over sin and death; the emancipated captives treading upon their tyrant’s necks. We follow out the Apostle’s wording:

And not as through the one who sinned, who fell, so is the gift; our acceptance in our Second Head does not follow the law of mere and strict retribution which appears in our fall in our first Head. (For, he adds in emphatic parenthesis, the judgment did issue, from one transgression, in condemnation, in sentence of death; but the gracious gift issued, from many transgressions,—not indeed as if earned by them, as if caused by them, but as *occasioned* by them; for this wonderful process of mercy found in our sins, as well as in our Fall, a *reason* for the Cross—in a deed of justification.) For if in one transgression, “*in*” it, as the effect is involved in its cause, death came to reign through the one offender, much rather those who are receiving, in their successive cases and generations, that abundance of the grace just spoken of, and of the free gift of righteousness, of acceptance, shall in life, life eternal, begun now, to end never, reign over their former tyrants through the One, their glorious One, Jesus Christ.

And now he sums up the whole in one comprehensive inference and affirmation. “The One,” “the many”; “the One,” “the all”; the whole mercy for the all due to the one work of the One;—such is the ground-thought all along. It is illustrated by “the one” and “the many” of the Fall, but still so as to throw the real weight of every word not upon the Fall but upon the Acceptance. Here, as throughout this paragraph, we should greatly mistake if we thought that the illustration and the object illustrated were to be pressed, detail by detail, into one mould. To cite an instance to the contrary, we are certainly not to take him to mean that because Adam’s “many” are not only fallen in him, but actually guilty, therefore Christ’s “many” are not only accepted in Him, but actually and personally meritorious of acceptance. The whole Epistle negatives that thought. Nor again are we to think, as we ponder ver. 18, that because “the condemnation” was “to all men” in the sense of their being not only condemnable but actually condemned, therefore “the justification of life” was “to all men” in the sense that all mankind are actually justified. Here again the whole Epistle, and the whole message of St. Paul about our acceptance, are on the other side. The provision is for the *genus*, for man; but the possession is for men—who believe. No; these great details in the parallel need our reverent caution, lest we think peace where there is, and can be, none. The force of the parallel lies in the broader and deeper factors of the two matters. It lies in the mysterious phenomenon of covenant headship, as affecting both our Fall and our Acceptance; in the power upon the many, in each case, of the deed of the One; and then in the magnificent fulness and positiveness of result in the case of our salvation. In our Fall, sin merely *worked itself out* into doom and death. In our Acceptance, the Judge’s award is positively crowned and as it were loaded with gifts and treasures. It brings with it, in ways not described here, but amply shown in other Scriptures, a living union with a Head who is our life, and in whom we possess already the powers of heavenly being in their essence. It brings with it not only the approval of the Law,



but accession to a throne. The justified sinner is a king already, in his Head, over the power of sin, over the fear of death. And he is on his way to a royalty in the eternal future which shall make him great indeed, great in his Lord.

The absolute dependence of our justification upon the Atoning Act of our Head, and the relation of our Head to us accordingly as our Centre and our Root of blessing, this is the main message of the passage we are tracing. The mystery of our congenital guilt is there, though it is only incidentally there. And after all what is that mystery? It is assuredly a fact. The statement of this paragraph, that the many were "constituted sinners by the disobedience of the one," what is it? It is the Scripture expression, and in some guarded sense the Scripture explanation of a consciousness deep as the awakened soul of man; that I, a member of this homogeneous race, made in God's image, not only have sinned, but have been a sinful being from my first personal beginning; and that I ought not to be so, and ought never to have been so. It is my calamity, but it is also my accusation. This I cannot explain; but this I know. And to know this, with a knowledge that is not merely speculative but moral, is to be "shut up unto Christ," in a self-despair that can go nowhere else than to Him for acceptance, for peace, for holiness, for power.

Let us translate, as they stand, the closing sentences before us:

Accordingly therefore, as through one transgression there came a result to all men, to condemnation, to sentence of death, so through one deed of righteousness there came a result to all men, (to "all" in the sense we have indicated, so that whoever of mankind receives the acceptance owes it always and wholly to the Act of Christ,) to justification of life, to an acceptance which not only bids the guilty "not die," but opens to the accepted the secret, in Him who is their Sacrifice, of powers which live in Him for them as He is their Life. For as, by the disobedience of the one man, the many, the many of that case, were constituted sinners, constituted guilty of the fall of their nature from God, so that their being sinful is not only their calamity but their sin, so too by the obedience of the One, "not according to their works," that is, to their conduct, past, present, or to come, but "by the obedience of the One," the many, His "many brethren," His Father's children through faith in Him, shall be, as each comes to Him in all time, and then by the final open proclamation of eternity, constituted righteous, qualified for the acceptance of the holy Judge.

Before he closes this page of his message, and turns the next, he has as it were a parenthetic word to say, indicating a theme to be discussed more largely later. It is the function of the law, the moral place of the preceptive *Fiat*, in view of this wonderful Acceptance of the guilty. He has suggested the question already, iii. 31; he will treat some aspects of it more fully later. But it is urgent here to enquire at least this, Was law a mere anomaly, impossible to put into relation with justifying grace? Might it have been as well out of the way, never heard of in the human world? No, God forbid. One deep purpose of acceptance was to glorify the Law, making the preceptive Will of God as dear to the justified as it is terrible to the guilty.

But now, besides this, it has a function antecedent as well as consequent to justification. Applied as positive precept to the human will in the Fall, what does it do? It does not create sinfulness; God forbid. Not God's will but the creature's will did that. But it occasions sin's declaration of war. It brings out the latent rebellion of the will. It forces the disease to the surface—merciful force, for it shows the sick man his danger, and it gives point to his Physician's words of warning and of hope. It reveals to the criminal his guilt; as it is sometimes found that information of a statutory human penalty awakens a malefactor's conscience in the midst of a half-unconscious course of crime. And so it brings out to the opening eyes of the soul the wonder of the remedy in Christ. He sees the Law; he sees himself; and now at last it becomes a profound reality to him to see the Cross. He believes, adores, and loves. The merit of his Lord covers his demerit, as the waters the sea. And he passes from the dread but salutary view of "the reign" of sin over him, in a death he cannot fathom, to submit to "the reign" of grace, in life, in death, for ever.

Now law came sideways in; law, in its largest sense, as it affects the fallen, but with a special reference, doubtless, to its articulation at Sinai. It came in "sideways," as to its relation to our acceptance; as a thing which should *indirectly* promote it, by not causing but occasioning the blessing; that the transgression might abound, that sin, that sins, in the most inclusive sense, might develop the latent evil, and as it were expose it to the work of grace. But where the sin multiplied, in the place, the region, of fallen humanity, there did superabound the grace; with that mighty overflow of the bright ocean of love which we have watched already. That just as our sin came to reign in our death, our penal death, so too might the grace come to reign, having its glorious way against our foes and over us, through righteousness, through the justifying work, to life eternal, which here we have, and which hereafter will receive us into itself, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

"The last words of Mr. Honest were, *Grace reigns*. So he left the world." Let us walk with the same watchword through the world, till we too, crossing that Jordan, lean with a final simplicity of faith upon "the obedience of the One."

#### CHAPTER XIV.

#### JUSTIFICATION AND HOLINESS.

##### ROMANS VI. 1-13.

In a certain sense, St. Paul has done now with the exposition of Justification. He has brought us on, from his denunciation of human sin, and his detection of the futility of mere privilege, to propitiation, to faith, to acceptance, to love, to joy, and hope, and finally to our mysterious but real connection in all this blessing with Him who won our peace. From this point onwards we shall find many mentions of our acceptance, and of its Cause; we shall come to some memorable mentions very soon. But we shall not hear the holy subject itself any more treated and expounded. It will underlie the following discussions everywhere; it will as it were surround them, as with



a sanctuary wall. But we shall now think less directly of the foundations than of the superstructure, for which the foundation was laid. We shall be less occupied with the fortifications of our holy city than with the resources they contain, and with the life which is to be lived, on those resources, within the walls.

Everything will cohere. But the transition will be marked, and will call for our deepest, and let us add, our most reverent and supplicating thought.

"We need not, then, be holy, if such is your programme of acceptance." Such was the objection, bewildered or deliberate, which St. Paul heard in his soul at this pause in his dictation; he had doubtless often heard it with his ears. Here was a wonderful provision for the free and full acceptance of "the ungodly" by the eternal Judge. It was explained and stated so as to leave no room for human virtue as a commendatory merit. Faith itself was no commendatory virtue. It was not "a work," but the antithesis to "works." Its power was not in itself but in its Object. It was itself only the void which received "the obedience of the One" as the sole meriting cause of peace with God. Then—may we not live on in sin, and yet be in His favour now, and in His heaven hereafter?

Let us recollect, as we pass on, one important lesson of these recorded objections to the great first message of St. Paul. They tell us incidentally how explicit and unreserved his delivery of the message had been, and how Justification by Faith, by faith only, meant what was said, when it was said by him. Christian thinkers, of more schools than one, and at many periods, have hesitated not a little over that point. The mediæval theologian mingled his thoughts of Justification with those of Regeneration, and taught our acceptance accordingly on lines impossible to lay true along those of St. Paul. In later days, the meaning of faith has been sometimes beclouded, till it has seemed through the haze, to be only an indistinct summary-word for Christian consistency, for exemplary conduct, for good works. Now supposing either of these lines of teaching, or anything like them, to be the message of St. Paul, "his Gospel," as he preached it; one result may be reasonably inferred—that we should not have had Rom. vi. 1 worded as it is. Whatever objections were encountered by a Gospel of acceptance expounded on such lines, (and no doubt it would have encountered many, if it called sinful men to holiness,) it would not have encountered this objection, that it seemed to allow men to be unholy. What such a Gospel would seem to do would be to accentuate in all its parts the urgency of obedience in order to acceptance; the vital importance on the one hand of an internal change in our nature (through sacramental operation, according to many); and then on the other hand the practice of Christian virtues, with the hope, in consequence, of acceptance, more or less complete, in heaven. Whether the objector, the enquirer, was dull, or whether he was subtle, it could not have occurred to him to say, "You are preaching a Gospel of license; I may, if you are right, live as I please, only drawing a little deeper on the fund of gratuitous acceptance as I go on." But just this was the *animus*, and such were very nearly the words, of those who either hated St. Paul's message as unorthodox, or wanted an excuse for the sin they loved, and found it in

quotations from St. Paul. Then St. Paul must have meant by faith what faith ought to mean, simple trust. And he must have meant by justification without works, what those words ought to mean, acceptance irrespective of our commendatory conduct. Such a Gospel was no doubt liable to be mistaken and misrepresented, and in just the way we are now observing. But it was also, and it is so still, the only Gospel which is the power of God unto salvation—to the fully awakened conscience, to the soul that sees itself, and asks for God indeed.

This undesigned witness to the meaning of the Pauline doctrine of Justification by Faith only will appear still more strongly when we come to the Apostle's answer to his questioners. He meets them not at all by modifications of his assertions. He has not a word to say about additional and corrective conditions precedent to our peace with God. He makes no impossible hint that Justification means the making of us good; or that Faith is a "short title" for Christian practice. No; there is no reason for such assertions either in the nature of words, or in the whole cast of the argument through which he has led us. What does he do? He takes this great truth of our acceptance in Christ our Merit, and puts it unreserved, unrelieved, unspoiled, in contact with other truth, of co-ordinate, nay, of superior greatness, for it is the truth to which Justification leads us, as way to end. He places our acceptance through Christ Atoning in organic connection with our life in Christ Risen. He indicates, as a truth evident to the conscience, that as the thought of our share in the Lord's Merit is inseparable from union with the meriting Person, so the thought of this union is inseparable from that of a spiritual harmony, a common life, in which the accepted sinner finds both a direction and a power in his Head. Justification has indeed set him free from the condemning chain of sin, from guilt. He is as if *he* had died the Death of sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction; as if *he* had passed through the *Lama Sabachthani*, and had "poured out *his* soul" for sin. So he is "dead to sin," in the sense in which his Lord and Representative "died to" it; the atoning death has killed sin's claim on him for judgment. As having so died, in Christ, he is "justified from sin." But then, because he thus died "in Christ," he is "in Christ" still, in respect also of resurrection. He is justified, not that he may go away, but that in His Justifier he may live, with the powers of that holy and eternal life with which the Justifier rose again.

The two truths are concentrated as it were into one, by their equal relation to the same Person, the Lord. The previous argument has made us intensely conscious that Justification, while a definite transaction in law, is not a mere transaction; it lives and glows with the truth of connection with a Person. That Person is the Bearer for us of all Merit. But He is also, and equally, the Bearer for us of new Life; in which the sharers of His Merit share, for they are in Him. So that, while the Way of Justification can be isolated for study, as it has been in this Epistle, the justified man cannot be isolated from Christ, who is his life. And thus he can never *ultimately* be considered apart from his possession, in Christ, of a new possibility, a new power, a new and glorious call to living holiness.



In the simplest and most practical terms the Apostle sets it before us that our justification is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. We are accepted that we may be possessed, and possessed after the manner not of a mechanical "article," but of an organic limb.\* We have "received the reconciliation" that we may now walk, not away from God, as if released from a prison, but with God, as His children in His Son. Because we are justified, we are to be holy, separated from sin, separated to God; not as a mere indication that our faith is real, and that therefore we are legally safe, but because we were justified for this very purpose, that we might be holy. To return to a simile we have employed already, the grapes upon a vine are not merely a living token that the tree is a vine, and is alive; they are the product for which the vine exists. It is a thing not to be thought of that the sinner should accept justification—and live to himself. It is a moral contradiction of the very deepest kind, and cannot be entertained without betraying an initial error in the man's whole spiritual creed.

And further, there is not only this profound connection of purpose between acceptance and holiness. There is a connection of endowment and capacity. Justification has done for the justified a twofold work, both limbs of which are all-important for the man who asks, *How can I walk and please God?* First, it has decisively broken the claim of sin upon him as guilt. He stands clear of that exhausting and enfeebling load. The pilgrim's burthen has fallen from his back, at the foot of the Lord's Cross, into the Lord's Grave. He *has* peace with God, not in emotion, but in covenant, through our Lord Jesus Christ. He has an unreserved "introduction" into a Father's loving and welcoming presence, every day and hour, in the Merit of his Head. But then also Justification has been to him as it were the signal of his union with Christ in new life; this we have noted already. Not only therefore does it give him, as indeed it does, an eternal occasion for a gratitude which, as he feels it, "makes duty joy, and labour rest." It gives him "a new power" with which to live the grateful life; a power residing not in Justification itself, but in what it opens up. It is the gate through which he passes to the fountain, the roof which shields him as he drinks. The fountain is his justifying Lord's exalted Life, His risen Life, poured into the man's being by the Spirit who makes Head and member one. And it is as justified that he has access to the fountain, and drinks as deep as he will of its life, its power, its purity. In the contemporary passage, 1 Cor. vi. 17, St. Paul had already written (in a connection unspeakably practical), "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." It is a sentence which might stand as a heading to the passage we now come to render.

What shall we say then? Shall we cling to the sin that the grace may multiply, the grace of the acceptance of the guilty? Away with the thought! We, the very men who died to that sin,—when our Representative, in whom we have believed, died for us to it, died to meet and break its claim—how shall we any longer live, have congenial being and action, in it, as in an

air we like to breathe? It is a moral impossibility that the man *so* freed from this thing's tyrannic claim to slay him should wish for anything else than severance from it in *all* respects. Or do you not know that we all, when baptised into Jesus Christ, when the sacred water sealed to us our faith-received contact with Him and interest in Him, were baptised into His Death, baptised as coming into union with Him as, above all, the Crucified, the Atoning? Do you forget that your covenant-Head, of whose covenant of peace your baptism was the divine physical token, is nothing to you if not your Saviour "who died," and who died because of this very sin with which your thought now parleys; died because only *so* could He break its legal bond upon you, in order to break its moral bond? We were entombed therefore with Him by means of our baptism, as it symbolised and sealed the work of faith, into His Death; it certified our interest in that vicarious death, even to its climax in the grave which, as it were, swallowed up the Victim; that just as Christ rose from the dead by means of the glory of the Father, as that death issued for Him in a new and endless life, not by accident, but because the Character of God, the splendour of His love, truth, and power, secured the issue, so we too should begin to walk (*περιπατήσωμεν*) in newness of life, should step forth in a power altogether new, in our union still with Him. All possible emphasis lies upon those words, "newness of life." They bring out what has been indicated already (vv. 17, 18), the truth that the Lord has won us not only remission of a death-penalty, not only even an extension of existence under happier circumstances, and in a more grateful and hopeful spirit—but a new and wonderful life-power. The sinner has fled to the Crucified, that he may not die. He is now not only amnestied but accepted. He is not only accepted but incorporated into his Lord, as one with Him in interest. He is not only incorporated as to interest, but, because his Lord, being Crucified, is also Risen, he is incorporated into Him as Life. The Last Adam, like the First, transmits not only legal but vital effects to His member. In Christ the man has, in a sense as perfectly practical as it is inscrutable, new life, new power, as the Holy Ghost applies to his inmost being the presence and virtues of his Head. "In Him he lives, by Him he moves."

To men innumerable the discovery of this ancient truth, or the fuller apprehension of it, has been indeed like a beginning of new life. They have been long and painfully aware, perhaps, that their strife with evil was a serious failure on the whole, and their deliverance from its power lamentably partial. And they could not always command as they would the emotional energies of gratitude, the warm consciousness of affection. Then it was seen, or seen more fully, that the Scriptures set forth this great mystery, this powerful fact; our union with our Head, by the Spirit, for life, for victory and deliverance, for dominion over sin, for willing service. And the hands are lifted up, and the knees confirmed, as the man uses the now open secret—Christ in him, and he in Christ—for the real walk of life. But let us listen to St. Paul again.

For if we became vitally connected, He with us and we with Him, by the likeness of His

\* Not that the imagery of the limb appears here, explicitly. But it does appear below. xii. 5, and in the contemporary passage 1 Cor. vi. 15; and more fully in the Epistles of the First Captivity.



Death, by the baptismal plunge, symbol and seal of our faith-union with the Buried Sacrifice, why, we shall be vitally connected with Him by the likeness also of His Resurrection, by the baptismal emergence, symbol and seal of our faith-union with the Risen Lord, and so with His risen power. This knowing, that our old man, our old state, as out of Christ and under Adam's headship, under guilt and in moral bondage, was crucified with Christ, was as it were nailed to His atoning Cross, where He represented us. In other words, He on the Cross, our Head and Sacrifice, so dealt with our fallen state for us, that the body of sin, this our body viewed as sin's stronghold, medium, vehicle, might be cancelled, might be in abeyance, put down, deposed, so as to be no more the fatal door to admit temptation to a powerless soul within.

"Cancelled" is a strong word. Let us lay hold upon its strength, and remember that it gives us not a dream, but a fact, to be found true in Christ. Let us not turn its fact into fallacy, by forgetting that, whatever "cancel" means, it does not mean that grace lifts us out of the body; that we are no longer to "keep under the body, and bring it into subjection," in the name of Jesus. Alas for us, if any promise, any truth, is allowed to "cancel" the call to watch and pray, and to think that in no sense is there still a foe within. But all the rather let us grasp, and use, the glorious positive in its place and time, which is everywhere and every day. Let us recollect, let us confess our faith, that thus it is with us, through Him who loved us. He died for us for this very end, that our "body of sin" might be wonderfully "in abeyance," as to the power of temptation upon the soul. Yes, as St. Paul proceeds, that henceforth we should not do bondservice to sin; that from now onwards, from our acceptance in Him, from our realisation of our union with Him, we should say to temptation a "no" that carries with it the power of the inward presence of the Risen Lord. Yes, for He has won that power for us in our Justification through His Death. He died for us, and we in Him, as to sin's claim, as to our guilt; and He thus died, as we have seen, on purpose that we might be not only legally accepted, but vitally united to Him. Such is the connection of the following clause, strangely rendered in the English Version, and often therefore misapplied, but whose literal wording is, For he who died, he who has died, has been justified from his ( $\tau\eta\varsigma$ ) sin; stands justified from it, stands free from its guilt. The thought is of the atoning Death, in which the believer is interested as if it were his own. And the implied thought is that, as that death is "fact accomplished," as "our old man" was so effectually "crucified with Christ," therefore we may, we must, claim the spiritual freedom and power in the Risen One which the Slain One secured for us when He bore our guilt.

This possession is also a glorious prospect, for it is permanent with the eternity of His Life. It not only is, but shall be. Now if we died with Christ, we believe, we rest upon His word and work for it, that we shall also live with Him, that we shall share not only now but for all the future the powers of His risen life. For He lives for ever—and we are in Him! Knowing that Christ, risen from the dead, no longer dies, no death is in His future now; death over

Him has no more dominion, its *claim* on Him is for ever gone. For as to His dying, it was as to our sin He died; it was to deal with our sin's claim; and He has dealt with it indeed, so that His death is "*once*,"  $\epsilon\phi\acute{\alpha}\nu\alpha\chi$ , once for ever; but as to His living, it is as to God He lives; it is in relation to His Father's acceptance, it is as welcome to His Father's throne for us, as the Slain One Risen. Even so must you too reckon yourselves, with the sure "calculation" that His work for you, His life for you, is infinitely valid, to be dead indeed to your sin, dead in His atoning death, dead to the guilt exhausted by that death, but living to your God, in Christ Jesus; welcomed by your eternal Father, in your union with His Son, and in that union filled with a new and blessed life from your Head, to be spent in the Father's smile, on the Father's service.

Let us too, like the Apostle and the Roman Christians, "reckon" this wonderful reckoning; counting upon these bright mysteries as upon imperishable facts. All is bound up not with the tides or waves of our emotions, but with the living rock of our union with our Lord. "In Christ Jesus"—that great phrase, here first explicitly used in the connection, includes all else in its embrace. Union with the slain and risen Christ, in faith, by the Spirit—here is our inexhaustible secret, for peace with God, for life to God, now and in the eternal day.

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, mortal, because not yet fully emancipated, though your Lord has "cancelled" for you its character as "the body of sin," the seat and vehicle of conquering temptation. Do not let sin reign there, so that you should obey the lusts of it, of the body. Observe the implied instruction. The body "cancelled" as "the body of sin," still has its "lusts," its desires; or rather desires are still occasioned by it to the man, desires which potentially, if not actually, are desires away from God. And the man, justified through the Lord's death and united to the Lord's life, is not therefore to mistake a *laissez-faire* for faith. He is to *use* his divine possessions, with a real energy of will. It is "for him," in a sense most practical, to see that his wealth is put to use, that his wonderful freedom is realised in act and habit. "Cancelled" does not mean annihilated. The body exists, and sin exists, and "desires" exist. It is for you, O man in Christ, to say to the enemy, defeated yet present, "Thou shalt not reign; I veto thee in the name of my King."

And do not present your limbs, your bodies in the detail of their faculties, as implements of unrighteousness, to sin, to sin regarded as the holder and employer of the implements. But present yourselves, your whole being, centre and circle, to God, as men living after death, in His Son's risen life, and your limbs, hand, foot, and head, with all their faculties, as implements of righteousness for God.

"O blissful self-surrender!" The idea of it, sometimes cloudy, sometimes radiant, has floated before the human soul in every age of history. The spiritual fact that the creature, as such, can never find its true centre in itself, but only in the Creator, has expressed itself in many various forms of aspiration and endeavour, now nearly touching the glorious truth of the matter, now wandering into cravings after a blank loss of



personality, or an eternal *coma* of absorption into an Infinite practically impersonal; or again, affecting a submission which terminates in itself, an *islâm*, a self-surrender into whose void no blessing falls from the God who receives it. Far different is the "self-presentation" of the Gospel. It is done in the fulness of personal consciousness and choice. It is done with revealed reasons of infinite truth and beauty to warrant its rightness. And it is a placing of the surrendered self into Hands which will both foster its true development as only its Maker can, as He fills it with His presence, and will use it, in the bliss of an eternal serviceableness, for His beloved will.

## CHAPTER XV.

### JUSTIFICATION AND HOLINESS: ILLUSTRATIONS FROM HUMAN LIFE.

#### ROMANS vi. 14-vii. 6.

AT the point we have now reached, the Apostle's thought pauses for a moment, to resume.\* He has brought us to self-surrender. We have seen the sacred obligations of our divine and wonderful liberty. We have had the miserable question, "Shall we cling to sin?" answered by an explanation of the rightness and the bliss of giving over our accepted persons, in the fullest liberty of will, to God, in Christ. Now he pauses, to illustrate and enforce. And two human relations present themselves for the purpose; the one to show the absoluteness of the surrender, the other its living results. The first is Slavery, the second is Wedlock.

For sin shall not have dominion over you; sin shall not put in its claim upon you, the claim which the Lord has met in your Justification; for you are not brought under law, but under grace. The whole previous argument explains this sentence. He refers to our acceptance. He goes back to the justification of the guilty, "without the deeds of law," by the act of free grace; and briefly restates it thus, that he may take up afresh the position that this glorious liberation means not license but divine order. Sin shall be no more your tyrant-creditor, holding up the broken law in evidence that it has right to lead you off to a pestilential prison, and to death. Your dying Saviour has met your creditor in full for you, and in Him you have entire discharge in that eternal court where the terrible plea once stood against you. Your dealings as debtors are now not with the enemy who cried for your death, but with the Friend who has bought you out of his power.

What then? are we to sin, because we are not brought under law, but under grace? Shall our life be a life of license, because we are thus wonderfully free? The question assuredly is one which, like that of ver. 1, and like those suggested in iii. 8, 31, had often been asked of St. Paul, by the bitter opponent, or by the false follower. And again it illustrates and defines, by the direction of its error, the line of truth

\* It will be observed that we place *the paragraph* after ver. 13, not, as many editions of the Epistle do, after ver. 14. It seems to us clear that ver. 14 has a closer connection with the following than with the previous context. It looks back, not precisely to ver. 13, but to the general recent argument, that it may then look definitely forward, over new ground.

from which it flew off. It helps to do what we remarked above, to assure us that when St. Paul taught "Justification by faith, without deeds of law," he meant what he said, without reserve; he taught that great side of truth wholly, and without a compromise. He called the sinner, "just as he was, and waiting not to rid his soul of one dark blot," to receive at once, and without fee, the acceptance of God for Another's blessed sake. Bitter must have been the moral pain of seeing, from the first, this holy freedom distorted into an unhallowed leave to sin. But he will not meet it by an impatient compromise, or untimely confusion. It shall be answered by a fresh collocation; the liberty shall be seen in its relation to the Liberator; and behold, the perfect freedom is a perfect service, willing but absolute, a slavery joyfully accepted, with open eyes and open heart, and then lived out as the most real of obligations by a being who has entirely seen that he is not his own.

Away with the thought. Do you not know that the party to whom you present, surrender, yourselves bondservants, slaves, so as to obey him,—bondservants you are, not the less for the freewill of the surrender, of the party whom you obey; no longer merely contractors with him, who may bargain, or retire, but his bondservants out and out; whether of sin, to death, or of obedience, to righteousness? (As if their assent to Christ, their *Amen* to His terms of peace, acceptance, righteousness, were personified; they were now the bondsmen of this their own act and deed, which had put them, as it were, into Christ's hands for all things.) Now thanks be to our God, that you were bondmen of sin, in legal claim, and under moral sway; yes, every one of you was this, whatever forms the bondage took upon its surface; but you obeyed from the heart the mould of teaching to which you were handed over.\* They had been sin's slaves. Verbally, not really, he "thanks God" for that fact of the past. Really, not verbally, he "thanks God" for the pastness of the fact, and for the bright contrast to it in the regenerated present. They had now been "handed over," by their Lord's transaction about them, to another ownership, and they had accepted the transfer, "from the heart." It was done by Another for them, but they had said their humble, thankful *fiat* as He did it. And what was the new ownership thus accepted? We shall find soon (ver. 22), as we might expect, that it is the mastery of God. But the bold, vivid introductory imagery has already called it (ver. 16) the slavery of "Obedience." Just below (vers. 19, 20) it is the slavery of "Righteousness," that is, if we read the word aright in its whole context, of "the Righteousness of God," His acceptance of the sinner as His own in Christ. And here, in a phrase most unlikely of all, whose personification strikes life into the most abstract aspects of the message of the grace of God, the believer is one who has been transferred to the possession of "a mould of Teaching." The Apostolic Doctrine, the mighty Message, the living Creed of life, the Teaching of the acceptance of the guilty for the sake of Him who was their Sacrifice, and is now their Peace and Life—this truth has, as it were, grasped them as its vassals, to form them, to mould them for its issues. It is indeed their "tenet." It "holds them"; a thought far dif-

\* So undoubtedly the Greek must be rendered.



ferent from what is too often meant when we say of a doctrine that "we hold it." Justification by their Lord's merit, union with their Lord's life; this was a doctrine, reasoned, ordered, verified. But it was a doctrine warm and tenacious with the love of the Father and of the Son. And it had laid hold of them with a mastery which swayed thought, affection, and will; ruling their whole view of self and of God. Now, liberated from your sin, you were enslaved to the Righteousness of God. Here is the point of the argument. It is a point of steel, for all is fact; but the steel is steeped in love, and carries life and joy into the hearts it penetrates. They are not for one moment their own. Their acceptance has magnificently emancipated them from their tyrant-enemy. But it has absolutely bound them to their Friend and King. Their glad consent to be accepted has carried with it a consent to belong. And if that consent was at the moment rather implied than explicit, virtual rather than articulately conscious, they have now only to understand their blessed slavery better to give the more joyful thanksgivings to Him who has thus claimed them altogether as His own.

The Apostle's aim in this whole passage is to awaken them, with the strong, tender touch of his holy reasoning, to articulate their position to themselves. They have trusted Christ, and are in Him. Then, they have entrusted themselves altogether to Him. Then, they have, in effect, surrendered. They have consented to be His property. They are the bondservants, they are the slaves, \* of His truth, that is, of Him robed and revealed in His Truth, and shining through it on them in the glory at once of His grace and of His claim. Nothing less than such an obligation is the fact for them. Let them feel, let them weigh, and then let them embrace, the chain which after all will only prove their pledge of rest and freedom.

What St. Paul thus did for our elder brethren at Rome, let him do for us of this later time. For us, who read this page, all the facts are true in Christ to-day. To-day let us define and affirm their issues to ourselves, and recollect our holy bondage, and realise it, and live it out with joy.

Now he follows up the thought. Conscious of the superficial repulsiveness of the metaphor—quite as repulsive in itself to the Pharisee as to the Englishman—he as it were apologises for it; not the less carefully, in his noble consideration, because so many of his first readers were actually slaves. He does not *lightly* go for his picture of our Master's hold of us, to the market of Corinth, or of Rome, where men and women were sold and bought to belong as absolutely to their buyers as cattle, or as furniture. Yet he *does* go there, to shake slow perceptions into consciousness, and bring the will face to face with the claim of God. So he proceeds. I speak humanly, I use the terms of this utterly *not-divine* bond of man to man, to

illustrate man's glorious bond to God, because of the weakness of your flesh, because your yet imperfect state enfeebles your spiritual perception, and demands a harsh paradox to direct and fix it. For—here is what he means by "humanly"—just as you surrendered your limbs, your functions and faculties in human life, slaves to your impurity and to your lawlessness, unto that lawlessness, so that the bad principle did indeed come out in bad practice, so now, with as little reserve of liberty, surrender your limbs slaves to righteousness, to God's Righteousness, to your justifying God, unto sanctification—so that the surrender shall come out in your Master's sovereign separation of His purchased property from sin.

He has appealed to the moral reason of the regenerate soul. Now he speaks straight to the will. You are, with infinite rightfulness, the bondmen of your God. You see your deed of purchase; it is the other side of your warrant of emancipation. Take it, and write your own unworthy names with joy upon it, consenting and assenting to your Owner's perfect rights. And then live out your life, keeping the autograph of your own surrender before your eyes. Live, suffer, conquer, labour, serve, as men who have themselves walked to their Master's door, and presented the ear to the awl which pins it to the doorway, each in his turn saying, "I will not go out free."

To such an act of the soul the Apostle calls these saints, whether they had done the like before or no. They were to sum up the perpetual fact, then and there, into a definite and critical act (*παραισθήσατε*, aorist) of thankful will. And he calls us to do the same to-day. By the grace of God, it shall be done. With eyes open, and fixed upon the face of the Master who claims us, and with hands placed helpless and willing within His hands, we will, we do, present ourselves bondservants to Him; for discipline, for servitude, for all His will.

For when you were slaves of your sin, you were freemen as to righteousness, God's Righteousness. It had nothing to do with you, whether to give you peace or to receive your tribute of love and loyalty in reply. Practically, Christ was not your Atonement, and so not your Master; you stood, in a dismal independence, outside His claims. To you, your lips were your own; your time was your own; your will was your own. You belonged to self; that is to say, you were the slaves of your sin. Will you go back? Will the word "freedom" (he plays with it, as it were, to prove them) make you wish yourselves back where you were before you had endorsed by faith your purchase by the blood of Christ? Nay, for what was that "freedom," seen in its results, its results upon yourselves? What fruit, therefore, (the "therefore" of the logic of facts,) used you to have then, in those old days, from things over which you are ashamed now? Ashamed indeed; for the end, the issue, as the fruit is the tree's "end," the end of those things is—death; perdition of all true life here and hereafter too. But now, in the blessed actual state of your case, as by faith you have entered into Christ, into His work and into His life, now liberated from sin and enslaved to God, you have your fruit, you possess indeed, at last, the true issues of being for which you were made, all contributing to sanctification, to that separation to God's will in practice which

\* We do not forget that many Christians feel a strong repugnance to the use of this word, steeped as it is in associations of degradation and wrong. For ourselves, we would yield to this feeling so far as habitually to prefer the word of milder sound, "bondservant." But surely in the passage the Apostle on purpose so accentuates the thought of our bondservice that its fullest and sternest designation is in place. And, if in any degree we gather the thought of other hearts from our own, there are times and connections in which the fulness of the joy of service demands that designation in order to its adequate realisation.



is the development of your separation to that will in critical fact, when you met your Redeemer in self-renouncing faith. Yes, this fruit you have indeed; and as its end, as that for which it is produced, to which it always and for ever tends, you have life eternal. For the pay of sin, sin's military stipend (*ὀψώνια*), punctually given to the being which has joined its war against the will of God, is death; but the free gift of God is life eternal, in Jesus Christ our Lord.

"Is life worth living?" Yes, infinitely well worth, for the living man who has surrendered to "the Lord that bought him." Outside that ennobling captivity, that invigorating while most genuine bondservice, the life of man is at best complicated and tired with a bewildered quest, and gives results at best abortive, matched with the ideal purposes of such a being. We "present ourselves to God," for His ends, as implements, vassals, willing bondmen; and lo, our own end is attained. Our life has settled, after its long friction, into gear. Our root, after hopeless explorations in the dust, has struck at last the stratum where the immortal water makes all things live, and grow, and put forth fruit for heaven. The heart, once dissipated between itself and the world, is now "united" to the will, to the love, of God; and understands itself, and the world, as never before; and is able to deny self and to serve others in a new and surprising freedom. The man, made willing to be nothing but the tool and bondman of God, "has his fruit" at last; bears the true product of his now re-created being, pleasant to the Master's eye, and fostered by His air and sun. And this "fruit" issues, as acts issue in habit, in the glad experience of a life really sanctified, really separated in ever deeper inward reality, to a holy will. And the "end" of the whole glad possession, is "life eternal."

Those great words here signify, surely, the coming bliss of the sons of the resurrection, when at last in their whole perfected being they will "live" all through, with a joy and energy as inexhaustible as its Fountain, and unencumbered at last and for ever by the conditions of our mortality. To that vast future, vast in its scope yet all concentrated round the fact that "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is," the Apostle here looks onward. He will say more of it, and more largely, later, in the eighth chapter. But as with other themes so with this, he preludes with a few glorious chords the great strain soon to come. He takes the Lord's slave by the hand, amidst his present tasks and burthens, (dear tasks and burthens, because the Master's, but still full of the conditions of earth,) and he points upward—not to a coming *manumission* in glory; the man would be dismayed to foresee that; he wants to "serve for ever";—but to a scene of service in which the last remainders of hindrance to its action will be gone, and a perfected being will for ever, perfectly, be not its own, and so will perfectly live in God. And this, so he says to his fellow-servant, to you and to me, is "the gift of God"; a grant as free, as generous, as ever King gave vassal here below. And it is to be enjoyed as such, by a being which, living wholly for Him, will freely and purely exult to live wholly on Him, in the heavenly places.

Yet surely the bearing of the sentences is

not wholly upon heaven. Life eternal, so to be developed hereafter that Scripture speaks of it often as it began hereafter, really begins here, and develops here, and is already "more abundant" (John x. 10) here. It is, as to its secret and also its experience, to know and to enjoy God, to be possessed by Him, and used for His will. In this respect it is "the end," the issue and the goal, now and perpetually, of the surrender of the soul. The Master meets that attitude with more and yet more of Himself, known, enjoyed, possessed, possessing. And so He gives, evermore gives, out of His sovereign bounty, life eternal to the bondservant who has embraced the fact that he is nothing, and has nothing, outside his Master. Not at the outset of the regenerate life only, and not only when it issues into the heavenly ocean, but all along the course, the life eternal is still "the free gift of God." Let us now, to-day, to-morrow, and always, open the lips of surrendering and obedient faith, and drink it in, abundantly, and yet more abundantly. And let us use it for the Giver.

We are already, here on earth, at its very springs; so the Apostle reminds us. For it is "in Jesus Christ our Lord"; and we, believing, are in Him, "saved in His life." It is in Him; nay, it is He. "I am the Life"; "He that hath the Son, hath the life." Abiding in Christ, we live "because He liveth." It is not to be "attained"; it is given, it is our own. In Christ, it is given, in its divine fulness, as to covenant provision, here, now, from the first, to every Christian. In Christ, it is supplied, as to its fulness and fitness for each arising need, as the Christian asks, receives, and uses for his Lord.

So from, or rather in, our holy bondservice the Apostle has brought us to our inexhaustible life, and its resources for willing holiness. But he has more to say in explaining the beloved theme. He turns from slave to wife, from surrender to bridal, from the purchase to the vow, from the results of a holy bondage to the offspring of a heavenly union. Hear him as he proceeds:

Or do you not know, brethren, (for I am talking to those acquainted with law, whether Mosaic or Gentile,) that the law has claim on the man, the party in any given case, for his whole lifetime? For the woman with a husband is to her living husband bound by law, stands all along bound to him. "His life," under normal conditions, is his adequate claim. Prove him living, and you prove her his. But if the husband should have died, she stands *ipso facto* cancelled from the husband's law, the marriage law as he could bring it to bear against her. So, therefore, while the husband lives, she will earn adulteress for her name if she weds another ("a second") husband. But if the husband should have died, she is free from the law in question, so as to be no adulteress, if wedded to another, a second, husband. Accordingly, my brethren, you too, as a mystic bride, collectively and individually, were done to death as to the Law, so slain that its capital claim upon you is met "and done," by means of the Body of the Christ, by the "doing to death" of His sacred Body for you, on His atoning Cross, to satisfy for you the aggrieved Law; in order to your wedding Another, a second Party, Him who rose from the dead; that we might bear fruit



for God; "we," Paul and his converts, in one happy "fellowship," which he delights thus to remember and indicate by the way.

The parable is stated and explained with a clearness which leaves us at first the more surprised that in the application the illustration should be reversed. In the illustration, the husband dies, the woman lives, and weds again. In the application, the Law does not die, but we, its unfaithful bride, are "done to death to it," and then, strange sequel, are wedded to the Risen Christ. We are taken by Him to be "one spirit" with Him (1 Cor. vi. 17). We are made one in all His interests and wealth, and fruitful of a progeny of holy deeds in this vital union. Shall we call all this a simile confused? Not if we recognise the deliberate and explicit carefulness of the whole passage. St. Paul, we may be sure, was quite as quick as we are to see the inverted imagery. But he is dealing with a subject which would be distorted by a mechanical correspondence in the treatment. The Law cannot die, for it is the preceptive will of God. Its claim is, in its own awful *forum domesticum*, like the injured Roman husband, to sentence its own unfaithful wife to death. And so it does; so it has done. But behold, its Maker and Master steps upon the scene. He surrounds the guilty one with Himself, takes her whole burthen on Himself, and meets and exhausts her doom. He dies. He lives again, after death, because of death; and the Law acclaims His resurrection as infinitely just. He rises, clasping in His arms her for whom He died, and who thus died in Him, and now rises in Him. Out of His sovereign love, while the Law attests the sure contract, and rejoices as "the Bridegroom's Friend," He claims her—herself, yet in Him another—for His blessed Bride.

All is love, as if we walked through the lily-gardens of the holy Song, and heard the call of the turtle in the vernal woods, and saw the King and His Beloved rest and rejoice in one another. All is law, as if we were admitted to watch some process of Roman matrimonial contract, stern and grave, in which every right is scrupulously considered, and every claim elaborately secured, without a smile, without an embrace, before the magisterial chair. The Church, the soul, is married to her Lord, who has died for her, and in whom now she lives. The transaction is infinitely happy. And it is absolutely right. All the old terrifying claims are amply and for ever met. And now the mighty, tender claims which take their place instantly and of course begin to bind the Bride. The Law has "given her away"—not to herself, but to the Risen Lord.

For this, let us remember, is the point and bearing of the passage. It puts before us, with its imagery at once so grave and so benignant, not only the mystic Bridal, but the Bridal as it is concerned with holiness. The Apostle's object is altogether this. From one side and from another he reminds us that "we belong." He has shown us our redeemed selves in their blessed bondservice; "free from sin, enslaved to God." He now shows us to ourselves in our divine wedlock; "married to Another," "bound to the law of" the heavenly Husband; clasped to His heart, but also to His rights, without which the very joys of marriage would be only sin. From either parable the inference is direct,

powerful, and, when we have once seen the face of the Master and of the Husband, unutterably magnetic on the will. You are set free, into a liberty as supreme and as happy as possible. You are appropriated, into a possession, and into a union, more close and absolute than language can set forth. You are wedded to One who "has and holds from this time forward." And the sacred bond is to be prolific of results. A life of willing and loving obedience, in the power of the risen Bridegroom's life, is to have as it were for its progeny the fair circle of active graces, "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, self-control."

Alas, in the time of the old-abolished wedlock there was result, there was progeny. But that was the fruit not of the union but of its violation. For when we were in the flesh, in our unregenerate days, when our rebel self, the antithesis of "the Spirit," ruled and denoted us, (a state, he implies, in which we all were once, whatever our outward differences were,) the passions, the strong but reasonless impulses, of our sins, which passions were by means of the Law, occasioned by the fact of its just but unloved claim, fretting the self-life into action, worked actively in our limbs, in our bodily life in its varied faculties and senses, so as to bear fruit for death. We wandered, restive, from our bridegroom, the Law, to Sin, our paramour. And behold, a manifold result of evil deeds and habits, born as it were into bondage in the house of Death. But now, now as the wonderful case stands in the grace of God, we are (it is the aorist, but our English fairly represents it) abrogated from the Law, divorced from our first injured Partner, nay, slain (in our crucified Head) in satisfaction of its righteous claim, as having died with regard to that in which we were held captive, even the Law and its violated bond, so that we do bondservice in the Spirit's newness, and not in the Letter's oldness.

Thus he comes back, through the imagery of wedlock, to that other parable of slavery which has become so precious to his heart. "So that we do bondservice," "so that we live a slave-life." It is as if he must break in on the heavenly Marriage itself with that brand and bond, not to disturb the joy of the Bridegroom and the Bride, but to clasp to the Bride's heart the vital fact that she is not her own; that fact so blissful, but so powerful also and so practical that it is "worth anything" to bring it home.

It is to be no dragging and dishonouring bondage, in which the poor toiler looks wistfully out for the sinking sun and the extended shadows. It is to be "not in the Letter's oldness"; no longer on the old principle of the dread and unrelieved "Thou shalt," cut with a pen of legal iron upon the stones of Sinai; bearing no provision of enabling power, but all possible provision of doom for the disloyal. It is to be "in the Spirit's newness"; on the new, wonderful principle, new in its full manifestation and application in Christ, of the Holy Ghost's empowering presence.\* In that light and strength the new relations are discovered, accepted, and fulfilled. Joined by the Spirit to the Lord Christ, so as to have full benefit of His justifying merit; filled by the Spirit with

\* Such passages as this and its companion, 2 Cor. iii. 4-8, have no reference, however remote to the "letter and spirit" of Holy Scripture. They contrast Sinai and Pentecost.



the Lord Christ, so as to derive freely and always the blessed virtues of His life; the willing bondservant finds in his absolute obligations an inward liberty ever "new," fresh as the dawn, pregnant as the spring. And the worshipping Bride finds in the holy call to "keep her only unto Him" who has died for her life, nothing but a perpetual surprise of love and gladness, "new every morning," as the Spirit shows her the heart and the riches of her Lord.

Thus closes, in effect, the Apostle's reasoned exposition of the self-surrender of the justified. Happy the man who can respond to it all with the "Amen" of a life which, reposing on the Righteousness of God, answers ever to His Will with the loyal gladness found in "the newness of the Spirit." It is "perfect freedom" to understand, in experience, the bondage and the bridal of the saints.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE FUNCTION OF THE LAW IN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

ROMANS vii. 7-25.

THE Apostle has led us a long way in his great argument; through sin, propitiation, faith, union, surrender, to that wonderful and "excellent mystery," the bridal oneness of Christ and the Church, of Christ and the believer. He has yet to unfold the secrets and glories of the experience of a life lived in the power of that Spirit of whose "newness" he has just spoken. But his last parable has brought him straight to a question which has repeatedly been indicated and deferred. He has told us that the Law of God was at first, ideally, our mystic husband, and that we were unfaithful in our wedded life, and that the injured lord sentenced to death his guilty spouse, and that the sentence was carried out—but carried out in Christ. Thus a death-divorce took place between us, the justified, and the Law, regarded as the violated party in the covenant—"Do this and live."

Is this ancient husband then a party whom we are now to suspect, and to defy? Our wedlock with him brought us little joy. Alas, its main experience was that we sinned. At best, if we did right, (in any deep sense of right,) we did it against the grain; while we did wrong, (in the deep sense of wrong, difference from the will of God,) with a feeling of nature and gravitation. Was not our old lord to blame? Was there not something wrong about the Law? Did not the Law misrepresent God's will? Was it not, after all "Sin itself in disguise," though it charged us with the horrible guilt of a course of adultery with Sin?

We cannot doubt that the statement and the treatment of this question here are in effect a record of personal experience. The paragraph which it originates, this long last passage of chapter vii., bears every trace of such experience. Hitherto, in the main, he has dealt with "you" and "us"; now he speaks only as "I," only of "me," and of "mine." And the whole dialect of the passage, so to say, falls in with this use of pronouns. We overhear the colloquies, the altercations, of will with conscience, of will with will, almost of self with self, carried on in a region which only self-conscious-

ness can penetrate, and which only the subject of it all can thus describe. Yes, the person Paul is here, analysing and reporting upon himself; drawing the veil from his own inmost life, with a hand firm because surrendered to the will of God, who bids him, for the Church's sake, expose himself to view. Nothing in literature, no "Confessions" of an Augustine, no "Grace Abounding" of a Bunyan, is more intensely individual. Yet on the other hand nothing is more universal in its searching application. For the man who thus writes is "the chosen vessel" of the Lord who has perfectly adjusted not his words only but his being, his experience, his conflicts and deliverances, to the manifestations of universal spiritual facts.

We need hardly say that this profound paragraph has been discussed and interpreted most variously. It has been held by some to be only St. Paul's intense way of presenting that great phenomenon, wide as fallen humanity—human will colliding with human conscience, so that "no man does all he knows." Passages from every quarter of literature, of all ages, of all races, have been heaped around it, to prove, (what is indeed so profoundly significant a fact, largely confirmatory of the Christian doctrine of Original Sin,\*) that universal man is haunted by undone duties; and this passage is placed as it were in the midst, as the fullest possible confession of that fact, in the name of humanity, by an ideal individual. But surely it needs only an attentive reading of the passage, as a part of the Epistle to the Romans, as a part of the teaching of St. Paul, to feel the extreme inadequacy of such an account. On the one hand, the long groaning confession is no artificial embodiment of a universal fact; it is the cry of a human soul, if ever there was a personal cry. On the other hand, the passage betrays a kind of conflict far deeper and more mysterious than merely that of "I ought" with "I will not." It is a conflict of "I will" with "I will not"; of "I hate" with "I do." And in the later stages of the confession we find the subject of the conflict avowing a wonderful sympathy with the Law of God; recording not merely an avowal that right is right, but a consciousness that God's precept is delectable. All this leads us to a spiritual region unknown to Euripides, and Horace, and even Epictetus.

Again it has been held that the passage records the experiences of a half-regenerate soul; struggling on its way from darkness to light, stumbling across a border-zone between the power of Satan and the kingdom of God; deeply convinced of sin, but battling with it in the old impossible way after all, meeting self with self, or, otherwise, the devil with the man. But here again the passage seems to refuse the exposition, as we read *all* its elements. It is no experience of a half-renewed life to "take delight with the law of God after the inner man." It is utterly unlawful for a half-regenerate soul to describe itself as so beset by sin that "it is *not* I, but sin that dwelleth in me." No more dangerous form of thought about itself could be adopted by a soul not fully acquainted with God.

Again, and quite on the other hand, it has been held that our passage lays it down that a stern but on the whole disappointing conflict with internal evil is the lot of the true

\* See J. B. Mozley's "Lectures," etc., ix, x.



Christian, in his fullest life, now, always, and to the end; that the regenerate and believing man is, if indeed awake to spiritual realities, to *feel* at every step, "O wretched man that I am"; "What I hate, that I do"; and to expect deliverance from such a consciousness only when he attains his final heavenly rest with Christ. Here again extreme difficulties attend the exposition; not from within the passage, but from around it. It is liberally encircled with truths of liberty, in a servitude which is perfect freedom; with truths of power and joy, in a life which is by the Holy Ghost. It is quite incongruous with such surroundings that it should be thought to describe a spiritual experience dominant and characteristic in the Christian life.

"What shall we say then?" Is there yet another line of exegesis which will better satisfy the facts of both the passage and its context? We think there is one, which at once is distinctive in itself, and combines elements of truth indicated by the others which we have outlined. For those others *have* each an element of truth, if we read aright. The passage *has* a reference to the universal conflict of conscience and will. It does say some things quite appropriate to the man who is awake to his bondage but has not yet found his Redeemer. And there is, we dare to say, a sense in which it may be held that the picture is true for the whole course of Christian life here on earth; for there is never an hour of that life when the man who "says he has no sin" does not "deceive himself" (1 John i. 8). And if that sin be but simple defect, a falling "short of the glory of God"; nay, if it be only that mysterious tendency which, felt or not, hourly needs a divine counteraction; still, the man "has sin," and must long for a final emancipation, with a longing which carries in it at least a *latent* "groan."

So we begin by recognising that Paul, the personal Paul, speaking here to all of us, as in some solemn "testimony" hour, takes us first to his earliest deep convictions of right and wrong, when, apparently after a previous complacency with himself, he woke to see—but not to welcome—the absoluteness of God's will. He glided along a smooth stream of moral and mental culture and reputation till he struck the rock of "Thou shalt not covet," "Thou shalt not desire," "Thou must not have self-will." Then, as from a grave, which was however only an ambush, "sin" sprang up; a conscious force of opposition to the claim of God's will as against the will of Paul; and his dream of religious satisfaction died. Till we close ver. 11, certainly, we are in the midst of the unregenerate state. The tenses are past; the narrative is explicit. He made a discovery of law which was as death after life to his then religious experience. He has nothing to say of counter-facts in his soul. It was conviction, with only rebellion as its issue.

Then we find ourselves, we hardly know how, in a range of confessions of a different order. There is a continuity. The Law is there, and sin is there, and a profound moral conflict. But there are now counter-facts. The man, the *Ego*, now "wills not," nay, "hates," what he practises. He wills what God prescribes, though he does it not. His sinful deeds are, in a certain sense, in this respect, not his own. He actually "delights, rejoices, with the Law of God." Yet

there is a sense in which he is "sold," "enslaved," "captured," in the wrong direction.

Here, as we have admitted, there is much which is appropriate to the not yet regenerate state, where however the man is awakening morally, to good purpose, under the hand of God. But the passage as a whole refuses to be satisfied thus, as we have seen. He who can truly speak thus of an inmost sympathy, a sympathy of delight, with the most holy Law of God, is no half-Christian; certainly not in St. Paul's view of things.

But now observe one great negative phenomenon of the passage. We read words about this regenerate sinner's moral being and faculties; about his "inner man," his "mind," "the law of his mind,"; about "himself," as distinguished from the "sin" which haunts him. But we read not one clear word about that eternal Spirit, whose glorious presence we have seen (vii. 6), characterising the Gospel, and of whom we are soon to hear in such magnificent amplitude. Once only is He even distinctly indicated; "the Law is spiritual" (ver. 14). But that is no comfort, no deliverance. The Spirit is indeed in the Law; but He must be also in the man, if there is to be effectual response, and harmony, and joy. No, we look in vain through the passage for one hint that the man, that Paul, is contemplated in it as filled by faith with the Holy Ghost for his war with indwelling sin working through his embodied conditions.

But he was regenerate, you say. And if so, he was an instance of the Spirit's work, a receiver of the Spirit's presence. It is so; not without the Spirit, working in him, could he "delight in the Law of God," and "with his true self serve the law of God." But does this necessarily mean that he, as a conscious agent, was fully using his eternal Guest as his power and victory?

We are not merely discussing a literary passage. We are pondering an oracle of God about man. So we turn full upon the reader—and upon ourselves—and ask the question, whether the heart cannot help to expound this hard paragraph. Christian man, by grace,—that is to say, by the Holy Spirit of God,—you have believed, and live. You are a limb of Christ, who is your life. But you are a sinner still; always, actually, in defect, and in tendency; always, potentially, in ways terribly positive. For whatever the presence of the Spirit in you has done, it has not so altered you that, if He should go, you would not *instantly* "revert to the type" of unholiness. Now, how do you meet temptation from without? How do you deal with the dread fact of guilty imbecility within? Do you, if I may put it so, use regenerate faculty in unregenerate fashion, meeting the enemy *practically* alone, with only high resolves, and moral scorn of wrong, and assiduous processes of discipline on body or mind? God forbid we should call these things evil. They are good. But they are the accidents, not the essence, of the secret; the wall, not the well, of power and triumph. It is the Lord Himself dwelling in you who is your victory; and that victory is to be realised by a conscious and decisive appeal to Him. "Through Him you shall do valiantly; for He it is that shall tread down your enemies" (Psal. lx. 12). And is not this verified in your experience? When, in your regenerate state, you use the true regenerate way, is there not a better



record to be given? When, realising that the true principle is indeed a Person, you less resolve, less struggle, and more appeal and confide—is not sin's "reign" broken, and is not your foot, even yours, because you are in conscious union with the Conqueror, placed effectually on "all the power of the enemy"?

We are aware of the objection ready to be made, and by devout and reverent men. It will be said that the Indwelling Spirit works always through the being in whom He dwells; and that so we are not to think of Him as a separable Ally, but just to "act ourselves," leaving it to Him to act through us. Well, we are willing to state the matter almost exactly in those last words, as theory. But the subject is too deep—and too practical—for neat logical consistency. He does indeed work in us, and through us. But then—it is He. And to the hard-pressed soul there is an unspeakable reality and power in thinking of Him as a separable, let us say simply a personal, Ally, who is also Commander, Lord, Life-Giver; and in calling Him definitely in.

So we read this passage again, and note this absolute and eloquent silence in it about the Holy Ghost. And we dare, in that view, to interpret it as St. Paul's confession, not of a long-past experience, not of an imagined experience, but of his own normal experience always—when he acts out of character as a regenerate man. He fails, he "reverts," when, being a sinner by nature still, and in the body still, he meets the Law, and meets temptation, in any strength short of the definitely sought power of the Holy Ghost, making Christ all to him for peace and victory. And he implies, surely, that this failure is not a bare hypothesis, but that he knows what it is. It is not that God is not sufficient. He is so, always, now, for ever. But the man does not always adequately use God; as he ought to do, as he might do, as he will ever rise up afresh to do. And when he does not, the resultant failure—though it be but a thought of vanity, a flush of unexpressed anger, a microscopic flaw in the practise of truthfulness, an unhallowed imagination, darting in a moment through the soul—is to him sorrow, burthen, shame. It tells him that "the flesh" is present still, present at least in its elements, though God can keep them out of combination. It tells him that, though immensely blest, and knowing now exactly where to seek, and to find, a constant practical deliverance (oh, joy unspeakable!), he is still "in the body," and that its conditions are still of "death." And so he looks with great desire for its redemption. The present of grace is good, beyond all his hopes of old. But the future of glory is "far better."

Thus the man at once "serves the Law of God," as its willing bondman (*δουλεύω*, ver. 25), in the life of grace, and submits himself, with reverence and shame, to its convictions, when, if but for an hour, or a moment, he "reverts" to the life of the flesh.

Let us take the passage up now for a nearly continuous translation.

What shall we say then, in face of the thought of our death-divorce, in Christ, from the Law's condemning power. Is the Law sin? Are they only two phases of one evil? Away with the thought! But—here is the connection of the two—I should not have known, recognised, un-

derstood, sin but by means of law. For coveting, for example, I should not have known, should not have recognised as sin, if the Law had not been saying, "Thou shalt not covet."\* But sin, making a fulcrum of the commandment, produced, effected, in me all coveting, every various application of the principle. For, law apart, sin is dead—in the sense of lack of conscious action. It needs "a holy Will," more or less revealed, to occasion its collision. Given no holy will, known or surmised, and it is "dead" as *rebellion*, though not as *pollution*. But I, the person to whom it lay buried, was all alive, conscious and content, law apart, once on a time (strange ancient memory in that biography!). But when the commandment came to my conscience and my will, sin rose to life again, ("again"; so it was no new creation after all) and I—died; I found myself legally doomed to death, morally without life-power, and bereft of the self-satisfaction that seemed my vital breath. And the commandment that was lifewards, prescribing nothing but perfect right, the straight line to life eternal, proved for me deathwards. For sin, making a fulcrum of the commandment, deceived me, into thinking fatally wrong of God and of myself, and through it killed me, discovered me to myself as legally and morally a dead man. So that the Law, indeed, is holy, and the commandment, the special precept which was my actual death-blow, holy, and just, and good. (He says, "the Law, *indeed*," with the implied antithesis that "sin, *on the other hand*," is the opposite; the whole fault of his misery beneath the Law lies with sin.) The good thing then, this good Law, has it to me become death? Away with the thought! Nay, but sin did so become that it might come out as sin, working out death for me by means of the good Law—that sin might prove overwhelmingly sinful, through the commandment, which at once called it up, and, by awful contrast, exposed its nature. Observe he does not say merely that sin thus "appeared" unutterably evil. More boldly, in this sentence of mighty paradoxes, he says that it "became" such. As it were, it developed its "character" into its fullest "action," when it thus used the eternal Will to set creature against Creator. Yet even this was overruled; all happened thus "in order," so that the very virulence of the plague might effectually demand the glorious remedy.

For we know, we men with our conscience, we Christians with our Lord's light, that the Law, this Law which sin so foully abused, is spiritual, the expression of the eternal Holiness, framed by the sure guidance of the Holy Spirit; but then I, I Paul, taken as a sinner, viewed apart from Christ, am fleshly, a child of self, sold to be under sin; yes, not only when, in Adam, my nature sold itself at first, but still and always, just so far as I am considered apart from Christ, and just so far as, in practice, I live apart from Christ, "reverting," if but for a minute, to my self-life. For the work I work out, I do not know, I do not recognise; I am lost amidst its distorted conditions; for it is not what I will that I practice, but it is what I hate that I do. But if what I do is what I do not will, I assent to the Law that it, the

\* Exod. xx. 17.—Observe here that great fact of Christian doctrine; that desire, bias, gravitation away from God's will, is sin, whether carried into act or not. Is not St. Paul here recalling some quite special spiritual incident?



Law, is good; I show my moral sympathy with the precept by the endorsement given it by my will, in the sense of my earnest moral preference. But now, in this state of facts, it is no longer I who work out the work, but the indweller in me—Sin.

He implies by "no longer" that once it was otherwise; once "the central" choice was for self, now, in the regenerate life, even in its conflicts, yea, even in its failures, it is for God. A mysterious "other self" is latent still, and asserts itself in awful reality when the true man, the man as regenerate, ceases to watch and to pray. And in this sense he dares to say "it is no more I." It is a sense the very opposite to the dream of self-excuse; for though the *Ego* as regenerate does not do the deed, it has, by its sleep, or by its confidence, betrayed the soul to the true doer. And thus he passes naturally into the following confessions, in which we read at once the consciousness of a state which ought not to be, though it is, and also the conviction that it is a state "out of character" with himself, with his personality as redeemed and new-created. Into such a confession there creeps no lying thought that he "is delivered to do these abominations" (Jer. vii. 10); that it is fate; that he cannot help it. Nor is the miserable dream present here that evil is but a phase of good, and that these conflicts are only discordant melodies struggling to a cadence where they will accord. It is a groan of shame and pain, from a man who could not be thus tortured if he were not born again. Yet it is also an avowal,—as if to assure himself that deliverance is intended, and is at hand,—that the treacherous tyrant he has let into the place of power "is an alien" to him as he is a man regenerate. Not for excuse, but to clear his thought, and direct his hope, he says this to himself, and to us, in his dark hour.

For I know that there dwells not in me, that is, in my flesh, good; in my personal life, so long, and so far, as it "reverts" to self as its working centre, all is evil, for nothing is as God would have it be. And that "flesh," that self-life, is ever there, latent if not patent; present in such a sense that it is ready for instant reappearance, from within, if any moral power less than that of the Lord Himself is in command. For the willing lies at my hand; but the working out what is right, does not. "The willing," as throughout this passage, means not the ultimate *fiat* of the man's soul, deciding his action, but his earnest moral approbation, moral sympathy, "the convictions" of the enlightened being. For not what I will, even good, do I; but what I do not will, even evil, that I practice. Now if what I do is what I do not will, no longer, as once, do I work it out, but the indweller in me, Sin.

Again his purpose is not excuse, but deliverance. No deadly antinomianism is here, such as has withered innumerable lives, where the thought has been admitted that sin may be in the man, and yet the man may not sin. His thought is, as all along, that it is his own shame that thus it is; yet that the evil is, ultimately, a thing alien to his true character, and that therefore he is right to call the lawful King and Victor in upon it.

And now comes up again the solemn problem of the Law. That stern, sacred, monitor is looking on all the while, and saying all the while

the things which first woke sin from its living grave in the old complacent experience, and then, in the regenerate state, provoked sin to its utmost treachery, and most fierce invasions. And the man hears the voice, and in his new-created character he loves it. But he has "reverted," ever so little, to his old attitude, to the self-life, and so there is *also* rebellion in him when that voice says "Thou shalt." So I find the Law—he would have said, "I find it my monitor, honoured, aye and loved, but not my helper"; but he breaks the sentence up in the stress of this intense confession; so I find the Law—for me, me with a will to do the right,—that for me the evil lies at hand. For I have glad sympathy with the Law of God; what He prescribes I endorse with delight as good, as regards the inner man, that is, my world of conscious insight and affection in the new life; but I see (as if I were a watcher from without) a rival law, another and contradictory precept, "serve *thyself*," in my limbs, in my world of sense and active faculty, at war with the law of my mind, the Law of God, adopted by my now enlightened thinking-power as its sacred code, and seeking to make me captive in that war to the law of sin, the law which is in my limbs.

Unhappy man am I. Who will rescue me out of the body of this death,\* out of a life conditioned by this mortal body, which in the Fall became Sin's especial vehicle, directly or indirectly, and which is not yet (vii. 23) actually "redeemed"? Thanks be to God, who giveth that deliverance, in covenant and in measure now, fully and in eternal actuality hereafter, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

So then, to sum the whole phenomenon of the conflict up, leaving aside for the moment this glorious hope of the issue, I, myself, with the mind indeed do bondservice to the law of God, but with the flesh, with the life of self, wherever and whenever I "revert" that way, I do bondservice to the law of sin.

Do we close the passage with a sigh, and almost with a groan? Do we sigh over the intricacy of the thought, the depth and subtlety of the reasoning, the almost fatigue of fixing and of grasping the facts below the terms "will," and "mind," and "inner man," and "flesh," and "I"? Do we groan over the consciousness that no analysis of our spiritual failures can console us for the fact of them, and that the Apostle seems in his last sentences to relegate our consolations to the future, while it is in the present that we fail, and in the present that we long with all our souls to do, as well as to approve the will of God?

Let us be patient, and also let us think again. Let us find a solemn and sanctifying peace in the patience which meekly accepts the mystery that we must needs "wait yet for the redemption of our body"; that the conditions of "this corruptible" must yet for a season give ambushes and vantages to temptation, which will be all annihilated hereafter. But let us also think again. If we went at all aright in our remarks previous to this passage, there are glorious possibilities for the present hour "readable between the lines" of St. Paul's unutterably deep confession. We have seen in conflict the Chris-

\* The Greek equally allows the rendering "out of this body of death."



tian man, regenerate, yet taken, in a practical sense, apart from his Regenerator. We have seen him really fight, though he really fails. We have seen him unwittingly, but guiltily, betray his position to the foe, by occupying it as it were alone. We have seen also, nevertheless, that he is not his foe's ally but his antagonist. Listen; he is calling for his King.

That cry will not be in vain. The King will take a double line of action in response. While his soldier-bondsman is yet in the body, "the body of this death," He will throw Himself into the narrow hold, and wonderfully turn the tide within it, and around it. And hereafter, He will demolish it. Rather He will transfigure it, into the counterpart—even as it were into the part—of His own body of glory; and the man shall rest, and serve, and reign for ever, with a being homogeneous all through in its likeness to the Lord.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE JUSTIFIED: THEIR LIFE BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.

ROMANS viii. 1-II.

THE sequence of the eighth chapter of the Epistle on the seventh is a study always interesting and fruitful. No one can read the two chapters over without feeling the strong connection between them, a connection at once of contrast and of complement. Great indeed is the contrast between the paragraph vii. 7-25 and the eighth chapter. The stern analysis of the one, unrelieved save by the fragment of thanksgiving at its close, (and even this is followed at once by a re-statement of the mysterious dualism,) is to the revelations and triumphs of the other as an almost starless night, stifling and electric, to the splendour of a midsummer morning with a yet more glorious morrow for its future. And there is complement as well as contrast. The day is related to the night, which has prepared us for it, as hunger prepares for food. Precisely what was absent from the former passage is supplied richly in the latter. There the Name of the Holy Spirit, "the Lord, the Life-Giver," was unheard. Here the fact and power of the Holy Spirit are present everywhere, so present that there is no other portion of the whole Scripture, unless we except the Redeemer's own Paschal Discourse, which presents us with so great a wealth of revelation on this all-precious theme. And here we find the secret that is to "stint the strife" which we have just witnessed, and which in our own souls we know so well. Here is the way "how to walk and to please God" (1 Thess. iv. 1), in our justified life. Here is the way how, not to be as it were the victims of "the body," and the slaves of "the flesh," but to "do to death the body's practices" in a continuous exercise of inward power, and to "walk after the Spirit." Here is the resource on which we may be for ever joyfully paying "the debt" of such a walk; giving our redeeming Lord His due, the value of His purchase, even our willing, loving surrender, in the all-sufficient strength of "the Holy Ghost given unto us."

Noteworthy indeed is the manner of the introduction of this glorious truth. It appears not without preparation and intimation; we have

heard already of the Holy Ghost in the Christian's life, v. 5, vii. 6. The heavenly water has been seen and heard in its flow; as in a limestone country the traveller may see and hear, through fissures in the fields, the buried but living floods. But here the truth of the Spirit, like those floods, finding at last their exit at some rough cliff's base, pours itself into the light, and animates all the scene. In such an order and manner of treatment there is a spiritual and also a practical lesson. We are surely reminded, as to the experiences of the Christian life, that in a certain sense we possess the Holy Ghost, yea, in His fulness, from the first hour of our possession of Christ. We are reminded also that it is at least possible on the other hand that we may need so to realise and to use our covenant possession, after sad experiments in other directions, that life shall be thenceforth a new experience of liberty and holy joy. We are reminded meanwhile that such a "new departure," when it occurs, is new rather from our side than from the Lord's. The water was running all the while below the rocks. Insight and faith, given by His grace, have not called it from above, but as it were from within, liberating what was there.

The practical lesson of this is important for the Christian teacher and pastor. On the one hand, let him make very much in his instructions, public and private, of the revelation of the Spirit. Let him leave no room, so far as he can do it, for doubt or oblivion in his friend's minds about the absolute necessity of the fulness of the presence and power of the Holy One, if life is to be indeed Christian. Let him describe as boldly and fully as the Word describes it what life may be, must be, where that sacred fulness dwells; how assured, how happy within, how serviceable around, how pure, free, and strong, how heavenly, how practical, how humble. Let him urge any who have yet to learn it to learn all this in their own experience, claiming on their knees the mighty gift of God. On the other hand, let him be careful not to overdraw his theory, and to prescribe too rigidly the methods of experience. Not all believers fail in the first hours of their faith to realise, and to use, the fulness of what the Covenant gives them. And where that realisation comes later than our first sight of Christ, as with so many of us it does come, not always are the experience and action the same. To one it is a crisis of memorable consciousness, a private Pentecost. Another wakes up as from sleep to find the unsuspected treasure at his hand—hid from him till then by nothing thicker than shadows. And another is aware that somehow, he knows not how, he has come to use the Presence and Power as a while ago he did not; he has passed a frontier—but he knows not when.

In all these cases, meanwhile, the man had, in one great respect, possessed the great gift all along. In covenant, in Christ, it was his. As he stepped by penitent faith into the Lord, he trod on ground which, wonderful to say, was all his own. And beneath it ran, that moment, the River of the water of life. Only, he had to discover, to draw, and to apply.

Again, the relation we have just indicated between our possession of Christ and our possession of the Holy Ghost is a matter of the utmost moment, spiritual and practical, presented prominently in this passage. All along, as we read the passage, we find linked inextricably together the truths of the Spirit and of the Son. "The



law of the Spirit of life" is bound up with "Christ Jesus." The Son of God was sent, to take our flesh, to die as our Sin-Offering, that we might "walk according to the Spirit." "The Spirit of God" is "the Spirit of Christ." The presence of the Spirit of Christ is such that, where He dwells, "Christ is in you." Here we read at once a caution, and a truth of the richest positive blessing. We are warned to remember that there is no *separable* "Gospel of the Spirit." Not for a moment are we to advance, as it were, from the Lord Jesus Christ to a higher or deeper region, ruled by the Holy Ghost. All the reasons, methods, and issues of the work of the Holy Ghost are eternally and organically connected with the Son of God. We have Him at all because Christ died. We have life because He has joined us to Christ living. Our experimental proof of His fulness is that Christ to us is all. And we are to be on the guard against any exposition of His work and glory which shall for one moment leave out those facts. But not only are we to be on our guard; we are to rejoice in the thought that the mighty, the endless work of the Spirit is all done always upon that sacred Field, Christ Jesus. And every day we are to draw upon the indwelling Giver of Life to do for us His own, His characteristic work; to show us "our King in His beauty," and to "fill our springs of thought and will with Him."

To return to the connection of the two great chapters. We have seen how close and pregnant it is; the contrast and the complement. But it is also true, surely, that the eighth chapter is not merely and only the counterpart to the seventh. Rather the eighth, though the seventh applies to it a special motive, is also a review of the whole previous argument of the Epistle, or rather the crown on the whole previous structure. It begins with a deep re-assertion of our Justification; a point unnoticed in vii. 7-25. It does this, using an inferential particle, "therefore," *ἀρα*—to which, surely, nothing in the just preceding verses is related. And then it unfolds not only the present acceptance and present liberty of the saints, but also their amazing future of glory, already indicated, especially in chap. v. 2. And its closing strains are full of the great first wonder, our Acceptance. "Them He justified"; "It is God that justifieth." So we forbear to take chap. viii. as simply the successor and counterpart of chap. vii. It is this, in some great respects. But it is more; it is the meeting point of all the great truths of grace which we have studied, their meeting point in the sea of holiness and glory.\*

As we approach the first paragraph of the chapter, we ask ourselves what is its message on the whole, its true *envoi*. It is our possession of the Holy Spirit of God, for purposes of holy loyalty and holy liberty. The foundation of that fact is once more indicated, in the brief assertion of our full Justification in Christ, and His propitiatory Sacrifice (ver. 3). Then from those words, "in Christ," he opens this ample revelation of our possession, in our union with Christ, of the Spirit who, having joined us to Him, now liberates us in Him, not from condemnation only, but from sin's dominion. If we are indeed in Christ, the Spirit is in us, dwelling in us, and

we are in the Spirit. And so, possessed and filled by the blessed Power, we indeed have power to walk and to obey. Nothing is mechanical, automatic; we are fully persons still; He who annexes and possesses our personality does not for a moment violate it. But then, He *does* possess it; and the Christian, so possessing and so possessed, is not only bound but enabled, in humble but practical reality, in a liberty otherwise unknown, to "fulfil the just demand of the Law," "to please God," in a life lived not to self but to Him.

Thus, as we shall see in detail as we proceed, the Apostle, while he still firmly keeps his hand, so to speak, on Justification, is occupied fully now with its issue, Holiness. And this issue he explains as not merely a matter of grateful feeling, the outcome of the loyalty supposed to be natural to the pardoned. He gives it as a matter of divine power, secured to them under the Covenant of their acceptance.

Shall we not enter on our expository study full of holy expectation, and with unspeakable desires awake, to receive all things which in that Covenant are ours? Shall we not remember, over every sentence, that in it Christ speaks by Paul, and speaks to us? For us also, as for our spiritual ancestors, all this is true. It shall be true in us also, as it was in them.

We shall be humbled as well as gladdened; and thus our gladness will be sounder. We shall find that whatever be our "walk according to the Spirit," and our veritable dominion over sin, we shall still have "the practices of the body" with which to deal—of the body which still is "dead because of sin," "mortal," not yet "redeemed." We shall be practically reminded, even by the most joyous exhortations, that possession and personal condition are one thing in covenant, and another in realisation; that we must watch, pray, examine self, and deny it, if we would "be" what we "are." Yet all this is but the salutary accessory to the blessed main burthen of every line. We are accepted in the Lord. In the Lord we have the Eternal Spirit for our inward Possessor. Let us arise, and "walk humbly," but also in gladness, "with our God."

St. Paul speaks again, perhaps after a silence, and Tertius writes down for the first time the now immortal and beloved words. So no adverse sentence is there now, in view of this great fact of our redemption, for those in Christ Jesus. "In Christ Jesus—mysterious union, blessed fact, wrought by the Spirit who linked us sinners to the Lord. For the law of the Spirit of the life which is in Christ Jesus freed me, the man of the conflict just described, from the law of sin and of death. The "law," the preceptive will, which legislates the covenant of blessing for all who are in Christ, has set him free. By a strange, pregnant paradox, so we take it, the Gospel—the message which carries with it acceptance, and also holiness, by faith—is here called a "law." For while it is free grace to us it is also immovable ordinance with God. The amnesty is His edict. It is by heavenly "statute" that sinners, believing, possess the Holy Spirit in possessing Christ. And here, with a sublime abruptness and directness, that great gift of the Covenant, the Spirit, for which the Covenant gift of Justification was given, is put forward as the Covenant's characteristic and crown. It is for the moment as if this were all—that "in Christ Jesus" we, I, are under the *fiat* which as-

\* "In this surpassing chapter the several streams of the preceding arguments meet and flow in one 'river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb,' until it seems to lose itself in the ocean of a blissful eternity."—David Brown, D. D.



sure to us the fulness of the Spirit. And this "law," unlike the stern "letter" of Sinai, has actually "freed me." It has endowed me not only with place but with power, in which to live emancipated from a rival law, the law of sin and of death. And what is that rival "law"? We dare to say, it is the preceptive will of Sinai; "Do this, and thou shalt live." This is a hard saying; for in itself that very Law has been recently vindicated as holy, and just, and good, and spiritual. And only a few lines above in the Epistle we have heard of a "law of sin" which is "served by the flesh." And we should unhesitatingly explain this "law" to be identical with that *but for the next verse here*, a still nearer context, in which "the law" is unmistakably the divine moral Code, considered however as "impotent." Must not this and that be the same? And to call that sacred Code "the Law of sin and of death" is not to say that it is sinful and deathful. It need only mean, and we think it does mean, that it is sin's occasion, and death's warrant, by the unrelieved collision of its holiness with fallen man's will. It must command; he, being what he is, must rebel. He rebels; it must condemn. Then comes his Lord to die for him, and to rise again; and the Spirit comes, to unite him to his Lord. And now, from the Law as provoking the helpless, guilty will, and as claiming the sinner's penal death—behold the man is "freed." For—(the process is now explained at large) the impossible of the Law—what it could not do, for this was not its function, even to enable us sinners to keep its precept from the soul—God, when He sent His own Son in likeness of flesh and sin, Incarnate, in our identical nature, under all those conditions of earthly life which for us are sin's vehicles and occasions, and as Sin-Offending, expiatory and reconciling, sentenced sin in the flesh; not pardoned it, observe, but sentenced it. He ordered it to execution; He killed its claim and its power for all who are in Christ. And this, "in the flesh," making man's earthly conditions the scene of sin's defeat, for our everlasting encouragement in our "life in the flesh." And what was the aim and issue? That the righteous demand of the Law might be fulfilled in us, us who walk not flesh-wise, but Spirit-wise; that we, accepted in Christ, and using the Spirit's power in the daily "walk" of circumstance and experience, might be liberated from the life of self-will, and meet the will of God with simplicity and joy.

Such, and nothing else or less, was the Law's "righteous demand"; an obedience not only universal but also cordial. For its first requirement, "Thou shalt have no other God," meant, in the spiritual heart of it, the dethronement of self from its central place, and the session there of the Lord. But this could never be while there was a reckoning still unsettled between the man and God. Friction there must be while God's Law remained not only violated but unsatisfied, unatoned.\* And so it necessarily remained, till the sole adequate Person, one with God, one with man, stepped into the gap; our Peace, our Righteousness, and also by the Holy Ghost our Life. At rest because of His sacrifice, at work by the power of His Spirit, we are now free to love, and divinely enabled to walk in love. Meanwhile the dream of an unsinning per-

fectness, such as could make a meritorious claim, is not so much negated as precluded, put far out of the question. For the central truth of the new position is that THE LORD has fully dealt, for us, with the Law's claim that man shall "deserve" acceptance. "Boasting" is inexorably "excluded," to the last, from this new kind of law-fulfilling life. For the "fulfilment" which means legal satisfaction is for ever taken out of our hands by Christ, and only that humble "fulfilment" is ours which means a restful, unanxious, reverent, unreserved loyalty in practice. To this now our "mind," our cast and gravitation of soul, is brought, in the life of acceptance, and in the power of the Spirit. For they who are flesh-wise, the unchanged children of the self-life, think, "mind," have moral affinity and converse with, the things of the flesh; but they who are Spirit-wise, think the things of the Spirit, His love, joy, peace, and all that holy "fruit." Their liberated and Spirit-bearing life now goes that way, in its true bias. For the mind, the moral affinity, of the flesh, of the self-life, is death; it involves the ruin of the soul, in condemnation, and in separation from God; but the mind of the Spirit, the affinity given to the believer by the indwelling Holy One, is life and peace; it implies union with Christ, our life and our acceptance; it is the state of soul in which He is realised. Because—this absolute antagonism of the two "minds" is such "because"—the "mind" of the flesh is personal hostility towards God; for to God's Law it is not subject. For indeed it cannot be subject to it;—those who are in flesh, surrendered to the life of self as their law, cannot please God, "cannot meet the wish" of Him whose loving but absolute claim is to be Lord of the whole man.

"They cannot": it is a moral impossibility. "The Law of God" is, "Thou shalt love Me with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself"; the mind of the flesh is, "I will love my self and its will first and most." Let this be disguised as it may, even from the man himself; it is always the same thing in its essence. It may mean a defiant choice of open evil. It may mean a subtle and almost evanescent preference of literature, or art, or work, or home, to God's will as such. It is in either case "the mind of the flesh," a thing which cannot be refined and educated into holiness, but must be surrendered at discretion, as its eternal enemy.

But you (there is a glad emphasis on "you") are not in flesh, but in Spirit, surrendered to the indwelling Presence as your law and secret, on the assumption that (he suggests not weary misgivings but a true examination) God's Spirit dwells in you; has His home in your hearts, humbly welcomed into a continuous residence. But if any one has not Christ's Spirit, (who is the Spirit as of the Father so of the Son, sent by the Son, to reveal and to impart Him,) that man is not His. He may bear his Lord's name, he may be externally a Christian, he may enjoy the divine Sacraments of union; but he has not "the Thing." The Spirit, evidenced by His holy fruit, is no Indweller there; and the Spirit is our vital bond with Christ. But if Christ is, thus by the Spirit, in you, dwelling by faith in the hearts which the Spirit has "strengthened" to receive Christ (Eph. iii. 16, 17)—true, the body is dead, because of sin, the primeval sentence still holds its way "there";

\* "The way of him that is laden with guilt is exceeding crooked."—Prov. xxi. 8 R. V.



the body is deathful still, it is the body of the Fall; but the Spirit is life, He is in that body, your secret of power and peace eternal, because of righteousness, because of the merit of your Lord, in which you are accepted, and which has won for you this wonderful Spirit-life.

Then even for the body there is assured a glorious future, organically one with this living present. Let us listen as he goes on: But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus, the slain Man, from the dead, dwells in you, He who raised from the dead Christ Jesus, the Man so revealed and glorified as the Anointed Saviour, shall also bring to life your mortal bodies, because of His Spirit, dwelling in you. That "frail temple," once so much defiled, and so defiling, is now precious to the Father because it is the habitation of the Spirit of His Son. Nor only so; that same Spirit, who, by uniting us to Christ, made actual our redemption, shall surely, in ways to us unknown, carry the process to its glorious crown, and be somehow the Efficient Cause of "the redemption of our body."

Wonderful is this deep characteristic of the Scripture; its Gospel for the body. In Christ, the body is seen to be something far different from the mere clog, or prison, or chrysalis, of the soul. It is its destined implement, may we not say its mighty wings in prospect, for the life of glory. As invaded by sin, it must needs pass through either death or, at the Lord's Return, an equivalent transfiguration. But as created in God's plan of Human Nature it is for ever congenial to the soul, nay, it is necessary to the soul's full action. And whatever be the mysterious mode (it is absolutely hidden from us as yet) of the event of Resurrection, this we know, if only from this Oracle, that the glory of the immortal body will have profound relations with the work of God in the sanctified soul. No mere material sequences will bring it about. It will be "because of the Spirit"; and "because of the Spirit dwelling in you," as your power for holiness in Christ.\*

So the Christian reads the account of his present spiritual wealth, and of his coming completed life, "his perfect consummation and bliss in the eternal glory." Let him take it home, with most humble but quite decisive assurance, as he looks again, and believes again, on his redeeming Lord. For him, in his inexpressible need, God has gone about to provide "so great salvation." He has accepted his person in His Son who died for him. He has not only "forgiven him" through that great Sacrifice, but in it He has "condemned," sentenced to chains and death, "his sin," which is now a doomed thing, beneath his feet, in Christ. And he has given to him, as personal and perpetual Indweller, to be claimed, hailed, and used by humble faith, His own Eternal Spirit, the Spirit of His Son, the Blessed One who, dwelling infinitely in the Head, comes to dwell fully in the members, and make Head and members wonderfully one. Now then let him give him-

\* We are aware that ver. 11 has been sometimes interpreted of present blessings for the body; as if the fulness of the Holy Ghost was to effect a quasi-glorification of the body's condition now; exempting it from illness, and at least retarding its decay. But this seems untenable. If the words point this way at all, ought they not to mean a literal exemption from death altogether? But this manifestly was not in the Apostle's mind, if we take his writings as a whole. That spiritual blessings may, and often do, act wonderfully in the life of the body, is most true. But that is not the truth of this verse.

self up with joy, thanksgiving, and expectation, to the "fulfilling of the righteous demand of God's Law," "walking Spirit-wise," with steps moving ever away from self and towards the will of God. Let him meet the world, the devil, and that mysterious "flesh," (all ever in potential presence,) with no less a Name than that of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Let him stand up not as a defeated and disappointed combatant, maimed, half-blinded, half-persuaded to succumb, but as one who treads upon "all the power of the enemy," in Christ, by the indwelling Spirit. And let him reverence his mortal body, even while he "keeps it in subjection," and while he willingly tires it, or gives it to suffer, for his Lord. For it is the temple of the Spirit. It is the casket of the hope of glory.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### *HOLINESS BY THE SPIRIT, AND THE GLORIES THAT SHALL FOLLOW.*

ROMANS viii. 12-25.

Now the Apostle goes on to develop these noble premisses into conclusions. How true to himself, and to his Inspirer, is the line he follows! First come the most practical possible of reminders of duty; then, and in profound connection, the inmost experiences of the regenerate soul in both its joy and its sorrow, and the most radiant and far-reaching prospects of glory to come. We listen still, always remembering that this letter from Corinth to Rome is to reach us too, by way of the City. He who moved His servant to send it to Aquila and Herodion had us too in mind, and has now carried out His purpose. It is open in our hands for our faith, love, hope, life to-day.

St. Paul begins with Holiness viewed as Duty, as Debt. He has led us through our vast treasury of privilege and possession. What are we to do with it? Shall we treat it as a museum, in which we may occasionally observe the mysteries of New Nature, and with more or less learning discourse upon them? Shall we treat it as the unwatchful King\* of old treated his splendid stores, making them his personal boast, and so betraying them to the very power which one day was to make them all its spoil? No, we are to live upon our Lord's magnificent bounty—to His glory, and in His will. We are rich; but it is for Him. We have His talents; and those talents, in respect of His grace, as distinct from His "gifts," are not one, nor five, nor ten, but ten thousand—for they are Jesus Christ. But we have them all "for Him." We are free from the law of sin and of death; but we are in perpetual and delightful debt to Him who has freed us. And our debt is—to walk with Him.

"So, brethren, we are debtors." Thus our new paragraph begins. For a moment he turns to say what we owe "no" debt to; even "the flesh," the self-life. But it is plain that his main purpose is positive, not negative. He implies in the whole rich context that we are debtors to the Spirit, to the Lord, "to walk Spirit-wise."

What a salutary thought it is! Too often in

\* 2 Kings xx. 12, 13.



the Christian Church the great word Holiness has been practically banished to a supposed almost inaccessible background, to the steep of a spiritual ambition, to a region where a few might with difficulty climb in the quest, men and women who had "leisure to be good," or who perhaps had exceptional instincts for piety. God be thanked, He has at all times kept many consciences alive to the illusion of such a notion; and in our own day, more and more, His mercy brings it home to His children that "this is His will, even the sanctification"—not of some of them, but of all. Far and wide we are reviving to see, as the fathers of our faith saw before us, that whatever else holiness is, it is a sacred and binding "debt." It is not an ambition; it is a duty. We are bound, every one of us who names the name of Christ, to be holy, to be separate from evil, to walk by the Spirit.

Alas for the misery of indebtedness, when funds fall short! Whether the unhappy debtor examines his affairs, or guiltily ignores their condition, he is—if his conscience is not dead—a haunted man. But when an honourable indebtedness concurs with ample means, then one of the moral pleasures of life is the punctual scrutiny and discharge. "He hath it by him"; and it is his happiness, as it is assuredly his duty, *not* to "say to his neighbour, Go and come again, and to-morrow I will give" (Prov. iii. 28).

Christian brother, partaker of Christ, and of the Spirit, we also owe, to Him who owns. But it is an indebtedness of the happy type. Once we owed, and there was worse than nothing in the purse. Now we owe, and we have Christ in us, by the Holy Ghost, wherewithal to pay. The eternal Neighbour comes to us, with no frowning look, and shows us His holy demand; to live to-day a life of truth, of purity, of confession of His Name, of unselfish serviceableness, of glad forgiveness, of unbroken patience, of practical sympathy, of the love which seeks not her own. What shall we say? That it is a beautiful ideal, which we should like to realise, and may yet some day seriously attempt? That it is admirable, but impossible? Nay; "we are debtors." And He who claims has first immeasurably given. We have His Son for our acceptance and our life. His very Spirit is in us. Are not these good resources for a genuine solvency? "Say not, Go and come again; I will pay Thee—to-morrow. Thou hast it by Thee!"

Holiness is beauty. But it is first duty, practical and present, in Jesus Christ our Lord.

So then, brethren, debtors are we—not to the flesh, with a view to living flesh-wise; but to the Spirit—who is now both our law and our power—with a view to living Spirit-wise. For if you are living flesh-wise, you are on the way to die. But if by the Spirit you are doing to death the practices, the stratagems, the machinations, of the body, you will live. Ah, the body is still there, and is still a seat and vehicle of temptation. "It is for the Lord, and the Lord is for it" (1 Cor. vi. 13). It is the temple of the Spirit. Our call is (1 Cor. vi. 20) to glorify God in it. But all this, *from our point of view*, passes from realisation into mere theory, woefully gainsaid by experience, when we let our acceptance in Christ, and our possession in Him of the Almighty Spirit, pass out of use into mere phrase. Say what some men will,

we are never for an hour here below exempt from elements and conditions of evil residing not merely around us but within us. There is no stage of life when we can dispense with the power of the Holy Ghost as our victory and deliverance from "the machinations of the body." And the body is no separate and as it were minor personality. If the man's body "machinates," it is the man who is the sinner.

But then, thanks be to God, this fact is not the real burthen of the words here. What St. Paul has to say is that the man who has the indwelling Spirit has with him, in him, a divine and all-effectual Counter-Agent to the subtlest of his foes. Let him do what we saw him above (vii. 7-25) neglecting to do. Let him with conscious purpose, and firm recollection of his wonderful position and possession (so easily forgotten!) call up the eternal Power which is indeed not himself, though in himself. Let him do this with "habitual" recollection and simplicity. And he shall be "more than conqueror" where he was so miserably defeated. His path shall be as of one who walks over foes who threatened, but who fell, and who die at his feet. It shall be less a struggle than a march, over a battle-field indeed, yet a field of victory so continuous that it shall be as peace.

"If by the Spirit you are doing them to death." Mark well the words. He says nothing here of things often thought to be of the essence of spiritual remedies; nothing of "will-worship, and humility, and unsparing treatment of the body" (Col. ii. 23); nothing even of fast and prayer. Sacred and precious is self-discipline, the watchful care that act and habit are true to that "temperance" which is a vital ingredient in the Spirit's "fruit" (Gal. v. 22, 23). It is the Lord's own voice (Matt. xxvi. 41) which bids us always "watch and pray"; "praying in the Holy Ghost" (Jude 20). Yes, but these true exercises of the believing soul are after all only as the covering fence around that central secret—our use by faith of the presence and power of "the Holy Ghost given unto us." The Christian who neglects to watch and pray will most surely find that he knows not how to use this his great strength, for he will be losing realisation of his oneness with his Lord. But then the man who actually, and in the depth of his being, is "doing to death the practices of the body," is doing so, "immediately," not by discipline, nor by direct effort, but by the believing use of "the Spirit." Filled with Him, he treads upon the power of the enemy. And that fulness is according to surrendering faith.

For as many as are led by God's Spirit, these are God's sons; for you did not receive a spirit of slavery, to take you back again to fear; no, you received a Spirit of adoption to sonship, in which Spirit, surrendered to His holy power, we cry, with no bated, hesitating breath, "Abba, our Father." His argument runs thus; "If you would live indeed, you must do sin to death by the Spirit. And this means, in another aspect, that you must yield yourselves to be led along by the Spirit, with that leading which is sure to conduct you always away from self and into the will of God. You must welcome the Indweller to have His holy way with your springs of thought and will. So, and only so, will you truly answer the idea, the description, 'sons of God'—that glorious term, never to be 'satisfied' by the relation of mere creaturehood,



or by that of merely exterior sanctification, mere membership in a community of men, though it be the Visible Church itself. But if you so meet sin by the Spirit, if you are so led by the Spirit, you do show yourselves nothing less than God's own sons. He has called you to nothing lower than sonship; to vital connection with a divine Father's life, and to the eternal embraces of His love. For when He gave and you received the Spirit, the Holy Spirit of promise, who reveals Christ and joins you to Him, what did that Spirit do, in His heavenly operation? Did He lead you back to the old position, in which you shrunk from God, as from a Master, who bound you against your will? No, He showed you that in the Only Son you are nothing less than sons, welcomed into the inmost home of eternal life and love. You found yourselves indescribably near the Father's heart, because accepted, and new-created, in His Own Beloved. And so you learnt the happy, confident call of the child, 'Father, O Father; Our Father, Abba.'\*"

So it was, and so it is. The living member of Christ is nothing less than the dear child of God. He is other things besides; he is disciple, follower, bondservant. He never ceases to be bondservant, though here he is expressly told that he has received no "spirit of slavery." So far as "slavery" means service forced against the will, he has done with this, in Christ. But so far as it means service rendered by one who is his master's absolute property, he has entered into its depths, for ever. Yet all this is exterior as it were to that inmost fact, that he is—in a sense ultimate, and which alone really fulfils the word—the child, the son, of God. He is dearer than he can know to his Father. He is more welcome than he can ever realise to take his Father at His word, and lean upon His heart, and tell Him all.

The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are God's children, born children. The Holy One, on His part, makes the once cold, reluctant, apprehensive heart "know and believe the love of God." He "sheds abroad God's love in it." He brings home to consciousness and insight the "sober certainty" of the promises of the Word; that Word through which, above all other means, He speaks. He shows to the man "the things of Christ," the Beloved, in whom he has the adoption and the regeneration; making him see, as souls see, what a paternal welcome there "must" be for those who are "in Him." And then, on the other part, the believer meets Spirit with spirit. He responds to the revealed paternal smile with not merely a subject's loyalty but a son's deep love; deep, reverent, tender, genuine, love. "Doubtless thou art His own child," says the Spirit. "Doubtless He is my Father," says our wondering, believing, seeing spirit in response.

But if children, then also heirs; God's heirs, Christ's co-heirs, possessors in prospect of our Father's heaven (towards which the whole argument now gravitates), in union of interest and life with our First-born Brother, in whom lies our right. From one hand a gift, infinitely merciful and surprising, that unseen bliss will be from another the lawful portion of the lawful child, one with the Beloved of the Father. Such heirs we are, if indeed we share His sufferings,

those deep but hallowed pains which will surely come to us as we live in and for Him in a fallen world, that we may also share His glory, for which that path of sorrow is, not indeed the meriting, but the capacitating, preparation.

Amidst the truths of life and love, of the Son, of the Spirit, of the Father, he thus throws in the truth of pain. Let us not forget it. In one form or another, it is for all "the children." Not all are martyrs, not all are exiles or captives, not all are called as a fact to meet open insults in a defiant world of paganism and unbelief. Many are still so called, as many were at first, and as many will be to the end; for "the world" is no more now than it ever was in love with God, and with His children as such. But even for those whose path is—not by themselves but the Lord—most protected—there must be "suffering," somehow, sooner, later, in this present life, if they are really living the life of the Spirit, the life of the child of God, "paying the debt" of daily holiness, even in its humblest and gentlest forms. We must observe, by the way, that it is to *such* sufferings, and not to sorrows in general, that the reference lies here. The Lord's heart is open for all the griefs of His people, and He can use them all for their blessing and for His ends. But the "suffering with Him" must imply a pain *due to our union*. It must be involved in our being His members, used by the Head for His work. It must be the hurt of His "hand" or "foot" in subserving His sovereign thought. What will the bliss be of the corresponding sequel! "That we may *share His glory*"; not merely "be glorified," but share His glory; a splendour of life, joy, and power whose eternal law and soul will be, union with Him who died for us and rose again.

Now towards that prospect St. Paul's whole thought sets, as the waters set towards the moon, and the mention of that glory, after suffering, draws him to a sight of the mighty "plurality" of the glory. For I reckon, "I calculate"—word of sublimest *prose*, more moving here than poetry, because it bids us to handle the hope of glory *as a fact*—that not worthy of mention are the sufferings of the present season; (he thinks of time not in its length but in its limit), in view of the glory about to be unveiled upon us, unveiled, and then heaped upon us, in its golden fulness.\* For—he is going to give us a deep reason for his "calculation"; wonderfully characteristic of the Gospel. It is that the final glory of the saints will be a crisis of mysterious blessing for the whole created Universe. In ways absolutely unknown, certainly as regards anything said in this passage, but none the less divinely fit and sure, the ultimate and eternal manifestation of Christ Mystical, the Perfect Head with His perfected members, will be the occasion, and in some sense too the cause, the mediating cause, of the emancipation of "Nature," in its heights and depths, from the cancer of decay, and its entrance on an endless æon of indissoluble life and splendour. Doubtless that goal shall be reached through long processes and intense crises of strife and death. "Nature," like the saint, may need to pass to glory through a tomb. But the issue will indeed be glory, when He who is the Head at once of "Nature,"† of the heavenly nations, and of re-

\* The Aramaic "Abba," used by our Lord in His hour of darkness, had probably become an almost personal Name to the believers.

\* With this verse on his lips, unfinished, Calvin died, 1564.

† See Col. i. 15, 16. The Lord's Headship of Creation, explicitly revealed there, is seen as it were only just below the surface here.



deemed man, shall bid the vast periods of conflict and dissolution cease, in the hour of eternal purpose, and shall manifestly "*be what He is*" to the mighty total.

With such a prospect natural philosophy has nothing to do. Its own laws of observation and tabulation forbid it to make a single affirmation of what the Universe shall be, or shall not be, under new and unknown conditions. Revelation, with no arbitrary voice, but as the authorised while reserved messenger of the Maker, and standing by the open Grave of the Resurrection, announces that there are to be profoundly new conditions, and that they bear a relation inscrutable, but necessary to the coming glorification of Christ and His Church. And what we now see and feel as the imperfections and shocks and seeming failures of the Universe, so we learn from this voice, a voice so quiet yet so triumphant, are only as it were the throes of birth, in which "Nature," impersonal indeed but so to speak animated by the thinking of the intelligent orders who are a part of her universal being, preludes her wonderful future.

For the longing outlook of the creation is expecting—the unveiling of the sons of God. For to vanity, to evil, to failure and decay, the creation was subjected not willingly, but because of Him who made it subject; its Lord and Sustainer, who in His inscrutable but holy will bade physical evil correspond to the moral evil of His conscious fallen creatures, angels or men. So that there is a deeper connection than we can yet analyse between sin, the primal and central evil, and everything that is really wreck or pain. But this "subjection," under His *fiat*, was in hope, because the creation itself shall be liberated from the slavery of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God, the freedom brought in for *it* by *their* eternal liberation from the last relics of the Fall. For we know by observation of natural evil, in the light of the promises, that the whole creation is uttering a common groan of burthen and yearning, and suffering a common birth-pang, even till now, when the Gospel has heralded the coming glory. Nor only so, but even the actual possessors of the firstfruits of the Spirit, possessors of that presence of the Holy One in them now, which is the sure pledge of His eternal fullness yet to come, even we ourselves, richly blest as we are in our wonderful Spirit-life, yet in ourselves are groaning, burthened still with mortal conditions pregnant of temptation, lying not around us only but deep within, expecting adoption, full instatement into the fruition of the sonship which already is ours, even the redemption of our body.

From the coming glories of the Universe he returns, in the consciousness of an inspired but human heart, to the present discipline and burthen of the Christian. Let us observe the noble candour of the words; this "groan" interposed in the midst of such a song of the Spirit and of glory. He has no ambition to pose as the possessor of an impossible experience. He is more than conqueror; but he is conscious of his foes. The Holy Ghost is in him; he does the body's practices victoriously to death by the Holy Ghost. But the body is there, as the seat and vehicle of manifold temptation. And though there is a joy in victory which can sometimes make even the presence of temptation seem "all joy" (James i. 2), he knows that something "far

better" is yet to come. His longing is not merely for a personal victory, but for an eternally unhindered service. That will not fully be his till his whole being is actually, as well as in covenant, redeemed. That will not be till not the spirit only but the body is delivered from the last dark traces of the Fall, in the resurrection hour.

For it is as to our hope that we are saved. When the Lord laid hold of us we were indeed saved, but with a salvation which was only in part actual. Its total was not to be realised till the whole being was in actual salvation. Such salvation (see below, xiii. 11) was coincident in prospect with "the Hope," "that blessed Hope," the Lord's Return and the Resurrection glory. So, to paraphrase this clause, "It was in the sense of the Hope that we are saved." But a hope in sight is not a hope; for, what a man sees, why does he hope for? Hope, in that case, has, in its nature, expired in possession. And our full "salvation" is a hope; it is bound up with a Promise not yet fulfilled; therefore, in its nature, it is still unseen, still unattained. But then, it is certain; it is infinitely valid; it is worth any waiting for. But if, for what we do not see, we do hope, looking on good grounds for the sunrise in the dark East, with patience we expect it. "With patience," literally "through patience." The "patience" is as it were the means, the secret, of the waiting; "patience," that noble word of the New Testament vocabulary, the saint's active submission, submissive action, beneath the will of God. It is no nerveless, motionless prostration; it is the going on and upward, step by step, as the man "waits upon the Lord, and walks, and does not faint."

## CHAPTER XIX.

### *THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER IN THE SAINTS: THEIR PRESENT AND ETERNAL WELFARE IN THE LOVE OF GOD.*

ROMANS viii. 26-39.

IN the last paragraph the music of this glorious didactic prophecy passed, in some solemn phrases, into the minor mood. "If we share His sufferings"; "The sufferings of this present season"; "We groan within ourselves"; "In the sense of our hope we were saved." All is well. The deep harmony of the Christian's full experience, if it is full downwards as well as upwards, demands sometimes such tones; and they are all music, for they all express a life in Christ, lived by the power of the Holy Ghost. But now the strain is to ascend again into its largest and most triumphant manner. We are now to hear how our salvation, though its ultimate issues are still things of hope, is itself a thing of eternity—from everlasting to everlasting. We are to be made sure that all things are **working** now, in concurrent action, for the **believer's** good; and that his justification is sure; and that his glory is so certain that its future is, from his Lord's point of sight, present; and that nothing, absolutely nothing, shall separate him from the eternal love.

But first comes one most deep and tender word, the last of its kind in the long argument, about the presence and power of the Holy Ghost. The Apostle has the "groan" of the Christian still in his ear, in his heart; in fact, it is his own.



And he has just pointed himself and his fellow believers to the coming glory, as to a wonderful antidote; a prospect which is at once great in itself and unspeakably suggestive of the greatness given to the most suffering and tempted saint by his union with his Lord. As if to say to the pilgrim, in his moment of distress, "Remember, you are more to God than you can possibly know; He has made you such, in Christ, that universal Nature is concerned in the prospect of your glory." But now, as if nothing must suffice but what is directly divine, he bids him remember also the presence in him of the Eternal Spirit, as his mighty but tenderest indwelling Friend. Even as "that blessed Hope," so, "*likewise also*," this blessed present Person, is the weak one's power. He takes the man in his bewilderment, when troubles from without press him, and fears from within make him groan, and he is in sore need, yet at a loss for the right cry. And He moves in the tired soul, and breathes himself into its thought, and His mysterious "groan" of divine yearning mingles with our groan of burthen, and the man's longings go out above all things not towards rest but towards God and His will. So the Christian's innermost and ruling desire is both fixed and animated by the blessed Indweller, and he seeks what the Lord will love to grant, even Himself and whatever shall please Him. The man prays aright, as to the essence of the prayer, because (what a divine miracle is put before us in the words!) the Holy Ghost, immanent in him, prays through him.

Thus we venture, in advance, to explain the sentences which now follow. It is true that St. Paul does not explicitly say that the Spirit makes intercession *in* us, as well as *for* us. But must it not be so? For *where is He*, from the point of view of Christian life, but *in us*?

Then, in the same way, the Spirit also—as well as the hope"—helps, as with a clasping, supporting hand, our weakness, our shortness and bewilderment of insight, our feebleness of faith. For what we should pray for as we ought, we do not know; but the Spirit Itself interposes to intercede for us with groanings unutterable; but (whatever be the utterance or no utterance) the Searcher of our hearts knows what is the mind, the purport, of the Spirit; because Godwise, with divine insight and sympathy, the Spirit with the Father, He intercedes for saints.

Did He not so intercede for Paul, and in him, fourteen years before these words were written, when (2 Cor. xii. 7-10) the man thrice asked that "the thorn" might be removed, and the Master gave him a better blessing, the victorious overshadowing power? Did He not so intercede for Monica, and in her, when she sought with prayers and tears to keep her rebellious Augustine by her, and the Lord let him fly from her side—to Italy, to Ambrose, and so to conversion?

But the strain rises now, finally and fully, into the rest and triumph of faith. "*We know not* what we should pray for as we ought"; and the blessed Spirit meets this deep need in His own way. And this, with all else that we have in Christ, reminds us of a somewhat that "we know" indeed; namely, that all things, favourable or not in themselves, concur in blessing for the saints. And then he looks backward (or rather upward) into eternity, and sees the throne, and the King with His sovereign will, and the lines of perfect and infallible plan and provision which

stretch from that Centre to infinity. These "saints," who are they? From one view-point, they are simply sinners who have seen themselves, and "fled for refuge to the" one possible "hope"; a "hope set before" every soul that cares to win it. From another view-point, that of the eternal Mind and Order, they are those whom, for reasons infinitely wise and just, but wholly hidden in Himself, the Lord has chosen to be His own for ever, so that His choice takes effect in their conversion, their acceptance, their spiritual transformation, and their glory.

There, as regards this great passage, the thought rests and ceases—in the glorification of the saints. What their Glorifier will do with them, and through them, thus glorified, is another matter. Assuredly He will *make use* of them in His eternal kingdom. The Church, made most blessed for ever, is yet beatified, ultimately, not for itself, but for its Head and for His Father. It is to be, in its final perfectness, "an habitation of God, in the Spirit" (Eph. ii. 22). Is He not so to possess it that the Universe shall see Him in it, in a manner and degree now unknown and unimaginable? Is not the endless "service" of the elect to be such that all orders of being shall through them behold and adore the glory of the Christ of God? For ever they will be what they here become, the bondservants of their Redeeming Lord, His Bride, His vehicle of power and blessing; "having of their own nothing, in Him all, and all for Him." No self-full exaltations await them in the place of light; or the whole history of sin would begin over again, in a new æon. No celestial Pharisaism will be their spirit; a look downward upon less blessed regions of existence, as from a sanctuary of their own. Who can tell what ministries of boundless love will be the expression of their life of inexpressible and inexhaustible joy? Always, like Gabriel, "in the presence," will they not always also, like him, "be sent" (Luke i. 19) on the messages of their glorious Head, in whom at length, in the "divine event," "all things shall be gathered together"?

But this is not the thought of the passage now in our hands. Here, as we have said, the thought terminates in the final glorification of the saints of God, as the immediate goal of the process of their redemption.

But we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, even for those who, purpose-wise, are His called ones. "We know it," with the cognition of faith; that is to say, because He, absolutely trustworthy, guarantees it by His character, and by His word. Deep, nay, insoluble is the mystery, from every other point of view. The lovers of the Lord are indeed unable to explain, to themselves or others, how this concurrence of "all things" works out its infallible issues in them. And the observer from outside cannot understand their certainty that it is so. But the fact is there given and assured, not by speculation upon events, but by personal knowledge of an Eternal Person. "Love God, and thou shalt know."\*

They "love God," with a love perfectly unartificial, the genuine affection of human hearts, hearts not the less human because divinely new-created, regenerated from above. Their immediate consciousness is just this; we love Him. Not, we have read the book of life; we have had

\* See a noble poem by James Montgomery, "The Lot of the Righteous."



a glimpse of the eternal purpose in itself; we have heard our names recited in a roll of the chosen; but, we love Him. We have found in Him the eternal Love. In Him we have peace, purity, and that deep, final satisfaction, that view of "the King in His beauty," which is the *summum bonum* of the creature. It was our fault that we saw it no sooner, that we loved Him no sooner. It is the duty of every soul that He has made to reflect upon its need of Him, and upon the fact that it owes it to Him to love Him in His holy beauty of eternal Love. If we could not it was because we would not. If you cannot it is because, somehow and somewhere, you will not; will not put yourselves without reserve in the way of the sight. "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good"; oh, love the eternal Love.

But those who thus simply and genuinely love God are also, on the other side, "purpose-wise, His called ones"; "called," in the sense which we have found above (p. 523) to be consistently traceable in the Epistles; not merely invited, but brought in; not evangelised only, but converted. In each case of the happy company, the man, the woman, came to Christ, came to love God with the freest possible coming of the will, the heart. Yet each, having come, had the Lord to thank for the coming. The human personality had traced its orbit of will and deed, as truly as when it willed to sin and to rebel. But lo, in ways past our finding out, its free track lay along a previous track of the purpose of the Eternal; its free "I will" was the precise and fore-ordered correspondence to His "Thou shalt." It was the act of man; it was the grace of God.

Can we get below such a statement, or above it? If we are right in our reading of the whole teaching of Scripture on the sovereignty of God, our thoughts upon it, practically, must sink down, and must rest, just here. The doctrine of the Choice of God, in its sacred mystery, refuses—so we humbly think—to be explained away so as to mean in effect little but the choice of man. But then the doctrine is "a lamp, not a sun." It is presented to us everywhere, and not least in this Epistle, as a truth not meant to explain everything, but to enforce *this* thing—that the man who as a fact loves the eternal Love has to thank not himself but that Love that his eyes, guiltily shut, were effectually opened. Not one link in the chain of actual Redemption is of our forging—or the whole would indeed be fragile. It is "of Him" that we, in this great matter, will as we ought to will. I ought to have loved God always. It is of His mere mercy that I love Him now.

With this lesson of uttermost humiliation the truth of the heavenly Choice, and its effectual Call, brings us also that of an encouragement altogether divine. Such a "purpose" is no fluctuating thing, shifting with the currents of time. Such a call to such an embrace means a tenacity, as well as a welcome worthy of God. "Who shall separate us?" "Neither shall any pluck them out of My Father's hand." And this is the motive of the words in this wonderful context, where everything is made to bear on *the safety* of the children of God, in the midst of all imaginable dangers.

For whom He knew beforehand, with a foreknowledge which, in this argument, can mean nothing short of foredecision\*—no mere foreknowledge of what they would do, but rather

of what He would do for them—those he also set apart beforehand, for conformation, deep and genuine, a resemblance due to kindred *being*, to the image, the manifested Countenance of His Son, that He might be firstborn amongst many brethren, surrounded by the circling host of kindred faces, congenial beings, His Father's children by their union with Himself. So, as ever in the Scriptures, mystery bears full on character. The man is saved that he may be holy. His "predestination" is not merely not to perish, but to be made like Christ, in a spiritual transformation, coming out in the moral features of the family of heaven. And all bears ultimately on the glory of Christ. The gathered saints are an organism, a family, before the Father; and their vital Centre is the Beloved Son, who sees in their true sonship the fruit of "the travail of His soul."

But those whom He thus set apart beforehand, He also called, effectually drew so as truly and freely to choose Christ; and those whom He thus called to Christ, He also justified in Christ, in that great way of propitiation and faith of which the Epistle has so largely spoken; but those whom He thus justified, He also glorified. "Glorified": it is a marvellous past tense. It reminds us that in this passage we are placed, as it were, upon the mountain of the Throne; our finite thought is allowed to speak for once (however little it understands it) the language of eternity, to utter the facts as the Eternal sees them. To Him, the pilgrim is already in the immortal country; the bondservant is already at his day's end, receiving his Master's "Well done, good and faithful." He to whom time is not as it is to us thus sees His purposes complete, always and for ever. We see through His sight in hearing His word about it. So for us, in wonderful paradox, our glorification is presented, as truly as our call, in terms of accomplished fact.

Here, in a certain sense, the long golden chain of the *doctrine* of the Epistle ends—in the hand of the King who thus crowns the sinners whose redemption, faith, acceptance, and holiness, He had, in the Heaven of His own Being, forewilled and fore-ordered, "before the world began," above all time. What remains of the chapter is the application of the doctrine. But what an application! The Apostle brings his converts out into the open field of trial, and bids them *use* his doctrine *there*. Are they thus dear to the Father in the Son? Is their every need thus met? Is their guilt cancelled in Christ's mighty merit? Is their existence filled with Christ's eternal Spirit? Is sin thus cast beneath their feet, and is such a heaven opened above their heads? "Then what have they to fear," before man, or before God? What power in the universe, of whatever order of being, can really hurt them? For what can separate them from their portion in their glorified Lord, and in His Father's love in Him? Again we listen, with Tertius, as the voice goes on:

What therefore shall we say in view of these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own true Son, but for us all handed Him over to that awful expiatory, propitiatory, darkness and death, so that He was "pleased to bruise Him, to put Him to grief" (Isaiah liii. 10), all for His own great glory, but, no whit the less, all for our pure blessing; how (wonderful "how"!) shall He not also with Him,

\* See, e. g., xi. 2; Acts ii. 23; 1 Pet. i. 2, 20.



because *all* is included and involved in Him who is the Father's All, give us also freely all things ("the all things that are")? And do we want to be sure that He will not after all find a flaw in our claim, and cast us in His court? Who will lodge a charge against God's chosen ones? Will God—who justifies them? Who will condemn them if the charge is lodged? Will Christ—who died, nay, rather, who rose, who is on the right hand of God, who is actually interceding for us? (Observe this one mention in the whole Epistle of His Ascension, and His action for us above, as He is, by the fact of His Session on the Throne, our sure Channel of eternal blessing, unworthy that we are.) Do we need assurance, amidst "the sufferings of this present time," that through them always the invincible hands of Christ clasp us, with untired love? We "look upon the covenant" of our acceptance and life in Him who died for us, and who lives both for and in us, and we meet the fiercest buffet of these waves in peace. Who shall sunder us from the love of Christ? There rise before him, as he asks, like so many angry personalities, the outward woes of the pilgrimage. Tribulation? or Perplexity? or Persecution? or Famine? or Nakedness? or Peril? or Sword? As it stands written, in that deep song of anguish and faith (Psal. xlv.) in which the elder Church, one with us in deep continuity, tells her story of affliction, "For Thy sake we are done to death all the day long; we have been reckoned, estimated, as sheep of slaughter." Even so. But in these things, all of them, we more than conquer; not only do we tread upon our foes; we spoil them, we find them occasions of glorious gain,\* through Him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, life with its natural allurements or its bewildering toils, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers,† whatever Orders of being unfriendly to Christ and His saints the vast Unseen contains, nor present things, nor things to come, in all the boundless field of circumstance and contingency, nor height, nor depth, in the illimitable sphere of space, nor any other creature, no thing, no being, under the Uncreated One, shall be able to sunder us, "us" with an emphasis upon the word and thought, from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord—from the eternal embrace wherein the Father embosoms the Son, and, in the Son, all who are one with Him.

So once more the divine music rolls itself out into the blessed Name. We have heard the previous cadences as they came in their order; "Jesus our Lord, who was delivered because of our offences, and was raised again because of our justification" (iv. 25); "That grace might reign, through Jesus Christ our Lord" (v. 21); "The gift of God is eternal life, in Jesus Christ our Lord" (vi. 23); "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (vii. 25). Like the theme of a fugue it has sounded on, deep and high; still, always, "our Lord Jesus Christ," who is all things, and in all, and for all, to His happy believing members. And now all is gathered up into this. Our "Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption" (I Cor. i. 33), the golden burthens of the third chapter, and

\* Cp. I Cor. iii. 22: "All things are yours, whether life or death."

† Strong documentary evidence favours the transference of "powers" to a place after "things to come." But surely rhythm, and the affinity of words, look the other way.

the sixth, and the eighth, are all, in their living ultimate essence, "Jesus Christ our Lord." He makes every truth, every doctrine of peace and holiness, every sure premiss and indissoluble inference, to be life as well as light. He is pardon, and sanctity, and heaven. Here, finally, the Eternal Love is seen not as it were diffused into infinity, but gathered up wholly and for ever in Him. Therefore to be in Him is to be in It. It is to be within the clasp which surrounds the Beloved of the Father.

Some years ago we remember reading this passage, this close of the eighth chapter, under moving circumstances. On a cloudless January night, late arrived in Rome, we stood in the Coliseum, a party of friends from England. Orion, the giant with the sword, glimmered like a spectre, the spectre of persecution, above the huge precinct; for the full moon, high in the heavens, overpowered the stars. By its light we read from a little Testament these words, written so long ago to be read in that same City; written by the man whose dust now sleeps at Tre Fontane, where the executioner dismissed him to be with Christ; written to men and women some of whom at least, in all human likelihood, suffered in the same Amphitheatre, raised only twenty-two years after Paul wrote to the Romans, and soon made the scene of countless martyrdoms. "Do you want a relic?" said a Pope to some eager visitor. "Gather dust from the Coliseum; it is all the martyrs."

We recited the words of the Epistle, and gave thanks to Him who had there triumphed in His saints over life and death, over beasts, and men, and demons. Then we thought of the inmost factors in that great victory; Truth and Life. They "knew whom they had believed"—their Sacrifice, their Head, their King. He whom they had believed lived in them, and they in Him, by the Holy Ghost given to them. Then we thought of ourselves, in our circumstances so totally different on the surface, yet carrying the same needs in their depths. Are we, too, to overcome, in "the things present" of our modern world, and in face of "the things to come" yet upon the earth? Are we to be "more than conquerors," winning blessing out of all things, and really living "in our own generation" (Acts xiii. 36) as the bondmen of Christ and the sons of God? Then for us also the absolute necessities are—the same Truth, and the same Life. And they are ours, thanks be to the Name of our salvation. Time hath no more dominion over them, because death hath no more dominion over Him. For us, too, Jesus died. In us, too, by the Holy Ghost, He lives.

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE SORROWFUL PROBLEM: JEWISH UNBELIEF; DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY.

#### ROMANS ix. 1-33.

WE may well think that again there was silence awhile in that Corinthian chamber, when Tertius had duly inscribed the last words we have studied. A "silence in heaven" follows, in the Apocalypse (viii. 1), the vision of the white hosts of the redeemed, gathered at last, in their eternal jubilation, before the throne of the Lamb. A



silence in the soul is the fittest immediate sequel to such a revelation of grace and glory as has passed before us here. And did not the man whose work it was to utter it, and whose personal experience was as it were the informing soul of the whole argument of the Epistle from the first, and not least in this last sacred pæan of faith, keep silence when he had done, hushed and tired by this "exceeding weight" of grace and glory?

But he has a great deal more to say to the Romans, and in due time the pen obeys the voice again. What will the next theme be? It will be a pathetic and significant contrast to the last; a lament, a discussion, an instruction, and then a prophecy, about not himself and his happy fellow-saints, but poor self-blinded unbelieving Israel.

The occurrence of that subject exactly here is true to the inmost nature of the Gospel. The Apostle has just been counting up the wealth of salvation, and claiming it all, as present and eternal property, for himself and his brethren in the Lord. Justifying Righteousness, Liberty from sin in Christ, the Indwelling Spirit, electing Love, coming and certain Glory, all have been recounted, and asserted, and embraced. "Is it selfish," this great joy of possession and prospect? Let those say so who see these things only from outside. Make proof of what they are in their interior, enter into them, learn yourself what it is to have peace with God, to receive the Spirit, to expect the eternal glory; and you will find that nothing is so sure to expand the heart towards other men as the personal reception into it of the Truth and Life of God in Christ. It is possible to hold a true creed—and to be spiritually hard and selfish. But is it possible so to be when not only the creed is held, but the Lord of it, its Heart and Life, is received with wonder and great joy? The man whose certainties, whose riches, whose freedom, are all consciously "in Him," cannot but love his neighbour, and long that he too should come into "the secret of the Lord."

So St. Paul, just at this point of the Epistle, turns with a peculiar intensity of grief and yearning towards the Israel which he had once led, and now had left, because they would not come with him to Christ. His natural and his spiritual sympathies all alike go out to this self-afflicting people, so privileged, so divinely loved, and now so blind. Oh, that he could offer any sacrifice that would bring them reconciled, humbled, happy, to the feet of the true Christ! Oh, that they might see the fallacy of their own way of salvation, and submit to the way of Christ, taking His yoke, and finding rest to their souls! Why do they not do it? Why does not the light which convinced him shine on them? Why should not the whole Sanhedrin say, "Lord, what wouldst Thou have us to do?" Why does not the fair beauty of the Son of God make them too "count all things but loss" for Him? Why do not the voices of the Prophets prove to them, as they do now to Paul, absolutely convincing of the historical as well as spiritual claims, of the Man of Calvary? Has the promise failed? Has God done with the race to which He guaranteed such a perpetuity of blessing? No, that cannot be. He looks again, and he sees in the whole past a long warning that, while an outer circle of benefits might affect the nation, the inner circle, the light and

life of God indeed, embraced "a remnant" only; even from the day when Isaac and not Ishmael was made heir of Abraham. And then he ponders the impenetrable mystery of the relation of the Infinite Will to human wills; he remembers how, in a way whose full reasons are unknowable, (but they are good, for they are in God,) the Infinite Will has to do with our willing; genuine and responsible though our willing is. And before that opaque veil he rests. He knows that only righteousness and love are behind it; but he knows that *it is* a veil, and that in front of it man's thought must cease and be silent. Sin is altogether man's fault. But when man turns from sin it is all God's mercy, free, special, distinguishing. Be silent, and trust Him, O man whom He has made. Remember, He *has made* thee. It is not only that He is greater than thou, or stronger; but He has made thee. Be reasonably willing to trust, out of sight, the reasons of thy Maker.

Then he turns again with new regrets and yearnings to the thought of that wonderful Gospel which was meant for Israel and for the world, but which Israel rejected, and now would fain check on its way to the world. Lastly, he recalls the future, still full of eternal promises for the chosen race, and through them full of blessings for the world; till he rises at length from perplexity and anguish, and the wreck of once eager expectations, into that great Doxology in which he blesses the Eternal Sovereign for the very mystery of His ways, and adores Him because He is His own eternal End.

Truth I speak in Christ, speaking as the member of the All-Truthful; I do not lie, my conscience, in the Holy Ghost, informed and governed by Him, bearing me concurrent witness—the soul within affirming to itself the word spoken without to others—that I have great grief, and my heart has incessant pain, yes, the heart in which (v. 5) the Spirit has "poured out" God's love and joy; there is room for both experiences in its human depths. For I was wishing, I myself, to be anathema from Christ, to be devoted to eternal separation from Him; awful dream of uttermost sacrifice, made impossible only because it would mean self-robbery from the Lord who had bought him; a spiritual suicide by sin—for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen flesh-wise. For they are *οὐτως εἰσιν* Israelites, bearers of the glorious theocratic name, sons of the "Prince with God" (Gen. xxxii. 28); theirs is the adoption, the call to be Jehovah's own filial race, "His son, His first-born" (Exod. iv. 22) of the peoples; and the glory, the Shechinah of the Eternal Presence, sacramentally seen in Tabernacle and Temple, spiritually spread over the race; and the covenants, with Abraham, and Isaac, and Levi, and Moses, and Aaron, and Phinehas, and David; and the Legislation, the Holy Moral Code, and the Ritual, with its divinely ordered symbolism, that vast Parable of Christ, and the Promises, of "the pleasant land," and the perpetual favour, and the coming Lord; theirs are the Fathers, patriarchs, and priests, and kings; and out of them, as to what is flesh-wise, is the Christ,—He who is over all things, God, blessed to all eternity. Amen.\*

It is indeed a splendid roll of honours, re-

\*For this rendering, rather than the alternative, "Blessed for ever be the God who is over all," see the reasons offered below, p. 580.



cited over this race "separate among the nations," a race which to-day as much as ever remains the enigma of history, to be solved only by Revelation. "The Jews, your Majesty," was the reply of Frederick the Great's old believing courtier, when asked with a smile for the credentials of the Bible; the short answer silenced the Encyclopædist King. It is indeed a riddle, made of indissoluble facts, this people everywhere dispersed, yet everywhere individual; scribes of a Book which has profoundly influenced mankind, and which is recognised by the most various races as an august and lawful claimant to be divine, yet themselves, in so many aspects, provincial to the heart; historians of their own glories, but at least equally of their own unworthiness and disgrace; transmitters of predictions which may be slighted, but can never, as a whole, be explained away, yet obstinate deniers of their majestic fulfilment in the Lord of Christendom; human in every fault and imperfection, yet so concerned in bringing to man the message of the Divine that Jesus Himself said of them (John iv. 22), "Salvation comes from the Jews." On this wonderful race this its most illustrious member (after his Lord) here fixes his eyes, full of tears. He sees their glories pass before him—and then realises the spiritual squalor and misery of their rejection of the Christ of God. He groans, and in real agony asks how it can be. One thing only cannot be; the promises have not failed; there has been no failure in the Promiser. What may seem such is rather man's misreading of the promise.

But it is not as though the word of God has been thrown out, that "word" whose divine honour was dearer to him than even that of his people. For not all who come from Israel constitute Israel; nor, because they are seed of Abraham, are they all his children, in the sense of family life and rights; but "In Isaac shall a seed be called thee" (Gen. xxi. 12); Isaac, and not any son of thy body begotten, is father of those whom thou shalt claim as thy covenant race. That is to say, not the children of his flesh are the children of his ( $\tau\omicron\upsilon$ ) God; no, the children of the promise, indicated and limited by its developed terms, are reckoned as seed. For of the promise this was the word (Gen. xviii. 10, 14). "According to this time I will come, and Sarah, she and not *any* spouse of thine; no Hagar, no Keturah, but Sarah, shall have a son." And the law of limitations did not stop there, but contracted yet again the stream of even physical filiation: Nor only so, but Rebecca too—being with child, with twin children, of one husband—no problem of complex parentage, as with Abraham, occurring here—even of Isaac our father, just named as the selected heir—for it was while they were not yet born, while they had not yet shown any conduct good or bad, that the choice-wise purpose of God might remain, sole and sovereign, not based on works, but wholly on the Caller—it was said to her (Gen. xxv. 23), "The greater shall be bondman to the less." As it stands written, in the prophet's message a millennium later, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated," I repudiated him as heir.

So the limit has run always along with the promise. Ishmael is Abraham's son, yet not his son. Esau is Isaac's son, yet not his son. And though we trace in Ishmael and in

Esau, as they grow, characteristics which may seem to explain the limitation, this will not really do. For the chosen one in each case has his conspicuous unfavourable characteristics too. And the whole tone of the record (not to speak of this its apostolic interpretation) looks towards mystery, not explanation. Esau's "profanity" was the concurrent occasion, not the cause, of the choice of Jacob. The reason of the choice lay in the depths of God, that World "dark with excess of bright." All is well there, but not the less all is unknown.

So we are led up to the shut door of the sanctuary of God's Choice. Touch it; it is adamant, and it is fast locked. No blind Destiny has turned the key, and lost it. No inaccessible Tyrant sits within, playing to himself both sides of a game of fate, and indifferent to the cry of the soul. The Key-Bearer, whose Name is engraved on the portal, is "He that liveth, and was dead, and is alive for evermore" (Rev. i. 18). And if you listen you will hear words within, like the soft deep voice of many waters, yet of an eternal Heart; "I am that I am; I will that I will; trust Me." But the door is locked; and the Voice is mystery.

Ah, what agonies have been felt in human souls, as men have looked at that gate, and pondered the unknown interior! The Eternal knows, with infinite kindness and sympathy, the pain unspeakable which can beset the creature when it wrestles with His Eternity, and tries to clasp it with both hands, and to say that "that is all!" We do not find in Scripture, surely, anything like an anthem for that awful sense of the unknown which can gather on the soul drawn—irresistibly as it sometimes seems to be—into the problems of the Choice of God, and oppressed as with "the weight of all the seas upon it," by the very questions stated presently here by the Apostle. The Lord knoweth, not only His will, but our heart, in these matters. And where He entirely declines to explain (surely because we are not yet of age to understand Him if He did) He yet shows us Jesus, and bids us meet the silence of the mystery with the silence of a personal trust in the personal Character revealed in Him.

In something of such stillness shall we approach the paragraph now to follow? Shall we listen, not to explain away, not even over much to explain, but to submit, with a submission which is not a suppressed resentment but an entire reliance? We shall find that the whole matter, in its practical aspect, has a voice articulate enough for the soul which sees Christ, and believes on Him. It says to that soul, "Who maketh thee to differ? Who hath fashioned thee to honour? Why art thou not now, as once, guiltily rejecting Christ, or, what is the same, postponing Him? Thank Him who has 'compelled thee,' yet without violation of thyself, 'to come in.' See in thy choice of Him His mercy on thee. And now, fall at His feet, to bless Him, to serve Him, and to trust Him. Think ill of thyself. Think reverently of others. And remember (the Infinite, who has chosen thee, says it), He willeth not the death of a sinner, He loved the world, He bids thee to tell it that He loves it, to tell it that He is Love."

Now we listen. With a look which speaks awe, but not misgiving, disclosing past tempests of doubt, but now a rest of faith, the Apostle dictates again:



What therefore shall we say? Is there injustice at God's bar? Away with the thought. The thing is, in the deepest sense, unthinkable. God, the God of Revelation, the God of Christ, is a Being who, if unjust—"ceases to be," "denies *Himself*." But the thought that His reasons for some given action should be, at least to us now, absolute mystery, He being the Infinite Personality, is not unthinkable at all. And in such a case it is not unreasonable, but the deepest reason, to ask for no more than His articulate guarantee, so to speak, that the mystery is fact; that He is conscious of it, alive to it (speaking humanly); and that He avows it as His will. For when God, the God of Christ, bids us "take His will for it," it is a different thing from an attempt, however powerful, to frighten us into silence. It is a reminder Who He is who speaks; the Being who is kindred to us, who is in relations with us, who loved us, but who also has absolutely made us, and cannot (because we are sheer products of His will) make us so much His equals as to tell us all. So the Apostle proceeds with a "for" whose bearing we have thus already indicated: For to Moses he says (Exod. xxxiv. 19), in the dark sanctuary of Sinai, "I shall pity whomsoever I do pity, and compassionate whomsoever I do compassionate"; My account of My saving action shall stop there. It appears therefore that it, the ultimate account of salvation, is not of (as the effect is "of" the first cause) the willer, nor of the runner, the carrier of willing into work, but of the Pitier—God. For the Scripture\* says (Exod. x. 16) to Pharaoh, that large example of defiant human sin, real and guilty, but also, concurrently, of the sovereign Choice which sentenced him to go his own way, and used him as a beacon at its end, "For this very purpose I raised thee up, made thee stand, even beneath the Plagues, that I might display in thee My power, and that My Name, as of the just God who strikes down the proud, might be told far and wide in all the earth."

Pharaoh's was a case of concurrent phenomena. *A man* was there on the one hand, willingly, deliberately, and most guiltily, battling with right, and rightly bringing ruin on his own head, wholly of himself. *God* was there on the other hand, making that man a monument not of grace but of judgment. And that side, that line, is isolated here, and treated as if it were all.

It appears then that whom He pleases, He pities, and whom He pleases, He hardens, in that sense in which He "hardened Pharaoh's heart," "made it stiff," "made it heavy," "made it harsh"—by sentencing it to have its own way. Yes,† thus "it appears." And beyond that inference we can take no step of thought but this—that the Subject of that mysterious "will," He who thus "pleases," and "pities," and "hardens," is no other than the God of Jesus Christ. He may be, not only submitted to, but trusted, in that unknowable sovereignty of His will. Yet listen to the question which speaks out the problem of all hearts: "You will say to Me therefore, Why does He still, after such an avowal of His sovereignty, softening this heart, hardening that, why does He still find fault? Ah, why?

For His act of will who has withstood? (Nay, you have withstood His will, and so have I. Not one word of the argument has contradicted the primary fact of our will, nor therefore our responsibility. But this he does not bring in here.) Nay, rather, rather than take such an attitude of narrow and helpless logic, think deeper; nay, rather, O man, O mere human being, you—who are you, who are answering back to your God? Shall the thing formed say to its Former, Why did you make me like this? Has not the potter authority over his clay, out of the same kneaded mass to make this vessel for honour, but that for dishonour? But if God, being pleased to demonstrate His wrath, and to evidence what He can do—*what* will St. Paul go on to say? That the Eternal, being thus "pleased," created responsible beings on purpose to destroy them, gave them personality, and then compelled them to transgress? No, he does not say so. The sternly simple illustration, in itself one of the least relieved utterances in the whole Scripture—that dread Potter and his kneaded Clay!—gives way, in its application, to a statement of the work of God on man full of significance in its variation. Here are indeed the "vessels" still; and the vessels "for honour" are such because of "mercy," and His own hand has "prepared them for glory." And there are the vessels "for dishonour," and in a sense of awful mystery they are such because of "wrath." But the "wrath" of the Holy One can fall only upon demerit; so these "vessels" have merited His displeasure of themselves. And they are "prepared for ruin"; but where is any mention of *His* hand preparing them? And meanwhile He "bears them in much longsuffering." The mystery is there, impenetrable as ever, when we try to pierce behind "His will." But on every side it is limited and qualified by facts which witness to the compassions of the Infinite Sovereign even in His judgments, and remind us that sin is altogether "of" the creature. So we take up the words where we dropped them above: What if He bore, (the tense throws us forward into eternity, to look back thence on His ways in time,) in much longsuffering, vessels of wrath, adjusted for ruin? And acted otherwise with others, that He might evidence the wealth of His glory, the resources of His inmost Character, poured upon vessels of pity, which He prepared in advance for glory, by the processes of justifying and hallowing grace—whom in fact He called, effectually, in their conversion, even us, not only from the Jews, but also from the Gentiles? For while the lineal Israel, with its privilege and its apparent failure, is here first in view, there lies behind it the phenomenon of "the Israel of God," the heaven-born heirs of the Fathers, a race not of blood, but of the Spirit. The great Promise, all the while, had set towards *that* Israel as its final scope; and now he gives proof from the Prophets that this intention was at least half revealed all along the line of revelation.

As actually in our Hosea (ii. 23; Heb., 25) in the book we know as such, He says, "I will call what was not My people, My people; and the not-beloved one, beloved. And [another Hosean oracle, in line with the first] it shall be, in the place where it was said to them, Not My people are ye, there they shall be called sons of the living God." In both places the first incidence of the words is on the restoration of

\* Observe the vital personality of the phrase; "the Scripture speaks." Cp. Gal. iii. 8 for perhaps the strongest example of the kind.

† Cp. Psal. lxxxi. 12, and above, i. 24, 26.



the Ten Tribes to covenant blessings. But the Apostle, in the Spirit, sees an ultimate and satisfying reference to a vaster application of the same principle; the bringing of the rebelling and banished ones of all mankind into covenant and blessing.

Meanwhile the Prophets who foretell that great ingathering indicate with equal solemnity the spiritual failure of all but a fraction of the lineal heirs of promise. But Isaiah cries over Israel, "If the number of the sons of Israel should be as the sand of the sea, the remnant only shall be saved; for as one who completes and cuts short will the Lord do His work upon the earth." Here again is a first and second incidence of the prophecy. In every stage of the history of Sin and Redemption the Apostle, in the Spirit, sees an embryo of the great Development. So, in the woefully limited numbers of the Exiles who returned from the old captivity he sees an embodied prophecy of the fewness of the sons of Israel who shall return from the exile of incredulity to their true Messiah. And as Isaiah (i. 9) has foretold, so it is; "Unless the Lord of Hosts had left us a seed, like Sodom we had become, and to Gomorrah we had been resembled."

Such was the mystery of the facts, alike in the older and in the later story of Israel. A remnant, still a remnant, not the masses, entered upon an inheritance of such ample provision, and so sincerely offered. And behind this lay the insoluble shadow within which is concealed the relation of the Infinite Will to the wills of men. But also, in front of the phenomenon, concealed by no shadow save that which is cast by human sin, the Apostle sees and records the reasons, as they reside in the human will, of this "salvation of a remnant." The promises of God, all along, and supremely now in Christ, had been conditioned (it was in the nature of spiritual things that it should be so) by submission to His way of fulfilment. The golden gift was there, in the most generous of hands, stretched out to give. But it could be put only into a recipient hand open and empty. It could be taken only by submissive and self-forgetting faith. And man, in his fall, had twisted his will out of gear for such an action. Was it wonderful that, by his own fault, he failed to receive? What therefore shall we say? \* Why, that the Gentiles, though they did not pursue righteousness, though no Oracle had set them on the track of a true divine acceptance and salvation, achieved righteousness, grasped it when once revealed, but the righteousness that results on faith; but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, aiming at what is, for fallen man, the impossible goal, a perfect meeting of the Law's one principle of acceptance, "This do and thou shalt live," did not attain that law; that is to say, practically, as we now review their story of vain efforts in the line of self, did not attain the acceptance to which that law was to be the avenue. The Pharisee as such, the Pharisee Saul of Tarsus for example, neither had peace with God, nor dared to think he had, in the depth of his soul. He knew enough of the divine ideal to be hopelessly uneasy about his realisation of it. He could say, stiffly enough, "God, I thank Thee" (Luke xviii. 11, 14); but he "went down to his house" unhappy, un-

satisfied, unjustified. On what account? Because it was not of faith, but as of works; in the unquiet dream that man must, and could, work up the score of merit to a valid claim. They stumbled on the Stone of their stumbling; as it stands written (Isa. viii. 14, xxviii. 16), in a passage where the great perpetual Promise is in view, and where the blind people are seen rejecting it as their foothold in favour of policy, or of formalism, Behold, I place in Sion, in the very centre of light and privilege, a Stone of stumbling, and a Rock of upsetting; and he who confides in Him, (or, perhaps, in it,) he who rests on it, on Him, shall not be put to shame.

One great Rabbi at least, Rashi, of the twelfth century, bears witness to the mind of the Jewish Church upon the significance of that mystic Rock. "Behold," so runs his interpretation, "I have established a King, a Messiah, who shall be in Zion a stone of proving."

Was ever prophecy more profoundly verified in event? Not for the lineal Israel only, but for Man, the King Messiah is, as ever, the Stone of either stumbling or foundation. He is, as ever, "a Sign spoken against." He is, as ever, the Rock of Ages, where the believing sinner hides, and rests, and builds,

"Below the storm-mark of the sky,  
Above the flood-mark of the deep."

Have we known what it is to stumble over Him? "We will not have this Man to reign over us"; "We were never in bondage to any man; who is He that He should set us free?" And are we now lifted by a Hand of omnipotent kindness to a place deep in His clefts, safe on His summit, "knowing nothing" for the peace of conscience, the satisfaction of thought, the liberation of the will, the abolition of death, "but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified"? Then let us think with always humbled sympathy of those who, for whatever reason, still "forsake their own mercy" (Jonah ii. 8). And let us inform them where we are, and how we are here, and that "the ground is good." And for ourselves, that we may do this the better, let us often read again the simple, strong assurance which closes this chapter of mysteries; "He who confides in Him shall not be put to shame"; "shall not be disappointed"; "shall not," in the vivid phrase of the Hebrew itself, "make haste." No, we shall not "make haste." From that safe Place no hurried retreat shall ever need to be beaten. That Fortress cannot be stormed; it cannot be surprised; it cannot crumble. For "It is He"; the Son, the Lamb, of God; the sinner's everlasting Righteousness, the believer's unfailing Source of peace, of purity, and of power.

#### DETACHED NOTE TO IX. 5.

THE following is transcribed, with a few modifications, from the writer's Commentary on the Epistle in "The Cambridge Bible":

["Who is over all, God blessed for ever.] The Greek may, with more or less facility, be translated (1) as in A. V.; or (2) 'who is God over all,' etc.; or (3) 'blessed for ever be He who is God over all' (i. e., the Eternal Father). . . . If we adopt (3) we take the Apostle to be led, by the mention of the Incarnation, to

\* For the seventh and last time he uses this characteristic phrase.



utter a sudden and solemn doxology to the God who gave that crowning mercy. In favour of this it is urged (by some entirely orthodox commentators, as H. A. W. Meyer) that St. Paul nowhere else styles the Lord simply 'God,' but rather 'the Son of God,' etc. By this they do not mean to detract from the Lord's Deity; but they maintain that St. Paul always so states that Deity, under Divine guidance, as to mark the 'Subordination of the Son'—that Subordination which is not a difference of Nature, Power, or Eternity, but of Order; just such as is marked by the simple but profound words Father and Son.

"But on the other hand there is Tit. ii. 13, where the Greek is (at least) *perfectly capable* of the rendering, 'our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.' [There is Acts xx. 28, where the evidence is very strong for the reading, retained by the R. V. (text) '*the Church of God*, which He purchased with His own blood.' And if St. John is to be taken to report words exactly, in his narrative of the Resurrection, in an incident whose point is deeply connected with verbal precision, we have one of the first Apostles, within eight days of the Resurrection, addressing the Risen Lord (John xx. 28) as '*my God*.' (We call attention to this as against the contention that only the latest developments of inspiration, represented in, e. g., St. John's Preamble to his Gospel, show us Christ called explicitly God.)]

"If . . . it is divinely true that 'the Word is God,' it is surely far from wonderful if here and there, in peculiar connections, [St. Paul] should so speak of Christ, even though guided to keep another phase of the truth *habitually* in view.

"Now, beyond all fair question, the Greek here is quite naturally rendered as in the A. V.; had it not been for historical controversy, probably, no other rendering would have been suggested. And lastly, and what is important, the context far rather suggests a *lament* (over the fall of Israel) than an ascription of praise. And what is most significant of all, it pointedly suggests *some explicit allusion to the super-human Nature of Christ*, by the words, 'according to the flesh.' But if there is such an allusion, then it must lie in the words, 'over all, God.'"

## CHAPTER XXI.

### JEWISH UNBELIEF AND GENTILE FAITH: PROPHECY.

#### ROMANS X. 1-21.

THE problem of Israel is still upon the Apostle's soul. He has explored here and there the conditions of the fact that his brethren, as a mass, have rejected Jesus. He has delivered his heart of its loving human groan over the fact. He has reminded himself, and then his readers, that the fact, however, involves no failure of the purpose and promise of God; for God from the first had indicated limitations within the apparent scope of the Abrahamic Promise. He has looked in the face, once for all, the mystery of the relation between God's efficient will and the will of the creature, finding a refuge, under the moral strain of that mystery, not away from it, but as it were behind it, in

the recollection of the infinite trustworthiness, as well as eternal rights, of man's Maker. Then he has recurred to the underlying main theme of the whole Epistle, the acceptance of the sinner in God's own one way; and we have seen how, from Israel's own point of view, Israel has stumbled and fallen just by his own fault. Israel would not rest upon "the Stone of stumbling"; he would collide with it. Divine sovereignty here or there—the heart of Jewish man, in its responsible personality, and wholly of itself—rebelled against a man-humbling salvation. And so all its religiousness, its earnestness, its intensity, went for nothing in the quest for peace and purity. They stumbled—a real striking of real wayward feet—at the Stumbling Stone; which all the while lay ready to be their basis and repose.

He cannot leave the subject, with its sadness, its lessons, and its hope. He must say more of his love and longing for Israel; and also more about this aspect of Israel's fall—this collision of man's will with the Lord's Way of Peace. And he will unfold the deep witness of the prophecies to the nature of that Way, and to the reluctance of the Jewish heart to accept it. Moses shall come in with the Law, and Isaiah with the Scriptures of the Prophets; and we shall see how their Inspirer, all along from the first, indicated what should surely happen when a salvation altogether divine should be presented to hearts filled with themselves.

Brethren, he begins, the deliberate desire of my heart, whatever discouragements may oppose it\* and my petition unto God for them,† is salvationwards. He is inevitably moved to this by the pathetic sight of their earnestness, misguided indeed, guiltily misguided, utterly inadequate to constitute for them even a phantom of merit; yet, to the eyes that watch it, a different thing from indifference or hypocrisy. He cannot see their real struggles, and not long that they may reach the shore.

For I bear them witness, the witness of one who once was the type of the class, that they have zeal of God, an honest jealousy for His Name, His Word, His Worship, only not in the line of spiritual knowledge. They have not seen all He is, all His Word means, all His worship implies. They are sure, and rightly sure, of many things about Him; but they have not "seen Him." And so they have not "abhorred themselves" (Job xli. 5, 6). And thus they are *not*, in their own conviction, shut up to a salvation which must be altogether of Him; which is no contract with Him, but eternal bounty from Him.

Solemn and heart-moving scene! There are now, and were then, those who would have surveyed it, and come away with the comfortable reflection that so much earnestness would surely somehow work itself right at last; nay, that it was already sufficiently good in itself to secure these honest zealots a place in some comprehensive heaven. If ever such thoughts had excuse, surely it was here. The "zeal" was quite sincere. It was ready to suffer, as well as to strike. The zealot was not afraid of a world in arms. And he felt himself on fire not for evil, but for God, for the God of Abraham, of Moses, of the Prophets, of the Promise. Would not this do? Would not the lamentable rejection of

\* We thus attempt to convey the force of μέν.

† So read; not "for Israel."



Jesus which attended it be condoned as a tremendous but mere accident, while the "zeal of God" remained as the substance, the essence, of the spiritual state of the zealot? Surely a very large allowance would be made; to put it at the lowest terms.

Yet such was not the view of St. Paul, himself once the most honest and disinterested Jewish zealot in the world. He had seen the Lord. And so he had seen himself. The deadly mixture of motive which may underlie what nevertheless we may have to call an *honest* hatred of the Gospel had been shown to him in the white light of Christ. In that light he had seen—what it alone can fully show—the condemnableness of all sin, and the hopelessness of self-salvation. From himself he reasons, and rightly, to his brethren. He knows, with a solemn sympathy, how much they are in earnest. But his sympathy conceals no false liberalism; it is not cheaply generous of the claims of God. He does not think that because they are in earnest they are saved. Their earnestness drives his heart to a deeper prayer for their salvation.

For knowing not the righteousness of our God, His way of being just, yet the Justifier, and seeking to set up their own righteousness, to construct for themselves a claim which should "stand in judgment," they did not submit to the righteousness of our God, when it appeared before them, embodied in "the Lord our Righteousness." They *aspired* to acceptance. God bade them *submit* to it. In their view, it was a matter of attainment; an ascent to a difficult height, where the climber might exult in his success. As He presented it, it was a matter of surrender, as when a patient, given over, places himself helpless in a master-healer's hands, for a recovery which is to be due to those hands alone, and to be celebrated only to their praise.

Alas for such "ignorance" in these earnest souls; for such a failure in Israel to strike the true line of "knowledge"! For it was a guilty failure. The Law had been indicating all the while that their Dispensation was not its own end, but one vast complex means to shut man up to a Redeemer who was at once to satisfy every type, and every oracle, and to supply "the impossible of the Law" (viii. 3), by giving Himself to be the believer's vicarious Merit. For the Law's end, its Goal, its Final Cause in the plan of redemption, is—Christ, unto righteousness, to effect and secure this wonderful acceptance, for every one who believes. Yes, He is no arbitrary sequel to the Law; He stands organically related to it. And to this the Law itself is witness, both by presenting an inexorable and condemning standard as its only possible code of acceptance, and by mysteriously pointing the soul away from that code, in its quest for mercy, to something altogether different, at once accessible and divine. For Moses writes down thus the righteousness got from the Law, "The man who does them, shall live in them" (Levit. xviii. 5); it is a matter of personal action and personal meriting alone. Thus the code, feasible and beneficent indeed on the plane of national and social life, which is its lower field of action, is necessarily fatal to fallen man when the question lies between his conscience and the eternal Judge. But the righteousness got from faith, the acceptance received by surrendering trust, thus speaks (Deut. xxx. 12-14)—in Moses' words indeed (and this is one main

point in the reasoning, that *he* is witness), yet as it were with a personal voice of its own, deep and tender: "Say not in thy heart, Who shall ascend to the heaven?" that is, to bring down Christ, by human efforts, by a climbing merit; "or, Who shall descend into the abyss? that is, to bring up Christ from the dead," as if "His victorious Sacrifice needed your supplement in order to its resurrection-triumph. But what does it say? "Near thee is the utterance, the explicit account of the Lord's willingness to bless the soul which casts itself on Him,\* in thy mouth, to recite it, and in thy heart," to welcome it. And this message is the utterance of faith, the creed of acceptance by faith alone, which we proclaim; that if you shall confess in your mouth Jesus as Lord,† as divine King and Master, and shall believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, owning in the soul the glory of the Resurrection, as revealing and sealing the triumph of the Atonement, you shall be saved. For with the heart faith is exercised, unto righteousness, with acceptance for its resultant; while with the mouth confession is made, unto salvation, with present deliverance and final glory for its resultant, the moral sequel of a life which owns its Lord as all in all. For the Scripture says (Isa. xxviii. 16), "Everyone who believes on Him shall not be ashamed,"‡ shall never be disappointed; shall be "kept, through faith, unto the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet. i. 5).

We have traversed here a tract pregnant of questions and mystery. We have to remember here also, as in previous places, that the Scripture is "not a sun, but a lamp." Much, very much, which this passage suggests as problem finds in its words no answer. This citation from Deuteronomy, with its vision of ascents and descents, its thoughts of the heaven and the abyss, what did it mean when aged Moses spoke it in the plains of Moab? What did it mean *to him*? Did he see, did he feel, Messiah in every clause? Had he conscious foreviews, then and there, of what was to be done ages later beyond that stern ridge of hills, westward of "the narrow stream"? Did he knowingly "testify beforehand" that God was to be born Man at Bethlehem, and to die Man at Jerusalem? We do not know; we cannot possibly know, until the eternal day finds Moses and ourselves together in the City of God, and we better understand the mysterious Word, at last, in that great light. If our Master's utterances are to be taken as final, it is quite certain that "Moses wrote of Him" (John v. 46). But it is not certain that he always knew he was so writing when he so wrote; nor is it certain *how far* his consciousness went when it was most awake that way. In the passage here cited by St. Paul the great Prophet may have been aware only of a reference of his words to the seen, the temporal, the national, to the blessings of loyalty to Israel's God-given polity, and of a return to it after times of revolt and decline. But then, St. Paul neither affirms this nor denies it. As if on purpose, he almost drops the personality of Moses out of sight, and personifies Justification as the speaker. His concern is less with the

\* Observe that the context in Deut. xxx. is full of the thought that rebels and law-breakers shall be welcome back when they come penitent to their God, "without one plea," but taking Him at His word.

† Or, with an alternative reading, "that Jesus is Lord."

‡ See above, ix. 33.



Prophet than with his Inspirer, the ultimate Author behind the immediate author. And his own prophet-insight is guided to see that in the thought of *that* Author, as He wielded Moses' mind and diction at His will, Christ was the inmost purport of the words.

We may ask again what are the laws by which the Apostle modifies here the Prophet's phrases, "Who shall descend into the abyss?" The Hebrew reads, "Who shall go over (*or on*) the sea?" The Septuagint reads, "Who shall go to the other side of the sea?" Here too "we know in part." Assuredly the change of terms was neither unconsciously made, nor arbitrarily; and it was made for readers who could challenge it, if so it seemed to them to be done. But we should need to know the whole relation of the One inspiring Master to the minds of both His Prophet and His Apostle to answer the question completely. However, we can see that Prophet and Apostle both have in their thought here the antithesis of depth to height; that the sea is, to Moses here, the antithesis to the sky, not to the land; and that St. Paul intensifies the imagery in its true direction accordingly when he writes, "into the abyss."

Again, he finds Justification by Faith in the Prophet's oracle about the subjective "nearness" of "the utterance" of mercy. Once more we own our ignorance of the conscious purport of the words, as Moses' words. We shall quite decline, if we are reverently cautious, to say that for certain Moses was not aware of such an inmost reference in what he said: it is very much easier to assert than to know what the limitations of the consciousness of the Prophets were. But here also we rest in the fact that behind both Moses and Paul, in their free and mighty personalities, stood their one Lord, building His Scripture slowly into its manifold oneness through them both. He was in the thought and word of Moses; and meantime already to Him the thought and word of Paul were present, and were in His plan. And the earlier utterance had this at least to do with the later, that it drew the mind of the pondering and worshipping Israel to the idea of a contact with God in His Promises which was not external and mechanical but deep within the individual himself, and manifested in the individual's free and living avowal of it.

As we quit the passage, let us mark and cherish its insistence upon "confession," "confession with the mouth that Jesus is Lord." This specially he connects with "salvation," with the believer's preservation to eternal glory. "Faith" is "unto righteousness"; "confession" is "unto salvation." Why is this? Is faith after all not enough for our union with the Lord, and for our safety in Him? Must we bring in something else, to be a more or less meritorious makeweight in the scale? If this is what he means, he is gainsaying the whole argument of the Epistle on its main theme. No; it is eternally true that we are justified, that we are accepted, that we are incorporated, that we are kept, through faith only; that is, that Christ is all for all things in our salvation, and our part and work in the matter are to receive and hold Him in *an empty hand*. But then this empty hand, holding Him, receives life and power from Him. The man is vivified by his Rescuer. He is rescued that he may live, and that he may serve as living. He cannot truly

serve without loyalty to his Lord. He cannot be truly loyal while he hides his relation to Him. In some articulate way he must "confess Him"; or he is not treading the path where the Shepherd walks before the sheep.

The "confession with the mouth" here in view is, surely, nothing less than the believer's open loyalty to Christ. It is no mere recitation of even the sacred catholic Creed; which may be recited as by an automaton. It is the witness of the whole man to Christ, as his own discovered Life and Lord. And thus it means in effect the path of faithfulness along which the Saviour actually leads to glory those who are justified by faith.

That no slackened emphasis on faith is to be felt here is clear from ver. 11. There, in the summary and close of the passage, nothing but faith is named; "*whosoever believeth on Him*." It is as if he would correct even the slightest disquieting surmise that our repose upon the Lord has to be secured by something other than Himself, through some means more complex than taking Him at His word. Here, as much as anywhere in the Epistle, this is the message; "from faith to faith." The "confession with the mouth" is not a different something added to this faith; it is its issue, its manifestation, its embodiment. "I believed; *therefore have I spoken*" (Ps. cxvi. 10).

This recurrence to his great theme gives the Apostle's thought a direction once again towards the truth of the world-wide scope of the Gospel of Acceptance. In the midst of this *philo-judean* section of the Epistle, on his way to say glorious things about abiding mercy and coming blessing for the Jews, he must pause again to assert the equal welcome of "the Greeks" to the Righteousness of God, and the foreshadow of this welcome in the Prophets. For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek (wonderful antithesis to the "no distinction" of iii. 23!). For the same Lord is Lord of all, wealthy to all who call upon Him, who invoke Him, who appeal to Him, in the name of His own mercies in His redeeming Son. For we have the prophecies with us here again. Joel, in a passage (ii. 32) full of Messiah, the passage with which the Spirit of Pentecost filled Peter's lips, speaks thus without a limit; "Every one, whoever shall call upon the Lord's Name, shall be saved." As he cites the words, and the thought rises upon him of this immense welcome to the sinful world, he feels afresh all the need of the heathen, and all the cruel narrowness of the Pharisaism which would shut them out from such an amplitude of blessing. How then can they call on Him on whom they never believed? But how can they believe on Him whom they never heard? But how can they hear Him apart from a proclaimer? But how can they proclaim unless they are sent, unless the Church which holds the sacred light sends her messengers out into the darkness? And in this again the Prophets are with the Christian Apostle, and against the loveless Judaist: As it stands written (Isa. lii. 7), "How fair the feet of the gossellers of peace, of the gossellers of good."

Here, as an incident in this profound discussion, is given for ever to the Church of Christ one of the most distinct and stringent of her missionary "marching-orders." Let us recollect this, and lay it on our own souls, forgetting



awhile, for we may, the problem of Israel and the exclusiveness of ancient Pharisaism. What is there here for us? What motive facts are here, ready to energise and direct the will of the Christian, and of the Church, in the matter of the "gospel" of the world?

We take note first of what is written last, the moral beauty and glory of the enterprise. "How fair the feet!" From the view-point of heaven there is nothing on the earth more lovely than the bearing of the name of Jesus Christ into the needing world, when the bearer is one "who loves and knows." The work may have, and probably will have, very little of the rainbow of romance about it. It will often lead the worker into the most uncouth and forbidding circumstances. It will often demand of him the patient expenditure of days and months upon humiliating and circuitous preparations; as he learns a barbarous unwritten tongue, or a tongue ancient and elaborate, in a stifling climate; or finds that he must build his own hut, and dress his own food, if he is to live at all among "the Gentiles." It may lay on him the exquisite—and prosaic—trial of finding the tribes around him entirely unaware of their need of his message; unconscious of sin, of guilt, of holiness, of God. Nay, they may not only not care for his message: they may suspect or deride his motives, and roundly tell him that he is a political spy, or an adventurer come to make his private gains, or a barbarian tired of his own Thule and irresistibly attracted to the region of the sun. He will often be tempted to think "the journey too great for him," and long to let his tired and heavy feet rest for ever. But his Lord is saying of him, all the while, "How fair the feet!" He is doing a work whose inmost conditions even now are full of moral glory, and whose eternal issues, perhaps where he thinks there has been most failure, shall be, by grace, worthy of "the King in His beauty." It is the continuation of what the King Himself "began to do" (Acts i. 1), when He was His own first Missionary to a world which needed Him immeasurably, yet did not know Him when He came.

Then, this paragraph asserts the necessity of the missionary's work still more urgently than its beauty. True, it suggests many questions (what great Scripture does not do so?) which we cannot answer yet at all:—"Why has He left the Gentiles thus? Why is so much, for their salvation, suspended (in our view) upon the too precarious and too lingering diligence of the Church? What will the King say at last to those who never could, by the Church's fault, even hear the blessed Name, that they might believe in It, and call upon It?" He knoweth the whole answer to such questions; not we. Yet here meanwhile stands out this "thing revealed" (Deut. xxix. 29). In the Lord's normal order, which is for certain the order of eternal spiritual right and love, however little we can see all the conditions of the case, man is to be saved through a personal "calling upon His Name." And for that "calling" there is need of personal believing. And for that believing there is need of personal hearing. And in order to that hearing, God does not speak in articulate thunder from the sky, nor send visible angels up and down the earth, but bids His Church, His children, go and tell.

Nothing can be stronger and surer than the

practical logic of this passage. The need of the world, it says to us, is not only amelioration, elevation, evolution. It is salvation. It is pardon, acceptance, holiness, and heaven. It is God; it is Christ. And that need is to be met not by subtle expansions of polity and society. No "unconscious cerebration" of the human race will regenerate fallen man. Nor will his awful wound be healed by any drawing on the shadowy resources of a post-mortal hope. The work is to be done now, in the Name of Jesus Christ, and by His Name. And His Name, in order to be known, has to be announced and explained. And that work is to be done by those who already know it, or it will not be done at all. "There is none other Name." There is no other method of evangelisation.

Why is not the Name already, at least externally, known and revered in every place of human dwelling? It would have been so, for a long time now, if the Church of Christ had followed better the precept and also the example of St. Paul. Had the apostolic missions been sustained more adequately throughout Christian history, and had the apostolic Gospel been better maintained in the Church in all the energy of its divine simplicity and fulness, the globe would have been covered—not indeed in a hurry, yet ages ago now—with the knowledge of Jesus Christ as Fact, as Truth, as Life. We are told even now by some of the best informed advocates of missionary enterprise that if Protestant Christendom (to speak of it alone) were really to respond to the missionary call, and "send" its messengers out not by tens but by thousands (no chimerical number), it would be soberly possible within thirty years so to distribute the message that no given inhabited spot should be, at furthest, one day's walk from a centre of evangelisation. This programme is not fanaticism, surely. It is a proposal for possible action, too long deferred, in the line of St. Paul's precept and example. It is not meant to discredit any present form of well-considered operation. And it does not for a moment ignore the futility of all enterprise where the sovereign power of the Eternal Spirit is not present. Nor does it forget the permanent call to the Church to sustain amply the pastoral work at home, in "the flock of God which is among us" (1 Pet. v. 2). But it sees and emphasises the fact that the Lord has laid it upon His Church to be His messenger to the whole world, and to be in holy earnest about it, and that the work, as to its human side, is quite feasible to a Church awake. "Stir up, we beseech Thee, O Lord, the wills of Thy faithful people" to both the glory and the necessity of this labour of labours for Thee, "that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of it, may of Thee be plenteously rewarded," in Thy divine use of their obedience, for the salvation of the world.

But the great missionary anticipates an objection from facts to his burning plea for the rightness of an unrestrained evangelism. The proclamation might be universal; but were not the results partial? "Here a little, and there a little"; was not this the story of missionary results even when a Paul, a Barnabas, a Peter, was the missionary? Everywhere some faith; but everywhere more hostility and still more indifference! Could this, after all, be the main track of the divine purposes—these often ineffectual excursions of the "fair feet" of the mes-



sengers of an eternal peace? Ah, that objection must have offered no mere logical difficulty to St. Paul; it must have pierced his heart. For while His Master was his first motive, his fellow-men themselves were his second. He loved their souls; he longed to see them blessed in Christ, saved in Him from "the death that cannot die," filled in Him with "life indeed" ἡ ὄντως ζωή, 1 Tim. vi. 19). The man who shed tears over his converts as he warned them (Acts xx. 31) had tears also, we may be sure, for those who would not be converted; nay, we know he had: "I tell you, *even weeping* (καὶ κλαίων), that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ" (Phil. iii. 18). But here too he leans back on the solemn comfort, the answer from within a veil,—that Prophecy had taken account of this beforehand. Moses, and Isaiah, and David had foretold on the one hand a universal message of good, but on the other hand a sorrowfully limited response from man, and notably from Israel. So he proceeds: But not all obeyed the good tidings, when "the word" reached them; for—we were prepared for such a mystery, such a grief—for Isaiah says (liii. 1), in his great Oracle of the Crucified, "Lord, who believed our hearing," the message they heard of us, about One "on whom were laid the iniquities of us all"? And as he dictates that word "hearing," it emphasises to him the fact that not mystic intuitions born out of the depths of man are the means of revelation, but articulate messages given from the depths of God, and spoken by men to men. And he throws the thought into a brief sentence, such as would lie in a footnote in a modern book: So we gather that faith comes from hearing; but the hearing comes through Christ's utterance; the messenger has it because it was first given to him by the Master who proclaimed Himself the Way, Truth, Life, Light, Bread, Shepherd, Ransom, Lord. All is revelation, not reverie; utterance, not insight.

Then the swift thought turns, and returns again. The prophecies *have* foretold an evangelical utterance to the whole human world. Not only in explicit prediction do they do so, but in the "mystic glory" of their more remote allusions. But I say, Did they not hear? Was this failure of belief due to a limitation of the messenger's range in the plan of God? Nay, rather, "Unto all the earth went out their tone, and to the ends of man's world their utterances" (Psal. xix. 4). The words are the voice of that Psalm where the glories of the visible heavens are collocated with the glories of the Word of God. The Apostle hears more than Nature in the Sunrise Hymn of David; he hears grace and the Gospel in the deep harmony which carries the immortal melody along. The God who meant the skies, with their "silent voices," to preach a Creator not to one race but to all, meant also His Word to have no narrower scope, preaching a Redeemer. Yes, and there were articulate predictions that it should be so, as well as starry parables; predictions, too, that showed the prospect not only of a world evangelised, but of an Israel put to shame by the faith of pagans. But I say (his rapid phrase meets with an anticipating answer the cavil yet unspoken) did not Israel know? Had they no distinct forewarning of what we see to-day? First comes Moses, saying, in his prophetic Song, sung at the foot of Pisgah

(Deut. xxxii. 21), "I [the 'I' is emphatic; the Person is the Lord, and the action shall be nothing less than His] I will take a no-nation to move your jealousy; to move your anger I will take a nation non-intelligent"; a race not only not informed by a previous revelation, but not trained by thought upon it to an insight into new truth. And what Moses indicates, Isaiah, standing later in the history, indignantly explains: But Isaiah dares anything and says (lxv. 1), "I was found by those who sought not Me; manifest I became to those who consulted not Me." But as to Israel he says, in the words next in order in the place (lxv. 2), "All the day long I spread my hands open, to beckon and to embrace, towards a people disobeying and contradicting."

So the servant brings his sorrows for consolation to—may we write the words in reverence?—the sorrows of His Master. He mourns over an Athens, an Ephesus, and above all a Jerusalem, that "will not come to the Son of God, that they might have life" (John v. 40). And his grief is not only inevitable; it is profoundly right, wise, holy. But he need not bear it unrelieved. He grasps the Scripture which tells him that his Lord has called those who would not come, and opened the eternal arms for an embrace—to be met only with a contradiction. He weeps, but it is as on the breast of Jesus as He wept over the City. And in the double certainty that the Lord has felt such grief, and that He is the Lord, he yields, he rests, he is still. "The King of the Ages" (1 Tim. i. 17) and "the Man of Sorrows" are One. To know Him is to be at peace, even under the griefs of the mystery of sin.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### ISRAEL, HOWEVER, NOT FORSAKEN.

ROMANS xi. 1-10.

"A PEOPLE disobeying and contradicting." So the Lord of Israel, through the Prophet, had described the nation. Let us remember as we pass on what a large feature in the prophecies, and indeed in the whole Old Testament, such accusations and exposures are. From Moses to Malachi, in histories, and songs, and instructions, we find everywhere this tone of stern truth-telling, this unsparing detection and description of Israelite sin. And we reflect that every one of these utterances, humanly speaking, was the voice of an Israelite; and that whatever reception it met with at the moment—it was sometimes a scornful or angry reception, oftener a reverent one—it was ultimately treasured, venerated, almost worshipped, by the Church of this same rebuked and humiliated Israel. We ask ourselves what this has to say about the true origin of these utterances, and the true nature of the environment into which they fell. Do they not bear witness to the supernatural in both? It was not "human nature" which, in a race quite as prone, at least, as any other, to assert itself, produced these intense and persistent rebukes from within, and secured for them a profound and lasting veneration. The Hebrew Scriptures, in this as in other things, are a literature which mere man, mere



Israelite man, "could not have written if he would, and would not have written if he could." \* Somehow, the Prophets not only spoke with an authority more than human, but they were known to speak with it. There was a national consciousness of divine privilege; and it was inextricably bound up with a national conviction that the Lord of the privileges had an eternal right to reprove His privileged ones, and that He had, as a fact, His accredited messengers of reproof, whose voice was not theirs but His; not the mere outcry of patriotic zealots, but the Oracle of God. Yea, an awful privilege was involved in the reception of such reproofs: "You only have I known; therefore will I punish you" (Amos iii. 2).

But this is a recollection by the way. St. Paul, so we saw in our last study, has quoted Isaiah's stern message, only now to stay his troubled heart on the fact that the unbelief of Israel in his day was, if we may dare to put it so, no surprise to the Lord, and therefore no shock to the servant's faith. But is he to stop there, and sit down, and say, "This must be so"? No; there is more to follow, in this discourse on Israel and God. He has "good words, and comfortable words" (Zech. i. 13), after the woes of the last two chapters, and after those earlier passages of the Epistle where the Jew is seen only in his hypocrisy, and rebellion, and pride. He has to speak of a faithful Remnant, now as always present, who make as it were the golden unbroken link between the nation and the promises. And then he has to lift the curtain, at least a corner of the curtain, from the future, and to indicate how there lies waiting there a mighty blessing for Israel, and through Israel for the world. Even now the mysterious "People" was serving a spiritual purpose in their very unbelief; they were occasioning a vast transition of blessing to the Gentiles, by their own refusal of blessing. And hereafter they were to serve a purpose of still more illustrious mercy. They were yet, in their multitudes, to return to their rejected Christ. And their return was to be used as the means of a crisis of blessing for the world.

We seem to see the look and hear the voice of the Apostle, once the mighty Rabbi, the persecuting patriot, as he begins now to dictate again. His eyes brighten, and his brow clears, and a happier emphasis comes into his utterance, and he sets himself to speak of his people's good, and to remind his Gentile brethren how, in God's plan of redemption, all their blessing, all they know of salvation, all they possess of life eternal, has come to them through Israel. Israel is the Stem, drawing truth and life from the unfathomable soil of the covenant of promise. They are the grafted Branches, rich in every blessing—because they are the mystical seed of *Abraham*, in Christ.

I say therefore, did God ever thrust away His people? Away with the thought! For I am an Israelite, of Abraham's seed, Benjamin's tribe; full member of the theocratic race and of its first royal and always loyal tribe; in my own person, therefore, I am an instance of Israel still in covenant. God never thrust away His people, whom He foreknew with the foreknowledge of eternal choice and purpose. That fore-

knowledge was "not according to their works," or according to their power; and so it holds its sovereign way across and above their long unworthiness. Or do you not know, in Elijah, in his story, in the pages marked with his name, what the Scripture says? How he intercedes before God, on God's own behalf, against Israel, saying (1 Kings xix. 10), "Lord, Thy prophets they killed, and Thy altars they dug up; and I was left solitary, and they seek my life"? But what says the oracular answer to him? "I have left for Myself seven thousand men, men who bowed never knee to Baal" (1 Kings xix. 18). So therefore, at the present season also, there proves to be a remnant, "a leaving" left by the Lord for Himself, on the principle of election of grace; their persons and their number following a choice and gift whose reasons lie in God alone. And then follows one of those characteristic "foot-notes" of which we saw an instance above (x. 17): But if by grace, no longer of works; "no longer," in the sense of a logical succession and exclusion: since the grace proves, on the other principle, no longer grace. But if of works, it is no longer grace; since the work is no longer work. That is to say, when once the grace-principle is admitted, as it is here assumed to be, "the work" of the man who is its subject is "no longer work" in the sense which makes an antithesis to grace; it is no longer so much toil done in order to so much pay to be given. In other words, the two supposed principles of the divine Choice are in their nature mutually exclusive. Admit the one as the condition of the "election," and the other ceases; you cannot combine them into an amalgam. If the election is of grace, *no* meritorious antecedent to it is possible in the subject of it. If it is according to meritorious antecedent, *no* sovereign freedom is possible in the divine action, such freedom as to bring the saved man, the saved remnant, to an adoring confession of unspeakable and mysterious mercy.

This is the point, here in this passing "foot-note," as in the longer kindred statements above (chap. ix.), of the emphasised allusion to "choice" and "grace." He writes thus that he may bring the believer, Gentile or Jew, to his knees, in humiliation, wonder, gratitude, and trust. "Why did I, the self-ruined wanderer, the self-hardened rebel, come to the Shepherd who sought me, surrender my sword to the King who reclaimed me? Did I reason myself into harmony with Him? Did I lift myself, hopelessly maimed, into His arms? No; it was the gift of God, *first*, last, and in the midst. And if so, it was the choice of God." That point of light is surrounded by a cloud-world of mystery, though within those surrounding clouds there lurks, as to God, only rightness and love. But the point of light is there, immovable, for all the clouds; where fallen man chooses God, it is thanks to God who has chosen fallen man. Where a race is not "thrust away," it is because "God foreknew." Where some thousands of members of that race, while others fall away, are found faithful to God, it is because He has "left them for Himself, on the principle of choice of grace." Where, amidst a widespread rejection of God's Son Incarnate, a Saul of Tarsus, an Aquila, a Barnabas, behold in Him their Redeemer, their King, their Life, their All, it is on that same principle. Let the man thus

\* I borrow the phrase from the late Prof. H. Rogers' "Supernatural Origin of the Bible Inferred from Itself," a book of masterly thinking and reasoning.



beholding and believing give the whole thanks for his salvation in the quarter where it is all due. Let him not confuse one truth by another. Let not this truth disturb for a moment his certainty of personal moral freedom, and of its responsibility. Let it not for a moment turn him into a fatalist. But let him abase himself, and give thanks, and humbly trust Him who has thus laid hold of him for blessing. As he does so, in simplicity, not speculating but worshipping, he will need no subtle logic to assure him that he is to pray, and to work, without reserve, for the salvation of all men. It will be more than enough for him that his Sovereign bids him do it, and tells him that it is according to His heart.

To return a little on our steps, in the matter of the Apostle's doctrine of the divine Choice: the reference in this paragraph to the seven thousand faithful in Elijah's day suggests a special reflection. To us, it seems to say distinctly that the "election" intended all along by St. Paul cannot possibly be explained adequately by making it either an election (to whatever benefits) of mere masses of men, as for instance of a nation, considered apart from its individuals; or an election merely to privilege, to opportunity, which may or may not be used by the receiver. As regards national election, it is undoubtedly present and even prominent in the passage, and in this whole section of the Epistle. For ourselves, we incline to see it quite simply in ver. 2 above; "His people, whom He foreknew." We read there, what we find so often in the Old Testament, a sovereign choice of a nation to stand in special relation to God; of a nation taken, so to speak, in the abstract, viewed not as the mere total of so many individuals, but as a quasi-personality. But we maintain that the idea of election takes another line when we come to the "seven thousand." Here we are thrown at once on the thought of individual experiences, and the ultimate secret of them, found only in the divine Will affecting the individual. The "seven thousand" had no aggregate life, so to speak. They formed, as the seven thousand, no organism or quasi-personality. They were "left" not as a mass, but as units; so isolated, so little grouped together, that even Elijah did not know of their existence. They were just so many individual men, each one of whom found power, by faith, to stand personally firm against the Baalism of that dark time, with the same individual faith which in later days, against other terrors, and other solicitations, upheld a Polycarp, an Athanasius, a Huss, a Luther, a Tyndale, a De Seso, a St. Cyran. And the Apostle quotes them as an instance and illustration of the Lord's way and will with the believing of all time. In their case, then, he both passes as it were through national election to individual election, as a permanent spiritual mystery; and he shows that he means by this an election not only to opportunity but to holiness. The Lord's "leaving them for Himself" lay behind their not bowing their knees to Baal. Each resolute confessor was individually enabled, by a sovereign and special grace. He was a true human personality, freely acting, freely choosing not to yield in that terrible storm. But behind his freedom was the higher freedom of the Will of God, saving him from himself that he might be free to confess and suffer. To our mind, no

part of the Epistle more clearly than this passage affirms this individual aspect of the great mystery. Ah, it is a mystery indeed; we have owned this at every step. And it is never for a moment to be treated therefore as if we knew all about it. And it is never therefore to be used to confuse the believer's thought about other sides of truth. But it is there, as a truth among truths; to be received with abasement by the creature before the Creator, and with humble hope by the simple believer.

He goes on with his argument, taking up the thread broken by the "foot-note" upon grace and works: What therefore? What Israel, the nation, the character, seeks after, righteousness in the court of God, this it lighted not upon as one who seeks a buried treasure in the wrong field "lights not upon" it; but the election, the chosen ones, the "seven thousand" of the Gospel era, did light upon it. But the rest were hardened, (not as if God had created their hardness, or injected it; but He gave it to be its own penalty;) as it stands written (Isa. xxix. 10, and Deut. xxix. 4 \*), "God gave them a spirit of slumber, eyes not to see, and ears not to hear, even to this day." A persistent ("unto this day") unbelief was the sin of Israel in the Prophet's times, and it was the same in those of the Apostles. And the condition was the same; God "gave" sin to be its own way of retribution. And David says (Psal. lxxix. 22), in a Psalm full of Messiah, and of the awful retribution justly ordained to come on His impenitent enemies, "Let their table turn into a trap, and into toils, and into a stumbling-block, and into a requital to them; darkened be their eyes, not to see, and their back ever bow Thou together."

The words are awful, in their connection here, and in themselves, and as a specimen of a class. Their purpose here is to enforce the thought that there is such a thing as positive divine action in the self-ruin of the impenitent; a fiat from the throne which "gives" a coma to the soul, and beclouds its eyes, and turns its blessings into a curse. Not one word implies the thought that He who so acts meets a soul tending upward and turns it downward; that He ignores or rejects even the faintest inquiry after Himself; that He is Author of one particle of the sin of man. But we do learn that the adversaries of God and Christ may be, and, where the Eternal so sees it good, are, *sentenced* to go their own way, even to its issues in destruction. The context of every citation here, as it stands in the Old Testament, shows abundantly that those so sentenced are no helpless victims of an adverse fate, but sinners of their own will, in a sense most definite and personal. Only, a sentence of judgment is concerned also in the case; "Fill ye up then the measure" (Matt. xiii. 32).

But then also in themselves and, as a specimen of a class, the words are a dark shadow in the Scripture sky. It is only by the way that we can note this here, but it must not be quite omitted in our study. This sixty-ninth Psalm is a leading instance of the several Psalms where the Prophet appears calling for the sternest retribution on his enemies. What thoughtful heart has not felt the painful mystery so presented?

\* Such a combination of citations is a significant witness to the Apostle's view of the O. T. as, from its divine side, "one Book" everywhere.



Read in the hush of secret devotion, or sung perhaps to some majestic chant beneath the minster-roof, they still tend to affront the soul with the question, Can this possibly be after the mind of Christ? And there rises before us the form of One who is in the act of Crucifixion, and who just then articulates the prayer, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Can these "imprecations" have His sanction? Can He pass them, endorse them, as His Word?

The question is full of pressing pain. And no answer can be given, surely, which shall relieve all that pain; certainly nothing which shall turn the clouds of such passages into rays of the sun. They *are* clouds; but let us be sure that they belong to the cloud-land which gathers round the Throne, and which only conceals, not wrecks, its luminous and immovable righteousness and love. Let us remark, for one point, that this same dark Psalm is, by the witness of the Apostles, as taught by their Master, a Psalm full of Messiah. It was undoubtedly claimed as his own mystic utterance by the Lamb of the Passion. He speaks in these dread words who also says, in the same utterance (ver. 9), "The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up." So the Lord Jesus did endorse this Psalm. He more than endorsed it; He adopted it as His own. Let this remind us further that the utterer of these denunciations, even the first and non-mystical utterer,—David, let us say,—appears in the Psalm not merely as a private person crying out about his violated personal rights, but as an ally and vassal of God, one whose life and cause is identified with His. Just in proportion as this is so, the violation of his life and peace, by enemies described as quite consciously and deliberately malicious, is a violation of the whole sanctuary of divine righteousness. If so, is it incredible that even the darkest words of such a Psalm are to be read as a true echo from the depths of man to the Voice which announces "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, to every soul of man that doeth evil"? Perhaps even the most watchful assertor of the divine character of Scripture is not bound to assert that no human frailty in the least moved the spirit of a David when he, in the sphere of his own personality, thought and said these things. But we have no right to assert, as a known or necessary thing, that it was so. And we have right to say that in themselves these utterances are but a sternly true response to the avenging indignation of the Holy One.

In any case, do not let us talk with a loose facility about their incompatibility with "the spirit of the New Testament." From one side, the New Testament is an even sterner book than the Old; as it must be of course, when it brings sin and holiness "out into the light" of the Cross of Christ. It is in the New Testament that, "the souls" of saints at rest are heard saying (Rev. vi. 10), "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" It is in the New Testament that an Apostle writes (2 Thess. i. 6), "It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them which trouble you." It is the Lord of the New Testament, the Offerer of the Prayer of the Cross, who said (Matt. xxiii. 32-35) "Fill ye up the measure of your fathers. I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes, and some of

them ye shall kill and crucify; that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth."

His eyes must have rested, often and again, upon the denunciations of the Psalms. He saw in them that which struck no real discord, in the ultimate spiritual depth, with His own blessed compassions. Let us not resent what He has countersigned. It is His, not ours, to know all the conditions of those mysterious outbursts from the Psalmist's consciousness. It is ours to recognise in them the intensest expression of what rebellious evil merits, and will find, as its reward.

But we have digressed from what is the proper matter before us. Here, in the Epistle, the sixty-ninth Psalm is cited only to affirm with the authority of Scripture the mystery of God's action in sentencing the impenitent adversaries of His Christ to more blindness and more ruin. Through this dark and narrow door the Apostle is about to lead us now into "a large room" of hope and blessing, and to unveil to us a wonderful future for the now disgraced and seemingly rejected Israel.

#### CHAPTER XXIII.

#### ISRAEL'S FALL OVERRULED, FOR THE WORLD'S BLESSING, AND FOR ISRAEL'S MERCY.

ROMANS xi. 11-24.

THE Apostle has been led a few steps backwards in the last previous verses. His face has been turned once more toward the dark region of the prophetic sky, to see how the sin of Christ-rejecting souls is met and punished by the dreadful "gift" of slumber, and apathy, and the transmutation of blessings to snares. But now, decisively, he looks sunward. He points our eyes, with his own, to the morning light of grace and promise. We are to see what Israel's fall has had to do with the world's hope and with life in Christ, and then what blessings await Israel himself, and again the world through him.

I say, therefore, (the phrase resumes the point of view to which the same words above (ver. 1) led us,) did they stumble that they might fall? Did their national rejection of an unwelcome because unworldly Messiah take place, in the divine permission, with the positive divine purpose that it should bring on a final rejection of the nation, its banishment out of its place in the history of redemption? Away with the thought! But their partial fall is the occasion of God's salvation for the Gentiles, with a view to move them, the Jews, to jealousy, to awake them to a sight of what Christ is, and of what their privilege in Him might yet be, by the sight of His work and glory in once pagan lives.

Observe here the divine benignity which lurks even under the edges of the cloud of judgment. And observe too, thus close to the passage which has put before us the mysterious side of divine action on human wills, the daylight simplicity of this side of that action; the loving skill with which the world's blessing is meant by the God of grace to act, exactly in the line of human feeling, upon the will of Israel.



But would that "the Gentiles" had borne more in heart that last short sentence of St. Paul's through these long centuries since the Apostles fell asleep! It is one of the most marked, as it is one of the saddest, phenomena in the history of the Church that for ages, almost from the days of St. John himself, we look in vain either for any appreciable Jewish element in Christendom, or for any extended effort on the part of Christendom to win Jewish hearts to Christ by a wise and loving evangelisation. With only relatively insignificant exceptions this was the abiding state of things till well within the eighteenth century, when the German Pietists began to call the attention of believing Christians to the spiritual needs and prophetic hopes of Israel, and to remind them that the Jews were not only a beacon of judgment, or only the most impressive and awful illustration of the fulfilment of prophecy, but the bearers of yet unfulfilled predictions of mercy for themselves and for the world. Meanwhile, all through the Middle Age, and through generations of preceding and following time also, Christendom did little for Israel but retaliate, reproach, and tyrannise. It was so of old in England; witness the fires of York. It is so to this day in Russia, and where the "Judenhetze" inflames innumerable hearts in Central Europe.

No doubt there is more than one side to the persistent phenomena. There is a side of mystery; the permissive sentence of the Eternal has to do with the long affliction, however caused, of the people which once uttered the fatal cry, "His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matt. xxvii. 25). And the wrong-doings of Jews, beyond a doubt, have often made a dark occasion for a "Jew-hatred," on a larger or narrower scale. But all this leaves unaltered, from the point of view of the Gospel, the sin of Christendom in its tremendous failure to seek, in love, the good of erring Israel. It leaves as black as ever the guilt of every fierce retaliation upon Jews by so-called Christians, of every slanderous belief about Jewish creed or life, of every unjust anti-Jewish law ever passed by Christian king or senate. It leaves an undiminished responsibility upon the Church of Christ, not only for the flagrant wrong of having too often animated and directed the civil power in its oppressions of Israel, and not only for having so awfully neglected to seek the evangelisation of Israel by direct appeals for the true Messiah, and by an open setting forth of His glory, but for the deeper and more subtle wrong, persistently inflicted from age to age, in a most guilty unconsciousness—the wrong of having failed to manifest Christ to Israel through the living holiness of Christendom. Here, surely, is the very point of the Apostle's thought in the sentence before us: "Salvation to the Gentiles, to move the Jews to jealousy." In his inspired idea, Gentile Christendom, in Christ, was to be so pure, so beneficent, so happy, finding manifestly in its Messianic Lord such resources for both peace of conscience and a life of noble love, love above all directed towards opponents and traducers, that Israel, looking on, with eyes however purblind with prejudice, should soon see a moral glory in the Church's face impossible to be hid, and be drawn as by a moral magnet to the Church's hope. Is it the fault of God (may He pardon the formal question, if it lacks reverence), or the fault of man, man carrying

the Christian name, that facts have been so woefully otherwise in the course of history? It is the fault, the grievous fault, of us Christians. The narrow prejudice, the iniquitous law, the rigid application of exaggerated ecclesiastical principle, all these things have been man's perversion of the divine idea, to be confessed and deplored in a deep and interminable repentance. May the mercy of God awaken Gentile Christendom, in a manner and degree as yet unknown, to remember this our indefeasible debt to this people everywhere present with us, everywhere distinct from us;—the debt of a life, personal and ecclesiastical, so manifestly pure and loving in our Lord the Christ as to "move them to the jealousy" which shall claim Him again for their own. Then we shall indeed be hastening the day of full and final blessing, both for themselves and for the world.

To that bright coming day the Apostle points us now, more directly than ever. But if their partial fall be the world's wealth, and their lessening, their reduction, (a reduction in one aspect to a race of scattered exiles, in another to a mere remnant of "Israelites indeed,") be the Gentiles' wealth, the occasion by which "the unsearchable wealth of Messiah" (Eph. iii. 8) has been as it were forced into Gentile receptacles, how much more their fulness, the filling of the dry channel with its ample ideal stream, the change from a believing remnant, fragments of a fragmentary people, to a believing nation, reanimated and reunited? What blessings for "the world," for "the Gentiles," may not come through the vehicle of such an Israel? But to you I speak, the Gentiles; to you, because if I reach the Jews, in the way I mean, it must be through you. So far indeed as I, distinctively I, am the Gentiles' Apostle, I glorify my ministry as such; I rejoice, Pharisee that I once was, to be devoted as no other Apostle is to a ministry for those whom I once thought of as of outcasts in religion. But I speak as your own Apostle, and to you, if perchance I may move the jealousy of my flesh and blood, and may save some from amongst them, by letting them as it were overhear what are the blessings of you Gentile Christians, and how it is the Lord's purpose to use those blessings as a magnet to wandering Israel. His hope is that, through the Roman congregation, this glorious open secret will come out, as they meet their Jewish neighbours and talk with them. So would one here, another there, "in the streets and lanes of the City," be drawn to the feet of Jesus, under the constraint of that "jealousy" which means little else than the human longing to understand what is evidently the great joy of another's heart; a "jealousy" on which often grace can fall, and use it as a vehicle of divine light and life.

He says only, "some of them"; as he does in the sister Epistle; 1 Cor. ix. 22. \* He recognises it as his present task, indicated alike by circumstance and revelation, to be not the glad ingatherer of vast multitudes to Christ, but the patient winner of scattered sheep. Yet let us observe that none the less he spends his whole soul upon that winning, and takes no excuse from a glorious future to slacken a single effort in the difficult present.

For if the throwing away of them, their downfall as the Church of God, was the world's reconciliation, the instrumental or occasioning cause

\* Cp. too 2 Cor. iii. 14-16 with this whole passage.



of the direct proclamation to the pagan peoples of the Atonement of the Cross, what will their reception be, but life from the dead? That is to say, the great event of Israel's return to God in Christ, and His to Israel, will be the signal and the means of a vast rise of spiritual life in the Universal Church, and of an unexampled ingathering of regenerate souls from the world. When Israel, as a Church, fell, the fall worked good for the world merely by driving, as it were, the apostolic preachers out from the Synagogue, to which they so much longed to cling. The Jews did anything but aid the work. Yet even so they were made an occasion for world-wide good. When they are "received again," as this Scripture so definitely affirms that they shall be received, the case will be grandly different. As before, they will be "occasions." A national and ecclesiastical return of Israel to Christ will of course give occasion over the whole world for a vastly quickened attention to Christianity, and for an appeal for the world's faith in the facts and claims of Christianity, as bold and loud as that of Pentecost. But more than this, Israel will now be not only occasion but agent.

The Jews, ubiquitous, cosmopolitan, yet invincibly national, coming back in living loyalty to the Son of David, the Son of God, will be a positive power in evangelisation such as the Church has never yet felt. Whatever the actual facts shall prove to be in the matter of their return to the Land of Promise\* (and who can watch without deep reflection the nation-less land and the land-less nation?) no prediction obliges us to think that the Jews will be withdrawn from the wide world by a national resettlement in their Land. A nation is not a Dispersion merely because it has individual citizens widely dispersed; if it has a true national centre, it is a people at home, a people with a home. Whether as a central mass in Syria, or as also a presence everywhere in the human world, Israel will thus be ready, once restored to God in Christ, to be a more than natural evangelising power.

Let this be remembered in every enterprise for the spiritual good of the great Dispersion now. Through such efforts God is already approaching His hour of blessing, long expected. Let that fact animate and give a glad patience to His workers, on whose work he surely begins in our day to cast His smile of growing blessing.

Now the argument takes a new direction. The restoration thus indicated, thus foretold, is not only sure to be infinitely beneficial. It is also to be looked for and expected as a thing lying so to speak in the line of spiritual fitness, true to the order of God's plan. In His will, when He went about to create and develop His Church, Israel sprung from the dry ground as the sacred Olive, rich with the sap of truth and grace, full of branch and leaf. From the tents of Abraham onward, the world's true spiritual light and life were there. There, not elsewhere, were revelation, and God-given ordinance, and "the covenants, and the glory." There, not elsewhere, the Christ of God, for whom all things waited, towards whom all the lines of man's life and history converged, was to appear. Thus, in a certain profound sense, all true salvation must be not only "of" Israel (John iv.

24) but through him. Union with Christ was union with Abraham. To become a Christian, that is to say, one of Messiah's men, was to become, mystically, an Israelite. From this point of view the Gentile's union with the Saviour, though not in the least less genuine and divine than the Jew's, was, so to speak, less normal. And thus nothing could be more spiritually normal than the Jew's recovery to his old relation to God, from which he had violently dislocated himself. These thoughts the Apostle now presses on the Romans, as a new motive and guide to their hopes, prayers, and work. (Do we gather from the length and fulness of the argument that already it was difficult to bring Gentiles to think aright of the chosen people in their fall and rebellion?) He reminds them of the inalienable consecration of Israel to special divine purposes. He points them to the ancient Olive, and boldly tells them that they are, themselves, only a graft of a wild stock, inserted into the noble tree. Not that he thinks of the Jew as a superior being. But the Church of Israel was the original of the Church. So the restoration of Israel to Christ, and to the Church, is a recovery of normal life, not a first and abnormal grant of life.

But if the first-fruit was holy, holy is the kneaded lump too. Abraham was as it were the Lord's First-fruits of mankind, in the field of His Church. "Abraham's seed" are as it were the mass kneaded from that first-fruits; made of it. Was the first-fruits holy, in the sense of consecration to God's redeeming purpose? Then that which is made of it must somehow still be a consecrated thing, even though put aside as if "common" for awhile. And if the root was holy, holy are the branches too; the lineal heirs of Abraham are still, ideally, potentially, consecrated to Him who separated Abraham to Himself, and moved him to his great self-separation. But if some of the branches (how tender is the euphemism of the "some"! ) were broken off, while you, wild-olive as you were, were grafted in among them, in their place of life and growth, and became a sharer of the root and of the Olive's fatness,—do not boast over the torn-off branches. But if you do boast over them—not you carry the root, but the root carries you. You will say then, The branches were broken off—that I might be grafted in. Good: true—and untrue: because of their unbelief they were broken off, while you because of your faith stand. They were no better beings than you, in themselves. But neither are you better than they, in yourself. They and you alike are, personally, mere subjects of redeeming mercy; owing all to Christ; possessing all only as accepting Christ. "Where is your boasting, then?" Do not be high-minded, but fear, fear yourself, your sin, your enemy. For if God did not spare the natural branches, take care lest He spare not you either. See therefore God's goodness and sternness. On those who fell, came His sternness; but on you, His goodness, if you abide by that goodness, with the adherence and response of faith; since you too will be cut out otherwise. And they too, if they do not abide by their unbelief, shall be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again. For if you from the naturally wild olive were cut out, and non-naturally were grafted into the Garden-Olive, how much more shall those, the branches naturally, be grafted into their own Olive!

\* This chapter is silent on that great matter.



Here are more topics than one which call for reverent notice and study.

1. The imagery of the Olive, with its root, stem, and branches. The Olive, rich and useful, long-lived, and evergreen, stands, as a "nature-parable" of spiritual life, beside the Vine, the Palm, and the Cedar, in the Garden of God. Sometimes it pictures the individual saint, living and fruitful in union with his Lord (Psal. lii. 8). Sometimes it sets before us the fertile organism of the Church, as here, where the Olive is the great Church Universal in its long life before and after the historical coming of Christ; the life which in a certain sense began with the Call of Abraham, and was only magnificently developed by the Incarnation and Passion. Its Root, in this respect, is the great Father of Faith. Its Stem is the Church of the Old Testament, which coincided, in the matter of external privilege, with the nation of Israel, and to which at least the immense majority of true believers in the elder time belonged. Its Branches (by a slight and easy modification of the image) are its individual members, whether Jewish or Gentile. The Master of the Tree, arriving on the scene in the Gospel age, comes as it were to prune His Olive, and to graft. The Jewish "branch," if he is what he seems, if he believes indeed and not only by hypothesis, abides in the Tree. Otherwise, he is—from the divine point of view—broken off. The Gentile, believing, is grafted in, and becomes a true part of the living organism; as genuinely and vitally one with Abraham in life and blessing as his Hebrew brother. But the fact of the Hebrew "race" in root and stem rules still so far as to make the re-ingrafting of a Hebrew branch, repenting, more "natural" (not more possible, or more beneficial, but more "natural") than the first ingrafting of a Gentile branch. The whole Tree is for ever Abrahamic, Israelite, in stock and growth; though all mankind has place now in its forest branches.

2. The imagery of grafting. Here is an instance of partial, while truthful, use of a natural process in Scripture parable. In our gardens and orchards it is the wild stock which receives, in grafting, the "good" branch; a fact which lends itself to many fertile illustrations. Here, on the contrary, the "wild" branch is inserted into the "good" stock. But the olive-yard yields to the Apostle all the imagery he really needs. He has before him, ready to hand, the Tree of the Church; all that he wants is an illustration of communication and union of life by artificial insertion. And this he finds in the olive-dresser's art, which shows him how a vegetable fragment, apart and alien, can by human design be made to grow into the life of the tree, as if a native of the root.

3. The teaching of the passage as to the Place of Israel in the divine Plan of life for the world. We have remarked on this already, but it calls for reiterated notice and recollection. "At sundry times, and in divers manners," and through many and divers races and civilisations, God has dealt with man, and is dealing with him, in the training and development of his life and nature. But in the matter of man's spiritual salvation, in the gift to him, in his Fall, of the life eternal, God has dealt with man, practically, through *one* race, Israel. Let it never be forgotten that the "sundry times and divers manners" of the apostolic Epistle (Heb. i. 1) are

all referred to "the prophets"; they are the "times" and "manners" of the Old Testament revelation. And when at length the same Eternal Voice spoke to man "in the Son" (ἐν τῷ υἱῷ), that Son came of Israel, "took hold of Abraham's seed" (Heb. ii. 16), and Himself bore definite witness that "salvation is from the Jews" (John iv. 24). Amidst the unknown manifoldness of the work of God for man, and in man, this is single and simple—that in one racial line only runs the stream of authentic and supernatural revelation; in the line of this mysteriously chosen Israel. From this point of view, the great Husbandman has planted not a forest but a Tree; and the innumerable trees of the forest can get the sap of Eden only as their branches are grafted by His hand into His one Tree, by the faith which unites them to Him who is the Root below the root, "the Root of David," and of Abraham.

4. The appeal to the new-grafted "branch" to "abide by the goodness of God." We have listened, as St. Paul has dictated to his scribe, to many a deep word about a divine and sovereign power on man; about man's absolute debt to God for the fact that he believes and lives. Yet here, with equal decision, we have man thrown back on the thought of his responsibility, of the contingency in a certain sense of his safety on his fidelity.\* "If you are true to mercy, mercy will be true to you; otherwise you too will be broken off." Here, as in our study of earlier passages, let us be willing to go all along with Scripture in the seeming inconstancy of its absolute promises and its contingent cautions. Let us, like it, "go to both extremes"; then we shall be as near, probably, as our finite thought can be at present to the whole truth as it moves, a perfect sphere, in God. Is the Christian worn and wearied with his experience of his own pollution, instability, and helplessness? Let him embrace, without a misgiving, the whole of that promise, "My sheep shall never perish." Has he drifted into a vain confidence, not in Christ, but in privilege, in experience, in apparent religious prosperity? Has he caught himself in the act of saying, even in a whisper, "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are"? Then let him listen in time to the warning voice, "Be not high-minded, but fear"; "Take heed lest He spare not thee." And let him put no pillow of theory between the sharpness of that warning and his soul. Penitent, self-despairing, resting in Christ alone, let him "abide by the goodness of God."

#### CHAPTER XXIV.

#### THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL DIRECTLY FORETOLD: ALL IS OF AND FOR GOD.

ROMANS xi. 25-36.

THUS far St. Paul has rather reasoned than predicted. He has shown his Gentile friends the naturalness, so to speak, of a restoration of Israel to Christ, and the manifest certainty that such a restoration will bring blessing to the

\* "To our safety our sedulity is required." Hooker "Sermon on the Perpetuity of Faith in the Elect" (at the close of the sermon). See the whole sermon, with its temperate and well-balanced assertion of the power of grace.



world. Now he advances to the direct assertion, made with a Prophet's full authority, that so it shall be. "How much rather shall they be grafted into their own Olive?" The question implies the assertion; nothing remains but to open it in full.

For I would not have you ignorant, brethren, of this mystery, this fact in God's purposes, impossible to be known without revelation, but luminous when revealed; (that you may not be wise in your own esteem, valuing yourselves on an insight which is all the while only a partial glimpse); that failure of perception, in a measure, in the case of many, not all, of the nation, has come upon Israel, and will continue until the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in, until Gentile conversion shall be in some sense a flowing tide. And so all Israel, Israel as a mass, no longer as by scattered units, shall be saved, coming to the feet of Him in whom alone is man's salvation from judgment and from sin; as it stands written (Ps. xiv. 7, Isa. lix. 20, with Isa. xxvii. 9), "There shall come from Sion the Deliverer; He shall turn away all impiety from Jacob; and such they shall find the covenant I shall have granted, such shall prove to be My promise and provision, 'ordered and sure,' when I shall take away their sins," in the day of My pardoning and restoring return to them.

This is a memorable passage. It is in the first place one of the most definitely predictive of all the prophetic utterances of the Epistles. Apart from all problems of explanation in detail, it gives us this as its message on the whole; that there lies hidden in the future, for the race of Israel, a critical period of overwhelming blessing. If anything is revealed as fixed in the eternal plan, which, never violating the creature's will yet is not subject to it, it is this. We have heard the Apostle speak fully, and without compromise, of the sin of Israel; the hardened or paralysed spiritual perception, the refusal to submit to pure grace, the restless quest for a valid self-righteousness, the deep exclusive arrogance. And thus the promise of coming mercy, such as shall surprise the world, sounds all the more sovereign and magnificent. It shall come; so says Christ's prophet Paul. Not because of historical antecedents, or in the light of general principles, but because of the revelation of the Spirit, he speaks of that wonderful future as if it were in full view from the present; "All Israel shall be saved."

We read "no date prefixed." As far as this chapter is concerned, years and days are as if they were not. On the whole, surely, a large range of process is in his view; he cannot expect to see fulfilled within a narrow season the accomplishment of all the preliminaries to the great event. But he says nothing about this. All we gather is that he sees in the future a great progress of Gentile Christianity; a great impression to be made by this on the mind of Israel; a vast and comparatively sudden awakening of Israel, by the grace of God, however brought to bear; the salvation of Israel in Christ on a national scale; "the receiving of them again"; and "life from the dead" as the result—life from the dead to the world at large. However late or soon, with whatever attendant events, divine or human, thus it shall be. The "spiritual failure of perception in part" shall vanish. "The Deliverer shall turn away ungod-

liness from Jacob." "All Israel shall be saved."

"Believest thou the Prophets?" The question, asked of Agrippa by St. Paul, comes to us from this prediction of his own. "Lord, we believe." Our Master knows that for us in our day it is not easy. The bad air of materialism, and the profound and stolid fatalism which it involves, is thick around us. And one symptom of its malign influence is the growing tendency in the Church to limit, to minimise, to explain if possible away, from the Scriptures, the properly and distinctively superhuman, whether of work or word. Men bearing the Christian name, and bearing it often with loyal and reverent intention, seem to think far otherwise than their Lord thought about this very element of prediction in the holy Book, and would have us believe that it is no great thing to grasp, and to contend for. But as for us, we desire in all things to be of the opinion of Him who is the eternal Truth and Light, and who took our nature, expressly, as to one great purpose, in order to unfold to us articulately His opinion. He lived and died in the light and power of predictive Scripture. He predicted. He rose again to commission His Apostles, as the Spirit should teach them, to see "things to come" (John xvi. 13). To us, this oracle of His "chosen Vessel" gives us articles of faith and hope. We do not understand, but we believe, because here it is written, that after these days of the prevalence of unbelief, after all these questions, loud or half articulate, angry or agonising, "Where is the promise?" the world shall see a spiritual miracle on a scale unknown before. "All Israel shall be saved." Even so, Lord Jesus Christ, the Deliverer. Fill us with the patience of this hope, for Thy chosen race, and for the world.

It is almost a pain to turn from this prospectus of the passage to a discussion of some of its details. But it is necessary; and for our purpose it need be only brief. Whatever the result may be, it will leave untouched the grandeur of the central promise.

1. "Until the fulness of the Gentiles come in." Does this mean that the stream of Gentile conversions shall have *flowed and ceased*, before the great blessing comes to Israel? Certainly the Greek may carry this meaning; perhaps, taken quite apart, it carries it more easily than any other. But it has this difficulty, that it would assign to the "salvation" of Israel no influence of blessing upon the Gentile world. Now ver. 12 has implied that "the fulness" of Israel is to be the more-than-wealth of "the world," of "the Gentiles." And ver. 15 has implied, if we have read it aright, that it is to be to "the world" as "life from the dead." This leads us to explain the phrase here to refer not to the close of the ingathering of the Gentile children of God, but to a time when that process shall be, so to speak, running high. That time of great and manifest grace shall be the occasion to Israel of the shock, as it were, of blessing; and from Israel's blessing shall date an unmeasured further access of divine good for the world.

As we pass, let us observe the light thrown by these sentences on the duty of the Church in evangelising the Gentiles for the Jews, as well as the Jews for the Gentiles. *Both* holy enterprises have a destined effect outside themselves.



The evangelist of Africa, India, China, is working for the hour of the "salvation of all Israel." The evangelist of the Hebrew Dispersion is preparing Israel for that hour of final blessing when the "saved" nation shall, in the hand of God, kindle the world with holy life.

2. "All Israel shall be saved." It has been held by some interpreters that this points to the Israel of God, the spiritual sons of Abraham. If so, it would be fairly paraphrased as a promise that when the Gentile conversions are complete, and the "spiritual failure of perception" gone from the Jewish heart, the family of faith shall be complete. But surely it puts violence on words, and on thought, to explain "Israel" in this whole passage mystically. Interpretation becomes an arbitrary work if we may suddenly do so here, where the antithesis of Israel and "the Gentiles" is the very theme of the message. No; we have here the nation, chosen once to a mysterious specialty in the spiritual history of man, abeyant. A blessing is in view for the nation; a blessing spiritual, divine, all of grace, quite individual in its action on each member of the nation, but national in the scale of its results. We are not obliged to press the word "all" to a rigid literality. Nor are we obliged to limit the crisis of blessing to anything like a moment of time. But we may surely gather that the numbers blessed will be at least the vast majority, and that the work will not be chronic but critical. A transition, relatively swift and wonderful, shall show the world a nation penitent, faithful, holy, given to God.

3. The quotations from Psalms and Prophets (vv. 26, 27) offer more questions than one. They are closely interlaced, and they are not literal quotations. "Out of Zion" takes the place of "for Zion." "He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob" takes the place of "For them that turn from transgression in Jacob." "This is the covenant" takes the place of "This is His blessing." And there are other minute points of variation. Yet we reverently trace in the originals and the citations, which all alike are the work of prophetic organs of the Spirit, the great ruling thought, identical in both, that "the Deliverer" belongs primarily to "Zion," and has in store primarily a blessing for her people.

Are we, with some devout interpreters, to explain the words, "The Deliverer shall come out of Zion," as predicting a personal and visible return of the Ascended Jesus to the literal Zion, in order to the salvation of Israel, and an outgoing of Him from thence to the Dispersion, or the world, in millennial glory? We deliberately forbear, in this exposition, to discuss in detail the great controversy thus indicated. We leave here on one side some questions, eagerly and earnestly asked. Will Israel return to the Land as Christian or as anti-Christian? Will the immediate power for their conversion be the visible Return of the Lord, or will it be an effusion of His Spirit, by which, spiritually, He shall visit and bless? What will be the attendant works and wonders of the time? All we do now is to express the conviction that the prophetic quotations here cannot be held to predict *unmistakably* a visible and local Return. If we read them aright, their import is satisfied by a paraphrase somewhat thus: "It stands predicted that to Zion, that is, to Israel, belongs the De-

liverer of man, and that for Israel He is to do His work, whenever finally it is done, with a specialty of grace and glory." Thus explained, the "shall come" of ver. 26 is the abstract future of divine purpose. In the eternal plan, the Redeemer was, when He first came to earth, to come to, for, and from "Zion." And His saving work was to be on lines, and for issues, for ever characterised by that fact.

Assuredly the Lord Jesus Christ is, personally, literally, visibly, and to His people's eternal joy, coming again; "this same Jesus, in like manner" (Acts i. 11). And as the ages unfold themselves, assuredly the insight of the believing Church into the fulness and, if we may say so, manifoldness of that great prospect grows. But it still seems to us that a deep and reverent caution is called for before we attempt to treat of any detail of that prospect, as regards time, season, mode, as if we quite knew. Across *all* lines of interpretation of unfulfilled prophecy—to name one problem only—it lies as an unsolved riddle how all the saints of all ages are equally bidden to watch, as those who "know not *what hour* their Lord shall come."

But let us oftener and oftener, however we may differ in detail, recite to one another the glorious essence of our hope. "To them that look for Him will He appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation"; "We shall meet the Lord in the air"; "So shall we be ever with the Lord" (Heb. ix. 28; 1 Thess. iv. 17).

We shall never quite understand the chronology and process of unfulfilled prophecy, till then.

Now briefly and in summary the Apostle concludes this "Epistle within the Epistle"; this oracle about Israel. As regards the Gospel, from the point of view of the evangelisation of the world apart from Judaism, that "gospelizing" which was, as it were, precipitated by the rebelling of Israel, they are enemies, on account of you, permitted, for your sakes, in a certain sense, to take a hostile attitude towards the Lord and His Christ, and to be treated accordingly; but as regards the election, from the point of view of the divine choice, they are beloved, on account of the Fathers; for irrevocable are the gifts and the call of our God. The "gifts" of unmerited choice, of a love uncaused by the goodness of its object, but coming from the depth of the Eternal; the "call" which not only invites the creature, but effects the end of the invitation; these are things which in their nature are not variable with the variations of man and of time. The nation so gifted and called, "not according to its works," is for ever the unalterable object of the eternal affection.

May we not extend the reference of a sentence so absolute in its oracular brevity, and take it to speak the secret of an indefectible mercy not only to nation, but to individual? Here as elsewhere we shall need to remember the rule which bids us, in the heights and depths of all truth, "go to both extremes." Here as elsewhere we must be reverently careful how we apply the oracle, and to whom. But does not the oracle say this, that where the eternal Love has, without merit, in divine specialty, settled upon a person, there, not arbitrarily but by a law, which we cannot explain but which we can believe, it abides for ever? Still, this is a reflection to be made only in passing here. The immediate matter is a chosen people, not



a chosen soul; and so he proceeds: For as once you obeyed not our God, but now, in the actual state of things, in His grace, found mercy, on occasion of their disobedience; so they too now obeyed not, on occasion of your mercy, in mysterious connection with the compassion which, in your pagan darkness, revealed salvation to you, that they too may find mercy. Yes, even their "disobedience," in the mystery of grace, was permitted *in order to* their ultimate blessing; it was to be overruled to that self-discovery which lies deep in all true repentance, and springs up towards life eternal in the saving "confidence of self-despair." The pagan (chap. i.) was brought to self-discovery as a rebel against God indicated in nature; the Jew (chap. ii.) as a rebel against God revealed in Christ. This latter, if such a comparison is possible, was the more difficult and as it were advanced work in the divine plan. It took place, or rather it is taking and shall take place, later in order, and nearer to the final and universal triumph of redemption. For God shut them all up into disobedience, that He might have mercy upon them all. With a *fiat* of judicial permission He let the Gentile develop his resistance to right into unnatural outrage. He let the Jew develop his into the desperate rejection of his own glorious Messiah. But He gave the *fiat* not as a God who did not care, a mere supreme Law, a Power sitting unconcerned above the scene of sin. He let the disease burst into the plague-spot in order that the guilty victim might ask at last for His remedy, and might receive it as mere and most astonishing mercy.

Let us not misuse the passage by reading into it a vain hope of an indiscriminate actual salvation, at the last, of all individuals of the race; a predestinarian hope for which Scripture not only gives no valid evidence, but utters against it what at least sound like the most urgent and unequivocal of its warnings. The context here, as we saw in another connection just now, has to do rather with masses than with persons; with Gentiles and Jews in their common characteristics rather than taken as individuals. Yet let us draw from the words, with reverent boldness, a warrant to our faith wholly to trust the Eternal to be, even in the least fathomable of His dealings, true to Himself, true to eternal Love, whatever be the action He shall take.

Here the Apostle's voice, as we seem to listen to it, pauses for a moment, as he passes into unspoken thoughts of awe and faith. He has now given out his prophetic burthen, telling us Gentiles how great has been the sin of Israel, but how great also is Israel's privilege, and how sure his coming mercy. And behind this grand special revelation there still rise on his soul those yet more majestic forms of truth which he has led us to look upon before; the Righteousness of God, the justifying grace, the believing soul's dominion over sin, the fulness of the Spirit, the coming glory of the saints, the emancipated Universe, the eternal Love. What remains, after this mighty process of spiritual discoveries, but to adore? Listen, as he speaks again, and again the pen moves upon the paper:

Oh depth of wealth of God's wisdom and knowledge too! How past all searching are His judgments, and past all tracking are His ways! "For who ever knew the Lord's mind? Or who ever proved His counsellor?" Or who

ever first gave to Him, and requital shall be made to the giver? Because out of Him, and through Him, and unto Him, are all things: to Him be the glory, unto the ages. Amen.

Even so, Amen. We also prostrate our being, with the Apostle, with the Roman saints, with the whole Church, with all the company of heaven, and give ourselves to that action of pure worship in which the creature, sinking lowest in his own eyes, yea out of his own sight altogether, rises highest into the light of his Maker. What a moment this is, what an occasion, for such an approach to Him who is the infinite and personal Fountain of being, and of redemption! We have been led from reason to reason, from doctrine to doctrine, from one link to another in a golden chain of redeeming mercies. We have had the dream of human merit expelled from the heart with arrows of light; and the pure glory of a grace most absolute, most merciful, has come in upon us in its place. All along we have been reminded, as it were in fragments and radiant glimpses, that these doctrines, these truths, are no mere principles in the abstract, but expressions of the will and of the love of a Person; that fact full of eternal life, but all too easily forgotten by the human mind, when its study of religion is carried away, if but for an hour, from the foot of the Cross, and of the Throne. But now all these lines converge upwards to their Origin. By the Cross they reach the Throne. Through the Work of the Son—One with the Father, for of the Son too it is written (Col. i. 16) that "all things are through Him, and unto Him"—through His Work, and in it, we come to the Father's Wisdom and Knowledge, which drew the plan of blessing, and as it were calculated and furnished all its means. We touch that point where the creature gravitates to its final rest, the vision of the Glory of God. We repose, with a profound and rejoicing silence, before the fact of mysteries too bright for our vision. After all the revelations of the Apostle we own with him in faith, with an acquiescence deep as our being, the fact that there is no searching, no tracking out, the final secrets of the ways of God. It becomes to us wonderfully sufficient, in the light of Christ, to know that "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious," is also Sovereign, Ultimate, His own eternal Satisfaction; that it is infinitely fit and blessed that, as His Will is the true efficient cause of all things, and His Presence their secret of continuance, so He is Himself their final Cause, their End, their Goal; they fulfil their idea, they find their bliss, in being altogether His; "all things are unto Him."

"To whom be the glory, unto the ages. Amen." The advancing "ages," *aiônes*, the infinite developments of the eternal life, what do we know about them? Almost nothing, except the greatest fact of all; that in them for ever the redeemed creature will glorify not itself but the Creator; finding an endless and ever fuller youth, an inexhaustible motive, a rest impossible to break, a life in which indeed "they cannot die any more," in surrendering always all its blissful wealth of being to the will and use of the Blessed One.

In these "ages" we already are, in Christ. We shall indeed grow for ever with their eternal growth, in Him, to the glory of the grace of



God. But let us not forget that we are already in their course, as regards that life of ours which is hid with Christ in God. With that recollection, let us give ourselves often, and as by the "second nature" of grace, to adoration. Not necessarily to frequent long abstractions of our time from the active services of life; we need only read on into the coming passages of the Epistle to be reminded that we are hallowed, in our Lord, to a life of unselfish contact with all the needs around us. But let that life have for its interior, for its animation, the spirit of worship. Taking by faith our all from God, let us inwardly always give it back to Him, as those who not only own with the simplest gratitude that He has redeemed us from condemnation and from sin, but who have seen with an adoring intuition that we and our all are of the "all things" which, being "of Him," and "by Him," are also wholly "unto Him," by an absolute right, by the ultimate law of our being, as we are the creatures of the eternal Love.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### *CHRISTIAN CONDUCT THE ISSUE OF CHRISTIAN TRUTH.*

#### ROMANS xii. 1-8.

AGAIN we may conjecture a pause, a long pause and deliberate, in the work of Paul and Tertius. We have reached the end, generally speaking, of the dogmatic and so to speak oracular contents of the Epistle. We have listened to the great argument of Righteousness, Sanctification, and final Redemption. We have followed the exposition of the mysterious unbelief and the destined restoration of the chosen nation; a theme which we can see, as we look back on the perspective of the whole Epistle, to have a deep and suggestive connection with what went before it; for the experience of Israel, in relation to the sovereign will and grace of God, is full of light thrown upon the experience of the soul. Now in order comes the bright sequel of this mighty antecedent, this complex but harmonious mass of spiritual facts and historical illustrations of the will and ways of the Eternal. The voice of St. Paul is heard again; and he comes full upon the Lord's message of duty, conduct, character.

As out of some cleft in the face of the rocky hills rolls the full pure stream born in their depths, and runs under the sun and sky through green meadows and beside the thirsty homes of men, so here from the inmost mysteries of grace comes the message of all-comprehensive holy duty. The Christian, filled with the knowledge of an eternal love, is told how not to dream, but to serve, with all the mercies of God for his motive.

This is indeed in the manner of the New Testament; this vital sequence of duty and doctrine; the divine Truths first, and then and therefore the blessed Life. To take only St. Paul's writings, the Ephesian and Colossian Epistles are each, practically, bisected by a line which has eternal facts before it and present duties, done in the light and power of them, after it. But the whole Book of God, in its texture all over, shows the same phenomenon. Someone has remarked with homely force that in the Bible

everywhere, if only we dig deep enough, we find "Do right" at the bottom. And we may add that everywhere also we have only to dig one degree deeper to find that the precept is rooted in eternal underlying facts of divine truth and love.

Scripture, that is to say, its Lord and Author, does not give us the terrible gift of a precept isolated and in a vacuum. It supports its commandments on a base of cogent motive; and it fills the man who is to keep them with the power of a living Presence in him; this we have seen at large in the pages of the Epistle already traversed. But then, on the other hand, the Lord of Scripture does not leave the motive and the Presence without the articulate precept. Rather, because they are supplied and assured to the believer, it spreads out all the more amply and minutely a moral directory before his eyes. It tells him, as a man who now rests on God and loves Him, and in whom God dwells, not only in general that he is to "walk and please God" but in particular "how" to do it (1 Thess. iv. 1). It takes his life in detail, and applies the will of the Lord to it. It speaks to him in explicit terms about moral purity, in the name of the Holy One; about patience and kindness, in the name of redeeming Love; about family duties, in the name of the Father and of the Son; about civic duties, in the name of the King Eternal. And the whole outline and all the details thus become to the believer things not only of duty but of possibility, of hope, of the strong interest given by the thought that thus and thus the beloved Master would have us use His divine gift of life. Nothing is more wonderfully free, from one point of view, than love and spiritual power. But if the love is indeed given by God and directed towards Him in Christ, the man who loves cannot possibly wish to be his own law, and to spend his soul's power upon his own ideas or preferences. His joy and his conscious aim must be to do, in detail, the will of the Lord who is now so dear to him; and therefore, in detail, to know it.

Let us take deep note of this characteristic of Scripture, its minuteness of precept, in connection with its revelation of spiritual blessing. If in any sense we are called to be teachers of others, let us carry out the example. Richard Cecil, wise and pregnant counsellor in Christ, says that if he had to choose between preaching precepts and preaching privileges he would preach privileges; because the privileges of the true Gospel tend in their nature to suggest and stimulate right action, while the precepts taken alone do not reveal the wealth of divine life and power. But Cecil, like his great contemporaries of the Evangelical Revival, constantly and diligently preached as a fact both privilege and precept; opening with energetic hands the revealed fulness of Christ, and then and therefore teaching "them which had believed through grace" not only the idea of duty, but its details. Thomas Scott, at Olney, devoted his week-night "lecture" in the parish church almost exclusively to instructions in daily Christian life. Assuming that his hearers "knew Christ" in personal reality, he told them how to be Christians in the home, in the shop, in the farm; how to be consistent with their regenerate life as parents, children, servants, masters, neighbours, subjects. There have been times, perhaps, when such didactic preaching



has been too little used in the Church. But the men who, under God, in the last century and the early years of this century, revived the message of Christ Crucified and Risen as all in all for our salvation, were eminently diligent in teaching Christian morals. At the present day, in many quarters of our Christendom, there is a remarkable revival of the desire to apply saving truth to common life, and to keep the Christian always mindful that he not only has heaven in prospect, but is to travel to it, every step, in the path of practical and watchful holiness. This is a sign of divine mercy in the Church. This is profoundly Scriptural.

Meanwhile, God forbid that such "teaching how to live" should ever be given, by parent, pastor, school-master, friend, where it does not first pass through the teacher's own soul into his own life. Alas for us if we show ever so convincingly, and even ever so winningly, the bond between salvation and holiness, and do not "walk accurately" (Eph. v. 15) ourselves, in the details of our walk.

As we actually approach the rules of holiness now before us, let us once more recollect what we have seen all along in the Epistle, that holiness is the aim and issue of the entire Gospel. It is indeed an "evidence of life," infinitely weighty in the inquiry whether a man knows God indeed and is on the way to His heaven. But it is much more; it is the expression of life; it is the form and action in which life is intended to come out. In our orchards (to use again a parable we have used already) the golden apples are evidences of the tree's species, and of its life. But a wooden label could tell us the species, and leaves can tell the life. The fruit is more than label or leaf; it is the thing for which the tree is there. We who believe are "chosen" and "ordained" to "bring forth fruit" (John xv. 16), fruit much and lasting. The eternal Master walks in His garden for the very purpose of seeing if the trees bear. And the fruit He looks for is no visionary thing; it is a life of holy serviceableness to Him and to our fellows, in His Name.

But now we draw near again and listen:

I exhort you therefore, brethren, by means of the compassions of God; using as my logic and my fulcrum this "depths of riches" we have explored; this wonderful Redemption, with its sovereignty, its mercy, its acceptance, its holiness, its glory; this overruling of even sin and rebellion, in Gentile and in Jew, into occasions for salvation; these compassionate indications in the nearer and the eternal future of golden days yet to come;—I exhort you therefore to present, to give over, your bodies as a sacrifice, an altar-offering, living, holy, well-pleasing, unto God; for this is your rational devotion. That is to say, it is the "devotion," the "cultus," the worship-service, which is done by the reason, the mind, the thought and will, of the man who has found God in Christ. The Greek term, "*latreia*," is tinged with associations of ritual and temple; but it is taken here, and qualified by its adjective, on purpose to be lifted, as in paradox, into the region of the soul. The robes and incense of the visible sanctuary are here out of sight; the individual believer is at once priest, sacrifice, and altar; he immolates himself to the Lord,—living, yet no longer to himself.

But observe the pregnant collocation here of

"the body" with "the reason." "Give over your bodies"; not now your spirit, your intelligence, your sentiments, your aspirations, but "your bodies," to your Lord. Is this an anticlimax? Have we retreated from the higher to the lower, in coming from the contemplation of sovereign grace and the eternal glory to that of the physical frame of man? No more than the Lord Jesus did, when He walked down from the hill of Transfiguration to the crowd below, and to the sins and miseries it presented. He came from the scene of glory to serve man in its abiding inner light. And even He, in the days of His flesh, served men, ordinarily, only through His sacred body; walking to them with His feet; touching them with His hands; meeting their eyes with His; speaking with His lips the words that were spirit and life. As with Him so with us. It is only through the body, practically, that we can "serve our generation by the will of God." Not without the body but through it the spirit must tell on the embodied spirits around us. We look, we speak, we hear, we write, we nurse, we travel, by means of these material servants of the will, our living limbs. Without the body, where should we be, as to other men? And therefore, without the surrender of the body, where are we, as to other men, from the point of view of the will of God?

So there is a true sense in which, while the surrender of the will is all-important and primary from one point of view, the surrender of the body, the "giving over" of the body, to be the implement of God's will in us, is all-important, is crucial, from another. For many a Christian life it is the most needful of all things to remember this; it is the oblivion, or the mere half-recollection, of this which keeps that life an almost neutral thing as to witness and service for the Lord.

And do not grow conformed to this world, this "æon," the course and state of things in this scene of sin and death; do not play "the worldling," assuming a guise which in itself is fleeting, and which for you, members of Christ, must also be hollow; but grow transfigured, living out a lasting and genuine change of tone and conduct, in which the figure is only the congenial expression of the essence—by the renewal of your mind, by using as an implement in the holy process that divine light which has cleared your intelligence of the mists of self-love, and taught you to see as with new eyes "the splendour of the will of God"; so as that you test, discerning as by a spiritual touchstone, what is the will of God, the good, and acceptable, and perfect (will).

Such was to be the method, and such the issue, in this development of the surrendered life. All is divine in origin and secret. The eternal "compassions," and the sovereign work of the renewing and illuminating Spirit, are supposed before the believer can move one step. On the other hand the believer, in the full conscious action of his renewed "intelligence," is to ponder the call to seek "transfiguration" in a life of unworldly love, and to attain it in detail by using the new insight of a regenerated heart. He is to look, with the eyes of the soul, straight through every mist of self-will to the now beloved Will of God, as his deliberate choice, seen to be welcome, seen to be perfect, not because all is understood, but because the



man is joyfully surrendered to the all-trusted Master. Thus he is to move along the path of an ever-brightening transfiguration; at once open-eyed, and in the dark; seeing the Lord, and so with a sure instinct gravitating to His will, yet content to let the mists of the unknown always hang over the next step but one.

It is a process, not a crisis; "*grow* transfigured." The origin of the process, the liberation of the movement, is, at least in idea, as critical as possible; "Give over your bodies." That precept is conveyed, in its Greek form (*παραστῆσαι*, aorist), so as to suggest precisely the thought of a critical surrender. The Roman Christian, and his English younger brother, are called here, as they were above (vi. 13, 19), to a transaction with the Lord quite definite, whether or no the like has taken place before, or shall be done again. They are called, as if once for all, to look their Lord in the face, and to clasp His gifts in their hands, and then to put themselves and His gifts altogether into *His* hands, for perpetual use and service. So, from the side of his conscious experience, the Christian is called to a "hallowing of himself" decisive, crucial, instantaneous. But its outcome is to be a perpetual progression, a growth, not so much "into" grace as "in" it (2 Pet. iii. 18), in which the surrender in purpose becomes a long series of deepening surrenders in habit and action, and a larger discovery of self, and of the Lord, and of His will, takes effect in the "shining" of the transfigured life "more and more, unto the perfect day" (Prov. iv. 18).

Let us not distort this truth of progression, and its correlative truth of the Christian's abiding imperfection. Let us not profane it into an excuse for a life which at the best is stationary, and must almost certainly be retrograde, because not intent upon a genuine advance. Let us not withhold "our bodies" from the sacred surrender here enjoined upon us, and yet expect to realise somehow, at some vague date, a "transfiguration, by the renewal of our mind." We shall be indeed disappointed of that hope. But let us be at once stimulated and sobered by the spiritual facts. As we are "yielded to the Lord," in sober reality, we are in His mercy "liberated for growth." But the growth is to come, among other ways, by the diligent application of "the renewal of our mind" to the details of His blessed Will.

And it will come, in its true development, only in the line of holy humbleness. To exalt oneself, even in the spiritual life, is not to grow; it is to wither. So the Apostle goes on:

For I say, through the grace that has been given me, "the grace" of power for apostolic admonition, to every one who is among you, not to be high-minded beyond what his mind should be, but to be minded toward sober-mindedness, as to each God distributed faith's measure. That is to say, let the individual never, in himself, forget his brethren, and the mutual relation of each to all in Christ. Let him never make himself the centre, or think of his personal salvation as if it could really be taken alone. The Lord, the sovereign Giver of faith, the Almighty Bringer of souls into acceptance and union with Christ by faith, has given thy faith to thee, and thy brother's faith to him; and why? That the individual gifts, the bounty of the One Giver, might join the individuals not only to the Giver but to one another, as recip-

ients of riches many yet one, and which are to be spent in service one yet many. The One Lord distributes the one faith-power into many hearts, "measuring" it out to each, so that the many, individually believing in the One, may not collide and contend, but lovingly co-operate in a manifold service, the issue of their "like precious faith" (2 Pet. i. 2) conditioned by the variety of their lives. So comes in that pregnant parable of the Body, found only in the writings of St. Paul, and in four only of his Epistles, but so stated there as to take a place for ever in the foreground of Christian truth. We have it here in the Romans, and in larger detail in the contemporary 1 Corinthians (xii. 12-27). We have it finally and fully in the later Epistolary Group, of the first Roman Captivity—in Ephesians and Colossians. There the supreme point in the whole picture, the glorious Head, and His relation to the Limb and to the Body, comes out in all its greatness, while in these earlier passages it appears only incidentally.\* But each presentation, the earlier and the later, is alike true to its purpose. When St. Paul wrote to the Asiatics he was in presence of errors which beclouded the living splendour of the Head. When he wrote to the Romans, he was concerned rather with the interdependence of the limbs, in the practice of Christian social life.

We have spoken of "the parable of the Body." But is the word "parable" adequate? "What if earth be but the shadow of heaven?" "What if our physical frame, the soul's house and vehicle, be only the feebler counterpart of that great Organism in which the exalted Christ unites and animates His saints? That union is no mere aggregation, no mere alliance of so many men under the presidency of an invisible Leader. It is a thing of life. Each to the living Head, and so each to all His members, we are joined, in that wonderful connection with a tenacity, and with a relation, genuine, strong, and close as the eternal life can make it. The living, breathing man, multifold yet one, is but the reflection, as it were, of "Christ Mystical," the true Body with its heavenly Head.

For just as in one body we have many limbs, but all the limbs have not the same function, so we, the many, are one body in Christ, in our personal union with Him, but in detail, limbs of one another, coherent and related not as neighbours merely, but as complementary parts in the whole. But having endowments—according to the grace that was given to us—differing, be it prophecy, inspired utterance, a power from above, yet mysteriously conditioned (1 Cor. xiv. 32) by the judgment and will of the utterer, let it follow the proportion of the man's faith, let it be true to his entire dependence on the revealed Christ, not left at the mercy of his mere emotions, or, as it were, played upon by alien unseen powers; be it active service, let the man be in his service, wholly given to it, not turning aside to covet his brother's more mystic gift; be it the teacher, let him likewise be in his teaching, whole-hearted in his allotted work, free from ambitious outlooks from it; be it the exhorter, let him be in his exhortation; the distributor of his means, for God, with open-handedness; the superintendent, of Church, or of home, with earnestness; the pitier, (large and unofficial designation!) with gladness, doub-

\* See 1 Cor. xii. 21: "Can the head say to the feet," etc. ?



ling his gifts and works of mercy by the hal-  
lowed brightness of a heart set free from the  
aims of self, and therefore wholly at the service  
of the needy.

This paragraph of eight verses lies here before  
us, full all along of that deep characteristic of  
Gospel life, surrender for service. The call is  
to a profoundly passive inward attitude, with an  
express view to a richly active outward useful-  
ness. Possessed, and knowing it, of the com-  
passions of God, the man is asked to give him-  
self over to Eternal Love for purposes of un-  
worldly and unambitious employment in the  
path chosen for him, whatever it may be. In  
this respect above all others he is to be "not  
conformed to this world"—that is, he is to  
make not himself but his Lord his pleasure and  
ambition. "By the renewal of his mind" he is  
to view the Will of God from a point inacces-  
sible to the unregenerate, to the unjustified, to  
the man not emancipated in Christ from the  
tyranny of sin. He is to see in it his inexhaust-  
ible interest, his line of quest and hope, his  
ultimate and satisfying aim; because of the prac-  
tical identity of the Will and the infinitely good  
and blessed Bearer of it. And this more than  
surrender of his faculties, this happy and re-  
poseful consecration of them, is to show its  
reality in one way above all others first; in a  
humble estimate of self as compared with  
brother Christians, and a watchful willingness to  
do—not another's work, but the duty that lies  
next.

This relative aspect of the life of self-surren-  
der is the burthen of this great paragraph of  
duty. In the following passage we shall find  
precepts more in detail; but here we have what  
is to govern all along the whole stream of the  
obedient life. The man rich in Christ is rever-  
ently to remember others, and God's will in  
them, and for them. He is to avoid the subtle  
temptation to intrude beyond the Master's al-  
lotted work for him. He is to be slow to think,  
"I am richly qualified, and could do this thing,  
and that, and the other, better than the man  
who does it now." His chastened spiritual in-  
stinct will rather go to criticise himself, to  
watch for the least deficiency in his own doing  
of the task which at least to-day is his. He will  
"give himself wholly to this," be it more or  
less attractive to him in itself. For he works as  
one who has not to contrive a life as full of suc-  
cess and influence as he can imagine, but to  
accept a life assigned by the Lord who has first  
given to him Himself.

The passage itself amply implies that he is to  
use actively and honestly his renewed *intelligence*.  
He is to look circumstances and conditions in  
the face, remembering that in one way or an-  
other the will of God is expressed in them.  
He is to seek to understand not his duties only,  
but his personal equipments for them, natural  
as well as spiritual. But he is to do this as one  
whose "mind" is "renewed" by his living con-  
tact and union with his redeeming King, and  
who has really laid his faculties at the feet of  
an absolute Master, who is the Lord of order  
as well as of power.

What peace, energy, and dignity come into  
a life which is consciously and deliberately thus  
surrendered! The highest range of duties, as  
man counts highest, is thus disburthened both  
of its heavy anxieties and of its temptations to  
a ruinous self-importance. And the lowest

range, as man counts lowest, is filled with the  
quiet greatness born of the presence and will of  
God. In the memoirs of Mme. de la Mothe  
Guyon much is said of her faithful maid-servant,  
who was imprisoned along with her (in a sepa-  
rate chamber) in the Bastille, and there died,  
about the year 1700. This pious woman, deeply  
taught in the things of the Spirit, and gifted with  
an understanding far above the common, ap-  
pears never for an hour to have coveted a more  
ambitious department than that which God as-  
signed her in His obedience. "She desired to  
be what God would have her be, and to be noth-  
ing more, and nothing less. She included time  
and place, as well as disposition and action. She  
had not a doubt that God, who had given re-  
markable powers to Mme. Guyon, had called her  
to the great work in which she was employed.  
But knowing that her beloved mistress could  
not go alone, but must constantly have some  
female attendant, she had the conviction, equally  
distinct, that she was called to be her maid-ser-  
vant."

A great part of the surface of Christian so-  
ciety would be "transfigured" if its depth was  
more fully penetrated with that spirit. And it is  
to that spirit that the Apostle here definitely  
calls us, each and every one, not as with a  
"counsel of perfection" for the few, but as the  
will of God for all who have found out what  
is meant by His "compassions," and have  
caught even a glimpse of His Will as "good,  
and acceptable, and perfect."

"I would not have the restless will  
That hurries to and fro,  
Seeking for some great thing to do  
Or secret thing to know;  
I would be treated as a child,  
And guided where I go."

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### CHRISTIAN DUTY: DETAILS OF PER- SONAL CONDUCT.

ROMANS xii. 8-21.

ST. PAUL has set before us the life of surren-  
der, of the "giving-over" of faculty to God, in  
one great preliminary aspect. The fair ideal  
(meant always for a watchful and hopeful real-  
isation) has been held aloft. It is a life whose  
motive is the Lord's "compassions"; whose  
law of freedom is His will; whose inmost aim  
is, without envy or interference towards our fel-  
low-servants, to "finish the work He hath given  
us to do." Now into this noble outline are to  
be poured the details of personal conduct which,  
in any and every line and field are to make the  
characteristics of the Christian.

As we listen again, we will again remember  
that the words are levelled not at a few, but at  
all who are in Christ. The beings indicated  
here are not the chosen names of a Church  
Calendar, nor are they the passionless inhab-  
itants of a Utopia. They are all who, in Rome  
of old, in England now, "have peace with God  
through our Lord Jesus Christ," "have the  
Spirit of God dwelling in them," and are living  
out this wonderful but most practical life in the  
straight line of their Father's will.

As if he could not heap the golden words  
too thickly together, St. Paul dictates here with



even unusual abruptness and terseness of expression. He leaves syntax very much alone; gives us noun and adjective, and lets them speak for themselves. We will venture to render as nearly verbatim as possible. The English will inevitably seem more rough and crude than the Greek, but the impression given will be truer on the whole to the original than a fuller rendering would be.

Your love, unaffected. Abominating the ill, wedded to the good. For your brotherly-kindness, full of mutual home-affection. For your honour, your code of precedence, deferring to one another. For your earnestness, not slothful. For the Spirit, as regards your possession and use of the divine Indweller, glowing. For the Lord, bond-serving. For your hope, that is to say, as to the hope of the Lord's Return, rejoicing. For your affliction, enduring. For your prayer, persevering. For the wants of the saints, for the poverty of fellow-Christians, communicating; "sharing," a yet nobler thing than the mere "giving" which may ignore the sacred fellowship of the provider and the receiver. Hospitality—prosecuting as with a studious cultivation. Bless those who persecute you; bless, and do not curse. This was a solemnly appropriate precept, for the community over which, eight years later, the first great Persecution was to break in "blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke." And no doubt there was abundant present occasion for it, even while the scene was comparatively tranquil. Every modern mission-field can illustrate the possibilities of a "persecution" which may be altogether private, or which at most may touch only a narrow neighbourhood; which may never reach the point of technical outrage, yet may apply a truly "fiery trial" to the faithful convert. Even in circles of our decorous English society is no such thing known as the "persecution" of a life "not conformed to this world," though the assault or torture may take forms almost invisible and impalpable, except to the sensibilities of the object of it? For all such cases, as well as for the confessor on the rack, and the martyr in the fire, this precept holds expressly: "Bless, do not curse." In Christ find possible the impossible; let the resentment of nature die, at His feet, in the breath of His love.

To rejoice with the rejoicing, and to weep with the weeping; holy duties of the surrendered life, too easily forgotten. Alas, there is such a phenomenon, not altogether rare, as a life whose self-surrender, in some main aspects, cannot be doubted, but which utterly fails in sympathy. A certain spiritual exaltation is allowed actually to harden, or at least to seem to harden, the consecrated heart; and the man who perhaps witnesses for God with a prophet's ardour is yet not one to whom the mourner would go for tears and prayer in his bereavement, or the child for a perfectly human smile in its play. But this is not as the Lord would have it be. If indeed the Christian has "given his body over," it is that his eyes, and lips, and hands, may be ready to give loving tokens of fellowship in sorrow, and (what is less obvious) in gladness too, to the human hearts around him.

Feeling the same thing towards one another; animated by a happy identity of sympathy and brotherhood. Not haughty in feeling, but full of lowly sympathies; accessible, in an unaffected fellowship, to the poor, the social inferior, the

weak and the defeated, and again to the smallest and homeliest interests of all. It was the Lord's example; the little child, the wistful parent, the widow with her mite, the poor fallen woman of the street, could "lead away" His blessed sympathies with a touch, while He responded with an unbroken majesty of gracious power, but with a kindness for which condescension seems a word far too cold and distant.

Do not get to be wise in your own opinion; be ready always to learn; dread the attitude of mind, too possible even for the man of earnest spiritual purpose, which assumes that you have nothing to learn and everything to teach; which makes it easy to criticise and to discredit; and which can prove an altogether repellent thing to the observer from outside, who is trying to estimate the Gospel by its adherent and advocate. Requiring no one evil for evil; safe from the spirit of retaliation, in your surrender to Him "who when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, threatened not." Taking forethought for good in the sight of all men; not letting habits, talk, expenses, drift into inconsistency; watching with open and considerate eyes against what others may fairly think to be unchristian in you. Here is no counsel of cowardice, no recommendation of slavery to a public opinion which may be altogether wrong. It is a precept of loyal jealousy for the heavenly Master's honour. His servant is to be nobly indifferent to the world's thought and word, where he is sure that God and the world antagonise. But he is to be sensitively attentive to the world's observation where the world, more or less acquainted with the Christian precept or principle, and more or less conscious of its truth and right, is watching, maliciously or it may be wistfully, to see if it governs the Christian's practice. In view of this the man will never be content even with the satisfaction of his own conscience; he will set himself not only to do right, but to be seen to do it. He will not only be true to a monetary trust, for example; he will take care that the proofs of his fidelity shall be open. He will not only mean well towards others; he will take care that his manner and bearing, his dealings and intercourse, shall unmistakably breathe the Christian air.

If possible, as regards your side (the "your" is as emphatic as possible in position and in meaning), living at peace with all men; yes, even in pagan and hostile Rome. A peculiarly Christian principle speaks here. The men who had "given over their bodies a living sacrifice" might think, imaginably, that their duty was to court the world's enmity, to tilt as it were against its spears, as if the one supreme call was to collide, to fall, and to be glorified. But this would be fanaticism; and the Gospel is never fanatical; for it is the law of love. The surrendered Christian is not, as such, an aspirant for even a martyr's fame, but the servant of God and man. If martyrdom crosses his path, it is met as duty; but he does not court it as *éclat*. And what is true of martyrdom is of course true of every lower and milder form of the conflict of the Church, and of the Christian, in the world.

Nothing more nobly evidences the divine origin of the Gospel than this essential precept; "as far as it lies with you, live peaceably with all men." Such wise and kind forbearance and



neighbourliness would never have been bound up with the belief of supernatural powers and hopes, if those powers and hopes had been the mere issue of human exaltation, of natural enthusiasm. The supernatural of the Gospel leads to nothing but rectitude and considerateness, in short to nothing but love, between man and man. And why? Because it is indeed divine; it is the message and gift of the living Son of God, in all the truth and majesty of His rightfulness. All too early in the history of the Church "the crown of martyrdom" became an object of enthusiastic ambition. But that was not because of the teaching of the Crucified, nor of His suffering Apostles.

Not avenging yourselves, beloved; no, give place to the wrath; let the angry opponent, the dread persecutor, have his way, so far as your resistance or retaliation is concerned. "*Beloved*, let us love" (1 John iv. 7); with that strong and conquering love which wins by suffering. And do not fear lest eternal justice should go by default; there is One who will take care of that matter; you may leave it with Him. For it stands written (Deut. xxxii. 35), "To Me belongs vengeance; I will recompense, saith the Lord." "But if" (and again he quotes the older Scriptures, finding in the Proverbs—xxv. 21, 22—the same oracular authority as in the Pentateuch), "but if thy enemy is hungry, give him food; if he is thirsty, give him drink; for so doing thou wilt heap coals of fire on his head"; taking the best way to the only "vengeance" which a saint can wish, namely, your "enemy's" conviction of his wrong, the rising of a burning shame in his soul, and the melting of his spirit in the fire of love. Be not thou conquered by the evil, but conquer, in the good, the evil.

"*In the good*"; as if surrounded by it, moving invulnerable, in its magic circle, through "the contradiction of sinners," "the provoking of all men." The thought is just that of Ps. xxxi. 18, 19: "How great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee, which Thou hast wrought for them that trust in Thee before the sons of men! Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy presence from the pride of man; Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues." "The good" of this sentence of St. Paul's is no vague and abstract thing; it is "the gift of God" (vi. 28); it is the life eternal found and possessed in union with Christ, our Righteousness, our Sanctification, our Redemption. Practically, it is "not *It* but *He*." The Roman convert who should find it more than possible to meet his enemy with love, to do him positive good in his need, with a conquering simplicity of intention, was to do so not so much by an internal conflict between his "better self" and his worse, as by the living power of Christ received in his whole being; by "abiding in Him."

It is so now, and for ever. The open secret of divine peace and love is what it was; as necessary, as versatile, as victorious. And its path of victory is as straight and as sure as of old. And the precept to tread that path, daily and hourly, if occasion calls, is still as divinely binding as it ever was for the Christian, if indeed he has embraced "the mercies of God," and is looking to his Lord to be evermore "transfigured, by the renewing of his mind."

As we review this rich field of the flowers, and of the gold, of holiness, this now completed paragraph of epigrammatic precepts, some leading and pervading principles emerge. We see first that the sanctity of the Gospel is no hushed and cloistered "indifferentism." It is a thing intended for the open field of human life; to be lived out "before the sons of men." A strong positive element is in it. The saint is to "*abominate* the evil"; not only to deprecate it, and deplore. He is to be energetically "*in earnest*." He is to "*glow*" with the Spirit, and to "*rejoice*" in the hope of glory. He is to take practical, provident pains to live not only aright, but manifestly aright, in ways which "all men" can recognise. Again, his life is to be essentially social. He is contemplated as one who meets other lives at every turn, and he is never to forget or neglect his relation to them. Particularly in the Christian Society, he is to cherish the "family affection" of the Gospel; to defer to fellow Christians in a generous humility; to share his means with the poor among them; to welcome the strangers of them to his house. He is to think it a sacred duty to enter into the joys and the sorrows round him. He is to keep his sympathies open for despised people, and for little matters. Then again, and most prominently after all, he is to be ready to suffer, and to meet suffering with a spirit far greater than that of only resignation. He is to bless his persecutor; he is to serve his enemy in ways most practical and active; he is to conquer him for Christ, in the power of a divine communion.

Thus, meanwhile, the life, so positive, so active in its effects, is to be essentially all the while a passive, bearing, enduring, life. Its strength is to spring not from the energies of nature, which may or may not be vigorous in the man, but from an internal surrender to the claim and government of his Lord. He has "presented himself to God" (vi. 13); he has "presented his body, a living sacrifice" (xii. 1). He has recognised, with a penitent wonder and joy, that he is but the limb of a Body, and that his Head is the Lord. His thought is now not for his personal rights, his individual exaltation, but for the glory of his Head, for the fulfilment of the thought of his Head, and for the health and wealth of the Body, as the great vehicle in the world of the gracious will of the Head.

It is among the chief and deepest of the characteristics of Christian ethics, this passive root below a rich growth and harvest of activity. All through the New Testament we find it expressed or suggested. The first Beatitude uttered by the Lord (Matt. v. 3) is given to "the poor, the mendicant (*πτωχοί*), in spirit." The last (John xx. 29) is for the believer, who trusts without seeing. The radiant portrait of holy Love (1 Cor. xiii.) produces its effect, full of indescribable life as well as beauty, by the combination of almost none but negative touches; the "total abstinence" of the loving soul from impatience, from envy, from self-display, from self-seeking, from brooding over wrong, from even the faintest pleasure in evil, from the tendency to think ill of others. Everywhere the Gospel bids the Christian take sides against himself. He is to stand ready to forego even his surest rights, if only *he* is hurt by so doing; while on the other hand he is watchful to re-



spect even the least obvious rights of others, yea, to consider their weaknesses, and their prejudices, to the furthest just limit. He is "not to resist evil"; in the sense of never fighting for self as self. He is rather to "suffer himself to be defrauded" (1 Cor. vi. 7) than to bring discredit on his Lord in however due a course of law. The straits and humiliations of his earthly lot, if such things are the will of God for him, are not to be materials for his discontent, or occasions for his envy, or for his secular ambition. They are to be his opportunities for inward triumph; the theme of a "song of the Lord," in which he is to sing of strength perfected in weakness, of a power not his own "overshadowing" him (2 Cor. xii. 9, 10).

Such is the passivity of the saints, deep beneath their serviceable activity. The two are in vital connection. The root is not the accident, but the proper antecedent of the product. For the secret and unostentatious surrender of the will, in its Christian sense, is no mere evacuation, leaving the house swept but empty; it is the reception of the Lord of life into the open castle of the City of Mansoul. It is the placing in His hands of all that the walls contain. And placed in His hands, the castle, and the city, will show at once, and continually more and more, that not only order, but life, has taken possession. The surrender of the Moslem is, in its theory, a mere submission. The surrender of the Gospel is a reception also; and thus its nature is to come out in "the fruit of the Spirit."

Once more, let us not forget that the Apostle lays his main emphasis here rather on being than on doing. Nothing is said of great spiritual enterprises; everything has to do with the personal conduct of the men who, if such enterprises are done, must do them. This too is characteristic of the New Testament. Very rarely do the Apostles say anything about their converts' duty, for instance, to carry the message of Christ around them in evangelistic aggression. Such aggression was assuredly attempted, and in numberless ways, by the primeval Christians, from those who were "scattered abroad" (Acts viii. 4) after the death of Stephen onwards. The Philippians (ii. 15, 16) "shone as lights in the world, holding out the word of life." The Ephesians (v. 13) penetrated the surrounding darkness, being themselves "light in the Lord." The Thessalonians (1, i. 8) made their witness felt "in Macedonia, and Achaia, and in every place." The Romans, encouraged by St. Paul's presence and sufferings, "were bold to speak the word without fear" (Phil. i. 14). St. John (3 Ep. 7) alludes to missionaries who, "for the Name's sake, went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles."

Yet is it not plain that, when the Apostles thought of the life and zeal of their converts, their first care, by far, was that they should be wholly conformed to the will of God in personal and social matters? This was the indispensable condition to their being, as a community, what they must be if they were to prove true witnesses and propagandists for their Lord.

God forbid that we should draw from this phenomenon one inference, however faint, to thwart or discredit the missionary zeal now in our day rising like a fresh, pure tide in the believing Church. May our Master continually animate His servants in the Church at home to

seek the lost around them, to recall the lapsed with the voice of truth and love. May He multiply a hundredfold the scattered host of His "witnesses in the uttermost parts of the earth," through the dwelling-places of those eight hundred millions who are still pagan, not to speak of the lesser yet vast multitudes of misbelievers, Mahometan and Jewish. But neither in missionary enterprise, nor in any sort of activity for God and man, is this deep suggestion of the Epistles to be forgotten. What the Christian does is even more important than what he says. What he is is the all-important antecedent to what he does. He is "nothing yet as he ought to" be if, amidst even innumerable efforts and aggressions, he has not "presented his body a living sacrifice" for his Lord's purposes, not his own; if he has not learnt, in his Lord, an unaffected love, a holy family affection, a sympathy with griefs and joys around him, a humble esteem of himself, and the blessed art of giving way to wrath, and of overcoming evil in "the good" of the presence of the Lord.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### CHRISTIAN DUTY; IN CIVIL LIFE AND OTHERWISE: LOVE.

#### ROMANS xiii. 1-10.

A NEW topic now emerges, distinct, yet in close and natural connection. We have been listening to precepts for personal and social life, all rooted in that inmost characteristic of Christian morals, self-surrender, self-submission to God. Loyalty to others in the Lord has been the theme. In the circles of home, of friendship, of the Church; in the open field of intercourse with men in general, whose personal enmity or religious persecution was so likely to cross the path—in all these regions the Christian was to act on the principle of supernatural submission, as the sure way to spiritual victory.

The same principle is now carried into his relations with the State. As a Christian, he does not cease to be a citizen, to be a subject. His deliverance from the death-sentence of the Law of God only binds him, in his Lord's name, to a loyal fidelity to human statute; limited only by the case where such statute may really contradict the supreme divine law. The disciple of Christ, as such, while his whole being has received an emancipation unknown elsewhere, is to be the faithful subject of the Emperor, the orderly inhabitant of his quarter in the City, the punctual taxpayer, the ready giver of not a servile yet a genuine deference to the representatives and ministers of human authority.

This is he to do for reasons both general and special. In general, it is his Christian duty rather to submit than otherwise, where conscience toward God is not in the question. Not weakly, but meekly, he is to yield rather than resist in all his intercourse purely personal, with men; and therefore with the officials of order, as men. But in particular also, he is to understand that civil order is not only a desirable thing, but divine; it is the will of God for the social Race made in His Image. In the abstract, this is absolutely so; civil order is a God-given law, as truly as the most explicit pre-



cepts of the Decalogue, in whose Second Table it is so plainly implied all along. And in the concrete, the civil order under which the Christian finds himself to be is to be regarded as a real instance of this great principle. It is quite sure to be imperfect, because it is necessarily mediated through human minds and wills. Very possibly it may be gravely distorted into a system seriously oppressive of the individual life. As a fact, the supreme magistrate for the Roman Christians in the year 58 was a dissolute young man, intoxicated by the discovery that he might do almost entirely as he pleased with the lives around him; by no defect, however, in the idea and purpose of Roman law, but by fault of the degenerate world of the day. Yet civil authority, even with a Nero at its head, was still in principle a thing divine. And the Christian's attitude to it was to be always that of a willingness, a purpose, to obey; an absence of the resistance whose motive lies in self-assertion. Most assuredly his attitude was not to be that of the revolutionist, who looks upon the State as a sort of belligerent power, against which he, alone or in company, openly or in the dark, is free to carry on a campaign. Under even heavy pressure the Christian is still to remember that civil government is, in its principle, "of God." He is to reverence the Institution in its idea. He is to regard its actual officers, whatever their personal faults, as so far dignified by the Institution that their governing work is to be considered always first in the light of the Institution. The most imperfect, even the most erring, administration of civil order is still a thing to be respected before it is criticised. In its principle, it is a "terror not to good works, but to the evil."

It hardly needs elaborate remark to show that such a precept, little as it may accord with many popular political cries of our time, means anything in the Christian but a political servility, or an indifference on his part to political wrong in the actual course of government. The religion which invites every man to stand face to face with God in Christ, to go straight to the Eternal, knowing no intermediary but His Son, and no ultimate authority but His Scripture, for the certainties of the soul, for peace of conscience, for dominion over evil in himself and in the world, and for more than deliverance from the fear of death, is no friend to the tyrants of mankind. We have seen how, by enthroning Christ in the heart, it inculcates a noble inward submissiveness. But from another point of view it equally, and mightily, develops the noblest sort of individualism. It lifts man to a sublime independence of his surroundings, by joining him direct to God in Christ, by making him the Friend of God. No wonder then that, in the course of history, Christianity, that is to say the Christianity of the Apostles, of the Scriptures, has been the invincible ally of personal conscience and political liberty, the liberty which is the opposite alike of license and of tyranny. It is Christianity which has taught men calmly to die, in face of a persecuting Empire, or of whatever other giant human force, rather than do wrong at its bidding. It is Christianity which has lifted innumerable souls to stand upright in solitary protest for truth and against falsehood, when every form of governmental authority has been against them. It was the student of St. Paul who, alone before

the great Diet, uttering no denunciation, temperate and respectful in his whole bearing, was yet found immovable by Pope and Emperor: "I can not otherwise; so help me God." We may be sure that if the world shuts the Bible it will only the sooner revert, under whatever type of government, to essential despotism, whether it be the despotism of the master, or that of the man. The "individual" indeed will "wither." The Autocrat will find no purely independent spirits in his path. And what then shall call itself, however loudly, "Liberty, Fraternity, Equality," will be found at last, where the Bible is unknown, to be the remorseless despot of the personality, and of the home.

It is Christianity which has peacefully and securely freed the slave, and has restored woman to her true place by the side of man. But then, Christianity has done all this in a way of its own. It has never flattered the oppressed, nor inflamed them. It has told impartial truth to them, and to their oppressors. One of the least hopeful phenomena of present political life is the adulation (it cannot be called by another name) too frequently offered to the working classes by their leaders, or by those who ask their suffrages. A flattery as gross as any ever accepted by complacent monarchs is almost all that is now heard about themselves by the new master-section of the State. This is not Christianity, but its parody. The Gospel tells uncompromising truth to the rich, but also to the poor. Even in the presence of pagan slavery it laid the law of duty on the slave, as well as on his master. It bade the slave consider his obligations rather than his rights; while it said the same, precisely, and more at length, and more urgently, to his lord. So it at once avoided revolution and sowed the living seed of immense, and salutary, and ever-developing reforms. The doctrine of spiritual equality, and spiritual connection, secured in Christ, came into the world as the guarantee for the whole social and political system of the truest ultimate political liberty. For it equally chastened and developed the individual, in relation to the life around him.

Serious questions for practical casuistry may be raised, of course, from this passage. Is resistance to a cruel despotism never permissible to the Christian? In a time of revolution, when power wrestles with power, which power is the Christian to regard as "ordained of God"? It may be sufficient to reply to the former question that, almost self-evidently, the absolute principles of a passage like this take for granted some balance and modification by concurrent principles. Read without any such reserve, St. Paul leaves here no alternative, under any circumstances, to submission. But he certainly did not mean to say that the Christian must submit to an imperial order to sacrifice to the Roman gods. It seems to follow that the letter of the precept does not pronounce it inconceivable that a Christian, under circumstances which leave his action unselfish, truthful, the issue not of impatience, but of conviction, might be justified in positive resistance; such resistance as was offered to oppression by the Huguenots of the Cevennes, and by the Alpine Vaudois before them. But history adds its witness to the warnings of St. Paul, and of his Master, that almost inevitably it goes ill in the highest respects with saints who "take



the sword," and that the purest victories for freedom are won by those who "endure grief, suffering wrongfully," while they witness for right and Christ before their oppressors. The Protestant pastors of Southern France won a nobler victory than any won by Jean Cavalier in the field of battle when, at the risk of their lives, they met in the woods to draw up a solemn document of loyalty to Louis XV.; informing him that their injunction to their flocks always was, and always would be, "Fear God, honour the King."

Meanwhile Godet, in some admirable notes on this passage, remarks that it leaves the Christian not only not bound to aid an oppressive government by active co-operation, but amply free to witness aloud against its wrong; and that his "submissive but firm conduct is itself a homage to the inviolability of authority. Experience proves that it is in this way all tyrannies have been morally broken, and all true progress in the history of humanity effected."

What the servant of God should do with his allegiance at a revolutionary crisis is a grave question for any whom it may unhappily concern. Thomas Scott, in a useful note on our passage, remarks that "perhaps nothing involves greater difficulties, in very many instances, than to ascertain to whom the authority *justly* belongs. . . . Submission in all things lawful to 'the existing authorities' is our duty at all times and in all cases; though in civil convulsions . . . there may frequently be a difficulty in determining which are 'the existing authorities.'" In such cases "the Christian," says Godet, "will submit to the new power as soon as the resistance of the old shall have ceased. In the actual state of matters he will recognise the manifestation of God's will, and will take no part in any reactionary plot."

As regards the problem of forms or types of government, it seems clear that the Apostle lays no bond of *conscience* on the Christian. Both in the Old Testament and in the New a just monarchy appears to be the ideal. But our Epistle says that "there is *no power* but of God." In St. Paul's time the Roman Empire was in theory, as much as ever, a republic, and in fact a personal monarchy. In this question, as in so many others of the outward framework of human life, the Gospel is liberal in its applications, while it is, in the noblest sense, conservative in principle.

We close our preparatory comments, and proceed to the text, with the general recollection that in this brief paragraph we see and touch as it were the corner-stone of civil order. One side of the angle is the indefeasible duty, for the Christian citizen, of reverence for law, of remembrance of the religious aspect of even secular government. The other side is the memento to the ruler, to the authority, that God throws His shield over the claims of the State only because authority was instituted not for selfish, but for social ends, so that it belies itself if it is not used for the good of man.

Let every soul, every person, who has "presented his body a living sacrifice," be submissive to the ruling authorities; manifestly, from the context, the authorities of the state. For there is no authority except by God; but the existing authorities have been appointed by God. That is, the *imperium* of the King Eternal is absolutely reserved; an authority not sanc-

tioned by Him is nothing; man is no independent source of power and law. But then, it has pleased God so to order human life and history, that His will in this matter is expressed, from time to time, in and through the actual constitution of the state. So that the opponent of the authority withstands the ordinance of God, not merely that of man; but the withstanders will on themselves bring sentence of judgment; not only the human crime of treason, but the charge, in the court of God, of rebellion against His will. This is founded on the idea of law and order, which means by its nature the restraint of public mischief and the promotion, or at least protection, of public good. "Authority," even under its worst distortions, still so far keeps that aim that no human civic power, as a fact, punishes good as good, and rewards evil as evil; and thus for the common run of lives the worst settled authority is infinitely better than real anarchy. For rulers, as a class, are not a terror to the good deed, but to the evil; such is always the fact in principle, and such, taking human life as a whole, is the tendency, even at the worst, in practice, where the authority in any degree deserves its name. Now do you wish not to be afraid of the authority? do what is good, and you shall have praise from it; the "praise," at least, of being unmolested and protected. For God's agent he is to you, for what is good; through his function God, in providence, carries out His purposes of order. But if you are doing what is evil, be afraid; for not for nothing, not without warrant, nor without purpose, does he wear his sword, symbol of the ultimate power of life and death; for God's agent is he, an avenger, unto wrath, for the practiser of the evil. Wherefore, because God is in the matter, it is a necessity to submit, not only because of the wrath, the ruler's wrath in the case supposed, but because of the conscience too; because you know, as a Christian, that God speaks through the state and through its minister, and that anarchy is therefore disloyalty to Him. For on this account too you pay taxes; the same commission which gives the state the right to restrain and punish gives it the right to demand subsidy from its members, in order to its operations; for God's ministers are they, His  *λειτουργοί*, a word so frequently used in sacerdotal connections that it well may suggest them here; as if the civil ruler were, in his province, an almost religious instrument of divine order; God's ministers, to this very end persevering in their task; working on in the toils of administration, for the execution, consciously or not, of the divine plan of social peace.

This is a noble point of view, alike for governed and for governors, from which to consider the prosaic problems and necessities of public finance. Thus understood, the tax is paid not with a cold and compulsory assent to a mechanical exaction, but as an act in the line of the plan of God. And the tax is devised and demanded, not merely as an expedient to adjust a budget, but as a thing which God's law can sanction, in the interests of God's social plan. Discharge therefore to all men, to all men in authority, primarily, but not only, their dues; the tax, to whom you owe the tax, on person and property; the toll, to whom the toll, on merchandise; the fear, to whom the fear, as to the ordained punisher of wrong; the honour, to



whom the honour, as to the rightful claimant in general of loyal deference.

Such were the political principles of the new Faith, of the mysterious Society, which was so soon to perplex the Roman statesman, as well as to supply convenient victims to the Roman despot. A Nero was shortly to burn Christians in his gardens as a substitute for lamps, on the charge that they were guilty of secret and horrible orgies. Later, a Trajan, grave and anxious, was to order their execution as members of a secret community dangerous to imperial order. But here is a private missive sent to this people by their leader, reminding them of their principles, and prescribing their line of action. He puts them in immediate spiritual contact, every man and woman of them, with the Eternal Sovereign, and so he inspires them with the strongest possible independence, as regards "the fear of man." He bids them know, for a certainty, that the Almighty One regards them, each and all, as accepted in His Beloved, and fills them with His great Presence, and promises them a coming heaven from which no earthly power or terror can for a moment shut them out. But in the same message, and in the same Name, he commands them to pay their taxes to the pagan State, and to do so, not with the contemptuous indifference of the fanatic, who thinks that human life in its temporal order is God-forsaken, but in the spirit of cordial loyalty and ungrudging deference, as to an authority representing in its sphere none other than their Lord and Father.

It has been suggested that the first serious antagonism of the state towards these mysterious Christians was occasioned by the inevitable interference of the claims of Christ with the stern and rigid order of the Roman Family. A power which could assert the right, the duty, of a son to reject his father's religious worship was taken to be a power which meant the destruction of all social order as such; a *nihilism* indeed. This was a tremendous misunderstanding to encounter. How was it to be met? Not by tumultuary resistance, not even by passionate protests and invectives. The answer was to be that of love, practical and loyal, to God and man, in life and, when occasion came, in death.\* Upon the line of that path lay at least the possibility of martyrdom, with its lions and its funeral piles; but the end of it was the peaceful vindication of the glory of God and of the Name of Jesus, and the achievement of the best security for the liberties of man.

Congenially then the Apostle closes these precepts of civil order with the universal command to love. Owe nothing to any one; avoid absolutely the social disloyalty of debt; pay every creditor in full, with watchful care; except the loving one another. Love is to be a perpetual and inexhaustible debt, not as if repudiated or neglected, but as always due and always paying; a debt, not as a forgotten account is owing to the seller, but as interest on capital is continuously owing to the lender. And this, not only because of the fair beauty of love, but because of the legal duty of it: For the lover of his fellow (*τὸν ἕτερον*, "the other man, be he who he may, with whom the man has to do) has fulfilled the law, the law of the Second Table, the code of man's duty to man, which is in question here.

\* "To believe, to suffer, and to love, was the primitive taste."—Milner.

He "has fulfilled" it; as having at once entered, in principle and will, into its whole requirement; so that all he now needs is not a better attitude, but developed information. For the, "Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not murder, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,\* Thou shalt not covet," and whatever other commandment there is, all is summed up in this utterance, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Lev. xix. 18). Love works the neighbour no ill; therefore love is the Law's fulfilment.

Is it a mere negative precept then? Is the life of love to be only an abstinence from doing harm, which may shun thefts, but may also shun personal sacrifices? Is it a cold and inoperative "harmlessness," which leaves all things as they are? We see the answer in part in those words, "as thyself." Man "loves himself" (in the sense of nature, not of sin), with a love which instinctively avoids indeed what is repulsive and noxious, but does so because it positively likes and desires the opposite. The man who "loves his neighbour as himself" will be as considerate of his neighbour's feelings as of his own, in respect of abstinence from injury and annoyance. But he will be more; he will be actively desirous of his neighbour's good. "Working him no evil," he will reckon it as much "evil" to be indifferent to his positive true interests as he would reckon it unnatural to be apathetic about his own. "Working him no evil," as one who "loves him as himself," he will care, and seek, to work him good.

"Love," says Leibnitz, in reference to the great controversy on Pure Love agitated by Fénelon and Bossuet, "is that which finds its felicity in another's good."† Such an agent can never terminate its action in a mere cautious abstinence from wrong.

The true divine commentary on this brief paragraph is the nearly contemporary passage written by the same author, 1 Cor. xiii. There, as we saw above, the description of the sacred thing, love, like that of the heavenly state in the Revelation, is given largely in negatives. Yet who fails to feel the wonderful *positive* of the effect? That is no merely negative innocence which is greater than mysteries, and knowledge, and the use of an angel tongue; greater than self-inflicted poverty, and the endurance of the martyr's flame; "chief grace below, and all in all above." Its blessed negatives are but a form of unselfish *action*. It forgets itself, and remembers others, and refrains from the least needless wounding of them, not because it wants merely "to live and let live," but because it loves them, finding its felicity in their good.

It has been said that "love is holiness, spelt short." Thoughtfully interpreted and applied, the saying is true. The holy man in human life is the man who, with the Scriptures open before him as his informant and his guide, while the Lord Christ dwells in his heart by faith as his Reason and his Power, forgets himself in a work for others which is kept at once gentle, wise, and persistent to the end, by the love which, whatever else it does, knows how to sympathise and to serve.

\* This clause is perhaps to be omitted here.

† See Card. Bausset, "Vie de Fénelon," ii. 375. Leibnitz, in a letter to T. Burnet, quotes the words from a work of his own; *Amare est felicitate alterius delectari*.



## CHAPTER XXVIII.

## CHRISTIAN DUTY IN THE LIGHT OF THE LORD'S RETURN AND IN THE POWER OF HIS PRESENCE.

ROMANS xiii. 11-14.

THE great teacher has led us long upon the path of duty, in its patient details, all summed up in the duty and joy of love. We have heard him explaining to his disciples how to live as members together of the Body of Christ, and as members also of human society at large, and as citizens of the state. We have been busy latterly with thoughts of taxes, and tolls, and private debts, and the obligation of scrupulous rightfulness in all such things. Everything has had relation to the seen and the temporal. The teaching has not strayed into a land of dreams, nor into a desert and a cell; it has had at least as much to do with the market, and the shop, and the secular official, as if the writer had been a moralist whose horizon was altogether of this life, and who for the future was "without hope."

Yet all the while the teacher and the taught were penetrated and vivified by a certainty of the future perfectly supernatural, and commanding the wonder and glad response of their whole being. They carried about with them the promise of their Risen Master that He would personally return again in heavenly glory, to their infinite joy, gathering them for ever around Him in immortality, bringing heaven with Him, and transfiguring them into His own celestial Image.

Across all possible complications and obstacles of the human world around them they beheld "that blissful hope" (Tit. ii. 13). The smoke of Rome could not becloud it, nor her noise drown the music of its promise, nor her splendour of possessions make its golden vista less beautiful and less entrancing to their souls.\* Their Lord, once crucified, but now alive for evermore, was greater than the world; greater in His calm triumphant authority over man and nature, greater in the wonder and joy of Himself, His Person and His Salvation. It was enough that He had said He would come again, and that it would be to their eternal happiness. He had promised; therefore it would surely be.

How the promise would take place, and when, was a secondary question. Some things were revealed and certain, as to the manner; "This same Jesus, in like manner as ye saw Him going into heaven" (Acts i. 11). But vastly more was unrevealed and even unconjectured. As to the time, His words had left them, as they still leave us, suspended in a reverent sense of mystery, between intimations which seem almost equally to promise both speed and delay. "Watch therefore, for ye know not when the Master of the house cometh" (Mark xiii. 35); "After a long time the Lord of the servants cometh, and reckoneth with them" (Matt. xxv. 19). The Apostle himself follows his Redeemer's example in the matter. Here and there he seems to indicate an Advent at the doors, as when he speaks of "us who are alive and remain" (1 Thess. iv. 15). But again, in this very

Epistle, in his discourse on the future of Israel, he appears to contemplate great developments of time and event yet to come; and very definitely, for his own part, in many places, he records his expectation of death, not of a deathless transfiguration at the Coming. Many at least among his converts looked with an eagerness which was sometimes restless and unwholesome, as at Thessalonica, for the coming King; and it may have been thus with some of the Roman saints. But St. Paul at once warned the Thessalonians of their mistake; and certainly this Epistle *suggests* no such upheaval of expectation at Rome.

Our work in these pages is not to discuss "the times and the seasons" which now, as much as then, lie in the Father's "power" (Acts i. 7). It is rather to call attention to the fact that in all ages of the Church this mysterious but definite Promise has, with a silent force, made itself as it were present and contemporary to the believing and watching soul. How at last it shall be seen that "I come quickly," and "The day of Christ is not at hand" (Rev. xxii. 12, 20, 2 Thess. ii. 2), were both divinely and harmoniously truthful, it does not yet fully appear. But it is certain that both are so; and that in every generation of the now "long time" "the Hope," as if it were at the doors indeed, has been calculated for mighty effects on the Christian's will and work.

So we come to this great Advent oracle, to read it for our own age. Now first let us remember its wonderful illustration of that phenomenon which we have remarked already, the concurrence in Christianity of a faith full of eternity, with a life full of common duty. Here is a community of men called to live under an almost opened heaven; almost to see, as they look around them, the descending Lord of glory coming to bring in the eternal day, making Himself present in this visible scene "with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God," waking His buried saints from the dust, calling the living and the risen to meet Him in the air. How can they adjust such an expectation to the demands of "the daily round"? Will they not fly from the City to the solitude, to the hill-tops and forests of the Apennines, to wait with awful joy the great lightning-flash of glory? Not so. They somehow, while "looking for the Saviour from the heavens" (Phil. iii. 20), attend to their service and their business, pay their debts and their taxes, offer sympathy to their neighbours in their human sadnesses and joys, and yield honest loyalty to the magistrate and the Prince. They are the most stable of all elements in the civic life of the hour, if "the powers that be" would but understand them; while yet, all the while, they are the only people in the City whose home, consciously, is the eternal heavens. What can explain the paradox? Nothing but the Fact, the Person, the Character of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not an enthusiasm, however powerful, which governs them, but a Person. And He is at once the Lord of immortality and the Ruler of every detail of His servant's life. He is no author of fanaticism, but the divine-human King of truth and order. To know Him is to find the secret alike of a life eternal and of a patient faithfulness in the life that now is.

What was true of Him is true for evermore. His servant now, in this restless close of the

\* Omitte mirari beatæ  
Fumum et opes strepitumque Romæ.—Horace.



nineteenth age, is to find in Him this wonderful double secret still. He is to be, in Christ, by the very nature of his faith, the most practical and the most willing of the servants of his fellow-men, in their mortal as well as immortal interests; while also disengaged internally from a bondage to the seen and temporal by his mysterious union with the Son of God, and by his firm expectation of His Return. And this, this law of love and duty, let us remember, let us follow, knowing the season, the occasion, the growing crisis; that it is already the hour for our awaking out of sleep, the sleep of moral inattention, as if the eternal Master were not near. For nearer now is our salvation, in that last glorious sense of the word "salvation" which means the immortal issue of the whole saving process, nearer now than when we believed, and so by faith entered on our union with the Saviour. (See how he delights to associate himself with his disciples in the blessed unity of remembered conversion; "when *we* believed.") The night, with its murky silence, its "poring dark," the night of trial, of temptation, of the absence of our Christ, is far spent, but the day has drawn near; it has been a long night, *but* that means a near dawn; the everlasting sunrise of the longed-for *Parousia*, with its glory, gladness, and unveiling. Let us put off, therefore, as if they were a foul and entangling night-robe, the works of the darkness, the habits and acts of the moral night, things which *we can* throw off in the Name of Christ; but let us put on the weapons of the light, arming ourselves, for defence, and for holy aggression on the realm of evil, with faith, love, and the heavenly hope. So to the Thessalonians five years before (I, v. 8), and to the Ephesians four years later (vi. 11-17), he wrote of the holy Panoply, rapidly sketching it in the one place, giving the rich finished picture in the other; suggesting to the saints always the thought of a warfare first and mainly defensive, and *then* aggressive with the drawn sword, and indicating as their true armour not their reason, their emotions, or their will, taken in themselves, but the eternal facts of their revealed salvation in Christ, grasped and used by faith. As by day, for it is already dawn, in the Lord, let us walk decorously, becomingly, as we are the hallowed soldiers of our Leader; let our life not only be right in fact; let it *show* to all men the open "decorum" of truth, purity, peace, and love; not in revels and drunken bouts; not in chamberings, the sins of the secret couch, and profligacies, not—to name evils which cling often to the otherwise reputable Christian—in strife and envy, things which are pollutions, in the sight of the Holy One, as real as lust itself. No; put on, clothe and arm yourselves with, the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself the living sum and true meaning of all that can arm the soul; and for the flesh take no forethought lust-ward. As if, in euphemism, he would say, "Take all possible *forethought against* the life of self (*σάρξ*), with its lustful, self-willed gravitation away from God. And let that forethought be, to arm yourselves, as if never armed before, with Christ."

How solemnly explicit he is, how plain-spoken, about the temptations of the Roman Christian's life! The men who were capable of the appeals and revelations of the first eight chapters yet needed to be told not to drink to

intoxication, not to go near the house of ill-fame, not to quarrel, not to grudge. But every modern missionary in heathendom will tell us that the like stern plainness is needed now among the new-converted faithful. And is it not needed among those who have professed the Pauline faith much longer, in the congregations of our older Christendom?

It remains for our time, as truly as ever, a fact of religious life—this necessity to press it home upon the religious, *as* the religious, that they are called to a practical and detailed holiness; and that they are never to ignore the possibility of even the worst falls. So mysteriously can the subtle "flesh," in the believing receiver of the Gospel, becloud or distort the holy import of the thing received. So fatally easy it is "to corrupt the best into the worst," using the very depth and richness of spiritual truth as if it could be a substitute for patient practice, instead of its mighty stimulus.

But glorious is the method illustrated here for triumphant resistance to that tendency. What is it? It is not to retreat from spiritual principle upon a cold naturalistic programme of activity and probity. It is to penetrate through the spiritual principle to the Crucified and Living Lord who is its heart and power; it is to bury self in Him, and to arm the will with Him. It is to look for Him as Coming, but also, and yet more urgently, to use Him as Present. In the great Roman Epic, on the verge of the decisive conflict, the goddess-mother laid the invulnerable panoply at the feet of her Æneas; and the astonished Champion straightway, first pondering every part of the heaven-sent armament, then "put it on," and was prepared. As it were at our feet is laid the Lord Jesus Christ, in all He is, in all He has done, in His indissoluble union with us in it all, as we are one with Him by the Holy Ghost. It is for us to see in Him our power and victory, and to "put Him on," in a personal act which, while all by grace, is yet in itself our own. And how is this done? It is by the "committal of the keeping of our souls unto Him" (1 Pet. iv. 19), not vaguely, but definitely and with purpose, in view of each and every temptation. It is by "living our life in the flesh by faith in the Son of God" (Gal. ii. 20); that is to say, in effect, by perpetually *making use of* the Crucified and Living Saviour, One with us by the Holy Spirit, by using Him as our living Deliverer, our Peace and Power, amidst *all* that the dark hosts of evil can do against us.

Oh, wonderful and all-adequate secret; "Christ, which is the Secret of God" (Col. ii. 2)! Oh, divine simplicity of its depth.

"Heaven's easy, artless, unencumber'd plan"!

Not that its "ease" means our indolence. No; if we would indeed "arm ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ" we must awake and be astir to "*know whom* we have trusted" (2 Tim. i. 12). We must explore His Word about Himself. We must ponder it, above all, in the prayer which converses with Him over His promises, till they live to us in His light. We must watch and pray, that we may be alert to employ our armament. The Christian who steps out into life "light-heartedly," thinking superficially of his weakness, and of his foes, is only too likely also to think of his Lord superficially, and to find of even this heavenly armour



that "he cannot *go* with it, for he hath not proved it" (1 Sam. xvii. 39). But all this leaves absolutely untouched the divine simplicity of the matter. It leaves it wonderfully true that the decisive, the satisfying, *the thorough*, moral victory and deliverance comes to the Christian man not by trampling about with his own resolves, but by committing himself to his Saviour and Keeper, who has conquered *him*, that now He may conquer "his strong Enemy" for him.

"Heaven's unencumbered plan" of "victory and triumph, against the devil, the world, and the flesh," is no day-dream of romance. It lives, it works in the most open hour of the common world of sin and sorrow. *We have seen* this "putting on of the Lord Jesus Christ" victoriously successful where the most fierce, or the most subtle, forms of temptation were to be dealt with. *We have seen* it preserving, with beautiful persistency, a life-long sufferer from the terrible solicitations of pain, and of still less endurable helplessness—every limb fixed literally immovable by paralysis on the ill-furnished bed; *we have seen* the man cheerful, restful, always ready for wise word and sympathetic thought, and affirming that his Lord, present to his soul, was infinitely enough to "keep him." *We have seen* the overwhelmed toiler for God, while every step through the day was clogged by "thronging duties," such duties as most wear and drain the spirit, yet maintained in an equable cheerfulness and as it were inward leisure by this same always adequate secret, "the Lord Jesus Christ put on." *We have known* the missionary who had, in sober earnest, hazarded his life for the blessed Name, yet ready to bear quiet witness to the repose and readiness to be found in meeting disappointment, solitude, danger, not so much by a stern resistance as by the use, then and there, confidently, and in surrender, of the Crucified and Living Lord. Shall we dare to add with the humiliating avowal that only a too partial proof has been made of this glorious open Secret, that *we know* by experiment that the weakest of the servants of our King, "putting on Him," find victory and deliverance, where there was defeat before?

Let us, writer and reader, address ourselves afresh in practice to this wonderful secret. Let us, as if we had never done it before, "put on the Lord Jesus Christ."\* Vain is our interpretation of the holy Word, which not only "abideth, but *liveth* for ever" (1 Pet. i. 23), if it does not somehow *come home*. For that Word was written on purpose to come home; to touch and move the conscience and the will, in the realities of our inmost, and also of our most outward, life. Never for one moment do we stand as merely interested students and spectators, outside the field of temptation. Never for one moment therefore can we dispense with the great Secret of victory and safety.

Full in face of the realities of sin—of Roman sin, in Nero's days; but let us just now forget Rome and Nero; they were only dark accidents of a darker essence—St. Paul here writes down, across them all, these words, this spell, this Name; "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." Take first a steady look, he seems to say, at

your sore need, in the light of God; but then, at once, look off, look *here*. Here is the more than Antithesis to it all. Here is that by which you can be "more than conqueror." Take your iniquities at the worst; this can subdue them. Take your surroundings at the worst; this can emancipate you from their power. It is "the Lord Jesus Christ," and the "putting on" of Him.

Let us remember, as if it were a new thing, that He, the Christ of Prophets, Evangelists, and Apostles, is a Fact. Sure as the existence now of His universal Church, as the observance of the historic Sacrament of His Death, as the impossibility of Galilean or Pharisaic imagination having *composed*, instead of *photographed*, the portrait of the Incarnate Son, the Immaculate Lamb; sure as is the glad verification in ten thousand blessed lives to-day of all, of all, that the Christ of Scripture undertakes to be to the soul that will take Him at His own terms—so sure, across all oldest and all newest doubts, across all *gnosis* and all *agnosia*, lies the present Fact of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Then let us remember that it is a fact that man, in the mercy of God, *can* "put Him on." He is not far off. He presents Himself to our touch, our possession. He says to us, "Come to Me." He unveils Himself as literal partaker of our nature; as our Sacrifice; our Righteousness, "through faith in His blood"; as the Head and Life-spring, in an indescribable union, of a deep calm tide of life spiritual and eternal, ready to circulate through our being. He invites Himself to "make His abode *with us*" (John xiv. 23); yea, more, "I will come in to him; I will dwell *in* his heart by faith" (Rev. iii. 20; Eph. iii. 17). In that ungovernable heart of ours, that interminably self-deceptive heart (Jer. xvii. 9), He engages to reside, to be permanent Occupant, the Master always at home. He is prepared thus to take, with regard to our will, a place of power nearer than all circumstances, and deep in the midst of all possible inward traitors; to keep His eye on their plots, His foot, not ours, upon their necks. Yes, He invites us thus to embrace Him into a full contact; to "put Him on."

May we not say of Him what the great Poet says of Duty, and glorify the verse by a yet nobler application?—

"Thou who art victory and law  
When empty terrors overawe,  
From vain temptations dost set free,  
And calm'st the weary strife of frail humanity!"

Yes, we can "put Him on" as our "Panoply of Light." We can put Him on as "the Lord," surrendering ourselves to His absolute while most benignant sovereignty and will, deep secret of repose. We can put Him on as "Jesus," clasping the truth that He, our Human Brother, yet Divine, "saves His people from their sins" (Matt. i. 21). We can put Him on as "Christ," our Head, anointed without measure by the Eternal Spirit, and now sending of that same Spirit into His happy members, so that we are indeed one with Him, and receive into our whole being the resources of His life.

Such are the armour and the arms. St. Jerome, commenting on a kindred passage (Eph. vi. 13), says that "it most clearly results that by 'the weapons of God' *the Lord our Saviour* is to be understood."

\* From this point to the close of the chapter the writer has used, with modifications, passages from a Sermon (No. iii.) in his volume entitled "Christ is All."



We may recollect that this text is memorable in connection with the Conversion of St. Augustine. In his "Confessions" (viii. 12) he records how, in the garden at Milan, at a time of great moral conflict, he was strangely attracted by a voice, perhaps the cry of children playing: "Take and read, take and read." He fetched and opened again a copy of the Epistles ("codicem Apostoli"), which he had lately laid down. "I read in silence the first place on which my eyes fell; 'Not in revelling and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in its lusts.' I neither cared, nor needed, to read further. At the close of the sentence, as if a ray of certainty were poured into my heart, the clouds of hesitation fled at once." His will was in the will of God.

Alas, there falls one shadow over that fair scene. In the belief of Augustine's time, to decide fully for Christ meant, or very nearly meant, so to accept the ascetic idea as to renounce the Christian home. But the Lord read His servant's heart aright through the error, and filled it with His peace. To us, in a surrounding religious light far clearer, in many things, than that which shone even upon Ambrose and Augustine; to us who quite recognise that in the paths of homeliest duty and commonest temptation lies the line along which the blessed power of the Saviour may best overshadow His disciple; the Spirit's voice shall say of this same text "Take and read, take and read." We will "put on," never to put off. Then we shall step out upon the old path in a strength new, and to be renewed for ever, armed against evil, armed for the will of God, with Jesus Christ our Lord.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### CHRISTIAN DUTY: MUTUAL TENDERNESS AND TOLERANCE: THE SACREDNESS OF EXAMPLE.

ROMANS xiv. 1-23.

BUT him who is weak—we might almost render, him who suffers from weakness, in his faith (in the sense here not of creed, a meaning of *πίστις* rare in St. Paul, but of reliance on his Lord; reliance not only for justification but, in this case, for holy liberty), welcome into fellowship—not for criticisms of his scruples, of his *διαλογισμοί*, the anxious internal debates of conscience. One man believes, has faith, issuing in a conviction of liberty, in such a mode and degree as to eat all kinds of food; but the man in weakness eats vegetables only; an extreme case, but doubtless not uncommon, where a convert, tired out by his own scruples between food and food, cut the knot by rejecting flesh-meat altogether. The eater—let him not despise the non-eater; while the non-eater—let him not judge the eater; for our (ὁ) God welcomed him to fellowship, when he came to the feet of His Son for acceptance. You—who are you, thus judging Another's domestic? To his own Lord, his own Master, he stands, in approval,—or, if that must be, falls under displeasure; but he shall be upheld in approval; for able is that Lord to set him so, to bid him "stand," under

His sanctioning smile. One man distinguishes day above day; while another distinguishes every day; a phrase paradoxical but intelligible; it describes the thought of the man who, less anxious than his neighbour about stated "holy-days," still aims not to "level down" but to "level up" his use of time; to count every day "holy," equally dedicated to the will and work of God. Let each be quite assured in his own mind; using the thinking-power given him by his Master, let him reverently work the question out, and then live up to his ascertained convictions, while (this is intimated by the emphatic "*his own mind*") he respects the convictions of his neighbour. The man who "minds" the day, the "holy-day" in question, in any given instance, to the Lord he "minds" it; (and the man who "minds" not the day, to the Lord he does not "mind" it); both parties, as Christians, in their convictions and their practice, stand related and responsible, directly and primarily to the Lord; that fact must always govern and qualify their mutual judgments. And the eater, the man who takes food indifferently without scruple, to the Lord he eats, for he gives thanks at his meal to God; and the non-eater, to the Lord he does not eat the scrupled food, and gives thanks to God for that of which his conscience allows him to partake.

The connection of the paragraph just traversed with what went before it is suggestive and instructive. There is a close connection between the two; it is marked expressly by the "but" (δέ) of ver. 1, a link strangely missed in the Authorised Version. The "but" indicates a difference of thought, however slight, between the two passages. And the difference, as we read it, is this. The close of the thirteenth chapter has gone all in the direction of Christian wakefulness, decision, and the battle-field of conquering faith. The Roman convert, roused by its trumpet-strain, will be eager to be up and doing, against the enemy and for his Lord, armed from head to foot with Christ. He will bend his whole purpose upon a life of open and active holiness. He will be filled with a new sense at once of the seriousness and of the liberty of the Gospel. But then—some "weak brother" will cross his path. It will be some recent convert, perhaps from Judaism itself, perhaps an ex-pagan, but influenced by the Jewish ideas so prevalent at the time in many Roman circles. This Christian, not untrustful, at least in theory, of the Lord alone for pardon and acceptance, is, however, quite full of scruples which, to the man fully "armed with Christ," may seem, and do seem, lamentably morbid, really serious mistakes and hindrances. The "weak brother" spends much time in studying the traditional rules of fast and feast, and the code of permitted food. He is sure that the God who has accepted him will hide His face from him if he lets the new moon pass like a common day; or if the Sabbath is not kept by the rule, not of Scripture, but of the Rabbis. Every social meal gives him painful and frequent occasion for troubling himself, and others; he takes refuge perhaps in an anxious vegetarianism, in despair of otherwise keeping undefiled. And inevitably such scruples do not terminate in themselves. They infect the man's whole tone of thinking and action. He ques-



tions and discusses everything, with himself, if not with others. He is on the way to let his view of acceptance in Christ grow fainter and more confused. He walks, he lives; but he moves like a man chained, and in a prison.

Such a case as this would be a sore temptation to the "strong" Christian. He would be greatly inclined, of himself, first to make a vigorous protest, and then, if the difficulty proved obstinate, to think hard thoughts of his narrow-minded friend; to doubt his right to the Christian name at all; to reproach him, or (worst of all) to satirise him. Meanwhile the "weak" Christian would have his harsh thoughts too. He would not, by any means for certain, show as much meekness as "weakness." He would let his neighbour see, in one way or other, that he thought him little better than a worldling, who made Christ an excuse for personal self-indulgence.

How does the Apostle meet the trying case, which must have crossed his own path so often, and sometimes in the form of a bitter opposition from those who were "suffering from weakness in their faith"? It is quite plain that his own convictions lay with "the strong," so far as *principle* was concerned. He "knew that nothing was unclean" (ver. 14). He knew that the Lord was not grieved, but pleased, by the temperate and thankful use, untroubled by morbid fears, of His natural bounties. He knew that the Jewish festival-system had found its goal and end in the perpetual "let us keep the feast" (1 Cor. v. 3) of the true believer's happy and hallowed life.\* And accordingly he does, in passing, rebuke "the weak" for their harsh criticisms (*κρίνειν*) of "the strong." But then, he throws all the more weight, the main weight, on his rebukes and warnings to "the strong." Their principle might be right on this great detail. But this left untouched the yet more stringent overruling principle, to "walk in love"; to take part against themselves; to live in this matter, as in everything else, for others. They were not to be at all ashamed of their special principles. But they were to be deeply ashamed of one hour's unloving conduct. They were to be quietly convinced, in respect of private judgment. They were to be more than tolerant—they were to be loving—in respect of common life in the Lord.

Their "strength" in Christ was never to be ungentle; never to be "used like a giant's." It was to be shown, first and most, by patience. It was to take the form of the calm, strong readiness to understand another's point of view. It was to appear as reverence for another's conscience, even when the conscience went astray for want of better light.

Let us take this apostolic principle out into modern religious life. There are times when we shall be specially bound to put it carefully in relation to other principles, of course. When St. Paul, some months earlier, wrote to Galatia, and had to deal with an error which darkened the whole truth of the sinner's way to God as it lies straight through Christ, he did not say, "Let every man be quite assured in his own

mind." He said (i. 8) "If an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel, which is not another, let him be anathema." The question *there* was, Is Christ all, or is He not? Is faith all, or is it not, for our laying hold of Him? Even in Galatia, he warned the converts of the miserable and fatal mistake of "biting and devouring one another" (v. 15). But he adjured them not to wreck their peace with God upon a fundamental error. *Here*, at Rome, the question was different; it was secondary. It concerned certain details of Christian practice. Was an outworn and exaggerated ceremonialism a part of the will of God, in the justified believer's life? It was not so, as a fact. Yet it was a matter on which the Lord, by His Apostle, rather counselled than commanded. It was not of the foundation. And the always overruling law for the discussion was—the tolerance born of love. Let us in our day remember this, whether our inmost sympathies are with "the strong" or with "the weak." In Jesus Christ, it is possible to realise the ideal of this paragraph even in our divided Christendom. It is possible to be convinced, yet sympathetic. It is possible to see the Lord for ourselves with glorious clearness, yet to understand the practical difficulties felt by others, and to love, and to respect, where there are even great divergences. No man works more for a final spiritual consensus than he who, in Christ, so lives.

Incidentally meantime, the Apostle, in this passage which so curbs "the strong," lets fall maxims which for ever protect all that is good and true in that well-worn and often misused phrase, "the right of private judgment." No spiritual despot, no claimant to be the autocratic director of a conscience, could have written those words, "Let every man be quite certain in his own mind"; "Who art thou that judgest Another's domestic?" Such sentences assert not the right so much as *the duty*, for the individual Christian, of a reverent "thinking for himself." They maintain a true and noble individualism. And there is a special need just now in the Church to remember, in its place, the value of Christian individualism. The idea of the community, the society, is just now so vastly prevalent (doubtless not without the providence of God) in human life, and also in the Church, that an assertion of the individual, which was once disproportionate, is now often necessary, lest the social idea in its turn should be exaggerated into a dangerous mistake. Coherence, mutuality, the truth of the Body and the Members; all this, in its place, is not only important, but divine. The individual must inevitably lose where individualism is his whole idea. But it is ill for the community, above all for the Church, where in the total the individual tends really to be merged and lost. Alas for the Church where the Church tries to take the individual's place in the knowledge of God, in the love of Christ, in the power of the Spirit. The religious Community must indeed inevitably lose where religious communism is its whole idea. It can be perfectly strong only where individual consciences are tender and enlightened; where individual souls personally know God in Christ; where individual wills are ready, if the Lord call, to stand alone for known truth even against the religious Society;—if there also the individualism is not self-will, but

\* There seems to be a broad and intelligible difference between the sabbath-keeping of the Jewish law and the Sabbath-keeping of man; the enjoyment and holy use of the primeval Rest for man and beast. We take it that *that* duty and privilege is not in question here at all. The "weak" Christian was the anxious scholar of the Rabbis, not the man simply loyal to the Decalogue.



Christian personal responsibility; if the man "thinks for himself" on his knees; if he reverences the individualism of others, and the relations of each to all.

The individualism of Rom. xiv., asserted in an argument full of the deepest secrets of cohesion, is the holy and healthful thing it is because it is Christian. It is developed not by the assertion of self, but by individual communion with Christ.

Now he goes on to further and still fuller statements in the same direction.

For none of us to himself lives, and none of us to himself dies. How, and wherefore? Is it merely that "we" live lives always, necessarily related to one another? He has this in his heart indeed. But he reaches it through the greater, deeper, antecedent truth of our relation to the Lord. The Christian is related to his brother-Christian through Christ, not to Christ through his brother, or through the common Organism in which the brethren are "each other's limbs." "To the Lord," with absolute directness, with a perfect and wonderful immediateness, each individual Christian is first related. His life and his death are "to others," but through him. The Master's claim is eternally first; for it is based direct upon the redeeming work in which He bought us for Himself.

For whether we live, to the Lord we live; and whether we be dead, to the Lord we are dead; in the state of the departed, as before, "relation stands." Alike, therefore, whether we be dead, or whether we live, the Lord's we are; His property, bound first and in everything to His possession. For to this end Christ both died and lived again, that He might become Lord of us both dead and living.

Here is the profound truth seen already in earlier passages in the Epistle. We have had it reasoned out, above all in the sixth chapter, in its revelation of the way of Holiness, that our only possible right relations with the Lord are clasped and governed by the fact that to Him we rightly and everlastingly belong. There, however, the thought was more of our surrender under his rights. Here it is of the mighty antecedent fact, under which our most absolute surrender is nothing more than the recognition of His indefeasible claim. What the Apostle says here, in this wonderful passage of mingled doctrine and duty, is that, whether or no *we are owning* our vassalage to Christ, we are nothing if not *de jure* His vassals. He has not only rescued us, but so rescued us as to buy us for His own. We may be true to the fact in our internal attitude; we may be oblivious of it; but we cannot get away from it. It looks us every hour in the face, whether we respond or not. It will still look us in the face through the endless life to come.

For manifestly it is this objective aspect of our "belonging" which is here in point. St. Paul is not reasoning with the "weak" and the "strong" from their experience, from their conscious loyalty to the Lord. Rather, he is calling them to a new realisation of what such loyalty should be. It is in order to this that he reminds them of the eternal claim of the Lord, made good in His death and Resurrection; His claim to be so their Master, individually and altogether, that every thought about each other was to be governed by that claim of His on

them all. "The Lord" must always interpose, with a right inalienable. Each Christian is annexed, by all the laws of Heaven, to Him. So each must—not make, but realise that annexation, in every thought about neighbour and about brother.

The passage invites us meantime to further remark, in another direction. It is one of those utterances which, luminous with light given by their context, shine also with a light of their own, giving us revelations independent of the surrounding matter. Here one such revelation appears; it affects our knowledge of the Intermediate State.

The Apostle,\* four times over in this short paragraph, makes mention of death, and of the dead. "No one of us dieth to Himself"; "Whether we die, we die unto the Lord"; "Whether we die, we are the Lord's"; "That He might be the Lord of the dead." And this last sentence, with its mention not of the dying, but of the dead, reminds us that the reference in them all is to the Christian's relation to his Lord, not only in the hour of death, but in the state after death. It is not only that Jesus Christ, as the slain One risen, is absolute Disposer of the time and manner of our dying. It is not only that when our death comes we are to accept it as an opportunity for the "glorifying of God" (John xxi. 19; Phil. i. 20) in the sight and in the memory of those who know of it. It is that when we have "passed through death," and come out upon the other side,

"When we enter yonder regions,  
When we touch the sacred shore,"

our relation to the slain One risen, to Him who, as such, "hath the keys of Hades and of death" (Rev. i. 18), is perfectly continuous and the same. He is our absolute Master, there as well as here. And we, by consequence and correlation, are vassals, servants, bondservants to Him, there as well as here.

Here is a truth which, we cannot but think, richly repays the Christian's repeated remembrance and reflection; and that not only in the way of asserting the eternal rights of our blessed Redeemer over us, but in the way of shedding light, and peace, and the sense of reality and expectation, on both the prospect of our own passage into eternity and the thoughts we entertain of the present life of our holy beloved ones who have entered into it before us.

Everything is precious which really assists the soul in such thoughts, and at the same time keeps it fully and practically alive to the realities of faith, patience, and obedience here below, here in the present hour. While the indulgence of unauthorised imagination in that direction is almost always enervating and disturbing to the present action of Scriptural faith, the least help to a solid realisation and anticipation, supplied by the Word that cannot lie, is in its nature both hallowing and strengthening. Such a help we have assuredly here.

He who died and rose again is at this hour, in holy might and right, "the Lord" of the blessed dead. Then, the blessed dead are vassals and *servants* of Him who died and rose again. And all our thought of them, as they are now, at this hour, "in those heavenly habitations, where the souls of them that sleep in

\* We transcribe here a few paragraphs from the closing pages of our book, "Life in Christ and for Christ."



the Lord Jesus enjoy perpetual rest and felicity,"\* gains indefinitely in life, in reality, in strength and glory, as we see them, through this narrow but bright "door in heaven" (Rev. v. 1), not resting only but serving also before their Lord, who has bought them for His use, and who holds them in His use quite as truly now as when we had the joy of their presence with us, and He was seen by us living and working in them and through them here.

True it is that the leading and essential character of their present state is rest, as that of their resurrection state will be action. But the two states overflow into each other. In one glorious passage the Apostle describes the resurrection bliss as also "rest" (2 Thess. i. 7). And here we have it indicated that the heavenly intermediate rest is also service. What the precise nature of that service is we cannot tell. "Our knowledge of that life is small." Most certainly, "in vain our fancy strives to paint" its blessedness, both of repose and of occupation. This is part of our normal and God-chosen lot here, which is to "walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. v. 7), *οὐ διὰ ὁρᾶς*, "not by Object seen," not by objects seen. But blessed is the spiritual assistance in such a walk as we recollect, step by step, as we draw nearer to that happy assembly above, that, whatever be the manner and exercise of their holy life, it is life indeed; power, not weakness; service, not inaction. He who died and revived is Lord, not of us only, but of them.

But from this excursion into the sacred Unseen we must return. St. Paul is intent now upon the believer's walk of loving large-heartedness in this life, not the next. But you—why do you judge your brother? (he takes up the verb, *κρίνειν*, used in his former appeal to the "weak," ver. 3). Or you too (he turns to the "strong"; see again ver. 3)—why do you despise your brother? For we shall stand, all of us, on one level, whatever were our mutual sentiments on earth, whatever claim we made here to sit as judges on our brethren, before the tribunal of our God. For it stands written (Isa. xlv. 23), "As I live, saith the Lord, sure it is as My eternal Being, that to Me, not to another, shall bend every knee; and every tongue shall confess, shall ascribe all sovereignty, to God," not to the creature. So then each of us, about himself, not about the faults or errors of his brother, shall give account to God.

We have here, as in 2 Cor. v. 10, and again, under other imagery, in 1 Cor. iii. 11-15, a glimpse of that heart-searching prospect for the Christian, his summons hereafter, as a Christian, to the tribunal of his Lord. In all the three passages, and now particularly in this, the language, though it lends itself freely to the universal Assize, is limited by context, as to its direct purport, to the Master's scrutiny of His own servants as such. The question to be tried and decided (speaking after the manner of men) at His "tribunal," in this reference, is not that of glory or perdition; the persons of the examined are accepted; the inquiry is in the *domestic* court of the Palace, so to speak; it regards the award of the King as to the issues and value of His accepted servants' labour and conduct, as His representatives, in their mortal life. "The Lord of the servants cometh, and reckoneth with

them" (Matt. xxv. 19). They have been justified by faith. They have been united to their glorious Head. They "shall be saved" (1 Cor. iii. 15), whatever be the fate of their "work." But what will their Lord say of their work? What have they done for Him, in labour, in witness, and above all *in character*? He will tell them what He thinks. He will be infinitely kind; but He will not flatter. And somehow, surely,—*"it doth not yet appear"* how, but somehow—eternity, even the eternity of salvation, will bear the impress of that award, the impress of *the past of service*, estimated by the King. "What shall the harvest be?"

And all this shall take place (this is the special emphasis of the prospect here) with a solemn individuality of inquiry. "*Every one of us—for himself—shall give account.*" We reflected, a little above, on the true place of "individualism" in the life of grace. We see here that there will indeed be a place for it in the experiences of eternity. The scrutiny of "the tribunal" will concern not the Society, the Organism, the total, but the member, the man. Each will stand in a solemn solitude there, before his divine Examiner. What *he* was, as the Lord's member, that will be the question. What *he* shall be, as such, in the functions of the endless state, that will be the result.

Let us not be troubled over that prospect with the trouble of the worldling, as if we did not know Him who will scrutinise us, and did not love Him. Around the thought of His "tribunal," in that aspect, there are cast no exterminating terrors. But it is a prospect fit to make grave and full of purpose the life which yet "is hid with Christ in God," and which is life indeed through grace. It is a deep reminder that the beloved Saviour is also, and in no figure of speech, but in an eternal earnest, the Master too. We would not have Him not to be this. He would not be all He is to us as Saviour, were He not this also, and for ever.

St. Paul hastens to further appeals, after this solemn forecast. And now all his stress is laid on the duty of the "strong" to use their "strength" not for self-assertion, not for even spiritual selfishness, but all for Christ, all for others, all in love.

No more therefore let us judge one another; but judge, decide, this rather—not to set stumblingblock for our brother, or trap. I know—he instances his own experience and principle—and am sure in the Lord Jesus, as one who is in union and communion with Him, seeing truth and life from that view-point, that nothing, nothing of the sort in question, no food, no time, is "unclean" of itself; literally, "by means of itself," by any *inherent* mischief; only to the man who counts anything "unclean," to him it is unclean. And therefore you, because you are not his conscience, must not tamper with his conscience. It is, in this case, mistaken; mistaken to his own loss, and to the loss of the Church. Yes, but what it wants is not your compulsion, but the Lord's light. If you can do so, bring that light to bear, in a testimony made impressive by holy love and unselfish consideration. But dare not, for Christ's sake, compel a conscience. For conscience means the man's best actual sight of the law of right and wrong. It may be a dim and distorted sight; but it is his best at this moment. He cannot violate it without sin, nor can you bid him do so

\* Visitation of the Sick (Prayer for a Sick Child).



without yourself sinning. Conscience may not always see aright. But to transgress conscience is always wrong.

For—the word takes up the argument at large, rather than the last detail of it—if for food's sake your brother suffers pain, the pain of a moral struggle between his present convictions and your commanding example, you have given up walking (*οὐκέτι περιπατεῖς*) love-wise. Do not not, with your food, (there is a searching point in the "your," touching to the quick the deep selfishness of the action,) work his ruin for whom Christ died.

Such sentences are too intensely and tenderly in earnest to be called sarcastic; otherwise, how fine and keen an edge they carry! "For food's sake!" "With your food!" The man is shaken out of the sleep of what seemed an assertion of liberty, but was after all much rather a dull indulgence of—that is, a mere slavery to—himself. "I like this meat; I like this drink; I don't like the worry of these scruples; they interrupt me, they annoy me." Unhappy man! It is better to be the slave of scruples than of self. In order to allow yourself another dish—you would slight an anxious friend's conscience, and, so far as your conduct is concerned, push him to a violation of it. But that means, a push on the slope which leans towards spiritual ruin. The way to perdition is paved with violated consciences. The Lord may counteract your action, and save your injured brother from himself—and you. But your action is, none the less, calculated for his perdition. And all the while this soul, for which, in comparison with your dull and narrow "liberty," you care so little, was so much cared for by the Lord that He—died for it.

Oh, consecrating thought, attached now, for ever, for the Christian, to every human soul which he can influence: "For whom Christ died!"

Do not therefore let your good, your glorious creed of holy liberty in Christ, be railed at, as only a thinly-veiled self-indulgence after all; for the kingdom of our God is not feeding and drinking; He does not claim a throne in your soul, and in your Society, merely to enlarge your bill of fare, to make it your sacred privilege, as an end in itself, to take what you please at table; but righteousness, surely here, in the Roman Epistle, the "righteousness" of our divine acceptance, and peace, the peace of perfect relations with Him in Christ, and joy in the Holy Spirit, the pure strong gladness of the justified, as in their sanctuary of salvation they drink the "living water," and "rejoice always in the Lord." For he who in this way lives as bondservant to Christ, spending his spiritual talents not for himself, but for his Master, is pleasing to his God, and is genuine to his fellow-men. Yes, he stands the test of their keen scrutiny. They can soon detect the counterfeit under spiritual assertions which really assert self. But their conscience affirms the genuineness of a life of unselfish and happy holiness; that life "reverbs no hollowness."

Accordingly, therefore, let us pursue the interests of peace, and the interests of an edification which is mutual; the "building up" which looks

beyond the man to his brother, to his brethren, and tempers by that look even his plans for his own spiritual life.

Again he returns to the sorrowful grotesque of preferring personal comforts, and even the assertion of the principle of personal liberty, to the good of others. Do not for food's sake be undoing the work of our God. "All things are pure"; he doubtless quotes a watchword often heard; and it was truth itself in the abstract, but capable of becoming a fatal fallacy in practice; but anything is bad to the man who is brought by a stumblingblock to eat it. Yes, this is bad. What is good in contrast?

Good it is not to eat flesh, and not to drink wine (a word for our time and its conditions), and not to do anything in which your brother is stumbled, or entrapped, or weakened. Yes, this is Christian liberty; a liberation from the strong and subtle law of self; a freedom to live for others, independent of their evil, but the servant of their souls.

You—the faith you have, have it by yourself, in the presence of your God. You have believed; you are therefore in Christ; in Christ you are therefore free, by faith, from the preparatory restrictions of the past. Yes; but all this is not given you for personal display, but for divine communion. Its right issue is in a holy intimacy with your God, as in the confidence of your acceptance you know Him as your Father, "nothing between." But as regards human intercourse, you are emancipated not that you may disturb the neighbours with shouts of freedom and acts of license, but that you may be at leisure to serve them in love. Happy the man who does not judge himself, who does not, in effect, decide against his own soul, in that which he approves, *δοκιμάζει*, pronounces satisfactory to conscience. Unhappy he who says to himself, "This is lawful," when the verdict is all the while purchased by self-love, or otherwise by the fear of man, and the soul knows in its depths that the thing is not as it should be. And the man who is doubtful, whose conscience is not really satisfied between the right and wrong of the matter, if he does eat, stands condemned, in the court of his own heart, and of his aggrieved Lord's opinion, because it was not the result of faith; the action had not, for its basis, the holy conviction of the liberty of the justified. Now anything which is not the result of faith, is sin; that is to say, manifestly, "anything" *in such a case as this*; any indulgence, any obedience to example, which the man, in a state of inward ambiguity, decides for on a principle other than that of his union with Christ by faith.

Thus the Apostle of Justification, and of the Holy Spirit, is the Apostle of Conscience too. He is as urgent upon the awful sacredness of our sense of right and wrong, as upon the offer and the security, in Christ, of peace with God, and the holy Indwelling, and the hope of glory. Let our steps reverently follow his, as we walk with God, and with men. Let us "rejoice in Christ Jesus," with a "joy" which is "in the Holy Ghost." Let us reverence duty, let us reverence conscience, in our own life, and also in the lives around us.



## CHAPTER XXX.

## THE SAME SUBJECT: THE LORD'S EXAMPLE: HIS RELATION TO US ALL.

## ROMANS XV. 1-13.

THE large and searching treatment which the Apostle has already given to the right use of Christian Liberty, is yet not enough. He must pursue the same theme further; above all, that he may put it into more explicit contact with the Lord Himself.

We gather without doubt that the state of the Roman Mission, as it was reported to St. Paul, gave special occasion for such fulness of discussion. It is more than likely, as we have seen from the first, that the bulk of the disciples were ex-pagans; probably of very various nationalities, many of them Orientals, and as such not more favourable to distinctive Jewish claims and tenets. It is also likely that they found amongst them, or beside them, many Christian Jews, or Christian Jewish proselytes, of a type more or less pronounced in their own direction; the school whose less worthy members supplied the men to whom St. Paul, a few years later, writing from Rome to Philippi, refers as "preaching Christ of envy and strife" (Phil. i. 15). The temptation of a religious (as of a secular) majority is always to tyrannise, more or less, in matters of thought and practice. A dominant school, in any age or region, too easily comes to talk and act as if all decided expression on the other side were an instance of "intolerance," while yet it allows itself sufficiently severe and censorious courses of its own. At Rome, very probably, this mischief was in action. The "strong," with whose principle, in its true form, St. Paul agreed, were disposed to domineer in spirit over the "weak," because the weak were comparatively the few. Thus they were guilty of a double fault; they were presenting a miserable parody of holy liberty, and they were acting off the line of that unselfish fairness which is essential in the Gospel character. For the sake not only of the peace of the great Mission Church, but of the honour of the Truth, and of the Lord, the Apostle therefore dwells on mutual duties, and returns to them again and again after apparent conclusions of his discourse. Let us listen as he now reverts to the subject, to set it more fully than ever in the light of Christ.

But (it is the "but" of resumption, and of new material) we are bound, we the able, οἱ δυνατοί (perhaps a sort of soubriquet for themselves among the school of "liberty," "the capables")—to bear the weaknesses of the unable, (again, possibly, a soubriquet, and in this case an unkindly one for a school,) and not to please ourselves. Each one of us, let him please not himself, but his neighbour, as regards what is good, with a view to edification.

"Please"; ἀρέσκειν, ἀρεσκέτω. The word is one often "soiled with ignoble use," in classical literature; it tends to mean the "pleasing" which fawns and flatters; the complaisance of the parasite. But it is lifted by Christian usage to a noble level. The cowardly and interested element drops out of it; the thought of willingness to do anything to please remains; only limited by the law of right, and aimed only at the other's "good." Thus purified, it is used else-

where of that holy "complaisance" in which the grateful disciple aims to "meet half-way the wishes" of his Lord (see Col. i. 10). Here, it is the unselfish and watchful aim to meet half-way, if possible, the thought and feeling of a fellow-disciple, to conciliate by sympathetic attentions, to be considerate in the smallest matters of opinion and conduct; a genuine exercise of inward liberty.

There is a gulf of difference between interested timidity and disinterested considerateness. In flight from the former, the ardent Christian sometimes breaks the rule of the latter. St. Paul is at his hand to warn him not to forget the great law of love. And the Lord is at his hand too, with His own supreme Example.

For even our Christ did not please Himself; but, as it stands written (Psal. lxxix. 9), "The reproaches of those who reproached Thee, fell upon Me."

It is the first mention in the Epistle of the Lord's Example. His Person we have seen, and the Atoning Work, and the Resurrection Power, and the great Return. The holy Example can never take the place of any one of these facts of life eternal. But when they are secure, then the reverent study of the Example is not only in place; it is of urgent and immeasurable importance.

"He did not please Himself." "Not My will, but Thine, be done." Perhaps the thought of the Apostle is dwelling on the very hour when those words were spoken, from beneath the olives of the Garden, and out of a depth of inward conflict and surrender which "it hath not entered into the heart of man"—except the heart of the Man of men Himself—"to conceive." Then indeed "He did not please Himself." From pain as pain, from grief as grief, all sentient existence naturally, necessarily, shrinks; it "pleases itself" in escape or in relief. The infinitely refined sentient Existence of the Son of Man was no exception to this law of universal nature; and now He was called to such pain, to such grief, as never before met upon one head. We read the record of Gethsemane, and its sacred horror is always new; the disciple passes in thought out of the Garden even to the cruel tribunal of the Priest with a sense of relief; his Lord has risen from the unfathomable to the fathomable depth of His woes—till He goes down again, at noon next day, upon the Cross. "He pleased not Himself." He who soon after, on the shore of the quiet water, said to Peter, in view of his glorious and God-glorifying end, "They shall carry thee *whither thou wouldst not*"—along a path from which all thy manhood shall shrink—He too, as to His Human sensibility, "would not" go to His own unknown agonies. But then, blessed be His Name, "He would go" to them, from that other side, the side of the infinite harmony of His purpose with the purpose of His Father, in His immeasurable desire of His Father's glory. So He "drank that cup," which shall never now pass on to His people. And then He went forth into the house of Caiaphas, to be "reproached," during some six or seven terrible hours, by men who, professing zeal for God, were all the while blaspheming Him by every act and word of malice and untruth against His Son; and from Caiaphas He went to Pilate, and to Herod, and to the Cross, "bearing that reproach."



"I'm not anxious to die easy, when He died hard!" So said, not long ago, in a London attic, lying crippled and comfortless, a little disciple of the Man of Sorrows. He had "seen the Lord," in a strangely unlikely conversion, and had found a way of serving Him; it was to drop written fragments of His Word from the window on to the pavement below. And for this silent mission he would have no liberty if he were moved, in his last weeks, to a comfortable "Home." So he would rather serve his beloved Redeemer thus, "pleasing not himself," than be soothed in body, and gladdened by surrounding kindness, but with less "fellowship of His sufferings." Illustrious confessor—sure to be remembered when "the Lord of the servants cometh"! And with what an *a fortiori* does his simple answer to a kindly visitor's offer bring home to us (for it is for us as much as for the Romans) this appeal of the Apostle's! We are called in these words not necessarily to any agony of body or spirit; not necessarily even to an act of severe moral courage; only to patience, largeness of heart, brotherly love. Shall we not answer *Amen* from the soul? Shall not even one thought of "the fellowship of His sufferings" annihilate in us the miserable "self-pleasing" which shows itself in religious bitterness, in the refusal to attend and to understand, in a censoriousness which has nothing to do with firmness, in a personal attitude exactly opposite to love?

He has cited Psalm lxi. as a Scripture which, with all the solemn problems gathered round its dark "minatory" paragraph, yet lives and moves with Christ, the Christ of love. And now—not to confirm his application of the Psalm, for he takes that for granted—but to affirm the positive Christian use of the Old Scriptures as a whole, he goes on to speak at large of "the things fore-written." He does so with the special thought that the Old Testament is full of truth in point for the Roman Church just now; full of the bright, *and uniting*, "hope" of glory; full of examples as well as precepts for "patience," that is to say, holy perseverance under trial; full finally of the Lord's equally gracious relation to "the Nations" and to Israel.

For all the things fore-written, written in the Scriptures of the elder time, in the age that both preceded the Gospel and prepared for it, for our instruction were written—with an emphasis upon "our"—that through the patience and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might hold our hope, the hope "sure and steadfast" of glorification in the glory of our conquering Lord. That is to say, the true "Author behind the authors" of that mysterious Book watched, guided, effected its construction, from end to end, with the purpose full in His view of instructing for all time the developed Church of Christ. And in particular, He adjusted thus the Old Testament records and precepts of "patience," the patience which "suffers *and is strong*," suffers and goes forward, and of "encouragement," *παράκλησις*, the word which is more than "consolation," while it includes it; for it means the voice of positive and enlivening appeal. Rich indeed are Pentateuch, and Prophets, and Hagiographa, alike in commands to persevere and be of good courage, and in examples of men who were made brave and patient by the power of God in them, as

they took Him at His word. And all this, says the Apostle, was on purpose, on God's purpose. That multifarious Book is indeed in this sense one. Not only is it, in its Author's intention, full of Christ; in the same intention it is full of Him for us. Immortal indeed is its preciousness, if this was His design. Confidently may we explore its pages, looking in them first for Christ, then for ourselves, in our need of peace, and strength, and hope.

Let us add one word, in view of the anxious controversy of our day, within the Church, over the structure and nature of those "divine Scriptures," as the Christian Fathers love to call them. The use of the Holy Book in the spirit of this verse, the persistent searching of it for the preceptive mind of God in it, with the belief that it was "written for our instruction," will be the surest and deepest means to give us "perseverance" and "encouragement" about the Book itself. The more we really *know* the Bible, at first hand, before God, with the knowledge both of acquaintance and reverent sympathy, the more shall we be able with intelligent spiritual conviction, to "persist" and "be of good cheer" in the conviction that it is indeed not of man (though through man), but of God. The more shall we use it as the Lord and the Apostles used it, as being not only of God, but of God for us; His Word, and for us. The more shall we make it our divine daily Manual for a life of patient and cheerful sympathies, holy fidelity, and "that blessed Hope"—which draws "nearer now than when we believed."

But may the God of the patience and the encouragement, He who is Author and Giver of the graces unfolded in His Word, He without whom even that Word is but a sound without significance in the soul, grant you, in His own sovereign way of acting on and in human wills and affections, to be of one mind mutually, according to Christ Jesus; "Christwise," in His steps, in His temper, under His precepts; having towards one another, not necessarily an identity of opinion on all details, but a community of sympathetic kindness. No comment here is better than this same Writer's later words, from Rome (Phil. ii. 2-5); "Be of one mind; having the same love; nothing by strife, or vainglory; esteeming others better than yourselves; looking on the things of others; with the same mind which was also in Christ Jesus," when He humbled Himself for us. And all this, not only for the comfort of the community, but for the glory of God: that unanimously, with one mouth, you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; turning from the sorrowful friction worked by self-will when it intrudes into the things of heaven, to an antidote, holy and effectual, found in adoring Him who is equally near to all His true people, in His Son.

Wherefore welcome one another into fellowship, even as our Christ welcomed you, all the individuals of your company, and all the groups of it, to our God's glory. These last words may mean either that the Lord's welcome of "you" "glorified" His Father's grace; or that that grace will be "glorified" by the holy victory of love over prejudice among the Roman saints. Perhaps this latter explanation is to be preferred, as it echoes and enforces the last words of the previous verse. But why should not both references reside in the one phrase,



where the actions of the Lord and His disciples are seen in their deep harmony? For I say that Christ stands constituted Servant of the Circumcision, Minister of divine blessings to Israel, on behalf of God's truth, so as to ratify in act the promises belonging to the Fathers, so as to secure and vindicate their fulfilment, by His coming as Son of David, Son of Abraham; but (a "but" which, by its slight correction, reminds the Jew that the Promise, given wholly *through* him, was not given wholly *for* him) so that the Nations, on mercy's behalf, should glorify God, blessing and adoring Him on account of a salvation which, in their case, was less of "truth" than of "mercy," because it was less explicitly and immediately of covenant; as it stands written (Ps. xviii. 49), "For this I will confess to Thee, will own Thee, among the Nations, and will strike the harp to Thy Name"; Messiah confessing His Eternal Father's glory in the midst of His redeemed Gentile subjects, who sing their "lower part" with Him. And again it, the Scripture, says (Deut. xxxii. 43), "Be jubilant, Nations, with His people." And again Ps. cxvii. 1), "Praise the Lord, all the Nations, and let all the peoples praise Him again." And again Isaiah says (xi. 10), "There shall come (literally, "shall be") the Root of Jesse, and He who rises up—"rises," in the present tense of the divine decree—to rule [the] Nations; on Him [the] Nations shall hope with the hope which is in fact faith, looking from the sure present to the promised future. Now may the God of that hope, "the Hope" just cited from the Prophet, the expectation of all blessing, up to its crown and flower in glory, on the basis of Messiah's work, fill you with all joy and peace in your believing, so that you may overflow in that hope, in the Holy Spirit's power; "in His power," clasped as it were within His divine embrace, and thus energised to look upward, heavenward, away from embittering and dividing temptations to the unifying as well as beatifying prospect of your Lord's Return.

He closes here his long, wise, tender appeal and counsel about the "unhappy divisions" of the Roman Mission. He has led his readers as it were all round the subject. With the utmost tact, and also candour, he has given them his own mind, "in the Lord," on the matter in dispute. He has pointed out to the party of scruple and restriction the fallacy of claiming the function of Christ, and asserting a divine rule where He has not imposed one. He has addressed the "strong" (with whom he agrees in a certain sense), at much greater length, reminding them of the moral error of making more of any given application of their principle than of the law of love in which the principle was rooted. He has brought both parties to the feet of Jesus Christ as absolute Master. He has led them to gaze on Him as their blessed Example, in His infinite self-oblivion for the cause of God, and of love. He has poured out before them the prophecies, which tell at once the Christian Judaist and the ex-pagan convert that in the eternal purpose Christ was given equally to both, in the line of "truth," in the line of "mercy." Now lastly he clasps them impartially to his own heart in this precious and pregnant benediction, beseeching for both sides, and for all their individuals, a wonderful ful-

ness of those blessings in which most speedily and most surely *the spirit* of their strife would expire. Let that prayer be granted, in its pure depth and height, and how could "the weak brother" look with quite his old anxiety on the problems suggested by the dishes at a meal, and by the dates of the Rabbinic Calendar? And how could "the capable" bear any longer to lose his joy in God by an assertion, full of self, of his own insight and "liberty"? Profoundly happy and at rest in their Lord, whom they embraced by faith as their Righteousness and Life, and whom they anticipated in hope as their coming Glory; filled through their whole consciousness, by the indwelling Spirit, with a new insight into Christ; they would fall into each other's embrace, in Him. They would be much more ready, when they met, to speak "concerning the King" than to begin a new stage of their not very elevating discussion.

How many a Church controversy, now as then, would die of inanition, leaving room for a living truth, if the disputants could only *gravitate*, as to their always most beloved theme, to the praises and glories of their redeeming Lord Himself! It is at His feet, and in His arms, that we best understand both His truth, and the thoughts, rightful or mistaken, of our brethren.

Meanwhile, let us take this benedictory prayer, as we may take it, from its instructive context, and carry it out with us into all the contexts of life. What the Apostle prayed for the Romans, in view of their controversies, he prays for us, as for them, in view of everything. Let us "stand back and look at the picture." Here—conveyed in this strong petition—is St. Paul's idea of the true Christian's true life, and the true life of the true Church. What are the elements, and what is the result?

It is a life lived in direct contact with God. "Now *the God of hope* fill you." He remits them here (as above, ver. 5) from even himself to the Living God. In a sense, he sends them even from "the things forewritten," to the Living God; not in the least to disparage the Scriptures, but because the great function of the divine Word, as of the divine Ordinances, is to guide the soul into an *immediate* intercourse with the Lord God in His Son, and to secure it therein. God is to deal direct with the Romans. He is to manipulate, He is to fill, their being.

It is a life not starved or straitened, but full. "The God of hope *fill you*." The disciple, and the Church, is not to live as if grace were like a stream "in the year of drought," now settled into an almost stagnant deep, then struggling with difficulty over the stones of the shallow. The man, and the Society, are to live and work in tranquil but moving strength, "rich" in the fruits of their Lord's "poverty" (2 Cor. viii. 9); filled out of His fulness; never, spiritually, at a loss for Him; never, practically, having to do or bear except in His large and gracious power.

It is a life bright and beautiful; "filled with *all joy and peace*." It is to show a surface fair with the reflected sky of Christ, Christ present, Christ to come. A sacred while open happiness and a pure internal repose are to be there, born of "His presence, in which is fulness of joy," and of the sure prospect of His Return, bringing with it "pleasures for evermore." Like that mysterious ether of which the natural



philosopher tells us, this joy, this peace, found and maintained "in the Lord," is to pervade *all* the contents of the Christian life, its moving masses of duty or trial, its interspaces of rest or silence; not always demonstrative, but always underlying, and always a living power.

It is a life of faith; "all joy and peace *in your believing*." That is to say, it is a life dependent for its all upon a Person and His promises. Its glad certainty of peace with God, of the possession of His Righteousness, is by means not of sensations and experiences, but of believing; it comes, and stays, by taking Christ at His word. Its power over temptation, its "victory and triumph against the devil, the world, and the flesh," is by the same means. The man, the Church, takes the Lord at His word;—"I am with you always"; "Through Me thou shalt do valiantly;—and faith, that is to say, Christ trusted in practice, is "more than conqueror."

It is a life overflowing with the heavenly hope; "that ye may abound *in the hope*." Sure of the past, and of the present, it is—what out of Christ no life can be—sure of the future. The golden age, for this happy life, is in front, and is no Utopia. "Now is our salvation nearer"; "We look for that blissful (*μακαριαν*) hope, the appearing of our great God and Saviour"; "Them which sleep in Him God will bring with Him"; "We shall be caught up together with them; we shall ever be with the Lord"; "They shall see His face; thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty."

And all this it is as a life lived "in the power of the Holy Ghost." Not by enthusiasm, not by any stimulus which self applies to self; not by resources for gladness and permanence found in independent reason or affection; but by the almighty, all-tender power of the Comforter. "The Lord, the Life-Giver," giving life by bringing us to the Son of God, and uniting us to Him, is the Giver and strong Sustainer of the faith, and so of the peace, the joy, the hope, of this blessed life.

"Now it was not written for their sakes only, but for us also," in our circumstances of personal and of common experience. Large and pregnant is the application of this one utterance to the problems perpetually raised by the divided state of organisation, and of opinion, in modern Christendom. It gives us one secret, above and below all others, as the sure panacea, if it may but be allowed to work, for this multifarious malady which all who think deplore. That secret is "the secret of the Lord, which is with them that fear Him" (Ps. xxv. 14). It is a fuller life in the individual, and so in the community, of the peace and joy of believing; a larger abundance of "that blessed hope," given by that power for which numberless hearts are learning to thirst with a new intensity, "the power of the Holy Ghost."

It was in that direction above all that the Apostle gazed as he yearned for the unity, not only spiritual, but practical, of the Roman saints. This great master of order, this man made for government, alive with all his large wisdom to the sacred importance, in its true place, of the external mechanism of Christianity, yet makes no mention of it here, nay, scarcely gives one allusion to it in the whole Epistle. The word "Church" is not heard till the final chapter; and then it is used only, or almost only, of the scattered mission-stations, or even mission-groups,

in their individuality. The ordered Ministry only twice, and in the most passing manner, comes into the long discourse; in the words (xii. 6-8) about prophecy, ministration, teaching, exhortation, leadership; and in the mention (xvi. 1) of Phœbe's relation to the Cenchræan Church. He is addressing the saints of that great City which was afterwards, in the tract of time, to develop into even terrific exaggerations the idea of Church Order. But he has practically nothing to say to them about unification and cohesion beyond this appeal to hold fast together by drawing nearer each and all to the Lord, and so filling each one his soul and life with Him.

Our modern problems must be met with attention, with firmness, with practical purpose, with due regard to history, and with submission to revealed truth. But if they are to be solved indeed they must be met outside the spirit of self, and in the communion of the Christian with Christ, by the power of the Spirit of God.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

*ROMAN CHRISTIANITY; ST. PAUL'S COMMISSION; HIS INTENDED ITINERARY; HE ASKS FOR PRAYER.*

### ROMANS xv. 14-33.

THE Epistle hastens to its close. As to its instructions, doctrinal or moral, they are now practically written. The Way of Salvation lies extended, in its radiant outline, before the Romans, and ourselves. The Way of Obedience, in some of its main tracks, has been drawn firmly on the field of life. Little remains but the Missionary's last words about persons and plans, and then the great task is done.

He will say a warm, gracious word about the spiritual state of the Roman believers. He will justify, with a noble courtesy, his own authoritative attitude as their counsellor. He will talk a little of his hoped for and now seemingly approaching visit, and matters in connection with it. He will greet the individuals whom he knows, and commend the bearer of the Letter, and add last messages from his friends. Then Phœbe may receive her charge, and go on her way.

But I am sure, my brethren, quite on my own part, about you, that you are, yourselves, irrespective of my influence, brimming with goodness, with high Christian qualities in general, filled with all knowledge, competent in fact to admonish one another. Is this flattery, interested and insincere? Is it weakness, easily persuaded into a false optimism? Surely not; for the speaker here is the man who has spoken straight to the souls of these same people about sin, and judgment, and holiness; about the holiness of these everyday charities which some of them (so he has said plainly enough) had been violating. But a truly great heart always loves to praise where it can, and discerningly, to think and say the best. He who is Truth itself said of His imperfect, His disappointing followers, as He spoke of them in their hearing to His Father, "They have kept Thy word"; "I am glorified in them" (John xvii. 6, 10). So here his Servant does not indeed give the Romans a formal certificate of perfection, but he does



rejoice to know, and to say, that their community is Christian in a high degree, and that in a certain sense they have not needed information about Justification by Faith, nor about principles of love and liberty in their intercourse. In essence, all has been in their cognisance already; an assurance which could not have been entertained in regard of every Mission, certainly. He has written not as to children, giving them an alphabet, but as to men, developing facts into science.

But with a certain boldness I have written to you, here and there, just as reminding you; because of the grace, the free gift of his commission and of the equipment for it, given me by our God, given in order to my being Christ Jesus' minister sent to the Nations, doing priest-work with the Gospel of God, that the oblation of the Nations, the oblation which is in fact the Nations self-laid upon the spiritual altar, may be acceptable, consecrated in the Holy Spirit. It is a startling and splendid passage of metaphor. Here once, in all the range of his writings (unless we except the few and affecting words of Phil. ii. 17), the Apostle presents himself to his converts as a sacrificial ministrant, a "priest" in the sense which usage (not etymology) has so long stamped on that English word as its more special sense. Never do the great Founders of the Church, and never does He who is its foundation, use the term *ιερεύς*, sacrificing, mediating, priest, as a term to designate the Christian minister in any of his orders; *never*, if this passage is not to be reckoned in, with its *ιερουργεῖν*, its "priest-work," as we have ventured to translate the Greek. In the distinctively sacerdotal Epistle, the Hebrews, the word *ιερεύς* comes indeed into the foreground. But there it is absorbed into the Lord. It is appropriated altogether to Him in His self-sacrificial Work once done, and in His heavenly Work now always doing, the work of mediatorial impartation, from His throne,\* of the blessings which His great Offering won. One other Christian application of the sacrificial title we have in the Epistles: "Ye are a holy priesthood," "a royal priesthood" (1 Pet. ii. 5, 9). But who are "ye"? Not the consecrated pastorate, but the consecrated Christian company altogether. And what are the altar-sacrifices of that company? "*Sacrifices spiritual*"; "*the praises of Him who called them into His wonderful light*" (1 Pet. ii. 5, 9). In the Christian Church, the pre-Levitical ideal of the old Israel reappears in its sacred reality. He who offered to the Church of Moses (Exod. xix. 6) to be one great priesthood, "a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation," found His favoured nation unready for the privilege, and so Levi representatively took the place alone. But now, in His new Israel, as all are sons in the Son, so all are priests in the Priest. And the sacred Ministry of that Israel, the Ministry which is His own divine institution, the gift (Eph. iv. 11) of the ascended Lord to His Church, is never once designated, as such, by the term which would have marked it as the analogue to Levi, or to Aaron.

Is this passage in any degree an exception? No; for it contains its own full inner evidence of its metaphorical cast. The "priest-working" here has regard, we find, not to a ritual,

\* He is seen in the Epistle not before the throne, standing, but *on* the throne, *seated*.

but to "the Gospel." "The oblation" is—the Nations. The hallowing Element, shed as it were upon the victims, is the Holy Ghost. Not in a material temple, and serving at no tangible altar, the Apostle brings his multitudinous *converts* as his holocaust to the Lord. The Spirit, at his preaching and on their believing, descends upon them; and they lay themselves "a living sacrifice" where the fire of love shall consume them, to His glory.

I have therefore my right to exultation, in Christ Jesus, as His member and implement, as to what regards God; not in any respect as regards myself, apart from Him. And then he proceeds as if about to say, in evidence of that assertion, that he always declines to intrude on a brother Apostle's ground, and to claim as his own experience what was in the least degree another's; but that indeed through him, in sovereign grace, God *has* done great things, far and wide. This he expresses thus, in energetic compressions of diction:

For I will not dare to talk at all of things which Christ did not work out through me (there is an emphasis on "me") to effect obedience of [the] Nations to His Gospel, by word and deed, in power of signs and wonders, in power of God's Spirit; a reference, strangely impressive by its very passingness, to the exercise of miracle-working gifts by the writer. This man, so strong in thought, so practical in counsel, so extremely unlikely to have been under an illusion about a large factor in his adult and intensely conscious experience, speaks direct from himself of his wonder-works. And the allusion, thus dropped by the way and left behind, is itself an evidence to the perfect mental balance of the witness; this was no enthusiast, intoxicated with ambitious spiritual visions, but a man put in trust with a mysterious yet sober treasure. So that from Jerusalem, and round about it (Acts xxvi. 20), as far as the Illyrian region, the highland seaboard which looks across the Adriatic to the long eastern side of Italy, I have fulfilled the Gospel of Christ, carried it practically everywhere, *satisfied the idea* of so distributing it that it shall be accessible everywhere to the native races.

But this I have done with this ambition, to preach the Gospel not where Christ was already named, that I might not build on another man's foundation; but to act on the divine word, as it stands written (Isa. lii. 15), "They to whom no news was carried about Him, shall see; and those who have not heard, shall understand." Here was an "ambition" as far-sighted as it was noble. Would that the principle of it could have been better remembered in the history of Christendom, and not least in our own age; a wasteful overlapping of effort on effort, system on system, would not need now to be so much deplored. Thus as a fact I was hindered for the most part—hindrances were the rule, signals of opportunity the exception—in coming to you; you, whose City is no untrodden ground to messengers of Christ, and therefore not the ground which had a *first* claim on me. But now, as no longer having place in these regions, eastern Roman Europe yielding him no longer an unatempted and accessible district to enter, and having a home-sick feeling for coming to you, these many years—whenever I may be journeying to Spain, [I will come to you]. For I hope, on my journey through, to see the sight



of you (as if the view of so important a Church would be a *spectacle* indeed), and by you to be escorted there, if first I may have my fill of you, however imperfectly.

As always, in the fine courtesy of pastoral love, he says more, and thinks more, of his own expected gain of refreshment and encouragement from them, than even of what he may have to impart to them. So he had thought, and so spoken, in his opening page (i. 11, 12); it is the same heart throughout.

How little did he realise the line and details of the destined fulfilment of that "home-sick feeling"! He was indeed to "see Rome," and for no passing "sight of the scene." For two long years of sorrows and joys, restraints and wonderful occasions, innumerable colloquies, and the writing of great Scriptures, he was to "dwell in his own hired lodgings" there. But he did not see what lay between.

For St. Paul ordinarily, as always for us, it was true that "we know not what awaits us." For us, as for him, it is better "to walk with God in the dark, than to go alone in the light."

Did he ultimately visit Spain? We shall never know until perhaps we are permitted to ask him hereafter. It is not at all impossible that, released from his Roman prison, he first went westward and then—as at some time he certainly did—travelled to the Levant. But no tradition, however faint, connects St. Paul with the great Peninsula which glories in her legend of St. James. Is it irrelevant to remember that *in his Gospel* he has notably visited Spain in later ages? It was the Gospel of St. Paul, the simple grandeur of his exposition of Justification by Faith, which in the sixteenth century laid hold on multitudes of the noblest of Spanish hearts, till it seemed as if not Germany, not England, bid fairer to become again a land of "truth in the light." The terrible Inquisition utterly crushed the springing harvest, at Valladolid, at Seville, and in that ghastly Quemadero at Madrid, which, five-and-twenty years ago, was excavated by accident, to reveal its deep strata of ashes, and charred bones, and all the débris of the *Autos*. But now again, in the mercy of God and in happier hours, the New Testament is read in the towns of Spain, and in her highland villages, and churches are gathering around the holy light, spiritual descendants of the true, the primeval, Church of Rome. May "the God of hope fill them with all peace and joy in believing."

But now I am journeying to Jerusalem, the journey whose course we know so well from Acts xx., xxi., ministering to the saints, serving the poor converts of the holy City as the collector and conveyer of alms for their necessities. For Macedonia and Achaia, the northern and southern Provinces of Roman Greece, finely *personified* in this vivid passage, thought good to make something of a communication, a certain gift to be "shared" among the recipients, for the poor of the saints who live at Jerusalem; the place where poverty seemed specially, for whatever reason, to beset the converts. "For they thought good!"—yes; but there is a different side to the matter. Macedonia and Achaia are generous friends, but they have an obligation too: And debtors they are to them, to these poor people of the old City. For if in their spiritual things the Nations shared, they, these Nations, are in debt, as a fact, in things carnal,

things belonging to our "life in the flesh," to minister to them; to do them public and religious service.

When I have finished this then, and sealed this fruit to them, put them into ratified ownership of this "proceed" of Christian love, I will come away by your road to Spain. (He *means*, "if the Lord will"; it is instructive to note that even St. Paul does not make it a duty, with an almost superstitious iteration, always to *say so*). Now I know that, coming to you, in the fulness of Christ's benediction I shall come. He will come with his Lord's "benediction" on him, as His messenger to the Roman disciples; Christ will send him charged with heavenly messages, and attended with His own prospering presence. And this will be "in fulness"; with a rich overflow of saving truth, and heavenly power, and blissful fellowship.

Here he pauses, to ask them for that boon of which he is so covetous—intercessory prayer. He has been speaking with a kind and even sprightly pleasantry (there is no irreverence in the recognition) of those Personages, Macedonia, and Achaia, and their gift, which is also their debt. He has spoken also of what we know from elsewhere (1 Cor. xvi. 1-4) to have been his own scrupulous purpose not only to collect the alms but to see them punctually delivered, above all suspicion of misuse. He has talked with cheerful confidence of "the road by Rome to Spain." But now he realises what the visit to Jerusalem involves for himself. He has tasted in many places, and at many times, the bitter hatred felt for him in unbelieving Israel; a hatred the more bitter, probably, the more his astonishing activity and influence were felt in region after region. Now he is going to the central focus of the enmity; to the City of the Sanhedrin, and of the Zealots. And St. Paul is no Stoic, indifferent to fear, lifted in an unnatural exaltation above circumstances, though he is ready to walk through them in the power of Christ. His heart anticipates the experiences of outrage and revilings, and the possible breaking up of all his missionary plans. He thinks too of prejudice within the Church, as well as of hatred from without; he is not at all sure that his cherished collection will not be coldly received, or even rejected, by the Judaists of the mother-church; whom yet he must and will call "saints." So he tells all to the Romans, with a generous and winning confidence in their sympathy, and begs their prayers, and above all sets them praying that he may not be disappointed of his longed-for visit to them.

All was granted. He was welcomed by the Church. He was delivered from the fanatics, by the strong arm of the Empire. He did reach Rome, and he had holy joy there. Only, the Lord took His own way, a way they knew not, to answer Paul and his friends.

But I appeal to you, brethren,—the "but" carries an implication that something lay in the way of the happy prospect just mentioned,—by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Spirit, by that holy family affection inspired by the Holy One into the hearts which He has regenerated, to wrestle along with me in your prayers on my behalf to our God; that I may be rescued from those who disobey the Gospel in Judæa, and that my ministration which takes me to Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints, may be taken by the Christians there



without prejudice, and in love; that I may with joy come to you, through the will of God, and may share refreshing rest with you, the rest of holy fellowship where the tension of discussion and opposition is intermitted, and the two parties perfectly "understand one another" in their Lord. But the God of our peace be with you all. Yes, so be it, whether or no the longed-for "joy" and "refreshing rest" is granted in His providence to the Apostle. With his beloved Romans, anyway, let there be "peace"; peace in their community, and in their souls; peace with God, and peace in Him. - And so it will be, whether their human friend is or is not permitted to see them, if only the Eternal Friend is there.

There is a deep and attractive tenderness, as we have seen above, in this paragraph, where the writer's heart tells the readers quite freely of its personal misgivings and longings. One of the most pathetic, sometimes one of the most beautiful, phenomena of human life is the strong man in his weak hour, or rather in his feeling hour, when he is glad of the support of those who may be so much his weaker. There is a sort of strength which prides itself upon never showing such symptoms; to which it is a point of honour to act and speak always as if the man were self-contained and self-sufficient. But this is a narrow type of strength, not a great one. The strong man truly great is not afraid, in season, to "let himself go"; he is well able to recover. An underlying power leaves him at leisure to show upon the surface very much of what he feels. The largeness of his insight puts him into manifold contact with others, and keeps him open to their sympathies, however humble and inadequate these sympathies may be. The Lord Himself, "mighty to save," cared more than we can fully know for human fellow-feeling. "Will ye also go away?" "Ye are they that have continued with Me in My temptations"; "Tarry ye here, and watch with Me"; "Lovest thou Me?"

No false spiritual pride suggests it to St. Paul to conceal his anxieties from the Romans. It is a temptation sometimes to those who have been called to help and strengthen other men, to affect for themselves a strength which perhaps they do not quite feel. It is well meant. The man is afraid that if he owns to a burthen he may seem to belie the Gospel of "perfect peace"; that if he even lets it be suspected that he is not always in the ideal Christian frame, his warmest exhortations and testimonies may lose their power. But at all possible hazards let him, about such things as about all others, tell the truth. It is a sacred duty in itself; the heavenly Gospel has no corner in it for the manœuvres of spiritual prevarication. And he will find assuredly that truthfulness, transparent candour, will not really discount his witness to the promises of his Lord. It may humiliate *him*, but it will not discredit Jesus Christ. It will indicate the imperfection of the recipient, but not any defect in the thing received. And the fact that the witness has been found quite candid against himself, where there is occasion, will give a double weight to his every direct testimony to the possibility of a life lived in the hourly peace of God.

It is no part of our Christian duty to feel doubts and fears! And the more we act upon our Lord's promises as they stand, the more

we shall rejoice to find that misgivings tend to vanish where once they were always thickening upon us. Only, it is our duty always to be transparently honest.

However, we must not treat this theme here too much as if St. Paul had given us an unmistakable text for it. His words now before us *express* no "carking care" about his intended visit to Jerusalem. They only indicate a deep sense of the gravity of the prospect, and of its dangers. And we know from elsewhere (see especially Acts xxi. 13) that that sense did sometimes amount to an agony of feeling, in the course of the very journey which he now contemplates. And we see him here quite without the wish to conceal his heart in the matter.

In closing we note, "for our learning," his example as he is a man who craves to be prayed for. Prayer, that great mystery, that blessed fact and power, was indeed vital to St. Paul. He is always praying himself; he is always asking other people to pray for him. He "has seen Jesus Christ our Lord"; he is his Lord's inspired Minister and Delegate; he has been "caught up into the third heaven"; he has had a thousand proofs that "all things," infallibly, "work together for his good." But he is left by this as certain as ever, with a persuasion as simple as a child's, and also as deep as his own life-worn spirit, that it is immensely well worth his while to secure the intercessory prayers of those who know the way to God in Christ.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### *A COMMENDATION; GREETINGS; A WARNING; A DOXOLOGY.*

ROMANS xvi. 1-27.

ONCE more, with a reverent license of thought, we may imagine ourselves to be watching in detail the scene in the house of Gaius. Hour upon hour has passed over Paul and his scribe as the wonderful Message has developed itself, at once and everywhere the word of man and the Word of God. They began at morning, and the themes of sin, and righteousness, and glory, of the present and the future of Israel, of the duties of the Christian life, of the special problems of the Roman Mission, have carried the hours along to noon, to afternoon. Now, to the watcher from the westward lattice,

"Slow sinks, more lovely ere his race be run,  
Along Morea's hills the setting sun;  
Not, as in northern climes, obscurely bright,  
But one unclouded blaze of living light."

The Apostle, pacing the chamber, as men are wont to do when they use the pens of others, is aware that his message is at an end, as to doctrine and counsel. But before he bids his willing and wondering secretary rest from his labours, he has to discharge his own heart of the personal thoughts and affections which have lain ready in it all the while, and which his last words about his coming visit to the City have brought up in all their life and warmth. And now Paul and Tertius are no longer alone; other brethren have found their way to the chamber—Timotheus, Lucius, Jason, Sosipater; Gaius himself; Quartus; and no less a neighbour than Erastus, Treasurer of Corinth. A page of per-



sonal messages is yet to be dictated, from St. Paul, and from his friends.

Now first he must not forget the pious woman who is—so we surely may assume—to take charge of this inestimable packet, and to deliver it at Rome. We know nothing of Phœbe but from this brief mention. We cannot perhaps be formally certain that she is here described as a female Church-official, a “deaconess” in a sense of that word familiar in later developments of Church-order—a woman set apart by the laying-on of hands, appointed to enquire into and relieve temporal distress, and to be the teacher of female enquirers in the mission. But there is at least a great likelihood that something like this was her position; for she was not merely an active Christian, she was “a ministrant of the Church.” And she was certainly, as a person, worthy of reliance and of loving commendatory praise, now that some cause—absolutely unknown to us; perhaps nothing more unusual than a change of residence, obliged by private circumstances—took her from Achaia to Italy. She had been a devoted and it would seem particularly a *brave* friend of converts in trouble, and of St. Paul himself. Perhaps in the course of her visits to the desolate she had fought difficult battles of protest, where she found harshness and oppressions. Perhaps she had pleaded the forgotten cause of the poor, with a woman’s courage, before some neglectful richer “brother.”

Then Rome itself, as he sees Phœbe reaching it, rises—as yet only in fancy; it was still unknown to him—upon his mind. And there, moving up and down in that strange and almost awful world, he sees one by one the members of a large group of his personal Christian friends, and his beloved Aquila and Prisca are most visible of all. These must be individually saluted.

What the nature of these friendships was we know in some instances, for we are told here. But why the persons were at Rome, in the place which Paul himself had never reached, we do not know, nor ever shall. Many students of the Epistle, it is well known, find a serious difficulty in this list of friends so placed—the persons so familiar, the place so strange; and they would have us look on this sixteenth chapter as a fragment from some other Letter, pieced in here by mistake; or what not. But no ancient copy of the Epistle gives us, by its condition, any real ground for such conjectures. And all that we have to do to realise possibilities in the actual features of the case, is to assume that many at least of this large Roman group, as surely Aquila and Prisca,\* had recently migrated from the Levant to Roman; a migration as common and almost as easy then as is the modern influx of foreign denizens to London.

Bishop Lightfoot, in an Excursus in his edition of the Philippian Epistle, has given us reason to think that not a few of the “Romans” named here by St. Paul were members of that “Household of Cæsar” of which in later days he speaks to the Philippians (iv. 22) as containing its “saints,” saints who send special greetings to the Macedonian brethren. The *Domus Cæsaris* included “the whole of the Imperial household, the meanest slaves, as well as the most powerful courtiers”; “all persons in the Emperor’s service, whether slaves or free-

men, in Italy and even in the provinces.” The literature of sepulchral inscriptions at Rome is peculiarly rich in allusions to members of “the Household.” And it is from this quarter, particularly from discoveries in it made early in the last century, that Lightfoot gets good reasons for thinking that in Phil. iv. 22 we may, quite possibly, be reading a greeting *from* Rome sent by the very persons (speaking roundly) who are here greeted in the Epistle *to* Rome. A place of burial on the Appian Way, devoted to the ashes of Imperial freedmen and slaves, and other similar receptacles, all to be dated with practical certainty about the middle period of the first century, yield the following names: Amplias, Urbanus, Stachys, Apelles, Tryphæna, Tryphosa, Rufus; Hermes, Hermas, Philologus, Julius, Nereis; a name which might have denoted *the sister* (see ver. 15) of a man Nereus.

Of course such facts must be used with due reserve in inference. But they make it abundantly clear that, in Lightfoot’s words, “the names and allusions at the close of the Roman Epistle are in keeping with the circumstances of the metropolis in St. Paul’s day.” They help us to a perfectly truthlike theory. We have only to suppose that among St. Paul’s converts and friends in Asia and Eastern Europe many either belonged already to the ubiquitous “Household,” or entered it after conversion, as purchased slaves or otherwise; and that some time before our Epistle was written there was a large draft from the provincial to the metropolitan department; and that thus, when St. Paul thought of personal Christian friends at Rome, he would happen to think, mainly, of “saints of Cæsar’s Household.” Such a theory would also, by the way, help to explain the emphasis with which just these “saints” sent their greeting, later, to Philippi. Many of them might have lived in Macedonia, and particularly in the *colonia* of Philippi, before the time of their supposed transference to Rome.

We may add, from Lightfoot’s discussion, a word about “the households,” or “people”—of Aristobulus and Narcissus—mentioned in the greetings before us. It seems at least likely that the Aristobulus of the Epistle was a grandson of Herod the Great, and brother of Agrippa of Judea; a prince who lived and died at Rome. At his death it would be no improbable thing that his “household” should pass by legacy to the Emperor, while they would still, as a sort of clan, keep their old master’s name. Aristobulus’ servants, probably many of them Jews (Herodion, St. Paul’s kinsman, may have been a retainer of this Herod), would thus now be a part of “the Household of Cæsar,” and the Christians among them would be a group of “the Household saints.” As to the Narcissus of the Epistle, he may well have been the all-powerful freedman of Claudius, put to death early in Nero’s time. On his death, his great *familia* would become, by confiscation, part of “the Household”; and its Christian members would be thought of by St. Paul as among “the Household saints.”

Thus it is at least possible that the holy lives which here pass in such rapid file before us were lived not only in Rome, but in a connection more or less close with the service and business of the Court of Nero. So freely does grace make light of circumstance.

\* See 1 Cor. xvi. 19.



Now it is time to come from our preliminaries to the text.

But—the word may mark the movement of thought from his own delay in reaching them to Phœbe's immediate coming—I commend to you Phœbe, our sister (this Christian woman bore, without change, and without reproach, the name of the Moon-Goddess of the Greeks), being a ministrant of the Church which is in Cenchreæ, the Ægæan port of Corinth; that you may welcome her, in the Lord, as a fellow-member of His Body, in a way worthy of the saints, with all the respect and the affection of the Gospel, and that you may stand by her in any matter in which she may need you, stranger as she will be at Rome. For she on her part has proved a stand-by (almost a champion, one who *stands up* for others) of many, aye, and of me among them.

Greet Prisca and Aquila, my co-workers in Christ Jesus; the friends who for my life's sake submitted their own throat to the knife (it was at some stern crisis otherwise utterly unknown to us, but well known in heaven); to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the Churches of the Nations; for they saved the man whom the Lord consecrated to the service of the Gentile world. And the Church at their house greet with them; that is, the Christians of their neighbourhood, who used Aquila's great room as their house of prayer; the embryo of our parish or district Church. This provision of a place of worship was an old usage of this holy pair, whom St. Paul's almost reverent affection presents to us in such a living individuality. They had gathered "a domestic Church" at Corinth, not many months before (1 Cor. xvi. 19). And earlier still, at Ephesus (Acts xviii. 26), they wielded such a Christian influence that they must have been a central point of influence and gathering there also. In Prisca, or Priscilla, as it has been remarked, we have "an example of what a married woman may do, for the general service of the Church, in conjunction with home-duties, just as Phœbe is the type of the unmarried servant of the Church, or deaconess."

Greet Epænetus, my beloved, who is the first-fruits of Asia, that is of the Ephesian Province, unto Christ; doubtless one who "owed his soul" to St. Paul in that three years' missionary pastorate at Ephesus, and who was now bound to him by the indescribable tie which makes the converter and converted one.

Greet Mary—a Jewess probably, *Miriam* or *Maria*—for she toiled hard for you; when and how we cannot know.

Greet Andronicus and Junias, *Junianus*, my kinsmen, and my fellow-captives in Christ's war; a loving and mindful reference to the human relationships which so freely, but not lightly, he had sacrificed for Christ, and to some persecution-battle (was it at Philippi?) when these good men had shared his prison; men who are distinguished among the apostles; either as being themselves, in a secondary sense, devoted "apostles," Christ's missionary delegates, though not of the Apostolate proper, or as being honoured above the common, for their toil and their character, by the Apostolic Brotherhood; who also before me came to be, as they are, in Christ. Not improbably these two early converts helped to "goad" (Acts xxvi. 14) the conscience of their still persecut-

ing Kinsman, and to prepare the way of Christ in his heart.

Greet Amplias, *Ampliatius*, my beloved in the Lord; surely a personal convert of his own.

Greet Urbanus, my co-worker in Christ, and Stachys—another masculine name—my beloved.

Greet Apelles, that tested man in Christ; the Lord knows, not we, the tests he stood.

Greet those who belong to Aristobulus' people.

Greet Herodion, my kinsman.

Greet those who belong to Narcissus' people; those who are in the Lord.

Greet Tryphæna and Tryphosa (almost certainly, by the type of their names, female *slaves*), who toil in the Lord, perhaps as "servants of the Church," so far as earthly service would allow them.

Greet Persis, the beloved woman (with faultless delicacy he does not here say "*my beloved*," as he had said of the Christian *men* mentioned just above), for she toiled hard in the Lord; perhaps at some time when St. Paul had watched her in a former and more Eastern home.

Greet Rufus—just possibly the Rufus of Mark xv. 21, brother of Alexander, and son of Cross-carrying Simon; the family was evidently known to St. Mark, and we have good cause to think that St. Mark wrote primarily for *Roman* readers—Rufus, the chosen man in the Lord, a saint of the *élite*; and his mother—and mine! This nameless woman had done a mother's part, somehow and somewhere, to the motherless Missionary, and her lovingkindness stands recorded now

"In either Book of Life, here and above."

Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren who are with them; dwellers perhaps in some isolated and distant quarter of Rome, a little Church by themselves.

Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and all the saints who are with them, in their assembly.

Greet one another with a sacred kiss; the Oriental pledge of friendship, and of respect. All the Churches of Christ greet you; Corinth, Cenchreæ, "with all the saints in the whole of Achaia" (2 Cor. i. 1).

The roll of names is over, with its music, that subtle characteristic of such recitations of human personalities, and with its moving charm for the heart due almost equally to our glimpses of information about one here and one there and to our total ignorance about others; an ignorance of everything about them but that they were at Rome, and that they were in Christ. We seem, by an effort of imagination, to see, as through a bright cloud, the faces of the company, and to catch the far-off voices; but the dream "dissolves in wrecks"; we do not know them, we do not know their distant world. But we do know Him in whom they were, and are; and that they have been "with Him, which is far better," for now so long a time of rest and glory. Some no doubt by deaths of terror and wonder, by the fire, by the horrible wild-beasts, "departed to be with Him"; some went, perhaps, with a dismissal as gentle as love and stillness could make it. But however,



they were the Lord's; they are with the Lord. And we, in Him,

"Are tending upward too,  
As fast as time can move."

So we watch this unknown yet well-beloved company, with a sense of fellowship and expectation impossible out of Christ. This page is no mere relic of the past; it is a list of friendships to be made hereafter, and to be possessed for ever, in the endless life where personality indeed shall be eternal, but where also the union of personalities, in Christ, shall be beyond our utmost present thought.

But the Apostle cannot close with these messages of love. He remembers another and anxious need, a serious spiritual peril in the Roman community. He has not even alluded to it before, but it must be handled, however briefly, now:

But I appeal to you, brethren, to watch the persons who make the divisions and the stumbling-blocks you know of, alien to the teaching which you learnt (there is an emphasis on "you," as if to difference the true-hearted converts from these troublemakers);—and do turn away from them; go, and keep, out of their way; wise counsel for a peaceable but effectual resistance. For such people are not bondservants of our Lord Jesus Christ, but they are bondservants of their own belly. They talk much of a mystic freedom; and free indeed they are from the accepted dominion of the Redeemer—but all the more they are enslaved to themselves; and by their pious language and their specious pleas they quite beguile the hearts of the simple, the unsuspecting. And they may perhaps have special hopes of beguiling *you*, because of your well-known readiness to submit, with the submission of faith, to sublime truths; a noble character, but calling inevitably for the safeguards of intelligent caution: For your obedience, "the obedience of faith," shown when the Gospel reached you, was carried by report to all men, and so to these beguilers, who hope now to entice your faith astray. As regards you, therefore, looking only at your personal condition, I rejoice. Only I wish you to be wise as to what is good, but uncontaminated (by defiling knowledge) as to what is evil. He would not have their holy readiness to believe distorted into an unhallowed and falsely tolerant curiosity. He would have their faith not only submissive but spiritually intelligent; then they would be alive to the risks of a counterfeited and illusory "Gospel." They would feel, as with an educated Christian instinct, where decisively to hold back, where to refuse attention to unwholesome teaching. But the God of our peace will crush Satan down beneath your feet speedily. This spiritual mischief, writhing itself, like the serpent of Paradise, into your happy precincts, is nothing less than a stratagem of the great Enemy's own; a movement of his mysterious personal antagonism to your Lord, and to you His people. But the Enemy's Conqueror, working in you, will make the struggle short and decisive. Meet the inroad in the name of Him who has made peace for you, and works peace in you, and it will soon be over. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be (or may we not render is?) with you.

What precisely was the mischief, who pre-

cisely were the dangerous teachers, spoken of here so abruptly and so urgently by St. Paul? It is easier to ask the question than to answer it. Some expositors have sought a solution in the fourteenth and fifteenth chapters, and have found in an extreme school of theoretical "liberty" these men of "pious language and specious pleas." But to us this seems impossible. Almost explicitly, in those chapters, he identifies himself *in principle* with "the capable"; certainly there is not a whisper of horror as regards their principle, and nothing but a friendly while unreserved reproof for the uncharity of their practice. Here he has in his mind men whose purposes and whose teachings are nothing but evil; who are to be—not indeed persecuted but—avoided; not met in conference, but solemnly refused a further hearing. In our view, the case was one of embryo *Gnosticism*. The Romans, so we take it, were troubled by teachers who used the language of Christianity, saying much of "Redemption," and of "Emancipation," and something of "Christ," and of "the Spirit"; but all the while they meant a thing totally different from the Gospel of the Cross. They meant by redemption and freedom, the liberation of spirit from matter. They meant by Christ and the Spirit, mere links in a chain of phantom beings, supposed to span the gulf between the Absolute Unknowable Existence and the finite World. And their morality too often tended to the tenet that as matter was hopelessly evil, and spirit the unfortunate prisoner in matter, the material body had nothing to do with its unwilling, and pure, Inhabitant: let the body go its own evil way, and work out its base desires.

Our sketch is taken from developed Gnosticism, such as it is known to have been a generation or two later than St. Paul. But it is more than likely that such errors were present, in essence, all through the Apostolic age. And it is easy to see how they could from the first disguise themselves in the special terminology of the Gospel of liberty and of the Spirit.

Such things may look to us, after eighteen hundred years, only like fossils of the old rocks. They are indeed fossil specimens—but of existing species. The atmosphere of the Christian world is still infected, from time to time—perhaps more now than a few generations ago, whatever that fact may mean—with unwholesome subtleties, in which the purest forms of truth are indescribably manipulated into the deadliest related error; a mischief sure to betray itself, however, (where the man tempted to parley with it is at once wakeful and humble,) by some fatal flaw of pride, or of untruthfulness, or of an uncleanness however subtle. And for the believer so tempted, under common circumstances, there is still, as of old, no counsel more weighty than St. Paul's counsel here. If he would deal with such snares in the right way, he must "turn away from them." He must turn away to the Christ of history. He must occupy himself anew with the primeval Gospel of pardon, holiness, and heaven.

Is the letter to be closed here at last? Not quite yet; not until one and then another of the gathered circle has committed his greetings to it. And first comes up the dear Timotheus, the man nearest of all to the strong heart of the Apostle. We seem to see him alive before us,



so much has St. Paul, in one Epistle and another, but above all in his dying letter to Timotheus himself, contributed to a portrait. He is many years younger than his leader and Christian Father. His face, full of thought, feeling, and devotion, is rather earnest than strong. But it has the strength of patience, and of absolute sincerity, and of rest in Christ. Timotheus repays the affection of Paul with unwavering fidelity. And he will be true to the end to his Lord and Redeemer, through whatever tears and agonies of sensibility. Then Lucius will speak, perhaps the Cyrenian of Antioch (Acts xiii. 1); and Jason, perhaps the convert of Thessalonica (Acts xvii. 5); and Sosipater, perhaps the Berean Sopater of Acts xx. 4; three blood-relations of the Apostle, who was not left utterly alone of human affinities, though he had laid them all at his Master's feet. Then the faithful Tertius claims the well-earned privilege of writing one sentence for himself. And Gaius modestly requests his salutation, and Erastus, the man of civic dignity and large affairs. He has found no discord between the tenure of a great secular office and the life of Christ; but to-day he is just a brother with brethren, named side by side with the Quartus whose only title is that beautiful one, "the brother," "our fellow in the family of God." So the gathered friends speak each in his turn to the Christians of the City; we listen as the names are given:

There greets you Timotheus my fellow-worker, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipatrus, my kinsmen.

There greets you I, Tertius, who wrote the Epistle in the Lord; he had been simply Paul's conscious pen, but also he had willingly drawn the strokes as being one with Christ, and as working in His cause.

There greets you Gaius, host of me and of the whole Church; universal welcomer to his door of all who love his beloved Lord, and now particularly of all at Corinth who need his Lord's Apostle.

There greets you Erastus, the Treasurer of the City, and Quartus ("Kouartos"), the brother.\*

Here, as we seem to discern the scene, there is indeed a pause, and what might look like an end. Tertius lays down the pen. The circle of friends breaks up, and Paul is left alone—alone with his unseen Lord, and with that long, silent Letter; his own, yet not his own. He takes it in his hands, to read, to ponder, to believe, to call up again the Roman converts, so dear, so far away, and to commit them again for faith, and for life, to Christ and to His Father. He sees them beset by the encircling masses of pagan idolatry and vice, and by the embittered Judaism which meets them at every turn. He sees them hindered by their own mutual prejudices and mistakes; for they are sinners still. Lastly, he sees them approached by this serpentine delusion of an unhallowed mysticism, which

\* Ver. 24 is probably to be omitted, as an insertion after date.

would substitute the thought of matter for that of sin, and reverie for faith, and an unknowable Somewhat, inaccessible to the finite, for the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And then he sees this astonishing Gospel, whose glorious outline and argument he has been caused to draw, as it was never drawn before, on those papyrus pages; the truth of God, not of man; veiled so long, promised so long, known at last; the Gospel which displays the sinner's peace, the believer's life, the radiant boundless future of the saints, and, in all and above all, the eternal love of the Father and the Son.

In this Gospel, "*his* Gospel," he sees manifested afresh his God. And he adores Him afresh, and commits to Him afresh these dear ones of the Roman Mission.

He must give them one word more, to express his overrunning heart. He must speak to them of Him who is Almighty for them against the complex might of evil. He must speak of that Gospel in whose lines the almighty grace will run. It is the Gospel of Paul, but also and first the "proclamation made by Jesus Christ" of Himself as our Salvation. It is the Secret "hushed" throughout the long æons of the past, but now spoken out indeed; the Message which the Lord of Ages, choosing His hour aright, now imperially commands to be announced to the Nations, that they may submit to it and live. It is the vast fulfilment of those mysterious Scriptures which are now the credentials, and the watchword, of its preachers. It is the supreme expression of the sole and eternal Wisdom; clear to the intellect of the heaven-taught child; more unfathomable, even to the heavenly watchers, than Creation itself. To the God of this Gospel he must now entrust the Romans, in the glowing words in which he worships Him through the Son in whom He is seen and praised. To this God—while the very language is broken by its own force—he must give glory everlasting, for His Gospel, and for Himself.

He takes the papers, and the pen. With dim eyes, and in large, laborious letters,\* and forgetting at the close, in the intensity of his soul, to make perfect the grammatical connection, he inscribes, in the twilight, this most wonderful of Doxologies. Let us watch him to its close, and then in silence leave him before his Lord, and ours:

But to Him who is able to establish you, according to my Gospel, and the proclamation of, made by, Jesus Christ, true to (*κατὰ*) (the) unveiling of (the) Secret hushed in silence during ages of times, but manifested now, and through (the) prophetic Scriptures, according to the edict of the God of Ages, for faith's obedience, published among all the Nations—to God Only Wise, through Jesus Christ—to whom be the glory unto the ages of the ages. Amen.

\* Gal. vi. 11: "See with *what great letters* I have written to you in autograph!" It has been remarked that this great Doxology bears a literary likeness to other passages which he probably wrote with his own hand.







THE FIRST EPISTLE  
TO THE CORINTHIANS







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# THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

BY THE REV. MARCUS DODS, D. D.

## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTION.

CORINTH was the first Gentile city in which Paul spent any considerable time. It afforded him the opportunities he sought as a preacher of Christ. Lying, as it did, on the famous Isthmus which connected Northern and Southern Greece, and defended by an almost impregnable citadel, it became a place of great political importance. Its position gave it also commercial advantages. Many traders bringing goods from Asia to Italy preferred to unlade at Cenchrea and carry their bales across the narrow neck of land rather than risk the dangers of doubling Cape Malea. So commonly was this done that arrangements were made for carrying the smaller ships themselves across the Isthmus on rollers; and shortly after Paul's visit Nero cut the first turf of an intended, but never finished, canal to connect the two seas.

Becoming by its situation and importance the head of the Achaian League, it bore the brunt of the conqueror's onslaught and was completely destroyed by the Roman general Mummius in the year 146 B. C. For a hundred years it lay in ruins, peopled by few but relic-hunters, who groped among the demolished temples for bits of sculpture or Corinthian brass. The all-discerning eye of Julius Cæsar, however, could not overlook the excellence of the site; and accordingly he sent a colony of Roman freedmen, the most industrious of the metropolitan population, to rebuild and replenish the city. Hence the names of Corinthians mentioned in the New Testament are mainly such as betoken a Roman and servile origin, such as Gaius, Fortunatus, Justus, Crispus, Quartus, Achaicus. Under these auspices Corinth speedily regained something of its former beauty, all its former wealth, and apparently more than its original size. But the old profligacy was also to some extent revived; and in Paul's day "to live as they do at Corinth" was the equivalent for living in luxury and licentiousness. Sailors from all parts with a little money to spend, merchants eager to compensate for the privations of a voyage, refugees and adventurers of all kinds, were continually passing through the city, introducing foreign customs and confounding moral distinctions. Too plainly are the innate vices of the Corinthians reflected in this Epistle. On the stage the Corinthian was usually represented drunk, and Paul found that this characteristic vice was allowed to follow his converts even to the communion table. In the letter there are also discernible some reminiscences of what Paul had seen in the Isthmian and gladiatorial contests. He had noted, too, as he walked through Corinth, how the fire of the Roman army had consumed the meaner houses of wood, hay, stubble, but had left standing, though charred, the precious marbles.

Nowhere do we see so clearly as in this Epistle the multifarious and delicate work required of one on whom lay the care of all the Churches.

A host of difficult questions poured in upon him: questions regarding conduct, questions of casuistry, questions about the ordering of public worship and social intercourse, as well as questions which struck to the very root of the Christian faith. Are we to dine with our heathen relatives? May we intermarry with those who are not yet Christian? may we marry at all? Can slaves continue in the service of heathen masters? What relation does the Communion hold to our ordinary meals? Is the man who speaks with tongues a superior kind of Christian, and must the prophet who speaks with the Spirit be allowed to interrupt other speakers? Paul in a previous letter had instructed the Corinthians on some of these points, but they had misunderstood him; and he now takes up their difficulties point by point, and finally disposes of them. Had nothing been required but the solution of practical difficulties, Paul's part had not been so delicate to play. But even through their request for advice there shone the ineradicable Greek vices of vanity, restless intellectualism, litigiousness, and sensuality. They even seemed to be on the perilous brink of glorying in a spurious liberality which could condone vices condemned by the heathen. In these circumstances the calmness and patience with which Paul pronounces on their entanglements are striking. But even more striking are the boundless intellectual vigour, the practical sagacity, the ready application to life, of the profoundest Christian principles. In reading the Epistle, one is amazed at the brevity and yet completeness with which intricate practical problems are discussed, the unerring firmness with which, through all plausible sophistry and fallacious scruples, the radical principle is laid hold of, and the sharp finality with which it is expressed. Nor is there any lack in the Epistle of the warm, rapid, and stirring eloquence which is associated with the name of Paul. It was a happy circumstance for the future of Christianity that in those early days, when there were almost as many wild suggestions and foolish opinions as there were converts, there should have been in the Church this one clear, practical judgment, this pure embodiment of the wisdom of Christianity.

It is in this Epistle we get the clearest view of the actual difficulties encountered by Christianity in a heathen community. We here see the religion of Christ confronted by the culture, and the vices, and the various social arrangements of paganism; we see the ferment and turmoil its introduction occasioned, the changes it wrought in daily life and common customs, the difficulty men honestly experienced in comprehending what their new principles required; we see how the higher aims and views of Christianity sifted the social customs of the ancient world, now allowing and now rejecting; and above all, we see the principles on which we ourselves must proceed in solving the social and ecclesiastical difficulties that embarrass ourselves. It is in this Epistle, in short, that we see the Apostle of the Gentiles in his proper and peculiar element, exhibiting the applicability of the religion of Christ



to the Gentile world, and its power, not to satisfy merely the aspirations of devout Jews, but to scatter the darkness and quicken the dead soul of the pagan world.

Paul's experience in Corinth is full of significance. On arriving at Corinth, he went, as usual, to the synagogue; and when his message was rejected by the Jews, he betook himself to the Gentiles. Next door to the synagogue, in the house of a convert called Justus, the Christian congregation was founded; and, to the annoyance of the Jews, one of the rulers of the synagogue, Crispus by name, attached himself to it. The Jewish irritation and envy smouldered until a new governor came from Rome, and then it found vent. This new governor was one of the most popular men of his time, the brother of Nero's tutor, the well-known Seneca. He was himself so markedly the representative of "sweetness and light" that he was commonly spoken of as "the sweet Gallio." The Jews in Corinth evidently fancied that a man of this character would be facile and would desire to make favour with all parties in his new province. They accordingly appealed to him, but were met with a prompt and decided rebuff. Their new governor assured them he had no jurisdiction over such questions. As soon as he hears it is not a matter in which the property or persons of his lieges are implicated he bids his lictors clear the court. The rabble that always gathers round a courthouse, seeing a Jew ignominiously dismissed, set upon him and beat him under the very eye of the judge, the beginning of that furious, unreasoning, brutal outrage which has pursued the Jews in all countries of Christendom.

Gallio has become the synonym for religious indifference. We call the easy-going, good-natured man who meets all your religious appeals with a shrug of the shoulders or a genial, bantering answer a Gallio. This is perhaps a little hard upon Gallio, who no doubt attended to his own religion in much the same spirit as his friends. When the narrative says that "he cared for none of those things," it means that he gave no heed to what seemed a common street brawl. It is rather the haughtiness of the Roman proconsul than the indifference of the man of the world that appears in his conduct. These squabbles among Jews about matters of their law were not affairs he could stoop to investigate or was by his office required to investigate. And yet it is not Gallio's proconsulship of Achaia nor his relationship to Roman celebrities that has made his name familiar to the modern world, but his connection with these wretched Jews that appeared before his small chair that morning. In Paul's little, insignificant, worn figure it was not to be expected he should see anything so remarkable as to stimulate inquiry; he could not have comprehended that the chief connection in which his name would afterwards appear would be in connection with Paul; and yet had he but known, had he but interested himself in what evidently so deeply interested his new subjects, how different might his own history have become, and how different, too, the history of Christianity. But filled with a Roman's disdain for questions of which the sword could not cut the knot, and with a Roman's reluctance to implicate himself with anything which was not sufficiently of this world to be adjusted by Roman law, he cleared his court and called the next case. The "sweet Gallio," patient and

affable to every other kind of complainant, had nothing but disdain and undisguised repugnance for these Eastern dreamers. The Roman, who could sympathise with almost every nationality and find room for all men in the wide lap of the empire, made himself detested in the East by his harsh contempt for mysticism and religion, and was met by a disdain deeper than his own.

"The brooding East with awe beheld  
Her impious younger world;  
The Roman tempest swelled and swelled,  
And on her head was hurled;  
The East bowed low before the blast  
In patient, deep disdain;  
She let the legions thunder past,  
And plunged in thought again."

Now in the Englishman there is much that closely resembles the Roman character. There is the same ability for practical achievement, the same capacity for conquest and for making much of conquered peoples, the same reverence for law, the same faculty for dealing with the world and the human race as it actually is, the same relish for, and mastery of, the present system of things. But along with these qualities there go in both races their natural defects: a tendency to forget the ideal and the unseen in the seen and the actual; to measure all things by material standards; to be more deeply impressed with the conquests of the sword than with those of the Spirit, and with the gains that are counted in coin rather than with those that are seen in character; and to be far more intensely interested in whatever concerns politics than in anything that concerns religion. So pronounced is this materialistic, or at any rate worldly, tendency in this country, that it has been formulated into a system for the conduct of life, under the name of secularism. And so popular has this system become, especially among working-men, that the chief promoter of it believes that his adherents may be numbered by hundreds of thousands.

The essential idea of secularism is "that precedence should be given to the duties of this life over those which pertain to another life," the reason being that this life is the first in certainty, and should therefore be the first in importance. Mr. Holyoake carefully states his position in these words: "We do not say that every man ought to give an *exclusive* attention to this world, because that would be to commit the old sin of dogmatism, and exclude the possibility of another world and of walking by different light from that by which alone we are able to walk. But as our *knowledge* is confined to this life, and testimony, and conjecture, and probability are all that can be set forth with respect to another life, we think we are justified in giving *precedence* to the duties of this state and of attaching primary importance to the morality of man to man." This statement has the merit of being undogmatic, but it is in consequence proportionately vague. If a man is not to give *exclusive* attention to this world, how much attention is he to give to another? Would Mr. Holyoake think the amount of attention most Christians give to the other world excessive? If so, the attention he thinks suitable must be limited indeed.

But if this theoretical statement, framed in view of the exigencies of controversy, be scarcely intelligible, the position of the practical secularist is perfectly intelligible. He says to himself,



I have occupations and duties now that require all my strength; and if there is another world the best preparation for it I can have is to do thoroughly and with all my strength the duties now pressing upon me. Most of us have felt the attraction of this position. It has a sound of candid, manly common-sense, and appeals to the English character in us, to our esteem for what is practical. Besides, it is perfectly true that the best preparation for any future world is to do thoroughly well the duties of our present state. But the whole question remains, What *are* the duties of the present state? These cannot be determined unless we come to some decision as to the truth or untruth of Christianity. If there is a God, it is not merely in the future, but now, that we have duties to Him, that all our duties are tinged with the idea of His presence and of our relation to Him. It is absurd to defer all consideration of God to a future world; God is as much in this world as in any: and if so, our whole life, in every part of it, must be, not a secular, but a godly life—a life we live well and can only live well when we live it in fellowship with Him. The mind that can divide life into duties of the present and duties that concern the future entirely misapprehends the teaching of Christianity, and misconceives what life is. If a man does not know whether there is a God, then he cannot know what his present duties are, neither can he do these duties as he ought. He may do them better than I can; but he does not do them as well as he himself could were he owning the presence and accepting the gracious, sanctifying influences of the Divine Spirit.

To the help of secularism comes also in our case another influence, which told with Gallio. Even the gentle and affable Gallio felt annoyed that so squalid a case should be among the first that came before him in Achaia. He had left Rome with the good wishes of the Imperial Court, had made a triumphal procession of several weeks to Corinth, had been installed there with all the pomp that Roman officials, military and civil, could devise; he had been met and acknowledged by the authorities, had sworn in his new officers, had caused his tessellated pavement to be laid and his chair of state set down; and as if in mockery of all this ceremony and display of power came this pitiful squabble from the synagogue, a matter of which not a man of standing in his court knew or cared anything, a matter in which Jews and slaves alone were interested. Christianity has always found its warmest supporters in the lower strata of society. It has not always been quite respectable. And here again Englishmen are like Romans: they are strongly influenced by what is respectable, by what has position and standing in the world. If Christianity were zealously promoted by princes, and leading officials, and distinguished professors and writers of genius, how much easier would it be to accept it; but its most zealous promoters are so commonly men of no education, men with odd names, men whose grammar and pronunciation put them beyond the pale of good society, men whose methods are rough and whose views are unphilosophical and crude. As in Corinth, so now, not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; and we must beware therefore of shrinking, as Gallio did, from what is essentially the most powerful agent for good in the world because it is so often found

with vulgar and repulsive adjuncts. The earthen vessels, as Paul reminds us, the pots of coarsest clay, chipped and crusted with coarse contact with the world, may yet hold treasure of price-less value.

It is always a question how far we should endeavour to become all things to all men, to win the wise of this world by presenting Christianity as a philosophy, and to win the well-born and cultured by presenting it in the dress of an attractive style. Paul as he left Athens, where he had met with so little success, was apparently exercised with this same question. He had tried to meet the Athenians on their own ground, showing his familiarity with their writers; but he seems to think that at Corinth another method may be more successful, and, as he tells them, "I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." It was, he says, with much fear and trembling he adopted this course; he was weak and dispirited at the time, at any rate; and it is plain that his resolve to abandon all such appeals as might tell with rhetoricians cost him an effort and made a deep impression upon him. He himself saw so clearly the foolishness of the Cross; he knew so well what a field for mockery was presented to the Greek mind by the preaching of salvation through a crucified person. He was very conscious of the poor appearance he made as a speaker among these fluent Greeks, whose ears were as cultivated as a musician's, and whose sense of beauty, trained by seeing their picked young men contend in the games, received a shock from "his weak and contemptible bodily presence," as they called it. Yet, all things considered, he made up his mind that he would trust his success to the simple statement of facts. He would preach "Christ and Him crucified." He would tell them what Jesus had been and done. He felt jealous of anything which might attract men to his preaching save the Cross of Christ. And he was more successful in Corinth than he had been elsewhere. In that profligate city he was obliged to stay eighteen months, because the work so grew under his hand.

And so it has ever been since. As matter of fact, it is not Christ's teaching, but His death, which has kindled the enthusiasm and the devotion of men. It is this which has conquered and won them, and delivered them from the bondage of self, and set them in a larger world. It is when we believe that this Person has loved us with a love stronger than death that we become His. It is when we can use Paul's words "who loved me and gave Himself for me" that we feel, as Paul felt, the constraining power of this love. It is this that forms between the soul and Christ that secret tie which has been the strength and happiness of so many lives. If our own life is neither strong nor happy, it is because we are not admitting the love of Christ, and are striving to live independently of Him who is our Life. Christ is the perennial fountain of love, of hopefulness, of true spiritual life. In Him there is enough to purify, and brighten, and sustain all human life. Brought into contact with the intellectualism and the vice of Corinth, the love of Christ proved its reality and its overcoming strength; and when we bring it into contact with ourselves, burdened, and perplexed and tempted as we are, we find that still it is the power of God unto salvation.



## CHAPTER II.

*THE CHURCH IN CORINTH.*

IN the year 58 A. D., when Paul wrote this Epistle, Corinth was a city with a mixed population, and conspicuous for the turbulence and immorality commonly found in seaports frequented by traders and seamen from all parts of the world. Paul had received letters from some of the Christians in Corinth which disclosed a state of matters in the Church far from desirable. He had also more particular accounts from some members of Chloe's household who were visiting Ephesus, and who told him how sadly disturbed the little community of Christians was by party spirit and scandals in life and worship.

In the letter itself the designation of the writer and of those addressed first claims our attention.

The writer identifies himself as "Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ by call, through the will of God." An Apostle is one sent, as Christ was sent by the Father. "As the Father sent Me, even so send I you." It was therefore an office no one could take to himself, nor was it the promotion resulting from previous service. To the apostleship the sole entrance was through the call of Christ; and in virtue of this call Paul became, as he says, an Apostle. And it is this which explains one of the most prominent of his characteristics: the singular combination of humility and authority, of self-depreciation and self-assertion. He is filled with a sense of his own unworthiness; he is "less than the least of the Apostles," "not worthy to be called an Apostle." On the other hand, he never hesitates to command the Churches, to rebuke the foremost man in the Church, to assert his claim to be listened to as the ambassador of Christ.

This extraordinary humility and equally remarkable boldness and authority had one common root in his perception that it was through Christ's call and by God's will he was an Apostle. The work of going to all the busiest parts of the world and proclaiming Christ was to his mind far too great a work for him to aspire to at his own instance. He could never have aspired to such a position as this gave him. But God called him to it; and, with this authority at his back, he feared nothing, neither hardship nor defeat.

And this is for us all the true and eternal source of humility and confidence. Let a man feel sure that he is called of God to do what he is doing, let him be fully persuaded in his own mind that the course he follows is God's will for him, and he will press on undauntedly, even though opposed. It is altogether a new strength with which a man is inspired when he is made conscious that God calls him to do this or that, when behind conscience or the plain requirements of human affairs and circumstances the presence of the living God makes itself felt. Well may we exclaim with one who had to stand alone and follow a solitary path, conscious only of God's approval, and sustained by that consciousness against the disapproval of all, "Oh, that we could take that simple view of things as to feel that the one thing which lies before us is to please God. What gain is it to please the world, to please the great, nay, even to please those whom we love, compared with this? What gain is it to be applauded, admired, courted, followed, compared

with this one aim of not being disobedient to a heavenly vision?"

In addressing the Church at Corinth Paul unites with himself a Christian called Sosthenes. This was the name of the chief ruler of the synagogue at Corinth who was beaten by the Greeks in Gallio's court, and it is not impossible that it was he who was now with Paul in Ephesus. If so, this would account for his being associated with Paul in writing to Corinth. What share in the letter Sosthenes actually had it is impossible to say. He may have written it to Paul's dictation; he may have suggested here and there a point to be touched upon. Certainly Paul's easy assumption of a friend as joint writer of the letter sufficiently shows that he had no such stiff and formal idea of inspiration as we have. Apparently he did not stay to inquire whether Sosthenes was qualified to be the author of a canonical book; but knowing the authoritative position he had held among the Jews of Corinth, he naturally conjoins his name with his own in addressing the new Christian community.

The persons to whom this letter is addressed are identified as "the Church of God which is at Corinth." With them are joined in character, if not as recipients of this letter, "all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord." And therefore we should perhaps not be far wrong if we were to gather from this that Paul would have defined the Church as the company of all those persons who "call upon the name of Jesus Christ." Calling upon the name of any one implies trust in him; and those who call upon the name of Jesus Christ are those who look up to Christ as their supreme Lord, able to supply all their need. It is this belief in one Lord which brings men together as a Christian Church.

But at once we are confronted with the difficulty that many persons who call upon the name of the Lord do so with no inward conviction of their need, and consequently with no real dependence upon Christ or allegiance to Him. In other words, the apparent Church is not the real Church. Hence the distinction between the Church visible, which consists of all who nominally or outwardly belong to the Christian community, and the Church invisible, which consists of those who inwardly and really are the subjects and people of Christ. Much confusion of thought is avoided by keeping in mind this obvious distinction. In the Epistles of Paul it is sometimes the ideal, invisible Church which is addressed or spoken of; sometimes it is the actual, visible Church, imperfect, stained with unsightly blots, calling for rebuke and correction. Where the visible Church is, and of whom composed, we can always say; its members can be counted, its property estimated, its history written. But of the invisible Church no man can fully write the history, or name the members, or appraise its properties, gifts, and services.

From the earliest times it has been customary to say that the true Church must be one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. That is true if the Church invisible be meant. The true body of Christ, the company of persons who in all countries and ages have called upon Christ and served Him, do form one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. But it is not true of the Church visible, and disastrous consequences have at various times followed the attempt to ascertain by the application of these notes which actual visible



Church has the best claim to be considered the true Church.

Without concerning himself explicitly to describe the distinguishing features of the true Church, Paul here gives us four notes which must always be found\* :—

1. Consecration. The Church is composed of "them that have been sanctified in Christ Jesus."

2. Holiness : "called to be saints."

3. Universality: "all that in every place call on the name," etc.

4. Unity: "both their Lord and ours."

1. The true Church is, first of all, composed of consecrated people. The word "sanctify" bears here a somewhat different meaning from that which we commonly attach to it. It means rather that which is set apart or destined to holy uses than that which has been made holy. It is in this meaning the word is used by our Lord when He says, "For your sakes I sanctify"—or set apart—"Myself." The Church by its very existence is a body of men and women set apart for a holy use. The New Testament word for Church, *ecclesia*, means a society "called out" from among other men. It exists not for common purposes, but to witness for God and for Christ, to maintain before the eyes and in all the common ways and works of men the ideal life realised in Christ and the presence and holiness of God. It becomes those who form the Church to meet God's purpose in calling them out of the world and to consider themselves as devoted and set apart to attain that purpose. Their destination is no longer that of the world; and a spirit set upon the attainment of the joys and advantages the world gives is wholly out of place in them.

2. More particularly those who compose the Church are called to be "saints." Holiness is the unmistakable characteristic of the true Church. The glory of God, inseparable from His essence, is His holiness, His eternally willing and doing only what is the very best. To think of God as doing wrong is blasphemy. Were God even once to do other than the best and right, the loving and just thing, He would cease to be God. It is the task of the Church to exhibit in human life and character this holiness of God's. Those whom God calls into His Church, He calls to be, above all else, holy.

The Church of Corinth was in some danger of forgetting this. One of its members in particular had been guilty of a scandalous breach even of the heathen code of morals; and of him Paul uncompromisingly says, "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person." Even with sinners of a less flagrant sort, no communion was to be held. "If any man that is called a brother"—that is, claiming to be a Christian—"be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such a one you must not even eat." No doubt there are risk and difficulty in administering this law. The graver hidden sin may be overlooked, the more obvious and venial transgression be punished. But the duty of the Church to maintain its sanctity is undeniable, and those who act for the Church must do their best in spite of all difficulty and risk.

The prime duty, however, lies with the members, not with the rulers, in the Church. Those whose function it is to watch over the purity of the Church would be saved from all doubtful

action were the individual members alive to the necessity of holy living. This, they should bear in mind, is the very object of the Church's existence and of their being in it.

3. Thirdly, it is ever to be borne in mind that the true Church of Christ is to be found, not in one country nor in one age, not in this or that Church, whether it assume the title of "Catholic" or pride itself on being national, but is composed of "all that in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Happily the time is gone by when with any show of reason any one Church can claim to be catholic on the ground of its being coextensive with Christendom. It is true that Cardinal Newman, one of the most striking figures and probably the greatest Churchman of our own generation, attached himself to the Church of Rome on this very ground: that it possessed this note of catholicity. To his eye, accustomed to survey the fortunes and growth of Christ's Church during the early and mediæval centuries, it seemed that the Church of Rome alone had any reasonable claim to be considered the Church catholic. But he was betrayed, as others have been, by confounding the Church visible with the Church invisible. No one visible Church can claim to be the Church catholic. Catholicity is not a matter of more or less; it cannot be determined by a majority. No Church which does not claim to contain the whole of Christ's people without exception can claim to be catholic. Probably there are some who accept this alternative, and do not see it to be absurd to claim for any one existing Church that it is coextensive with the Church of Christ.

4. The fourth note of the Church here implied is its unity. The Lord of all the Churches is one Lord; in this allegiance they centre, and by it are held together in a true unity. Plainly this note can belong only to the Church invisible, and not to that multifarious collection of incoherent fragments known as the visible Church. It is indeed doubtful whether a visible unity is desirable. Considering what human nature is and how liable men are to be overawed and imposed upon by what is large, it is probably quite as conducive to the spiritual well-being of the Church that she is broken up into parts. Outward divisions into national Churches and Churches under different forms of government and holding various creeds would sink into insignificance, and be no more bewailed than the division of an army into regiments, were there the real unity which springs from true allegiance to the common Lord and zeal for the common cause rather than for the interests of our own particular Church. When the generous rivalry exhibited by some of our regiments in battle passes into envy, unity is destroyed, and indeed the attitude sometimes assumed towards sister-Churches is rather that of hostile armies than of rival regiments striving which can do most honour to the common flag. One of the hopeful signs of our times is that this is generally understood. Christian people are beginning to see how much more important are those points on which the whole Church is agreed than those often obscure or trivial points which split the Church into sects. Churches are beginning to own with some sincerity that there are Christian gifts and graces in all Churches, and that no one Church comprises all the excellences of Christendom. And the only outward unity that is worth having is that which springs

\* Comp. F. W. Robertson's "Lectures on Corinthians."



from inward unity, from a genuine respect and regard for all who own the same Lord and spend themselves in His service.

Paul, with his usual courtesy and instinctive tact, introduces what he has to say with a hearty acknowledgment of the distinctive excellences of the Corinthian Church: "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you in Christ Jesus, that in everything ye have been enriched in Him, in all utterance and in all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you." Paul was one of those large-natured men who rejoice more in the prosperity of others than in any private good fortune. The envious soul is glad when things go no better with others than with himself, but the generous and unselfish are lifted out of their own woes by their sympathy with the happy. Paul's joy—and it was no mean or shallow joy—was to see the testimony he had borne to Christ's goodness and power confirmed by the new energies and capacities which were developed in those who believed his testimony. The gifts which the Christians in Corinth exhibited made it manifest that the Divine presence and power proclaimed by Paul were real. His testimony regarding the risen but unseen Lord was confirmed by the fact that those who believed this testimony and called upon the name of the Lord received gifts not previously enjoyed by them. Further argument regarding the actual and present power of the unseen Lord was needless in Corinth. And in our day it is the new life of believers which most strongly confirms the testimony regarding the risen Christ. Every one who attaches himself to the Church either damages or aids the cause of Christ, propagates either belief or unbelief. In the Corinthians Paul's testimony regarding Christ was confirmed by their reception of the rare gifts of utterance and knowledge. It is indeed somewhat ominous that the incorruptible honesty of Paul can only acknowledge their possession of "gifts," not of those fine Christian graces which distinguished the Thessalonians and others of his converts. But the grace of God must always adjust itself to the nature of the recipient; it fulfils itself by means of the material which nature furnishes. The Greek nature was at all times lacking in seriousness, and had attained little moral robustness; but for many centuries it had been trained to admire and excel in intellectual and oratorical displays. The natural gifts of the Greek race were quickened and directed by grace. Their intellectual inquisitiveness and apprehensiveness enabled them to throw light on the grounds and results of the Christian facts; and their fluent and flexible speech formed a new wealth and a more worthy employment in their endeavours to formulate Christian truth and exhibit Christian experience. Each race has its own contribution to make to complete and full-grown Christian manhood. Each race has its own gifts; and only when grace has developed all these gifts in a Christian direction can we actually see the fitness of Christianity for all men and the wealth of the nature and work of Christ, which can appeal to and best develop all.

Paul thanked God for their gift of utterance. Perhaps had he lived now, within sound of an utterance dizzying and ceaseless as the roar of Niagara, he might have had a word to say in the praise of silence. There is more than a risk nowadays that talk take the place of thought

on the one hand and of action on the other. But it could not fail to occur to Paul that this Greek utterance, with the instrument it had in the Greek language, was a great gift to the Church. In no other language could he have found such adequate, intelligible, and beautiful expression for the new ideas to which Christianity gave birth. And in this new gift of utterance among the Corinthians he may have seen promise of a rapid and effective propagation of the Gospel. For indeed there are few more valuable gifts the Church can receive than utterance. Legitimately may we hope for the Church when she so apprehends her own wealth in Christ as to be stirred to invite all the world to share with her, when through all her members she feels the pressure of thoughts that demand utterance, or when there arise in her even one or two persons with the rare faculty of swaying large audiences, and touching the common human heart, and lodging in the public mind some germinant ideas. New epochs in the Church's life are made by the men who speak, not to satisfy the expectation of an audience, but because they are driven by an inward compelling force, not because they are called upon to say something, but because they have that in them which they must say.

But utterance is well backed by knowledge. Not always has it been remembered that Paul recognises knowledge as a gift of God. Often, on the contrary, has the determination to satisfy the intellect with Christian truth been reprehended as idle and even wicked. To the Corinthians the Christian revelation was new, and inquiring minds could not but endeavour to harmonise the various facts it conveyed. This attempt to understand Christianity was approved. The exercise of the human reason upon Divine things was encouraged. The faith which accepted testimony was a gift of God, but so also was the knowledge which sought to recommend the contents of this testimony to the human mind.

But, however rich in endowments the Corinthians were, they could not but feel, in common with all other men, that no endowment can lift us above the necessity of conflict with sin or put us beyond the hazard which that conflict entails. In point of fact, richly endowed men are often most exposed to temptation, and feel more keenly than others the real hazard of human life. Paul therefore concludes this brief introduction by assigning the reason of his assurance that they will be blameless in the day of Christ; and that reason is that God is in the matter: "God is faithful, by whom ye were called to the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." God calls us with a purpose in view, and is faithful to that purpose. He calls us to the fellowship of Christ that we may learn of Him and become suitable agents to carry out the whole will of Christ. To fear that, notwithstanding our hearty desire to become of Christ's mind and notwithstanding all our efforts to enter more deeply into His fellowship, we shall yet fail, is to reflect upon God as either insincere in His call or inconstant. The gifts and calling of God are without repentance. They are not revoked on further consideration. God's invitation comes to us, and is not withdrawn, even though it is not met with the hearty acceptance it deserves. All our obstinacy in sin, all our blindness to our true



advantage, all our lack of anything like generous self-devotion, all our frivolity, and folly, and worldliness, are understood before the call is given. By calling us to the fellowship of His Son God guarantees to us the possibility of our entering into that fellowship and of becoming fit for it.

Let us then revive our hopes and renew our belief in the worth of life by remembering that we are called to the fellowship of Jesus Christ. This is satisfying; all else that calls us in life is defective and incomplete. Without this fellowship with what is holy and eternal, all we find in life seems trivial or is embittered to us by the fear of loss. In worldly pursuits there is excitement; but when the fire burns out, and the cold ashes remain, chill and blank desolation is the portion of the man whose all has been the world. We cannot reasonably and deliberately choose the world; we may be carried away by greed, or carnality, or earthliness to seek its pleasures, but our reason and our better nature cannot approve the choice. Still less does our reason approve that what we cannot deliberately choose we should yet allow ourselves to be governed by and actually join in fellowship of the closest kind. Believe in God's call, listen to it, strive to maintain yourself in the fellowship of Christ, and every year will tell you that God, who has called you, is faithful and is bringing you nearer and nearer to what is stable, happy, and satisfying.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE FACTIONS.

THE first section of this Epistle, extending from the tenth verse of the first chapter to the end of the fourth chapter, is occupied with an endeavour to quench the factious spirit which had shown itself in the Corinthian Church. Paul, with his accustomed frankness, tells the Corinthians from whom he has received information regarding them. Some members of the household of Chloe who were then in Ephesus were his informants. Chloe was evidently a woman well known in Corinth, and probably was resident there, although it has with some reason been remarked that it "is more in harmony with St. Paul's discretion to suppose that she was an Ephesian known to the Corinthians, whose people had been in Corinth and returned to Ephesus."\* The danger of this factious spirit, which in subsequent ages has so grievously weakened the Church and hindered her work, seemed to Paul so urgent that he abruptly adjured them to unity of sentiment and of confession by that name which was at once "the bond of union and the most holy name by which they could be entreated." Before speaking of the important topics he wished to discuss, he must first of all give them to understand that he does not write to a party, but seeks to win the ear of a whole and united Church.

The parties in the Corinthian Church had not as yet outwardly separated from one another. The members were known as belonging to this or that party, but they worshipped together and had not as yet renounced one another's communion. They differed in doctrine, but their faith in one Lord held them together.

\* Evans.

Of these parties Paul names four. There were first of all those who held by Paul himself and the aspect of the Gospel he had presented. They owed to him their own salvation; and having experienced the efficacy of his gospel, they could not believe that there was any other efficacious mode of presenting Christ to men. And gradually they became more concerned to uphold Paul's authority than to help the cause of Christ. They probably fell into the mistake to which all mere partisans are liable, and became more Pauline than Paul himself, magnifying his peculiarities and attaching importance to casual sayings and private practices of his which were in themselves indifferent. There was apparently some danger that they might become more Pauline than Christian, might allow their indebtedness to Paul to obscure their debt to Christ, and might so pride themselves in the teacher as to neglect the thing taught.

There was a second party, grouped round Apollos. This learned and eloquent Alexandrian had come to Corinth after Paul left, and what Paul had planted he so successfully watered that many seemed to owe everything to him. Until he came and fitted the Gospel into their previous knowledge, and showed them its relations to other faiths, and opened up to them its ethical wealth and bearing on life, they had been unable to make full use of Paul's teaching. He had sown the seed in their minds; they had owned the truth of his statements and accepted them; but until they heard Apollos they could not lay hold on the truth with sufficient definiteness, and could not boldly act upon it. The teaching of Apollos was not opposed to Paul's, but supplementary of it. At the end of this letter Paul tells the Corinthians that he had asked Apollos to revisit them, but Apollos had refused, and refused very probably because he was aware that a party had been formed in his name, and that his presence in Corinth would only foster and increase it. It is obvious therefore that there was no jealousy between Paul and Apollos themselves, whatever rivalry might exist among their followers.

The third party gloried in the name of Cephas; that is, Peter, the Apostle of the circumcision. It is possible that Peter had been in Corinth, but it is not necessary to suppose so. His name was used in opposition to Paul's as representing the original group of Apostles who had companied with the Lord in His lifetime, and who adhered to the observance of the Jewish law. How far the party of Cephas in Corinth indulged in disparagement of Paul's authority we cannot exactly say. There are indications, however, in the Epistle that they cited against him even his self-denial, arguing that he did not dare either to ask the Church to maintain him or to marry, as Peter had done, because he felt that his claim to be an Apostle was insecure. It may be imagined how painful it must have been for a high-minded man like Paul to be compelled to defend himself against such accusations, and with what mingled indignation and shame he must have written the words, "Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other Apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord and Cephas? Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?" This party then had in it more dangerous elements than the party of Apollos. Extreme Judaisers would find among its members a soil prepared



for their apparently conservative and orthodox but really obstructive and pernicious teaching.

Of the fourth party, which named itself "of Christ," we learn more in the Second Epistle than in the First. From a striking and powerful outburst in that Epistle (2 Cor. x. 7-xii. 18), it would appear that the Christ party was formed and led by men who prided themselves on their Hebrew descent (xi. 22), and on having learned their Christianity, not from Paul, Apollos, or Cephas, but from Christ Himself (1 Cor. i. 12; 2 Cor. x. 7). These men came to Corinth with letters of commendation (2 Cor. iii. 1), probably from Palestine, as they had known Jesus, but not from the Apostles in Jerusalem, for they separated themselves from the Petrine party in Corinth. They claimed to be apostles of Christ (2 Cor. xi. 13) and "ministers of righteousness" (xi. 15); but as they taught "another Jesus," "another spirit," "another gospel" (xi. 4), Paul does not hesitate to denounce them as false apostles and ironically to hold them up as "out-and-out apostles." As yet, however, at the date of the First Epistle, they had either not so plainly shown their true colours, or Paul was not aware of all the evil they were doing.

The Apostle hears of these four parties with dismay. What then would he think of the state of the Church now? There was as yet in Corinth no schism, no secession, no outward disruption of the Church; and indeed Paul does not seem to contemplate as possible that which in our day is the normal condition: a Church broken up into little sections, each of which worships by itself, and looks upon the rest with some distrust or contempt. It did not as yet appear possible that the members of the one body of Christ should refuse to worship their common Lord in fellowship with one another and in one place. The evils attaching to such a condition of things may no doubt be unduly magnified; but we are probably more inclined to overlook than to magnify the mischief done by disunion in the Church. The Church was intended to be the grand uniter of the race. Within its pale all kinds of men were to be gathered. Distinctions were to be obliterated; differences were to be forgotten; the deepest thoughts and interests of all men were to be recognised as common; there was to be neither Jew nor Gentile, Greek nor barbarian, bond nor free. But instead of uniting men otherwise alienated, the Church has alienated neighbours and friends; and men who will do business together, who will dine together, will not worship together. Thus the Church has lost a large part of her strength. Had the kingdom of Christ been visibly one, it would have been supreme and without a rival in the world. Had there been union where there has been division, the rule and influence of Christ would have so far surpassed every other influence that peace and truth, right and justice, godliness and mercy, would have everywhere reigned. But instead of this the strength of the Church has been frittered away in civil strife and party warfare, her ablest men have spent themselves in controversy, and through division her influence has become insignificant. The world looks on and laughs while it sees the Church divided against itself and wrangling over petty differences while it ought to be assailing vice, ungodliness, and ignorance. And yet schism is thought no sin; and that which the Reformers shuddered at and

shrank from, that secession which they feared to make even from a Church so corrupt as that of Rome then was, every petty ecclesiastic now presumes to initiate.

Now that the Church is broken into pieces, perhaps the first step towards a restoration of true unity is to recognise that there may be real union without unity of external organisation. In other words, it is quite possible that Churches which have individually a separate corporate existence—say the Presbyterian, Independent, and Episcopalian Churches—may be one in the New Testament sense. The human race is one; but this unity admits of numberless varieties and diversities in appearance, in colour, in language, and of endless subordinate divisions into races, tribes, and nations. So the Church may be truly one, one in the sense intended by our Lord, one in the "unity of the Spirit" and the bond of peace, though there continue to be various divisions and sects. It may very well be argued that, constituted as human nature is, the Church, like every other society or institution, will be the better of a competing, if not an opposing, rival; that schism, divisions, sects, are necessary evils; that truth will be more thoroughly investigated, discipline more diligently and justly maintained, useful activities more vigorously engaged in, if there be rival Churches than if there be one. And it is certainly true that, so far as man can foresee, there is no possibility, not to say prospect, of the Church of Christ becoming one vast visible organisation. Oneness in that sense is prevented by the very same obstacles that hinder all States and governments on earth from being merged into one great kingdom. But as amidst all diversities of government and customs it is the duty of States to remember and maintain their common brotherhood and abstain from tyranny, oppression, and war, so it is the duty of Churches, however separate in creed or form of government, to maintain and exhibit their unity. If the sects of the Church will frankly and cordially recognise one another as parts of the same whole, if they will exhibit their relationship by combining in good works, by an interchange of ecclesiastical civilities, by aiding one another when aid is needed, this is, I conceive, real union. Certainly Churches which see it to be their duty to maintain a separate existence ought to be equally careful to maintain a real unity with all other Churches.

Again, it is to be borne in mind that there may be real union without unity in creed. As Churches may be truly one though, for the sake of convenience or of some conscientious scruple, they maintain a separate existence, so the unity required in the New Testament is not uniformity of belief in respect to all articles of faith. This uniformity is desirable; it is desirable that all men know the truth. Paul here and elsewhere entreats his readers to endeavour to agree and be of one mind. It is quite true that the Church has gained much by difference of opinion. It is true that were all men to be agreed there might be a danger of truth becoming lifeless and forgotten for want of the stimulus it derives from assault, and discussion, and cross-questioning. It is undoubtedly the fact that doctrine has been ascertained and developed precisely in proportion and in answer to the errors and mistakes of heretics; and were all assault and opposition even now to cease, there might be some



danger of a lifeless treatment of truth ensuing. And yet no one can desire that men be in error; no one can wish heresies to multiply that the Church may be stimulated. A visitation of cholera may result in cleanliness and carefulness, but no one desires that cholera may come. Opposition in Parliament is an acknowledged service to the country, yet each party desires that its sentiments become universal. So, too, notwithstanding every good result which may flow from the diversity of opinion regarding Divine truth, agreement and unanimity are what all should aim at. We may even see reason to believe that men will never all think alike; we may think that it is not in the nature of things that men of diverse natural disposition, diverse experience and upbringing, should think the same thing; if it is true, as a great thinker has said, that "our system of thought is very often only the history of our heart," then the effort to bring men to precise uniformity of thought is hopeless: and yet this effort must be made. No man who believes he has found the truth can forbear disseminating it to the utmost of his ability. If his favourite views are opposed in conversation, he does what he can to convince and make converts of his antagonists. There is truth, there are a right and a wrong, and it is not all the same whether we know the truth or are in error; and doctrine is simply truth expressed; and though the whole truth may not be expressed, yet even this partial expression of it may be much safer and nearer what we ought to believe than some current denial of the truth. Paul wishes people to believe certain things, not as if then they would be fully enlightened, but because so far they will be enlightened and so far defended against error.

But the question remains, What truths are to be made terms of communion? Is schism or secession ever justifiable on the ground that error is taught in the Church?

This is a question most difficult to answer. The Church of Christ is formed of those who are trusting to Him as the power of God unto salvation. He is in communion with all who thus trust Him, whether their knowledge be great or small; and we cannot refuse to communicate with those with whom He is in communion. And it may very reasonably be questioned whether any part of the Church has a right to identify herself with a creed which past experience proves that the whole Church will never adopt, and which therefore necessarily makes her schismatic and sectarian. As manifestoes or didactic summaries of truth, confessions of faith may be very useful. Systematic knowledge is at all times desirable; and as a backbone to which all the knowledge we acquire may be attached, a catechism or confession of faith is part of the necessary equipment of a Church. But no doctrinal error which does not subvert personal faith in Christ should be allowed to separate Churches. Theology must not be made more of than Christianity. We cannot pay too much attention to doctrine or too earnestly contend for the faith; we cannot too anxiously seek to have and to disseminate clear views of truth: but if we make our clear views a reason for quarrelling with other Christians and a bar to our fellowship with them, we forget that Christ is more than doctrine and charity better than knowledge.

Paul certainly was contemplating Christ, and

not a creed, as the principle and centre of the Church's unity, when he exclaimed, "Is Christ divided?" The indivisible unity of Christ Himself is in Paul's mind the sufficient argument for the unity of the Church. If you can divide the one Christ, and if one Church can live on one part, another on another, then you may have several Churches; but if there be one Christ indivisible, then is there but one Church indivisible. In all Christians and in all Churches the one Christ is the life of each. And it is monstrous that those who are vitally united to one Person and quickened by one Spirit should in no way recognise their unity.

It is with something akin to horror that Paul goes on to ask, "Was Paul crucified for you?" He implies that only on the death of Christ can the Church be founded. If those who prided themselves on being followers of Paul were in danger of exalting him to the place of Christ, they were forfeiting their salvation, and had no right to be in the Church at all. Take away the death of Christ and the personal connection of the believer with the crucified Redeemer, and you take away the Church.

From this casual expression of Paul we see his habitual attitude towards Christ; and more distinctly than from any laboured exposition do we gather that in his mind the pre-eminence of Christ was unique, and that this pre-eminence was based upon His crucifixion. Paul understood, and was never slow to affirm, the indebtedness of the young Christian Churches to himself: he was their father, and without him they would not have existed. But he was not their saviour, the foundation on which they were built. Not for one moment did he suppose that he could occupy towards men the position Christ occupied. That position was unique, altogether distinct from the position he occupied. No one could share with Christ in being the Head of the Church and the Saviour of the body. Paul did not think of Christ as of one among many, as of the best among many who had done well. He did not think of Him as the best among renowned and useful teachers, as one who had added to what previous teachers had been building. He thought of His work as so transcending and distinct from the work of other men that it was with a kind of horror that he saw that there was even a possibility of some confounding his own apostolic work with the work of Christ. He fervently thanks God that he had not even baptised many persons at Corinth, lest it should be supposed he had baptised them into his own name, and so implied, as baptism implies, that men were to acknowledge him as their leader and head. Had the chief part of Christ's work been its lesson in self-sacrifice, might not Paul's life have very well rivalled it, and might not those who had themselves seen the life of Paul and felt the power of his goodness have been forgiven if they felt more indebted to him than to the more remote Jesus?

The ever-recurring disposition then to reduce the work of Christ to the level of comparison with the work done for the race by other men must take account of this expression which reveals to us Paul's thought about it. Certainly Paul understands that between his work and the work of Christ an impassable gulf is fixed. Paul was wholly devoted to his fellow-men, had suffered and was prepared again to suffer any hardships and outrage in their cause, but it seemed to



him monstrous that any person should confound the influence of his work with that of Christ. And that which gave Christ this special place and claim was His crucifixion. We miss what Paul found in the work of Christ so long as we look more to His life than to His death. Paul does not say, Was Paul your teacher in religion, and did he lead your thoughts to God? did Paul by his life show you the beauty of self-sacrifice and holiness? but "Was Paul crucified for you?" It was Christ's death for His people which gave Him the unique claim on their allegiance and devotedness. The Church is founded on the Cross.

It was not, however, the mere fact of His dying which gave Christ this place, and which claims the regard and trust of all men. Paul had really given his life for men; he had been more than once taken up for dead, having by the truth he taught provoked the hatred of the Jews, even as Jesus had done. But even this did not bring him into rivalry with the unapproachable Redeemer. Paul knew that in Christ's death there was a significance his own could never have. It was not only human self-sacrifice that was there manifested, but Divine self-sacrifice. It was as God's Representative Christ died as truly as He died as man's Representative. This Paul could not do. In Christ's death there was what there could be in none other: a sacrifice for the sins of men and an atonement for these sins. Through this death sinners find a way back to God and assurance of salvation. There was a work accomplished by it which the purest of men could not help Him in, but must Himself depend upon and receive the benefit of. Christ by His death is marked off from all men, He being the Redeemer, they the redeemed.

This exceptional, unique work then—what have we made of it? Paul, probably on the whole the most richly endowed man, morally and intellectually, the world has seen, found his true life and his true self in the work of this other Person. It was in Christ Paul first learned how great a thing human life is, and it was through Christ and His work Paul first came into fellowship with the true God. This greatest of men owed everything to Christ, and was so inwardly convinced of this that, heart and soul, he yielded himself to Christ, and gloried in serving Him. How is it with us? Does the work of Christ actually yield to us those grand results it yielded to Paul? Or is the greatest reality in this human world of ours wholly resultless so far as we are concerned? It filled Paul's mind, his heart, his life; it left him nothing else to desire: this man, formed on the noblest and largest type, found room in Christ alone for the fullest development and exercise of his powers. Is it not plain that if we neglect the connection with Christ which Paul found so fruitful, we are doing ourselves the greatest injustice and preferring a narrow prison-house to liberty and life?

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### *THE FOOLISHNESS OF PREACHING.*

IN the preceding section of this Epistle Paul introduced the subject which was prominent in his thoughts as he wrote: the divided state of the Corinthian Church. He adjured the rival par-

ties by the name of Christ to hold together, to discard party names and combine in one confession. He reminded them that Christ is indivisible, and that the Church which is founded on Christ must also be one. He shows them how impossible it is for any one but Christ to be the Church's foundation, and thanks God that he had given no pretext to any one to suppose that he had sought to found a party. Had he even baptised the converts to Christianity, there might have been persons foolish enough to whisper that he had baptised in his own name and had intended to found a Pauline, not a Christian, community. But providentially he had baptised very few, and had confined himself to preaching the Gospel, which he considered to be the proper work to which Christ had "sent" him; that is to say, for which he held an Apostle's commission and authority. But as he thus repudiates the idea that he had given any countenance to the founding of a Pauline party, it occurs to him that some may say, Yes, it is true enough, he did not baptise; but his preaching may more effectually have won partisans than even baptising them into his own name could have done. And so Paul goes on to show that his preaching was not that of a demagogue or party-leader, but was a bare statement of fact, garnished and set off by absolutely nothing which could divert attention from the fact either to the speaker or to his style. Hence this digression on the foolishness of preaching.

In this section of the Epistle then it is Paul's purpose to explain to the Corinthians (1) the style of preaching he had adopted while with them and (2) why he had adopted this style.

I. His time in Corinth, he assures them, had been spent, not in propagating a philosophy or system of truth peculiar to himself, and which might have been identified with his name, but in presenting the Cross of Christ and making the plainest statements of fact regarding Christ's death. In approaching the Corinthians, Paul had necessarily weighed in his own mind the comparative merits of various modes of presenting the Gospel. In common with all men who are about to address an audience, he took into consideration the aptitudes, peculiarities, and expectations of his audience, that he might so frame his arguments, statements, and appeals as to be most likely to carry his point. The Corinthians, as Paul well knew, were especially open to the attractions of rhetoric and philosophical discussion. A new philosophy clothed in elegant language was likely to secure a number of disciples. And it was quite in Paul's power to present the Gospel as a philosophy. He might have spoken to the Corinthians in large and impressive language of the destiny of man, of the unity of the race, and of the ideal man in Christ. He might have based all he had to teach them on some of the accepted dicta or theories of their own philosophers. He might have propounded some new arguments for immortality or the existence of a personal God, and have shown how congruous the Gospel is to these great truths. He might, like some subsequent teachers, have emphasised some particular aspect of Divine truth, and have so identified his teaching with this one side of Christianity as to found a school or sect known by his name. But he deliberately rejected this method of introducing the Gospel, and "determined not to know anything among them save Jesus Christ and Him cruci-



fied." He stripped his mind bare, as it were, of all his knowledge and thinking, and came among them as an ignorant man who had only facts to tell.

Paul then in this instance deliberately trusted to the bare statement of facts, and not to any theory about these facts. This is a most important distinction, and to be kept in view by all preachers, whether they feel called by their circumstances to adopt Paul's method or not. In preaching to audiences with whom the facts are familiar, it is perfectly justifiable to draw inferences from them and to theorise about them for the instruction and edification of Christian people. Paul himself spoke "wisdom among them that were perfect." But what is to be noted is that for doing the work proper to the Gospel, for making men Christians, it is not theory or explanation, but fact, that is effective. It is the presentation of Christ as He is presented in the written Gospels, the narrative of His life and death without note or comment, theory or inference, argument or appeal, which stands in the first rank of efficiency as a means of evangelising the world. Paul, ever moderate, does not denounce other methods of presenting the Gospels as illegitimate; but in his circumstances the bare presentation of fact seemed the only wise method.

No doubt we may unduly press Paul's words; and probably we should do so if we gathered that he merely told his hearers how Christ had lived and died and gave them no inkling of the significance of His death. Still the least we can gather from his words is that he trusted more to facts than to any explanation of the facts, more to narration than to inference and theory. Certainly the neglect of this distinction renders a great proportion of modern preaching ineffective and futile. Preachers occupy their time in explaining how the Cross of Christ ought to influence men, whereas they ought to occupy their time in so presenting the Cross of Christ that it does influence men. They give laboured explanations of faith and elaborate instructions regarding the method and results of believing, while they should be exhibiting Christ so that faith is instinctively aroused. The actor on the stage does not instruct his audience how they should be affected by the play; he so presents to them this or that scene that they instinctively smile or find their eyes fill. Those onlookers at the Crucifixion who beat their breasts and returned to their homes with awe and remorse were not told that they should feel compunction; it was enough that they saw the Crucified. So it is always; it is the direct vision of the Cross, and not anything which is said about it, which is most effective in producing penitence and faith. And it is the business of the preacher to set Christ and Him crucified clear before the eyes of men; this being done, there will be little need of explanations of faith or inculcation of penitence. Make men see Christ, set the Crucified clear before them, and you need not tell them to repent and believe; if that sight does not make them repent, no telling of yours will make them.

The very fact that it was a Person, not a system of philosophy, that Paul proclaimed was sufficient proof that he was not anxious to become the founder of a school or the head of a party. It was to another Person, not to himself, he directed the attention and faith of his

hearers. And that which permanently distinguishes Christianity from all philosophies is that it presents to men, not a system of truth to be understood, but a Person to be relied upon. Christianity is not the bringing of new truth to us so much as the bringing of a new Person to us. The manifestation of God in Christ is in harmony with all truth; but we are not required to perceive and understand that harmony, but to believe in Christ. Christianity is for all men, and not for the select, highly educated few; and it depends, therefore, not on exceptional ability to see truth, but on the universal human emotions of love and trust.

II. Paul justifies his rejection of philosophy or "wisdom" and his adoption of the simpler but more difficult method of stating fact on three grounds. The first is that God's method had changed. For a time God had allowed the Greeks to seek Him by their own wisdom; now He presents Himself to them in the foolishness of the Cross (vers. 17-25). The second ground is that the wise do not universally respond to the preaching of the Cross, a fact which shows that it is not wisdom that preaching appeals to (vers. 26-31). And his third ground is that he feared lest, if he used "wisdom" in presenting the Gospel, his hearers might be only superficially attracted by his persuasiveness and not profoundly moved by the intrinsic power of the Cross (ii. 1-5).

I. His first reason is that God had changed His method. "After that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." Even the wisest of the Greeks had attained only to inadequate and indefinite views of God. Admirable and pathetic are the searchings of the noble intellects that stand in the front rank of Greek philosophy; and some of their discoveries regarding God and His ways are full of instruction. But these thoughts, cherished by a few wise and devout men, never penetrated to the people, and by their vagueness and uncertainty were incapacitated from deeply influencing any one. To pass even from Plato to the Gospel of John is really to pass from darkness to light. Plato philosophises, and a few souls seem for a moment to see things more clearly; Peter preaches, and three thousand souls spring to life. If God was to be known by men generally, it was not through the influence of philosophy. Already philosophy had done its utmost; and so far as any popular and sanctifying knowledge of God went, philosophy might as well never have been. "The world by wisdom knew not God." No safer assertion regarding the ancient world can be made.

That which, in point of fact, has made God known is the Cross of Christ. No doubt it must have seemed foolishness and mere lunacy to summon the seeker after God away from the high and elevating speculations of Plato on the good and the eternal and to point him to the Crucified, to a human form gibbeted on a malefactor's cross, to a man that had been hanged. None knew better than Paul the infamy attaching to that cursed death, and none could more distinctly measure the surprise and stupefaction with which the Greek mind would hear the announcement that it was there God was to be seen and known.\* Paul understood the offence of the Cross, but he knew also its power. "The



Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block and unto the Greeks foolishness, but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

As proof that God was in their midst and as a revelation of God's nature, the Jews required a sign, a demonstration of physical power. It was one of Christ's temptations to leap from a pinnacle of the Temple, for thus He would have won acceptance as the Christ. The people never ceased to clamour for a sign. They wished Him to bid a mountain be removed and cast into the sea; they wished Him to bid the sun stand still or Jordan retire to its source. They wished Him to make some demonstration of superhuman power, and so put it beyond a doubt that God was present. Even at the last it would have satisfied them had He bid the nails drop out and had He stepped down from the Cross among them. They could not understand that to remain on the Cross was the true proof of Divinity. The Cross seemed to them a confession of weakness. They sought a demonstration that the power of God was in Christ, and they were pointed to the Cross. But to them the Cross was a stumbling-block they could not get over. And yet in it was the whole power of God for the salvation of the world. All the power that dwells in God to draw men out of sin to holiness and to Himself was actually in the Cross. For the power of God that is required to draw men to Himself is not power to alter the course of rivers or change the site of mountains, but power to sympathise, to make men's sorrows His own, to sacrifice self, to give all for the needs of His creatures. To them that believe in the God there revealed, the Cross is the power of God. It is this love of God that overpowers them and makes it impossible for them to resist Him. To a God who makes Himself known to them in self-sacrifice they quickly and delightedly yield themselves.

2. As a second ground on which to rest the justification of his method of preaching Paul appeals to the constituent elements of which the Church of Corinth was actually composed. It is plain, he says, that it is not by human wisdom, nor by power, nor by anything generally esteemed among men that you hold your place in the Church. The fact is that "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." If human wisdom or power held the gates of the kingdom, you yourselves would not be in it. To be esteemed, and influential, and wise is no passport to this new kingdom. It is not men who by their wisdom find out God and by their nobility of character commend themselves to Him; but it is God who chooses and calls men, and the very absence of wisdom and possessions makes men readier to listen to His call. "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things which are; that no flesh should glory in His presence." It is all God's doing now; it is "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus;" it is God that hath chosen you. Human wisdom had its opportunity and accomplished little; God now by

the foolishness of the Cross lifts the despised, the foolish, the weak, to a far higher position than the wise and noble can attain by their might and their wisdom.

Paul thus justifies his method by its results. He uses as his weapon the foolishness of the Cross, and this foolishness of God proves itself wiser than men. It may seem a most unlikely weapon with which to accomplish great things, but it is God who uses it, and that makes the difference. Hence the emphasis throughout this passage on the agency of God. "God hath chosen" you; "Of God are ye in Christ Jesus;" "Of God He is made unto you wisdom." This method used by Paul is God's method and means of working, and therefore it succeeds. But for this reason also all ground of boasting is removed from those who are within the Christian Church. It is not their wisdom or strength, but God's work, which has given them superiority to the wise and noble of the world. "No flesh can glory in God's presence." The wise and mighty of earth cannot glory, for their wisdom and might availed nothing to bring them to God; those who are in Christ Jesus can as little glory, for it is not on account of any wisdom or might of theirs, but because of God's call and energy, they are what they are. They were of no account, poor, insignificant, outcasts, and slaves, friendless while alive and when dead not missed in any household; but God called them and gave them a new and hopeful life in Christ Jesus.

In Paul's day this argument from the general poverty and insignificance of the members of the Christian Church was readily drawn. Things are changed now; and the Church is filled with the wise, the powerful, the noble. But Paul's main proposition remains: whoever is in Christ Jesus is so, not through any wisdom or power of his own, but because God has chosen and called him. And the practical result remains. Let the Christian, while he rejoices in his position, be humble. There is something wrong with the man's Christianity who is no sooner delivered from the mire himself than he despises all who are still entangled. The self-righteous attitude assumed by some Christians, the "Look at me" air they carry with them, their unsympathetic condemnation of unbelievers, the superiority with which they frown upon amusements and gaieties, all seem to indicate that they have forgotten it is by the grace of God they are what they are. The sweetness and humble friendliness of Paul sprang from his constant sense that whatever he was he was by God's grace. He was drawn with compassion towards the most unbelieving because he was ever saying within himself, There, but for the grace of God, goes Paul. The Christian must say to himself, It is not because I am better or wiser than other men that I am a Christian; it is not because I sought God with earnestness, but because He sought me, that I am now His. The hard suspicion and hostility with which many good people view unbelievers and godless livers would thus be softened by a mixture of humble self-knowledge. The unbeliever is no doubt often to be blamed, the selfish pleasure-seeker undoubtedly lays himself open to just condemnation, but not by the man who is conscious that but for God's grace he himself would be unbelieving and sinful.

Lastly, Paul justifies his neglect of wisdom



and rhetoric on the ground that had he used "enticing words of man's wisdom" the hearers might have been unduly influenced by the mere guise in which the Gospel was presented and too little influenced by the essence of it. He feared to adorn the simple tale or dress up the bare fact, lest the attention of his audience might be diverted from the substance of his message. He was resolved that their faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God; that is to say, that those who believed should do so, not because they saw in Christianity a philosophy which might compete with current systems, but because in the Cross of Christ they felt the whole redeeming power of God brought to bear on their own soul.

Here again things have changed since Paul's day. The assailants of Christianity have put it on its defence, and its apologists have been compelled to show that it is in harmony with the soundest philosophy. It was inevitable that this should be done. Every philosophy now has to take account of Christianity. It has shown itself to be so true to human nature, and it has shed so much light on the whole system of things and so modified the action of men and the course of civilisation, that a place must be found for it in every philosophy. But to accept Christianity because it has been a powerful influence for good in the world, or because it harmonises with the most approved philosophy, or because it is friendly to the highest development of intellect, may be legitimate indeed; but Paul considered that the only sound and trustworthy faith was produced by direct personal contact with the Cross. And this remains for ever true.

To approve of Christianity as a system and to adopt it as a faith are two different things. It is quite possible to respect Christianity as conveying to us a large amount of useful truth, while we hold ourselves aloof from the influence of the Cross. We may approve the morality which is involved in the religion of Christ, we may countenance and advocate it because we are persuaded no other force is powerful enough to diffuse a love of law and some power of self-restraint among all classes of society, we may see quite clearly that Christianity is the only religion an educated European can accept, and yet we may never have felt the power of God in the Cross of Christ. If we believe in Christianity because it approves itself to our judgment as the best solution of the problems of life, that is well; but still, if that be all that draws us to Christ, our faith stands in the wisdom of men rather than in the power of God.

In what sense then are we Christians? Have we allowed the Cross of Christ to make its peculiar impression upon us? Have we given it a chance to influence us? Have we in all seriousness of spirit considered what is presented to us in the Cross? Have we honestly laid bare our hearts to the love of Christ? Have we admitted to ourselves that it was for us He died? If so, then we must have felt the power of God in the Cross. We must have found ourselves taken captive by this love of God. God's law we may have found it possible to resist; its threatenings we may have been able to put out of our mind. The natural helps to goodness which God has given us in the family, in the world around us, in the fortunes of life, we may have found too feeble to lift us above temptation and bring us into a really high and pure

life. But in the Cross we at length experience what Divine power is; we know the irresistible appeal of Divine self-sacrifice, the overcoming, regenerating pathos of the Divine desire to save us from sin and destruction, the upholding and quickening energy that flows into our being from the Divine sympathy and hopefulness in our behalf. The Cross is the actual point of contact between God and man. It is the point at which the fulness of Divine energy is actually brought to bear upon us men. To receive the whole benefit and blessing that God can now give us we need only be in true contact with the Cross: through it we become direct recipients of the holiness, the love, the power, of God. In it Christ is made to us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. In very truth all that God can do for us to set us free from sin and to restore us to Himself and happiness is done for us in the Cross; and through it we receive all that is needful, all that God's holiness requires, all that His love desires us to possess.

## CHAPTER V.

### *DIVINE WISDOM.*

IN the preceding paragraph Paul has explained why he had proclaimed the bare facts regarding Christ and His crucifixion and trusted to the Cross itself to impress the Corinthians and lead them to God, and why he had resisted the temptation to appeal to the Corinthian taste for rhetoric and philosophy by exhibiting Christianity as a philosophy. He believed that where conversion was the object of preaching no method could compare in efficiency with the simple presentation of the Cross. But sometimes he found himself in circumstances in which conversion could not be his object. He was occasionally called, as preachers in our own day are regularly called, to preach to those who were already Christians. And he tells us that in these circumstances, speaking "among the perfect," or in presence of fairly mature Christians, he made no scruple of unfolding the "wisdom" or philosophy of Christ's truth. To expound the deeper truths revealed by Christ was useless or even hurtful to mere "babes" in Christ or to those who as yet were not even born again; but to the adolescent and to those who might lay claim to have attained some firm manhood of Christian character, he was forward to teach all he himself knew. These words, "Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect," he makes the text of the following paragraph, in which he proceeds to explain (1) what the wisdom is; (2) how he speaks it; (3) to whom he speaks it.

I. First, the wisdom which he speaks among the perfect, though eminently deserving of the name, is not on a level with human philosophies, nor is it of a similar origin. It is not just one more added to human searches after truth. The princes of this world, its men of light and leading, have had their own theories of God and man, and yet have really "come to nought." The incompetence of the men and theories that actually control human affairs is put beyond a doubt by the crucifixion of Christ. In the person of Christ the glory of God was manifested as a glory in which man was to partake; had



there been diffused among men any true perception of the real nature of God, the Crucifixion would have been an impossibility. The fact that God's incarnate glory was crucified is a demonstration of the insufficiency of all previous teaching regarding God. But the wisdom taught by Paul is not just one theory more, devised by the speculative ingenuity of man; it is a disclosure made by God of knowledge unattainable by human endeavour. The three great sources of human knowledge—seeing, hearing, and thought—alike fail here. "Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, it has not entered into the heart of man to conceive," this wisdom. Hitherto it has been a mystery, a thing hidden; now God has Himself revealed it.

What the contents of this wisdom are, we can readily perceive from such specimens of it as Paul gives us in his Epistle to the Ephesians and elsewhere. It is a declaration of the Divine purpose towards man, or of "the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." Paul delighted to expatiate on the far-reaching results of Christ's death, the illustrations it gives of the nature of God and of righteousness, its place as the grand moral centre, holding together and reconciling all things. He delights to show the superiority of the Gospel to the Law and to build up a philosophy of history which sheds light on the entire plan of God's training of men. The purpose of God and its fulfilment by the death of Christ he is never weary of contemplating, nor of showing how out of destitution, and disease, and war, and ignorance, and moral ruin, and what seemed a mere wreck of a world there were to be brought by this one healing element the restoration of man to God and to one another, fellowship with God and peace on earth, in short a kingdom of God among men. He clearly saw how through all that had previously happened on earth, and through all that men had thought, preparation had been made for the fulfilment of this gracious purpose of God. These were "the deep things of God" which caused him to see how different was the wisdom of God from the wisdom of men.

This "wisdom" which Paul taught has had a larger and more influential place in men's minds than any other system of human thought. Christendom has seen Christ through Paul's eyes. He interpreted Christianity to the world, and made men aware of what had been and was in their midst. Men of the largest faculty, such as Augustine and Luther, have been unable to find a religion in Christ until they entered His school by Paul's door. Stumbling at one or two Jewish peculiarities which attach to Paul's theology, some modern critics assure us that, "after having been for three hundred years"—and they might have said for fifteen hundred years—"the Christian doctor *par excellence*, Paul is now coming to an end of his reign." Matthew Arnold, with truer discernment, if not on sounder grounds, predicts that "the doctrine of Paul will arise out of the tomb where for centuries it has lain buried. It will edify the Church of the future. It will have the consent of happier generations, the applause of less superstitious ages. All will be too little to pay half the debt which the Church of God owes to this 'least of the Apostles, who was not fit to be called an Apostle, because he persecuted the Church of God.'"

We may find in Paul's writings arguments

which, however convincing to the Jew, are not convincing to us; we may prefer his experimental and ethical to his doctrinal teaching; some estimable people can only accept him when they have purged him of his Calvinism; others shut their eyes to this or that which seems to them a blot in his writings; but the fact remains that it is to this man we owe our Christianity. It was he who disengaged from the dying body of Judaism the new-born religion and held it aloft in the eye of the world as the true heir to universal empire. It was he whose piercing intellect and keen moral discernment penetrated to the very heart of this new thing, and saw in it a force to conquer the world and to rid men of all bondage and evil of every kind. It was he who applied to the whole range of human life and duty the inexhaustible ethical force which lay in Christ, and thus lifted at one effort the heathen world to a new level of morality. He was the first to show the superiority of love to law, and to point out how God trusted to love, and to summon men to meet the trust God thus reposed in them. We cannot measure Paul's greatness, because the light he has himself shed has made it impossible for us to put ourselves back in imagination into the darkness through which he had to find his way. We can but dimly measure the strength that was required to grasp as he grasped the significance of God's manifestation in the flesh.

Paul then used two methods of teaching. In addressing those who had yet to be won to Christ, he used the foolishness of preaching, and presented to them the Cross of Christ. In addressing those who had already owned the power of the Cross and made some growth in Christian knowledge and character, he enlarged upon the significance of the Cross and the light it threw on all moral relations, on God and on man. And even in this department of his work he disclaims any desire to propagate a philosophy of his own. The system of truth he proclaims to the Christian people is not of his own devising. It is not in virtue of his own speculative ability he has discovered it. It is not one of the wisdoms of this world, having its origin in the brain of an ingenious theorist. On the contrary, it has its origin in God, and partakes therefore of the truth and stability attaching to the thoughts of God.

II. But if it be undiscoverable by man, how does Paul come to know it? To the Corinthian intelligence there seemed but these three ways of learning anything: seeing, hearing, or thinking; and if God's wisdom was attainable by none of these, how was it reached? Paul proceeds to show how he was enabled to "speak" this wisdom. He does this in vers. 10-13, in which his chief affirmations are that the Spirit of God alone knows the mind of God, that this Spirit has been given to him to reveal to him God's mind and to enable him to divulge that mind to others, in suitable words.

I. The Spirit of God alone knows the mind of God and searches its deep things, just as none but the spirit of man which is in him knows the things of man. "There is in every man a life hidden from all eyes, a world of impressions, anxieties, aspirations, and struggles, of which he alone, in so far as he is a spirit—that is to say, a conscious and personal being—gives account to himself. This inner world is unknown to others, except in so far as he reveals it to them



by speech."\*. And if we are baffled often and deceived regarding human character and find ourselves unable to penetrate to the "deep things" of man, to his inmost thoughts and motives, much more is it true that "the deep things" of God are wholly beyond our ken and are only known by the Spirit of God which is in Him. A vague and uncertain guess, possibly not altogether wrong, probably altogether wrong, is all we can attain to.

And still more certainly true is this of God's purposes. Even though you flatter yourself you know a man's nature, you cannot certainly predict his intentions. You cannot anticipate the thoughts of an able man whom you see designing a machine, or planning a building, or conceiving a literary work; you cannot say in what form a vindictive man will wreak his vengeance; nor can you penetrate through the abstracted look of the charitable and read the precise form his bounty will take. Every great work even of man comes upon us by surprise; the various inventions that facilitate business, the new poems, the new books, the new works of art, have never been conceived before. They were hidden mysteries until the originating mind disclosed them. And much more were God's intentions and His method of accomplishing inconceivable by any but Himself. What God's purpose was in creating man, what He designed to accomplish through the death of Christ, what was to be the outcome of all human life, and temptation, and struggle—these things were God's secret, known only to the Spirit of God that was in Him.

2. This Spirit, Paul declares, was given to him, and revealed to him God's purposes, "the things which are freely given to us of God." He had received "not the spirit of the world," which would have enabled him only to theorise, and speculate, and create another "wisdom of this world;" but he had received "the Spirit which is of God," and this Spirit had revealed to him "the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

We may think of revelation either as the act of God or as it is received by man. God reveals Himself in all He does, as man discloses his character in all he does. With God's first act therefore in the remotest past revelation began. As yet there was none to receive the knowledge of God, but God showed His nature and His purpose as soon as He began to do anything. And this revelation of Himself has continued ever since. In the world around us and the earth on which we live God reveals Himself; "the things which are made," as Paul says, "give us clearly to see and understand the invisible things of God, His unseen nature, from the creation of the world." Still more fully is God's nature revealed in man: in conscience, distinguishing between right and wrong; in the spirit craving fellowship with the Eternal. In the history of nations, and especially in the history of that nation which founded itself upon its idea of God, He revealed Himself. By guiding it, by delivering it from Egypt, by punishing it, God made Himself known to Israel. And at length in Jesus Christ God gave the fullest possible manifestation of Himself. The veil was entirely lifted, and God came as much as possible into free intercourse with His creatures. He put Himself within reach of our knowledge.

But it was not enough that God be revealed

\* Godet.

objectively in Christ; there must also be a subjective revelation within the soul of the beholder. It was not enough that God be manifested in the flesh and men be allowed to draw such inferences as they could from that manifestation; but, in addition to this, God gave His Spirit to Paul and others that they might see the full significance of that manifestation. It was quite possible for men to be witnesses of the objective revelation without understanding it. The open eye is needed as well as outward light. And Paul everywhere insists upon this: that he had received his knowledge of Divine truth by *revelation*, not by the mere exercise of his own unaided thought, but by a spiritual enlightenment through the gift of God's Spirit.

The presence of God's Spirit in any man can of course only be verified by the results. God's Spirit working in and by means of man's nature cannot be known in separation from the man's spirit and the work done in that spirit. This inward revelation which Paul refers to is accomplished by the action of the Divine Spirit on the human faculties, quickening and elevating these faculties. The revelation or new knowledge acquired by Paul was given by God, but at the same time was acquired by Paul's own faculties, so that it remained with him always, just as the knowledge we naturally acquire remains with us and can be freely used by us. An inward revelation can come to a man only in the form of impressions, convictions, thoughts arising in his own mind. Paul knew that his knowledge was a revelation of God, not by the suddenness with which it was imparted, not by supernatural appearances accompanying it, not by any sense or consciousness of another Spirit working with his own, but by the results. It is always the substance or content of any revelation which proves its origin. Paul knew he had the mind of Christ because he found that he could understand Christ's words and work, could perfectly sympathise with His aims and look at things from Christ's point of view.

In their humility, many persons shrink from making this affirmation here made by Paul; they cannot ever unhesitatingly affirm that the Spirit of God is given them or that they have the mind of Christ. Such persons should recognise that it was the very humility of Paul which enabled him so confidently to affirm these things of himself. He knew that the knowledge of Christ's purposes he had and the sympathy with them were the evidence of God's Spirit working in him. He knew that without God's Spirit he himself could never have had these thoughts. And it is when we recognise our own insufficiency most that we are readiest to confess the presence of God's Spirit.

3. But Paul makes a further affirmation. Not only is the knowledge he has of Divine things a revelation made by God's Spirit to him, but the words in which he declares this revelation to others are taught him by the same Spirit: "which things we also speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual." The meaning of these last words is doubtful. They either mean "fitting spiritual words to spiritual truths," or "applying spiritual truths to spiritual people." The sense of the passage is not materially altered whichever meaning is adopted. Paul distinctly affirms that as his knowledge is gained by God's revealing it to



him, so his utterance of this knowledge is by the inspiration of God. The spirit of the world produces its philosophies and clothes them in appropriate language. The philosophies with which the Corinthians were familiar taught how the world was made and what man's nature is, and they did so in language full of technicalities and adorned with rhetorical devices. Paul disclaimed this; both his knowledge and the form in which he taught it were dictated, not by the Spirit of this world, but by the Spirit of God. The same truths which Paul declared might have been declared in better Greek than he used, and they might have been embellished with illustrative matter and references to their own authors. This style of presenting Divine truth may have been urged upon Paul by some of his Corinthian hearers as far more likely to find entrance into the Greek mind. But Paul refused to allow his style to be formed by human wisdom and the literary methods of secular authors, and thought it more suitable to proclaim spiritual truth in spiritual language and in words which were taught him by the Holy Ghost.

This statement of Paul may be construed into a guarantee of the general accuracy of his teaching; but it was not intended to be that. Paul did not express himself in this way in order to convince men of his accuracy, still less to convince them that every word he uttered was infallibly correct; what he intended was to justify his use of a certain *kind* of language and a certain *style* of teaching. The spirit of this world adopts one method of insinuating knowledge into the mind; the Spirit of God uses another method. It is the latter Paul adopts. That is what he means to say, and it is obvious from this statement of his we can gather nothing regarding verbal inspiration or the infallibility of every word he spoke.

It might indeed seem a very simple and sound argument were we to say that Paul affirms that the words in which he embodies his teaching are taught him by the Holy Ghost, and that therefore there can be no error in them. But to interpret the words of any writer with no regard to his intention in writing them is voluntarily to blind ourselves to their true meaning. And Paul's intention in this passage is to contrast two methods of teaching, two styles of language, the worldly or secular and the spiritual, and to affirm that the style which he adopted was that which the Holy Ghost taught him. An artist whose work was criticised might defend himself by saying, "I have been trained in the Impressionist school," or "I use the principles taught me by Ruskin," or "I am a pupil of this or the other great teacher;" but these replies, while quite relevant as a defence and explanation of the particular style of painting he has adopted, are not intended to identify the work of the scholar with that of the master, or to insinuate that the master is responsible for all the pupil does. Similarly Paul's reply is relevant as an explanation of his reason for refusing to use the methods of professional rhetoricians in teaching his spiritual truths. "Spiritual modes of presenting truth and an avoidance of rhetorical artifice and embellishment accord better with what I have to say." Whoever gathers from this that every individual word Paul spoke or wrote is absolutely the best does so at his own risk and without Paul's authority. Certainly it was not Paul's intention to make any such statement. And it is

quite as dangerous to put too much into Paul's words as to put too little.

III. Having shown that the wisdom he teaches is spiritual, and that his method of teaching it is spiritual, he proceeds finally to show that it can be taught only to spiritual persons. "The spiritual man judgeth all things;" he can discern whether he is "among the perfect" or among the carnal, whether he may speak wisdom or must confine himself to elementary truth. But, on the other hand, he himself cannot be judged by the carnal man. It is in vain that rudimentary believers find fault with Paul's method of teaching; they cannot judge him, because they cannot understand the mind of the Lord which guides him. It would have served no purpose to teach spiritual wisdom in Corinth, for the members of that Church were as yet only babes in Christ, carnal and not spiritual. Their carnality was proved by their factiousness. They were still governed by the passions which rule the natural man. And therefore Paul fed them with milk, and not with strong meat; with the simple and affecting Gospel of the Cross, and not with those high and far-reaching deductions from it which he divulged among prepared and sympathetic spirits.

In the distinctions of men into natural, carnal, and spiritual Paul here shows how untrammelled he was by theological technicalities, and how straight he looked at facts. He does not divide men summarily into believers and unbelievers, classing all believers as spiritual, all unbelievers as carnal. He does not unchurch all who are not spiritual. He may be disappointed that certain members of the Church are carnal and are very slow in growing up to the maturity of Christian manhood, but he does not deny such carnal persons a place in the Church. He gives them time. He does not flatter them or deceive them as to their condition. He neither counts them as perfect nor repudiates them as unregenerate. He allows they are born again; but as the babe is apparently a mere animal, exhibiting no qualities of mind or heart, but only animal instincts, and yet by care and suitable nourishment develops into adult man, so the Christian babe may as yet be carnal, with very little to differentiate him from the natural man, yet the germ of the spiritual Christian may be there, and with care and suitable nourishment will grow.

The confidence which Paul here expresses regarding his superiority to the judgment of carnal men is a superiority inseparable from knowledge in any department. Truth carries with it always a self-evidencing power, and whoever attains a clear perception of truth in any branch of knowledge is aware that it is the truth he has attained. When the mind has been long puzzling over a difficulty and at last sees the solution, it is as if the sun had risen. The mind is at once convinced.

No one had ever greater right than Paul to say, "I have the mind of Christ." Every day of his life said the same thing. He at once entered into Christ's mind and more than any other man carried it out. It was by his moral sympathy with Christ's aims that he entered so completely into the knowledge of His person and work. He lived his way into the truth. And all our best knowledge is reached in the same way. The truths we see most clearly and have deepest assurance of are those which our own



experience has taught us. Spiritual truth is of a kind which only spiritual men can understand.

Spiritual men are those who can say, with Paul, "We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." What men's eyes need especially to be opened to is the bounty of God and the consequent wealth and hopefulness of human life. Paul's wondering delight in God's grace and loving adaptation of Himself to human needs continually finds utterance in his writings. His own sense of unworthiness magnified the forgiving mercy of God. He rejoiced in a Divine love which was passing knowledge, but which he knew could be relied upon to the utmost. The vision of this love opened to his hope a vista of happiness. There is a natural joy in living that all men can understand. This life in many ways appeals to our thirst for happiness, and often it seems as if we needed nothing more. But, in one way or other, most of us learn that what is naturally presented to us in this world is not enough, indeed only brings in the long run anxiety and grief. And then it is that, by God's grace, men come to find that this life is but a small lagoon leading to, and fed by, the boundless ocean of God's love beyond. They learn that there is a hope that cannot be blighted, a joy that is uninterrupted, a fulness of life that meets and satisfies every instinct, and affection, and purpose. They begin to see the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him, the things that are freely given to us of God—"freely given," given without desert of ours, given to make us happy, given by a love that must find expression.

But to know and appreciate the things which are freely given to us of God a man must have the Spirit of God. For God's gifts are spiritual; they attach to character, to what is eternally ours. They cannot be received by those who refuse the severity of God's training and are not alive to the reality of spiritual growth, of passing from a carnal to a spiritual manhood. The path to these eternal, all-satisfying joys may be hard; Christ's path was not easy, and they who follow Him must in one form or other have their faith in the unseen tested. They must really, and not only in word, pass from dependence on this present world to dependence on God; they must somehow come to believe that underneath and in all we here see and experience lies God's unalterable, unmingled love, that ultimately it is this they have to do with, this that explains all.

How soon do men think they have exhausted the one inexhaustible, the love and resources of God; how quickly do men weary of life, and think they have seen all and know all; how ready are men to conclude that for them existence is a failure and can yield no perfect joy, while as yet they know as little of the things God has prepared for them that love Him as the new-born babe knows of the life and experiences that lie before it. You have but touched the hem of His garment; what must it be to be clasped to His heart? Happy they to whom the darkness of this world reveals the boundless distances of the starry heaven, and who find that the blows which have shattered their earthly happiness have merely broken the shell which confined their true life and have given them entrance into a world infinite and eternal.

## CHAPTER VI.

### GOD'S HUSBANDRY AND BUILDING.

PAUL having abundantly justified his method of preaching to the Corinthians, and having shown why he contented himself with the simple presentation of the Cross, resumes his direct rebuke of their party spirit. He has told them that they were as yet unfit to hear the "wisdom" which he taught in some Churches, and the very proof of their immaturity is to be found in their partisanship. "While one saith, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed?" The teachers by whose names they were proud to be known were not founders of schools nor heads of parties, who sought recognition and supremacy; they were "ministers," servants who were used by a common Lord to rouse faith, not in themselves, but in Him. Each had his own gifts and his own task. "I have planted." To me it was given to found the Church at Corinth. Apollos came after me, and helped my plant to grow. But it was God Himself who gave the vital influence requisite to make our work efficacious. Apollos and I are but one instrument in God's hand, as the man who sets the sails and he who holds the helm are one instrument used by the master of the ship, or as the mason who hews and the builder who sets the stones in their places are one instrument for the carrying out of the masterbuilder's design. "We are fellow-labourers used by God; ye are *God's* husbandry, *God's* building."

Throughout this paragraph it is this thought that Paul dwells upon: that the Church is originated and maintained, not by men, but by God. Teachers are but God's instruments; and yet, being human instruments, they have each his own responsibility, as each has his own part of the one work.

From this truth that God alone is the Giver of spiritual life and that the Church is His building several inferences may be drawn.

1. Our praise for any good we have received of a spiritual kind should be given, not solely to men, but mainly to God. The Corinthians were conscious that in receiving Christianity they had received a very great boon. They felt that gratitude was due somewhere. The new thoughts they had of God, the consciousness of Christ's eternal love, the hope of immortality, the sustaining influence of the friendship of Christ, the new world they seemed to live in—all this made them think of those who had brought them this new happiness. But Paul was afraid lest their acknowledgment of himself and Apollos should eclipse their gratitude to God. People sometimes congratulate themselves on having adopted a good style of religion, not too sentimental, not sensational and spasmodic, not childishly external, not coldly doctrinal; they are thankful they lit upon the books they read at a critical time of their spiritual and mental growth; they can clearly trace to certain persons an influence which they know strengthened their character; and they think with gratitude and sometimes with excessive admiration of such books and persons. Paul would say to them, It is not culpable to think with gratitude of those who have been instrumental in furthering your knowledge



of the truth or your Christian life; but always remember that you are God's husbandry and God's building, and that it is to Him all your praise must ultimately go.

2. It is to God we must look for all further growth. We must use the best books; we must put ourselves under influences which we know are good for us, whatever they are for others; we must conscientiously employ such means of grace as our circumstances permit; but, above all, we must ask God to give the increase. No doubt the use of the means God uses to increase our life is a silent but constant prayer; still we are not mere trees planted to wait for such influences as come to us, but have wills to choose the life these influences bring and to open our being to the living God who imparts Himself to us in and through them.

3. If we are God's husbandry and building, let us reverence God's work in ourselves. It may seem a very rickety and insecure structure that is rising within us, a very sickly and unpromising plant; and we are tempted to mock the beginnings of good in ourselves and be disappointed at the slow progress the new man makes in us. Vexed at our small attainment, at the poor show among Christians our character makes, at the stunted appearance the plant of grace in us presents, we are tempted to trample it once for all out of sight. Grace sometimes seems to do so little for us in emergencies, and the transformation of our character seems so unutterably slow and shallow, that we are disposed to think the radical change we need can never be accomplished. But different thoughts possess us when we remember that this transformation of character is not a thing to be accomplished only by ourselves through a judicious choice and a persevering use of fit means, but is God's work. There may be little appearance or promise of good in you; but underneath the little there is lies what is infinitely great, even the purpose and love of God himself. "Ye are God's husbandry;" therefore hope becomes you. The deliverance of the human soul from evil, its redemption to purity and nobility—this is what engages all God's care and energy.

4. For the same reason we must hope for others as for ourselves. It is the foundation of all hope to know that God has always been inclining men to righteousness and will always do so. So often we look sadly at the godlessness, and frivolity, and deep degradation and misery that abound, and feel as if the burden of lifting men to a higher condition lay all upon us; the ceaseless flow of human life into and out of the world, the hopeless conditions in which many are born, the frightful influences to which they are exposed, the extreme difficulty of winning even one man to good, the possibility that no more may be won and that the Christian stock may die out—these considerations oppress the spirit, and cause men to despair of ever seeing a kingdom of God on earth. But Paul could never despair because he was at all times convinced that the whole energy that ceaselessly goes forth from God goes forth to accomplish good, and nothing but good, and that among the good ends God is accomplishing there is nothing for which He has sacrificed so much and at which He so determinedly aims as the restoration of men to purity, love, and goodness.

5. But the chief inference Paul draws from the truth that the Church is God's building is the

grave responsibility of those who labour for God in this work. As for Paul's own part in the work, the laying of the foundation, he says that was comparatively easy. There was no chance of his making a mistake there. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Any teacher who professes to lay another foundation thereby gives up his claim to be a Christian teacher. If any one proceeds to lay another foundation than Christ, it is not a Christian Church he is meaning to build. He who does not proceed upon the facts of Christ's life and death, he whose instruction does not presuppose Christ as its foundation, may be useful for some purposes of life, but not as a builder of the Christian temple. He who teaches morality without ever hinting that apart from Christ it cannot be attained in its highest form may have his use, but not as a Christian teacher. He who uses the Christian pulpit for the propagation of political or socialist ideas may be a sound and useful teacher; but his proper place is the platform or the House of Commons or some such institution, and not the Christian Church. And the question at present, says Paul, is not what other institutions you may profitably found in the world, but how this institution of the Church, already founded, is to be completed. Other foundation no Christian teacher is proposing to lay; but on this foundation very various and questionable material is being built, in some instances gold, silver, and stones of value, in others wood, hay, stubble.

When Corinth rose from its ruins, it was no uncommon sight to see a miserable hovel reared against the marble wall of a temple or the splendid portico of some deserted palace rendered habitable by a patchwork of mud and straw. What a recent visitor saw at Luxor may be accepted as to some extent true of Corinth: "Mud hovels, mud pigeon-towers, mud yards, and a mud mosque cluster like wasp's nests in and about the ruins. Architraves sculptured with royal titles support the roofs of squalid cabins. Stately capitals peep out from the midst of sheds in which buffaloes, camels, donkeys, dogs, and human beings herded together in unsavoury fellowship." So in Corinth the huge slabs of costly and carefully chiselled stone lay stable as the rock on which they rested, but now the glory of such foundations was dishonoured by squalid superstructures. And the picture in Paul's mind's eye of the Corinthian Church vividly suggested what he had seen while walking among those heterogeneous buildings. He sees the Church rising with a strange mixture of design and material. The foundation, he knows, is the same; but on the solid marble is reared a crazy structure of second-hand and ill-adapted material, here a wall propped up with rotten planking, there a hole stopped with straw, on one side a richly decorated gateway, with gold and silver profusely wrought into its design, on the other side a clay partition or loose boarding. It grieves him to see the incongruous structure. He sees the teachers bringing, with great appearance of diligence, the merest rubbish, wood, hay, stubble, apparently unconscious of the incongruity of their material with the foundation they build upon. He sees them taken with every passing fancy—the lifeless stubble that has lost its living seed of truth, the mud of the common highway, the readiest thoughts that come to hand—and setting these in the temple wall.



What would Paul say did he now see the superstructure which eighteen hundred years have raised on the one foundation? Is any more heterogeneous structure anywhere to be seen than the Church of Christ? How obviously unworthy of the foundation is much that has been built upon it; how many teachers have laboured all their days at erecting what has already been proved a mere house of cards; and how many persons have been built into the living temple who have brought no stability or beauty to the building. How careless often have the builders been, anxious only to have quantity to show, regardless of quality, ambitious to be credited with largely extending the size of the Church apart from any consideration of the worth or worthlessness of the material added. As in any building, so in the Church, additional size is additional danger, if the material be not sound.

The soundness of the material which has been built upon the foundation of Christ will, like all things else, be tested. "The day shall declare it;" that light of Christ's presence and dominance over all things, that light which shall penetrate all human things when our true life is entered on—that shall declare it. "The fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is. If any man's work abide, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire." The Corinthians knew what a trial by fire meant. They knew how the flames had travelled over their own city, consuming all that fire could kindle on, and leaving of the slightly built houses nothing but a charred and useless timber here and there, while the massive marbles stood erect among the ruins; and the precious metals, even though molten, were prized by the conqueror. Against the fire no prayer, no appeal prevailed. Its judgment and decisions were irreversible; wood, hay, stubble, disappeared: only what was solid and valuable remained. By such irreversible judgment are we and our work to be judged. We are to enter into a life in which the nature and character of the work we have done in this world shall bring upon it utter destruction or a rewarding and growing utility. Fire simply burns up all that will burn and leaves what will not. So shall the new life we are to pass into absolutely annihilate what is not in keeping with it, and leave only what is useful and congruous. There is no question here of admitting explanations, of adducing extenuating circumstances, of appealing to compassion, and so forth. It is a judgment, and a judgment of absolute truth, which takes things as they actually are. The work that has been well and wisely done will stand; foolish, vain, and selfish work will go. We are to pass through the fire.

Paul, with his unfailing discernment, accepts it as a very possible contingency that a Christian man may do poor work. In that case, Paul says, the man will be saved as by fire; his work shall be burned, but himself be scatheless. He shall be in the position of a man whose house has been burnt; the man is saved, but his property, all that he has slowly gathered round him and valued as the fruit of his labour, is gone. He may have received no bodily injury, but he is so stripped that he scarcely knows himself, and the whole thought and toil of his life seem to have gone for nothing. So, says Paul, shall this and that man pass into the heavenly state, hearing behind him, as he barely enters, the crash of all

he has been building up, as it falls and leaves for the result of a laborious life a ghastly, charred ruin and a cloud of dust. To have been useless, to have advanced Christ's kingdom not at all, to have spent our life building up a pretentious erection which at last falls about our ears, to come to the end and find that not one solid brick in the whole fabric is of our laying, and that the world would have been quite as well without us—this must be humiliating indeed; but it is a humiliation which all selfish, worldly, and foolishly fussy Christians are preparing for themselves. To many Christians it seems enough that they be doing *something*. If only they are decently active, it concerns them little that their work is really effecting no good, as if they were active rather for the sake of keeping themselves warm in a chilling atmosphere than to accomplish any good purpose. Work done for this world must be such as will stand inspection and actually do the thing required. Christian work should not be less, but more, thorough.

There is a degree of carelessness or malignity sometimes to be found in those who profess to be Christian teachers which Paul does not hesitate unconditionally to doom. "If any man destroy the temple of God, him shall God destroy." A teacher may in various ways incur this doom. He may in guiding some one to Christ fit him obliquely to the foundation, so that firm rest in Christ is never attained; but the man remains like a loose stone in a wall, unsettled himself and unsettling all around him. Any doctrine which turns the grace of God into license incurs this doom. To lift stones from the mire they have been lying in and fit them into the temple is good and right, but to leave them uncleansed and unpolished is to disfigure the temple. Any teaching that does not recognise in Christianity the means of becoming holy, and encourages men to believe themselves Christians though they neither have nor wish to have the Spirit of Christ, destroys the temple.

But we are responsible as well as our teachers for the appearance we present in God's temple. The stone that is to occupy a permanent place in a building is carefully squared and beaten into its place, and its level adjusted with the utmost nicety. Would it not make a very obvious change in the appearance and in the strength of the Church if every member of it were at pains to set himself absolutely true to Christ? There is no doubt a good deal of anxiety about our relation to Christ, frequent examining and measuring of our actual position; but does not this too often merely reveal that conscience is uneasy? Some persons are prevented from resting satisfactorily on Christ because of some erroneous opinion about faith or about the manner in which the connection is formed, or some pet theory or crochet has possessed the mind and keeps them unsettled. Some will not rest on Christ until they have such repentance as they judge sufficient; others so rest on Him that they have no repentance. Strange that men will so complicate the simplicity of Christ, who is the hand of our heavenly Father, stretched out to lift us out of our sin and draw us to Himself. If you wish God's love, accept it; if you long for holiness, take Christ as your Friend; if you see no greater joy than to serve in His great cause, do His will and follow Him.

But, alas! with some it is no misunderstanding



that prevents a close connection between the soul and Christ, but some worldly purpose or some entangling and deeply cherished sin. The foundation stone is as a polished slab of marble, having its upper surface smooth as a mirror, whereas we are like stones that have been lying on the seashore, encrusted with shells and lichens, drilled with holes, grown all round and round with unsightly inequalities; and if we are to rest with entire stability on the foundation, these excrescences must be removed. Even a small one at one point is enough to prevent close adhesion. One sin consciously retained, one command or expression of Christ's will unresponded to, makes our whole connection with Him unsettled and insecure, our confessions and repentances untrue and hardening, our prayers hesitating and insincere, our love for Christ hollow, our life inconsistent, vacillating, and unprofitable.

And more must be done even after we are securely fitted into our place. Stones often look well enough when first built in, but soon lose their colour; and their surface and fine edges crumble and shale off, so that they need to be constantly looked to. So do the stones in God's temple get tarnished and discoloured by exposure. One sin after another is allowed to stain the conscience; one little corruption after another settles on the character, and eats out its fineness, and when once the fair, clean stone is no longer unsullied, we think it of little consequence to be scrupulous. Then the weather tells upon us: the ordinary atmosphere of this life, with its constant damp of worldly care and its occasional storms of loss, and disappointment, and social collisions, and domestic embroilment, eats out the heavenly temper from our character, and leaves its edges ragged; and the man becomes soured and irritable, and the surface of him, all that meets the casual eye, is rough and broken.

Above all, do not many Christian persons seem to think it enough to have attained a place in the building, and, after spending a little thought and trouble on entering the Christian life, take no step onwards during the whole remainder of their lives? But it is in God's building as in highly ornamented buildings generally. The stones are not all sculptured before they are fitted into their places, but they are built in rough-hewn, so that the building may proceed: and then at leisure the device proper to each is carved upon it. This is the manner of God's building. Long after a man has been set in the Church of Christ, God hews and carves him to the shape He designs; but we, being not dead, but living, stones, have it in our power to mar the beauty of God's design, and indeed so distort it that the result is a grotesque and hideous monster, belonging to no world, neither of God nor of man. If we let a thousand other influences mould and fashion us, God's design must necessarily be spoiled.

The folly of partisanship and sectarianism is finally exhibited in the words, "Let no man glory in men. For all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas." The man who held to Paul and would learn nothing from Apollos or Peter was defrauding himself of his rights. It has been the weakness of Christians in all ages, and never more than in our own, to see good in only one aspect of truth and listen to no form of teaching but one. The Broad Churchman despises the traditionalist; the Evan-

gelical gathers up his skirts at the approach of a Broad Churchman. Calvinist and Arminian stand at daggers drawn. Each limits himself to his own fortress, which he thinks he can defend, and starves himself on siege rations while the fields wave white with grain outside. The eye is constructed to sweep round a wide range of vision; but men put on blinkers and decline even to look at anything which does not lie directly in the line of sight. We know that to confine ourselves to one form of food induces poverty of blood and disease, and yet we fancy a healthy spiritual life can be maintained only by confining ourselves to one form of doctrine and one way of looking at universal truth. To the Evangelical who shrinks with horror from liberal teaching, and to the advanced thinker who turns with contempt from the Evangelical, Paul would say, Ye do yourselves a wrong by listening to one form of the truth only; every teacher who declares what he himself lives on has something to teach you; to despise or neglect any form of Christian teaching is so far to impoverish yourselves. "All things are yours," not this teacher or that, in whom you glory, but all teachers of Christ.

His own expression, "all things are yours," suggests to Paul the whole wealth of the Christian, for whom exist not only all those who have striven to unfold the significance of the Christian revelation, but all things else, whether "the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come." As it is true of all teachers, of however commanding genius, that the Church does not exist for them that they may have a field for their genius, and followers to applaud and represent them, but that they exist for the Church, their genius being used for the advancement of the spiritual life of this and that unknown and hidden soul; so is it true of all things,—of life and all its laws, of death and all it leads to,—that these are ordained of God to minister to the growth of His children. This was the regal attitude which Paul himself assumed and maintained towards all events and the whole world of created things. He was incapable of defeat. The outrages and deaths he endured, he bore as proofs of the truth of his gospel. The storms of ill-will and persecution he everywhere encountered, he knew were only bringing him and his gospel more rapidly to all the world. And when he looked at last on the sword of the Roman executioner, he recognised it with joy as the instrument which by one sharp blow was to burst his fetters and set him free to boundless life and the full knowledge of his Lord. The same inheritance belongs to every one who has faith to take it. "All things are yours." The whole course of this world and all its particular incidents, the complete range of human experience from first to last, including all we shrink from and fear,—all are for the good of Christ's people. What thoughts flash from this man's mind. How his words still entrance and lift and animate the soul. "All things are yours." The catastrophes of life that seem finally to blot out hope, the wild elemental forces in whose presence frail man is as the moth, the unknown future of the physical world, the certain death that awaits every man and listens to no appeal, all things that naturally discourage and compel us to feel our weakness,—yes, says Paul, all these things are yours, serving your highest good, bringing you on towards



your eternal joy, more certainly than the things you select and buy, or win, and cherish as your own. You are free men, supreme over all created things, for "ye are Christ's," you belong to Him who rules all, and loves you as His own; and above Christ and His rule there is no adverse will that can rob you of any good, for as ye are Christ's, cherished by Him, so is Christ God's, and the supreme will that governs all, governs all in the interests of Christ.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE MINISTRY.

So keenly alive is Paul to the danger and folly of party-spirit in the Church, that he has still one more word of rebuke to utter. He has shown the Corinthians that to give their faith to one teacher, and shut their ears to every other form of truth than that which he delivers, is to impoverish and defraud themselves. All teachers are theirs, and are sent, not to win disciples to themselves, who may spread their fame and reflect credit on their talents, but to serve the people, and be merged in self-obliterating toil. The preachers, Paul tells them, exist for the Church: not the Church for the preachers. The people are the primary consideration, the main end to which the preachers are subordinate. The mistake often made in things civil, that the people exist for the king, not the king for the people, is made also in things ecclesiastical, and has, in some instances, attained such dimensions that the "Church" means the clergy, not the laity, and that when a man enters the ministry he is said to enter the Church,—as if already he were not in it as a layman.

Paul now proceeds to demonstrate the futility of the judgment passed upon their teachers by the Corinthians. Paul and the rest were servants of Christ, stewards sent by Him to dispense to others what He had entrusted to them. The question therefore was, were they faithful, did they dispense what they had received in conformity with Christ's purpose? The question was not, were they eloquent, were they philosophical, were they learned? Criticism no preacher need expect to escape. Sometimes one might suppose sermons were of no other use than to furnish material for a little discussion and pleasant exercise of the critical faculty. Every one considers himself capable of this form of criticism, and once a sermon has been sorted and labelled as of this, that, or the other quality, it is too often put permanently aside. In such criticism, Paul reminds us, it is a great matter to bear in mind that what has no great attraction for us may yet serve some good purpose. The gifts dispensed by Christ are various. The influence of some ministers is most felt in private, while others are shy and stiff, and can only utter themselves freely in the pulpit. In the pulpit again various gifts appear, some having good nerve and a ready and felicitous address which reaches the multitude; while others have more power of thought, and a finer literary gift, or a sympathetic manner of handling peculiarities of spiritual experience. Who shall say which of these styles is most edifying to the Church? And who shall say which teacher is most faith-

fully serving his Master? Who shall determine whether this preacher or that is the better steward, most truly seeking his Lord's glory, and careless of his own? May it not be expected that when the things at present hidden in darkness, the motives and thoughts of the heart, are brought to light in Christ's judgment, many that are first shall be last, and the last first?

He who is conscious that he is the servant of Christ and must give account to Him, can always say with Paul, "It is a very small thing that I should be judged of man's judgment," whether for acquittal and applause or condemnation and abuse. He who utters what is peculiar to himself must expect to be misjudged by those who do not look at things from his point of view. A teacher who thinks for himself and is not a mere echo of other men, finds himself compelled to utter truths which he knows will be misunderstood by many; but so long as he is conscious that he is faithfully delivering what has been made known to himself, the condemnation of the many can trouble him very little or not at all. It is to his own Master he stands or falls; and if he feels sure that he is doing his Master's will, he may regret the opposition of men, but he can neither be greatly astonished nor greatly perturbed by it. And, on the other hand, the approval and applause of men come to him only as a reminder that there is no finality in man's judgment, and that it is only Christ's approval which avails to give permanent satisfaction. A sympathetic audience every teacher needs, but general approval will be his in the inverse ratio of the individuality of his teaching.

In his whole discussion of this subject Paul has named only himself and Apollos, but he means that what he has said of them should be applied to all. "These things I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that in us ye might learn not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another." But great difficulty has always been experienced in tracing the similarities and distinctions which exist between the Apostles and the ordinary ministry of the Church, and had Paul been writing this epistle in our own day he would have felt himself compelled to speak more definitely on these points. For what makes union hopeless in Christendom at present is not that parties are formed round individual leaders, but that Churches are based on diametrically opposed opinions regarding the ministry itself. The Church of Rome unchurches all the rest, and defends her action by the simplest process of reasoning. There can be no true Church, she says, where there are no forgiveness of sins and no sacraments, and there can be no forgiveness and no sacraments where there are no true ministers to administer them, and there are no true ministers save those who can trace their orders to the Apostles. This theory of the ministry proceeds on the idea that the Apostles received from Christ a commission to exercise the apostolic office, and along with it a deposit of grace, with powers to communicate this to those who should succeed them. This deposit of grace derived from Christ Himself has been handed down from generation to generation, through a line of consecrated persons, each member of the series receiving at his ordination, and irrespective of his moral character, both the commission



and the powers which belonged to his predecessor in office.

This theory of the efficacy of ministration in the Church, with its entirely external account of its transmission, is but one manifestation of the old superstition that confounds the outward symbol of Christian grace with that grace itself. It is a survival from a time in which religion was treated as a kind of magic, in which it was only needful to observe the right words of incantation and the right outward order. Even supposing that any priest now alive could trace his orders back to the Apostles, which no priest can, is it credible that the mere observance of an outward form should secure the transmission of the highest spiritual functions to those who may or may not have any spirituality of mind? However much grace the ordaining bishop may himself possess, however many of the qualifications of a good minister of Christ he may have, he can transmit none of these by the laying on of his hands. He can confer the external authority in the Church which belongs to the office to which he ordains, but he cannot communicate that which fits a man to use this authority. The laying on of hands is the outward symbol of the bestowal of the Holy Spirit, but it does not confer that Spirit, which is given, not by man, but by Christ alone. The laying on of hands is a fit symbol to use at ordination when those who use it have satisfied themselves that the ordained person is in possession of the Spirit. It is the expression of their reasonable belief that the Spirit is given.

In some Churches reaction against the theory of apostolical succession has led men to distrust and repudiate ordination altogether, and to maintain that any man may preach who can get people to listen to him, and may administer the sacraments to any who apply for them. No outward recognition by the Church is deemed necessary. The middle course is safer, which acknowledges not only the supreme necessity of an inward call, but also the expediency of an outward call by the Church. By an inward call it is meant that it is the inward and spiritual fitness of any person which constitutes his main right of entrance to the ministry. There are certain mental and moral endowments, certain circumstances and educational advantages, personal inclinations and leanings, which, when they meet in a boy or young man, point him out as suited for the work of the ministry. The evidence that Christ means that any one should take office in His Church,—in other words calls him to office,—is the fact that He bestows on that person the gifts which fit him for it.

But besides this inward persuasion wrought in the mind of the individual, and which constitutes the inward call, there must be an outward call also by the Church's recognition of fitness and communication of authority. Any man who, at his own instance and on his own authority, gathers a congregation and dispenses the sacraments is guilty of schism. Even Barnabas and Paul were ordained by the Church. As in the State a prince though legitimate does not succeed to the throne without formal consecration and coronation, so in the Church there is needful a formal recognition of the title which any one claims to office. It is not the consecration which constitutes the prince's right; that he already possesses by birth: so, neither is it the Church's ordination which qualifies and

entitles the minister to his office; this he already has by the gift of Christ; but recognition by the Church is needed to give him due authority to exercise the functions of his office. It is a matter of expediency and of order. It is calculated to maintain the unity of the Church. Admission to the ministry being regulated by those already in office, schisms are less likely to occur. Ordination has been a bulwark against fanaticism, against foolish private opinions and doctrines, against divisive courses in worship and in organisation. If the Church was to be kept together and to grow as a consistent whole, it was necessary that those already in office should be allowed to scrutinise the claims of aspirants to office, and should not have their order invaded, their work thwarted and obstructed, their doctrine denied and contradicted by every one who might profess to have an inward call to the ministry.

It would therefore seem to be every one's duty to inquire, before he gives himself to another profession or business, whether Christ is not claiming him to serve in His Church. The qualifications which constitute a call to the ministry are such as these: an interest in men, in their ways, and habits, and character; a social disposition, inclining you to mix with other people, to take pleasure in their thoughts and feelings, to be of service to them, to talk frankly with them; a liking for reading, if not for hard study; some capacity for thinking and arranging your thoughts and expressing them, which, however, is to so great an extent the result of study and practice that you may find it impossible to say whether you have it or not. There are negative qualifications equally important, such as an indifference to money-making, a shrinking from the eager competition and hurry of a business life. And, above all, there are the deeper and essential qualifications which are the fruit of the Spirit's sanctifying energy: some genuine sense of your indebtedness to Christ; a strong desire to serve Him; an ambition to preach Him, to proclaim His worth, to invite men to appreciate and love Him. If you have these desires, and if you would fain be of use in things spiritual to your fellow-men, then it would seem that you are called by Christ to the ministry. I do not say that all ministers are so qualified, but only that any one who is so qualified should be careful how he chooses some other calling in preference to the ministry.

Paul concludes this portion of his Epistle with a pathetic comparison of his condition as an Apostle with the condition of those in Corinth who were glorying in this or that teacher. They spoke as if they needed his instructions no more, and as if already they had attained the highest Christian advantages. "Already ye are full; already ye are rich: ye have reigned as kings without us." They behave as if all the trial of the Christian life were over. With the frothy spirit of young converts, they are full of a triumph which they despise Paul for not inculcating. By one leap they had attained, or thought they had attained, a superiority to all disturbance, and to all trial, and to all need of teaching, which, in fact, as Paul's own experience taught him, could only be attained in another life. While they thus triumphed, he who had begotten them in Christ was being treated as the offscouring and filth of the world.

Paul can only compare himself and the other



Apostles to those gladiators who were condemned to die, and who came into the arena last, after the spectators had been sated with other exhibitions and bloodless performances. "I think that God hath set forth us the Apostles last, as it were appointed to death. For we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels and to men." They came into the arena knowing they should never leave it alive, that they were there for the purpose of enduring the worst their enemies could do to them. It was no fight with buttoned foils Paul and the rest were engaged in. While others sat comfortably looking on, with curtains to shade them from the heat and refreshments to save them from exhaustion or from faintness at the sight of blood, they were in the arena, exposed to wounds, ill-usage, and death. They had as little hope of retiring to live a quiet life as the gladiators who had said farewell to their friends and saluted the Emperor as those about to die. Life became no easier, the world no kinder, to Paul as time went on. "Even unto this present hour of writing," he says, "we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place." Here is the finest mind, the noblest spirit, on earth; and this is how he is treated: driven from place to place, thrust aside as interrupting the proper work of men, passed by with a sneer at his rags, refused the commonest charity, paid for his loving words in blows and insolence. And yet he goes on with his work, and lets nothing interrupt that. "Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat." Nay, it is a life which he is so far from giving up himself, that he will call to it the easy-going Christians of Corinth. "I beseech you," he says, "be ye followers of me."

And if the contrast between Paul's precarious and self-sacrificing life and the luxurious and self-complacent life of the Corinthians might be expected to shame them into some vigorous Christian service, a similar contrast candidly considered may accomplish some good results in us. Already the Corinthians were accepting that pernicious conception of Christianity which looks upon it as merely a new luxury, that they who are already comfortable in all outward respects may be comforted in spirit as well and purge their minds from all anxieties, questionings, and strivings. They recognised how happy a thing it is to be forgiven, to be at peace with God, to have a sure hope of life everlasting. For them the battle was over, the conquest won, the throne ascended. As yet they had not caught a glimpse of what is involved in becoming holy as Christ is holy, nor had steadily conceived in their minds the profound inward change which must pass upon them. As yet it was enough for them that they were called to be God's children, provided for by a heavenly Father; and Christ's own view of life and of men had not yet possessed or even dawned upon their soul, causing them to feel that until they could live for others they had no true life.

Are there none still who listen to Christianity rather as a voice soothing their fears than as a bugle summoning them to conflict, who are satisfied if through the Gospel they are enabled to comfort their own soul, and who do not yet respond to Christ's call to live under the power of that Spirit of His which prompted Him to all sacrifice? Paul does not summon the whole

Church to be homeless, destitute, comfortless, outcast from all joy; and yet there is meaning in his words when he says, "Be ye followers of me." He means that there is not one standard of duty for him and another for us. All is wrong with us until we be made somehow to recognise, and make room in our life for the recognition, that we have no right to be lapping ourselves round with all manner of selfish aggrandisement while Paul is driven through life with scarcely one day's bread provided, that in some way intelligible to our own conscience we must approve ourselves to be his followers, and that no right is secured to any class of Christians to stand selfishly aloof from the common Christian cause. If we be Christ's, as Paul was, it must inevitably come to this with us: that we cordially yield to him all we are and have; our very selves, with all our tastes and aptitudes and with all we have made by our toil; our life, with all its fruits, we gladly yield to Him. If our hearts be His, this is inevitable and delightful; unless they be so, it is impossible, and seems extravagant. It is vain to say to a man, Serve only yourself in life, seek only to make a reputation for yourself and gather comforts round yourself, and make it the aim of your life to be comfortable and respectable—it is vain to bid a man thus limit and impoverish his life if at the same time you show him a person so attracting human allegiance as Christ does, and so opening to men wider and eternal aims as He does, and if you show him a cause so kindling every right ambition as Christ's cause does.

It was Christ's own self-sacrifice that threw such a spell over the Apostles and gave them so new a feeling towards their fellow-men and so new an estimate of their deepest needs. After seeing how Christ lived, they could never again justify themselves in living for self. After seeing His regardlessness of bodily comfort, His superiority to traditional necessities and customary luxuries, after witnessing how veritably He was but passing through this world, and used it as the stage on which he might serve God and men, and counted His life best spent in giving it for others, they could not settle down into the old life and aim only at passing comfortably, reputably, and religiously through it. That view of life was made for ever impossible to them. The life of Christ had made a new way for itself into a new region, and the horizon rent by the passage never again closed to them. That life became the only spiritual reality to them. And it is because we are so sunk in self-seeking and worldliness, and so blinded by the customs and traditional ideas about spending life, about acquitting ourselves well and making a name, about earning a competence, about everything which turns the regard in upon self instead of outwards upon objects worthy of our exertion—it is therefore that we continue so unapostolic, so unprofitable, so unchanged.

It might encourage us to bring our life more nearly into the line of Paul's were we to see clearly that the cause he served is really inclusive of all that is worth working for. We can scarcely apprehend this with any clearness without feeling some enthusiasm for it. The *kind* of devotedness expected of the Christian is illustrated in the lives of all men of any force of character; the Christian's devotedness is only given to a larger and more reasonable object. There have



been statesmen and patriots, and there still are such, who, though possibly not absolutely devoid of some taint of selfish ambition, are yet in the main devoted to their country; its interests are continually on their mind and heart, their time is given wholly to it, and their own personal tastes and pursuits are held in abeyance and abandoned to make room for more important labour. You have seen men become so enamoured of a cause that they will literally sell all they have to forward it, and who obviously have it on their hearts by night and by day, who live for that and for nothing else; you can detect as often as you meet them that the real aim and object of their life is to promote that cause. Some new movement, political or ecclesiastical, some literary scheme, some fresh enterprise of benevolence, some new commercial idea, or no matter what it is, you have seen again and again that men throw themselves so thoroughly into such causes that they cannot be said to be living for themselves. They will part with time, with property, with other important objects, with health, even with life itself, for the sake of their cherished, chosen cause. And when such a cause is worthy, such as the reformation of prison discipline, or the emancipation of slaves, or the liberating of an oppressed nation, the men who adopt it seem to lead the only lives which have some semblance of glory in them; and the sacrifices they make, the obloquy they incur, the toils they endure, make the heart burn and swell as we hear of them. Every one instinctively acknowledges that such self-forgetful and heroic lives are the right and model lives for all. What a man does for himself is jealously examined, criticised, and passed at the most with an exclamation of wonder; but what he does for others is welcomed with acclamation as an honour to our common humanity. So long as a man labours merely for himself, to win himself a name, to get for himself a possession, he makes no valuable contribution to the world's good, and only by accident effects anything for which other men are thankful; but let a man even with small means at his command have the interests of others at his heart, and he sets in motion endless agencies and influences that bless whatever they touch.

It is this then that our Lord does for us by claiming our service; He gives us the opportunity of sinking our selfishness, which is in the last analysis our sin, and of living for a worthier object than our own pleasure or our own careful preservation. When He tells us to live for Him and to seek the things that are His, He but tells us in other words and in a more attractive and practical form to seek the common good. We seek the things that are Christ's when we act as Christ would act were He in our place, when we let Christ live through us, when we, by considering what He would have us do, let His influence still tell on the world and His will still be done in the world. This should be so done by each and every Christian that the result would be the same as if Christ had personally at command all the resources for good that are possessed by His people, as if He were Himself spending all the money, energy, and time that are being expended by His people, so that at every point where there is a Christian Christ's purposes might be being forwarded. This is the devotedness we are called to; this is the devotedness

we must cultivate until we do make some considerable attainment in it.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### *EXCOMMUNICATION; OR, PURGING OUT THE OLD LEAVEN.*

FROM the subject of the factions in the Corinthian Church, which has so long detained Paul, he now passes to the second division of his Epistle, in which he speaks of the relation the Christians should hold to the heathen population around them. The transition is easy and such as befits a letter. Paul had thought it advisable to send Timothy, who perfectly understood his mind, and could represent his views more fully than a letter; but it now occurred to him that this might be construed by some of the vain popular leaders in the Church into a timorous reluctance on his part to appear in Corinth and a sign that they were no longer to be held in check by the strong hand of the Apostle. "Some are puffed up, as though *I* would not come to you." He assures them therefore that he himself will come to Corinth, and also that the leaders of the Church have little reason to be puffed up, seeing that they have allowed in the Church an immorality so gross that even the lower standard of pagan ethics regards it as an unnameable abomination; and if once it is named, it is only to say that not all the waters of ocean can wash away such guilt. Instead of being puffed up, Paul tells them, they should rather be ashamed and at once take steps to put away from them so great a scandal. If not, he must come, not in meekness and love, but with a rod.

The Corinthian Church had fallen into a common snare. Churches have always been tempted to pique themselves on their rich foundations and institutions, on producing champions of the faith, able writers, eloquent preachers, on their cultured ministry, on their rich and æsthetic services, and not on that very thing for which the Church exists: the cleansing of the morals of the people and their elevation to a truly spiritual and godly life. And it is the individuals who give character to any Church. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." Each member of a Church in each day's conduct in business and at home stakes, not only his own reputation, but the credit of the Church to which he belongs. Involuntarily and unconsciously men lower their opinion of the Church and cease to expect to find in her a fountain of spiritual life, because they find her members selfish and greedy in business, ready to avail themselves of doubtful methods; harsh, self-indulgent, and despotic at home, tainted with vices condemned by the least educated conscience. Let us remember that our little leaven leavens what is in contact with us; that our worldliness and unchristian conduct tend to lower the tone of our circle, encourage others to live down to our level, and help to demoralise the community.

In the judgment Paul pronounces on the Corinthian culprit two points are important. First, it is noteworthy that Paul, Apostle though he was, did not take the case out of the hands of the congregation. His own judgment on the case was explicit and decided, and this judgment he does not hesitate to declare; but, at the same



time; it is the congregation which must deal with the case and pronounce judgment in it. The excommunication he enjoined was to be their act. "Put away from among yourselves," he says (v. 13), "that wicked person." The government of the Church was in Paul's idea thoroughly democratic; and where the power to excommunicate has been lodged in a priesthood, the results have been deplorable. Either, on the one hand, the people have become craven and have lived in terror, or, on the other hand, the priest has been afraid to measure his strength with powerful offenders. In our own country and in others this power of excommunication has been abused for the most unworthy purposes, political, social, and private; and only when it is lodged in the congregation can you secure a fair judgment and moral right to enforce it. There is little fear that this power will nowadays be abused. Men themselves conscious of strong propensities to evil and of many sins are more likely to be lax in administering discipline than forward to use their power; and so far from ecclesiastical discipline producing in its administrators harsh, tyrannical, and self-righteous feelings, it rather works an opposite effect, and evokes charity, a sense of solemn responsibility, and the longing for the welfare of others which lies latent in Christian minds.

But, second, the precise punishment intended by Paul is couched in language which the present generation cannot readily understand. The culprit is not only to be excluded from Christian communion, but "to be delivered unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved." Many meanings have been put upon these words; but after all has been said, the natural and obvious meaning of the words asserts itself. Paul believed that certain sins were more likely to be cured by bodily suffering than by any other agency. Naturally sins of the flesh belonged to this class. Bodily suffering of some kinds he believed to be the infliction of Satan. Even his own thorn in the flesh he spoke of as a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him. He expected also that the judgment pronounced by himself and the congregation on this offender would be given effect to in God's providence; and accordingly he bids the congregation hand the man over to this disciplinary suffering, not as a final doom, but as the only likely means of saving his soul. If the offender mentioned in the Second Epistle is the same man, then we have evidence that the discipline was effectual, that the sinner did repent and was overwhelmed with shame and sorrow. Certainly such an experience of punishment, though not invariably or even commonly effectual, is in itself calculated to penetrate to the very depths of a man's spirit and give him new thoughts about his sin. If when suffering he can acknowledge his own wrongdoing as the cause of his misery and accept all the bitter and grievous penalties his sin has incurred, if he can truly humble himself before God in the matter and own that all he suffers is right and good, then he is nearer the kingdom of heaven than ever he was before. Substantially the same idea as Paul's is put in the mouth of the Pope by the most modern of poets:—

"For the main criminal I have no hope  
Except in such a suddenness of fate.  
I stood at Naples once, a night so dark,  
I could have scarce conjectured there was earth

Anywhere, sky, or sea, or world at all,  
But the night's black was burst through by a blaze;  
Thunder struck blow on blow; Earth groaned and bore,

Through her whole length of mountain visible:  
There lay the city thick and plain with spires,  
And, like a ghost disshrouded, white the sea.  
So may the truth be flashed out by one blow,  
And Guido see one instant and be saved."

The necessity for keeping their communion pure, for being a society with no leaven of wickedness among them, Paul proceeds to urge and illustrate in the words, "For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us purge out the old leaven." The allusion was of course much more telling to Jews than it can possibly be to us; still, if we call to mind the outstanding ideas of the Passover, we cannot fail to feel the force of the admonition. That must be the simplest explanation of the Passover which Jewish parents were enjoined to give to their children, in the words, "By strength of hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, from the house of bondage. And it came to pass when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the Lord slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, with the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast. Therefore I sacrifice to the Lord all the firstborn being males, but all the firstborn of my children I redeem." That is to say, all the firstborn of animals they sacrificed to God, slaying them on His altar, but instead of slaying the human firstborn they redeemed them by sacrificing a lamb in their stead. The whole transaction of the night of the first Passover stood thus: God claimed the Israelites as His people; the Egyptians also claimed them as theirs. And as no warning would persuade the Egyptians to let them away to serve God, God at last forcibly delivered them, slaying the flower of the Egyptian people, and so crippling and dismaying them as to give Israel opportunity of escape. Being thus rescued that they might be God's people, they felt bound to continue to own this; and in accordance with the custom of their time they expressed their sense of it by sacrificing their firstborn, by presenting them to God as belonging to Him. By this outward sacrificial act engaged in by every family it was acknowledged that the whole nation belonged to God.

Christ, then, is our Passover or Paschal Lamb, in the first place, because through Him there is made the acknowledgment that we belong to God. He is in very truth the prime and flower, the best representative of our race, the firstborn of every creature. He is the one who can make for all others this acknowledgment that we are God's people. And He does so by perfectly giving Himself up to God. This fact that we belong to God, that we men are His creatures and subjects, has never been perfectly acknowledged save by Christ. No individual or society of people has ever lived entirely for God. No man has ever fully recognised this apparently simple truth, that we are not our own, but God's. The Israelites made the acknowledgment in form, by sacrifice, but Christ alone made it in deed by giving Himself up wholly to do God's will. The Israelites made the acknowledgment from time to time, and with probably more or less truthfulness and sincerity, but Christ's whole spirit and habitual temper of mind were those of perfect obedience and dedication.

Only those of us, then, who see that we ought to live for God can claim Christ as our represent-



ative. His dedication to God is unmeaning to us if we do not desire to belong entirely to God. If He is our Passover, the meaning of this is that He gives us liberty to serve God; if we do not mean to be God's people, if we do not resolutely purpose to put ourselves at God's disposal, then it is idle and false of us to talk of Him as our Passover. Christ comes to bring us back to God, to redeem us from all that hinders our serving Him; but if we really prefer being our own masters, then manifestly He is useless to us. It is no matter what we say, nor what rites and forms we go through; the one question is, Do we at heart wish to give ourselves up to God? Does Christ really represent us,—represent, by His devoted, unworldly life, our earnest and hearty desire and intention? Do we find in His life and death, in His submission to God and meek acceptance of all God appointed, the truest representation of what we ourselves would fain be and do, but cannot?

It is through this *self-sacrifice* of Christ that we can become God's people, and enjoy all the liberties and advantages of His people. Christ becomes the representative of all whose state of mind His sacrifice represents. If we would fain be of one mind and will with God as Christ was, if we feel the degradation and bitterness of failing God and disappointing the trust He has confided in us His children, if our life is wholly spoiled by the latent feeling that all is wrong because we are not in harmony with the wise and holy and loving Father, if we feel with more and more distinctness, as life goes on, that there is a God, and that the foundation of all happiness and soundness of life must be laid in union with Him, then Christ's perfect surrender of Himself to the will of the Father represents what we would but cannot ourselves achieve. When the Israelite came with his lamb, feeling the attractiveness and majesty of God, and desiring to pour his whole life out in fellowship with God and service of Him, as entirely as the life of the lamb was poured out at the altar, God accepted this symbolic utterance of the worshipper's heart. As the worshipping Israelite saw in the animal yielding its whole life the very utterance of his own desire, and said, Would God I could as freely and entirely devote myself with all my powers and energies to my Father above; so we, looking at the free, and loving, and eager sacrifice of our Lord, says in our hearts, Would God I could thus live in God and for God, and so become one with perfect purity and justice, with infinite love and power.

The Paschal Lamb then was in the first place the acknowledgment by the Israelites that they belonged to God. The lamb was offered to God, not as being itself anything worthy of God's acceptance, but merely as a way of saying to God that the family who offered it gave themselves up as entirely to Him. But by thus becoming a kind of substitute for the family, it saved the firstborn from death. God did not wish to smite Israel, but to save them. He did not wish to confound them with the Egyptians, and make an indiscriminate slaughter. But God did not simply omit the Israelite houses, and pick out the Egyptian ones throughout the land. He left it to the choice of the people whether they would accept His deliverance and belong to Him or not. He told them that every home would be safe, on the door-post of which there was visible the blood of the lamb. The blood of the lamb

thus provided a refuge for the people, a shelter from death which otherwise would have fallen upon them. The angel of judgment was to recognise no distinction between Israelite and Egyptian save this of the sprinkled, stained door-posts. Death was to enter every house where the blood was not visible; mercy was to rest on every family that dwelt under this sign. God's judgment was out that night all over the land, and no difference of race was made anything of. They who had disregarded the use of the blood would have no time to object, We be Abraham's seed. God meant that they should all be rescued, but He knew that it was quite possible that some had become so entangled with Egypt that they would be unwilling to leave it, and He would not force any—we may say He *could* not force any—to yield themselves to Him. This rendering of ourselves to God must be a free act on our part; it must be the deliberate and true act of a soul that feels convinced of the poverty and wretchedness of all life that is not serving God. And God left it in the choice of each family—they might or might not use the blood, as they pleased. But wherever it was used, safety and deliverance were thereby secured. Wherever the lamb was slain in acknowledgment that the family belonged to God, God dealt with them as with His own. Wherever there was no such acknowledgment, they were dealt with as those who preferred to be God's enemies.

And now Christ our Passover is slain, and we are asked to determine the application of Christ's sacrifice, to say whether we will use it or no. We are not asked to add anything to the efficacy of that sacrifice, but only to avail ourselves of it. Passing through the streets of the Egyptian cities on the night of the Passover, you could have told who trusted God and who did not. Wherever there was faith there was a man in the twilight with his basin of blood and bunch of hyssop, sprinkling his lintel and then going in and shutting his door, resolved that no solicitation should tempt him from behind the blood till the angel was by. He took God at His word; he believed God meant to deliver him, and he did what he was told was his part. The result was that he was rescued from Egyptian bondage. God now desires that we be separated from everything which prevents us from gladly serving Him, from every evil bias in us which prevents us from delighting in God, from all that makes us feel guilty and unhappy, from all sin that enchains us and makes our future hopeless and dark. God calls us to Himself, meaning that we shall one day get forever past all that has made us unfaithful to Him and all that has made it impossible for us to find deep and lasting pleasure in serving Him. To us He throws open a way out from all bondage, and from all that gives us the spirit of slaves; He gives us the opportunity of following Him into real and free life, into glad fellowship with Him and joyful partnership in His ever beneficent and progressive work. What response are we making? In the face of the varied difficulties and deluding appearances of this life, in the face of the complexity and inveterate hold of sin, can you believe that God seeks to deliver you and even now designs for you a life that is worthy of His greatness and love, a life which shall perfectly satisfy you and give play to all your worthy desires and energies?

Sacrifices were in old times accompanied by



feasts in which the reconciled God and His worshippers ate together. In the feast of Passover the lamb which had been used as a sacrifice was consumed as food to strengthen the Israelites for their exodus. This idea Paul here adapts to his present purpose. "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us," he says, "let us therefore keep the feast." The whole life of the Christian is a festal celebration; his strength is maintained by that which has given him peace with God. By Christ's death God reconciles us to Himself; out of Christ we continually receive what fits us to serve God as His free people. Every Christian should aim at making his life a celebration of the true deliverance Christ has accomplished for us. We should see that our life is a true exodus, and being so it will bear marks of triumph and of freedom. To feed upon Christ, joyfully to assimilate all that is in Him to our own character, it is this which makes life festal, which turns faintness into abounding strength, and brings zest and appetite into monotonous labour.

But Paul's purpose in introducing the idea of the Passover is rather to enforce his injunction to the Corinthians to purge their communion of all defilement. "Let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness!" Leaven was judged unclean, because fermentation is one form of corruption. This impurity was not to be touched by the holy people during their festival week. This was secured at the first keeping of the Passover by the suddenness of the exodus when the people fled with their kneading boards on their shoulders and had no time to take leaven, and had therefore no choice but to keep God's command and eat unleavened bread. And so scrupulously did the people at all times observe this that before the day of the feast they used to sweep their houses and search the dark corners with candles, lest a morsel of leaven should be found among them. Thus would Paul have all Christians be separate from the rotting, fermenting results of the old life. So suddenly would he have us issue from it and so clean would he have us leave it all behind us. A *little* leaven leaveneth the whole lump; therefore must we be careful, if we would keep this precept and be clean, to search into even unlikely corners in our hearts and lives, and as with the candle of the Lord make diligent search for the tainting remnant.

It is the purpose to keep the feast faithfully, and live as those who are delivered from bondage, which reveals in our consciousness how much we have to put away, and how much of the old life is following on into the new. Habits, feelings, likings and dislikings, all go with us. The unleavened bread of holiness and of a life bound to and ruled by the earnest and godly life of Christ, seems flat and insipid, and we crave something more stimulating to the appetite. The old intolerance of regular, intelligent, continuous prayer, the old willingness to find a rest in this world, must be purged out as leaven which will alter the whole character of our life. Are our holy days holidays, or do we endure holiness of thought and feeling mainly on the consideration that holiness is but for a season? Patiently and believingly resist the stirrings of the old nature. Measure all that rises in you and all that quickens your blood and stirs your appetite by the death and spirit of Christ.

Sever yourself determinedly from all that alienates you from Him. The old life and the new should not run parallel with one another so that you can pass from the one to the other. They are not side by side, but end to end; the one all preceding the other, the one ceasing and terminating where the other begins.

The old leaven is to be put away: "the leaven of malice and wickedness," the bad-heartedness that is not seen to be bad till brought into the light of Christ's spirit; the spiteful, vindictive, and selfish feelings that are almost expected in society, these are to be put away; and in their stead "the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" is to be introduced. Above all things, Paul would say, let us be sincere. The word "sincere" sets before the mind the natural image from which the moral quality takes its name, the honey free from the smallest particle of wax, pure and pellucid. The word which Paul himself, using his own language, here sets down, conveys a similar idea. It is a word derived from the custom of judging the purity of liquids or the texture of cloths by holding them between the eye and the sun. What Paul desiderates in the Christian character is a quality which can stand this extreme test, and does not need to be seen only in an artificial light. He wants a pure transparent sincerity; he wants what is to its finest thread genuine; an acceptance of Christ which is real, and which is rich in eternal results.

Are we living a genuine and true life? Are we living up to what we know to be the truth about life? Christ has given us the true estimate of this world and all that is in it, He has measured for us God's requirements, He has shown us what is the truth about God's love;—are we living in this truth? Do we not find that in our best intentions there is some mixture of foreign elements, and in our most assured choice of Christ some remaining elements which will lead us back from our choice? Even while we own Christ as our Saviour from sin, we are but half-inclined to go out from its bondage. We pray God for deliverance, and when He throws wide open before us the gate that leads away from temptation, we refuse to see it, or hesitate until again it is closed. We know how we may become holy, and yet will not use our knowledge.

Let us, whatever else, be genuine. Let us not trifle with the purpose and requirements of Christ. In our deepest and clearest consciousness we see that Christ does open the way to the true life of man; that it is our part to make room for this self-sacrificing life in our own day and in our own circumstances; that until we do so we can only by courtesy be called Christians. The convictions and beliefs which Christ inspires are convictions and beliefs about what we should be, and what Christ means all human life to be, and until these convictions and beliefs are embodied in our actual living selves, and in our conduct and life, we feel that we are not genuine. Time will bring us no relief from this humiliating position, unless time brings us at length to yield ourselves freely to Christ's Spirit, and unless, instead of looking at the kingdom He seeks to establish as a quite impossible Utopia, we set ourselves resolutely and wholly to aid in the annexing to His rule our own little world of business and of all the relations of life. To have convictions is well, but



if these convictions are not embodied in our life, then we lose our life, and our house is built on sand.

## CHAPTER IX.

### ON GOING TO LAW.

ST. PAUL here gives his judgment on the litigiousness of the Corinthians. The Greeks, in general, were fond of going to law. They were not only quarrelsome, but they seemed to derive an excitement pleasant to their frivolous nature in the suspense and uncertainty of cases before the courts. The converts to Christianity seemed not to have discarded this taste, and as a habit of going to law not merely involved great loss of time, but was also dangerous to the feeling of brotherhood which should exist among Christians, St. Paul takes the opportunity to throw in some advice on the subject. He has been telling them they have nothing to do with judging the heathen; he now proceeds to remind them that they ought not to go to law before the heathen. He feared that an unseemly wrangling among Christians might convey to the heathen quite an erroneous impression of the nature of their religion. There was, to his mind, something incongruous, something monstrous, in brother going to law with brother. What was that brotherhood worth that could not bear a little wrong? How could he continue to speak of Christian love, if Christians were to bite and devour one another? How could he preach the superiority of Christianity to heathenism if Christians had so little common sense, so little *esprit de corps*, so little mutual forbearance, that they must call in a heathen to settle their disputes for them? It seemed to Paul to be a losing of caste for Christians to proclaim their insufficiency to carry on their own affairs without the aid of heathen. It seemed to him a public confession that Christianity was not sufficient for the needs of its adherents.

The reasons which St. Paul adduces to give weight to his rebuke are important.

I. The saints are destined to judge the world, to judge angels; that is to say, to judge persons in separation from earthly interests, to judge unclothed detached spirits, to ascertain what is spiritually good and spiritually evil. Shall they not then be considered fit to judge little worldly matters, matters of *£ s. d.*, matters of property and of bargain? This statement that the saints shall judge the world is one of those broad widely-suggestive statements with which St. Paul from time to time surprises us, making them casually, as if he had many more equally astounding facts in his knowledge which he might also reveal if he had leisure. It is difficult to grasp the statements which he makes in this style; it is also difficult to link a truth so revealed to the truths amid which we are now living; it is difficult even to ascertain with precision the bearing and significance of it.

It seems plain, however, that whatever else may be implied in this statement, and in whatever way it is to be fulfilled, St. Paul meant that ultimately, in that final state of things towards which all present things are growing and travelling, the men who are holy shall be

at the head of affairs, acknowledged as the fittest to discern between right and wrong; and also that the germ and first principles of this final state of things are already implanted in the world by the Christian religion—two very important truths, certainly, to those who believe them. The precise form of the final judgment and future government of the world we cannot predict: but from this statement a bright ray of light shoots into the darkness, and shows us that the saints, *i. e.*, the servants of Christ, are to have the responsibility of pronouncing judgment on character, and of allotting destiny, reward or punishment. We shrink from such a thought; not, indeed, that we are slow to pronounce judgment upon our fellow-men, but to do so officially, and in connection with definite results, seems a responsibility too heavy for merely human judges to sustain. But why men should not judge men hereafter as they do judge them now, we do not see. If we, in this present world, submit ourselves to those who have knowledge of law and ordinary justice, we may well be content to be judged in the world to come by those whose holiness has been matured by personal strife against evil, by sustained efforts to cleanse their souls from bias, from envy, from haste, from harshness, from all that hinders them from seeing and loving the truth. Holiness, or likeness to God, assimilation to His mind, formed by the constant desire to judge of things in this world as He judges, and to love truly all that He loves, this quality is surely worthy to be at the head. In that future kingdom of God in which all things are to have their proper place, and are to be ranked according to their real worth, holiness must come to the supremacy.

But equally worthy of remark is St. Paul's *inference* from the fact that holiness shall eventually be supreme. His inference is that it ought *now* to be regarded as competent to settle the petty disputes which arise among us. "If we are to judge angels, much more the things that pertain to this life." We can only arrive at any dignity by perseveringly seeking it. If the future kingdom of God is to be a perfect kingdom, it can only be as its subjects carry into it characters which have been strongly tending towards perfection. It is not the future that is to make us, but we who are to make the future. The kingdom of God is within us; if not there, in our own dispositions and likings, it is nowhere. Heaven will be what its inhabitants make it. Earth is not heaven only because men decline to make it so. We do not know the forms which society will assume in the world to come, when men will be grouped, not by families and blood-relationships, and the necessary requirements of physical life, but according to their character and moral value, their spiritual affinities and capacities for usefulness. But though we cannot say exactly how men will be grouped, nor how they will find expression for all that intense emotion and eager activity which in this life creates adventure, war, politics, speculation, inventions of all kinds, we do know that wherever there are men there must be society, there must be men not isolated and solitary, but working together and depending one on the other; and that there will therefore be difficult complications of interest and obscure relations of man to man very similar to those which arise in this world; but that those diffi-



culties will be removed without passion and wrangling and the interference of force. A heaven and an earth there will be; but "a new heaven and a new earth." The outer framework will be very much the same, but the inner spirit and life very different. But it is not the altered place or time that is to produce in us this change of spirit; we are to find it there only if we carry it with us. St. Paul takes for granted that the principles which are to be perfectly and exclusively manifested in the world to come, are now cherished by Christians. And as there will be no differences in heaven which cannot be adjusted without appeal to an authority which can silence and reconcile the disputants, so there ought to be, among the heirs of heaven, no going to law now.

St. Paul, therefore, while he contrasts the subjects in which a lawyer-like mind will find employment in this world and the next, reminds us that those who are here trained to understand character, and to discern where right and justice lie, will be in no want of employment in the world to come. The matters which come before our courts, or which are referred privately to lawyers, may often be in themselves very paltry. A vast proportion of legal business is created by changes from which the future life is exempt: changes consequent on death, on marriage, on pecuniary disasters. But underneath such suits as these the keenest of human feelings are at work, and it is often in the power of a lawyer to give a man advice which will save his conscience from a life-long stain, or which will bring comfort into a family instead of heart-burning, and plenty in place of penury. The physician keeps us in life; the minister of Christ tells us on what principles we ought to live; but the lawyer takes our hand at every great practical step in life, and it is his function (and surely there is none higher) to insist on a conscientious use of money, to point out the just claims which others have upon us, to show us the right and the wrong in all our ordinary affairs, and thus to bring justice and mercy down from heaven and make them familiar to the market-place. And therefore many of the finest characters and best intellects have devoted themselves, and always will devote themselves, to this profession. It may attract many from less lofty motives; but it always will attract those who are concerned to save men from practical folly, and who wish to see the highest principles brought into direct contact with human affairs. If the legal mind degenerates into a mere memory for technicalities and acuteness in applying forms, nothing can be more contemptible or dangerous to the character; but if it takes to do with real things, and not with forms only, and tries to see what equity requires, and not merely what the letter of the law enjoins, and seeks to forward the well-being of men, then surely there is no profession in which there is such abundant opportunity of earning the beatitude which says, "Blessed are the peacemakers," none in which the senses can better be exercised to discern between good and evil, none in which men may better be prepared for the higher requirements of a heavenly society in which some are made rulers over ten cities.

II. The second confirmation of his rebuke St. Paul brings forward in the fifth verse: "Is there not a wise man among yourselves?" "A

wise man" was the technical term for a judge in the Hebrew courts.

To understand Paul's position we must bear in mind that among the Jews there was no distinction between Church and State. The courts appointed for the determination of the minor causes in each locality were composed of the same persons who constituted the eldership of the synagogue. In the synagogue and by the eldership offenders were both tried and punished. The Rabbis said, "He who brings lawsuits of Israel before a heathen tribunal profanes the Name, and does homage to idolatry; for when *our enemies* are *judges* (Deut. xxxii. 31) it is a testimony to the superiority of their religion." This idea passed over from Judaism to Christianity; and Paul considers it a scandal that "brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers." And even a century after Paul's time the rule of the Christian Church was "Let not those who have disputes go to law before the civil powers, but let them by all means be reconciled by the elders of the Church, and let them readily yield to their decision." And as late as our own day we find an Arab sheikh complaining that Christian Copts come to him, a Mohammedan, to settle their disputes and "won't go and be settled by the priest out of the Gospels."

Did Paul then mean that such legal cases as are now tried in our civil courts should be settled by non-professional men? Did he mean that ecclesiastical courts should take out of the hands of the civil magistrate all pleas regarding property, all disputes about commercial transactions? Did he foresee none of the great evils that have arisen wherever Church or State has not respected the province of the other, and was he prepared to put the power of the sword into the hands of the ecclesiastics? We think no one can read either his life or his writings without seeing that this was not his meaning. He taught men to submit themselves to the powers that then were—*i. e.*, to the heathen magistrates of Rome—and he himself appealed to Cæsar. He had no notion of subverting the ordinary legal procedure and civil courts, but he would fain have deprived them of much of their practice. He thought it might be expected that Christians would never be so determinedly rancorous or so blindly covetous but that their disputes might be settled by private and friendly advice. He gives no orders about constituting new courts and appointing new statutes and forms of procedure; he has no idea of transferring into the Church all the paraphernalia of civil courts: but he maintains that if a Christian community be in a healthy state, few quarrels will be referred for settlement to a court of law. Courts of law are necessary evils, which will be less and less patronised in proportion as Christian feeling and principle prevail.

This rebuke is applicable even to a community like our own, in which the courts of law are not heathen, but Christian; and the principle on which the rebuke is based is one that has gradually worked its way into the heart of the community. It is felt, felt now even by nations as well as by individuals, that if a dispute can be settled by arbitration, this is not only cheaper, quicker, and equally satisfactory, but that it is a more generous and Christian way of getting justice done. Those who hold office in the



Church may not always happen to be suitable arbitrators; they may not have the technical and special knowledge requisite: but Paul's counsel is acted on if disputes among Christians be somehow adjusted in a friendly way, and without the interference of an external authority. Christian people may need legal advice; they may not know what the right and wrong of a complicated case are; they may be truly at a loss to understand how much is justly theirs and how much their neighbour's; they may often need professional aid to shed light on a transaction: but when two Christians go to law in a spirit of rancour, resolved to make good their own just claims, and to enforce by the authority of law what they cannot compass by right feeling, this only proves that their worldliness is stronger than their Christianity. St. Paul thinks it a scandal and a degradation when Christians need to appeal to law against one another. It is a confession that Christian principle is in their case insufficient by itself to carry them through the practical difficulties of life.

But some one will say to this, as to every unworldly, truly Christian, and therefore novel and difficult counsel, "It savours of theory and of romance; a man cannot act it out unless he is prepared to be duped, and cheated, and imposed upon. It is a theory that, if carried out, must end in beggary." Just as if the world could be regenerated by anything that is not apparently romantic! If a greater good is to be reached, it must be by some way that men have not tried before. The kingdoms of this world will not become the kingdom of Christ by the admission into our conduct of only that which men have tried and found to be practicable, and void of all risk, and requiring no devotion or sacrifice. If then, any one says, "But if there is to be no going to law, if we are not to force a man to give us our own, we must continually be losers," the reply of a well-known Kincardineshire lawyer might suffice: "Don't go to law if yielding does not cost you more than forty shillings in the pound." And from a different point of view St. Paul replies, "Well, and what though you be losers? The kingdom you belong to is not meat and drink, but righteousness." If a man says, "We must have some redress, some authority to extort the dues that are not freely given; we must strike when we are struck; when a man takes our coat, we must summon him, or he will take our cloak next," St. Paul replies, "Well, if this *be* the alternative, if you must either push your own claims and insist upon your rights, or suffer by assuming the meekness and gentleness of your Master, why do you not rather take wrong? why do you not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? It may be quite true that if you turn the other cheek, it also will be smitten. It may be very likely that a greedy competitor will be so little abashed by your meekness, and so little struck by your magnanimity in giving way to some of his demands, that he will even be encouraged to greater extortions. It is quite probable that if you act as your Master did, you will be as ill off in this world as He was. But is that any reason why you should at once call Him your Master and refuse to obey His precepts and follow His example?" One thing is certain: that so long as men honestly accepted Christ's words in their plain meaning,

and followed Him in His own way, making light of worldly loss, Christianity was believed in and rapidly extended. It was seen to be a new moral power among men, and was welcomed as such, until a large part of the world received it; but its victory was its defeat. Once it became the fashion, once it became popular, the heart of it was eaten out. As soon as it became a religion without hardship, it became a religion without vitality.

St. Paul then shows no hesitation about pushing his doctrine to its consequences. He sees that the real cure of wrangling, and of fraud, and of war is not litigation, nor any outward restraint that can be laid on the wrong-doer, but meekness, and unselfishness, and unworldliness on the part of those who suffer wrong. The world has laughed at this theory of social regeneration all along; a few men in each generation have believed in it, and have been ridiculed for their belief. At the same time, the world itself is aware, or should be aware, that its own remedies have utterly failed. Has war taught nations moderation in their ambition? Has it saved the world from the calamities which it is said would ensue were any one nation to prefer submitting to injustice rather than going to war? Have the outward restraints of law made men more just or less avaricious? There has been time to test the power of law to repress crime, and to compel men to honesty and justice. Can any one say it has been so successful that it must be looked to as the great means of regenerating society, of bringing society into that healthy and ideal state which statesmen work for, and for which the people inarticulately sigh? Does not St. James come nearer the mark when he says, "Whence come wars and fightings? Come they not hence, even of the lusts that war in your members?" — *i. e.*, from the restless ambitions, and appetites, and longings of men who seek their all in this world? And if that is their source, it is to that we must apply the remedy. Law is necessary for restraining the expressions of a vicious nature, but law is insufficient to remove the possibility of these expressions by healing the nature. This can only be done by the diffusion of unworldliness and unselfishness. And it is Christians who are responsible for diffusing this unworldly spirit, and who must diffuse it, not by talk and advice, but by practice and example, by themselves showing what unselfishness is, rebuking covetousness by yielding to its demands, shaming all wrong-doing by refusing to retaliate while they expose its guilt.

While therefore it is a mistake to suppose that all the laws which are to rule in the perfected kingdom of God can find immediate and unmodified expression in this present world, it is our part to find for them an introduction into the world in every case in which it is possible to apply them. Those laws which are to be our sole rule when we are perfect cannot always be immediately applied now. For example, we all believe that ultimately love will be the only motive, that all service of God and of one another will eventually spring solely from our desire to serve because we love. And because this is so, some persons have thought that love should be the only motive now, and that obedience which is procured by fear is useless; that preachers ought to appeal only to the highest parts of man's nature, and not at all to those



which are lower; and that parents should never threaten punishment nor enforce obedience. But the testimony of one of the most genial and successful of preachers is that "of all the persons to whom his ministry had been efficacious *only one* had received the first effectual impressions from the gentle and attractive aspects of religion, all the rest from the awful and alarming ones—the appeals to fear." Take, again, the testimony of one of the wisest and most successful of our schoolmasters. "I can't rule my boys," he says, "by the law of love. If they were angels or professors, I might; but as they are only boys, I find it necessary to make them fear me first, and then take my chance of their love afterwards. By this plan I find that I generally get both; by reversing the process I should in most cases get neither." And God, though slow to anger and not easily provoked, scourgeth every son whom He receiveth, not dealing with us now as He will deal with us when perfect love has cast out its preparative fear. So, in regard to the matter before us, there must be an aim and striving towards the perfect state in which there shall be no going to law, no settling of matters by appeal to anything outside the heart of the persons interested. But while we aim at this, and seek to give it prevalence, we shall also be occasionally forced back upon the severer and more external means of self-defence. The members of Christ's Church are those on whom the burden falls of giving prevalence to these Christian principles. It is incumbent upon them to show, even at cost to themselves, that there are higher, better, and more enduring principles than law, and the customs of trade, and the ways of the world. And however difficult it may be *theoretically* to hold the balance between justice and mercy, between worldly sharpness and Christian meekness, we all know that there are some who practically exhibit a large measure of this Christian temper, who prefer to take wrong and to suffer quietly rather than to expose the wickedness of others, or to resent their unjust claims, or to complain of their unfair usage. And whatever the most worldly of us may think of such conduct, however we may smile at it as weak, there is no one of us but also pays his tribute of respect to those who suffer wrong, loss, detraction, with a meek and cheerful patience; and whatever be the lot of such sufferers in a world where men are too busy in pushing their worldly prospects to understand those who are not of this world, we have no doubt in what esteem they will be held and what reward they will receive in a world where the Lamb is on the throne, and meek self-sacrifice is honestly worshipped as the highest quality, whether in God or in man.

Paul knows that the Christian conscience is with him when he declares that men should rather suffer wrong than bring reproach on the Christian name: "Know ye not that wrong-doers shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God." And yet how little do men seem to take to heart the great fact that they are travelling forward to a state in which nothing uncongenial to the Spirit of Christ can possibly find place. Do they think of the future at all? Do they believe that a state of things ruled by the Spirit of Christ is to follow

this? And what preparation do they make? Is it not the height of folly to suppose that the selfishness and greed, the indolence and frivolity, the dreamy unreality and worldliness, which we suffer to grow upon us here, will give us entrance into the kingdom of God? The seaman who means to winter in the Arctic circle might as reasonably go with a single month's provisions and clothes suited to the tropics. There are a reason and a law in things; and if we are not assimilated to the Spirit of Christ now, we can have no part in His kingdom. If now our interest, and pursuits, and pleasures are all found in what gratifies selfishness and worldliness, it is impossible we can find a place in that kingdom which is all unselfishness and unworldliness. "Be not deceived." The spiritual world is a reality, and the godliness and Christlikeness that compose it must also be realities. Put away from you the fatuous idea that things will somehow come all right, and that your character will adapt itself to changed surroundings. It is not so; nothing that defiles can find entrance into the kingdom of God, but only those who are "sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God."

## CHAPTER X.

### FORNICATION.

IN remonstrating with the Corinthians for their litigiousness, Paul was forcibly reminded how imperfectly his converts understood the moral requirements of the kingdom of God. Apparently, too, he had reason to believe that they were not only content to remain on a low moral plane, but actually quoted some of his own favourite sayings in defence of immoral practices. After warning them, therefore, that only those who were sanctified could belong to the kingdom of God and specifying certain kinds of wrong-doing which must for ever be excluded from that kingdom, he goes on to explain how they had misapprehended him if they thought that any principle of his could give colour to immorality. The Corinthians had apparently learned to argue that if, as Paul had so often and emphatically told them, all things were lawful to them, then this commonest of Greek indulgences was lawful; if abstaining from the meat which had been killed in a heathen temple was a matter of moral indifference which Christians might or might not practise, as they pleased, then this other common accompaniment of idolatry was also a matter of indifference and not in itself wrong.

To understand this Corinthian obliquity of moral vision it must be borne in mind that licentious rites were a common accompaniment of pagan worship, and especially in Corinth idolatry might have been briefly described as the performance of Balaam's instructions to the Israelites: the eating of things sacrificed to idols and the committing of fornication. The temples were often scenes of revelry and debauchery such as happily have become incredible to a modern mind. But not at once could men emerging from a religion so slenderly connected with morality apprehend what Christianity required of them. When they abandoned the temple-worship, were they also to abstain



from eating the flesh offered for sale in the open market, and which had first been sacrificed to an idol? Might they not by partaking of such flesh become partakers in the sin of idolatry? To this Paul replied, Do not too scrupulously inquire into the previous history of your dinner; the meat has no moral taint; all things are lawful for you. This was reasonable; but then how about the other accompaniment of idolatry? Was it also a thing of indifference? Can we apply the same reasoning to it? It was this insinuation which called forth the emphatic condemnation which Paul utters in this paragraph.

The great principle of Christian liberty, "All things are lawful for me," Paul now sees he must guard against abuse by adding, "But all things are not expedient." The law and its modification are fully explained in a subsequent passage of the Epistle (viii.; x. 23, etc.). Here it may be enough to say that Paul seeks to impress on his readers that the question of duty is not answered by simply ascertaining what is lawful; we must also ask whether the practice or act contemplated is expedient. Though it may be impossible to prove that this or that practice is wrong in every case, we have still to ask, Does it advance what is good in us; is its bearing on society good or evil; will it in present circumstances and in the instance we contemplate give rise to misunderstandings and evil thoughts? The Christian is a law to himself; he has an internal guide that sets him above external rules. Very true; but that guide leads all those who possess it to a higher life than the law leads to, and proves its presence by teaching a man to consider, not how much indulgence he may enjoy without transgressing the letter of the law, but how he can most advantageously use his time and best forward what is highest in himself and in others.

Again, "all things are lawful for me;" all things are in my power. Yes, but for that very reason "I will not be brought under the power of any." "The reasonable use of my liberty cannot go the length of involving my own loss of it."\* I am free from the law; I will not on that account become the slave of indulgence. As Carlyle puts it, "enjoying things which are pleasant—that is not the evil; it is the reducing of our moral self to slavery by them that is. Let a man assert withal that he is king over his habitudes; that he could and would shake them off on cause shown: this is an excellent law." There are several practices and habits which no one would call immoral or sinful, but which enslave a man quite as much as worse habits. He is no longer a free man; he is uneasy and restless, and cannot settle to his work until he obeys the craving he has created. And it is the very lawfulness of these indulgences which has ensnared him. Had they been sinful, the Christian man would not have indulged in them; but being in his power, they have now assumed power over him. They have power to compel him to waste his time, his money, sometimes even his health. He alone attains the true dignity and freedom of the Christian man who can say, with Paul, "I know both how to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need;" "All things are in my power, but I will not be brought under the power of any."

\* Godet.

Paul then proceeds more explicitly to apply these principles to the matter in hand. The Corinthians argued that if meats were morally indifferent, a man being morally neither the better nor the worse for eating food which had been offered in an idol's temple, so also a man was neither better nor worse for fornication. To expose the error of this reasoning Paul draws a remarkable distinction between the digestive, nutritive organs of the body and the body as a whole. Paul believed that the body was an essential part of human nature, and that in the future life the natural body would give place to the spiritual body. He believed also that the spiritual body was connected with, and had its birthplace in, the natural body, so that the body we now wear is to be represented by that finer and more spiritual organism we are hereafter to be clothed in. The connection of that future body with the physical world and its dependence on material things we cannot understand; but in some way inconceivable by us it is to carry on the identity of our present body, and thereby it reflects a sacredness and significance on this body. The body of the full-grown man or of the white-bearded patriarch is very different from that of the babe in its mother's arms, but there is a continuity that links them together and gives them identity. So the future body may be very different from and yet the same as the present. At the same time, the organs which merely serve for the maintenance of our present natural body will be unnecessary and out of place in the future body, which is spiritual in its origin and in its maintenance. Paul therefore distinguishes between the organs of nutrition and that body which is part of our permanent individuality, and which by some unimaginable process is to flower into an everlasting body. The digestive organs of the body have their use and their destiny, and the body as a whole has its use and destiny. These two differ from one another; and if you are to argue from the one to the other, you must keep in view this distinction. "Meats for the belly and the belly for meats; and God shall destroy both it and them: but the body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body, and God shall raise up the one as He has raised up the other." The organs of nutrition have a present use; they are made for meats, and have a natural correspondence with meats. Any meat which the digestive organs approve is allowable. The conscience has to do with meat only through these organs. It must listen to their representations; and if they approve of certain qualities and quantities of food, the conscience confirms this decision: approves when the man uses the food best for these organs; disapproves when he uses consciously and self-indulgently what is bad for them. "Meats for the belly and the belly for meats"—they claim each other as their mutual, God-appointed counterparts. By eating you are not perverting your bodily organs to a use not intended for them; you are putting them to the use God meant them to serve.

Besides, these organs form no part of the future spiritual body. They pass away with the meats for which they were made. God shall destroy both the meats that are requisite for life in this world, and the organs needful for deriving sustenance from them. They serve a temporary purpose, like the houses we live



in and the clothes we wear; and as we are not morally better because we live in a stone house, and not in a brick one, or because we wear woollens, and not cotton—so long as we do what is best to keep us in life—so neither is there any moral difference in meats—a remarkable conclusion for a Jew to come to, whose religion had taught him to hold so many forms of food in abhorrence.

But the body as a whole—for what is it made? These organs of nutrition fulfil their function when they lead you to eat such meat as sustains you in life; when does the body fulfil its function? What is its object and end? For what purpose have we a body? Paul is never afraid to suggest the largest questions, neither is he afraid to give his answer. "The body," he says, "is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body." Here also there is a mutual correspondence and fitness.

"The body is for the Lord." Paul was addressing Christians, and this no Christian would be disposed to deny. Every Christian is conscious that the body would not fulfil its end and purpose unless it were consecrated to the Lord and informed by His Spirit. The organism by which we come into contact with the world outside ourselves is not the unwieldy, hindering, irredeemable partner of the spirit, but is designed to be the vehicle of spiritual faculties and the efficient agent of our Lord's purposes. It must not be looked upon with resentment, pity, or contempt, but rather as essential to our human nature and to the fulfilment of the Lord's design as the Saviour of the world and the Head of humanity. It was through the body of the Lord that the great facts of our redemption were accomplished. It was the instrument of the incarnation and of the manifestation of God among men, of the death and the resurrection by which we are saved. And as in His own body Christ was incarnate among men, so now it is by means of the bodily existence and energies of His people on earth that He extends His influence.

The body then is for the Lord. He finds in it His needed instrument; without it He cannot accomplish His will. And the Lord is for the body. Without Him the body cannot develop into all it is intended to be. It has a great future as well as the soul. Our adoption as God's children is, in Paul's view, incomplete until the body also is redeemed and has fought its way through sickness, base uses, death, and dissolution into likeness to the glorified body of Christ. This body which we now identify with ourselves, and apart from which it is difficult to conceive of ourselves, is not the mere temporary lodging of the soul, which in a few years must be abandoned; but it is destined to preserve its identity through all coming changes, so that it will be recognisable still as our body. But this cannot be believed, far less accomplished, save by faith in the fact that God has raised up the Lord Jesus and will with Him raise us also. Otherwise the future of the body seems brief and calamitous. Death seems plainly to say, There is an end of all that is physical. Yes, replies the resurrection of the Lord; in death there is an end of this natural body; but death disengages the spiritual body from the natural, and clothes the spirit in a more fitting garb. Understand this we cannot, any more than we understand why a large mass

draws to itself smaller masses; but believe it we can in presence of Christ's resurrection.

The Lord then is for the body, because in the Lord the body has a future opened to it and present connections and uses which prepare it for that future. It is the Spirit of Christ who is, within us, the earnest of that future, and who forms us for it, inclining us while in the body and by means of it to sow to the Spirit and thus to reap life everlasting. Without Christ we cannot have this Spirit, nor the spiritual body He forms. The only future of the body we dare to look at without a shudder is the future it has in the Lord. God has sent Christ to secure for the body redemption from the fate which naturally awaits it, and apart from Christ it has no outlook but the worst. The Lord is for the body, and as well might we try to sustain the body now without food as to have any endurable future for it without the Lord.

But if the body is thus closely united to Christ in its present use and in its destiny, if its proper function and fit development can only be realised by a true fellowship with Christ, then the inference is self-evident that it must be carefully guarded from such uses and impurities as involve rupture with Christ. "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid." The Christian is one spirit with Christ. There is a real community of spiritual life between them. It is the spirit which possessed Christ which now possesses the Christian. He has the same aims, the same motives, the same view of life, the same hope, as his Lord. It is in Christ he seeks to live, and he has no stronger desire than to be used for His purposes. That Christ would use him as He used the members of His own body while on earth, that there might be the same direct influence and moving power of the Lord's Spirit, the same ready and instinctive response to the Lord's will, the same solidarity between himself and the Lord as between Christ's body and Christ's Spirit—this is the Christian's desire. To have his body a member of Christ—this is his happiness. To be one in will with Him who has brought by His own goodness the light of heaven into the darkness of earth, to learn to know Him and to love Him by serving Him and by measuring His love with all the needs of earth—this is his life. To be so united to Christ in all that is deepest in his nature that he knows he can never be separated from Him, but must go forward to the happy destiny which his Lord already enjoys—this is the Christian's joy; and it is made possible to every man.

Possible to every man is this personal union to Christ, but to be united thus in one Spirit to Christ and at the same time to be united to impurity is for ever impossible. To be one with Christ in spirit and at the same time to be one in body with what is spiritually defiled is impossible, and the very idea is monstrous. Devotedness to Christ is possible, but it is incompatible with any act which means that we become one in body with what is morally polluted. If the Christian is as truly a member of Christ's body as were the hands and eyes of the body He wore on earth, then the mind shrinks, as from blasphemy, from following out the thought of Paul. And if any frivolous Co-



rinthian still objected that such acts went no deeper than the eating of food ceremonially unclean, that they belonged to the body that was to be destroyed, Paul says, It is not so; these acts are full of the deepest moral significance: they were intended by God to be *the expression of inward union*, and they have that significance whether you shut your eyes to it or not.

And this is what Paul means when he goes on to say, "Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body." He does not mean that this is the only sin committed by the body, for of many other sins the body is the agent, as in murder, lying, blasphemy, robbery, and thieving. Neither does he mean that this is the only sin to which bodily appetite instigates, for gluttony and drunkenness equally take their rise in bodily appetite. But he means that this is the only sin in which the present connection of the body with Christ and its future destiny in Him are directly sinned against. This is the only sin, he means, which by its very nature alienates the body from Christ, its proper Partner. Other sins indirectly involve separation from Christ; this explicitly and directly transfers allegiance and sunders our union with Him. By this sin a man detaches himself from Christ; he professes to be united to what is incompatible with Christ.

These weighty reasonings and warm admonitions, into which Paul throws his whole energy, are concluded by the statement of a twofold truth which is of much wider application than to the matter in hand: "Ye are bought with a price to be the temple of the Holy Ghost." We are bought with a price, and are no longer our own. The realities underlying these words are gladly owned in every Christian consciousness. God has caused us to recognise how truly we are His by showing us that He has grudged nothing which can restore us fully to Him. He has bought us, not with any of those prices the wealthy can pay without sacrifice and without profound interest and feeling, but with that price which is coined and issued by love, which carries in it the token and pledge of love, and which therefore wins us wholly. In our relations with God we have never to do with any merely formal transaction performed for the sake of keeping up appearances, saving the proprieties, or satisfying the letter of law, but always with what is necessary in the nature of things, with what is real, with the very God of truth, the centre and source of all reality. God has made us His own, has won our hearts and wills to Himself, by manifesting His love in ways that touch and move us, and for purposes absolutely needful. God means that our attachment to Him should be real and permanent, and He has based it on the most reasonable grounds. He means that we should be His, not only because we are His creatures or because He has an indefeasible right to our service as the source of our life; but He means that our hearts should be His, and that we should be drawn to live and labour for His ends, convinced in our reason that this is our happiness and attracted by His love to serve Him. He means this; and ac-

cordingly He has bought us, has given us reason to become His, has made such advances as ought to win us, has not grudged to show His earnest desire for our love by Himself making sacrifices and declaring that He loves us. It is a thought the humble heart can scarcely endure that it is loved by God, that it has been counted so precious in God's sight that Divine love and sacrifice should have been spent on its restoration. It is a thought that overwhelms the believing heart, but, believed in, it wins the soul eternally to God.

We are not our own; we belong to Him who has loved us most; and His love will be satisfied when we suffer Him to dwell in us, so that we shall be His temples, and shall glorify Him in body and in spirit. God claims our body as well as our spirit; He has a purpose for our body as well as for our spirit. Our body is to glorify Him in the future and now: in the future, by exhibiting how the Divine wisdom has triumphed over all that threatens the body, and has used all the present bodily experiences for preparing a permanent spiritual embodiment of all human faculties and joys; and now, by putting itself at the disposal of God for the accomplishment of His will. We glorify God by allowing Him to fulfil His purpose of love in creating us. What that purpose is we cannot wholly know; but trusting ourselves to His love, we can, by obeying Him, have it more and more accomplished in us. And it is the consciousness that we are God's temples which constantly incites us to live worthily of Him. To say that we are temples of God is not to use a figure of speech. It is the temple of stone that is the figure; the true dwelling-place of God is man. In nothing can God reveal Himself as He can in man. Through nothing else can He express so much of what is truly Divine. It is not a building of stone which forms a fit temple for God; it is not even the heaven of heavens. In material nature only a small part of God can be seen and known. It is in man, able to choose what is morally good, able to resist temptation, to make sacrifices for worthy ends, to determine his own character; it is in man, whose own will is his law, and who is not the mere mechanical agent of another's will, that God finds a worthy temple for Himself. Through you God can express and reveal what is best in Himself. Your love is sustained by His, and reveals His. Your approval of what is pure and hatred of impurity have their source in His holiness, and by transforming you into His own image He discloses Himself as truly dwelling and living within you. Where is God to be found and to be known if not in men? Where can His presence and Divine goodness and reality be more distinctly manifest than in Christ and those who are in any degree like Him? It is in men that the unseen Divine Spirit manifests His nature and His work. But if so, what a profanation is it when we take this body, which is built to be His temple, and put it to uses which it were blasphemous to associate with God! Let us rather find our joy in realising the ideal set before us by Paul, in keeping ourselves pure as God's temples and in glorifying Him in our body and in our spirit.



## CHAPTER XI.

## MARRIAGE.

THERE are two preliminary considerations which throw some light on this much-contested passage. First, Paul had to speak about marriage as he found it, as it existed among those to whom he wished to be of service. Hence he makes no allusion to that which among ourselves is the main argument for, or at least the one only justifying motive to, marriage, viz., love. Marriage is treated here from a lower point of view than it would have been had this letter been originally written for Englishmen. The Church to which it was addressed was composite. Jews, Greeks, and Romans, in what proportions it is not easy to say, brought their peculiar and national usages into it. In the marriages of the Jews and Greeks, love had, as a rule, little to do. The marriage was arranged by the parents of the contracting parties.

"Faces strange and tongues unknown  
Make us by a bid their own,"

is the remonstrance of the Greek maiden against the unnatural custom which prevailed of allowing no intimacy, and scarcely any real acquaintance, prior to marriage. The lack of warmth and personal interest which characterises the Greek plays arises mainly from the circumstance that among the Greeks there was absolutely no such thing as that love prior to marriage on which even our best works of fiction uniformly depend for their interest. Among the Romans there was none of this Eastern seclusion of women, and but for other causes marriage among this section of the Corinthian population might have served as an example to the rest.

Secondly, it is to be considered that not only had Paul to speak of marriage as he found it, but also that he was here only giving answers to some special questions, and not discussing the whole subject in all its bearings. There might be other points which to his mind seemed equally important; but his advice not having been asked about these, he passes them by. He introduces the subject in a manner fitted to remind us that he has no intention of propounding his views on marriage in a complete and systematic form: "Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me." There had arisen in the Corinthian Church certain scruples about marriage; and as the Church was composed of persons who would naturally take very different views on the subject, these scruples might not be easily removed. Among the Jews it was believed that marriage was a duty, "so much so that he who at the age of twenty had not married was considered to have sinned." Among the Gentiles the tendency to celibacy was so strong that it was considered necessary to counteract it by legal enactment. In a community previously disposed to take such opposite views of marriage difficulties were sure to arise. Those who were predisposed to disparage the married state would throw contempt upon it as a mere concession to the flesh; they apparently even urged that, Christians being new creatures, their whole previous relationships were dissolved. To Paul therefore appeal is made.

The questions referred to Paul resolve them-

selves into two: whether the unmarried are to marry, and whether the married are to continue to live together.

In reply to the former question, whether the unmarried are to marry, he first states the duty of unmarried persons themselves (in vv. 2, 7-9); and afterwards (in vv. 25-39) he explains the duty of parents to their unmarried daughters.

I. First then we have Paul's counsel to the unmarried. This is summed up in the words, "I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I;" that is to say, if they remain unmarried, Paul being probably the only unmarried Apostle. But if any man's temperament be such that he cannot settle undistractedly to his work without marrying; if he is restless and ill at ease, and full of natural cravings which make him think much of marriage, and make him feel sure he would be less distracted in married life—then, says Paul, let such an one by all means marry. But do not misunderstand me, he says; this is permission I am giving you, not commandment. I do not say you *must* or ought to marry; I say you *may*, and in certain circumstances *ought*. Those among you who say a man sins if he do not marry, talk nonsense. Those among you who feel a quiet superiority because you are married, and think of unmarried people as undergraduates who have not attained a degree equal to yours, are much mistaken if you suppose that I am of your mind. When I say, "Let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband," I do not mean that every man who wishes to come as near perfection as possible must go and marry, but what I speak I speak by way of permission; I permit every man to marry who deliberately believes he will be the better of marrying. So far from thinking that every man ought to marry, or that married men have somehow the advantage over single men, I think the very opposite, and would that *all* men were even as I myself, only I know that to many men it is not so easy as it is to me to live unmarried; and therefore I do not advise them to a single life.

But this advice of Paul's proceeds, not from any ascetic tendency, but from the practical bias of his mind. He had no idea that marriage was a morally inferior condition; on the contrary, he saw in it the most perfect symbol of the union of Christ and the Church. But he thought that unmarried men were likely to be most available for the work of Christ; and therefore he could not but wish it possible, though he knew it was not possible, that all unmarried men should remain unmarried.

His reason for thinking that unmarried men would be more efficient in the service of Christ is given in the thirty-second and thirty-third verses: "He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord; but he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife," an opinion quite similar to that which Lord Bacon pronounced when he said, "Certainly the best works, and of greatest merit for the public, have proceeded from the unmarried or childless men, who both in affections and means have married and endowed the public." Given two men with equal desire to serve Christ, but the one married and the other unmarried, it is obvious that the un-



married man has more means and opportunities of service than he who has a large family to support. No doubt a good wife may stimulate a man to liberality, and may greatly increase his tenderness towards deserving objects of charity; but the fact remains that he who has seven or ten mouths to fill cannot have so much to give away as if he had but himself to support. Then, again, however alike in sentiment husband and wife may be, there are sacrifices which a married man may not make. With the unmarried man there need be no other consideration than this: How can I best serve Christ? With the married man there must always be other considerations. He cannot ignore or forswear the ties with which he has bound himself; he cannot act as if he had only himself to consider. The unmarried man has life and the world before him, and may choose the most ideal and perfect style of life he pleases. He may seek to realise, as many in recent times have realised, the exact apostolic idea of how it is best to spend a human life. He may choose to devote himself to the elevation of some one class of the community, or he is free to go to the ends of the earth to preach the Gospel. He has no one thing to consider but how he may please the Lord. But the married man has limited his range of choice, and has cut himself off from some at least of the most influential ways of doing good in the world. It is therefore to the unmarried that the State looks for the manning of the army and navy; it is to the unmarried that society looks for the nursing of the sick and for the filling of posts of danger; and it is on the unmarried that the Church depends for a large part of her work, from teaching in Sunday-schools to occupying unhealthy and precarious outposts in the mission field.

But while Paul makes no scruple of saying that for many purposes the unmarried man is the more available, he says also, Beware how *you* individually think yourself a hero, and able to forego marriage. Beware lest, by choosing a part which you are not fit for, you give Satan an advantage over you, and expose yourself to constant temptation, and pass through life distracted by needless deprivation. "Far be it from me," says Paul, "to cast a snare upon you," to invite or encourage you into a position against which your nature would unceasingly rebel, to prompt you to attempt that for which you are constitutionally unfit, and thereby to make your life a chronic temptation. "Every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, another after that." And if any man fancies that, because there are advantages in being unmarried, therefore that is the best state for him, or if, on the other hand, any man fancies that, because most men seem to find great happiness in marriage, he also needs marriage to complete his happiness, both of these men leave out of account that which is chiefly to be taken into account, viz., the special temperament, calling, and opportunities of each.

The common-sense and wise counsel of this chapter are sometimes half jestingly put aside by the idle remark that Paul, being himself unmarried, takes a biased view of the subject. But the chief merit of the whole passage is that Paul positively and expressly declines to judge others by himself, or himself by others. What is good for one man in this respect is

not good, he says, for another; every man must ascertain for himself what is best for him. And this is precisely what is lacking in popular feeling and talk about marriage. People start in life, and are encouraged to start in life, on the understanding that their happiness cannot be complete till they are married; that they are in some sense incomplete and unsatisfactory members of society until they marry. Now, on the contrary, people should be taught not to follow one another like sheep, nor to suppose that they will infallibly find happiness where others have found it. They should be taught to consider their own make and bent, and not to take for granted that the cravings they feel for an indefinite addition to their happiness will be satisfied by marriage. They should be taught that marriage is but one out of many paths to happiness, that it is possible celibacy may be the straightest path to happiness for them, and that many persons are so constituted that they are likely to be much more useful unmarried than married. They should, above all, be taught that human life is very wide and multifarious, and that, to effect His ends, God needs persons of all kinds and conditions, so that to prejudge the direction in which our usefulness and happiness are to run is to shut God out of our life. There can be no doubt that the opposite way of speaking of marriage as the great settlement in life has introduced much misery and uselessness into the lives of thousands.

It is this then which not only signally illustrates the judicial balance of the Apostle's mind, but at the same time gives us the key to the whole chapter. The capacity for celibacy is a gift of God to him who possesses it, a gift which may be of eminent service, but to which no moral value can be attached. There are many such diversities of gifts among men, gifts of immense value, but which may belong to bad as well as to good men. For example, two men travel together; the one can go without food for twelve hours, the other cannot, but if you repair his strength every five hours, he can go through as much fatigue as the other. This power of abstinence is a valuable gift, and has frequently enabled men in certain circumstances to save life or perform other important service. But no one would dream of arguing that because a man possessed this gift, he was therefore a *better* man than his less enduring friend. Unfortunately, so simple a distinction has not been kept in view. In the most powerful Church in the world celibacy is regarded as a virtue in itself, so that men with no natural gift for it have been encouraged to aim at it, with what results we need not say.

But while there is no virtue in remaining unmarried, there is virtue in remaining unmarried for the sake of serving Christ better. Some persons are kept single by mere selfishness; having been accustomed to orderly and quiet ways, they shrink from having their personal peace broken in upon by the claims of children. Some shrink from being tied down to any definite settlement in life; they like to feel unencumbered, and free to shift their tent at short notice. Some dread responsibility and the little and great anxieties of family life. A few have the feeling of the miser, and prefer the possibility of many conceivable marriages to the actuality of one. For such persons to make a virtue of their celibacy is absurd. But all



honour to those who recognise that they are called to some duty they could not discharge if married! All honour to that eldest son of an orphaned family who sees that it is not for him to please himself, but to work for those who have none to look to but him! There are here and there persons who from the highest motives decline marriage: persons conscious of some hereditary weakness, physical or mental; persons who, on a deliberate survey of human life, have seemed to themselves to recognise that they are called to a kind of service with which marriage is incompatible. We may be thankful that in our own country and time there are men and women of sufficiently heroic mould to exemplify the wisdom of the Apostle's counsel. Such devotion is not for every one. There are persons of a soft and domestic temperament who need the supports and comforts of home-life, and nothing can be more cruel and ill-advised than to encourage such persons to turn their life into a channel in which it was never intended to run. But it is equally to be lamented that, where there are women quite capable of a life of self-devotion to some noble work, they should be discouraged from such a life by the false and foolish, and petty notions of society, and should be taught to believe that the only way in which they can serve their Lord is by caring for the affairs of a single household. No calling is nobler or more worthy of a Christian woman than marriage; but it is not the only calling. There are other callings as noble, and there are callings in which many women will find a much wider field for doing good.

II. St. Paul's counsel to the married. Some of the Corinthians seem to have thought that, because they were new creatures in Christ, their old relations should be abandoned; and they put to Paul the question whether a believing man who had an unbelieving wife ought not to forsake her. Paul had shrewdness enough to see that if a Christian might separate from an unbelieving wife on the sole ground that he was a Christian, this easy mode of divorce might lead to a large and most unwelcome influx of pretended Christians into the Church. He therefore lays down the law that the power of separation is to rest with the unbelieving and not with the believing partner. If the unbelieving wife wishes to separate from her Christian husband, let her do so; but the change from heathenism to Christianity was no reason for sundering the marriage union. It frequently happened in the early ages of the Church that when a man was converted to the Christian faith in middle life, and judged he could serve God better without the encumbrance of a family, he forsook his wife and children and betook himself to a monastery. This directly contravened the law here laid down to abide in the vocation wherein God's call had found him.

The principle, "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called," is of wide application. The slave who heard God's call to him to become His child was not to think he must resent being a slave and assert his Christian liberty by requiring emancipation from earthly servitude. On the contrary, he must be content with the inward possession of the freedom Christ had given him, and must show his

liberty by the willingness and spontaneity of his submission to all his outward conditions. It is not externals that make a Christian; and if God's grace has found a man in unlikely circumstances, that is the best evidence he can have that he will find opportunity of serving God in those circumstances, if there be no sin in them. It throws great light on the relation which we as Christians hold to the institutions of our country, and generally to outward things, when we understand that Christianity does not begin by making external changes, but begins within and gradually finds its way outwards, modifying and rectifying all it meets.

But the principle to which Paul chiefly trusts, he enounces in the twenty-ninth verse: "This I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none, and they that weep as though they wept not; . . . for the fashion of this world passeth away." The forms in which human life is now moulded, the kind of business we are now engaged in, the pleasures we enjoy, even the relationships we hold to one another, pass away. There are no doubt relationships which time cannot dissolve, marriages so fit and uniting spirits so essentially kindred that no change can dissolve them, affections so pure and clinging that if the future does not renew them, it loses a large part of its charm for us. But whatever is temporary in our relation to the present world it is foolish so to set our heart on, that death may seem to end all our joy and all our usefulness. We may resent being asked to be moderate and self-restrained in our devotedness to this or that pursuit, but the fact is that the time is short and that the fashion of this world passeth away; and it is surely the part of wisdom to accommodate oneself to fact. In this life we now lead, and underneath all its activities, and forms, and relationships, we have opportunity of laying hold on what is permanent; and if, instead of penetrating through the outward things to the eternal significance and relations they bear, we give ourselves wholly to them, we abuse the world, and pervert it to an end for which it was not intended. The man who is sent abroad for five years would consider it folly to accumulate a large collection of the luxuries of life, furniture, and paintings, and encumbrances; how many times five years do we expect to live, that we should be much concerned to amass goods which we cannot remove to another world? This world is a means, and not an end; and those use it best who use it in relation to what is to be. They use it not less vigorously, but more wisely, not despising the mould which fashions them to their eternal form, but ever bearing in mind that the mould is to be broken and that what is fashioned by it alone remains. It is the thought of our great future which alone gives us sufficient courage and wisdom to deal with present things intensely and in earnest. For, as a heathen long ago saw and said, "if God make so much of creatures in whom there is nothing permanent, He is like women who sow the seeds of plants within the soil enclosed in an oyster-shell." The very intensity of our interests and affections reminds us that we cannot root ourselves in this present life, but need a larger room.



## CHAPTER XII.

*LIBERTY AND LOVE.*

THE next question which had been put to Paul by the Corinthian Church, and to which he now replies, is "touching things offered unto idols," whether a Christian had liberty to eat such things or not. This question necessarily arose in a society partly heathen and partly Christian. Every meal was in a manner dedicated to the household gods by laying some portion of it on the family altar. Where one member of a heathen family had become a Christian, he would at once be confronted with the question, rising in his own conscience, whether by partaking of such food he might not be countenancing idolatry. On the occasion of a birthday, or a marriage, or a safe return from sea, or any circumstance that seemed to call for celebration, it was customary to sacrifice in some public temple. And after the legs of the victim, enclosed in fat, and the entrails had been burnt on the altar, the worshipper received the remainder, and invited his friends and guests to partake of it either in the temple itself, or in the surrounding grove, or at his own home. Here again a young convert might very naturally ask himself whether he was justified in attending such a feast and actually sitting down to meat in the idol's presence. Nor was it only personal friendships and the harmony of family life that were threatened; but on public occasions and national celebrations the Christian was in a strait betwixt two; fearful, on the one hand, of branding himself as no good citizen by abstaining from participation in the feast, fearful, on the other hand, lest by compliance he should be found unfaithful to his new religion. And even though his own family was entirely Christian, the difficulty was not removed, for much of the meat offered in worship found its way into the common market, so that at every meal the Christian ran the risk of eating things sacrificed to idols.

Among the Jews it had always been considered pollution to eat such food. Instances are on record of men dying cheerfully rather than suffer such contamination. Few Jewish Christians could rise to the height of our Lord's maxim, "Not that which goeth into a man defileth him." The Gentile converts also felt the difficulty of at once throwing off all the old associations. When they entered the temple where but a few months ago they had worshipped, the atmosphere of the place intoxicated them; and the long-accustomed sights quickened their pulse and exposed them to serious temptation. Others, less sensitive, could use the temple as they would an ordinary eating-house, without the slightest stirring of idolatrous feeling. Some went to the houses of heathen friends as often as they were invited, and partook of what was set before them, making no minute inquiries as to how the meat had been provided, asking no questions for conscience' sake, but believing that the earth and its fulness were the Lord's, and that what they ate they received from God, and not from an idol. Others, again, could not shake off the feeling that they were countenancing idolatry when they partook of such feasts. Thus there arose a diversity of judgment and a variance in

practice which must have given rise to much annoyance, and which did not appear to be approaching any nearer to a final and satisfactory settlement.

In answer to the appeal made to him on this subject, it might seem that Paul had nothing to do but quote the deliverance of the Council of Jerusalem, which determined that Gentile converts should be commanded to abstain from meats offered to idols. Paul himself had obtained that deliverance, and was satisfied with it; but now he makes no reference to it, and treats the question afresh. In the epistles of the Lord to the Churches, embodied in the Book of Revelation, the eating of things sacrificed to idols is spoken of in strongly condemnatory language; and in one of the very earliest non-canonical documents of the primitive Church we find the precept, "Abstain carefully from things offered to idols, for that is worship of dead gods." Paul's disregard of the decision of the Council is probably due to his belief that that decision was merely provisional and temporary. He had founded Churches which could scarcely be expected to go past himself for guidance; and as the situation in the Corinthian Church was different from what it had been in Antioch, he felt justified in treating the matter afresh. And while in the early Church the partaking of sacrificial food which Paul allowed was sometimes vehemently condemned, this was due to the circumstance that it was sometimes used as a test of a man's abandonment of idolatry. Of course where this was the case no Christian could possibly be in doubt regarding the proper course to follow. What a man may freely do in ordinary circumstances, he may not do if he is warned that certain inferences will be drawn from his action.

The case laid before Paul, then, belongs to the class known as matters morally indifferent. These are matters upon which conscience does not uniformly give the same verdict even among persons brought up under the same moral law. On mingling with society, every one finds that there are many points of conduct regarding which there is not an unanimous consent of judgment among the most delicately conscientious people, and upon which it is difficult to decide even when we are anxious to do right. Such points are the lawfulness of attending certain places of public amusement, the propriety of allowing oneself to be implicated in certain kinds of private amusements or entertainments, the way of spending Sunday, and the amount of pleasure, refinement, and luxury one may admit into his life.

The state of feeling produced in Corinth by the discussion of such topics is apparent from Paul's mode of treating the question put to him. His answer is addressed to the party who claimed superior knowledge, who wished to be known as the party which stood for liberty of conscience, and probably for the Pauline axiom, "All things are lawful for me." Paul does not directly address those who had scruples about eating, but those who had none. He does not speak to, but only of, the "weak" brethren who had still conscience of the idol. And apparently a good deal of ill-feeling had been engendered in the Corinthian Church by the different views taken. This is always the trouble in connection with morally indifferent matters. They do little harm if each holds his own opin-



ion genially and endeavours to influence others by a friendly statement of his own practice and the grounds of it. But in most instances it happens as in Corinth: those who saw that they could eat without contamination scorned those who had scruples; while, on their side, the scrupulous judged the eaters to be worldly time-servers, in a perilous state, less godly and consistent than themselves.

As a first step towards the settlement of this matter, Paul makes the largest concession to the party of liberty. Their clear perception that an idol was nothing in the world, a mere bit of timber, and of no more significance to a Christian than a pillar or a doorpost—this knowledge is sound and commendable. At the same time, they need not make quite so much of it as they were doing. In their letter of inquiry they must have emphasised the fact that they were the party of enlightenment, who saw things as they really were, and had freed themselves from fantastic superstitions and antiquated ideas. Quite true, says Paul, "we all have knowledge;" but you need not remind me at every turn of your superior discernment of the Christian's true position nor of your wonderfully sagacious discovery that an idol is nothing in the world. Any Jewish schoolboy could have told you this. I know that you understand the principles which should regulate your intercourse with the heathen much better than the scrupulous do, and that your views of liberty are my own. Let us then hear no more of this. Do not always be returning upon this, as if this settled the whole matter. You are in the right so far as regards knowledge, and your brethren are weak; let that be conceded: but do not suppose you settle the question or impress me more strongly with the righteousness of your conduct by reiterating that you, whom your brethren call lax and misguided, are better instructed in the principle of Christian conduct than they. Once for all, I know this.

Does this, then, not settle the question? If—the party of liberty might say—if we are right, if the idol is nothing, and an idol's temple no more than an ordinary dining-room, does this not settle the whole matter? By no means, says Paul. "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth." You have as yet grasped only one end, and that the weaker end, of the Christian rule. You must add love, consideration of your neighbour, to your knowledge. Without this, knowledge is unwholesome and as likely to do harm as to do good. In very similar terms the founder of the Positive philosophy speaks of the evil results of loveless knowledge. "I am free to confess," he says, "that hitherto the Positive spirit has been tainted with the two moral evils which peculiarly wait on knowledge. It puffs up, and it dries the heart, by giving free scope to pride and by turning it from love." It is indeed matter of everyday observation that men of ready insight into moral and spiritual truth are prone to despise the less enlightened spirits that stumble among the scruples which, like the bats of the moral twilight, fly in their faces. The knowledge which is not tempered by humility and love does harm both to its possessor and to other Christians; it puffs up its possessor with scorn, and it alienates and embitters the less enlightened. Knowledge without love, knowledge which does not take into considera-

tion the difficulties and scruples of brethren, cannot be admired or commended, for though in itself a good thing and capable of being used for the advancement of the Church, knowledge dissociated from charity can do good neither to him who possesses it nor to the Christian community. However the possessors of such knowledge vaunt themselves as the men of progress and the hope of the Church, it is not by knowledge alone the Church can ever solidly grow. Knowledge does produce an appearance of growth, a puffing up, an unhealthy, morbid growth, a mushroom, fungous growth; but that which builds up the Church stone by stone, a strong, enduring edifice, is love. It is a good thing to have clear views of Christian liberty, to have definite, firmly held ideas of Christian conduct, to discard fretting scruples and idle superstitions; add love to this knowledge, exercise it in a tender, patient, self-denying, considerate, loving way, and you edify both yourself and the Church: but exercise it without love, and you become a poor inflated creature, puffed up with a noxious gas destructive of all higher life in yourself and in others.

Paul's law, then, is that liberty must be tempered by love; that the individual must consider the society of which he forms a part; and that, after his own conscience is satisfied regarding the legitimacy of certain actions, he must further consider how the conscience of his neighbour will be affected if he uses his liberty and does these actions. He must endeavour to keep step with the Christian community of which he forms a part, and must beware of giving offence to less enlightened persons by his freer conduct. He must consider not only whether he himself can do this or that with a good conscience, but also how the conscience of those who know what he does will be affected by it.

Applying this law to the matter in hand, Paul declares that, for his own part, he has no scruples at all about meat. "Meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse." If therefore I had to consult only my own conscience, the matter would admit of prompt and easy solution. I would as soon eat in an idol's temple as anywhere else. But all have not the conviction we have that an idol is nothing in the world. Some are unable to rid themselves of the feeling that in eating sacrificial meat they are paying an act of homage to the idol. "Some with conscience of the idol," with the feeling that the idol is present and accepting the worship, "eat the sacrificial meat as a thing offered unto an idol, and their conscience being weak is defiled." Their conscience is weak, not fully enlightened, not purged of old superstition; but their conscience is their conscience: and if they feel they are doing a wrong thing and yet do it, they do a wrong thing, and defile their conscience. Therefore we must consider them as well as ourselves, for as often as we use our liberty and eat sacrificial meat we tempt them to do the same, and so to defile their conscience. They know that you are men of sound and clear spiritual discernment; they look up to you as guides; and if they see you who have knowledge sitting at meat in the idol's temple, must not they be emboldened to do the same, and so to stain and harden their own conscience?



It is easy to imagine how this would be exemplified at a Corinthian table. Three Christians are invited, with other guests, to a party in the house of a heathen friend. One of these invited Christians is weakly scrupulous, unable to disentangle himself from the old idolatrous associations connected with sacrificial meat. The other two Christians are men of ampler view and more enlightened conscience, and have the deepest conviction that scruples about eating at a heathen table are baseless. All three recline at the table; but, as the meal goes on, the anxious, scrutinising eye of the weak brother discerns some mark which identifies the meat as sacrificial, or, fearing it may be so, he inquires of the servant, and finds it has been offered in the temple: and at once he draws the attention of his Christian friends to this, saying, "This has been offered in sacrifice to idols." One of his friends, knowing that heathen eyes are watching, and wishing to show how superior to all such scruples the enlightened Christian is and how genial and free a religion is the religion of Christ, smiles at his friend's scruples, and accepts the meat. The other, quite as clear-sighted and free from superstition, but more generous and more truly courageous, accommodates himself to the scruple of the weak brother, and declines the dish, lest, by eating and leaving the scrupulous man without support, he should tempt him to follow their example, contrary to his own conviction, and so lead him into sin. It need not be said which of these men acts the friendly part and comes nearest to the Christian principle of Paul.

In our own society similar cases necessarily arise. I, as a Christian man, and knowing that the earth and its fulness are the Lord's, may feel at perfect liberty to drink wine. Had I only myself to consider, and knowing that my temptation does not lie that way, I might use wine regularly or as often as I felt disposed to enjoy a needed stimulant. I may feel quite convinced in my own mind that morally I am not one whit the worse of doing so. But I cannot determine whether I am to indulge myself or not without considering the effect my conduct will have on others. There may be among my friends some who know that their temptation does lie that way, and whose conscience bids them altogether refrain. If by my example such persons are encouraged to silence the voice of their own conscience, then I incur the incalculable guilt of helping to destroy a brother for whom Christ died.

Or again, a lad has had the great good fortune to be brought up in a Puritanic household, and has imbibed stringent moral principles, with perhaps somewhat narrow ideas. He has been taught, together with much else of the same character, that the influence of the theatre is in our country demoralising, that one day in the week is little enough to give to the claims of spiritual education, and so forth. But on entering the life of a great city he is soon brought in contact with men whose uprightness, and sagacity, and Christian spirit he cannot but respect, but who yet read their weekly paper, or any book they are interested in, as freely on Sunday as on Saturday, and who visit the theatre without the slightest twinge of conscience. Now either of two things will probably happen in such a case. The young man's ideas of Christian liberty may become clearer.

He may attain the standpoint of Paul, and may see that fellowship with Christ can be maintained in conditions of life he once absolutely condemned. Or the young man may not grow in Christian perception, but being daunted by overpowering example, and chafing under the raillery of his companions, may do as others do, though still uneasy in his own conscience.

What is to be observed about this process, which is ceaselessly going on in society, is that the emboldening of conscience is one thing, its enlightenment quite another. And were it possible to get statistics of the proportion of cases in which the one process goes on without the other, these statistics might be salutary. But we need no statistics to assure us that Christian people by selfishly using their own liberty do continually lead less enlightened persons to trample on their scruples and disregard their own conscience. Constantly it happens in every department of human life that men who once shrank from certain practices as wrong now freely engage in them, although they are not in their own mind any more clearly convinced of their legitimacy than they were before, but are merely emboldened by the example of others. Such persons, if possessed of any self-observation and candour, will tell you that at first they felt as if they were stealing the indulgence or the gain the practice brings, and that they had to drown the voice of conscience by the louder voice of example.

The results of this are disastrous. Conscience is dethroned. The ship no longer obeys her helm, and lies in the trough of the sea swept by every wave and driven by every wind. It may indeed be said, What harm can come of persons less enlightened being emboldened to do as we do if what we do is right? Is not that, most strictly speaking, edification? It is not as if we emboldened any one to transgress the moral law; we are merely bringing our weak brother's conduct up to the level of our own. Do we not act wisely and well in so doing? Again it must be answered, No, because, while yielding themselves to the influence of your example, these persons abandon the guidance of their own conscience, which may be a less enlightened, but is certainly a more authoritative, guide than you. If the weak brother does a right thing while his conscience tells him it is a wrong thing, to him it is a wrong thing. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin;" that is to say, whatsoever is not dictated by a thorough conviction that it is right is sin. It is sin which in some respects is more dangerous than a sin of passion or impulse. By a sin of passion the conscience is not directly injured, and may remain comparatively tender and healthy; but when you refuse to acknowledge conscience as your guide and accept some other person's conduct as that which may dictate to you what you may or may not do, you dethrone conscience, and sap your moral nature. You shut your own eyes, and prefer to be led by the hand of another person, which may indeed serve you on this occasion; but the end will be a dog and a string.

Two permanent lessons are preserved in this exposition which Paul gives of the matter laid before him. The first is the sacredness or supremacy of conscience. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind;" that is the one legitimate source of conduct. A man may



possibly do a wrong thing when he obeys conscience; he is certainly wrong when he acts contrary to conscience. He may be helped to a decision by the advice of others, but it is his own decision by which he must abide. He must act, not on the conviction of others, but on his own. It is what he himself sees that must guide him. He is bound to use every means to enlighten his conscience and to learn with accuracy what is right and allowable, but he is also bound always to act upon his own present perception of what is right. His conscience may not be as enlightened as it ought to be. Still his duty is to enlighten, not to violate it. It is the guide God has given us, and we must not choose another.

The second lesson is that we must ever use our Christian liberty with Christian consideration of others. Love must mingle with all we do. There are many things which are lawful for a Christian, but which are not compulsory or obligatory, and which he may refrain from doing on cause shown. Duties he must of course discharge, regardless of the effect his conduct may have on others. He may be quite sure he will be misunderstood; he may be sure evil motives will be imputed to him; he may be sure disastrous consequences will be the first result of his action; but if conscience says this or that *must* be done, then all thought of consequences must be thrown to the winds. But where conscience says, not "You must," but only "You may," then we must consider the effect our using our liberty will have on others. We lie as Christians under an obligation to consider others, to lay aside all pride of advanced ideas, and this not merely that we may submit ourselves to those who know better than we, but that we may not offend those who are bound by prejudices of which we are rid. We must limit our liberty by the scrupulosity of prejudiced, narrow-minded, weak people. We must forego our liberty to do this or that if by doing it we should shock or disturb a weak brother or encourage him to overstep his conscience. As the Arctic voyager who has been frozen up all winter does not seize the first opportunity to escape, but waits till his weaker companions gain strength enough to accompany him, so must the Christian accommodate himself to the weaknesses of others, lest by using his liberty he should injure him for whom Christ died. Never was there a man who more fully understood the freedom of the Christian position than Paul; no man was ever more entirely lifted out of the mist of superstition and formalism into the clear light of free, eternal life: but with this freedom he carried a sympathy with weak and entangled beginners which prompted him to exclaim, "If meat make any brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."

Our conduct must be limited and to a certain extent regulated by the narrow-mindedness, the scruples, the prejudices, the weakness in short, of others. We cannot say, I see my way to do so-and-so, let my friend think what he pleases; I am not to be trammelled by his superstition or ignorance; let my conduct have what effect it will on him; I am not responsible for that; if he does not see it to be right, I do, and I will act accordingly. We cannot speak thus if the matter be indifferent; if it be a

matter we can lawfully abstain from, then abstain we must if we would follow the Apostle who followed Christ. This is the practical law which stands in the forefront of Christ's teaching and was sealed by every day of His life. It is enounced not only by St. Paul: "Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died;" "Through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died," but also in our Lord's still more emphatic words, "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." Paul could not look on his weak brethren as narrow-minded bigots, could not call them hard names and ride rough-shod over their scruples; and to this delicate consideration he was aided by the remembrance that these were the persons for whom Christ died. For them Christ sacrificed, not merely a little feeling or a little of His own way, but His own will and self entirely. And the spirit of Christ is still manifested in all in whom He dwells, specially in a humility and yieldingness of disposition which is not led by self-interest or self-complacency, but seeks the weal of other men. Nothing shows us more distinctly the thorough manner in which St. Paul partook of the spirit of Christ than his ability to say, "I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### MAINTENANCE OF THE MINISTRY.

IN the preceding chapter Paul has disposed of the question put to him regarding meats offered in sacrifice to idols. He has taken occasion to point out that in matters morally indifferent Christian men will consider the scruples of weak, and prejudiced, and superstitious people. He has inculcated the duty of accommodating ourselves to the consciences of less enlightened persons, if we can do so without violating our own. For his own part, he is prepared, while the world standeth, to abridge his Christian liberty, if by his using that liberty he may imperil the conscience of any weak brother. But keeping pace, as Paul always does, with the thought of those he writes to, he no sooner makes this emphatic statement than it occurs to him that those in Corinth who are ill-affected towards him will make a handle even of his self-denial, and will whisper or boldly declare that it is all very fine for Paul to use this language, but that, in point of fact, the precarious position he holds in the Church makes it incumbent on him to deny himself and become all things to all men. His apostleship stands on so insecure a basis that he has no option in the matter, but must curry favour with all parties. He is not on the same platform as the original Apostles, who may reasonably stand upon their apostleship, and claim exemption from manual labour, and demand maintenance both for themselves and their wives. Paul remains unmarried, and works with his hands to support himself, and makes himself weak among the weak, because he has no claim to mainte-



nance and is aware that his apostleship is doubtful. He proceeds, therefore, with some pardonable warmth and righteous indignation, to assert his freedom and apostleship (vv. 1, 2), and to prove his right to the same privileges and maintenance as the other Apostles (3-14); and then from the fifteenth to the eighteenth verse he gives the true reason for his foregoing his rightful claim; and in vv. 19-22 he reaffirms the principle on which he uniformly acted, becoming "all things to all men," suiting himself to the innocent prejudices and weaknesses of all, "that he might by all means save some."

Paul then had certain rights which he was resolved should be acknowledged, although he waived them. He maintains that if he saw fit, he might require the Church to maintain him, and to maintain him not merely in the bare way in which he was content to live, but to furnish him with the ordinary comforts of life. He might, for example, he says, require the Church to enable him to keep a wife and to pay not only his own, but her, travelling expenses. The other Apostles apparently took their wives with them on their apostolic journeys, and may have found them useful in gaining access for the Gospel to the secluded women of Eastern and Greek cities. He might also, he says, "forbear working;" might cease, that is to say, from his tent-making and look to his converts for support. He is indignant at the sordid, or malicious, or mistaken spirit which could deny him such support.

This claim to support and privilege Paul rests on several grounds. 1. He is an apostle, and the other Apostles enjoyed these privileges. "Have we not power to take with us a Christian woman as a wife, as well as other Apostles? . . . Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?" His proof of his apostleship is summary: "Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?" No one could be an apostle who had not seen Jesus Christ after His resurrection. The Apostles were to be witnesses to the Resurrection, and were qualified to be so by seeing the Lord alive after death. But it seems to have been commonly urged against Paul that he had not been among those to whom Christ showed Himself after He rose from the dead. Paul therefore both in his reported speeches and in his letters insists upon the fact that on the way to Damascus he had seen the risen Lord.

But not every one who had seen the Lord after His resurrection was an apostle, but those only who by Him were commissioned to witness to it; and that Paul had been thus commissioned he thinks the Corinthians may conclude from the results among themselves of his preaching. The Church at Corinth was the seal of his apostleship. What was the use of quibbling about the time and manner of his ordination, when the reality and success of his apostolic work were so apparent? The Lord had acknowledged his work. In presence of the finished structure that draws the world to gaze, it is too late to ask if he who built it is an architect. Would that every minister could so prove the validity of his orders!

2. Paul maintains his right to support on the principle of remuneration everywhere observed in human affairs. The soldier does not go to war at his own expense, but expects to be

equipped and maintained in efficiency by those for whom he fights. The vine-dresser, the shepherd, every labourer, expects, and is certainly warranted in expecting, that the toil he expends will at least have the result of keeping him comfortably in life. However difficult it is to lay down an absolute law of wages, this may at least be affirmed as a natural principle: that labour of all kinds must be so paid as to maintain the labourer in life and efficiency; and it may be added that there are certain inalienable human rights, such as the right to bring up a family the members of which shall be useful and not burdensome to society, the right to some reserve of leisure and of strength which the labourer may use for his own enjoyment and advantage, which rights will be admitted and provided for when out of the confused war of theories, and strikes, and competition a just law of wages has been won. Happily no one now needs to be told that one of the most striking results of our modern civilisation is that the nineteenth-century labourer has less of the joy of life than the ancient slave, and that we have forgotten the fundamental law that the husbandman that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits.

And lest any one should sanctimoniously or ignorantly say, "These secular principles have no application to sacred things," Paul anticipates the objection, and dismisses it: "Say I these things as a man? or saith not the Law the same also?" I am not introducing into a sacred religion principles which rule only in secular matters. Does not the Law say, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn"? It must be allowed to live by its labour. As it threshes out the wheat, it must be allowed to feed itself, mouthful by mouthful, as it goes on with its work. And this was not said in the Law because God had any special care for oxen, but in order to give expression to the law which must regulate the connection between all labourers and their work that he that plougheth may plough in hope, may have a personal interest in his work, and may give himself ungrudgingly to it, assured that he himself will be the first to benefit by it.

This law that a man shall live by his labour is a two-edged law. If a man produce what the community needs, he should himself profit by the production; but, on the other hand, if a man will not work, neither should he eat. Only the man who produces what other men need, only the man who by his industry or capability contributes to the good of the community, has any right to profits. Quick and easy manipulations of money, shrewd and risky dexterities which yield no real benefit to the community, deserve no remuneration. It is a blind, sordid, and contemptible spirit that hastes to be rich by one or two successful transactions that profit no one. A man should be content to live on what he is worth to the community. Here also our minds are often confused by the complexities of business; but on that account it is all the more necessary that we firmly adhere to the few essential canons, such as that "trading ceases to be just when it ceases to benefit both parties," or that a man's wealth should truly represent his value to society. Conscience enlightened by allegiance to the Spirit of Christ is a much more satisfactory guide for the individual in trade, speculation, and in-



vestment than any trade customs or economic theories.

3. A third ground on which Paul rests his claim to be supported by the Church is ordinary gratitude: "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?" Some of the Churches founded by Paul spontaneously acknowledged this claim, and wished to free him from the necessity of labouring for his own support. They felt that the benefit they had derived from him could not be stated in terms of money; but prompted by irrepressible gratitude, they could not but seek to relieve him from manual labour and set him free for higher work. This method of gauging the amount of spiritual benefit absorbed, by its overflow in material aid given to the propagation of the Gospel would, I dare say, scarcely be relished by that monstrous development the niggardly Christian.

4. Lastly, Paul argues from the Levitical usage to the Christian. Both in heathen countries and among the Jews it was customary that they who ministered in holy things should live by the offerings of the people to the Temple. Levites and priests alike had been thus maintained among the Jews. "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel." Were there no recorded command of the Lord to this effect, we might suppose Paul merely argued that this was the Lord's will; but among the original instructions given to the seventy who were first sent to preach the kingdom of heaven, we find this: "Into whatsoever house ye enter, there remain, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the labourer is worthy of his hire."

That evils may result from the existence of a paid ministry no one will be disposed to deny. Some of the most disastrous abuses in the Church of Christ, as well as some of the gravest political troubles, could never have arisen had there been no desirable benefices. Lucrative ecclesiastical posts and offices have necessarily excited the avarice of unworthy aspirants, and have weakened instead of strengthening the Church's influence. Many wealthy ecclesiastics have done nothing for the benefit of the people, whereas many laymen by their unpaid devotedness have done much. In view of these and other evils, it cannot surprise us to find that again and again it has occurred to good men to suppose that on the whole Christianity might be more effectively propagated were there no separate class of men set apart to this work as their sole occupation. But this idea is reactionary and extreme, and is condemned both by common-sense and by the express declarations of our Lord and His Apostles. If the work of the ministry is to be thoroughly done, men must give their whole time to it. Like every other professional work, it will often be done inadequately; and I dare say there is much in our methods which is unwise and susceptible of improvement: but the ministry keeps pace with the general intelligence of the country, and may be trusted to adapt its methods, even though too tardily for some ardent spirits, to the actual necessities. And if men give their whole time to the work, they must be paid for it, a circumstance which is not likely to lead to much evil in our own country so long as the great mass of ministers are paid as they presently are. It is hardly the profession which

is likely to be chosen by any one who is anxious to coin his life into money. If the laity consider that covetousness is more unseemly in a Christian minister than in a Christian man, they have taken an effectual means of barring out that vice.

Paul felt himself the more free to urge these claims because his custom was to forego them all in his own case. "I have used none of these things; neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me; for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void." Here again we come upon the sound judgment and honest heart that are never biassed by his own personal circumstances or insist that what is fit for him is fit for every one. How apt are self-denying men to spoil their self-denial by dropping a sneer at the weaker souls that cannot follow their heroic example. How ready are men who can live on little and accomplish much to leave the less robust Christians to justify on their own account their need of human comforts. Not so Paul. He first fights the battle of the weak for them, and then disclaims all participation in the spoils. What a nobility and sagacity in the man who himself would accept no remuneration for his work, and who yet, so far from thinking slightly of those who did or even being indifferent to them, argues their case for them with an authoritative force they did not themselves possess.

Nor does he consider that his self-denial is at all meritorious. He has no desire to signalise himself as more disinterested than other men. On the contrary, he strives to make it appear as if this course were compulsory and as if no choice were left to him. His fear was that if he took remuneration, he "should hinder the Gospel of Christ." Some of the best incomes in Greece in Paul's day were made by clever lecturers and talkers, who attracted disciples, and initiated them into their doctrines and methods. Paul was resolved he should never be mistaken for one of these. And no doubt his success was partly due to the fact that men recognised that his teaching was a labour of love, and that he was impelled by the truth and importance of his message. Every man finds an audience who is inwardly impelled to speak; who speaks, not because he is paid for doing so, but because there is that in him which must find utterance.

This, says Paul, was his case. "Though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel!" His call to the ministry had been so exceptional, and had so distinctly and emphatically declared the grace and purpose of Christ, that he felt bound by all that can constrain a man to the devotedness of a lifetime. Paul felt what we now so clearly see: that on him lay the gravest responsibilities. Had he declined to preach, had he complained of bad usage, and stipulated for higher terms, and withdrawn from the active propagation of Christianity, who would or could have taken up the task he laid down? But while Paul could not but be conscious of his importance to the cause of Christ, he would arrogate to himself no credit on account of his arduous toil, for from this, he says, he could not escape; necessity was laid upon him. Whether he does his work willingly or unwillingly, still he must do it. He



dare not flinch. If he does it willingly, he has a reward; if he does it unwillingly, still he is entrusted with a stewardship he dare not neglect. What then is the reward he has, giving himself, as he certainly does, *willingly* to the work? His reward is that "when he preaches the Gospel he makes the Gospel of Christ without charge." The deep satisfaction he felt in dissociating the Gospel of self-sacrifice from every thought of money or remuneration and in offering it freely to the poorest as His Master's fit representative was sufficient reward for him and incalculably greater than any other he ever got or could conceive.

In other words, Paul saw that however it might be with other men, with him there was no alternative but to preach the Gospel; the only alternative was—was he to do it as a slave entrusted with a stewardship, and who was compelled, however reluctant he might be, to be faithful, or was he to do it as a free man, with his whole will and heart? The reluctant slave could expect no reward; he was but fulfilling an obligatory, inevitable duty. The free man might, however, expect a reward; and the reward Paul chose was that he should have none—none in the ordinary sense, but really the deepest and most abiding of all: the satisfaction of knowing that, having freely received, he had freely given, and had lifted the Gospel into a region quite undimmed by the suspicion of self-seeking or any mists of worldliness.

In declining pecuniary remuneration, Paul was acting on his general principle of making himself the servant of all and of living entirely and exclusively for the good of others. "Though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more." It was from Paul that Luther derived his two propositions which he uttered as the keynote of the resonant blast "on Christian Liberty" with which he stirred all Europe into new life: "A Christian man is the most free lord of all, and subject to none; a Christian man is the most dutiful servant of all, and subject to every one." So Paul's independence of all men was assumed and maintained for the very purpose of making himself the more effectually the servant of all. To the Jew and to those under the Law he became as a Jew, observing the seventh day, circumcising Timothy, abstaining from blood, accommodating himself to all their scruples. To those who were without the Law, and who had been brought up in Greece, he also conformed himself, freely entering into their innocent customs, calling no meats unclean, appealing, not to the law of Moses, but to conscience, to common-sense, to their own poets. "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some"—a course which none but a man of wide sympathy and charity, clear intellect, and thorough integrity can adopt.

For Paul was no mere latitudinarian. While accommodating himself to the practice of those around him in all matters of mere outward observance, and which did not touch the essentials of morality and faith, he at the same time held very definite opinions on the chief articles of the Christian creed. No amount of liberality of sentiment can ever induce a thoughtful man to discourage the formation of opinion on all matters of importance. On the contrary, the only escape from mere traditionalism or the tyranny

of authority in matters of religion is in individual inquiry and ascertainment of the truth. Free inquiry is the one instrument we possess for the discovery of truth; and by pursuing such inquiry men may be expected to come to some agreement in religious belief, as in other things. No doubt righteousness of life is better than soundness of creed. But is it not possible to have both? It is better to live in the Spirit, to be meek, chaste, temperate, just, loving, than to understand the relation of the Spirit to God and to ourselves; but the human mind can never cease to seek satisfaction: and truth, the more clearly it is seen, will the more effectually nourish righteousness.

Again, Paul had an end in view which preserved his liberality from degenerating. He sought to recommend himself to men, not for his sake, but for theirs. He saw that conscientious scruples were not to be confounded with malignant hatred of truth, and that if we are to be helpful to others, we must begin by appreciating the good they already possess. Hostile criticism or argument for the sake of victory produces no results worth having. Vain exultation in the victors, obstinacy and bitterness in the vanquished—these are worse than useless, the retrograde results of unsympathetic argument. In order to remove a man's difficulties, you must look at them from his point of view and feel the pressure he feels. "The greatest orator save one of antiquity has left it on record that he always studied his adversary's case with as great, if not still greater, intensity than even his own;"\* and certainly those who have not entered into the point of view of those who differ from them are not likely to have anything of importance to say to them. In order to "gain" men, you must credit them with some desire to see the truth, and you must have sympathy enough to see with their eyes. Parents sometimes weaken their influence with their children by inability to look at things with the eyes of youth, and by an insistence upon the outward expressions of religion which are distasteful to children and suitable only for adults. Children have a high esteem for justice and courage, and can respond to exhibitions of self-sacrifice and truth, and purity; that is to say, they have a capacity for admiring and adopting the essentials of the Christian character, but if we insist upon them exhibiting feelings which are alien to their nature and practices necessarily distasteful and futile, we are more likely to drive them from religion than to attract them to it. Let us beware of insisting on alterations in conduct where these are not absolutely necessary. Let us beware of identifying religion in the minds of the young with a rigid conformity in outward things, and not with an inward spirit of love and goodness. Are you striving to gain some? Then let these words of the Apostle warn you not to seek for the wrong thing, not to begin at the wrong end, not to measure the hold which truth has over those you seek to win, by the exactness with which all your ideas are carried out and all your customs observed. Human nature is an infinitely various thing, and often there is the truest regard for what is holy and Divine disguised under a violent departure from all ordinary ways of manifesting reverence and piety. Put yourself in the place of the inquir-

\* See Mill's "Liberty," p. 21.



ing, perplexed, embittered soul, find out the good that is in it, patiently accommodate yourself to its ways so far as you legitimately may, and you will be rewarded by "gaining some."

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### *NOT ALL WHO RUN WIN.*

IN the preceding part of this chapter Paul has proved his right to claim remuneration from those to whom he preached the Gospel, and he has also given his reasons for declining to urge this claim. He was resolved that no one should have any ground for misapprehending his motive in preaching the Gospel. He was quite content to live a bare, poor life, not merely that he might keep himself above suspicion, but that those who heard the Gospel might see it simply as the Gospel and not be hindered from accepting it by any thought of the preacher's motives. This was his main reason for supporting himself by his own labour. But he had another reason, namely, "that he might be himself a partaker of the benefits he preached" (ver. 23). Apostle though he was, he had his own salvation to work out. He was not himself saved by proclaiming salvation to others, any more than the baker is fed by making bread for others or the physician kept in health by prescribing for others. Paul had a life of his own to lead, a duty of his own to discharge, a soul of his own to save; and he recognised that what was laid before him as the path to salvation was to make himself entirely the servant of others. This he was resolved persistently to do, "lest that by any means, when he had preached to others, he himself should be a castaway."

Paul had evidently felt this danger to be a serious one. He had found himself tempted from time to time to rest in the name and calling of an apostle, to take for granted that his salvation was a thing past doubt and on which no more thought or effort need be expended. And he saw that in a slightly altered form this temptation was common to all Christians. All have the name, not all the reality. And the very possession of the name is a temptation to forget the reality. It might almost seem to be in the proportion of runners to winners in a race: "All run, but one receiveth the prize."

In endeavouring to warn Christians against resting in a mere profession of faith in Christ, he cites two great classes of instances which prove that there is often ultimate failure even where there has been considerable promise of success. First, he cites their own world-renowned Isthmian games, in which contests, as they all well knew, not every one who entered for the prizes was successful: "All run, but one receiveth the prize." Paul does not mean that salvation goes by competition; but he means that as in a race not all who run run so as to obtain the prize for which they run, so in the Christian life not all who enter it put out sufficient energy to bring them to a happy issue. The mere fact of recognising that the prize is worth winning and even of entering for it is not enough. And then he cites another class of instances with which the Jews in the Corinthian Church were familiar. "All our fathers," he says, "were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptised unto

Moses in the cloud and in the sea." All of them without exception enjoyed the outward privileges of God's people, and seemed to be in a fair way of entering the promised land; and yet the majority of them fell under God's displeasure, and were overthrown in the wilderness. Therefore "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

The Isthmian games, then, one of the most ancient glories of Corinth, furnished Paul with the readiest illustration of his theme. These games, celebrated every second year, had in ancient times been one of the chief means of fostering the feeling of brotherhood in the Hellenic race. None but Greeks of pure blood who had done nothing to forfeit their citizenship were allowed to contend in them. They were the greatest of national gatherings; and even when one State was at war with another, hostilities were suspended during the celebration of the games. And scarcely any greater distinction could be earned by a Greek citizen than victory in these games. When Paul says that the contending athletes endured their severe training and underwent all the privations necessary "to obtain a corruptible crown," we must remember that while it is quite true that the wreath of pine given to the victor might fade before the year was out, he was welcomed home with all the honours of a victorious general, the wall of his town being thrown down that he might pass in as a conqueror, and his statue being set up by his fellow-citizens. In point of fact, the names and deeds of many of the victors may yet be read in the verses of one of the greatest of Greek poets, who devoted himself, as laureate of the games, to the celebration of the annual victories.

But however highly we raise the value of the Greek crown the force of Paul's comparison remains. The wreath of the victor in the games was at the best corruptible, liable to decay. No permanent, eternal satisfaction could result from being victorious in a contest of physical strength, activity, or skill. But for every man it is possible to win an incorruptible crown, that which shall always and for ever be to him a joy as thrilling and a distinction as honourable as at the moment he received it. There is that which is worthy of the determined and sustained effort of a lifetime. Put into the one scale all perishable distinctions, and honours, and prizes, all that has stimulated men to the most strenuous endeavours, all that a grateful nation bestows on its heroes and benefactors, all for which men "scorn delights and live laborious days;" and all these kick the beam when you put in the other scale the incorruptible crown. The two are not necessarily opposed or incompatible; but to choose the less in preference to the greater is to repudiate our birthright. As victory in the games was the actual incentive which stimulated the youth of Greece to attain the perfection of physical strength, beauty, and development, so there is laid before us an incentive which, when clearly apprehended, is sufficient to carry us forward to perfect moral attainment. The brightest jewel in the incorruptible crown is the joy of having become all God made us to become, of perfectly fulfilling the end of our creation, of being able to find happiness in goodness, in closest fellowship with God, in promoting what Christ lived and died to promote. Must we say that there



are men who have no ambition to experience perfect rectitude and purity? Are we to conclude that there are men of so grovelling, besotted, and blind a spirit that when opportunity is given them to win true glory, perfect expansion and growth of spirit, and perfect joy they turn away to salaries and profits, to meat and drink, to frivolity and the world's routine? The incorruptible crown is held over their head; but so intent are they on the muck-rake, they do not even see it.

To those who would win it Paul gives these directions:—

1. Be temperate. "Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things." Contentedly and without a murmur he submits himself to the rules and restrictions of his ten months' training, without which he may as well not compete. The little indulgences which other men allow themselves he must forego. Not once will he break the trainer's rules, for he knows that some competitors will refrain even from that once and gain strength while he is losing it. He is proud of his little hardships, and fatigues, and privations, and counts it a point of honour scrupulously to abstain from anything which might in the slightest degree diminish his chance of success. He sees other men giving way to appetite, resting while he is panting with exertion, luxuriating in the bath, enjoying life at pleasure; but he has scarce a passing thought of envy, because his heart is set on the prize, and severe training is indispensable. He knows that his chances are gone if in any point or on any occasion he relaxes the rigour of the discipline.

The contest in which Christians are engaged is not less, but more, severe. The temperance maintained by the athlete must be outdone by the Christian if he is to be successful. There are many things in which men who have no thought of the incorruptible prize may engage, but from which the Christian must refrain. All that lowers the tone and slackens the energies must be abandoned. If the Christian indulges in the pleasures of life as freely as other men, if he is unconscious of any severity of self-restraint, if he denies himself nothing which others enjoy, he proves that he has no higher aim than they and can of course win no higher prize. The temperance here enjoined, and which the Christian practises, not because it is enjoined, but because a higher aim truly cherished compels him to practise it, is a habitual sober-mindedness and detachment from what is worldly in the world. It is that temper of spirit and that sustained attitude towards life which enable a man to rule his own desires, to endure hardness and find pleasure in so doing. No spasmodic, occasional efforts and partial abstinences will ever bring a man victorious to the goal. Many a man denies himself in one direction and indulges himself in another. He macerates the flesh, but pampers the spirit by vanity, ambition, or self-righteousness. Or he denies himself some of the pleasures of life, but is more besotted by its gains than other men. Temperance to be effectual must be complete. The athlete who drinks more than is good for him may save himself the trouble of observing the trainer's rules as to what he eats. It is lost labour to develop some of his muscles if he do not develop all of them. If he offends in one point, he breaks the whole law.

Temperance must be continuous as well as complete. One day's debauch was enough to undo the result of weeks during which the athlete had carefully attended to the rules prescribed. And we find that one lapse into worldliness undoes what years of self-restraint have won. Always the work of growth is very slow, the work of destruction very quick. One indiscretion on the part of the convalescent will undo what the care of months has slowly achieved. One fraud spoils the character for honesty which years of upright living have earned. And this also is one of the great dangers of the spiritual life: that a little carelessness, a brief infidelity to our high calling, or a passing indulgence suddenly demolishes what long and patient toil has been building up. It is like the taking out of a pin or a ratchet that lets all we have gained run down to its old condition.

Beware then of giving place to the world or the flesh at any point. Be reasonable and true. Recognise that if you are to succeed in winning eternal life, all the spiritual energy you can command will be required. So set your heart on the attainment of things eternal that you will not grudge missing much that other men enjoy and possess. Measure the invitations of life by their fitness or unfitness to develop within you true spiritual energy.

2. Be decided. "I run," says Paul, "not as uncertainly," not as a man who does not know where he is going or has not made up his mind to go there. To be among those who win as well as among those who run, we must know where we are going, and be quite sure we mean to be there. We have all some kind of idea about what God offers and calls us to. But this idea must be clear if we are to make for it straight. No man can run straight to a mere will-o'-the-wisp, and no man can run straight who first means to go to one house or station and then changes his mind and thinks he should go to another. We must count the cost and see clearly what we are to gain and what we must lose by making for the incorruptible prize. We must be resolved to win and have no thought of defeat, of failure, of doing something better. It is the absence of deliberate choice and reasonable decision which causes such "uncertain" running on the part of many who profess to be in the race. Their faces are as often turned from the goal as towards it. They are evidently not clear in their own minds that all strength spent in any other direction than towards the goal is wasted. They do not distinctly know what they mean to be at, what they wish to make of life. Paul did know. He had made up his mind not to pursue comfort, learning, money, respect, position, but to seek first the kingdom of God. He judged that to spread the knowledge of Christ was the best use to which he could put his life. He knew where he was going and to what all his efforts tended. Every life is unsatisfactory until its owner has made up his mind what he means to do with it, until it is governed by a clearly conceived and firmly held aim. Then it flies like the arrow to its mark.

What, then, do the traces of our past life show? Do we see the straight track of a well-steered ship, which has deviated not a yard from its course nor wasted an ounce of power? Has every footfall been in direct advance of the last, and has all expenditure of energy brought us



nearer the ultimate goal? Or are the traces we look back on like ground trodden by dancers, a confused medley all in one spot, or like the footsteps of saunterers in a garden backwards and forwards, according as this or that has attracted them? Has not the course of many of us been like that of persons lost, uncertain which direction to pursue, eagerly starting off, but after a little slackening their pace, stopping, looking round, and then going off in another direction? For some weeks a great deal of ardour has been apparent, the whole man girt up, every nerve strained, the whole attention directed towards spiritual victory, arrangements made to facilitate communion with God, new methods devised for subordinating all our work to the one great aim, everything gone about as if now at last we had found the secret of living; and then in a surprisingly short time all this eagerness cools down, doubt takes the place of decision, discouragement and failure breed distrust of our methods, and we lapse into contentment with easier attainments and more worldly aims. And at length, after many false starts, we are ashamed to begin any arduous spiritual task for fear of ceasing it next week. We think that the surest way to make fools of ourselves is to adopt a thorough-going Christian practice, so much do we count upon ourselves flagging, wearying, altering our course. How many times have we been rekindled to some true zeal, how often have we gathered up our scattered energies and concentrated our efforts on the Christian life, and yet as often have we gone back to a dreamy, listless sauntering, as if we had nothing to secure, no end to reach, no work to accomplish.

Are we likely ever to reach the goal thus? Will the goal come to us, or how are we ever to reach it? Are we nearer to it to-day than ever before? Are not our minds yet made up that it is worth reaching, and that whatever does not help us towards it must be abandoned? Let us be clear in our own minds as to the matters which tempt us aside from the straight path to the goal and are incompatible with progress; and let us determine whether these things are to prevail with us or not.

3. Be in earnest. "So fight I, not as one that beateth the air," not as one amusing himself with idle flourishes, but as one who has a real enemy to encounter. What a blush does this raise on the cheek of every Christian who knows himself! How much of this mere parade and sham-fighting is there in the Christian army! We learn the art of war and the use of our weapons as if we were forthwith to use them in the field; we act over and learn many varieties of offensive and defensive movements, and know the rules by which spiritual foes may be subdued; we read books which direct us about personal religion, and delight in those which most skillfully lay open our weaknesses and show us how we may overcome them. But all this is mere fencing-school work; it kills no enemy. It is but a species of accomplishment like that of those who learn the use of the sword, not because they mean to use it in battle, but that they may have a more elegant carriage. A great part of our spiritual strength is spent in mere parade. It is not meant to have any serious effect. It is not directed against anything in particular. We seem to be doing everything that a good soldier of Jesus

Christ need do save the one thing: we slay no enemy. We leave no foe stone-dead on the field. We are well-trained: no one can deny it; we could instruct others how to conquer sin; we spend much time, and thought, and feeling on exercises which are calculated to make an impression on sin; and yet is it not almost entirely a beating the air? Where are our slain foes? This apparent eagerness to be holy, this professed devotedness to the cause of Christ—are they not mere flourish? We do not mean to strike our enemies; we for the most part only wish to make ourselves believe we are striking them and are zealous and faithful soldiers of Christ.

Even where there is some reality in the contest we may still be beating the air. We may be able to say that we have apprehended the reality of the moral welfare to which every man is called in this life. We may be able honestly to say that if our sins are not slain, it is neither because we have not recognised them, nor because we have aimed no blows at them. We have made serious and honest efforts to destroy sin, and yet our blows seem to fall short; and sin stands before us vigorous and lively, and as ready as ever to give us a fall. Many persons who level their blows at their sins do not after all strike them; spiritual energy is put forth; but it is not brought fully, fairly, and firmly into contact with the sin to be destroyed. In most Christian people there is a great expenditure of thought and of feeling about sin; their spirit is probably more exercised about their sins than about anything else: and a great deal of spiritual life is expended in the shape of shame, compunction, penitence, resolve, self-restraint, watchfulness, prayer. All this, were it brought directly to bear on some definite object, would produce great effect; but in many cases no good whatever seems to result.

Paul's language suggests that possibly the reason may be that there remains in the heart some reluctance quite to kill and put an end to sin, to beat all the life out of it. It is like a father fighting with his son: he wishes to defend himself and disarm his son, but not to kill him. We may be willing or even intensely anxious to escape the blows sin aims at us; we may be desirous to wound, hamper, and limit our sin, and keep it under control; we may wish to tame the wild animal and domesticate it, so as to make it yield some pleasure and profit, and yet be reluctant to slay it outright. The soul and life of every sin is some lust of our own; and while quite anxious to put an end to some of the evils this lust produces in our life, we may not be prepared to extinguish the lust itself. We pray God, for example, to preserve us from the evils of praise or of success; and yet we continue to court praise and success. We are unable to sacrifice the pleasure for the sake of the safety. Therefore our warfare against sin becomes unreal. Our blows are not delivered home, but beat the air. Unconsciously we cherish the evil desire within us which is the soul of the sin, and seek to destroy only some of its manifestations.

The result of such unreal contest is detrimental. Sin is like something floating in the air or the water: the very effort we make to grasp and crush it displaces it, and it floats mockingly before us, untouched. Or it is like an agile antagonist who springs back from our



blow, so that the force we have expended merely racks and strains our own sinews and does him no injury. So when we spend much effort in conquering sin and find it as lively as ever, the spirit is strained and hurt by putting out force on nothing. It is less able than before to resist sin, less believing, less hopeful, inwardly ill at ease and distracted. It becomes confused and disheartened, disbelieves in itself, and scoffs at fresh resolves and endeavours.

Finally, Paul tells us what that enemy was against which he directed his well-aimed, firmly planted blows. It was his own body. Every man's body is his enemy when, instead of being his servant, it becomes his master. The proper function of the body is to serve the will, to bring the inner man into contact with the outer world and enable him to influence it. When the body mutinies and refuses to obey the will, when it usurps authority and compels the man to do its bidding, it becomes his most dangerous enemy. When Paul's body presumed to dictate to his spirit, and demanded comforts and indulgences, and shrank from hardship, he beat it down. The word he uses is an exceptionally strong one: "I keep under;" it is a technical term of the games, and means to strike full in the face. It was the word used of the most damaging blow one boxer could give another. This unmerciful, overpowering blow Paul dealt to his body, resisting its assaults and making it helpless to tempt him. He thus brought it into subjection, made it his slave, as the winner in some of the games had a right to carry the vanquished into slavery.

It was probably by sheer strength of will and by the grace of Christ that Paul subdued his body. Many in all ages have striven to subdue it by fasting, by scourging, by wakefulness; and of these practices we have no right to speak scornfully until we can say that by other means we have reduced the body to its proper position as the servant of the spirit. Can we say that our body is brought into subjection; that it dare not curtail our devotions on the plea of weariness; that it dare not demand a dispensation from duty on the score of some slight bodily disturbance; that it never persuades us to neglect any duty on the score of its unpleasantness to the flesh; that it never prompts us to undue anxiety either about what we shall eat or drink or wherewithal we shall be clothed; that it never quite treads the spirit under foot and defiles it with wicked imaginings? There is a fair and reasonable degree in which a man may and ought to cherish his own flesh, but there is also needful a disregard to many of its claims and a hard-hearted obduracy to its complaints. In an age when Spartan simplicity of life is almost unknown, it is very easy to sow to the flesh almost without knowing it until we find ourselves reaping corruption.

Probably nothing more effectually slackens our efforts in the spiritual life than the sense of unreality which haunts us as we deal with God and the unseen. With the boxer in the games it was grim earnest. He did not need any one to tell him that his life depended on his ability to defend himself against his trained antagonist. Every faculty must be on the alert. No dreamer has here a chance. What we need is something of the same sense of reality, that it is a life-and-death contest we are engaged in, and that he that treats sin as a weak or

pretended antagonist will shortly be dragged a mangled disgrace out of the arena.

## CHAPTER XV.

### FALLACIOUS PRESUMPTIONS.

IN discussing the question regarding "things offered unto idols," Paul is led to treat at large of Christian liberty, a subject to which he was always drawn. And partly to encourage the Christians of Corinth to consider their weak and prejudiced brethren, partly for other reasons, he reminds them how he himself abridged his liberty and departed from his just claims in order that the Gospel he preached might find readier acceptance. Besides, not only for the sake of the Gospel and of other men, but for his own sake also, he must practise self-denial. It would profit him nothing to have been an apostle unless he practised what he preached. He had felt that in considering the spiritual condition of other men and trying to advance it he was apt to forget his own; and he saw that all men were more or less liable to the same temptation, and were apt to rest in the fact that they were Christians and to shrink from the arduous life which gives that name its meaning. By means of two illustrations Paul fixes this idea in their minds, first pointing them to their own games, in which they saw that not all who entered for the race obtained the prize, and then pointing them to the history of Israel, in which they might plainly read that not all who began the journey to the promised land found entrance into it.

The Israelites of the Exodus are here introduced as exemplifying a common experience. They accepted the position of God's people, but failed in its duties. They perceived the advantages of being God's subjects, but shrank from much which this implied. They were willing to be delivered from bondage, but found themselves overweighted by the responsibilities and risks of a free life. They were in contact with the highest advantages men need possess, and yet failed to use them.

The amount of conviction which prompts us to form a connection with Christ may be insufficient to stimulate us to do and endure all that results from that connection. The children of Israel were all baptised unto Moses, but they did not implement their baptism by a persistent and faithful adherence to him. They were baptised unto Moses by their acceptance of his leadership in the Exodus. By passing through the Red Sea at his command they definitely renounced Pharaoh and abandoned their old life, and as definitely pledged and committed themselves to throw in their lot with Moses. By passing the Egyptian frontier and following the guidance of the pillar of cloud they professed their willingness to exchange a life of bondage, with its security and occasional luxuries, for a life of freedom, with its hazards and hardships; and by that passage of the Red Sea they were as certainly sworn to support and obey Moses as ever was Roman soldier who took the oath to serve his emperor. When, at Brederode's invitation, the patriots of Holland put on the beggar's wallet and tasted wine from the beggar's bowl, they were baptised unto William of Orange and their country's cause. When the



sailors on board the "Swan" weighed anchor and beat out of Plymouth, they were baptised unto Drake and pledged to follow him and fight for him to the death. Baptism means much; but if it means anything it means that we commit and pledge ourselves to the life we are called to by Him in whose name we are baptised. It draws a line across the life, and proclaims that to whomsoever in time past we have been bound, and for whatsoever we have lived, we now are pledged to this new Lord, and are to live in His service. Such a pledge was given by every Israelite who turned his back on Egypt and passed through that sea which was the defence of Israel and destruction to the enemy. The crossing was at once actual deliverance from the old life and irrevocable committal to the new. They died to Pharaoh, and were born again to Moses. They were baptised unto Moses.

And as the Israelites had thus a baptism analogous to the one Christian sacrament, so had they a spiritual food and drink in the wilderness which formed a sacrament analogous to the Christian communion. They were not shut out of Egypt, and imprisoned in the desert, and left to do the best they could on their own resources. If they failed to march steadily forward and fulfil their destiny as the emancipated people of God, this failure was not due to any neglect on God's part. The fare might be somewhat Spartan, but a sufficiency was always provided. He who had encouraged them to enter on this new life was prepared to uphold them in it and carry them through.

One of the expressions used by Paul in describing the sustenance of the Israelites has given rise to some discussion. "They did all drink," he says, "the same spiritual drink, for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ." Now there happened to be a Jewish tradition which gave out that the rock smitten by Moses was a detached block or boulder, "globular, like a beehive," which rolled after the camp in its line of march, and was always at hand, with its unfailing water-supply. This is altogether too grotesque an idea. The fact is that the Israelites did not die of thirst in the wilderness. It was quite likely they should; and but for the providential supply of water, so large a company could not have been sustained. And no doubt not only in the rock at Rephidim at the beginning of their journey and the rock of Kadesh at its close, but in many most unlikely places during the intervening years, water was found. So that in looking back on the entire journey it might very naturally be said that the rock had followed them, not meaning that wherever they went they had the same source to draw from, but that throughout their journeyings they were supplied with water in places and ways as unexpected and unlikely.

Paul's point is that in the wilderness the food and drink of the Israelites were "spiritual," or, as we should more naturally say, sacramental; that is to say, their sustenance continually spoke to them of God's nearness and reminded them that they were His people. And as Christ Himself, when He lifted the bread at the Last-Supper, said, "This is My body," so does Paul use analogous language and say, "That Rock was Christ," an expression which gives us considerable insight into the

significance of the Israelitish types of Christ, and helps to rid our minds of some erroneous impressions we are apt to cherish regarding them.

The manna and the water from the rock were given to sustain the Israelites and carry them towards their promised land, but they were so given as to quicken faith in God. To every Israelite his daily nourishment might reasonably be called spiritual, because it reminded him that God was with him in the wilderness, and prompted him to think of that purpose and destiny for the sake of which God was sustaining the people. To the devout among them their daily food became a means of grace, deepening their faith in the unseen God and rooting their life in a true dependence upon Him. The manna and the water from the rock were sacramental, because they were continuous signs and seals of God's favour and redeeming efficiency and promise. They were types of Christ, serving for Israel in the wilderness the purpose which Christ serves for us, enabling them to believe in a heavenly Father who cared for them and accomplishing the same spiritual union with the unseen God which Christ accomplishes for us.

It was in this sense that Paul could say that the rock was Christ. The Israelites in the wilderness did not know that the rock was a type of Christ. They did not, as they drank of the water, think of One who was to come and satisfy the whole thirst of men. The types of Christ in the old times did not enable men to forecast the future; it was not through the future they exercised an influence for good on the mind. They worked by exciting there and then in the Jewish mind the same faith in God which Christ excites in our mind. It was not knowledge that saved the Jew, but faith, attachment to the living God. It was not the fragmentary and disjointed picture of a Redeemer thrown on the screen of his hopes by the types, nor was it any thought of a future Deliverer, which saved him, but his belief in God as his Redeemer there and then. This belief was quickened by the various institutions, providences, and objects by which God convinced the Jews that He was their Friend and Lord. Sacrifice they accepted as an institution of God's appointment intended to encourage them to believe in the forgiveness of sin and in God's favour; and without any thought of the realised ideal of sacrifice in Christ, the believing and devout Israelite entered through sacrifice into fellowship with God. Every sacrifice was a type of Christ; it did foreshadow that which was to be: but it was a type, not because it revealed Christ to those who saw or offered it, but because for the time being it served the same purpose as Christ now serves, enabling men to believe in the forgiveness of sins.

But while in the mind of the Israelite there was no connection of the type with the Christ that was to come, there was in reality a connection between them. The redemption of men is one, whether accomplished in the days of the Exodus or in our own time. The idea or plan of salvation is one, resting always on the same reasons and principles. The Israelites were pardoned in view of the incarnation and atonement of Christ just as we are. If it was needful for our salvation that Christ should come and live and suffer in human nature, it was also



needful for their salvation. The Lamb was slain "from the foundation of the world," and the virtue of the sacrifice of Calvary was efficacious for those who lived before as well as for those who lived after it. To the mind of God it was present, and in His purpose it was determined, from the beginning; and it is in view of Christ's incarnation and work that sinners early or late have been restored to God. So that everything by which God instructed men and taught them to believe in His mercy and holiness was connected with Christ. It was to Christ it owed its existence, and really it was a shadow of the coming substance. And as the shadow is named from the substance, it may be truly said, "That Rock was Christ."

These outward blessings then of which St. Paul here speaks had very much the same nature as the Christian sacraments to which he tacitly compares them. They were intended to convey greater gifts and be the channels of a grace more valuable than themselves. But to most of the Israelites they remained mere manna and water, and brought no firmer assurance of God's presence, no more fruitful acceptance of God's purpose. The majority took the husk and threw away the kernel; were so delayed by the wrappings that they forgot to examine the gift they enclosed: accepted the physical nourishment, but rejected the spiritual strength it contained. Instead of learning from their wilderness experience the sufficiency of Jehovah and gathering courage to fulfil His purpose with them, they began to murmur and lust after evil things, and were destroyed by the destroyer. They had been baptised unto Moses, pledging themselves to his leadership and committing themselves to the new life he opened to them; they had been sustained by manna and water from the rock, which plainly told them that all nature would work for them if they pressed forward to their God-appointed destiny: but the most of them shrank from the hardships and hazards of the way, and could not lift their heart to the glory of being led by God and used to fulfil His greatest purposes.

And so, says Paul, it may be with you. It is possible that you may have been baptised and may have professedly committed yourself to the Christian career, it is possible you may have partaken of that bread and wine which convey undying life and energy to believing recipients, and may yet have failed to use these as spiritual food, enabling you to fulfil all the duties of the life you are pledged to. Had it been enough merely to show a readiness to enter on the more arduous life, then all Israel would have been saved, for "all" without exception passed through the Red Sea and committed themselves to life under God's leadership. Had it been enough outwardly to participate in that which actually links men to God, then all Israel would have been inspired by God's Spirit and strength, for "all" without exception partook of the spiritual food and the spiritual drink. But the disastrous and undeniable result was that the great mass of the people were overthrown in the wilderness and did never set foot in the land of promise. And men have not yet outlived this same danger of committing themselves to a life they find too hard and full of risk. They see the advantages of a Christian career, and connect themselves with the Christian Church; they instinctively perceive that it is there God is most

fully known, and that the purposes of God are there concentrated and running on to direct and perfect results; they are drawn by their better self to throw in their lot with the Church, to forget competing advantages, and spend themselves wholly on what is best: and yet the difficulty of standing alone and acting on individual conviction rather than on current understandings, the wearing depression of personal failure and insufficiency for high and spiritual attainment, the distraction of the haunting doubt that after all they are making sacrifices and suffering privations which are fruitless, unwise, unnecessary, gradually betray the spirit into virtual renunciation of all Christian hopes and into a practical willingness to return to the old life. And thus as the wilderness came to be spotted all over with the burial-places of those who had left the Red Sea behind them with shouts of triumph and with hopes that broke out in song and dancing, as the route of that once jubilant host might at last have been traced, as the great slave-routes of Africa are traceable, by the bones of men and the skeletons of children, so, alas! might the Church's march through the centuries be recognised by the far more horrifying remains of those who once, with liveliest hope and unbroken sense of security, joined themselves to the people of Christ, but silently lost hold of the hope that once drew them on and either stole away on private enterprises of their own and were destroyed of the destroyer, or withered in helpless imbecility, murmuring at their lot and stone-blind to its glory. As the retreat of Napoleon's "grand army" from Moscow was marked by corpses wearing the French uniform, but bringing neither strength nor lustre to their cause, so must shame be reflected on the Church by the countless numbers of those who can be identified with Christ's cause only by the uniform they wear, and not by any victories they have won. There were in the wilderness districts through which no Israelite would willingly pass, districts in which many thousands had fallen, and which were branded as vast "graves of lust," places whose very name stirred a deeper horror and raised a quicker blush on the Israelite's cheek than is raised on the Englishman's by the mention of Majuba Hill or Braddock's defeat. And the Church's territory also is spotted with those vast charnel-houses and places of defeat where even her mighty have fallen, where the earth refuses to cover the disgrace and blot out the stain. These are not things of the past. While women and children are starved though they toil all day and half the night, with eagerest energy and the skill necessity gives; while life is to so many thousands in our land a joyless and hopeless misery; while trade not only panders to covetousness and selfishness, but directly contributes to what is immoral and destructive, we can scarcely speak of the "glorious marching" of the Church of Christ. We have our places of horror, which no right-hearted Christian can think of without a shudder.

But while the distinction between the life we naturally seek and that to which God calls us is felt by all from age to age, the forms in which this distinction makes itself felt vary as the world grows older. To all men living in a world of sense it is difficult to live by faith in the unseen. To every man it is the ultimate, severest test of character to determine for what ends



he will live and to carry out this determination; but the temptations which avail to draw men aside from their reasonable decision are various as the men themselves. Paul names the temptations to which the Corinthians, in common with the Israelites, were exposed: idolatry, fornication, murmuring, tempting Christ. He saw clearly how difficult it was for the Corinthians to discard all heathen customs, how much of what had been brightest in their life they must sacrifice if they were to renounce absolutely the religion of their parents and friends and all the joyous, if licentious, customs associated with that religion. Apparently some of them thought they might pass from the Christian communion to the heathen temple, and after partaking of Christ's sacrament eat and drink in the idolatrous festival, entering into the entire service. They seemed to think that they might be both Christians and pagans.

Against this vain attempt to combine the incompatible Paul warns them. Do not tempt Christ, he says, by experimenting how far He will bear with your conformity to idolatry. Some of the Israelites did so and were destroyed by serpents. Do not murmur that you are hereby severed from all the enjoyments of life, dissociated from your heathen friends, black-balled in society and in business, excluded from all national festivals and from many private entertainments; do not count up your losses, but your gains. Your temptations are severe, but "there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man." Every man must make up his mind to a certain kind of life and go through with it. No man can unite in his own life all advantages. He must deliberate and choose; and having made his choice, he must not lament what he loses or be tempted from striving to gain what he judges best by weakly and greedily craving for the second-best also. He may win the first prize; he may win the second: he cannot win both, and if he tries, he will win neither.

The practical outcome of all that Paul has thus rapidly passed in review he utters in the haunting words, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." In this life we are never beyond the reach of temptation. And these temptations to which all of us are exposed are real; they do sufficiently test character and show what it actually is. Our suppositions regarding ourselves are often untrue. There is no reality corresponding. Our state is actually not such as we conceive it to be. We are at ease and complacent when we ought not to be at ease. We think we stand secure when we are on the point of falling. We live as if we had reached the goal when the whole journey is yet before us. Our future may be very different from what we wish or expect. Mere satisfaction with our present condition is a very insecure foundation on which to build our hope for the future. Mere reliance on a profession we have made, or on the fact that we are within reach of means of grace, tends only to slacken our energies. Heedlessness, taking things for granted, failure to sift matters thoroughly out, an indolent unwillingness to probe our spiritual condition to the quick—this is what has betrayed multitudes of Christians. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

If determined wickedness has slain its thousands, heedlessness has slain its tens of thou-

sands. Through lack of watchfulness men fall into sin which entangles them for life and thwarts their best purposes. Through want of watchfulness men go on in sin which exceedingly provokes God, till at last His hand falls heavily upon them. Every man is apt to lay too much stress on the circumstance that he has joined himself to the number of those who own the leadership of Christ. The question remains, How far has he gone with his Leader? Many an Israelite compassionated the poor heathen whom he left behind in the land of Egypt, and yet found that, with all his own apparent nearness to God, his heart was heathen still. Whoever takes it for granted that things are well with him, whoever "thinketh he standeth"—he is the man who has especial and urgent need to "take heed lest he fall."

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE VEIL.

At this point of the Epistle Paul passes from the topics regarding which the Corinthians had requested him to inform them, to make some remarks on the manner in which, as he had heard, they were conducting their meetings for public worship. The next four chapters are occupied with instructions as to what constitutes seemliness and propriety in such meetings. He desires to express in general his satisfaction that on the whole they had adhered to the instructions he had already given them and the arrangements he had himself made while in Corinth. "I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances as I delivered them to you." Yet there are one or two matters which cannot be spoken of in terms of commendation. He heard, in the first place, with surprise and vexation, that not only were women presuming to pray in public and address the assembled Christians, but even laid aside while they did so the characteristic dress of their sex, and spoke, to the scandal of all sober-minded Orientals and Greeks, unveiled. To reform this abuse he at once addresses himself. It is a singular specimen of the strange matters that must have come before Paul for decision when the care of all the Churches lay upon him. And his settlement of it is an admirable illustration of his manner of resolving all practical difficulties by means of principles which are as true and as useful for us to-day as they were for those primitive Christians who had heard his own voice admonishing them. In treating ethical or practical subjects, Paul is never superficial, never content with a mere rule.

In order to see the import and importance of this matter of dress, we must first of all know how it came to pass that the Christian women should have thought of making a demonstration so unfeminine as to shock the very heathen around them. What was their intention or meaning in doing so? What idea was possessing their minds? Throughout this long and interesting letter, Paul is doing little else than endeavouring to correct the hasty impressions which these new believers were receiving regarding their position as Christians. A great flood of new and vast ideas was suddenly poured in upon their minds; they were taught to look



differently on themselves, differently on their neighbours, differently on God, differently on all things. Old things had in their case passed away with a will, and all things had become new. They were made alive from the dead, they were born again, and did not know how far this affected the relationships with this world into which their natural birth had brought them. The facts of the second birth and the new life took such hold upon them that they could not for a time understand how they were yet connected with the old life. So that for some of them Paul had to solve the simplest problems, as, for example, we find that the believing husband was in doubt whether he should live with his wife who remained an unbeliever, for was it not abhorrent to nature that he, the living, should be bound to the dead, that a child of God should remain in the most intimate connection with one who was yet a child of wrath? Was this not a monstrous anomaly, for which prompt divorce was the fit remedy? That such questions as these should be put shows us how difficult these early Christians found it to adjust themselves as children of God to their position in a corrupt, condemned world.

Now one of the ideas in Christianity which was newest to them was the equality of all before God, an idea well calculated to take powerful and absorbing hold of a world half slaves, half masters. The emperor and the slave must equally give account to God. Cæsar is not above responsibility; the barbarian who swells his triumph and is afterwards slaughtered in his dungeon or his theatre is not beneath it. Each man and each woman must stand alone before God, and for himself and herself give account of the life received from God. Alongside of this idea came that of the one Saviour for all alike, the common salvation accessible to all on equal terms, and partaking of which all became brethren and on a level, one with Christ and one therefore with each other. There was neither Greek nor barbarian, male nor female, bond nor free, now. These three mighty distinctions that had tyrannised over the ancient world were abolished, for all were one in Christ Jesus. It dawned on the barbarian that though there was no Roman citizenship for him nor any entrance into the mighty commonwealth of Greek literature, he had a citizenship in heaven, was the heir of God, and could command even with his barbaric speech the ear of the Most High. It dawned on the slave as his fetter galled him, or as his soul sank under the sad hopelessness of his life, that he was God's redeemed, rescued from the bondage of his own evil heart, and superior to all curse, being God's friend. And it dawned on the woman that she was neither man's toy nor man's slave, a mere luxury or appendage to his establishment, but that she also had herself a soul, a responsibility equally momentous with the man's, and therefore a life to frame for herself. The astonishment with which such ideas must have been received, so subversive of the principles on which heathen society was proceeding, it is impossible now to realise; but we cannot wonder that they should by their fresh power and absorbing novelty have carried the Christians to quite the opposite extreme from those at which they had been living.

In the case before us the women who had been awakened to a sense of their own personal,

individual responsibility and their equal right to the highest privileges of men began to think that in all things they should be recognised as the equals of the other sex. They were one with Christ; men could have no higher honour: was it not obvious that they were on an equality with those who had held them so cheap? They had the Holy Ghost dwelling in them; might not they, as well as the men, edify Christian assemblies by uttering the inspirations of the Spirit? They were not dependent on men for their Christian privileges; ought not they to show this by laying aside the veil, which was the acknowledged badge of dependence? This laying aside of the veil was not a mere change of fashion in dress, of which, of course, Paul would have had nothing to say; it was not a feminine device for showing themselves to better advantage among their fellow-worshippers; it was not even, though this also, alas! falls within the range of possible supposition, the immodest boldness and forwardness which are sometimes seen to accompany in both sexes the profession of Christianity; but it was the outward expression and easily read symbol of a great movement on the part of women in assertion of their rights and independence.

The exact meaning of the laying aside of the veil thus becomes plain. It was the part of female attire which could most readily be made the symbol of a change in the views of women regarding their own position. It was the most significant part of the woman's dress. Among the Greeks it was the universal custom for the women to appear in public with the head covered, commonly with the corner of their shawl drawn over their head like a hood. Accordingly Paul does not insist on the face being covered, as in Eastern countries, but only the head. This covering of the head could be dispensed with only in places where they were secluded from public view. It was therefore the recognised badge of seclusion; it was the badge which proclaimed that she who wore it was a private, not a public, person, finding her duties at home, not abroad, in one household, not in the city. And a woman's whole life and duties ought to lie so much apart from the public eye that both sexes looked upon the veil as the truest and most treasured emblem of woman's position. In this seclusion there was of course implied a limitation of woman's sphere of action and a subordination to one man's interests instead of to the public. It was the man's place to serve the State or the public, the woman's place to serve the man. And so thoroughly was it recognised that the veil was a badge setting forth this private and subordinate position of the woman that it was the one significant rite in marriage that she assumed the veil in token that now her husband was her head, to whom she was prepared to hold herself subordinate. The laying aside the veil was therefore an expression on the part of the Christian women that their being assumed as members of Christ's body raised them out of this position of dependence and subordination.

This movement of the Corinthian women towards independence, on the ground that all are one in Christ Jesus, Paul meets by reminding them that personal equality is perfectly consistent with social subordination. It was quite true, as Paul himself had taught them, that, so far as their connection with Christ went, there



was no distinction of sex. To the woman, as to the man, the offer of salvation was made directly. It was not through her father or her husband that the woman had to deal with Christ. She came into contact with the living God and united herself to Christ independently of any male representative and on the same footing as her male relatives. There is but one Christ for all, rich and poor, high and low, male and female; and all are received by Him on the same footing, no distinction being made. While then in things civil and social the husband represents the wife, he cannot do so in matters of religion. Here each person must act for himself or herself. And the woman must not confound these two spheres in which she moves, or argue that because she is independent of her husband in the greater, she must also be independent of him in the less. Equality in the one sphere is not inconsistent with subordination in the other. "I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God."

The principle enounced in these words is of incalculable importance and very wide and constant application. Whatever is meant by the natural equality of men, it cannot mean that all are to be in every respect on the same level, and that none are to have authority over others. The application of Paul's principle to the matter in hand alone here concerns us. The woman must recognise that as Christ, though equal with the Father, is subordinate to Him, so is she herself subordinate to her husband or her father. In her private worship she deals with Christ independently; but when she appears in public and social worship, she appears as a woman with certain social relations. Her relation to Christ does not dissolve her relations to society. Rather does it intensify them. The inward change that has passed upon her, and the new relation which she has formed independently of her husband, only strengthen the bond by which she is tied to him. When a boy becomes a Christian, that confirms, and in no degree relaxes, his subordination to his parents. He holds a relation to Christ which they could not form for him, and which they cannot dissolve; but this independence in one matter does not make him independent in everything. A commissioned officer in the army holds his commission from the Crown; but this does not interfere with, but only confirms, his subordination to officers who, like himself, are servants of the Crown, but above him in rank. In order to the harmony of society, there is a gradation of ranks; and social grievances result, not from the existence of social distinctions, but from their abuse.

This gradation then involves Paul's inference that "every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head." The veil being the recognised badge of subordination, when a man appears veiled he would seem to acknowledge some one present and visible at his head, and would thus dishonour Christ, his true Head. A woman, on the other hand, appearing unveiled would seem to say that she acknowledges no visible human head, and thereby dishonours her head—that is, her husband—and so doing, dishonours herself. For a woman to appear unveiled on the streets

of Corinth was to proclaim her shame. And so, says Paul, a woman who in public worship discards her veil might as well be shaven. She puts herself on the level of the woman with a shaven head, which both among Jews and Greeks was a brand of disgrace. In the eye of the angels, who, according to the Jewish belief, were present in meetings for worship, the woman is disgraced who does not appear with "power on her head;" that is to say, with the veil by which she silently acknowledges the authority of her husband.

This subordination of the woman to the man belongs not merely to the order of the Christian Church, but has its roots in nature. "Man is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man." Paul's idea is that man was created to represent God and so to glorify Him, to be a visible embodiment of the goodness, and wisdom, and power of the unseen God. Nowhere so clearly or fully as in man can God be seen. Man is the glory of God because he is His image and is fitted to exhibit in actual life the excellences which make God worthy of our love and worship. Looking at man as he actually and broadly is, we may think it a bold saying of Paul when he says, "Man is the glory of God;" and yet on consideration we see that this is no more than the truth. We should not scruple to say of the Man Christ Jesus that He is the glory of God, that in the whole universe of God nothing can more fully reveal the infinite Divine goodness. In Him we see how truly man is God's image, and how fit a medium human nature is for expressing the Divine. We know of nothing higher than what Christ said, did, and was during the few months He went about among men. He is the glory of God; and every man in his degree, and according to his fidelity to Christ, is also the glory of God.

This is of course true of woman as well as of man. It is true that woman can exhibit the nature of God and be His glory as well as man. But Paul is placing himself at the point of view of the writer of Genesis and speaking broadly of God's purpose in creation. And he means that God's purpose was to express Himself fully and crown all His works by bringing into being a creature made in His image, able to subdue, and rule, and develop all that is in the world. This creature was man, a masculine, resolved, capable creature. And just as it appeals to our sense of fitness that when God became incarnate He should appear as man, and not as woman, so does it appeal to our sense of fitness that it is man, and not woman, who should be thought of as created to be God's representative on earth. But while man directly, woman indirectly, fulfils this purpose of God. She is God's glory by being man's glory. She serves God by serving man. She exhibits God's excellences by creating and cherishing excellence in man. Without woman man cannot accomplish aught. The woman is created for the man, because without her he is helpless. "For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman."

But as man becomes actually the glory of God when he perfectly subordinates himself to God with the absolute devotedness of love, so does woman become the glory of man when she upholds and serves man with that perfect devotedness of which woman so constantly shows her-



self to be capable. It is in winning the self-sacrificing love of man and his entire devotion that God's glory appears, and man's glory appears in his power to kindle and maintain the devotion of woman. Not in independence of God does man find either his own glory or God's, and not in independence of man does woman find either her own glory or man's. The desire of woman shall be to her husband; in the honourable devotedness to man which love prompts, woman fulfils the law of her creation; and it is only the imperfect and ignoble woman who has any sense of humiliation, degradation, or limitation of her sphere in following the lead of love for the individual. It is through this honourable service of man she serves God and fulfils the purpose of her existence. The woman who is most womanly will most readily recognise that her function is to be the glory of man, to mould, and elevate, and sustain the individual, to find her joy and her life in the private life, in which the affections are developed, principles formed, and all personal wants provided for. And man, on his part, must say,

"If aught of goodness or of grace  
Be mine, hers be the glory."

For, as a French writer says, "her influence embraces the whole of life. A wife, a mother—two magical words, comprising the sweetest sources of man's felicity! Theirs is the reign of beauty, of love, of reason, always a reign. A man takes counsel with his wife; he obeys his mother: he obeys her long after she has ceased to live, and the ideas he has received from her become principles even stronger than his passions."\*

The position assigned to woman as the glory of man is therefore far removed from the view which cynically proclaims her man's mere convenience, whose function it is "to fatten household sinners," "to suckle fools and chronicle small beer." Paul's view, though adopted and exhibited in individual instances, is far as yet from commanding universal consent. But certainly nothing so distinguishes, elevates, purifies, and balances a man in life as a high esteem for woman. A man shows his manliness chiefly by a true reverence for all women, by a clear recognition of the high service appointed to them by God, and by a tender sympathy with them in all the various endurance their nature and their position demand.

That this is woman's normal sphere is indicated even by her unalterable physical characteristics. "Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering." By nature woman is endowed with a symbol of modesty and retirement. The veil, which signifies her devotion to home duties, is merely the artificial continuation of her natural gift of hair. The long hair of the Greek fop or of the English cavalier was accepted by the people as an indication of effeminate and luxurious living. Suitable for women, it is unsuitable for men; such is the instinctive judgment. And nature, speaking through this visible sign of the woman's hair, tells her that her place is in private, not in public, in the home, not in the city or the camp, in the attitude of free and loving subordination, not in the seat

\* See Landel's "True Glory of Woman."

of authority and rule. In other respects also the physical constitution of woman points to a similar conclusion. Her shorter stature and slighter frame, her higher pitch of voice, her more graceful form and movement, indicate that she is intended for the gentler ministries of home life rather than for the rough work of the world. And similar indications are found in her mental peculiarities. She has the gifts which fit her for influencing individuals; man has those qualities which enable him to deal with things, with abstract thought, or with persons in the mass. Quicker in perception and trusting more to her intuitions, woman sees at a glance what man is sure of only after a process of reasoning.

These arguments and conclusions introduced by Paul of course apply only to the broad and normal distinction between man and woman. He does not argue that women are inferior to men, nor that they may not have equal spiritual endowments; but he maintains that, whatever be their endowments, there is a womanly mode of exercising them and a sphere for woman which she ought not to transgress. Not all women are of the distinctively womanly type. A Britomart may arm herself and overthrow the strongest knights. A Joan of Arc may infuse into a nation her own warlike and patriotic ardour. In art, in literature, in science, feminine names may occupy some of the highest places. In our own day many careers have been opened to women from which they had hitherto been debarred. They are now found in Government offices, in School Boards, in the medical profession. Again and again in the history of the Church attempts have been made to institute a female order in the ministry, but as yet both the clerical and the legal professions are closed to women.\* And we may reasonably conclude that as the army and navy will always be manned by the physically stronger sex, so there are other employments in which women would be entirely out of place.

But it will be asked, Why was Paul so exact in describing how a woman should comport herself while praying or prophesying in public, when he meant very shortly in this same Epistle to write, "Let your women keep silence in the Churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the Law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the Church"? It has been suggested that although it was the standing order that women should not speak, there might be occasions when the Spirit urged them to address an assemblage of Christians; and the regulation here given is intended for these exceptional cases. This may be so, but the connection in which the absolute prohibition is given rather militates against this view, and I think it more likely that in his own mind Paul held the two matters quite distinct and felt that a mere prohibition preventing women from addressing public meetings would not touch the more serious transgression of female modesty involved in the discarding of the veil. He could not pass over this violent assertion of independence without separate treatment; and while he is treating it, it is not the speaking in public which is before his mind,

\* The experience of the Society of Friends throws light on this matter.



but the unfeminine assertion of independence and the principle underlying this manifestation.

Besides the direct teaching of this passage on the position of woman, there are inferences to be drawn from it of some importance. First, Paul recognises that the God of nature is the God of grace, and that we may safely argue from the one sphere to the other. "All things are of God." It is profitable to be recalled to the teaching of nature. It saves us from becoming fantastic in our beliefs, from cherishing fallacious expectations, from false, pharisaic, extravagant conduct.

Again, we are here reminded that every man and woman has to do directly with God, who has no respect of persons. Each soul is independent of all others in its relation to God. Each soul has the capacity of direct connection with God and of thus being raised above all oppression, not only of his fellows, but of all outward things. It is here man finds his true glory. His soul is his own to give it to God. He is dependent on nothing but on God only. Admitting God into his spirit, and believing in the love and rectitude of God, he is armed against all the ills of life, however little he may relish them. To all of us God offers Himself as Friend, Father, Saviour, Life. No man need remain in his sin; none need be content with a poor eternity; no man need go through life trembling or defeated: for God declares Himself on our side, and offers His love to all without respect of persons. We are all on the same footing before Him. God does not admit some freely, while He shrinks from the touch of others. It is as full and rich an inheritance that He puts within the reach of the poorest and most wretched of earth's inhabitants as He offers to him on whom the eyes of men rest in admiration or in envy. To disbelieve or repudiate this privilege of uniting ourselves to God is in the truest sense to commit spiritual suicide. It is in God we live now; He is with us and in us: and to shut Him out from that inmost consciousness to which none else is admitted is to cut ourselves off, not only from the deepest joy and truest support, but from all in which we can find spiritual life.

Lastly, although there is in Christ an absolute levelling of distinctions, no one being more acceptable to God or nearer to Him because he belongs to a certain race or rank, or class, yet these distinctions remain and are valid in society. A woman is a woman still though she become a Christian; a subject must honour his king although by becoming a Christian he is himself in one aspect above all authority; a servant will show his Christianity, not by assuming an insolent familiarity with his Christian master, but by treating him with respectful fidelity. The Christian, above all men, needs sober-mindedness to hold the balance level and not allow his Christian rank entirely to outweigh his social position. It forms a great part of our duty to accept our own place without envying others and to do honour to those to whom honour is due.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### ABUSE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

IN this paragraph of his letter Paul speaks of an abuse which can scarcely be credited, still

less tolerated, in our times. The most sacred of all Christian ordinances had been allowed to degenerate into a bacchanalian revel, not easily to be distinguished from a Greek drinking party. A respectable citizen would hardly have permitted at his own table the license and excess visible at the Table of the Lord. How such disorders in worship should have arisen calls for explanation.

It was common in Corinth and the other cities of Greece for various sections of the community to form themselves into associations, clubs, or guilds; and it was customary for such societies to share a common meal once a week, or once a month, or even, when convenient, daily. Some of these associations were formed of persons very variously provided with this world's goods, and one of the objects of some of the clubs was to make provision for the poorer members in such a manner as to subject them to none of the shame which is apt to attend the acceptance of promiscuous charity. All members had an equal right to present themselves at the table; and the property held by the society was equally distributed to all.

This custom, not unknown in Palestine itself, had been spontaneously adopted by the primitive Church of Jerusalem. The Christians of those early days felt themselves to be more closely related than the members of any trade guild or political club. If it was convenient and suitable that persons of similar political opinions or belonging to the same trade should to some extent have common property and should exhibit their community by sharing a common meal, it was certainly suitable among Christians. Speedily it became a prevalent custom for Christians to eat together. These meals were called *agapæ*—love-feasts—and became a marked feature of the early Church. On a fixed day, generally the first day of the week, the Christians assembled, each bringing what he could as a contribution to the feast: fish, poultry, joints of meat, cheese, milk, honey, fruit, wine, and bread. In some places the proceedings began by partaking of the consecrated bread and wine; but in other places physical appetite was first appeased by partaking of the meal provided, and after that the bread and wine were handed round.

This mode of celebrating the Lord's Supper was recommended by its close resemblance to its original celebration by the Lord and His disciples. It was at the close of the Paschal Supper, which was meant to satisfy hunger as well as to commemorate the Exodus, that our Lord took bread and brake it. He sat with His disciples as one family, and the meal they partook of was social as well as religious. But when the first solemnity passed away, and Christ's presence was no longer felt at the common table, the Christian love-feast was liable to many corruptions. The wealthy took the best seats, kept hold of their own delicacies, and, without waiting for any common distribution, each looked after himself and went on with his own supper, regardless of the fact that others at the table had none. "Every one taketh before other his own supper," so that, while one is hungry and has received nothing, another at this so-called common love-feast has already taken too much and is intoxicated. Those who had no need to use the common stock, but had houses of their own to eat and



to drink in, yet, for the sake of appearances, brought their contribution to the meal, but consumed it themselves. The consequence was that from being truly love-feasts, exhibiting Christian charity and Christian temperance, these meetings became scandalous as scenes of greedy selfishness, and profane conduct, and besotted excess. "What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not." In this Paul anticipates the condemnation of these occasions of revelry and discord which the Church was obliged to pronounce after no great lapse of time.\*

Thus then arose these disorders in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. By the conjunction of this rite with the social meal of the Christians it degenerated into an occasion of much that was unseemly and scandalous. To the reform of this abuse Paul now addresses himself; and it is worth our while to observe what remedies he does not propose as well as those he recommends.

First, He does not propose to disjoin absolutely and in all cases the religious rite from the ordinary meal. In the case of the richer members of the Church this disjunction is enjoined. They are directed to take their meals at home. "Have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the Church of God, and shame them that have not? . . . If any man hunger, let him eat at home." But with the destitute or those who had no well-provided homes another rule must be adopted. It would shame the Christian community, and quite undo its quickly won reputation for brotherly love and charity, were its members observed begging their daily bread on the streets. It was equally unseemly for the rich to accept and for the poor to be denied the meal furnished at the expense of the Church. And therefore Paul's recommendation is that those who can conveniently eat at home should do so. But as no quality of the Christian Church is more strictly her own than charity and no duty more incumbent or more lovely than to feed the hungry, it could not dishonour the Church to spread in it a meal for whosoever should be in need of it.

Again, although the wine of Holy Communion had been so sadly abused, Paul does not prohibit its use in the ordinance. His moderation and wisdom have not in this respect been universally followed. On infinitely less occasion alterations have been introduced into the administration of the ordinance with a view to preventing its abuse by reclaimed drunkards, and on still slighter pretext a more sweeping alteration was introduced many centuries ago by the Church of Rome. In that Church the custom still prevails of receiving communion only under one kind; that is to say, the communicant partakes of the bread, but not of the wine. The reason for this is given by one of their most authoritative writers as follows: "It is well known that this custom was not first established by any ecclesiastical law; but, on the contrary, it was in consequence of the general prevalence of the usage that this law was passed in approval of it. It is a matter of no less notoriety that the monasteries in whose centre this observance had its rise, and thence spread in ever wider circles, were led by a very nice sense of delicacy to impose on themselves this priva-

tion. A pious dread of desecrating, by spilling and the like, even in the most conscientious ministrations, the form of the sublimest and the holiest whereof the participation can be vouchsafed to man, was the feeling which swayed their minds. . . . However, we should rejoice if it were left free to each one to drink or not out of the consecrated chalice; and this permission would be granted if with the same love and concord a universal desire were expressed for the use of the cup as from the twelfth century the contrary wish has been enounced."\* One cannot but regret that this reverence for the ordinance did not take the form of a humble acceptance of it, in accordance with its original institution; and one cannot but think that the "pious dread of desecrating" the ordinance would have sufficiently prevented any spilling of the wine or other abuse, or have sufficiently atoned for any little accident which might occur. And certainly, in contrast to all such contrivances, the sanity of Paul's judgment comes out in strong relief; and we more clearly recognise the sagacity which directed that the ordinance should not be tampered with to suit the avoidable weaknesses of men, but that men should learn to live up to the requirements of the ordinance.

Again, Paul does not insist that because frequent communion had been abused this must give place to monthly or yearly communion. In after-times, partly from the abuses attending frequent communion and partly from the condition of the cities into which Christianity found its way, a change to rarer celebration was found advisable; and, for reasons that need not here be detailed, the Church catholic, both in the East and in the West, settled **down** to the custom of celebrating the Lord's Supper weekly; and for some centuries it was expected that all members of the Church should partake weekly. Paul's reluctance to lay down any law on the subject suggests that the abuse of this or any other ordinance does not arise simply from the frequency of its administration. It is quite natural to suppose that the inevitable result of frequent communion is an undue familiarity with holy things and a profane carelessness in handling what should only be approached with the deepest reverence. That familiarity breeds contempt, or at any rate heedlessness, is certainly a rule that ordinarily holds good. As Nelson said of his sailors, hardened by familiarity with danger, they cared no more for round-shot than for peas. The medical student who faints or sickens at his first visit to the operating theatre soon looks with unblenching face on wounds and blood. And by the same law it is feared, and not without reason, that if we observed frequent communion, we should cease to cherish that proper awe, and cease to feel that flutter of hesitation, and cease to be subdued by that sacredness of the ordinance which yet are the very feelings through which in great measure the rite influences us for good. We think it would be impossible to pass every week through those trying moments in which the soul trembles before God's majesty and love as exhibited in the Lord's Supper; and we fear that the heart would instinctively shrink from the reality, and protect itself against the emotion, and find a way of observing the ordinance with ease to itself, and that thus the life would die out from

\* For a highly coloured description of the love-feasts see Renan's "St. Paul," pp. 261-270.

\* Möhler's "Symbolism," i. 351.



the celebration, and the mere husk or form be left.

It is, however, obvious that these fears need not be verified, and that an effort on our part would prevent the consequences dreaded. Our method of procedure in all such cases is first to find out what it is right to do, and then, though it cost us an effort, to do it. If our reverence for the ordinance in question depends on its rare celebration, every one must see that such reverence is very precarious. May it not be a merely superstitious or sentimental reverence? Is it not produced by some false idea of the rite and its signification, or does it not spring from the solemnity of the paraphernalia and human surroundings of it? Paul seeks to restore reverence in the Corinthians not by prohibiting frequent communion, but by setting more clearly before them the solemn facts which underlie the rite. In presence of these facts every worthy communicant is at all times living; and if it be merely the outward equipment and presentation of these facts which solemnise us and quicken our reverence, then this itself is rather an argument for a more frequent celebration of the rite, that so this false reverence at least might be dissipated.

The instincts of men are, however, in many cases a safer guide than their judgments; and there is a feeling prevalent that very frequent communion is not advisable, and that if it be advisable it should be reached not at a bound, but step by step. The main point on which the individual should insist on coming to some clear understanding with himself is whether his own reluctance to frequent communion does not arise from his fear of the ordinance being too profitable rather than from any fear of its ceasing to profit. Does not our shrinking from it often mean that we shrink from being more distinctly confronted with the love and holiness of Christ and with His purpose in dying for us? Does it not mean that we are not quite reconciled to be always living on the holiest motives, always under the most subduing and purifying influences, always living as the children of God, whose citizenship is in heaven? Do we shrink from the additional restraint and the fresh and effectual summons to a life, not higher and purer than we ought to be living—for there is no such life—but higher and purer than we are quite prepared to live? Putting to ourselves these questions, we use this rite as the thermometer, which shows us whether we are cold, lukewarm, or hot, or as the lead heaved from time to time, which shows us the depth of water we have and the kind of bottom over which we are holding our course.

The two most instructive writers on the sacraments are Calvin and Waterland. The latter, in his very elaborate treatment of the Eucharist, offers some remarks upon the point before us. "There can," he says, "be no just bar to frequency of communion but the want of preparation, which is only such a bar as men may themselves remove if they please; and therefore it concerns them highly to take off the impediment as soon as possible, and not to trust to vain hopes of alleviating one fault by another. . . . The danger of misperforming any religious duty is an argument for fear and caution, but no excuse for neglect; God insists upon the doing it, and the doing it well also. . . . It was no sufficient plea for the slothful servant under

the Gospel that he thought his master hard to please, and thereupon neglected his bounden duty, for the use he ought to have made of that thought was to have been so much the more wakeful and diligent in his master's service. Therefore in the case of the Holy Communion it is to very little purpose to plead the strictness of the self-examination or preparation by way of excuse either for a total, or for a frequent, or for a long neglect of it. A man may say that he comes not to the Table because he is not prepared, and so far he assigns a good reason; but if he should be further asked why he is not prepared when he may, then he can only make some trifling, insufficient excuse or remain speechless."\*

The positive counsel Paul gives regarding suitable preparation for participation in this Sacrament is very simple. He offers no elaborate scheme of self-examination which might fill the mind with scruples and induce introspective habits and spiritual hypochondria. He would have every man answer the plain question, Do you discern the Lord's body in the Sacrament? This is the one cardinal point on which all revolves, admitting or excluding each applicant. He who clearly understands that this is no common meal, but the outward symbol by means of which God offers to us Jesus Christ, is not likely to desecrate the Sacrament. "This is My body," says the Lord, meaning that this bread will ever remind the communicant that his Lord freely gave His own body for the life of the world. And whoever accepts the bread and the wine because they remind him of this and bring him into a renewed attitude of faith is a worthy communicant. The Corinthians were chastened by sickness and apparently by death that they might see and repent of the enormity of using these symbols as common food; and in order that they might escape this chastening, they had but to recall the institution of the Sacrament by our Lord Himself.

The brief narrative of this first institution which Paul here inserts gives prominence to the truth that the Sacrament was intended primarily as a memorial or remembrance of the Saviour. Nothing could be simpler or more human than our Lord's appointment of this Sacrament. Lifting the material of the Supper before Him, He bids His disciples make the simple act of eating and drinking the occasion of remembering Him. As the friend who is setting out on a long absence or is passing for ever from earth puts into our hands his portrait or something he has used, or worn, or prized, and is pleased to think that we shall treasure it for his sake, so did Christ on the eve of His death secure this one thing: that His disciples should have a memento by which to remember Him. And as the dying gift of a friend becomes sacred to us as his own person, and we cannot bear to see it handed about by unsympathetic hands and remarked upon by those who have not the same loving reverence as ourselves, and as when we gaze at his portrait, or when we use the very pen or pencil worn smooth by his fingers, we recall the many happy times we spent together and the bright and inspiring words that fell from his lips, so does this Sacrament seem sacred to us as Christ's own person, and by means of it grate-

\* Waterland, "Works," iv. p. 781.



ful memories of all He was and did throng into the mind.

Again, the form of this memorial is fitted to recall the actual life and death of the Lord. It is His body and blood we are invited by the symbols to remember. By them we are brought into the presence of an actual living Person. Our religion is not a theory; it is not a speculation, a system of philosophy putting us in possession of a true scheme of the universe and guiding us to a sound code of morals; it is, above all, a personal matter. We are saved by being brought into right personal relations. And in this Sacrament we are reminded of this and are helped to recognise Christ as an actual living Person, who by His body and blood, by His actual humanity, saved us. The body and blood of Christ remind us that His humanity was as substantial as our own, and His life as real. He redeemed us by the actual human life He led and by the death He died, by His use of the body and soul we make other uses of. And we are saved by remembering Him and by assimilating the spirit of His life and death.

But especially, when Christ said, "Do this in remembrance of Me," did He mean that His people to all time should remember that He had given Himself wholly to them and for them. The symbols of His body and blood were intended to keep us in mind that all that gave Him a place among men He devoted to us. By giving His flesh and blood He means that He gives us His all, Himself wholly; and by inviting us to partake of His flesh and blood He means that we must receive Him into the most real connection possible, must admit His self-sacrificing love into our heart as our most cherished possession. He bade His disciples remember Him, knowing that the death He was about to die would "draw all men unto Him," would fill the despairing with hopes of purity and happiness, would cause countless sinners to say to themselves with soul-subduing rapture, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." He knew that the love shown in His death and the hopes it creates would be prized as the world's redemption, and that to all time men would be found turning to Him and saying, "If I forget Thee, let my right hand forget her cunning; if I do not remember Thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I do not prefer Thee above my chief joy." And therefore He presents Himself to us as He died: as One whose love for us actually brought Him to the deepest abasement and sorest suffering, and whose death opens for us a way to the Father.

But these symbols were appointed to be for a remembrance of Christ in order that, remembering Him, we might renew our fellowship with Him. In the Sacrament there is not a mere representation of Christ or a bare commemoration of events in which we are interested; but there is also an actual, present communion between Christ and the soul. Encouraged and stimulated by the outward signs, we, in our own soul and for ourselves, accept Christ and the blessings He brings. There is in the bread and wine themselves nothing that can profit us, but we are by their means to "discern the Lord's body." When Christ is said to be present in the bread and the wine, nothing mysterious or magical is meant. It is meant that He is spiritually present to those who believe.

He is present in the Sacrament as He is present to faith at any time and in any place; only, these signs which God puts into our hands to assure us of His gift of Christ to us help us to believe that Christ is given, and make it easier for us to rest in Him.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### CONCERNING SPIRITUAL GIFTS.

THIS Epistle is well fitted to disabuse our minds of the idea that the primitive Church was in all respects superior to the Church of our own day. We turn page after page, and find little but contention, jealousies, errors, immorality, fantastic ideas, immodesty, irreverence, profanity. At this point in the Epistle we do come upon a state of things which differentiates the primitive Church from our own; but here too the superior advantages of those early Christians were sadly abused by ignorance and envy. The members of the Corinthian Church were possessed of "spiritual gifts." They were endowed at their conversion or at baptism with certain powers which they had not previously possessed, and which were due to the influence of the Holy Spirit. It would have been surprising had so entire a revolution in human feelings and prospects as Christianity introduced not been accompanied by some extraordinary and abnormal manifestation. The new Divine life which was suddenly poured into human nature stirred it to unusual power. Men and women who yesterday could only sit and condole with their sick friends found themselves to-day in so elevated a state of mind that they could impart to the sick vital energy. Young men who had been brought up in idolatry and ignorance suddenly found their minds filled with new and stimulating ideas which they felt impelled to impart to those who would listen. These and the like extraordinary gifts, which were very helpful in calling attention to the young Christian community, speedily passed away when the Christian Church took its place as an established institution.

If we are disposed to question the genuineness of those manifestations because in our own day the Spirit of Christ does not produce them, there are two considerations which should weigh with us. First, that which Browning urges: that miracles which were once needed are now no longer required, because they served the purpose for which they were given. As when you sow a plot in a garden you stick twigs around it, that no careless person may tread down and destroy the young and yet unseen plant, but when the plants have themselves become as tall and visible as the twigs, then these are useless, so if the miracles actually served to help the young Church's growth, she by their means has now become sufficiently visible and sufficiently understood to need them no more.\*

\* "You stick a garden-plot with ordered twigs  
To show inside lie germs of herbs unborn,  
And check the careless step would spoil their birth;  
But when herbs wave, the guardian twigs may go,  
Since should ye doubt of virtues, question kinds.  
It is no longer for old twigs ye look,  
Which proved once underneath lay store of seed,  
But to the herb's self, by what light ye boast,  
For what fruit's signs are. This book's fruit is plain,



And, secondly, it was to be expected that the first impact of these new Christian forces on the spirit of man should produce disturbance and violent emotions, such as could not be expected to continue as the normal condition of things. New political or social ideas suddenly possessing a people, as at the French Revolution, carry them to many actions and inspire them with an energy which cannot be normal. And gentle and without observation as were the Spirit and the kingdom of Christ, yet it was impossible but that, under the pressure of the most influential and inspiring ideas which ever possessed our race, there should be some extraordinary manifestations.

Nothing could be more natural than that these gifts should be overrated and should almost be considered as the most substantial and advantageous blessings Christianity had to offer. First being accepted as evidence of the real indwelling of the Holy Spirit, they came to be prized for their own sake. Originally designed as signs of the reality of the communication between the risen Lord and His Church, and therefore as assurances that the holiness and blessedness promised by Christ were not unattainable, they came to be regarded as themselves more precious than the holiness they promised. Given to this individual and to that in order that each might have some gift by which he could profit the community, they came to be looked upon as distinctions of which the individual was proud, and therefore introduced vanity, envy, and separation, instead of mutual esteem and helpfulness. One gift was measured with another and rated above or below it; and, as usual, what was useful could not compete with what was surprising. The gift of speaking for the spiritual profit of the hearers was little thought of in comparison with the gift of speaking in unknown tongues. Throughout this and the two following chapters Paul explains the object of these gifts and the principle of their distribution and employment; he enounces the supremacy of love, and lays down certain rules for the guidance of meetings in which these gifts were displayed.

Paul introduces his remarks by reminding them that their previous history sufficiently explained their need of instruction. "In your former heathen state you had no experience whatever similar to that which you now have in the Church. The dumb idols to the worship of which you let yourselves be carried did not communicate powers similar to those which the Spirit now communicates to you. Consequently, novices as you are in this domain, you need a guiding thread to prevent you from going astray. This is why I instruct you."\* And the first thing you need to guide you is a criterion by which you can judge whether so-called manifestations of the Spirit are genuine or spurious. The test is a simple one. Every one whose words or actions disparage Jesus proclaims himself to be under some other influence than that of the Spirit; every one who owns Jesus as Lord, serving Him and promoting His cause, is animated by the Spirit.

"No man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth

Jesus accursed." But was there any possibility of such an utterance being heard in a Christian Church? It seems there was. It seems that very early in the history of Christianity men were found in the Church who could not reconcile themselves to the accursed death of Christ. They believed in the Gospel He proclaimed, the miracles He wrought, the kingdom He founded; but the Crucifixion was still a stumbling-block to them. And so they framed a theory to suit their own prejudices, and held that the Divine Logos descended upon Jesus at His baptism and spoke and acted through Him, but abandoned Him before the Crucifixion. It was Jesus, a mere man, who died on the Cross the accursed death. This degradation of Jesus was not to be tolerated in the Christian Church, and was decisive as to a man's possession of true spiritual gifts. To own the lordship of Jesus was the test of a man's Christianity. Did he acknowledge as supreme that Person who had lived and died under the name of Jesus? Did he employ his spiritual gifts for the furtherance of His kingdom and as one who was really endeavouring to serve this unseen Master? Then no hesitation need be shown in admitting his claim to be animated by the Spirit of God.

In other words, Paul wishes them to understand that, after all, the only sure test of a man's Christianity is his actual submission to Christ. No wonderful works he may accomplish in the Church or in the world prove his possession of Christ's Spirit. "Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name have cast out devils, and in Thy name have done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that work iniquity." A man may gather and edify a large congregation, he may write ably in defence of Christianity, he may be recognised as a benefactor of his age, or he may be considered the most successful of missionaries, but the only test of a man's claims to be listened to by the Church is his actual submission to Christ. He will seek not his own glory, but the good of men. And as to the gifts themselves, they should be no cause of discord, for they have everything in common: they have their source in God; they are for Christ's service; they are forms of the same Spirit. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all."

The new life then introduced by Christ into the individual and society was found to assume various forms and to suffice for all the needs of human nature in this world. Paul delighted to survey the variety of endowment and faculty which appeared in the Church. Wisdom, knowledge, faith, power to work miracles, extraordinary gifts of exhortation or prophecy and also of speaking in unknown tongues, capacity for managing affairs and general helpfulness—these and other gifts were the efflorescence of the new life. As the sun in spring develops each seed according to its own special kind and character, so this new spiritual force develops in each man his most intimate and special character. Christian influence is not an external appliance that clips all men after one pattern as trees in

Nor miracles need prove it any more.

Doth the fruit show? Then miracles bade 'ware

At first of root and stem, saved both till now

From trampling ox, rough boar, and wanton goat."

\* Godet.



an avenue are clipped into one shape; but it is an inward and vital power which causes each to grow according to his own individuality, one with the rugged irregularity of the oak, another with the orderly richness of the plane. Variety in harmony is said to be the principle of all beauty, and it is this which the Divine Spirit in man produces. Individual distinctions are not obliterated, but developed and directed for the service of the community. At one in their allegiance to Christ, bound into one body by common affections, beliefs, and hopes, and aiming at the advancement of one cause, Christians are yet as different as other men in faculty, in temperament, in attainment.

There is no truth coming more determinedly to the front in our own day than this: that society is an organism similar to the human body. This indeed is no new idea, nor is it an exclusively Christian idea. That man was made for society and that it was each man's business to labour for the good of the whole was common Stoic doctrine. It was taught that every man should believe himself to be born, not for himself, but for the whole world. Take one out of many expressions of this truth: "You have seen a hand cut off, or a foot, or a head, lying apart from the rest of the body; that is what a man makes himself when he separates himself from others or does anything unsocial. You were made by nature a part; and it is due to the benevolence of God that, if you have become detached from the whole, you can be reunited to it." And in the very earliest days, when the populace of Rome became disaffected and seditious and retired outside the city walls to a camp of their own, Menenius Agrippa went out to them and uttered his fable which Shakespeare has helped to make famous. He related how the various members of the body—the hand, the eye, the ear—mutinied and refused to work any longer because it seemed to them that all the food and enjoyment for which they toiled went to another member, and not to them. It was of course easy for the accused member to clear itself of the charge of inactivity and show that the food it received was not retained for its own exclusive use, but was distributed through the rivers of the blood, and how "the strongest nerves and small inferior veins" from it received the natural competency whereby they lived.

But although this comparison of society to the body is not new, it is now being more seriously and scientifically examined and pushed to its legitimate conclusions and applications. The "real meaning of the doctrine that society is an organism is that an individual has no life except that which is social, and that he cannot realise his own purposes except in realising the larger purposes of society." All the organs of the body by which we do our work in the world and earn our bread are themselves maintained in life and fulfil the end of their own existence by working for and maintaining the whole body; and except in the common life of the body they cannot be maintained at all. It is the same with the other organs of the body. The heart, the lungs, the digestive organs, have hard and constant work to do; but only by doing it can they fulfil the very purpose of their existence and maintain themselves in life by contributing to the life of the body in which alone they can live

at all. The same principle holds good in society. It is obvious in trade and commerce; a man can only maintain himself in life by helping to maintain other people. And the ideal society is one in which each man should not only yield reluctantly to the compulsion of this natural law, but should clearly see the great ends for which mankind exists and labour zealously to promote these ends, should as eagerly seek what contributes to the good of the whole as the hand is stretched out for food or as the palate relishes what stays the appetite and nourishes the whole body.

Illustrating the relation of Christians to one another by the figure of the members of a body, Paul suggests several ideas.

I. The unity of Christians is a vital unity. The members of the body of Christ form one whole because they partake of one common life. "By one Spirit are we all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." The unity of those who together form the body of Christ is not a mechanical unity, as of a pound of shot in a bag; nor is it a unity imposed by external force, as of caged wild beasts in a menagerie; nor is it a unity of mere accidental juxtaposition, as of passengers in a train or of the inhabitants of a town. But as the life of the human body maintains all the various members and nourishes them to a well-proportioned and harmonious growth, so is it in the body of Christ. Remove from the human body the life that supports it, and all the members fall away from connection with one another; but so long as the life is retained it assimilates in the most surprising way all nutriment to its own precise type and form. The lion and the tiger may eat precisely the same food, but that food nourishes in each a different form. The life that animates the human body assimilates nutriment to its own uses, imparting to each member its due proportion and maintaining all the members in their relation to one another.

The unity of Christians is a unity of this kind, a vital unity. The same spiritual life exists in all Christians, derived from the same source, supplying them with similar energy, and prompting them to the same habits and aims. They accept the Spirit of Christ, and so are formed into one body, being no more isolated, self-seeking, and each man fighting for his own hand, but banded together for the promotion of one common cause. There is no clashing between the interests of the individual and the interests of the society or kingdom to which he belongs. The member finds its only life and function in the body. It is by the freest and most deliberate exercise of his reason and his will that a man attaches himself to Christ, seeing that by so doing he enters the only path to real happiness and attainment. The individual can only utter and fulfil his best self by doing his best possible for society. His devotion to public interests is no self-destroying generosity, but the dictate of duty and of reason. To quote a writer who deals with this matter from the philosophical point of view, "he who has made the welfare of the race his aim has done so, not from a generous choice, but because he regards the pursuit of this welfare as his imperative duty. The welfare of the race is his own ideal, what he must



realise in order to be what he *ought* to be. The welfare of the race is his own welfare, which he must seek because he must be *himself*. Cromwell, Luther, Mahomet, were heroes, not because they did something over and above what they *ought* to have done, but because their *ideal self* was coextensive with the larger life of their world. 'I can no other' was the voice of each. . . . Their large purposes were what they owed to themselves just as much as to their world."\*

Those who cannot philosophically reconcile the claims of society and the claims of the individual are yet enabled by their attachment to Christ and by their acceptance of His Spirit to merge self in the larger whole of Christ's body and find their truest life in seeking the good of others. It is by their acceptance of Christ's Spirit as the source and Guide of their own life that they enter into fellowship with the community of men.

2. Paul is careful to show that the very efficiency of the body depends upon the multiplicity and variety of the members of which it is composed: "If they were all one member, where were the body?" "If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?" The lowest forms of life have either no distinct organs or very few; but the higher we ascend in the scale of life the more numerous and more distinctly differentiated are the organs. In the lower forms one member discharges several functions, and the animal uses the same organ for locomotion as it uses for eating and digesting; in the higher forms each department of life and activity is presided over by its own sense or organ. The same law holds good of society. Among tribes low down in the scale of civilisation each man is his own farmer, or shepherd, or huntsman, and his own priest, and butcher, and cook, and clothier. Each man does everything for himself. But as men become civilised the various wants of society are supplied by different individuals, and every function is specialised. The same law necessarily holds true of the body of Christ. It is highly organised, and no one organ can do the whole work of the body. Therefore one has this gift, another that. And the more nearly this body approaches perfection, the more various and distinct will these gifts be.

One important function of the Church therefore is to elicit and utilise every faculty for good which its members possess. In a society in which Christianity is but beginning to take root, it may fall to one man to do the work of the whole Christian body—to be eye, tongue, foot, hand, and heart. He must evangelise, he must teach, he must legislate, he must enforce law; he must preach, he must pray, he must lead the singing; he must plan the church and help to build it; translate the Scriptures and help to print them; teach the savages to wear a little clothing and help to make it; dissuade them from war and instruct them in the arts of peace, instilling a taste for agriculture and commerce. But when the Christian society has left this rudimentary stage behind, those various functions are discharged by different individuals; and as it advances towards a perfect condition its functions and organs become as multifarious and as distinctly differentiated as the organs of the human body. Every member of the Church is different from every other, and has a gift of his

own. Some are fitted to nourish the Church herself and maintain the body of Christ in health and efficiency; some are fitted to act on the world outside: they are eyes to perceive, feet to pursue, hands to lay hold of those who are straying from the light.

Every one, therefore, who is drawn into the fellowship of the body of Christ has something to contribute to its good and to the work it does. He is in connection with that body because the Spirit of Christ has possessed and assimilated him to it; and that Spirit energises in him. He may not see that anything the Church is presently engaged in is work he can undertake. He may feel out of place and awkward when he attempts to do what others are doing. He feels himself like a greyhound, compelled to run by scent and not by sight, and expected to do the work of a pointer, and not seize his quarry, or as if set to do the work of an eye with the hand. He can do it only in a groping, fumbling, imperfect manner. But this is only a hint that he is meant for other work, not for none. And it is for him to discover what his Christian instincts lead him to. The eye does not need to be told it is for seeing, or the hand that it is for grasping. The eye and the hand of the child instinctively do their office. And where there is true Christian life, it matters not what the member of Christ's body be, it will find its function, even though that function is new in the Church's experience.

The fact, then, that you are very different from the ordinary members of the Church is no reason for supposing you do not belong to Christ's body. The ear is very different from the eye; it can detect neither form nor colour: it cannot enjoy a landscape or welcome a friend: but "if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?" Is it not, on the contrary, its very diversity from the eye that makes it a welcome addition to the body, enriching its capabilities and enlarging its usefulness? It is not by comparison with other people that we can tell whether we belong to the body of Christ, nor is our function in that body determined by anything which some other member is doing. The very difficulty we find in adjusting ourselves to others and in finding any already existing Christian work to which we can give ourselves is a hint that we have the opportunity of adding to the Church's efficiency. The Church can claim to be perfect only when she embraces the most diversely gifted individuals and allows the tastes, instincts, and aptitudes of all to be used in her work.

3. As there is to be no slothful self-disparagement in the body of Christ, so must there be no depreciation of other people. "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you." When zealous people discover new methods, they forthwith despise the normal ecclesiastical system that has stood the test and is stamped with the approval of centuries. One method cannot regenerate and Christianise the world, any more than one member can do the whole work of the body. Paul goes even further, and reminds us that the "feeble" parts of the body are "the more necessary;" the heart, the brain, the lungs, and all those delicate members of the body that do its essential work entirely hidden from view are more necessary than

\* Professor Jones in "Essays in Philosophical Criticism."



the hand or the foot, the loss of which no doubt cripples, but does not kill. So in the Church of Christ it is the hidden souls who by their prayers and domestic godliness maintain the whole body in health and enable more conspicuously gifted members to do their part. Contempt for any member of the body of Christ is most unseemly and sinful. Yet men seem unable ever to learn how many members, and how various, it takes to complete a body, and how needful are those functions they themselves are wholly unable to discharge.

4. Lastly, Paul is careful to teach that "the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man *to profit withal*." It is not for the glorification of the individual that the new spiritual life manifests itself in this or that remarkable form, but for the edification of the body of Christ. However beautiful any feature of a face may be, it is hideous apart from its position among the rest and lying by itself. Morally hideous and no longer admirable is the Christian who attracts attention to himself and does not subordinate his gift to the advantage of the whole body of Christ. If in the human body any member asserts itself and is not subservient to the one central will, that is recognised as disease: St. Vitus' dance. If any member ceases to obey the central will, paralysis is indicated. And equally so is disease indicated wherever a Christian seeks his own ends or his own glorification, and not the advantage of the whole body. Simon Magus sought to make a reputation and a competence for himself by spiritual gifts. What in his case was mainly stupidity is in ours sin, if we use such powers and opportunities as we have for our own purposes, and not with a view to the profit of others.

Let us then endeavour to recognise our position as members of Christ's body. Let us with seriousness accept Him as appointed by God to be our true spiritual Life and Head; let us consider what we have in our power to do for the good of the whole body; and let us put aside all jealousy, envy, and selfishness, and with meekness honour the work done by others while humbly and hopefully doing our own.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### NO GIFT LIKE LOVE.

THIS is one of the passages of Scripture which an expositor scruples to touch. Some of the bloom and delicacy of surface passes from the flower in the very handling which is meant to exhibit its fineness of texture. But although this eulogium of love is its own best interpreter, there are points in it which require both explanation and enforcement.

In the preceding chapter (xii.) Paul has striven to suppress the envy, vanity, and discord which had resulted from the abuse of the spiritual gifts with which the Corinthian Church was endowed. He has explained that these gifts were bestowed for the edification of the Church, and not for the glorification of the individual; and that therefore the individual should covet, not the most surprising, but the most profitable, of these manifestations of the Spirit. "Covet the best gifts," he says: Desire the gifts which edify, the gift of exhortation, or, as it was then called, prophecy. And yet

there is a more excellent way to edify the Church than even to exercise apostolic gifts; this is the way of love, which he proceeds to celebrate.

1. Love is the ligament which binds together the several members of the body of Christ, the cement which keeps the stones of the temple together. Without love there can be no body, no temple, only isolated stones or disconnected, and therefore useless, members. The extraordinary gifts of which the Corinthians were so proud cannot compete with love. They may profit the Church, but without love they are no evidence of the ripe Christian manhood of their possessor. Suppose I speak all possible languages—languages of angels, if you please, as well as languages of men—and have not love, I am but a mere instrument played upon by another, no better than a bit of sounding brass, a trumpet or a cymbal, not enjoying, nor moved by, nor swayed by the music I make, but insensible. As Bunyan says, "Is it so much to be a fiddle?" If no man understands the language I am impelled to use, then I am but as a clanging cymbal, making a noise without significance. And even though I speak a tongue which some stranger recognises as his own, it is not I who am coming into contact with his soul through a living influence; I am but used as an instrument of brass is used by the player.

Or take even the higher gift of prophecy. Suppose I am enlightened by the Spirit so that I can explain things hitherto misunderstood; suppose I can make revelations of important truths which have been accessible to none besides; suppose even that I have all faith—faith, as the rabbis say, to remove mountains; suppose I can work miracles, heal the sick, raise the dead, set the whole world agape with astonishment—all this without love, however it may profit others, profits myself not at all, and neither brings me into closer connection with Christ nor gives assurance of my sound spiritual condition. I may be among the number of those who, after doing wonderful works in Christ's name, are repudiated by Him. For as among ourselves there are many gifts, such as learning, eloquence, sagacity; musical, and poetical, and artistic genius, which may greatly contribute to the edification of the Church, and yet reside in persons who can make little claim to sanctity, so in the early Church these extraordinary spiritual gifts seem to have carried with them no evidence of their possessors' personal religion. They had certainly begun a Christian career, but they might be deteriorating in character instead of developing and maturing.

There were, however, two Christian actions which might seem to be beyond question as evidence of a sound spiritual condition: almsgiving and martyrdom. The young man who sought guidance from Christ lacked but one thing: to sell his property and give to the poor. But, says Paul, "though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing." It is only too possible to do great acts of charity from a love of display, or from an uneasy sense of duty which parts reluctantly and grudgingly with what it bestows. That is understood. Common-sense tells every one but the abjectly superstitious man himself that it is as impossible to buy spiritual health on a bed of death as it is to buy the cure of his mortal disease.



But martyrdom? Can a man give any stronger proof of his faith than to give his body to be burned? Certainly one would with great reluctance disparage the integrity of those courageous persons who in many ages of the Church's history have gone without flinching to the stake. But, in point of fact, a willingness to suffer for one's opinion or one's faith is not in every case a guarantee of the existence of a heart transformed from selfishness to love. At one period martyrdom became fashionable, and Christian teachers were compelled to remonstrate with those who fanatically rushed to the stake and the arena, just as suicide once became fashionable at Rome and evoked prohibitory legislation.

Not without reason then does Paul so emphatically warn men against looking upon such exceptional actions or such extraordinary endowments as undoubted evidence of a healthy spiritual state. Gifts and conduct which bring men prominently before the eye of the Church or the world are often no index to the character; and if they be not rooted in and guided by love, their possessor has little reason to congratulate himself. Too often it is a man's snare to judge himself by what he does rather than by what he is. It is so easy comparatively to do great things, supposing certain gifts be present; it is at least always possible to human nature to make sacrifices and engage in arduous duties. The impossible thing is love. No eye to advantageous consequences or to public opinion can enable a man to love; no desire to maintain a character for piety can produce that grace. Love must be spontaneous, from the soul's self, not produced by considerations or the requirements of a position we wish to reach or to maintain. It must be the unconstrained, natural outcome of the real man. Not even the consideration of Christ's love will produce love in us if there be not a real sympathy with Christ. A sense of benefit received will not produce love where there is no similarity of sentiment. Love cannot be got up. It is the result of God entering and possessing the soul. "He that loveth is born of God." That is the only account to be given of the matter. And therefore it is that where love is absent all is absent.

And yet how the mistake of the Corinthians is perpetuated from age to age. The Church is smitten with a genuine admiration of talent, of the faculties which make the body of Christ bulk larger in the eye of the world, while too often love is neglected. After all that the Church has learned of the dangers which accompany theological controversy, and of the hollowness of much that passes for growth, intellectual gifts are frequently prized more highly than love. Do we not ourselves often become aware that the absence of this one thing needful is writing vanity and failure on all we do and on all we are? If we are not yet in the real fellowship of the body of Christ, possessed by a love that prompts us to serve the whole, with what complacency can we look on other acquirements? Do parents sufficiently impress on their children that all successes at school and in early life are as nothing compared to the more obscure but much more substantial acquisition of a thoroughly unselfish, generous, catholic spirit of service?

2. Paul having illustrated the supremacy of

love by showing that without it all other gifts are profitless, proceeds (vv. 4-7) to celebrate its own positive excellence. It is possible, though unlikely, that Paul may have read the eulogium pronounced on love by the greatest of Greek writers five hundred years before: "Love is our lord, supplying kindness and banishing unkindness, giving friendship and forgiving enmity, the joy of the good, the wonder of the wise, the amazement of the gods; desired by those who have no part in him, and precious to those who have the better part in him; parent of delicacy, luxury, desire, fondness, softness, grace; careful of the good, uncaring of the evil. In every word, work, wish, fear—pilot, helper, defender, saviour; glory of gods and men, leader best and brightest; in whose footsteps let every man follow, chanting a hymn and joining in that fair strain with which love charms the souls of gods and men." Five hundred years after Paul another eulogium was pronounced on love by Mahomet: "Every good act is charity: your smiling in your brother's face; your putting a wanderer in the right road; your giving water to the thirsty, or exhortations to others to do right. A man's true wealth hereafter is the good he has done in this world to his fellow-man. When he dies, people will ask, What property has he left behind him? but the angels will ask what good deeds he has sent before him."

Paul's eulogium is the more effective because it exhibits in detail the various ramifications of this exuberant and fruitful grace, how it runs out into all our intercourse with our fellow-men and carries with it a healing and sweetening virtue. It imbues the entire character, and contains in itself the motive of all Christian conduct. It is "the fulfilling of the Law." Its claims are paramount because it embraces all other virtues. If a man has love, there is no grace impossible to him or into which love will not on occasion develop. Love becomes courage of the most absolute kind where danger threatens its object. It begets a wisdom and a skill which put to shame technical training and experience. It brings forth self-restraint and temperance as its natural fruit; it is patient, forgiving, modest, humble, sympathising. It is quite true that

"As every lovely hue is light,  
So every grace is love."

Thomas à Kempis dwells with evident relish on the varied capacity of this all-comprehending grace. "Love," he says, "feels no burden, regards not labours, would willingly do more than it is able, pleads not impossibilities, because it feels sure that it can and may do all things. Love is swift, sincere, pious, pleasant, and delightful; strong, patient, faithful, prudent, long-suffering, manly, and never seeking itself: it is circumspect, humble, and upright; sober, chaste, steadfast, quiet, and guarded in all its senses."

Paul's description of the behaviour of love is drawn in view of the discords and vanities of the Corinthians and as a contrast to their unseemly and unbrotherly conduct. "Love suffereth long, and is kind;" it reveals itself in a magnanimous bearing of injuries and in a considerate and tender imparting of benefits. It returns good for evil; not readily provoked by slights and wrongs, it ever seeks to spend itself in kindnesses. Then there is nothing envious,



vain, or selfish in love. "Love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself." It neither grudges others their gifts, nor is eager to show off its own. The pallor and bitter sneer of envy and the ridiculous swagger of the boastful are equally remote from love. "It is not puffed up, and doth not behave itself unseemly." Love saves a man from making a fool of himself by consequential conduct, and by thrusting himself into positions which betray his incompetence, and by immodest, irreverent, and eccentric actions. It balances a man and gives him sense by bringing him into right relations with his fellows and prompting him to esteem their gifts more highly than his own. Neither is love ever on the watch for its own rights, scrupulously exacting the remuneration, the recognition, the applause, the precedence, the deference, that may be due: "it seeketh not its own." "It is not easily provoked, nor does it take account of evil;" it is not fired with resentment at every slight, and does not make a mental note and lay up in its memory the contempt shown by one, the indifference shown by another, the intention to wound betrayed by a third. Love is too little occupied with itself to feel these exhibitions of malice very keenly. It is bent on winning the battle for others, and the wounds received in the cause are made light of. Its eye is still on the advantage to be gained by the needy, and not on itself.

Another manifestation of love, and one the mention of which pricks the conscience, is that it "rejoiceth not in unrighteousness." It has no malignant pleasure in seeing reputations exploded, in discovering the sin, the hypocrisy, the mistakes, of other men. "It rejoiceth with the truth." Where truth scatters calumny and shows that suspicions were ill-founded, love rejoices. Successful wickedness, whether for or against its own interests, love has no pleasure in; but where goodness triumphs love is thrilled with a sympathetic joy. In place of rejoicing in discovered wickedness because it lowers a rival or seems to leave a more prominent position to itself, love hastens to cover the fault. "It covereth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things." It has untiring charity, making every allowance, proposing every excuse, believing that explanations can be made, accepting greedily such as are made, slow to be persuaded that things are as bad as rumour paints, hoping against hope for the acquittal, or at any rate for the reformation, of every culprit.

3. Finally, Paul shows the superiority of love by comparing it in point of permanence, first, with the gifts of which the Corinthians were so proud, and, second, with the universal Christian graces.

"Love never faileth;" it is imperishable: it grows from less to more; there never comes a time when it gives place to some higher quality of soul, or when it is unimportant whether a man has it or no, or when it is no longer the criterion of the whole moral state. The most surprising spiritual gifts can make no such claim. "Whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease." These gifts were for the temporary benefit of the Church. However some might misapprehend their significance and fancy that these extraordinary manifestations were destined to characterise the Christian

Church throughout its history, Paul was not so deceived. He was prepared for their disappearance. They were the scaffolding which no one thinks of or inquires after when the building is finished, the school-books which become the merest rubbish when the boy is educated, the prop which the forester removes when the sapling has become a tree.

But knowledge? The knowledge of God and of Divine things in which good men delight, and which is esteemed the stamina of character—is not this permanent? No, says Paul. "Knowledge also shall be done away." And to illustrate his meaning Paul uses two figures: the figure of a child's knowledge, which is gradually lost in the knowledge of the man, and the figure of an object dimly seen through a semi-transparent medium. We shall understand the significance and the bearing of these figures if we consider that when we speak of imperfect knowledge we mean either of two things: we may either mean that it is imperfect in amount or that it is imperfect in quality, in accuracy. When a boy begins the study of Euclid, the first proposition he learns is absolutely accurate and true; he may add to it, but he can never improve upon it. His knowledge is imperfect in amount, but so far as it goes it is absolutely reliable; he may build upon it and deduce other truths from it. But when we are walking on a misty morning and see an object at a distance, our knowledge is imperfect, but in quite another sense. It is imperfect in the sense of being dim, uncertain, inaccurate. We see that there is something before us, but whether a human being or a gatepost we cannot say. A little nearer we see it is a human being, but whether old or young, friend or no friend, we cannot say. Here the growth of our knowledge is from dimness to accuracy.

Both the figures used by Paul imply that our knowledge of Divine things is of this latter kind. They loom, as it were, through a mist. Many of their details are invisible. We have not got them under our hand to examine at leisure. Our present knowledge is as the light of a lantern by which we can pick our way, or as the starlight, for which we are thankful in the meantime; but when the sun of a wider, deeper, truer knowledge rises, what we now call knowledge shall be quite eclipsed. "When I was a child," says Paul, "I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things." That is to say, Paul was distinctly aware that much of our present knowledge is provisional. We do not know the very truth, but only such approximations to the truth and such symbols of it as we are able to understand. We are at present in the state of childhood, which cherishes many notions destined to be exploded by maturer knowledge. We think of God as a Being very similar to ourselves, only very much greater; and in our present state we must be content with this imperfect knowledge, but prepared to put it away as "childish" when fuller knowledge comes. The atoning death of Christ may be spoken of as the substitutionary sacrifice of a Victim on whom our guilt is laid; but to speak thus of the death of Christ is to make large use of the language of symbol, and we must hold our minds open for the fuller knowledge which will make such language seem quite inadequate. Paul's language warns us



against speaking, or thinking, or acting as if our knowledge of Divine things were perfectly accurate, and as if therefore we might freely and unhesitatingly condemn all who differ from us.

The other figure is still more precise, although there is great difference of opinion as to what Paul means by seeing now "through a glass, darkly." The word here rendered "glass" is used either for the dim metallic mirror used by the ancients, or for the semi-translucent talc which was their substitute for glass in windows. Of these two meanings it is the latter which in this passage gives the best sense. It was a common figure among the rabbis to illustrate dimness of vision. If they wished to denote direct and clear vision, they spoke of seeing a thing face to face; if they wished to denote uncertain hazy vision, they spoke of seeing through a glass—that is, through a substance only a little more transparent than our own dimmed glass, through which you can see objects, but cannot tell exactly what they are or who the persons are who are moving. Thus they had a common saying, "All other prophets saw as through nine glasses, Moses as through one." The rabbis, too, had another saying which illustrates the second part of this twelfth verse: "Even as a king, who with common people talks through a veil, so that he sees them, but they do not see him, but when his friend comes to speak to him, he removes this veil, so that he might see him face to face, even so did God speak to Moses apparently, and not darkly."\*

Interpreting Paul's language then by the language of his own kith and kin and of the schools in which he had been educated, his meaning is that in this life we can see Divine things only dimly and as through a veil, but hereafter we shall see them without the intervention of any obscuring medium. Here and now we can make out only the general outline of the unseen realities; but hereafter we shall know even as we are known, shall see God as directly as He now sees us. We shall not have even then the same perfect knowledge of Him that He has of us, but shall see Him as immediately and directly as He sees us. Now He wears a veil through which He can see, but through which we cannot see; hereafter He will lay aside this. Our present knowledge of God and of all things unseen is necessarily vague, not susceptible of exact definition. There are some things of which we may be quite sure, others of which we must be content to remain in uncertainty. We may be quite sure that God exists, that He loves us, that He has sent His Son to save us; but if we attempt to run a sharp and clear outline round the truths thus dimly seen, we shall inevitably err.

It may be added that while Paul warns us against supposing that our knowledge is perfect, he does not mean to brand it as useless or delusive. On the contrary, his figures imply that it is necessary for our growth, and that unless we honestly use such knowledge as we have, we cannot win our way to knowledge that is perfect. It is the imperfect knowledge of the child which leads it on to further attainment. The fundamental doctrine of the Christian creed that there are three Persons in one God is certainly a very rough and childish expression of a truth

\*See the passages in Wettstein and Schöttgen.

far deeper than we can understand, but to reject this doctrine because it is evidently only an approximation to a truth which cannot be defined and stated in final terms is to refuse to submit to the conditions under which we now live and to ape a manhood which in point of fact we do not possess.

Paul's crowning testimony to the worth of love is given in the thirteenth verse: "But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love." He does not mean that love abides while faith becomes sight and hope fruition. Rather he indicates that faith and hope are also imperishable, and hereby distinguished from the spiritual gifts of which he has been speaking. Both in this life and in that which is to come faith, hope, and love abide. For faith and hope pass away only in one aspect of their exercise. If by faith be meant belief in things unseen, this passes away when the unseen is seen. If hope be taken as referring only to the future state in general, then when that state is reached hope passes away. But faith and hope are really permanent elements of human life, faith being the confidence we have in God, and hope the ever-renewed expectancy of future good. But while faith maintains us in connection with God, love is the enjoyment of God and the partaking of His nature; and while hope renews our energy and guides our aims, it can bring us to no better thing than love.

To see the beauty, fruitfulness, and sufficiency of love is easy, but to have it as the mainspring of our own life most difficult, indeed the greatest of all attainments. This we instinctively recognise as the true test of our condition. Have we that in us which really knits us to God and our fellow-men and prompts us to do our utmost for them? Have we in us this new affection which destroys selfishness and brings us into true and lasting relations with all we have to do with? This is the root of all good, the beginning of all blessedness, because the germ of all likeness to God, who Himself is love.

## CHAPTER XX.

### SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND PUBLIC WORSHIP.

IN the first twenty-five verses of this chapter Paul gives his estimate of the comparative value of the two chief spiritual gifts: speaking with tongues and prophesying; in the latter half of the chapter he lays down certain rules which were to guide the exercise of these gifts and certain principles on which all the worship and public services of the Church should proceed.

A difficulty, however, meets us at the outset. We have no opportunity of observing these gifts in exercise, and cannot readily understand them. With prophecy indeed there need be no great difficulty. Prophesying is speaking for God, whether the utterance regards present or future matters. When Moses complained that he had no gift of utterance, God said, "Aaron shall be thy prophet;" that is, shall speak for thee, or be thy spokesman. Prediction is not necessarily any part of the prophet's function. It may be so, and often it was so, but a man might be a prophet who had no revelation of



the future. In the sense in which Paul uses the word, a prophet was "an inspired teacher and exhorter who revealed to men the secrets of God's will and word and the secrets of their own hearts for the purpose of conversion and edification." The function of the prophet is indicated in the third verse: "He that prophesieth speaketh for edification, and exhortation, and comfort;" and still further in the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth verses, where the results of prophesying are described in terms precisely such as we should use to describe the results of efficacious preaching. The hearer is "convinced," is conscious in himself that the words spoken are shedding light and carrying conviction into the recesses of his heart. The gift of prophecy, then, was the endowment which enabled a Christian to speak so as to bring the mind and spirit of the hearer into touch with God.

But the gift of tongues is involved in greater obscurity. On its first occurrence, as recorded in the book of Acts, it would seem to have been the gift of speaking in foreign languages. We are told that the strangers from Asia Minor, Parthia, the shores of the Black Sea, Africa, and Italy, when they heard the disciples speaking, recognised that they were speaking intelligible languages. One man was attracted by the sound of his native Arabic; another heard the familiar Latin; a third for the first time in Jerusalem heard a Jew speaking the language he was accustomed to hear on the banks of the Nile. Naturally they were confounded by the circumstance, "every man hearing," as it is said, "his own language, the tongue wherein he was born." It would certainly seem probable, therefore, that, whether the gift afterwards changed its character or not, it was originally the power of speaking in a foreign language so as to be intelligible to any one who understood that language.

This gift was of course communicated, not as a permanent acquisition, to fit men to preach the Gospel in foreign countries, but merely as a temporary impulse to utter words which to themselves had no meaning. All spiritual gifts seem to have been inconstant in their influence. Paul had the gift of healing, and yet he "left Trophimus at Miletum sick;" his dear friend Epaphroditus was sick nigh unto death without Paul being able to help him; and when Timothy was unwell, he did not cure him by miracle, but by a very commonplace prescription. So, too, when a man by study and practice acquires the use of a foreign tongue, he has command of that language so long as memory lives and for all purposes; but this "gift of tongues" was only available "as the Spirit gave utterance" to each, and failed to communicate a constant and complete command of the language. It is not to be supposed therefore that this gift was bestowed in order to enable men more easily to proclaim the Gospel to all races. And at no period of the world's history was such a gift less needed, Greek and Latin being very generally understood throughout the Roman world. Perhaps more persons grew up bilingual in that day than at any other time.

If then this gift was intermittent and did not qualify its possessor to use a foreign language for the ordinary purposes of life or for preaching the Gospel, what was its use? It served the same purpose as other miracles; it made

visible and called attention to the entrance of new powers into human nature. As Paul says, it was "for them that believe not, not for them that believe." It was meant to excite inquiry, not to instruct the mind of the Christian. It produced conviction that among the followers of Christ new powers were at work. The evidence of this took a shape which seemed to intimate that the religion of Christ was suitable for every race of mankind. This gift of tongues seemed to claim all nations as the object of Christ's work. The most remote and insignificant tribe was accessible to Him. He knew their language, suited Himself to their peculiarities, and claimed kindred with them.

It must, however, be said that the common opinion of scholars is that the gift of tongues did not consist in ability to speak a foreign language even temporarily, but in an exalted frame of mind which found expression in sounds or words belonging to no human language. What was thus uttered has been compared to the "merry, unmeaning shouts of boyhood, getting rid of exuberant life, uttering in sounds a joy for which manhood has no words." These ecstatic cries or exclamations were not always understood either by the person uttering them, or by any one else, so that there was always a risk of such utterances being considered either as the ravings of lunatics, or, as in the first instance, the thick and inarticulate mutterings of drunkards. But sometimes there was present a person in the same key of feeling whose spirit vibrated to the note struck by the speaker, and who was able to render his inarticulate sounds into intelligible speech. For as music can only be interpreted by one who has a feeling for music, and as the inarticulate language of tears, or sighs, or groans can be comprehended by a sympathetic soul, so the tongues could be interpreted by those whose spiritual state corresponded to that of the gifted person.

At various periods of the Church's history these manifestations have been reproduced. The Montanists of the early Church, the Camisards of France at the close of the seventeenth century, and the Irvingites of our own country claimed that they possessed similar gifts. Probably all such manifestations are due to violent nervous agitation. The early Quakers showed their wisdom in treating all physical manifestations as physical.

Comparing these two gifts, prophecy and speaking with tongues, Paul very decidedly gives the preference to the former, and this mainly on the score of its greater utility. It often happened that when one of the Christians spoke in tongues there was no one present who could interpret. However exalted the man's own spirit might be, the congregation could derive no benefit from his utterances. And if a number of persons spoke at once, as they seemed to do in Corinth, on the pretext that they could not control themselves, any unbeliever who came in and heard this Babel of sound would naturally conclude, as Paul says, that he had stumbled into a ward of lunatics. Such disorder must not be. If there were no one present who could interpret what the speakers with tongues were saying, they must be silent. Apart from interpretation speaking with tongues was mere noise, the blare of a trumpet sounded by one who did not know one call from another, and which was mere unintelligible



sound. Prophesying was not liable to these abuses. All understood it, and could learn something from it.

From this preference shown by Paul for the less showy but more useful gift, we may gather that to make public worship the occasion of self-display or sensational exhibitions is to degrade it. This is a hint for the pulpit rather than for the pew. Preachers must resist the temptation to preach for effect, to make a sensation, to produce fine sermons. The desire to be recognised as able to move men, to say things smartly, to put the truth freshly, to be eloquent, or to be sensible is always striving against the simple-minded purpose of edifying Christ's people. Worshipers as well as preachers may, however, be so tempted. They may sing with a gratified sense of exhibiting a good voice. They may find greater pleasure in what is sensational in worship than in what is simple and intelligible.

Again, we here see that worship in which the understanding bears no part, receives no countenance from Paul. "I will pray with the spirit; I will pray with the understanding also." Where the prayers of the Church are in an unknown tongue, such as Latin, the worshipper may indeed pray with the spirit, and may be edified thereby, but his worship would be better did he pray with the understanding also. Music unaccompanied by words induces in some temperaments an impressible condition which has an appearance of devoutness and probably something of the reality; but such devoutness is apt to be either hazy or sentimental or both, unless by the help of accompanying words the understanding goes hand in hand with feeling.

No countenance can be found in this chapter to the idea that worship should exclude preaching and become the sole purpose of the assembling together of Christian people. Some temperaments incline towards worship, but resent being preached to or instructed. The reverential and serious feelings which are quickened into life by devotional forms of prayer may be scattered by the buffoonery or ineptitudes of the preacher. Exasperation, unbelief, contempt, in the mind of the hearer may be the only results achieved by some sermons. It may occasionally occur to us that the Christian world would be very much the better of some years of silence, and that results which have not been reached by floods of preaching might be attained if these floods were allowed to ebb and a period of quiet and repose succeed. Unquestionably there is a danger at present of leading men to suppose that religion is a thing which must be ceaselessly talked about, and which perhaps chiefly consists of talk, so that if one only hears enough, and has the right opinions, he may accept himself as a religious person. But it is one thing to say that there is at present too much preaching or too careless and unequal a distribution of preaching, and quite another thing to say there should be none.

Having given expression to his preference for prophesying, Paul goes on to indicate the manner in which the public services should be conducted. The picture he draws is one which finds no counterpart in the greater modern Churches. The chief distinction between the services of the Corinthian Church and those we are now familiar with is the much greater freedom with which in those days the membership

of the Church took part in the service. "When ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation." Each member of the congregation had something to contribute for the edification of the Church. The experience, the thought, the gifts, of the individual were made available for the benefit of all. One with a natural aptitude for poetry threw his devotional feeling into a metrical form, and furnished the Church with her earliest hymns. Another with innate exactness of thought set some important aspect of Christian truth so clearly before the mind of the congregation that it at once took its place as an article of faith. Another, fresh from contact with the world and intercourse with unbelieving and dissolute men, who had felt his own feet sliding and renewed his grasp on Christ, entered the meeting with the glow of conflict on his face, and had eager words of exhortation to utter. And so passed the hours of meeting, without any fixed order, without any appointed ministry, without any uniformity of service. And certainly the freshness, fulness, and variety of such services were greatly to be desired if possibly they could be attained. We lose much of what would interest and much that would edify by enjoining silence upon the membership of the Church.

And yet, as Paul observes, there was much to be desired in those Corinthian services. Had there been some authorised official presiding over them, the abuses of which this letter speaks could not have arisen. To appeal to this chapter or to any part of this letter in proof that there should be no distinction between clergy and laity would be very bad policy. It is indeed obvious that at this time there were neither elders nor deacons, bishops nor rulers of any kind, in the Church of Corinth; but then it is quite as obvious that there was great need of them, and that the want of them had given rise to some scandalous abuses and to much disorder. The ideal condition would be one in which authority should be lodged in certain elected office-bearers, while the faculty and gift of each member in some way contributed to the good of the whole Church. In most Churches of our own day, efforts are made to utilise the Christian energies of their membership in those various charitable works which are so necessary and so abundant. But probably we should all be the better of a much freer ventilation of opinion within the Church and of listening to men who have not been educated in any particular school of theology and hold their minds closely to the realities of experience.

We cannot but ask in passing, What has become of all those inspired utterances with which the Corinthian Church from week to week resounded? Doubtless they entered into the life of that generation and fostered the Christian character which so often shone out on the heathen world with surprising purity. Doubtless, too, the unknown teachers of those primitive Churches did much both in the way of suggesting aspects of truth to Paul and of confirming, and expounding, and illustrating his somewhat condensed and difficult teaching. Had their utterances been recorded, many obscurities of Scripture might have been removed, much light must have been reflected on the whole circle of Christian truth, and we should



have been able to define more clearly the actual condition of the Christian Church. Shorthand was in common use at that time in the Roman courts, and by its means we are in possession of relics of that age of much less value than the report of one or two of these Christian meetings might have been. No such report, however, is forthcoming.

While Paul abstains from appointing office-bearers to preside at their meetings, he is careful to lay down two principles which should regulate their procedure. First, "let everything be done decently and in order." This advice was greatly needed in a Church in which the public services were sometimes turned into tumultuous exhibitions of rival gifts, each man trying to make himself heard above the din of voices, one speaking with tongues, another singing a hymn, a third loudly addressing the congregation, so that any stranger who might be attracted by the noise and step into the house could think this Christian meeting nothing else than Bedlam broke loose. Above all things, then, says Paul, conduct your meetings in a seemly fashion. Observe the rules of common decency and order. I do not prescribe any particular forms you must observe nor any special order you must follow in your services. I do not pronounce what portion of time should be devoted to prayer nor what to praise or exhortation; nor do I require that you should in all cases begin your service in the same stereotyped manner and carry it through in the same routine. Your services must vary both in form and in substance from week to week, according to the equipment of the individual members of your Church; sometimes there may be many who wish to exhort, sometimes there may be none. But in all this freedom and variety, spontaneity must not run into obtrusiveness, and variety must be saved from disorder.

The other general principle Paul lays down in the words, "Let all things be done unto edifying." Let each use his gift for the good of the congregation. Keep the great end of your meetings in view, and you need no formal rubrics. If extempore prayer is found inspiring, use it; if the old liturgy of the synagogue is preferred, retain its service; if both have advantages, employ both. Judge your methods by their bearing on the spiritual life of your members. Make no boast of your æsthetic worship, your irreproachable liturgy, your melting music, if these things do not result in a more loyal service of Christ. Do not pique yourselves on your puritanic simplicity of worship and the absence of all that is not spiritual if this bareness and simplicity do not bring you more directly into the presence of your Lord. It matters little what we eat or in what shape it is served if we are the better for our food and are maintained in health and vigour. It matters little whether the vehicle in which we travel be highly decorated or plain so long as it brings us safely to our destination. Are we the better for our services? Is it our chief aim in them to receive and promote an earnest religious spirit and a sincere service of Christ?

It might be difficult to say whether the somewhat selfish ambition of those Corinthians to secure the surprising gifts of the Spirit or our own torpid indifference and lack of expectation is less to be commended. Certainly every one who attaches himself to Christ ought to indulge

in great expectations. Through Christ lies the way out from the poverty and futility that oppress our spiritual history. From Him we may, however falsely modest we are, expect at least His own Spirit. And in this "least" there is promise of all. They who sincerely attach themselves to Christ cannot fail to end by being like Him. But lack of expectation is fatal to the Christian. If we expect nothing or very little from Christ, we might as well not be Christians. If He does not become to us a second conscience, ever present in us to warn against sin and offer opposing inducements, we might as well call ourselves by any other name. His power is exerted now not to excite to unwonted exhibitions of abnormal faculties, but to promote in us all that is most stable and substantial in character. And the fact is that they who hunger after righteousness are filled. They who expect that Christ will help them to become like Himself do become like Him. All grace is attainable. Nothing but unbelief shuts us out from it. Do not be content until you find in Christ more abundant life, until you have as clear evidence as these Corinthians had that a new spirit of power dwells within you. He Himself encourages you to expect this. It is to receive this He calls us to Him; and if we are not expecting this spirit of life, it is because we do not understand or do not believe Him. He has come to give us the best God has to give, and the best is likeness to Himself. He has come to save our life from being a folly and a failure, and He saves it by filling it with His own Spirit. All fulness resides in Him; in Him Divine resource is made available for human needs: but the distribution is moral, not mechanical; that is to say, it depends on your willingness to receive, on your expectation of good, on your true personal attachment to Christ in spirit and in will.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

#### I. ITS PLACE IN THE CHRISTIAN CREED.

PAUL having now settled the minor questions of order in public worship, marriage, intercourse with the heathen, and the other various difficulties which were distracting the Corinthian Church, turns at last to a matter of prime importance and perennial interest: the resurrection of the body. This great subject he handles not in the abstract, but with a view to the particular attitude and beliefs of the Corinthians. Some of them said broadly, "There is no resurrection of the dead," although apparently they had no intention of denying that Christ had risen. Accordingly Paul proceeds to show them that the resurrection of Christ and that of His followers hang together, that the resurrection of Christ is essential to the Christian creed, that it is amply attested, and that although great difficulties surround the subject, making it impossible to conceive what the risen body will be, yet the resurrection of the body is to be looked forward to with confident hope.

It will be most convenient to consider first the place which the resurrection of Christ holds in the Christian creed; but that we may follow Paul's argument and appreciate its force, it will



be necessary to make clear to our own mind what he meant by the resurrection of Christ and what position the Corinthians sought to maintain.

First, by the resurrection of Christ Paul meant His rising from the grave with a body glorified or made fit for the new and heavenly life He had entered. Paul did not believe that the body he saw on the road to Damascus was the very body which had hung upon the cross, made of the same material, subject to the same conditions. He affirms in this chapter that flesh and blood, a natural body, cannot enter upon the heavenly life. It must pass through a process which entirely alters its material. Paul had seen bodies consumed to ashes, and he knew that the substance of these bodies could not be recovered. He was aware that the material of the human body is dissolved, and is by the processes of nature used for the constructing of the bodies of fishes, wild beasts, birds; that as the body was sustained in life by the produce of the earth, so in death it is mingled with the earth again, giving back to earth what it had received. The arguments, therefore, commonly urged against the Resurrection had no relevancy against that in which Paul believed, for it was not that very thing which was buried which he expected would rise again, but a body different in kind, in material, and in capacity.

But yet Paul always speaks as if there were some connection between the present and the future, the natural and the spiritual, body. He speaks, too, of the body of Christ as the type or specimen into the likeness of which the bodies of His people are to be transformed. Now, if we conceive, or try to conceive, what passed in that closed sepulchre in the garden of Joseph, we can only suppose that the body of flesh and blood which was taken down from the cross and laid there was transformed into a spiritual body by a process which may be called miraculous, but which differed from the process which is to operate in ourselves only by its rapidity. We do not understand the process; but is that the only thing we do not understand? All along the line which marks off this world from the spiritual world mystery broods; and the fact that we do not understand how the body Christ had worn on earth passed into a body fit for another kind of life ought not to prevent our believing that such a transmutation can take place.

There are in nature many forces of which we know nothing, and it may one day appear to us most natural that the spirit should clothe itself with a spiritual body. The connection between the two bodies is the persistent and identical spirit which animates both. As the life that is in the body now assimilates material and forms the body to its particular mould, so may the spirit hereafter, when ejected from its present dwelling, have power to clothe itself with a body suited to its needs. Paul refuses to recognise any insuperable difficulty here. The transmutation of the earthly body of Christ into a glorified body will be repeated in the case of many of His followers. for, as he says, "we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.*"

Secondly, we must understand the position occupied by those whom Paul addressed in this chapter. They doubted the Resurrection; but in that day, as in our own, the Resurrection

was denied from two opposite points of view. Materialists, such as the Sadducees, believing that mental and spiritual life are only manifestations of physical life and dependent upon it, necessarily concluded that with the death of the body the whole life of the individual terminates. And it would rather appear as if the Corinthians were tainted with materialism. "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," can only be the suggestion of the materialist, who believes in no future life of any kind.

But many who opposed materialism held that the resurrection of the body, if not impossible, was at all events undesirable. It was the fashion to speak contemptuously of the body. It was branded as the source and seat of sin, as the untamed bullock which dragged its yokefellow, the soul, out of the straight path. Philosophers gave thanks to God that He had not tied their spirit to an immortal body, and refused to allow their portrait to be taken, lest they should be remembered and honoured by means of their material part. When Paul's teaching was accepted by such persons, they laid great stress on his inculcation of the mystical or spiritual dying with Christ and rising again, until they persuaded themselves this was all he meant by resurrection. They declared that the Resurrection was past already, and that all believing men were already risen in Christ. To be free from all connection with matter was an essential element in their idea of salvation, and to promise them the resurrection of the body was to offer them a very doubtful blessing indeed.

In our own day the resurrection of Christ is denied both from the materialist and from the spiritualist or idealist point of view. It is said that the Resurrection of Christ is an undoubted fact if by the resurrection be meant that His spirit survived death and now lives in us. But the bodily resurrection is a thing of no account. Not from the risen body flows the power that has altered human history, but from the teachings and life of Christ and from His devotion of Himself even unto death to the interests of men. Christ lay in His grave, and the elements of His body have passed into the bosom of nature, as ours will before long; but His spirit was not imprisoned in the grave: it lives, perhaps in us. Statements to this effect you may hear or read frequently in our day. And either of two very different beliefs may be expressed in such language. It may, on the one hand, mean that the person Jesus is individually extinct, and that although virtue still flows from His life, as from that of every good man, He is Himself unconscious of this and of everything else, and can exert no new and fresh influence, such as emanates from a person presently alive and aware of the exigencies appealing to His interference. This is plainly a form of belief entirely different from that of the Apostles, who acted for a living Lord, to whom they appealed and by whom they were guided. Belief in a dead Christ, who cannot hear prayer and is unconscious of our service, may indeed help a man who has nothing better to help him; but it is not the belief of the Apostles.

On the other hand, it may be meant that although the body of Christ remained in the tomb, His spirit survived death, and lives a disembodied but conscious and powerful life. One of the profoundest German critics, Keim, has expressed himself to this effect. The Apostles,



he thinks, did not see the actual risen body of the Lord; their visions of a glorified Jesus were not, however, delusive; the appearances were not the creations of their own excitement, but were intentionally produced by the Lord Himself. Jesus, it is believed, had actually passed into a higher life, and was as full of consciousness and of power as He had been on earth; and of this glorified life in which He was He gave the Apostles assurance by these appearances. The body of the Lord remained in the tomb; but these appearances were intended, to use the critic's own words, as a kind of telegram, to assure them He was alive. Had such a sign of His continued and glorified life not been given, their belief in Him as the Messiah could not have survived the death on the cross.

This view, although erroneous, can do little harm to experimental or practical Christianity. The difference between a disembodied spirit and a spiritual body is really unappreciable to our present knowledge. And if any one finds it impossible to believe in the bodily resurrection of Christ, but easy to believe in His present life and power, it would only be mischievous to require of him a faith he cannot give in addition to a faith which brings him into real fellowship with Christ. The main purpose of Christ's appearances was to give to His disciples assurance of His continued life and power. If that assurance already exists, then belief in Christ as alive and supreme supersedes the use of the usual stepping-stone towards that belief.

At the same time, it must be maintained that not only did the Apostles believe they saw the body of Christ, by which indeed they first of all identified Him, but also they were distinctly assured that the body they saw was not a ghost or a telegram, but a veritable body that could stand handling, and whose lips and throat could utter sound. Besides, it is not in reason to suppose that when they saw this appearance, whatever it was, they should not at once go to the sepulchre and see what was there. And if there they saw the body while in various other places they saw what seemed to be the body, what a world of incomprehensible and mystifying jugglery must they have felt themselves to be involved in!

It is a fact then that those who knew most both about the body and about the spirit of Jesus believed they saw the body and were encouraged so to believe. Besides, if we accept the view that though Christ is alive, His body remained in the grave, we are at once confronted with the difficulty that Christ's glorification is not yet complete. If Christ's body did not partake in His conquest over the grave, then that conquest is partial and incomplete. Human nature both in this life and in the life to come is composed of body and spirit; and if Christ now sits at God's right hand in perfected human nature, it is not as a disembodied spirit, but as a complete person in a glorified body, we must conceive of Him. No doubt it is a spiritual influence which Christ now exerts upon His followers, and their belief in His risen life may be independent of any statements made by the disciples concerning His body; at the same time, to suppose that Christ is now without a body is to suppose that He is imperfect: and it must also be remembered that the primitive faith and restored confidence in Christ, to which the very existence of the Church is due, were created by

the sight of the empty tomb and the glorified body.

In the face of such chapters as this and other passages equally explicit, modern believers in a merely spiritual resurrection have found some difficulty in reconciling their views with the statements of Paul. Mr. Matthew Arnold undertakes to show us how this may be done. "Not for a moment," he says, "do we deny that in Paul's earlier theology, and notably in the Epistles to the Thessalonians and Corinthians, the physical and miraculous aspect of the Resurrection, both Christ's and the believer's, is primary and predominant. Not for a moment do we deny that to the very end of his life, after the Epistle to the Romans, after the Epistle to the Philippians, if he had been asked whether he held the doctrine of the Resurrection in the physical and miraculous sense as well as in his own spiritual and mystical sense, he would have replied with entire conviction that he did. Very likely it would have been impossible to him to imagine his theology without it. But—

"Below the surface stream, shallow and light,  
Of what we *say* we feel—below the stream,  
As light, of what we *think* we feel, there flows  
With noiseless current strong, obscure and deep,  
The central stream of what we feel indeed ;"

and by this alone are we truly characterised." This, however, is not to interpret an author, but to make him a mere nose of wax that can be worked into any convenient shape. Probably Paul understood his own theology quite as well as Mr. Arnold; and, as his critic says, he considered the physical resurrection of Christ and the believer an essential part of it.

Considering the place which our Lord's risen body had in Paul's conversion, it could not be otherwise. At the very moment when Paul's whole system of thought was in a state of fusion the risen Lord was pre-eminently impressed upon it. It was through his conviction of the resurrection of Christ that both Paul's theology and his character were once for all radically altered. The idea of a crucified Messiah had been abhorrent to him, and his life was dedicated to the extirpation of this vile heresy that sprang from the Cross. But from the moment when with his own eyes he saw the risen Lord he understood, with the rest of the disciples, that death was the Messiah's appointed path to supreme spiritual headship. As truly in Paul's case as in that of the other disciples faith sprang from the sight of the glorified Christ; and to none could it be so inevitable as to him to say, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." From the first Paul had put the resurrection of Christ forward as an essential and fundamental part of the Gospel he had received, and which he was accustomed to deliver.

And, generally speaking, this place is assigned to it both by believers and by unbelievers. It is recognised that it was the belief in the Resurrection which first revived the hopes of Christ's followers and drew them together to wait for the promise of His Spirit. It is recognised that whether the Resurrection be a fact or no, the Church of Christ was founded on the belief that it had taken place, so that if that had been removed the Church could not have been. This is affirmed as decisively by unbelievers as by believers. The great leader of



modern unbelief (Strauss) declares that the Resurrection is "the centre of the centre, the real heart of Christianity as it has been until now;" while one of his ablest opponents says, "The Resurrection created the Church, the risen Christ made Christianity; and even now the Christian faith stands or falls with Him. . . . If it be true that no living Christ ever issued from the tomb of Joseph, then that tomb becomes the grave, not of a man, but of a religion, with all the hopes built on it and all the splendid enthusiasms it has inspired" (Fairbairn).

It is not difficult to perceive what it was in the resurrection of Christ which gave it this importance.

1. First, it was the convincing proof that Christ's words were true, and that He was what He had claimed to be. He Himself had on more occasions than one hinted that such proof was to be given. "Destroy this temple," He said, "and in three days I will raise it again." The sign which was to be given, notwithstanding His habitual refusal to yield to the Jewish craving for miracle, was the sign of the prophet Jonah. As he had been thrown out and lost for three days and nights, but had thereby only been forwarded in his mission, so our Lord was to be thrown out as endangering the ship, but was to rise again to fuller and more perfect efficiency. In order that His claim to be the Messiah might be understood, it was necessary that He should die; but in order that it might be believed, it was needful that He should rise. Had He not died, His followers would have continued to expect a reign of earthly power; His death showed them no such reign could be, and convinced them His spiritual power sprang out of apparent weakness. But had He not risen again, all their hopes would have been blighted. All who had believed in Him would have joined with the Emmaus disciples in their hopeless cry, "We thought that this had been He who should have redeemed Israel."

It was the resurrection of our Lord, then, which convinced His disciples that His words had been true, that He was what He had claimed to be, and that He was not mistaken regarding His own person, His work, His relation to the Father, the prospects of Himself and His people. This was the answer given by God to the doubts, and calumnies, and accusations of men. Jesus at the last had stood alone, unsupported by one favouring voice. His own disciples forsook Him, and in their bewilderment knew not what to think. Those who considered Him a dangerous and seditious person, or at best a crazed enthusiast, found themselves backed by the voice of the people and urged to extreme measures, with none to remonstrate save the heathen judge, none to pity save a few women. This delusion, they congratulated themselves, was stamped out. And stamped out it would have been but for the Resurrection. "Then it was seen that while the world had scorned the Son of God, the Father had been watching over Him with unceasing love; that while the world had placed Him at its bar as a malefactor and blasphemer, the Father had been making ready for Him a seat at His own right hand; that while the world nailed Him to the cross, the Father had been preparing for Him 'many crowns' and a name that is above every name; that while the world had gone to the grave in the garden, setting a watch and sealing the stone, and had

then returned to its feasting and merriment, because the Preacher of righteousness was no longer there to trouble it, the Father had waited for the third morning in order to bring Him forth in triumph from the grave."\*

This contrast between the treatment Christ received at the hands of men and His justification by the Father in the Resurrection fills and colours all the addresses delivered by the Apostles to the people in the immediately succeeding days. They evidently accepted the Resurrection as God's great attestation to the person and work of Christ. It changed their own thoughts about Him, and they expected it would change the thoughts of other men. They saw now that His death was one of the necessary steps in His career, one of the essential parts of the work He had come to do. Had Christ not been raised, they would have thought Him weak and mistaken as other men. The beauty and promise of His words which had so attracted them would now have seemed delusive and unbearable. But in the light of the Resurrection they saw that the Christ "ought to have suffered these things and so to enter His glory." They could now confidently say, "He died for our sins, and was raised again for our justification."

2. Secondly, the resurrection of Christ occupies a fundamental place in the Christian creed, because by it there is disclosed a real and close connection between this world and the unseen, eternal world. There is no need now of argument to prove a life beyond; here is one who is in it. For the resurrection of Christ was not a return to this life, to its wants, to its limitations, to its inevitable close; but it was a resurrection to a life for ever beyond death. Neither was it a discarding of humanity on Christ's part, a cessation of His acceptance of human conditions, a rising to some kind of existence to which man has no access. On the contrary, it was because He continued truly human that in human body and with human soul He rose to veritable human life beyond the grave. If Jesus rose from the dead, then the world into which He is gone is a real world, in which men can live more fully than they live here. If He rose from the dead, then there is an unseen Spirit mightier than the strongest material powers, a God who is seeking to bring us out of all evil into an eternally happy condition. Quite reasonably is death invested with a certain majesty, if not terror, as the mightiest of physical things. There may be greater evils; but they do not affect all men, but only some, or they debar men from certain enjoyments and a certain kind of life, but not from all. But death shuts men out from everything with which they have here to do, and launches them into a condition of which they know absolutely nothing. Any one who conquers death and scatters its mystery, who shows in his own person that it is innocuous, and that it actually betterers our condition, brings us light that reaches us from no other quarter. And He who shows this superiority over death in virtue of a moral superiority, and uses it for the furtherance of the highest spiritual ends, shows a command over the whole affairs of men which makes it easy to believe He can guide us into a condition like His own. As Peter affirms, it is "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead we are begotten again unto a lively hope."

\* Milligan, "The Resurrection of our Lord," p. 150.



3. For, lastly, it is in the resurrection of Christ we see at once the norm or type of our life here and of our destiny hereafter. Holiness and immortality are two aspects, two manifestations, of the Divine life we receive from Christ. They are inseparable the one from the other. His Spirit is the source of both. "If the Spirit that raised up the Lord Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies through His Spirit that dwelleth in you." If we have now the one evidence of His indwelling in us, we shall one day have the other. The hope that should uplift and purify every part of the Christian's character is a hope which is shadowy, unreal, inoperative, in those who merely know about Christ and His work; it becomes a living hope, full of immortality in all who are now actually drawing their life from Christ, who have their life truly hid with Christ in God, who are in heart and will one with the Most High, in whom is all life.

Therefore does Paul so continually hold up to us the risen life of Christ as that to which we are to be conformed. We are to rise with Him to newness of life. As Christ has done with death, having died to sin once, so must His people be dead to sin and live to God with Him. Sometimes in weariness or dejection one feels as if he had seen the best of everything, experienced all he can experience, and must now simply endure life; he sees no prospect of anything fresh, or attractive, or reviving. But this is not because he has exhausted life, but because he has not begun it. To the "children of the Resurrection," who have followed Christ in His path to life by **renouncing sin, and conquering** self, and giving themselves to God, there is a springing life in their own soul that renews hope and energy.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST (continued).

#### II. ITS PROOF.

PAUL, having affirmed that the resurrection of Christ is an essential element of the Gospel, proceeds to sketch the evidence for the fact. That evidence mainly consists in the attestation of those who at various times and in various places and circumstances had seen the Lord after His death. Other evidence there is, as Paul indicates. In certain unspecified passages of the Old Testament he thinks a discerning reader might have found sufficient intimation that when the Messiah came He would both die and rise again. But as he himself had not at first recognised these intimations in the Old Testament, he does not press them upon others, but appeals to the simple fact that many of those who had been familiar with the appearance of Christ while He lived saw Him after death alive.

As a preliminary to the positive evidence here adduced by Paul, it may be remarked that we have no record of any contemporary denial of the fact, save only the story put in the mouths of the soldiers by the chief priests. Matthew tells us that it was currently reported that the soldiers who had been on guard at the sepulchre were bribed by the priests and elders to

say that the disciples had come in the night and stolen the body. But whatever temporary purpose they fancied this might serve, the great purpose it now serves is to prove the truth of the Resurrection, for the main point is admitted, the tomb was empty. As for the story itself, its falsehood must have been apparent; and probably no one in Jerusalem was so simple as to be taken in by it. For, in point of fact, the authorities had taken steps to prevent this very thing. They were resolved there should be no tampering with the grave, and accordingly had set their official seal upon it and placed a guard to watch.

The evidence thus unintentionally furnished by the authorities is important. Their action after the Resurrection proves that the tomb was empty; while their action previous to the Resurrection proves that it was emptied by no ordinary interposition, but by the actual rising of Jesus from the dead. So beyond doubt was this that when Peter stood before the Sanhedrin and affirmed it no one was hardy enough to contradict him. Had they been able to persuade themselves that the disciples had tampered with the guard, or overpowered them, or terrified them in the night by strange appearances, why did they not prosecute the disciples for breaking the official seal? Could they have had a more plausible pretext for exploding the Christian faith and stamping out the nascent heresy? They were perplexed and alarmed at the growth of the Church; what hindered them from bringing proof that there had been no resurrection? They had every inducement to do so, yet they did not. If the body was still in the grave, nothing was easier than to produce it; if the grave was empty, as they affirmed, because the disciples had stolen the body, no more welcome handle against them could have been furnished to the authorities. But they could not in open court pretend any such thing. They knew that what their guard reported was true. In short, there was no object the Sanhedrin would more gladly have compassed than to explode the belief in the resurrection of Christ; if that belief was false, they had ample means of showing it to be so: and yet they did absolutely nothing that had any weight with the public mind. It is apparent that not only the disciples, but the authorities, were compelled to admit the fact of the Resurrection.

The idea that there was only a pretended resurrection, vamped up by the disciples, may therefore be dismissed; and indeed no well-informed person nowadays would venture to affirm such a thing. It is admitted by those who deny the Resurrection as explicitly as by those who affirm it that the disciples had a *bona fide* belief that Jesus had risen from the dead and was alive. The only question is, How was that belief produced? And to this question there are three answers: (1) that the disciples saw our Lord alive after the Crucifixion, but He had never been dead; (2) that they only thought they saw Him; and (3) that they did actually see Him alive after being dead and buried.

I. The first answer is plainly inadequate. We are asked to account for the Christian Church, for the belief in a risen Lord which animated the first disciples with a faith, a hope, a courage, whose power is felt to this day; we ask for an explanation of this singular circumstance that a number of men arrived at the conclusion that they had an almighty Friend, One who had all



power in heaven and on earth; and we are told, in explanation of this, that they had seen their Master barely rescued from crucifixion, creeping about the earth, scarcely able to move, all stained with blood, soiled from the tomb, pale, weak, helpless, and this object caused them to believe He was almighty. As one of the most sceptical of critics himself says, "one who had thus crept forth half dead from the grave and crawled about a sickly patient, needing medical and surgical assistance, nursing and strengthening, and who finally succumbed to his sufferings, could never have given his followers the impression that he was the Conqueror over death and the grave, the Prince of life. Such a recovery could only have weakened or at best given a pathetic tinge to the impression which he had made upon them by his life and death; it could not possibly have changed their sorrow into ecstasy, and raised their reverence into worship."

This explanation then may be dismissed. It is neither in harmony with the facts, nor is it adequate as an explanation.

It is not in harmony with the facts, because the fact of His death was certified by the surest authority. There was in the world at that time, and there is in the world now, nothing more punctiliously accurate than a soldier trained under the old Roman discipline. The punctilious exactness of this discipline is seen in the conduct both of the soldiers at the cross and of Pilate. Though the soldiers see that Jesus is dead, they make sure of His death by a spear-thrust, a hand-breadth wide, sufficient of itself, as they very well knew, to cause death. And when Pilate is applied to for the body, he will not give it up until he has received from the centurion on duty the necessary certificate that the sentence of death has actually been executed.

Neither is the supposition that Jesus survived the Crucifixion and appeared to His disciples in this rescued condition any explanation of their faith in Him as a risen, glorious almighty Lord. The Person they saw and afterwards believed in was not a bleeding, crushed, defeated man, who had death still to look forward to, but a Person who had passed through and conquered death, and was now alive for evermore, opening for Himself and to them the gates of a glorious and deathless life.

2. The belief of the disciples is explained with greater appearance of insight by those who say that they imagined they saw the risen Lord, although in reality they did not. There are, it is pointed out, several ways in which the disciples may have been deceived. For example, some clever and scheming person may have personated Jesus. Such personations have been made, but never with such results. When Postumus Agrippa was killed, one of his slaves secreted or dispersed the ashes of the murdered man, to destroy the evidence of his death, and retired for a time till his hair and beard were grown, to favour a certain likeness which he actually bore him. Meanwhile, taking a few intimates into his confidence, he spread a report, which found ready listeners, that Agrippa still lived. He glided from town to town, showing himself in the dusk for a few minutes only at a time to men prepared for the sudden apparition, until it came to be noised abroad that the gods had saved the grandson of Agrippa from the fate intended for him, and that he was about to visit the city and claim his rightful inheritance. But

no sooner did the vulgar imposture take this practical shape and come into contact with the realities of life than the whole trick exploded. Imposture, in fact, does not fit the case before us at all; and the more we consider the combination of qualities required in any one who could undertake to personate the risen Lord, the more we shall be persuaded that the right explanation of the belief in the Resurrection is not to be sought in this direction.

Again, one of the most reasonable and influential of our contemporaries ascribes "the great myth of Christ's bodily revival to the belief on the part of the disciples that such a soul could not become extinct. In a lesser way the grave of a beloved friend has been to many a man the birthplace of his faith; and it is obvious that in the case of Christ every condition was fulfilled which would raise such sudden conviction to the height of passionate fervour. The first words of the disciples to one another on that Easter morn may well have been 'He is not dead. His spirit is this day in paradise among the sons of God.'" Quite so; they of course believed that his spirit was in paradise, and for that very reason fully expected to find His body in the tomb. No ordinary visit to a grave, nor any ordinary results flowing from such a visit, throw light on the case before us, because in ordinary circumstances sane men do not believe that their friends are restored to them, and are standing in bodily palpable shape before them. There is no likelihood whatever that their belief in the continued existence of their Master's spirit should have given rise to the conviction that they had seen Him. It might have given rise to such expressions as that He would be with them to the end of the world, but not to the conviction that they had seen Him in the body.

Here, again, is Renan's account of the growth of this belief: "To Jesus was to happen the same fortune which is the lot of all men who have rivetted the attention of their fellow-men. The world, accustomed to attribute to them superhuman virtues, cannot admit that they have submitted to the unjust, revolting, iniquitous law of the death common to all. At the moment in which Mahomet expired Omar rushed from the tent, sword in hand, and declared that he would hew down any one who should dare to say that the prophet was no more. . . . Heroes do not die. What is true existence but the recollection of us which survives in the hearts of those who love us? For some years this adored Master had filled the little world by which He was surrounded with joy and hope; could they consent to allow Him to the decay of the tomb? No; He had lived so entirely in those who surrounded Him, that they could but affirm that after His death He was still living." M. Renan is careful not to remind us that the uproar occasioned by Omar's announcement was stilled by the calm voice of Abu Bekr, who also came forth from the deathbed of Mahomet with the memorable words, "Whoso hath worshipped Mahomet, let him know that Mahomet is dead, but whoso hath worshipped God that the Lord liveth and doth not die." The great critic omits also to notice that none of the Apostles said, like Omar, that their Master was not dead; they admitted and felt His death keenly; and it is vain to attempt to confound things essentially distinct, the assertion of a matter of fact, viz., that the Lord had risen again, with the sentimental or regret-



ful resuscitation of a man's image in the hearts of his surviving friends.

Besides, it should be observed that all these hypotheses, which explain the belief in the Resurrection by supposing that the disciples imagined that they had seen Christ, or persuaded themselves that He still lived, omit altogether to explain how they disposed of the tomb of our Lord, in which, according to this hypothesis, His body was still quietly reposing. One or two persons in a peculiarly excitable state might suppose they had seen a figure resembling a person about whom they were concerned; but how the belief that the tomb was empty could take any hold on them, or on the thousands who must have visited it in the succeeding weeks, is not explained, nor is any attempt made to explain it.

Is there, then, no possibility of the disciples having been deceived? May they not have been mistaken? May they not have seen what they wished to see, as other men have sometimes done? Men of vivid fancy or of a boastful spirit sometimes come really to believe they have done and said things they never did or said. Is it out of the question to imagine that the disciples may have been similarly misled? Had the belief in the Resurrection depended on the report of one man, had there been only one or a few eyewitnesses of the matter, their evidence might have been explained away on this ground. It is possible, of course, that one or two persons who were anxiously looking for the Resurrection of Jesus might have persuaded themselves they saw Him, might persuade themselves that some distant figure or some gleam of morning sunshine among the trees of the garden was the looked-for person. It requires no profound psychological knowledge to teach us that occasionally visions are seen. But what we have here to explain is how not one but several persons, not together, but in different places and at different times, not all in one mood of mind but in various moods, came to believe they had seen the risen Lord. He was recognised, not by persons who expected to see Him alive, but by women who went to anoint Him dead; not by credulous, excitable persons, but by men who would not believe till they had gone to and into the sepulchre; not by persons so enthusiastic and creative of their own belief as to mistake any passing stranger or even a gleam of light for Him they sought, but so slow to believe, so scornfully incredulous of resurrection, so resolutely sceptical, and so keenly alive to the possibility of delusion, that they vowed nothing would satisfy them but the test of touch and sight. It was a belief produced, not by one extraordinary and doubtful appearance, but by repeated and prolonged appearances to persons in various places and of various temperaments.

This supposition, therefore, that the disciples were prepared to believe in the Resurrection and wished to believe it, and that what they wished to see they thought they saw, must be given up. It has never been shown that the disciples *had* such a belief; it formed no part of the Jewish creed regarding the Messiah: and the idea that they actually were in this expectant state of mind is thoroughly contradicted by the narrative. So far from being hopeful, they were sad and gloomy, as witness the melancholy, resigned despair of the two friends on the road to Emmaus.

"It is a woe 'too deep for tears' when all  
Is reft at once, when some surpassing spirit,  
Whose light adorned the world around it, leaves  
Those who remain behind, not sobs or groans,  
But pale despair and cold tranquillity."

Such was the state of mind of the bereft disciples. They thought all was over. The women who went with their spices to anoint the dead—they certainly were not expecting to find their Lord risen. The men to whom they announced what they had seen were sceptical; some of them laughed at the women, and called their report "idle tales," and would not believe. Mary Magdalene was so little expecting to see her Lord alive again that when He did appear to her she thought He was the gardener, the *only* person she dreamt of seeing going about at that hour in the garden. Thomas, with all the resolute distrust of others which a modern sceptic could show, vows he will believe such a wild imagination on no man's word, and unless he sees the Lord with his own eyes and is allowed to test the reality of the figure by touch as well, he will not be convinced. To the disciples on the way to Emmaus, though they had never heard such conversation before as that of the Person who joined them, it never once occurred that this could be the Lord. In short there was not one person to whom our Lord appeared who was not taken wholly by surprise. So far were they from depicting the Resurrection in their hopes and fancies with such vividness as to make it seem to take outward shape and reality, that even when it did actually take place they could scarcely believe it on the strongest evidence. We are compelled, therefore, to dismiss the idea that the first disciples believed in the resurrection because they wished to do so and were prepared to do so.

3. There remains, therefore, only the third explanation of the disciples' belief in the Resurrection: they did see Him alive after He had been dead and buried. Plainly it was no phantom, or ghost, or imaginary appearance which could personate their lost Master and rouse them from the despondency, and inaction, and timidity of disappointed hopes to the calmest consistency of plan and the firmest courage. It was no vision created by their own imagination which could at once and for ever alter the idea of the Messiah which the disciples in common with all their countrymen held. It was no phantom who could imitate the impressive individuality of the Lord and continue His identity into new scenes, who could inspire the disciples with unity of purpose, and who could lead them forward to the most splendid victories men have ever won. No; nothing will explain the faith of the Apostles and of the rest but the fact of their really seeing the Lord after His death clothed in power. The men who said they had seen Him were men of probity; they were men who showed themselves worthy of being witnesses to so great an event; men animated by no paltry spirit of vainglory, but by seriousness, even sublimity, of mind; men whose lives and conduct require an explanation, and which are explained by their having been brought in contact with the spiritual world in this surprising and solemnising manner.

The testimony of Paul himself is in some respects more convincing than that of those who saw the Lord immediately after the Resurrection. Certainly he was neither anxious to believe nor likely to be ignorant of the facts. He



had devoted himself to the extermination of the new faith; all his hopes as a Pharisee and as a Jew were banded against it. He had the best means of ascertaining the truth, living on terms of friendship with the leading men in Jerusalem. It is simply inconceivable that he should have abandoned all his prospects and entered on a wholly different life without carefully investigating the chief fact which influenced him in making this change. It is of course said that Paul was a nervous, excitable creature, probably epileptic, and certainly liable to see visions. It is insinuated that his conversion was due to the combined influence of epilepsy and a thunderstorm—of all the unlucky suggestions of modern scepticism perhaps the unluckiest. Were it true, one could only wish epilepsy commoner than it is. We have to account not only for Paul's conversion, but for his abiding by the convictions at first produced in him. It is out of the question to suppose that he did not spend much of the immediately succeeding years in examining the grounds of the Christian faith and in questioning himself as to his own belief. Paul was no doubt eager and enthusiastic, but no man was ever better fitted to move among the realities of life or to ascertain what these realities are. Englishmen regard Paley as one of the best representatives of the combined acuteness and sense, penetration and solidity of judgment, by which English judges are supposed to be characterised; and Paley says of Paul, "His letters furnish evidence of the soundness and sobriety of his judgment, and his morality is everywhere calm, pure, and rational; adapted to the condition, the activity, and the business of social life and of its various relations; free from the over-scrupulousness and austerities of superstition, and from what was more perhaps to be apprehended, the abstractions of quietism and the soarings and extravagances of fanaticism." But really no person of ordinary capacity needs certificates of Paul's sanity. No saner or more commanding intellect ever headed a complex and difficult movement. There is no one of that generation whose testimony to the Resurrection is more worth having, and we have it in the most emphatic form of a life based upon it.

No one, so far as I know, who has taken a serious interest in the evidence adduced for this event, has denied that it would be quite sufficient to authenticate any ordinary historical event. In point of fact, the majority of the events of past history are accepted on much slenderer evidence than that which we have for the Resurrection. The evidence we have for it is of precisely the same kind as that on which we accept ordinary events; it is the testimony of the persons concerned, the simple statements of eyewitnesses and of those who were acquainted with eyewitnesses. It is not a prophetic, or poetical, or symbolical, or supernatural statement, but the plain and unvarnished testimony of ordinary men. The accounts vary in many particulars, but as to the central fact that the Lord rose and was seen over and over again there is no variation, and such variations as there are are merely such as exist in all similar accounts by different individuals of one and the same event. In short, the evidence can be refused only on the ground that no evidence, however strong, could prove such an incredible event. It is admitted that the evidence would be accepted in any other case, but this reported event is in itself incredible.

The idea of any interference with the physical laws which rule the world, no matter how important an end is to be served by the interference, is rejected as out of the question. This seems to me quite an illogical method of dealing with the subject. The supernatural is rejected as a preliminary, so as to bar any consideration of the most appropriate evidences of the supernatural. Before looking at that which, if not the most effective proof of the supernatural, is at least among those arguments which chiefly deserve attention, the mind is made up to reject all evidence of the supernatural.

The first business of scientific men is to look at facts. Many facts which at first sight seemed to contradict previously ascertained laws were ultimately found to indicate the presence of a higher law. Why are men of science so terrified by the word "miracle"? This event may, like the visit of a comet, have occurred only once in the world's history; but it need not on that account be irreducible to law or to reason. The resurrection of Christ is unique, because He is unique. Find another Person bearing the same relation to the race and living the same life, and you will find a similar resurrection. To say that it is unusual or unprecedented is to say nothing at all to the purpose.

Besides, those who reject the resurrection of Christ as impossible are compelled to accept an equally astounding moral miracle—the miracle, I mean, that those who had the best means of ascertaining the truth and every possible inducement to ascertain it should all have been deceived, and that this deception should have been the most fruitful source of good, not only to them, but to the whole world.

We are brought then to the conclusion that the disciples believed in the resurrection of Christ because it had actually taken place. No other account of their belief has ever been given which commends itself to the common understanding which accepts what appeals to it. No account of the belief has been given which is at all likely to gain currency or which is more credible than that which it seeks to supplant. The belief in the Resurrection which so suddenly and effectively possessed the first disciples remains unexplained by any other supposition than the simple one that the Lord did rise again.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### CONSEQUENCES OF DENYING RESURRECTION.

IN endeavoring to restore among the Corinthians the belief in the resurrection of the body, Paul shows the fundamental place occupied in the Christian creed by the resurrection of Christ, and what attestation His resurrection had received. He further exhibits certain consequences which flow from denial of the Resurrection. These consequences are (1) that if there is no resurrection of the body, then Christ is not risen, and that, therefore, (2) the Apostles who witnessed to that resurrection are false witnesses; (3) that those who had already died believing in Christ, had perished, and that our hope in Christ must be confined to this life; (4) that baptism for the dead is a vain folly if the dead rise not. To the statement and discus-



sion of these consequences Paul devotes a large part of this chapter, from verse 12 to verse 34. Let us take the least important consequence first.

1. "If the dead rise not at all, what shall they do who are baptised for the dead?" (ver. 29)—an inquiry of which the Corinthians no doubt felt the full force, but which is rather lost upon us because we do not know what it means. Some have thought that as baptism is sometimes used in Scripture as equivalent to immersion in a sea of troubles, Paul means to ask, "What shall they do, what hope have they, who are plunged in grief for the friends they have lost?" Some think it refers to those who have been baptised with Christ's baptism, that is to say, have suffered martyrdom and so entered into the Church of the dead. Others again think, that to be baptised "for the dead" means no more than ordinary baptism, in which the believer looks forward to the resurrection from the dead. The primitive form of baptism brought death and the resurrection vividly before the believer's mind, and confirmed his hope in the resurrection, which hope was vain if there is no resurrection.

The plain meaning of the words, however, seems to point to a vicarious baptism, in which a living friend received baptism as a proxy for a person who had died without baptism. Of such a custom there is historical trace. Even before the Christian era, among the Jews, when a man died in a state of ceremonial defilement it was customary for a friend of the deceased to perform in his stead the washings and other rites which the dead man would have performed had he recovered. A similar practice prevailed to some small extent among the primitive Christians, although it was never admitted as a valid rite by the Church Catholic. Then, as now, it sometimes happened that on the approach of death the thoughts of unbelieving persons were strongly turned towards the Christian faith, but before baptism could be administered death cut down the intending Christian. Baptism was generally postponed until youth or even middle life was passed, in order that a large number of sins might be washed away in baptism, or that fewer might stain the soul after it. But naturally miscalculations sometimes occurred, and sudden death anticipated a long-delayed baptism. In such cases the friends of the deceased derived consolation from vicarious baptism. Some one who was persuaded of the faith of the departed answered for him and was baptised in his stead.

If Paul meant to say, On the supposition that death ends all, what is the use of any one being baptised as proxy for a dead friend? he could not have used words more expressive of his meaning than when he says, "If the dead rise not at all, why are they then baptised for the dead?" The only difficulty is, that Paul might thus seem to draw an argument for a fundamental doctrine of Christianity from a foolish and unjustifiable practice. Is it possible that a man of such sagacity can have sanctioned or countenanced so absurd a superstition? But his alluding to this custom, in the way he here does, scarcely implies that he approved of it. He rather differentiates himself from those who practised the rite. "What shall *they* do who are baptised for the dead?"—referring, probably, to some of the Corinthians themselves. In any case,

the point of the argument is obvious. To be baptised for those who had died without baptism, and whose future was supposed thereby to be jeopardised, had at least a show of friendliness and reason; to be baptised for those who had already passed out of existence was of course, on the face of it, absurd.

2. The second consequence which flows from the denial of the resurrection is, that Paul's own life is a mistake. "Why stand we in jeopardy every hour? What advantageth it me to risk death daily, and to suffer daily, if the dead rise not?" If there is no resurrection, he says, my whole life is a folly. No day passes but I am in danger of death at the hands either of an infuriated mob or a mistaken magistrate. I am in constant jeopardy, in perils by land and sea, in perils of robbers, in nakedness, in fasting; all these dangers I gladly encounter because I believe in the resurrection. But "if in this life only we have hope in Christ, then we are of all men most miserable." We lose both this life and that which we thought was to come.

Paul's meaning is plain. By the hope of a life beyond, he had been induced to undergo the greatest privations in this life. He had been exposed to countless dangers and indignities. Although a Roman citizen, he had been cast into the arena to contend with wild beasts: there was no risk he had not run, no hardship he had not endured. But in all he was sustained by the assurance that there remained for him a rest and an inheritance in a future life. Remove this assurance and you remove the assumption on which his conduct is wholly built. If there is no future life either to win or to lose, then the Epicurean motto may take the place of Christ's promises, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

It may indeed be said that even if there be no life to come, this life is best spent in the service of man, however full of hazard and hardship that service be. That is quite true; and had Paul believed this life was all, he might still have chosen to spend it, not on sensual indulgence, but in striving to win men to something better. But in that case there would have been no deception and no disappointment. In point of fact, however, Paul believed in a life to come, and it was because he believed in that life he gave himself to the work of winning men to Christ regardless of his own pains and losses. And what he says is that if he is mistaken, then all these pains and losses have been gratuitous, and that his whole life has proceeded on a mistake. The life to which he sought to win, and for which he sought to prepare men, does not exist.

Besides, it must be acknowledged that the mass of men do sink in a merely sensual or earthly life if the hope of immortality is removed, and that Paul did not require to be very guarded in his statement of this truth. In fact, the words "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die" were taken from the history of his own nation. When Jerusalem was besieged by the Babylonians and no escape seemed possible, the people gave themselves up to recklessness and despair and sensual indulgence, saying, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Similar instances of the recklessness produced by the near approach of death may very readily be culled from the history of shipwrecks, of pestilences, and of besieged cities. In the old Jewish book, the



Book of Wisdom, it finds a very beautiful expression, the following words being put into the mouth of those who knew not that man is immortal: "Our life is short and tedious, and in the death of man is no remedy; neither was any man ever known to return from the grave: for we are all born at an adventure, and shall be afterwards as though we had never been; for the breath of our nostrils is as smoke, and a little spark is the moving of our heart, which, being extinguished, our bodies will be burnt to ashes, and our spirit vanish as the soft air: and our name shall be forgotten in time, and no man shall hold our works in remembrance, and our life shall pass away like the trace of a cloud, and shall be dispersed as a mist that is driven away with the beams of the sun, and overcome with the heat thereof. . . . Come on, therefore, let us enjoy the good things that are present, and let us speedily use the creatures like as in youth. Let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ointments, and let no flower of the spring pass by us; let us crown ourselves with rose-buds before they be withered; let none of us go without his share of voluptuousness; let us leave tokens of our joyfulness in every place, for this is our portion, and our lot is this."

It is obvious therefore that this is the conclusion which the mass of mankind draw from a disbelief in immortality. Convince men that this life is all, that death is final extinction, and they will eagerly drain this life of all the pleasure it can yield. We may say that there are some men to whom virtue is the greatest pleasure; we may say that to all the denial of appetite and self-indulgence is a more genuine pleasure than the gratification of it; we may say that virtue is its own reward, and that irrespective of the future it is right to live now spiritually and not sensually, for God and not for self; we may say that the judgments of conscience are pronounced without any regard to future consequences, and that the highest and best life for man is a life in conformity to conscience and in fellowship with God, whether such life is to be long or short, temporal or eternal. And this is true, but how are we to get men to accept it? Teach men to believe in a future life and you strengthen every moral sentiment and every Godward aspiration by revealing the true dignity of human nature. Make men feel that they are immortal beings, that this life, so far from being all, is the mere entrance and first step to existence; make men feel that there is open to them an endless moral progress, and you give them some encouragement to lay the foundations of this progress in a self-denying and virtuous life in this world. Take away this belief, encourage men to think of themselves as worthless little creatures that come into being for a few years and are blotted out again for ever, and you destroy one mainspring of right action in men. It is not that men do noble deeds for the sake of reward: the hope of reward is scarcely a perceptible influence in the best of men, or indeed in any men; but in all men trained as we are, there is an indefinite consciousness that, being immortal creatures, we are made for higher ends than those of this life, and have prospects of enjoyments which should make us independent of the grosser pleasures of the present bodily condition.

Apparently the Corinthians themselves had argued that morality was quite independent of

a belief in immortality. For Paul goes on: "Be not deceived: you cannot, however much you think so, you *cannot* hear such theories without having your moral convictions undermined and your tone lowered." This he conveys to them in a common quotation from a heathen poet—"Evil communications corrupt good manners"; that is to say, false opinions have a natural tendency to produce unsatisfactory and immoral conduct. To keep company with those whose conversation is frivolous or cynical, or charged with dangerous or false views of things, has a natural tendency to lead us to a style of conduct we should not otherwise have fallen into. Men do not always recognise this; they need the warning, "Be not deceived." The beginnings of conduct are so hidden from our observation, our lives are formed by influences so imperceptible, what we hear sinks so insidiously into the mind and mingles so insensibly with our motives, that we can never say *what* we have heard without moral contamination. No doubt it is possible to hold the most erroneous opinions and yet to keep the life pure; but they are strong and guileless spirits who can preserve a high moral tone while they have lost faith in those truths which mainly nourish the moral nature of the mass of men. And many have found to their surprise and grief that opinions which they fancied they might very well hold and yet live a high and holy life, have somehow sapped their moral defences against temptation and paved the way for shameful falls. We cannot always prevent doubts, even about the most fundamental truths, from entering our minds, but we can always refuse to welcome such doubts, or to be proud of them; we can always be resolved to treat sacred things in a reverent and not in a flippant spirit, and we can always aim at least at an honest and eager seeking for the truth.

3. But the most serious consequence which results if there be no resurrection of the dead, is that in that case Christ is not risen. "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen." For Paul refused to consider the resurrection of Christ as a miracle in the sense of its being exceptional and aside from the usual experience of man. On the contrary, he accepts it as the type to which every man is to be conformed. Precedent in time, exceptional possibly in some of its accidental accompaniments, the resurrection of Christ may be, but nevertheless as truly in the line of human development as birth, and growth, and death. Christ, being man, must submit to the conditions and experience of men in all essentials, in all that characterises man as human. And, therefore, if resurrection be not a normal human experience, Christ has not risen. The time at which resurrection takes place, and the interval elapsing between death and resurrection, Paul makes nothing of. A child may live but three days, but he is not on that account any the less human than if he had lived his threescore years and ten. Similarly the fact of Christ's resurrection identifies Him with the human race, while the shortness of the interval elapsing between death and resurrection does not separate Him from man, for in point of fact the interval will be less in the case of many.

Both here and elsewhere Paul looks upon Christ as the representative man, the one in whom we can see the ideal of manhood. If



any of our own friends should veritably die, and after death should appear to us alive, and should prove his identity by remaining with us for a time, by showing an interest in the very things which had previously occupied his thought, and by taking practical steps to secure the fulfilment of his purposes, a strong probability that we too should live through death would inevitably be impressed on our mind. But when Christ rises from the dead this probability becomes a certainty because He is the type of humanity, the representative person. As Paul here says, "He is the firstfruits of them that sleep." His resurrection is the sample and pledge of ours. When the farmer pulls the first ripe ears of wheat and carries them home, it is not for their own sake he values them, but because they are a specimen and sample of the whole crop; and when God raised Christ from the dead, the glory of the event consisted in its being a pledge and specimen of the triumph of mankind over death. "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him."

And yet while Paul distinctly holds that resurrection is a normal human experience, he also implies that but for the interposition of Christ that experience might have been lost to men. It is in Christ that men are made alive after and through death. As Adam is the source of physical life that ends in death, so Christ is the source of spiritual life that never dies. "By man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." Adam's severance from God and preference of what was physical, brought man under the powers of the physical world: Christ by perfect adhesion to God, and constant conquest of all physical allurements, won life eternal for Himself and for those who have His Spirit. As a man of genius and wisdom will by his occupation of a throne enlarge men's ideas of what a king is, and bring many blessings to his subjects, so Christ by living a human life enlarged it to its utmost dimensions, compelling it to express His ideas of life, and winning for those who follow Him entrance into a larger and higher condition. Resurrection is here represented, not as an experience which men would have enjoyed had Christ never appeared on earth, nor as an experience opened to men by God's sovereign good will, but as an experience in some way brought by Christ within human reach. "By man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." That is to say, all who are by physical derivation truly united to Adam, incur the death which by sinning he introduced into human experience; and similarly, all who by spiritual affinity are in Christ enjoy the new life which triumphs over death, and which He won. Adam was not the only man who died, but the firstfruits of a rich harvest; and so, Christ is not alone in resurrection, but is become the firstfruits of them that sleep. According to Paul's theology, the conduct of a man, the sin of Adam, carried in it disastrous consequences to all connected with him: but equally fruitful in consequences were the human life, death, and resurrection of Christ. The death of Adam was the first stroke of that funeral knell that has ceaselessly sounded through all generations: but the resurrection of Christ was equally the pledge

and earnest that the same experience would be enjoyed by all "that are Christ's."

Paul is carried on from the thought of the resurrection of "them that are Christ's," to the thought of the consummation of all things which this great event introduces and signalises. This exhibition of the triumph over death is the signal that all other enemies are now defeated. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death;" and this being destroyed, all Christ's followers being now gathered in and having entered on their eternal condition, the work of Christ so far as this world is concerned is over. Having reunited men to God, His work is done. The provisional government administered by Him having accomplished its work of bringing men into perfect harmony with the Supreme Will, it gives place to the immediate and direct government of God. What is implied in this it is impossible to say. A condition in which sin shall have no place and in which there shall be no need of means of reconciliation, a condition in which the work of Christ shall be no longer needed and in which God shall be all in all, pervading with His presence every soul and as welcome and natural as the air or the sunlight,—that is a condition not easy to be imagined. Neither can we readily imagine what Christ Himself shall be and do when the term of His mediatorial administration is finished and God is all in all.

One idea conspicuous in this brief and pregnant passage is that Christ came to subdue all the enemies of mankind, and that He will continue His work until His purpose is accomplished. He alone has taken a perfectly comprehensive view of the obstacles to human happiness and progress, and He has set Himself to remove these. He alone has penetrated to the root of all human evil and misery, and has given Himself to the task of emancipating men from all evil, of restoring men to their true life, and of abolishing for ever the miseries which have so largely characterised man's history. Slowly, indeed, and unseen, does His work proceed; slowly, because the work is for eternity, and because only gradually can moral and spiritual evils be removed. "It is by no breath, turn of eye, wave of hand, salvation joins issue with death," but by actual and sustained moral conflict, by real sacrifice and persistent choice of good, by long trial and development of individual character, by the slow growth of nations and the interaction of social and religious influences, by the leavening of all that is human with the spirit of Christ, that is, with self-devotement in practical life to the good of men. All this is too great and too real to be other than slow. The tide of moral progress in the world has often seemed to turn. Even now, when the leaven has been working for so long, how doubtful often seems the issue, how concerned even Christian people are about the merest superficialities and how little labouring to put down in Christ's name the common enemies. Can any one who looks at things as they are find it easy to believe in the final extinction of evil? Whither tend the prevalent vices, the empty-souled love of pleasure and demand for excitement, the unyielding, brazen-faced selfishness of the principles of business if not of the men who engage in it, the diligent propagation of error, the oppression of the rich and the greed and sensuality that poverty induces? One needs to be reminded that these



things are the enemies, not only of good men, but of Christ, and that by God's will He is to defeat them. One needs to be reminded also that to see this victory accomplished and to have had no share in it will be the sorest humiliation and the most painful reflection to every generous mind. However slight be our power, let us strike such blow as we can at the common enemies which must be destroyed ere the great consummation is reached.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### *THE SPIRITUAL BODY.*

THE proofs of the Resurrection which Paul has adduced are satisfactory. So long as they are clearly before the mind, we find it possible to believe in that great experience which will finally give us possession of the life to come. But after all proof rises doubt irrepressible, owing to the difficulty of understanding the process through which the body passes and the nature of the body that is to be. "Some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" Not always in an unbelieving and scoffing spirit, often in mere perplexity and justifiable inquisitiveness, will men ask these questions.

Paul answers both inquiries by referring to analogies in the natural world. Only by death, he says, does seed reach its designed development; and the body or form in which seed rises is very different in appearance from that in which it is sown. These analogies have their place and their use in removing objections and difficulties. They are not intended or supposed to establish the fact of the Resurrection, but only to remove difficulties as to its mode. By analogy you can show that a certain process or result is not impossible, you may even create a presumption in its favour, but you cannot establish it as an actuality. Analogy is a powerful instrument for removing objections, but utterly weak for establishing positive truth. Seed lives again after burial, but it does not follow that our bodies will do so. Seed, when it rots away beneath the soil, gives birth to a better thing than that which was sown, but this is no proof that the same result will follow when our bodies pass through a similar treatment. But if a man says, as Paul here supposes he may, "Such a thing as this resurrection you speak of is an unnatural, unheard-of, and impossible thing," the best reply is to point him to some analogous process in nature, in which this apparent impossibility or something very similar is actually brought to pass.

Even outside the circle of Christian thought these analogies in nature have always been felt to remove some of the presumptions against the Resurrection and to make room for listening to evidence in its favour. The transformation of the seed into the plant and the development of the seed to a fuller life through apparent extinction, the transformation of the grub into the brilliant and powerful dragon-fly through a process which terminates the life of the grub—these and other natural facts show that one life may be continued through various phases, and that the termination of one form of life does not always mean the termination of all life in a creature. We need not,

these analogies tell us, at once conclude that death ends all, for in some visible instances death is only a birth to a higher and freer life. Neither need we point to the dissolution of the natural body and conclude that no more perfect body can be connected with such a process, because in many cases we see a more efficient body disengaged from the original and dissolving body. Thus far the analogies carry us. It is doubtful whether they should be pushed further, although they might seem to indicate that the new body is not to be a new creation, but is to be produced by virtue of what is already in existence. The new body is not to be irrespective of what has gone before, but is to be the natural result of causes already working. What these causes are, or how the spirit is to impress its character on the body, we do not know.

It is not impossible, then, nor even quite improbable, that the death of our present body may set free a new and far more perfectly equipped body. The fact that we cannot conceive the nature of this body need not trouble us. Who without previous observation could imagine what would spring from an acorn or a seed of wheat? To each God gives its own body. We cannot imagine what our future body, subject to no waste or decay, can be; but we need not on that account reject as childish all expectation that such a body shall exist. "All flesh is not the same flesh." The kind of flesh you now wear may be unfit for everlasting life, but there may await you as suitable and congenial a body as your present familiar tenement. Consider the inexhaustible fertility of God, the endless varieties already existing in nature. The bird has a body which fits it for life in the air; the fish lives with comfort in its own element. And the variety already existing does not exhaust God's resources. We read at present but one chapter in the history of life, and what future chapters are to unfold who can imagine? A fertile and inventive man knows no bounds to his progress; will God stand still? Are we not but at the beginning of His works? May we not reasonably suppose that a truly infinite expansion and development await God's works? Is it not entirely unreasonable to suppose that what we see and know is the measure of God's resources?

Paul does not attempt to describe the future body, but contents himself with pointing out one or two of its characteristics by which it is distinguished from the body we now wear. "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." In this body there are decay, humiliation, weakness, a life that is merely temporary; in the body that is to be decay gives place to incorruptibility, humiliation to glory, weakness to power, animal life to spiritual.

The present body is subject to decay. Not only is it easily injured by accident and often rendered permanently useless, but it is so constituted that all activity wastes it; and this waste needs constant repair. That we may constantly seek this repair, we are endowed with strong appetites, which sometimes overbear everything else in us and both defeat their own ends and hinder the growth of the spirit. The organs by which the waste is repaired themselves wear out, so that by no care or nourishment can a man make out to live as long as a tree. But the very



decay of this body makes way for one in which there shall be no waste, no need of physical nourishment, and therefore no need of strong and overbearing physical appetites. Instead of impeding the spirit by clamouring to have its wants attended to, it will be the spirit's instrument. A great part of the temptations of this present life arise from the conditions in which we necessarily exist as dependent for our comfort in great measure on the body. And one can scarcely conceive the feeling of emancipation and superiority which will possess those who have no anxiety about a livelihood, no fear of death, no distraction of appetite.

The present body is for similar reasons characterised by "weakness." We cannot be where we would, nor do what we would. A man may work his twelve hours, but he must then acknowledge he has a body which needs rest and sleep. Many persons are disqualified by bodily weakness from certain forms of usefulness and enjoyment. Many persons also, though able to do a certain amount of work, do it with labour; their vitality is habitually low, and they never have the full use of their powers, but need continually to be on their guard, and go through life burdened with a lassitude and discomfort more difficult to bear than passing attacks of pain. In contradistinction to this and to every form of weakness, the resurrection body will be full of power, able to accomplish the behests of the will, and fit for all that is required of it.

But the most comprehensive contrast between the two bodies is expressed in the words, "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." A natural body is that which is animated by a human life and is fitted for this world. "The first man Adam was made a living soul," or, as we should more naturally say, an animal. He was made with a capacity for living; and because he was to live upon earth, he had a body in which this life or soul was lodged. The natural body is the body we receive at birth, and which is suited for its own requirements of maintaining itself in life in this world into which we are born. The soul, or animal life, of man is higher than that of the other animals, it has richer endowments and capacities, but it is also in many respects similar. Many men are quite content with the merely animal life which this world upholds and furnishes. They find enough to satisfy them in its pleasures, its work, its affairs, its friendships; and for all these the natural body is sufficient. The thoughtful man cannot indeed but look forward and ask himself what is to become of this body. If he turns to Scripture for light, he will probably be struck with the fact that it sheds no light whatever on the future of the natural body. Those who are in Christ enter into possession of a spiritual body, but there is no hint of any more perfect body being prepared for those who are not in Christ.

The spiritual body, which is reserved for spiritual men, is a body in which the upholding life is spiritual. The natural life of man both forms to a human shape, and upholds, the natural body; the spiritual body is similarly maintained by what is spiritual in man. It is the soul, or natural life, of man which gives the body its appetites and maintains it in efficiency; remove this soul, and the body is mere dead matter. In like manner it is the spirit which maintains the spiritual body; and by the spirit is meant that in man

which can delight in God and in goodness. The body we now have is miserable and useless or happy and serviceable in proportion to its animal vitality, in proportion to its power to assimilate to itself the nutriment this physical world supplies. The spiritual body will be healthy or sickly in proportion to the spiritual vitality that animates it; that is to say, in proportion to the power of the individual spirit to delight in God and find its life in Him and in what He lives for.

We have already seen that Paul refuses to consider the resurrection of Christ as miraculous in the sense of its being unique or abnormal; on the contrary, he considers resurrection to be an essential step in normal human development, and therefore experienced by Christ. And now he enunciates the great principle or law which governs not only this fact of resurrection, but the whole evolution of God's works: "first that which is natural, afterward that which is spiritual." It is this law which we see ruling the history of creation and the history of man. The spiritual is the culminating point towards which all of the processes of nature tend. The gradual development of what is spiritual—of will, of love, of moral excellence—this, so far as man can see, is the end towards which all nature constantly and steadily is working.

Sometimes, however, it occurs to one to question the law "first that which is natural, afterward that which is spiritual." If the present body hinders rather than helps the growth of the spirit, if at last all Christians are to have a spiritual body, why might we not have had this body to begin with? What need of this mysterious process of passing from life to life and from body to body? If it is true that we are here only for a few years and in the future life for ever, why should we be here at all? Why might we not at birth have been ushered into our eternal state? The answer is obvious. We are not at once introduced into our eternal condition because we are moral creatures, free to choose for ourselves, and who cannot enter an eternal state save by choice of our own: first that which is natural, first that which is animal, first a life in which we have abundant opportunity to test what appears good and are free to make our choice; then that which is spiritual, because the spiritual can only be a thing of choice, a thing of the will. There is no spiritual life or spiritual birth save by the will. Men can become spiritual only by choosing to be so. Involuntary, compulsory, necessitated, natural spirituality is, so far as man is concerned, a contradiction in terms.

Human nature is a thing of immense possibilities and range. On the one side it is akin to the lower animals, to the physical world and all that is in it, high and low; on the other side it is akin to the highest of all spiritual existences, even to God Himself. At present we are in a world admirably adapted for our probation and discipline, a world in which, in point of fact, every man does attach himself to the lower or to the higher, to the present or to the eternal, to the natural or to the spiritual. And although the results of this may not be apparent in average cases, yet in extreme cases the results of human choice are obtrusively apparent. Let a man give himself unrestrainedly and exclusively to animal life in its grosser forms, and the body itself soon begins to suffer. You can see the process of physical deterioration going on, deepening in misery until death comes. But what follows death? Can one promise



himself or another a future body which shall be exempt from the pains which unrepented sin has introduced? Are those who have by their vice committed a slow suicide to be clothed hereafter in an incorruptible and efficient body? It seems wholly contrary to reason to suppose so. And how can their probation be continued if the very circumstance which makes this life so thorough a probation to us all—the circumstance of our being clothed with a body—is absent? The truth is, there is no subject on which more darkness hangs or on which Scripture preserves so ominous a silence as the future of the body of those who in this life have not chosen God and things spiritual as their life.

On the other hand, if we consider instances in which the spiritual life has been resolutely and unreservedly chosen, we see anticipations here also of the future destiny of those who have so chosen. They may be crushed by diseases as painful and as fatal as the most flagrant of sinners endure, but these diseases frequently have the result only of making the true spiritual life shine more brightly. In extreme cases, you would almost say, the transmutation of the tortured and worn body into a glorified body is begun. The spirit seems dominant; and as you stand by and watch, you begin to feel that death has no relation to the emotions, and hopes, and intercourse you detect in that spirit. These which seem, and are, the very life of the spirit, cannot be thought of as terminated by a merely physical change. They do not spring from, nor do they depend upon, what is physical; and it is reasonable to suppose that they will not be destroyed by it. Looking at Christ Himself and allowing due impression to be made upon us by His concernment about the highest, and best, and most lasting things, by His recognition of God and harmony with Him, by His living in God, and by His superiority to earthly considerations, we cannot but feel it to be most unlikely that such a spirit should be extinguished by bodily death.

This spiritual body we receive through the intervention of Christ. As from the first man we receive animal life, from the second we receive spiritual life. "The first Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam a quickening spirit. And as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." The image of the first man we have by our natural and physical derivation from him, the image of the second by spiritual derivation; that is to say, by our choosing Christ as our ideal and by our allowing His Spirit to form us. This Spirit is life-giving; this Spirit is indeed God, communicating to us a life which is at once holy and eternal.

The mode of Christ's intervention is more fully described in the words, "The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Everywhere Paul teaches that it was sin which brought death upon man; that man would have broken through the law of death which reigns in the physical world had he not by sin brought himself under the power of things physical. And this poisonous fang was pressed in by the Law. The strength of sin is the Law. It is positive disobedience, the preference of known evil to known good, the violation of law whether written in the conscience or in spoken commandments, which gives sin its moral character. The choice of the

evil in presence of the good—it is that which constitutes sin.

The words are no doubt susceptible of another meaning. They could be used by one who wished to say that sin is that which makes death painful, which adds terror of future judgment and gloomy forebodings to the natural pain of death. But it must be owned that this is not so much in keeping with Paul's usual way of looking at the connection between death and sin.

Christ's victory over death is thus explained by Godet: "Christ's victory over death has two aspects, the one relating to Himself, the other concerning men. He first of all conquered *sin* in relation to Himself by denying to it the right of existence in Him, condemning it to non-existence in His flesh, similar though it was to our sinful flesh (Rom. viii. 3); and thereby He disarmed *the Law* so far as it concerned Himself. His life being the Law in living realisation, He had it for Him, and not against Him. This twofold personal victory was the foundation of His own resurrection. Thereafter He continued to act that this victory might extend to us. And first He freed us from the burden of condemnation which *the Law* laid on us, and whereby it was ever interposing between us and communion with God. He recognised in our name the right of God over the sinner; He consented to satisfy it to the utmost in His own person. Whoever appropriates this death as undergone in his room and stead and for himself, sees the door of reconciliation to God open before him, as if he had himself expiated all his sins. The separation established by the Law no longer exists; the Law is disarmed. By that very fact *sin* also is vanquished. Reconciled to God, the believer receives Christ's Spirit, who works in him an absolute breach of will with sin and complete devotion to God. The yoke of sin is at an end; the dominion of God is restored in the heart. The two foundations of the reign of death are thus destroyed. Let Christ appear, and this reign will crumble in the dust for ever."

It is then with joy and triumph Paul contemplates death. Naturally we shrink from and fear it. We know it only from one side: only from seeing it in the persons of other men, and not from our own experience. And what we see in others is necessarily only the darker side of death, the cessation of bodily life and of all intercourse with the warm and lively interests of the world. It is a condition exciting tears, and moaning, and grief in those that remain in life; and though these tears arise chiefly from our own sense of loss, yet insensibly we think of the condition of the dead as a state to be bewailed. We see the sowing in weakness, in dishonour, in corruption, as Paul says; and we do not see the glory, and strength, and incorruption of the spiritual body. The dead may be in bright regions and be living a keener life than ever; but of this we see nothing; and all we do see is sad, depressing, humiliating.

But to "faith's foreseeing eye" the other side of death becomes also apparent. The grave becomes the robing room for life eternal. Stripped of "this muddy vesture of decay," we are there to be clothed with a spiritual body. Death is enlisted in the service of Christ's people; and by destroying flesh and blood, it enables this mortal to put on immortality. The blow which threatens to crush and annihilate all life breaks but the shell and lets the imprisoned spirit free



to a larger life. Death is swallowed up in victory, and itself ministers to the final triumph of man. Our instincts tell us that death is critical and has a determining power on our destinies. We cannot evade it; we may depreciate or neglect, but we cannot diminish, its importance. It has its place and its function, and it will operate in each one of us according to what it finds in us, destroying what is merely animal, emancipating what is truly spiritual. We cannot as yet stand on the further side of death, and look back on it, and recognise its kindly work in us; but we can understand Paul's burst of anticipated triumph, and with him we can forecast the joy of having passed all doubtful struggle and anxious foreboding, and of finally experiencing that all the evils of humanity have been overcome. With a triumph so complete in view, we can also listen to his exhortation, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

But if we have any fit conception of the magnitude of the triumph, we shall also cherish some worthy idea of the reality of the conflict. Those who have felt the terror of death know that it can be counterbalanced only by something more than a surmise, a hope, a longing, only indeed by a fact as solid as itself. And if to them the resurrection of Christ approves itself as such a fact, and if they can listen to His voice saying, "Because I live, ye shall live also," they do feel themselves armed against the graver terrors of death, and cannot but look forward with some confident hope to a life into which the ills they have here experienced cannot follow them. But at the same time, and in proportion as the reality of the future life quickens hope within them, it must also reveal to them the reality of the conflict through which that life is reached. By no mere idle naming of the name of Christ or resultless faith in Him can men pass from what is natural to what is spiritual. We are summoned to believe in Christ, but for a purpose; and that purpose is that, believing in Him as the revelation of God to us, we may be able to choose Him as our pattern and live His life. It is only what is purely spiritual in ourselves that can put us in possession of a spiritual body. From Christ we can receive what is spiritual; and if our belief in Him prompts us to become like Him, then we may count upon sharing in His destiny.

This is the permanent incentive of the Christian life. This present experience of ours leads to a larger, more satisfying experience. Beyond our horizon there awaits us an endlessly enlarging world. Death, which seems to bound our view, is really but our real birth to a fuller, and eternal, and true life. "Therefore be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." The promptings of conscience do not delude you; your instinctive hopes will not be put to shame; your faith is reasonable; there is a life beyond. And no effort you now put forth will prove vain; no prayer, no earnest desire, no struggle towards what is spiritual, will fail of its effect. All that is spiritual is destined to live; it belongs to the eternal world: and all that you do in the Spirit, all mastery of self and the world and the flesh, all devoted fellowship with God—all is giving you a surer place and a more abundant entrance into the spiritual world, for "your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

## CHAPTER XXV.

## THE POOR.

IN closing his letter to the Corinthians, Paul, as usual, explains his own movements, and adds a number of miscellaneous directions and salutations. These for the most part relate to matters of merely temporary interest, and call for no comment. Interest of a more permanent kind unfortunately attaches to the collection for the poor Christians of Jerusalem which Paul invites the Corinthians to make. Several causes had contributed to this poverty; and, among others, it is not improbable that the persecution promoted by Paul himself had an important place. Many Christians were driven from their homes, and many more must have lost their means of earning a livelihood. But it is likely that Paul was anxious to relieve this poverty, not so much because it had been partly caused by himself as because he saw in it an opportunity for bringing more closely together the two great parties in the Church. In his Epistle to the Galatians Paul tells us that the three leaders of the Jewish Christian Church—James, Peter, and John—when they had assured themselves that this new Apostle was trustworthy, gave him the right hand of fellowship, on the understanding that he should minister to the Gentiles, "only," he adds—"only they would that we should remember the poor, the same which I also was forward to do." Accordingly we find him seeking to interest the Gentile Churches in their Jewish brethren, and of such importance did he consider the relief that was to be sent to Jerusalem that he himself felt it an honour to be the bearer of it. He saw that no doctrinal explanations were likely to be so fruitful in kindly feeling and true unity as this simple expression of brotherly kindness.

In our own day poverty has assumed a much more serious aspect. It is not the poverty which results from accident, nor even that which results from wrongdoing or indolence, which presses for consideration. Such poverty could easily be met by individual charity or national institutions. But the poverty we are now confronted with is a poverty which necessarily results from the principle of competition which is the mainspring of all trade and business. It is the poverty which results from the constant effort of every man to secure custom by offering a cheaper article, and to secure employment by selling his labour at a cheaper rate than his neighbour. So overstocked is the labour market that the employer can name his own terms. Where he wants one man, a hundred offer their services; and he who can live most cheaply secures the place. So that necessarily wages are pressed down by competition to the very lowest figure; and wherever any trade is not strong enough to combine and resist this constant pressure, the results are appalling. No slaves were ever so hunger-bitten, no lives were ever more crushed under perpetual and hopeless toil, than are thousands of our fellow-countrymen and countrywomen in our own time. It is the fact that in all our large cities there are thousands of persons who by working sixteen hours a day earn only what suffices to maintain the most wretched existence. Every day hundreds of children are being born to a life of hopeless toil



and misery, unrelieved by any of the comforts or joys of the well-to-do.

The most painful and alarming feature of this condition of things is, as every one knows, that it seems the inevitable result of the principles on which our entire social fabric is built. Every invention, every new method of facilitating business, every contrivance or improvement in machinery, makes life more difficult to the mass of men. The very advances made by civilised nations in the rapid production of needful articles increase the breach between rich and poor, throwing larger resources into the hands of the few, but making the lot of the many still darker and more poverty-stricken. Every year makes the darkness deeper, the distress more urgent. Here individual charity is unavailing. It is not the relief of one here or there that is needed; it is the alteration of a system of things which inevitably produces such results. Individual charity is here a mere mop in the face of the tide. What is wanted is not larger workhouses where the aged poor may be sheltered, but such a system as will enable the working man to provide for himself against old age. What is wanted is not that the charitable should eke out by voluntary contributions the earnings of the labouring classes, but that these earnings should be such as to amply cover all ordinary human wants. "Money given in aid of wages relieves the employer, not the employed; reduces wages, not misery." What is wanted is a social system which tends to bring within the reach of all the comforts and the joys of life which men legitimately desire, and which does not tend, as our present social system does, to overload a small number of men with more wealth than they need, or desire, or can use, while the millions are crushed with toil and pinched with semi-starvation. What the working classes at present demand is, not charity, but justice. They do not wish to seem to be indebted to others for support which they feel they have toiled for and earned. They require a social system, in which the honest toil of a lifetime will be sufficient to secure the toiler and his family from the dangers and degradation of utter poverty.

That a change is desirable no one who has spent two thoughts on the subject can doubt. The only question is, What change is desirable and possible? Is there any organisation or social system which could check the evils resulting from the present competitive system, and secure that every one who is willing to work should be furnished with remunerative employment? Socialists are quite convinced that the whole problem would be solved were private capital to be converted into co-operative or public capital. Socialism demands that society shall be the only capitalist, and that all private captains of industry and capital be abolished. No return is possible to the state of things in which every man worked by himself with his own hands and at his own risk, producing his one or two webs, tilling his one or two acres. It is recognised that far more and better products can be produced where manufactures are carried on in large factories. But on the socialistic principle these factories must be owned, not by private capitalists, but by the State, or at any rate by co-operative societies of some kind. This is the essence of the demand of Socialism: that "whereas industry is at present carried on by private capitalists served by wage-labour, it must in the future be conducted

by associated or co-operating workmen jointly owning the means of production."

The difficulty in pronouncing judgment on such a demand arises from the fact that very few men indeed have sufficient imagination and sufficient knowledge of our complicated social system to be able to forecast the results of so great a change. In the present stage of human progress personal interest is undoubtedly one of the strongest incentives to industry, and to this motive the present system of competition appeals. And although socialists declare that their system would not exclude competition, it is difficult to see what field it would have or at what point it would find its opportunity. Certain departments of industry are already in the hands of the State or of co-operative societies, but the organisation of all industries and the management and remuneration of all labour demand a machinery so colossal that it is feared it would fall to pieces by its own weight. Still it is possible that ways and means of working a socialistic scheme may be devised; and it is quite certain that if any system could be devised which is really workable, and which should at once save us from the disastrous results of competition and yet evoke all the energy which competition evokes, that system would forthwith be adopted in every civilised country.

As yet, however, no such social system has been elaborated. General principles, ruling ideas, theories, paper plans, have been enunciated by the score; but, in point of fact, there is no system yet devised which appeals either to the common-sense and instincts of the masses, or which stands the criticism of experts. And some of those who have given greatest attention to social subjects, and have made the greatest personal sacrifices in behalf of the poor and down-trodden, are inclined to believe that no such system can be devised, and that deliverance from the present wretched state of matters is to be found, not in compulsory enactment, nor even in the sudden adoption of a different social system, but in the application of Christian principles to the working of the present competitive system. That is to say, they believe that true progress here, as elsewhere, begins in character, not in outward organisation, or, as it has been put, that "the soul of improvement is the improvement of the soul." They consider that the present system rests on unchangeable laws of human nature, but that if men worked that system with consideration, unworldliness, and brotherly kindness, the present evil results would be avoided. Or they believe that it is at any rate useless to alter the present system violently by mere legislative enactment or by revolution, but that if it is to be altered, it can effectually, and permanently, and beneficially be so only under the pressure and at the dictation of an improved public opinion.

Appeal is confidently made to the mind of Christ by both parties, both by those who trust to the enforcement of a socialistic scheme, and by those who believe only in the social improvement which results from the improvement of the individual. By the one party it is confidently affirmed that were Jesus Christ now on earth He would be a communist, would aim at equalising all classes and at commuting private property into a public fund. Communism has been tried to some extent in the Church. In monastic societies private property is surrendered for the



good of the community, and this practice professes to find its sanction in the communism of the primitive Church. But the account we have of that communism shows that it was neither compulsory nor permanent. It was not compulsory, for Peter reminds Ananias that his property was his own, and that even after he had sold it he was at liberty to do what he pleased with the proceeds. And it was not permanent nor universal, for here we find that Paul had to ask contributions for the relief of the poor Christians of Jerusalem; while we see that there were rich and poor in the same congregations, and that such duties as almsgiving and hospitality, which could not be practised without private means, were enjoined upon Christians. It is also obvious that many of the duties inculcated in the Epistles of Paul could not be discharged in a society in which all classes were levelled.

It is perhaps of more importance to observe that in probably the most critical period of the world's history our Lord took no part in any political movement; nay, He counted it a temptation of the devil when He saw how much inducement there was to head some popular party and compete with kings or statesmen. He was no agitator, although He lived in an age abounding in abuses. And this limitation of His work was due to no superficial view of social movements nor to any mere shrinking from the rougher work of life, but to His perception that His own task was to touch what was deepest in man, and to lodge in human nature forces which ultimately would achieve all that was desirable. The cry of the poor against the oppressor was never louder than in His lifetime; slavery was universal: no country on earth enjoyed a free government. Yet our Lord most carefully abstained from following in the steps of a Judas the Gaulanite, and from intermeddling with social or State affairs. He came to found a kingdom, and that kingdom was to exist on earth, and was to be the ideal condition of mankind; but He trusted to move and mould society by regenerating the individual and by teaching men to seek in the first place not what "the Gentiles seek"—happy outward conditions—but the kingdom of God, the rule of God's Spirit in the heart, and the righteousness that comes of that. It was by the regeneration of individuals society was to be regenerated. The leaven which contact with Him imparted to the individual would touch and purify the whole social fabric.

In any case the duty of individual Christians is plain. Whether needless and unjust poverty is to be relieved by social revolution or by the happier and surer, if slower, method of leavening society with the spirit of Christ, it is the part of every Christian man to inform himself of the state of his fellow-citizens and to bring himself in some practically helpful way into connection with the wretchedness in the midst of which we are living. To shut our eyes to the squalor, and vice, and hopelessness which poverty too often brings, to seclude ourselves in our own comfortable homes and shut out all sounds and signs of misery, to "abhor the affliction of the afflicted," and practically to deny that it is better to visit the house of mourning than the house of feasting—this is simply to furnish proof that we know nothing of the spirit of Christ. We may find ourselves quite unable to rectify abuses on a large scale or to discern how poverty can be

absolutely prevented, but we can do something to brighten some lives; we can consider those whose hard and bare lives make our comforts cheap; we can ask ourselves whether we are quite free from blood-guiltiness in using articles which are cheap to us because wrung out of underpaid and starving hands. It is true that anything we can do may be but a scratching of the surface, the lifting of a bucketful out of an overflowing flood which should be stopped at the source; still we must do what we can, and all knowledge of social facts and kindly feeling and action towards the oppressed are helpful, and on the way to a final settlement of our social condition. Let every Christian give his conscience fair play, let him ask himself what Christ would do in his circumstances, and this final settlement will not be long postponed. But so long as selfishness rules, so long as the world of men is like a pit full of loathsome creatures, each struggling to the top over the heads and crushed bodies of the rest, no scheme will alter or even disguise our infamy.

The method of collecting which Paul recommends was in all probability that which he himself practised. "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." This verse has sometimes been quoted as evidence that the Christians met for worship on Sundays as we do. Manifestly it shows nothing of the kind. It is proof that the first day of the week had its significance, *probably* as the day of our Lord's resurrection, possibly only for some trade reasons now unknown. It was expressly said that each was to lay up "by him"—that is, not in a public fund, but at home in his own purse—what he wished to give. But what is chiefly to be noticed is that Paul, who ordinarily is so free from preciseness and form, here enjoins the precise method in which the collection might best be made. That is to say, he believed in methodical giving. He knew the value of steady accumulation. He laid it on each man's conscience deliberately to say how much he would give. He wished no one to give in the dark. He did not carry out in the letter, even if he new the precept, "Let not thy right hand know what thy left hand doeth." He knew how men seem to themselves to be giving much more than they are if they do not keep an exact account of what they give, how some men shrink from knowing definitely the proportion they give away. And therefore he presents it as a duty we have each to discharge to determine what proportion we can give away, and if God prospers us and increases our incomes, to what extent we should increase our personal expenditure and to what extent use for charitable objects the additional gain.

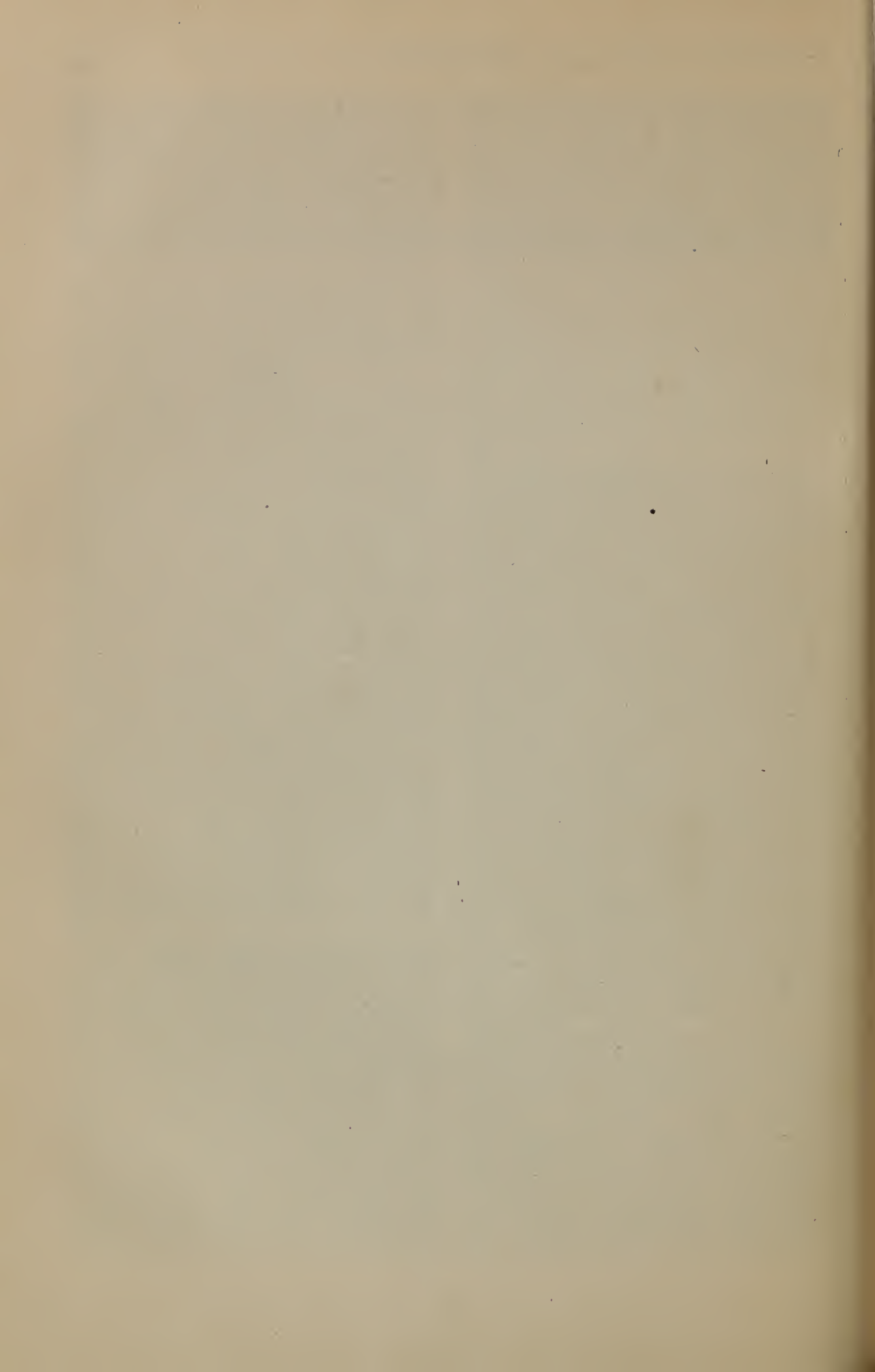
The Epistle concludes with an overflowing expression of affection from Paul and his friends to the Church of Corinth; but suddenly in the midst of this there occur the startling words, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema." "Anathema" means accursed. What induced Paul to insert these words just here, it is difficult to see. He had taken the manuscript out of the hand of Sosthenes and written the Salutation with his own hand, and apparently still with his own hand adds this startling sentence. Probably his feeling was that all his lessons of charity and every other lesson he had been inculcating would be in vain without love



to the Lord Jesus. All his own love for the Corinthians had sprung from this source; and he knew that their love for the Jews would prove hollow unless it too was animated by this same principle. They are serious words for us all—serious because our own hearts tell us they are just. If we do not love the Lord Jesus, what good thing can we love? If we do not love Him who is simply and only good, must there not be something accidental, superficial, unsafe, about our love for anything or any one besides?

If we have not learned by loving Him to love all that is worthy, may we not justly fear that we are yet in danger of losing what life is meant to teach and to give? Trying to reach the truth about ourselves, do we find that we have attained to see and to love what is worthy? Can we say with something of Paul's conviction and joy, "Maranatha"—"The Lord is at hand"? Is it the true stay of our spirit that Christ rules, and will in His own time reconcile all things by His own Spirit.

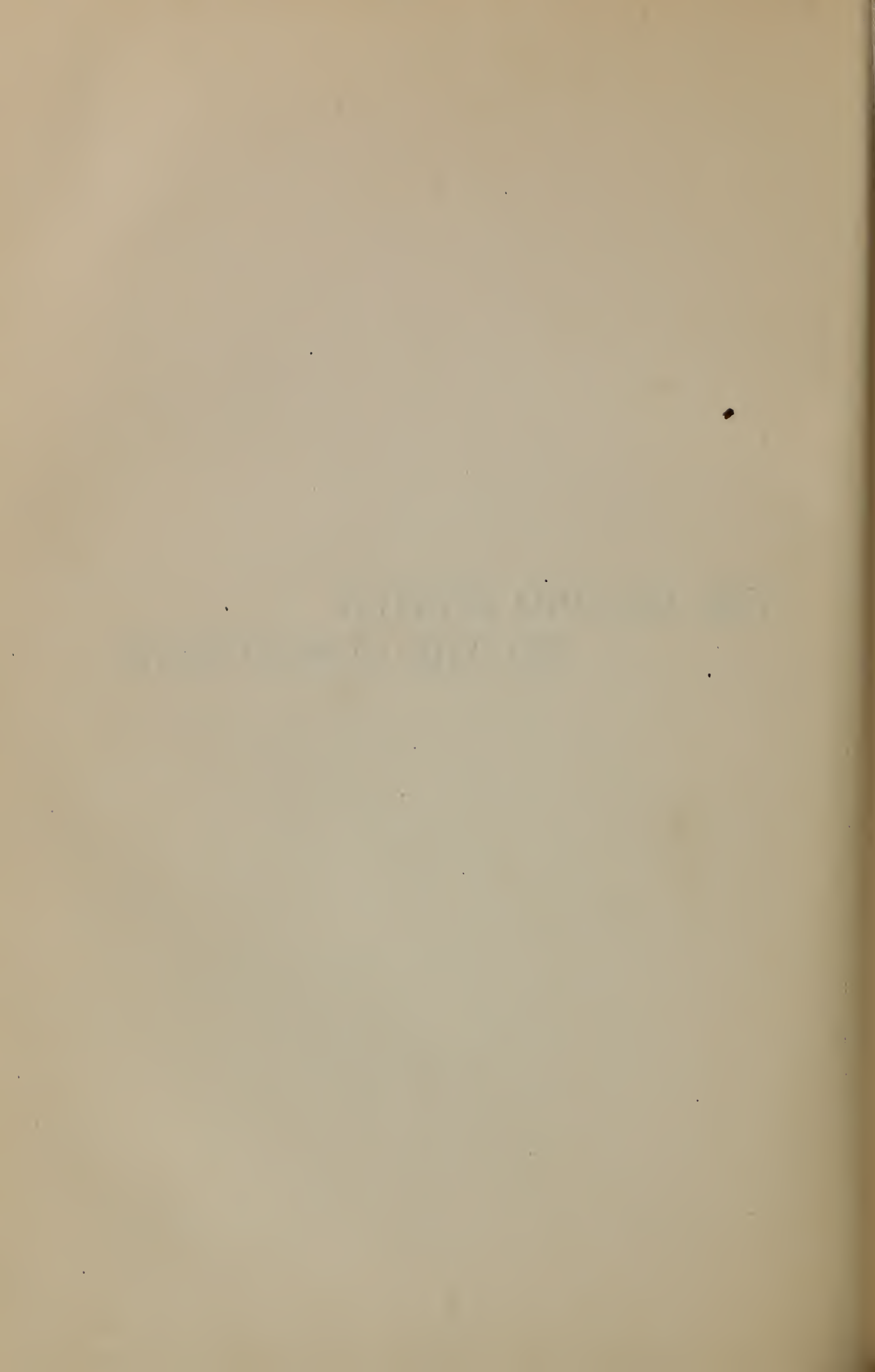






THE SECOND EPISTLE  
TO THE CORINTHIANS



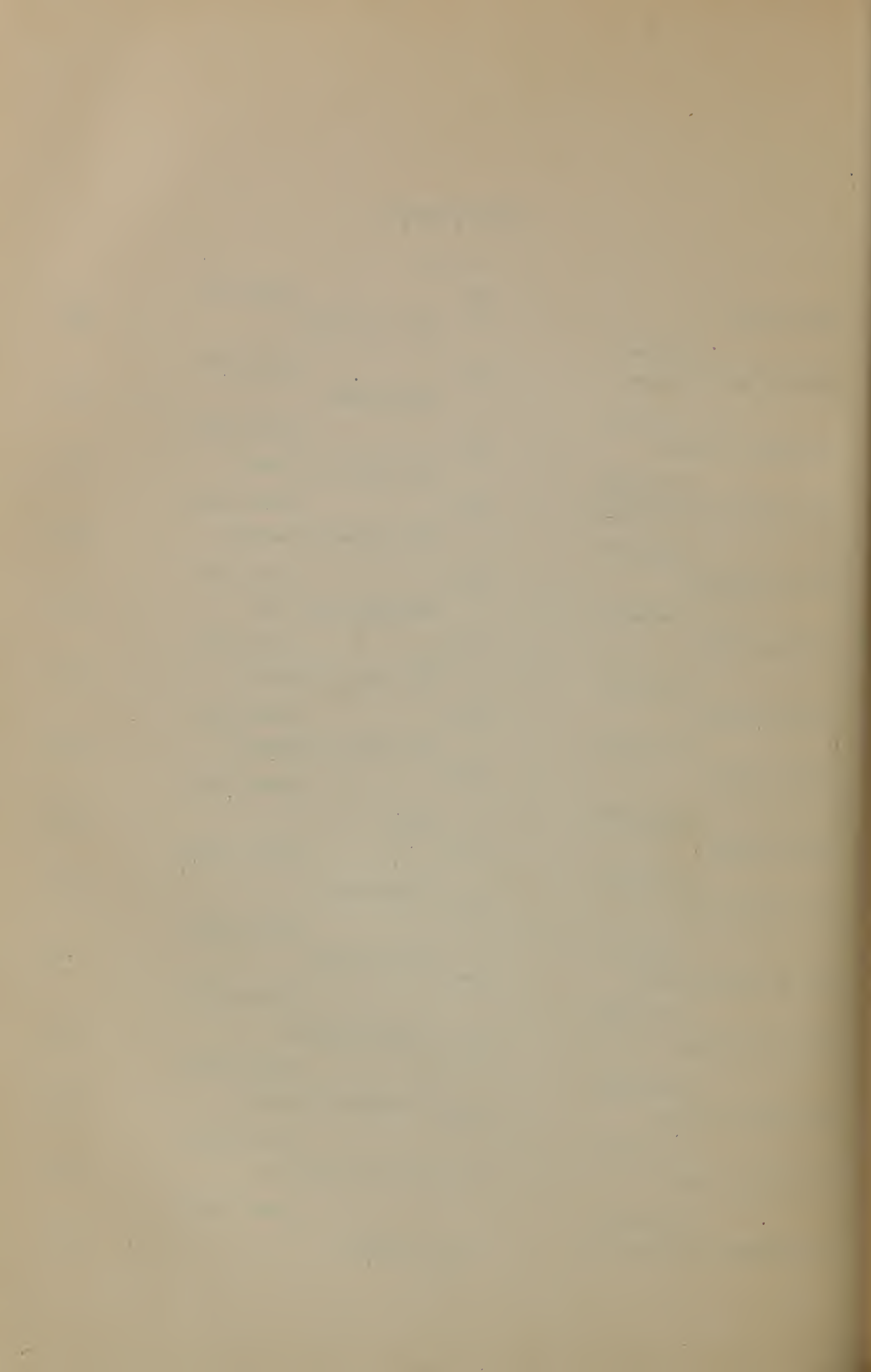




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# THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

BY THE REV. JAMES DENNEY, B. D.

## INTRODUCTION.

INTRODUCTION, in the scientific sense, is not part of the expositor's task; but it is convenient, especially when introduction and exposition have important bearings on each other, that the expositor should indicate his opinion on the questions common to both departments. This is the purpose of the statement which follows.

(1) The starting-point for every inquiry into the relations between St. Paul and the Corinthians, so far as they concern us here, is to be found in the close connection between the two Epistles to the Corinthians which we possess. This close connection is not a hypothesis, of greater or less probability, like so much that figures in Introductions to the Second Epistle; it is a large and solid fact, which is worth more for our guidance than the most ingenious conjectural combination. Stress has been justly laid on this by Holtzmann,\* who illustrates the general fact by details. Thus 2 Cor. i. 8-10, ii. 12, 13, attach themselves immediately to the situation described in 1 Cor. xvi. 8, 9. Similarly in 2 Cor. i. 12 there seems to be a distinct echo of 1 Cor. ii. 4-14. More important is the unquestionable reference in 2 Cor. i. 13-17, 23, to 1 Cor. xvi. 5. From a comparison of these two passages it is plain that before Paul wrote either he had had an intention, of which the Corinthians were aware, to visit Corinth in a certain way. He was to leave Ephesus, sail straight across the sea to Corinth, go from Corinth to Macedonia, and then return, *via* Corinth, to Asia again. In other words, on this tour he was to visit Corinth twice. In the last chapter of the First Epistle he announces a change of plan: he is *not* going to Corinth direct, but *via* Macedonia, and the Corinthians are only to see him once. He does not say, in the First Epistle, why he has changed his plan, but the announcement caused great dissatisfaction in Corinth. Some said he was a fickle creature; some said he was afraid to show face. This is the situation to which the Second Epistle directly addresses itself; the very first thing Paul does in it is to explain and justify the change of plan announced in the First. It was not fickleness, he says, nor cowardice, that made him change his mind, but the desire to spare the Corinthians and himself the pain which a visit paid at the moment would certainly inflict. The close connection between our two Epistles, which on this point is unquestionable, may be further illustrated. Thus, not to point to general resemblances in feeling or temper, the correspondence is at least suggestive between ἀγνὸς ἐν τῷ πράγματι, 2 Cor. vii. 11 (*cf.* the use of πᾶγμα in Thess. iv. 6), and τοιαύτη πορνεία in 1 Cor. v. 1; between ἐν προσώπῳ Χριστοῦ, 2 Cor. ii. 10 and ἐν τῷ ὄνματι τοῦ Κ. ἡμῶν I. X., 1 Cor. v. 4; between the mention of Satan in 2 Cor. ii. 11 and 1 Cor. v. 5; between πειθεῖν in 2 Cor. xii. 21 and 1 Cor. v. 2; between τοιοῦτος and τις in 2 Cor. ii. 6 f., 2 Cor. ii. 5, and the same words in 1 Cor. v. 5

\* "Einleitung," 2d ed., p. 255 f.

and 1 Cor. v. 1. If all these are carefully examined and compared, I think it becomes extremely difficult to believe that in 2 Cor. ii. 5 ff. and in 2 Cor. vii. 8 ff. the Apostle is dealing with anything else than the case of the sinner treated in 1 Cor. v. The coincidences in detail would be very striking under any circumstances; but in combination with the fact that the two Epistles, as has just been shown by the explanation of the change of purpose about the journey, are in the closest connection with each other, they seem to me to come as nearly as possible to demonstration.

(2) If this view is accepted, it is natural and justifiable to explain the Second Epistle as far as possible out of the First. Thus the letter to which St. Paul refers in 2 Cor. ii. 4 and in 2 Cor. vii. 8, 12, will be our First Epistle to the Corinthians; the persons referred to in 2 Cor. vii. 12 as "he who did the wrong" and "he to whom the wrong was done" will be the son and the father in 1 Cor. v. 1. There are, indeed, many who think that it is absurd to speak of the First Epistle to the Corinthians as written "out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears"; and who cannot imagine that Paul would speak of a great sin and crime, like that of the incestuous person, in such language as he employs in 2 Cor. ii. 5 ff. and 2 Cor. vii. 12. Such language, they argue, suits far better the case of a personal injury, an insult or outrage of which Paul—either in person or in one of his deputies—had been the victim at Corinth. Hence they argue for an intermediate visit of a very painful character, and for an intermediate letter, now lost, dealing with this painful incident. Paul, we are to suppose, visited Corinth on the business of 1 Cor. v. (among other things), and there suffered a great humiliation. He was defied by the guilty man and his friends, and had to leave the Church without effecting anything. Then he wrote the extremely severe letter to which ii. 4 refers—a letter which was carried by Titus, and which produced the change on which he congratulates himself in ii. 5 ff. and vii. 8 ff. It is obvious that this whole combination is hypothetical; and hence, though many have been attracted by it, it appears with an infinite variety of detail. It is obvious also that the grounds on which it rests are subjective; it is a question on which men will differ to the end of time, whether the language in 2 Cor. ii. 4 is an apt description of the mood in which Paul wrote (at least certain parts of) the First Epistle to the Corinthians, or whether the language in 2 Cor. ii. 5 ff., vii. 8 ff. is becoming language in which to close proceedings like those opened in 1 Cor. v. If many have believed that it is not, many, on the other hand, have no difficulty in believing that it is; and those who take the negative not only fail to explain the series of verbal correspondences detailed above, but dissolve the connection between our two Epistles altogether. Thus Godet allows more than a year, crowded with events, to come between them. In view of the palpable fact with which



we started, I cannot but think this quite incredible: it is far easier to suppose that the proceedings about the incestuous person took a complexion which made Paul's language in the second and seventh chapters natural than to come to any confident conviction about this hypothetical visit and letter.

(3) But the visit, it may be said, at all events, is not hypothetical. It is distinctly alluded to in 2 Cor. ii. 1, xii. 14, xiii. 1. These passages are discussed in the exposition. The two last are certainly not decisive; there are good scholars who hold the same opinion of the first. Heinrici, for instance, maintains that Paul had only been once in Corinth when he wrote the Second Epistle; it was the *third* time he was *starting*, but once his intention had been frustrated or deferred, so that when he reached Corinth it would only be his second visit. A case can be stated for this, but in view of chap. ii. 1 and chap. xiii. 2, I do not see that it can be easily maintained. These passages practically compel us to assume that Paul had already visited Corinth a second time, and had had very painful experiences there. But the close connection of our Epistles equally compels us to assume that this second visit belongs to an earlier date than our first canonical Epistle. We know nothing of it except that it was not pleasant, and that Paul was very willing to save both himself and the Corinthians the repetition of such an experience. It is nothing against this view that the visit in question is not referred to in Acts or in the first letter. Hardly anything in chap. xi. 24 ff. is known to us from Acts, and probably we should never have known of this journey unless in explaining the change of purpose which the first letter announced it had occurred to Paul to say: "I do not wish to come when it could only vex you; I had enough of that before."

(4) As for the letter, which is supposed to be referred to in 2 Cor. ii. 4, it also has been relieved of its hypothetical character by being identified with chaps. x. 1-xiii. 10 of our present Second Epistle. In the absence of the faintest external indication that the Epistle ever existed in any other than its present form, it is perhaps superfluous to treat this seriously; but the comment of Godet seems to me sufficiently to dispose of it. The hypothetical letter in question—in which Godet himself believes—must have had two main objects: first, to accredit Titus, who is assumed to have carried it, as the representative of Paul; and, second, to insist on reparation for the assumed personal outrage of which Paul had been the victim on his recent visit. This second object, at all events, is indisputable. But chaps. x. 1-xiii. 10 have no reference whatever to either of these things, and are wholly taken up with what the Apostle means to do when he comes to Corinth the third time; they refer not to this (imaginary) insolent person, but to the misbelieving and the immoral in general.

(5) Except in the points specified, the interpretation of the Epistle is little affected by the questions raised in "Introduction." Even in the points specified it is the historical reference, not the ethical import, which is affected. Whichever view we take of them, we get on the whole substantially the same impression of the spirit of Christ as it lives and works in the soul of the Apostle. It is part of the man's great-

ness, it is the seal of his inspiration, that in his hands the temporal becomes eternal, the incidental loses its purely incidental character, and has significance for all time. It is the expositor's task to deal with the spiritual rather than the historical side, and it will be sufficient here to indicate in outline what I conceive the series of Paul's relations with the Corinthians to have been.

(6) His first visit to Corinth was that which is recorded in Acts xviii.; according to the statement of ver. 11 it extended over a period of eighteen months. In all probability he had many communications with the Church, through deputies whom he commissioned, in the years during which he was absent; the form of the question in 2 Cor. xii. 17 (*μή τινα ὦν ἀπέσταλκα πρὸς ὑμᾶς, κ. τ. λ.*) implies as much. But it is only after his coming to Ephesus, in the course of his third missionary journey, that personal intercourse with Corinth can have been resumed. To this period I should refer the visit which we are bound to assume on the ground of 2 Cor. ii. 1, xiii. 2. What the occasion was, or what the circumstances, we cannot tell; all we know is that it was painful, and perhaps disappointing. Paul had used grave and threatening language on this occasion (2 Cor. xiii. 2), but he had been obliged to tolerate some things which he would rather have seen otherwise. This visit was probably made toward the close of the three years' stay in Ephesus, and the letter referred to in 1 Cor. v. 9—the one in which he warned the Corinthians not to associate with fornicators—would most likely be written on his return from it. In this letter he may very naturally have announced that purpose of visiting Corinth twice—once on his way to Macedonia, and again on his way back—to which reference has already been made. This letter, plainly, did not serve its purpose, and not long afterwards Paul received at Ephesus deputies from the Corinthian Church (1 Cor. xvi. 17), who apparently brought written instructions with them, in which Paul's judgment was sought more minutely on a variety of ethical questions (1 Cor. vii. 1). Before these deputies arrived, or at all events before Paul wrote the letter (our First Epistle) in which he addressed himself to the state of affairs in Corinth which their reports had disclosed, Timothy had left Ephesus on a journey of some interest. Paul meant Corinth to be his destination (1 Cor. iv. 17), but he had to go *via* Macedonia, and the Apostle was not certain that he would get so far (1 Cor. xvi. 10: "But if Timothy come," etc.). In point of fact, he does not seem to have gone farther than Macedonia; and Luke in Acts xix. 22 mentions Macedonia as the place to which he had been sent. That he got no farther is suggested also by the fact that Paul joins his name with his own in the salutation of the Second Epistle, which was written in Macedonia, but never hints that he owed to *him* any information whatever on the state of the Corinthian Church. All that he knew of this, and of the effect of his first letter, he learned from Titus (2 Cor. ii. 13, vii. 13 f.). But how did Titus happen to be in Corinth representing Paul? By far the happiest suggestion here is that which makes Titus and the brother of 2 Cor. xii. 18 the same as "the brethren" of 1 Cor. xvi. 12, whose return from Corinth Paul expected in the company of Timothy. Timothy,



as we have seen, did not get so far. Paul's departure from Ephesus was apparently hastened by a great peril; his anxiety, too, to hear the effect produced by that letter which had cost him so much—our First Epistle—was very great; he pressed on, past Troas, where a fair field of labour waited for workers, and finally encountered Titus in Macedonia, and heard his report.

(7) This is the point at which the Second Epistle to the Corinthians begins. It falls of itself into three clearly marked divisions. The first extends over chaps. i.-vii. In this the Apostle makes his peace, so to speak, with the Corinthians, and does everything in his power to remove any feeling of "soreness" which might linger in their minds over his rigorous treatment of one particular offender. But embedded in this there is a magnificent vindication of the spiritual apostolic ministry, especially in contrast with that of the legalists, and an appeal for love and confidence such as he had always bestowed on the Church. Chaps. viii. and ix. form the second part, and are devoted to the collection which was being made in the Gentile Churches for poor Christians in Jerusalem. The third part consists of chaps. x. to xiii. In this Paul confronts the disorders which still assert themselves in the Church; the pretensions of certain Judaists, "superlative apostles" as he calls them, who were assailing his apostolic vocation and subverting his gospel; and the immoral license of others, presumably once pagans, who used liberty for a cloak to the flesh. He writes of both with unsparing severity, yet he does not wish to be severe. He parts from the Church with words of unaffected love, and includes them all in his benediction.

## CHAPTER I.

### SUFFERING AND CONSOLATION.

#### 2 CORINTHIANS i. 1-7 (R. V.).

THE greeting with which St. Paul introduces his Epistles is much alike in them all, but it never becomes a mere formality, and ought not to pass unregarded as such. It describes, as a rule, the character in which he writes, and the character in which his correspondents are addressed. Here he is an apostle of Jesus Christ, divinely commissioned; and he addresses a Christian community at Corinth, including in it, for the purposes of his letter, the scattered Christians to be found in the other quarters of Achaia. His letters are occasional, in the sense that some special incident or situation called them forth; but this occasional character does not lessen their value. He addresses himself to the incident or situation in the consciousness of his apostolic vocation; he writes to a Church constituted for permanence, or at least for such duration as this transitory world can have; and what we have in his Epistles is not a series of *obiter dicta*, the casual utterances of an irresponsible person; it is the mind of Christ authoritatively given upon the questions raised. When he includes any other person in the salutation—as in this place "Timothy our brother"—it is rather as a mark of courtesy, than as adding to the Epistle another authority besides his own. Timothy had helped to found

the Church at Corinth; Paul had shown great anxiety about his reception by the Corinthians, when he started to visit that turbulent Church alone (1 Cor. xvi. 10 f.); and in this new letter he honours him in their eyes by uniting his name with his own in the superscription. The Apostle and his affectionate fellow-worker wish the Corinthians, as they wished all the Churches, grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not necessary to expound afresh the meaning and connection of these two New Testament ideas: grace is the first and last word of the Gospel: and peace—perfect spiritual soundness—is the finished work of grace in the soul.

The Apostle's greeting is usually followed by a thanksgiving, in which he recalls the conversion of those to whom he is writing, or surveys their progress in the new life, and the improvement of their gifts, gratefully acknowledging God as the author of all. Thus in the First Epistle to the Corinthians he thanks God for the grace given to them in Christ Jesus, and especially for their Christian enrichment in all utterance and in all knowledge. So, too, with deeper gratitude, he dwells on the virtues of the Thessalonians, remembering their work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope. Here also there is a thanksgiving, but at the first glance of a totally different character. The Apostle blesses God, not for what He has done for the Corinthians, but for what He has done for himself. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation." This departure from the Apostle's usual custom is probably not so selfish as it looks. When his mind travelled down from Philippi to Corinth, it rested on the spiritual aspects of the Church there with anything but unrelieved satisfaction. There was much for which he could not possibly be thankful; and just as the momentary apostasy of the Galatians led to his omitting the thanksgiving altogether, so the unsettled mood in which he wrote to the Corinthians gave it this peculiar turn. Nevertheless, when he thanked God for comforting him in all his afflictions, he thanked Him on their behalf. It was they who were eventually to have the profit both of his sorrows and his consolations. Probably, too, there is something here which is meant to appeal even to those who disliked him in Corinth. There had been a good deal of friction between the Apostle and some who had once owned him as their father in Christ; they were blaming him, at this very moment, for not coming to visit them; and in this thanksgiving, which dilates on the afflictions he has endured, and on the divine consolation he has experienced in them, there is a tacit appeal to the sympathy even of hostile spirits. Do not, he seems to say, deal ungenerously with one who has passed through such terrible experiences, and lays the fruit of them at your feet. Chrysostom presses this view, as if St. Paul had written his thanksgiving in the character of a subtle diplomatist: to judge by one's feeling, it is true enough to deserve mention.

The subject of the thanksgiving is the Apostle's sufferings, and his experience of God's mercies under them. He expressly calls them the sufferings of Christ. These sufferings, he says, abound toward us. Christ was the great-



est of sufferers: the flood of pain and sorrow went over His head; all its waves and billows broke upon Him. The Apostle was caught and overwhelmed by the same stream; the waters came into his soul. In abundant measure the disciple was initiated into his Master's stern experience; he learned, what he prayed to learn, the fellowship of His sufferings. The boldness of the language in which a mortal man calls his own afflictions the sufferings of Christ is far from unexampled in the New Testament. It is repeated by St. Paul in Col. i. 24: "I now rejoice in my sufferings on your behalf, and fill up that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church." It is varied in Heb. xiii. 13, where the sacred writer exhorts us to go out to Jesus, without the camp, bearing *His* reproach. It is anticipated and justified by the words of the Lord Himself: "Ye shall indeed drink of My cup; and with the baptism with which I am baptised shall ye be baptised withal." One lot, and that a cross, awaits all the children of God in this world, from the Only-begotten who came from the bosom of the Father, to the latest-born among His brethren. But let us beware of the hasty assertion that, because the Christian's sufferings can thus be described as of a piece with Christ's, the key to the mystery of Gethsemane and Calvary is to be found in the self-consciousness of martyrs and confessors. The very man who speaks of filling up that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ for the Church's sake, and who says that the sufferings of Christ came on him in their fulness, would have been the first to protest against such an idea. "Was Paul crucified for you?" Christ suffered alone; there is, in spite of our fellowship with His sufferings, a solitary, incommunicable greatness in His Cross, which the Apostle will expound in another place (chap. v.). Even when Christ's sufferings come upon us there is a difference. At the very lowest, as Vinet has it, we do from gratitude what He did from pure love. We suffer in His company, sustained by His comfort; He suffered un comforted and unsustained. We are afflicted, when it so happens, "under the auspices of the divine mercy"; He was afflicted that there might be mercy for us.

Few parts of Bible teaching are more recklessly applied than those about suffering and consolation. If all that men endured was of the character here described, if all their sufferings were sufferings of Christ, which came on them because they were walking in His steps and assailed by the forces which buffeted Him, consolation would be an easy task. The presence of God with the soul would make it almost unnecessary. The answer of a good conscience would take all the bitterness out of pain; and then, however it tortured, it could not poison the soul. The mere sense that our sufferings *are* the sufferings of Christ—that we are drinking of His cup—is itself a comfort and an inspiration beyond words. But much of our suffering, we know very well, is of a different character. It does not come on us because we are united to Christ, but because we are estranged from Him; it is the proof and the fruit, not of our righteousness, but of our guilt. It is our sin finding us out, and avenging itself upon us, and in no sense the suffering of Christ. Such suffering, no doubt, has its use and its purpose.

It is meant to drive the soul in upon itself, to compel it to reflection, to give it no rest till it awakes to penitence, to urge it through despair to God. Those who suffer thus will have cause to thank God afterwards if His discipline leads to their amendment, but they have no title to take to themselves the consolation prepared for those who are partners in the sufferings of Christ. Nor is the minister of Christ at liberty to apply a passage like this to any case of affliction which he encounters in his work. There are sufferings and sufferings; there is a divine intention in them all, if we could only discover it; but the divine intention and the divinely wrought result are only explained here for one particular kind—those sufferings, namely, which come upon men in virtue of their following Jesus Christ. What, then, does the Apostle's experience enable him to say on this hard question?

(1) His sufferings have brought him a new revelation of God, which is expressed in the new name, "The Father of mercies and God of all comfort." The name is wonderful in its tenderness; we feel as we pronounce it that a new conception of what love can be has been imparted to the Apostle's soul. It is in the sufferings and sorrows of life that we discover what we possess in our human friends. Perhaps one abandons us in our extremity, and another betrays us; but most of us find ourselves unexpectedly and astonishingly rich. People of whom we have hardly ever had a kind thought show us kindness; the unsuspected, unmerited goodness which comes to our relief makes us ashamed. This is the rule which is illustrated here by the example of God Himself. It is as if the Apostle said: "I never knew, till the sufferings of Christ abounded in me, how near God could come to man; I never knew how rich His mercies could be, how intimate His sympathy, how inspiring His comfort." This is an utterance well worth considering. The sufferings of men, and especially the sufferings of the innocent and the good, are often made the ground of hasty charges against God; nay, they are often turned into arguments for Atheism. But who are they who make such charges? Not the righteous sufferers, at least in New Testament times. The Apostle here is their representative and spokesman, and he assures us that God never was so much to him as when he was in the sorest straits. The divine love was so far from being doubtful to him that it shone out then in unanticipated brightness; the very heart of the Father was revealed—all mercy, all encouragement and comfort. If the martyrs have no doubts of their own, is it not very gratuitous for the spectators to become sceptics on their account? "The sufferings of Christ" in His people may be an insoluble problem to the disinterested onlooker, but they are no problem to the sufferers. What is a mystery, when viewed from without, a mystery in which God seems to be conspicuous by His absence, is, when viewed from within, a new and priceless revelation of God Himself. "The Father of mercies and God of all comfort," is making Himself known now as for want of opportunity He could not be known before.

Notice especially that the consolation is said to abound "through Christ." He is the mediator through whom it comes. To partake in His sufferings is to be united to *Him*; and to be united to Him is to partake of His *life*. The



Apostle anticipates here a thought on which he enlarges in the fourth chapter: "Always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body." In our eagerness to emphasise the nearness and the sympathy of Jesus, it is to be feared that we do less than justice to the New Testament revelation of His glory. He does not suffer now. He is enthroned on high, far above all principality and power and might and dominion. The Spirit which brings His presence to our hearts is the Spirit of the Prince of Life; its function is not to be weak with our weakness, but to help our infirmity, and to strengthen us with all might in the inner man. The Christ who dwells in us through His Spirit is not the Man of Sorrows, wearing the crown of thorns; it is the King of kings and Lord of lords, making us partakers of His triumph. There is a weak tone in much of the religious literature which deals with suffering, utterly unlike that of the New Testament. It is a degradation of Christ to our level which it teaches, instead of an exaltation of man toward Christ's. But the last is the apostolic ideal: "More than conquerors through Him that loved us." The comfort of which St. Paul makes so much here is not necessarily deliverance from suffering for Christ's sake, still less exemption from it; it is the strength and courage and immortal hope which rise up, even in the midst of suffering, in the heart in which the Lord of glory dwells. Through Him such comfort abounds; it wells up to match and more than match the rising tide of suffering.

(2) But Paul's sufferings have done more than give him a new knowledge of God; they have given him at the same time a new power to comfort others. He is bold enough to make this ministry of consolation the key to his recent experiences. "He comforteth us in all our affliction, that we may be able to comfort them that are in any affliction, through the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." His sufferings and his consolation together had a purpose that went beyond himself. How significant that is for some perplexing aspects of man's life! We are selfish, and instinctively regard ourselves as the centre of all providences; we naturally seek to explain everything by its bearing on ourselves alone. But God has not made us for selfishness and isolation, and some mysteries would be cleared up if we had love enough to see the ties by which our life is indissolubly linked to others. This, however, is less definite than the Apostle's thought; what he tells us is that he has gained a new power at a great price. It is a power which almost every Christian man will covet; but how many are willing to pass through the fire to obtain it? We must ourselves have needed and have found comfort, before we know what it is; we must ourselves have learned the art of consoling in the school of suffering, before we can practise it for the benefit of others. The most painfully tried, the most proved in suffering, the souls that are best acquainted with grief, provided their consolation has abounded through Christ, are specially called to this ministry. Their experience is their preparation for it. Nature is something, and age is something; but far more than nature and age is that discipline of God to which they have been submitted, that initiation into the sufferings of Christ

which has made them acquainted with His consolations also, and has taught them to know the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. Are they not among His best gifts to the Church, those whom He has qualified to console, by consoling them in the fire?

In the sixth verse the Apostle dwells on the interest of the Corinthians in his sufferings and his consolation. It is a practical illustration of the communion of the saints in Christ. "All that befalls me," says St. Paul, "has *your* interest in view. If I am afflicted, it is in the interest of your comfort: when you look at me, and see how I bear myself in the sufferings of Christ, you will be encouraged to become imitators of me, even as I am of Him. If, again, I am comforted, this also is in the interest of *your* comfort; God enables me to impart to you what He has imparted to me; and the comfort in question is no impotent thing; it proves its power in this—that when you have received it, you endure with brave patience the same sufferings which we also suffer." This last is a favourite thought with the Apostle, and connects itself readily with the idea, which may or may not have a right to be expressed in the text, that all this is in furtherance of the salvation of the Corinthians. For if there is one note of the saved more certain than another, it is the brave patience with which they take upon them the sufferings of Christ. *ὁ δὲ ὑπομείνας εἰς τέλος, οὗτος σωθήσεται* (Matt. x. 22.) All that helps men to endure to the end, helps them to salvation. All that tends to break the spirit and to sink men in despondency, or hurry them into impatience or fear, leads in the opposite direction. The great service that a true comforter does is to put the strength and courage into us which enable us to take up our cross, however sharp and heavy, and to bear it to the last step and the last breath. No comfort is worth the name—none is taught of God—which has another efficacy than this. The saved are those whose souls rise to this description, and who recognise their spiritual kindred in such brave and patient sufferers as Paul.

The thanksgiving ends appropriately with a cheerful word about the Corinthians. "Our hope for you is steadfast; knowing that, as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so are ye also of the comfort." These two things go together; it is the appointed lot of the children of God to become acquainted with both. If the sufferings could come alone, if *they* could be assigned as the portion of the Church apart from the consolation, Paul could have no hope that the Corinthians would endure to the end; but as it is he is not afraid. The force of his words is perhaps best felt by us, if instead of saying that the sufferings and the consolation are inseparable, we say that the consolation depends upon the sufferings. And what is the consolation? It is the presence of the exalted Saviour in the heart through His Spirit. It is a clear perception, and a firm hold, of the things which are unseen and eternal. It is a conviction of the divine love which cannot be shaken, and of its sovereignty and omnipotence in the Risen Christ. This infinite comfort is contingent upon our partaking of the sufferings of Christ. There is a point, the Apostle seems to say, at which the invisible world and its glories intersect this world in which we live, and become visible, real, and inspiring to men. It is the



point at which we suffer with Christ's sufferings. At any other point the vision of this glory is unneeded, and therefore withheld. The worldly, the selfish, the cowardly; those who shrink from self-denial; those who evade pain; those who root themselves in the world that lies around us, and when they move at all move in the line of least resistance; those who have never carried Christ's Cross,—none of these can ever have the triumphant conviction of things unseen and eternal which throbs in every page of the New Testament. None of these can have what the Apostle elsewhere calls "eternal consolation." It is easy for unbelievers, and for Christians lapsing into unbelief, to mock this faith as faith in "the transcendent"; but would a single line of the New Testament have been written without it? When we weigh what is here asserted about its connection with the sufferings of Christ, could a graver charge be brought against any Church than that its faith in this "transcendent" languished or was extinct? Do not let us hearken to the sceptical insinuations which would rob us of all that has been revealed in Christ's resurrection; and do not let us imagine, on the other hand, that we can retain a living faith in this revelation if we decline to take up our cross. It was only when the sufferings of Christ abounded in him that Paul's consolation was abundant through Christ; it was only when he laid down his life for His sake that Stephen saw the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.

## CHAPTER II.

### FAITH BORN OF DESPAIR.

2 CORINTHIANS i. 8-14 (R. V.).

PAUL seems to have felt that the thanksgiving with which he opens this letter to the Corinthians was so peculiar as to require explanation. It was not his way to burst upon his readers thus with his private experiences either of joy or sorrow; and though he had good reason for what he did—in that abundance of the heart out of which the mouth speaks, in his desire to conciliate the good-will of the Corinthians for a much-tried man, and in his faith in the real communion of the saints—he instinctively stops here a moment to vindicate what he has done. He does not wish them to be ignorant of an experience which has been so much to him, and ought to have the liveliest interest for them.

Evidently they knew that he had been in trouble, but they had no sufficient idea of the extremity to which he had been reduced. We were weighed down, he writes, in excess, beyond our power; the trial that came upon us was one not measured to man's strength. We despaired even of life. Nay, we have had \* the answer of death in ourselves. When we looked about us, when we faced our circumstances, and asked ourselves whether death or life was to be the end of this, we could only answer, Death. We were like men under sentence; it was only a question of a little sooner or a little later, when the fatal stroke should fall.

\* Notice the perfect *ἐσχήκαμεν*. We *had* this experience, and in its fruit—a newer and deeper faith in God—we *have* it still. It is a permanent possession in this happy form. The same idea is expressed in the pft. *ἠλπίκαμεν*, ver. 10.

The Apostle, who has a divine gift for interpreting experience and reading its lessons, tells us why he and his friends had to pass such a terrible time. It was that they might trust, not in themselves, but in God who raises the dead. It is natural, he implies, for us to trust in ourselves. It is so natural, and so confirmed by the habits of a lifetime, that no ordinary difficulties or perplexities avail to break us of it. It takes all God can do to root up our self-confidence. He must reduce us to despair; He must bring us to such an extremity that the one voice we have in our hearts, the one voice that cries to us wherever we look round for help, is Death, death, death. It is out of this despair that the superhuman hope is born. It is out of this abject helplessness that the soul learns to look up with new trust to God.

It is a melancholy reflection upon human nature that we have, as the Apostle expresses it elsewhere, to be "shut up" to all the mercies of God. If we could evade them, notwithstanding their freeness and their worth, we would. How do most of us attain to any faith in Providence? Is it not by proving, through numberless experiments, that it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps? Is it not by coming, again and again, to the limit of our resources, and being compelled to feel that unless there is a wisdom and a love at work on our behalf, immeasurably wiser and more benignant than our own, life is a moral chaos? How, above all, do we come to any faith in redemption? to any abiding trust in Jesus Christ as the Saviour of our souls? Is it not by this same way of despair? Is it not by the profound consciousness that in ourselves there is *no* answer to the question, How shall man be just with God? and that the answer must be sought in Him? Is it not by failure, by defeat, by deep disappointments, by ominous forebodings hardening into the awful certainty that we cannot with our own resources make ourselves good men—is it not by experiences like these that we are led to the Cross? This principle has many other illustrations in human life, and every one of them is something to our discredit. They all mean that only desperation opens our eyes to God's love. We do not heartily own Him as the author of life and health, unless He has raised us from sickness after the doctor had given us up. We do not acknowledge His paternal guidance of our life, unless in some sudden peril, or some impending disaster, He provides an unexpected deliverance. We do not confess that salvation is of the Lord, till our very soul has been convinced that in it there dwells no good thing. Happy are those who are taught, even by despair, to set their hope in God; and who, when they learn this lesson once, learn it, like St. Paul, once for all (see note on *ἐσχήκαμεν* above). Faith and hope like those which burn through this Epistle were well worth purchasing, even at such a price; they were blessings so valuable that the love of God did not shrink from reducing Paul to despair that he might be compelled to grasp them. Let us believe when such trials come into our lives—when we are weighed down exceedingly, beyond our strength, and are in darkness without light, in a valley of the shadow of death with no outlet—that God is not dealing with us cruelly or at random, but shutting us up to an experience of His love which we have hitherto declined. "After two days



will He revive us; on the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live before Him."

The Apostle describes the God on whom he learned to hope as "God who raises the dead." He himself had been as good as dead, and his deliverance was as good as a resurrection. The phrase, however, seems to be the Apostle's equivalent for omnipotence: when he thinks of the utmost that God can do, he expresses it thus. Sometimes the application of it is merely physical (e. g., Rom. iv. 17); sometimes it is spiritual as well. Thus in Eph. i. 19 ff. the possibilities of the Christian life are measured by this—that that power is at work in believers with which God wrought in Christ when *He raised Him from the dead*, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places. Is not that power sufficient to do for the weakest and most desperate of men far more than all he needs? Yet it is his need, somehow, when brought home to him in despair, that opens his eyes to this omnipotent saving power.

The text of the words in which Paul tells of his deliverance can hardly be said to be quite certain, but the general meaning is plain. God delivered him from the awful death which was impending over him; he had his hope now firmly set on Him; he was sure that He would deliver him in the future also. What the danger had been, which had made so powerful an impression on this hardy soul, we cannot now tell. It must have been something which happened after the First Epistle was written, and therefore was not the fighting with wild beasts at Ephesus, whatever that may have been (1 Cor. xv. 32). It may have been a serious bodily illness, which had brought him to death's door, and left him so weak, that still, at every step, he felt it was God's mercy that was holding him up. It may have been a plot to make away with him on the part of the many adversaries mentioned in the First Epistle (xvi. 9)—a plot which had failed, as it were, by a miracle, but the malignity of which still dogged his steps, and was only warded off by the constant presence of God. Both these suggestions require, and would satisfy, the reading, "who delivered us from so great a death, and *doth deliver*." If, however, we take the reading of the R. V.—"who delivered us from so great a death, and *will deliver*; on whom we have set our hope that He will also still deliver us"—the existence of the danger, at the moment at which Paul writes, is not necessarily involved; and the danger itself may have been more of what we might call an accidental character. The imminent peril of drowning referred to in chap. xi. 25 would meet the case; and the confidence expressed by Paul with such emphatic reference to the future will not seem without motive when we consider that he had several sea voyages in prospect—as those from Corinth to Syria, from Syria to Rome, and probably from Rome to Spain. So Hofmann interprets the whole passage: but whether the interpretation be good or bad, it is elsewhere than in its accidental circumstances that the interest of the transaction lies for the writer and for us. To Paul it was not merely a historical but a spiritual experience; not an incident without meaning, but a divinely ordered discipline; and it is thus that we must learn to read our own lives if the purpose of God is to be wrought out in them.

Notice in this connection, in the eleventh

verse, how simply Paul assumes the spiritual participation of the Corinthians in his fortunes. It is God indeed who delivers him, but the deliverance is wrought while they, as well as other Churches, co-operate in supplication on his behalf. In the strained relations existing between himself and the Corinthians, the assumption here made so graciously probably did them more than justice; if there were unsympathetic souls among them, they must have felt in it a delicate rebuke. What follows—"that, for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many, thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf" (R. V.)—simple and intelligible as it looks in English, is one of the passages which justify M. Sabatier's remark that Paul is difficult to understand and impossible to translate. The Revisers seem to have construed τὸ εἰς ἡμᾶς χάρισμα διὰ πολλῶν together, as if it had been τὸ διὰ π. ε. ἡ. χάρισμα, the meaning being that the favour bestowed on Paul in his deliverance from this peril had been bestowed at the intercession of many. Others get virtually the same meaning by construing τὸ εἰς ἡμᾶς χάρισμα with ἐκ πολλῶν προσώπων: the inversion is supposed to emphasise these last words; and as it was, on this view, prayer on the part of many persons that procured his deliverance, Paul is anxious that the deliverance itself should be acknowledged by the thanksgiving of many. It cannot be denied that both these renderings are grammatically violent, and it seems to me preferable to keep τὸ εἰς ἡμᾶς χάρισμα by itself, even though ἐκ πολλῶν προσώπων and διὰ πολλῶν should then reduplicate the same idea with only a slight variation. We should then render: "in order that, on the part of many persons, the favour shown to us may be gratefully acknowledged by many on our behalf." The pleonasm thus resulting strikes one rather as characteristic of St. Paul's mood in such passages, than as a thing open to objection. But grammar apart, what really has to be emphasised here is again the communion of the saints. All the Churches pray for St. Paul—at least he takes it for granted that they do; and when he is rescued from danger, his own thanksgiving is multiplied a thousandfold by the thanksgivings of others on his behalf. This is the ideal of an evangelist's life; in all its incidents and emergencies, in all its perils and salvations, it ought to float in an atmosphere of prayer. Every interposition of God on the missionary's behalf is then recognised by him as a gift of grace—not, be it understood, a private favour, but a blessing and a power capacitating him for further service to the Church. Those who have lived through his straits and his triumphs with him in their prayers know how true that is.

At this point (ver. 12) the key in which Paul writes begins to change. We are conscious of a slight discord the instant he speaks about the testimony of his conscience. Yet the transition is as unforced as any such transition can be. I may well take for granted, seems to be the thought in his mind, that you pray for me; I may well ask you to unite with me in thanks to God for my deliverance; for if there is one thing I am sure of, and proud of, it is that I have been a loyal minister of God in the world, and especially to you. Fleshly wisdom has not been my guide. I have used no worldly policy; I have sought no selfish ends. In a holiness and sincerity which God bestows, in an element of crys-



tal transparency, I have led my apostolic life. The world has never convicted me of anything dark or underhand; and in all the world none know better than you, among whom I lived longer than elsewhere, working with my hands, and preaching the Gospel as freely as God offers it, that I have walked in the light as He is in the light.

This general defence, which is not without its note of defiance, becomes defined in ver. 13. Plainly charges of insincerity had been made against Paul, particularly affecting his correspondence, and it is to these he addresses himself. It is not easy to be outspoken and conciliatory in the same sentence, to show your indignation to the man who charges you with double-dealing, and at the same time take him to your heart; and the Apostle's effort to do all these things at once has proved embarrassing to himself, and more than embarrassing to his interpreters. He begins, indeed, lucidly enough. "We write nothing else to you than what you read." He does not mean that he had no correspondence with members of the Church except in his public epistles; but that in these public epistles his meaning was obvious and on the surface. His style was not, as some had hinted, obscure, tortuous, elaborately ambiguous, full of loop-holes; he wrote like a plain man to plain men; he said what he meant, and meant what he said. Then he qualifies this slightly. "We write nothing to you but what you read—or in point of fact acknowledge," even apart from our writing. This seems to me the simplest interpretation of the words *ἡ καὶ ἐπιγινώσκετε*; and the simplest construction is then that of Hofmann, who puts a colon at *ἐπιγινώσκετε*, and with *ἐπιλίζω δὲ* begins what is virtually a separate sentence. "And I hope that to the end ye will acknowledge, as in fact you acknowledged us in part, that we are your boast, as you also are ours, in the day of the Lord Jesus." Other possibilities of punctuation and construction are so numerous that it would be endless to exhibit them; and in the long-run they do not much affect the sense. What the reader has to seize is that Paul has been accused of insincerity, especially in his correspondence, and that he indignantly denies the charge; that, in spite of such accusations, he can point to at least a partial recognition among the Corinthians of what he and his fellow-workers really are; and that he hopes their confidence in him will increase and continue to the end. Should this bright hope be gratified, then in the day of the Lord Jesus it will be the boast of the Corinthians that they had the great Apostle Paul as their spiritual father, and the boast of the Apostle that the Corinthians were his spiritual children.

A passage like this—and there are many like it in St. Paul—has something in it humiliating. Is it not a disgrace to human nature that a man so open, so truthful, so brave, should be put to his defence on a charge of underhand dealing? Ought not somebody to have been deeply ashamed, for bringing this shame on the Apostle? Let us be very careful how we lend motives, especially to men whom we know to be better than ourselves. There is that in all our hearts which is hostile to them, and would not be grieved to see them degraded a little; and it is that, and nothing else, which supplies bad

motives for their good actions, and puts an ambiguous face on their simplest behaviour. "Deceit," says Solomon, "is in the heart of them that imagine evil"; it is our own selves that we condemn most surely when we pass our bad sentence upon others.

The immediate result of imputing motives, and putting a sinister interpretation on actions, is that mutual confidence is destroyed; and mutual confidence is the very element and atmosphere in which any spiritual good can be done. Unless a minister and his congregation recognise each other as in the main what they profess to be, their relation is destitute of spiritual reality; it may be an infinite weariness, or an infinite torment; it can never be a comfort or a delight on one side or the other. What would a family be, without the mutual confidence of husband and wife, of parents and children? What is a state worth, for any of the ideal ends for which a state exists, if those who represent it to the world have no instinctive sympathy with the general life, and if the collective conscience regards the leaders from a distance with dislike or distrust? And what is the pastoral relation worth, if, instead of mutual cordiality, openness, readiness to believe and to hope the best, instead of mutual intercession and thanksgiving, of mutual rejoicing in each other, there is suspicion, reserve, insinuation, coldness, a grudging recognition of what it is impossible to deny, a willingness to shake the head and to make mischief? What an experience of life we see, what a final appreciation of the best thing, in that utterance of St. John in extreme age: "Beloved, let us love one another." All that is good for us, all glory and joy, is summarily comprehended in that.

The last words of the text—"the day of the Lord Jesus"—recall a very similar passage in 1 Thess. ii. 19: "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing—is it not even ye—before our Lord Jesus at His coming?" In both cases our minds are lifted to that great presence in which St. Paul habitually lived; and as we stand there our disagreements sink into their true proportions; our judgments of each other are seen in their true colours. No one will rejoice then that he has made evil out of good, that he has cunningly perverted simple actions, that he has discovered the infirmities of preachers, or set the saints at variance; the joy will be for those who have loved and trusted each other, who have borne each other's faults and laboured for their healing, who have believed all things, hoped all things, endured all things, rather than be parted from each other by any failure of love. The mutual confidence of Christian ministers and Christian people will then, after all its trials, have its exceeding great reward.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE CHURCH'S ONE FOUNDATION.

2 CORINTHIANS i. 15-20 (R. V.).

THE emphatic words in the first sentence are "in this confidence." All the Apostle's plans for visiting Corinth, both in general and in their details, depended upon the maintenance of a good understanding between himself and the



Church; and the very prominence here given to this condition is a tacit accusation of those whose conduct had destroyed his confidence. When he intimated his intention of visiting them, according to the programme of vv. 15 and 16, he had felt sure of a friendly welcome, and of the cordial recognition of his apostolic authority; it was only when that assurance was taken away from him by news of what was being said and done at Corinth, that he had changed his plan. He had originally intended to go from Ephesus to Corinth, then from Corinth north into Macedonia, then back to Corinth again, and thence, with the assistance of the Corinthians, or their convoy for part of the way, to Jerusalem. Had this purpose been carried out, he would of course have been twice in Corinth, and it is to this that most scholars refer the words "a second benefit," or rather "grace." This reference, indeed, is not quite certain; and it cannot be proved, though it is made more probable, by using *πρότερον* and *δεύτερον* to interpret each other. It remains possible that when Paul said, "I was minded to come before unto you, that ye might have a second benefit," he was thinking of his original visit as the first, and of this purposed one as the second, "grace." This reading of his words has commended itself to scholars like Calvin, Bengel, and Heinrici. Whichever of these interpretations be correct, the Apostle had abandoned his purpose of going from Ephesus to Macedonia *via* Corinth, and had intimated in the First Epistle (chap. xvi. 5) his intention of reaching Corinth *via* Macedonia. This change of purpose is not sufficient to explain what follows. Unless there had been at Corinth a great deal of bad feeling, it would have passed without remark, as a thing which had no doubt good reasons, though the Corinthians were ignorant of them; at the very most, it would have called forth expressions of disappointment and regret. They would have been sorry that the benefit, the token of Divine favour which was always bestowed when the Apostle came "in the fullness of the blessing of Christ," and "longing to impart some spiritual gift," had been delayed; but they would have acquiesced as in any other natural disappointment. But this was not what took place. They used the Apostle's change of purpose to assail his character. They charged him with "lightness," with worthless levity. They called him a weathercock, a Yes and No man, who said now one thing and now the opposite, who said both at once and with equal emphasis, who had his own interests in view in his fickleness, and whose word, to speak plainly, could never be depended upon.

The responsibility for the change of plan has already been indirectly transferred to his accusers; but the Apostle stoops to answer them quite straightforwardly. His answer is indeed a challenge: "When I cherished that first wish to visit you, *was* I—dare you say I was—guilty of the levity with which you charge me? Or—to enlarge the question, and, seeing that my whole character is attacked, to bring my character as a whole into the discussion—the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be the yea yea and the nay nay?" Am I, he seems to say, in my character and conduct, like a shifty, unprincipled politician—a man who has no convictions, or no conscience about his convictions—a man

who is guided, not by any higher spirit dwelling in him, but solely by considerations of selfish interest? Do I say things out of mere compliment, not meaning them? When I make promises, or announce intentions, is it always with the tacit reservation that they may be cancelled if they turn out inconvenient? Do you suppose that I *purposely* represent myself as a man who affirms and denies, makes promises and breaks them, has Yes yes and No no dwelling side by side in his soul? \* You know me far better than to suppose any such thing. All my communications with you have been inconsistent with such a view of my character. As God is faithful, our word to you is not Yes and No. It is not incoherent, or equivocal, or self-contradictory. It is entirely truthful and self-consistent.

In this eighteenth verse the Apostle's mind is reaching out already to what he is going to make his real defence, and therefore carries a double weight. It covers at once whatever he had said to them about the proposed journey, and whatever he had said in his evangelistic ministry at Corinth. It is this latter sense of it that is continued in ver. 19: "For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us, by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not Yes and No, but in him Yes has found place. For how many soever are the promises of God, in Him is the Yes." Let us notice first the argumentative force of this. Paul is engaged in vindicating his character, and especially in maintaining his truthfulness and sincerity. How does he do so here? His unspoken assumption is that character is determined by the main interest of life; that the work to which a man gives his soul will react upon the soul, changing it into its own likeness. As the dyer's hand is subdued to the element it works in, so was the whole being of Paul—such is the argument—subdued to the element in which he wrought, conformed to it, impregnated by it. And what was that element? It was the Gospel concerning God's Son, Jesus Christ. Was there any dubiety about what that was? any equivocal mixture of Yes and No there? Far from it. Paul was so certain of what it was that he repeatedly and solemnly anathematized man or angel who should venture to qualify, let alone deny it. There is no mixture of Yes and No in Christ. As the Apostle says elsewhere (Rom. xv. 8), Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision "in the interest of the truth of God, with a view to the confirmation of the promises." However many the promises might be, in Him a mighty affirmation, a mighty fulfilment, was given of every one. The ministry of the Gospel has this, then, as its very subject, its constant preoccupation, its highest glory—the absolute faithfulness of God. Who would venture to assert that Paul, or that anybody, could catch the trick of equivocation in such a service? Who does not see that such a service must needs create true men?

To this argument there is, for the natural

\* Mention may be made here of another interpretation of ver. 17, modifications of which recur from Chrysostom to Hofmann. In substance it is this: "The things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh (*i. e.*, with the stubborn consistency of a proud man, who disposes as well as proposes) that with *me* (*ἐμοί* emphatic: *me*, as if I were God, always to do what I would like to do) the Yes should be yes, and the No, no—*i. e.*, every promise inviolably kept?" This is grammatically quite good, but contextually impossible.



man, a ready answer. It by no means follows, he will say, that because the Gospel is devoid of ambiguity or inconsistency, equivocation and insincerity must be unknown to its preachers. A man may proclaim the true Gospel and in his other dealings be far from a true man. Experience justifies this reply; and yet it does not invalidate Paul's argument. That argument is good for the case in which it is applied. It might be *repeated* by a hypocrite, but no hypocrite could ever have *invented* it. It bears, indeed, a striking because an unintentional testimony to the height at which Paul habitually lived, and to his unqualified identification of himself with his apostolic calling. If a man has ten interests in life, more or less divergent, he may have as many inconsistencies in his behaviour; but if he has said with St. Paul, "This one thing I do," and if the one thing which absorbs his very soul is an unceasing testimony to the truth and faithfulness of God, then it is utterly incredible that he should be a false and faithless man. The work which claims him for its own with this absolute authority will seal him with its own greatness, its own simplicity and truth. He will not use levity. The things which he purposes, he will not purpose according to the flesh. He will not be guided by considerations perpetually varying, except in the point of being all alike selfish. He will not be a Yes and No man, whom nobody can trust.

The argumentative force of the passage being admitted, its doctrinal import deserves attention. The Gospel—which is identified with God's Son, Jesus Christ—is here described as a mighty affirmation. It is not Yes and No, a message full of inconsistencies, or ambiguities, a proclamation the sense of which no one can ever be sure he has grasped. In it (*ἐν αὐτῷ* means "in Christ") the everlasting Yea has found place. The perfect tense (*γέγονεν*) means that this grand affirmation has come to us, and is with us, for good and all. What it was and continued to be in Paul's time, it is to this day. It is in this positive, definite, unmistakable character that the strength of the Gospel lies. What a man cannot know, cannot seize, cannot tell, he cannot preach. The refutation of popular errors, even in theology, is not gospel; the criticism of traditional theories, even about Scripture, is not gospel; the intellectual "economy," with which a clever man in a dubious position uses language about the Bible or its doctrines which to the simple means Yes, and to the subtle qualifies the Yes enormously, is not gospel. There is no strength in any of these things. Dealing in them does not make character simple, sincere, massive, Christian. When they stamp themselves on the soul, the result is not one to which we could make the appeal which Paul makes here. If we have any gospel at all, it is because there are things which stand for us above all doubts, truths so sure that we cannot question them, so absolute that we cannot qualify them, so much our life that to tamper with them is to touch our very heart. Nobody has any right to preach who has not mighty affirmations to make concerning God's Son, Jesus Christ—affirmations in which there is no ambiguity, and which no questioning can reach.

In the Apostle's mind a particular turn is given to this thought by its connection with the Old Testament. In Christ, he says, the Yes has been realised; for how many soever are the

promises of God, in Him is the Yes. The mode of expression is rather peculiar, but the meaning is quite plain. Is there a single word of good, Paul asks, that God has ever spoken concerning man? Then that word is reaffirmed, it is confirmed, it is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. It is no longer a word, but an actual gift to men, which they may take hold of and possess. Of course when Paul says "how many soever are the promises," he is thinking of the Old Testament. It was there the promises stood in God's name; and hence he tells us in this passage that Christ is the fulfilment of the Old Testament; in Him God has kept His word given to the fathers. All that the holy men of old were bidden to hope for, as the Spirit spoke through them in many parts and in many ways, is given to the world at last: he who has God's Son, Jesus Christ, has all God has promised, and all He can give.

There are two opposite ways of looking at the Old Testament with which this apostolic teaching is inconsistent, and which, by anticipation, it condemns.

There is the opinion of those who say that God's promises to His people in the Old Testament have not been fulfilled, and never will be. That is the opinion held by many among the modern Jews, who have renounced all that was most characteristic in the religion of their fathers, and attenuated it into the merest deistical film of a creed. It is the opinion also of many who study the Bible as a piece of literary antiquity, but get to no perception of the life which is in it, or of the organic connection between the Old Testament and the New. What the Apostle says of his countrymen in his own time is true of both these classes—when they read the Scriptures there is a veil upon their hearts. The Old Testament promises have been fulfilled, every one of them. Let a man be taught what they mean, not as dead letters in an ancient scroll, but as present words of the living God; and then let him look to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and see whether there is not in Him the mighty, the perpetual confirmation of them all. We smile sometimes at what seems the whimsical way in which the early Christians, who had not yet a New Testament, found Christ everywhere in the Old; but though it may be possible to err in detail in this pursuit, it is not possible to err on the whole. The Old Testament is gathered up, every living word of it, in Him; we are misunderstanding it if we take it otherwise.

The opinion just described is a species of rationalism. There is another opinion, which, while agreeing with the rationalistic one that many of God's promises in the Old Testament have not yet been fulfilled, believes that their fulfilment is still to be awaited. If one might do so without offence, I should call this a species of fanaticism. It is the error of those who take the Jewish nation as such to be the subject of prophecy, and hope for its restoration to Palestine, for a revived Jerusalem, a new Davidic monarchy, even a reign of Christ over such an earthly kingdom. All this, if we may take the Apostle's word for it, is beside the mark. Equally with rationalism it loses the spirit of God's word in the letter. The promises have been fulfilled already, and we are not to look for another fulfilment. Those who have seen Christ have seen all that God is going to



do—and it is quite adequate—to make His word good. He who has welcomed Christ knows that not one good word of all that God has spoken has failed. God has never, by the promises of the Old Testament, or by the instincts of human nature, put a hope or a prayer into man's heart that is not answered and satisfied abundantly in His Son.

But leaving the reference to the Old Testament on one side, it is well worth while for us to consider the practical meaning of the truth, that *all* God's promises are Yea in Christ. God's promises are His declarations of what He is willing to do for men; and in the very nature of the case they are at once the inspiration and the limit of our prayers. We are encouraged to ask all that God promises, and we must stop there. Christ Himself then is the measure of prayer to man; we can ask all that is in Him; we dare not ask anything that lies outside of Him. How the consideration of this should expand our prayers in some directions, and contract them in others! We can ask God to give us Christ's purity, Christ's simplicity, Christ's meekness and gentleness, Christ's faithfulness and obedience, Christ's victory over the world. Have we ever measured these things? Have we ever put them into our prayers with any glimmering consciousness of their dimensions, any sense of the vastness of our request? Nay, we can ask Christ's glory, His Resurrection Life of splendour and incorruption—the image of the heavenly. God has promised us all these things, and far more: but has He always promised what we ask? Can we fix our eyes on His Son, as He lived our life in this world, and remembering that this, so far as this world is concerned, is the measure of promise, ask without any qualification that our course here may be free from every trouble? Had Christ no sorrow? Did He never meet with ingratitude? Was he never misunderstood? Was He never hungry, thirsty, weary? If all God's promises are summed up in Him—if He is everything that God has to give—can we go boldly to the throne of grace, and pray to be exempted from what He had to bear, or to be richly provided with indulgences which He never knew? What if all unanswered prayers might be defined as prayers for things not included in the promises—prayers that we might get what Christ did not get, or be spared what He was not spared? The spirit of this passage, however, does not urge so much the definiteness as the compass and the certainty of the promises of God. They are so many that Paul could never enumerate them, and all of them are sure in Christ. And when our eyes are once opened on Him, does not He Himself become as it were inevitably the substance of our prayers? Is not our whole heart's desire, Oh that I might win *Him*! Oh that *He* might live in me, and make me what He is! Oh that *that* Man might arise in me, that the man I am may cease to be! Do we not feel that if God would give us His Son, all would be ours that we could take or He could give?

It is in this mood—with the consciousness, I mean, that in Jesus Christ the sure promises of God are inconceivably rich and good—that the Apostle adds: "wherefore also through Him is the Amen." It is not easy to put a prayer into words, whether of petition or thanksgiving, for men are not much in the habit of speaking to

God; but it is easy to say Amen. That is the part of the Church when God's Son, Jesus Christ, is proclaimed, clothed in His Gospel. Apart from the Gospel, we do not know God, or what He will do, or will not do, for sinful men; but as we listen to the proclamation of His mercy and His faithfulness, as our eyes are opened to see in His Son all He has promised to do for us, nay, in a sense, all He has already done, our grateful hearts break forth in one grand responsive Amen! So let it be! we cry. Unless God had first prompted us by sending His Son, we could never have found it in our hearts to present such requests to Him; but through Christ we are enabled to present them, though it should be at first with only a look at Him, and an appropriating Amen. It is the very nature of prayer, indeed, to be the answer to promise. Amen is all, at bottom, that God leaves for us to say.

The solemn acceptance of a mercy so great—an acceptance as joyful as it is solemn, since the Amen is one rising out of thankful hearts—re-ounds to the glory of God. This is the final cause of redemption, and however it may be lost sight of in theologies which make man their centre, it is always magnified in the New Testament. The Apostle rejoices that his ministry and that of his friends (*δι' ἡμῶν*) contributes to this glory; and the whole connection of thought in the passage throws a light on a great Bible word. God's glory is identified here with the recognition and appropriation by men of His goodness and faithfulness in Jesus Christ. He is glorified when it dawns on human souls that He has spoken good concerning them beyond their utmost imaginings, and when that good is seen to be indubitably safe and sure in His Son. The Amen in which such souls welcome His mercy is the equivalent of the Old Testament word, "Salvation is of the Lord." It is expanded in an apostolic doxology: "Of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things: to Him be glory for ever."

#### CHAPTER IV.

#### CHRISTIAN MYSTERIES.

#### 2 CORINTHIANS i. 21, 22 (R. V.).

It is not easy to show the precise connection between these words and those which immediately precede. Possibly it is emotional, rather than logical. The Apostle's heart swells as he contemplates in the Gospel the goodness and faithfulness of God; and though his argument is complete when he has exhibited the Gospel in that light, his mind dwells upon it involuntarily, past the mere point of proof; he lingers over the wonderful experience which Christians have of the rich and sure mercies. Those who try to make out a more precise sequence of thought than this are not very successful. Of course it is apparent that the keynote of the passage is in harmony with that of the previous verses. The ideas of "stablishing," of "sealing," and of an "earnest," are all of one family; they are all, as it were, variations of the one mighty *affirmation* which has been made of God's promises in Christ. From this point of view they have an argumentative value. They suggest that God, in all sorts of ways, makes believers as



sure of the Gospel, and as constant to it, as He has made it sure and certain to them; and thus they exclude more decisively than ever the idea that the minister of the Gospel can be a man of Yes and No. But though this is true, it fails to do justice to the word on which the emphasis falls—namely, God. This, according to some interpreters, is done, if we suppose the whole passage to be, in the first instance, a disclaimer of any false inference which might be drawn from the words, “to the glory of God by us.” “By us,” Paul writes; for it was through the apostolic preaching that men were led to receive the Gospel, to look at God’s promises, confirmed in Christ, with an appropriating Amen to His glory; but he hastens to add that it was God Himself whose grace in its various workings was the beginning, middle, and end both of their faith and of their preaching. This seems to me rather artificial, and I do not think more than a connection in sentiment, rather than in argument, can be insisted upon.

But setting this question aside, the interpretation of the two verses is of much interest. They contain some of the most peculiar and characteristic words of the New Testament—words to which, it is to be feared, many readers attach no very distinct idea. The simplest plan is to take the assertions one by one, as if God were the subject. Grammatically this is incorrect, for *θεός* is certainly the predicate; but for the elucidation of the meaning this may be disregarded.

(1) First of all, then, God confirms us into Christ. “Us,” of course, means St. Paul and the preachers whom he associates with himself, —Silas and Timothy. But when he adds “with you,” he includes the Corinthians also, and all believers. He does not claim for himself any steadfastness in Christ, or any trustworthiness as dependent upon it, which he would on principle refuse to others. God, who makes His promises sure to those who receive them, gives those who receive them a firm grasp of the promises. Christ is here, with all the wealth of grace in Him, indubitable, unmistakable; and what God has done on that side, He does on the other also. He confirms believers into Christ. He makes their attachment to Christ, their possession of Him, a thing indubitable and irreversible. Salvation, to use the words of St. John, is true *in Him and in them*; in them, so far as God’s purpose and work go, as much as in Him. He who is confirmed into Christ is in principle as trustworthy, as absolutely to be depended upon, as Christ Himself. The same character of pure truth is common to them both. Christ’s existence as the Saviour, in whom all God’s promises are guaranteed, and Paul’s existence as a saved man with a sure grasp on all these promises, are alike proofs that God is faithful; the truth of God stands behind them both. It is to this that the appeal of vv. 15-20 is virtually made; it is this in the long-run which is called in question when the trustworthiness of Paul is impeached.

All this, it may be said, is ideal; but in what sense is it so? Not in the sense that it is fanciful or unreal: but in the sense that the divine law of our life, and the divine action upon our life, are represented in it. It is our calling as Christian people to be steadfast in Christ. Such steadfastness God is ever seeking to impart, and in striving to attain to it we can always appeal to Him for help. It is the opposite of insta-

bility; in a special sense it is the opposite of untrustworthiness. If we are letting God have His way with us in this respect, we are persons who can always be depended upon and depended upon for conduct in keeping with the goodness and faithfulness of God, into which we have been confirmed by Him.

(2) From this general truth, with its application to all believers, the Apostle passes to another of more limited range. By including the Corinthians with himself in the first clause, he virtually excludes them in the second—“God anointed us.” It is true that the New Testament speaks of an anointing which is common to all believers—“Ye have an anointing from the Holy One; ye all know” (1 John ii. 20): but here, on the contrary, something special is meant. This can only be the consecration of Paul, and of those for whom he speaks, to the apostolic or evangelistic ministry. It is worth noticing that in the New Testament the act of anointing is never ascribed to any one but God. The only unction which qualifies for service in the Christian dispensation, or which confers dignity in the Christian community, is the unction from on high. “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power,” and it is the participation in this great anointing which capacitates any one to work in the Gospel. Paul undoubtedly claimed, in virtue of his divine call to apostleship, a peculiar authority in the Church; but we cannot define any peculiarity in his possession of the Spirit. The great gift which must be held in some sense by all Christians—“for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His”—was in him intensified, or specialised, for the work he had to do. But it is one Spirit in him and in us, and that is why we do not find the exercise of his authority alien or galling. It is authority divorced from “unction”—authority without this divine qualification—against which the Christian spirit rebels. And though “unction” cannot be defined; though no material guarantee can be given or taken for the possession of the Spirit; though a merely historical succession is, so far as this spiritual competence and dignity are concerned, a mere irrelevance; though, as Vinet said, we think of unction rather when it is absent than when it is present,—still, the thing itself is recognisable enough. It bears witness to itself, as light does; it carries its own authority, its own dignity, with it; it is the *ultima ratio*, the last court of appeal, in the Christian community. It may be that Paul is preparing already, by this reference to his commission, for the bolder assertion of his authority at a later stage.

(3) These two actions of God, however—the establishing of believers in Christ, which goes on continually, and the consecration of Paul to the apostleship, which was accomplished once for all, go back to prior actions, in which, again, all believers have an interest. They have a common basis in the great deeds of grace in which the Christian life began. God, he says, is He who also sealed us, and gave the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

“He also sealed us.” It seems strange that so figurative a word should be used without a hint of explanation, and we must assume that it was so familiar in the Church that the right of application could be taken for granted. The middle voice makes it certain that the main



idea is, "He marked us as His own." This is the sense in which the word is frequently used in the Book of Revelation: the servants of God are sealed on their foreheads, that they may be recognised as His. But what is the seal? Under the Old Testament, the mark which God set upon His people—the covenant sign by which they were identified as His—was circumcision. Under the New Testament, where everything carnal has passed away, and religious materialism is abolished, the sign is no longer in the body; we are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise (Eph. i. 13 f.). But the past tense ("He sealed us"), and its recurrence in Eph. i. 13 ("ye were sealed"), suggests a very definite reference of this word, and beyond doubt it alludes to baptism. In the New Testament, baptism and the giving of the Holy Spirit are regularly connected with each other. Christians are born of water and of the Spirit. "Repent," is the earliest preaching of the Gospel (Acts ii. 38), "and be baptised every one of you, . . . and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." In early Christian writers the use of the word "seal" as a technical term for baptism is practically universal; and when we combine this practice with the New Testament usage in question, the inference is inevitable. God puts His *seal* upon us, He *marks* us as His own, when we are baptised.

But the seal is not baptism as a ceremonial act. It is neither immersion nor sprinkling nor any other mode of lustration which marks us out as God's. The seal by which "the Lord knoweth them that are His" is His Spirit; it is the impress of His Spirit upon them. When that impress can be traced upon our souls, by Him, or by us, or by others, then we have the witness in ourselves; the Spirit bears witness with our spirits that we are children of God.

But of all words "spirit" is the vaguest; and if we had nothing but the word itself to guide us, we should either lapse into superstitious ideas about the virtue of the sacrament, or into fanatical ideas about incommunicable inward experiences in which God marked us for His own. The New Testament provides us with a more excellent way than either; it gives the word "spirit" a rich but definite moral content: it compels us, if we say we have been sealed with the Spirit, and claimed by God as His, to exhibit the distinguishing features of those who are His. "The Lord is the Spirit" (2 Cor. iii. 17). To be sealed with the Spirit is to bear, in however imperfect a degree, in however inconspicuous a style, the image of the heavenly man, the likeness of Jesus Christ. There are many passages in his Epistles in which St. Paul enlarges on the work of the Spirit in the soul; all the various dispositions which it creates, all the fruits of the Spirit, may be conceived as different parts of the impression made by the seal. We must think of these in detail, if we wish to give the word its meaning; we must think of them in contrast with the unspiritual nature, if we wish to give it any edge. Once, say, we walked in the lusts of the flesh: has Christ redeemed us, and set on our souls and our bodies the seal of His purity? Once we were hot and passionate, given to angry words and hasty, intemperate deeds: are we sealed now with the meekness and gentleness of Jesus? Once we were grasping and covetous, even to the verge of dishonesty; we could not let money pass us, and we

could not part with it: have we been sealed with the liberality of Him who says, "It is more blessed to give than to receive"? Once a wrong rankled in our hearts; the sun went down upon our wrath, not once or twice, but a thousand times, and found it as implacable as ever: is that deep brand of vindictiveness effaced now, and in its stead imprinted deep the Cross of Christ, where He loved us, and gave Himself for us, and prayed, "Father forgive them"? Once our conversation was corrupt; it had a taint in it; it startled and betrayed the innocent; it was vile and foolish and unseemly: are these things of the past now? and has Christ set upon our lips the seal of His own grace and truth, of His own purity and love, so that every word we speak is good, and brings blessing to those who hear us? These things, and such as these, are the seal of the Spirit. They are Christ in us. They are the stamp which God sets upon men when He exhibits them as His own.

The seal, however, has another use than that of marking and identifying property. It is a symbol of assurance. It is the answer to a challenge. It is in this sense that it is easiest to apply the figure to baptism. Baptism does not, indeed, carry with it the actual possession of all these spiritual features; it is not even, as an *opus operatum*, the implanting of them in the soul; but it is a divine pledge that they are within our reach; we can appeal to it as an assurance that God has come to us in His grace, has claimed us as His own, and is willing to conform us to the image of His Son. In this sense, it is legitimate and natural to call it God's seal upon His people.

(4) Side by side with "He sealed us," the Apostle writes, "He gave the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." After what has been said, it is obvious that this is another aspect of the same thing. We are sealed with the Spirit, and we get the earnest of the Spirit. In other words, the Spirit is viewed in two characters: first, as a seal; and then as an earnest. This last word has a very ancient history. It is found in the Book of Genesis (xxxviii. 18), and was carried, no doubt, by Phœnician traders, who had much occasion to use it, both to Greece and Italy. From the classical peoples it has come more or less directly to us. It means properly a small sum of money paid to clench a bargain, or to ratify an engagement. Where there is an earnest, there is more to follow, and more of essentially the same kind—that is what it signifies. Let us apply this now to the expression of St. Paul, "the earnest of the Spirit." It means, we must see, that in the gift of this Spirit, in that measure in which we now possess it, God has not given all He has to give. On the contrary, He has come under an obligation to give more: what we have now is but "the firstfruits of the Spirit" (Rom. viii. 23). It is an indication and a pledge of what is yet to be, but bears no proportion to it. All we can say on the basis of this text is that between the present and the future gift—between the earnest and that which it guarantees—there must be some kind of congruity, some affinity which makes the one a natural and not an arbitrary reason for believing in the other.

But the Corinthians were not limited to this text. They had St. Paul's general teaching in their minds to interpret it by; and if we wish



to know what it meant even for them, we must fill out this vague idea with what the Apostle tells us elsewhere. Thus in the great text in Ephesians (i. 13 f.), so often referred to, he speaks of the Holy Spirit with which we were sealed as the earnest of *our inheritance*. God has an "inheritance" in store for us. His Spirit makes us sons; and if sons, then heirs; heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ. This connection of the Spirit, sonship, and inheritance is constant in St. Paul; it is one of his most characteristic combinations. What then is the inheritance of which the Spirit is the earnest? That no one can tell. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him." But though we cannot tell more precisely, we can say that if the Spirit is the earnest of it, it must be in some sense a development of the Spirit; life in an order of being which matches the Spirit, and for which the Spirit qualifies. If we say it is "glory," then we must remember that only Christ in us (the seal of the Spirit) can be *the hope* of glory.

The application of this can be made very plain. Our whole life in this world looks to some future, however near or bounded it may be; and every power we perfect, every capacity we acquire, every disposition and spirit we foster, is an earnest of something in that future. Here is a man who gives himself to the mastery of a trade. He acquires all its skill, all its methods, all its resources. There is nothing any tradesman can do that he cannot do as well or better. What is that the earnest of? What does it ensure, and as it were put into his hand by anticipation? It is the earnest of constant employment, of good wages, of respect from fellow-workmen, perhaps of wealth. Here, again, is a man with the scientific spirit. He is keenly inquisitive about the facts and laws of the world in which we live. Everything is interesting to him—astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology, history. What is this the earnest of? It is the earnest, probably, of scientific achievements of some kind, of intellectual toils and intellectual victories. This man will enter into the inheritance of science; he will walk through the kingdoms of knowledge in the length of them and the breadth of them, and will claim them as his own. And so it is wherever we choose to take our illustrations. Every spirit that dwells in us, and is cultivated and cherished by us, is an *earnest*, because it fits and furnishes us for some particular thing. *God's Spirit* also is an earnest of an inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, imperishable: can we assure ourselves that we have anything in our souls which promises, because it matches with, an inheritance like this? When we come to die, this will be a serious question. The faculties of accumulation, of mechanical skill, of scientific research, of trade on a great or a small scale, of agreeable social intercourse, of comfortable domestic life, may have been brought to perfection in us; but can we console ourselves with the thought that *these* have the earnest of immortality? Do they qualify us for, and by qualifying assure us of, the incorruptible kingdom? Or do we not see at once that a totally different equipment is needed to make men at home there, and that nothing can be the earnest of an eternal life of blessedness with God except that Holy Spirit with which He

seals His own, and through which He makes them, even here, partakers of the divine nature?

We cannot study these words without becoming conscious of the immense enlargement which the Christian religion has brought to the human mind, of the vast expansion of hope which is due to the Gospel, and at the same time of the moral soundness and sobriety with which that hope is conceived. The promises of God were first really apprehended in Jesus Christ; in Him as He lived and died and rose again from the dead, in Him especially as He lives in immortal glory, men first saw what God was able and willing to do for them, and they saw this in its true relations. They saw it under its moral and spiritual conditions. It was not a future unconnected with the present, or connected with it in an arbitrary or incalculable way. It was a future which had its earnest in the present, a guarantee not alien to it, but akin—the Spirit of Christ implanted in the heart, the likeness of Christ sealed upon the nature. The glorious inheritance was the inheritance, not of strangers, but of sons; and it still becomes sure as the Spirit of sonship is received, and fades into incredibility when that Spirit is extinguished or depressed. If we could live in the Spirit with the completeness of Christ, or even of St. Paul, we should feel that we really had an earnest of immortality; the glory of heaven would be as certain to us as the faithfulness of God to His promise.

## CHAPTER V.

### A PASTOR'S HEART.

2 CORINTHIANS i. 23-ii. 4 (R. V.).

WHEN Paul came to the end of the paragraph in which he defends himself from the charge of levity and untrustworthiness by appealing to the nature of the Gospel which he preached, he seems to have felt that it was hardly sufficient for his purpose. It might be perfectly true that the Gospel was one mighty affirmation, with no dubiety or inconsistency about it; it might be as true that it was a supreme testimony to the faithfulness of God; but bad men, or suspicious men, would not admit that its character covered his. Their own insincerities would keep them from understanding its power to change its loyal ministers into its own likeness, and to stamp them with its own simplicity and truth. The mere invention of the argument in vv. 18-20 is of itself the highest possible testimony to the ideal height at which the Apostle lived; no man conscious of duplicity could ever have had it occur to him. But it had the defect of being too good for his purpose; the foolish and the false could see a triumphant reply to it; and he leaves it for a solemn asseveration of the reason which actually kept him from carrying out his first intention. "I call God to witness against my soul, that sparing you I forbore to come to Corinth." The soul is the seat of life; he stakes his life, as it were, in God's sight, upon the truth of his words. It was not consideration for himself, in any selfish spirit, but consideration for them, which explained his change of purpose. If he had carried out his intention, and gone to Corinth, he would have had to do



so, as he says in 1 Cor. iv. 21, with a rod, and this would not have been pleasant either for him or for them.

This is very plain—plain even to the dullest; the Apostle has no sooner set it down than he feels it is too plain. "To spare us," he hears the Corinthians say to themselves as they read: "who is he that he should take this tone in speaking to us?" And so he hastens to anticipate and deprecate their touchy criticism: "Not that we lord it over your faith, but we are helpers of your joy; as far as faith is concerned, your position, of course, is secure."

This is a very interesting aside; the digressions in St. Paul, as in Plato, are sometimes more attractive than the arguments. It shows us, for one thing, the freedom of the Christian faith. Those who have received the Gospel have all the responsibilities of mature men; they have come to their majority as spiritual beings; they are not, in their character and standing as Christians, subject to arbitrary and irresponsible interference on the part of others. Paul himself was the great preacher of this spiritual emancipation: he gloried in the liberty with which Christ made men free. For him the days of bondage were over; there was no subjection for the Christian to any custom or tradition of men, no enslavement of his conscience to the judgment or the will of others, no coercion of the spirit except by itself. He had great confidence in this Gospel and in its power to produce generous and beautiful characters. That it was capable of perversion also he knew very well. It was open to the infusion of self-will; in the intoxication of freedom from arbitrary and unspiritual restraint, men might forget that the believer was bound to be a law to himself, that he was free, not in lawless self-will, but only in the Lord. Nevertheless, the principle of freedom was too sacred to be tampered with; it was necessary both for the education of the conscience and for the enrichment of spiritual life with the most various and independent types of goodness; and the Apostle took all the risks, and all the inconveniences even, rather than limit it in the least.

This passage shows us one of the inconveniences. The newly enfranchised are mightily sensible of their freedom, and it is extremely difficult to tell them of their faults. At the very mention of authority all that is bad in them, as well as all that is good, is on the alert; and spiritual independence and the liberty of the Christian people have been represented and defended again and again, not only by an awful sense of responsibility to Christ, which lifts the lowliest lives into supreme greatness, but by pride, bigotry, moral insolence, and every bad passion. What is to be done in such cases as these, where liberty has forgotten the law of Christ? It is certainly not to be denied in principle: Paul, even with the peculiar position of an apostle, and of the spiritual father of those to whom he writes (1 Cor. iv. 15), does not claim such an authority over their faith—that is, over the people themselves in their character of believers—as a master has over his slaves. Their position as Christians is secure; it is taken for granted by him as by them; and this being so, no arbitrary *ipse dixit* can settle anything in dispute between them; he can issue no orders to the Church such as the Roman Emperor could issue to his soldiers. He may appeal to them

on spiritual grounds; he may enlighten their consciences by interpreting to them the law of Christ; he may try to reach them by praise or blame; but simple compulsion is not one of his resources. If St. Paul says this, occupying as he does a position which contains in itself a natural authority which most ministers can never have, ought not all official persons and classes in the Church to beware of the claims they make for themselves? A clerical hierarchy, such as has been developed and perfected in the Church of Rome, does lord it over faith; it *legislates* for the laity, both in faith and practice, without their co-operation, or even their consent; it keeps the *cæcus fidelium*, the mass of believing men, which is the Church, in a perpetual minority. All this, in a so-called apostolic succession, is not only anti-apostolic, but anti-Christian. It is the confiscation of Christian freedom; the keeping of believers in leading-strings all their days, lest in their liberty they should go astray. In the Protestant Churches, on the other hand, the danger on the whole is of the opposite kind. We are too jealous of authority. We are too proud of our own competence. We are too unwilling, individually, to be taught and corrected. We resent, I will not say criticism, but the most serious and loving voice which speaks to us to disapprove. Now liberty, when it does not deepen the sense of responsibility to God and to the brotherhood—and it does not always do so—is an anarchic and disintegrating force. In all the Churches it exists, to some extent, in this degraded form; and it is this which makes Christian education difficult, and Church discipline often impossible. These are serious evils, and we can only overcome them if we cultivate the sense of responsibility at the same time that we maintain the principle of liberty, remembering that it is those only of whom he says, "Ye were bought with a price" (and are therefore Christ's slaves), to whom St. Paul also gives the charge: "Be not ye slaves of men."

This passage not only illustrates the freedom of Christian faith, it presents us with an ideal of the Christian ministry. "We are not lords over your faith," says St. Paul, "but we are helpers of your joy." It is implied in this that joy is the very end and element of the Christian life, and that it is the minister's duty to be at war with all that restrains it, and to co-operate in all that leads to it. Here, one would say, is something in which all can agree: all human souls long for joy, however much they may differ about the spheres of law and liberty. But have not most Christian people, and most Christian congregations, something here to accuse themselves of? Do not many of us bear false witness against the Gospel on this very point? Who that came into most churches, and looked at the uninterested faces, and hearkened to the listless singing, would feel that the soul of the religion, so languidly honoured, was mere joy—joy unspeakable, if we trust the Apostles, and full of glory? It is ingratitude which makes us forget this. We begin to grow blind to the great things which lie at the basis of our faith; the love of God in Jesus Christ—that love in which He died for us upon the tree—begins to lose its newness and its wonder; we speak of it without apprehension and without feeling; it does not make our hearts burn within us any more; we have no joy in it. Yet we may be sure



of this—that we can have no joy without it. And he is our best friend, the truest minister of God to us, who helps us to the place where the love of God is poured out in our hearts in its omnipotence, and we renew our joy in it. In doing so, it may be necessary for the minister to cause pain by the way. There is no joy, nor any possibility of it, where evil is tolerated. There is no joy where sin has been taken under the patronage of those who call themselves by Christ's name. There is no joy where pride is in arms in the soul, and is reinforced by suspicion, by obstinacy, even by jealousy and hate, all waiting to dispute the authority of the preacher of repentance. When these evil spirits are overcome, and cast out, which may only be after a painful conflict, joy will have its opportunity again,—joy, whose right it is to reign in the Christian soul and the Christian community. Of all evangelistic forces, this joy is the most potent; and for that, above all other reasons, it should be cherished wherever Christian people wish to work the work of their Lord.

After this little digression on the freedom of the faith, and on joy as the element of the Christian life, Paul returns to his defence. "To spare you I forbore to come; for I made up my own mind on this, not to come to you a second time in sorrow." Why was he so determined about this? He explains in the second verse. It is because all his joy is bound up in the Corinthians, so that if he grieves them he has no one left to gladden him except those whom he has grieved—in other words, he has no joy at all. And he not only made up his mind definitely on this; he wrote also in exactly this sense: he did not wish, when he came, to have sorrow from those from whom he ought to have joy. In that desire to spare himself, as well as them, he counted on their sympathy; he was sure that his own joy was the joy of every one of them, and that they would appreciate his motives in not fulfilling a promise, the fulfilment of which in the circumstances would only have brought grief both to them and him. The delay has given them time to put right what was amiss in their Church, and has ensured a joyful time to them all when his visit is actually accomplished.

There are some grammatical and historical difficulties here which claim attention. The most discussed is that of the first verse: what is the precise meaning of τὸ μὴ πάλιν ἐν λύπῃ πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐλθεῖν? There is no doubt that this is the correct order of the words, and just as little, I think, that the natural meaning is that Paul had once visited Corinth in grief, and was resolved not to repeat such a visit. So the words are taken by Meyer, Hofmann, Schmiedel, and others. The visit in question cannot have been that on occasion of which the Church was founded; and as the connection between this passage and the last chapter of the First Epistle is as close as can be conceived (see the Introduction), it cannot have fallen between the two: the only other supposition is, that it took place before the First Epistle was written. This is the opinion of Lightfoot, Meyer, and Weiss; and it is not fatal to it that no such visit is mentioned elsewhere—e. g., in the book of Acts. Still, the interpretation is not essential; and if we can get over chap. xiii. 2, it is quite possible to agree with Heinrici that Paul had only been in Corinth once, and that what he means in

ver. 1 here is: "I determined not to carry out my purpose of revisiting you, in sorrow."

There is a difficulty of another sort in ver. 2. One's first thought is to read καὶ τὴν ὁ εὐφρανῶν με, κ. τ. λ., as a real singular, with a reference, intelligible though indefinite, to the notorious but penitent sinner of Corinth. "I vex you, I grant it; but where does my joy come from—the joy without which I am resolved not to visit you—except from one who is vexed by me?" The bad man's repentance had made Paul glad, and there is a worthy considerateness in this indefinite way of designating him. This interpretation has commended itself to so sound a judge as Bengel, and though more recent scholars reject it with practical unanimity, it is difficult to be sure that it is wrong. The alternative is to generalise the τὴν and make the question mean: "If I vex you, where can I find joy? All my joy is in you, and to see you grieved leaves me absolutely joyless."

A third difficulty is the reference of ἔγραψά τοῦτο αὐτὸ in ver. 3. Language very similar is found in ver. 9, and again in chap. vii. 8-12. It is very natural to think here of our First Epistle. It served the purpose contemplated by the letter here described; it told of Paul's change of purpose; it warned the Corinthians to rectify what was amiss, and so to order their affairs that he might come, not with a rod, but in love and in the spirit of meekness; or, as he says here, not to have sorrow, but, what he was entitled to, joy from his visit. All that is alleged against this is that our First Epistle does not suit the description given of the writing in ver. 4: "out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears." But when those parts of the First Epistle are read, in which St. Paul is not answering questions submitted to him by the Church, but writing out of his heart upon its spiritual condition, this will appear a dubious assertion. What a pain must have been at his heart, when such passionate words broke from him as these: "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you?—What is Apollos, and what is Paul?—With me it is a very little thing to be judged by you.—Though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I begot you through the Gospel.—I will know, not the speech of them that are puffed up, but the power." Not to speak of the fifth and sixth chapters, words like these justify us in supposing that the First Epistle may be, and in all probability is, meant.

Putting these details aside, as of mainly historical interest, let us look rather at the spirit of this passage. It reveals, more clearly perhaps than any passage in the New Testament, the essential qualification of the Christian minister—a heart pledged to his brethren in the love of Christ. That is the only possible basis of an authority which can plead its own and its Master's cause against the aberrations of spiritual liberty, and there is always both room and need for it in the Church. Certainly it is the hardest of all authorities to win, and the costliest to maintain, and therefore substitutes for it are innumerable. The poorest are those that are merely official, where a minister appeals to his standing as a member of a separate order, and expects men to reverence that. If this was once possible in Christendom, if it is still possible where men secretly wish to shunt their spiritual responsibilities upon others, it is not possible



where emancipation has been grasped either in an anarchic or in a Christian spirit. Let the great idea of liberty, and of all that is cognate with liberty, once dawn upon their souls, and men will never sink again to the recognition of anything as an authority that does not attest itself in a purely spiritual way. "Orders" will mean nothing to them but an arrogant unreality, which in the name of all that is free and Christian they are bound to condemn. It will be the same, too, with any authority which has merely an intellectual basis. A professional education, even in theology, gives no man authority to meddle with another in his character as a Christian. The University and the Divinity Schools can confer no competence here. Nothing that distinguishes a man from his fellows, nothing in virtue of which he takes a place of superiority apart: on the contrary, that love only which makes him entirely one with them in Jesus Christ, can ever entitle him to interpose. If their joy is his joy; if to grieve them, even for their good, is his grief; if the cloud and sunshine of their lives cast their darkness and their light immediately upon him; if he shrinks from the faintest approach to self-assertion, yet would sacrifice anything to perfect their joy in the Lord,—then he is in the true apostolical succession; and whatever authority may rightly be exercised, where the freedom of the spirit is the law, may rightly be exercised by him. What is required of Christian workers in every degree—of ministers and teachers, of parents and friends, of all Christian people with the cause of Christ at heart—is a greater expenditure of soul on their work. Here is a whole paragraph of St. Paul, made up almost entirely of "grief" and "joy"; what depth of feeling lies behind it! If this is alien to us in our work for Christ, we need not wonder that our work does not tell.

And if this is true generally, it is especially true when the work we have to do is that of rebuking sin. There are few things which try men, and show what spirit they are of, more searchingly than this. We like to be on God's side, and to show our zeal for Him, and we are far too ready to put all our bad passions at His service. But these are a gift which He declines. Our wrath does not work His righteousness—a lesson that even good men, of a kind, are very slow to learn. To denounce sin, and to declaim about it, is the easiest and cheapest thing in the world: one could not do less where sin is concerned, unless he did nothing at all. Yet how common denunciation is. It seems almost to be taken for granted as the natural and praiseworthy mode of dealing with evil. People assail the faults of the community, or even of their brethren in the Church, with violence, with temper, with the tone, often, of injured innocence. They think that when they do so they are doing God service; but surely we should have learned by this time that nothing could be so unlike God, so unfaithful and preposterous as a testimony for Him. God Himself overcomes evil with good; Christ vanquishes the sin of the world by taking the burden of it on Himself; and if we wish to have part in the same work, there is only the same method open to us. Depend upon it, we shall not make others weep for that for which we have not wept; we shall not make that touch the hearts of others which has not first touched

our own. That is the law which God has established in the world; He submitted to it Himself in the person of His Son, and He requires us to submit to it. Paul was certainly a very fiery man; he could explode, or flame up, with far more effect than most people; yet it was not there that his great strength lay. It was in the passionate tenderness that checked that vehement temper, and made the once haughty spirit say what he says here: "Out of much affliction and anguish of heart, I wrote unto you with many tears, not that you might be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have more abundantly toward you." In words like these the very spirit speaks which is God's power to subdue and save the sinful.

It is worth dwelling upon this, because it is so fundamental, and yet so slowly learned. Even Christian ministers, who ought to know the mind of Christ, almost universally, at least in the beginning of their work, when they preach about evil, lapse into the scolding tone. It is of no use whatever in the pulpit, and of just as little in the Sunday-school class, in the home, or in any relation in which we seek to exercise moral authority. The one basis for that authority is love; and the characteristic of love in the presence of evil is not that it becomes angry, or insolent, or disdainful, but that it takes the burden and the shame of the evil to itself. The hard, proud heart is impotent; the mere official is impotent, whether he call himself priest or pastor; all hope and help lie in those who have learned of the Lamb of God who bore the sin of the world. It is soul-travail like His, attesting love like His, that wins all the victories in which He can rejoice.

## CHAPTER VI.

### CHURCH DISCIPLINE.

#### 2 CORINTHIANS ii. 5-11 (R. V.).

IN verses 5-11 of this Epistle, St. Paul said a great deal about sorrow, the sorrow he felt on the one hand, and the sorrow he was reluctant to cause the Corinthians on the other. In this passage reference is evidently made to the person who was ultimately responsible for all this trouble. If much in it is indefinite to us, and only leaves a doubtful impression, it was clear enough for those to whom it was originally addressed; and that very indefiniteness has its lesson. There are some things to which it is sufficient, and more than sufficient, to allude; least said is best said. And even when plain-speaking has been indispensable, a stage arrives at which there is no more to be gained by it; if the subject *must* be referred to, the utmost generality of reference is best. Here the Apostle discusses the case of a person who had done something extremely bad; but with the sinner's repentance assured, it is both characteristic and worthy of him that neither here nor in chap. vii. does he mention the name either of offender or offence. It is perhaps too much to expect students of his writings, who wish to trace out in detail all the events of his life, and to give the utmost possible definiteness to all its situations, to be content with this obscurity; but students of his spirit—Christian people reading the Bible for



practical profit—do not need to perplex themselves as to this penitent man's identity. He may have been the person mentioned in 1 Cor. v. who had married his step-mother; he may have been some one who had been guilty of a personal insult to the Apostle: the main point is that he was a sinner whom the discipline of the Church had saved.

The Apostle had been expressing himself about his sorrow with great vehemence, and he is careful in his very first words to make it plain that the offence which had caused such sorrow was no personal matter. It concerned the Church as well as him. "If any one hath caused sorrow, he hath not caused sorrow to me, but in part to you all." To say more than this would be to exaggerate. The Church, in point of fact, had not been moved either as universally or as profoundly as it should have been by the offence of this wicked man. The penalty imposed upon him, whatever it may have been, had not been imposed by a unanimous vote, but only by a majority; there were some who sympathised with him, and would have been less severe.\* Still, it had brought conviction of his sin to the offender; he could not brazen it out against such consenting condemnation as there was; he was overwhelmed with penitential grief. This is why the Apostle says, "Sufficient to such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the majority." It has served the purpose of all disciplinary treatment; and having done so, must now be superseded by an opposite line of action. "Contrariwise ye should rather forgive him and comfort him, lest by any means such a one should be swallowed up with his overmuch sorrow." In St. Paul's sentence "such a one" comes last, with the emphasis of compassion upon it. He had been "such a one," to begin with, as it was a pain and a shame even to think about; he is "such a one," now, as the angels in heaven are rejoicing over; "such a one" as the Apostle, having the spirit of Him who received sinners, regards with profoundest pity and yearning; "such a one" as the Church ought to meet with pardoning and restoring love, lest grief sink into despair, and the sinner cut himself off from hope. To prevent such a deplorable result, the Corinthians are by some formal action (*κυρωσαι*: cf. Gal. iii. 15) to forgive him, and receive him again as a brother; and in their forgiveness and welcome he is to find the pledge of the great love of God.

This whole passage is of interest from the light which it throws upon the discipline of the Church; or, to use less technical and more correct language, the Christian treatment of the erring.

It shows us, for one thing, the aim of all discipline: it is, in the last resort, the restoration of the fallen. The Church has, of course, an interest of its own to guard; it is bound to protest against all that is inconsistent with its character; it is bound to expel scandals. But the Church's protest, its condemnation, its excommunication even, are not ends in themselves;

they are means to that which is really an end in itself, a priceless good which justifies every extreme of moral severity, the winning again of the sinner through repentance. The judgment of the Church is the instrument of God's love, and the moment it is accepted in the sinful soul it begins to work as a redemptive force. The humiliation it inflicts is that which God exalts; the sorrow, that which He comforts. But when a scandal comes to light in a Christian congregation—when one of its members is discovered in a fault gross, palpable, and offensive—what is the significance of that movement of feeling which inevitably takes place? In how many has it the character of goodness and of severity, of condemnation and of compassion, of love and fear, of pity and shame, the only character that has any virtue in it to tell for the sinner's recovery? If you ask nine people out of ten what a scandal is, they will tell you it is something which makes talk; and the talk in nine cases out of ten will be malignant, affected, more interesting to the talkers than any story of virtue or piety—scandal itself, in short, far more truly than its theme. Does anybody imagine that gossip is one of the forces that waken conscience, and work for the redemption of our fallen brethren? If this is all we can do, in the name of all that is Christian let us keep silence. Every word spoken about a brother's sin, that is not prompted by a Christian conscience, that does not vibrate with the love of a Christian heart, is itself a sin against the mercy and the judgment of Christ.

We see here not only the end of Church discipline, but the force of which it disposes for the attainment of its end. That force is neither more nor less than the conscience of the Christian people who constitute the Church: discipline is, in principle, the reaction of that force against all immorality. In special cases, forms may be necessary for its exercise, and in the forms in which it is exercised variations may be found expedient, according to time, place, or degree of moral progress; the congregation as a body, or a representative committee of it, or its ordained ministers, may be its most suitable executors; but that on which all alike have to depend for making their proceedings effective to any Christian intent is the vigour of Christian conscience, and the intensity of Christian love, in the community as a whole. Where these are wanting, or exist only in an insignificant degree, disciplinary proceedings are reduced to a mere form; they are legal, not evangelical; and to be legal in such matters is not only hypocritical, but insolent. Instead of rendering a real Christian service to offenders, which by awakening conscience will lead to penitence and restoration, discipline under such conditions is equally cruel and unjust.

It is plain also, from the nature of the force which it employs, that discipline is a function of the Church which is in incessant exercise, and is not called into action only on special occasions. To limit it to what are technically known as cases of discipline—the formal treatment of offenders by a Church court, or by any person or persons acting in an official character—is to ignore its real nature, and to give its exercise in these cases a significance to which it has no claim. The offences against the Christian standard which can be legally impeached even in Church courts are not one in ten thou-

\* This suits with either idea as to the identity of the man. (1) If he were the incestuous person of 1 Cor. v., the minority would consist of those who abused the Christian idea of liberty, and were "puffed up" (1 Cor. v. 2) over this sin as an illustration of it. (2) If he were one who had personally insulted Paul, the minority would probably consist of the Judaistic opponents of the Apostle.



sand of those against which the Christian conscience ought energetically to protest; and it is the vigour with which the ceaseless reaction against evil in every shape is instinctively maintained which measures the effectiveness of all formal proceedings, and makes them means of grace to the guilty. The officials of a Church may deal in their official place with offences against soberness, purity, or honesty; they are bound to deal with them, whether they like it or not; but their success will depend upon the completeness with which they, and those whom they represent, have renounced not only the vices which they are judging, but all that is out of keeping with the mind and spirit of Christ. The drunkard, the sensualist, the thief, know perfectly well that drunkenness, sensuality, and theft are not the only sins which mar the soul. They know that there are other vices, just as real if not so glaring, which are equally fatal to the life of Christ and man, and as completely disqualify men for acting in Christ's name. They are conscious that it is not a *bona fide* transaction when their sins are impeached by men whose consciences endure with equanimity the reign of meanness, duplicity, pride, hypocrisy, self-complacency. They are aware that God is not present where these are dominant, and that God's power to judge and save can never come through such channels. Hence the exercise of discipline in these legal forms is often resented, and often ineffective; and instead of complaining about what is obviously inevitable, the one thing at which all should aim who wish to protect the Church from scandals is to cultivate the common conscience, and bring it to such a degree of purity and vigour, that its spontaneous resentment of evil will enable the Church practically to dispense with legal forms. This Christian community at Corinth had a thousand faults; in many points we are tempted to find in it rather a warning than an example; but I think we may take this as a signal proof that it was really sound at heart: its condemnation of this guilty man fell upon his conscience as the sentence of God, and brought him in tears to the feet of Christ. No legal proceedings could have done that: nothing could have done it but a real and passionate sympathy with the holiness and the love of Christ. Such sympathy is the one subduing, reconciling, redeeming power in our hands; and Paul might well rejoice, after all his affliction and anguish of heart, when he found it so unmistakably at work in Corinth. Not so much formal as instinctive, though not shrinking on occasion from formal proceedings; not malignant, yet closing itself inexorably against evil; not indulgent to badness, but with goodness like Christ's, waiting to be gracious,—this Christian virtue really holds the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and opens and shuts with the authority of Christ Himself. We need it in all our Churches to-day, as much as it was needed in Corinth; we need it that special acts of discipline may be effective; we need it still more that they may be unnecessary. Pray for it as for a gift that comprehends every other—the power to represent Christ, and work His work, in the recovery and restoration of the fallen.

In vv. 9-11, the same subject is continued, but with a slightly different aspect exposed. Paul had obviously taken the initiative in this matter, though the bulk of the Church, at his prompt-

ing, had acted in a right spirit. Their conduct was in harmony with his motive in writing to them, which had really been to make proof of their obedience in all points. But he has already disclaimed either the right or the wish to lord it over them in their liberty as believers; and here, again, he represents himself rather as following them in their treatment of the offender, than as pointing out the way. "Now to whom ye forgive anything, I also forgive"—so great is my confidence in you: "for what I also have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, for your sakes have I forgiven it in the presence of Christ." When he says "if I have forgiven anything," he does not mean that his forgiveness is dubious, or in suspense; what he does is to deprecate the thought that his forgiveness is the main thing, or that he had been the person principally offended. When he says "*for your sakes* have I forgiven it," the words are explained by what follows: to have refused his forgiveness in the circumstances would have been to perpetuate a state of matters which could only have injured the Church. When he adds that his forgiveness is bestowed "in the presence of Christ," he gives the assurance that it is no complaisance or formality, but a real acceptance of the offender to peace and friendship again. And we should not overlook the fact that in this association of Christ, of the Corinthians, and of himself, in the work of forgiveness and restoration, Paul is really encompassing a desponding soul with all the grace of earth and heaven. Surely he will not let his grief become despair, when all around him and above him there is a present and convincing witness that, though God is intolerant of sin, He is the refuge of the penitent.

The gracious and conciliatory tone of these verses seems to me worthy of special admiration; and I can only express my astonishment that to some they have appeared insincere, a vain attempt to cover a defeat with the semblance of victory, a surrender to the opposition at Corinth, the painfulness of which is ill-disguised by the pretence of agreement with them. The exposition just given renders the refutation of such a view unnecessary. We ought rather to regard with reverence and affection the man who knew how to combine, so strikingly, unflinching principle and the deepest tenderness and consideration for others; we ought to propose his modesty, his sensitiveness to the feelings even of opponents, his sympathy with those who had no sympathy with him, as examples for our imitation. Paul had been deeply moved by what had taken place at Corinth, possibly he had been deeply injured; but even so his personal interest is kept in the background; for the obedient loyalty which he wishes to prove is not so much *his* interest as theirs to whom he writes. He cares only for others. He cares for the poor soul who has forfeited his place in the community; he cares for the good name of the Church; he cares for the honour of Jesus Christ; and he exerts all his power with these interests in view. If it needs rigour, he can be rigorous; if it needs passion, he can be passionate; if it needs consideration, graciousness, a conciliatory temper, a willingness to keep out of sight, he can be depended upon for all these virtues. If they were only affected, Paul would deserve the praise of a great diplomatist; but it is far easier



to believe them real, and see in them the signs of a great minister of Christ.

The last verse puts the aim of his proceedings in another light: all this, he says, I do, "that no advantage may be gained over us by Satan: for we are not ignorant of his devices." The important words in the last clause are of the same root; it is as if Paul had said: "Satan is very knowing, and is always on the alert to get the better of us; but we are not without knowledge of his knowing ways." It was the Apostle's acquaintance with the wiles of the devil which made him eager to see the restoration of the penitent sinner duly carried through. This implies one or two practical truths, with which, by way of application, this exposition may close.

(1) A scandal in the Church gives the devil an opportunity. When one who has named the name of Jesus, and vowed loyal obedience to Him, falls into open sin, it is a chance offered to the enemy which he is not slow to improve. He uses it to discredit the very name of Christ: to turn that which ought to be to the world the symbol of the purest goodness into a synonym of hypocrisy. Christ has committed His honour, if not His character, to our keeping; and every lapse into vice gives Satan an advantage over Him.

(2) The devil finds his gain in the incompetence of the Church to deal with the evil in the Spirit of Christ. It is a fine thing for him if he can drive the convicted sinner to despair, and persuade him that there is no more forgiveness with God. It is a fine thing if he can prompt those who love little, because they know little of God's love, to show themselves rigid, implacable, irreconcilable, even to the penitent. If he can deform the likeness of Christ into a morose Pharisaism, what an incalculable gain it is! If the disciples of Him who received sinners look askance on those who have lapsed, and chill the hope of restoration with cold suspicion and reserve, there will be joy over it, not in heaven, but in hell. And not only this, but the opposite is a device of the devil, of which we ought not to be ignorant. There is hardly a sin that some one has not an interest in extenuating. Even the incestuous person in Corinth had his defenders: there were some who were puffed up, and gloried in what he had done as an assertion of Christian liberty. The devil takes advantage of the scandals that occur in the Church to bribe and debauch men's consciences; indulgent words are spoken, which are not the voice of Christ's awful mercy, but of a miserable self-pity; the strongest and holiest thing in the world, the redeeming love of God, is adulterated and even confounded with the weakest and basest thing, the bad man's immoral forgiveness of himself. And not to mention anything else under this head, could any one imagine what would please and suit the devil better than the absolutely unfeeling but extremely interesting gossip which resounds over every exposure of sin?

(3) But, lastly, the devil finds his advantage in the dissensions of Christians. What an opportunity he would have had in Corinth, had strained relations continued between the Apostle and the Church! What opportunities he has everywhere, when tempers are on edge, and every movement means friction, and every proposal rouses suspicion! The last prayer Christ

prayed for His Church was that they might all be one: to be one in Him is the final security against the devices of Satan. What a frightful commentary the history of the Church is on this prayer! What frightful illustrations it furnishes of the devil's gain out of the saints' quarrels! There are plenty of subjects, of course, even in Church life, on which we may naturally and legitimately differ; but we ought to know better than to let the differences enter into our souls. At bottom, we should be all one; it is giving ourselves away to the enemy, if we do not, at all costs, "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

## CHAPTER VII.

### CHRIST'S CAPTIVE.

#### 2 CORINTHIANS ii. 12-17 (R. V.).

IN this passage the Apostle returns from what is virtually, if not formally, a digression, to the narrative which begins in chap. i. 8 f., and is continued in i. 15 f. At the same time he makes a transition to a new subject, really though not very explicitly connected with what goes before—namely, his independent and divinely granted authority as an apostle. In the last verses of chap. ii., and in chap. iii. 1-4, this is treated generally, but with reference in particular to the success of his ministry. He then goes on to contrast the older and the Christian dispensation, and the character of their respective ministries, and terminates the section with a noble statement of the spirit and principles with which he fulfilled his apostolic calling (chap. iv. 1-6).

Before leaving Ephesus, Paul had apparently made an appointment to meet Titus, on his return from Corinth, at Troas. He went thither himself to preach the Gospel, and found an excellent opportunity for doing so; but the non-arrival of his brother kept him in such a state of unrest that he was unable to make that use of it which he would otherwise have done. This seems a singular confession, but there is no reason to suppose that it was made with a bad conscience. Paul was probably grieved that he had not the heart to go in at the door which had been opened to him in the Lord, but he did not feel guilty. It was not selfishness which made him turn away, but the anxiety of a true pastor about other souls which God had committed to his care. "I had no relief *for my spirit*," he says; and the spirit, in his language, even though it be a constituent of man's nature, is that in him which is akin to the divine, and receptive of it. That very element in the Apostle, in virtue of which he could act for God at all, was already preoccupied, and though the people were there, ready to be evangelised, it was beyond his power to evangelise them. His spirit was absorbed and possessed by hopes and fears and prayers for the Corinthians; and as the human spirit, even when in contact with the divine, is finite, and only capable of so much and no more, he was obliged to let slip an occasion which he would otherwise have gladly seized. He probably felt with all missionaries that it is as important to secure as to win converts; and if the Corinthians were capable of reflection, they might reflect with shame on the loss which their sin had entailed on the people



of Troas. The disorders of their wilful community had engrossed the Apostle's spirit, and robbed their fellow-men across the sea of an apostolic ministry. They could not but feel how genuine was the Apostle's love, when he had made such a sacrifice to it; but such a sacrifice ought never to have been required.

When Paul could bear the suspense no longer, he said good-bye to the people of Troas, crossed the Thracian Sea, and advanced into Macedonia to meet Titus. He did meet him, and heard from him a full report of the state of matters at Corinth (chap. vii. 5 ff.); but here he does not take time to say so. He breaks out into a jubilant thanksgiving, occasioned primarily no doubt by the joyful tidings he had just received, but widening characteristically, and instantaneously, to cover all his apostolic work. It is as though he felt God's goodness to him to be all of a piece, and could not be sensitive to it in any particular instance without having the consciousness rise within him that he lived and moved and had his being in it. "Now to God be thanks, who always leadeth us in triumph in Christ."

The peculiar and difficult word in this thanksgiving is *θριαμβεύοντι*. The sense which first strikes one as suitable is that which is given in the Authorised Version: "God which always causeth us to triumph." Practically Paul had been engaged in a conflict with the Corinthians, and for a time it had seemed not improbable that he might be beaten; but God had caused him to triumph in Christ—that is, acting in Christ's interests, in matters in which Christ's name and honour were at stake, the victory (as always) had remained with him; and for this he thanks God. This interpretation is still maintained by so excellent a scholar as Schmiedel, and the use of *θριαμβεύειν* in this transitive sense is defended by the analogy of *μαθητεύειν* in Matt. xxviii. 19.

But appropriate as this interpretation is, there is one apparently fatal objection to it. There is no doubt that *θριαμβεύειν* is here used transitively, but we have not to guess, by analogy, what it must mean when so used; there are other examples which fix this unambiguously. One is found elsewhere in St. Paul himself (Col. ii. 15), where *θριαμβεύσας αὐτοὺς* indubitably means "having triumphed over them." In accordance with this, which is only one out of many instances,\* the Revisers have displaced the old rendering here, and substituted for it, "Thanks be to God, which always leadeth us in triumph." The triumph here is God's, not the Apostle's; Paul is not the soldier who wins the battle, and shouts for victory, as he marches in the triumphal procession; he is the captive who is led in the Conqueror's train, and in whom men see the trophy of the Conqueror's power. When he says that God always leads him in triumph in Christ, the meaning is not perfectly obvious. He may intend to define, as it were, the area over which God's victory extends. In everything which is covered by the name and authority of Christ, God triumphantly asserts His power over the Apostle. Or, again, the words may signify that it is through Christ that God's victorious power is put forth. These two meanings, of course, are not inconsistent; and practically they coincide.

It cannot be denied, I think, if this is taken

quite rigorously, that there is a certain air of irrelevance about it. It does not seem to be to the purpose of the passage to say that God always triumphs over Paul and those for whom He speaks, or even that He always leads them in triumph. It is this feeling, indeed, which mainly influences those who keep to the rendering of the Authorised Version, and regard Paul as the victor. But the meaning of *θριαμβεύοντι* is not really open to doubt, and the semblance of irrelevance disappears if we remember that we are dealing with a figure, and a figure which the Apostle himself does not press. Of course in an ordinary triumph, such as the triumph of Claudius over Caractacus, of which St. Paul may easily have heard, the captives had no share in the victory; it was not only a victory over them, but a victory against them. But when God wins a victory over man, and leads his captive in triumph, the captive too has an interest in what happens; it is the beginning of all triumphs, in any true sense, for him. If we apply this to the case before us, we shall see that the true meaning is not irrelevant. Paul had once been the enemy of God in Christ; he had fought against Him in his own soul, and in the Church which he persecuted and wasted. The battle had been long and strong; but not far from Damascus it had terminated in a decisive victory for God. There the mighty man fell, and the weapons of his warfare perished. His pride, his self-righteousness, his sense of superiority to others and of competence to attain to the righteousness of God, collapsed for ever, and he rose from the earth to be the slave of Jesus Christ. That was the beginning of God's triumph over him; from that hour God led him in triumph in Christ. But it was the beginning also of all that made the Apostle's life itself a triumph, not a career of hopeless internal strife, such as it had been, but of unbroken Christian victory. This, indeed, is not involved in the mere word *θριαμβεύοντι*, but it is the real thing which was present to the Apostle's mind when he used the word. When we recognise this, we see that the charge of irrelevance does not really apply; while nothing could be more characteristic of the Apostle than to hide himself and his success in this way behind God's triumph over him and through him.

Further, the true meaning of the word, and the true connection of ideas just explained, remind us that the only triumphs we can ever have, deserving the name, must begin with God's triumph over us. This is the one possible source of joy untroubled. We may be as selfish as we please, and as successful in our selfishness; we may distance all our rivals in the race for the world's prizes; we may appropriate and engross pleasure, wealth, knowledge, influence; and after all there will be one thing we must do without—the power and the happiness of thanking God. No one will ever be able to thank God because he has succeeded in pleasing himself, be the mode of his self-pleasing as respectable as you will; and he who has not thanked God with a whole heart, without misgiving and without reserve, does not know what joy is. Such thanksgiving and its joy have one condition: they rise up spontaneously in the soul when it allows God to triumph over it. When God appears to us in Jesus Christ, when in the omnipotence of His love and purity and truth He makes war upon our pride

\* See Grimm's "Lexicon" s. v., or Lightfoot on Col. ii. 15.



and falsehood and lusts, and prevails against them, and brings us low, then we are admitted to the secret of this apparently perplexing passage; we know how natural it is to cry, "Thanks be unto God who in His victory over us giveth us the victory! Thanks be to Him who always leadeth us in triumph!" It is out of an experience like this that Paul speaks; it is the key to his whole life, and it has been illustrated anew by what has just happened at Corinth.

But to return to the Epistle. God is described by the Apostle not only as triumphing over them (*i. e.*, himself and his colleagues) in Christ, but as making manifest through them the savour of His knowledge in every place. It has been questioned whether "His" knowledge is the knowledge of God or of Christ. Grammatically, the question can hardly be answered; but, as we see from chap. iv. 6, the two things which it proposes to distinguish are really one; what is manifested in the apostolic ministry is the knowledge of God as He is revealed in Christ. But why does Paul use the expression "*the savour of His knowledge*"? It was suggested probably by the figure of the triumph, which was present to his mind in all the detail of its circumstances. Incense smoked on every altar as the victor passed through the streets of Rome; the fragrant steam floated over the procession, a silent proclamation of victory and joy. But Paul would not have appropriated this feature of the triumph, and applied it to his ministry, unless he had felt that there was a real point of comparison, that the knowledge of Christ which he diffused among men, wherever he went, was in very truth a fragrant thing. True, he was not a free man; he had been subdued by God, and made the slave of Jesus Christ; as the Lord of glory went forth conquering and to conquer, over Syria and Asia and Macedonia and Greece, He led him as a captive in the triumphal march of His grace; he was the trophy of Christ's victory; every one who saw him saw that necessity was laid upon Him; but what a gracious necessity it was! "*The love of Christ constraineth us.*" The captives who were dragged in chains behind a Roman chariot also made manifest the knowledge of their conqueror; they declared to all the spectators his power and his pitilessness; there was nothing in that knowledge to suggest the idea of a fragrance like incense. But as Paul moved through the world, all who had eyes to see saw in him not only the power, but the sweetness of God's redeeming love. The mighty Victor made manifest through Him, not only His might, but His charm, not only His greatness, but His grace. It was a good thing, men felt, to be subdued and led in triumph like Paul; it was to move in an atmosphere perfumed by the love of Christ, as the air around the Roman triumph was perfumed with incense. The Apostle is so sensible of this that he weaves it into his sentence as an indispensable part of his thought; it is not merely the knowledge of God which is made manifest through him as he is led in triumph, but that knowledge as a fragrant, gracious thing, speaking to every one of victory and goodness and joy.

The very word "savour," in connection with the "knowledge" of God in Christ, is full of meaning. It has its most direct application, of course, to preaching. When we proclaim the Gospel, do we always succeed in manifesting it

as a savour? Or is not the savour—the sweetness, the winsomeness, the charm and attractiveness of it—the very thing that is most easily left out? Do we not catch it sometimes in the words of others, and wonder that it eludes our own? We miss what is most characteristic in the knowledge of God if we miss this. We leave out that very element in the Evangel which makes it evangelic, and gives it its power to subdue and enchain the souls of men. But it is not to preachers only that the word "savour" speaks; it is of the widest possible application. Wherever Christ is leading a single soul in triumph, the fragrance of the Gospel should go forth; rather, it does go forth, in proportion as His triumph is complete. There is sure to be that in the life which will reveal the graciousness as well as the omnipotence of the Saviour. And it is this virtue which God uses as His main witness, as His chief instrument, to evangelise the world. In every relation of life it should tell. Nothing is so in-suppressible, nothing so pervasive, as a fragrance. The lowliest life which Christ is really leading in triumph will speak infallibly and persuasively for Him. In a Christian brother or sister, brothers and sisters will find a new strength and tenderness, something that goes deeper than natural affection, and can stand severer shocks; they will catch the fragrance which declares that the Lord in His triumphant grace is there. And so in all situations, or, as the Apostle has it, "in every place." And if we are conscious that we fail in this matter, and that the fragrance of the knowledge of Christ is something to which our life gives no testimony, let us be sure that the explanation of it is to be found in self-will. There is something in us which has not yet made complete surrender to Him, and not till He leads us un-resistingly in triumph will the sweet savour go forth.

At this point the Apostle's thought is arrested by the issues of his ministry, though he carries the figure of the fragrance, with a little pressure, through to the end. In God's sight, he says, or so far as God is concerned, we are a sweet savour of Christ, a perfume redolent of Christ, in which He cannot but take pleasure. In other words, Christ proclaimed in the Gospel, and the ministries and lives which proclaim Him, are always a joy to God. They are a joy to Him, whatever men may think of them, alike in them that are being saved and in them that are perishing. To those who are being saved, they are a savour "from life to life"; to those who are perishing, a savour "from death to death." Here, as everywhere, St. Paul contemplates these exclusive opposites as the sole issues of man's life, and of the Gospel ministry. He makes no attempt to subordinate one to the other, no suggestion that the way of death may ultimately lead to life, much less that it must do so. The whole solemnity of the situation, which is faced in the cry "And who is sufficient for these things?" depends on the finality of the contrast between life and death. These are the goals set before men, and those who are being saved and those who are perishing are respectively on their way to one or the other. Who is sufficient for the calling of the Gospel ministry, when such are the alternatives involved in it? Who is sufficient, in love, in wisdom, in humility, in awful earnestness, for the



duties of a calling the issues of which are life or death for ever?

There is considerable difficulty in the sixteenth verse, partly dogmatic, partly textual. Commentators so opposite in their bias as Chrysostom and Calvin have pondered and remarked upon the opposite effects here ascribed to the Gospel. It is easy to find analogies to these in nature. The same heat which hardens clay melts iron. The same sunlight which gladdens the healthy eye tortures that which is diseased. The same honey which is sweet to the sound palate is nauseous to the sick; and so on. But such analogies do not explain anything, and one can hardly see what is meant by calling them illustrations. It remains finally inexplicable that the Gospel, which appeals to some with winning irresistible power, subduing and leading them in triumph, should excite in others a passion of antipathy which nothing else could provoke. This remains inexplicable, because it is irrational. Nothing that can be pointed to in the universe is the least like a bad heart closing itself against the love of Christ, like a bad man's will stiffening into absolute rigidity against the will of God. The preaching of the Gospel may be the occasion of such awful results, but it is not their cause. The God whom it proclaims is the God of grace; it is never His will that any should perish—always that all should be saved. But He can save only by subduing; His grace must exercise a sovereign power in us, which through righteousness will lead to life everlasting (Rom. v. 21). And when this exercise of power is resisted, when we match our self-will against the gracious saving will of God, our pride, our passions, our mere sloth, against the soul-constraining love of Christ; when we prevail in the war which God's mercy wages with our wickedness,—then the Gospel itself may be said to have ministered to our ruin; it was ordained to life, and we have made it a sentence of death. Yet even so, it is the joy and glory of God; it is a sweet savour to Him, fragrant of Christ and His love.

The textual difficulty is in the words *ἐκ θανάτου εἰς θάνατον*, and *ἐκ ζωῆς εἰς ζωὴν*. These words are rendered in the Revised Version "*from death to death*," and "*from life to life*." The Authorised Version, following the "*Textus Receptus*," which omits *ἐκ* in both clauses, renders "*a savour of death unto death*," and "*of life unto life*." In spite of the inferior MS. support, the "*Textus Receptus*" is preferred by many modern scholars—*e. g.*, Heinrici, Schmiedel, and Hofmann. They find it impossible to give any precise interpretation to the better attested reading, and an examination of any exposition which accepts it goes far to justify them. Thus Professor Beet comments: "*From death for death* (comp. Rom. i. 17): a scent proceeding *from*, and thus revealing the presence of, *death*; and, like malaria from a putrefying corpse, causing *death*. Paul's labours among some men revealed the eternal death which day by day cast an ever-deepening shadow upon them [this answers to *ὁσμή ἐκ θανάτου*]; and by arousing in them increased opposition to God, promoted the spiritual mortification which had already begun" [this answers to *εἰς θάνατον*]. Surely it is safe to say that nobody in Corinth could ever have guessed this from the words. Yet this is a favourable specimen of the inter-

pretations given. If it were possible to take *ἐκ θανάτου εἰς θάνατον*, and *ἐκ ζωῆς εἰς ζωὴν*, as Baur took *ἐκ πλῆθους εἰς πλῆθος* in Rom. i. 17, that would be the simplest way out of the difficulty, and quite satisfactory. What the Apostle said would then be this: that the Gospel which he preached, ever good as it was to God, had the most opposite characters and effects among men,—in some it was death *from beginning to end*, absolutely and unmitigatedly deadly in its nature and workings; in others, again, it was life from beginning to end—life was the uniform sign of its presence, and its invariable issue. This also is the meaning which we get by omitting *ἐκ*: the genitives *ζωῆς* and *θανάτου* are then adjectival,—a vital fragrance, with life as its element and end; a fatal fragrance, the end of which is death. This has the advantage of being the meaning which occurs to an ordinary reader; and if the critically approved text, with the repeated *ἐκ*, cannot bear this interpretation, I think there is a fair case for defending the received text on exegetical grounds. Certainly nothing but the broad impression of the received text will ever enter the general mind.

The question that rises to the Apostle's lips as he confronts the solemn situation created by the Gospel is not directly answered. "Who is sufficient for these things? Who? I say. For we are not as the many, who corrupt the Word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, we speak in Christ." Paul is conscious as he writes that his awful sense of responsibility as a preacher of the Gospel is not shared by all who exercise the same vocation. To be the bearer and the representative of a power with issues so tremendous ought surely to annihilate every thought of self; to let personal interest intrude is to declare oneself faithless and unworthy. We are startled to hear from Paul's lips what at first sight seems to be a charge of just such base self-seeking laid against the majority of preachers. "We are not as the many, corrupting the Word of God." The expressive word rendered here "*corrupting*" has the idea of self-interest, and especially of petty gain, at its basis. It means literally to sell in small quantities, to retail for profit. But it was specially applied to tavern-keeping, and extended to cover all the devices by which the wine-sellers in ancient times deceived their customers. Then it was used figuratively, as here; and Lucian, *e. g.*, speaks of philosophers as selling the sciences, and in most cases (*οἱ πολλοί*: a curious parallel to St. Paul), like tavern-keepers, "*blending, adulterating, and giving bad measure*." It is plain that there are two separable ideas here. One is that of men qualifying the Gospel, infiltrating their own ideas into the Word of God, tempering its severity, or perhaps its goodness, veiling its inexorableness, dealing in compromise. The other is that all such proceedings are faithless and dishonest, because some private interest underlies them. It need not be avarice, though it is as likely to be this as anything else. A man corrupts the Word of God, makes it the stock-in-trade of a paltry business of his own, in many other ways than by subordinating it to the need of a livelihood. When he exercises his calling as a minister for the gratification of his vanity, he does so. When he preaches not that awful message in which life and death are bound up, but him-



self, his cleverness, his learning, his humour, his fine voice even or fine gestures, he does so. He makes the Word minister to him, instead of being a minister of the Word; and that is the essence of the sin. It is the same if ambition be his motive, if he preaches to win disciples to himself, to gain an ascendancy over souls, to become the head of a party which will bear the impress of his mind. There was something of this at Corinth; and not only there, but wherever it is found, such a spirit and such interests will change the character of the Gospel. It will not be preserved in that integrity, in that simple, uncompromising, absolute character which it has as revealed in Christ. Have another interest in it than that of God, and that interest will inevitably colour it. You will make it what it was not, and the virtue will depart from it.

In contrast with all such dishonest ministers, the Apostle represents himself and his friends speaking "as of sincerity." They have no mixture of motives in their work as evangelists; they have indeed no independent motives at all: God is leading them in triumph, and proclaiming His grace through them. It is He who prompts every word (*ὡς ἐκ Θεοῦ*). Yet their responsibility and their freedom are intact. They feel themselves in His presence as they speak, and in that presence they speak "in Christ." "In Christ" is the Apostle's mark. Not in himself apart from Christ, where any mixture of motives, any process of adulteration, would have been possible, but only in that union with Christ which was the very life of his life, did he carry on his evangelistic work. This was his final security, and it is still the only security, that the Gospel can have fair play in the world.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### LIVING EPISTLES.

#### 2 CORINTHIANS iii. 1-3 (R. V.).

"ARE we beginning again to commend ourselves?" Paul does not mean by these words to admit that he had been commending himself before; he means that he has been accused already of doing so, and that there are those at Corinth who, when they hear such passages of this letter as that which has just preceded, will be ready to repeat the accusation. In the First Epistle he had found it necessary to vindicate his apostolic authority, and especially his interest in the Corinthian Church as its spiritual father (1 Cor. ix. 1-27, iv. 6-21), and obviously his enemies at Corinth had tried to turn these personal passages against him. They did so on the principle *Qui s'excuse s'accuse*. "He is commending himself," they said, "and self-commendation is an argument which discredits, instead of supporting, a cause." The Apostle had heard of these malicious speeches, and in this Epistle makes repeated reference to them (see chaps. v. 12, x. 18, xiii. 6). He entirely agreed with his opponents that self-praise was no honour. "Not he who commendeth himself is approved, but he whom the Lord commendeth." But he denied point-blank that he was commending himself. In distinguishing as he had done in

chap. ii. 14-17 between himself and his colleagues, who spoke the Word "as of sincerity, as of God, in the sight of God," and "the many" who corrupted it, nothing was further from his mind than to plead his cause, as a suspected person, with the Corinthians. Only malignity could suppose any such thing, and the indignant question with which the chapter opens tacitly accuses his adversaries of this hateful vice. It is pitiful to see a great and generous spirit like Paul compelled thus to stand upon guard, and watch against the possible misconstruction of every lightest word. What needless pain it inflicts upon him, what needless humiliation! How it checks all effusion of feeling, and robs what should be brotherly intercourse of everything that can make it free and glad! Further on in the Epistle there will be abundant opportunity of speaking on this subject at greater length; but it is proper to remark here that a minister's character is the whole capital he has for carrying on his business, and that nothing can be more cruel and wicked than to cast suspicion on it without cause. In most other callings a man may go on, no matter what his character, provided his balance at the bank is on the right side; but an evangelist or a pastor who has lost his character has lost everything. It is humiliating to be subject to suspicion, painful to be silent under it, degrading to speak. At a later stage Paul was compelled to go further than he goes here; but let the indignant emotion of this abrupt question remind us that candour is to be met with candour, and that the suspicious temper which would fain malign the good eats like a canker the very heart of those who cherish it.

From the serious tone the Apostle passes suddenly to the ironical. "Or need we, as do some, epistles of commendation to you or from you?" The "some" of this verse are probably the same as "the many" of chap. ii. 17. Persons had come to Corinth in the character of Christian teachers, bringing with them commendatory letters which secured their standing when they arrived. An example of what is meant can be seen in Acts xviii. 27. There we are told that when Apollos, who had been working in Ephesus, was minded to pass over into Achaia, the Ephesian brethren encouraged him, and wrote to the disciples to receive him—that is, they gave him an epistle of commendation, which secured him recognition and welcome in Corinth. A similar case is found in Rom. xvi. 1, where the Apostle uses the very word which we have here: "I commend unto you Phœbe our sister, who is a servant of the Church that is at Cenchreæ: that ye receive her in the Lord, worthily of the saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever matter she may have need of you: for she herself also hath been a succourer of many, and of mine own self." This was Phœbe's introduction, or epistle of commendation, to the Church of Rome. The Corinthians were evidently in the habit both of receiving such letters from other Churches, and of granting them on their own account; and Paul asks them ironically if they think he ought to bring one, or when he leaves them to apply for one. Is *that* the relation which ought to obtain between him and them? The "some," to whom he refers, had no doubt come from Jerusalem: it is they who are referred to in



chap. xi. 22 ff. But it does not follow that their recommendatory letters had been signed by Peter, James, and John; and just as little that those letters justified them in their hostility to Paul. No doubt there were many—many myriads, the Book of Acts says—at Jerusalem, whose conception of the Gospel was very different from his, and who were glad to counteract him whenever they could; but there were many also, including the three who seemed to be pillars, who had a thoroughly good understanding with him, and who had no responsibility for the “some” and their doings. The epistles which the “some” brought were plainly such as the Corinthians themselves could grant, and it is a complete misinterpretation to suppose that they were a commission granted by the Twelve for the persecution of Paul.

The giving of recommendatory letters is a subject of considerable practical interest. When they are merely formal, as in our certificates of Church membership, they come to mean very little. It is an unhappy state of affairs perhaps, but no one would take a certificate of Church membership by itself as a satisfactory recommendation. And when we go past the merely formal, difficult questions arise. Many people have an estimate of their own character and competence, in which it is impossible for others to share, and yet they apply without misgiving to their friends, and especially to their minister or their employer, to grant them “epistles of commendation.” We are bound to be generous in these things, but we are bound also to be honest. The rule which ought to guide us, especially in all that belongs to the Church and its work, is the interest of the cause, and not of the worker. To flatter is to do a wrong, not only to the person flattered, but to the cause in which you are trying to employ him. There is no more ludicrous reading in the world than a bundle of certificates, or testimonials, as they are called. As a rule, they certify nothing but the total absence of judgment and conscience in the people who have granted them. If you do not know whether a person is qualified for any given situation or not, you do not need to say anything about it. If you know he is not, and he asks you to say that he is, no personal consideration must keep you from kindly but firmly declining. I am not preaching suspicion, or reserve, or anything ungenerous, but justice and truth. It is wicked to betray a great interest by bespeaking it for incompetent hands; it is cruel to put any one into a place for which he is unfit. Where you are confident that the man and the work will be well matched, be as generous as you please; but never forget that the work is to be considered in the first place, and the man only in the second.

Paul has been serious, and ironical, in the first verse; in ver. 2 he becomes serious again, and remains so. “*You*,” he says, answering his ironical question, “*you* are our epistle.” Epistle, of course, is to be taken in the sense of the preceding verse. “*You* are the commendatory letter which I show, when I am asked for my credentials.” But to whom does he show it? In the first instance, to the captious Corinthians themselves. The tone of chap. ix. in the First Epistle is struck here again: “Wherever I may need recommendations, it is certainly not at Corinth.” “If I be not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you: the seal of mine

apostleship are ye in the Lord.” Had they been a Christian community when he first visited them, they might have asked who he was; but they owed their Christianity to him; he was their father in Christ; to put him to the question in this superior, suspicious style was unnatural, unfilial ingratitude. They themselves were the living evidence of the very thing which they threw doubt upon—the apostleship of Paul.

This bold utterance may well excite misgivings in those who preach constantly, yet see no result of their work. It is common to disparage success, the success of visible acknowledged conversions, of bad men openly renouncing badness, bearing witness against themselves, and embracing a new life. It is common to glorify the ministry which works on, patient and uncomplaining, in one monotonous round, ever sowing, but never reaping, ever casting the net, but never drawing in the fish, ever marking time, but never advancing. Paul frankly and repeatedly appeals to his success in evangelistic work as the final and sufficient proof that God had called him, and had given him authority as an apostle; and search as we will, we shall not find any test so good and unequivocal as this success. Paul had seen the Lord; he was qualified to be a witness of the Resurrection; but these, at the very most, were his own affair, till the witness he bore had proved its power in the hearts and consciences of others. How to provide, to train, and to test the men who are to be the ministers of the Christian Church is a matter of the very utmost consequence, to which sufficient attention has not yet been given. Congregations which choose their own pastor are often compelled to take a man quite untried, and to judge him more or less on superficial grounds. They can easily find out whether he is a competent scholar; they can see for themselves what are his gifts of speech, his virtues or defects of manner; they can get such an impression as sensible people always get, by seeing and hearing a man, of the general earnestness or lack of earnestness in his character. But often they feel that more is wanted. It is not exactly more in the way of character; the members of a Church have no right to expect that their minister will be a truer Christian than they themselves are. A special inquisition into his conversion, or his religious experience, is mere hypocrisy; if the Church is not sufficiently in earnest to guard herself against insincere members, she must take the risk of insincere ministers. What is wanted is what the Apostle indicates here—that intimation of God’s concurrence which is given through success in evangelistic work. No other intimation of God’s concurrence is infallible—no call by a congregation, no ordination by a presbytery or by a bishop. Theological education is easily provided, and easily tested; but it will not be so easy to introduce the reforms which are needed in this direction. Great masses of Christian people, however, are becoming alive to the necessity for them; and when the pressure is more strongly felt, the way for action will be discovered. Only those who can appeal to what they have done in the Gospel can be known to have the qualifications of Gospel ministers; and in due time the fact will be frankly recognised.

The conversion and new life of the Corin-



thians were Paul's certificate as an apostle. They were a certificate known, he says, and read by all men. Often there is a certain awkwardness in the presenting of credentials. It embarrasses a man when he has to put his hand into his breast pocket, and take out his character, and submit it for inspection. Paul was saved this embarrassment. There was a fine unsought publicity about his testimonials. Everybody knew what the Corinthians had been, everybody knew what they were; and the man to whom the change was due needed no other recommendation to a Christian society. Whoever looked at them saw plainly that they were an epistle of Christ; the mind of Christ could be read upon them, and it had been written by the intervention of Paul's hand. This is an interesting though a well-worn conception of the Christian character. Every life has a meaning, we say; every face is a record; but the text goes further. The life of the Christian is an epistle; it has not only a meaning, but an address; it is a message from Christ to the world. Is Christ's message to men legible on our lives? When those who are without look at us, do they see the hand of Christ quite unmistakably? Does it ever occur to anybody that there is something in our life which is not of the world, but which is a message to the world from Christ? Did you ever, startled by the unusual brightness of a true Christian's life, ask as it were involuntarily, "Whose image and superscription is this?" and feel as you asked it that these features, these characters, could only have been traced by one hand, and that they proclaimed to all the grace and power of Jesus Christ? Christ wishes so to write upon us that men may see what He does for man. He wishes to engrave His image on our nature, that all spectators may feel that it has a message for them, and may crave the same favour. A congregation which is not in its very existence and in all its works and ways a legible epistle, an unmistakable message from Christ to man, does not answer to this New Testament ideal.

Paul claims no part here but that of Christ's instrument. The Lord, so to speak, dictated the letter, and he wrote it. The contents of it were prescribed by Christ, and through the Apostle's ministry became visible and legible in the Corinthians. More important is it to notice with what the writing was done: "not with ink," says St. Paul, "but with the Spirit of the living God." At first sight this contrast seems formal and fantastic; nobody, we think, could ever dream of making either of these things do the work of the other, so that it seems perfectly gratuitous in Paul to say, "not with ink, but with the Spirit." Yet ink is sometimes made to bear a great deal of responsibility. The characters of the *τινὲς* ("some") in ver. i. were only written in ink; they had nothing, Paul implies, to recommend them but these documents in black and white. That was hardly sufficient to guarantee their authority, or their competence as ministers in the Christian dispensation. But do not Churches yet accept their ministers with the same inadequate testimonials? A distinguished career at the University, or in the Divinity Schools, proves that a man can write with ink, under favourable circumstances; it does not prove more than that; it does not prove that he will be spiritually effective, and everything else is irrelevant. I do not say this

to disparage the professional training of ministers; on the contrary, the standard of training ought to be higher than it is in all the Churches: I only wish to insist that nothing which can be represented in ink, no learning, no literary gifts, no critical acquaintance with the Scriptures even, can write upon human nature the Epistle of Christ. To do that needs "the Spirit of the living God." We feel, the moment we come upon those words, that the Apostle is anticipating; he has in view already the contrast he is going to develop between the old dispensation and the new, and the irresistible inward power by which the new is characterised. Others might boast of qualifications to preach which could be certified in due documentary form, but he carried in him wherever he went a power which was its own witness, and which overruled and dispensed with every other. Let all of us who teach or preach concentrate our interest here. It is in "the Spirit of the living God," not in any requirements of our own, still less in any recommendations of others, that our serviceableness as ministers of Christ lies. We cannot write His epistle without it. We cannot see, let us be as diligent and indefatigable in our work as we please, the image of Christ gradually come out in those to whom we minister. Parents, teachers, preachers, this is the one thing needful for us all. "Tarry," said Jesus to the first evangelists, "tarry in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" it is of no use to begin without that.

This idea of the "epistle" has taken such a hold of the Apostle's mind, and he finds it so suggestive whichever way he turns it, that he really tries to say too much about it in one sentence. The crowding of his ideas is confusing. One learned critic enumerates three points in which the figure becomes inconsistent with itself, and another can only defend the Apostle by saying that this figurative letter might well have qualities which would be self-contradictory in a real one. This kind of criticism smells a little of ink, and the only real difficulty in the sentence has never misled any one who read it with sympathy. It is this—that St. Paul speaks of the letter as written in two different places. "Ye are our epistle," he says at the beginning, "written in our hearts"; but at the end he says, "written not on tables of stone, but on tables that are hearts of flesh"—meaning evidently *on the hearts of the Corinthians*. Of course this last is the sense which coheres with the figure. Paul's ministry wrote the Epistle of Christ upon the Corinthians, or, if we prefer it, wrought such a change in their hearts that they became an epistle of Christ, an epistle to which he appealed in proof of his apostolic calling. In expressing himself as he does about this, he is again anticipating the coming contrast of Law and Gospel. Nobody would think of writing a letter on tables of stone, and he only says "not on stone tables" because he has in his mind the difference between the Mosaic and the Christian dispensation. It is quite out of place to refer to Ezek. xi. 19, xxxvi. 26, and to drag in the contrast between hard and tender hearts. What Paul means is that the Epistle of Christ is not written on dead matter, but on human nature, and that too at its finest and deepest. When we remember the sense of depth and inwardness which attaches to the heart in Scripture,



it is not forcing the words to find in them the suggestion that the Gospel works no merely outward change. It is not written on the surface, but in the soul. The Spirit of the living God finds access for itself to the secret places of the human spirit; the most hidden recesses of our nature are open to it, and the very heart is made new. To be able to write *there* for Christ, to point not to anything dead, but to living men and women, not to anything superficial, but to a change that has reached the very core of man's being, and works its way out from thence, is the testimonial which guarantees the evangelist; it is the divine attestation that he is in the true apostolical succession.

What, then, does Paul mean by the other clause "ye are our epistle, written on *our* hearts"? I do not think we can get much more than an emotional certainty about this expression. When a man has been an intensely interested spectator, still more an intensely interested actor, in any great affair, he might say afterwards that the whole thing and all its circumstances were engraved upon his heart. I imagine that is what St. Paul means here. The conversion of the Corinthians made them an epistle of Christ; in making them believers through St. Paul's ministry, Christ wrote on *their* hearts what was really an epistle to the world; and the whole transaction, in which Paul's feelings had been deeply engaged, stood written on *his* heart for ever. Interpretations that go beyond this do not seem to me to be justified by the words. Thus Heinrici and Meyer say, "We have in our own consciousness the certainty of being recommended to you by yourselves and to others by you"; and they elucidate this by saying, "The Apostle's *own good consciousness* was, as it were, the *tablet* on which this living epistle of the Corinthians stood, and that had to be left unassailed even by the most malevolent." A sense so pragmatical and pedantic, even if one can grasp it at all, is surely out of place, and many readers will fail to discover it in the text. What the words do convey is the warm love of the Apostle, who had exercised his ministry among the Corinthians with all the passion of his nature, and who still bore on his ardent heart the fresh impression of his work and its results.

Amid all these details let us take care not to lose the one great lesson of the passage. Christian people owe a testimony to Christ. His name has been pronounced over them, and all who look at them ought to see His nature. We should discern in the heart and in the behaviour of Christians the handwriting, let us say the characters, not of avarice, of suspicion, of envy, of lust, of falsehood, of pride, but of Christ. It is to us He has committed Himself; we are the certification to men of what He does for man; His character is in our care. The true epistles of Christ to the world are not those which are expounded in pulpits; they are not even the gospels in which Christ Himself lives and moves before us; they are living men and women, on the tables of whose hearts the Spirit of the living God, ministered by a true evangelist, has engraved the likeness of Christ Himself. It is not the written Word on which Christianity ultimately depends; it is not the sacraments, nor so-called necessary institutions: it is this inward, spiritual, Divine writing which is the guarantee of all else.

## CHAPTER IX.

## THE TWO COVENANTS.

2 CORINTHIANS iii. 4-11 (R. V.).

THE confidence referred to in the opening of this passage is that which underlies the triumphant sentences at the end of the second chapter. The tone of those sentences was open to misinterpretation, and Paul guards himself against this on two sides. To begin with, his motive in so expressing himself was quite pure: he had no thought of commending himself to the Corinthians. And, again, the ground of his confidence was not in himself. The courage which he had to speak as he did he had through Jesus Christ, and that, too, in relation to God. It was virtually confidence in God, and therefore inspired by God.

It is this last aspect of his confidence which is expanded in the fifth verse: "not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to account anything as from ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God." This vehement disclaimer of any self-sufficiency has naturally been taken in the widest sense, and theologians from Augustine downward have found in it one of the most decisive proofs of the inability of man for any spiritual good accompanying salvation. No one, we may be sure, would have ascribed salvation, and all spiritual good accompanying it, entirely to God with more hearty sincerity than the Apostle; but it does seem better here to give his words a narrower and more relevant interpretation. The "sufficiency to account anything," of which he speaks, must have a definite meaning for the context; and this meaning is suggested by the words of chap. ii. 14-17. Paul would never have dared, he tells us—indeed, he would never have been able—on his own motion, and out of his own resources, either to form conclusions, or to express them, on the subjects there in view. It is not for any man at random to say what the true Gospel is, what are its issues, what the responsibilities of its hearers or preachers, what is the spirit requisite in the evangelist, or what are the methods legitimate for him. The Gospel is God's concern, and only those who have been capacitated by Him are entitled to speak as Paul has spoken. If this is a narrower sense than that which is expounded so vigorously by Calvin, it is more pertinent, and some will find it quite as pungent. Of all things that are done hastily and inconsiderately, by people calling themselves Christian, the criticism of evangelists is one of the most conspicuous. At his own prompting, out of his own wise head, any man almost will both make up his mind and speak his mind about any preacher with no sense of responsibility whatever. Paul certainly did form opinions about preachers, opinions which were anything but flattering; but he did it through Jesus Christ and in relation to God; he did it because, as he writes, God had made him sufficient, *i. e.*, had given him capacity to be, and the capacity of, a true evangelist, so that he knew both what the Gospel was, and how it ought to be proclaimed. It would silence much incompetent, because self-sufficient, criticism, if no one "thought anything" who had not this qualification.

The qualification having been mentioned, the



Apostle proceeds, as usual, to enlarge upon it. "Our sufficiency is of God; who also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant; not of letter, but of spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." At the first glance, we see no reason why his thought should take this direction, and it can only be because those whom he is opposing, and with whom he has contrasted himself in chap. ii. 17, are in some sense representatives of the old covenant, ministers of the letter in spite of their claim to be evangelists, and appealing not to a competency which came from God, but to one which rested on "the flesh." They based their title to preach on certain advantages of birth, or on having known Jesus when He lived in the world, or perhaps on certification by others who had known Him; at all events, not on that spiritual competence which Paul's ministry at Corinth had shown him to possess. That this was really the case will be seen more fully at a later stage (especially in chaps. x. ff.).

With the words "ministers of a new covenant" we enter upon one of the great passages in St. Paul's writings, and are allowed to see one of the inspiring and governing ideas in his mind. "Covenant," even to people familiar with the Bible, is beginning to be a remote and technical term; it needs to be translated or explained. If no more than another word is to be used, perhaps "dispensation" or "constitution" would suggest something. God's covenant with Israel was the whole constitution under which God was the God of Israel, and Israel the people of God. The new covenant of which Paul speaks necessarily implies an old one; and the old one is this covenant with Israel. It was a national covenant, and for that, among other reasons, it was represented and embodied in legal forms. There was a legal constitution under which the nation lived, and according to which all God's dealings with it, and all its dealings with God, were regulated. Without entering more deeply, in the meantime, into the nature of this constitution, or the religious experiences which were possible to those who lived under it, it is sufficient to notice that the best spirits in the nation became conscious of its inadequacy, and eventually of its failure. Jeremiah, who lived through the long agony of his country's dissolution, and saw the final collapse of the ancient order, felt this failure most deeply, and was consoled by the vision of a brighter future. That future rested for him on a more intimate relation of God to His people, on a constitution, as we may fairly paraphrase his words, less legal and more spiritual. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people: and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them,

saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more." This wonderful passage, so profound, so spiritual, so evangelical, is the utmost reach of prophecy; it is a sort of stepping-stone between the Old Testament and the New. Jeremiah has cried to God out of the depths, and God has heard his cry, and raised him to a spiritual height from which his eye ranges over the land of promise, and rests with yearning on all its grandest features. We do not know whether many of his contemporaries or successors were able to climb the mount which offered this glorious prospect; but we know that the promise remained a promise—a rainbow light across the dark cloud of national disaster—till Christ claimed its fulfilment as His work. It was His to make good all that the prophets had spoken; and when in the last hours of His life He said to His disciples, "This is My blood of the covenant,\* which is shed for many, for the remission of sins," it was exactly as if He had laid His Hand on that passage of Jeremiah, and said, "This day is this scripture fulfilled before your eyes." By the death of Jesus a new spiritual order was established; it rested on the forgiveness of sin, it made God accessible to all, it made obedience an instinct and a joy; all the intercourse of God and man was carried on upon a new footing, under a new constitution; to use the words of the prophet and the apostle, God made a new covenant with His people.

Among the Christians of the first age, no one so thoroughly appreciated the newness of Christianity, or was so immensely impressed by it, as St. Paul. The difference between the earlier dispensation and the later, between the religion of Moses' disciples and the religion of believers in Jesus Christ, was one that could hardly be exaggerated; he himself had been a zealot of the old, he was now a zealot of the new; and the gulf between his former and his present self was one that no geometry could measure. He had lived after the strictest sect of the old religion, a Pharisee; touching the righteousness which is in the law he could call himself blameless; he had tasted the whole bitterness of the legalism, the formality, the bondage, in which the old covenant entangled those who were devoted to it in his days. It is with this in his memory that he here sets the old and the new in unrelieved opposition to each other. His feeling is like that of a man who has just been liberated from prison, and whose whole mind is possessed and filled up with the single sensation that it is one thing to be chained, and another thing to be free. In the passage before us, this is all the Apostle has in view. He speaks as if the old covenant and the new had nothing in common, as if the new, to borrow Baur's expression, had merely a negative relation to the old, as if it could only be contrasted with it, and not compared to it, or illustrated by it. And with this restricted view he characterises the old dispensation as one of letter, and the new as one of spirit. Speaking out of his own experience, which was not solitary, but typical, he could truly speak thus. The essence of the old, to a Pharisee born and bred, was its documentary, statutory character: the law, written in letters, on stone tablets or parchment sheets, simply confronted men with its uninspiring im-

\* The true reading in Matt. xxvi. 28 omits "new," but the reference is unmistakable.



perative; it had never yet given any one a good conscience or enabled him to attain to the righteousness of God. The essence of the new, on the other hand, was spirit; the Christian was one in whom, through Christ, the Holy Spirit of God dwelt, putting the righteousness of God within his reach, enabling him to perfect holiness in God's fear. The contrast is made absolute, *pro tem*. There is no "spirit" in the old at all; there is no "letter" in the new. This last assertion was more natural then than now; for at the time when Paul wrote this Epistle, there was no "New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" consigned in documents and collected for the use of the Church. The Gospel existed in the world, not at all in books, but only in men; all the epistles were living epistles; there was literally no letter, but only spirit.

This, doubtless, is the explanation of the blank antithesis of the old covenant and the new in the passage before us. But it is obvious, when we think of it, that this antithesis does not exhaust the relations of the two. It is not the whole truth about the earlier dispensation to say that, while the new is spiritual, it is not. The religion of the Old Testament was not mere legalism; if it had been, the Old Testament would be for us an unprofitable and almost an unintelligible book. That religion had its spiritual side, as all but utterly corrupt religions always have; God administered His grace to His people through it, and in psalms and prophecies we have records of their experiences, which are not legal, but spiritual, and priceless even to Christian men. Nor would Paul, under other circumstances, have refused to admit this; on the contrary, it is a prominent element in his teaching. He knows that the old bears in its bosom the promise of the new, a sum of promises that has been confirmed and made good, in Jesus Christ (chap. i. 20). He knows that the righteousness of God, which is proclaimed in the Gospel, is witnessed to by the law and the prophets (Rom. iii. 21). He knows that "the law," even, is "spiritual" (Rom. vii. 14). He knows that the righteousness of faith was a secret revealed to David (Rom. iv. 6 f.). He would probably have agreed with Stephen that the oracles received and delivered by Moses in the wilderness were "living" oracles; and his profound mind would have thrilled to hear that great word of Jesus, "I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." Had he lived to a time like ours, when the Gospel also has been embodied in a book, instead of using "letter" and "spirit" as mutually exclusive, he would have admitted, as we do, that both ideas apply, in some sense, to both dispensations, and that it is possible to take the old and the new alike either in the letter or in the spirit. Nevertheless, he would have been entitled to say that, if they were to be characterised in their differences, they must be characterised as he has done it: the mark of the old, as opposed to the new, is literalism, or legalism; the mark of the new, as opposed to the old, is spirituality, or freedom. They differ as law differs from life, as compulsion from inspiration. Taken thus, no one can have any difficulty in agreeing with him.

But the Apostle does not rest in generalities: he goes on to a more particular comparison of the old and the new dispensations, and especially to a demonstration that the new is the more

glorious. He starts with a statement of their working, as dependent on their nature just described. One is letter; the other, spirit. Well, the letter kills, but the spirit gives life. A sentence so pregnant as this, and so capable of various applications, must have been very perplexing to the Corinthians, had they not been fairly acquainted beforehand with the Apostle's "form of doctrine" (Rom. vi. 17). It condenses in itself a whole cycle of his characteristic thoughts. All that he says in the Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians about the working of the law, in its relation to the flesh, is represented in "the letter killeth." The power of the law to create the consciousness of sin and to intensify it; to stimulate transgression, and so make sin exceeding sinful, and shut men up in despair; to pass sentence upon the guilty, the hopeless sentence of death,—all this is involved in the words. The fulness of meaning is as ample in "the spirit giveth life." The Spirit of Christ, given to those who receive Christ in the Gospel, is an infinite power and an infinite promise. It includes the reversal of all that the letter has wrought. The sentence of death is reversed; the impotence to good is counteracted and overcome; the soul looks out to, and anticipates, not the blackness of darkness for ever, but the everlasting glory of Christ. When the Apostle has written these two little sentences—when he has supplied "letter" and "spirit" with the predicates "kill" and "make alive," in the sense which they bear in the Christian revelation—he has gone as far as the mind of man can go in stating an effective contrast. But he works it out with reference to some special points in which the superiority of the new to the old is to be observed.

(1) In the first place, the ministry of the old was a ministry of death. Even as such it had a glory, or splendour, of its own. The face of Moses, its great minister, shone after he had been in the presence of God; and though that brightness was passing away even as men caught sight of it, it was so resplendent as to dazzle the beholders. But the ministry of the new is a ministry of spirit: and who would not argue *a fortiori* that it should appear in glory greater still? Both the *μᾶλλον* ("rather"), and the future (*ἔσται*) in ver. 8, are logical. Paul speaks, to use Bengel's expression, looking forward, as it were, from the Old Testament into the New. He does not say in what the glory of the New consists. He does not say that it is veiled at present, and will be manifested when Christ comes to transfigure His own. Even the use of "hope" in ver. 12 does not prove this. He leaves it quite indefinite; and arguing from the nature of the two ministries, which has just been explained, simply concludes that in glory the new must far transcend the old.

(2) In vv. 9 and 10 he puts a new point upon this. "Death" and "life" are here replaced by "condemnation" and "righteousness." It is through condemnation that man becomes the prey of death; and the grace which reigns in him to eternal life reigns through righteousness (Rom. v. 21). The contrast of these two words is very significant for Paul's conception of the Gospel: it shows how essential to his idea of righteousness, how fundamental in it, is the thought of acquittal or acceptance with God. Men are bad men, sinful men, under God's condemnation; and he cannot conceive a Gospel



at all which does not announce, at the very outset, the removal of that condemnation, and a declaration in the sinner's favour. Perhaps there are other ways of conceiving men, and other aspects in which God can come to them as their Saviour; but the Pauline Gospel has proved itself, and will always prove itself anew, the Gospel for the sinful, who know the misery of condemnation and despair. Mere pardon, as it has been called, may be a meagre conception, but it is that without which no other Christian conception can exist for a moment. That which lies at the bottom of the new covenant, and supports all its magnificent promises and hopes, is this: "I will forgive their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more." If we could imagine this taken away, what were left? Of course the righteousness which the Gospel proclaims is more than pardon; it is not exhausted when we say it is the opposite of condemnation; but unless we feel that the very nerve of it lies in the removal of condemnation, we shall never understand the New Testament tone in speaking of it. It is this which explains the joyous rebound of the Apostle's spirit whenever he encounters the subject; he remembers the black cloud, and now there is clear shining; he was under sentence then, but now he is justified by faith, and has peace with God. He cannot exaggerate the contrast, nor the greater glory of the new state. Granting that the ministry of condemnation had its glory—that the revelation of law "had an austere majesty of its own"—does not the ministry of righteousness, the Gospel which annulled the condemnation and restored man to peace with God, overflow with glory? When he thinks of it, he is tempted to withdraw the concession he has made. We may call the old dispensation and its ministry glorious if we like; they are glorious when they stand alone; but when comparison is made with the new, they are not glorious at all. The stars are bright till the moon rises; the moon herself reigns in heaven till her splendour pales before the sun; but when the sun shines in his strength, there is no other glory in the sky. All the glories of the old covenant have vanished for Paul in the light which shines from the Cross and from the Throne of Christ.

(3) A final superiority belongs to the new dispensation and its ministry as compared with the old—the superiority of permanence to transiency. "If that which passeth away *was* with glory, much more that which remaineth *is* in glory." The verbs here are supplied by the translators, but one may question whether the contrast of past and present was so definite in the Apostle's mind. I think not, and the reference to Moses' face does not prove that it was. All through these comparisons St. Paul expresses himself with the utmost generality; logical and ideal, not temporal, relations, dominate his thoughts. The law *was* given in glory—there is no dispute about that; but what the eleventh verse makes prominent is that while glory is the attendant or accompaniment of the transient, it is the element of the permanent. The law is indeed of God; it has a function in the economy of God; it is at the very lowest a negative preparation for the Gospel; it shuts men up to the acceptance of God's mercy. In this respect the glory on Moses' face represents the real greatness which belongs to the law as a power used by God in the working out of His

loving purpose. But at the best the law only shuts men up to Christ, and then its work is done. The true greatness of God is revealed, and with it His true glory, once for all, in the Gospel. There is nothing beyond the righteousness of God, manifested in Christ Jesus, for the acceptance of faith. That is God's last word to the world: it has absorbed in it even the glory of the law; and it is bright for ever with a glory above all other. It is God's chief end to reveal this glory in the Gospel, and to make men partakers of it; it has been so always, is so still, and ever shall be; and in the consciousness that he has seen and been saved by the eternal love of God, and is now a minister of it, the Apostle claims this finality of the new covenant as its crowning glory. The law, like the lower gifts of the Christian life, passes away; but the new covenant abides, for it is the revelation of love—that love which is the being and the glory of God Himself.

These qualities of the Christian dispensation, which constitute its newness, are too readily lost sight of. It is hard to appreciate and to live up to them, and hence they are always lapsing out of view, and requiring to be rediscovered. In the first age of Christianity there were many myriads of Jews, the Book of Acts tells us, who had very little sense of the newness of the Gospel; they were exceedingly zealous for the law, even for the letter of all its ritual prescriptions: Paul and his spiritual conception of Christianity were their bugbear. In the first half of the second century the religion even of the Gentile Churches had already become more legal than evangelical; there was wanting any sufficient apprehension of the spirituality, the freedom, and the newness of Christianity as opposed to Judaism; and though the reaction of Marcion, who denied that there was any connection whatever between the Old Testament and the New, went to a false and perverse extreme, it was the natural, and in its motives the legitimate, protest of spirit and life against letter and law. The Reformation in the sixteenth century was essentially a movement of similar character: it was the rediscovery of the Pauline Gospel, or of the Gospel in those characteristics of it which made Paul's heart leap for joy—its justifying righteousness, its spirituality, its liberty. In a Protestant scholasticism this glorious Gospel has again been lost oftener than once; it is lost when "a learned ministry" deals with the New Testament writings as the scribes dealt with the Old; it is lost also—for extremes meet—when an unlearned piety swears by verbal, even by literal, inspiration, and takes up to mere documents an attitude which in principle is fatal to Christianity. It is in the life of the Church—especially in that life which communicates itself, and makes the Christian community what the Jewish never was, essentially a missionary community—that the safeguard of all these high characteristics lies. A Church devoted to learning, or to the maintenance of a social or political position, or even merely to the cultivation of a type of character among its own members, may easily cease to be spiritual, and lapse into legal religion: a Church actively engaged in propagating itself never can. It is not with the "letter" one can hopefully address unbelieving men: it is only with the power of the Holy Spirit at work in the heart; and where the Spirit is, there is liberty. None are



so "sound" on the essentials of the faith as men with the truly missionary spirit; but at the same time none are so completely emancipated, and that by the self-same Spirit, from all that is not itself spiritual.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE TRANSFIGURING SPIRIT.

#### 2 CORINTHIANS iii. 12-18 (R. V.).

THE "hope" which here explains the Apostle's freedom of speech is to all intents and purposes the same as the "confidence" in ver. 4. It is much easier to suppose that the word is thus used with a certain latitude, as it might be in English, than to force upon it a reference to the glory to be revealed when Christ comes again, and to give the same future reference to "glory" all through this passage. The new covenant is present, and present in its glory; and though it has a future, with which the Apostle's hope is bound up, it is not in view of its future only, it is because of what it is even now, that he is so grandly confident, and uses such boldness of speech. It is quite fair to infer from chap. iv. 3—"if our Gospel is veiled, it is veiled in those that are perishing"—that Paul's opponents at Corinth had charged him with behaviour of another kind. They had accused him of making a mystery of his Gospel—preaching it in such a fashion that no one could really see it, or understand what he meant. If there is any charge which the true preacher will feel keenly, and resent vehemently, it is this. It is his first duty to deliver his message with a plainness that defies misunderstanding. He is sent to all men on an errand of life or death; and to leave any man wondering, after the message has been delivered, what it is about, is the worst sort of treachery. It belies the Gospel, and God who is its author. It may be due to pride, or to a misguided intention to commend the Gospel to the wisdom or the prejudices of men; but it is never anything else than a fatal mistake.

Paul not only resents the charge; he feels it so acutely that he finds an ingenious way of retorting it. "We," he says, "the ministers of the new covenant, we who preach life, righteousness, and everlasting glory, have nothing to hide; we wish every one to know everything about the dispensation which we serve. It is the representatives of the old who are really open to the charge of using concealment; the first and the greatest of them all, Moses himself, put a veil on his face, that the children of Israel should not look stedfastly on the end of that which was passing away. The glory on his face was a fading glory, because it was the glory of a temporary dispensation; but he did not wish the Israelites to see clearly that it was destined to disappear; so he veiled his face, and left them to think the law a permanent divine institution."

Perhaps the best thing to do with this singular interpretation is not to take it too seriously. Even sober expositors like Chrysostom and Calvin have thought it necessary to argue gravely that the Apostle is not accusing the law, or saying anything insulting of Moses; while Schmiedel, on the other hand, insists that a

grave moral charge is made against Moses, and that Paul most unjustly uses the Old Testament, in its own despite, to prove its own transitoriness. I believe it would be far truer to say that the character of Moses never crossed Paul's mind in the whole passage, for better or worse; he only remembered, as he smarted under the accusation of veiling his Gospel of the new covenant, a certain transaction under the old covenant in which a veil did figure—a transaction which a Rabbinical interpretation, whimsical indeed to us, but provoking if not convincing to his adversaries, enabled him to turn against them. As for proving the transitoriness of the Old Testament by a forced and illegitimate argument, that transitoriness was abundantly established to Paul, as it is to us, on real grounds; nothing whatever depends on what is here said of Moses and the veil. It is not necessary, if we take this view, to go into the historical interpretation of the passage in Exod. xxxiv. 29-35. The comparison of the Apostle with the Old Testament writer has been made more difficult for the English reader by the serious error in the Authorised Version of Exod. xxxiv. 33. Instead of "*till* Moses had done speaking with them," we ought to read, as in the Revised Version, "*when* Moses had done speaking." This exactly reverses the meaning. Moses spoke to the people with face bare and radiant; the glory was to be visible at least in his official intercourse with them, or *whenever he spoke for God*. At other times he wore the veil, putting it off, however, when he went into the tabernacle—that is, *whenever he spoke with God*. In all divine relations, then, we should naturally infer, there was to be the open and shining face; in other words, so far as he acted as mediator of the old covenant, Moses really acted in the spirit of Paul. It would therefore have been unjust in the Apostle to charge him with hiding anything, if the charge had really meant more than this—that Paul saw in his use of the veil a symbol of the fact that the children of Israel did not see that the old covenant was transitory, and that its glory was to be lost in that of the new. No one can deny that this *was* the fact, and no one therefore need be exercised if Paul pictured it in the manner of his own time and race, and not in the manner of ours. To suppose that he means to charge Moses with a deliberate act of dishonesty is to suppose what no sensible person will ever credit; and we may return, without more ado, to the painful situation which he contemplates.

*Their minds were hardened.* This is stated historically, and seems to refer in the first instance to those who watched Moses put on the veil, and became insensible, as he did so, to the nature of the old covenant. But it is applicable to the Jewish race at all periods of their history; they never discovered the secret which Moses hid from their forefathers beneath the veil. The only result that followed the labours even of great prophets like Isaiah had been the deepening of the darkness: having eyes the people saw not, having ears they heard not; their heart was fat and heavy, so that they did not apprehend the ways of God nor turn to Him. All around him the Apostle saw the melancholy evidence that there had been no change for the better. Until this day the same veil remains, when the Old Testament is read, not taken away; for it is only undone in Christ, and of



Christ they will know nothing. He repeats the sad statement, varying it slightly to indicate that the responsibility for a condition so blind and dreary rests not with the old covenant itself, but with those who live under it. "Until this day, I say, whensoever Moses is read, a veil lies upon their heart."

This witness, we must acknowledge, is almost as true in the nineteenth century as in the first. The Jews still exist as a race and a sect, acknowledging the Old Testament as a revelation from God, basing their religion upon it, keeping their ancient law so far as circumstances enable them to keep it, not convinced that as a religious constitution it has been superseded by a new one. Many of them, indeed, have abandoned it without becoming Christians. But in so doing they have become secularists; they have not appreciated the old covenant to the full, and then outgrown it; they have been led for various reasons to deny that there ever was anything divine in it, and have renounced together its discipline and its hopes. Only where the knowledge of the Christ has been received is the veil which lies upon their hearts taken away; they can then appreciate both all the virtues of the ancient dispensation and all its defects; they can glorify God for what it was and for what it shut them up to; they can see that in all its parts it had a reference to something lying beyond itself—to a "new thing" that God would do for His people; and in welcoming the new covenant, and its Mediator Jesus Christ, they can feel that they are not making void, but establishing, the law.

This is their hope, and to this the Apostle looks in ver. 16: "But whensoever it shall turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away." The Greek expression of this passage is so closely modelled on that of Exod. xxxiv. 34, that Westcott and Hort print it as a quotation. Moses evidently is still in the Apostle's mind. The veiling of his face symbolised the nation's blindness; the nation's hope is to be seen in that action in which Moses was unveiled. He uncovered his face when he turned from the people to speak to God. "Even so," says the Apostle, "when *they* turn to the Lord, the veil of which we have been speaking is taken away,\* and they see clearly." One can hardly avoid feeling in this a reminiscence of the Apostle's own conversion. He is thinking not only of the unveiling of Moses, but of the scales which fell from his own eyes when he was baptised in the name of Jesus, and was filled with the Holy Ghost, and saw the old covenant and its glory lost and fulfilled in the new. He knew how stupendous was the change involved here; it meant a revolution in the whole constitution of the Jews' spiritual world as vast as that which was wrought in the natural world when the sun supplanted the earth as the centre of our system. But the gain was corresponding. The soul was delivered from an *impasse*. Under the old covenant, as bitter experience had shown him, the religious life had come to a dead-lock; the conscience was confronted with a torturing, and in its very nature insoluble, problem: man, burdened and enslaved by sin, was required to attain to a righteousness which should please God. The contradictions of this position were solved, its mystery was abolished, when the soul

\* The present, where we might expect the future, conveys the certainty and decisiveness of the result.

turned to the Lord, and appropriated by faith the righteousness and life of God in him. The old covenant found its place, an intelligible and worthy though subordinate place, in the grand programme of redemption; the strife between the soul and God, between the soul and the conditions of existence, ceased; life opened out again; there was a large room to move in, an inspiring power within; in one word, there was spiritual life and liberty, and Christ was the author of it all.

This is the force of the seventeenth verse: "Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." The Lord, of course, is Christ, and the Spirit is that of which Paul has already spoken in the sixth verse. It is the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life under the new covenant. He who turns to Christ receives this Spirit; it is through it that Christ dwells in His people; what are called "fruits of the Spirit" are traits of Christ's own character which the Spirit produces in the saints; practically, therefore, the two may be identified, and hence the expression "the Lord is the Spirit," though startling at first sight, is not improper, and ought not to mislead. It is a mistake to connect it with such passages as Rom. i. 4, and to draw inferences from it as to Paul's conception of the person of Christ. He does not say "the Lord is spirit," but "the Lord is the Spirit"; what is in view is not the person of Christ so much as His power. To identify the Lord and the Spirit without qualification, in the face of the benediction in chap. xiii. 14, is out of the question. The truth of the passage is the same as that of Rom. viii. 9 ff.: "If any man have not the *spirit of Christ*, he is none of His. And if *Christ is in you*," etc. Here, so far as the practical experience of Christians goes, no distinction is made between the Spirit of Christ and Christ Himself; Christ dwells in Christians through His Spirit. The very same truth, as is well known, pervades the chapters in the Fourth Gospel in which Christ consoles His disciples for His departure from this world; He will not leave them orphans—He will come to them, and remain with them in the other Comforter. To turn to Christ, the Apostle wishes to assert with the utmost emphasis, is not to do a thing which has no virtue and no consequences; it is to turn to one who has received of the Father the gift of the Holy Ghost, and who immediately sets up the new spiritual life, which is nothing less than His own life, by that Spirit, in the believing soul. And summing up in one word the grand characteristic and distinction of the new covenant, as realised by this indwelling of Christ through His Spirit, he concludes: "And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

In the interpretation of the last word, we must have respect to the context; liberty has its meaning in contrast with that state to which the old covenant had reduced those who adhered to it. It means freedom from the law; freedom, fundamentally, from its condemnation, thanks to the gift of righteousness in Christ; freedom, also, from its letter, as something simply without us and over against us. No written word, as such, can ever be pleaded against the voice of the Spirit within. Even the words we call in an eminent sense "inspired," words of the Spirit, are subject to this law: they do



not put a limit to the liberty of the spiritual man. He can overrule the letter of them when the literal interpretation or application would contravene the spirit which is common both to them and him. This principle is capable of being abused, no doubt, and by bad men and fanatics has been abused; but its worst abuses can hardly have done more harm than the pedantic word-worship which has often lost the soul even of the New Testament, and read the words of the Lord and His Apostles with a veil upon its face through which nothing could be seen. There is such a thing as an unspiritual scrupulosity in dealing with the New Testament, now that we have it in documentary form, just as there used to be in dealing with the Old; and we ought to remind ourselves continually that the documentary form is an accident, not an essential, of the new covenant. That covenant existed, and men lived under it and enjoyed its blessings, before it had any written documents at all; and we shall not appreciate its characteristics, and especially this one of its spiritual freedom, unless we put ourselves occasionally, in imagination, in their place. It is far easier to make Paul mean too little than too much; and the liberty of the Spirit in which he exults here covers, we may be sure, not only liberty from condemnation, and liberty from the unspiritual yoke of the ritual law, but liberty from all that is in its nature statutory, liberty to organise the new life, and to legislate for it, from within.

The bearing of this passage on the religious blindness of the Jews ought not to hide from us its permanent application. The religious insensibility of his countrymen will cease, Paul says; their religious perplexities will be solved, when they turn to Christ. This is the beginning of all intelligence, of all freedom, of all hope, in things spiritual. Much of the religious doubt and confusion of our own times is due to the preoccupation of men's minds with religion at points from which Christ is invisible. But it is He who is the key to *all* human experiences as well as to the Old Testament; it is He who answers the questions of the world as well as the questions of the Jews; it is He who takes *our* feet out of the net, opens the gate of righteousness before us, and gives us spiritual freedom. It is like finding a pearl of great price when the soul discovers this, and to point it out to others is to do them a priceless service. Disregard everything else in the meantime, if you are bewildered, baffled, in bonds which you cannot break; turn to Jesus Christ, as Moses turned to God, with face uncovered; put down prejudice, preconceptions, pride, the disposition to make demands; only look stedfastly till you see what He is, and all that perplexes you will pass away, or appear in a new light, and serve a new and spiritual purpose.

Something like this larger application of his words passed, we may suppose, before the Apostle's mind when he wrote the eighteenth verse. In the grandeur of the truth which rises upon him he forgets his controversy and becomes a poet. We breathe the ampler ether, the diviner air, as we read: "But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit." I have kept here for *κατοπτριζόμενοι* the rendering of the Authorised Ver-

sion, which in the Revised has been relegated to the margin, and replaced by "reflecting as a mirror." There do not seem to be sufficient grounds for the change, and the old translation is defended in Grimm's Lexicon, in Winer's Grammar, and by Meyer, Heinrici, and Beet. The active voice of the verb *κατοπτρίζω* means "to exhibit in a mirror"; and the middle, "to mirror oneself"—i. e., "to look at oneself in a mirror." This, at least, is the sense of most of the examples of the middle which are found in Greek writers; but as it is quite inapplicable here, the question of interpretation becomes rather difficult. It is, however, in accordance with analogy to say that if the active means "to show in a mirror," the middle means "to get shown to one in a mirror," or, as the Authorised Version puts it, "to behold in a mirror." I cannot make out that any analogy favours the new rendering, "reflecting as a mirror"; and the authority of Chrysostom, which would otherwise be considerable on this side, is lessened by the fact that he seems never to have raised the question, and in point of fact combines both renderings. His illustration of the polished silver lying in the sunshine, and sending back the rays which strike it, is in favour of the change; but when he writes, "We not only *look upon* the glory of God, but also catch thence a kind of radiance," he may fairly be claimed for the other side. There are two reasons also which seem to me to have great weight in favour of the old rendering: first, the expression "with unveiled face," which, as Meyer remarks, is naturally of a piece with "beholding"; and, second, an unequivocal example of the middle voice of *κατοπτρίζομαι* in the sense of "seeing," while no unequivocal example can be produced for "reflecting." This example is found in Philo i. 107 ("Leg. Alleg.," iii. 33), where Moses prays to God: "Show not Thyself to me through heaven or earth, or water or air, or anything at all that comes into being; nor let me see Thy form mirrored in any other thing than in Thee, even in God." This seems to me decisive, and there is the less reason to reject it on other than linguistic grounds, when we consider that the idea of "reflecting," if it is given up in *κατοπτριζόμενοι* is conserved in *μεταμορφούμεθα*. The transformation has the reflection of Christ's glory for its effect, not for its cause; but the reflection, eventually, is there.

Assuming, then, that "beholding as in a glass" is the right interpretation of this hard word, let us go on to what the Apostle says. "We all" probably means "all Christians," and not only "all Christian teachers." If there is a comparison implied, it is between the two dispensations, and the experiences open to those who lived under them, not between the mediator of the old and the heralds of the new. Under the old covenant one only saw the glory; now the beatific vision is open to all. We all behold it "with unveiled face." There is nothing on Christ's part that leads to disguise, and nothing on ours that comes between us and Him. The darkness is past, the true light already shines, and Christian souls cannot look on it too fixedly, or drink it in to excess. But what is meant by "the glory of the Lord" on which we gaze with face unveiled?

It will not be questioned, by those who are at home in St. Paul's thoughts, that "the Lord"



means the exalted Saviour, and that the glory must be something which belongs to Him. Indeed, if we remember that in the First Epistle, chap. ii. 8, He is characteristically described by the Apostle as "the Lord of glory," we shall not feel it too much to say that the glory is *everything* which belongs to Him. There is not any aspect of the exalted Christ, there is not any representation of Him in the Gospel, there is not any function which He exercises, that does not come under this head. "In His temple everything saith Glory!" There is a glory even in the mode of His existence: St. Paul's conception of Him is dominated always by that appearance on the way to Damascus, when he saw the Christ through a light above the brightness of the sun. It is His glory that He shares the Father's throne,\* that He is head of the Church, possessor and bestower of all the fullness of divine grace, the coming Judge of the world, conqueror of every hostile power, intercessor for His own, and, in short, bearer of all the majesty which belongs to His kingly office. The essential thing in all this—essential to the understanding of the Apostle, and to the existence of the apostolic "Gospel of the glory of Christ" (chap. iv. 4)—is that the glory in question is the glory of a Living Person. When Paul thinks of it, he does not look back, he looks up; he does not remember, he beholds in a glass; the glory of the Lord has no meaning for him apart from the present exaltation of the Risen Christ. "The Lord reigneth; He is apparelled with majesty"—that is the anthem of His praise.

I have insisted on this, because, in a certain reaction from what was perhaps an exaggerated Paulinism, there is a tendency to misapply even the most characteristic and vital passages in St. Paul's Gospel, and pre-eminently to misapply passages like this. Nothing could be more misleading than to substitute here for the glory of the exalted Christ as mirrored in the apostolic Gospel that moral beauty which was seen in Jesus of Nazareth. Of course I do not mean to deny that the moral loveliness of Jesus is glorious; nor do I question that in the contemplation of it in the pages of our Gospels—*subject to one grand condition*—a transforming power is exercised through it; but I do deny that any such thing was in the mind of St. Paul. The subject of the Apostle's Gospel was not Jesus the carpenter of Nazareth, but Christ the Lord of glory; men, as he understood the matter, were saved, not by dwelling on the wonderful words and deeds of One who had lived some time ago, and reviving these in their imagination, but by receiving the almighty, emancipating, quickening Spirit of One who lived and reigned for evermore. The transformation here spoken of is not the work of a powerful imagination, which can make the figure in the pages of the Gospels live again, and suffuse the soul with feeling as it gazes upon it; preach this as gospel who will, it was never preached by an apostle of Jesus Christ. It is the work of the Spirit, and the Spirit is given, not to the memory or imagination which can vivify the past, but to the faith which sees Christ upon His throne. And it is subject to the condition of faith in the living Christ that contemplation of Jesus in the Gospels changes us into the same

image. There can be no doubt that at the present time many are falling back upon this contemplation in a despairing rather than a believing mood; what they seek and find in it is rather a poetic consolation than religious inspiration; their faith in the living Christ is gone, or is so uncertain as to be practically of no saving power, and they have recourse to the memory of what Jesus was as at least something to cling to. "We thought that it had been He which should have delivered Israel." But surely it is as clear as day that in religion—in the matter of redemption—we must deal, not with the dead, but with the living. Paul may have known less or more of the contents of our first three Gospels; he may have valued them more or less adequately; but just because he had been saved by Christ, and was preaching Christ as a Saviour, the centre of his thoughts and affections was not Galilee, but "the heavenlies." *There* the Lord of glory reigned; and from that world He sent the Spirit which changed His people into His image. And so it must always be, if Christianity is to be a living religion. Leave out this, and not only is the Pauline Gospel lost, but everything is lost which could be called Gospel in the New Testament.

The Lord of glory, Paul teaches here, is the pattern and prophecy of a glory to be revealed in us; and as we contemplate Him in the mirror of the Gospel,\* we are gradually transformed into the same image, even as by the Lord the Spirit. The transformation, these last words again teach, is not accomplished by beholding, but while we behold; it does not depend on the vividness with which we can imagine the past, but on the present power of Christ working in us. The result is such as befits the operation of such a power. We are changed into the image of Him from whom it proceeds. We are made like Himself. It may seem far more natural to say that the believer is made like Jesus of Nazareth, than that he is made like the Lord of glory; but that does not entitle us to shift the centre of gravity in the Apostle's teaching, and it only tempts us to ignore one of the most prominent and enviable characteristics of the New Testament religious life. Christ is on His throne, and His people are *exalted and victorious* in Him. When we forget Christ's exaltation in our study of His earthly life—when we are so pre-occupied, it may even be so fascinated, with what He was, that we forget what He is—when, in other words, a pious historical imagination takes the place of a living religious faith—that *victorious consciousness is lost*, and in a most essential point the image of the Lord is not reproduced in the believer. This is why the Pauline point of view—if indeed it is to be called Pauline, and not simply Christian—is essential. Christianity is a religion, not merely a history, though it should be the history told by Matthew, Mark, and Luke; and the chance of having the history itself appreciated for religion is that He who is its subject shall be contemplated, not in the dim distance of the past, but in the glory of His heavenly reign, and that He shall be recognised, not merely as one who lived a perfect life in His own generation, but as the Giver of life eternal by His Spirit to all who turn to

\* So Meyer, from whom the particulars in this sentence are taken.

\*The idea of the mirror is not to be omitted, as of no consequence. It is essential to the figure: "we see not yet face to face."



Him. The Church will always be justified, while recognising that Christianity is a historical religion, in giving prominence, not to its historicity, but to what makes it a religion at all—namely, the present exaltation of Christ. This involves everything, and determines, as St. Paul tells us here, the very form and spirit of her own life.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE GOSPEL DEFINED.

#### 2 CORINTHIANS iv. 1-6 (R. V.).

IN these verses Paul resumes for the last time the line of thought on which he had set out at chap. iii. 4, and again at chap. iii. 12. Twice he has allowed himself to be carried away into digressions, not less interesting than his argument; but now he proceeds without further interruption. His subject is the New Testament ministry, and his own conduct as a minister.

"Seeing we have this ministry," he writes, "even as we obtained mercy, we faint not." The whole tone of the passage is to be triumphant; above the common joy of the New Testament it rises, at the close (ver. 16 ff.), into a kind of solemn rapture; and it is characteristic of the Apostle that before he abandons himself to the swelling tide of exultation, he guards it all with the words, "even as we obtained mercy." There was nothing so deep down in Paul's soul, nothing so constantly present to his thoughts, as this great experience. No flood of emotion, no pressure of trial, no necessity of conflict, ever drove him from his moorings here. The mercy of God underlay his whole being; it kept him humble even when he boasted; even when engaged in defending his character against false accusations—a peculiarly trying situation—it kept him truly Christian in spirit.

The words may be connected equally well, so far as either meaning or grammar is concerned, with what precedes, or with what follows. It was a signal proof of God's mercy that He had entrusted Paul with the ministry of the Gospel; and it was only what we should expect, when one who had obtained such mercy turned out a good soldier of Jesus Christ, able to endure hardship and not faint. Those to whom little is forgiven, Jesus Himself tells us, love little; it is not in them for Jesus' sake to bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, endure all things. They faint easily, and are overborne by petty trials, because they have not in them that fountain of brave patience—a deep abiding sense of what they owe to Christ, and can never, by any length or ardour of service, repay. It accuses us, not so much of human weakness, as of ingratitude, and insensibility to the mercy of God, when we faint in the exercise of our ministry.

"We faint not," says Paul; "we show no weakness. On the contrary, we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully." The contrast marked by *ἀλλὰ* is very instructive: it shows, in the things which Paul had renounced, whither weakness leads. It betrays men. It compels them to have re-

course to arts which shame bids them conceal; they become diplomatists and strategists, rather than heralds; they manipulate their message; they adapt it to the spirit of the time, or the prejudices of their auditors; they make liberal use of the principle of accommodation. When these arts are looked at closely, they come to this: the minister has contrived to put something of his own between his hearers and the Gospel; the message has really not been declared. His intention, of course, with all this artifice, is to recommend himself to men; but the method is radically vicious. The Apostle shows us a more excellent way. "We have renounced," he says, "all these weak ingenuities; and by manifestation of the truth commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

This is probably the simplest and most complete directory for the preaching of the Gospel. The preacher is to make the truth manifest. It is implied in what has just been said, that one great hindrance to its manifestation may easily be its treatment by the preacher himself. If he wishes to do anything else at the same time, the manifestation will not take effect. If he wishes, in the very act of preaching, to conciliate a class, or an interest; to create an opinion in favour of his own learning, ability, or eloquence; to enlist sympathy for a cause or an institution which is only accidentally connected with the Gospel,—the truth will not be seen, and it will not tell. The truth, we are further taught here, makes its appeal to the conscience; it is there that God's witness in its favour resides. Now, the conscience is the moral nature of man, or the moral element in his nature; it is this, therefore, which the preacher has to address. Does not this involve a certain directness and simplicity of method, a certain plainness and urgency also, which it is far easier to miss than to find? Conscience is not the abstract logical faculty in man, and the preacher's business is therefore not to prove, but to proclaim, the Gospel. All he has to do is to let it be seen, and the more nakedly visible it is the better. His object is not to frame an irrefragable argument, but to produce an irresistible impression. There is no such thing as an argument to which it is impossible for a wilful man to make objections; at least there is no such thing in the sphere of Christian truth. Even if there were, men would object to it on that very ground. They would say that, in matters of this description, when logic went too far, it amounted to moral intimidation, and that in the interests of liberty they were entitled to protest against it. Practically, this is what Voltaire said of Pascal. But there is such a thing as an irresistible impression,—an impression made upon the moral nature against which it is vain to attempt any protest; an impression which subdues and holds the soul for ever. When the truth is manifested, and men see it, this is the effect to be looked for; this, consequently, is the preacher's aim. In the sight of God—that is, acting with absolute sincerity—Paul trusted to this simple method to recommend himself to men. He brought no letters of introduction from others; he had no artifices of his own; he held up the truth in its unadorned integrity till it told upon the conscience of his hearers; and after that, he needed no other witness. The same conversions which accredited



the power of the message accredited the character of him who bore it.

To this line of argument there is a very obvious reply. What, it may be asked, of those on whom "the manifestation of the truth" produces no effect? What of those who in spite of all this plain appeal to conscience neither see nor feel anything? It is sadly obvious that this is no mere supposition; the Gospel remains a secret, an impotent ineffective secret, to many who hear it again and again. Paul faces the difficulty without flinching, though the answer is appalling. "If our Gospel is veiled [and the melancholy fact cannot be denied], it is veiled in the case of the perishing." The fact that it remains hidden from some men is their condemnation; it marks them out as persons on the way to destruction. The Apostle proceeds to explain himself further. As far as the rationale can be given of what is finally irrational, he interprets the moral situation for us. The perishing people in question are unbelievers, whose thoughts, or minds, the god of this world has blinded. The intention of this blinding is conveyed in the last words of ver. 4: "that the illumination which proceeds from the Gospel, the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, may not dawn upon them."

Let these solemn words appeal to our hearts and consciences, before we attempt to criticise them. Let us have a due impression of the stupendous facts to which they refer, before we raise difficulties about them, or say rashly that the expression is disproportioned to the truth. To St. Paul the Gospel was a very great thing. A light issued from it so dazzling, so overwhelming, in its splendour and illuminative power, that it might well appear incredible that men should not see it. The powers counteracting it, "the world-rulers of this darkness," must surely, to judge by their success, have an immense influence. Even more than an immense malignity, they must have an immense malignity. For what a blessedness it meant for men, that that light should dawn upon them! What a deprivation and loss, that its brightness should be obscured! Paul's whole sense of the might and malignity of the powers of darkness is condensed in the title which he here gives to their head—"the god of this world." It is literally "of this age," the period of time which extends to Christ's coming again. The dominion of evil is not unlimited in duration; but while it lasts it is awful in its intensity and range. It does not seem an extravagance to the Apostle to describe Satan as the god of the present æon; and if it seems extravagant to us, we may remind ourselves that our Saviour also twice speaks of him as "*the prince of this world*." Who but Christ Himself, or a soul like St. Paul in complete sympathy with the mind and work of Christ, is capable of seeing and feeling the incalculable mass of the forces which are at work in the world to defeat the Gospel? What sleepy conscience, what moral mediocrity, itself purblind, only dimly conscious of the height of the Christian calling, and vexed by no aspirations toward it, has any right to say that it is too much to call Satan "the god of this world"? Such sleepy consciences have no idea of the omnipresence, the steady persistent pressure, the sleepless malignity, of the evil forces which beset man's life. They have no idea of the extent to which these forces frustrate the love of

God in the Gospel, and rob men of their inheritance in Christ. To ask why men *should* be exposed to such forces is another, and here an irrelevant, question. What St. Paul saw, and what becomes apparent to every one in proportion as his interest in evangelising becomes intense, is that evil has a power and dominion in the world, which are betrayed, by their counteracting of the Gospel, to be purely malignant—in other words, Satanic—and the dimensions of which no description can exaggerate. Call such powers Satan, or what you please, but do not imagine that they are inconsiderable. During this age they *reign*; they have virtually taken what should be God's place in the world.

It is the necessary complement of this assertion of the malign dominion of evil, when St. Paul tells us that it is exercised in the case of unbelievers. It is their minds which the god of this world has blinded. We need not try to investigate more narrowly the relations of these two aspects of the facts. We need not say that the dominion of evil produces unbelief, though this is true (John iii. 18, 19); or that unbelief gives Satan his opportunity; or even that unbelief and the blindness here referred to are reciprocally cause and effect of each other. The moral interests involved are protected by the fact that blindness is only predicated in the case in which the Gospel has been rejected by individual unbelief; and the mere individualism, which is the source of so many heresies, doctrinal and practical, is excluded by the recognition of spiritual forces as operative among men which are far more wide-reaching than any individual knows. Nor ought we to overlook the suggestion of pity, and even of hope, for the perishing, in the contrast between their darkness and the illumination which the Gospel of the glory of Christ lights up. The perishing are not the lost; the unbelievers may yet believe: "in our deepest darkness, we know the direction of the light" (Beet). Final unbelief would mean final ruin; but we are not entitled to make sense the measure of spiritual things, and to argue that because we see men blind and unbelieving now they are bound for ever to remain so. In preaching the Gospel we must preach with hope that the light is stronger than the darkness, and able, even at the deepest, to drive it away. Only, when we see, as we sometimes will, how dense and impenetrable the darkness is, we cannot but cry with the Apostle, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

This passage is one of those in which the subject of the Gospel is distinctly enunciated: it is the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. The glory of Christ, or, which is the same thing, Christ in His glory, is the sum and substance of it, that which gives it both its contents and its character. Paul's conception of the Gospel is inspired and controlled from beginning to end by the appearance of the Lord which resulted in his conversion. In the First Epistle to the Corinthians (i. 18, 23), and in the Epistle to the Galatians (vi. 14), he seems to find what is essential and distinguishing in the Cross rather than the Throne; but this is probably due to the fact that the significance of the Cross had been virtually denied by those for whom His words are meant. The Christ whom he preached had died, and died, as the next chapter will make very prominent, to reconcile the world to God;



but Paul preached Him as he had seen Him on that ever-memorable day; with all the virtue of His atoning death in it, the Gospel was yet the Gospel of *His glory*. It is in the combination of these two that the supreme power of the Gospel lies. In the distaste for the supernatural which has prevailed so widely, many have tried to ignore this, and to get out of the Cross alone an inspiration which it cannot yield if severed from the Throne. Had the story of Jesus ended with the words "suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried," it is very certain that these words would never have formed part of a Creed—there would never have been such a thing as the Christian religion. But when these words are combined with what follows—"He rose again from the dead on the third day, He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father"—we have the basis which religion requires; we have a living Lord, in whom all the redemptive virtue of a sinless life and death is treasured up, and who is able to save to the uttermost all that trust Him. It is not the emotions excited by the spectacle of the Passion, any more than the admiration evoked by the contemplation of Christ's life, that save; it is the Lord of glory, who lived that life of love, and in love endured that agony, and who is now enthroned at God's right hand. The life and death in one sense form part of His glory, in another they are a foil to it; He could not have been our Saviour but for them; He would not be our Saviour unless He had triumphed over them, and entered into a glory beyond.

When the Apostle speaks of Christ as the image of God, we must not let extraneous associations with this title deflect us from the true line of his thought. It is still the Exalted One of whom he is speaking: there is no other Christ for him. In that face which flashed upon him by Damascus twenty years before, he had seen, and always saw, all that man could see of the invisible God. It represented for him, and for all to whom he preached, the Sovereignty and the Redeeming Love of God, as completely as man could understand them. It evoked those ascriptions of praise which a Jew was accustomed to offer to God alone. It inspired doxologies. When it passed before the inward eye of the Apostle, he worshipped: "to Him," he said, "be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever." Whether the pre-incarnate Son was also the image of God, and whether the same title is applicable to Jesus of Nazareth, are separate questions. If they are raised, they must be answered in the affirmative, with the necessary qualifications; but they are quite irrelevant here. Much misunderstanding of the Pauline Gospel would have been prevented if men could have remembered that what was only of secondary importance to them, and even of doubtful certainty—namely, the exaltation of Christ—was itself the foundation of the Apostle's Christianity, the one indubitable fact from which his whole knowledge of Christ, and his whole conception of the Gospel, set forth. Christ on the throne was, if one may say so, a more immediate certainty to Paul, than Jesus on the banks of the lake, or even Jesus on the cross. It may not be natural or easy for *us* to start thus; but if we do not make the effort, we shall involuntarily dislocate and distort the whole system of his thoughts.

In the fourth verse the stress is logically, if not grammatically, on Christ. "The Gospel of the glory of *Christ*," I say. "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake." Perhaps ambition had been laid to Paul's charge; "the necessity of being first" is one of the last infirmities of noble minds. But the Gospel is too magnificent to have any room for thoughts of self. A proud man may make a nation, or even a Church, the instrument or the arena of his pride; he may find in it the field of his ambition, and make it subservient to his own exaltation. But the defence which Paul has offered of his truthfulness in chap. i. is as capable of application here. No one whom Christ has seized, subdued, and made wholly His own for ever, can practise the arts of self-advancement in Christ's service. The two are mutually exclusive. Paul preaches Christ Jesus as Lord—the absolute character in which he knows Him; as for himself, he is every man's servant for Jesus' sake. He obtained mercy, that he might be found faithful in service: the very name of Jesus kills pride in his heart, and makes him ready to minister even to the unthankful and evil.

This is the force of the "for" with which the sixth verse begins. It is as if he had written, "With our experience, no other course is possible, to us; for it is God, who said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." But the connection here is of little importance in comparison with the grandeur of the contents. In this verse we have the first glimpse of the Pauline doctrine, explicitly stated in the next chapter—"that if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." The Apostle finds the only adequate parallel to his own conversion in that grand creative act in which God brought light, by a word, out of the darkness of chaos. It is not forcing the figure unduly, nor losing its poetic virtue, to think of gloom and disorder as the condition of the soul on which the Sun of Righteousness has not risen. Neither is it putting any strain upon it to make it suggest that only the creative word of God can dispel the darkness, and give the beauty of life and order to what was waste and void. There is one point, indeed, in which the miracle of grace is more wonderful than that of creation. God only commanded the light to shine out of darkness when time began; but He shone Himself in the Apostle's heart: *Ipsa lux nostra* (Bengel). He shone "to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." In that light which God flashed into his heart, he saw the face of Jesus Christ, and knew that the glory which shone there was the glory of God. What these words mean has already been explained. In the face of Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory, Paul saw God's Redeeming Love upon the throne of the universe; it had descended deeper than sin and death; it was exalted now above all heavens; it filled all things. That sight he carried with him everywhere; it was his salvation and his Gospel, the inspiration of his inmost life, and the motive of all his labours. One who owed all this to Christ was not likely to make Christ's service the theatre of his own ambitions; he could not do anything but take the servant's place, and proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord.



There is a difficulty in the last half of ver. 6: it is not clear what precisely is meant. By some the passage is rendered: God shined in our hearts, "that *He* might bring into the light (for *us* to see it) the knowledge of His glory," etc. This is certainly legitimate, and strikes me as the most natural interpretation. It would answer then to what Paul says in Gal. i. 15 f., referring to the same events: "It pleased God to reveal His Son in me." But others think all this is covered by the words "God shined in our hearts," and they take *πρὸς φωτισμὸν, κ. τ. λ.*, as a description of the apostolic vocation: God shined in our hearts, "that *we* might bring into the light (for *others* to see) the knowledge of His glory," etc. The words would then answer to what follows in Gal. i. 16: God revealed His Son in me, "that I might preach Him among the heathen." This construction is possible, but I think forced. In Paul's experience his conversion and vocation were indissolubly connected; but *πρὸς φωτισμὸν, κ. τ. λ.*, can only mean one, and the conversion is the likelier.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE VICTORY OF FAITH.

2 CORINTHIANS iv. 7-18 (R. V.).

IN the opening verses of this chapter Paul has magnified his office, and his equipment for it. He has risen to a great height, poetic and spiritual, in speaking of the Lord of glory, and of the light which shines from His face for the illumining and redemption of men. The disproportion between his own nature and powers, and the high calling to which he has been called, flashes across his mind. It is quite possible that this disproportion, viewed with a malignant eye, had been made matter of reproach by his adversaries. "Who," they may have said, "is this man, who soars to such heights, and makes such extraordinary claims? The part does not suit him; he is quite unequal to it; his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible." It is possible, further, though I hardly think it probable, that the very sufferings Paul endured in his apostolic work were cast in his teeth by Jewish teachers at Corinth; they were read by these spiteful interpreters as signs of God's wrath, the judgment of the Almighty on a wanton subverter of His law. But surely it is not too much to suppose that Paul could sometimes think unchallenged. A soul as great and as sensitive as his might well be struck by the contrast which pervades this passage without requiring to have it suggested by the malice of his foes. The interpretation which he puts upon the contrast is not merely a happy artifice (so Calvin), and still less a *tour de force*; it is a profound truth, a favourite, if one may say so, in the New Testament, and of universal application.

"We have this treasure," he writes—the treasure of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, including the apostolic vocation to diffuse that knowledge—"we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power [which it exercises, and which is exhibited in sustaining us in our function] may be seen to be God's, and not from us." Earthen vessels are fragile, and

what the word immediately suggests is no doubt bodily weakness, and especially mortality; but the nature of some of the trials referred to in vv. 8 and 9 (*ἀπορούμενοι, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐξαπορούμενοι*) shows that it would be a mistake to confine the meaning to the body. The earthen vessel which holds the priceless treasure of the knowledge of God—the lamp of frail ware in which the light of Christ's glory shines for the illumination of the world—is human nature as it is; man's body in its weakness, and liability to death; his mind with its limitations and confusions; his moral nature with its distortions and misconceptions, and its insight not yet half restored. It was not merely in his physique that Paul felt the disparity between himself and his calling to preach the Gospel of the glory of Christ; it was in his whole being. But instead of finding in this disparity reason to doubt his vocation, he saw in it an illustration of a great law of God. It served to protect the truth that *salvation is of the Lord*. No one who saw the exceeding greatness of the power which the Gospel exercised—not only in sustaining its preachers under persecution, but in transforming human nature, and making bad men good—no one who saw this, and looked at a preacher like Paul, could dream that the explanation lay in *him*. Not in an ugly little Jew, without presence, without eloquence, without the means to bribe or to compel, could the source of such courage, the cause of such transformations, be found; it must be sought, not in him, but in God. "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things which are." And the end of it all is that he which glorieth should glory *in the Lord*.

This verse is never without its application; and though the contempt of the world did not suggest it to St. Paul, it may naturally enough recall it to us. One would sometimes think, from the tone of current literature, that no person with gifts above contempt is any longer identified with the Gospel. Clever men, we are told, do not become preachers now—still less do they go to church. They find it impossible to have real or sincere intellectual intercourse with Christian ministers. Perhaps this is not so alarming as the clever people think. There always have been men in the world so clever that God could make no use of them; they could never do His work, because they were so lost in admiration of their own. But God's work never depended on them, and it does not depend on them now. It depends on those who, when they see Jesus Christ, become unconscious, once and for ever, of all that they have been used to call their wisdom and their strength—on those who are but earthen vessels in which another's jewel is kept, lamps of clay in which another's light shines. The kingdom of God has not changed its administration since the first century; its supreme law is still the glory of God, and not the glory of the clever men; and we may be quite sure it will not change. God will always have his work done by instruments who are willing to have it clear that the exceeding greatness of the power is His, and not theirs.

The eighth and ninth verses illustrate the con-



trast between Paul's weakness and God's power. In the series of participles which the Apostle uses, the earthen vessel is represented by the first in each pair, the divine power by the second. "We are pressed on every side, but not straitened"—*i. e.*, not brought into a narrow place from which there is no escape. "We are perplexed, but not unto despair," or, preserving the relation between the words of the original, "put to it, but not utterly put out." This distinctly suggests inward rather than merely bodily trials, or at least the inward aspect of these: constantly at a loss, the Apostle nevertheless constantly finds the solution of his problems. "Pursued, but not abandoned"—*i. e.*, not left in the enemy's hands. "Smitten down, but not destroyed": even when trouble has done its worst, when the persecuted man has been overtaken and struck to the ground, the blow is not fatal, and he rises again. All these partial contrasts of human weakness and Divine power are condensed and concentrated in the tenth verse in one great contrast, the two sides of which are presented in their divinely intended relation to each other: "always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body." And this again, with its mystical poetic aspect, especially in the first clause, is reaffirmed and rendered into prose in ver. 11: "For we, alive as we are, are ever being delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh."

Paul does not say that he bears about in his body and death of Jesus (*θάνατος*) but his dying (*νέκρωσις*, *mortificatio*), the process which produces death. The sufferings which come upon him daily in his work for Jesus are gradually killing him; the pains, the perils, the spiritual pressure, the excitement of danger and the excitement of deliverance, are wearing out his strength, and soon he must die. In the very same way, Jesus Himself had spent His strength and died, and in that life of weakness and suffering which was always bringing him nearer the grave, Paul felt himself in intimate sympathetic communion with his Master: it was "the dying of Jesus" that he carried about in his body. But that was not all. In spite of the dying, he was not dead. Perpetually in peril, he had a perpetual series of escapes; perpetually at his wits' end, his way perpetually opened before him. What was the explanation of that? It was *the life of Jesus* manifesting itself in his body. The life of Jesus can only mean the life which Jesus lives now at God's right hand; and these repeated escapes of the Apostle, these restorations of his courage, are manifestations of that life; they are, so to speak, a series of resurrections. Paul's communion with Jesus is not only in His dying, but in His rising again; he has the evidence of the Resurrection, because he has its power, present with him, in these constant deliverances and renewals. Nay, the very purpose of his sufferings and perils is to provide occasion for the manifestation of this resurrection life. Unless he were exposed to death, God could not deliver him from it; unless he were pressed in the spirit, God could not give him relief; there could be no setting off of the exceeding greatness of His power in contrast with the exceeding frailty of the earthen vessel. The use of "body" and of "mortal flesh" in these verses has been appealed to in support of

an interpretation which would limit the meaning to what is merely physical: "I am in daily danger of death, God daily delivers me from it, and thus the life of Jesus is manifested in me." This is of course included in the interpretation given above; but I cannot suppose it is all the Apostle meant. The truth is, there is no such thing in the passage, or indeed in human life, as a merely physical experience. To be delivered to death for Jesus' sake is an experience which is at once and indissolubly physical and spiritual; it could not be, unless the soul had its part, and that the chief part in it. To be delivered *from* such death is also an experience as much spiritual as physical. And in both aspects, and not least in the first, is the life of Jesus manifested. Nor can I see that it is in the least degree unnatural for one who feels this to speak of that life as being manifested in his "body," or in his "mortal flesh"; it is a way which all men understand of describing the human nature, which is the scene of the manifestation, as a frail and powerless thing.

The moral of the passage is similar to that of chap. i. 3-11. Suffering, for the Christian, is not an accident; it is a divine appointment and a divine opportunity. To wear life out in the service of Jesus is to open it to the entrance of Jesus' life; it is to receive, in all its alleviations, in all its renewals, in all its deliverances, a witness to His resurrection. Perhaps it is only by accepting this service, with the daily dying it demands, that that witness can be given to us; and "the life of Jesus" on His throne may become inapprehensible and unreal in proportion as we decline to bear about in our bodies His dying. All who have commented on this passage have noticed the iteration of the name of Jesus. *Singulariter sensit Paulus dulcedinem ejus*. Schmiedel explains the repetition as partly accidental, and partly indicative of the fact that Christ's death is here regarded as a purely human occurrence, and not as a redemptive deed of the Messiah. This points in the right direction, though it may fairly be doubted whether Paul would have drawn this distinction, or could have even been made to understand it. The analytic tendency of the modern mind often disintegrates what depends for its virtue on being kept whole and entire, and this seems to me a case in point. The use of the name Jesus rather indicates that, in recalling the actual events of his own career, Paul saw them run continually parallel to events in the career of Another; they were one in kind with that painful series of incidents which ended in the death of the historical Saviour. People have often sought in the Epistles of Paul for traces of a knowledge of Christ like that which is conserved in the first three Gospels; in this expression, *τὴν νέκρωσιν τοῦ Ἰησοῦ*, and in the repetition of the historical proper name, there is an indirect but quite convincing proof that the general character of Christ's life was known to the Apostle. And though he does not dwell on Christ's sympathy with the fulness and power of the writer to the Hebrews, it is evident from this passage that he was in sympathetic fellowship with One who had suffered as he suffered, and that even to name His human name was consolation.

In ver. 12 an abrupt conclusion is drawn from all that precedes: "So then death worketh in us, but life in you." *Ironice dictum*, is Calvin's



comment, and the words are at least intelligible if so taken. The stinging passage beginning at chap. iv. 8 of the First Epistle is ironical in precisely this sense—"We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye have glory, but we have dishonour": this is, as it were, a variation on the theme "death worketh in us, but life in you." Still, the irony does not seem in place here: Paul writes in all seriousness that the sufferings which he endures as a preacher of the Gospel, and which eventually bring death to him—which are the approaches of death, or death itself at work—are the means by which life, in the most unqualified sense, comes to be at work in the Corinthians. If the death and life which are in view wherever the Gospel appears are to be distributed among them, the death is his, and the life theirs; the dying of Jesus is borne about by the Evangelist, while those who accept the message he brings at this cost are made partakers in Jesus' life.

Not indeed that the contrast can be thus absolute: the thirteenth verse corrects this hasty inference. If death alone were at work in St. Paul, it would frustrate his vocation; he would not be able to preach at all. But he is able to preach. In spite of all the discouragement which his sufferings might beget, his faith remains vigorous; he is conscious of possessing that same confidence toward God which animated the ancient Psalmist to sing, "I believed, therefore I spoke." "We also," he says, "believe, and therefore also we speak." What he believes, and what prompts his utterance, we read in the thirteenth verse: "We speak, knowing that He who raised Jesus shall raise us also like Jesus, and shall present us with you. With you, I say: for the whole thing is for your sakes, that the grace, having become abundant, may by means of many cause the thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God."

What an interesting illustration this is of the communion of the saints! Paul recognises a spiritual kinsman in the writer of the Psalm; faith in God, the power which faith confers, the obligations which faith imposes, are the same in all ages. He recognises spiritual kinsmen in the Corinthians also. All his sufferings have their interests in view, and it is part of his joy, as he looks on to the future, that when God raises him from the dead, as He raised His own Son, He will present him *along with them*. Their unity will not be dissolved by death. The word here rendered "present" has often a technical sense in Paul's Epistles; it is almost appropriated to the presenting of men before the judgment-seat of Christ. Good scholars insist on that meaning here; but even with the proviso that acceptance in the judgment is taken for granted, I cannot feel that it is quite congruous. There is such a thing as presentation to a sovereign as well as to a judge—the presenting of the bride to the bridegroom on the wedding day as well as of the criminal to the justice—and it is the great and glad occasion which answers to the feeling in the Apostle's mind. The communion of the saints, in virtue of which his sufferings bring blessing to the Corinthians, has its issue in the joyful union of all before the throne. As Paul thinks of that, he sees an end in the Gospel lying beyond the blessing it brings to men. That end is God's glory. The more he toils and suffers, the more

God's grace is made known and received; and the more it is received, the more does it cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.

Two practical reflections present themselves here, nearly related to each other. The first is that faith naturally speaks; the second, that grace merits thanksgiving. Put the two into one, and we may say that grace received by faith merits articulate thanksgiving. Much modern faith is inarticulate, and it is far too soothing to be true if we say, Better so. Of course the utterance of faith is not prescribed to it; to be of any value it must be spontaneous. Not all the believing are to be teachers and preachers, but all are to be confessors. Every one who has faith has a witness to bear to God. Every one who has accepted God's grace by faith has a thankful acknowledgment of it to make, and at some time or other to make in words. It is not the faculty of speech that is wanting where this is not done; it is courage and gratitude; it is the same Spirit of faith which prompted the Psalmist and St. Paul. It is true that hypocrites sometimes speak, and that testimonies and thanksgivings are apt to be discredited on their account; but bad money would never be put in circulation unless good money was indisputably valuable. It is not the dumb, but the confessing Christian, not the taciturn, but the outspokenly thankful, who glorifies God, and helps on the Gospel. Calvin is properly severe on our "pseudo-Nicodemi," who make a merit of their silence, and boast that they have never by a syllable betrayed their faith. Faith is betrayed in another and more serious sense when it is kept secret.

But to return to the Apostle, who himself, at ver. 16, returns to the beginning of the chapter, and resumes the *οὐκ ἐγκακοῦμεν* of ver. 1: "Wherefore we faint not." "Wherefore" means "With all that has been said in view"; not only the glorious future in which Paul and his disciples are to be raised and presented together to Christ, but his daily experience of the life of Jesus manifested in his mortal flesh. This kept him brave and strong. "We faint not; but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day." The outward man covers the same area as "our body," or "our mortal flesh." It is human nature as it is constituted in this world—a weak, fragile, perishable thing. Paul could not mistake, and did not hide from himself, the effect which his apostolic work had upon him. He saw it was killing him. He was old long before the time. He was a sorely broken man at an age when many are in the fulness of their strength. The earthen vessel was visibly crumbling. Still, that was not the *whole* of his experience. "The inward man is renewed day by day." The meaning of these words must be fixed mainly by the opposition in which they stand to *οὐκ ἐγκακοῦμεν* ("we faint not"). The same word (*ἀνακαινοδοῦσθαι*) is used of the renewal of the soul in the Creator's image (Col. iii. 10)—i. e., of the work of sanctification; but the opposition in question proves that this is not contemplated here. We must rather think of the daily supply of spiritual power for apostolic service—of the new strength and joy which were given to St. Paul every morning, in spite of the toils and sufferings which every day exhausted him. Of course we can say of all people, bad as well as good, "The outward man is decay-



ing." Time tires the stoutest runner, crumbles the compactest wall. But we cannot say of all, "The inward man is renewed day by day." That is not the compensation of every one; it is the compensation of those whose outward man has decayed in Jesus' service, who have been worn out in labours for His sake. It is they, and they only, who have a life within which is independent of outward conditions, which sufferings and deaths cannot crush, and which never grows old. The decay of the outward man in the godless is a melancholy spectacle, for it is the decay of everything; in the Christian it does not touch that life which is hid with Christ in God, and which is in the soul itself a well of water springing up to life eternal.

But who shall speak of the two great verses in which the Apostle, leaving controversy out of sight, solemnly weighs against each other time and eternity, the seen and the unseen, and claims his inheritance beyond? "Our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." One can imagine that he was dictating quick and eagerly as he began the sentence; he "crowds and hurries and precipitates" the grand contrasts of which his mind is full. Affliction in any case is outweighed by glory, but the affliction in question is a light matter, the glory a great weight: the light affliction is but momentary—it ends with death at the latest, it may end in the coming of Jesus to anticipate death; the weight of glory is eternal; and as if this were not enough, the light affliction which is but for a moment works out for us the weight of glory which endures for ever, "in excess and to excess," in a way above conception, to a degree above conception: it works out for us the things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor man's heart conceived, "all that God has prepared for them that love Him" (1 Cor. ii. 9). If Paul spoke fast and with beating heart as he crowded all this into two brief lines, we can well believe that the pressure was relaxed, and that the pen moved more steadily and slowly over the contemplative words that follow: "while we look not to the things which are seen, but to the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." This sentence is sometimes translated conditionally: "provided we look," etc. This is legitimate, but unnecessary. The Apostle is speaking, in the first instance, of himself, and the looking is taken for granted. The look is not merely equivalent to vision; it means that the unseen is the goal of him who looks. The eye is to be directed to it, not as an indifferent object, but as a mark to aim at, an end to attain. This observation goes some way to limit the application of the whole passage. The contrast of things seen and things unseen is sometimes taken in a latitude which deprives it of much of its force: psychology and metaphysics are dragged in to define and to confuse the Apostle's thought. But everything here is practical. The things seen are to all intents and purposes that tempest-tossed life of which St. Paul has been speaking, that daily dying, that pressure, perplexity, persecution, and downcasting, which are for the

present his lot. To these he does not look: in comparison with that to which he does look, these are a light and momentary affliction which is not worth a thought. Similarly, the things unseen are not everything, indefinitely, which is invisible; to all intents and purposes they are the glory of Christ. It is on this the Apostle's eye is fixed, this which is his goal. The stormy life, even when most is made of its storms, passes; but Christ's glory can never pass. It is infinite, inconceivable, eternal. There is an inheritance in it for all who keep their eyes upon it, and, sustained by a hope so high, bear the daily death of a life like Paul's as a light and momentary affliction. The connection between the two is so close that the one is said to work for us the other. By Divine appointment they are united; fellowship with Jesus is fellowship all through—in the daily dying, which soon has done its worst, and then in the endless life. We may say, if we please, that the glory is the reward of the suffering; it would be truer to say that it was its compensation, truer still that it was its fruit. There is a vital connection between them, but no one can imagine he is reading Paul's thought who should find here the idea that the trivial service of man can make God his debtor for so vast a sum. The excellency of the power which raises the earthen vessel to this height of faith, hope, and inspiration is itself God's, and God's alone.

Distrust of the supernatural, insistence on the present and the practical, and the pride of a self-styled common sense, have done much to rob modern Christianity of this vast horizon, to blind it to this heavenly vision. But wherever the life of Jesus is being manifested in mortal flesh—wherever in His service and for His sake men and women die daily, wearing out nature, but with spirit ceaselessly renewed—there the unseen becomes real again. Such people know that what they do is not for one dead, but for One who lives; they know that the daily inspirations they receive, the hopes, the deliverances, are wrought in them, not by themselves, but by One who has all power in heaven and on earth. The things that are unseen and eternal stand out as what they are in relation to lives like these; to other lives, they have no relation at all. A worldly and selfish career does not work out an exceeding and eternal weight of glory, and therefore to the worldly and selfish man heaven is for ever an unpractical, incredible thing. But it not only comes out in its brightness, it comes out as a mighty inspiration and support, to every one who bears about in his body the dying of Jesus; as he fastens his eye upon it, he takes heart anew, and in spite of daily dying "faints not."

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE CHRISTIAN HOPE.

#### 2 CORINTHIANS V. 1-10 (R. V.).

THAT outlook on the future, which at the close of chap. iv. is presented in the most general terms, is here carried out by the Apostle into more definite detail. The passage is one of the most difficult in his writings, and has received the most various interpretations; yet the first impression it leaves on a simple reader is prob-



ably as near the truth as the subtlest ingenuity of exegesis. It is indeed to such first impressions that one often returns when the mind has ceased to sway this way and that under the impact of conflicting arguments.

The Apostle has been speaking about his life as a daily dying, and in the first verse of this chapter he looks at the possibility that this dying may be consummated in death. It is only a possibility, for to the end of his life it was always conceivable that Christ might come, and forestall the last enemy. Still, it is a possibility; the earthly house of our tabernacle may be dissolved; the tent in which we live may be taken down. With what hope does the Apostle confront such a contingency? "If this befall us," he says, "we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens." Every word here points the contrast between this new house and the old one, and points it in favour of the new. The old was a tent; the new is a building: the old, though not literally made with hands, had many of the qualities and defects of manufactured articles; the new is God's work and God's gift: the old was perishable; the new is eternal. When Paul says we have this house "in the heavens," it is plain that it is not heaven itself; it is a new body which replaces and surpasses the old. It is in the heavens in the sense that it is God's gift; it is something which He has for us where He is, and which we shall wear there. "We have it" means "it is ours"; any more precise definition must be justified on grounds extraneous to the text.

The second verse brings us to one of the ambiguities of the passage. "For verily," our R. V. reads, "in this we groan, longing to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven." The meaning which the English reader finds in the words "in this we groan" is in all probability "in our present body we groan." This is also the meaning defended by Meyer, and by many scholars. But it cannot be denied that ἐν τούτῳ does not naturally refer to ἡ ἐπίγειος ἡμῶν οἰκία τοῦ σκήνους. If it means "in this body" it must be attached specially to σκήνους, and σκήνους is only a subordinate word in the clause. Elsewhere in the New Testament ἐν τούτῳ means "on this account," or "for this reason," and I prefer to take it in this sense here: "For this cause—i. e., because we are the heirs of such a hope—we groan, longing to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven." If Paul had no hope, he would not sigh for the future; but the very longing which pressed the sighs from his bosom became itself a witness to the glory which awaited him. The same argument, it has often been pointed out, is found in Rom. viii. 19 ff. The earnest expectation of the creation, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God, is evidence that this manifestation will in due time take place. The spiritual instincts are prophetic. They have not been implanted in the soul by God only to be disappointed. It is of the longing hope of immortality—that very hope which is in question here—that Jesus says: "If it were not so, I would have told you."

The third verse states the great gain which lies in the fulfilment of this hope: "Since, of course, being clothed [with this new body], we shall not be found naked [i. e., without any body]." I cannot think, especially looking on

to ver. 4, that these two verses (2 and 3) mean anything else than that Paul longs for Christ to come before death. If Christ comes first, the Apostle will receive the new body by the transformation, instead of the putting off, of the old; he will, so to speak, put it on *above* the old; he will be spared the shuddering fear of dying; he will not know what it is to have the old tent taken down, and to be left houseless and naked. We do not need to investigate the opinions of the Hebrews or the Greeks about the condition of souls in Hades in order to understand these words; the conception, figurative as it is, carries its own meaning and impression to every one. It is reiterated, rather than proved, in the fourth verse: \* "For we who are in the tabernacle groan also, being burdened, in that our will is not to be unclothed, but to be clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up of life." It is natural to take βαρούμενοι ("being burdened") as referring to the weight of care and suffering by which men are oppressed while in the body; but here also, as in the similar case of ver. 2, the proper reference of the word is forward. What oppresses Paul, and makes him sigh, is the intensity of his desire to escape "being unclothed," his immense longing to see Jesus come, and, instead of passing through the terrible experience of death, to have the corruptible put on incorruption, and the mortal put on immortality, without that trial.

This seems plain enough, but we must remember that the confidence which Paul has been expressing in the first verse is meant to meet the very case in which this desire is *not* gratified, the case in which death *has* to be encountered, and the tabernacle taken down. "If this should befall us," he says, "we have another body awaiting us, far better than that which we leave, and hence we are confident." The confidence which this hope inspires would naturally, we think, be most perfect, if in the very act of dissolution the new body were assumed; if death were the initial stage in the transformation scene in which all that is mortal is swallowed up by life; if it were, not the ushering of the Christian into a condition of "nakedness," which, temporary though it be, is a mere blank to the mind and imagination, but his admission to celestial life; if "to be absent from the body" were immediately, and in the fullest sense of the words, the same thing as "to be at home with the Lord." This is, in point of fact, the sense in which the passage is understood by a good many scholars, and those who read it so find in it a decisive turning-point in the Apostle's teaching on the last things. In the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, they say, and indeed in the First to the Corinthians also, Paul's eschatology was still essentially Jewish. The Christian dead are οἱ κοιμώμενοι, or οἱ κοιμηθέντες ("those that sleep"); nothing definite is said of their condition; only it is implied that they do not get the incorruptible body till Jesus comes again and raises them from the dead. In other words, those who die before the Parousia have the soul-chilling prospect of an unknown term of "nakedness." Here this terror is dispelled by the new revelation made to the Apostle, or the new insight to which he has attained: there is no longer any such interval between death and

\* The true rendering here is that in the margin of the R. V.



glory; the heavenly body is assumed at once; the state called *κοιμᾶσθαι* ("being asleep") vanishes from the future. Sabatier and Schmiedel, who adopt this view, draw extreme consequences from it. It marks an advance, according to Schmiedel, of the highest importance. The religious postulate of an uninterrupted communion of life with Christ, violated by the conception of a *κοιμᾶσθαι*, or falling asleep, is satisfied; Christ's descent from heaven, and a simultaneous resurrection and judgment, become superfluous; judgment is transferred to the moment of death, or rather to the process of development during life on earth; and, finally, the place of eternal blessedness passes from earth (the Jewish and early Christian opinion, probably shared by Paul, as he gives no indication of the contrary) to heaven. All this, it is further pointed out, is an approximation, more or less close, to the Greek doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and may even have been excogitated in part under its influence; and it is at the same time a half-way house between the Pharisaic eschatology of First Thessalonians and the perfected Christian doctrine of a passage like John v. 24: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth Him that sent Me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life."

There is no objection to be made in principle to the idea that the Apostle's outlook on the future was subject to modification—that he was capable of attaining, or even did attain, a deeper insight, with experience, into the connection between that which is and that which is to come. But it is surely somewhat against the above estimate of the alleged change here that Paul himself seems to have been quite unconscious of it. He was not a man whose mind wrought at unawares, and who passed unwittingly from one standpoint to another. He was nothing if not reflective. According to Sabatier and Schmiedel, he had made a revolutionary change in his opinions—a change so vast that on account of it Sabatier reckons this Epistle, and especially this passage, the most important in all his writings for the comprehension of his theological development; and yet, side by side with the new revolutionary ideas, uttered literally in the same breath with them, we find the old standing undisturbed. The simultaneous resurrection and judgment, according to Schmiedel, should be impossible now; but in chap. iv. 14 the resurrection appears precisely as in Thessalonians, and in chap. v. 10 the judgment, precisely as in all his Epistles from the first to the last. As for the inconsistency between going to be at home with the Lord and the Lord's coming, it also recurs in later years: Paul writes to the Philippians that he has a desire to depart and to be with Christ; and in the same letter, that the Lord is at hand, and that we wait for the Saviour from heaven. Probably the misleading idea in the study of the whole subject has been the assumption that the *κοιμώμενοι*—the dead *in Christ*—were in some dismal, dreary condition which could fairly be described as "nakedness." There is not a word in the New Testament which favours this idea. Where we see men die in faith, we see something quite different. "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." "I saw the souls of them which had been slain for

the Word of God . . . and there was given them, to each one, a white robe." When Paul speaks of those who have fallen asleep, in First Thessalonians, it is with the express intention of showing that those who survive to the Parousia have no advantage over them. "Jesus Christ died for us," he writes (1 Thess. v. 10), "that, whether we wake or sleep, we may live together with Him." And he uses one most expressive word in a similar connection (1 Thess. iv. 14): "Them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." *Suave verbum*, says Bengel: *dicitur de viventibus*. May we not say with equal cogency, not only "de viventibus," but "de viventibus cum Iesu"? Those who are asleep are with Him; they are in blessedness with Him; what their mode of existence is it may be impossible for us to conceive, but it is certainly not a thing to shrink from with horror. The taking down of the old tent in which we live here is a thing from which one cannot but shrink, and that is why Paul would rather have Christ come, and be saved the pain and fear of dying. With death in view he mentions the new body as the ground of his confidence, because it is the final realisation of the Christian hope, the crown of redemption (Rom. viii. 23). But he does not mean to say that, unless the new body were granted in the very instant of dying, death would usher him into an appalling void, and separate him from Christ. This assumption, on which the interpretation of Sabatier and Schmiedel rests, is entirely groundless, and therefore that interpretation, in spite of a superficial plausibility, is to be decidedly rejected. It is to be rejected all the more when we are invited to see the occasion which produced Paul's supposed change of opinion in the danger which he had lately incurred in Asia (chap. i. 8-10). Paul, we are to imagine, who had always been confident that he would live to see the Parousia, had come to very close quarters with death, and this experience constrained him to seek in his religion a hope and consolation more adequate to the terribleness of death than any he had yet conceived. Hence the mighty advance explained above. But is it not absurd to say that a man, whose life was constantly in peril, had never thought of death till this time? Can any one seriously believe that, as Sabatier puts it, "the image of death, with which the Apostle had not hitherto concerned himself, (here) enters for the first time within the scope of his doctrine"? Can any one who knows the kind of man Paul was deliberately suggest that fear and self-pity conferred on him an enlargement of spiritual vision which no sympathy for bereaved disciples, and no sense of fellowship with those who had fallen asleep in Jesus, availed to bestow? Believe this who will, it seems utterly incredible to me. The passage says nothing inconsistent with Thessalonians, or First Corinthians, or Philippians, or Second Timothy, about the last things: it expresses in a special situation the constant Christian faith and hope—"the redemption of the body"; that is the possession of the believer; it is ours; and the Apostle is not concerned to fix the moment of time at which hope becomes sight. "Come what will," he says, "come death itself, *this* is ours; and because it is ours, though we dread the possible necessity of having to strip off the old body, and would fain escape it, we do not allow it to dismay us."



The Apostle cannot look to the end of the Christian hope without referring to its condition and guarantee. "He that wrought us for this very thing is God, who gave us the earnest of the Spirit." The future is never considered in the New Testament in a speculative fashion; nothing could be less like an apostle than to discuss the immortality of the soul. The question of life beyond death is for Paul not a metaphysical but a Christian question; the pledge of anything worth the name of life is not the inherent constitution of human nature, but the possession of the Divine Spirit. Without the Spirit, Paul could have had no such certainty, no such triumphant hope, as he had; without the Spirit there can be no such certainty yet. Hence it is idle to criticise the Christian hope on purely speculative grounds, and as idle to try on such grounds to establish it. That hope is of a piece with the experience which comes when the Spirit of Him who raised up Christ from the dead dwells in us, and apart from this experience it cannot even be understood. But to say that there is no eternal life except in Christ is not to accept what is called "conditional immortality"; it is only to accept conditional glory.

The fifth verse marks a pause: in the three which follow Paul describes the mood in which, possessed of the Christian hope, he confronts all the conditions of the present and the alternatives of the future. "We are of good courage at all times," he says. "We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from home as far as the Lord is concerned—at a distance from Him." This does not mean that fellowship is broken, or that the soul is separated from the love of Christ: it only means that earth is not heaven, and that Paul is painfully conscious of the fact. This is what is proved by ver. 7: We are absent from the Lord, our true home, "for in this world we are walking through the realm of faith, not through that of actual appearance." There is a world, a mode of existence, to which Paul looks forward, which is one of actual appearance: he will be in Christ's presence there, and see Him face to face (1 Cor. xiii. 12). But the world through which his course lies meanwhile is *not* that world of immediate presence and manifestation; on the contrary, it is a world of faith, which realises that future world of manifestation only by a strong spiritual conviction; it is through a faith-land that Paul's journey leads him. All along the way his faith keeps him in good heart; nay, when we think of all that it ensures, of all that is guaranteed by the Spirit, he is willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be at home with the Lord.

"For, ah! the Master is so fair,  
His smile so sweet on banished men,  
That they who meet it unaware  
Can never turn to earth again;  
And they who see Him risen afar,  
At God's right hand to welcome them,  
Forgetful stand of home and land,  
Desiring fair Jerusalem."

If he had to make his choice, it would incline this way, rather than the other; but it is not his to make a choice, and so he does not express himself unconditionally. The whole tone of the passage anticipates that of Phil. i. 21 ff.: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if to live in the flesh,—if this is the fruit of my

work, then what I shall choose I wot not. But I am in a strait betwixt the two, having the desire to depart and to be with Christ; for it is very far better: yet to abide in the flesh is more needful for your sake." Nothing could be less like the Apostle than a monkish, unmanly wish to die. He exulted in his calling. It was a joy to him above all joys to speak to men of the love of God in Jesus Christ. But nothing, on the other hand, could be less like him than to lose sight of the future in the present, and to forget amid the service of men the glory which is to be revealed. He stood between two worlds; he felt the whole attraction of both; in the earnest of the Spirit he knew that he had an inheritance there as well as here. It is this consciousness of the dimensions of life that makes him so immensely interesting; he never wrote a dull word; his soul was stirred incessantly by impulses from earth and from heaven, swept by breezes from the dark and troubled sea of man's life, touched by inspirations from the radiant heights where Christ dwelt. We do not need to be afraid of the reproach of "other worldliness" if we seek to live in this same spirit; the reproach is as false as it is threadbare. It would be an incalculable gain if we could recover the primitive hope in something like its primitive strength. It would not make us false to our duties in the world, but it would give us the victory over the world.

In bringing this subject to a close, the Apostle strikes a graver note. A certain moral, as well as a certain emotional temper, is evoked by the Christian hope. It fills men with courage, and with spiritual yearnings; it braces them also to moral earnestness and vigour. "Wherefore also we make it our aim"—literally, we are ambitious, the only lawful ambition—"whether at home or absent, to be well-pleasing unto Him." Modes of being are not of so much consequence. It may agree with a man's feelings better to live till Christ comes, or to die before He comes, and go at once to be with Him; but the main thing is, in whatever mode of being, to be accepted in His sight. "For we must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad." The Christian hope is not clouded by the judgment-seat of Christ; it is sustained at the holy height which befits it. We are forbidden to count upon it lightly. "Every man," we are reminded, "that hath this hope set on Him purifieth himself even as He is pure." It is not necessary for us to seek a formal reconciliation of this verse with Paul's teaching that the faithful are accepted in Christ Jesus; we can feel that both must be true. And if the doctrine of justification freely, by God's grace, is that which has to be preached to sinful men, the doctrine of exact retribution, taught in this passage, has its main interest and importance for Christians. It is Christians only who are in view here, and the law of requital is so exact that every one is said to get back, to carry off for himself, the very things done in the body. In this world, we have not seen the last of anything. We shall all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ; all that we have hidden shall be revealed. The books are shut now, but they will be opened then. The things we have done in the body will come back to us, whether good or bad. Every pious thought,



and every thought of sin; every secret prayer, and every secret curse; every unknown deed of charity, and every hidden deed of selfishness: we will see them all again, and though we have not remembered them for years, and perhaps have forgotten them altogether, we shall have to acknowledge that they are our own, and take them to ourselves. Is not that a solemn thing to stand at the end of life? Is it not a true thing? Even those who can say with the Apostle, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and rejoice in hope of His glory," know how true it is. Nay, they most of all know, for they understand better than others the holiness of God, and they are especially addressed here. The moral consciousness is not maintained in its vigour and integrity if this doctrine of retribution disappears; and if we are called by a passage like this to encourage ourselves in the Lord, and in the hope which He has revealed, we are warned also that evil cannot dwell with God, and that He will by no means clear the guilty.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

#### THE MEASURE OF CHRIST'S LOVE.

##### 2 CORINTHIANS V. 11-15 (R. V.).

THE Christian hope of immortality is elevated and solemnised by the thought of the judgment-seat of Christ. This is no strange thought to St. Paul; many a time he has set himself in imagination in that great presence, and let the awe of it descend upon his heart. This is what he means when he writes, "Knowing the fear of the Lord." Like the pastors addressed in the Epistle to the Hebrews, he exercises his office as one who must render an account. In this spirit, he says, he persuades men. A motive so high, and so stern in its purifying power, no minister of Christ can afford to dispense with. We need something to suppress self-seeking, to keep conscience vigorous, to preserve the message of reconciliation itself from degenerating into good-natured indifference, to prohibit immoral compromises and superficial healing of the soul's hurts. Let us familiarise our minds, by meditation, with the fear due to Christ the judge, and a new element of power will enter into our service, making it at once more urgent and more wholesome than it could otherwise be.

The meaning of the words "we persuade men" is not at once clear. Interpreters generally find in them a combination of two ideas—we try to win men for the Gospel, and we try to convince them of our own purity of motive in our evangelistic work. The word is suitable enough to express either idea; and though it is straining it to make it carry both, the first is suggested by the general tenor of the passage, and the second seems to be demanded by what follows. "We try to convince men of our disinterestedness, but we do not need to try to convince God; we have been manifested to Him already; and we trust also that we have been manifested in your consciences." Paul was well aware of the hostility with which he was regarded by some of the Corinthians, but he is confident that, when his appeal is tried in the proper court, decision must be given in his

favour, and he hopes that this has really been done at Corinth. Often we do not give people in his position the benefit of a fair trial. It is not in our consciences they are arraigned—*i. e.*, in God's sight, and according to God's law—but at the bar of our prejudices, our likes and dislikes, sometimes even our whims and caprices. It is not their *character* which is taken into account, but something quite irrelevant to character. Paul did not care for such estimates as these. It was nothing to him whether his appearance made a favourable impression on those who heard him—whether they liked his voice, his gestures, his manners, or even his message. What he did care for was to be able to appeal to their consciences, as he could appeal to God, to whom all things were naked and opened, that in the discharge of his functions as an evangelist he had been absolutely simple and sincere.

In speaking thus, he has no intention of again recommending himself. Rather, as he says with a touch of irony, it is for their convenience he writes; he is giving them occasion to boast on his behalf, that when they encounter people who boast in face and not in heart they may not be speechless, but may have something to say for themselves—and for him. It is easy to read between the lines here. The Corinthians had persons among them—Jewish and Judaising teachers evidently—who boasted "in face"; in other words, who prided themselves on outward and visible distinctions, though, as Paul asserts; they had nothing within to be proud of. There are suggestions of these distinctions elsewhere, and we can imagine the claims men made, the airs they gave themselves, or at least the recognition they consented to accept, on the ground of them. Their eloquence, their knowledge of the Scriptures, their Jewish descent, their acquaintance with the Twelve, above all acquaintance with Jesus Himself—these were their credentials, and of these their followers made much. Perhaps even on their own ground Paul could have met and routed most of them, but meanwhile he leaves them in undisturbed possession of their advantages, such as they are. He only sums up these advantages in the disparaging word "face," or "appearance"; they are all on the outside; they amount to "a fair show in the flesh," but no more. He would not like if *his* disciples could make no better boast of their master, and all the high things he has written, from chap. ii. 14 on to chap. v. 10, especially his vindication of the absolute purity of his motives, furnish them, if they choose to take it so, with grounds of counter-boasting, far deeper and more spiritual than those of his adversaries. For *he* boasts, not "in appearance, but in heart." The ironical tone in this is unmistakable, yet it is not merely ironical. From the beginning of Christianity to this day Churches have gathered round men, and made their boast in them. Too often it has been a boast "in face," and not "in heart"—gifts, accomplishments, and distinctions, which may have given an outward splendour to the individual, but which were entirely irrelevant to the possession of the Christian spirit. Often even the imperfections of the natural man have been gloried in, simply because they were his; and the Lutheran and Calvinistic Churches, for example, owe some of their most distinctive features to an exaggerated appreciation of those



very characteristics of Luther and Calvin which had no Christian value. The same thing is seen every day, on a smaller scale, in congregations. People are proud of their minister, not for what he is in heart, but because he is more learned, more eloquent, more naturally capable, than other preachers in the same town. It is a pity when ministers themselves, like the Judaists in Corinth, are content to have it so. The true evangelist or pastor will choose rather, with St. Paul, to be taken for what he is as a Christian, and for nothing else; and if he *must* be spoken about, he will be spoken of in this character, and in no other. Nay, if it really comes to glorying "in face," he will glory in his weaknesses and incapacities; he will magnify the very earthiness of the earthen vessel, the very coarseness of the clay, as a foil to the power and life of Christ which dwell in it.

The connection of ver. 13 with what precedes is very obscure. Perhaps as fair a paraphrase as any would run thus: "And well may you boast of our complete sincerity; for whether we are beside ourselves, it is to God; or whether we are of sober mind, it is unto you; that is, in no case is self-interest the motive or rule of our conduct." Connection apart, there is a further difficulty about *εἴτε ἐξέστημεν*. The Revised Version renders it "whether we *are* beside ourselves," but in the margin gives "*were*" for "*are*." It makes a very great difference which tense we accept. If the proper meaning is given by "*are*," the application must be to some constant characteristic of the Apostle's ministry. His enthusiasm, his absolute superiority to common selfish considerations such as are ordinarily supreme in human life, his resolute assertion of truths lying beyond the reach of sense, the unearthly flame which burned unceasingly in his bosom, and never more brightly than when he wrote the fourth and fifth chapters of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians—all these constitute the temper which is described as being "*beside oneself*," a kind of sacred madness. It was in this sense that the accusation of being beside himself was brought on a memorable occasion against Jesus (Mark iii. 21). The disciple and the Master alike seemed to those who did not understand them to be in an overstrained, too highly wrought condition of spirit; in the ardour of their devotion they allowed themselves to be carried beyond all natural limits, and it was not improper to speak of applying some kindly restraint. At first sight this interpretation seems very appropriate, and I do not think that the tense of *ἐξέστημεν* is decisive against it. Those who think it is point to the change to the present tense in the next clause, *εἴτε σωφρονούμεν*, and allege that this would have no motive unless *ἐξέστημεν* were a true past. But this may be doubted. On the one hand, *ἐξέστη* in Mark iii. 21 can hardly mean anything but "He is beside Himself"—i. e., it is virtually a present; on the other, the grammatical present *ἐξιστάμεθα* would not unambiguously convey the idea of madness, and would therefore be inappropriate here. But assuming that the change of tense has the effect of making *ἐξέστημεν* a real past, and that the proper rendering is "whether we *were* beside ourselves," what is the application then? We must suppose that some definite occasion is before the Apostle and his readers, on which he had been in an ecstasy (Acts xi. 5; x. 10),

and that his opponents availed themselves of this experience, in which he had passed, for a time, out of his own control, to whisper the malicious accusation that he had once not been quite right in his mind, and that this explained much. The Apostle, we should have to assume, admits the fact alleged, but protests against the inference drawn from it, and the use made of the inference. "*I was beside myself*," he says; "but it was an experience which had nothing to do with my ministry; it was between God and my solitary self; and to drag it into my relations with you is a mere impertinence." That the "*ecstasis*" in question was his vision of Jesus on the way to Damascus, and that his adversaries sought to discredit that, and the apostleship of Paul as grounded on that, is one of the extravagances of an irresponsible criticism. Of all experiences that ever befell him, his conversion is the very one which was *not* solely his own affair and God's, but the affair of the whole Church; and whereas he speaks of his ecstasies and visions with evident reluctance and embarrassment, as in chap. xii. 1 ff., or refuses to speak of them at all, as here (assuming this interpretation to be the true one), he makes his conversion and the appearance of the Lord the very foundation of his preaching, and treats of both with the utmost frankness. It must be something quite different from this—something analogous perhaps to the speaking with tongues, in which "the understanding was unfruitful," but for which Paul was distinguished (1 Cor. xiv. 14-18)—that is intended here. Such rapt conditions are certainly open to misinterpretation; and as their spiritual value is merely personal, Paul declines to discuss any allusion to them, as if it affected his relation to the Corinthians.

The strongest point in favour of this interpretation seems to me not the tense of *ἐξέστημεν*, but the use of *θεῷ*: "it is unto God." If the meaning were the one first suggested, and the madness were the holy enthusiasm of the Evangelist, that would be distinctly a thing which did concern the Corinthians, and it would not be natural to withdraw it from their censure as God's affair. Nevertheless, one can conceive Paul saying that he was answerable for his extravagances, not to them, but to his Master; and that his sober-mindedness, at all events, had their interests in view. On a survey of the whole case, and especially with Mark iii. 21, and the New Testament use of the verb *ἐξιστάμαι* before us, I incline to think that the text of the Revised Version is to be preferred to the margin. The "*being beside himself*" with which Paul was charged will not, then, be an isolated incident in his career—an incident which Jewish teachers, remembering the ecstasies of Peter and John, could hardly object to—but the spiritual tension in which he habitually lived and wrought. The language, so far as I can judge, admits of this interpretation, and it brings the Apostle's experience into line, not only with that of his Master, but with that of many who have succeeded him. But how great and rare is the self-conquest of the man who can say that in his enthusiasm and his sobriety alike—when he is beside himself, and when his spirit is wholly subject to him—the one thing which never intrudes, or troubles his singleness of mind, is the thought of his own private ends.



In the verses which follow, Paul lets us into the secret of this unselfishness, this freedom from by-ends and ambition: "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that One died for all, therefore all [of them] died." "Constraineth" is one of the most expressive words in the New Testament; the love of Christ has hold of the Apostle on both sides, as it were, and urges him on in a course which he cannot avoid. It has him in its grasp, and he has no choice, under its irresistible constraint, but to be what he is, and to do what he does, whether men think him in his mind or out of his mind. That the love of Christ means Christ's love to us, and not our love to Him, is shown by the fact that Paul goes on at once to describe in what it consists. "It constrains us," he says, "because we have come to this mind about it: One died for all; so then all died." Here, we may say, is the content of Christ's love, the essence of it, that which gives it its soul-subduing and constraining power: He loved us, and gave Himself for us; He died for all, and in that death of His all died.

It may seem a hazardous thing to give a definition of love, and especially to shut up within the boundaries of a human conception that love of Christ which passes knowledge. But the intelligence must get hold somehow even of things inconceivably great, and the New Testament writers, with all their diversity of spiritual gifts, are at one as to what is essential here. They all find Christ's love concentrated and focussed in His death. They all find it there inasmuch as that death was a death *for us*. Perhaps St. Paul and St. John penetrated further, intellectually, than any of the others into the mystery of this "for"; but if we cannot give it a natural interpretation, and an interpretation in which an absolutely irresistible constraint is hidden for heart and will, we do not know what the Apostles meant when they spoke of Christ's love. There has been much discussion about the "for" in this place. It is *ὑπέρ* not *ἀντί*, and many render it simply "on our behalf," or "for our advantage." That Christ did die for our advantage is not to be questioned. Neither is it to be questioned that this is a fair rendering of *ὑπέρ*. But what *does* raise question is whether this interpretation of the "for" supplies sufficient ground for the immediate inference of the Apostle: "so then all died." Is it logical to say, "One died for the benefit of all: hence all died"? From that premiss is not the only legitimate conclusion "hence all remained alive"? Plainly, if Paul's conclusion is to be drawn, the "for" must reach deeper than this mere suggestion of our advantage: if we all died, in that Christ died *for us*, there must be a sense in which that death of His is *ours*; He must be identified with *us* in it: there, on the cross, while we stand and gaze at Him, He is not simply a person doing us a service; He is a person doing us a service *by filling our place and dying our death*. It is out of this deeper relation that all services, benefits, and advantages flow; and that deeper sense of "for," in which Christ in His death is at once the representative and the substitute of man, is essential to do justice to the Apostle's thought. Without the ideas involved in these words we cannot con-

ceive, as he conceived it, the love of Christ. We cannot understand how that force, which exercised such absolute authority over his whole life, appealed to his intelligence. We do not mean what he meant even when we use his words; we gain currency, under cover of them, for ideas utterly inadequate to the spiritual depth of his.

If this were an exposition of St. Paul's theology, and not of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, I should be bound to consider the connection between that outward death of Christ in which the death of all is involved, and the appropriation of that death to themselves by individual men. But the Apostle does not directly raise this question here; he only adds in the fifteenth verse a statement of the purpose for which Christ died, and in doing so suggests that the connecting link is to be sought, in part at least, in the feeling of gratitude. "He died for all, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again." In dying our death Christ has done something for us so immense in love that we ought to be His, and only His, for ever. To make us His is the very object of His death. Before we know Him we are naturally selfish; we are an end to ourselves, in the bad sense; we are our own. Even the sacrifices which men make for their families, their country, or their order, are but qualifications of selfishness; it is not eradicated and exterminated till we see and feel what is meant by this—that *Christ died our death*. The life we have after we have apprehended this can never be our own; nay, we ourselves are not our own; we are bought with a price; life has been given a ransom for us, and our life is due to Him "who died for us and rose again." I believe the Authorised Version is right in this rendering, and that it is a mistake to say, "who for our sakes died and rose again." The Resurrection has certainly significance in the work of Christ, but not in precisely the same way as His death; and Paul mentions it here, not to define its significance, but simply because he could not think of living except for One who was Himself alive.

One point deserves especial emphasis here—the universality of the expressions. Paul has been speaking of himself, and of the constraint which the love of Christ, as he apprehends it, exercises upon him. But he no sooner begins to define his thought of Christ's love than he passes over from the first person to the third. The love of Christ was not to be limited; what it is to the Apostle it is to the world: He died for all, and so all died. Whatever blessing Christ's death contained, it contains for all. Whatever doom it exhausts and removes, it exhausts and removes for all. Whatever power it breaks, it breaks for all. Whatever ideal it creates, whatever obligation it imposes, it creates and imposes for all. There is not a soul in the world which is excluded from an interest in that knowledge-surpassing love which made our death its own. There is not one which ought not to feel that omnipotent constraint which enchained and swayed the strong, proud spirit of Paul. There is not one which ought not to be pouring out its life for Him who died in its place, and rose to receive its service.



## CHAPTER XV.

## THE NEW WORLD.

2 CORINTHIANS v. 16, 17 (R. V.).

THE inferences which are here drawn depend upon what has just been said of Christ's death for all, and the death of all in that death of His. In that death, as inclusive of ours, the old life died, and with it died all its distinctions. All that men were, apart from Christ, all that constituted the "appearance" (*πρόσωπον*,) ver. 12) of their life, all that marked them off from each other as such and such outwardly, ceased to have significance the moment Christ's death was understood as Paul here understands it. He dates his inference with *ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν* ("henceforth"). This does not mean from the time at which he writes, but from the time at which he saw that One had died for all, and so all died. Here, as in other places, he divides his life into "now" and "then," the Christian and the pre-Christian stage (Rom. v. 9; Eph. ii. 11-13). The transition from one to the other was revolutionary, and one of its most startling results is that which he here describes. "Then," the distinctions between men, the "appearances" in which they boasted, had been important in his eyes; "now," they have ceased to be. He\* never asks whether a man is Jew or Greek, rich or poor, bond or free, learned or unlearned; these are classifications "after the flesh," and have died in Christ's death *for all*. To recognise them any longer, to admit the legitimacy of claims based upon them—such claims as his opponents in Corinth seem to have been putting forth—would be to make Christ's death, in a sense, of no effect. It would be to deny that when He died for all, all died in Him; it would be to reanimate distinctions that should have been annihilated in His death.

To this rule of knowing no one after the flesh Paul can admit no exception. Not even Christ is accepted. "Even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know Him so no more." This is a difficult saying, and has been very variously interpreted. The English reader inevitably supposes that Paul *had* known Christ "after the flesh," but had outgrown that kind of knowledge; and that he is intimating these two facts. But it is quite possible to take the words† as purely hypothetical: "Supposing us to have known even Christ after the flesh—a case which in point of fact was never ours—yet now we know Him so no more." Grammar does not favour this last rendering, though it does not preclude it; and however the matter may be settled, the bare supposition, as much as the fact, requires us to give a definite meaning to the words about knowing Christ after the flesh, and ceasing so to know Him.

Some have inferred from them that when Paul became a Christian, and for some time after, his conception of Christ had resembled that of the persons whom he is here controverting: his Christ had been to all intents and purposes a Jewish Messiah, and he had only been able by degrees to overcome, though he had at last overcome, the narrowness and national-

ism of his early years as a disciple. To know Christ after the flesh would be to know Him in the character of a deliverer of the Jews: His Jewish descent, His circumcision, His observance of the Temple worship, His limitation of His ministry to the Holy Land, would be matters of great significance; and Jewish descent might naturally be supposed to establish a prerogative in relation to the Messiah for Jews as opposed to Gentiles. Probably there were Christians whose original conception of the Saviour was of this kind, and it is a fair enough description to say that this amounts only to a knowing of Christ after the flesh; but Paul can hardly have been one of them. His Christian knowledge of Christ dates from his vision of the Risen Lord on the way to Damascus, and in that appearance there was no room for anything that could be called "flesh." It was an appearance of the Lord of Glory. It determined all Paul's thoughts thenceforth. Nothing is more remarkable in his Epistles than the strong sense that what he calls his Gospel is one, unchanged, and unchangeable. It is not Yes and No. Neither man nor angel may modify it by preaching another Jesus than he preaches. He is quite unconscious of any such transformation of his Christology as is indicated above; and in the absence of any trace elsewhere of a change so important, it is impossible to read it into the verse before us.

Another interpretation of the words would make "knowing Christ after the flesh" refer to a knowledge at first hand of the facts and outward conditions of Christ's life in this world: a knowledge which Paul had in his early Christian days valued highly, but for which he no longer cared. There were numbers of men alive then who had known Christ in this sense. They had seen and heard Him in Galilee and Jerusalem; they had much to tell about Him which would no doubt be very interesting to believers; and more than likely some of them emphasised this distinction of theirs, and were disposed to be pretentious on the strength of it. Whether Paul had ever known Christ in this sense, it is impossible to say. But it is certain that to such knowledge he would have assigned no Christian importance whatever. And in doing so, he would have been following the example of Christ Himself. "Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in Thy presence, and Thou hast taught in our streets. And He shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are." But it is impossible to suppose that this is a matter on which Paul as a Christian had ever needed to change his mind.

It is an interpretation in part akin to this which makes St. Paul here decry all knowledge of the historical Christ in comparison with the understanding of His death and resurrection. To know Christ after the flesh is in this case to know Him as He is represented in Matthew, Mark, and Luke; and Paul is supposed to say that, though narratives like these once had an interest and value for him, they really have it no longer: they are not essential to his Gospel, which is constituted by the death and resurrection alone. These great events and their consequences are all he is concerned with; to know Christ after the Evangelists is merely to know Him after the flesh; and flesh, even *His* flesh, ought to have no significance since His death.

\* The "we" in the first clause of ver. 16 is emphatic.

† As Heinrici does.



It is a little difficult to take this quite seriously, though it has a serious side. St. Paul, no doubt, makes very few references to incidents in the life of our Lord, or even to words which He spoke.\* But he is not singular in this. The Epistles of Peter and John are historically as barren as his. They do not add a word to the Gospel story; there is no new incident, no new trait in the picture of Jesus, no new oracle. Indeed, the only genuine addition to the record is that one made by Paul himself—"the word of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." The truth seems to be that it is not natural for an apostle, nor for any inspired man, to fall back on quotations, like a preacher gravelled for lack of matter, or conscious of wanting authority. Paul and his colleagues in apostleship had Christ living in them, and recognised the spirit by which they spoke as the spirit of their Master. So far as this was the case, it was certainly a matter of indifference to them whether they were acquainted with this or that incident in His life, with this or that syllable that He spoke on such and such an occasion. One casual occurrence, one scene in Christ's sufferings, one discourse which He delivered, would inevitably be known with more exact and literal precision to one person than to another; and there is no difficulty in believing that the casual advantage which any individual might thus possess was regarded by St. Paul as a thing of no Christian consequence. Similar differences exist still, and in principle are to be disregarded. But it is another thing to say that *all* knowledge of the historical Christ is irrelevant to Christianity, and yet another to father such an opinion on St. Paul. The attempt to do so is due in part, I believe, to a misinterpretation of *κατὰ σάρκα*. Paul has been read as if what he disclaimed and decried were knowledge of Christ *ἐν σαρκί*. But the two things are quite distinct. Christ lived *in the flesh*; but the life that He lived in the flesh He lived *after the spirit*, and when its spiritual import is regarded, it is safe to say that no one ever knew Christ as He was *in the flesh*—the Christ of Matthew, Mark, and Luke—better than Paul. No one had been initiated into Christ's character, as that character is revealed in the story of the Evangelists, more fully than he. No one ever knew the mind, the temper, the new moral ideal of Christianity, better than Paul, and there is no ultimate source for this knowledge but the historical Christ. Paul could not in his work as an evangelist preach salvation through the death and resurrection of an unknown person; the story which was the common property of the Church, and with which her catechists everywhere indoctrinated the new disciples, must have been as familiar to him, in substance, as it is to us; and his evident knowledge and appreciation of the character embodied in it forbid us to think of this acquaintance with Christ as what he means by knowing Him after the flesh. He might have had the Gospel narratives by heart, and counted them inestimably precious, and yet have spoken exactly as he speaks here.

Nevertheless, this interpretation, though mistaken, has a certain truth in it. There is a historical knowledge of Christ which is a mere ir-

relevance to Christianity, and it has sometimes a stress laid upon it by its possessors which tempts one to speak of it in St. Paul's scornful tone. Many so-called "Lives" of Christ abound in it. They aim at a historical realism which, to speak the plain truth, has simply no religious value. Knowledge of localities, customs, costumes, and so forth, is interesting enough; but if it should be ever so full and ever so exact, it is not the knowledge of Jesus Christ in any sense which makes a Gospel. It is quite possible, nay it is more than possible, that such knowledge may come between the soul and the Lord. It was so when Jesus lived. There were people who knew so well what He was like that they were blind to what He was. In St. Paul's phrase we may say that they knew Him "after the flesh," and it kept them from knowing Him truly. They asked, "Is not this the carpenter?" as if that were a piece of undeniable insight; and they were not conscious that only men blind to what he really was could ever have asked a question so absurd. It was *not* the carpenter who spoke with authority in the synagogues, and cast out devils, and brought in the kingdom; it was the Son of Man, the Son of God; and whether Paul meant it so or not, we may use his language in this passage to express the conviction, that one may really know Christ, to whom the whole outward aspect of His life, represented by "the carpenter of Nazareth," is indifferent; nay, that one cannot know Him in any real sense until these external things *are* indifferent. Or to put the same thing in other words, we may say that the knowledge of Christ which constitutes the Christian is not the knowledge of what He was, but of what He is; and if we know what He is, then all that is merely outward in the history may pass away.

But if none of these interpretations answers exactly to the Apostle's thought, where are we to seek the meaning of his words? All these, it will be observed, assume that Paul knew Christ "after the flesh," subsequent to his conversion; that he shared, as a Christian, views about Christ which he is now combating. As these interpretations, however, are untenable, we must assume that the time when he thus knew Christ was *before* his conversion. He could look back to days when his Messianic conceptions were "carnal"; when the Christ was to be identified, for him, by tokens in the domain of "appearance," or "flesh"; when He was to be a national, perhaps merely a political deliverer, and the Saviour of the Jews in a sense which gave them an advantage over the Gentiles. But these days were gone for ever. "Henceforth"—from the very instant that the truth flashed on him, one died *for all*, and so *all* died—they belonged to a past which could never be revived or recalled. One died for all: that means that Christ is Universal Redeemer. That same One rose again: that means He is Universal Lord. He has done the same infinite service for all, He makes the same infinite claim upon all; there are no prerogatives for any race, for any caste, for any individual men, in relation to Him. In presence of His cross, there is no difference: in His death, and in our death in Him, all carnal distinctions die; "henceforth we know no man after the flesh." Even kinship to Jesus "after the flesh" does not base any prerogative in the kingdom of God; even to have eaten and drunk in His presence, and lis-

\* See the excellent section on Paul and the Historical Christ in Sabatier's "The Apostle Paul" (English translation, pp. 76-85).



tened to His living voice, confers no distinction there; He has not done more for His brethren and His companions than He has done for us all. And not only the carnal distinctions of men have vanished away; the carnal Jewish conception of Christ has vanished with them.

The seventeenth verse seems a new inference from the same ground as the fifteenth. Indeed, it connects so naturally with ver. 15 that one critic has suggested that ver. 16 is spurious, and another that it was a later insertion by the Apostle. Perhaps we may assume that St. Paul, who had no fear of such critics before his eyes, was capable of setting his sentences down just as they occurred to him, and did not mind an occasional awkwardness. When he writes "Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature," he is indeed drawing an inference from ver. 15, but he is at the same time generalising and carrying on the thought of ver. 16. The idea of the new creature occurs in other places in his writings (*e. g.*, Eph. ii. 10; Gal. vi. 15), but both here and in Gal. vi. 15 I prefer the rendering in the margin of the Revised Version—"If any man is in Christ, there is a new creation: the old things passed away (when he died in Christ); \* behold, they have become new." We may say, if we please, that it is the new creature which makes the new creation; the change in the soul which revolutionises the world. Still, it is this universal change which the Apostle, apparently, wishes to describe; and in the sudden note of triumph with which he concludes—"Behold! all is become new"—we feel, as it were, one throb of that glad surprise with which he had looked out on the world after God had reconciled him to Himself by His Son. The past was dead to him, as dead as Christ on His cross; all its ideas, all its hopes, all its ambitions, were dead; *in Christ*, he was another man in another universe.

This is the first passage in 2 Corinthians in which this Pauline formula for a Christian—a man in Christ—is used.† It denotes the most intimate possible union, a union in which the believer's faith identifies him with Jesus in His death and resurrection, so that he can say, "I live no longer, but Christ liveth in me." It is the Apostle's profoundest word, not on the Gospel, but on the appropriation of the Gospel; not on Christ, but on the Christian religion. It is mystical, as every true word must be which speaks of the relation of the soul to the Saviour; but it is intelligible to every one who knows what it is to trust and to love, and through trust and love to lose self in another whose life is greater and better than his own. And when we have seen, even for a moment, what it is to live in self or in the world, and what to live in Christ, we can easily believe that this union is equivalent to a re-creating and transfiguring of all things.

It is impossible to point to all the applications of this truth: "all things" is too wide a text. Every reader knows the things which bulked most largely in his life before he knew Christ, and it is easy for him to tell the difference due to being in the Lord. In a sense the new creation is in process as long as we live; it is ideally that faith in Christ which means death in His death; ideally that with faith the old passes and the new is there; the actual putting away

of the old, the actual production of the new, are the daily task of faith as it unites the soul to Christ. We are *in* Him the moment faith touches Him, but we have to grow up *into* Him in all things. Only as we do so does the world change all around us, till the promise is fulfilled of new heavens and a new earth.

But there is one application of these words, directly suggested by the context, which we ought not to overlook: I mean their application to men, and the old ways of estimating men. Those who are in Christ have died to the whole order of life in which men are judged "after the flesh." Perhaps the Christian Church has almost as much need as any other society to lay this to heart. We are still too ready to put stress upon distinctions which are quite in place in the world, but are without ground in Christ. Even in a Christian congregation there is a recognition of wealth, of learning, of social position, in some countries of race, which is not Christian. I do not say these distinctions are not real, but they are meaningless in relation to Christ, and ought not to be made. To make them narrows and impoverishes the soul. If we associate only with people of a certain station, and because of their station, all our thoughts and feelings are limited to a very small area of human life; but if distinctions of station, of intelligence, of manners, are lost in the common relation to Christ, then life is open to us in all its length and breadth; all things are ours, because we are His. To be guided by worldly distinctions is to know only a few people, and to know them by what is superficial in their nature; but to see that such distinctions died in Christ's death, and to look at men in relation to Him who is Redeemer and Lord of all, is to know all our brethren, and to know them not on the surface, but to the heart. People lament everywhere the want of a truly social and brotherly feeling in the Church, and try all sorts of well-meant devices to stimulate it, but nothing short of this goes to the root of the matter. The social, in this universal sense, is dependent upon the religious. Those who have died in Christ to the world in which these separative distinctions reign will have no difficulty in recognising each other as one in Him. Society is transfigured for each of us when this union is accomplished; the old things have passed, and all has become new.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### RECONCILIATION.

#### 2 CORINTHIANS v. 18-21 (R. V.).

"If any man be in Christ," Paul has said, "there is a new creation; he is another man and lives in another world. But the new creation has the same Author as the original one: it is all of God, who reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and gave to us the ministry of reconciliation." It is plain from these last words that "us" does not mean Christians in general, but in the first instance Paul himself. He is a typical example of what it is to be in Christ; he understands what his own words mean—"the old things passed away; behold, they have become new"; he understands also how this stupendous change has been brought

\* Observe the aorist *παρῆλθεν*.

† Chap. ii. 14, 17 and chap. iii. 14, are more limited.



about. "It is due to God," he says, "who reconciled us to Himself through Christ."

The great interest of this passage is its bearing upon the Christian doctrine of reconciliation, and before we go further it is necessary to explain precisely what this word means. It presupposes a state of estrangement. Now, a state of estrangement may be of two kinds: the feeling of alienation and hostility may exist upon one side only, or it may exist upon both. What, then, is the character of that state of estrangement which subsists between God and man independently of the Gospel, and which the Gospel, as a ministry of reconciliation, is designed to overcome? Is it one-sided, or two-sided? Is there something to be put away in man only, or something to be put away in God as well, before reconciliation is effected?

These questions have been answered very confidently in different ways. Many, especially in modern times, assert with passionate eagerness that the estrangement is merely one-sided. Man is alienated from God by sin, fear, and unbelief, and God reconciles him to Himself when He prevails with him to lay aside these evil dispositions, and trust Him as his Father and his Friend. "All things are of God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ," would mean in this case, "All things are of God, who has won our friendship through His Son." That this describes in part the effect of the Gospel, no one will deny. It is one of its blessed results that fear and distrust of God are taken away, and that we learn to trust and love Him. Nevertheless, this is not what the New Testament means by reconciliation, though it is one of its fruits.

To St. Paul the estrangement which the Christian reconciliation has to overcome is indubitably two-sided; there is something in God as well as something in man which has to be dealt with before there can be peace. Nay, the something on God's side is so incomparably more serious that in comparison with it the something on man's side simply passes out of view. It is God's earnest dealing with the obstacle on His own side to peace with man which prevails on man to believe in the seriousness of His love, and to lay aside distrust. It is God's earnest dealing with the obstacle on His own side which constitutes the reconciliation; the story of it is "the word of reconciliation"; when men receive it they *receive* (Rom. v. 10) the reconciliation. "Reconciliation" in the New Testament sense is not something which *we accomplish* when we lay aside our enmity with God; it is something which *God accomplished* when in the death of Christ He put away everything that on His side meant estrangement, so that He might come and preach peace. To deny this is to take St. Paul's Gospel away root and branch. He always conceives the Gospel as the revelation of God's wisdom and love in view of a certain state of affairs as subsisting between God and man. Now, what is the really serious element in this situation? What is it that makes a Gospel necessary? What is it that the wisdom and love of God undertake to deal with, and do deal with, in that marvellous way which constitutes the Gospel? Is it man's distrust of God? is it man's dislike, fear, antipathy, spiritual alienation? Not if we accept the Apostle's teaching. The serious thing which makes the Gospel necessary, and the putting away of which consti-

tutes the Gospel, is God's condemnation of the world and its sin; it is God's wrath, "revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Rom. i. 16-18). The putting away of this is "reconciliation": the preaching of *this* reconciliation is the preaching of the Gospel.

Much impatience has been shown in the criticism of this conception. Clever men have exhibited their talent and courage by calling it "heathenish"; and others have undertaken to apologise for St. Paul by describing this objection as "modern." I cannot understand how any one should feel entitled either to flout the Apostle on this matter, or to take him under his patronage. If any one ever had the sense to distinguish between what is real and unreal in regard to God, between what is true and false spiritually, it was he; even with Ritschl on one side and Schmiedel on the other he is not dwarfed, and may be permitted to speak for himself. The wrath of God, the condemnation of God resting on the sinful world, are not, whatever speculative theologians may think, unreal things: neither do they belong only to ancient times. They are the most real things of which human nature has any knowledge till it receives the reconciliation. They are as real as a bad conscience; as real as misery, impotence, and despair. And it is the glory of the Gospel, as St. Paul understood it, that it deals with them as real. It does not tell men that they are illusions, and that only their own groundless fear and distrust have ever stood between them and God. It tells them that God has dealt seriously with these serious things for their removal, that awful as they are He has put them away by an awful demonstration of His love; it tells them that God has made peace at an infinite cost, and that the priceless peace is now freely offered to them.

When St. Paul says that God has given him the ministry of reconciliation, he means that he is a preacher of this peace. He ministers reconciliation to the world. His work has no doubt a hortatory side, as we shall see, but that side is secondary. It is not the main part of his vocation to tell men to make their peace with God, but to tell them that God has made peace with the world. At bottom, the Gospel is not good advice, but good news. All the good advice it gives is summed up in this—Receive the good news. But if the good news be taken away; if we cannot say, God has made peace, God has dealt seriously with His condemnation of sin, so that it no longer stands in the way of your return to Him; if we cannot say, Here *is* the reconciliation, receive it,—then for man's actual state we have no Gospel at all.

In the nineteenth verse St. Paul explains more fully the way in which he is looking at the subject: "to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation." The English Authorised Version puts a comma at Christ: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself." It is safe to say that "God was in Christ" is a sentence which neither St. Paul nor any other New Testament writer could have conceived; the "was" and the "reconciling" must be taken together, and "in Christ" is practically equivalent to "through Christ" in the previous verse—God was by means of



Christ reconciling the world to Himself. "Reconciling," of course, must be taken in the sense already explained. The sentence does not mean that God was trying to convert men, or to prevail with them to lay aside their enmity, but that He was disposing of everything that on His part made peace impossible. When Christ's work was done, the reconciliation of the world was accomplished. When men were called to receive it, they were called to a relation to God, not in which they would no more be against Him—though that is included—but in which they would no more have Him against them (Hofmann). There would be no condemnation thenceforth to those who were in Christ Jesus.

The connection of the words "not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation," is rather difficult. The last clause certainly refers to something which took place after the work of reconciliation had been wrought; Paul was commissioned to tell the story of it. It seems most probable that the other is co-ordinate with this, so that both are in a sense the evidence for the main proposition. It is as if he had said: "God was by means of Christ establishing friendly relations between the world and Himself, as appears from this, that He does not reckon their trespasses unto them, and has made us preachers of His grace." The very universality of the expression—reconciling a world to Himself—is consistent only with an objective reconciliation. It cannot mean that God was overcoming the world's enmity (though that is the ulterior object); it means that God was putting away His own condemnation and wrath. When this was done, He could send, and did send, men to declare that it was done; and among these men, none had a profounder appreciation of what God had wrought, and what he himself had to declare as God's glad tidings, than the Apostle Paul.

This is the point we reach in ver. 20: "We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were intreating you by us; we beseech you, on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God." The Apostle has just told us that all is of God, but all is at the same time "in Christ," or "through Christ." Hence it is on Christ's behalf he comes forward; it is the furtherance of Christ's interests he has at heart. Nay, it is that same interest which is at the heart of the Father, who desires now to glorify the Son; so that when Paul appeals to men on Christ's behalf it is as though God Himself entreated them. Most expositors notice the amazing contrast between *πρεσβεύομεν* ("we are ambassadors") and *δεόμεθα* ("we beseech you"). The ambassador, as a rule, stands upon his dignity; he maintains the greatness of the person whom he represents. But Paul in this lowly, passionate entreaty is not false to his Master; he is preaching the Gospel in the spirit of the Gospel; he shows that he has really learned of Christ; the very conception of the ambassador descending to entreaty is, as Calvin says, an incomparable commendation of the grace of Christ. One can imagine how Saul the Pharisee would have spoken on God's behalf; with what rigour, what austerity, what unbending, uncompromising assurance. But old things have passed away; behold, they have become new. This simple verse illumines, as by a lightning flash, the new world into which the Gospel

has translated Paul, the new man it has made of him. The fire that burned in Christ's heart has caught hold in his; his soul is tremulous with passion; he is conscious of the grandeur of his calling, yet there is nothing that he would not do to win men for his message. It would go to his heart like a sword if he had to take up the old lament, "Who hath believed our report?" In his dignity as Christ's ambassador and as the mouthpiece of God, in his humility, in his passionate earnestness, in the urgency and directness of his appeal, St. Paul is the supreme type and example of the Christian minister. In the passage before us he presents the appeal of the Gospel in its simplest form: wherever he stands before men on Christ's behalf his prayer is, "Be ye reconciled unto God." And once more we must insist on the apostolic import of these words. It is the misleading nuance of "reconcile" in English that makes so many take them as if they meant, "Lay aside your enmity to God; cease to regard Him with distrust, hatred, and fear": in other words, "Show yourselves His friends." In St. Paul's lips they cannot possibly mean anything but, "Accept *His* offered friendship: enter into that peace which He has made for the world through the death of His Son; believe that He has at infinite cost put away all that on His part stood between you and peace; *receive* the reconciliation."

The Received Text and the Authorised Version attach the twenty-first verse to this exhortation by γάρ ("for"): "For Him who knew no sin He made to be sin on our behalf." The "for" is spurious, and though it is not inept the sentence gains greatly in impressiveness by its omission. The Apostle does not point out the connection for us: in simply declaring the manner in which God reconciled the world to Himself—the process by which, the cost at which, He made peace—he leaves us to feel how vast is the boon which is offered to us in the Gospel, how tremendous the responsibility of rejecting it. To refuse "the reconciliation" is to condemn the death in which the Sinless One was made sin on our behalf.

This wonderful sentence is the inspired commentary on the statement of ver. 15—"One died for all." It takes us into the very heart of the Apostolic Gospel. Just because it does so, it has always been felt to be of critical importance, alike by those who welcome and by those who reject it; it condenses and concentrates in itself the attraction of Christ and the offence of Christ. It is a counsel of despair to evade it. It is not the puzzle of the New Testament, but the ultimate solution of all puzzles; it is not an irrational quantity that has to be eliminated or explained away, but the key-stone of the whole system of apostolic thought. It is not a blank obscurity in revelation, a spot of impenetrable blackness; it is the focus in which the reconciling love of God burns with the purest and intensest flame; it is the fountain light of all day, the master light of all seeing, in the Christian revelation. Let us look at it more closely.

God, we must observe in the first place, is the subject. "All" is of Him in the work of reconciliation, and this above all, that He made the Sinless One to be sin. I have read a book on the Atonement which quoted this sentence three times, or rather misquoted it, never once recognising that an action of God is involved.



But without this, there is no coherence in the Apostle's thoughts at all. Without this, there would be no explanation of reconciliation as God's work. God reconciled the world to Himself—made peace into which the world might enter—in making Christ sin on its behalf. What precisely this means we shall inquire further on; but it is essential to remember, whatever it mean, that God is the doer of it.

Observe next the description of Christ—"Him that knew no sin." The Greek negative (*οὐκ*), as Schmiedel remarks, implies that this is regarded as the verdict of some one else than the writer. It was Christ's own verdict upon Himself. He whose words search our very hearts, and bring to light unsuspected seeds of badness, never Himself betrays the faintest consciousness of guilt. He challenges His enemies directly: "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" It is the verdict of all sincere human souls, as uttered by the soldier who watched His cross—"Truly this was a righteous man." It is the verdict even of the great enemy who assailed Him again and again, and found nothing in Him, and whose agents recognised Him as the Holy One of God. Above all, it is the verdict of God. He was the beloved Son, in whom the Father was well pleased. For three-and-thirty years, in daily contact with the world and its sins, Christ lived and yet knew no sin. To His will and conscience it was a foreign thing. What infinite worth that sinless life possessed in God's sight! When He looked down to earth it was the one absolutely precious thing. Filled full of righteousness, absolutely well-pleasing in His eyes, it was worth more to God than all the world beside.

Now, God reconciled the world to Himself—He made a peace which could be proclaimed and offered to the world—when, all sinless as Christ was, He made Him to be sin on our behalf. What does this mean? Not, exactly, that He made Him a sin-offering on our behalf. The expression for a sin-offering is distinct (*περὶ ἁμαρτίας*), and the parallelism with *δικαιοσύνη* in the next clause forbids that reference here. The sin-offering of the Old Testament can at most have pointed towards and dimly suggested so tremendous an utterance as this; and the profoundest word of the New Testament cannot be adequately interpreted by anything in the Old. When St. Paul says, "Him that knew no sin God made sin," he must mean that in Christ on His cross, by divine appointment, the extremest opposites met and became one—in-carnate righteousness and the sin of the world. The sin is laid by God on the Sinless One; its doom is laid on Him; His death is the execution of the divine sentence upon it. When He dies, He has put away sin; it no longer stands, as it once stood, between God and the world. On the contrary, God has made peace by this great transaction; He has wrought out reconciliation; and its ministers can go everywhere with this awful appeal: "Receive the reconciliation; Him who knew no sin God hath made sin on our behalf, and there is henceforth no condemnation to them that are in Christ."

No one who has felt the power of this appeal will be very anxious to defend the Apostolic Gospel from the charges which are sometimes made against it. When he is told that it is impossible for the doom of sin to fall on the Sinless One, and that even if it were conceivable

it would be frightfully immoral, he is not disquieted. He recognises in the moral contradictions of this text the surest sign that the secret of the Atonement is revealed in it: he feels that God's work of reconciliation necessarily involves such an identification of sinlessness and sin. He knows that there is an appalling side to sin, and he is ready to believe that there is an appalling side to redemption also—a side the most distant sight of which makes the proudest heart quail, and stops every mouth before God. He knows that the salvation which he needs must be one in which God's mercy comes *through*, and not *over*, His judgment; and this is the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. But without becoming controversial on a subject on which more than on any other the temper of controversy is unseemly, reference may be made to the commonest form of objection to the apostolic doctrine, in the sincere hope that some one who has stumbled at that doctrine may see it more truly. The objection I refer to discredits propitiation in the alleged interest of the love of God. "We do not need," the objectors say, "to propitiate an angry God. This is a piece of heathenism, of which a Christian ought to be ashamed. It is a libel on the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose name is love, and who waits to be gracious." What are we to say to such words, which are uttered as boldly as if there were no possible reply, or rather as if the Apostles had never written, or had been narrow-minded unreceptive souls, who had not only failed to understand their Master, but had taught with amazing perversity the very opposite of what He taught on the most essential of all points—the nature of God and His relation to sinful men? We must say this. It is quite true that we have not to propitiate an offended God: the very fact upon which the Gospel proceeds is that we *cannot* do any such thing. But it is not true that no propitiation is needed. As truly as guilt is a real thing, as truly as God's condemnation of sin is a real thing, a propitiation is needed. And it is here, I think, that those who make the objection referred to part company, not only with St. Paul, but with all the Apostles. God is love, they say, and therefore He does not require a propitiation. God is love, say the Apostles, and therefore He provides a propitiation. Which of these doctrines appeals best to the conscience? Which of them gives reality, and contents, and substance, to the love of God? Is it not the apostolic doctrine? Does not the other cut out and cast away that very thing which made the soul of God's love to Paul and John? "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that *He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*" "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. . . . Him that knew no sin He made to be sin on our behalf." That is how they spoke in the beginning of the Gospel, and so let us speak. Nobody has any right to borrow the words "God is love" from an apostle, and then to put them in circulation after carefully emptying them of their apostolic import. Still less has any one a right to use them as an argument against the very thing in which the Apostles placed their meaning. But this is what they do who appeal to love against propitiation. To take the condemnation out of the Cross is to take the nerve out of the Gospel; it will



cease to hold men's hearts with its original power when the reconciliation which is preached through it contains the mercy, but not the judgment of God. Its whole virtue, its consistency with God's character, its aptness to man's need, its real dimensions as a revelation of love, depend ultimately on this, that mercy comes to us in it through judgment.

In the last words of the passage the Apostle tells us the object of this great interposition of God: "He made Christ to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Our condemnation is made His; it is accepted, exhausted, annihilated, on His cross; and when we receive the reconciliation—when we humble ourselves to be forgiven and restored at this infinite cost—there is no longer condemnation for us: we are justified by our faith, and have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. This is what is meant by becoming the righteousness of God in Him. It is not, as the very next sentence suggests, all that is included in the Christian salvation, but it is all that the words themselves contain. "In Him" has all promise in it, as well as the present possession of reconciliation, with which the Christian life begins; but it is this present possession, and not the promise involved in it, which St. Paul describes as the righteousness of God. In Christ, that Christ who died for us, and in Him in virtue of that death which by exhausting condemnation put away sin, we are accepted in God's sight.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE SIGNS OF AN APOSTLE.

#### 2 CORINTHIANS VI. 1-13 (R. V.).

THE ministry of the Gospel is a ministry of reconciliation; the preacher of the Gospel is primarily an evangelist. He has to proclaim that wonderful grace of God which made peace between heaven and earth through the blood of the Cross, and he has to urge men to receive it. Until this is done, there is nothing else that he can do. But when sinful men have welcomed the glad tidings, when they have consented to accept the peace bought for them with so great a price, when they have endured to be forgiven and restored to God's favour, not for what they are, nor for what they are going to be, but solely for what Christ did for them on the cross, then a new situation is created, and the minister of the Gospel has a new task. It is to that situation St. Paul addresses himself here. Recognising the Corinthians as people reconciled to God by the death of His Son, he entreats them not to receive the grace of God in vain. He does so, according to our Bibles, as a fellow-worker with God. This is probably right, though some would take the word as in chap. i. 24, and make it mean "as fellow-workers with you." But it is more natural, when we look to what precedes, to think that St. Paul is here identifying himself with God's interest in the world, and that he speaks out of the proud consciousness of doing so. "All is of God," in the great work of redemption; but God does not disdain the sympathetic co-operation of men whose hearts He has touched.

But what is meant by receiving the grace of

God in vain, or to no purpose? That might be done in an infinite variety of ways, and in reading the words for edification we naturally grasp at any clue suggested by our circumstances. An expositor is bound to seek his clue rather in the circumstances of the Corinthians; and if we have regard to the general tenor of this Epistle, and especially to such a passage as chap. xi. 4, we shall find the true interpretation without difficulty. Paul has explained his Gospel—his proclamation of Jesus as Universal Redeemer in virtue of His dying the sinner's death, and as Universal Lord in virtue of His resurrection from the dead—so explicitly, because he fears lest through the influence of some false teacher the minds of the Corinthians should be corrupted from the simplicity that is toward Christ. It would be receiving the grace of God in vain, if, after receiving those truths concerning Christ which he had taught them, they were to give up his Gospel for another in which these truths had no place. This is what he dreads and deprecates, both in Corinth and Galatia: the precipitate removal from the grace of Christ to another Gospel which is no Gospel at all, but a subversion of the truth. This is what he means by receiving the grace of God in vain.

There are some minds to which this will not be impressive, some to which it will only be provoking. It will seem irrelevant and pithless to those who take for granted the finality of the distinction between religion and theology, or between the theory, as it is called, and the fact of the Atonement. But for St. Paul, as for all sufficiently earnest and vigorous minds, there is a point at which these distinctions disappear. A certain theory is seen to be essential to the fact, a certain theology to be the constitutive force in the religion. The death of Christ was what it was to him only because it was capable of a certain interpretation: his theory of it, if we choose to put it so, gave it its power over him. The love of Christ constrained him "because he thus judged"—*i. e.*, because he construed it to his intelligence in a way which showed it to be irresistible. If these interpretations and constructions are rejected, it must not be in the name of "fact" as opposed to "theory," but in the name of other interpretations more adequate and constraining. A fact of which there is absolutely *no* theory is a fact which is without relation to anything in the universe—a mere irrelevance in man's mind—a blank incredibility—a rock in the sky. Paul's "theory" about Christ's death for sin was not to him an excrescence on the Gospel, or a superfluous appendage to it: it was itself the Gospel; it was the thing in which the very soul of God's redeeming love was brought to light; it was the condition under which the love of Christ became to him a constraining power; to receive it and then reject it was to receive the grace of God in vain.

This does not preclude us from the edifying application of these words which a modern reader almost instinctively makes. Peace with God is the first and deepest need of the sinful soul, but it is not the sum-total of salvation. It would, indeed, be received in vain, if the soul did not on the basis of it proceed to build up the new life in new purity and power. The failure to do this is, unhappily, only too common. There is no mechanical guarantee for the fruits of the Spirit; no assurance, such as would make



this appeal unnecessary, that every man who has received the word of reconciliation will also walk in newness of life. But if an evangelical profession and an immoral life are the ugliest combination of which human nature is capable, the force of this appeal ought to be felt by the weakest and the worst. "The Son of God loved me, and gave Himself for me": can any of us hide that word in his heart, and live on as if it meant nothing at all?

Paul emphasises his appeal to the Corinthians by a striking quotation from an ancient prophet (Isa. xlix. 8): "At an acceptable time did I hearken unto thee, And in a day of salvation did I succour thee"; and he points it by the joyful exclamation: "Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation." The passage in Isaiah refers to the servant of Jehovah, and some scholars would insist that even in the quotation a primary application must be made to Christ. The ambassadors of the Gospel represent *His* interest (chap. v. 20); this verse is, as it were, the answer to *His* prayer: "Father, the hour is come: glorify Thy Son." In answering the Son, the Father introduces the era of grace for all who are, or shall be, Christ's: behold, now is the time in which God shows us favour; now is the day on which He saves us. This is rather scholastic than apostolic, and it is far more probable that St. Paul borrows the prophet's words, as he often does, because they suit him, without thinking of their original application. What is striking in the passage, and characteristic both of the writer and of the New Testament, is the union of urgency and triumph in the tone. "Now" does certainly mean "now or never"; but more prominently still it means "in a time so favoured as this: in a time so graced with opportunity." The best illustration of it is the saying of Jesus to the Apostles: "Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." *Now*, that we live under the reign of grace; *now*, when God's redeeming love, omnipotent to save, shines on us from the Cross; *now*, that the last days have come, and the Judge is at the door, let us with all seriousness, and all joy, work out our own salvation, lest we make the grace of God of no effect.

St. Paul is as careful himself as he would have the Corinthians to be. He does not wish them to receive the Gospel in vain, and he takes pains that it shall not be frustrated through any fault of his: "working together with God we intreat you . . . giving no occasion of stumbling in anything, that our ministration be not blamed." It is almost implied in a sentence like this that there are people who will be glad of an excuse not to listen to the Gospel, or not to take it seriously, and that they will look for such an excuse in the conduct of its ministers. Anything in the minister to which objection can be raised will be used as a shield against the Gospel. It does not matter that in nine cases out of ten this plea for declining the grace of God is impudent hypocrisy; it is one which the non-Christian should never have. If it is not the chief end of the evangelist to give no occasion of stumbling, it is one of his chief rules.

This is a matter on which Jesus lays great stress. The severest words He ever spoke were spoken against those whose conduct made faith hard and unbelief easy. Of course they were spoken to all, but they have special application to those who are so directly identified with the Gospel as its ministers. It is to them men naturally look for the proof of what grace does. If its reception has been in vain in them; if they have not learned the spirit of their message; if their pride, or indolence, or avarice, or ill-nature provoke the anger or contempt of those to whom they preach,—then their ministration is blamed, and the shadow of that censure falls upon their message. The grace of God which has to be proclaimed through human lips, and to attest itself by its power over human lives, might seem to be put in this way to too great hazard in the world; but it has God behind it, or rather it is itself God at work in His ministers as their humility and fidelity allow Him; and in spite of the occasions of stumbling for which there is no excuse, God is always able to make grace prevail. Through the faults of its ministers, nay, sometimes even with those faults as a foil, men see how good and how strong that grace is.

It is not easy to comment on the glowing passage (vv. 4-16) in which St. Paul expands this sober habit of giving no occasion of stumbling in anything into a description of his apostolic ministry. Logically, its value is obvious enough. He means the Corinthians to feel that if they turn away from the Gospel which he has preached to them they are passing censure lightly on a life of unparalleled devotion and power. He commends himself to them, as God's servants ought always to do, by the life which he leads in the exercise of his ministry, and to reject his Gospel is to condemn his life as worthless or misspent. Will they venture to do that when they are reminded of what it is, and when they feel that it is all this for them? No right-minded man will, without provocation, speak about himself, but Paul is doubly protected. He is challenged, by the threatenend desertion from the Gospel of some, at least, of the Corinthians; and it is not so much of himself he speaks, as of the ministers of Christ; not so much on his own behalf, as on behalf of the Gospel. The fountains of the great deep are broken up within him as he thinks of what is at issue; he is in all straits, as he begins, and can speak only in unconnected words, one at a time; but before he stops he has won his liberty, and pours out his soul without restraint.

It is needless to comment on each of the eight-and-twenty separate phrases in which St. Paul characterises his life as a minister of the Gospel. But there are what might be called breathing-places, if not logical pauses, in the outburst of feeling, and these, as it happens, coincide with the introduction of new aspects of his work. (1) At first he depicts exclusively, and in single words, its passive side. Christ had shown him at his conversion how great things he must suffer for His name's sake (Acts ix. 16), and here is his own confirmation of the Lord's word: he has ministered "in much patience—in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses; in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults"—where the enmity of men was conspicuous; "in labours, in watchings, in fastings"—freely exacted by his own devotion. These nine words are all, in a manner, subordinated to "much



patience"; his brave endurance was abundantly shown in every variety of pain and distress. (2) At ver. 6 he makes a new start, and now it is not the passive and physical aspect of his work that is in view, but the active and spiritual. All that weight of suffering did not extinguish in him the virtues of the new life, or the special gifts of the Christian minister. He wrought, he reminds them, "in purity, in knowledge, in long-suffering, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in love unfeigned, in the word of truth, in the power of God." The precise import of some of these expressions may be doubtful, but this is of less consequence than the general tenor of the whole, which is unmistakable. Probably some of the terms, strictly taken, would cross each other. Thus the Holy Spirit and the power of God, if we compare such passages as 1 Cor. ii. 4, 1 Thess. i. 5, are very nearly akin. The same remark would apply to "knowledge," and to "the word of truth," if the latter refers, as I cannot but think it does,\* to the Gospel. "Purity" is naturally taken in the widest sense, and "undissembled love" is peculiarly appropriate when we think of the feelings with which some of the Corinthians regarded Paul. But the main thing to notice is how the "much endurance," which, to a superficial observer, is the most conspicuous characteristic of the Apostle's ministry, is balanced by a great manifestation of spiritual force from within. Of all men in the world he was the weakest to look at, the most battered, burdened, and depressed, yet no one else had in him such a fountain as he of the most powerful and gracious life. And then (3) after another pause, marked this time by a slight change in the construction (from *ἐν* to *διὰ*), he goes on to enlarge upon the whole conditions under which his ministry is fulfilled, and especially on the extraordinary contrasts which are reconciled in it. We commend ourselves in our work, he says, "by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and the left, by glory and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet coming to be well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowing, yet ever rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." Here again it is not the details that are important, but the whole, and yet the details require notice. The armour of righteousness is that which righteousness supplies, or it may even be that which righteousness is: Paul's character equips him right and left; it is both spear and shield, and makes him competent either for attack or defence. Without righteousness, in this sense of integrity, he could not commend himself in his work as a minister of God.† But not only does his real character commend him; his reputation does the same service, however various that reputation may be. Through honour and dishonour, through evil report and good report—through the truth that is told about him, and through the lies—through the esteem of his friends, the malignity of his enemies, the contempt of strangers—the same man comes out, in the same character, devoted always in the same spirit to the same calling. It

is indeed his very devotion which produces these opposite estimates, and hence, inconsistent as they are, they agree in recommending him as a servant of God. Some said "He is beside himself," and others would have plucked out their eyes for his sake, yet both these extremely opposite attitudes were produced by the very same thing—the passionate earnestness with which he served Christ in the Gospel. There are good scholars who think that the clauses beginning "as deceivers, and true," are the Apostle's own commentary on "through evil report and good report"; in other words, that in these clauses he is giving samples of the way in which he was spoken of, to his honour or dishonour, and glorying that honour and dishonour alike only guaranteed more thoroughly his claim to be a minister of God. This might suit the first two pairs of contrasts ("as deceivers, and true; as unknown, and gaining recognition"), but it does not suit the next ("as dying, and behold we live"), in which, as in those that follow, the Apostle is not repeating what was said by others, but speaking for himself, and stating truth equally on both sides of the account. After the first pair, there is no "dishonour," or "evil report," in any of the states which he contrasts with each other: though opposites, they have each their truth, and the power and beauty of the passage, and of the life which it describes, lie simply in this, that both *are* true, and that through all such contrasts St. Paul can prove himself the same loyal minister of the reconciliation.

Each pair of opposites might furnish by itself a subject for discourse, but what we are rather concerned with is the impression produced by the whole. In their variety they give us a vivid idea of the range of St. Paul's experiences; in the regularity with which he puts the higher last, and in the climax with which he concludes, they show the victorious spirit with which he confronted all that various life. An ordinary Christian—an ordinary minister of the Gospel—may well feel, as he reads, that his own life is by comparison empty and commonplace. There is not that terrible pressure on him from without; there is not that irrepressible fountain of grace within; there is not that triumphant spirit which can subdue all the world contains—honour and dishonour, evil report and good report—and make it pay tribute to the Gospel, and to himself as a Gospel minister. Yet the world has still all possible experiences ready for those who give themselves to the service of God with the whole-heartedness of Paul: it will show them its best and its worst; its reverence, affection, and praise; its hatred, its indifference, its scorn. And it is in the facing of all such experiences by God's ministers that the ministry receives its highest attestation: they are enabled to turn all to profit; in ignominy and in honour alike they are made more than conquerors through Him who loves them. St. Paul's plea rises involuntarily into a pæan; he begins, as we saw, with the embarrassed tone of a man who wishes to persuade others that he has taken sincere pains not to frustrate his work by faults he could have avoided—"giving no occasion of stumbling in anything, that the ministry be not blamed"; but he is carried higher and higher, as the tide of feeling rises within him, till it sets him beyond the reach of blame or praise—at Christ's right hand, where all things are his.

\*Some, because of the want of the article, make it equivalent to "veracity."

†Beet, however, takes it in the technical sense: justification by faith is the preacher's sword and shield.



Here is a signal fulfilment of that word of the Lord: "I am come that they might have life, and might have it more abundantly." Who could have it more abundantly, more triumphantly strong through all its vicissitudes, than the man who dictated these lines?

The passage closes with an appeal in which Paul descends from this supreme height to the most direct and affectionate address. He names his readers by name: "Our mouth is open unto you, O Corinthians; \* our heart is enlarged." He means that he has treated them with the utmost frankness and cordiality. With strangers we use reserve; we do not let ourselves go, nor indulge in any effusion of heart. But he has not made strangers of them; he has relieved his overcharged heart before them, and he has established a new claim on their confidence in doing so. "Ye are not straitened in us," he writes; that is, "The awkwardness and constraint of which you are conscious in your relations with me are not due to anything on my side; my heart has been made wide, and you have plenty of room in it. But you are straitened in your own affections. It is *your* hearts that are narrow: cramped and confined with unworthy suspicions, and with the feeling that you have done me a wrong which you are not quite prepared to rectify. Overcome these ungenerous thoughts at once. Give me a recompense in kind for my treatment of you. I have opened my heart wide, to you and for you; open your hearts as freely, to me and for me. I am your father in Christ, and I have a right to this from my children."

When we take this passage as a whole, in its original bearings, one thing is plain: that want of love and confidence between the minister of the Gospel and those to whom he ministers has great power to frustrate the grace of God. There may have been a real revival under the minister's preaching—a real reception of the grace which he proclaims—but all will be in vain if mutual confidence fails. If he gives occasion of stumbling in something, and the ministry is blamed; or if malice and falsehood sow the seeds of dissension between him and his brethren, the grand condition of an effective ministry is gone. "Beloved, let us love one another," if we do not wish the virtue of the Cross to be of no effect in us.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### NEW TESTAMENT PURITANISM.

2 CORINTHIANS vi. 14-vii. 1 (R. V.).

THIS is one of the most peculiar passages in the New Testament. Even a careless reader must feel that there is something abrupt and unexpected in it; it jolts the mind as a stone on the road does a carriage-wheel. Paul has been begging the Corinthians to treat him with the same love and confidence which he has always shown to them, and he urges this claim upon them up to ver. 13. Then comes this passage about the relation of Christians to the world. Then again, at chap. vii. 2—"Open your hearts to us; we wronged no man, we corrupted no man, we took advantage of no man"—he re-

\* *Rara et præsentissima appellatio* (Bengel).

turns to the old subject without the least mark of transition. If everything were omitted from chap. vi. 14 to chap. vii. 1 inclusive, the continuity both of thought and feeling would be much more striking. This consideration alone has induced many scholars to believe that these verses do not occupy their original place. The ingenious suggestion has been made that they are a fragment of the letter to which the Apostle refers in the First Epistle (chap. v. 9): the sentiment, and to some extent even the words, favour this conjecture. But as there is no external authority for any conjecture whatever, and no variation in the text, such suggestions can never become conclusive. It is always possible that, on reading over his letter, the Apostle himself may have inserted a paragraph breaking to some extent the closeness of the original connection. If there is nothing in the contents of the section inconsistent with his mind, the breach of continuity is not enough to discredit it.

Some, however, have gone further than this. They have pointed to the strange formulæ of quotation—"as God said," "saith the Lord," "saith the Lord Almighty"—as unlike Paul. Even the main idea of the passage—"touch not any unclean thing"—is asserted to be at variance with his principles. A narrow Jewish Christian might, it is said, have expressed this shrinking from what is unclean, in the sense of being associated with idolatry, but not the great Apostle of liberty. At all events he would have taken care, in giving such an advice under special circumstances, to safeguard the principle of freedom. And, finally, an argument is drawn from language. The only point at which it is even plausible is that which touches upon the use of the terms "flesh" and "spirit" in chap. vii. 1. Schmiedel, who has an admirable excursus on the whole question, decides that this, and this only, is certainly un-Pauline. It is certainly unusual in Paul, but I do not think we can say more. The "rigour and vigour" with which Paul's use of these terms is investigated seems to me largely misplaced. They did undoubtedly tend to become technical in his mind, but words so universally and so vaguely used could never become simply technical. If any contemporary of Paul could have written, "Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit," then Paul himself could have written it. Language offers the same latitudes and liberties to everybody, and one could not imagine a subject which tempted less to technicality than the one urged in these verses. Whatever the explanation of their apparently irrelevant insertion here, I can see nothing in them alien to Paul. Puritanism is certainly more akin to the Old Testament than to the New, and that may explain the instinctiveness with which the writer seems to turn to the law and the prophets, and the abundance of his quotations; but though "all things are lawful" to the Christian, Puritanism has a place in the New Testament too. There is no conception of "holiness" into which the idea of "separation" does not enter; and though the balance of elements may vary in the New Testament as compared with the Old, none can be wanting. From this point of view we can best examine the meaning and application of the passage. If a connection is craved, the best, I think, is that furnished by a combina-



tion of Calvin and Meyer. *Quasi recuperata auctoritate*, says Calvin, *liberius jam eos objurgat*: this supplies a link of feeling between vv. 13 and 14. A link of thought is supplied if we consider with Meyer that inattention to the rule of life here laid down was a notable cause of receiving the grace of God in vain (ver. 1). Let us notice (1) the moral demand of the passage; (2) the assumption on which it rests; (3) the Divine promise which inspires its observance.

(1) The moral demand is first put in the negative form: "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers." The peculiar word *ἐπεροζυγούντες* ("unequally yoked") has a cognate form in Lev. xix. 19, in the law which forbids the breeding of hybrid animals. God has established a good physical order in the world, and it is not to be confounded and disfigured by the mixing of species. It is that law (or perhaps another form of it in Deut. xxii. 10, forbidding an Israelite to plough with an ox and an ass under the same yoke) that is applied in an ethical sense in this passage. There is a wholesome moral order in the world also, and it is not to be confused by the association of its different kinds. The common application of this text to the marriage of Christians and non-Christians is legitimate, but too narrow. The text prohibits every kind of union in which the separate character and interest of the Christian lose anything of their distinctiveness and integrity. This is brought out more strongly in the free quotation from Isa. lii. 11 in ver. 17: "Come out from among them, and be separate, saith the Lord, and touch not anything unclean." These words were originally addressed to the priests who, on the redemption of Israel from Babylon, were to carry the sacred temple vessels back to Jerusalem. But we must remember that, though they are Old Testament words, they are quoted by a New Testament writer, who inevitably puts his own meaning into them. "The unclean thing" which no Christian is to touch is not to be taken in a precise Levitical sense; it covers, and I have no doubt was intended by the writer to cover, all that it suggests to any simple Christian mind now. We are to have no compromising connection with anything in the world which is alien to God. Let us be as loving and conciliatory as we please, but as long as the world is what it is, the Christian life can only maintain itself in it in an attitude of protest. There always will be things and people to whom the Christian has to say No!

But the moral demand of the passage is put in a more positive form in the last verse: "Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." That is the ideal of the Christian life. There is something to be overcome and put away; there is something to be wrought out and completed; there is a spiritual element or atmosphere—the fear of God—in which alone these tasks can be accomplished. The fear of God is an Old Testament name for true religion, and even under the New Testament it holds its place. The Seraphim still veil their faces while they cry "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts," and still we must feel that great awe descend upon our hearts if we would be partakers of His holiness. It is this which withers up sin to the root, and enables us to

cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit. St. Paul includes himself in his exhortation here: it is one duty, one ideal, which is set before all. The prompt decisive side of it is represented in *καθαρίσωμεν* ("let us cleanse": observe the aorist); its patient laborious side in *ἐπιτελοῦντες ἀγιοσύνην* ("carrying holiness to completion." Almost everybody in a Christian Church makes a beginning with this task: we cleanse ourselves from obvious and superficial defilements; but how few carry the work on into the spirit, how few carry it on ceaselessly towards perfection. As year after year rolls by, as the various experiences of life come to us with their lessons and their discipline from God, as we see the lives of others, here sinking ever deeper and deeper into the corruptions of the world, there rising daily nearer and nearer to the perfect holiness which is their goal, does not this demand assert its power over us? Is it not a great thing, a worthy thing, that we should set ourselves to purge away from our whole nature, outward and inward, whatever cannot abide the holy eye of God; and that we should regard Christian holiness, not as a subject for casual thoughts once a week, but as the task to be taken up anew, with unwearying diligence, every day we live? Let us be in earnest with this, for surely God is in earnest.

(2) Observe now the assumption on which the demand not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers is based. It is that there are *two* ethical or spiritual interests in the world, and that these are fundamentally inconsistent with each other. This implies that in choosing the one, the other has to be rejected. But it implies more: it implies that at bottom there are only two kinds of people in the world—those who identify themselves with the one of these interests, and those who identify themselves with the other.

Now, as long as this is kept in the abstract form, people do not quarrel with it. They have no objection to admit that good and evil are the only spiritual forces in the world, and that they are mutually exclusive. But many will not admit that there are only two kinds of persons in the world, answering to these two forces. They would rather say there is only *one* kind of persons, in whom these forces are with infinite varieties and modifications combined. This seems more tolerant, more humane, more capable of explaining the amazing mixtures and inconsistencies we see in human lives. But it is not more true. It is a more penetrating insight which judges that every man—despite his range of neutrality—would in the last resort choose his side; would, in short, in a crisis of the proper kind, prove finally that he was not good *and* bad, but good *or* bad. We cannot pretend to judge others, but sometimes men judge themselves, and always God can judge. And there is an instinct in those who are perfecting holiness in the fear of God which tells them, without in the least making them Pharisaical, not only what things, but what persons—not only what ideas and practices, but what individual characters—are not to be made friends of. It is no pride, or scorn, or censoriousness, which speaks thus, but the voice of all Christian experience. It is recognised at once where the young are concerned: people are careful of the friends their children make, and a schoolmaster will dismiss inexorably, not only a bad habit, but a



bad boy, from the school. It ought to be recognised just as easily in maturity as in childhood: there are men and women, as well as boys and girls, who distinctly represent evil, and whose society is to be declined. To protest against them, to repel them, to resent their life and conduct as morally offensive, is a Christian duty; it is the first step towards evangelising them.

It is worth noticing in the passage before us how the Apostle, starting from abstract ideas, descends, as he becomes more urgent, into personal relations. What fellowship have righteousness and lawlessness? None. What communion has light with darkness? None. What concord has Christ with Belial? Here the persons come in who are the heads, or representatives, of the opposing moral interests, and it is only now that we feel the completeness of the antagonism. The interest of holiness is gathered up in Christ; the interest of evil in the great adversary; and they have nothing in common. And so with the believer and the unbeliever. Of course there is ground on which they can meet: the same sun shines on them, the same soil supports them, they breathe the same air. But in all that is indicated by those two names—believer and unbeliever—they stand quite apart; and the distinction thus indicated reaches deeper than any bond of union. It is not denied that the unbeliever may have much that is admirable about him; and for the believer the one supremely important thing in the world is that which the unbeliever denies, and therefore the more he is in earnest the less can he afford the unbeliever's friendship. We need all the help we can get to fight the good fight of faith, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God; and a friend whose silence numbs faith, or whose words trouble it, is a friend no earnest Christian dare keep. Words like these would not seem so hard if the common faith of Christians were felt to be a real bond of union among them, and if the recoil from the unbelieving world were seen to be the action of the whole Christian society, the instinct of self-preservation in the new Christian life. But, at whatever risk of seeming harsh, it must be repeated that there has never been a state of affairs in the world in which the commandment had no meaning. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate"; nor an obedience to this commandment which did not involve separation from persons as well as from principles.

(3) But what bulks most largely in the passage is the series of divine promises which are to inspire and sustain obedience. The separations which an earnest Christian life requires are not without their compensation; to leave the world is to be welcomed by God. It is probable that the pernicious association which the writer had immediately in view was association with the heathen in their worship, or at least in their sacrificial feasts. At all events it is the inconsistency of this with the worship of the true God that forms the climax of his exposition—What agreement hath a temple of God with idols? and it is to this, again, that the encouraging promises are attached. "*We*," says the Apostle, "are a temple of the living God." This carries with it all that he has claimed: for a temple means a house in which God dwells, and God can only dwell in a holy place. Pagans and Jews alike recognised the sanctity of their

temples: nothing was guarded more jealously; nothing, if violated, was more promptly and terribly avenged. Paul had seen the day when he gave his vote to shed the blood of a man who had spoken disrespectfully of the Temple at Jerusalem, and the day was coming when he himself was to run the risk of his life on the mere suspicion that he had taken a pagan into the holy place. He expects Christians to be as much in earnest as Jews who keep the sanctity of God's house inviolate; and now, he says, that house are we: it is ourselves we have to keep unspotted from the world.

We are God's temple in accordance with the central promise of the old covenant: as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people." The original of this is Lev. xxvi. 11, 12. The Apostle, as has been observed already, takes the Old Testament words in a New Testament sense: as they stand here in Second Corinthians they mean something much more intimate and profound than in their old place in Leviticus. But even there, he tells us, they are a promise to us. What God speaks, He speaks to His people, and speaks once for all. And if the divine presence in the camp of Israel—a presence represented by the Ark and its tent—was to consecrate that nation to Jehovah, and inspire them with zeal to keep the camp clean, that nothing might offend the eyes of His glory, how much more ought those whom God has visited in His Son, those in whom He dwells through His Spirit, to cleanse themselves from every defilement, and make their souls fit for His habitation? After repeating the charge to come out and be separate, the writer heaps up new promises, in which the letter and the spirit of various Old Testament passages are freely combined. The principal one seems to be 2 Sam. vii., which contains the promises originally made to Solomon. At ver. 14 of that chapter we have the idea of the paternal and filial relation, and at ver. 8 the speaker is described in the LXX., as here, as the Lord Almighty. But passages like Jer. xxxi. 1, 9, also doubtless floated through the writer's mind, and it is the substance, not the form, which is the main thing. The very freedom with which they are reproduced shows us how thoroughly the writer is at home, and how confident he is that he is making the right and natural application of these ancient promises.

Separate yourselves, for you are God's temple: separate yourselves and you will be sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, and He will be your Father. *Hæc una ratio instar mille esse debet.* The friendship of the world, as James reminds us, is enmity with God; it is the consoling side of the same truth that separation from the world means friendship with God. It does not mean solitude, but a more blessed society; not renunciation of love, but admission to the only love which satisfies the soul, because that for which the soul was made. The Puritanism of the New Testament is no harsh, repellent thing, which eradicates the affections, and makes life bleak and barren; it is the condition under which the heart is opened to the love of God, and filled with all comfort and joy in obedience. With Him on our side—with the promise of His indwelling Spirit to sanctify us, of His fatherly kindness to enrich and protect us—shall we not obey the exhortation to come out and be sep-



arate, to cleanse ourselves from all that defiles, to perfect holiness in His fear?

## CHAPTER XIX.

### REPENTANCE UNTO LIFE.

2 CORINTHIANS vii. 2-16 (R. V.).

IN this fine passage St. Paul completes, as far as it lay upon his side to do so, his reconciliation with the Corinthians. It concludes the first great division of his Second Epistle, and henceforth we hear no more of the sinner censured so severely in the First (chap. v.),\* or of the troubles which arose in the Church over the disciplinary treatment of his sin. The end of a quarrel between friends is like the passing away of a storm; the elements are meant to be at peace with each other, and nature never looks so lovely as in the clear shining after rain. The effusion of feeling in this passage, so affectionate and unreserved; the sense that the storm-clouds have no more than left the sky, yet that fair weather has begun, make it conspicuously beautiful even in the writings of St. Paul.

He begins by resuming the appeal interrupted at chap. vi. 13. He has charged the Corinthians with being straitened in their own affections: distrust and calumny have narrowed their souls, nay, shut them against him altogether. "Receive us," he exclaims here—*i. e.*, open your hearts to us. "You have no cause to be reserved: we wronged no man, ruined no man, took advantage of no man." Such charges had doubtless been made against him. The point of the last is clear from chap. xii. 16-18: he had been accused of making money out of his apostolic work among them. The other words are less precise, especially the one rendered "corrupted," which should perhaps be rather explained, as in 1 Cor. iii. 17, "destroyed." Paul has not wronged or ruined any one in Corinth. Of course, his Gospel made serious demands upon people: it insisted on readiness to make sacrifices, and on actual sacrifice besides; it proceeded with extreme severity against sinners like the incestuous man; it entailed obligations, as we shall presently hear, to help the poor even of distant lands; and then, as still, such claims might easily be resented as ruinous or unjust. St. Paul simply denies the charge. He does not retort it; it is not his object to condemn those whom he loves so utterly. He has told them already that they are in his heart to die together and to live together (vi. 11); and when this is so, there is no place for recrimination or bandying of reproaches. He is full of confidence in them; he can freely make his boast of them. He has had affliction enough, but over it all he has been filled with consolation; even as he writes, his joy overflows (observe the present: *ὑπερπερισσεύομαι*).

That word—"ye are in our hearts to die together and to live together"—is the key to all that follows. It has suffered much at the hands of grammarians, for whom it has undeniable perplexities; but vehement emotion may be permitted to be in some degree inarticulate, and we can always feel, even if we cannot demonstrate, what it means. "Your image in my

\* But see on chap. ii. 5-11.

heart accompanies me in death and life," is as nearly as possible what the Apostle says; and if the order of the words is unusual—for "life" would naturally stand first—that may be due to the fact, so largely represented in chap. iv., that his life was a series of deadly perils, and of ever-renewed deliverances from them, a daily dying and a daily resurrection, through all the vicissitudes of which the Corinthians never lost their place in his heart. More artificial interpretations only obscure the intensity of that love which united the Apostle to his converts. It is levelled here, unconsciously, no doubt, but all the more impressively, with the love which God in Christ Jesus our Lord bears to His redeemed. "I am persuaded," St. Paul writes to the Romans, "that neither death nor life can separate us from that." "You may be assured," he writes here to the Corinthians, "that neither death nor life can separate you from my love." The reference of death and life is of course different, but the strength of conviction and of emotion is the same in both cases. St. Paul's heart is pledged irrevocably and irreversibly to the Church. In the deep feeling that he is theirs, he has an assurance that they also are his. The love with which he loves them is bound to prevail; nay, it has prevailed, and he can hardly find words to express his joy. "En qualiter affectos esse omnes Pastores conveniat" (Calvin).

The next three verses carry us back to chap. ii. 12 ff., and resume the story which was interrupted there at ver. 14. The sudden thanksgiving of that passage—so eager and impetuous that it left the writer no time to tell what he was thankful for—is explained here. Titus, whom he had expected to see in Troas, arrived at length, probably from Philippi, and brought with him the most cheering news. Paul was sadly in need of it. His flesh had no rest: the use of the perfect (*ἔσχηκεν*) almost conveys the feeling that he began to write whenever he got the news, so that up to this moment the strain had continued. The fights without were probably assaults upon himself, or the Churches, of the nature of persecution; the fears within, his anxieties about the state of morals, or of Gospel truth, in the Christian communities. Outworn and depressed, burdened both in body and mind (*cf.* the expressions in ii. 13 and vii. 5), he was suddenly lifted on high by the arrival and the news of Titus. Here again, as in ii. 14, he ascribes all to God. It was He whose very nature it is to comfort the lowly who so graciously comforted him. Titus apparently had gone himself with a sad and apprehensive heart to Corinth; he had been away longer than he had anticipated, and in the interval St. Paul's anxiety had risen to anguish; but in Corinth his reception had been unexpectedly favourable, and when he returned he was able to console his master with a consolation which had already gladdened his own heart. Paul was not only comforted, his sorrow was turned into joy, as he listened to Titus telling of the longing of the Corinthians to see him, of their mourning over the pain they had given him by their tolerance for such irregularities as that of the incestuous man or the unknown insulter of the Apostle, and of their eagerness to satisfy him and maintain his authority. The word "your" (*ὑμῶν*) in ver. 7 has a certain emphasis which suggests a contrast. Before Titus went to Corinth,



it was Paul who had been anxious to see *them*, who had mourned over their immoral laxity, who had been passionately interested in vindicating the character of the Church he had founded; now it is *they* who are full of longing to see *him*, of grief, and of moral earnestness; and it is this which explains his joy. The conflict between the powers of good in one great and passionate soul, and the powers of evil in a lax and fickle community, has ended in favour of the good; Paul's vehemence has prevailed against Corinthian indifference, and made it vehement also in all good affections, and he rejoices now in the joy of his Lord.

Then comes the most delicate part of this reconciliation (vv. 8-12). It is a good rule in making up disputes to let bygones be bygones, as far as possible; there may be a little spark hidden here and there under what seem dead ashes, and there is no gain in raking up the ashes, and giving the spark a chance to blaze again. But this is a good rule only because we are bad men, and because reconciliation is seldom allowed to have its perfect work. We feel, and say, after we have quarreled with a person and been reconciled, that it can never be the same again. But this ought not to be so; and if we were perfect in love, or ardent in love at all, it would not be so. If we were in one another's hearts, to die together and to live together, we should retrace the past together in the very act of being reconciled; and all its misunderstandings and bitterness and badness, instead of lying hidden in us as matter of re-creation for some other day when we are tempted, would add to the sincerity, the tenderness, and the spirituality of our love. The Apostle sets us an example here, of the rarest and most difficult virtue, when he goes back upon the story of his relations with the Corinthians, and makes the bitter stock yield sweet and wholesome fruit.

The whole result is in his mind when he writes, "Although I made you sorry with the letter, I do not regret it." The letter is, on the simplest hypothesis, the First Epistle; and though no one would willingly speak to his friends as Paul in some parts of that Epistle speaks to the Corinthians, he cannot pretend that he wishes it unwritten. "Although I did regret it," he goes on, "now I rejoice." He regretted it, we must understand, before Titus came back from Corinth. In that melancholy interval, all he saw was that the letter made them sorry; it was bound to do so, even if it should only be temporarily; but his heart smote him for making them sorry at all. It vexed him to vex them. No doubt this is the plain truth he is telling them, and it is hard to see why it should have been regarded as inconsistent with his apostolic inspiration. He did not cease to have a living soul because he was inspired; and if in his despondency it crossed his mind to say, "That letter will only grieve them," he must have said in the same instant, "I wish I had never written it." But both impulses were momentary only; he has heard now the whole effect of his letter, and rejoices that he wrote it. Not, of course, that they were made sorry—no one could rejoice for that—but that they were made sorry to repentance. "For ye were made sorry according to God, that in nothing ye might suffer loss on our part. For sorrow according to God worketh repentance unto salvation, a

repentance which bringeth no regret. But the sorrow of the world worketh death."

Most people define repentance as a kind of sorrow, but this is not exactly St. Paul's view here. There is a kind of sorrow, he intimates, which issues in repentance, but repentance itself is not so much an emotional as a spiritual change. The sorrow which ends in it is a blessed experience; the sorrow which does not end in it is the most tragical waste of which human nature is capable. The Corinthians, we are told, were made sorry, or grieved, according to God. Their sorrow had respect to Him: when the Apostle's letter pricked their hearts, they became conscious of that which they had forgotten—God's relation to them, and His judgment on their conduct. It is this element which makes any sorrow "godly," and without this, sorrow does not look towards repentance at all. All sins sooner or later bring the sense of loss with them; but the sense of loss is not repentance. It is not repentance when we discover that our sin has found us out, and has put the things we most coveted beyond our reach. It is not repentance when the man who has sown his wild oats is compelled in bitterness of soul to reap what he has sown. It is not a sorrow according to God when our sin is summed up for us in the pain it inflicts upon ourselves—in our own loss, our own defeat, our own humiliation, our own exposure, our own unavailing regret. These are not healing, but embittering. The sorrow according to God is that in which the sinner is conscious of his sin in relation to the Holy One, and feels that its inmost soul of pain and guilt is this, that he has fallen away from the grace and friendship of God. He has wounded a love to which he is dearer than he is to himself: to know this is really to grieve, and that not with a self-consuming, but with a healing, hopeful sorrow. It was such a sorrow to which Paul's letter gave rise at Corinth: it is such a sorrow which issues in repentance, that complete change of spiritual attitude which ends in salvation, and need never be regretted. Anything else—the sorrow, *e. g.*, which is bounded by the selfish interests of the sinner, and is not due to his sinful act, but only to its painful consequences—is the sorrow of the world. It is such as men feel in that realm of life in which no account is taken of God; it is such as weakens and breaks the spirit, or embitters and hardens it, turning it now to defiance and now to despair, but never to God, and penitent hope in Him. It is in this way that it works death. If death is to be defined at all, it must be by contrast with salvation: the grief which has not God as its rule can only exhaust the soul, wither up its faculties, blight its hopes, extinguish and deaden all.

St. Paul can point to the experience of the Corinthians themselves as furnishing a demonstration of these truths. "Consider your own godly sorrow," he seems to say, "and what blessed fruits it bore. What earnest care it wrought in you! how eager became your interest in a situation to which you had once been sinfully indifferent!" But "earnest care" is not all. On the contrary, Paul expands it into a whole series of acts or dispositions, all of which are inspired by that sorrow according to God. When they thought of the infamy which sin had brought upon the Church, they were eager to clear themselves of complicity in it, and



angry with themselves that they had ever allowed such a thing to be; when they thought of the Apostle, they feared lest he should come to them with a rod, and yet their hearts went out in longing desires to see him; when they thought of the man whose sin was at the bottom of all this trouble, they were full of moral earnestness, which made lax dealing with him impossible, and compelled them to punish his offence. In every way they made it evident that, in spite of early appearances, they were really pure in the matter. They were not, after all, making themselves partakers, by condoning it, of the bad man's offence.

A popular criticism disparages repentance, and especially the sorrow which leads to repentance, as a mere waste of moral force. We have nothing to throw away, the severely practical moralist tells us, in sighs and tears and feelings: let us be up and doing, to rectify the wrongs for which we are responsible; that is the only repentance which is worth the name. This passage, and the experience which it depicts, are the answer to such precipitate criticism. The descent into our own hearts, the painful self-scrutiny and self-condemnation, the sorrowing according to God, are not waste of moral force. Rather are they the only possible way to accumulate moral force; they apply to the soul the pressure under which it manifests those potent virtues which St. Paul here ascribes to the Corinthians. All sorrow, indeed, as he is careful to tell us, is not repentance; but he who has no sorrow for his sin has not the force in him to produce earnest care, fear, longing, zeal, avenging. The fruit, of course, is that for which the tree is cultivated; but who would magnify the fruit by disparaging the sap? That is what they do who decry "godly sorrow" to exalt practical amendment.

With this reference to the effect of his letter upon them, the Apostle virtually completes his reconciliation to the Corinthians. He chooses to consider the effect of his letter as the purpose for which it was written, and this enables him to dismiss what had been a very painful subject with a turn as felicitous as it is affectionate. "So then, though I did write to you, it was not for his sake who did the wrong [the sinner of 1 Cor. v.], nor for his who had it done to him [his father]\*; but that you yourselves might become conscious of your earnest care of our interests in the sight of God." Awkward as some of the situations had been, all that remained, so far as the Apostle and the Corinthians were concerned, was this: they knew better than before how deeply they were attached to him, and how much they would do for his sake. He chooses, as I have said, to regard this last result of his writing as the purpose for which he wrote; and when he ends the twelfth verse with the words, "For this cause, we have been comforted," it is as if he said, "I have got what I wanted now, and am content."

But content is far too weak a word. Paul had heard all this good news from Titus, and the comfort which it gave him was exalted into abounding joy when he saw how the visit to Corinth had gladdened and refreshed the spirit of his friend. Evidently Titus had accepted Paul's commission with misgivings: possibly Timothy, who had been earlier enlisted for the

same service (1 Cor. xvi. 10), had found his courage fail him, and withdrawn. At all events, Paul had spoken encouragingly to Titus of the Corinthians before he started; as he puts it in ver. 14, he had boasted somewhat to him on their account; and he is delighted that their reception of Titus has shown that his confidence was justified. He cannot refrain here from a passing allusion to the charges of prevarication discussed in the first chapter; he not only tells the truth *about* them (as Titus has seen), but he has always told the truth *to* them. These verses present the character of Paul in an admirable light: not only his sympathy with Titus, but his attitude to the Corinthians, is beautifully Christian. What in most cases of estrangement makes reconciliation hard is that the estranged have allowed themselves to speak of each other to outsiders in a way that cannot be forgotten or got over. But even when the tension between Paul and the Corinthians was at its height, he boasted of them to Titus. His love to them was so real that nothing could blind him to their good qualities. He could say severe things to them, but he would never disparage or malign them to other people; and if we wish friendships to last, and to stand the strains to which all human ties are occasionally subject, we must never forget this rule. "Boast somewhat," even of the man who has wronged you, if you possibly can. If you have ever loved him, you certainly can, and it makes reconciliation easy.

The last results of the painful friction between Paul and the Corinthians were peculiarly happy. The Apostle's confidence in them was completely restored, and they had completely won the heart of Titus. "His affections are more abundantly toward you, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him." "Fear and trembling" is an expression which St. Paul uses elsewhere, and which is liable to be misunderstood. It does not suggest panic, but an anxious scrupulous desire not to be wanting to one's duty, or to do less than one ought to do. "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you," does not mean "Do it in a constant state of agitation or alarm," but "Work on with this resource behind you, in the same spirit with which a young man of character would work, who was starting in business on capital advanced by a friend." He would proceed, or ought to proceed, with fear and trembling, not of the sort which paralyse intelligence and energy, but of the sort which peremptorily preclude slackness or failure in duty. This is the meaning here also. The Corinthians were not frightened for Paul's deputy, but they welcomed him with an anxious conscientious desire to do the very utmost that duty and love could require. This, says Calvin, is the true way to receive ministers of Christ; and it is this only which will gladden a true minister's heart. Sometimes, with the most innocent intention, the whole situation is changed, and the minister, though received with the utmost courtesy and kindness, is not received with fear and trembling at all. Partly through his own fault, and partly through the fault of others, he ceases to be the representative of anything that inspires reverence or excites to conscientious earnestness of conduct. If, under these circumstances, he continues to

\* But see on chap. ii. 5-11.



be kindly treated, he is apt to end in being, not the pastor, but the pet lamb of his flock. In apostolic times there was no danger of this, but modern ministers and modern congregations have sometimes thrown away all the possibilities of good in their mutual relations by disregarding it. The affection which they ought to have to each other is Christian, not merely natural; controlled by spiritual ideas and purposes, and not a matter of ordinary good feeling; and where this is forgotten, all is lost.

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE GRACE OF LIBERALITY.

2 CORINTHIANS viii. 1-15 (R. V.).

WITH the eighth chapter begins the second of the three great divisions of this Epistle. It is concerned exclusively with the collection which the Apostle was raising in all the Gentile Christian communities for the poor of the Mother Church at Jerusalem. This collection had great importance in his eyes, for various reasons: it was the fulfilment of his undertaking, to the original Apostles, to remember the poor (Gal. ii. 10); and it was a testimony to the saints in Palestine of the love of the Gentile brethren in Christ. The fact that Paul interested himself so much in this collection, destined as it was for Jerusalem, proves that he distinguished broadly between the primitive Church and its authorities on the one hand, and the Jewish emissaries whom he treats so unsparingly in chaps. x. and xi. on the other.

Money is usually a delicate topic to handle in the Church, and we may count ourselves happy in having two chapters from the pen of St. Paul in which he treats at large of a collection. We see the mind of Christ applied in them to a subject which is always with us, and sometimes embarrassing; and if there are traces here and there that embarrassment was felt even by the Apostle, they only show more clearly the wonderful wealth of thought and feeling which he could bring to bear on an ungrateful theme. Consider only the variety of lights in which he puts it, and all of them ideal. "Money," as such, has no character, and so he never mentions it. But he calls the thing which he wants a grace (*χάρις*), a service (*διακονία*), a communion in service (*κοινωνία*), a munificence (*ἀδρότης*), a blessing (*εὐλογία*), a manifestation of love. The whole resources of Christian imagination are spent in transfiguring, and lifting into a spiritual atmosphere, a subject on which even Christian men are apt to be materialistic. We do not need to be hypocritical when we speak about money in the Church; but both the charity and the business of the Church must be transacted as Christian, and not as secular, affairs.

Paul introduces the new topic with his usual felicity. He has got through some rough water in the first seven chapters, but ends with expressions of joy and satisfaction. When he goes on in the eighth chapter, it is in the same cheerful key. It is as though he said to the Corinthians: "You have made me very happy, and now I must tell you what a happy experience I have had in Macedonia. The grace of God has been poured out on the Churches, and

they have given with incredible liberality to the collection for the Jewish poor. It so moved me that I begged Titus, who had already made some arrangements in connection with this matter among you, to return and complete the work."

Speaking broadly, the Apostle invites the Corinthians to look at the subject through three media: (1) the example of the Macedonians; (2) the example of the Lord; and (3) the laws by which God estimates liberality.

(1) The liberality of the Macedonians is described as "the grace of God given in the Churches." This is the aspect of it which conditions every other; it is not the native growth of the soul, but a divine gift for which God is to be thanked. Praise Him when hearts are opened, and generosity shown; for it is His work. In Macedonia this grace was set off by the circumstances of the people. Their Christian character was put to the severe proof of a great affliction (see 1 Thess. ii. 14 f.); they were themselves in deep poverty; but their joy abounded nevertheless (1 Thess. i. 6), and joy and poverty together poured out a rich stream of liberality.\* This may sound paradoxical, but paradox is normal here. Strange to say, it is not those to whom the Gospel comes easily, and on whom it imposes little, who are most generous in its cause. On the contrary, it is those who have suffered for it, those who have lost by it, who are as a rule most open-handed. Comfort makes men selfish, even though they are Christian; but if they are Christian, affliction, even to the spoiling of their goods, teaches them generosity. The first generation of Methodists in England—the men who in 1843 fought the good fight of the faith in Scotland—illustrate this law; in much proof of affliction, it might be said of them also, the abundance of their joy, and their deep poverty, abounded unto the riches of their liberality. Paul was almost embarrassed with the liberality of the Macedonians. When he looked at their poverty, he did not hope for much (ver. 5). He would not have felt justified in urging people who were themselves in such distress to do much for the relief of others. But they did not need urging: it was they who urged him. The Apostle's sentence breaks down as he tries to convey an adequate impression of their eagerness (ver. 4), and he has to leave off and begin again (ver. 5). To their power, he bears witness, yes and beyond their power, they gave of their own accord. They importuned him to bestow on them also the favour of sharing in this service to the saints. And when their request was granted, it was no paltry contribution that they made; they gave *themselves* to the Lord, to begin with, and to the Apostle, as His agent in the transaction, by the will of God. The last words resume, in effect, those with which St. Paul introduced this topic: it was God's doing, the working of His will on their wills, that the Macedonians behaved as they did. I cannot think the English version is right in the rendering: "And this, not as we had hoped, but first they gave their own selves to the Lord." This inevitably suggests that afterwards they gave something else—viz., their subscriptions. But this is a false contrast,

\* *Ἀπλότης* is literally simplicity or singleness of heart, the disposition which, when it gives, does so without *arrière-pensée*: in point of fact this is identical with the liberal or generous disposition. Cf. chap. ix. 11, 13; Rom. xii. 8; James i. 5.



and gives the word "first" (*πρῶτον*) a false emphasis, which it has not in the original. What St. Paul says is virtually this: "We expected little from people so poor, but by God's will they literally put *themselves* at the service of the Lord, in the first instance, and of us as His administrators. They said to us, to our amazement and joy, 'We are Christ's, and yours after Him, to command in this matter.'" This is one of the finest and most inspiring experiences that a Christian minister can have, and, God be thanked, it is none of the rarest. Many a man besides Paul has been startled and ashamed by the liberality of those from whom he would not have ventured to beg. Many a man has been importuned to take what he could not have dared to ask. It is a mistake to refuse such generosity, to decline it as too much; it gladdens God, and revives the heart of man. It is a mistake to deprive the poorest of the opportunity of offering this sacrifice of praise; it is the poorest in whom it has most munificence, and to whom it brings the deepest joy. Rather ought we to open our hearts to the impression of it, as to the working of God's grace, and arouse our own selfishness to do something not less worthy of Christ's love.

This was the application which St. Paul made of the generosity of the Macedonians. Under the impression of it he exhorted Titus, who on a previous occasion\* had made some preliminary arrangements about the matter in Corinth, to return thither and complete the work. He had other things also to complete, but "this grace" was to be specially included. Perhaps one may see a gentle irony in the tone of ver. 7. "Enough of argument," the Apostle says: † "let Christians distinguished as you are in every respect—in faith and eloquence and knowledge and all sorts of zeal, and in the love that comes from you and abides in us—see that they are distinguished in this grace also." It is a real character that is suggested here by way of contrast, but not exactly a lovely one: the man who abounds in spiritual interest, who is fervent, prayerful, affectionate, able to speak in the Church, but unable to part with money.

(2) This brings the Apostle to his second point, the example of the Lord. "I do not speak by way of commandment," he says, "in urging you to be liberal, I am only taking occasion, through the earnestness of others, to put the sincerity of your love to the proof. If you truly love the brethren you will not grudge to help them in their distress. The Macedonians, of course, are no law for you; and though it was from them I started, I do not need to urge their example; 'for ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might become rich.'" This is the one pattern that stands for ever before the eyes of Christian men, the fountain of an inspiration as strong and pure to-day as when Paul wrote these words.

Read simply, and by one who has the Christian creed in his mind, the words do not appear ambiguous. Christ was rich, they tell us; He became poor for our sakes, and by His poverty we become rich. If a commentary is needed,

\*Previous to his recent visit? So Schmiedel. Or simply = formerly?

†This, according to Hermann (quoted by Meyer), is often the force of *ἀλλά*, which is certainly a surprising word here.

it is surely to be sought in the parallel passage Phil. ii. 5 ff. The rich Christ is the pre-existent One, in the form of God, in the glory which He had with the Father before the world was; He became poor when He became man. The poor men are those whose lot Christ came to share, and in consequence of that self-improvement of His they become heirs of a kingdom. It is not necessary, indeed it is utterly misleading, to ask curiously *how* Christ became poor, or what kind of experience it was for Him when He exchanged heaven for earth, and the form of God for the form of a servant. As Mr. Gore has well said, it is not the metaphysics of the Incarnation that St. Paul is concerned with, either here or in Philippians, but its ethics. We may never have a scientific key to it, but we have a moral key. If we do not comprehend its method, at least we comprehend its motive, and it is in its motive that the inspiration of it lies. We know *the grace* of our Lord Jesus Christ; and it comes home to our hearts when the Apostle says, "Let that *mind*—that moral temper—be in you which was also in Him." Ordinary charity is but the crumbs from the rich man's table; but if we catch Christ's spirit, it will carry us far beyond that. He was rich, and gave up all for our sakes; it is no less than poverty on His part which enriches us.

The older theologians, especially of the Lutheran Church, read this great text differently, and their opinion is not yet quite extinct. They referred *ἐπτώχευσεν*, not to Christ's entrance on the incarnate state, but to His existence in it; \* they puzzled themselves to conceive of Him as rich and poor at the same time; and they quite took the point from St. Paul's exhortation by making *ἐπτώχευσεν πλοῖσις ὧν* describe a combination, instead of an interchange, of states. It is a counsel of despair when a recent commentator (Heinrici), sympathising with this view, but yielding to the comparison of Phil. ii. 5 ff., tries to unite the two interpretations, and to make *ἐπτώχευσεν* cover both the coming to earth from heaven and the life in poverty on earth. No word can mean two different things at the same time: and in this daring attempt we may fairly see a final surrender of the orthodox Lutheran interpretation.

Some strange criticisms have been passed on this appeal to the Incarnation as a motive to liberality. It shows, Schmiedel says, Paul's contempt for the knowledge of Christ after the flesh, when the Incarnation is all he can adduce as a pattern for such a simply human thing as a charitable gift. The same contempt, then, we must presume, is shown in Philippians, when the same great pattern is held up to inspire Christians with lowly thoughts of themselves, and with consideration for others. It is shown, perhaps, again at the close of that magnificent chapter—the fifteenth in First Corinthians—where all the glory to be revealed when Christ transfigures His people is made a reason for the sober virtues of steadfastness and patience. The truth is rather that Paul knew from experience that the supreme motives are needed on the most ordinary occasions. He never appeals to incidents, not because he does not know them, or because he despises them, but because it is far more potent and effectual to appeal to

\*Translating it, of course, "*was* poor," or "*lived* poor": which is not impossible in itself.



Christ. His mind gravitates to the Incarnation, or the Cross, or the Heavenly Throne, because the power and virtue of the Redeemer are concentrated there. The spirit that wrought redemption, and that changes men into the image of the Lord—the spirit without which *no* Christian disposition, not even the most “simply human,” can be produced—is felt there, if one may say so, in gathered intensity; and it is not the want of a concrete vision of Jesus such as Peter and John had, nor a scholastic insensibility to such living and love-compelling details as our first three Gospels furnish, that makes Paul have recourse thither; it is the instinct of the evangelist and pastor who knows that the hope of souls is to live in the presence of the very highest things. Of course Paul believed in the pre-existence and in the Incarnation. The writer quoted above does not, and naturally the appeal of the text is artificial and unimpressive to him. But may we not ask, in view of the simplicity, the unaffectedness, and the urgency with which St. Paul uses this appeal both here and in Philippians, whether *his* faith in the pre-existence can have had no more than the precarious speculative foundation which is given to it by so many who reconstruct his theology? “Christ, the perfect reconciler, must be the perfect revealer of God; God’s purpose—that for which He made all things—must be seen in Him; but that for which God made all things must have existed (in the mind of God) before all things; therefore Christ is (ideally) from everlasting.” This is the substance of many explanations of how St. Paul came by his Christology; but if this had been all, *could* St. Paul by any possibility have appealed thus naively to the Incarnation *as a fact*, and a fact which was one of the mainsprings of Christian morality?

(3) The Apostle pauses for a moment to urge his plea in the interest of the Corinthians themselves. He is not commanding, but giving his judgment: “this,” he says, “is profitable for you, who began a year ago, not only to do, but also to will. But now complete the doing also.” Every one knows this situation, and its evils. A good work which has been set on foot with interest and spontaneity enough, but which has begun to drag, and is in danger of coming to nothing, is very demoralising. It enfeebles the conscience, and spoils the temper. It develops irresolution and incapacity, and it stands perpetually in the way of anything else that has to be done. Many a bright idea stumbles over it, and can get no further. It is not only worldly wisdom, but divine wisdom, which says: “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.” If it is the giving of money, the building of a church, the insuring of a life, complete the doing. To be always thinking about it, and always in an ineffective way busy about it, is not profitable for you.

It is in this connection that the Apostle lays down the laws of Christian liberality. In these verses (11 to 15) there are three. (a) First, there must be readiness, or, as the Authorised Version puts it, a willing mind. What is given must be given freely; it must be a gracious offering, not a tax. This is fundamental. The law of the Old Testament is re-enacted in the New: “Of every man *whose heart maketh him willing* shall ye take the Lord’s offering.” What we spend in piety and charity is not tribute

paid to a tyrant, but the response of gratitude to our Redeemer: and if it has not this character He does not want it. If there be *first* a willing mind, the rest is easy; if not, there is no need to go on. (b) The second law is, “according as a man has.” *Readiness* is the acceptable thing, not this or that proof of it. If we cannot give much, then a ready mind makes even a little acceptable. Only let us remember this, that readiness always gives all that is in its power. The readiness of the poor widow in the Temple could only give two mites, but two mites were all her living; the readiness of the Macedonians was in the depths of poverty, but they gave *themselves* to the Lord. The widow’s mites are an illustrious example of sacrifice, and this word of the Apostle contains a moving appeal for generosity; yet the two together have been profaned times innumerable to cloak the meanest selfishness. (c) The third law is reciprocity. Paul does not write that the Jews may be relieved and the Corinthians burdened, but on the principle of equality: at this crisis the superfluity of the Corinthians is to make up what is wanting to the Jews, and at some other the situation will be exactly reversed. Brotherhood cannot be one-sided; it must be mutual, and in the interchange of services equality is the result. This, as the quotation hints, answers to God’s design in regard to worldly goods, as that design is indicated in the story of the manna: He that gathered much had no more than his neighbours, and he that gathered little had no less. To be selfish is not an infallible way of getting more than your share; you may cheat your neighbour by that policy, but you will not get the better of God. In all probability men are far more nearly on an equality, in respect of what their worldly possessions yield, than the rich in their pride, or the poor in their envious discontent, would readily believe; but where inequality is patent and painful—a glaring violation of the divine intention here suggested—there is a call for charity to redress the balance. Those who give to the poor are co-operating with God, and the more a community is Christianised, the more will that state be realised in which each has what he needs.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE FRUITS OF LIBERALITY.

2 CORINTHIANS viii. 16-ix. 15 (R. V.).

THIS long passage has a good many difficulties of detail, for the grammarian and the textual critic. Where it seems necessary, these will be referred to in the notes; but as the large meaning of the writer is hardly affected by them, they need not interrupt the course of exposition. It falls into three parts, which are clearly marked as such in the Revised Version: (1) Chap. viii. 16-24, commending to the Corinthians the three brethren who were to precede Paul and prepare the collection; (2) Chap. ix. 1-5, appealing to the motives of emulation and shame to reinforce love in the matter; and (3) Chap. ix. 6-15, urging liberality, and enlarging on the blessed fruits it yields. The first of these divisions begins, and the last ends, with an exclamatory ascription of thanks to God.

(1) Chap. viii. 16-24. Of the three men who



acted as commissioners in this delicate undertaking, only one, Titus, is known to us by name. He had just returned from Corinth: he knew all the critical points in the situation; and no doubt the Apostle was glad to have such a man at the head of the little party. He was thankful to God that on the occasion of that previous visit the Corinthians had completely won the heart of Titus, and that his loyal fellow-worker needed no compulsion to return. He was leaving Paul of his own accord, full of earnest care for his Achaian friends. Along with him went a second—the brother whose praise in the Gospel was through all the Churches. It is useless to ask who the brother was. A very early opinion, alluded to by Origen, and represented apparently in the traditional subscription to this Epistle, identified him with Luke. Probably the ground for this identification was the idea that his “praise in the Gospel” referred to Luke’s work as an evangelist. But this cannot be: first, because Luke’s Gospel cannot have been written so early; and, secondly, because “the Gospel” at this date does not mean a written thing at all. This man’s praise in the Gospel must mean the credit he had acquired by his services to the Christian faith; it might be by some bold confession, or by activity as an evangelist, or by notable hospitality to missionaries, or by such helpful ministries as the one he was now engaged in. The real point of interest for us in the expression is the glimpse it gives us of the unity of the Church, and the unimpeded circulation of one life through all its members. Its early divisions, theological and racial, have been sufficiently emphasised; it is well worth while to observe the unity of the spirit. It was this, eventually, which gave the Church its power in the decline of the Empire. It was the only institution which extended over the area of civilisation with a common spirit, common sympathies, and a common standard of praise. It was a compliment to the Corinthians to include in this embassy one whose good name was honoured wherever men met in the name of Jesus. This brother was at the same time a deputy in a special sense. He had been elected by the Churches who were contributing to the collection, that he might accompany the Apostle when it was taken to Jerusalem. This, in itself, is natural enough, and it would not call for comment but for the remark to which the Apostle proceeds—“avoiding this, that any man should blame us in the matter of this bounty which is ministered by us to the glory of the Lord, and to show our readiness: for we take thought for things honourable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.”

There was evidently an unpleasant side to this transaction. Paul’s interest in the collection, his enemies had plainly said (chap. xii. 17, 18), was not quite disinterested. He was capable of putting his own hand into the bag. What ought a Christian man to do in such a case? We shall see in a later chapter how keenly Paul felt this unworthy imputation, and with what generous passion he resented it; but here he betrays no indignation; he joins with the Churches who are making the collection in so ordering matters as to preclude suspicion. Wherever the money is concerned, his responsibility is to be shared with another. It is a pity that Christ should not be glorified, and the

Apostle’s zeal to help the poor saints made known, without the accompaniment of these base suspicions and precautionary measures; but in all things human, evil will mingle with good, and the humble course is best, which does not only what God knows to be honourable, but what men must see to be so too. In handling money especially, it is best to err on the safe side. If most men are too readily suspected by others, it only answers to the fact that most men are too ready to trust themselves. We have an infinite faith in our own honesty; and when auditors are appointed to examine their books, the inexperienced are apt to think it needless, and even impertinent. If they were wise, they would welcome it as a protection against suspicion and even against themselves. Many a man has ruined himself—not to speak of those who trusted him—by too blind a belief in his own integrity. The third brother who accompanied Titus seems to have been more closely associated with Paul than the second. He had proved him often, in many things, and found him uniformly earnest; and at this juncture the confidence he had in the Corinthians made him more earnest than ever. Paul extols the three in the highest terms before he sends them off; if anybody in Corinth wishes to know what they are, he is proud to tell. Titus is his partner in the apostolic calling, and has shared his work among them; the other brethren are deputies (apostles) of Churches, a glory of Christ. What an idealist Paul was! What an appreciation of Christian character he had when he described these nameless believers as reflections of the splendour of Christ! To common eyes they might be commonplace men; but when Paul looked at them he saw the dawning of that brightness in which the Lord appeared to him by the way. Contact with the grimy side of human nature did not blind him to this radiance; rather did this glory of Christ in men’s souls strengthen him to believe all things, to hope all things, to endure all things. In showing before these honoured messengers the proof of their love, and of his boasting on their behalf, the Corinthians will show it, he says, before the face of the Churches. It will be officially reported throughout Christendom.

(2) Chap. ix. 1-5. This section strikes one at first as greatly wanting in connection with what precedes. It looks like a new beginning, an independent writing on the same or a similar subject. This has led some scholars to argue that either chap. viii. or chap. ix. belongs to a different occasion, and that only resemblance in subject has led to one of them being erroneously inserted here beside the other. This, in the absence of any external indication, is an extremely violent supposition; and closer examination goes to dissipate that first impression. The statements, *e. g.*, in vv. 3-5 would be quite unintelligible if we had not chap. viii. 16-24 to explain them; and instead of saying there is no connection between ix. 1 and what precedes, we should rather say that the connection is somewhat involved and circuitous—as will happen when one is handling a topic of unusual difficulty. It is to be explained thus. The Apostle feels that he has said a good deal now about the collection, and that there is a danger in being too urgent. He uses what he has just said about the reception of the brethren as a stepping-stone to another view of the subject, more



flattering to the Corinthians, to begin with, and less importunate. "Maintain your character before them," he says in effect; "for as for the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to be writing to you as I do." Instead of finding it necessary to urge their duty upon them, he has been able to hold up their readiness as an example to the Macedonians. "Achaia has been prepared for a year past," he said to his fond disciples in Thessalonica and Philippi; and the zeal of the Achaians, or rivalry of them, roused the majority of the Macedonians. This is one way of looking at what happened; another, and surely Paul would have been the first to say a more profound, is that of chap. viii. 1—the grace of God was given in the Churches of Macedonia. But the grace of God takes occasions, and uses means; and here its opportunity and its instrument for working in Macedonia was the ready generosity of the Corinthians. It has wrought, indeed, so effectively that the tables are turned, and now it is the liberality of Macedonia which is to provoke Corinth. Paul is sending on these brethren beforehand, lest, if any of the Macedonians should accompany him when he starts for Corinth himself, they should find matters not so flourishing as he had led them to believe. "That would put me to shame," he says to the Corinthians, "not to speak of you. I have been very confident in speaking of you as I have done in Macedonia: do keep up my credit and your own. Let this blessing, which you are going to bestow on the poor, be ready as a blessing—*i. e.*, as something which one gives willingly, and as liberally as he can; and not as a matter of avarice, in which one gives reluctantly, keeping as much as he can."

The legitimacy of such motives as are appealed to in this paragraph will always be more or less questioned among Christian men, but as long as human nature is what it is they will always be appealed to. A great man of action like St. Paul will of course find his temptation along this line. He is so eager to get men to act, and the inertness of human nature is so great, that it is hard to decline anything which will set it in motion. It is not the highest motive, certainly, when the forwardness of one stimulates another; but in a good cause, it is better than none. A good cause, too, has a wonderful power of its own when men begin to attend to it; it asserts itself, and takes possession of souls on its own account. Rivalry becomes generous then, even if it remains; it is a race in love that is being run, and all who run obtain the prize. Competitions for prizes which only one can gain have a great deal in them that is selfish and bad; but rivalry in the service of others—rivalry in unselfishness—will not easily degenerate in this direction. Paul does not need to be excused because he stimulates the Macedonians by the promptitude of the Corinthians—though he had his misgivings about this last—and the Corinthians by the liberality of the Macedonians. The real motive in both cases was "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor." It is this which underlies everything in the Christian heart, and nothing can do harm which works as its auxiliary.

(3) Chap. ix. 6-15. In the third and last section the Apostle resumes his direct and urgent tone. "I do not need to write to you," he

seems to say, "but one thing I cannot but set down: He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." That is the law of God, and the nature of things, whether men regard or disregard it. Charity is in a real sense an investment, not a casting away of money; it is not fruitless, but bears fruit in the measure in which it is sown. Of course it cannot be enforced—that would be to deny its very nature. Each is to give what he has purposed in his heart, where he is free and true: he is not to give out of grief, mourning over what he gives and regretting he could not keep it; neither is he to give out of necessity, because his position, or the usages of his society, or the comments of his neighbours, put a practical compulsion upon him. God loves a cheerful giver. Money is nothing to Him but as an index to the soul; unless the soul gives it, and gives itself with it, He takes no account. But He does take account of true charity, and because He does, the charitable may be of good cheer: He will not allow them to be without the means of manifesting a spirit so grateful to Him. If we really wish to be generous, He will not withhold from us the power of being so. This is what the Apostle says in ver. 8: "God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that ye, having always all sufficiency in everything, may abound unto every good work." There is, indeed, another way of rendering *ἀντάρκεια* (sufficiency). Some take it subjectively, not objectively, and make it mean, not sufficiency, but contentment. But though a contented spirit disposes people wonderfully to be generous, and the discontented, who have never enough for themselves, can never, of course, spare anything for anybody else, this meaning is decidedly to be rejected. The sufficiency, as ver. 10 also shows, is outward: we shall always, if we are charitable, have by God's grace the means of being more so. He is able to bless us abundantly, that we may be able for every good work. Observe the purpose of God's blessing. This is the import of the quotation from the 112th Psalm, in which we have the portrait of the good man: "He hath dispersed"—what uncalculating liberality there is in the very word—"he hath given to the poor: his righteousness abideth for ever." The approximation, in the Jewish morals of later times, of the ideas of righteousness and almsgiving, has led some to limit *δικαιοσύνη* in this passage (as in Matt. vi. 1) to the latter sense. This is extremely improbable—I think impossible. In the Psalm, both in ver. 3 and ver. 10 (LXX.), the expression "his righteousness abideth for ever" reflects God's verdict on the character as a whole. The character there described, and here referred to by the relevant trait of generosity, is one which need fear no chances of the future. He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply the seed sown by the generous Corinthians (that they may ever be in a position to be generous), and will cause also the fruits of their righteousness to grow. Their righteousness, as it figures in this last phrase, is of course represented, for the time being, by their generosity; and the poetic expression "fruits of righteousness," which is borrowed from Hosea, designates the results which that generosity produces. It is not only an investment which guarantees to them the generous care of God for



their own welfare; it is a seed which bears another and more spiritual harvest. With some expansion of heart on this the Apostle concludes.

(a) It yields a rich harvest of thanksgiving to God. This is expressed in ver. 12, and is the principal point. It is something to fill up further the measure of a brother's needs by a timely gift, but how much more it is to change the tune of his spirit, and whereas we found him cheerless or weak in faith, to leave him gratefully praising God. True thankfulness to the Heavenly Father is an atmosphere in which all virtues flourish: and those whose charity bears fruit in this grateful spirit are benefactors of mankind to an extent which no money can estimate. It is probably forcing the Apostle's language to insist that *λειτουργία*, as a name for the collection, has any priestly or sacrificial reference; but unfeigned charity is in its very nature a sacrifice of praise to God—the answer of our love to His; and it has its best effect when it evokes the thanksgivings to God of those who receive it. Wherever love is, He must be first and last.

(b) The charity of the Corinthians bore another spiritual fruit: in consequence of it the saints at Jerusalem were won to recognise more unreservedly the Christian standing of the Gentile brethren. This is what we read in ver. 13. Taking occasion from the proof of what you are, which this ministration of yours has given them, they glorify God "for the obedience of your confession unto the Gospel of Christ, and for the liberality of your contribution unto them and unto all." The verbal combinations possible here give free scope to the ingenuity and the caprice of grammarians; but the kind of thing meant remains plain. Once the Christians of Jerusalem had had their doubts about the Corinthians and the other pagans who were said to have received the Gospel; they had heard marvellous reports about them certainly, but it remained to be seen on what these reports rested. They would not commit themselves hastily to any compromising relation to such outsiders. Now all their doubts have been swept away; the Gentiles have actually come to the relief of their poverty, and there is no mistaking what that means. The language of love is intelligible everywhere, and there is only One who teaches it in such relations as are involved here—Jesus Christ. Yes, once they had their doubts of you; but now they will praise God that you have obediently confessed the Gospel, and frankly owned a fellowship with them and with all. The last words mean, in effect, that the Corinthians had liberally shared what they had with them and with all; but the terms are so chosen as to obliterate, as far as possible, all but the highest associations. This, then, is another fruit of charity: it widens the thoughts—it often improves the theology—of those who receive it. All goodness, men feel instinctively, is of God; and they cannot condemn as godless, or even as beyond the covenant, those through whom goodness comes to them.

(c) Finally, among the fruits of charity is to be reckoned the direct response of brotherly love, expressed especially in intercessory prayer, and in a longing to see those on whom God's

grace rests so abundantly. An unknown and distant benefactor is sometimes better than one near at hand. He is regarded simply in his character as a benefactor; we know nothing of him that can possibly discount his kindness; our mind is compelled to rest upon his virtues and remember them gratefully before God. One of the meanest experiences of human nature that we can have—and it is not an imaginary one—is to see people paying the debt of gratitude, or at least mitigating the sense of obligation, by thinking over the deficiencies in their benefactor's character. "He is better off than we are; it is nothing to him; and if he is kind to the poor, he has need to be. It will take a lot of charity to cover all he would like to hide." This revolting spirit is the extreme opposite of the intercessory prayer and brotherly yearning which St. Paul sees in his mind's eye among the saints at Jerusalem. Perhaps he saw almost more than was really to be seen. The union of hearts he aimed at was never more than imperfectly attained. But to have aimed at it was a great and generous action, and to have brought so many Gentile Churches to co-operate to this end was a magnificent service to the kingdom of God.

These "fruits" are not as yet actually borne, but to the Apostle's loving anticipation they are as good as real. They are the fruits of "the righteousness" of the Corinthians, the harvest that God has caused to grow out of their liberality. From the very beginning there have been two opinions as to what St. Paul means by the exclamation with which he closes—"Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift." On the one hand, it is read as if it were a part of what precedes, the unspeakable gift of God being the numberless blessings that charity yields, by God's goodness, both to those who give and to those who receive it. Paul in this case would be thinking, when he wrote, of the joy with which the Gentiles gave, and of the gratitude, the willing recognition, and the brotherly prayers and longing, with which the Jews received, help in the hour of need. These would be the unspeakable gift. On the other hand, the sentence is read as if it stood apart, not the continuation of what immediately precedes, but the overflow of the Apostle's heart in view of the whole situation. It becomes possible, then, to regard "God's unspeakable gift" as the gift of redemption in His Son—the great, original, unsearchable gift, in which everything else is included, and especially all such manifestations of brotherly love as have just been in view. Sound feeling, I think, unequivocally supports the last interpretation. The very word "unspeakable" is one of a class that Paul reserves for this particular object; the wisdom and love of God as displayed in man's salvation are unspeakable, unsearchable, passing knowledge; but nothing else is. It is to this his mind goes back, instinctively, as he contemplates what has flowed from it in the particular case before us; but it is the great divine gift, and not its fruits in men's lives, however rich and various, that it passes the power of words to characterise. It is for it, and not for its results in Jew or Gentile, that the Apostle so devoutly thanks God.



## CHAPTER XXII.

## WAR.

## 2 CORINTHIANS X. 1-6 (R. V.).

THE last four chapters of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians stand as manifestly apart as the two about the collection. A great deal too much has been made of this undeniable fact. If a man has a long letter to write, in which he wishes to speak of a variety of subjects, we may expect variations of tone, and more or less looseness of connection. If he has something on his mind which it is difficult to speak about, but which cannot be suppressed, we may expect him to keep it to the end, and to introduce it, perhaps, with awkward emphasis. The scholars who have argued, on the ground of the extreme difference of tone, and want of connection, that chaps. x.-xiii. of this Epistle were originally a separate letter, either earlier (Weisse) or later (Semler) than the first seven chapters, seem to have overlooked these obvious considerations. If Paul stopped dictating for the day at the end of chap. ix.—if he even stopped a few moments in doubt how to proceed to the critical subject he had still to handle—the want of connection is sufficiently explained; the tone in which he writes, when we consider the subject, needs no justification. The mission of Titus had resulted very satisfactorily, so far as one special incident was concerned—the treatment of a guilty person by the Church; the tension of feeling over that case had passed by. But in the general situation of affairs at Corinth there was much to make the Apostle anxious and angry. There were Judaists at work, impugning his authority and corrupting his Gospel; there was at least a minority of the Church under their influence; there were large numbers living, apparently, in the grossest sins (chap. xii. 20 f.); there was something, we cannot but think, approaching spiritual anarchy. The one resource the Apostle has with which to encounter this situation—his one standing ground alike against the Church and those who were corrupting it—is his apostolic authority; and to the vindication of this he first addresses himself. This, I believe, explains the peculiar emphasis with which he begins: "Now I myself, I Paul intreat you." *Αὐτὸς ἐγὼ Παῦλος* is not only the grammatical subject of the sentence, but if one may say so, the subject under consideration; it is the very person whose authority is in dispute who puts himself forward deliberately in this authoritative way. The *δὲ* ("now") is merely transitional; the writer moves on, without indicating any connection, to another matter.

In the long sentence which makes up the first and second verses, everything comes out at once—the Apostle's indignation, in that extreme personal emphasis; his restraint of it, in the appeal to the meekness and gentleness of Christ; his resentment at the misconstruction of his conduct by enemies, who called him a coward at hand, and a brave man only at a safe distance; and his resolve, if the painful necessity is not spared him, to come with a rod and not spare. It is as if all this had been dammed up in his heart for long, and to say a single word was to say everything. The appeal to the meekness and gentleness of Christ is

peculiarly affecting in such a connection; it is intended to move the Corinthians, but what we feel is how it has moved Paul. It may be needful, on occasion, to assert oneself, or at least one's authority; but it is difficult to do it without sin. It is an exhilarating sensation to human nature to be in the right, and when we enjoy it we are apt to enlist our temper in the divine service, forgetting that the wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God. Paul felt this danger, and in the very sentence in which he puts himself and his dignity forward with uncompromising firmness, he recalls to his own and his readers' hearts the characteristic temper of the Lord. How far He was, under the most hateful provocation, from violence and passion! How far from that sinful self-assertion, which cannot consider the case and claims of others! It is when we are in the right that we must watch our temper, and, instead of letting anger carry us away, make our appeal for the right by the meekness and gentleness of Jesus. This, when right is won, makes it twice blessed. The words, "who in your presence am lowly among you, but being absent am of good courage toward you," are one of the sneers current in Corinth at Paul's expense. When he was there, his enemies said, face to face with them, he was humble enough; it was only when he left them he became so brave. This mean slander must have stung the proud soul of the Apostle—the mere quotation of it shows this; but the meekness and gentleness of Christ have entered into him, and instead of resenting it he continues in a still milder tone. He descends from urging or entreating to beseeching. The thought of Christ has told already on his heart and on his pen. He begs them so to order their conduct that he may be spared the pain of demonstrating the falsehood of that charge. He counts on taking daring action against some at Corinth who count of him as though he walked after the flesh; but they can make this face-to-face hardihood needless, and in the name not of his own cowardice, but of his Lord's meekness and considerateness, he appeals to them to do so.

The charge of walking after the flesh is one that needs interpretation. In a general way it means that Paul was a worldly, and not a spiritual, man; and that the key to his character and conduct—even in his relations with Churches—was to be sought in his private and personal interests. What this would mean in any particular case would depend upon the circumstances. It might mean that he was actuated by avarice, and, in spite of pretences to be disinterested, was ruled at bottom by the idea of what would pay; or it might mean—and in this place probably does mean—that he had an undue regard for the opinion of others, and acted with feeble inconsistency in his efforts to please them. A man of whom either of these things could be truly said would be without spiritual authority, and it was to discredit the Apostle in the Church that the vague and damaging charge was made.

He certainly shows no want of courage in meeting it. That he walks *in* the flesh, he cannot deny. He is a human being, wearing a weak nature, and all its maladies are incident to him. As far as that nature goes, it is as possible that he, as that any man, should be ruled by its love of ease or popularity; or, on



the other hand, should be overcome by timidity, and shrink from difficult duties. But he denies that this is his case. He spends his life in this nature, with all its capacity for unworthy conduct; but in his Christian warfare he is not ruled by it—he has conquered it, and it has no power over him at all. "I was with you," he wrote in the First Epistle, "with weakness and fear and much trembling"; but "my speech and my preaching were . . . with demonstration of the Spirit and of power." This is practically what he says here, and what must be said by every man who undertakes to do anything for God. No one can be half so well aware as he, if he is sincere at all, of the immense contrast between the nature in which he lives and the service to which he is called. None of his enemies can know so well as he the utter earthiness of the vessel in which the heavenly treasure is deposited. But the very meaning of a divine call is that a man is made master of this weakness, and through whatever pain and self-repression can disregard it for his work's sake. With some men timidity is the great trial: for them, it is the flesh. They are afraid to declare the whole counsel of God; or they are afraid of some class, or of some particular person: they are brave with a pen perhaps, or in a pulpit, or surrounded by sympathising spectators; but it is not in them to be brave alone, and to find in the Spirit a courage and authority which overbear the weakness of the flesh. From all such timidity, as an influence affecting his apostolic work, Paul can pronounce himself free. Like Jeremiah (Jer. i. 6-8) and Ezekiel (Ezek. ii. 6-8), he is naturally capable, but spiritually incapable of it. He is full of might by the Spirit of the Lord: and when he takes the field in the Lord's service, the flesh is as though it were not. Since the expression *ἐν σαρκὶ περιπατοῦντες* refers to the whole of the Apostle's life, it seems natural to take *στρατευόμεθα* as referring to the whole of his ministry, and not solely to his present campaign against the Corinthians. It is of his apostolic labours in general—of course including that which lay immediately before him—that he says: "The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strong holds."

Nobody but an evangelist could have written this sentence. Paul knew from experience that men fortify themselves against God: they try to find impregnable positions in which they may defy Him, and live their own life. Human nature, when God is announced to speak, instinctively puts itself on its guard; and you cannot pass that guard, as Paul was well aware, with weapons furnished by the flesh. The weapons need to be divinely strong; mighty in God's sight, for God's service, with God's own might. There is an answer in this to many of the questions that are being asked at present about methods of evangelising; where the divinely powerful weapons are found, such questions give no trouble. No man who has ever had a direct and unmistakable blessing on his work as an evangelist has ever enlisted "the flesh" in God's service. No such man has ever seen, or said, that learning, eloquence, or art in the preacher; or bribes of any sort to the hearer; or approaches to the "strong holds," constructed of amusements, lectures, concerts, and so forth, were of the very slightest value. He who knows anything about the matter

knows that it is a life-and-death interest which is at stake when the soul comes face to face with the claims and the mercy of God; and that the preacher who has not the hardihood to represent it as such will not be listened to, and should not be. Paul was armed with this tremendous sense of what the Gospel was—the immensity of grace in it, the awfulness of judgment; and it was this which gave him his power, and lifted him above the arts, the wisdom, and the timidity of the flesh. A man will hold his own against anything but this. He will parley with any weapon flesh can fashion or wield; this is the only one to which he surrenders.

Perhaps in the fifth verse, which is an expansion of "the casting down of strong holds," a special reference to the Corinthians begins to be felt: at all events they might easily apply it to themselves. "Casting down imaginations," the Apostle says, "and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God." "Imaginations" is probably a fair enough rendering of *λογισμοίς*, though the margin has "reasonings," and the same word in Rom. ii. 15 is rendered "thoughts." To what it applies is not very obvious. Men do certainly fortify themselves against the Gospel in their thoughts. The proud wisdom of the Greek was familiar to the Apostle, and even the obvious fact that it had not brought the world salvation was not sufficient to lower its pride. The expression has sometimes been censured as justifying the *sacrificium intellectus*, or as taking away freedom of thought in religion. To think of Paul censuring the free exercise of intelligence in religion is too absurd; but there is no doubt that, with his firm hold of the great facts on which the Christian faith depends, he would have dealt very summarily with theories, ancient or modern, which serve no purpose but to fortify men against the pressure of these facts. He would not have taken excessive pains to put himself in the speculator's place, and see the world as he sees it, with the most stupendous realities left out; he would not have flattered with any affected admiration that most self-complacent of mortals—the wise of this world. He would have struck straight at the heart and conscience with the spiritual weapons of the Gospel; he would have spoken of sin and judgment, of reconciliation and life in Christ, till these great realities had asserted their greatness in the mind, and in doing so had shattered the proud intellectual structures which had been reared in ignorance or contempt of them. "Thoughts" and "imaginations" must yield to things, and make room for them: it was on this principle Paul wrought. And to "thoughts" or "imaginations" he adds "every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God." The emphasis is on "every"; the Apostle generalises the opposition which he has to encounter. It may not be so much in the "thoughts" of men, as in their tempers, that they fortify themselves. Pride, which by the instinct of self-preservation sees at once to the heart of the Gospel, and closes itself against it; which hates equally the thought of absolute indebtedness to God and the thought of standing on the same level with others in God's sight,—this pride raises in every part of our nature its protest against the great surrender. It is implied in the whole structure of this passage that "the knowledge of God" against which every



high thing in man rises defiantly is a humbling knowledge. In other words, it is not speculative merely, but has an ethical significance, which the human heart is conscious of even at a distance, and makes ready to acknowledge or to resist. No high thing lifts itself up in us against a mere theorem—a doctrine of God which is as a doctrine in algebra; it is the practical import of knowing God which excites the rebellion of the soul. No doubt, for the Apostle, the knowledge of God was synonymous with the Gospel: it was the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ; it was concentrated in the Cross and the Throne of His Son, in the Atonement and the Sovereignty of Christ. The Apostle had to beat down all the barriers by which men closed their minds against this supreme revelation; he had to win for these stupendous facts a place in the consciousness of humanity answering to their grandeur. *Their* greatness made *him* great: he was lifted up on them; and though he walked in the flesh, in weakness and fear and much trembling, he could confront undaunted the pride and the wisdom of the world, and compel them to acknowledge his Lord.

This meaning is brought out more precisely in the words with which he continues—"bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." If we suppose a special reference here to the Corinthians, it will be natural to take *νόημα* ("thought") in a practical sense—as, e. g., in chap. ii. 11, where it is rendered "devices." The Corinthians had notions of their own, apparently, about how a Church should be regulated—wild, undisciplined, disorderly notions; and in the absence of the Apostle they were experimenting with them freely. It is part of his work to catch these runaway thoughts, and make them obedient to Christ again. It seems, however, much more natural to allow the wilder reference of *αἰχμαλωτίζοντες* to the whole of Paul's apostolic work; and then *νόημα* also will be taken in a less restricted sense. Men's minds, and all that goes on in their minds, are by nature lawless: they are without the sense of responsibility to guard and consecrate the sense of freedom. When the Gospel makes them captive, this lawless liberty comes to an end. The mind, in all its operations, comes under law to Christ: in its every thought it is obedient to Him. The supremacy which Christ claims and exercises is over the whole nature: the Christian man feels that nothing—not even a thought—lies beyond the range in which obedience is due to Him. This practical conviction will not paralyse thinking in the very least, but it will extinguish many useless and bad thoughts, and give their due value to all.

The Apostle descends unmistakably from the general to the particular in ver. 6: "Being in readiness to avenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled." Apparently what he contemplates in Corinth is a disobedience which in part at least will refuse to surrender to Christ. There is a spirit abroad there, in the Judaists especially, and in those whom they have influenced, which will not bend, and must be broken. How Paul means to take vengeance on it, he does not say. He is confident himself that the divinely powerful weapons which he wields will enable him to master it, and that is enough. Whatever the shape the disobedience may assume,—hostility to the Gospel of Paul, as sub-

versive of the law; hostility to his apostolic claims, as unequal to those of the Twelve; hostility to the practical authority he asserted in Churches of his founding, and to the moral ideas he established there,—whatever the face which opposition may present, he declares himself ready to humble it. One limitation only he imposes on himself—he will do this, "when the obedience of the Corinthians is fulfilled." He expressly distinguishes the Church as a whole from those who represent or constitute the disobedient party. There have been misunderstandings between the Church and himself; but as chaps. i. to vii. show, these have been so far overcome: the body of the Church has reconciled itself to its founder; it has returned, so to speak, to its allegiance to Paul, and has busied itself in carrying out his will. When this process, at present only in course, is completed, his way will be clear. He will be able to act with severity and decision against those who have troubled the Church, without running any risk of hurting the Church itself. This leads again to the reflection that, with all his high consciousness of spiritual power, with all his sense of personal wrong, the most remarkable characteristic of Paul is love. He waits to the last moment before he resorts to severer measures; and he begs those who may suffer from them, begs them by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, to spare him such pain.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### COMPARISONS.

#### 2 CORINTHIANS X. 7-18 (R. V.).

THIS passage abounds with grammatical and textual difficulties, but the general import and the purpose of it are plain. The self-assertion of *αὐτὸς ἐγὼ Παῦλος* (ver. 1) receives its first interpretation and expansion here: we see what it is that Paul claims, and we begin to see the nature of the opposition against which his claim has to be made good. Leaving questions of grammatical construction aside, vv. 7 and 8 define the situation; and it is convenient to take them as if they stood alone.

There was a person in Corinth—more than one indeed, but one in particular, as the *τις* in ver. 7 and the singular *φησὶν*\* in ver. 10 suggest—who claimed to be Christ's, or of Christ, in a sense which disparaged and was meant to disparage Paul. If we use the plural, to include them all, we must not suppose that they are identical with the party in the Church who are censured in the First Epistle for saying, "I am of Christ," just as others said, "I am of Paul," "I am of Apollos," "I am of Cephas." That party may have been dependent upon them, but the individuals here referred to are taxed with an exclusiveness and arrogance, and in the close of the chapter with a wanton trespassing on Paul's province, which show that they were not native to the Church, but intruders into it. They were confident that they were Christ's in a sense which discredited Paul's apostleship, and entitled them, so to speak, to legitimate a Church which his labours had called into being. Everything compels us to recognise in

\* This is the reading adopted by Westcott and Hort with most MSS. except B.



them Jewish Christians, who had been connected with Christ in a way in which Paul had not; who had known Him in the flesh, or had brought commendatory letters from the Mother Church at Jerusalem; and who, on the strength of these accidents, gave themselves airs of superiority in Pauline Churches, and corrupted the simplicity of the Pauline Gospel.

The first words in ver. 7—τὰ κατὰ πρόσωπον βλέπετε—are no doubt directed to this situation, but they have been very variously rendered. Our Authorised Version has, "Do ye look on things after the outward appearance?" That is, "Are you really imposed upon by the pretensions of these men, by their national and carnal distinctions, as if these had anything to do with the Gospel?" This is a good Pauline idea, but it is doubtful whether τὰ κατὰ πρόσωπον can yield it. The natural sense of these words is, "What is before your face." The Revised Version accordingly renders, "Ye look at the things that are before your face": meaning, apparently, "You allow yourselves to be carried away by whatever is nearest to you—at present, by these interloping Jews, and the claims they flaunt before your eyes." It seems to me more natural, with many good scholars, to take βλέπετε, in spite its unemphatic position, as imperative: "Look at the things which are before your faces! The most obvious and palpable facts discredit these Judaists and accredit me. A claim to be Christ's is not to be made out *a priori* by any carnal prerogatives, or any human recommendations; it is only made out by this—that Christ Himself attests it by giving him who makes it success as an evangelist. Look at what confronts you! There is not a single Christian thing you see which is not Christ's own testimony that I am His; unless you are senseless and blind, my position and authority as an apostle can never be impugned among you." The argument is thus the same as that which he uses in chap. iii. 1-3, and in the First Epistle, chap. ix. 2.

At first Paul asserts only a bare equivalence to his Jewish opponent: "Let him consider this with himself, that, *even as* he is Christ's, *so also* are we." The historical, outward connection with Christ, whatever it may have been, amounted in this relation to exactly nothing at all. Not what Christ was, but what He is, is the life and reality of the Christian religion. Not an accidental acquaintance with Him as He lived in Galilee or Jerusalem, but a spiritual fellowship with Him as He reigns in the heavenly places, makes a Christian. Not a letter written by human hands—though they should be the hands of Peter or James or John—legitimizes a man in the apostolic career; but only the sovereign voice which says, "He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My Name." Neither as Christian nor as apostle can one establish a monopoly by making his appeal to "the flesh." The application of this Christian truth has constantly to be made anew, for human nature loves a monopoly; it does not seem really to have a thing, unless its possession of it is exclusive. We are all too ready to unchurch, or unchristianise, others; to say, "*We* are Christ's," with an emphasis which means that others are not. Churches with a strong organisation are especially tempted to this unchristian narrowness and pride. Their members think almost instinctively of other Christians as

outsiders and inferiors; they would like to take them in, to reordain their ministers, to reform their constitution, to give validity to their sacraments—in one word, to legitimate them as Christians and as Christian societies. All this is mere unintelligence and arrogance. Legitimacy is a convenient and respectable political fiction; but to make the constitution of any Christian body, which has developed under the pressure of historical exigencies, the law for the legitimization of Christian life, ministry, and worship everywhere, is to deny the essential character of the Christian religion. It is to play toward men whom Christ has legitimated by His Spirit, and by His blessing on their work, precisely the part which the Judaists played toward Paul; and to compromise with it is to betray Christ, and to renounce the freedom of the Spirit.

But the Apostle does not stop short with claiming a bare equality with his rivals. "For though I should boast somewhat more abundantly concerning our authority . . . I shall not be put to shame"—*i. e.*, "The facts I have invited you to look at will bear me out." The key to this passage is to be found in 1 Cor. xv. 15, where he boasts that, though the least of the apostles, and not worthy to be called an apostle, he had, through the grace of God given to him, laboured more abundantly than all the rest. If it came to comparison, then, of the attestation which Christ gave to their several labours, and so to their authority, by success in evangelising, it would not be Paul who would have to hide his head. But he does not choose to boast any more of his authority at this point. He has no desire to clothe himself in terrors; on the contrary, he wishes to avoid the very appearance of scaring them out of their wits by his letters (compare Mark ix. 6; Heb. xii. 21). His authority has been given him, not for the pulling down, but for the building up, of the Church; it is not lordly (chap. i. 24), but ministerial; and he would wish, not only to show it in kindly service, but also in a kindly aspect. "Not for casting down," in ver. 8, is no contradiction of "mighty for casting down" in ver. 4: the object in the two cases is quite different. Many things in man must be cast down—many high thoughts, much pride, much wilfulness, much presumption and self-sufficiency—but the casting down of these is the building up of souls.

At this point comes what is logically a parenthesis, and we hear in it the criticisms passed at Corinth on Paul, and his own reply to them. "His letters," they say (or, he says), "are weighty and strong; but his bodily presence weak, and his speech of no account." The last part of this criticism has been much misunderstood; it is really of moral import, but has been read in a physical sense. It does not say anything at all about the Apostle's physique, or about his eloquence or want of eloquence; it tells us that (according to these critics), when he was actually present at Corinth, he was somehow or other ineffective; and when he spoke there, people simply disregarded him. An uncertain tradition no doubt represents Paul as an infirm and meagre person, and it is easy to believe that to Greeks he must sometimes have seemed embarrassed and incoherent in speech to the last degree (what, for instance, could have seemed more formless to a Greek than vv. 12-18 of this chapter?): nevertheless, it is nothing



like this which is in view here. The criticism is not of his physique, nor of his style, but of his personality—what is described is not his appearance nor his eloquence, but the effect which the man produced when he went to Corinth and spoke. It was nothing. As a man, bodily present, he could get nothing done: he talked, and nobody listened. It is implied that this criticism is false; and Paul bids any one who makes it consider that what he is in word by letters when he is absent, that he will also be in deed when he is present. The double rôle of potent pamphleteer and ineffective pastor is not for him.

The kind of criticism which was here passed on St. Paul is one to which every preacher is obnoxious. An epistle is, so to speak, the man's words without the man; and such is human weakness, that they are often stronger than the man speaking in bodily presence, that is, than the man and his words together. The character of the speaker, as it were, discounts all he says; and when he is there, and delivers his message in person, the message itself suffers an immense depreciation. This ought not so to be, and with a man who cultivates sincerity will not so be. He will be, himself, as good as his words; his effectiveness will be the same whether he writes or speaks. Nothing ultimately counts in the work of a Christian minister but what he can say and do and get done when in direct contact with living men. In many cases the modern sermon really answers to the epistle as it is referred to in this sarcastic comment; in the pulpit, people say, the minister is impressive and memorable; but in the ordinary intercourse of life, and even in the pastoral relation, where he has to meet people on an equal footing, his power quite disappears. He is an ineffective person, and his words have no weight. Where this is true, there is something very far wrong; and though it was not true in the case of Paul, there are cases in which it is. To bring the pastoral up to the level of the pulpit work—the care of individual souls and characters to the intensity and earnestness of study and preaching—would be the saving of many a minister and many a congregation.

But to return to the text. The Apostle is disinclined to pursue this line further: in defending himself against these obscure detractors, he can hardly avoid the appearance of self-commendation, which of all things he abhors. An acute observer has remarked that when war lasts long the opposing combatants borrow each other's weapons and tactics: and it was this uninviting weapon that the policy of his opponents laid to the Apostle's hand. With ironical recognition of their hardihood, he declines it: "We are not bold—have not the courage—to number ourselves among, or compare ourselves with, certain of them that commend themselves"—*i. e.*, the Judaists who had introduced themselves to the Church. "Far be it from me," says the Apostle grimly, "to claim a place among, or near, such a distinguished company." But he is too much in earnest to prolong the ironical strain, and in the verses which follow, from 12 to 16, he states in good set terms the differences between himself and them. (1) They measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves among themselves, and in so doing are without understanding. They constitute a religious coterie, a sort of clique or ring in the Church, ignoring all but themselves, making

themselves the only standard of what is Christian, and betraying, by that very proceeding, their want of sense. There is a fine liberality about this sharp saying, and it is as necessary now as in the first century. Men coalesce, within the limits of the Christian community, from affinities of various kinds—sympathy for a type or an aspect of doctrine, or liking for a form of polity; and as it is easy, so is it common, for those who have drifted like to like, to set up their own associations and preferences as the only law and model for all. They take the air of superior persons, and the penalty of the superior person is to be unintelligent. They are without understanding. The standard of the coterie—be it "evangelical," "high church," "broad church," or what you please—is not the standard of God; and to measure all things by it is not only sinful, but stupid. In contrast to this Judaistic clique, who saw no Christianity except under their own colours, Paul's standard is to be found in the actual working of God through the Gospel. He would have said with Ignatius, only with a deeper insight into every word, "Where Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church." (2) Another point of difference is this: Paul works independently as an evangelist; it has always been his rule to break new ground. God has assigned him a province to labour in, large enough to gratify the highest ambition; he is not going beyond it, nor exaggerating his authority, when he asserts his apostolic dignity in Corinth; the Corinthians know as well as he that he came all the way to them, and was the first to come, ministering the Gospel of Christ. Nay, it is only the weakness of their faith that keeps him from going farther: and he has hope that as their faith grows it will set him free to carry the Gospel beyond them to Italy and Spain; this would be the crown of his greatness as an evangelist, and it depends on them whether he is to win it; in any case, the winning of it would be in harmony with his vocation, the carrying of it out in glorious fulness; for, like John Wesley, he could say the whole world was his parish. If he boasts at all, it is not immeasurably; it is on the basis of the gift and calling of God, within the limits of what God has wrought by him and by no other; he never intrudes into another's province and boasts of what he finds done to his hand. But this was what the Jews did. They did not propagate the Gospel with apostolic enthusiasm among the heathen; they waited till Paul had done the hard preliminary work, and formed Christian congregations everywhere, and then they slunk into them—in Galatia, in Macedonia, in Achaia—talking as if these Churches were *their* work, disparaging their real father in Christ, and claiming to complete and legitimate—which meant, in effect, to subvert—his work. No wonder Paul was scornful, and did not venture to put himself in a line with such heroes.

Two feelings are compounded all through this passage: an intense sympathy with the purpose of God that the Gospel should be preached to every creature—Paul's very soul melts into that; and an intense scorn for the spirit that sneaks and poaches on another's ground, and is more anxious that some men should be good sectarians than that all men should be good disciples. This evil spirit Paul loathes, just as Christ loathed it; the temper of these verses is that in which the Master cried, "Woe unto you, scribes



and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is become so, ye make him twofold more a son of hell than yourselves." Of course the evil spirit must always be disguised, both from others and from itself: the proselytiser assumes the garb of the evangelist; but the proselytiser turned evangelist is the purest example in the world of Satan disguised as an angel of light. The show is divine, but the reality is diabolical. It does not matter what the special sectarianism is: the proselyting of a hierarchical Church, and the proselytising of the Plymouth Brethren, are alike dishonourable and alike condemned. And the safeguard of the soul against this base spirit is an interest like Paul's in the Christianising of those who do not know Christ at all. Why should churches compete? why should their agencies overlap? why should they steal from each other's folds? why should they be anxious to seal all believers with their private seal, when the whole world lies in wickedness? That field is large enough for all the efforts of all evangelists, and till it has been sown with the good seed from end to end there can be nothing but reprobation for those who trespass on the province of others, and boast that they have made their own what they certainly did not make Christ's.

At the close, to borrow Bengel's expression, Paul sounds a retreat. He has liberated his mind about his adversaries—always a more or less dangerous process; and after the excitement and self-assertion are over, he composes it again in the presence of God. He checks himself, we feel, with that Old Testament word, "Now he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. I *have* always broken new ground; I *have* come as far as you, and wish to go farther, evangelising; I never *have* boasted of another man's labours as if they were mine, or claimed the credit of what he had done; but all this is mine only as God's gift. It is His grace bestowed on me, and not in vain. I would not boast except in Him; for not he who commends himself is approved, but only he whom the Lord commends." No character which is only self-certified can stand the test: no claim to apostolic dignity and authority can be maintained which the Lord does not attest by granting apostolic success.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### GODLY JEALOUSY.

#### 2 CORINTHIANS xi. 1-6 (R. V.).

ALL through the tenth chapter there is a conflict in the Apostle's mind. He is repeatedly, as it were, on the verge of doing something, from which he as often draws back. He does not like to boast—he does not like to speak of himself at all—but the tactics of his enemies, and the faithlessness of the Corinthians, are making it inevitable. In chap. xi. he takes the plunge. He adopts the policy of his adversaries, and proceeds to enlarge on his services to the Church; but with magnificent irony, he first assumes the mask of a fool. It is not the genuine Paul who figures here; it is Paul playing a part to which he has been compelled against his will, acting in a character which is as remote

as possible from his own. It is the character native and proper to the other side; and when Paul, with due deprecation, assumes it for the nonce, he not only preserves his modesty and his self-respect, but lets his opponents see what he thinks of them. He plays the fool for the occasion, and of set purpose; they do it always, and without knowing it, like men to the manner born.

But it is the Corinthians who are directly addressed. "Would that ye could bear with me in a little foolishness: nay indeed bear with me." In the last clause, *ἀνέχεσθε* may be either imperative (as the Revised Version gives it in the text,) or indicative (as in the margin: "but indeed ye do bear with me"). The use of *ἀλλὰ* rather favours the last; and it would be quite in keeping with the extremely ironical tone of the passage to render it so. Even in the First Epistle, Paul had reflected on the self-conceit of the Corinthians: "We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ." That self-conceit led them to think lightly of him, but not just to cast him off; they still tolerated him as a feeble sort of person: "Ye do indeed bear with me." But whichever alternative be preferred, the irony passes swiftly into the dead earnest of the second verse: "For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I espoused you to one husband, that I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ."

This is the ground on which Paul claims their forbearance, even when he indulges in a little "folly." If he is guilty of what seems to them extravagance, it is the extravagance of jealousy—*i. e.*, of love tormented by fear. Nor is it any selfish jealousy, of which he ought to be ashamed. He is not anxious about his private or personal interests in the Church. He is not humiliated and provoked because his former pupils have come to their spiritual majority, and asserted their independence of their master. These are common dangers and common sins; and every minister needs to be on his guard against them. Paul's jealousy over the Corinthians was "a jealousy of God"; God had put it into his heart, and what it had in view was God's interest in them. It distressed him to think, not that his personal influence at Corinth was on the wane, but that the work which God had done in their souls was in danger of being frustrated, the inheritance He had acquired in them of being lost. Nothing but God's interest had been in the Apostle's mind from the beginning. "I betrothed you," he says, "to *one* husband"—the emphasis lies on *one*—"that I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ."\*

It is the Church collectively which is represented by the pure virgin, and it ought to be observed that this is the constant use in Scripture, alike in the Old Testament and the New. It is Israel as a whole which is married to the Lord; it is the Christian Church as a whole (or a Church collectively, as here) which is the Bride, the Lamb's wife. To individualise the figure, and speak of Christ as the Bridegroom of the soul, is not Scriptural, and almost always misleads. It introduces the language and the associations of natural affection into a region where they are entirely out of place; we have no terms of endearment here, and should have

\* "Woods, trees, meadows, and hills are my witnesses that I drew on a fair match betwixt Christ and Anwoth."—S. RUTHERFORD.



none, but high thoughts of the simplicity, the purity, and the glory of the Church. Glory is especially suggested by the idea of "presenting" the Church to Christ. The presentation takes place when Christ comes again to be glorified in His saints; that great day shines unceasingly in the Apostle's heart, and all he does is done in its light. The infinite issues of fidelity and infidelity to the Lord, as that day makes them manifest, are ever present to his spirit; and it is this which gives such divine intensity to his feelings wherever the conduct of Christians is concerned. He sees everything, not as dull eyes see it now, but as Christ in His glory will show it then. And it takes nothing less than this to keep the soul absolutely pure and loyal to the Lord.

The Apostle explains in the third verse the nature of his alarm. "I fear," he says, "lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve in his craftiness, your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity" (and the purity) "which is toward Christ." The whole figure is very expressive. "Simplicity" means singleness of mind; the heart of the "pure virgin" is undivided; she ought not to have, and will not have, a thought for any but the "one man" to whom she is betrothed. "Purity" again is, as it were, one species of "simplicity"; it is "simplicity" as shown in the keeping of the whole nature unspotted for the Lord. What Paul dreads is the spiritual seduction of the Church, the winning away of her heart from absolute loyalty to Christ. The serpent beguiled Eve by his craftiness; he took advantage of her unsuspecting innocence to wile her away from her simple belief in God and obedience to Him. When she took into her mind the suspicions he raised, her "simplicity" was gone, and her "purity" followed. The serpent's agents—the servants of Satan, as Paul calls them in ver. 15—are at work in Corinth; and he fears that their craftiness may seduce the Church from its first simple loyalty to Christ. It is natural for us to take ἀπλότης and ἀγνότης in a pure ethical sense, but it is by no means certain that this is all that is meant; indeed, if καὶ τῆς ἀγνότητος be a gloss, as seems not improbable, ἀπλότης may well have a different application. "The simplicity which is toward Christ," from which he fears lest by any means "their minds" or "thoughts" be corrupted, will rather be their whole-hearted acceptance of Christ as Paul conceived of Him and preached Him, their unreserved, unquestioning surrender to that form of doctrine (Rom. vi. 17) to which they had been delivered. This, of course, in Paul's mind, involved the other—there is no separation of doctrine and practice for him; but it makes a theological rather than an ethical interest the predominant one; and this interpretation, it seems to me, coheres best with what follows, and with the whole preoccupation of the Apostle in this passage. The people whose influence he feared were not unbelievers, nor were they immoral; they professed to be Christians, and indeed better Christians than Paul; but their whole conception of the Gospel was at variance with his; if they made way at Corinth, his work would be undone. The Gospel which he preached would no longer have that unsuspicious acceptance; the Christ whom he proclaimed would no longer have that unwavering loyalty; instead of simplicity and purity, the heart of the "pure virgin" would be possessed by misgivings, hes-

itations, perhaps by outright infidelity; his hope of presenting her to Christ on the great day would be gone.

This is what we are led to by ver. 4, one of the most vexed passages in the New Testament. The text of the last word is uncertain: some read the imperfect ἀνείχεσθε; others, including our Revisers, the present ἀνέχεσθε. The latter is the better attested, and suits best the connection of thought. The interpretations may be divided into two classes. First, there are those which assume that the suppositions made in this verse are not true. This is evidently the intention in our Authorised Version. It renders, "For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, *ye might well bear with him.*" But—we must interpolate—nothing of this sort has really taken place; for Paul counts himself not a whit inferior to the very chiefest Apostles. No one—not even Peter or James or John—could have imparted anything to the Corinthians which Paul had failed to impart; and hence their spiritual seduction, no matter how or by whom accomplished, was perfectly unreasonable and gratuitous. This interpretation, with variations in detail which need not be pursued, is represented by many of the best expositors, from Chrysostom to Meyer. "If," says Chrysostom in his paraphrase, "if we had omitted anything that should have been said, and they had made up the omission, we do not forbid you to attend to them. But if everything has been perfectly done on our part, and no blank left, how did they?" (the Apostle's adversaries) "get hold of you?" This is the broad result of many discussions; and it is usual—though not invariable—for those who read the passage thus to take τῶν ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων in a complimentary, not a contemptuous, sense, and to refer it, as Chrysostom expressly does, to the three pillars of the primitive Church.

The objections to this interpretation are obvious enough. There is first the grammatical objection, that a hypothetical sentence, with the present indicative in the protasis, and the present indicative in the apodosis, can by no plausibility of argument be made to mean, "If the interloper *were* preaching another Jesus . . . you *would* be right to bear with him." Even if the imperfect is the true reading, which is improbable, this translation is unjustified. But there is a logical as well as a grammatical objection. The use of γὰρ ("for") surely implies that in the sentence which it introduces we are to find the reason for what precedes. Paul is afraid, he has told us, lest the Church should be seduced from the one husband to whom he has betrothed her. But he can never mean to explain a *real* fear by making a number of *imaginary* suppositions; and so we must find in the hypothetical clauses here the *real* grounds of his alarm. People had come to Corinth ὁ ἐρχόμενος is no doubt collective, and characterises the troublers of the Church as intruders, not native to it, but separable from it—doing all the things here supposed. Paul has espoused the Church to *One* Husband; they preach *another* Jesus. Not, of course, a distinct Person, but certainly a distinct conception of the same Person. Paul's Christ was the Son of God, the Lord of Glory, He who by His death on the cross became Universal Redeemer, and by His ascension Universal Lord



—the end of the Law, the giver of the Spirit; it would be another Jesus if the intruders preached only the Son of David, or the Carpenter of Nazareth, or the King of Israel. According to the conception of Christ, too, would be “the spirit” which accompanied this preaching, the characteristic temper and power of the religion it proclaimed. The spirit ministered by Paul in his apostolic work was one of power, and love, and, above all things, liberty; it emancipated the soul from weakness, from scruples, from moral inability, from slavery to sin and law; but the spirit generated by the Judaizing ministry, the characteristic temper of the religion it proclaimed, was servile and cowardly. It was a spirit of bondage tending always to fear (Rom. viii. 15). Their whole gospel—to give their preaching a name it did not deserve (Gal. i. 6-9)—was something entirely unlike Paul’s both in its ideas and in its spiritual fruits. Unlike—yes, and immeasurably inferior, and yet in spite of this the Corinthians put up with it well enough. This is the plain fact which the Apostle plainly states. *He* had to plead for their toleration, but they had no difficulty in tolerating men who by a spurious gospel, an unspiritual conception of Christ, and an unworthy incapacity for understanding freedom, were undermining his work, and seducing their souls. No wonder he was jealous, and angry, and scornful, when he saw the true Christian religion, which has all time and all nations for its inheritance, in danger of being degraded into a narrow Jewish sectarianism; the kingdom of the Spirit lost in a society in which race gave a prerogative, and carnal ordinances were revived; and, worse still, Christ the Son of God, the Universal reconciler, known only “after the flesh,” and appropriated to a race, instead of being exalted as Lord of all, in whom there is no room for Greek or Jew, barbarian or Scythian, bond or free. The Corinthians bore with this nobly; but he who had begotten them in the true Gospel had to beg them to bear with him.

There is only one difficulty in this interpretation, and that is not a serious one: it is the connection of ver. 5 with what precedes. Those who connect it immediately with ver. 4 are obliged to supply something: for example, “But you *ought* not to bear with them, for I consider that I am in nothing behind the very chiefest apostles.” I have no doubt at all that *οἱ ὑπερλίαν ἀπόστολοι*—the superlative apostles—are *not* Peter, James, and John, but the teachers aimed at in ver. 4, the *ψευδαπόστολοι* of ver. 13; it is with them, and not with the Twelve or the eminent Three, that Paul is comparing himself.\* But even so, I agree with Weizsäcker that the connection for the *γὰρ* in ver. 5 must be sought further back—as far back, indeed, as ver. 1. “You bear well enough with them, and so you may well bear with me, as I beg you to do; for I consider,” etc. This is effective enough, and brings us back again to the main subject. If there is a point in which Paul is willing to concede his inferiority to these superlative apostles, it is the non-essential one of utterance. He grants that he is

rude in speech—not rhetorically gifted or trained—a plain, blunt man who speaks right on. But he is not rude in knowledge: in every respect he has made *that* manifest, among all men, toward them. The last clause is hardly intelligible, and the text is insecure. The reading *φανερῶσαντες* is that of all the critical editors; the object may either be indefinite (his competence in point of knowledge), or, more precisely, *τὴν γνώσιν* itself, supplied from the previous clause. In no point whatever, under no circumstances, has Paul ever failed to exhibit to the Corinthians the whole truth of God in the Gospel. This it is which makes him scornful even when he thinks of the men whom the Corinthians are preferring to himself.

When we look from the details of this passage to its scope, some reflections are suggested, which have their application still.

(1) Our conception of the Person of Christ determines our conception of the whole Christian religion. What we have to proclaim to men as gospel—what we have to offer to them as the characteristic temper and virtue of the life which the Gospel originates—depends on the answer we give to Jesus’ own question, “Whom say ye that I am?” A Christ who is simply human cannot be to men what a Christ is who is truly divine. The Gospel identified with Him cannot be the same; the spirit of the society which gathers round Him cannot be the same. It is futile to ask whether such a gospel and such a spirit can fairly be called Christian; they are in point of fact quite other things from the Gospel and the Spirit which are historically associated with the name. It is plain from this passage that the Apostle attached the utmost importance to his conceptions of the Person and Work of the Lord: ought not this to give pause to those who evacuate his theology of many of its distinctive ideas—especially that of the Pre-existence of Christ—on the plea that they are merely theologoumena of an individual Christian, and that to discard them leaves the Gospel unaffected? Certainly this was not what he thought. Another Jesus meant another spirit, another gospel—to use modern words, another religion and another religious consciousness; and *any* other, the Apostle was perfectly sure, came short of the grandeur of the truth. The spirit of the passage is the same with that in Gal. i. 6 ff., where he erects the Gospel he has preached as the standard of absolute religious truth. “Though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema. As we have said before, so say I now again, If any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema.”

(2) “The simplicity that is toward Christ”—the simple acceptance of the truth about Him, an undivided loyalty of heart to Him—may be corrupted by influences originating within, as well as without, the Church. The infidelity which is subtlest, and most to be dreaded, is not the gross materialism or atheism which will not so much as hear the name of God or Christ; but that which uses all sacred names, speaking readily of Jesus, the Spirit, and the Gospel, but meaning something else, and something less, than these words meant in apostolic lips. This it was which alarmed the jealous love of Paul; this it is, in its insidious influence, which con-

\*It is gratuitous to drag in a reference to the first Apostles, and then to suppose the Corinthians drawing the inference—“if he is not inferior to them, still less is he inferior to our new teachers.” Such an inference depends on a traditional conception of apostleship which the Corinthians were not likely to share, and it is equally unnecessary and improbable.



stitutes one of the most real perils of Christianity at the present time. The Jew in the first century, who reduced the Person and Work of Christ to the scale of his national prejudices, and the theologian in the nineteenth, who discounts apostolic ideas when they do not suit the presuppositions of his philosophy, are open to the same suspicion, if they do not fall under the same condemnation. True thoughts about Christ—in spite of all the smart sayings about theological subtleties which have nothing to do with piety—are essential to the very existence of the Christian religion.

(3) There is no comparison between the Gospel of God in Jesus Christ His Son and any other religion. The science of comparative religion is interesting as a science; but a Christian may be excused for finding the religious use of it tiresome. There is nothing true in any of the religions which is not already in his possession. He never finds a moral idea, a law of the spiritual life, a word of God, in any of them, to which he cannot immediately offer a parallel, far more simple and penetrating, from the revelation of Christ. He has no interest in disparaging the light by which millions of his fellow-creatures have walked, generation after generation, in the mysterious providence of God; but he sees no reason for pretending that that light—which Scripture calls darkness and the shadow of death—can bear comparison with the radiance in which he lives. "If," he might say, misapplying the fourth verse—"if they brought us another saviour, another spirit, another gospel, we might be religiously interested in them; but, as it is, we have everything already, and they, in comparison, have nothing." The same remark applies to "theosophy," "spiritualism," and other "gospels." It will be time to take them seriously when they utter one wise or true word on God or the soul which is not an echo of something in the old familiar Scriptures.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### FOOLISH BOASTING.

#### 2 CORINTHIANS xi. 7-29 (R. V.).

THE connection of ver. 7 with what precedes is not at once clear. The Apostle has expressed his conviction that he is in nothing inferior to "the superlative apostles" so greatly honoured by the Corinthians. Why, then, is he so differently treated? A rudeness in speech he is willing to concede, but that can hardly be the explanation, considering his fulness of knowledge. Then another idea strikes him, and he puts it, interrogatively, as an alternative. Can it be that he did wrong—humbling himself that they might be exalted—in preaching to them the Gospel of God for nought, *i. e.*, in declining to accept support from them while he evangelised in Corinth? Do they appreciate the interlopers more highly than Paul, because they exact a price for their gospel, while he preached his for nothing? This, of course, is bitterly ironical; but it is not gratuitous. The background of fact which prompted the Apostle's question was no doubt this—that his adversaries had misinterpreted his conduct. A true apostle, they said, had a right to be maintained by the

Church; The Lord Himself has ordained that they who preach the Gospel should live by the Gospel; but he claims no maintenance, and by that very fact betrays a bad conscience. He dare not make the claim which every true apostle makes without the least misgiving.

It would be hard to imagine anything more malignant in its wickedness than this. Paul's refusal to claim support from those to whom he preached is one of the most purely and characteristically Christian of all his actions. He felt himself, by the grace of Christ, a debtor to all men; he owed them the Gospel; it was as if he were defrauding them if he did not tell them of the love of God in His Son. He felt himself in immense sympathy with the spirit of the Gospel; it was the free gift of God to the world, and as far as it depended on him its absolute freeness would not be obscured by the merest suspicion of a price to be paid. He knew that in foregoing his maintenance he was resigning a right secured to him by Christ (1 Cor. ix. 14), humbling himself, as he puts it here, that others might be spiritually exalted; but he had the joy of preaching the Gospel in the spirit of the Gospel—of entering, in Christ's service, into the self-sacrificing joy of his Lord; and he valued this above all earthly reward. To accuse such a man, on such grounds, of having a bad conscience, and of being afraid to live by his work, because he knew it was not what it pretended to be, was to sound the depths of baseness. It gave Paul in some measure the Master's experience, when the Pharisees said, "He casteth out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils." It is really the prince of the devils, the accuser of the brethren, who speaks in all such malignant insinuations; it is the most diabolical thing any one can do—the nearest approach to sinning against the Holy Ghost—when he sets himself to find out bad motives for good actions.

As we shall see further on, Paul's enemies made more specific charges: they hinted that he made his own out of the Corinthians indirectly, and that he could indemnify himself, for this abstinence, from the collection (chaps. xii. 16-18, chap. viii. and ix.). Perhaps this is why he describes his actual conduct at Corinth in such vigorous language (vv. 7-11), before saying anything at all of his motives. "I preached to you the Gospel of God," he says, "for nothing." He calls it "the Gospel of God" with intentional fulness and solemnity; the genuine Gospel, he means—not another, which is no gospel at all, but a subversion of the truth. He robbed other Churches, and took wages from them, in order to minister to the Corinthians. There is a mingling of ideas in the strong words here used. The English reader thinks of Paul's doing less than justice to other Churches that he might do more than justice to the Corinthians; but though this is true, it is not all. Both "robbed" and "wages," as Bengel has pointed out, are military words, and it is difficult to resist the impression that Paul used them as such; he did not come to Corinth to be dependent on any one, but in the course of a triumphant progress, in which he devoted the spoils of his earlier victories for Christ to a new campaign in Achaia. Nay, even when he was with them and was "in want," he did not throw himself like a benumbing weight on any one; what his own labours failed to supply, the brethren (per-



haps Silas and Timothy) made good when they came from Macedonia. This has been his practice, and will continue to be so. He swears by the truth of Christ that is in him, that no man shall ever stop his mouth, so far as boasting of this independence is concerned, in the regions of Achaia. Why? His tender heart dismisses the one painful supposition which could possibly arise. "Because I love you not? God knoweth." Love is wounded when its proffered gifts are rejected with scorn, and when *their* rejection means that *it* is rejected; but that was not the situation here. Paul can appeal to Him who knows the heart in proof of the sincerity with which he loves the Corinthians.

His fixed purpose to be indebted to no one in Achaia has another object in view. What that is he explains in the twelfth verse. Strange to say, this verse, like ver. 4, has received two precisely opposite interpretations. (1) Some start with the idea that Paul's adversaries at Corinth were persons who took no support from the Church, and boasted of their disinterestedness in this respect. The "occasion" which they desired was an occasion of any sort for disparaging and discrediting Paul; and they felt they would have such an occasion if Paul accepted support from the Church, and so put himself in a position of inferiority to them. But Paul persists in his self-denying policy, with the object of depriving them of the opportunity they seek, and at the same time of proving them—in this very point of disinterestedness—to be in exactly the same position as himself. But surely, throughout both Epistles, a contrast is implied, in this very point, between Paul and his opponents: the tacit assumption is always that his line of conduct is singular, and is not to be made a rule. And in the face of ver. 20 it is too much to assume that it was the rule of his Judaizing opponents in Corinth. (2) Others start with the idea, which seems to me indubitably right, that these opponents did accept support from the Church. But even on this assumption opinions diverge. (a) Some argue that Paul pursued his policy of abstinence partly to deprive them of any opportunity of disparaging him, and partly to compel them to adopt it themselves ("that they may be found even as we").\* I can hardly imagine this being taken seriously. Why should Paul have wanted to lift these preachers of a false gospel to a level with himself in point of generosity? To coerce them into a reluctant self-denial could be no possible object to him either of wish or hope. Hence there seems only (b) the other alternative open, which makes the last clause—"that wherein they boast, they may be found even as we"—depend, not upon "what I do, that I will do," but upon "them that desire occasion." What the adversaries desired was, not occasion to disparage Paul in general, but occasion of being on an equality with him in the matter in which they gloried—viz., their apostolic claims. They felt the advantage which Paul's disinterestedness gave him with the Corinthians; they had not themselves the generosity needed to imitate it; it was not enough to assail it with covert slanders (chap. xii. 16-18), or to say that he was afraid to claim an apostle's due; it would have been all they wanted had he resigned it. Then they could have said that in that in which they boasted—apostolic dignity—they were precisely on a level

\* That is, the two *iva* are co-ordinate.

with him. But not to mention the spiritual motives for his conduct, which have been already explained, and were independent of all relation to his opponents, Paul was too capable a strategist to surrender such a position to the enemy. It would never be by action of his that he and they found themselves on the same ground.

At the very mention of such an equality his heart rises within him. "Found even as we! Why, such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ." Here, at last, the irony is cast aside, and Paul calls a spade a spade. The conception of apostleship in the New Testament is not that dogmatic traditional one, which limits the name to the Twelve, or to the Twelve and the Apostle of the Gentiles; as we see from passages like chap. viii. 23, Acts xiv. 4, 14, it had a much larger application. What Paul means when he calls his opponents false apostles is not that persons *in their position* could have no right to the name; but that persons *with their character*, their aims, and their methods, would only deceive others when they used it. It ought to cover something quite different from what it actually did cover in them. He explains himself further when he calls them "deceitful workers." That they were active he does not deny; but the true end of their activity was not declared. As far as the word itself goes, the "deceit" which they used may have been intended to cloak either their personal or their proselytising views. After what we have read in chap. x. 12-18, the latter seems preferable. The Judaizing preachers had shown their hand in Galatia, demanding openly that Paul's converts should be circumcised, and keep the law of Moses as a whole; but their experience there had made them cautious, and when they came to Corinth they proceeded more diplomatically. They tried to sap the Pauline Gospel, partly by preaching "another Jesus," partly by calling in question the legitimacy of Paul's vocation. They said nothing openly of what was the inevitable and intended issue of all this—the bringing of spiritual Gentile Christendom under the old Jewish yoke. But it is this which goes to the Apostle's soul; he can be nothing but irreconcilably hostile to men who have assumed the guise of apostles of Christ, in order that they may with greater security subvert Christ's characteristic work. Paul dwells on the deceitfulness of their conduct as its most offensive feature; yet he does not wonder at it, for even Satan, he says, fashions himself into an angel of light. It is no great thing, then, if his servants also fashion themselves as servants of righteousness.

We can only tell in a general way what Paul meant when he spoke of Satan, the prince of darkness, transfiguring himself so as to appear a heavenly angel. He may have had some Jewish legend in his mind, some story of a famous temptation, unknown to us, or he may only have intended to represent to the imagination, with the utmost possible vividness, one of the familiar laws in our moral experience, a law which was strikingly illustrated by the conduct of his adversaries at Corinth. Evil, we all know, could never tempt us if we saw it simply as it is; disguise is essential to its power; it appeals to man through ideas and hopes which he cannot but regard as good. So it was in the very first temptation. An act which in its essential character



was neither more nor less than one of direct disobedience to God was represented by the tempter, not in that character, but as the means by which man was to obtain possession of a tree good for food (sensual satisfaction), and pleasant to the eyes (æsthetic satisfaction), and desirable to make one wise (intellectual satisfaction). All these satisfactions, which in themselves are undeniably good, were the cloak under which the tempter hid his true features. He was a murderer from the beginning, and entered Eden to ruin man, but he presented himself as one offering to man a vast enlargement of life and joy. This is the nature of all temptations; to disguise himself, to look as like a good angel as he can, is the first necessity, and therefore the first invention of the devil. And all who do his work, the Apostle says, naturally imitate his devices. The soul of man is born for good, and will not listen at all to any voice which does not profess at least to speak for good: this is why the devil is a liar from the beginning, and the father of lies. Lying in word and deed is the one weapon with which he can assail the simplicity of man.

But how does this apply to the Judaisers in Corinth? To Paul, we must understand, they were men affecting to serve Christ, but really impelled by personal, or at the utmost by partisan, feelings. Their true object was to win an ascendancy for themselves, or for their party, in the Church; but they made their way into it as evangelists and apostles. Nominally, they were ministers of Christ; really, they ministered to their own vanity, and to the bigotry and prejudices of their race. They professed to be furthering the cause of righteousness, but in sober truth the only cause which was the better for them was that of their own private importance; the result of their ministry was, not that bad men became good, but that they themselves felt entitled to give themselves airs. Over against all this unreality Paul remembers the righteous judgment of God. "Whose end," he concludes abruptly, "shall be according to their works."

The most serious aspect of such a situation as this is seen when we consider that men may fill it unconsciously: they may devote themselves to a cause which looks like the cause of Christ, or the cause of righteousness; and at bottom it may not be Christ or righteousness at all which is the animating principle in their hearts. It is some hidden regard to themselves, or to a party with which they are identified. Even when they labour, and possibly suffer, it is this, and not loyalty to Christ, which sustains them. It may be in defence of orthodoxy, or in furtherance of liberalism, that a man puts himself forward in the Church, and in either case he will figure to those who agree with him as a servant of righteousness; but equally in either case the secret spring of his action may be pride, the desire to assert a superiority, to consolidate a party which is his larger self, to secure an area in which he may rule. He may spend energy and talent on the work; but if this is the ultimate motive of it, it is the work of the devil, and not of God. Even if the doctrine he defends is the true one—even if the policy he maintains is the right one—the services he may accidentally render are far outweighed by the domestication in the Church of a spirit so alien to the Lord's. It is diabolical, not divine; the Gospel is profaned by contact with it; the

Church is prostituted when it serves as an arena for its exercise; when it comes forward in the interest of righteousness, it is Satan fashioning himself into an angel of light.

At this point Paul returns to the idea which has been in his mind since chap. x. 7—the idea of boasting, or rather glorying. He does not like the thing itself, and just as little does he like the mask of a fool, under which he is to play the part: he is conscious that neither suits him. Hence he clears the ground once more, before he commits himself. "Again, I say, let no man think that I *am* foolish; but if that favour cannot be granted, then even as a foolish person receive me, that I also may boast a little." There is a fine satirical reflection in the "also." If he does make a fool of himself by boasting, he is only doing what the others do, whom the Corinthians receive with open arms. But it strikes his conscience suddenly that there is a higher rule for the conduct of a Christian man than the example of his rivals, or the patience of his friends. The tenderness of Paul's spirit comes out in the next words: "What I speak, I speak *not after the Lord*, but as in foolishness, in this confidence of glorying." The Lord never boasted; nothing could be conceived less like Him, less after His mind; and Paul will have it distinctly understood that *His* character is not compromised by any extravagance of which His servant may here make himself guilty. As a rule, the Apostle did speak "after the Lord"; his habitual consciousness was that of one who had "the mind of Christ," and who felt that Christ's character was, in a sense, in his keeping. That ought to be the rule for all Christians; we should never find ourselves in situations in which the Christian character, with all its responsibilities, affecting both ourselves and Him, cannot be maintained. With Christ and His interests removed from the scene, Paul at length feels himself free to measure himself against his rivals. "Since many glory after the flesh, I also will glory." The flesh means everything except the spirit. Where Christ and the Gospel are concerned, it is, according to Paul, an absolute irrelevance, a thing to be simply left out of account; but since they persist in dragging it in, he will meet them on their own ground. What that is, first comes out clearly in ver. 22: but the Apostle delays again to urge his plea for tolerance. "Ye suffer the foolish gladly, being wise yourselves." It answers best to the vehemence of the whole passage to take the first clause here—"Ye suffer the foolish gladly"—as grim earnest, the reference being to the other boasters, Paul's rivals; and only the second clause ironically. Then ver. 20 would give the proof of this: "Ye bear with the foolish gladly . . . for ye bear with a man if he enslaves you, if he devours you, if he takes you captive, if he exalts himself over you, if he strikes you on the face." We must suppose that this strong language describes the overbearing and violent behaviour of the Judaists in Corinth. We do not need to take it literally, but neither may we suppose that Paul spoke at random: he is virtually contrasting his own conduct and that of the people in question, and the nature of the contrast must be on the whole correctly indicated. He himself had been accused of weakness; and he frankly admits that, if comparison has to be made with a line of action like this, the accusation is just.



"I speak by way of disparagement, as though we had been weak." This rendering of the Revised Version fairly conveys the meaning. It might be expressed in a paraphrase, as follows: "In saying what I have said of the behaviour of my rivals, I have been speaking to my own disparagement, the idea involved being that I" notice the emphatic (*ἡμεῖς*) "have been weak. Weak, no doubt, I was, if violent action like theirs is the true measure of strength: nevertheless, whereinsoever any is bold (I speak in foolishness), I am bold also. On whatever ground they claim to exercise such extraordinary powers, that ground I can maintain as well as they."

Here, finally, the boasting does begin. "Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I." This is the sum and substance of what is meant by their glorying after the flesh: they prided themselves on their birth, and claimed authority on the strength of it. They may have appealed, not only to the election of Israel as the Old Testament represents it, but to words of Jesus, like "Salvation is of the Jews." The three names for what is in reality one thing convey the impression of the immense importance which was assigned to it. "Hebrews" seems the least significant; it is merely the *national* name, with whatever historical glories attached to it in Hebrew minds. "Israelites" is a *sacred* name; it is identified with the prerogatives of the theocratic people: Paul himself, when his heart swells with patriotic emotion, begins the enumeration of the privileges belonging to his kinsmen after the flesh—"they who are Israelites." "Seed of Abraham," again, is for the Apostle, and probably for these rivals of his, equivalent to "heirs of the promises"; it describes the Jewish people as more directly and immediately interested—nay, as alone directly and immediately interested—in the salvation of God. No one could read Rom. ix. 4 f. without feeling that pride of race—pride in his people, and in their special relation to God and special place in the history of redemption—was among the strongest passions in the Apostle's heart; and we can understand the indignation and scorn with which he regarded men who tracked him over Asia and Europe, assailed his authority, and sought to undermine his work, on the ground that he was faithless to the lawful prerogatives of Israel. There was not an Israelite in the world prouder of his birth, with a more magnificent sense of his country's glories, than the Apostle of the Gentiles; and it provoked him beyond endurance to see the things in which he gloried debased, as they were debased, by his rivals—made the symbols of a paltry vanity which he despised, made barriers to the universal love of God by which all the families of the earth were to be blessed. Driven to extremity, he could only outlaw such opponents from the Christian community, and transfer the prerogatives of Israel to the Church. "*We*," he taught his Gentile converts to say—"we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. iii. 3).

Here he does not linger long over what is merely external. It is a deeper question that he asks in ver. 23, "Are they ministers of Christ?" and he feels like a man beside himself, clean out of his sense (*παράφρονων*)—so un-

suitable is the subject for boasting—as he answers, "I more." Many interpret this as if it meant, "I am more than a servant of Christ," and then ask wonderingly, "What more?" but surely the natural meaning is, "I am a servant too, in a higher degree." The proof of this is given in that tale of sufferings which bursts irrepressibly from the Apostle's heart, and sweeps us in its course like a torrent. If he thought of his rivals when he began, and was instituting a serious comparison when he wrote "in labours *more abundantly* [than they]," they must soon have escaped from his mind. It is his own life as a minister of Christ on which he dwells; and after the first words, if a comparison is to be made, he leaves the making of it to others. But comparison, in fact, was out of the question: the sufferings of the Apostle in doing service to Christ were unparalleled and alone. The few lines which he devotes to them are the most vivid light we have on the apostolic age and the apostolic career. They show how fragmentary, or at all events how select, is the narrative in the Book of Acts. Thus of the incidents mentioned in ver. 25 we learn but little from St. Luke. Of the five times nine-and-thirty stripes, he mentions none; of the three beatings with rods, only one; of the three shipwrecks, none (for Acts xxvii. is later), and nothing of the twenty-four hours in the deep. It is not necessary to comment on details, but one cannot resist the impression of triumph with which Paul recounts the "perils" he had faced; so many they were, so various, and so terrible, yet in the Lord's service he has come safely through them all. It is a commentary from his own hand on his own word—"as dying, and, behold, we live!" In the retrospect all these perils show, not only that he is a true servant of Christ, entering into the fellowship of his Master's sufferings to bring blessing to men, but that he is owned by Christ as such: the Lord has delivered him from deaths so great; yes, and will deliver him; and his hope is set on Him for every deliverance he may need (chap. i. 10).

But, after all, these perils are but outward, and the very enumeration of them shows that they are things of the past. In all their kinds and degrees—violence, privation, exposure, fear—they are a historical testimony to the devotion with which Paul has served Christ. He bore in his body the marks which they had left, and to him they were the marks of Jesus; they identified him as Christ's slave. But not to mention incidental matters, there is another testimony to his ministry which is ever with him—a burden as crushing as these bodily sufferings, and far more constant in its pressure: "that which cometh upon me daily, anxiety for all the Churches." Short of this, anything of which man can boast may be, at least in a qualified sense, "after the flesh"; but in this identification of himself with Christ's cause in the world—this bearing of others' burdens on his spirit—there is that fulfilment of Christ's law which alone and finally legitimates a Christian ministry. Nor was it merely in an official sense that Paul was interested in the affairs of the Church. When the Church is once planted in the world, it has a side which is of the world, a side which may be administered without a very heavy expenditure of Christian feeling: this, it is safe to say, is simply out of sight. Paul's anxiety for the Churches is defined in all its scope and in-



tensity in the passionate words of the twentieth verse: "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I burn not?" His love individualised Christian people, and made him one with them. There was no trembling timorous soul, no scrupulous conscience, in all the communities he had founded, whose timidity and weakness did not put a limit to his strength: he condescended to their intelligence, feeding them with milk, and not with meat; he measured his liberty, not in principle, but in practice, by their bondage; his heart thrilled with their fears; in the fulness of his Christ-like strength he lived a hundred feeble lives. And when spiritual harm came to one of them—when the very least was made to stumble, and was caught in the snare of falsehood or sin—the pain in his heart was like burning fire. The sorrow that pierced the soul of Christ pierced his soul also; the indignation that glowed in the Master's breast, as He pronounced woe on the man by whom occasions of stumbling come, glowed again in him. This is the fire that Christ came to cast on the earth, and that He longed to see kindled—this prompt intense sympathy with all that is of God in men's souls, this readiness to be weak with the weak, this pain and indignation when the selfishness or pride of men leads the weak astray, and imperils the work for which Christ died. And this is indeed the Apostle's last line of defence. Nowhere could boasting be less in place than when a man speaks of the lessons he has learned at the Cross: yet these only give him a title to glory as "a minister of Christ." If glorying *here* is inadmissible, it is because glorying in every sense is "folly."

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS.

2 CORINTHIANS xi. 30-xii. 10 (R. V.).

THE difficulties of exposition in this passage are partly connected with its form, partly with its substance: it will be convenient to dispose of the formal side first. The thirteenth verse of the eleventh chapter—"If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things that concern my weakness"—seems to serve two purposes. On the one hand, it is a natural and effective climax to all that precedes; it defines the principle on which Paul has acted in the "glorying" of vv. 23-29. It is not of exploits that he is proud, but of perils and sufferings; not of what he has achieved, but of what he has endured, for Christ's sake; in a word, not of strength, but of weakness. On the other hand, this same thirtieth verse indubitably points forward; it defines the principle on which Paul will always act where boasting is in view; and it is expressly resumed in chap. xii., ver. 5 and ver. 9. For this reason, it seems better to treat it as a text than as a peroration; it is the key to the interpretation of what follows, put into our hands by the Apostle himself. In the full consciousness of its dangers and inconveniences, he means to go a little further in this foolish boasting; but he takes security, as far as possible, against its moral perils, by choosing as the ground of boasting things which in the common judgment of men would only bring him shame.

At this point we are startled by a sudden appeal to God, the solemnity and fulness of which strike us, on a first reading, as almost painfully gratuitous. "The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, He who is blessed for ever, knoweth that I lie not." What is the explanation of this extraordinary earnestness? There is a similar passage in Gal. i. 19—"Now touching the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not"—where Lightfoot says the strength of the Apostle's language is to be explained by the unscrupulous calumnies cast upon him by his enemies. This *may* be the clue to his vehemence here; and in point of fact it falls in with by far the most ingenious explanation that has been given of the two subjects introduced in this paragraph. The explanation I refer to is that of Heinrici. He supposes that Paul's escape from Damascus, and his visions and revelations, had been turned to account against him by his rivals. They had used the escape to accuse him of ignominious cowardice: the indignity of it is obvious enough. His visions and revelations were as capable of misconstruction: it was easy to call them mere illusions, signs of a disordered brain; it was not too much for malice to hint that his call to apostleship rested on nothing better than one of these ecstatic hallucinations. It is because things so dear to him are attacked—his reputation for personal courage, which is the mainstay of all the virtues; his actual vision of Christ, and divinely authorised mission—that he makes the vehement appeal that startles us at first. He calls God to witness that in regard to both these subjects he is going to tell the exact truth: the truth will be his sufficient defence. Ingenious as it is, I do not think this theory can be maintained. There is no hint in the passage that Paul is defending himself; he is glorying, and glorying in the things that concern his weakness. It seems more probable that, when he dictated the strong words of ver. 31, the outline of all he was going to say was in his mind; and as the main part of it—all about the visions and revelations—was absolutely uncontrollable by any witness but his own, he felt moved to attest it thus in advance. The names and attributes of God fall in well with this. As the visions and revelations were specially connected with Christ, and were counted by the Apostle among the things for which he had the deepest reason to praise God, it is but the reflection of this state of mind when he appeals to "the God and Father of the Lord Jesus, He who is blessed for evermore." This is not a random adjuration, but an appeal which takes shape involuntarily in a grateful and pious heart, on which the memory of a signal grace and honour still rests. Of course the verses about Damascus stand rather out of relation to it. But it is a violence which nothing can justify to strike them out of the text on this ground, and along with them part or the whole of ver. 1 in chap. xii. For many reasons unknown to us the danger in Damascus, and the escape from it, may have had a peculiar interest for the Apostle; *hæc persecutio*, says Calvin, *erat quasi primum tirocinium Pauli*; it was his "matriculation in the school of persecution." He may have intended, as Meyer thinks, to make it the beginning of a new catalogue of sufferings for Christ's sake, all of which were to be covered by the appeal to God, and have abruptly repented, and gone off on another sub-



ject; but whether or not, to expunge the lines is pure wilfulness. The Apostle glories in what he endured at Damascus—in the imminent peril and in the undignified escape alike—as in things belonging to his weakness. Another might choose to hide such things, but they are precisely what he tells. In Christ's service scorn is glory, ignominy is honour; and it is the mark of loyalty when men rejoice that they are counted worthy to suffer shame for the Name.

When we go on to chap. xii., and the second of the two subjects with which boasting is to be associated, we meet in the first verse with serious textual difficulties. Our Authorised Version gives the rendering: "It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord." This follows the Textus Receptus: *Καυχᾶσθαι δὲ οὐ συμφέρει μοι\* ἐλεύσομαι γὰρ, κ. τ. λ.*, only omitting the *γὰρ* (for I will come). The MSS. are almost chaotic, but the most authoritative editors—Tregelles, Tischendorf in his last edition, and Westcott and Hort—agree in reading *Καυχᾶσθαι δὲ οὐ\* συμφέρον μὲν ἐλεύσομαι δὲ, κ. τ. λ.* This is the text which our Revisers render: "I must needs glory, though it is not expedient; but I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord." Practically, the difference is not so great after all. According to the best authorities, Paul repeats that he is being forced to speak as he does; the consciousness of the disadvantages attendant on this course does not leave him, it is rather deepened, as he approaches the highest and most sacred of all subjects—visions and revelations he has received from Christ. Of these two words, revelations is the wider in import: visions were only one of the ways in which revelations could be made. Paul, of course, is not going to boast directly of the visions and revelations themselves. All through the experiences to which he alludes under this name he was to himself as a third person; he was purely passive; and to claim credit, to glory as if he had done or originated anything, would be transparently absurd. But there are "things of his weakness" associated with, if not dependent on, these high experiences; and it is in them, after due explanation, that he purposes to exult.

He begins abruptly. "I know a man in Christ, fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I know not; or whether out of the body I know not; God knoweth), such a one caught up even to the third heaven." A man in Christ means a Christian man, a man in his character as a Christian. To St. Paul's consciousness the wonderful experience he is about to describe was not natural, still less pathological, but unequivocally religious. It did not befall him as a man simply, still less as an epileptic patient; it was an unmistakably Christian experience. He only existed for himself, during it, as "a man in Christ." "I know such a man," he says, "fourteen years ago caught up even to the third heaven." The date of this "rapture" (the same word is used in Acts viii. 39; 1 Thess. iv. 17; Rev. xii. 5: all significant examples) would be about A. D. 44. This forbids us to connect it in any way with Paul's conversion, which must have been twenty years earlier than this letter; and indeed there is no reason for identifying it with anything else we know of the Apostle. At

\* In their margin Westcott and Hort read *δὲ οὐ*.

the date in question, as far as can be made out from the Book of Acts, he must have been in Tarsus or in Antioch. The rapture itself is described as perfectly incomprehensible. He may have been carried up bodily to the heavenly places; his spirit may have been carried up, while his body remained unconscious upon earth: he can express no opinion about this; the truth is only known to God. It is idle to exploit a passage like this in the interest of apostolic psychology; Paul is only taking elaborate pains to tell us that of the mode of his rapture he was absolutely ignorant. It is fairer to infer that the event was unique in his experience, and that when it happened he was alone; had such things recurred, or had there been spectators, he could not have been in doubt as to whether he was caught up "in the body" or "out of the body." The mere fact that the date is given individualises the event in his life; and it is going beyond the facts altogether to generalise it, and take it as the type of such an experience as accompanied his conversion, or of the visions in Acts xvi. 9, xxii. 17 f., xviii. 9. It was one, solitary, incomparable experience, including in it a complex of visions and revelations granted by Christ: it was this, at all events, to the Apostle; and if we do not believe what he tells us about it, we can have no knowledge of it at all.

"Caught up even to the third heaven." The Jews usually counted seven heavens; sometimes, perhaps because of the dual form of the Hebrew word for heaven, two; but the distinctions between the various heavens were as fanciful as the numbers were arbitrary. It adds nothing, even to the imagination, to speak of an ærial, a sidereal, and a spiritual heaven, and to suppose that these are meant by Paul; we can only think vaguely of the "man in Christ" rising through one celestial region after another till he came even to the third. The word chosen to define the distance (*έως*) suggests that an impression of vast spaces traversed remained on the Apostle's mind; and that the third heaven, on which his sentence pauses, and which is a resting-place for his memory, was also a station, so to speak, in his rapture. This is the only supposition which does justice to the resumption in ver. 3 of the deliberate and circumstantial language of ver. 2. "And I know such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body (I know not) God knoweth—how that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words that it is not lawful for a man to utter." This is a resumption, not a repetition. Paul is not elaborately telling the same story over again, but he is carrying it on, with the same full circumstance, the same grave asseveration, from the point at which he halted. The rapture had a second stage, under the same incomprehensible conditions, and in it the Christian man passed out and up from the third heaven into Paradise. Many of the Jews believed in a Paradise beneath the earth, the abode of the souls of the good while they awaited their perfecting at the Resurrection (*cf.* Luke xvi. 23 ff., xxiii. 43); but obviously this cannot be the idea here. We must think rather of what the Apocalypse calls "the Paradise of God" (ii. 7), where the tree of life grows, and where those who overcome have their reward. It is an abode of unimaginable blessedness, "far above all heavens," to use the Apostle's



own words elsewhere (Eph. iv. 10). What visions he had, or what revelations, during that pause in the third heaven, Paul does not say; and at this supreme point of his rapture, in Paradise, the words he heard were words unspeakable, which it is not lawful for man to utter. Mortal ears might hear, but mortal lips might not repeat, sounds so mysterious and divine: it was not for *man* (ἄνθρωπος is qualitative) to utter them.

But why, we may ask, if this rapture has its meaning and value solely for the Apostle, should he refer to it here at all? Why should he make such solemn statements about an experience, the historical conditions of which, as he is careful to assure us, are incomprehensible, while its spiritual content is a secret? Is not such an experience literally *nothing* to us? No, unless Paul himself is nothing; for this experience was evidently a great thing to him. It was the most sacred privilege and honour he had ever known; it was among his strongest sources of inspiration; it had a powerful tendency to generate spiritual pride; and it had its accompaniment, and its counter-weight, in his sharpest trial. The world knows little of its greatest men; perhaps we very rarely know what are the great things in the lives even of the people who are round about us. Paul had kept silence about this sublime experience for fourteen years, and no man had ever guessed it; it had been a secret between the Lord and His disciple; and they only, who were in the secret, could rightly interpret all that depended upon it. There is a kind of profanity in forcing the heart to show itself too far, in compelling a man to speak about, even though he does not divulge, the things that it is not lawful to utter. The Corinthians had put this profane compulsion on the Apostle; but though he yields to it, it is in a way which keeps clear of the profanity. He tells what he dare tell in the third person, and then goes on: "On behalf of such a one will I glory, but on behalf of myself will I not glory, save in my infirmities." *Removere debemus τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἀπὸ τοῦ μεγάλου* (Bengel): there are things too great to allow the intrusion of self. Paul does not choose to identify the poor Apostle whom the Corinthians and their misleading teachers used so badly with the man in Christ who had such inconceivable honour put on him by the Lord; if he does boast on behalf of such a one, and magnify his sublime experiences, at all events he does not transfer his prerogatives to *himself*; he does not say, "*I* am that incomparably honoured man; reverence in me a special favourite of Christ." On the contrary, where *his own* interest has to be forwarded, he will glory in nothing but his weaknesses. The one thing about which he is anxious is that men should not think too highly of him, nor go in their appreciation beyond what their experience of him as a man and a teacher justifies (ver. 6). He might, indeed, boast, reasonably enough; for the truth would suffice, without any foolish exaggeration; but he forbears, for the reason just stated. We are familiar with the danger of thinking too highly of ourselves; it is as real a danger, though probably a less considered one, to be too highly thought of by others. Paul dreaded it; so does every wise man. To be highly thought of, where the character is sincere and unpretentious, may be a protection, and even an inspiration; but to have a reputation,

morally, that one does not deserve—to be counted good in respects in which one is really bad—is to have a frightful difficulty added to penitence and amendment. It puts one in a radically false position; it generates and fosters hypocrisy; it explains a vast mass of spiritual ineffectiveness. The man who is insincere enough to be puffed up by it is not far from judgment.

But to return to the text. Paul wishes to be humble; he is content that men should take him as they find him, infirmities and all. He has that about him, too, and not unconnected with these high experiences, the very purpose of which is to keep him humble. If the text is correct, he expresses himself with some embarrassment. "And by reason of the exceeding greatness of the revelations—wherefore, that I should not be exalted overmuch, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, that I should not be exalted overmuch." The repetition of the last word shows where the emphasis lies: Paul has a deep and constant sense of the danger of spiritual pride, and he knows that he would fall into it unless a strong counter-pressure were kept up upon him.

I do not feel called on to add another to the numberless disquisitions on Paul's thorn in the flesh. The resources of imagination having been exhausted, people are returning to the obvious. The thorn in the flesh\* was something painful, which affected the Apostle's body; it was something in its nature purely physical, not a solicitation to any kind of sin, such as sensuality or pride, else he would not have ceased to pray for its removal; it was something terribly humbling, if not humiliating—an affection which might well have excited the contempt and loathing of those who beheld it (Gal. iv. 14, which probably refers to this subject); it had begun after, if not in consequence of, the rapture just described, and stood in a spiritual, if not a physical, relation to it; it was, if not chronic or periodic, at least recurrent; the Apostle knew that it would never leave him. What known malady, incident to human nature, fulfils all these conditions, it is not possible with perfect certainty to say. A considerable mass of competent opinion supports the idea that it must have been liability to epileptic seizures. Such an infirmity Paul might have suffered under in common with men so great as Julius Cæsar and the first Napoleon, as Mahomet, King Alfred, and Peter the Great. But it does not quite satisfy the conditions. Epileptic attacks, if they occur with any frequency at all, invariably cause mental deterioration. Now, Paul distinctly suggests that the thorn was a very steady companion; and as his mind, in spite of it, grew year after year in the apprehension of the Christian revelation, so that his last thoughts are always his largest and best, the epileptic hypothesis has its difficulties like every other. Is it likely that a man who suffered pretty constantly from nervous convulsions of this kind wrote the Second Epistle to the Corinthians after fourteen years of them, or the Epistles to the Romans, Philippians, Colossians, and Ephesians later still? There is, of course, no religious interest in affirming or denying any physical explanation of the matter whatever;

\* For the meaning "thorn," not "stake" or "cross," see Ezek. xxviii. 24; Hosea ii. 8 (6); Num. xxxiii. 55.



but with our present data I do not think a certain explanation is within our reach.

The Apostle himself is not interested in it as a physical affection. He speaks of it because of its spiritual significance, and because of the wonderful spiritual experiences he has had in connection with it. It was given him, he says: but by whom? When we think of the purpose—to save him from spiritual pride—we instinctively answer, "God." And that, it can hardly be doubted, would have been the Apostle's own answer. Yet he does not hesitate to call it in the same breath a messenger of Satan. The name is dictated by the inborn, ineradicable shrinking of the soul from pain; that agonising, humiliating, annihilating thing, we feel at the bottom of our hearts, is not really of God, even when it does His work. In His perfect world pain shall be no more. It does not need science, but experience, to put these things together, and to understand at once the evil and the good of suffering. Paul, at first, like all men, found the evil overpowering. The pain, the weakness, the degradation of his malady, were intolerable. He could not understand that only a pressure so pitiless and humbling could preserve him from spiritual pride and a spiritual fall. We are all slow to learn anything like this. We think we can take warning, that a word will be enough, that at most the memory of a single pang will suffice to keep us safe. But pains remain with us, and the pressure is continuous and unrelieved, because the need of constraint and of discipline is ceaseless. The crooked branch will not bend in a new curve if it is 'only tied to it for half an hour. The sinful bias in our natures—to pride, to sensuality, to falsehood, or whatever else—will not be cured by one sharp lesson. The commonest experience in human life is that the man whom sickness and pain have humbled for the moment, the very moment their constraint is lifted, resumes his old habit. He does not think so, but it is really the thorn that has been keeping him right; and when its sharpness is blunted, the edge is taken from his conscience too.

Paul besought the Lord, that is Christ, thrice, that this thing might depart from him. The Lord, we may be sure, had full sympathy with that prayer. He Himself had had His agony, and prayed the Father thrice that if it were possible the cup of pain might pass from Him. He prayed, indeed, in express submission to the Father's will; the voice of nature was not allowed in Him to urge an unconditional peremptory request. Perhaps in Paul on this occasion—certainly often in most men—it is nature, the flesh and not the spirit, which prompts the prayer. But God is all the while guarding the spirit's interest as the higher, and this explains the many real answers to prayer which seem to be refusals. A refusal is an answer, if it is so given that God and the soul thenceforth understand one another. It was thus that Paul was answered by Christ: "He hath said to me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for [My] strength is made perfect in weakness."

The first point to notice in this answer is the tense of the verb: "He hath said." The A. V. with "He said" misses the point. The sentence is present as well as past; it is Christ's continuous, as well as final, answer to Paul's prayer. The Apostle has been made to understand that the thorn must remain in his flesh, but along

with this he has received the assurance of an abiding love and help from the Lord. We remember, even by contrast, the stern answer made to Moses when he prayed that he might be permitted to cross Jordan and see the goodly land—"Let it suffice thee: speak no more unto Me of this matter." Paul also could no more ask for the removal of the thorn: it was the Lord's will that he should submit to it for high spiritual ends, and to pray against it would now have been a kind of impiety. But it is no longer an unrelieved pain and humiliation; the Apostle is supported under it by that grace of Christ which finds in the need and abjectness of men the opportunity of showing in all perfection its own condescending strength. The collocation of "grace" and "strength" in the ninth verse is characteristic of the New Testament, and very significant. There are many to whom "grace" is a holy word with no particular meaning; "the grace of God," or "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ," is only a vague benignity, which may fairly enough be spoken of as a "smile." But grace, in the New Testament, is force: it is a heavenly strength bestowed on men for timely succour; it finds its opportunity in our extremity; when our weakness makes us incapable of doing anything, it gets full scope *to work*. This is the meaning of the last words—"strength is made perfect in weakness." The truth is quite general; it is an application of it to the case in hand if we translate as in the A. V. (with some MSS.): "My strength is made perfect in [thy] weakness." It is enough, the Lord tells Paul, that he has this heavenly strength unceasingly bestowed upon him; the weakness which he has found so hard to bear—that distressing malady which humbled him and took his vigour away—is but the foil to it: it serves to magnify it, and to set it off; with that Paul should be content.

And he is content. That answer to his thrice-repeated prayer works a revolution in his heart; he looks at all that had troubled him—at all that he had deprecated—with new eyes. "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities—that is, glory rather than bemoan them or pray for their removal—that the power of Christ may spread its tabernacle over me." This compensation far outweighed the trial. He has ceased to speak now of the visions and revelations, perhaps he has ceased already to think of them; he is conscious only of the weakness and suffering from which he is never to escape, and of the grace of Christ which hovers over him, and out of weakness and suffering makes him strong. His very infirmities redound to the glory of the Lord, and so he chooses them, rather than his rapture into Paradise, as matter for boasting. "For this cause I am well content, on Christ's behalf, in infirmities, in insults, in necessities, in persecutions and distresses; for when I am weak, then am I strong."

With this noble word Paul concludes his enforced "glorying." He was not happy in it; it was not like him; and it is a triumph of the Spirit of Christ in him that he gives it such a noble turn, and comes out of it so well. There is a tinge of irony in the first passage (chap. xi. 21) in which he speaks of weakness, and fears that in comparison with his high-handed rivals at Corinth he will only have this to boast about; but as he enters into his real experience, and



tells us what he had borne for Christ, and what he had learned in pain and prayer about the laws of the spiritual life, all irony passes away; the pure heroic heart opens before us to its depths. The practical lessons of the last paragraphs are as obvious as they are important. That the greatest spiritual experiences are incommunicable; that even the best men are in danger of elation and pride; that the tendency of these sins is immensely strong, and can only be restrained by constant pressure; that pain, though one day to be abolished, is a means of discipline actually used by God; that it may be a plain duty to accept some suffering, or sickness, even a humbling and distressing one, as God's will for our good, and not to pray more for its removal; that God's grace is given to those who so accept His will, as a real reinforcement of their strength, nay, as a substitute, and far more, for the strength which they have not; that weakness, therefore, and helplessness, as foils to the present help of God, may actually be occasions of glorying to the Christian,—all these, and many more, are gathered up in this passionate Apologia of Paul.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

## NOT YOURS, BUT YOU.

## 2 CORINTHIANS xii. 11-21 (R. V.).

EXPOSITORS differ widely in characterising the three or four brief paragraphs into which this passage may be divided: (1) vv. 11-13; (2) vv. 14, 15, and vv. 16-18; (3) vv. 19-21. What is clear is, that we feel in it the ground-swell of the storm that has raged through the last two chapters, and that it is not till the beginning of chap. xiii. that the Apostle finally escapes from this, and takes up an authoritative and decisive attitude to the Corinthians. When he does reach Corinth, it will not be to explain and justify his own conduct, either against rivals or those whom rivals have misled, but to take prompt and vigorous action against disorders in the life of the Church.

(1) A review of what he has just written leads to a burst of indignant remonstrance. "I have become foolish." The emphasis is on the verb, not on the adjective; it is the painful fact that the eleventh chapter of Second Corinthians is a thing that no wise man would have written if he had been left to himself and his wisdom. Paul, who was a wise man, felt this, and it stung him. He resented the compulsion which was put upon him by the ingratitude and faithlessness of the Corinthians. The situation ought to have been exactly reversed. When he was defamed by strangers, then they, who knew him, instead of hearkening to the calumniators, ought to have stood up in his defence. But they basely left him to defend himself, to plead his own cause, to become a fool by "glorying." This kind of compulsion should never be put upon a good man, especially a man to whom, under God, we ourselves have been deeply indebted. The services he has rendered constitute a claim on our loyalty, and it is a duty of affection to guard his character against disparagement and malice.

Paul, in his deep consciousness of being wronged, presses home the charge against the

Corinthians. They had every reason, he tells them, to act as his advocates. When he was among them, he was in nothing inferior to the "superlative" Apostles—this is his last flout at the Judaist interlopers—nothing though he was. The signs that prove a man to be an apostle were wrought among them (the passive expression keeps *his* agency in the background) in all patience, by signs and wonders and mighty deeds. Their suspicions of him, their willingness to listen to insinuations against him, after such an experience, were unpardonable. He can only think of one "sign of the apostle" which was not wrought among them by his means, of one point in which he had made them inferior to the other Churches: he had not burdened them with his support. They were the spoilt children of the apostolic family; and he begs them, with bitter irony, to forgive him this wrong. If they had only been converted by a man who stood upon his rights!

"The signs of an apostle" are frequently referred to in Paul's Epistles, and are of various kinds. By far the most important, and the most frequently insisted on, is success in evangelistic work. He who converts men and founds Churches has the supreme and final attestation of apostleship, as Paul conceives it. It is to this he appeals in 1 Cor. ix. 2; 2 Cor. iii. 1-3. In the passage before us Calvin makes "*patience*" a sign—*primum signum nominat patientiam*. Patience is certainly a characteristic Christian virtue, and it is magnificently exercised in the apostolic life; but it is not peculiarly apostolic. Patience in the passage before us, "every kind of patience," rather brings before our minds the conditions under which Paul did his apostolic work. Discouragements of every description, bad health, suspicion, dislike, contempt, moral apathy and moral license—the weight of all these pressed upon him heavily, but he bore up under them, and did not suffer them to break his spirit or to arrest his labours. His endurance was a match for them all, and the power of Christ that was in him broke forth in spite of them in apostolic signs. There were conversions, in the first place; but there were also what he calls here "signs [in a narrower sense], and wonders, and mighty deeds." This is an express claim, like that made in Acts xv. 12, Rom. xv. 19, to have wrought what we call miracles. The three words represent miracles under three different aspects: they are "signs," as addressed to man's intelligence, and conveying a spiritual meaning; they are "wonders," as giving a shock to feeling, and moving nature in those depths which sleep through common experience; and they are "mighty works" or "powers," as arguing in him who works them a more than human efficiency. But no doubt the main character they bore in the Apostle's mind was that of the gifts of grace, which God ministered to the Church by His Spirit. It is natural for an unbeliever to misunderstand even New Testament miracles, because he wishes to conceive them, as it were, *in vacuo*, or in relation to the laws of nature; in the New Testament itself they are conceived in relation to the Holy Ghost. Even Jesus is said in the Gospels to have cast out devils by the Spirit of God; and when Paul wrought "signs and wonders and powers," it was in carrying out his apostolic work graced by the same Spirit. What things he had done in Corinth we



have no means of knowing, but the Corinthians knew; and they knew that these things had no arbitrary or accidental character, but were the tokens of a Christian and an apostle.

(2) In the second paragraph Paul turns abruptly (*idou*) "behold!") from the past to the future. "This is the third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not burden you." The first clause has the same ambiguity in Greek as in English; it is impossible to tell from the words alone whether he had been already twice, or only once, in Corinth. Other considerations decide, I think, that he had been twice; but of course these cannot affect the construction of this verse: for the third time he is in a state of readiness—this is all the words will yield. But when he makes the new visit, whether it be his third or only his second, one thing he has decided: he will act on the same principle as before, and decline to be a burden to them. He does not speak of it boastfully now, as in chap. xi. 10, for his adversaries have passed out of view, but in one of the most movingly tender passages in the whole Bible. "I will not lie on you like a benumbing weight, for I seek not yours, but you." It is not his own interest which brings him to Corinth again, but theirs; it is not avarice which impels him, but love. In a sense, indeed, love makes the greater claim of the two; it is far more to demand the heart than to ask for money. Yet the greater claim is the less selfish, indeed is the purely unselfish one; for it can only be really made by one who gives all that he demands. Paul's own heart was pledged to the Corinthians; and when he said "I seek *you*," he did not mean that he sought to make a party of them, or a faction, in the interest of his own ambition, but that the one thing he cared for was the good of their souls. Nor in saying so does he claim to be doing anything unusual or extraordinary. It is only what becomes him as their father in Christ (1 Cor. iv. 15). "I seek *you*; for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children." Filial duty, of course, is not denied here; Paul is simply bringing himself as the spiritual father of the Corinthians under the general rule of nature that "love descends rather than ascends." If this seems a hard saying to a child's heart, it is at least true that it descends *before* it ascends. It all begins from God: in a family, it all begins from the parents. The primary duty of love is parental care; and nothing is more unnatural, though at a certain level it is common enough, than the desire of parents to make money out of their children as quickly and as plentifully as possible, without considering the ulterior interests of the children themselves. This kind of selfishness is very transparent, and is very naturally avenged by ingratitude, and the Apostle for his part renounces it. "*I*," he exclaims, with all the emphasis in his power—"I have more than a natural father's love for you. I will with all gladness spend, yes, and be spent to the uttermost, for your souls! I will give what I have, yes, and all that I am, that you may be profited." And then he checks that rush of affection, and dams up the overflowing passion of his heart in the abrupt poignant question: "If I love you more abundantly, am I loved less?"

This is not the first passage in the Epistle, nor, near as we are to the end, is it the last, in

which Paul shows us the true spirit of the Christian pastor. "Not yours, but you," is the motto of every minister who has learned of Christ; and the noble words of ver. 15, "I will very gladly spend and be spent to the last for your souls," recall more nearly than any other words in Scripture the law by which our Lord Himself lived—not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many. Here, surely, is a sign of apostleship—an unmistakable mark of the man who is specially called to continue Christ's work. That work cannot be done at all except in the spirit of Him who inaugurated it, and though love like Paul's, and love like Christ's, may be mocked and trampled on, it is the only power which has the right to speak in Christ's name. The joy of sacrifice thrills through the Apostle's words, and it is joy in the Holy Ghost; it is a fellowship with Christ in the very life of His life that lifts Paul, for the moment, to the heavenly places. This is the spirit in which wrong is to be met, and suspicion, calumny, and contempt; it is in this, if at all, that we can be more than conquerors. Nature says, "Stand upon your rights; vindicate your position; insist on having all that you conceive to be your due"; but love says, "Spend and be spent, and spare not till all is gone; life itself is not too much to give that love may triumph over wrong."

It is not possible to write long as Paul writes in these two verses (14 and 15). The tension is too great both for him and for his readers. With *ἔστω δέ*—"But be it so"—he descends from this height. He writes in the first person, but he is plainly repeating what he assumes others will say. "Very well, then, let that pass," is the answer of his enemies to his friends when that passionate protestation is read. "He did not *himself* prove burdensome to us, but being crafty he brought us into his net by guile. He exploited the Church in his own interest by means of his agents." This charge the Apostle meets with a downright denial; he can appeal to the knowledge which the Corinthians themselves possess of the manner in which his agents have conducted themselves. He had no doubt had occasion, far oftener than we know, to communicate with so important and so restless a Church; and he challenges the Corinthians to say that a single one of those whom he had sent had taken advantage of them. He instances—perhaps as the last of his deputies, who had but just returned from Corinth when he wrote this letter; perhaps as the one on whom scandal had chosen to fasten—his "partner" and "fellow-labourer toward them," Titus; and he refers to an unknown brother who had accompanied him. They cannot mean to say (*μήτι*) that Titus took advantage of them? "Walked we not in the same Spirit?" A modern reader naturally makes "spirit" subjective, and takes it as equivalent to "the same moral temper or principle"; an early Christian reader would more probably think of the Holy Spirit as that which ruled in Paul and Titus alike. In any case the same Spirit led to the same conduct; they walked in the same self-denying path, and scrupulously abstained from burdening the Corinthians for their support.

(3) We feel the meanness of all this, and are glad when the Apostle finally turns his back on it. It is an indignity to be compelled even to



allude to such things. And the worst is, that no care a man can take will prevent people from misunderstanding his indignant protest, and from assuming that he is really on his trial before them, and not improbably compromised. Paul's mind is made up to leave the Corinthians no excuse for such misunderstanding and presumption. In ver. 19 he reads their ignoble thought: "Ye have long been thinking"—i. e., all through the last two chapters, and, indeed, more or less all through the Epistle; see chap. iii. 1—"that we are making our defence at your bar. Far from it: at God's bar we speak in Christ." He will not endure, with his visit to Corinth close at hand, that there should be any misapprehension as to their relations. His responsibility as a Christian man is not to them, but to God; He is the Master to whom he stands or falls; it is He alone to whom he has to vindicate his life. The Corinthians had been seating themselves in imagination on the tribunal, and they are summarily set on the floor. But Paul does not wish to be rude or unkind. "You are not my judges, certainly," he seems to say, "but all I have said and done, beloved, all I say and do, is for your building up in Christian life. My heart is with you in it all, and I sincerely intend your good." We cannot sufficiently admire the combination in the Apostle, or rather the swift alternation, of all those intellectual and emotional qualities that balance each other in a strong living character. He can be at once trenchant and tender; inexorable in the maintenance of a principle, and infinitely sympathetic and considerate in his treatment of persons. We see all his qualities illustrated here.

Their edification is the governing thought on which the last verses of the chapter turn, and on which eventually the whole Epistle rests (see chap. xiii. 10). It is because he is interested in their edification that he thinks with misgivings of the journey in prospect. "I fear lest by any means when I come to find you not such as I would, and on my part be found of you not such as ye would." What these two fears imply is unfolded in due order in the remainder of the letter. The Corinthians, such as Paul would not have them, are depicted in vv. 20 and 21; Paul, in a character in which the Corinthians would prefer not to see him, comes forward in chap. xiii., vv. 1-10. It is with the first only of these two fears, the bad condition of the Corinthian Church, that we are here concerned. This first fear has two grounds. The first is the prevalence of sins which may perhaps be summarised as sins of self-will. Strife, jealousy, passions, factions and low factious arts, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults: such is the catalogue. It illustrates what has been well described as "the carnality of religious contention." Almost all the sins here enumerated are directly connected with the existence of parties and party feeling in the Church. They are of a kind which has disgraced the Church all through its history, and the exceeding sinfulness of which is not yet recognised by the great mass of professing Christians. People do not consider that the Church, as a visible society, more or less naturalised in the world, is as capable as any other society of offering a career to ambition, or of furnishing a theatre for the talents and the energies of self-seeking men; and they have a vague idea that the wilfulness, the intriguing and factious arts, the jealousy

and conceit of men, are better things when put to the service of the Church than when employed in mere selfishness. But they are not. They are the very same, and they are peculiarly odious when enlisted in His service who was meek and lowly in heart, and who gave Himself for men. Paul's first list of sins is only too life-like, and the fear grounded on it is one which many a modern minister can share. The second list is made up of what might be called, in contrast with sins of self-will, sins of self-indulgence—"uncleanness, fornication, and lasciviousness that they wrought." Both together make up what the Apostle calls the works of the flesh. Both together are the direct opposite of those fruits of the spirit in which the true life of the Church consists. Paul writes as if he were more alarmed about the sins of the latter class. He puts μή ("lest") instead of μήπως ("lest by any means": ver. 20), marking thus the climax, and something like the certainty, of his sad apprehension. "I fear," he says, "lest when I come again my God should humble me before you"—or, perhaps "in connection with you." Nothing could more bow down a true and loving heart like Paul's than to see a Church that he had regarded as the seal of his apostleship—a congregation of men "washed, sanctified, and justified"—wallowing again in the mire of sensual sins. He had been proud of them, had boasted of them, had given thanks to God on their behalf: how it must have crushed him to think that his labour on them had come to this! Yet he writes instinctively "my God." This humiliation does not come to him without his Father; there is a divine dispensation in it, as far as he is concerned, and he submits to it as such. He dare not think of it as a personal insult; he dare not think of the sinners as if they had offended against him. He fears he will have to *mourn over* numbers of those who have before sinned, and who will not have repented of these sensualities before he reaches Corinth. In chap. v. 2 of the First Epistle he sums up his condemnation of the moral laxity of the Church in the presence of such evils in the words: "Ye did not mourn." He himself will not be able to avoid mourning: his heart grows heavy within him as he thinks of what he must see before long. This, again, is the spirit of the true pastor. Selfish anger has nothing healing in it, nor has wounded pride; it is not for any man, however good or devoted, to feel that he is entitled to resent it, as a personal wrong, when men fall into sin. He is not entitled to resent it, no matter how much he may have spent, or how freely he may have spent himself, upon them; but he is bound to bewail it. He is bound to recognise in it, so far as he himself is free from responsibility, a dispensation of God intended to make him humble; and in all humility and love he is bound to plead with the lapsed, not his own cause, but God's. This is the spirit in which Paul confronts the sad duties awaiting him at Corinth, and in this again we see "the signs of the apostle."

The two catalogues of sins with which this chapter closes remind us, by way of contrast, of the two characteristic graces of Christianity: self-will or party spirit, in all its forms, is opposed to brotherly love, and self-indulgence, in all its forms, to personal purity. There is much in this Epistle which would be called by some



people theological and transcendent; but no one knew better than Paul that, though Christianity must be capable of an intellectual construction, it is not an intellectual system in essence, but a new moral life. He was deeply concerned, as we have repeatedly seen, that the Corinthians should think right thoughts about Christ and the Gospel; but he was more than concerned, he was filled with grief, fear, and shame, when he thought of the vices of temper and of sensuality that prevailed among them. These went to the root of Christianity, and if they could not be destroyed it must perish. Let us turn our eyes from them to the purity and love that they obscure, and lift up our hearts to these as the best things to which God has called us in the fellowship of His Son.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### CONCLUSION.

#### 2 CORINTHIANS xiii. (R. V.).

THE first part of this chapter is in close connection with what precedes; it is, so to speak, the explanation of St. Paul's fear (xii. 20) that when he came to Corinth he would be found of the Corinthians "not such as they would." He expresses himself with great severity; and the abruptness of the first three sentences, which are not linked to each other by any conjunctions, contributes to the general sense of rigour. "This is the third time I am coming to you" is a resumption of chap. xii. 14, "This is the third time I am ready to come to you," and labours under the same ambiguity; it is perhaps more natural to suppose that Paul had actually been twice in Corinth (and there are independent reasons for this opinion), but the words here used are quite consistent with the idea that this was the third time he had definitely purposed and tried to visit them, whether his purpose had been carried out or not. When he arrives, he will proceed at once to hold a judicial investigation into the condition of the Church, and will carry it through with legal stringency. "At the mouth of two and (where available) three witnesses shall every question be brought to decision." This principle of the Jewish law (Deut. xix. 15), to which reference is made in other New Testament passages connected with Church discipline (Matt. xviii. 16; 1 Tim. v. 19), is announced as that on which he will act. There will be no informality and no injustice, but neither will there be any more forbearance. All cases requiring disciplinary treatment will be brought to an issue at once, and the decision will be given rigorously as the matter of fact, attested by evidence, requires. He feels justified in proceeding thus after the reiterated warnings he has given them. To these reference is made in the solemn words of ver. 2. English readers can see, by comparing the Revised Version with the Authorised, the difficulties of translation which still divide scholars. The words which the Authorised Version renders "*as if I were present*" (*ὡς παρών*) are rendered by the Revisers "*as when I was present*." All scholars connect this ambiguous clause with τὸ δεύτερον: "the second time." Hence there are two main ways in which the whole passage can be rendered. The one is that which stands in the Revised

Version, and which is defended by scholars like Meyer, Lightfoot, and Schmiedel: it is in effect this—"I have already forewarned, and do now forewarn, as I did on the occasion of my second visit, so also now in my absence, those who have sinned heretofore, and all the rest, that if I come again I will not spare." This is certainly rather cumbrous; but assuming that chap. ii. 1 gives strong ground for believing in a second visit already paid to Corinth—a visit in which Paul had been grieved and humbled by disorders in the Church, but had not been in a position to do more than warn against their continuance—it seems the only available interpretation. Those who evade the force of chap. ii. 1 render here in the line of the Authorised Version: "I have forewarned" (viz., in the first letter, *e. g.*, iv. 21), "and do now forewarn, as though I were present the second time, although I am now absent, those who have sinned," etc. So Heinrici. This, on grammatical grounds, seems quite legitimate; but the contrast between presence and absence, which is real and effective in the other rendering, is here quite inept. We can understand a man saying, "I tell you in my absence, just as I did when I was with you that second time": but who would ever say, "I tell you as if I were present with you a second time, although in point of fact I am absent"? The absence here comes in with a grotesque effect, and there seems hardly room to doubt that the rendering in our Revised Version is correct. Paul had, when he visited Corinth a second time, warned those who had sinned before that visit, he now warns them again, and all others with them who anticipated his coming with an evil conscience, that the hour of decision is at hand. It is not easy to say what he means by the threat not to spare. Many point to judgments like that on Ananias and Sapphira, or on Elymas the sorcerer; others to the delivering of the incestuous person to Satan, "for the destruction of the flesh"; the supposition being that Paul came to Corinth armed with a supernatural power of inflicting physical sufferings on the disobedient. This uncanny idea has really no support in the New Testament, in spite of the passages quoted; and probably what his words aim at is an exercise of spiritual authority which might go so far as totally to exclude an offender from the Christian community.

The third verse is to be taken closely with the second: "I will not spare, since ye seek a proof of Christ that speaketh in me, who to you-ward is not weak, but is powerful in you." The friction between the Corinthians and the Apostle involved a higher interest than his. In putting Paul to the proof, they were really putting to the proof the Christ who spoke in him. In challenging Paul to come and exert his authority, in defying him to come with a rod, in presuming on what they called his weakness, they were really challenging Christ. The description of Christ in the last clause—"who towards you is not weak, but is powerful in you, or among you"—must be interpreted by the context. It can hardly mean that in their conversion, and in their experience as Christian people, they had evidence that Christ was not weak, but strong: such a reference, though supported by Calvin, is surely beside the mark. The meaning must rather be that for the purpose in hand—the restoration of order and discipline in the Corinthian Church—the Christ who spoke in Paul



was not weak, but mighty. Certainly any one who looked at Christ in Himself might see proofs, in abundance, of weakness: going directly to the crowning one, "He was crucified," the Apostle says, "*in virtue of weakness.*" Sin was so much stronger than He, in the days of His flesh, that it did what it liked with Him. Sin mocked Him, buffeted Him, scourged Him, spit upon Him, nailed Him to the tree—so utter was His weakness, so complete the triumph of sin over Him. But that is not the whole story: "He liveth in virtue of the power of God." He has been raised from the dead by the glory of the Father; sin cannot touch Him any more: He has all power in heaven and on earth, and all things are under His feet. This double relation of Christ to sin is exemplified in His Apostle. "For we also are weak in Him; but we shall live with Him, in virtue of God's power, toward you." The sin of the Corinthians had had its victory over Paul on the occasion of his second visit; God had humbled him then, even as Christ was humbled on the cross; he had seen the evil, but it had been too strong for him; in spite of his warnings, it had rolled over his head. That "weakness," as the Corinthians called it, remained; to them he was still as weak as ever—hence the present ἀσθενούμεν: but to the Apostle it was no discreditable thing; it was a weakness "in Christ," or perhaps, as some authorities read, "with Christ." In being overpowered by sin for the moment, he entered into the fellowship of his Lord's sufferings; he drank out of the cup his Master drank upon the cross. But the cross does not represent Christ's whole attitude to sin, nor does that incapacity to deal with the turbulence, disloyalty, and immorality of the Corinthians represent the whole attitude of the Apostle to these disorders. Paul is not only crucified with Christ, he has been made to sit with Him in the heavenly places; and when he comes to Corinth this time, it will not be in the weakness of Christ, but in the victorious strength of His new life. He will come clothed with power from on high to execute the Lord's sentence on the disobedient.

This passage has great practical interest. There are many whose whole conception of the Christian attitude toward evil is summed up in the words: "He was crucified through weakness." They seem to think that the whole function of love in presence of evil, its whole experience, its whole method and all its resources, are comprehended in bearing what evil chooses, or is able, to inflict. There are even bad people, like the Corinthians, who imagine that this exhausts the Christian ideal, and that they are wronged if they are not allowed by Christians to do what they like to them with impunity. And if it is not so easy to act on this principle in our dealings with one another—though there are people mean enough to try it—there are plenty of hypocrites who presume on it in their dealings with God. "He was crucified through weakness," they say in their hearts; the cross exhausts His relation to sin; that infinite patience can never pass over to severity. But the assumption is false: the cross does *not* exhaust Christ's relation to sin; He passed from the cross to the throne, and when He comes again it is as Judge. It is the sin of sins to presume upon the cross; it is a mistake that cannot be remedied to persist in that presumption to the end. When Christ comes again, *He* will not

spare. The two things go together in Him: the infinite patience of the cross, the inexorable righteousness of the throne. The same two things go together in men: the depth with which they feel evil, the completeness with which they suffer it to work its will against them, and the power with which they vindicate the good. It is the worst blindness, as well as the basest guilt, which, because it has seen the one, refuses to believe in the other.

The Corinthians, by their rebellious spirit, were putting Paul to the proof; in ver. 5 he reminds them sharply that it is their own standing as Christians which is in question, and not his. "Try yourselves," he says, with abrupt emphasis, "*not me; try yourselves*, if ye are in the faith; put yourselves to the proof; or know ye not as to *your own selves*, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless, indeed, ye be reprobate." The meaning here is hardly open to doubt: the Apostle urges his readers individually to examine their Christian standing. "Let each," he virtually says, "put himself to the proof, and see whether he is in the faith." There is, indeed, a difficulty in the clause, "Or know ye not as to your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless, indeed, ye be reprobate." This may be read either as a test, put into their hands to direct them in their self-scrutiny; or as an appeal to them after—or even before—the scrutiny has been made. The manner in which the alternative is introduced—"unless, indeed, ye are reprobates"—a manner plainly suggesting that the alternative in question is *not* to be assumed, is in favour of taking it in the sense of an appeal. After all, they are a Christian Church with Christ among them, and they cannot but know it. Paul, again, on his side cannot think that they are reprobate, and he hopes they will recognise that *he* is not, but on the contrary a genuine Apostle, attested by God, and to be acknowledged and obeyed by the Church. Very often that temper which judges others, and calls legitimate spiritual authority in question, is due, as in part it was among the Corinthians, to inward misgivings. It is when people ought to be putting themselves to the proof, and are with cause afraid to begin, that they are most ready to challenge others. It was a kind of self-defence—the self-defence of a bad conscience—when the Corinthians required Paul to demonstrate his apostolic claims before he meddled with their affairs. It was a plea, the sole purpose of which was to enable them to live on as they were, immoral and impenitent. It is properly retorted when he says, "Try yourselves if ye are in the faith; it is in every sense of the word an impertinence to drag in anybody else."

In both cases Paul hopes the result of the trial will be satisfactory. He would not like to think the Corinthians ἀδόκιμοι ("reprobate"), and no more would he like them to regard him in that light. Still, the two things are not on exactly the same footing in his mind; *their* character is much dearer to him than his own reputation; provided they are what they ought to be, he does not care what is thought of himself. This is the general sense of vv. 7 to 9, and except in ver. 8 the details are clear enough. He prays to God that the Corinthians may do no evil. His object in this is not that he himself may appear reprovèd; indeed, if his prayer is granted, he will have no opportunity of exer-



cising the disciplinary authority of which he has said so much. It will be open to any one then to say that he is *ἀδόκιμος*, reprobate, a person to be rejected because he has not demonstrated his claim to apostolic authority by apostolic action. But as long as they act well, which is the real object of his prayer, he does not care, though he *has* to pass as *ἀδόκιμος*. He can bear evil report as well as good report, and rejoice to fulfil his vocation under the one condition as well as the other. This is only one aspect of that sacrifice of self to the interest of the flock which is indispensable in the good shepherd. As compared with any single member of his congregation, a minister may be more in the eye of the world, more still in the eye of the Church; and it is natural for him to think that some self-assertion, some recognition and reputation, are due to his position. It is a mistake: no man who understands the position at all will dream of asserting his own importance against that of the community. The Church, the congregation even, no matter how much it may be indebted to him, no matter if it owes to him, as the Corinthian Church to Paul, its very existence in Christ, is always greater than he; it will outlive him; and however tender he may naturally be of his own position and reputation, if the Church prosper in Christian character, he must be as willing to let these dear possessions go, and to count them worthless, as to part with money or any material thing.

The real difficulty here lies in the eighth verse, where the Apostle explains, apparently, why he acts on the principle just stated. "I pray this prayer for you," he seems to say, "and I am content to pass as a reprobate, while you do that which is honourable; for I can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth." What is the connection of ideas alluded to by this "for"? Some of the commentators give up the question in despair: others only remind one of the French pastor who said to some one who preached on Romans: "Saint Paul est déjà fort difficile et . . . vous venez après." As far as one can make out, he seems to say: "I act on this principle because it is the one which furthers the truth, and therefore is obligatory upon me; I am not able to act on one which would injure or prejudice the truth." The truth, in this interpretation, would be synonymous, as it often is in the New Testament, with the Gospel. Paul is incapable of acting in a way that would check the Gospel, and its influence over men; he has no choice but to act in its interest; and therefore he is content to let the Corinthians think what they please of him, provided his prayer is answered, and they do no evil, but rather that which is good before God. For this is what the Gospel requires. "Content," indeed, is not a strong enough word. "We rejoice," he says in ver. 9 "when we are weak, and you are strong: this we also pray for, even your perfecting." "Perfecting" is perhaps as good a word as can be got for *κατάρτις*: it denotes the putting right of all that is defective or amiss.

It is in favour of this interpretation of the eighth verse that the reason seems at first out of proportion to the conclusion. With an idealist like Paul it is always so. He appeals to the loftiest motives to influence the lowliest actions,—to faith in the Incarnation as a motive to generosity—to faith in the Resurrection Life, as a motive to patient continuance in well-doing—

to faith in the heavenly citizenship of believers, as a motive to separation from the licentious. In the same way he appeals here to a universal moral rule to explain his conduct in a particular case. His principle everywhere is not to act in prejudice of the Gospel, but in furtherance of it; he has strength available for this last purpose, but none at all for the former. It is the rule on which every minister of Christ should always act; and if the line of conduct which it pointed out sometimes led men to disregard their own reputation, provided the Gospel was having free course, the very strangeness of such a result might turn to the furtherance of the truth. It is by-ends that explain nine-tenths of spiritual inefficiency; singleness of mind like this would save us our perplexities and our failures alike.

It is because he has an interest like this in the Corinthians that Paul writes as he has done while absent from Corinth. He does not wish, when he comes among them, to proceed with severity. The power the Lord gave him would entitle him to do so; yet he remembers that this power was given him, as he has remarked already (x. 8), for building up, and not for casting down. Even casting down with a view to building up on a better basis was a less natural, if sometimes a necessary, exercise of it; and he hopes that the severity of his words will lead, even before his coming, to such voluntary action on the part of the Church as will spare him severity in deed.

This is practically the end of the letter, and the mind involuntarily goes back to the beginning. We see now the three great divisions of it plainly before our eyes. In the *first seven chapters* Paul writes under the general impression of the good news Titus has brought from Corinth. It has made him glad, and he writes gladly. The one case that he had been concerned about has been disposed of in a way that he can consider satisfactory; the Church, in the majority of its members, has acted well in the matter. The *eighth and ninth chapters* are a digression: they are concerned solely with the collection for the poor at Jerusalem, and Paul inserts them where they stand perhaps because the transition was easy from his joy over the change at Corinth to his joy over the liberality of the Macedonians. In *chaps. x. 1-xiii. 10* he evidently writes in a very different strain. The Church, as a whole, has returned to its allegiance, especially on the moral question at issue; but there are Jewish interlopers in it, subverting the Gospel, and reconverting Paul's converts to their own illiberal faith; and there are also, as it would appear, numbers of sensual people who have not yet renounced the vilest sins. It is these two sets of persons who are in view in the last four chapters; and it is the utter inconsistency of Judaic nationalism on the one hand, and Corinthian license on the other, with the spiritual Gospel of the Son of God, that explains the severity of his tone. "The truth" is at stake—the truth for which he has suffered all that he recounts in chap. xi.—and no vehemence is too passionate for the occasion. Yet love controls it all, and he speaks severely that he may not have to act severely; he writes these things that, if possible, he may be spared the pain of saying them.

And then the letter, like almost every letter, hastens in disconnected sentences to its close.



"Finally, brethren, farewell." He cannot but address them affectionately at parting; when the heart recovers from the heat of indignation, its unchanging love speaks again as before. Some would render *χαίrete* "rejoice," instead of "farewell"; to Paul's readers, no doubt, it had a friendly sound, but "rejoice" is far too strong. In all the imperatives that follow there is a reminiscence of their faults as well as a desire for their good: "be perfected, be comforted, be of the same mind, live in peace." There was much among them to rectify, much that was inevitably disheartening to overcome, much dissension to compose, much friction to allay; but as he prays them to face these duties he can assure them that the God of love and peace will be with them. God can be characterised by love and peace; they are His essential attributes, and He is an inexhaustible source of them, so that all who make peace and love their aim can count confidently to be helped by Him. It is, as it were, the first step of obedience to these precepts—the first condition of obtaining the presence of God which has just been promised—when the Apostle writes, "Greet one another with a holy kiss." The kiss was the symbol of Christian brotherhood; in exchanging it Christians recognised each other as members of one family. To do this even in form, to do it with solemnity in a public assembly of the whole Church, was to commit themselves to the obligations of peace and love which had been so set at naught in their religious contentions. It is a generous encouragement to them to recognise each other as children of God when he adds that all the Christians about him recognise them in that character. "All the saints salute you." They do so because they are Christians and because you are; acknowledge each other, as you are all acknowledged from without.

The letter is closed, like all that the Apostle wrote, with a brief prayer. "The grace of the Lord Jesus [Christ], and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all." Of all such prayers it is the fullest in expression, and this has gained for it pre-eminently the name of the apostolic benediction. It would be too much to say that the doctrine of the Trinity, as it has been defined in the creeds, is explicitly to be found here; there is no statement at all in this place of the relations of Christ, God, and the Holy Spirit. Still, it is on passages like this that the Trinitarian doctrine of God is based; or rather it is in passages like this that we see it beginning to take shape: it is based on the historical fact of the

revelation of God in Christ, and on the experience of the new divine life which the Church possesses through the Spirit. It is extraordinary to find men with the New Testament in their hands giving explanations, speculative or popular, of this doctrine, which stand in no relation either to the historical Christ or to the experience of the Church. But these things hang together; and whatever the worth may be of a Trinitarian doctrine which is not essentially dependent on the Person of Christ and on the life of His Church, it is certainly not Christian. The historical original of the doctrine, and the impulse of experience under which Paul wrote, are suggested even by the order of the words. A speculative theologian may try to deduce the Triune nature of God from the borrowed assumption that God is love, or knowledge, or spirit; but the Apostle has only come to know God as love through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is this which reveals God's love and assures us of it; it is this by which God commends his own love to us. "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me," Jesus said; and this truth, pre-announced by the Lord, is certified here by the very order in which the Apostle instinctively puts the sacred names. "The communion of the Holy Spirit" stands last; it is in this that "the grace of the Lord Jesus and the love of God" become the realised possessions of Christian men. The precise force of "the communion" is open to doubt. If we take the genitive in the same sense as it bears in the previous clauses, the word will mean "the fellowship or unity of feeling which is produced by the Spirit." This is a good sense, but not the only one: what Paul wishes may rather be the joint participation of them all *in* the Spirit, and in the gifts which it confers. But practically the two meanings coincide, and our minds rest on the comprehensiveness of the blessing invoked on a Church so mixed, and in many of its members so unworthy. Surely "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost" were with the man who rises so easily, so unconstrainedly, after all the tempest and passion of this letter, to such a height of love and peace. Heaven is open over his head; he is conscious, as he writes, of the immensities of that love whose breadth and length and depth and height pass knowledge. In the Son who revealed it—in God who is its eternal source—in the Spirit through whom it lives in men—he is conscious of that love and of its workings; and he prays that in all its aspects, and in all its virtues, it may be with them all.

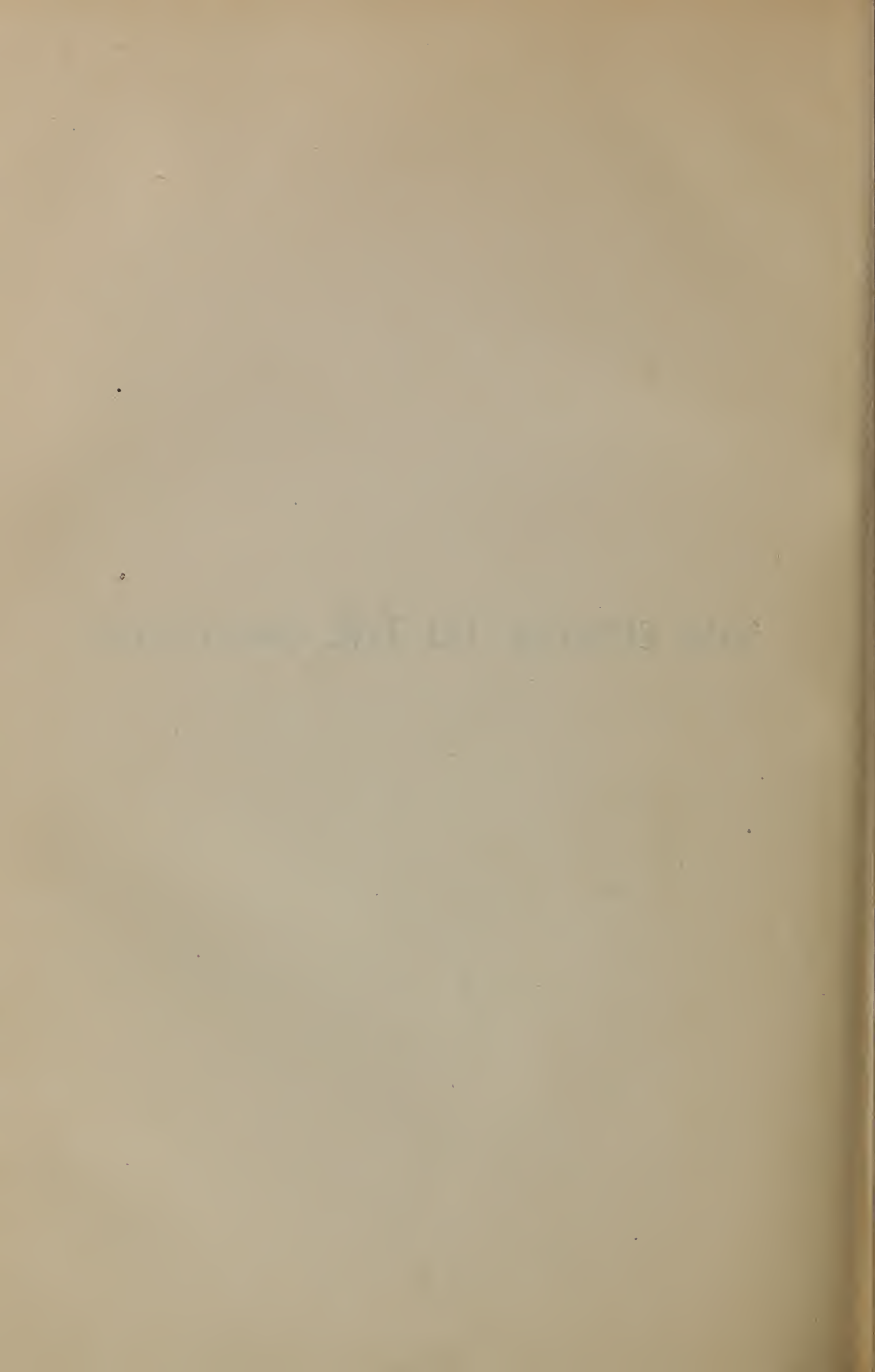






THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS







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# THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS.\*

BY THE REV. G. G. FINDLAY, B. A.

## THE PROLOGUE.

### CHAPTER i. 1-10.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE ADDRESS.

#### GALATIANS i. 1, 2.

ANTIQUITY has nothing to show more notable in its kind, or more precious, than this letter of Paul to the Churches of Galatia. It takes us back, in some respects nearer than any other document we possess, to the beginnings of Christian theology and the Christian Church. In it the spiritual consciousness of Christianity first reveals itself in its distinctive character and its full strength, free from the trammels of the past, realising the advent of the new kingdom of God that was founded in the death of Christ. It is the voice of the Church testifying "God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts." Buried for a thousand years under the weight of the Catholic legalism, the teaching of this Epistle came to life again in the rise of Protestantism. Martin Luther put it to his lips as a trumpet to blow the *reveillé* of the Reformation. His famous Commentary summoned enslaved Christendom to recover "the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free." Of all the great Reformer's writings this was the widest in its influence and the dearest to himself. For the spirit of Paul lived again in Luther, as in no other since the Apostle's day. The Epistle to the Galatians is the charter of Evangelical faith.

The historical criticism of the present century has brought this writing once more to the front of the conflict of faith. Born in controversy, it seems inevitably to be born for controversy. Its interpretation forms the pivot of the most thoroughgoing recent discussions touching the beginnings of Christian history and the authenticity of the New Testament record. The Galatian Epistle is, in fact, the key of New Testament Apologetics. Round it the Roman and Corinthian Letters group themselves, forming together a solid, impregnable quaternion, and supplying a fixed starting-point and an indubitable test for the examination of the critical questions belonging to the Apostolic age. Whatever else may be disputed, it is agreed that there was an apostle Paul, who wrote these four Epistles to certain Christian societies gathered out of heathenism, communities numerous, widely scattered, and containing men of advanced intelligence; and this within thirty years of the death of Jesus Christ. Every critic must reckon with this fact. The most sceptical criticism makes a respectful pause before our Epistle. Hopeless of destroying its testimony, Ra-

tionalism treats it with an even exaggerated deference; and seeks to extract evidence from it against its companion witnesses amongst the New Testament writings. This attempt, however misdirected, is a signal tribute to the importance of the document, and to the force with which the personality of the writer and the conditions of the time have stamped themselves upon it. The deductions of the Baurian criticism appear to us to rest on a narrow and arbitrary examination of isolated passages; they spring from a mistaken *a priori* view of the historical situation. Granting, however, to these inferences, which will meet us as we proceed, their utmost weight, they still leave the testimony of Paul to the supernatural character of Christianity substantially intact.

Of the four major Epistles, this one is superlatively characteristic of its author. It is *Paulinissima Paulinarum*—most Pauline of Pauline things. It is largely autobiographical; hence its peculiar value. Reading it, we watch history in the making. We trace the rise of the new religion in the typical man of the epoch. The master-builder of the Apostolic Church stands before us at the crisis of his work. He lets us look into his heart, and learn the secret of his power. We come to know the Apostle Paul as we know scarcely any other of the world's great minds. We find in him a man of the highest intellectual and spiritual powers, equally great in passion and in action, as a thinker and a leader of men. But at every step of our acquaintance the Apostle points us beyond himself; he says, "It is not I: it is Christ that lives in me." If this Epistle teaches us the greatness of Paul, it teaches us all the more the Divine greatness of Jesus Christ, before whom that kingly intellect and passionate heart bowed in absolute devotion.

The situation which the Epistle reveals and the personal references in which it abounds are full of interest at every point. They furnish quite essential data to the historian of the Early Church. We could wish that the Apostle, telling us so much, had told us more. His allusions, clear enough, we must suppose, to the first readers, have lent themselves subsequently to very conflicting interpretations. But as they stand, they are invaluable. The fragmentary narrative of the Acts requires, especially in its earlier sections, all the illustration that can be obtained from other sources. The conversion of Paul, and the Council at Jerusalem, events of capital importance for the history of Apostolic times, are thereby set in a light certainly more complete and satisfactory than is furnished in Luke's narrative, taken by itself. And Paul's references to the Judean Church and its three "pillars," touch the crucial question of New Testament criticism, namely that concerning the relation of the Gentile Apostle to Jewish Christianity and the connection between his theology and the teaching of Jesus. Our judgment respecting the conflict between Peter and Paul at Antioch in particular will determine our whole conception of the legalist controversy, and con-

\*The text used in this exposition is, with very few exceptions, that of the Revised English Version, or its margin.



sequently of the course of Church history during the first two centuries. Around these cursory allusions has gathered a contest only less momentous than that from which they sprung.

The personal and the doctrinal element are equally prominent in this Epistle; and appear in a combination characteristic of the writer. Paul's theology is the theology of experience. "It pleased God," he says, "to reveal His Son in me" (i. 16). His teaching is cast in a psychological mould. It is largely a record of the Apostle's spiritual history; it is the expression of a living, inward process—a personal appropriation of Christ, and a growing realisation of the fulness of the Godhead in Him. The doctrine of Paul was as far as possible removed from being the result of abstract deduction, or any mere combination of data externally given. In his individual consciousness, illuminated by the vision of Christ and penetrated by the Spirit of God, he found his message for the world. "We believe, and therefore speak. We have received the Spirit of God, that we may know the things freely given us of God:" sentences like these show us very clearly how the Apostle's doctrine formed itself in his mind. His apprehension of Christ, above all of the cross, was the focus, the creative and governing centre, of all his thoughts concerning God and man, time and eternity. In the light of this knowledge he read the Old Testament, he interpreted the earthly life and teaching of Jesus. On the ground of this personal sense of salvation he confronted Peter at Antioch; on the same ground he appeals to the vacillating Galatians, sharers with himself in the new life of the Spirit. Here lies the nerve of his argument in this Epistle. The theory of the relation of the Law to the Abrahamic promise developed in the third chapter, is the historical counterpart of the relation of the legal to the evangelical consciousness, as he had experienced the two states in turn within his own breast. The spirit of Paul was a microcosm, in which the course of the world's religious evolution was summed up, and brought to the knowledge of itself.

The Apostle's influence over the minds of others was due in great part to the extraordinary force with which he apprehended the facts of his own spiritual nature. Through the depth and intensity of his personal experience he touched the experience of his fellows, he seized on those universal truths that are latent in the consciousness of mankind, "by manifestation of the truth commending himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God." But this knowledge of the things of God was not the mere fruit of reflection and self-searching; it was "the ministration of the Spirit." Paul did not simply *know* Christ; he was one with Christ, "joined to the Lord, one spirit" with Him. He did not therefore speak out of the findings of his own spirit; the absolute Spirit, the Spirit of truth and of Christ, spoke in him. Truth, as he knew it, was the self-assertion of a Divine life. And so this handful of old letters, broken and casual in form, with their "rudeness of speech," their many obscurities, their rabbinical logic, have stirred the thoughts of men and swayed their lives with a power greater perhaps than belongs to any human utterances, saving only those of the Divine Master.

The features of Paul's style show themselves

here in their most pronounced form. "The style is the man." And the whole man is in this letter. Other Epistles bring into relief this or that quality of the Apostle's disposition and of his manner as a writer; here all are present. The subtlety and trenchant vigour of Pauline dialectic are nowhere more conspicuous than in the discussion with Peter in chap. ii. The discourse on Promise and Law in chap. iii. is a master-piece of exposition, unsurpassed in its keenness of insight, breadth of view, and skill of application. Such passages as i. 15, 16; ii. 19, 20; vi. 14, take us into the heart of the Apostle's teaching, and reveal its mystical depth of intuition. Behind the masterful dialectician we find the spiritual seer, the man of contemplation, whose fellowship is with the eternal and unseen. And the emotional temperament of the writer has left its impress on this Epistle not less distinctly than his mental and spiritual gifts. The denunciations of i. 6-10; ii. 4, 5; iv. 2; v. 7-12; vi. 12-14, burn with a concentrated intensity of passion, a sublime and holy scorn against the enemies of the cross, such as a nature like Paul's alone is capable of feeling. Nor has the Apostle penned anything on the other hand more amiable and touching, more winningly frank and tender in appeal, than the entreaty of iv. 11-20. His last sentence, in vi. 17, is an irresistible stroke of pathos. The ardour of his soul, his vivacity of mind and quick sensibility, are apparent throughout. Those sudden turns of thought and bursts of emotion that occur in all his Epistles and so much perplex their interpreters, are especially numerous in this. And yet we find that these interruptions are never allowed to divert the writer from his purpose, nor to destroy the sequence of his thought. They rather carry it forward with greater vehemence along the chosen course, as storms will a strong and well-manned ship. The Epistle is strictly a unity. It is written, as one might say, at a single breath, as if under pressure and in stress of mind. There is little of the amplitude of expression and the delight in lingering over some favourite idea that characterise the later Epistles. Nor is there any passage of sustained eloquence to compare with those that are found in the Roman and Corinthian letters. The business on which the Apostle writes is too urgent, his anxiety too great, to allow of freedom and discursiveness of thought. Hence this Epistle is to an unusual degree closely packed in matter, rapid in movement, and severe in tone.

In its construction the Epistle exhibits an almost dramatic character. It is full of action and animation. There is a gradual unfolding of the subject, and a skilful combination of scene and incident brought to bear on the solution of the crucial question. The Apostle himself, the insidious Judaisers, and the wavering Galatians,—these are the protagonists of the action; with Peter and the Church at Jerusalem playing a secondary part, and Abraham and Moses, Isaac and Ishmael, appearing in the distance. The first Act conducts us rapidly from scene to scene till we behold Paul labouring amongst the Gentiles, and the Churches of Judea listening with approval to the reports of his success. The Council of Jerusalem opens a new stage in the history. Now Gentile liberties are at stake; but Titus' circumcision is successfully resisted, and Paul as the Apostle



of the Uncircumcised is acknowledged by "the pillars" as their equal; and finally Peter, when he betrays the truth of the Gospel at Antioch, is corrected by the Gentile Apostle. The third chapter carries us away from the present conflict into the region of first principles,—to the Abrahamic Covenant with its spiritual blessing and world-wide promise, opposed by the condemning Mosaic Law, an opposition finally resolved by the coming of Christ and the gift of His Spirit of adoption. At this point the Apostle turns the gathered force of his argument upon his readers, and grapples with them front to front in the expostulation carried on from iv. 8-12, in which the story of Hagar forms a telling episode. The fifth and closing Act, extending to the middle of chap. vi., turns on the antithesis of Flesh and Spirit, bringing home the contention to the region of ethics, and exhibiting to the Galatians the practical effect of their following the Pauline or the Judaistic leadership. Paul and the Primitive Church; Judaism and Gentile-Christian liberties; the Covenants of Promise and of Law; the circumcision or non-circumcision of the Galatians; the dominion of Flesh or Spirit: these are the contrasts through which the Epistle advances. Its centre lies in the decisive question given in the *fourth* of these antitheses. If we were to fix it in a single point, ver. 2 of chap. v. is the sentence we should choose:—

"Behold, I Paul say unto you,  
If ye be circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing."

The above analysis may be reduced to the common threefold division, followed in this exposition:—viz. (1) "Personal History," i. 11-ii. 21; (2) "Doctrinal Polemic," iii. 1-v. 12; (3) "Ethical Application," v. 13-vi. 10.

The epistolary Introduction forms the Prologue, i. 1-10; and an Epilogue is appended, by way of renewed warning and protestation, followed by the concluding signature and benediction,—vi. 11-18.

The Address occupies the first two verses of the Epistle.

I. On the one side is *the writer*: "Paul, an Apostle." In his earliest Letters (to Thessalonica) the title is wanting; so also in Philipians and Philemon. The last instance explains the other two. To the Macedonian Churches Paul writes more in the style of friendship than authority: "for love's sake he rather entreats." With the Galatians it is different. He proceeds to define his apostleship in terms that should leave no possible doubt respecting its character and rights: "not from men," he adds, "nor through man; but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, that raised Him from the dead."

This reads like a contradiction of some statement made by Paul's opposers. Had they insinuated that he *was* "an apostle from men," that his office was derived, like their own, only from the mother Church in Jerusalem? Such insinuations would very well serve their purpose; and if they were made, Paul would be sure not to lose a moment in meeting them.

The word *apostle* had a certain latitude of meaning. It was already, there is reason to believe, a term of Jewish official usage when our Lord applied it to His chosen Twelve. It signified a *delegate* or *envoy*, accredited by some

public authority, and charged with a special message. We can understand, therefore, its application to the emissaries of particular Churches—of Jerusalem or Antioch, for example—despatched as their messengers to other Churches, or with a general commission to proclaim the Gospel. The recently discovered "Teaching of the Apostles" shows that this use of the title continued in Jewish-Christian circles to the end of the first century, alongside of the restricted and higher use. The lower apostleship belonged to Paul in common with Barnabas and Silas and many others.

In the earlier period of his ministry, the Apostle was seemingly content to rank in public estimation with his companions in the Gentile mission. But a time came when he was compelled to arrogate to himself the higher dignity. His right thereto was acknowledged at the memorable conference in Jerusalem by the leaders of the Jewish Church. So we gather from the language of ii. 7-9. But the full exercise of his authority was reserved for the present emergency, when all his energy and influence were required to stem the tide of the Judaistic reaction. We can well imagine that Paul, "gentle in the midst" of his flock and "not seeking to be of weight" (1 Thess. ii. 6, 7), had hitherto said as little as need be on the subject of his official rights. His modesty had exposed him to misrepresentations both in Corinth and in Galatia. He will "have" these people "to know" that his gospel is in the strictest sense Divine, and that he received his commission, as certainly as any of the Twelve, from the lips of Jesus Christ Himself (ver. 11).

"Not from men" excludes human derivation; "not through man," human intervention in the conferment of Paul's office. The singular number (*man*) replaces the plural in the latter phrase, because it stands immediately opposed to "Jesus Christ" (a striking witness this to His Divinity). The second clause carries the negation farther than the first; for a call from God may be, and commonly is, imposed by human hands. There are, says Jerome, four kinds of Christian ministers: first, those sent neither from men nor through man, like the prophets of old time and the Apostles; secondly, those who are from God, but through man, as it is with their legitimate successors; thirdly, those who are from men, but not from God, as when one is ordained through mere human favour and flattery; the fourth class consists of such as have their call neither from God nor man, but wholly from themselves, as with false prophets and the false apostles of whom Paul speaks. His vocation, the Apostle declares, was superhuman, alike in its origin and in the channel by which it was conveyed. It was no voice of man that summoned Saul of Tarsus from the ranks of the enemies to those of the servants of Christ, and gave him the message he proclaimed. Damascus and Jerusalem in turn acknowledged the grace given unto him; Antioch has sent him forth on her behalf to the regions beyond; but he was conscious of a call anterior to all this, and that admitted of no earthly validation. "Am I not an apostle?" he exclaims, "have I not seen Jesus our Lord?" (1 Cor. ix. 1). "Truly the signs of the Apostle were wrought in him," both in the miraculous powers attending his office, and in those moral and spiritual qualities of a minister of God in which



he was inferior to none.\* For the exercise of his ministry he was responsible neither to "those of repute" at Jerusalem, nor to his censurers at Corinth; but to Christ who had bestowed it (1 Cor. iv. 3, 4).

The call of the Apostle proceeded also from "God the Father, who raised Jesus Christ from the dead." Christ was in this act the mediator, declaring the Supreme will. In other places, more briefly, he styles himself "Apostle by the will of God." His appointment took place by a Divine intervention, in which the ordinary sequence of events was broken through. Long after the Saviour in His bodily presence had ascended to heaven, when in the order of nature it was impossible that another Apostle should be elected, and when the administration of His Church had been for several years carried on by human hands, He appeared once more on earth for the purpose of making this man His "minister and witness;" He appeared in the name of "the Father, who had raised Him from the dead." This interposition gave to Paul's ministry an exceptional character. While the mode of his election was in one aspect humbling, and put him in the position of "the untimely one," the "least of the Apostles," whose appearance in that capacity was unlooked for and necessarily open to suspicion; on the other hand, it was glorious and exalting, since it so richly displayed the Divine mercy and the transforming power of grace.

But why does he say, *who raised Him from the dead*? Because it was the *risen Jesus* that he saw, and that he was conscious of seeing in the moment of the vision. The revelation that arrested him before Damascus, in the same moment convinced him that Jesus was risen, and that he himself was called to be His servant. These two convictions were inseparably linked in Paul's recollections. As surely as God the Father had raised His Son Jesus from the dead and given Him glory, so surely had the glorified Jesus revealed Himself to Saul his persecutor to make him His Apostle. He was, not less truly than Peter or John, a witness of His resurrection. The message of the Resurrection was the burden of the Apostleship.

He adds, "and all the brethren which are with me." For it was Paul's custom to associate with himself in these official letters his fellow-labourers, present at the time. From this expression we gather that he was attended just now by a considerable band of companions, such as we find enumerated in Acts xx. 2-6, attending him on his journey from Ephesus to Corinth during the third missionary tour. This circumstance has some bearing on the date of the letter. Bishop Lightfoot (in his Commentary) shows reason for believing that it was written, not from Ephesus as commonly supposed, but at a somewhat later time, from Macedonia. It is connected by numerous and close links of internal association with the Epistle to the Romans, which on this supposition speedily followed, and with 2 Corinthians, immediately preceding it. And the allusion of the text, though of no decisive weight taken by itself, goes to support this reasoning. Upon this hypothesis, our Epistle was composed in Macedonia, during the autumn of 57 (or possibly, 58) A. D. The emotion which surcharges 2 Corinthians runs over into Galatians; while

\* 1 Cor. xv. 10; 2 Cor. iv. 2; vi. 3-10; xi. 5, 16-xii. 13.

the theology which labours for expression in Galatians finds ampler and calmer development in Romans.

II. Of the readers, "the churches of Galatia," it is not necessary to say much at present. The character of the Galatians, and the condition of their Churches, will speak for themselves as we proceed. *Galatian* is equivalent to *Gaul*, or *Kelt*. This people was a detached fragment of the great Western-European race, which forms the basis of our own Irish and West-British populations, as well as of the French nationality. They had conquered for themselves a home in the north of Asia Minor during the Gaulish invasion that poured over Southeastern Europe and into the Asiatic peninsula some three and a half centuries before. Here the Gallic intruders stubbornly held their ground; and only succumbed to the irresistible power of Rome. Defeated by the Consul Manlius in 189 B. C., the Galatians retained their autonomy, under the rule of native princes, until in the year 25 B. C., on the death of Amyntas, the country was made a province of the Empire. The people maintained their distinctive character and speech despite these changes. At the same time they readily acquired Greek culture, and were by no means barbarians; indeed they were noted for their intelligence. In religion they seem to have largely imbibed the Phrygian idolatry of the earlier inhabitants.

The Roman Government had annexed to Galatia certain districts lying to the south, in which were situated most of the cities visited by Paul and Barnabas in their first missionary tour. This has led some scholars to surmise that Paul's "Galatians" were really Pisidians and Lycaonians, the people of Derbe, Lystra, and Pisidian Antioch. But this is improbable. The inhabitants of these regions were never called Galatians in common speech; and Luke distinguishes "the Galatic country" quite clearly from its southern borderlands. Besides, the Epistle contains no allusions, such as we should expect in the case supposed, to the Apostle's earlier and memorable associations with these cities of the South. Elsewhere he mentions them by name (2 Tim. iii. 11); and why not here, if he were addressing this circle of Churches?

The Acts of the Apostles relates nothing of Paul's sojourn in Galatia, beyond the fact that he twice "passed through the Galatic country" (Acts xvi. 6; xviii. 23), on the first occasion during the second missionary journey, in travelling north and then westwards from Pisidia; the second time, on his way from Antioch to Ephesus, in the course of the third tour. Galatia lay outside the main line of Paul's evangelistic career, as the historian of the Acts describes it, outside the Apostle's own design, as it would appear from iv. 13. In the first instance Galatia follows (in the order of the Acts), in the second precedes Phrygia, a change which seems to indicate some new importance accruing to this region: the further clause in Acts xviii. 23, "strengthening all the disciples," shows that the writer was aware that by this time a number of Christian societies were in existence in this neighbourhood.

No city is mentioned in the address, but the country of Galatia only—the single example of the kind in Paul's Epistles. The Galatians were countryfolk rather than townsfolk. And the



Church seems to have spread over the district at large, without gathering itself into any one centre, such as the Apostle had occupied in other parts of his Gentile field.

Still more significant is the curtness of this designation. Paul does not say, "To the Churches of God in Galatia," or "to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ," as in other Epistles. He is in no mood for compliments. These Galatians are, he fears, "removing from God who had called them" (ver. 6). He stands in doubt of them. It is a question whether they are now, or will long continue, "Churches of God" at all. He would gladly commend them if he could; but he must instead begin with reproaches. And yet we shall find that, as the Apostle proceeds, his sternness gradually relaxes. He remembers that these "foolish Galatians" are his "children," once ardently attached to him (iv. 12-20). His heart yearns towards them; he travails over them in birth again. Surely they will not forsake him, and renounce the gospel of whose blessings they had enjoyed so rich an experience (iii. 3; v. 10). He calls them "brethren" once and again; and with this kindly word, holding out the hand of forgiveness, he concludes the letter.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE SALUTATION.

#### GALATIANS i. 3-5.

THE greetings and benedictions of the Apostolic Letters deserve more attention from us than they sometimes receive. We are apt to pass over them as if they were a kind of pious formality, like the conventional phrases of our own epistles. But to treat them in such fashion is to do injustice to the seriousness and sincerity of Holy Scripture. This salutation of "Grace and Peace" comes from Paul's very heart. It breathes the essence of his gospel.

This formula appears to be of the Apostle's coining. Other writers, we may believe, borrowed it from him. *Grace* represents the common Greek salutation,—joy to you, *χαίρειν* changing to the kindred *χάρις*; while the more religious *peace* of the Hebrew, so often heard from the lips of Jesus, remains unaltered, only receiving from the New Covenant a tenderer significance. It is as though East and West, the old world and the new, met here and joined their voices to bless the Church and people of Jesus Christ.

*Grace* is the sum of all blessing bestowed by God; *peace*, in its wide Hebraic range of meaning, the sum of all blessing experienced by man. *Grace* is the Father's good will and bounty in Christ to His undeserving children; *peace*, the rest and reconciliation, the recovered health and gladness of the child brought home to the Father's house, dwelling in the light of his Father's face. *Grace* is the fountain of redeeming love; *peace* is the "river of life proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb," that flows calm and deep through each believing soul, the river whose "streams make glad the city of God."

What could a pastor wish better for his people, or friend for the friend he loves most, than this double blessing? Paul's letters are per-

fumed with its fragrance. Open them where you will, they are breathing out, "Grace to you and peace." Paul has hard things to write in this Epistle, sorrowful complaints to make, grievous errors to correct; but still with "Grace and peace" he begins, and with "Peace and grace" he will end! And so this stern and reproachful letter to these "foolish Galatians" is all embalmed and folded up in grace and peace. That is the way to "be angry and sin not." So mercy rejoices over judgment.

These two benedictions, we must remember, go together. Peace comes through grace. The proud heart never knows peace; it will not yield to God the glory of His grace. It scorns to be a debtor, even to Him. The proud man stands upon his rights, upon his merits. And he will have them; for God is just. But peace is not amongst them. No sinful child of man deserves that. Is there wrong between your soul and God, iniquity hidden in the heart? Till that wrong is confessed, till you submit to the Almighty and your spirit bows at the Redeemer's cross, "what hast thou to do with peace?" No peace in this world, or in any world, for him who will not be at peace with God. "When I kept silence," so the ancient confession runs (Ps. xxxii. 3-5), "my bones waxed old through my moaning all the day long"—that is why many a man is old before his time! because of this continual inward chafing, this secret, miserable war of the heart against God. "Day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture was turned into the drought of summer"—the soul withered like grass, all the freshness and pure delight of life wasted and perishing under the steady, unrelenting heat of the Divine displeasure. "Then I said"—I could bear it no longer—"I said, I will confess my transgression unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." And then peace came to the weary soul. The bitterness and hardness of life were gone; the heart was young again. The man was new born, a child of God.

But while Paul gives this salutation to all his Churches, his greeting is extended and qualified here in a peculiar manner. The Galatians were falling away from faith in Christ to Jewish ritualism. He does not therefore wish them "Grace and peace" in a general way, or as objects to be sought from any quarter or by any means that they might choose; but only "from God our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins." Here is already a note of warning and a tacit contradiction of much that they were tempted to believe. It would have been a mockery for the Apostle to desire for these fickle Galatians grace and peace on other terms. As at Corinth, so in Galatia, he is "determined to know nothing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Above the puerilities of their Jewish ritual, above the pettiness of their wrangling factions, he directs his reader's gaze once more to the sacrifice of Calvary and the sublime purpose of God which it reveals.

Do we not need to be recalled to the same sight? We live in a distracted and distracting age. Even without positive unbelief, the cross is too frequently thrust out of view by the hurry and press of modern life. Nay, in the Church itself is it not in danger of being practically set on one side, amidst the throng of competing interests which solicit, and many of them justly



solicit, our attention? We visit Calvary too seldom. We do not haunt in our thoughts the sacred spot, and linger on this theme, as the old saints did. We fail to attain "the fellowship of Christ's sufferings;" and while the cross is outwardly exalted, its inward meaning is perhaps but faintly realised. "Tell us something new," they say; "that story of the cross, that evangelical doctrine of yours, we have heard it so often, we know it all so well!" If men are saying this, if the cross of Christ is made of none effect, its message staled by repetition, we must be strangely at fault either in the hearing or the telling. Ah, if we knew the cross of Christ, it would crucify us; it would possess our being. Its supremacy can never be taken from it. That cross is still the centre of the world's hope, the pillar of salvation. Let the Church lose her hold of it, and she loses everything. She has no longer any reason to exist.

I. So the Apostle's greeting invites his readers to contemplate anew *the Divine gift bestowed upon sinful men*. It invokes blessing upon them "from our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins."

To see this gift in its greatness, let us go a little farther back; let us consider who the Christ is that thus "gives Himself." He is, we are taught, the almoner of all the Divine bounties. He is not the object alone, but the depository and dispenser of the Father's good pleasure to all worlds and all creatures. Creation is rooted in "the Son of God's love" (Col. i. 15-18). Universal life has its fountain in "the Only-begotten, which is in the bosom of the Father." The light that dispelled the weltering gloom of chaos, the more wondrous light that shone in the dawn of human reason, came from this "outbeaming of the Father's glory." Countless gifts had He, "the life of men, the Word that was from the beginning," bestowed on a world that knew Him not. Upon the chosen race, the people whom on the world's behalf he formed for Himself, He showered His blessings. He had given them promise and law, prophet and priest and king, gifts of faith and hope, holy obedience and brave patience and deep wisdom and prophetic fire and heavenly rapture; and His gifts to them have come through them to us, "partakers with them of the root and fatness of the olive tree."

But now, to crown all, *He gave Himself!* "The Word became flesh." The Son of God planted Himself into the stock of human life, made Himself over to mankind; He became the Son of man. So in the fulness of time came the fulness of blessing. Earlier bestowments were instalments and prophecies of this; later gifts are its outcome and its application. What could He have done more than this? What could the Infinite God do more, even for the most worthy, than He has done for us in "sending His Son, the Only-begotten, that we might live through Him!" Giving us Him, surely He will give us grace and peace.

And if our Lord Jesus Christ "gave Himself," is not that sufficient? What could Jewish ritual and circumcision add to this "fulness of the Godhead"? Why hunt after the shadows, when one has the substance? Such were the questions which the Apostle has to ask his Judaising readers. And what, pray, do *we* want with modern Ritualism, and its scenic apparatus, and its priestly offices? Are these things designed to

eke out the insufficiency of Christ? Will they recommend Him better than His own gospel and the pure influence of His Spirit avail to do in these latter days? Or have modern thought, to be sure, and the progress of the nineteenth century carried us beyond Jesus Christ, and created spiritual wants for which He has no supply? Paul at least had no anticipation of this failure. All the need of hungry human hearts and searching minds and sorrowing spirits, to the world's latest ages, the God of Paul, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is able to supply in Him. "We are complete in Him,"—if we but knew our completeness. The most advanced thinkers of the age will still find Jesus Christ in advance of them. Those who draw the most largely from His fulness leave its depths unsounded. There are resources stored for the times to come in the revelation of Christ, which our age is too slight, too hasty of thought, to comprehend. We are straitened in ourselves; never in Him.

From this supreme gift we can argue down to the humblest necessities, the commonest trials of our daily lot. It adapts itself to the small anxieties of a struggling household, equally with the largest demands of our exacting age. "Thou hast given us Thy Son," says some one, "and wilt Thou not give us bread?" We have a generous Lord. His only complaint is that we do not ask enough. "Ye are My friends," He says: "I have given My life for you. Ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Giving us Himself, He has given us all things. Abraham and Moses, David and Isaiah, "Paul and Apollos and Cephas"—yea the world itself, life and death, things present and to come—all are ours; and we are Christ's and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. iii. 22, 23). Such is the chain of blessing that hangs on this single gift.

Great as the gift is, it is not greater than our need. Wanting a Divine Son of man, human life remains a baffled aspiration, a pathway leading to no goal. Lacking Him, the race is incomplete, a body without its head, a flock that has no master. By the coming of Christ in the flesh human life finds its ideal realised; its haunting dream of a Divine helper and leader in the midst of men, of a spiritual and immortal perfection brought within its reach, has attained fulfilment. "God hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David; as He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began." Jacob's vision has come true. There is the golden ladder, with its foot resting on the cold, stony earth, and its top on heaven's starry platform, with its angels ascending and descending through the darkness; and you may climb its steps, high as you will! So humanity receives its crown of life. Heaven and earth are linked, God and man reunited in the person of Jesus Christ.

But Paul will not suffer us to linger at Bethlehem. He hastens on to Calvary. The Atonement, not the Incarnation, is in his view the centre of Christianity. To the cross of Jesus, rather than to His cradle, he attaches our salvation. "Jesus Christ gave Himself"—what for, and in what way? What was the errand that brought Him here, in such a guise, and at such a time? Was it to meet our *need*, to fulfil our human aspirations, to crown the moral edifice, to lead the race onward to the goal of its



development? Yes—ultimately, and in the final issue, for “as many as receive Him”; it was to “present every man perfect in Christ.” But that was not the primary object of His coming, of such a coming. Happy for us indeed, and for Him, if it could have been so. To come to a world waiting for Him, hearkening for the cry, “Behold thy God, O Israel,” would have been a pleasant and a fitting thing. But to find Himself rejected by His own, to be spit upon, to hear the multitude shout, “Away with Him!” was this the welcome that he looked for? Yea surely, nothing else but this. For He gave Himself *for our sins*. He came to a world steeped in wickedness, seething with rebellion against God, hating Him because it hated the Father that sent Him, sure to say as soon as it saw Him, “We will not have this man to reign over us.” Not therefore by way of incarnation and revelation alone, as it might have been for an innocent race; but by way of *sacrifice*, as a victim on the altar of expiation, “a lamb led to the slaughter,” He gave Himself up for us all. “To deliver us from an evil world,” says the Apostle; to mend a faulty and imperfect world, something less and other would have sufficed.

Extreme diseases call for extreme remedies. The case with which our good Physician had to deal was a desperate one. The world was sick at heart; its moral nature rotten to the core. Human life was shattered to its foundation. If it was to be saved, if the race was to escape perdition, the fabric must be reconstructed upon another basis, on the ground of a new righteousness, outside ourselves and yet akin to us, near enough to take hold of us and grow into us, which should draw to itself the broken elements of human life, and as a vital organic force refashion them, “creating” men “anew in Christ Jesus”—a righteousness availing before God, and in its depth and width sufficient to bear a world’s weight. Such a new foundation Jesus Christ has laid in His death. “He laid down His life for us,” the Shepherd for the sheep, the Friend for His perishing friends, the Physician for sufferers who had no other remedy. It had come to this,—either He must die, or we must die for ever. Such was the sentence of the All-wise Judge; on that judgment the Redeemer acted. “His judgments are a great deep”; and in this sentence there are depths of mystery into which we tremble to look, “secret things that belong unto the Lord our God.” But so it was. There was no way but this, no moral possibility of saving the world, and yet saving Him the accursed death.

If there had been, would not the Almighty Father have found it out? would He not have “taken away the cup” from those white, quivering lips? No; He must *die*. He must consent to be “made sin, made a curse” for us. He must humble His stainless innocence, humble His glorious Godhead down to the dust of death. He must die, at the hands of the men He created and loved, with the horror of the world’s sin fastened on Him; die under a blackened heaven, under the averting of the Father’s face. And He did it. He said, “Father, Thy will be done. Smite the Shepherd; but let the sheep escape.” So He “gave Himself for our sins.”

Ah, it was no easy march, no holiday pageant, the coming of the Son of God into this world of ours. He “came to *save sinners*.” Not to

help good men—this were a grateful task; but to redeem bad men—the hardest work in God’s universe. It tasked the strength and the devotion of the Son of God. Witness Gethsemane. And it will cost His Church something, more haply than we dream of now, if the work of the Redeemer is to be made effectual, and “the travail of His soul satisfied.”

In pity and in sorrow was that gift bestowed; in deep humility and sorrow must it be accepted. It is a very humbling thing to “receive the atonement,” to be made righteous on such terms as these. A man who has done well can with satisfaction accept the help given him to do better. But to know that one has done very ill, to stand in the sight of God and truth condemned, marked with the disgrace that the crucifixion of the Son of God has branded on our human nature, with every stain of sin in ourselves revealed in the light of His sacrifice, is a sore abasement. When one has been compelled to cry out, “Lord, save; or I perish!” he has not much left to plume himself upon. There was Saul himself, a perfect moralist, “blameless in the righteousness of the law.” Yet he must confess, “How to perform that which is good I find not. In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing. Wretch that I am, who shall deliver me?” Was not this mortifying to the proud young Pharisee, the man of strict conscience and high-souled moral endeavour? It was like death. And whoever has with sincerity made the same attempt to attain in the strength of his will to a true virtue, has tasted of this bitterness.

This, however, is what many cannot understand. The proud heart says, “No; I will not stoop to that. I have my faults, my defects and errors, not a few. But as for what you call *sin*, as for guilt and inborn depravity, I am not going to tax myself with anything of the kind. Leave me a little self-respect.” So with the whole herd of the self-complacent, half-religious Laodiceans. Once a week they confess themselves “miserable sinners,” but their sins against God never yet cost them one half hour of misery. And Paul’s “gospel is hid to them.” If they read this Epistle, they cannot tell what it is all about; why Paul makes so much ado, why these thunderings of judgment, these cries of indignation, these beseechings and protestings and redoubled arguments,—all because a parcel of foolish Galatians wanted to play at being Jews! They are inclined to think with Festus, that this good Paul was a little beside himself. Alas! to such men, content with the world’s good opinion and their own, the death of Christ is made of none effect. Its moral grandeur, its infinite pathos, is lost upon them. They pay it a conventional respect, but as for *believing* in it, as for making it their own, and dying with Christ to live in Him—they have no idea what it means. That, they will tell you, is “mysticism,” and they are practical men of the world. They have never gone out of themselves, never discovered their moral insufficiency. These are they of whom Jesus said, “The publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.” It is our human independence, our moral self-conceit, that robs us of the Divine bounty. How should God give His righteousness to men so well furnished with their own? “Blessed” then “are the poor in spirit”; blessed are the broken in heart—poor



enough, broken enough, bankrupt enough to stoop to a Saviour "who gave Himself for our sins."

II. Sinful men have made an *evil world*. The world, as Paul knew it, was evil indeed. "The existing evil age," he says, the world as it then was, in contrast with the glory of the perfected Messianic kingdom.

This was a leading distinction of the rabbinical schools; and the writers of the New Testament adopt it, with the necessary modification, that "the coming age," in their view, commences with the Parousia, the full advent of the Messiah King. The period that intervenes since His first appearing is transitional, belonging to both eras. It is the conclusion of "this world," to which it appertains in its outward and material relations; but under the perishing form of the present there lies hidden for the Christian believer the seed of immortality, "the earnest" of his future and complete inheritance. Hence the different and seemingly contradictory ways in which Scripture speaks of the world that now is.

To Paul at this time the world wore its darkest aspect. There is a touching emphasis in the order of this clause. "The present world, *evil as it is*:" the words are a sigh for deliverance. The Epistles to Corinth show us how the world just now was using the Apostle. The wonder is that one man could bear so much. "We are made as the filth of the world," he says, "the offscouring of all things." So the world treated its greatest living benefactor. And as for his Master—"the princes of this world crucified the Lord of glory." Yes, it was a bad old world, that in which Paul and the Galatians lived—false, licentious, cruel. And that "evil world" still exists.

True, the world, as we know it, is vastly better than that of Paul's day. Not in vain have Apostles taught, and martyrs bled, and the Church of Christ witnessed and toiled through so many ages. "Other men have laboured; we enter into their labours." An English home of to-day is the flower of the centuries. To those cradled in its pure affections, endowed with health and honourable work and refined tastes, the world must be, and was meant to be, in many aspects a bright and pleasant world. Surely the most sorrowful have known days in which the sky was all sunshine and the very air alive with joy, when the world looked as when it came forth fresh from its Creator's hand, "and behold, it was very good." There is nothing in the Bible, nothing in the spirit of true religion to damp the pure joy of such days as these. But there are "the days of darkness;" and they are many. The Serpent has crept into our Paradise. Death breathes on it his fatal blast.

And when we look outside the sheltered circles of home-life and Christian brotherhood, what a sea of misery spreads 'around us. How limited and partial is the influence of religion. What a mass of unbelief and godlessness surges up to the doors of our sanctuaries. What appalling depths of iniquity exist in modern society, under the brilliant surface of our material civilisation. And however far the dominance of sin in human society may be broken—as, please God, it shall be broken—still evil is likely to remain in many tempting and perilous forms until the world is burnt to ashes in the

fires of the Last Judgment. Is it not an evil world, where every morning newspaper serves up to us its miserable tale of disaster and of crime, where the Almighty's name is "all the day blasphemed," and every night drunkenness holds its horrid revels and the daughters of shame walk the city streets, where great Christian empires tax the poor man's bread and make his life bitter to maintain their huge standing armies and their cruel engines of war, and where, in this happy England and its cities teeming with wealth, there are thousands of patient, honest working women, whose life under the fierce stress of competition is a veritable slavery, a squalid, dreary struggle just to keep hunger from the door? Aye, it is a world so evil that no good and right-thinking man who knows it would care to live in it for a single day, but for the hope of helping to make it better.

Now it was the purpose of Jesus Christ, that for those who believe in Him this world's evil should be brought absolutely to an end. He promises a full deliverance from all that tempts and afflicts us here. With sin, the root of evil, removed, its bitter fruits at last will disappear. We shall rise to the life immortal. We shall attain our perfect consummation and bliss both in body and soul. Kept from the evil of the world while they remain in it, enabled by His grace to witness and contend against it, Christ's servants shall then be lifted clean out of it for ever. "Father, I will," prayed Jesus, "that they also whom Thou hast given Me, may be with Me where I am." To that final salvation, accomplished in the redemption of our body and the setting up of Christ's heavenly kingdom, the Apostle's words look forward: "that He might deliver us *out of* this present world." This was the splendid hope which Paul offered to the dying and despairing world of his day. The Galatians were persuaded of it and embraced it; he entreats them not to let it go.

The self-sacrifice of Christ, and the deliverance it brings, are both, the Apostle concludes, "according to the will of God, even our Father." The wisdom and might of the Eternal are pledged to the work of human redemption. The cross of Jesus Christ is the manifesto of Infinite Love. Let him therefore who rejects it, know against Whom he is contending. Let him who perverts and falsifies it, know with what he is trifling. He who receives and obeys it, may rest assured that all things are working for his good. For all things are in the hands of our God and Father; "to Whom," let us say with Paul, "be glory for ever. Amen."

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE ANATHEMA.

#### GALATIANS i. 6-10.

AFTER the Salutation in Paul's Epistles comes the Thanksgiving. *Εὐχαριστῶ* or *Εὐλογητός*—these are the words we expect first to meet. Even in writing to Corinth, where there was so much to censure and deplore, he begins, "I give thanks to my God always for you." This letter deviates from the Apostle's devout and happy usage. Not "I give thanks," but "I



marvel;" not blessing, but *anathema*, is coming from his lips: a surprise that jars all the more upon one's ears, because it follows on the sublime doxology of the preceding verse. "I marvel to see you so quickly falling away to another gospel. . . . But if any one preach unto you any gospel other than that ye received—aye, though it were ourselves, or an angel from heaven—I have said once, and I say again, Let him be Anathema."

These words were well calculated to startle the Galatians out of their levity. They are like a lightning-flash which shows one to be standing on the edge of a precipice. We see at once the infinite seriousness of the Judaic controversy, the profound gulf that lies between Paul and his opposers. He is for open war. He is in haste to fling his gage of defiance against these enemies of the cross. With all his tact and management, his readiness to consult the susceptibilities and accommodate the scruples of sincere consciences, the Apostle can find no room for conciliation here. He knows the sort of men he has to deal with. He perceives that the whole truth of the Gospel is at stake. Not circumstantial, but essentials; not his personal authority, but the honour of Christ, the doctrine of the cross, is involved in this defection. He must speak plainly; he must act strongly, and at once; or the cause of the Gospel is lost. "If I continued any longer to please men," he says, "I should not be a servant of Christ." To stand on terms with such opponents, to palter with this "other Gospel," would be treason against Him. There is but one tribunal at which this quarrel can be decided. To Him "who had called" the Galatians believers "in Christ's grace," who by the same grace had called the Apostle to His service and given him the message he had preached to them—to God he appeals. In His name, and by the authority conferred upon him and for which he must give account, he pronounces these troublers "anathema." They are enemies of Christ, by their treachery excluded from His kingdom.

However unwelcome, however severe the course the Apostle takes, he has no alternative. "For now," he cries, "is it *men* that I persuade, or *God*?" He must do his duty, let who will condemn. Paul was ready to go all lengths in pleasing men in consistence with loyalty to Christ, where he could do it "for their good, unto edification." But if their approval clashed with God's, then it became "a very small thing:"\* he did not heed it one jot. Such is the temper of mind which the Epistles to Corinth disclose in Paul at this juncture. In the same spirit he indites these trenchant and displeasing words.

With a heavy heart Paul has taken up his pen. If we judge rightly of the date of this letter, he had just passed through the darkest hour of his experience, when not his life alone, but the fate of his Gentile mission hung in the balance. His expulsion from Ephesus, coming at the same time as the Corinthian revolt, and followed by a prostrating attack of sickness, had shaken his soul to its depths. Never had his heart been so torn with anxiety, never had he felt himself so beaten down and discomfited, as on that melancholy journey from Ephesus to Macedonia.† "Out of anguish of heart and

with many tears" and after-relentings (2 Cor. ii. 4; vii. 8) he wrote his First Letter to Corinth. And this Epistle is even more severe. There runs through it a peculiar mental tension, an exaltation of feeling such as prolonged and deep suffering leaves behind in a nature like Paul's. "The marks of Jesus" (vi. 17) are visible, impressed on his spirit no less than on his body. The Apostle's heart is full to overflowing. Its warm glow is felt under the calmer course of narrative and argument: while at the beginning and end of the Epistle it breaks forth in language of burning indignation and melting pathos. Before advancing a single step, before entering on any sort of explanation or discussion, his grief at the fickleness of his Galatian children and his anger against their seducers must find expression.

These sentences demand, before we proceed further, a few words of exegetical definition. For the reference of "so quickly" it is needless to go beyond the verb it qualifies. The Apostle cannot surely mean, "*so soon* falling away (after your conversion)." For the Galatian Churches had been founded five, if not seven, years before this time; and the backsliding of recent converts is less, and not more, surprising than of established believers. What astonishes Paul is the *suddenness* of this movement, the facility with which the Galatians yielded to the Judaising "persuasion," the rapid spread of this new leaven. As to the double "other" (ἕτερον, *different*, R. V.—ἄλλο) of vv. 6 and 7, and the connection of the idiomatic "only" (εἰ μὴ, *except*),—we regard the second *other* as an abrupt correction of the first; while the *only* clause, extending to the end of ver. 7, mediates between the two, qualifying the statement "There is no other gospel," by showing in what sense the writer at first had spoken of "another." "Ye are falling away," says he, "to another sort of gospel—which is not another, except that there are certain that trouble you and would fain pervert the gospel of Christ." The word *gospel* is therefore in the first instance applied ironically. Paul yields the sacred title up to his opponents, only to snatch it out of their false hands. "*Another* gospel! there is only one; although there are men that falsify it, and seek to foist something else upon you in its name." Seven times in this context (vv. 6-11) does the Apostle reiterate, in noun or verb, this precious word, as though he could not let it go. A strange sort of "good news" for the Galatians, that they must be circumcised forsooth, and observe the Jewish Calendar (v. 2, 3; vi. 12; iv. 9, 10)!

I. In Paul's view, there is but one gospel for mankind. The gospel of Jesus Christ bears a fixed, inviolable character.

On this position the whole teaching of Paul rests,—and with it, may we not add, Christianity itself? However variously we may formulate the essentials of a Christian man's faith, we are generally agreed that there are such essentials, and that they are found in Paul's gospel to the Gentiles. With him the good tidings about Christ constituted a very definite and, as we should say, *dogmatic* body of truth. In whatever degree his gospel has been confused and overlaid by later teachings, to his own mind its terms were perfectly clear, and its authority incontestable. With all its breadth, there is nothing nebulous, nothing limp or hesitating about the theology of Paul. In its main doctrines it

\* 1 Cor. iv. 3, 4; 2 Cor. v. 9-12; xii. 19.

† 2 Cor. i. 8-10; ii. 12, 13; iv. 8-11; vii. 5-7.



is fixed and hard as adamant; and at the challenge of this Judaistic perversion it rings out an instant and peremptory denial. It was the ark of God on which the Jewish troublers laid their unholy hands. "Christ's grace" is lodged in it. God's call to mankind was conveyed by these "good tidings." The Churches which the Apostle had planted were "God's husbandry, God's building;" and woe to the man who tampered with the work, or sought to lay another foundation than that which had been laid (1 Cor. iii. 5-11). To distort or mutilate "the word of the truth of the gospel," to make it mean now one thing and now another, to disturb the faith of half-instructed Christians by captious reasonings and self-interested perversions, was a capital offence, a sin against God and a crime against humanity. Paul possesses in his gospel truth of unspeakable value to mankind, the supreme revelation of God's mercy to the world. And he is prepared to launch his anathema against every wilful impugner, no matter what his pretensions, or the quarter from which he comes.

"Well," it may be said, "this is sheer religious intolerance. Paul is doing what every dogmatist, every ecclesiastical bigot has done in his turn. His beliefs are, to be sure, *the* truth; and accordingly he unchurches and anathematizes those who cannot agree with him. With all his nobility of mind, there is in Paul a leaven of Jewish rancour. He falls short of the sweet reasonableness of Jesus." So some will say, and in saying claim to represent the mild and tolerant spirit of our age. But is there not in every age an intolerance that is just and necessary? There is a logical intolerance of sophistry and trifling. There is a moral intolerance of impurity and deceit. And there is a religious intolerance, which includes both these and adds to them a holy jealousy for the honour of God and the spiritual welfare of mankind. It is mournful indeed to think how many crimes have been perpetrated under the cloak of pious zeal. *Tantum Religio potuit suadere majorum.* The corruption of Christianity by human pride and cruelty has furnished copious illustrations of the terrible line of Lucretius. But the perversion of this noblest instinct of the soul does not take away either its reasonableness or its use. The quality of a passion is one thing; the mode of its expression is another. The hottest fires of bigotry are cold when compared with the scorching intolerance of Christ's denunciations of the Pharisees. The anathemas of Jesus and of Paul are very different from those of arrogant pontiffs, or of narrow sectaries, inflamed with the idolatry of their own opinions. After all, the zeal of the rudest fanatic in religion has more in it of manly worth and moral capability than the languors of a blasé scepticism, that sits watching with amused contempt the strife of creeds and the search of human hearts after the Living God. There is an idle, listless, cowardly tolerance, as there is an intolerance that is noble and just.

The *one gospel* has had many interpreters. Their voices, it must be confessed, sound strangely discordant. While the teachings of Christianity excite so intensely a multitude of different minds, of every variety of temper and capacity, contradiction will inevitably arise. Nothing is easier than to scoff at "the Babel of religious opinions." Christian truth is neces-

sarily refracted and discoloured in passing through disordered natures and defective minds. And, alas! that Church which claims to hold the truth without possibility of error or variation, has perverted Christ's gospel most of all.

But notwithstanding all differences, there exists a large and an increasing measure of agreement amongst the great body of earnest Christians. Slowly, yet surely, one debate after another comes to its settlement. The noise and publicity with which discussion on matters of faith is carried on in an age of religious freedom, and when liberty of thought has outrun mental discipline, should not lead us to exaggerate the extent of our disagreements. In the midst of human controversy and error, the Spirit of truth is carrying on His work. He is the supreme witness of Jesus Christ. And He abides with us for ever. The newly awakened historical conscience of our times is visibly making for unity. The Church is going back to the New Testament. And the more thoroughly she does this, the more directly and truthfully she addresses herself to the original record and comes face to face with Christ and His Apostles there, so much the more shall we realise the oneness and certainty of "the faith once delivered to the saints." Beneath the many superstructures, faulty and changing in their form, we reach the one "foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone." There we touch solid rock. "The unity of the faith" lies in "the knowledge of the Son of God." Of Him we shall learn most from those who knew Him best. Let us transport ourselves into the fellowship of His first disciples; and listen to His gospel as it came fresh from the lips of Peter and John and Paul, and the Divine Master Himself. Let us bid the voice of the centuries be silent, that we may *hear Him*.

For the Galatian readers, as for Paul, there could be but *one gospel*. By his voice the call of God had reached their hearts (ver. 6; chap. v. 8). The witness of the Spirit of God and of Christ in the supernatural gifts they had received, and in the manifold fruit of a regenerate life (iii. 2-5; v. 22, 23), was evidence to them that the Apostle's message was "the true gospel of the grace of God." This they had gratefully acknowledged at the time of his first visit (iv. 15). The proclamation of the crucified and risen Christ had brought to them unspeakable blessing. Through it they received the knowledge of God; they were made consciously sons of God, heirs of life eternal (iii. 26; iv. 6-9; vi. 8). To entertain any other gospel, after this experience and all these professions, was an act of apostasy. "Ye are deserting (like runaway soldiers), *turning renegades* from God:" such is the language in which Paul taxes his readers. In listening to the persuasion of the Judaists, they were "disobeying the truth" (v. 7, 8). They were disloyal to conscience; they were trifling with the most sacred convictions of their lives, and with the testimony of the Spirit of God. They were forgetting the cross of Christ, and making His death of none effect. Surely they must have been "bewitched" to act thus; some deadly spell was upon them, which had laid memory and conscience both to sleep (ii. 21-iii. 3).

The nature and the contents of the two "gospels" current in Galatia will be made clear in



the further course of the Epistle. They were the gospels of Grace and of Law respectively; of Salvation by Faith, and by Works; of life in the Spirit, and in the Flesh; of the Cross and the Resurrection on the one hand, and of Circumcision and the Calendar and "Clean meats" on the other; the gospels of inwardness, and of externalism—of Christ, and of self. The conflict between these two was the great struggle of Paul's life. His success was, historically speaking, the salvation of Christianity.

But this contention did not end with his victory. The Judaistic perversion appealed to tendencies too persistent in our nature to be crushed at one blow. The gospel of externalism is dear to the human heart. It may take the form of culture and moralities; or of "services" and sacraments and churchly order; or of orthodoxy and philanthropy. These and such things make themselves our idols; and trust in them takes the place of faith in the living Christ. It is not enough that the eyes of our heart should once have seen the Lord, that we should in other days have experienced "the renewing of the Holy Ghost." It is possible to forget, possible to "remove from Him that called us in the grace of Christ." With little change in the form of our religious life, its inward reality of joy in God, of conscious sonship, of fellowship in the Spirit, may be utterly departed. The gospel of formalism will spring up and flourish on the most evangelical soil, and in the most strictly Pauline Churches. Let it be banned and barred out never so completely, it knows how to find entrance, under the simplest modes of worship and the soundest doctrine. The serried defence of Articles and Confessions constructed against it will not prevent its entrance, and may even prove its cover and intrenchment. Nothing avails, as the Apostle says, but a constant "new creation." The life of God in human souls is sustained by the energy of His Spirit, perpetually renewed, ever proceeding from the Father and the Son. "The life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." This is the true orthodoxy. The vitality of his personal faith in Christ kept Paul safe from error, faithful in will and intellect to the *one gospel*.

II. We have still to consider the import of the judgment pronounced by Paul upon those who pervert the gospel of Christ. "Let him be anathema. Even should it be ourselves, or an angel from heaven, *let him be anathema*."

These are tremendous words. Commentators have been shocked at the Apostle's damning his opponents after this fashion, and have sought to lighten the weight of this awful sentence. It has been sometimes toned down into an act of excommunication or ecclesiastical censure. But this explanation will not hold. Paul could not think of subjecting "an angel" to a penalty like that. He pronounced excommunication against disorderly members of the Thessalonian Church; and in 1 Cor. v. 1-8 he gives directions for the carrying out of a similar decree, attended with severe bodily affliction supernaturally adjudged, against a sinner whose presence grossly stained the purity of the Church. But this sentence goes beyond either of those. It contemplates the exclusion of the offenders from the Covenant of grace, their loss of final salvation.

Thrice besides has Paul used this ominous

word. The cry "Jesus is anathema," in 1 Cor. xii. 3, reveals with a lurid effect the frenzied malignity towards Christ of which the spirit of evil is sometimes capable. In a very different connection the word appears in Rom. ix. 3; where Paul "could wish himself anathema from Christ," if that were possible, for his brethren's sake; he could find it in his heart to be cut off for ever from that love of God in Christ of which he has just spoken in terms of unbounded joy and confidence (Rom. viii. 31-39), and banished from the heavenly kingdom, if through his exclusion his Jewish kindred might be saved. Self-sacrifice can go no further. No heavier loss than this could be conceived for any human being. Nearest to our passage is the imprecation at the end of 1 Corinthians: "If any man love not the Lord, let him be anathema,"—a judgment proclaimed against cold and false hearts, knowing His love, bearing His name, but with no true love to Him.

This Greek word in its Biblical use has grown out of the *chérem* of the Old Testament, the *ban* declared against that which was cut off from the Divine mercies and exposed to the full sweep of judgment. Thus in Deut. xiii. 12-18, the city whose people should "go and serve other gods," is declared *chérem* (*anathema*), an "accused," or "devoted thing" (R. V.), on which ensues its destruction by sword and fire, leaving it to remain "a ruin-heap for ever." Similarly in Joshua vi., vii., the spoil of Jericho is *anathema*, Achan's theft is therefore *anathema*, and Israel is made by it *anathema* until "the accused thing is destroyed" from among the people. Such were the recollections associated with this word in the Mosaic law, which it would inevitably carry with it to the minds of those against whom it was now directed. And there is nothing in later Jewish usage to mitigate its force.

Now the Apostle is not writing like a man in a passion, who flings out his words as missiles, eager only to wound and confound his opponents. He repeats the sentence. He quotes it as one that he had already affirmed in the hearing of his readers. The passage bears the marks of well-weighed thought and judicial solemnity. In pronouncing this judgment on "the troublers," Paul acts under the sense of Apostolic responsibility. We must place the sentence in the same line as that of Peter against Ananias and Sapphira, and of Paul himself against Elymas the Cypriot sorcerer, and against the incestuous Corinthian. In each case there is a supernatural insight and authorisation, "the authority which the Lord gave" and which is wielded by His inspired Apostle. The exercise of this judicial function was one of "the signs of the Apostle." This was the proof of "Christ speaking in him" which Paul was so loth to give at Corinth,\* but which at this crisis of his ministry he was compelled to display. And if he "reckons to be bold against" his adversaries in Galatia, he knows well the ground on which he stands.

His anathema struck at men who were the worst enemies of Christ. "We can do nothing against the truth," he says; "but for the truth" he was ready to do and dare everything,—to "come with a rod," as he tells the proud Corinthians. There was no authority, however lofty, that he was not warranted to use on Christ's

\* 2 Cor. x. 1-11; xiii. 1-10; 1 Cor. iv. 18-21.



behalf, no measure, however severe, from which he would shrink, if it were required in defence of the truth of the Gospel. "He possesses weapons, not fleshly, but mighty through God"; and he is prepared to bring them all into play rather than see the gospel perverted or overthrown. Paul will hurl his anathema at the prince of the archangels, should He come "preaching another gospel," tempting his children from their allegiance to Christ. This bolt was not shot, a moment too soon. Launched against the legalist conspiracy, and followed up by the arguments of this and the Roman Epistle, it saved the Church from being overpowered by reactionary Judaism. The Apostle's judgment has marked the gospel of the cross for all time as God's inviolable truth, guarded by lightnings.

The sentences of judgment pronounced by the Apostles present a striking contrast to those that have fulminated from the Chair of their self-styled successors. In the Canons of the Council of Trent, for example, we have counted one hundred and thirty-five anathemas. A large proportion of these are concerned with the rights of the priesthood; others with complicated and secondary points of doctrine; some are directed virtually against the teaching of Paul himself. Here is one specimen: "If any one shall say that justifying faith is nothing else but a trust in the Divine mercy, remitting sins for Christ's sake, or that it is this trust alone by which we are justified: let him be anathema."\* Again, "If any one shall say that the Canon of the Mass contains errors, and therefore shall be abrogated: let him be anathema."† In the closing session, the final act of the presiding Cardinal was to pronounce, "Anathema to all heretics;" to which the assembled prelates shouted in response, "Anathema, anathema." With this imprecation on their lips the Fathers of the Church concluded their pious labours. It was the Reformation, it was "the liberty of the sons of God," that Rome anathematised. Paul's censure holds good against all the Conciliar Canons and Papal Bulls that contravene it. But twice has he pronounced this awful word; once against any that "love not the Lord," a second time upon those who wilfully pervert His gospel. The Papal anathemas sound like the maledictions of an angry priesthood, jealous for its prerogatives; here we have the holy severity of an inspired Apostle, concerned only for the truth, and for his Master's honour. There speaks the conscious "lord over God's heritage," wearing the triple crown, wielding the power of Interdict and Inquisition, whose word sets armies in motion and makes kings tremble on their seats. Here a feeble, solitary man, "his bodily presence weak, his speech contemptible," hunted from place to place, scourged and stoned, shut up for years in prison, who could not, except for love's sake, command the meanest service. How conspicuous in the one case, how wanting in the other, is the might of the Spirit and the dignity of the inspired word, the transcendence of moral authority.

It is the moral conduct of those he judges that determines in each case the sentence passed by the Apostle. For a man knowing Jesus Christ, as we presume the members of the Corinthian Church did know Him, not to love Him

\*Session vi., Can. xii.

†Session xxii., Can. vi.

argues a bad heart. Must not we count *ourselves* accursed, if with our knowledge of Christ we had no love for Him? Such a man is already virtually *anathema*. He is severed as a branch from its vine, ready to be gathered for the burning (John xv. 6). And these Galatian disturbers were something worse than mere mistaken enthusiasts for their native Jewish rites. Their policy was dishonourable (iv. 17). They made the gospel of Christ subservient to factious designs. They sought to win credit with their fellow-countrymen and to escape the reproach of the cross by imposing circumcision on the Gentiles (ii. 4; vi. 12, 13). They prostituted religion to selfish and party purposes. They sacrificed truth to popularity, the glory of Christ and the cross to their own. They were of those whom the Apostle describes as "walking in craftiness and handling the word of God deceitfully," who "traffic" in the gospel, peddling with it as with petty wares, cheapening and adulterating it like dishonest hucksters to make their own market by it (2 Cor. ii. 17; iv. 2). Did not Paul do well to smite them with the rod of his mouth? Justly has he marked with the brand of this fiery anathema the false minister, "who serves not the Lord Christ, but his own belly."

But does this declaration preclude in such a case the possibility of repentance? We trow not. It declares the doom which is due to any, be he man or angel, who should do what these "troublers" are doing. It is a general sentence, and has for the individuals concerned the effect of a warning, like the announcement made concerning the Traitor at the Last Supper. However unlikely repentance might be in either instance, there is nothing to forbid it. So when Peter said to Simon Magus, "Thy money perish with thee!" he nevertheless continued, "Repent, therefore, of this thy wickedness, and pray the Lord, if perhaps the thought of thy heart shall be forgiven thee" (Acts viii. 20-22). To his worst opponents, on any sign of contrition, Paul, we may be sure, would have gladly said the same.

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## THE PERSONAL HISTORY.

### CHAPTER i. II-ii. 21.

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### CHAPTER IV.

## PAUL'S GOSPEL REVEALED BY CHRIST.

### GALATIANS i. II-14.

HERE the Epistle begins in its main purport. What has gone before is so much exordium. The sharp, stern sentences of vv. 6-10 are like the roll of artillery that ushers in the battle. The mists rise from the field. We see the combatants arrayed on either side. In due order and with cool self-command the Apostle proceeds to marshal and deploy his forces. His truthful narrative corrects the misrepresentations of his opponents, and repels their attack upon himself. His powerful dialectic wrests from their hands and turns against them their weapons of Scriptural proof. He wins the cita-



del of their position, by establishing the claim of the men of faith to be the sons of Abraham. On the ruins of confuted legalism he builds up an impregnable fortress for Christian liberty, an immortal vindication of the gospel of the grace of God.

The cause of Gentile freedom at this crisis was bound up with the person of the Apostle Paul. His Gospel and his Apostleship must stand or fall together. The former was assailed through the latter. He was himself just now "the pillar and stay of the truth." If his character had been successfully attacked and his influence destroyed, nothing, humanly speaking, could have saved Gentile Christendom at this decisive moment from falling under the assaults of Judaism. When he begins his crucial appeal with the words, "Behold, *I Paul* say unto you" (v. 2), we feel that the issue depends upon the weight which his readers may attach to his personal affirmation. He pits his own truthfulness, his knowledge of Christ, his spiritual discernment and authority, and the respect due to himself from the Galatians, against the pretensions of the new teachers. The comparison is not indeed so open and express as that made in 2 Corinthians; none the less it tacitly runs through this Epistle. Paul is compelled to put himself in the forefront of his argument. In the eyes of his children in the faith, he is bound to vindicate his Apostolic character, defamed by Jewish malice and untruth.

The first two chapters of this Epistle are therefore Paul's "Apologia pro vita sua." With certain chapters in 2 Corinthians, and scattered passages in other letters, they form the Apostle's autobiography, one of the most perfect self-portraits that literature contains. They reveal to us the man more effectively than any ostensible description could have done. They furnish an indispensable supplement to the external and cursory delineations given in the Acts of the Apostles. While Luke skilfully presents the outward framework of Paul's life and the events of his public career, it is to the Epistles that we turn—to none more frequently than this—for the necessary subjective data, for all that belongs to his inner character, his motives and principles. This Epistle brings into bold relief the Apostle's moral physiognomy. Above all, it throws a clear and penetrating light on the event which determined his career—the greatest event in the history of Christianity after the Day of Pentecost—Paul's conversion to faith in the Lord Jesus.

This was at once the turning-point in the Apostle's life, and the birth-hour of his gospel. If the Galatians were to understand his teaching, they must understand this occurrence; they must know why he became a Christian, how he had received the message which he brought to them. They would, he felt sure, enter more sympathetically into this doctrine, if they were better acquainted with the way in which he had arrived at it. They would see how well-justified was the authority, how needful the severity with which he writes. Accordingly he begins with a brief relation of the circumstances of his call to the service of Christ, and his career from the days of his Judaistic zeal, when he made havoc of the faith, till the well-known occasion on which he became its champion against Peter himself, the chief of the Twelve (i. 11-ii. 21). His object in this recital appears to be three-

fold: to refute the misrepresentations of the Circumcisionists; to vindicate his independent authority as an Apostle of Christ; and further, to unfold the nature and terms of his gospel, so as to pave the way for the theological argument which is to follow, and which forms the body of the Epistle.

I. Paul's gospel was supernaturally conveyed to him, by a personal intervention of Jesus Christ. This assertion is the Apostle's starting-point. "My gospel is not after man. I received it as Jesus Christ revealed it to me."

That the initial revelation was made to him by Christ in person was a fact of incalculable importance for Paul. This had made him an Apostle in the august sense in which he claims the title (ver. 1). This accounts for the vehemence with which he defends his doctrine, and for the awful sentence which he has passed upon its impugners. The Divine authorship of the gospel he preached made it impossible for him to temporise with its perverters, or to be influenced by human favour or disfavour in its administration. Had his teaching been "according to man," he might have consented to a compromise; he might reasonably have tried to humour and accommodate Jewish prejudices. But the case is far otherwise. "I am not at liberty to please men," he says, "for my gospel comes directly from Jesus Christ" (vv. 10-11). So he "gives" his readers "to know," as if by way of formal notification.\*

The gospel of Paul was inviolable, then, because of its superhuman character. And this character was impressed upon it by its superhuman origin: "not according to man, for neither *from man* did I receive it, nor was I taught it, but by a revelation of Jesus Christ." The Apostle's knowledge of Christianity did not come through the ordinary channel of tradition and indoctrination; Jesus Christ had, by a miraculous interposition, taught him the truth about Himself. He says, "Neither did I," with an emphasis that points tacitly to the elder Apostles, whom he mentions a few sentences later (ver. 17). To this comparison his adversaries forced him, making use of it, as they freely did, to his disparagement. But it comes in by implication rather than direct assertion. Only by putting violence upon himself, and with strong expressions of his unworthiness, can Paul be brought to set his official claims in competition with those of the Twelve. Notwithstanding, it is perfectly clear that he puts his ministry on a level with theirs. He is no Apostle at second-hand, no disciple of Peter's or dependent of the "pillars" at Jerusalem. "Neither did I," he declares, "any more than they, take my instructions from other lips than those of Jesus our Lord."

But what of this "revelation of Jesus Christ," on which Paul lays so much stress? Does he mean a revelation made *by* Christ, or *about* Christ? Taken by itself, the expression, in Greek as in English, bears either interpretation. In favour of the second construction—viz., that Paul speaks of a revelation by which Christ was made known to him—the language of ver. 16 is adduced: "It pleased God to reveal His Son in me." Paul's general usage points in the same direction. With him Christ is the *object* of manifestation, preaching, and the like. 2 Cor. xii. 1 is probably an instance to the contrary: "I will

\* Comp. Rom. ix. 22; 1 Cor. xii. 3; xv. 1; 2 Cor. viii. 2



come to visions and revelations of the Lord." But it should be observed that wherever this genitive is objective (a revelation revealing Christ), *God* appears in the context, just as in ver. 16 below, to Whom the authorship of the revelation is ascribed. In this instance, *the gospel* is the object revealed; and *Jesus Christ*, in contrast with man, is claimed for its Author. So at the outset (ver. 1) Christ, in His Divine character, was the *Agent* by whom Paul, as veritably as the Twelve, had received his Apostleship. We therefore assent to the ordinary view, reading this passage in the light of the vision of Jesus thrice related in the Acts.\* We understand Paul to say that no *mere man* imparted to him the gospel he preached, but *Jesus Christ revealed it*.

On the Damascus road the Apostle Paul found his mission. The vision of the glorified Jesus made him a Christian, and an Apostle. The act was a *revelation*—that is, in New Testament phrase, a supernatural, an immediately Divine communication of truth. And it was a revelation not conveyed in the first instance, as were the ordinary prophetic inspirations, through the Spirit; "Jesus Christ," in His Divine-human person, made Himself known to His persecutor. Paul had "seen that Just One and heard a voice from His mouth."

The appearance of Jesus to Saul of Tarsus was in itself a gospel, an earnest of the good tidings he was to convey to the world. "Why persecutest thou Me?" that Divine voice said, in tones of reproach, yet of infinite pity. The sight of Jesus the Lord, meeting Saul's eyes, revealed His grace and truth to the persecutor's heart. He was brought in a moment to the obedience of faith; he said, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" He "confessed with his mouth the Lord Jesus"; he "believed in his heart that God had raised Him from the dead." It was true, after all, that "God had made" the crucified Nazarene "both Lord and Christ;" for this was He!

The cross, which had been Saul's stumbling-block, deeply affronting his Jewish pride, from this moment was transformed. The glory of the exalted Redeemer cast back its light upon the tree of shame. The curse of the Law visibly resting upon Him, the rejection of men, marked Him out as God's chosen sacrifice for sin. This explanation at once presented itself to an instructed and keenly theological mind like Saul's, so soon as it was evident that Jesus was not accursed, as he had supposed, but approved by God. So Paul's gospel was given him at a stroke. Jesus Christ dying for our sins, Jesus Christ living to save and to rule—behold "the good news"! The Apostle had it on no less authority than that of the risen Saviour. From Him he received it to publish wide as the world.

Thus Saul of Tarsus was born again. And with the Christian man the Christian thinker, the theologian, was born in him. The Pauline doctrine has its root in Paul's conversion. It was a single, organic growth, the seed of which was this "revelation of Jesus Christ." Its creative impulse was given in the experience of the memorable hour, when "God who said, Light shall shine out of darkness, in the face of Jesus Christ shined" into Saul's heart. As the light of this revelation penetrated his spirit, he recognised, step by step, the fact of the resur-

rection, the import of the crucifixion, the Divinity of Jesus, His human mediatorship, the virtue of faith, the office of the Holy Spirit, the futility of Jewish ritual and works of law, and all the essential principles of his theology. Given the genius of Saul and his religious training, and the Pauline system of doctrine was, one might almost say, a *necessary deduction* from the fact of the appearance to him of the glorified Jesus. If that form of celestial splendour was Jesus, then He was risen indeed; then He was the Christ; He was, as He affirmed, the Son of God. If He was Lord and Christ, and yet died by the Father's will on the cross of shame, then his death could only be a propitiation, accepted by God, for the sins of men, whose efficacy had no limit, and whose merit left no room for legal works of righteousness. If this Jesus was the Christ, then the assumptions of Saul's Judaism, which had led him into blasphemous hatred and outrage towards Him, were radically false; he will purge himself from the "old leaven," that his life may become "a new lump." From that moment a world of life and thought began for the future Apostle, the opposite in all respects of that in which hitherto he had moved. "The old things," he cries, "passed away; lo, they have become new" (2 Cor. v. 17). Paul's conversion was as complete as it was sudden.

This intimate relation of doctrine and experience gives to Paul's teaching a peculiar warmth and freshness, a vividness of human reality which it everywhere retains, despite its lofty intellectualism and the scholastic form in which it is largely cast. It is theology alive, trembling with emotion, speaking words like flames, forming dogmas hard as rock, that when you touch them are yet glowing with the heat of those central depths of the human spirit from which they were cast up. The collision of the two great Apostles at Antioch shows how the strength of Paul's teaching lay in his inward realisation of the truth. There was *life* behind his doctrine. He was, and for the time the Jewish Apostle was not, acting and speaking out of the reality of spiritual conviction, of truth personally verified. Of the Apostle Paul above all divines the saying is true, *Pectus facit theologum*. And this personal knowledge of Christ, "the master light of all his seeing," began when on the way to Damascus his eyes beheld Jesus our Lord. His farewell charge to the Church through Timothy (2 Tim. i. 9-12), while referring to the general manifestation of Christ to the world, does so in language coloured by the recollection of the peculiar revelation made at the beginning to himself: "God," he says, "called us with a holy calling, according to His purpose and grace, which hath now been manifested by the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, whereunto I was appointed a preacher and apostle. For which cause I also suffer these things. But I am not ashamed: for I know Him in whom I have believed." This manifestation of the celestial Christ shed its brightness along all his path.

II. His assertion of the Divine origin of his doctrine Paul sustains by referring to *the previous course of his life*. There was certainly nothing in that to account for his preaching Christ crucified. "For you have heard," he continues,

\* Acts ix. 1-19; xxii. 5-16; xxvi. 12-18.



"of my manner of life aforetime, when I followed Judaism."

Here ends the chain of *fors* reaching from ver. 10 to ver. 13—a succession of explanations linking Paul's denunciation of the Christian Judaisers to the fact that he had himself been a violent anti-Christian Judaist. The seeming contradiction is in reality a consistent sequence. Only one who had imbibed the spirit of legalism as Saul of Tarsus had done could justly appreciate the hostility of its principles to the new faith, and the sinister motives actuating the men who pretended to reconcile them. Paul knew Judaism by heart. He understood the sort of men who opposed him in the Gentile Churches. And if his anathema appear needlessly severe, we must remember that no one was so well able to judge of the necessities of the case as the man who pronounced it.

"You have heard"—from whom? In the first instance, probably, from Paul himself. But on this matter, we may be pretty sure, his opponents would have something to say. They did not scruple to assert that he "still preached circumcision"\* and played the Jew even now when it suited him, charging him with insincerity. Or they might say, "Paul is a renegade. Once the most ardent of zealots for Judaism, he has passed to the opposite extreme. He is a man you cannot trust. Apostates are proverbially bitter against their old faith." In these and in other ways Paul's Pharisaic career was doubtless thrown in his teeth.

The Apostle sorrowfully confesses "that above measure he persecuted the Church of God and laid it waste." His friend Luke makes the same admission in similar language.† There is no attempt to conceal or palliate this painful fact, that the famous Apostle of the Gentiles had been a persecutor, the deadliest enemy of the Church in its infant days. He was the very type of a determined, pitiless oppressor, the forerunner of the Jewish fanatics who afterwards sought his life, and of the cruel bigots of the Inquisition and the Star-chamber in later times. His restless energy, his indifference to the feelings of humanity in this work of destruction, were due to religious zeal. "I thought," he says, "I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." In him, as in so many others, the saying of Christ was fulfilled: "The time cometh, when whoso killeth you will think that he is offering a sacrifice to God." These Nazarenes were heretics, traitors to Israel, enemies of God. Their leader had been crucified, branded with the extremest mark of Divine displeasure. His followers must perish. Their success meant the ruin of Mosaism. God willed their destruction. Such were Saul's thoughts, until he heard the protesting voice of Jesus as he approached Damascus to ravage His little flock. No wonder that he suffered remorse to the end of his days.

Saul's persecution of the Church was the natural result of his earlier training, of the course to which in his youth he committed himself. The Galatians had heard also "how proficient he was in Judaism, beyond many of his kindred and age; that he was surpassed by none in zeal for their ancestral traditions." His birth (Phil. iii. 4, 5), education (Acts xxii. 3), temperament,

circumstances, all combined to make him a zealot of the first water, the pink and pattern of Jewish orthodoxy, the rising hope of the Pharisaic party, and an instrument admirably fitted to crush the hated and dangerous sect of the Nazarenes. These facts go to prove, not that Paul is a traitor to his own people, still less that he is a Pharisee at heart, preaching Gentile liberty from interested motives; but that it must have been some extraordinary occurrence, quite out of the common run of human influences and probabilities, that set him on his present course. What could have turned this furious Jewish persecutor all at once into the champion of the cross? What indeed but the revelation of Christ which he received at the Damascus gate? His previous career up to that hour had been such as to make it impossible that he should have received his gospel through human means. The chasm between his Christian and pre-Christian life had only been bridged by a supernatural interposition of the mercy of Christ.

Our modern critics, however, think that they know Paul better than he knew himself. They hold that the problem raised by this passage is capable of a natural solution. Psychological analysis, we are told, sets the matter in a different light. Saul of Tarsus had a tender conscience. Underneath his fevered and ambitious zeal, there lay in the young persecutor's heart a profound misgiving, a mortifying sense of his failure, and the failure of his people, to attain the righteousness of the Law. The seventh chapter of his Epistle to the Romans is a leaf taken out of the inner history of this period of the Apostle's life. Through what a stern discipline the Tarsian youth had passed in these legal years! How his haughty spirit chafed and tortured itself under the growing consciousness of its moral impotence! The law had been truly his *παιδαγωγός* (iii. 24), a severe tutor, preparing him unconsciously "for Christ." In this state of mind such scenes as the martyrdom of Stephen could not but powerfully affect Saul, in spite of himself. The bearing of the persecuted Nazarenes, the words of peace and forgiveness that they uttered under their sufferings, stirred questionings in his breast not always to be silenced. Self-distrust and remorse were secretly undermining the rigour of his Judaic faith. They acted like a "goad" (Acts xxvi. 14), against which he "kicked in vain." He rode to Damascus—a long and lonely journey—in a state of increasing disquiet and mental conflict. The heat and exhaustion of the desert march, acting on a nervous temperament naturally excitable and overwrought, hastened the crisis. Saul fell from his horse in an access of fever, or catalepsy. His brain was on fire. The convictions that haunted him suddenly took form and voice in the apparition of the glorified Jesus, whom Stephen in his dying moments had addressed. From that figure seemed to proceed the reproachful cry which the persecutor's conscience had in vain been striving to make him hear. A flash of lightning, or, if you like, a sunstroke, is readily imagined to fire this train of circumstances,—and the explanation is complete! When, besides, M. Renan is good enough to tell us that he has himself "experienced an attack of this kind at Byblos," and "with other principles would certainly have taken the hallucinations he then had for

\* Ch. v. 11; comp. 1 Cor. ix. 20; Acts xvi. 3; xxi. 20-26; xxiii. 6.

† Acts vii. 58; viii. 1-3; ix. 1.



visions," \* what more can we desire? Nay, does not Paul himself admit, in ver. 16 of this chapter, that his conversion was essentially a spiritual and subjective event?

Such is the diagnosis of Paul's conversion offered us by rationalism; and it is not wanting in boldness nor in skill. But the corner-stone on which it rests, the hinge of the whole theory, is imaginary and in fatal contradiction with the facts of the case. Paul himself *knows nothing* of the remorse imputed to him previously to the vision of Jesus. The historian of the Acts knows nothing of it. In a nature so upright and conscientious as that of Saul, this misgiving would at least have induced him to desist from persecution. From first to last his testimony is, "I did it *ignorantly*, in unbelief." It was this ignorance, this absence of any sense of wrong in the violence he used against the followers of Jesus, that, in his view, accounted for his "obtaining mercy" (1 Tim. i. 13). If impressions of an opposite kind were previously struggling in his mind, with such force that on a mere nervous shock they were ready to precipitate themselves in the shape of an overmastering hallucination, changing instantly and for ever the current of his life, how comes it that the Apostle has told us nothing about them? That he should have *forgotten* impressions so poignant and so powerful, is inconceivable. And if he has of set purpose ignored, nay, virtually denied this all-important fact, what becomes of his sincerity?

The Apostle was manifestly innocent of any such predisposition to Christian faith as the above theory imputes to him. True, he was conscious in those Judaistic days of his failure to attain righteousness, of the disharmony existing between "the law of his reason" and that which wrought "in his members." His conviction of sin supplied the moral precondition necessary in every case to saving faith in Christ. But this negative condition does not help us in the least to explain the vision of the glorified Jesus. By no psychological process whatever could the experience of Rom. vii. 7-24 be made to project itself in such an apparition. With all his mysticism and emotional susceptibility, Paul's mind was essentially sane and critical. To call him *epileptic* is a calumny. No man so diseased could have gone through the Apostle's labours, or written these Epistles. His discussion of the subject of supernatural gifts, in 1 Cor. xii. and xiv., is a model of shrewdness and good sense. He had experience of trances and ecstatic visions; and he knew, perhaps as well as M. Renan, how to distinguish them from objective realities.† The manner in which he speaks of this appearance allows of no reasonable doubt as to the Apostle's full persuasion that "in sober certainty of waking sense" he had seen Jesus our Lord.

It was this sensible and outward revelation that led to the inward revelation of the Redeemer to his soul, of which Paul goes on to speak in ver. 16. Without the latter the former would have been purposeless and useless. The objective vision could only have revealed a "Christ after the flesh," had it not been the means of opening Saul's closed heart to the influence of the Spirit of Christ. It was the

means to this, and in the given circumstances the indispensable means.

To a history that "knows no miracles," the Apostle Paul must remain an enigma. His faith in the crucified Jesus is equally baffling to naturalism with that of the first disciples, who had laid Him in the grave. When the Apostle argues that his antecedent relations to Christianity were such as to preclude his conversion having come about by natural human means, we are bound to admit both the sincerity and the conclusiveness of his appeal.

## CHAPTER V.

### PAUL'S DIVINE COMMISSION.

#### GALATIANS i. 15-17.

It pleased God to reveal His Son in me: this is after all the essential matter in Paul's conversion, as in that of every Christian. The outward manifestation of Jesus Christ served in his case to bring about this result, and was necessary to qualify him for his extraordinary vocation. But of itself the supernatural vision had no redeeming virtue, and gave Saul of Tarsus no message of salvation for the world. Its glory blinded and prostrated the persecutor; his heart might notwithstanding have remained rebellious and unchanged. "I am Jesus," said the heavenly Form,—"*Go, and it shall be told thee what thou shalt do*";—that was all! And that was not salvation. "Even though one rose from the dead," still it is possible not to believe. And faith is possible in its highest degree, and is exercised to-day by multitudes, with no celestial light to illumine, no audible voice from beyond the grave to awaken. The sixteenth verse gives us the inward counterpart of that exterior revelation in which Paul's knowledge of Christ had its beginning,—but only its beginning.

The Apostle does not surely mean by "in me," *in my case, through me (to others)*. This gives a sense true in itself, and expressed by Paul elsewhere (ver. 24; 1 Tim. i. 16), but unsuitable to the word "reveal," and out of place at this point of the narrative. In the next clause—"that I might preach Him among the Gentiles"—we learn what was to be the issue of this revelation for the world. But in the first place it was a Divine certainty *within the breast of Paul himself*. His Gentile Apostleship rested upon the most assured basis of inward conviction, upon a spiritual apprehension of the Redeemer's person. He says, laying emphasis on the last two words, "to reveal His Son *within me*." So Chrysostom: Why did he not say *to me*, but *in me*? Showing that not by words alone he learned the things concerning faith; but that he was also filled with the abundance of the Spirit, the revelation shining through his very soul; and that he had Christ speaking in himself.

I. The substance of Paul's gospel was, therefore, given him by the unveiling of the Redeemer to his heart.

The "revelation" of ver. 16 takes up and completes that of ver. 12. The dazzling appearance of Christ before his eyes and the summons of His voice addressed to Saul's bodily ears formed the special mode in which it pleased God to "call him by His grace." But "whom He

\* "Les Apôtres," p. 180, note 1.

† 1 Cor. xiv. 18; 2 Cor. xii. 1-6; Acts xvi. 9; xviii. 8, 9; xxii. 17, 18.



called, He also justified." In this further act of grace salvation is first personally realised, and the gospel becomes the man's individual possession. This experience ensued upon the acceptance of the fact that the crucified Jesus was the Christ. But this was by no means all. As the revelation penetrated further into the Apostle's soul, he began to apprehend its deeper significance. He knew already that the Nazarene had claimed to be the Son of God, and on that ground had been sentenced to death by the Sanhedrim. His resurrection, now a demonstrated fact, showed that this awful claim, instead of being condemned, was acknowledged by God Himself. The celestial majesty in which He appeared, the sublime authority with which He spoke, witnessed to His Divinity. To Paul equally with the first Apostles, He "was declared Son of God in power, by the resurrection of the dead." But this persuasion was borne in upon him in his after-reflections, and could not be adequately realised in the first shock of his great discovery. The language of this verse throws no sort of suspicion on the reality of the vision before Damascus. Quite the opposite. The inward presupposes the outward. Understanding follows sight. The subjective illumination, the inward conviction of Christ's Divinity, in Paul's case as in that of the first disciples, was brought about by the appearance of the risen, Divine Jesus. That appearance furnishes in both instances the explanation of the astounding change that took place in the men. The heart full of blasphemy against His name has learnt to own Him as "the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Through the bodily eyes of Saul of Tarsus the revelation of Jesus Christ had entered and transformed his spirit.

Of this interior revelation *the Holy Spirit*, according to the Apostle's doctrine, had been the organ. The Lord, on first meeting the gathered Apostles after His insurrection, "breathed upon them, saying, Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John xx. 22). This influence was in truth "the power of His resurrection"; it was the inspiring breath of the new life of humanity issuing from the open grave of Christ. The baptism of Pentecost, with its "mighty rushing wind," was but the fuller effusion of the power whose earnest the Church received in that gentle breathing of peace on the day of the resurrection. By His Spirit Christ made Himself a dwelling in the hearts of His disciples, raised at last to a true apprehension of His nature. All this was recapitulated in the experience of Paul. In his case the common experience was the more sharply defined because of the suddenness of his conversion, and the startling effect with which this new consciousness projected itself upon the background of his earlier Pharisaic life. Paul had his Resurrection-vision on the road to Damascus. He received his Pentecostal baptism in the days that followed.

It is not necessary to fix the precise occasion of the second revelation, or to connect it specifically with the visit of Ananias to Saul in Damascus, much less with his later "ecstasy" in the temple (Acts ix. 10-19; xxii. 12-21). When Ananias, sent by Christ, brought him the assurance of forgiveness from the injured Church, and bade him "recover his sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost," this message greatly comforted his heart, and pointed out to him

more clearly the way of salvation along which he was groping. But it is the office of the Spirit of God to reveal the Son of God; so Paul teaches everywhere in his Epistles, taught first by his own experience. Not from Ananias, nor from any man had he received this knowledge; God revealed His Son in the soul of the Apostle—"sent forth the Spirit of His Son into his heart" (iv. 6). The language of 2 Cor. iii. 12-iv. 6 is the best commentary on this verse. A veil rested on the heart of Saul the Pharisee. He read the Old Covenant only in the condemning letter. Not yet did he know "the Lord" who is "the spirit." This veil was done away in Christ. "The glory of the Lord" that burst upon him in his Damascus journey, rent it once and for ever from his eyes. God, the Light-giver, had "shined in his heart, in the face of Jesus Christ." Such was the further scope of the revelation which effected Paul's conversion. As he writes afterwards to Ephesus, "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, had given him a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ; eyes of the heart enlightened to know the hope of His calling, and his exceeding power to usward, according to that He wrought in Christ when he raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand" (Eph. i. 17-21). In these words we hear an echo of the thoughts that passed through the Apostle's mind when first "it pleased God in him to reveal His Son."

II. In the light of this inner revelation Paul received his Gentile mission.

He speedily perceived that this was the purpose with which the revelation was made: "that I should preach Him among the Gentiles." The three accounts of his conversion furnished by the Acts witness to the same effect. Whether we should suppose that the Lord Jesus gave Saul this commission directly, at His first appearance, as seems to be implied in Acts xxvi., or infer from the more detailed narrative of chaps. ix. and xxii., that the announcement was sent by Ananias and afterwards more urgently repeated in the vision at the Temple, in either case the fact remains the same; from the beginning Paul knew that he was appointed to be Christ's witness to the Gentiles. This destination was included in the Divine call which brought him to faith in Jesus. His Judaic prejudices were swept away. He was ready to embrace the universalism of the Gospel. With his fine logical instinct, sharpened by hatred, he had while yet a Pharisee discerned more clearly than many Jewish Christians the bearing of the doctrine of the cross upon the legal system. He saw that the struggle was one of life and death. The vehemence with which he flung himself into the contest was due to this perception. But it followed from this, that, once convinced of the Messiahship of Jesus, Paul's faith at a bound overleaped all Jewish barriers. "Judaism—or the religion of the Crucified," was the alternative with which his stern logic pursued the Nazarenes. Judaism and Christianity—this was a compromise intolerable to his nature. Before Saul's conversion he had left that halting-place behind; he apprehended already, in some sense, the truth up to which the elder Apostles had to be educated, that "in Christ Jesus there is neither Greek nor Jew." He passed at a step from the one camp to the other. In this there was consistency. The en-



lightened, conscientious persecutor, who had debated with Stephen and helped to stone him, was sure, if he became a Christian, to become a Christian of Stephen's school. When he entered the Church, Paul left the Synagogue. He was ripe for his world-wide commission. There was no surprise, no unpreparedness in his mind when the charge was given him, "Go; for I will send thee far hence among the Gentiles."

In the Apostle's view, his personal salvation and that of the race were objects united from the first. Not as a privileged Jew, but as a sinful man, the Divine grace had found him out. The righteousness of God was revealed to him on terms which brought it within the reach of every human being. The Son of God whom he now beheld was a personage vastly greater than his national Messiah, the "Christ after the flesh" of his Jewish dreams, and His gospel was correspondingly loftier and larger in its scope. "God was in Christ, reconciling," not a nation, but "*a world unto Himself.*" The "grace" conferred on him was given that he might "preach among the Gentiles Christ's unsearchable riches, and make all men see the mystery" of the counsel of redeeming love (Eph. iii. 1-11). It was the world's redemption of which Paul partook; and it was his business to let the world know it. He had fathomed the depths of sin and self-despair; he had tasted the uttermost of pardoning grace. God and the world met in his single soul, and were reconciled. He felt from the first what he expresses in his latest Epistles, that "the grace of God which appeared" to him, was "for the salvation of all men" (Tit. ii. 11). "Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief" (1 Tim. i. 15). The same revelation that made Paul a Christian, made him the Apostle of mankind.

III. For this vocation the Apostle had been destined by God from the beginning. "It pleased God to do this," he says, "who had marked me out from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace."

While "Saul was yet breathing out threatening and slaughter" against the disciples of Jesus, how different a future was being prepared for him! How little can we forecast the issue of our own plans, or of those we form for others. His Hebrew birth, his rabbinical proficiency, the thoroughness with which he had mastered the tenets of Legalism, had fitted him like no other to be the bearer of the Gospel to the Gentiles. This Epistle proves the fact. Only a graduate of the best Jewish schools could have written it. Paul's master, Gamaliel, if he had read the letter, must perforce have been proud of his scholar; he would have feared more than ever that those who opposed the Nazarene might "haply be found fighting against God." The Apostle foils the Judaists with their own weapons. He knows every inch of the ground on which the battle is waged. At the same time, he was a born Hellenist and a citizen of the Empire, native "of no mean city." Tarsus, his birthplace, was the capital of an important Roman province, and a centre of Greek culture and refinement. In spite of the Hebraic conservatism of Saul's family, the genial atmosphere of such a town could not but affect the early development of so sensitive a nature. He had sufficient tincture of Greek letters and con-

versance with Roman law to make him a true cosmopolitan, qualified to be "all things to all men." He presents an admirable example of that versatility and suppleness of genius which have distinguished for so many ages the sons of Jacob, and enable them to find a home and a market for their talents in every quarter of the world. Paul was "a chosen vessel, to bear the name of Jesus before Gentiles and kings, and the sons of Israel."

But his mission was concealed till the appointed hour. Thinking of his personal election, he reminds himself of the words spoken to Jeremiah touching his prophetic call. "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest out of the womb I sanctified thee. I appointed thee a prophet unto the nations" (Jer. i. 5). Or like the Servant of the Lord in Isaiah he might say, "The Lord hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath He made mention of my name. And He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of His hand hath He hid me! and He hath made me a polished shaft, in His quiver hath He kept me close" (Isa. xlix. 1, 2). This belief in a fore-ordaining Providence, preparing in secret its chosen instruments, so deeply rooted in the Old Testament faith, was not wanting to Paul. His career is a signal illustration of its truth. He applies it, in his doctrine of Election, to the history of every child of grace. "Whom He foreknew, He did predestinate. Whom He did predestinate, He called." Once more we see how the Apostle's theology was moulded by his experience.

The manner in which Saul of Tarsus had been prepared all his life long for the service of Christ, magnified to his eyes the sovereign grace of God. "He called me *through His grace.*" The call came at precisely the fit time; it came at a time and in a manner calculated to display the Divine compassion in the highest possible degree. This lesson Paul could never forget. To the last he dwells upon it with deep emotion, "In me," he writes to Timothy, "Jesus Christ first showed forth all His longsuffering. I was a blasphemer, a persecutor, insolent and injurious; but I obtained mercy" (1 Tim. i. 13-16). He was so dealt with from the beginning, he had been called to the knowledge of Christ under such circumstances, that he felt he had a right to say, above other men, "By the grace of God I am what I am." The predestination under which his life was conducted "from his mother's womb," had for its chief purpose to exhibit God's mercy to mankind, "that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (Eph. ii. 7). To this purpose, so soon as he discerned it, he humbly yielded himself. The Son of God, whose followers he had hunted to death, whom in his madness he would have crucified afresh, had appeared to him to save and to forgive. The *grace* of it, the infinite kindness and compassion such an act revealed in the Divine nature, excited new wonder in the Apostle's soul till his latest hour. Henceforth he was the bondman of grace, the celebrant of grace. His life was one act of thanksgiving "to the praise of the glory of His grace!"

IV. From Jesus Christ in person Paul had received his knowledge of the Gospel, without human intervention. In the revelation of Christ



to his soul he possessed the substance of the truth he was afterwards to teach; and with the revelation there came the commission to proclaim it to all men. His gospel-message was in its essence complete; the Apostleship was already his. Such are the assertions the Apostle makes in reply to his gainsayers. And he goes on to show that the course he took after his conversion sustains these lofty claims: "When God had been pleased to reveal His Son in me, immediately (right from the first) I took no counsel with flesh and blood. I avoided repairing to Jerusalem, to the elder Apostles; I went away into Arabia, and back again to Damascus. It was three years before I set foot in Jerusalem."

If that were so, how could Paul have received his doctrine or his commission from the Church of Jerusalem, as his traducers alleged? He acted from the outset under the sense of a unique Divine call, that allowed no human validation or supplement. Had the case been otherwise, had Paul come to his knowledge of Christ by ordinary channels, his first impulse would have been to go up to the mother city to report himself there, and to gain further instruction. Above all, if he intended to be a minister of Christ, it would have been proper to secure the approval of the Twelve, and to be accredited from Jerusalem. This was the course which "flesh and blood" dictated, which Saul's new friends at Damascus probably urged upon him. It was insinuated that he had actually proceeded in this way, and put himself under the direction of Peter and the Judean Church. But he says, "I did nothing of the sort. I kept clear of Jerusalem for three years; and then I only went there to make private acquaintance with Peter, and stayed in the city but a fortnight." Although Paul did not for many years make public claim to rank with the Twelve, from the commencement he acted in conscious independence of them. He calls them "Apostles *before me*," by this phrase assuming the matter in dispute. He tacitly asserts his equality in official status with the Apostles of Jesus, assigning to the others precedence only in point of time. And he speaks of this equality in terms implying that it was already present to his mind at this former period. Under this conviction he held aloof from human guidance and approbation. Instead of "going up to Jerusalem," the centre of publicity, the headquarters of the rising Church, Paul "went off into Arabia."

There were, no doubt, other reasons for this step. Why did he choose *Arabia* for his sojourn? and what, pray, was he doing there? The Apostle leaves us to our own conjectures. *Solitude*, we imagine, was his principal object. His Arabian retreat reminds us of the Arabian exile of Moses, of the wilderness discipline of John the Baptist, and the "forty days" of Jesus in the wilderness. In each of these instances, the desert retirement followed upon a great inward crisis, and was preparatory to the entrance of the Lord's servant on his mission to the world. Elijah, at a later period of his course, sought the wilderness under motives not dissimilar. After such a convulsion as Paul had passed through, with a whole world of new ideas and emotions pouring in upon him, he felt that he must be alone; he must get away from the voices of men. There are such times in the history of every earnest soul. In the silence of

the Arabian desert, wandering amid the grandest scenes of ancient revelation, and communing in stillness with God and with his own heart, the young Apostle will think out the questions that press upon him; he will be able to take a calmer survey of the new world into which he has been ushered, and will learn to see clearly and walk steadily in the heavenly light that at first bewildered him. So "the Spirit immediately driveth him out into the wilderness." In Arabia one confers, not with flesh and blood, but with the mountains and with God. From Arabia Saul returned in possession of himself, and of his gospel.

The Acts of the Apostles omits this Arabian episode (Acts ix. 19-25). But for what Paul tells us here, we should have gathered that he began at once after his baptism to preach Christ in Damascus, his preaching after no long time exciting Jewish enmity to such a pitch that his life was imperilled, and the Christian brethren compelled him to seek safety by flight to Jerusalem. The reader of Luke is certainly surprised to find a period of three years,\* with a prolonged residence in Arabia, interpolated between Paul's conversion and his reception in Jerusalem. Luke's silence, we judge, is *intentional*. The Arabian retreat formed no part of the Apostle's public life, and had no place in the narrative of the Acts. Paul only mentions it here in the briefest terms, and because the reference was necessary to put his relations to the first Apostles in their proper light. For the time the converted Saul had dropped out of sight; and the historian of the Acts respects his privacy.

The place of the Arabian journey seems to us to lie between vv. 21 and 22 of Acts ix. That passage gives a twofold description of Paul's preaching in Damascus, in its earlier and later stages, with a double note of time (vv. 19 and 23). Saul's first testimony, taking place "straightway," was, one would presume, a mere declaration of faith in Jesus: "In the synagogues he proclaimed Jesus, (saying) that He is the Son of God" (R. V.), language in striking harmony with that of the Apostle in the text (vv. 12, 16). Naturally this recantation caused extreme astonishment in Damascus, where Saul's reputation was well-known both to Jews and Christians, and his arrival was expected in the character of Jewish inquisitor-in-chief. Ver. 22 presents a different situation. Paul is now preaching in his established and characteristic style; as we read it, we might fancy we hear him debating in the synagogues of Pisidian Antioch or Corinth or Thessalonica: "He was confounding the Jews, *proving* that this is the Christ." Neither Saul himself nor his Jewish hearers in the first days after his conversion would be in the mood for the sustained argumentation and Scriptural dialectic thus described. The explanation of the change lies behind the opening words of the verse: "But Saul increased in strength"—a growth due not only to the prolonged opposition he had to encounter, but still more, as we conjecture from this hint of the Apostle, to the period of rest and reflection which he enjoyed in his Arabian seclusion. The two marks of time given us in vv. 19 and 23 of Luke's nar-

\* Ver. 18: that is, parts of "three years," according to ancient reckoning—say from 36 to 38 A. D. possibly less than two in actual duration.



rative, may be fairly distinguished from each other—"certain days," and "sufficient days" (or "a considerable time")—as denoting a briefer and a longer season respectively: the former so short that the excitement caused by Saul's declaration of his new faith had not yet subsided when he withdrew from the city into the desert—in which case Luke's note of time does not really conflict with Paul's "immediately"; the latter affording a lapse of time sufficient for Saul to develop his argument for the Messiahship of Jesus, and to provoke the Jews, worsted in logic, to resort to other weapons. From Luke's point of view the sojourn in Arabia, however extended, was simply an incident, of no public importance, in Paul's early ministry in Damascus.

The disappearance of Saul during this interval helps, however, as we think, to explain a subsequent statement in Luke's narrative that is certainly perplexing (Acts ix. 26, 27). When Saul, after his escape from Damascus, "was come to Jerusalem," and "assayed to join himself to the disciples," they, we are told, "were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple!" For while the Church at Jerusalem had doubtless heard at the time of Saul's marvellous conversion three years before, his long retirement and avoidance of Jerusalem threw an air of mystery and suspicion about his proceedings, and revived the fears of the Judean brethren; and his reappearance created a panic. In consequence of his sudden departure from Damascus, it is likely that no public report had as yet reached Judea of Saul's return to that city and his renewed ministry there. Barnabas now came forward to act as sponsor for the suspected convert. What induced him to do this—whether it was that his largeness of heart enabled him to read Saul's character better than others, or whether he had some earlier private acquaintance with the Tarsian—we cannot tell. The account that Barnabas was able to give of his friend's conversion and of his bold confession in Damascus, won for Paul the place in the confidence of Peter and the leaders of the Church at Jerusalem which he never afterwards lost.

The two narratives—the history of Luke and the letter of Paul—relate the same series of events, but from almost opposite standpoints. Luke dwells upon Paul's connection with the Church at Jerusalem and its Apostles. Paul is maintaining his independence of them. There is no contradiction; but there is just such discrepancy as will arise where two honest and competent witnesses are relating identical facts in a different connection.

## CHAPTER VI.

### PAUL AND THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH.

#### GALATIANS i. 18-24.

FOR the first two years of his Christian life, Paul held no intercourse whatever with the Church at Jerusalem and its chiefs. His relation with them was commenced by the visit he paid to Peter in the third year after his conversion. And that relation was more precisely determined and made public when, after successfully prosecuting for fourteen years his

mission to the heathen, the Apostle again went up to Jerusalem to defend the liberty of the Gentile Church (ii. 1-10).

A clear understanding of this course of events was essential to the vindication of Paul's position in the eyes of the Galatians. The "troublers" told them that Paul's doctrine was not that of the mother Church; that his knowledge of the gospel and authority to preach it came from the elder Apostles, with whom, since his attack upon Peter at Antioch, he was at open variance. They themselves had come down from Judea on purpose to set his pretensions in their true light, and to teach the Gentiles the way of the Lord more perfectly.

Modern rationalism has espoused the cause of these "deceitful workers" (2 Cor. xi. 13-15). It endeavours to rehabilitate the Judaistic party. The "critical" school maintain that the opposition of the Circumcisionists to the Apostle Paul was perfectly legitimate. They hold that the "pseud-apostles" of Corinth, the "certain from James," the "troublers" and "false brethren privily brought in" of this Epistle, did in truth represent, as they claimed to do, the principles of the Jewish Christian Church; and that there was a radical divergence between the Pauline and Petrine gospels, of which the two Apostles were fully aware from the time of their encounter at Antioch. However Paul may have wished to disguise the fact to himself, the teaching of the Twelve was identical, we are told, with that "other gospel" on which he pronounces his anathema; the original Church of Jesus never emancipated itself from the trammels of legalism; the Apostle Paul, and not his Master, was in reality the author of evangelical doctrine, the founder of the Catholic Church. The conflict between Peter and Paul at Antioch, related in this Epistle, supplies, in the view of Baur and his followers, the key to the history of the Early Church. The Ebionite assumption of a personal rivalry between the two Apostles and an intrinsic opposition in their doctrine, hitherto regarded as the invention of a desperate and decaying heretical sect, these ingenious critics have adopted for the basis of their "scientific" reconstruction of the New Testament. Paul's Judaising hinderers and troublers are to be canonised; and the pseudo-Clementine writings, forsooth, must take the place of the discredited Acts of the Apostles. Verily "the whirligig of time hath its revenges." To empanel Paul on his accusers' side, and to make this Epistle above all convict him of heterodoxy, is an attempt which dazzles by its very daring.

Let us endeavour to form a clear conception of the facts touching Paul's connection with the first Apostles and his attitude and feeling towards the Jewish Church, as they are in evidence in the first two chapters of this Epistle.

I. On the one hand, it is clear that the Gentile Apostle's relations to Peter and the Twelve were those of *personal independence and official equality*.

This is the aspect of the case on which Paul lays stress. His sceptical critics argue that under his assertion of independence there is concealed an opposition of principle, a "radical divergence." The sense of independence is unmistakable. It is on that side that the Apostle seeks to guard himself. With this aim he styles himself at the outset "an Apostle not from men,



nor by man"—neither man-made nor man-sent. Such apostles there were; and in this character, we imagine, the Galatian Judaistic teachers, like those of Corinth,\* professed to appear, as the emissaries of the Church in Jerusalem and the authorised exponents of the teaching of the "pillars" there. Paul is an Apostle at first-hand, taking his commission directly from Jesus Christ. In that quality he pronounces his benediction and his anathema. To support this assumption he has shown how impossible it was in point of time and circumstances that he should have been beholden for his gospel to the Jerusalem Church and the elder Apostles. So far as regarded the manner of his conversion and the events of the first decisive years in which his Christian principles and vocation took their shape, his position had been altogether detached and singular; the Jewish Apostles could in no way claim him for their son in the gospel.

But at last, "after three years," Saul "did go up to Jerusalem." What was it for? To report himself to the authorities of the Church and place himself under their direction? To seek Peter's instruction, in order to obtain a more assured knowledge of the gospel he had embraced? Nothing of the kind. Not even "*to question Cephias*," as some render *ἑρωτῶσαι*, following an older classical usage—"to gain information" from him; but "I went up *to make acquaintance with Cephias*." Saul went to Jerusalem carrying in his heart the consciousness of his high vocation, seeking, as an equal with an equal, to make personal acquaintance with the leader of the Twelve. *Cephias* (as he was called at Jerusalem) must have been at this time to Paul a profoundly interesting personality. He was the one man above all others whom the Apostle felt he must get to know, with whom it was necessary for him to have a thorough understanding.

How momentous was this meeting! How much we could wish to know what passed between these two in the conversations of the fortnight they spent together. One can imagine the delight with which Peter would relate to his listener the scenes of the life of Jesus; how the two men would weep together at the recital of the Passion, the betrayal, trial and denial, the agony of the Garden, the horror of the cross; with what mingled awe and triumph he would describe the events of the Resurrection and the Forty Days, the Ascension, and the baptism of fire. In Paul's account of the appearances of the risen Christ (1 Cor. xv. 4-8), written many years afterwards, there are statements most naturally explained as a recollection of what he had heard privately from Peter, and possibly also from James, at this conference. For it is in his gospel message and doctrine, and his Apostolic commission, not in regard to the details of the biography of Jesus, that Paul claims to be independent of tradition. And with what deep emotion would Peter receive in turn from Paul's lips the account of his meeting with Jesus, of the three dark days that followed, of the message sent through Ananias, and the revelations made and purposes formed during the Arabian exile. Between two such men, met at such a time, there would surely be an entire frankness of communication and a brotherly exchange of convictions and of plans. In that case

Paul could not fail to inform the elder Apostle of the extent of the commission he had received from their common Master; although he does not appear to have made any public and formal assertion of his Apostolic dignity for a considerable time afterwards. The supposition of a private cognisance on Peter's part of Paul's true status makes the open recognition which took place fourteen years later easy to understand (ii. 6-10).

"But other of the Apostles," Paul goes on to say, "saw I none, but only James the brother of the Lord." James, *no Apostle* surely; neither in the higher sense, for he cannot be reasonably identified with "James the son of Alphæus;" nor in the lower, for he was, as far as we can learn, stationary at Jerusalem. But he stood so near the Apostles, and was in every way so important a person, that if Paul had omitted the name of James in this connection, he would have seemed to pass over a material fact. The reference to James in 1 Cor. xv. 7—a hint deeply interesting in itself, and lending so much dignity to the position of James—suggests that Paul had been at this time in confidential intercourse with James as well as Peter, each relating to the other how he had "seen the Lord."

So cardinal are the facts just stated (vv. 15-19), as bearing on Paul's apostleship, and so contrary to the representations made by the Judaisers, that he pauses to call God to witness his veracity: "Now in what I am writing to you, lo, before God, I lie not." The Apostle never makes this appeal lightly; but only in support of some averment in which his personal honour and his strongest feelings are involved.\* It was alleged, with some show of proof, that Paul was an underling of the authorities of the Church at Jerusalem, and that all he knew of the gospel had been learned from the Twelve. From ver. 11 onwards he has been making a circumstantial contradiction of these assertions. He protests that up to the time when he commenced his Gentile mission, he had been under no man's tutelage or tuition in respect to his knowledge of the gospel. He can say no more to prove his case. Either his opposers or himself are uttering falsehood. The Galatians knew, or ought to know, how incapable he is of such deceit. Solemnly therefore he avouches, closing the matter so far, as if drawing himself up to his utmost height: "Behold, before God, I do not lie!"

But now we are confronted with the narrative of the Acts (chap. ix. 26-30), which renders a very different account of this passage in the Apostle's life. (To vv. 26, 27 of Luke's narrative we have already alluded in the concluding paragraphs of chapter v.) We are told there that Barnabas introduced Saul "to the Apostles"; here, that he saw none of them but Cephias, and only James besides. The *number* of the Apostolate present in Jerusalem at the time is a particular that does not engage Luke's mind; while it is of the essence of Paul's affirmation. What the Acts relates is that Saul, through Barnabas' intervention, was now received by the Apostolic fellowship as a Christian brother, and as one who "had seen the Lord." The object which Saul had in coming to Jerusalem, and the fact that just then Cephias was the only one of the Twelve to be found in the city, along

\* 2 Cor. xi. 13; iii. 1-3. See the remarks on the word "Apostle" in chap. i. p. 817.

\* See Rom. ix. 1; 2 Cor. i. 17, 18, 23; 1 Thess. ii. 5.



with James—these are matters which only come into view from the private and personal standpoint to which Paul admits us. For the rest, there is certainly no contradiction when we read in the one report that Paul “went up to make acquaintance with Cephas,” and in the other, that he “was with them going in and out at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord;” that “he spake and disputed against the Hellenists,” moving their anger so violently that his life was again in danger, and he had to be carried down to Cæsarea and shipped off to Tarsus. Saul was not the man to hide his head in Jerusalem. We can understand how greatly his spirit was stirred by his arrival there, and by the recollection of his last passage through the city gates. In these very synagogues of the Hellenists he had himself confronted Stephen; outside those walls he had assisted to stone the martyr. Paul’s address, delivered many years later to the Jewish mob that attempted his life in Jerusalem, shows how deeply these remembrances troubled his soul (Acts xxii. 17-22). And they would not suffer him now to be silent. He hoped that his testimony to Christ, delivered in the spot where he had been so notorious as a persecutor, would produce a softening effect on his old companions. It was sure to affect them powerfully, one way or the other. As the event proved, it did not take many words from Saul’s lips to awaken against him the same fury that hurried Stephen to his death. A fortnight was time quite sufficient, under the circumstances, to make Jerusalem, as we say, too hot to hold Saul. Nor can we wonder, knowing his love for his kindred, that there needed a special command from heaven (Acts xxii. 21), joined to the friendly compulsion of the Church, to induce him to yield ground and quit the city. But he had accomplished something; he had “made acquaintance with Cephas.”

This brief visit to the Holy City was a second crisis in Paul’s career. He was now thrust forth upon his mission to the heathen. It was evident that he was not to look for success among his Jewish brethren. He lost no opportunity of appealing to them; but it was commonly with the same result as at Damascus and Jerusalem. Throughout life he carried with him this “great sorrow and unceasing pain of heart,” that to his “kinsmen according to the flesh,” for whose salvation he could consent to forfeit his own, his gospel was hid. In their eyes he was a traitor to Israel, and must count upon their enmity. Everything conspired to point in one direction: “Depart,” the Divine voice had said, “for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.” And Paul obeyed. “I went,” he relates here, “into the regions of Syria and Cilicia” (ver. 21).

To Tarsus, the Cilician capital, Saul voyaged from Judea. So we learn from Acts ix. 30. His native place had the first claim on the Apostle after Jerusalem, and afforded the best starting-point for his independent mission. Syria, however, precedes Cilicia in the text; it was the leading province of these two, in which Paul was occupied during the fourteen years ensuing, and became the seat of distinguished Churches. In Antioch, the Syrian capital, Christianity was already planted (Acts xi. 19-21). The close connection of the Churches of these provinces, and their predominantly Gentile character, are both

evident from the letter addressed to them subsequently by the Council of Jerusalem (Acts xv. 23, 24). Acts xv. 41 shows that a number of Christian societies owning Paul’s authority were found at a later time in this region. And there was a highroad direct from Syro-Cilicia to Galatia, which Paul traversed in his second visit to the latter country (Acts xviii. 22, 23); so that the Galatians would doubtless be aware of the existence of these older Gentile Churches, and of their relation to Paul. He has no need to dwell on this first chapter of his missionary history. After but a fortnight’s visit to Jerusalem, Paul went into these Gentile regions, and there for twice seven years—with what success was known to all—“preached the faith of which once he made havoc.”

This period was divided into two parts. For five or six years the Apostle laboured alone; afterwards in conjunction with Barnabas, who invited his help at Antioch (Acts xi. 25, 26). Barnabas was Paul’s senior, and had for some time held the leading position in the Church of Antioch; and Paul was personally indebted to this generous man (p. 834). He accepted the position of helper to Barnabas without any compromise of his higher authority, as yet held in reserve. He accompanied Barnabas to Jerusalem in 44 (or 45) A. D., with the contribution made by the Syrian Church for the relief of the famine-stricken Judean brethren—a visit which Paul seems here to forget.\* But the Church at Jerusalem was at that time undergoing a severe persecution; its leaders were either in prison or in flight. The two delegates can have done little more than convey the moneys entrusted to them, and that with the utmost secrecy. Possibly Paul on this occasion never set foot inside the city. In any case, the event had no bearing on the Apostle’s present contention.

Between this journey and the really important visit to Jerusalem introduced in chap. ii. 1, Barnabas and Paul undertook, at the prompting of the Holy Spirit expressed through the Church of Antioch (Acts xiii. 1-4), the missionary expedition described in Acts xiii., xiv. Under the trials of this journey the ascendancy of the younger evangelist became patent to all. Paul was marked out in the eyes of the Gentiles as their born leader, the Apostle of heathen Christianity. He appears to have taken the chief part in the discussion with the Judaists respecting circumcision, which immediately ensued at Antioch; and was put at the head of the deputation sent up to Jerusalem concerning this question. This was a turning-point in the Apostle’s history. It brought about the public recognition of his leadership in the Church. The seal of man was now to be set upon the secret election of God.

During this long period, the Apostle tells us, he “remained unknown by face to the Churches of Judea.” Absent for so many years from the metropolis, after a fortnight’s flying visit, spent in private intercourse with Peter and James, and in controversy in the Hellenistic synagogues where few Christians of the city would be likely to follow him,† Paul was a stranger to the bulk of the Judean disciples. But they watched his course, notwithstanding, with lively interest and

\* Acts xi. 27-30. It is significant that this ministrations was sent “to the Elders.”

† For the ministry alluded to in Acts xxvi. 20 there were other, later opportunities, especially in the journey described in Acts xv. 3; see also Acts xxi. 15, 16.



with devout thanksgiving to God (vv. 22, 23). Throughout this first period of his ministry the Apostle acted in complete independence of the Jewish Church, making no report to its chiefs, nor seeking any direction from them. Accordingly, when afterwards he did go up to Jerusalem and laid before the authorities there his gospel to the heathen, they had nothing to add to it; they did not take upon themselves to give him any advice or injunction, beyond the wish that he and Barnabas should "remember the poor," as he was already forward to do (ii. 1-10). Indeed the three famous Pillars of the Jewish Church at this time openly acknowledged Paul's equality with Peter in the Apostleship, and resigned to his direction the Gentile province. Finally, at Antioch, the head-quarters of Gentile Christianity, when Peter compromised the truth of the gospel by yielding to Judaistic pressure, Paul had not hesitated publicly to reprove him (ii. 11-21). He had been compelled in this way to carry the vindication of the gospel to the furthest lengths; and he had done this successfully. It is only when we reach the end of the second chapter that we discover how much the Apostle meant when he said, "My gospel is not according to man."

If there was any man to whom as a Christian teacher he was bound to defer, any one who might be regarded as his official superior, it was the Apostle Peter. Yet against this very Cephas he had dared openly to measure himself. Had he been a disciple of the Jewish Apostle, a servant of the Jerusalem Church, how would this have been possible? Had he not possessed an authority derived immediately from Christ, how could he have stood out alone, against the prerogative of Peter, against the personal friendship and local influence of Barnabas, against the example of all his Jewish brethren? Nay, he was prepared to rebuke all the Apostles, and anathematise all the angels, rather than see Christ's gospel set at nought. For it was in his view "the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, committed to my trust!" (1 Tim. i. 11).

II. But while Paul stoutly maintains his independence, he does this in such a way as to show that there was no hostility or personal rivalry between himself and the first Apostles. His relations to the Jewish Church were all the while those of *friendly acquaintance and brotherly recognition*.

That Nazarene sect which he had of old time persecuted, was "the Church of God" (ver. 13). To the end of his life this thought gave a poignancy to the Apostle's recollection of his early days. To "the Churches of Judea"\* he attaches the epithet *in Christ*, a phrase of peculiar depth of meaning with Paul, which he could never have conferred as matter of formal courtesy, nor by way of mere distinction between the Church and the Synagogue. From Paul's lips this title is a guarantee of orthodoxy. It satisfies us that the "other gospel" of the Circumcisionists was very far from being the gospel of the Jewish Christian Church at large. Paul is careful to record the sympathy which the Judean brethren cherished for his missionary work in its earliest stages, although their knowledge of him was comparatively distant: "Only they continued to hear that our old persecutor is preaching the faith which once he sought to

destroy. And in me they glorify God." Nor does he drop the smallest hint to show that the disposition of the Churches in the mother country toward himself, or his judgment respecting them, had undergone any change up to the time of his writing this Epistle.

He speaks of the elder Apostles in terms of unfeigned respect. In his reference in ii. 11-21 to the error of Peter, there is great plainness of speech, but no bitterness. When the Apostle says that he "went up to Jerusalem to see Peter," and describes James as "the Lord's brother," and when he refers to both of them, along with John, as "those accounted to be pillars," can he mean anything but honour to these honoured men? To read into these expressions a covert jealousy and to suppose them written by way of disparagement, seems to us a strangely jaundiced and small-minded sort of criticism. The Apostle testifies that Peter held a Divine trust in the Gospel, and that God had "wrought for Peter" to this effect, as for himself. By claiming the testimony of the Pillars at Jerusalem to his vocation, he shows his profound respect for theirs. When the unfortunate difference arose between Peter and himself at Antioch, Paul is careful to show that the Jewish Apostle on that occasion was influenced by the circumstances of the moment, and nevertheless remained true in his real convictions to the common gospel.

In view of these facts, it is impossible to believe, as the *Tendency* critics would have us do, that Paul when he wrote this letter was at feud with the Jewish Church. In that case, while he taxes Peter with "dissimulation" (ii. 11-13), he is himself the real dissembler, and has carried his dissimulation to amazing lengths. If he is in this Epistle contending against the Primitive Church and its leaders, he has concealed his sentiments toward them with an art so crafty as to overreach itself. He has taught his readers to reverence those whom on this hypothesis he was most concerned to discredit. The terms under which he refers to Cephas and the Judean Churches would be just so many testimonies against himself, if their doctrine was the "other gospel" of the Galatian troublers, and if Paul and the Twelve were rivals for the suffrages of the Gentile Christians.

The one word which wears a colour of detraction is the parenthesis in ver. 6 of chap. ii.: "whatever aforetime\*" they (those of repute) "were, makes no difference to me. God accepts no man's person." But this is no more than Paul has already said in i. 16, 17. At the first, after receiving his gospel from the Lord in person, he felt it to be out of place for him to "confer with flesh and blood." So now, even in the presence of the first Apostles, the earthly companions of his Master, he cannot abate his pretensions, nor forget that his ministry stands on a level as exalted as theirs. This language is in precise accord with that of 1 Cor. xv. 10. The suggestion that the repeated *οἱ δοκούντες* conveys a sneer against the leaders at Jerusalem, as "seeming" to be more than they were, is an insult to Paul that recoils upon the critics who utter it. The phrase denotes "those of repute," "reputed to be pillars," the acknowledged heads of the mother Church. Their position was recognised on all hands; Paul assumes it,

\* Ver. 22. It is arbitrary in Meyer to exclude from this category the Church of Jerusalem.

\* We follow Lightfoot in reading the *πρὸς* as in ch. i. 23, and everywhere else in Paul, as a participle of *time*.



and argues upon it. He desires to magnify, not to minify, the importance of these illustrious men. They were pillars of his own cause. It is a maladroitness of interpretation that would have Paul cry down James and the Twelve. By so much as he impaired their worth, he must assuredly have impaired his own. If their status was mere *seeming*, of what value was their endorsement of his? But for a preconceived opinion, no one, we may safely affirm, reading this Epistle would have gathered that Peter's "gospel of the circumcision" was the "other gospel" of Galatia, or that the "certain from James" of ii. 12 represented the views and the policy of the first Apostles. The assumption that Peter's dissimulation at Antioch expressed the settled doctrine of the Jewish Apostolic Church, is unhistorical. The Judaisers abused the authority of Peter and James when they pleaded it in favour of their agitation. So we are told expressly in Acts xv.; and a candid interpretation of this letter bears out the statements of Luke. In James and Peter, Paul and John, there were indeed "diversities of gifts and operations," but they had received the same Spirit; they served the same Lord. They held alike the one and only gospel of the grace of God.

## CHAPTER VII.

### PAUL AND THE FALSE BRETHREN.

#### GALATIANS ii. 1-5.

"FOURTEEN years" had elapsed since Paul left Jerusalem for Tarsus, and commenced his Gentile mission. During this long period—a full half of his missionary course—the Apostle was lost to the sight of the Judean Churches. For nearly half this time, until Barnabas brought him to Antioch, we have no further trace of his movements. But these years of obscure labour had, we may be sure, no small influence in shaping the Apostle's subsequent career. It was a kind of Apostolic apprenticeship. Then his evangelistic plans were laid; his powers were practised; his methods of teaching and administration formed and tested. This first, unnoted period of Paul's missionary life held, we imagine, much the same relation to his public ministry that the time of the Arabian retreat did to his spiritual development.

We are apt to think of the Apostle Paul only as we see him in the full tide of his activity, carrying "from Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum" the standard of the cross and planting it in one after another of the great cities of the Empire, "always triumphing in every place;" or issuing those mighty Epistles whose voice shakes the world. We forget the earlier term of preparation, these years of silence and patience, of unrecorded toil in a comparatively narrow and humble sphere, which had after all their part in making Paul the man he was. If Christ Himself would not "clutch" at His Divine prerogatives (Phil. ii. 5-11), nor win them by self-assertion and before the time, how much more did it become His servant to rise to his great office by slow degrees. Paul served first as a private missionary pioneer in his native land, then as a junior colleague and assistant to Barnabas, until the summons came to take a higher place, when "the signs of an Apostle"

had been fully "wrought in him." Not in a day, nor by the effect of a single revelation did he become the fully armed and all-accomplished Apostle of the Gentiles whom we meet in this Epistle. "After the space of fourteen years" it was time for him to stand forth the approved witness and minister of Jesus Christ, whom Peter and John publicly embraced as their equal.

Paul claims here the initiative in the momentous visit to Jerusalem undertaken by himself and Barnabas, of which he is going to speak. In Acts xv. 2 he is similarly placed at the head of the deputation sent from Antioch about the question of circumcision. The account of the preceding missionary tour in Acts xiii., xiv., shows how the headship of the Gentile Church had come to devolve on Paul. In Luke's narrative they are "Barnabas and Saul" who set out; "Paul and Barnabas" who return.\* Under the trials and hazards of this adventure—at Paphos, Pisidian Antioch, Lystra—Paul's native ascendancy and his higher vocation irresistibly declared themselves. Age and rank yielded to the fire of inspiration, to the gifts of speech, the splendid powers of leadership which the difficulties of this expedition revealed in Paul. Barnabas returned to Antioch with the thought in his heart, "He must increase; I must decrease." And Barnabas was too generous a man not to yield cheerfully to his companion the precedence for which God thus marked him out. Yet the "sharp contention" in which the two men parted soon after this time (Acts xv. 36-40), was, we may conjecture, due in some degree to a lingering soreness in the mind of Barnabas on this account.

The Apostle expresses himself with modesty, but in such a way as to show that *he* was regarded in this juncture as the champion of the Gentile cause. The "revelation" that prompted the visit came to him. The "taking up of Titus" was his distinct act (ver. 1). Unless Paul has deceived himself, he was quite the leading figure in the Council; it was his doctrine and his Apostleship that exercised the minds of the chiefs at Jerusalem, when the delegates from Antioch appeared before them. Whatever Peter and James may have known of surmised previously concerning Paul's vocation, it was only now that it became a public question for the Church. But as matters stood, it was a vital question. The status of uncircumcised Christians, and the Apostolic rank of Paul, constituted the twofold problem placed before the chiefs of the Jewish Church. At the same time, the Apostle, while fixing our attention mainly on his own position, gives to Barnabas his meed of honour; for he says, "I went up with Barnabas,"—"we never yielded for an hour to the false brethren,"—"the Pillars gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we might go to the Gentiles." But it is evident that the elder Gentile missionary stood in the background. By the action that he takes Paul unmistakably declares, "I am the Apostle of the Gentiles;"† and that claim is admitted by the consenting voice of both branches of the Church. The Apostle stepped to the front at this solemn crisis, not for his own rank or office's sake, but at the call of God, in defence of the truth of the gospel and the spiritual freedom of mankind.

\* Acts xiii. 2, 7, 13, 43, 45, 46, 50; xiv. 12, 14; xv. 2, 12.  
† Comp. Rom. xi. 13; xv. 16, 17.



This meeting at Jerusalem took place in 51, or it may be, 52 A. D. We make no doubt that it is the same with the Council of Acts xv. The identification has been controverted by several able scholars, but without success. The two accounts are different, but in no sense contradictory. In fact, as Dr. Pfleiderer acknowledges,\* they "admirably supplement each other. The agreement as to the chief points is in any case greater than the discrepancies in the details; and these discrepancies can for the most part be explained by the different standpoint of the relaters." A difficulty lies, however, in the fact that the historian of the Acts makes this the *third* visit of Paul to Jerusalem subsequently to his conversion; whereas, from the Apostle's statement, it appears to have been the *second*. This discrepancy has already come up for discussion in the last chapter (p. 836). Two further observations may be added on this point. In the first place, Paul does not say that he had never been to Jerusalem since the visit of i. 18; he does say, that on this occasion he "went up again," and that meanwhile he "remained unknown by face" to the Christians of Judea (i. 22)—a fact quite compatible, as we have shown, with what is related in Acts xi. 29, 30. And further, the request addressed at this conference to the Gentile missionaries, that they should "remember the poor," and the reference made by the Apostle to his previous zeal in the same business (vv. 9, 10), are in agreement with the earlier visit of charity mentioned by Luke.

I. The emphasis of ver. 1 rests upon its last clause,—*taking along with me also Titus*. Not "Titus as well as Barnabas"—this cannot be the meaning of the "also"—for Barnabas was Paul's colleague, deputed equally with himself by the Church of Antioch; nor "Titus as well as others"—there were other members of the deputation (Acts xv. 2), but Paul makes no reference to them. The *also* (*καὶ*) calls attention to the fact of Paul's taking *Titus*, in view of the sequel; as though he said, "I not only went up to Jerusalem at this particular time, under Divine direction, but I took along with me Titus besides." The prefixed *with* (*συν-*) of the Greek participle refers to Paul himself: compare ver. 3, "Titus who was with me." As for the "certain others" referred to in Acts xv. 2, they were most likely Jews; or if any of them were Gentiles, still it was Titus whom Paul had chosen for his companion; and his case stood out from the rest in such a way that it became the decisive one, the *test-case* for the matter in dispute.

The mention of *Titus*' name in this connection was calculated to raise a lively interest in the minds of the Apostle's readers. He is introduced as known to the Galatians; indeed by this time his name was familiar in the Pauline Churches, as that of a fellow-traveller and trusted helper of the Apostle. He was with Paul in the latter part of the third missionary tour—so we learn from the Corinthian letters—and therefore probably in the earlier part of the same journey, when the Apostle paid his second visit to Galatia. He belonged to the heathen mission, and was Paul's "true child after a common faith" (Tit. i. 4), an uncircumcised man, of Gentile birth equally with the Galatians. And now they read of his "going

up to Jerusalem with Paul," to the mother-city of believers, where are the pillars of the Church—the Jewish teachers would say—the true Apostles of Jesus, where His doctrine is preached in its purity, and where every Christian is circumcised and keeps the Law. Titus, the unclean Gentile, at Jerusalem! How could he be admitted or tolerated there, in the fellowship of the first disciples of the Lord? This question Paul's readers, after what they had heard from the Circumcisionists, would be sure to ask. He will answer it directly.

But the Apostle goes on to say, that he "went up in accordance with a revelation." For this was one of those supreme moments in his life when he looked for and received the direct guidance of heaven. It was a most critical step to carry this question of Gentile circumcision up to Jerusalem, and to take Titus with him there, into the enemies' stronghold. Moreover, on the settlement of this matter Paul knew that his Apostolic status depended, so far as human recognition was concerned. It would be seen whether the Jewish Church would acknowledge the converts of the Gentile mission as brethren in Christ; and whether the first Apostles would receive him, "the untimely one," as a colleague of their own. Never had he more urgently needed or more implicitly relied upon Divine direction than at this hour.

"And I put before them (the Church at Jerusalem) the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles—but privately to those of repute: am I running (said I), or have I run, in vain?" The latter clause we read *interrogatively*, along with such excellent grammatical interpreters as Meyer, Wieseler, and Hofmann. Paul had not come to Jerusalem *in order to solve any doubt in his own mind*; but he wished the Church of Jerusalem to declare its mind respecting the character of his ministry. He was not "running as uncertainly;" nor in view of the "revelation" just given him could he have any fear for the result of his appeal. But it was in every way necessary that the appeal should be made.

The interjected words, "but privately," etc., indicate that there were *two* meetings during the conference, such as those which seem to be distinguished in Acts xv. 4 and 6; and that the Apostle's statement and the question arising out of it were addressed more pointedly to "those of repute." By this term we understand, here and in ver. 6, "the apostles and elders" (Acts xv.), headed by Peter and James, amongst whom "those reputed to be pillars" are distinguished in ver. 9. Paul dwells upon the phrase *οἱ δοκοῦντες*, because, to be sure, it was so often on the lips of the Judaisers, who were in the habit of speaking with an imposing air, and by way of contrast with Paul, of "the authorities" (at Jerusalem)—as the designation might appropriately be rendered. These very men whom the Legalists were exalting at Paul's expense, the venerated chiefs of the mother Church, had on this occasion, Paul is going to say, given their approval to his doctrine; they declined to impose circumcision on Gentile believers. The Twelve were not stationary at Jerusalem, and therefore could not form a fixed court of reference there; hence a greater importance accrued to the Elders of the city Church, with the revered James at their head, the brother of the Lord.

The Apostle, in bringing Titus, had brought

\* "Hibbert Lectures," p. 103. This testimony is the more valuable as coming from the ablest living exponent of the Baurian theory.



up the subject-matter of the controversy. The "gospel of the uncircumcision" stood before the Jewish authorities, an accomplished fact. Titus was there, by the side of Paul, a sample—and a noble specimen, we can well believe—of the Gentile Christendom which the Jewish Church must either acknowledge or repudiate. How will they treat him? Will they admit this foreign *protégé* of Paul to their communion? Or will they require him first to be circumcised? The question at issue could not take a form more crucial for the prejudices of the mother Church. It was one thing to acknowledge uncircumcised fellow-believers in the abstract, away yonder at Antioch or Iconium, or even at Cæsarea; and another thing to see Titus standing amongst them in his heathen uncleanness, on the sacred soil of Jerusalem, under the shadow of the Temple, and to hear Paul claiming for him—for this "dog" of a Gentile—equally with himself the rights of Christian brotherhood! The demand was most offensive to the pride of Judaism, as no one knew better than Paul; and we cannot wonder that a revelation was required to justify the Apostle in making it. The case of *Trophimus*, whose presence with the Apostle at Jerusalem many years afterwards proved so nearly fatal (Acts xxi. 27-30), shows how exasperating to the legalist party his action in this instance must have been. Had not Peter and the better spirits of the Church in Jerusalem laid to heart the lesson of the vision of Joppa, that "no man must be called common or unclean," and had not the wisdom of the Holy Spirit eminently guided this first Council of the Church,\* Paul's challenge would have received a negative answer; and Jewish and Gentile Christianity must have been driven asunder.

The answer, the triumphant answer, to Paul's appeal comes in the next verse: "Nay, not even Titus who, was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised." Titus *was not circumcised*, in point of fact—how can we doubt this in view of the language of ver. 5: "Not even for an hour did we yield in subjection"? And he "was *not compelled* to be circumcised"—a mode of putting the denial which implies that in refusing his circumcision urgent solicitation had to be withstood, solicitation addressed to Titus himself, as well as to the leaders of his party. The kind of pressure brought to bear in the case and the quarter from which it proceeded, the Galatians would understand from their own experience (vi. 12; comp. ii. 14).

The attempt made to bring about Titus' circumcision signally failed. Its failure was the practical reply to the question which Paul tells us (ver. 2) he had put to the authorities in Jerusalem; or, according to the more common rendering of ver. 2b, it was the answer to the apprehension under which he addressed himself to them. On the former of these views of the connection, which we decidedly prefer, the authorities are clear of any share in the "compulsion" of Titus. When the Apostle gives the statement that his Gentile companion "was not compelled to be circumcised" as the reply to his appeal to "those of repute," it is as much as to say: "The chiefs at Jerusalem did not require Titus' circumcision. They repudiated the attempt of certain parties to force this rite

upon him." This testimony precisely accords with the terms of the rescript of the Council, and with the speeches of Peter and James, given in Acts xv. But it was a great point gained to have the liberality of the Jewish Christian leaders put to the proof in this way, to have the generous sentiments of speech and letter made good in this example of uncircumcised Christianity brought to their doors.

To the authorities at Jerusalem the question put by the delegates from Antioch on the one side, and by the Circumcisionists on the other, was perfectly clear. If they insist on Titus' circumcision, they disown Paul and the Gentile mission: if they accept Paul's gospel, they must leave Titus alone. Paul and Barnabas stated the case in a manner that left no room for doubt or compromise. Their action was marked, as ver. 5 declares, with the utmost decision. And the response of the Jewish leaders was equally frank and definite. We have no business, says James (Acts xv. 19), "to trouble those from the Gentiles that turn to God." Their judgment is virtually affirmed in ver. 3, in reference to Titus, in whose person the Galatians could not fail to see that their own case had been settled by anticipation. "Those of repute" disowned the Circumcisionists; the demand that the yoke of circumcision should be imposed on the Gentiles had no sanction from them. If the Judaisers claimed their sanction, the claim was false.

Here the Apostle pauses, as his Gentile readers must have paused and drawn a long breath of relief or of astonishment at what he has just alleged. If Titus was not compelled to be circumcised, even at Jerusalem, who, they might ask, was going to compel *them*?—The full stop should therefore be placed at the end of ver. 3, not ver. 2. Vv. 1-3 form a paragraph complete in itself. Its last sentence resolves the decisive question raised in this visit of Paul's to Jerusalem, when he "took with him also Titus."

II. The opening words of ver. 4 have all the appearance of commencing a new sentence. This sentence, concluded in ver. 5, is grammatically incomplete; but that is no reason for throwing it upon the previous sentence, to the confusion of both. There is a transition of thought, marked by the introductory *But*, from the issue of Paul's second critical visit to Jerusalem (vv. 1-3) to *the cause which made it necessary*. This was the action of "false brethren," to whom the Apostle made a determined and successful resistance (vv. 4, 5). The opening "But" does not refer to ver. 3 in particular, rather to the entire foregoing paragraph. The ellipsis (after "But") is suitably supplied in the marginal rendering of the Revisers, where we take *it was* to mean, not "Because of the false brethren Titus was not (or was not compelled to be) circumcised," but "Because of the false brethren *this meeting came about*, or *I took the course aforesaid*."

To know what Paul means by "false brethren," we must turn to i. 6-9, iii. 1, iv. 17, v. 7-12, vi. 12-14, in this Epistle; and again to 2 Cor. ii. 17-iii. 1, iv. 2, xi. 3, 4, 12-22, 26; Rom. xvi. 17, 18; Phil. iii. 2. They were men bearing the name of Christ and professing faith in Him, but Pharisees at heart, self-seeking, rancorous, unscrupulous men, bent on exploiting the Pauline Churches for their own advantage, and regarding Gentile converts to Christ as so many possible recruits for the ranks of the Circumcision.

\* Acts xv. 28: "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us." This was in the Early Church no mere pious official form.



But where, and how, were these traitors "privily brought in"? Brought in, we answer, to the field of the Gentile mission; and doubtless by local Jewish sympathisers, who introduced them without the concurrence of the officers of the Church. They "came in privily"—slipped in by stealth—"to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus." Now it was at Antioch and in the pagan Churches that this liberty existed in its normal exercise—the liberty for which our Epistle contends, the enjoyment of Christian privileges independently of Jewish law—in which Paul and his brother missionaries had identified themselves with their Gentile followers. The "false brethren" were Jewish spies in the Gentile Christian camp. We do not see how the Galatians could have read the Apostle's words otherwise; nor how it could have occurred to them that he was referring to the way in which these men had been originally "brought into" the Jewish Church. That concerned neither him nor them. But *their getting into the Gentile fold* was the serious thing. They are the "certain who came down from Judea, and taught the (Gentile) brethren, saying, Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved;" and whom their own Church afterwards repudiated (Acts xv. 24). With Antioch for the centre of their operations, these mischief-makers disturbed the whole field of Paul and Barnabas' labours in Syria and Cilicia (Acts xv. 23; comp. Gal. i. 21). For the Galatian readers, the terms of this sentence, coming after the anathema of i. 6-9, threw a startling light on the character of the Judean emissaries busy in their midst. This description of the former "troublers" strikes at the Judaic opposition in Galatia. It is as if the Apostle said: "These false brethren, smuggled in amongst us, to filch away our liberties in Christ, wolves in sheep's clothing—I know them well; I have encountered them before this. I never yielded to their demands a single inch. I carried the struggle with them to Jerusalem. There, in the citadel of Judaism, and before the assembled chiefs of the Judean Church, I vindicated once and for all, under the person of Titus, your imperilled Christian rights."

But as the Apostle dilates on the conduct of these Jewish intriguers, the precursors of such an army of troublers, his heart takes fire; in the rush of his emotion he is carried away from the original purport of his sentence, and breaks it off with a burst of indignation: "To whom," he cries, "not even for an hour did we yield by subjection, that the truth of the gospel might abide with you." A breakdown like this—an *anacoluthon*, as the grammarians call it—is nothing strange in Paul's style. Despite the shipwrecked grammar, the sense comes off safely enough. The clause, "we did not yield," etc., describes in a negative form, and with heightened effect, the course the Apostle had pursued from the first in dealing with the false brethren. In this unyielding spirit he had acted, without a moment's wavering, from the hour when, guided by the Holy Spirit, he set out for Jerusalem with the uncircumcised Titus by his side, until he heard his Gentile gospel vindicated by the lips of Peter and James, and received from them the clasp of fellowship as Christ's acknowledged Apostle to the heathen.

It was therefore the action of Jewish interlopers, men of the same stamp as those infest-

ing the Galatian Churches, which occasioned Paul's second, public visit to Jerusalem, and his consultation with the heads of the Judean Church. This decisive course he was himself inspired to take; while at the same time it was taken on behalf and under the direction of the Church of Antioch, the metropolis of Gentile Christianity. He had gone up with Barnabas and "certain others"—including the Greek Titus chosen by himself—the company forming a representative deputation, of which Paul was the leader and spokesman. This measure was the boldest and the only effectual means of combating the Judaistic propaganda. It drew from the authorities at Jerusalem the admission that "Circumcision is nothing," and that Gentile Christians are free from the ritual law. This was a victory gained over Jewish prejudice of immense significance for the future of Christianity. The ground was already cut from under the feet of the Judaic teachers in Galatia, and of all who should at any time seek to impose external rites as things essential to salvation in Christ. To all his readers Paul can now say, so far as his part is concerned: *The truth of the gospel abides with you.*

## CHAPTER VIII.

### PAUL AND THE THREE PILLARS.

#### GALATIANS ii. 6-10.

WE have dealt by anticipation, in chap. vi., with several of the topics raised in this section of the Epistle—touching particularly the import of the phrase "those of repute," and the tone of disparagement in which these dignitaries appear to be spoken of in ver. 6. But there still remains in these verses matter in its weight and difficulty more than sufficient to occupy another chapter.

The grammatical connection of the first paragraph, like that of vv. 2, 3, is involved and disputable. We construe its clauses in the following way:—(1) Ver. 6 begins with a *But*, contrasting "those of repute" with the "false brethren" dealt with in the last sentence. It contains another *anacoluthon* (or incoherence of language) due to the surge of feeling remarked in ver. 4, which still disturbs the Apostle's grammar. He begins: "But from those reputed to be something"—as though he intended to say, "I received on my part nothing, no addition or qualification to my gospel." But he has no sooner mentioned "those of repute" than he is reminded of the studied attempt that was made to set up their authority in opposition to his own, and accordingly throws in this protest: "what they were aforesaid,\* makes no difference to me: man's person God doth not accept." But in saying this, Paul has laid down one of his favourite axioms, a principle that filled a large place in his thoughts;† and its enunciation deflects the course of the main sentence, so that it is resumed in an altered form: "For to me those of repute imparted nothing." Here the *me* receives a greater emphasis; and *for* takes the place of *but*. The fact that the first

\* For this rendering of *πρὸς* comp. ch. i. 13, 23; and see Lightfoot, or Beet, *in loc.*

† Comp. Rom. ii. 11; 1 Cor. i. 27-31; xv. 9, 10; Eph. vi. 9; Col. iii. 25.



Apostles had nothing to impart to Paul, signally illustrates the Divine impartiality, which often makes the last and least in human eyes equal to the first.

(2) Vv. 7-9 state the *positive*, as ver. 6 the *negative* side of the relation between Paul and the elder Apostles, still keeping in view the principle laid down in the former verse. "Nay, on the contrary, when they saw that I have in charge the gospel of the uncircumcision, as Peter that of the circumcision (ver. 7)—and when they perceived the grace that had been given me, James and Cephas and John, those renowned pillars of the Church, gave the right hand of fellowship to myself and Barnabas, agreeing that we should go to the Gentiles, while they laboured amongst the Jews" (ver. 9).

(3) Ver. 8 comes in as a parenthesis, explaining how the authorities at Jerusalem came to see that this trust belonged to Paul. "For," he says, "He that in Peter's case displayed His power in making him (above all others) Apostle of the Circumcision, did as much for me in regard to the Gentiles." It is not human ordination, but Divine inspiration that makes a minister of Jesus Christ. The noble Apostles of Jesus had the wisdom to see this. It had pleased God to bestow this grace on their old Tarsian persecutor; and they frankly acknowledged the fact.

Thus Paul sets forth, in the first place, the completeness of his Apostolic qualifications, put to proof at the crisis of the circumcision controversy; and in the second place, the judgment formed respecting him and his office by the first Apostles and companions of the Lord.

I. "To me those of repute added nothing." Paul had spent but a fortnight in the Christian circle of Jerusalem, fourteen years ago. Of its chiefs he had met at that time only Peter and James, and them in the capacity of a visitor, not as a disciple or a candidate for office. He had never sought the opportunity, nor felt the need, of receiving instruction from the elder Apostles during all the years in which he had preached Christ amongst the heathen. It was not likely he would do so now. When he came into conference and debate with them at the Council, he showed himself their equal, neither in knowledge nor authority "a whit behind the very chiefest." And they were conscious of the same fact.

On the essentials of the gospel Paul found himself in agreement with the Twelve. This is implied in the language of ver. 6. When one writes, "A adds nothing to B," one assumes that B has already what belongs to A, and not something different. Paul asserts in the most positive terms he can command, that his intercourse with the holders of the primitive Christian tradition left him as a minister of Christ exactly where he was before. "On me," he says, "they conferred nothing"—rather, perhaps, "*addressed no communication to me.*" The word used appears to deny their having made any motion of the kind. The Greek verb is the same that was employed in i. 16, a rare and delicate compound. Its meaning varies, like that of our *confer*, *communicate*, as it is applied in a more or less active sense. In the former place Paul had said that he "did not confer with flesh and blood"; now he adds, that flesh and blood did not confer anything upon him. Formerly he

did not bring his commission to lay it before men; now they had nothing to bring on their part to lay before him. The same word affirms the Apostle's independence at both epochs, shown in the first instance by his reserve toward the dignitaries at Jerusalem, and in the second by their reserve toward him. Conscious of his Divine call, he sought no patronage from the elder Apostles then; and they, recognising that call, offered him no such patronage now. Paul's gospel for the Gentiles was complete, and sufficient unto itself. His ministry showed no defect in quality or competence. There was nothing about it that laid it open to correction, even on the part of those wisest and highest in dignity amongst the personal followers of Jesus.

So Paul declares; and we can readily believe him. Nay, we are tempted to think that it was rather the Pillars who might need to learn from him, than he from them. In doctrine, Paul holds the primacy in the band of the Apostles. While all were inspired by the Spirit of Christ, the Gentile Apostle was in many ways a more richly furnished man than any of the rest. The Paulinism of Peter's First Epistle goes to show that the debt was on the other side. Their earliest privileges and priceless store of recollections of "all that Jesus did and taught," were matched on Paul's side by a penetrating logic, a breadth and force of intellect applied to the facts of revelation, and a burning intensity of spirit, which in their combination were unique. The Pauline teaching, as it appears in the New Testament, bears in the highest degree the marks of original genius, the stamp of a mind whose inspiration is its own.

Modern criticism even exaggerates Paul's originality. It leaves the other Apostles little more than a negative part to play in the development of Christian truth. In some of its representations, the figure of Paul appears to overshadow even that of the Divine Master. It was Paul's creative genius, it is said, his daring idealism, that deified the human Jesus, and transformed the scandal of the cross into the glory of an atonement reconciling the world to God. Such theories Paul himself would have regarded with horror. "I received *of the Lord* that which I delivered unto you:" such is his uniform testimony. If he owed so little as a minister of Christ to his brother Apostles, he felt with the most sincere humility that he owed everything to Christ. The agreement of Paul's teaching with that of the other New Testament writers, and especially with that of Jesus in the Gospels, proves that, however distinct and individual his conception of the common gospel, none the less there was a common gospel of Christ, and he did not speak of his own mind. The attempts made to get rid of this agreement by post-dating the New Testament documents, and by explaining away the larger utterances of Jesus found in the Gospels as due to Paulinist interpolation, are unavailing. They postulate a craftiness of ingenuity on the part of the writers of the incriminated books, and an ignorance in those who first received them, alike inconceivable. Paul did not build up the splendid and imperishable fabric of his theology on some speculation of his own. Its foundation lies in the person and the teaching of Jesus Christ, and was common to Paul with James and Cephas and John. "Whether I or



they," he testifies, "so we preach, and so ye believed" (1 Cor. xv. 11). Paul satisfied himself at this conference that he and the Twelve taught the same gospel. Not in its primary data, but in their logical development and application, lies the specifically *Pauline* in Paulinism. The harmony between Paul and the other Apostolic leaders has the peculiar value which belongs to the agreement of minds of different orders, working independently.

The Judaisers, however, persistently asserted Paul's dependence on the elder Apostles. "The authority of the Primitive Church, the Apostolic tradition of Jerusalem"—this was the fulcrum of their argument. Where could Paul, they asked, have derived his knowledge of Christ, but from this fountain-head? And the power that made him could unmake him. Those who commissioned him had the right to overrule him, or even to revoke his commission. Was it not known that he had from time to time resorted to Jerusalem; that he had once publicly submitted his teaching to the examination of the heads of the Church there? The words of ver. 6 contradict these malicious insinuations. Hence the positiveness of the Apostle's self-assertion. In the Corinthian Epistles his claim to independence is made in gentler style, and with expressions of humility that might have been misunderstood here. But the position Paul takes up is the same in either case: "I am an Apostle. I have seen Jesus our Lord. You—Corinthians, Galatians—are my work in the Lord." That Peter and the rest were in the old days so near to the Master, "makes no difference" to Paul. They are what they are—their high standing is universally acknowledged, and Paul has no need or wish to question it; but, by the grace of God, *he* also is what he is (1 Cor. xv. 10). Their Apostleship does not exclude or derogate from his.

The self-depreciation, the keen sense of inferiority in outward respects, so evident in Paul's allusions to this subject elsewhere, is after all not wanting here. For when he says, "God regards not *man's person*," it is evident that in respect of visible qualifications Paul felt that he had few pretensions to make. Appearances were against him. And those who "glory in appearance" were against him too (2 Cor. v. 12). Such men could not appreciate the might of the Spirit that wrought in Paul, nor the sovereignty of Divine election. They "reckoned" of the Apostle "as though he walked according to flesh" (2 Cor. x. 2). It seemed to them obvious, as a matter of course, that he was far below the Twelve. With men of worldly wisdom the Apostle did not expect that his arguments would prevail. His appeal was to "the spiritual, who judge all things."

So we come back to the declaration of the Apostle in i. 11: "I give you to know, brethren, that my gospel is not according to man." Man had no hand either in laying its foundation or putting on the headstone. Paul's predecessors in Apostolic office did not impart the gospel to him at the outset; nor at a later time had they attempted to make any addition to the doctrine he had taught far and wide amongst the heathen. His Apostleship was from first to last a supernatural gift of grace.

II. Instead, therefore, of assuming to be his superiors, or offering to bestow something of their own on Paul, the three renowned pillars of

the faith at Jerusalem acknowledged him as a brother Apostle.

"They saw that I am intrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision." The form of the verb implies a trust given in the past and taking effect in the present, a settled fact. Once for all, this charge had devolved on Paul. He is "appointed herald and apostle" of "Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all,—teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth" (1 Tim. ii. 6, 7). That office Paul still holds. He is the leader of Christian evangelism. Every new movement in heathen missionary enterprise looks to his teaching for guidance and inspiration.

The conference at Jerusalem in itself furnished conclusive evidence of Paul's Apostolic commission. The circumcision controversy was a test not only for Gentile Christianity, but at the same time for its Apostle and champion. Paul brought to this discussion a knowledge and insight, a force of character, a conscious authority and unction of the Holy Spirit, that powerfully impressed the three great men who listened to him. The triumvirate at Jerusalem well knew that Paul had not received his marvellous gifts through their hands. Nor was there anything lacking to him which they felt themselves called upon to supply. They could only say, "This is the Lord's doing; and it is marvellous in our eyes." Knowing, as Peter at least, we presume had done for many years,\* the history of Paul's conversion, and seeing as they now did the conspicuous Apostolic signs attending his ministry, James and Cephas and John could only come to one conclusion. The gospel of the uncircumcision, they were convinced, was committed to Paul, and his place in the Church was side by side with Peter. Peter must have felt as once before on a like occasion: "If God gave unto him a gift equal to that He gave to me, who am I, that I should be able to hinder God?" (Acts xi. 17). It was not for them because of their elder rank and dignity to debate with God in this matter, and to withhold their recognition from His "chosen vessel."

John had not forgotten his Master's reproof for banning the man that "followeth not with us" (Luke ix. 49; Mark ix. 38). They "recognised," Paul says, "the grace that had been given me;" and by that he means, to be sure, the undeserved favour that raised him to his Apostolic office.† This recognition was given to *Paul*. Barnabas shared the "fellowship." His hand was clasped by the three chiefs at Jerusalem, not less warmly than that of his younger comrade. But it is in the singular number that Paul speaks of "the grace that was given *me*," and of the "trust in the gospel" and the "working of God *unto Apostleship*."

Why then does not Paul say outright, "they acknowledged me an Apostle, the equal of Peter?" Some are bold enough to say—*Holsten* in particular—"Because this is just what the Jerusalem chiefs never did, and never could have done."‡ We will only reply, that if this were the case, the passage is a continued *suggestio falsi*. No one could write the words of vv. 7-9, without intending his readers to believe

\* Ch. i. 18. See ch. v. p. 835.

† See Rom. i. 5; 1 Cor. xv. 10; Eph. iii. 2, 7, 8; 1 Tim.

i. 13.  
‡ "Zum Evangelien d. Paulus und d. Petrus," p. 273. Holsten is the keenest and most logical of all the Baurian succession.



that such a recognition took place. Paul avoids the point-blank assertion, with a delicacy that any man of tolerable modesty will understand. Even the appearance of "glorying" was hateful to him (2 Cor. x. 17; xi. 1; xii. 1-5, 11).

The Church at Jerusalem, as we gather from vv. 7, 8, observed in Paul "signs of the Apostle" resembling those borne by Peter. His Gentile commission ran parallel with Peter's Jewish commission. The labours of the two men were followed by the same kind of success, and marked by similar displays of miraculous power. The like seal of God was stamped on both. This correspondence runs through the Acts of the Apostles. Compare, for example, Paul's sermon at Antioch in Pisidia with that of Peter on the Day of Pentecost; the healing of the Lystran cripple and the punishment of Elymas, with the case of the lame man at the Temple gate and the encounter of Peter and Simon Magus. The conjunction of the names of Peter and Paul was familiar to the Apostolic Church. The parallelism between the course of these great Apostles was no invention of second-century orthodoxy, set up in the interests of a "reconciling hypothesis;" it attracted public attention as early as 51 A. D., while they were still in their mid career. If this idea so strongly possessed the minds of the Jewish Christian leaders and influenced their action at the Council of Jerusalem, we need not be surprised that it should dominate Luke's narrative to the extent that it does. The allusions to Peter in 1 Corinthians\* afford further proof that in the lifetime of the two Apostles it was a common thing to link their names together.

But had not Peter also a share in the Gentile mission? Does not the division of labour made at this conference appear to shut out the senior Apostle from a field to which he had the prior claim? "Ye know," said Peter at the Council, "how that a good while ago God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel, and believe" (Acts xv. 7). To Peter was assigned the double honour of "opening the door of faith" both to Jew and Gentile. This experience made him the readier to understand Paul's position and gave him the greater weight in the settlement of the question at issue. And not Peter alone, but Philip the Evangelist and other Jewish Christians had carried the gospel across the line of Judaic prejudice, before Paul appeared on the scene. Barnabas and Silas were both emissaries of Jerusalem. So that the mother Church, if she could not claim Paul as her son, had nevertheless a large stake in the heathen mission. But when Paul came to the front, when his miraculous call, his incomparable gifts and wonderful success had made themselves known, it was evident to every discerning mind that he was the man chosen by God to direct this great work. Peter had *opened* the door of faith to the heathen, and had bravely kept it open; but it was for Paul to lead the Gentile nations through the open door, and to make a home for them within the fold of Christ. The men who had laboured in this field hitherto were Paul's forerunners. And Peter does not hesitate to acknowledge the younger Apostle's special fitness for this wider province of their com-

mon work; and with the concurrence of James and John he yields the charge of it to him.

Let us observe that it is two different *provinces*, not different gospels, that are in view. When the Apostle speaks of "the gospel of the uncircumcision" as committed to himself, and that "of the circumcision" to Peter, he never dreams of any one supposing, as some of his modern critics persist in doing, that he meant two different *doctrines*. How can that be possible, when he has declared those *anathema* who preach any other gospel? He has laid his gospel before the heads of the Jerusalem Church. Nothing has occurred there, nothing is hinted here, to suggest the existence of a "radical divergence." If James and the body of the Judean Church really sympathised with the Circumcisionists, with those whom the Apostle calls "false brethren," how could he with any sincerity have come to an agreement with them, knowing that this tremendous gulf was lying all the while between the Pillars and himself? Zeller argues that the transaction was simply a pledge of "reciprocal toleration, a merely external concordat between Paul and the original Apostles."\* The clasp of brotherly friendship was a sorry farce, if that were all it meant—if Paul and the Three just consented for the time to slur over irreconcilable differences; while Paul in turn has glossed over the affair for us in these artful verses! Baur, with characteristic *finesse*, says on the same point: "The *κοινωνία* was always a division; it could only be brought into effect by one party going *εἰς τὰ ἔθνη*, the other *εἰς τὴν περιτομήν*. As the Jewish Apostles could allege nothing against the principles on which Paul founded his evangelical mission, they were obliged to recognise them in a certain manner; but their recognition was a mere outward one. They left him to work on these principles still further in the cause of the gospel among the Gentiles; but for themselves they did not desire to know anything more about them."† So that, according to the Tübingen critics, we witness in ver. 9 not a union, but a divorce! The Jewish Apostles recognise Paul as a brother, only in order to get rid of him. Can misinterpretation be more unjust than this? Paul does not say, "They gave us the right hand of fellowship *on condition that*," "but, *in order that* we should go this way, they that." As much as to say: The two parties came together and entered into a closer union, so that with the best mutual understanding each might go its own way and pursue its proper work in harmony with the other. For Paul it would have been a sacrilege to speak of the diplomatic compromise which Baur and Zeller describe as "giving the right hand of fellowship."

Never did the Church more deeply realise than at her first Council the truth, that "there is one body and one Spirit; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all" (Eph. iv. 4-6). Paul still seems to feel his hand in the warm grasp of Peter and of John when he writes to the Ephesians of "the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself for chief corner-stone; in whom the whole building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord" (ii. 20, 21).

\* "The Acts of the Apostles Critically Investigated," vol. ii. pp. 28, 30: Eng. Trans.

† "Paulus," vol. i. p. 155; Eng. Trans.

\* Ch. i. 12; iii. 22; ix. 5.



Alas for the criticism that is obliged to see in words like these the invention of second-century churchmanship, putting into the mouth of Paul catholic sentiments of which in reality he knew nothing! Such writers know nothing of the power of that fellowship of the Spirit which reigned in the glorious company of the Apostles.

"Only they would have us remember the poor"—a circumstance mentioned partly by way of reminder to the Galatians touching the collection for Jerusalem, which Paul had already set on foot amongst them (1 Cor. xvi. 1). The request was prompted by the affectionate confidence with which the Jewish chiefs embraced Paul and Barnabas. It awakened an eager response in the Apostle's breast. His love to his Jewish kindred made him welcome the suggestion. Moreover every deed of charity rendered by the wealthier Gentile Churches to "the poor saints in Jerusalem," was another tie helping to bind the two communities to each other. Of such liberality Antioch, under the direction of the Gentile missionaries, had already set the example (Acts xi. 29, 30).

*James, Peter, John, and Paul*—it was a memorable day when these four men met face to face. What a mighty quaternion! Amongst them they have virtually made the New Testament and the Christian Church. They represent the four sides of the one foundation of the City of God. Of the Evangelists, Matthew holds affinity with James; Mark with Peter; and Luke with Paul. James clings to the past and embodies the transition from Mosaism to Christianity. Peter is the man of the present, quick in thought and action, eager, buoyant, susceptible. Paul holds the future in his grasp, and schools the unborn nations. John gathers present, past, and future into one, lifting us into the region of eternal life and love.

With Peter and James Paul had met before, and was to meet again. But so far as we can learn, this was the only occasion on which his path crossed that of *John*. Nor is this Apostle mentioned again in Paul's letters. In the Acts he appears but once or twice, standing silent in Peter's shadow. A holy reserve surrounds John's person in the earlier Apostolic history. His hour was not yet come. But his name ranked in public estimation amongst the three foremost of the Jewish Church; and he exercised, doubtless, a powerful, though quiet, conciliatory influence in the settlement of the Gentile question. The personality of Paul excited, we may be sure, the profoundest interest in such a mind as that of John. He absorbed, and yet in a sense transcended, the Pauline theology. The Apocalypse, although the most Judaic book of the New Testament, is penetrated with the influence of Paulinism. The detection in it of a covert attack on the Gentile Apostle is simply one of the mare's nests of a super-subtle and suspicious criticism. John was to be the heir of Paul's labours at Ephesus and in Asia Minor. And John's long life, touching the verge of the second century, his catholic position, his serene and lofty spirit, blending in itself and resolving into a higher unity the tendencies of James and Peter and Paul, give us the best assurance that in the Apostolic age there was indeed "One, holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church."

Paul's fellowship with Peter and with James was cordial and endeared. But to hold the

hand of John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved," was a yet higher satisfaction. That clasp symbolised a union between men most opposite in temperament and training, and brought to the knowledge of Christ in very different ways, but whose communion in Him was deep as the life eternal. Paul and John are the two master minds of the New Testament. Of all men that ever lived, these two best understood Jesus Christ.

## CHAPTER IX.

### PAUL AND PETER AT ANTIOCH.

GALATIANS ii. 11-18.

THE conference at Jerusalem issued in the formal recognition by the Primitive Church of Gentile Christianity, and of Paul's plenary Apostleship. And it brought Paul into brotherly relations with the three great leaders of Jewish Christianity. But this fellowship was not to continue undisturbed. The same cause was still at work which had compelled the Apostle to go up to Jerusalem, taking Titus with him. The leaven of Pharisaic legalism remained in the Church. Indeed, as time went on and the national fanaticism grew more violent, this spirit of intolerance became increasingly bitter and active. The address of James to Paul on the occasion of his last visit to the Holy City, shows that the Church of Jerusalem was at this time in a state of the most sensitive jealousy in regard to the Law, and that the legalistic prejudices always existing in it had gained a strength with which it was difficult to cope (Acts xxi. 17-25).

But for the present the Judaising faction had received a check. It does not appear that the party ever again insisted on circumcision as a thing essential to salvation for the Gentiles. The utterances of Peter and James at the Council, and the circular addressed therefrom to the Gentile Churches, rendered this impossible. The Legalists made a change of front; and adopted a subtler and seemingly more moderate policy. They now preached circumcision as the prerogative of the Jew within the Church, and as a counsel of perfection for the Gentile believer in Christ (iii. 3). To quote the rescript of Acts xv. against this altered form of the circumcisionist doctrine, would have been wide of the mark.

It is against this newer type of Judaistic teaching that our Epistle is directed. Circumcision, its advocates argued, was a Divine ordinance that must have its benefit.\* God has given to Israel an indefeasible pre-eminence in His kingdom.† Law-keeping children of Abraham enter the new Covenant on a higher footing than "sinners of the Gentiles:" they are still the elect race, the holy nation. If the Gentiles wish to share with them, they must add to their faith circumcision, they must complete their imperfect righteousness by legal sanctity. So they might hope to enter on the full heritage of the sons of Abraham; they would be brought into communion with the first Apostles and the Brother, of the Lord; they would be admitted to the inner circle of the kingdom of God. The new Legalists sought, in fact, to super-impose Jewish on Gentile Christianity. They no longer

\* Rom. ii. 25-iii. 1.

† Rom. i. 16; ii. 9, 10; ix. 4, 5; xi. 1, 2.



refused all share in Christ to the uncircumcised; they offered them a larger share. So we construe the teaching which Paul had to combat in the second stage of his conflict with Judaism, to which his four major Epistles belong. And the signal for this renewed struggle was given by the collision with Peter at Antioch.

This encounter did not, we think, take place on the return of Paul and Barnabas from the Council. The compact of Jerusalem secured to the Church a few years of rest from the Judaistic agitation. The Thessalonian Epistles, written in 52 or 53 A. D., go to show, not only that the Churches of Macedonia were free from the legalist contention, but that it did not at this period occupy the Apostle's mind. Judas Barsabbas and Silas—not Peter—accompanied the Gentile missionaries in returning to Antioch; and Luke gives, in Acts xv., a tolerably full account of the circumstances which transpired there in the interval before the second missionary tour, without the slightest hint of any visit made at this time by the Apostle Peter. We can scarcely believe that the circumcision party had already recovered, and increased its influence, to the degree that it must have done when "even Barnabas was carried away"; still less that Peter on the very morning of the settlement at Jerusalem and of his fraternal communion there with Paul would show himself so far estranged.

When, therefore, did "Cephas come down to Antioch?" The Galatians evidently knew. The Judaisers had given their account of the matter, to Paul's disadvantage. Perhaps he had referred to it himself on his last visit to Galatia, when we know he spoke explicitly and strongly against the Circumcisionists (i. 9). Just before his arrival in Galatia on this occasion he had "spent some time" at Antioch (Acts xviii. 22, 23), in the interval between the second and third missionary journeys. Luke simply mentions the fact, without giving any details. This is the likeliest opportunity for the meeting of the two Apostles in the Gentile capital. M. Sabatier, in the following sentences, appears to us to put the course of events in its true light:—"Evidently the Apostle had quitted Jerusalem and undertaken his second missionary journey full of satisfaction at the victory he had gained, and free from anxiety for the future. The decisive moment of the crisis therefore necessarily falls between the Thessalonian and Galatian Epistles. What had happened in the meantime? *The violent discussion with Peter at Antioch* (Gal. ii. 11-21), and all that this account reveals to us,—the arrival of the emissaries from James in the pagan-Christian circle, the counter-mission organised by the Judaisers to rectify the work of Paul. A new situation suddenly presents itself to the eyes of the Apostle on his return from his second missionary journey. He is compelled to throw himself into the struggle, and in doing so to formulate in all its rigour his principle of the abolishment of the Law."

The "troublers" in this instance were "certain from James." Like the "false brethren" who appeared at Antioch three years before they came from the mother Church, over which James presided. The Judaising teachers at Corinth had their "commendatory letters" (2 Cor. iii. 1), derived assuredly from the same quarter. In all likelihood, their confederates in Galatia brought similar credentials. We have already

seen that the authority of the Primitive Church was the chief weapon used by Paul's adversaries. These letters of commendation were part of the machinery of the anti-Pauline agitation. How the Judaisers obtained these credentials, and in what precise relation they stood to James, we can only conjecture. Had the Apostle held James responsible for their action, he would not have spared him any more than he has done Peter. James held a quasi-pastoral relation to Christian Jews of the Dispersion. And as he addressed his Epistle to them, so he would be likely on occasion to send delegates to visit them. Perhaps the Circumcisionists found opportunity to pass themselves off in this character; or they may have abused a commission really given them, by interfering with Gentile communities. That the Judaistic emissaries in some way or other adopted false colours, is plainly intimated in 2 Cor. xi. 13. James, living always at Jerusalem, being moreover a man of simple character, could have little suspected the crafty plot which was carried forward under his name.

These agents addressed themselves in the first instance to *the Jews*, as their commission from Jerusalem probably entitled them to do. They plead for the maintenance of the sacred customs. They insist that the Mosaic rites carry with them an indelible sanctity; that their observance constitutes a Church within the Church. If this separation is once established, and the Jewish believers in Christ can be induced to hold themselves aloof and to maintain the "advantage of circumcision," the rest will be easy. The way will then be open to "compel the Gentiles to Judaize." For unless they do this, they must be content to remain on a lower level, in a comparatively menial position, resembling that of uncircumcised proselytes in the Synagogue. The circular of the Jerusalem Council may have been interpreted by the Judaists in this sense, as though it laid down the terms, not of full communion between Jew and Gentile believers, but only of a permissive, secondary recognition. At Antioch the new campaign of the Legalists was opened, and apparently with signal success. In Galatia and Corinth we see it in full progress.

The withdrawal of Peter and the other Jews at Antioch from the table of the Gentiles virtually "compelled" the latter "to Judaize." Not that the Jewish Apostle had this intention in his mind. He was made the tool of designing men. By "separating himself" he virtually said to every uncircumcised brother, "Stand by thyself, I am holier than thou." Legal conformity on the part of the Gentiles was made the condition of their communion with Jewish Christians—a demand simply fatal to Christianity. It re-established the principle of salvation by works in a more individual form. To supplement the righteousness of faith by that of law meant to *supplant* it. To admit that the Israelite by virtue of his legal observances stood in a higher position than "sinners of the Gentiles," was to stultify the doctrine of the cross, to make Christ's death a gratuitous sacrifice. Peter's error, pushed to its logical consequences, involved the overthrow of the Gospel. This the Gentile Apostle saw at a glance. The situation was one of imminent danger. Paul needed all his wisdom, and all his courage and promptitude to meet it.



It had been Peter's previous rule, since the vision of Joppa, to lay aside Jewish scruples of diet and to live in free intercourse with Gentile brethren. He "was wont to eat with the Gentiles. Though a born Jew, he lived in Gentile fashion"—words unmistakably describing Peter's general habit in such circumstances. This Gentile conformity of Peter was a fact of no small moment for the Galatian readers. It contravenes the assertion of a radical divergence between Petrine and Pauline Christianity, whether made by Ebionites or Baurians.

The Jewish Apostle's present conduct was an act of "dissimulation." He was belying his known convictions, publicly expressed and acted on for years. Paul's challenge assumes that his fellow-Apostle is acting insincerely. And this assumption is explained by the account furnished in the Acts of the Apostles respecting Peter's earlier relations with Gentile Christianity (x. 1-xi. 18; xv. 6-11). The strength of Paul's case lay in the conscience of Peter himself. The conflict at Antioch, so often appealed to in proof of the rooted opposition between the two Apostles, in reality gives evidence to the contrary effect. Here the maxim strictly applies, *Exceptio probat regulam*.

Peter's lapse is quite intelligible. No man who figures in the New Testament is better known to us. Honest, impulsive, ready of speech, full of contagious enthusiasm, brave as a lion, firm as a rock against open enemies, he possessed in a high degree the qualities which mark out a leader of men. He was of the stuff of which Christ makes his missionary heroes. But there was a strain of weakness in Peter's nature. He was *pliable*. He was too much at the mercy of surroundings. His denial of Jesus set this native fault in a light terribly vivid and humiliating. It was an act of "dissimulation." In his soul there was a fervent love to Christ. His zeal had brought him to the place of danger. But for the moment he was alone. Public opinion was all against him. A panic fear seized his brave heart. He forgot himself; he denied the Master whom he loved more than life. His courage had failed; never his faith. "Turned back again" from his coward flight, Peter had indeed "strengthened his brethren" (Luke xxii. 31, 32). He proved a tower of strength to the infant Church, worthy of his cognomen of the *Rock*. For more than twenty years he had stood unshaken. No name was so honoured in the Church as Peter's. For Paul to be compared to him was the highest possible distinction.

And yet, after all this lapse of time, and in the midst of so glorious a career, the old, miserable weakness betrays him once more. How admonitory is the lesson! The sore long since healed over, the infirmity of nature out of which we seemed to have been completely trained, may yet break out again, to our shame and undoing. Had Peter for a moment forgotten the sorrowful warning of Gethsemane? Be it ours to "watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation."

We have reason to believe that, if Peter rashly erred, he freely acknowledged his error, and honoured his reprover. Both the Epistles that bear his name, in different ways, testify to the high value which their author set upon the teaching of "our beloved brother Paul." Tradition places the two men at Rome side by side in their last days; as though even in their death

these glorious Apostles should not be divided, despite the attempts of faction and mistrust to separate them.

Few incidents exhibit more strongly than this the grievous consequences that may ensue from a seemingly trivial moral error. It looked a little thing that Peter should prefer to take his meals away from Gentile company. And yet, as Paul tells him, his withdrawal was a virtual rejection of the Gospel, and imperilled the most vital interests of Christianity. By this act the Jewish Apostle gave a handle to the adversaries of the Church which they have used for generations and for ages afterwards. The dispute which it occasioned could never be forgotten. In the second century it still drew down on Paul the bitter reproaches of the Judaizing faction. And in our own day the rationalistic critics have been able to turn it to marvellous account. It supplies the corner-stone of their "scientific reconstruction" of Biblical theology. The entire theory of Baur is evolved out of Peter's blunder. Let it be granted that Peter in yielding to the "certain from James" followed his genuine convictions and the tradition of Jewish Christianity, and we see at once how deep a guilt lay between Paul and the Primitive Church. All that Paul argues in the subsequent discussion only tends, in this case, to make the breach more visible. This false step of Peter is the thing that chiefly lends a colour to the theory in question, with all the far-reaching consequences touching the origin and import of Christianity, which it involves. So long "the evil that men do lives after them"!

Paul's rebuke of his brother Apostle extends to the conclusion of the chapter. Some interpreters cut it short at the end of ver. 14; others at ver. 16; others again at ver. 18. But the address is consecutive and germane to the occasion throughout. Paul does not, to be sure, give a verbatim report, but the substance of what he said, and in a form suited to his readers. The narrative is an admirable prelude to the argument of chap. iii. It forms the transition from the historical to the polemical part of the Epistle, from the Apostle's personal to his doctrinal apology. The condensed form of the speech makes its interpretation difficult and much contested. We shall in the remainder of this chapter trace the general course of Paul's reproof, proposing in the following chapter to deal more fully with its doctrinal contents.

I. In the first place, *Paul taxes the Jewish Apostle with insincerity and unfaithfulness toward the gospel*. "I saw," he says, "that they were not holding a straight course, according to the truth of the gospel."

It is a *moral*, not a doctrinal aberration, that Paul lays at the door of Cephas and Barnabas. They did not hold a different creed from himself; they were disloyal to the common creed. They swerved from the path of rectitude in which they had walked hitherto. They had regard no longer to "the truth of the gospel"—the supreme consideration of the servant of Christ—but to the favour of men, to the public opinion of Jerusalem. "What will be said of us *there*?" they whispered to each other, "if these messengers of James report that we are discarding the sacred customs, and making no difference between Jew and Gentile? We shall alienate our Judean brethren. We shall bring



a scandal on the Christian cause in the eyes of Judaism."

This withdrawal of the Jews from the common fellowship at Antioch was a public matter. It was an injury to the whole Gentile-Christian community. If the reproof was to be salutary, it must be equally public and explicit. The offence was notorious. Every one deplored it, except those who shared it, or profited by it. Cephas "stood condemned." And yet his influence and the reverence felt toward him were so great that no one dared to put this condemnation into words. His sanction was of itself enough to give to this sudden recrudescence of Jewish bigotry the force of authoritative usage. "The truth of the gospel" was again in jeopardy. Once more Paul's intervention foiled the attempts of the Judaizers and saved Gentile liberties. And this time he stood quite alone. Even the faithful Barnabas deserted him. But what mattered that, if Christ and truth were on his side? "Amicus Cephas, amicus Barnabas; sed magis amicus Veritas." Solitary amid the circle of opposing or dissembling Jews, Paul "withstood" the chief of the Apostles of Jesus "to the face." He rebuked him "before them all."

II. Peter's conduct is reproved by Paul *in the light of their common knowledge of salvation in Christ.*

Paul is not content with pointing out the inconsistency of his brother Apostle. He must probe the matter to the bottom. He will bring Peter's delinquency to the touchstone of the Gospel, in its fundamental principles. So he passes in ver. 15 from the outward to the inward, from the circumstances of Peter's conduct to the inner world of spiritual consciousness, in which his offence finds its deeper condemnation. "You and I," he goes on to say, "not Gentile sinners, but men of Jewish birth—yet for all that, knowing that there is no justification for man in works of law, only through faith in Christ—we too put our faith in Christ, in order to be justified by faith in Him, not by works of law; for as Scripture taught us, in that way no flesh will be justified."

Paul makes no doubt that the Jewish Apostle's experience of salvation corresponded with his own. Doubtless, in their previous intercourse, and especially when he first "made acquaintance with Cephas" (i. 18) in Jerusalem, the hearts of the two men had been opened to each other; and they had found that, although brought to the knowledge of the truth in different ways, yet in the essence of the matter—in respect of the personal conviction of sin, in the yielding up of self-righteousness and native pride, in the abandonment of every prop and trust but Jesus Christ—their history had run the same course, and face answered to face. Yes, Paul knew that he had an ally in the heart of his friend. He was not fighting as one that beateth the air, not making a rhetorical flourish, or a parade of some favourite doctrine of his own; he appealed from Peter dissembling to Peter faithful and consistent. Peter's dissimulation was a return to the Judaic ground of legal righteousness. By refusing to eat with uncircumcised men, he affirmed implicitly that, though believers in Christ, they were still to him "common and unclean," that the Mosaic rites imparted a higher sanctity than the righteousness of faith. Now the principles of evangelical and legal righteous-

ness, of salvation by faith and by law-works, are diametrically opposed. It is logically impossible to maintain both. Peter had long ago accepted the former doctrine. He had sought salvation, just like any Gentile sinner, on the common ground of human guilt, and with a faith that renounced every consideration of Jewish privilege and legal performance. By what right can any Hebrew believer in Christ, after this, set himself above his Gentile brother, or presume to be by virtue of his circumcision and ritual law-keeping a holier man? Such we take to be the import of Paul's challenge in vv. 15, 16.

III. Paul is met at this point by the stock objection to the doctrine of salvation by faith—an objection brought forward in the dispute at Antioch not, we should imagine, by Peter himself, but by the Judaistic advocates. *To renounce legal righteousness was in effect, they urged, to promote sin—nay, to make Christ Himself a minister of sin* (ver. 17).

Paul retorts the charge on those who make it. *They promote sin*, he declares, *who set up legal righteousness again* (ver. 18). The objection is stated and met in the form of question and answer, as in Rom. iii. 5. We have in this sharp thrust and parry an example of the sort of fence which Paul must often have carried on in his discussions with Jewish opponents on these questions.

We must not overlook the close verbal connection of these verses with the two last. The phrase "seeking to be justified in Christ" carries us back to the time when the two Apostles, self-condemned sinners, severally sought and found a new ground of righteousness in Him. Now when Peter and Paul did this, they were "themselves also found\* to be sinners,"—an experience how abasing to their Jewish pride! They made the great discovery that stripped them of legal merit, and brought them down in their own esteem to the level of common sinners. Peter's confession may stand for both, when he said, abashed by the glory of Christ, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Now this style of penitence, this profound self-abasement in the presence of Jesus Christ, revolted the Jewish moralist. To Pharisaic sentiment it was contemptible. If justification by faith requires this, if it brings the Jew to so abject a posture and makes no difference between lawless and law-keeping, between pious children of Abraham and heathen outcasts—if this be the doctrine of Christ, all moral distinctions are confounded, and Christ is "a minister of sin!" This teaching robs the Jew of the righteousness he before possessed; it takes from him the benefit and honour that God bestowed upon his race! So, we doubt not, many a Jew was heard angrily exclaiming against the Pauline doctrine, both at Antioch and elsewhere. This conclusion was, in the view of the Legalist, a *reductio ad absurdum* of Paulinism.

The Apostle repels this inference with the indignant *μη γένοιτο, Far be it!* His reply is indicated by the very form in which he puts the question: "If we were *found* sinners" (Christ did not *make* us such). "The complaint was this," as Calvin finely says: "Has Christ therefore come to take away from us the righteous-

\* For this emphatic "found," describing a process of moral conviction and inward discovery, comp. Rom. vii. 10, 18, 21; the whole passage strikingly illustrates the reminiscence of our text.



ness of the Law, to make us polluted who were holy? Nay, Paul says;—he repels the blasphemy with detestation. For Christ did not introduce sin, but revealed it. He did not rob them of righteousness, but of the false show thereof.\* The reproach of the Judaisers was in reality the same that is urged against evangelical doctrine still—that it is *immoral*, placing the virtuous and vicious in the common category of “sinners.”

Ver. 18 throws back the charge of promoting sin upon the Legalist. It is the counterpart, not of ver. 19, but rather of ver. 17. The “transgressor” is the sinner in a heightened and more specific sense, one who breaks known and admitted law.† This word bears, in Paul’s vocabulary, a precise and strongly marked signification which is not satisfied by the common interpretation. It is not that Peter, in setting up the Law which he had in principle overthrown, *puts himself in the wrong*; nor that Peter in re-establishing the Law, *contradicts the purpose of the Law itself* (Chrysostom, Lightfoot, Beet). This is to anticipate the next verse. In Paul’s view and according to the experience common to Peter with himself, law and transgression are concomitant, every man “under law” is *ipso facto* a transgressor. He who sets up the first, constitutes himself the second. And this is what Peter is now doing; although Paul courteously veils the fact by putting it hypothetically, in the first person. After dissolving, so far as in him lay, the validity of legal righteousness and breaking down the edifice of justification by works, Peter is now building it up again, and thereby constructing a prison-house for himself. Returning to legal allegiance, he returns to legal condemnation;‡ with his own hands he puts on his neck the burden of the Law’s curse, which through faith in Christ he had cast off. By this act of timid conformity he seeks to commend himself to Jewish opinion; but it only serves, in the light of the Gospel, to “prove him a transgressor,” to “commend”§ him in that unhappy character. This is Paul’s retort to the imputation of the Judaist. It carries the war into the enemies’ camp. “No,” says Paul, “Christ is no patron of sin, in bidding men renounce legal righteousness. But those promote sin—in themselves first of all—who after knowing His righteousness, turn back again to legalism.”

IV. The conviction of Peter is now complete. From the sad bondage to which the Jewish Apostle, by his compliance with the Judaisers, was preparing to submit himself, the Apostle turns to his own joyous sense of deliverance (vv. 19-21). Those who resort to legalism, he has said, ensure their own condemnation. It is, on the other hand, by an entire surrender to Christ, by realising the import of His death, that we learn to “live unto God.” So Paul had proved it. At this moment he is conscious of a union with the crucified and living Saviour, which lifts him above the curse of the law, above the power of sin. To revert to the Judaistic state, to dream any more of earning righteousness by legal conformity, is a thing for him

inconceivable. It would be to make void the cross of Christ!

And it was the Law itself that first impelled Paul along this path. “Through law” he “died to law.” The Law drove him from itself to seek salvation in Jesus Christ. Its accusations allowed him no shelter, left him no secure spot on which to build the edifice of his self-righteousness. It said to him unceasingly, Thou art a transgressor.\* He who seeks justification by its means contradicts the Law, while he frustrates the grace of God.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE PRINCIPLES AT STAKE.

#### GALATIANS ii. 19-21.

PAUL’s personal apology is ended. He has proved his Apostolic independence, and made good his declaration, “My Gospel is not according to man.” If he owed his commission to any man, it was to Peter; so his traducers persistently alleged. He has shown that, first *without* Peter, then *in equality with* Peter, and finally *in spite of* Peter, he had received and maintained it. Similarly in regard to James and the Jerusalem Church. Without their mediation Paul commenced his work; when that work was challenged, they could only approve it; and when afterwards men professing to act in their name disturbed his work, the Apostle had repelled them. He acted all along under the consciousness of a trust in the gospel committed to him directly by Jesus Christ, and an authority in its administration second to none upon earth. And events had justified this confidence.

Paul is compelled to say all this about himself. The vindication of his ministry is forced from him by the calumnies of false brethren. From the time of the conference at Jerusalem, and still more since he withstood Peter at Antioch, he had been a mark for the hatred of the Judaising faction. He was the chief obstacle to their success. Twice he had foiled them, when they counted upon victory. They had now set on foot a systematic agitation against him, with its headquarters at Jerusalem, carried on under some pretext of sanction from the authorities of the Church there. At Corinth and in Galatia the legalist emissaries had appeared simultaneously; they pursued in the main the same policy, adapting it to the character and disposition of the two Churches, and appealing with no little success to the Jewish predilections common even amongst Gentile believers in Christ.

In this controversy Paul and the gospel he preached were bound together. “I am set,” he says, “for the defence of the gospel” (Phil. i. 16). He was the champion of the cross, the impersonation of the principle of salvation by faith. It is “the gospel of Christ,” the “truth of the gospel,” he reiterates, that is at stake. If he wards off blows falling upon him, it is because they are aimed through him at the truth for which he lives—nay, at Christ who lives in him. In his self-assertion there is no note of pride or personal anxiety. Never was there a man more completely lost in the greatness of a great cause, nor who felt himself in com-

\* Rom. vii. 7-viii. 1.

\* “Commentarii,” *in loc.*

† See Grimm’s “Lexicon,” or Trench’s “N. T. Synonyms,” on this word. Comp. ch. iii. 19; Rom. ii. 23-27; iv. 15; v. 14.

‡ Comp. ch. iii. 10-12, 19; Rom. iii. 20; iv. 15.

§ This verb has, as Schott suggests, a tinge of irony.



parison with it more worthless. But that cause has lifted Paul with it to imperishable glory. Of all names named on earth, none stands nearer than his to that which is "above every name."

While Paul in chaps. i. and ii. is busy with his own vindication, he is meantime behind the personal defence preparing the doctrinal argument. His address to Peter is an incisive outline of the gospel of grace. The three closing verses are the heart of Paul's theology. Such a testimony was the Apostle's best defence before his audience at Antioch; it was the surest means of touching the heart of Peter and convincing him of his error. And its recital was admirably calculated to enlighten the Galatians as to the true bearing of this dispute which had been so much misrepresented. From ver. 15 onwards, Paul has been all the while addressing, under the person of Peter, the conscience of his readers, and paving the way for the assault that he makes upon them with so much vigour in the first verses of chap. iii. Read in the light of the foregoing narrative, this passage is a compendium of the Pauline Gospel, invested with the peculiar interest that belongs to a confession of personal faith, made at a signal crisis in the author's life. Let us examine this momentous declaration.

I. At the foundation of Paul's theology lies his conception of *the grace of God*.

Grace is the Apostle's watchword. The word occurs twice as often in his Epistles as it does in the rest of the New Testament. Outside the Pauline Luke and Hebrews, and 1 Peter with its large infusion of Paulinism, it is exceedingly rare. In this word the character, spirit, and aim of the revelation of Christ, as Paul understood it, are summed up. "The grace of God" is the touchstone to which Peter's dissimulation is finally brought. *Christ* is the embodiment of Divine grace—above all, in His death. So that it is one and the same thing to "bring to nought the grace of God," and "the death of Christ." Hence God's grace is called "the grace of Christ,"—"of our Lord Jesus Christ." From Romans to Titus and Philemon, "grace reigns" in every Epistle. No one can counterfeit this mark of Paul, or speak of grace in his style and accent.

God's grace is not His love alone; it is *redeeming love*—love poured out upon the undeserving, love coming to seek and save the lost, "bringing salvation to all men" (Rom. v. 1-8; Tit. ii. 11). Grace decreed redemption, made the sacrifice, proclaims the reconciliation, provides and bestows the new sonship of the Spirit, and schools its children into all the habits of godliness and virtue that beseeem their regenerate life, which it brings finally to its consummation in the life eternal.\*

Grace in God is therefore the antithesis of *sin in man*, counterworking and finally triumphing over it. Grace belongs to the last Adam as eminently as sin to the first. The later thoughts of the Apostle on this theme are expressed in Tit. iii. 4-7, a passage singularly rich in its description of the working of Divine grace on human nature. "We were senseless," he says, "disobedient, wandering in error, in bondage to lusts and pleasures of many kinds, living in envy and malice, hateful, hating each other. But when the kindness and love to man

of our Saviour God shone forth,"—then all was changed: "not by works wrought in our own righteousness, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, that, justified by His grace, we might be made heirs in hope of life eternal." The vision of the grace of God drives stubbornness, lust, and hatred from the soul. It brings about, for man and for society, the *palingenesis*, the new birth of Creation, rolling back the tide of evil and restoring the golden age of peace and innocence; and crowns the joy of a renovated earth with the glories of a recovered heaven.

Being the antagonist of sin, grace comes of necessity into contrast with *the law*. Law is intrinsically the opposer of sin; sin is "lawlessness," with Paul as much as with John.\* But law was powerless to cope with sin: it was "weak through the flesh." Instead of crushing sin, the interposition of law served to inflame and stimulate it, to bring into play its latent energy, reducing the man most loyally disposed to moral despair. "By the law therefore is the knowledge of sin; it worketh out wrath." Inevitably, it makes men transgressors; it brings upon them an inward condemnation, a crushing sense of the Divine anger and hostility.† That is all that law can do by itself. "Holy and just and good," notwithstanding, to our perverse nature it becomes *death* (Rom. vii. 13; 1 Cor. xv. 56). It is actually "the strength of sin," lending itself to extend and confirm its power. We find in it a "law of sin and death." So that to be "under law" and "under grace" are two opposite and mutually exclusive states. In the latter condition only is sin "no longer our lord" (Rom. vi. 14). Peter and the Jews of Antioch therefore, in building up the legal principle again, were in truth "abolishing the grace of God." If the Galatians follow their example, Paul warns them that they will "fall from grace." Accepting circumcision, they become "debtors to perform the whole law,"—and that means transgression and the curse (v. 1-4; iii. 10-12; ii. 16-18).

While sin is the reply which man's nature makes to the demands of law, *faith* is the response elicited by grace; it is the door of the heart opening to grace.‡ Grace and Faith go hand in hand, as Law and Transgression. Limiting the domain of faith, Peter virtually denied the sovereignty of grace. He belied his confession made at the Council of Jerusalem: "By *the grace* of the Lord Jesus we *trust* to be saved, even as the Gentiles" (Acts xv. 11). With Law are joined such terms as Works, Debt, Reward, Glorifying, proper to a "righteousness of one's own."§ With Grace we associate Gift, Promise, Predestination, Call, Election, Adoption, Inheritance, belonging to the dialect of "the righteousness which is of God by faith." Grace operates in the region of "the Spirit," making for freedom; but law, however spiritual in origin, has come to seek its accomplishment in the sphere of the flesh, where it "gendereth to bondage" (iv. 23-v. 5; 2 Cor. iii. 6, 17).

Grace appears, however, in another class of passages in Paul's Epistles, of which i. 15, ii. 9 are examples. To the Divine grace Paul as-

\* Rom. vii. 12, 14; 2 Thess. ii. 4-8; comp. 1 John iii. 4.

† Rom. iii. 20; iv. 15; v. 20; vii. 5, 24; Gal. ii. 16; iii. 10, 12, 19.

‡ Rom. iii. 24, 25; Eph. ii. 8; etc.

§ Rom. iv. 1-4; xi. 6; Gal. ii. 16; iii. 12.

\* Eph. i. 5-9; 2 Tim. i. 9; Rom. iii. 24; Heb. ii. 9; 2 Cor. v. 20-v. 1; Gal. iv. 5; Tit. iii. 5-7; ii. 11-14; Rom. v. 21.



cribes his personal salvation and Apostolic call. The revelation which made him a Christian and an Apostle, was above all things a manifestation of grace. Wearing this aspect, "the glory of God" appeared to him "in the face of Jesus Christ." The splendour that blinded and overwhelmed Saul on his way to Damascus, was "the glory of His grace." The voice of Jesus that fell on the persecutor's ear spoke in the accents of grace. No scourge of the Law, no thunders of Sinai, could have smitten down the proud Pharisee, and beaten or scorched out of him his strong self-will, like the complaint of Jesus. All the circumstances tended to stamp upon his soul, fused into penitence in that hour, the ineffaceable impression of "the grace of God and of our Saviour Jesus Christ." Such confessions as those of 1 Cor. xv. 8-10, and Eph. ii. 7, iii. 7, 8, show how constantly this remembrance was present with the Apostle Paul and suffused his views of revelation, giving to his ministry its peculiar tenderness of humility and ardour of gratitude. This sentiment of boundless obligation to the grace of God, with its pervasive effect upon the Pauline doctrine, is strikingly expressed in the doxology of 1 Tim. i. 11-17,—words which it is almost a sacrilege to put into the mouth of a *falsarius*: "According to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, wherewith I was intrusted, . . . who was aforetime a blasphemer and persecutor. . . . But the grace of our Lord abounded even more exceedingly. Faithful is the saying, worthy to be received of all, 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners'—of whom I am chief. . . . In me as chief Christ Jesus showed forth all His long-suffering. . . . Now to the King of the ages be honour and glory for ever. Amen." Who, reading the Apostle's story, does not echo that *Amen*? No wonder that Paul became the Apostle of *grace*; even as John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved," must perforce be the Apostle of *love*. First to him was God's grace revealed in its largest affluence, that through him it might be known to all men and to all ages.

II. Side by side with the grace of God, we find in ver. 21 *the death of Christ*. He sets aside the former, the Apostle argues, who by admitting legal righteousness nullifies the latter.

While grace embodies Paul's fundamental conception of the Divine character, the death of Christ is the fundamental fact in which that character manifests itself. So the cross becomes the centre of Paul's theology. But it was, in the first place, the basis of his personal life. "Faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me," is the foundation of "the life he now lives in the flesh."

Here lay the stumbling-block of Judaism. Theocratic pride, Pharisaic tradition, could not, as we say, *get over* it. A crucified Messiah! How revolting the bare idea. But when, as in Paul's case, Judaistic pride did surmount this huge scandal and in spite of the offence of the cross arrive at faith in Jesus, it was at the cost of a severe fall. It was broken in pieces,—destroyed once and for ever. With the elder Apostles the change had been more gradual; they were never steeped in Judaism as Saul was. For him to accept the faith of Jesus was a revolution the most complete and drastic possible. As a Jew, the preaching of the cross was an outrage on his faith and his Messianic hopes;

now it was that which most of all subdued and entranced him. Its power was extreme, whether to attract or repel. The more he had loathed and mocked at it before, the more he is bound henceforth to exalt the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. A proof of the Divine anger against the Nazarene he had once deemed it; now he sees in it the token of God's grace in Him to the whole world.

For Paul therefore the death of Christ imported the end of Judaism. "I died to law," he writes,—*"I am crucified with Christ."* Once understanding what this death meant, and realising his own relation to it, on every account it was impossible to go back to Legalism. The cross barred all return. The law that put Him, the sinless One, to death, could give no life to sinful men. The Judaism that pronounced His doom, doomed itself. Who would make peace with it over the Saviour's blood? From the moment that Paul knew the truth about the death of Jesus, he had done with Judaism for ever. Henceforth he knew nothing—cherished no belief or sentiment, acknowledged no maxim, no tradition, which did not conform itself to His death. The world to which he had belonged *died*, self-slain, when it slew Him. From Christ's grave a new world was rising, for which alone Paul lived.

But why should the grace of God take expression in a fact so appalling as Christ's death? What has *death* to do with grace? It is the legal penalty of sin. The conjunction of sin and death pervades the teaching of Scripture, and is a principle fixed in the conscience of mankind. Death, as man knows it, is the inevitable consequence and the universal witness of his transgression. He "carries about in his mortality the testimony that God is angry with the wicked every day" (Augustine). The death of Jesus Christ cannot be taken out of this category. He died a sinner's death. He bore the penalty of guilt. The prophetic antecedents of Calvary, the train of circumstances connected with it, His own explanations in chief—are all in keeping with this purpose. With amazement we behold the Sinless "made sin," the Just dying for the unjust. He was "born of a woman, born under law": under law He lived—and *died*. Grace is no law-breaker. God must above all things be "just Himself," if He is to justify others (Rom. iii. 26). The death of Jesus declares it. That sublime sacrifice is, as one might say, the *resultant* of grace and law. Grace "gives Him up for us all;" it meets the law's claims in Him, even to the extreme penalty, that from us the penalty may be lifted off. He puts Himself under law, in order "to *buy out* those under law" (iv. 4, 5). In virtue of the death of Christ, therefore, men are dealt with on an extra-legal footing, on terms of grace; not because law is ignored or has broken down; but because it is satisfied beforehand. God has "set forth Christ Jesus a propitiation"; and in view of that accomplished fact, He proceeds "in the present time" to "justify him who is of faith in Jesus" (Rom. iii. 22-26). Legalism is at an end, for the Law has spent itself on our Redeemer. For those that are in Him "there is now no condemnation." This is to anticipate the fuller teaching of chap. iii.; but the vicarious sacrifice is already implied when Paul says, "He gave Himself up for me—gave Himself for our sins" (i. 4).



*The resurrection of Christ* is, in Paul's thought, the other side of His death. They constitute one event, the obverse and reverse of the same reality. For Paul, as for the first Apostles, the resurrection of Jesus gave to His death an aspect wholly different from that it previously wore. But the transformation wrought in their minds during the "forty days" in his case came about in a single moment, and began from a different starting-point. Instead of being the merited punishment of a blasphemer and false Messiah, the death of Calvary became the glorious self-sacrifice of the Son of God. The dying and rising of Jesus were blended in the Apostle's mind; he always sees the one in the light of the other. The faith that saves, as he formulates it, is at once a faith that Christ died for our sins, and that God raised Him from the dead on the third day.\* Whichever of the two one may first apprehend, it brings the other along with it. The resurrection is not an express topic of this Epistle. Nevertheless it meets us in its first sentence, where we discern that Paul's knowledge of the gospel and his call to proclaim it, rested upon this fact. In the passage before us the resurrection is manifestly assumed. If the Apostle is "crucified with Christ,"—and yet "Christ lives in him," it is not simply the teaching, or the mission of Jesus that lives over again in Paul; the life of the risen Saviour has itself entered into his soul.

III. This brings us to the thought of the union of the believer with Christ in death and life, which is expressed in terms of peculiar emphasis and distinctness in ver. 20. "With Christ I have been crucified; and I live no longer; it is Christ that lives in me. My earthly life is governed by faith in Him who loved me and died for me." Christ and Paul are one. When Christ died, Paul's former self died with Him. Now it is the Spirit of Christ in heaven that lives within Paul's body here on earth.

This union is first of all a communion with the dying Saviour. Paul does not think of the sacrifice of Calvary as something merely accomplished for him, outside himself, by a legal arrangement in which one person takes the place of another and, as it were, *personates* him. The nexus between Christ and Paul is deeper than this. Christ is the centre and soul of the race, holding towards it a spiritual primacy of which Adam's natural headship was a type, mediating between men and God in all the relations which mankind holds to God.† The death of Jesus was more than substitutionary; it was representative. He had every right to act for us. He was the "One" who alone could "die for all;" in Him "all died" (2 Cor. v. 14, 15). He carried us with Him to the cross; His death was in effect the death of those whose sins He bore. There was no legal fiction here; no federal compact extemporised for the occasion. "The second Man from heaven," if second in order of time, was first and fundamental in the spiritual order, the organic Head of mankind, "the root," as well as "the offspring" of humanity.‡ (The judgment that fell upon the race was a summons to Him who held in His hands its interests and destinies. Paul's faith apprehends and endorses what Christ has done on his behalf,— "who loved me," he cries, "and gave Himself

up for me." When the Apostle says, "I have been crucified with Christ," he goes back in thought to the scene of Calvary; there, potentially, all that was done of which he now realises in himself the issue. His present salvation is, so to speak, a *rehearsal* of the Saviour's death, a "likeness" (Rom. vi. 5) of the supreme act of atonement, which took place once for all when Christ died for our sins.

Faith is the link between the past, objective sacrifice, and the present, subjective apprehension of it, by which its virtue becomes our own. Without such faith, Christ would have "died in vain." His death must then have been a great sacrifice thrown away. Wilful unbelief repudiates what the Redeemer has done, provisionally, on our behalf. This repudiation, as individuals, we are perfectly free to make. "The objective reconciliation effected in Christ's death can after all benefit actually, in their own personal consciousness, only those who know and acknowledge it, and feel themselves in their solidarity with Christ to be so much one with Him as to be able to appropriate inwardly His death and celestial life, and to live over again His life and death; those only, in a word, who truly believe in Christ. Thus the idea of substitution in Paul receives its complement and realisation in the mysticism of his conception of faith. While Christ objectively represents the whole race, that relation becomes a subjective reality only in the case of those who connect themselves with Him in faith in such a way as to fuse together with Him into *one* spirit and *one* body, as to find in Him their Head, their soul, their life and self, and He in them His body, His members and His temple. Thereby the idea of 'one for all' receives the stricter meaning of 'all in and with one.'"

Partaking the death of Christ, Paul has come to share in *His risen life*. On the cross he owned his Saviour—owned His wounds, His shame, His agony of death, and felt himself therein shamed, wounded, slain to death. Thus joined to his Redeemer, as by the nails that fastened Him to the tree, Paul is carried with Him down into the grave—into the grave, and out again! Christ is risen from the dead: so therefore is Paul. He "died to sin once," and now "liveth to God; death lords it over Him no more:" this Paul reckons equally true for himself (Rom. vi. 3-11). The *Ego*, the "old man" that Paul once was, lies buried in the grave of Jesus.

Jesus Christ alone, "the Lord of the Spirit" has risen from that sepulchre,—has risen in the spirit of Paul. "If any one should come to Paul's doors and ask, Who lives here? he would answer, not Saul of Tarsus, but Jesus Christ lives in this body of mine." In this appropriation of the death and rising of the Lord Jesus, this interpenetration of the spirit of Paul and that of Christ, there are three stages corresponding to the Friday, Saturday, and Sunday of Easter-tide. "Christ died for our sins; He was buried; He rose again the third day:" so, by consequence, "I am crucified with Christ; no longer do I live; Christ liveth in me."

This mystic union of the soul and its Saviour bears fruit in the activities of outward life. Faith is no mere abstract and contemplative affection; but a working energy, dominating and directing all our human faculties. It makes even the flesh its instrument, which defied the law of God, and betrayed the man to the bondage of

\* 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4, 11; Rom. iv. 24, 25; x. 9; 1 Thess. iv. 14.

† Rom. v. 14; 1 Cor. xv. 23, 45-48; 1 Tim. ii. 5.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 45-49; comp. Col. i. 15-17; John i. 4, 9, 15, 16.



sin and death. There is a note of triumph in the words,—“the life I now live in the flesh, I live in faith!” The impossible has been accomplished. “The body of death” is possessed by the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Rom. vi. 12; vii. 23-viii. 1). The flesh—the despair of the law—has become the sanctified vessel of grace.

Paul’s entire theology of Redemption is contained in this mystery of union with Christ. The office of the *Holy Spirit*, whose communion holds together the glorified Lord and His members upon earth, is implied in the teaching of ver. 20. This is manifest, when in iii. 2-5 we find the believer’s union with Christ described as “receiving the Spirit, beginning in the Spirit;” and when a little later “the promise of the Spirit” embraces the essential blessings of the new life.\* The doctrine of the *Church* is also here. For those in whom Christ dwells have therein a common life, which knows no “Jew and Greek; all are one man” in Him.† *Justification* and *sanctification* alike are here; the former being the realisation of our share in Christ’s propitiation for sin, the latter our participation in His risen life, spent “to God.” Finally, *the resurrection to eternal life* and *the heavenly glory* of the saints spring from their present fellowship with the Redeemer. “The Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead, dwelling in us, shall raise our mortal body” to share with the perfected spirit His celestial life. The resurrection of Christ is the earnest of that which all His members will attain,—nay, the material creation is to participate in the glory of the sons of God, made like to Him, the “firstborn of many brethren” (Rom. viii. 11, 16-23, 29, 30; Phil. iii. 20, 21).

In all these vital truths Paul’s gospel was traversed by the Legalism countenanced by Peter at Antioch. *The Judaistic doctrine* struck directly, if not avowedly, at the cross, whose reproach its promoters sought to escape. This charge is the climax of the Apostle’s contention against Peter, and the starting-point of his expostulation with the Galatians in the following chapter. “If righteousness could be obtained by way of law, then Christ died for nought!” What could one say worse of any doctrine or policy, than that it led to this? And if works of law actually justified men, and circumcision is allowed to make a difference between Jew and Greek before God, the principle of legalism is admitted, and the intolerable consequence ensues which Paul denounces. What did Christ die for, if men are able to redeem themselves after this fashion? How can any one dare to build up in face of the cross his paltry edifice of self-wrought goodness, and say by doing so that the expiation of Calvary was superfluous and that Jesus Christ might have spared Himself all that trouble!

And so, on the one hand, Legalism *impugns the grace of God*. It puts human relations to God on the footing of a debtor and creditor account; it claims for man a ground for boasting in himself (Rom. iv. 1-4), and takes from God the glory of His grace. In its devotion to statute and ordinance, it misses the soul of obedience, the love of God, only to be awakened by the knowledge of His love to us (v. 14; 1 John iv. 7-11). It sacrifices the Father in God to the

King. It forgets that trust is the first duty of a rational creature toward his Maker, that the law of faith lies at the basis of all law for man.

On the other hand, and by the same necessity, Legalism is *fatal to the spiritual life in man*. Whilst it clouds the Divine character, it dwarfs and petrifies the human. What becomes of the sublime mystery of the life hid with Christ in God, if its existence is made contingent on circumcision and ritual performance? To men who put “meat and drink” on a level with “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost,” or in their intercourse with fellow-Christians set points of ceremony above justice, mercy, and faith, the very idea of a spiritual kingdom of God is wanting. The religion of Jesus and of Paul regenerates the heart, and from that centre regulates and hallows the whole ongoing of life. Legalism guards the mouth, the hands, the senses, and imagines that through these it can drill the man into the Divine order. The latter theory makes religion a mechanical system; the former conceives it as an inward, organic life.

## THE DOCTRINAL POLEMIC.

### CHAPTER iii. 1-V. 12.

## CHAPTER XI.

## THE GALATIAN FOLLY.

### GALATIANS iii. 1-5.

At the beginning of chap. iii. falls the most marked division of this Epistle. So far, since the exordium, its course has been strictly narrative. The Apostle has been “giving” his readers “to know” many things concerning himself and his relations to the Judean Church of which they had been ignorant or misinformed. Now this preliminary task is over. From explanation and defence he passes suddenly to the attack. He turns sharply round upon the Galatians, and begins to ply them with expostulation and argument. It is for their sake that Paul has been telling this story of his past career. In the light of the narration just concluded, they will be able to see their folly and to understand how much they have been deceived.

Here also the indignation so powerfully expressed in the Introduction, breaks forth again, directed this time, however, against the Galatians themselves and breathing grief more than anger. And just as after that former outburst the letter settled down into the sober flow of narrative, so from these words of reproach Paul passes on to the measured course of argument which he pursues through the next two chapters. In iv. 8-20, and again in v. 1-12, doctrine gives way to appeal and warning. But these paragraphs still belong to the polemical division of the Epistle, extending from this point to the middle of chap. v. This section forms the central and principal part of the letter, and is complete in itself. Its last words, in v. 6-12, will bring us round to the position from which we are now setting out.

This chapter stands, nevertheless, in close con-

\* Ch. iii. 14; iv. 6, 7; v. 5; 1 Cor. vi. 17, 19; Rom. viii. 9-16.

† Ch. iii. 28; Col. iii. 11; Rom. xv. 5-7.



nection of thought with the foregoing. The Apostle's doctrine is grounded in historical fact and personal experience. The theological argument has behind it the weight of his proved Apostleship. The Judaistic dispute at Antioch, in particular, bears immediately on the subject-matter of the third chapter. Peter's vacillation had its counterpart in the defection of the Galatians. The reproof and refutation which the elder Apostle brought upon himself, Paul's readers must have felt, touched them very nearly. In the crafty intriguers who made mischief at Antioch, they could see the image of the Judaists who had come into their midst. Above all, it was *the cross* which Cephas had dishonoured, whose efficacy he had virtually denied. His act of dissimulation, pushed to its issue, nullified the death of Christ. This is the gravamen of Paul's impeachment. And it is the foundation of all his complaints against the Galatians. Round this centre the conflict is waged. By its tendency to enhance or diminish the glory of the Saviour's cross, Paul judges of the truth of every teaching, the worth of every policy. Angel or Apostle, it matters not—whoever disparages the cross of Jesus Christ finds in Paul an unflinching enemy. The thought of Christ "dying in vain" rouses in him the strong emotion under which he indites the first verses of this chapter. What greater folly, what stranger bewitchment can there be, than for one who has seen "Jesus Christ crucified" to turn away to some other spectacle, to seek elsewhere a more potent and diviner charm! "O senseless Galatians!"

I. Here then was the beginning of their folly. *The Galatians forgot their Saviour's cross.*

This was the first step in their backsliding. Had their eyes continued to be fixed on Calvary, the Legalists would have argued and cajoled in vain. Let the cross of Christ once lose its spell for us, let its influence fail to hold and rule the soul, and we are at the mercy of every wind of doctrine. We are like sailors in a dark night on a perilous coast, who have lost sight of the lighthouse beacon. Our Christianity will go to pieces. If Christ crucified should cease to be its sovereign attraction, from that moment the Church is doomed.

This forgetfulness of the cross on the part of the Galatians is the more astonishing to Paul, because at first they had so vividly realised its power, and the scene of Calvary, as Paul depicted it, had taken hold of their nature with extraordinary force. He was conscious at the time—so his words seem to intimate—that it was given him, amongst this susceptible people, to draw the picture with unwonted effect. The gaze of his hearers was riveted upon the sight. It was as if the Lord Jesus hung there before their eyes. They beheld the Divine sufferer. They heard His cries of distress and of triumph. They felt the load which crushed Him. Nor was it their sympathies alone and their reverence, to which the spectacle appealed. It stirred their conscience to its depths. It awakened feelings of inward humiliation and contrition, of horror at the curse of sin, of anguish under the bitterness and blackness of its death. "It was *you*," Paul would say—"yo. and I, for whom He died. *Our* sins laid on Him that ignominy, those agonies of body and of spirit. He died the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." They looked, they listened, till their

hearts were broken, till all their sins cried out against them; and in a passion of repentance they cast themselves before the Crucified, and took Him for their Christ and King. From the foot of the cross they rose new men, with heaven's light upon their brow, with the cry *Abba, Father*, rising from their lips, with the Spirit of God and of Jesus Christ, the consciousness of a Divine sonship, filling their breast.

Has all this passed away? Have the Galatians forgotten the shame, the glory of that hour—the tears of penitence, the cries of joy and gratitude which the vision of the cross drew from their souls, the new creation it had wrought within them, the ardour of spirit and high resolve with which they pledged themselves to Christ's service? Was the influence of that transforming experience to prove no more enduring than the morning cloud and early dew? Foolish Galatians! Had they not the wit to see that the teaching of the Legalists ran counter to all they had then experienced, that it "made the death of Christ of none effect," which had so mighty and saving an effect upon themselves? Were they "so senseless," so bereft of reason and recollection? The Apostle is amazed. He cannot understand how impressions so powerful should prove so transient, and that truths thus clearly perceived and realised should come to be forgotten. Some fatal spell has been cast over them. They are "bewitched" to act as they are doing. A deadly fascination, like that of the "evil eye," has paralysed their minds.

The ancient word alluded to in the word the Apostle uses here is not altogether a superstition. The malignity that darts out in the glance of the "evil eye" is a presage of mischief. Not without reason does it cause a shudder. It is the sign of a demoniac jealousy and hate. "Satan has entered into" the soul which emits it, as once into Judas. Behind the spite of the Jewish false brethren Paul recognised a preternatural malice and cunning, like that with which "the Serpent beguiled Eve." To this darker source of the fascination his question, "Who hath bewitched you?" appears to point.

II. Losing sight of the cross of Christ, the Galatians were furthermore *rejecting the Holy Spirit of God.*

This heavy reproach the Apostle urges upon his readers through the rest of the paragraph, pausing only for a moment in ver. 4 to recall their earlier sufferings for Christ's sake in further witness against them. "I have but one question to put to you," he says—"You received the Spirit: how did that come about? Was it through what you *did* according to law? or what you *heard* in faith? You know well that this great blessing was given to your *faith*. Can you expect to retain this gift of God on other terms than those on which you received it? Have you begun with the Spirit to be brought to perfection by the flesh? (ver. 3). . . . Nay, God still bestows on you His Spirit, with gifts of miraculous energy; and I ask again, whether these displays attend on the practice of law-works, or upon faith's hearing?" (ver. 5).

The Apostle wished the Galatians to test the competing doctrines by their effects. The Spirit of God had put His seal on the Apostle's teaching, and on the faith of his hearers. Did any such manifestation accompany the preaching of the Legalists? That is all he wants to know. His cause must stand or fall by "the demonstra-



tion of the Spirit." By "signs and wonders," and diverse gifts of the Holy Spirit, God was wont to "bear witness with" the ministers and witnesses of Jesus Christ (Heb. ii. 3, 4; 1 Cor. xii. 4-11): was this testimony on the side of Paul, or the Circumcisionists? Did it sustain the gospel of the grace of God, or the "other gospel" of Legalism?

"He, the Spirit of truth, shall testify of Me," Christ had said; and so John, at the end of the Apostolic age: "It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth." When the Galatians accepted the message of the cross proclaimed by Paul's lips, "the Holy Spirit fell" on them, as on the Jewish Church at the Pentecost, and the Gentile believers in the house of Cornelius (Acts x. 44); "the love of God was poured out in their hearts through the Holy Ghost that was given them" (Rom. v. 5). As a mighty, rushing wind this supernatural influence swept through their souls. Like fire from heaven it kindled in their spirit, consuming their lusts and vanities, and fusing their nature into a new, holy passion of love to Christ and to God the Father. It broke from their lips in ecstatic cries, unknown to human speech; or moved them to unutterable groans and pangs of intercession (Rom. viii. 26).

There were men in the Galatian Churches on whom the baptism of the Spirit conferred besides miraculous *charismata*, superhuman powers of insight and of healing. These gifts God continued to "minister amongst" them (God is unquestionably the agent in ver. 5). Paul asks them to observe on what conditions, and to whom, these extraordinary gifts are distributed. For the "receiving of the Spirit" was an infallible sign of true Christian faith. This was the very proof which in the first instance had convinced Peter and the Judean Church that it was God's will to save the Gentiles, independently of the Mosaic law (Acts xi. 15-18).

Receiving the Spirit, the Galatian believers knew that they were the sons of God. "God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into their hearts, crying, *Abba, Father*" (iv. 6, 7). When Paul speaks of "receiving the Spirit," it is this that he thinks of most of all. The miraculous phenomena attending His visitations were facts of vast importance; and their occurrence is one of the historical certainties of the Apostolic age. They were "signs," conspicuous, impressive, indispensable at the time—monuments set up for all time. But they were in their nature variable and temporary. There are powers greater and more enduring than these. The things that "abide" are "faith, hope, love;" love chiefest of the three. Hence when the Apostle in a later chapter enumerates the qualities that go to make up "the fruit of the Spirit," he says nothing of *tongues* or *prophecies*, or *gifts of healing*; he begins with *love*. Wonder-working powers had their times and seasons, their peculiar organs; but every believer in Christ—whether Jew or Greek, primitive or mediæval or modern Christian, the heir of sixty generations of faith or the latest converts from heathenism—joins in the testimony, "The love of God is shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost given unto us." This mark of God's indwelling Spirit the Galatians had possessed. They were "sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (iii. 26). And with the filial title they had received the filial nature. They were "taught of God to love one

another." Being sons of God in Christ, they were also "heirs" (iv. 7; Rom. viii. 17). They possessed the earnest of the heavenly inheritance (Eph. i. 14), the pledge of their bodily redemption (Rom. viii. 10-23), and of eternal life in the fellowship of Christ. In their initial experience of "the salvation which is in Jesus Christ" they had the foretaste of its "eternal glory," of the "grace" belonging to "them that love our Lord Jesus Christ," which is "in incorruption."\*

No legal condition was laid down at this beginning of their Christian life; no "work" of any kind interposed between the belief of the heart and the conscious reception of the new life in Christ. Even their baptism, significant and memorable as it was, had not been required as in itself a precondition of salvation. Sometimes after baptism, but often—as in the case of Cornelius' household—before the rite was administered, "the Holy Ghost fell" on believing souls (Acts x. 44-48; xi. 15, 16). They "confessed with their mouth the Lord Jesus;" they "believed in their hearts that God had raised Him from the dead,"—and they were saved. Baptism is, as Paul's teaching elsewhere shows,† the expression, not the medium—the symbol, and not the cause, of the new birth which it might precede or follow. The Catholic doctrine of the *opus operatum* in the sacraments is radically anti-Pauline; it is Judaism over again. The process by which the Galatians became Christians was essentially spiritual. They had begun *in the Spirit*.

And so they must continue. To begin in the Spirit, and then look for perfection to the flesh, to suppose that the work of faith and love was to be consummated by Pharisaic ordinances, that Moses could lead them higher than Christ, and circumcision effect for them what the power of the Holy Ghost failed to do—this was the height of unreason. "Are you so senseless?" the Apostle asks.

He dwells on this absurdity, pressing home his expostulation with an emphasis that shows he is touching the centre of the controversy between himself and the Judaizers. They admitted, as we have shown in chap. ix., that Gentiles might *enter* the kingdom of God through faith and by the baptism of the Spirit. This was settled at the Council of Jerusalem. Without a formal acceptance of this evangelical principle, we do not see how the legalists could again have found entrance into Gentile Christian Churches, much less have carried Peter and Barnabas and the liberal Jews of Antioch with them, as they did. They no longer attempted to deny salvation to the uncircumcised; but they claimed for the circumcised a more complete salvation, and a higher status in the Church. "Yes, Paul has laid the foundation," they would say; "now we have come to perfect his work, to give you the more advanced instruction, derived from the fountain-head of Christian knowledge, from the first Apostles in Jerusalem. *If you would be perfect, keep the commandments*; be circumcised, like Christ and His disciples, and observe the law of Moses. If you be circumcised, Christ will profit you much more than hitherto; and you will inherit all the blessings promised in Him to the children of Abraham."

\* 2 Tim. ii. 10; Eph. vi. 24 (*ἀφθαρσία* is "incorruption" everywhere else in Paul; why not here?).

† Ch. iii. 24, 27; Rom. vi. 2-4; Col. ii. 11-13; Tit. iii. 5.



Such was the style of "persuasion" employed by the Judaizers. It was well calculated to deceive Jewish believers, even those best affected to their Gentile brethren. It appeared to maintain the prescriptive rights of Judaism and to satisfy legitimate national pride, without excluding the Gentiles from the fold of Christ. Nor is it difficult to understand the spell which the circumcisionist doctrine exerted over susceptible Gentile minds, after some years of Christian training, of familiarity with the Old Testament and the early history of Israel. Who is there that does not feel the charm of ancient memories and illustrious names? Many a noble mind is at this present time "bewitched," many a gifted and pious spirit is "carried away" by influences precisely similar. *Apostolical succession, patristic usage, catholic tradition, the authority of the Church*—what words of power are these! How wilful and arbitrary it appears to rely upon any present experience of the grace of God, upon one's own reading of the gospel of Christ, in contradiction to claims advanced under the patronage of so many revered and time-honoured names. The man, or the community, must be deeply conscious of having "received the Spirit," that can feel the force of attractions of this nature, and yet withstand them. It requires a clear view of the cross of Jesus Christ, an absolute faith in the supremacy of spiritual principles to enable one to resist the fascinations of ceremonialism and tradition. They offer us a more "ornate worship," a more "refined" type of piety, "consecrated by antiquity;" they invite us to enter a selecter circle, and to place ourselves on a higher level than that of the vulgar religionism of faith and feeling. It is the Galatian "persuasion" over again. Ceremony, antiquity, ecclesiastical authority are after all poor substitutes for faith and love. If they come between us and the living Christ, if they limit and dishonour the work of His Spirit, we have a right to say, and we will say with the Apostle Paul, *Away with them!*

The men of tradition are well content that we should "begin in the Spirit," provided they may have the finishing of our faith. To prey upon the Pauline Church is their ancient and natural habit. An evangelical beginning is too often followed by a ritualistic ending. And Paul is ever begetting spiritual children, to see himself robbed of them by these bewitching Judaizers. "O foolish Galatians," he seems still to be saying, What is it that charms you so much in all this ritual and externalism? Does it bring you nearer to the cross of Christ? Does it give you more of His Spirit? Is it a spiritual satisfaction that you find in these works of Church law, these priestly ordinances and performances? How can the sons of God return to such childish rudiments? Why should a religion which began so spiritually seek its perfection by means so formal and mechanical?

The conflict which this Epistle signalised is one that has never ceased. Its elements belong to human nature. It is the contest between the religion of the Spirit and that of the letter, between the spontaneity of personal faith and the rights of usage and prescription. The history of the Church is largely the record of this incessant struggle. In every Christian community, in every earnest and devout spirit, it is repeated in some new phase. When the Fathers

of the Church in the second and third centuries began to write about "the new law" and to identify the Christian ministry with the Aaronic priesthood, it was evident that Legalism was regaining its ascendancy. Already the foundations were laid of the Catholic Church-system, which culminated in the Papacy of Rome. What Paul's opponents sought to do by means of circumcision and Jewish prerogatives, that the Catholic legalists have done, on a larger scale, through the claims of the priesthood and the sacramental offices. The spiritual functions of the private Christian, one after another, were usurped or carelessly abandoned. Step by step the hierarchy interposed itself between Christ and His people's souls, till its mediation became the sole channel and organ of the Holy Spirit's influence. So it has come to pass, by a strange irony of history, that under the forms of Pauline doctrine and in the same of the Apostle of the Gentiles joined to that of Peter, Catholic Christendom, delivered by him from the Jewish yoke, has been entangled in a bondage in some respects even heavier and more repressive. If tradition and prescription are to regulate our Christian belief, they lead us infallibly to *Rome*, as they would have led the Galatians to perishing Jerusalem.

III. Paul said he had but one question to ask his readers, that which we have already discussed. And yet he does put to them, by way of parenthesis, another (ver. 4), suggested by what he has already called to mind, touching the beginning of their Christian course: "Have ye suffered so many things in vain?" Their folly was the greater in that *it threatened to deprive them of the fruit of their past sufferings in the cause of Christ.*

The Apostle does not say this without a touch of softened feeling. Remembering the trials these Galatians had formerly endured, the sacrifices they had made in accepting the gospel, he cannot bear to think of their apostasy. Hope breaks through his fear, grief passes into tenderness as he adds, "If it be indeed in vain." The link of reminiscence connecting vv. 3 and 4 is the same as that we find in 1 Thess. i. 6: "Ye received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost."\*

We need not seek for any peculiar cause of these sufferings; nor wonder that the Apostle does not mention them elsewhere. Every infant Church had its baptism of persecution. No one could come out of heathen society and espouse the cause of Jesus, without making himself a mark for ridicule and violence, without the rupture of family and public ties, and many painful sacrifices. The hatred of Paul's fellow-countrymen towards him was an additional cause of persecution to the Churches he had founded. They were followers of the crucified Nazarene, of the apostate Saul. And they had to suffer for it. With the joy of their new life in Christ there had come sharp pangs of loss and grief, heart-wounds deep and lasting. This slight allusion sufficiently reminds the Apostle's readers of what they had passed through at the time of their conversion.

And now were they going to surrender the faith won by such a struggle? Would they let themselves be cheated of blessings which had cost them so dear? "So many things," he asks,

\* Comp. 2 Thess. i. 4-6; Ph. i. 28-30; Rom. viii. 17; 2 Tim. i. 8.



"did you suffer in vain?" He will not believe it. He cannot think that this brave beginning will have so mean an ending. If "God counts them worthy of His kingdom for which they suffered," let them not deem themselves unworthy. Surely they have not escaped from the tyranny of heathenism, in order to yield up their liberties to Jewish intrigue, to the cozenage of false brethren who seek to exalt themselves at their expense (ii. 4; iv. 17; vi. 12, 13). Will flattery beguile from them the treasure to which persecution had made them cling the more closely?

Too often, alas! the Galatian defection is repeated. The generous devotion of youth is followed by the lethargy and formalism of a prosperous age; and the man who at twenty-five was a pattern of godly zeal, at fifty is a finished worldling. The Christ whom he adored, the cross at which he bowed in those early days—he seldom thinks of them now. "I remember thee, *the kindness of thy youth*, the love of thine espousals; how thou wentest after Me *in the wilderness*." Success has spoiled him. The world's glamour has bewitched him. He bids fair to "end in the flesh."

In a broader sense, the Apostle's question addresses itself to Churches and communities untrue to the spiritual principles that gave them birth. The faith of the primitive Church, that endured three centuries of persecution, yielded its purity to Imperial blandishments. Our fathers, Puritan and Scottish, staked their lives for the crown-rights of Jesus Christ and the freedom of faith. Through generations they endured social and civil ostracism in the cause of religious liberty. And now that the battle is won, there are those amongst their children who scarcely care to know what the struggle was about. Out of indolence of mind and vanity of scepticism, they abandon at the bidding of priest or sophist the spiritual heritage bequeathed to them. Did *they* then suffer so many things in vain? Was it an illusion that sustained those heroic souls, and enabled them to "stop the mouths of lions and subdue kingdoms"? Was it for nought that so many of Christ's witnesses in these realms since the Reformation days have suffered the loss of all things rather than yield by subjection to a usurping and worldly priesthood? And can we, reaping the fruit of their faith and courage, afford in these altered times to dispense with the principles whose maintenance cost our forefathers so dear a price?

"O foolish Galatians," Paul in that case might well say to us again!

## CHAPTER XII.

### ABRAHAM'S BLESSING AND THE LAW'S CURSE.

GALATIANS iii. 6-14.

FAITH then, we have learnt, not works of law, was the condition on which the Galatians received the Spirit of Christ. By this gate they entered the Church of God, and had come into possession of the spiritual blessings common to all Christian believers, and of those extraordinary gifts of grace which marked the Apostolic days.

In this mode of salvation, the Apostle goes

on to show, there was after all nothing new. The righteousness of faith is more ancient than legalism. It is as old as *Abraham*. His religion rested on this ground. "The promise of the Spirit," held by him in trust for the world, was given to his faith. "You received the Spirit, God works in you His marvellous powers, by the hearing of faith—even as *Abraham believed God*, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness." In the hoary patriarchal days as now, in the time of promise as of fulfilment, faith is the root of religion; grace invites, righteousness waits upon the hearing of faith. So Paul declares in vv. 6-9, and re-affirms with emphasis in ver. 14. The intervening sentences set forth by contrast *the curse* that hangs over the man who seeks salvation by way of law and personal merit.

Thus the two standing types of religion, the two ways by which men seek salvation, are put in contrast with each other—faith with its blessing, law with its curse. The former is the path on which the Galatians had entered, under the guidance of Paul; the latter, that to which the Judaic teachers were leading them. So far the two principles stand only in antagonism. The antinomy will be resolved in the latter part of the chapter.

But why does Paul make so much of the faith of *Abraham*? Not only because it furnished him with a telling illustration, or because the words of Gen. xv. 6 supplied a decisive proof-text for his doctrine: he could not well have chosen any other ground. Abraham's case was the *instantia probans* in this debate. "We are Abraham's seed:"\* this was the proud consciousness that swelled every Jewish breast. "Abraham's bosom" was the Israelite's heaven: even in Hades his guilty sons could claim pity from "Father Abraham" (Luke xvi. 19-31). In the use of this title were concentrated all the theocratic pride and national bigotry of the Jewish race. To the example of Abraham the Judaistic teacher would not fail to appeal. He would tell the Galatians how the patriarch was called, like themselves, out of the heathen world to the knowledge of the true God; how he was separated from his Gentile kindred, and received the mark of circumcision to be worn thenceforth by all who followed in his steps, and who sought the fulfilment of the promise granted to Abraham and his seed.

The Apostle holds, as strongly as any Judaist, that the promise belongs to the children of Abraham. But what makes a son of Abraham? "Birth, true Jewish blood, of course," replied the Judaist. The Gentile, in his view, could only come into a share of the heritage by receiving circumcision, the mark of legal adoption and incorporation. Paul answers this question by raising another. What was it that brought Abraham his blessing? To what did he owe his righteousness? It was *faith*: so Scripture declares—"Abraham believed God." Righteousness, covenant, promise, blessing—all turned upon this. And the true sons of Abraham are those who are like him: "Know then that the men of faith, these are Abraham's sons." This declaration is a blow, launched with studied effect full in the face of Jewish privilege. Only a Pharisee, only a Rabbi, knew how to wound in this fashion. Like the words of Stephen's defence, such sentences as these

\* Matt. iii. 9; John viii. 33-39.



stung Judaic pride to the quick. No wonder that his fellow-countrymen, in their fierce fanaticism of race, pursued Paul with burning hate and set a mark upon his life.

But the identity of Abraham's blessing with that enjoyed by Gentile Christians is not left to rest on mere inference and analogy of principle. Another quotation clinches the argument: "In thee," God promised to the patriarch, "shall be blessed"—not the natural seed, not the circumcised alone—but "all the nations (Gentiles)!" And "the Scripture" said this, "foreseeing" what is now taking place, namely, "that God justifieth the Gentiles by faith." So that in giving this promise to Abraham it gave him, his "gospel before the time (*προεγγελιαστο*)." Good news indeed it was to the noble patriarch, that all the nations—of whom as a wide traveller he knew so much, and over whose condition he doubtless grieved—were finally to be blessed with the light of faith and the knowledge of the true God; and thus blessed through himself. In this prospect he "rejoiced to see Christ's day;" nay, the Saviour tells us, like Moses and Elijah, "he saw it and was glad." Up to this point in Abraham's history, as Paul's readers would observe, there was no mention of circumcision or legal requirement (ver. 17; Rom. iv. 9-13). It was on purely evangelical principles, by a declaration of God's grace listened to in thankful faith, that he had received the promise which linked him to the universal Church and entitled every true believer to call him father. "So that the men of faith are blessed, along with faithful Abraham."

I. What then, we ask, was the nature of Abraham's blessing? In its essence, it was righteousness. The "blessing" of vv. 9 and 14 is synonymous with the "justification" of vv. 6 and 8, embracing with it all its fruits and consequences. No higher benediction could come to any man than that God should "count him righteous."

Paul and the Legalists agreed in designating righteousness before God man's chief good. But they and he intended different things by it. Nay, Paul's conception of righteousness, it is said, differed radically from that of the Old Testament, and even of his companion writers in the New Testament. Confessedly, his doctrine presents this idea under a peculiar aspect. But there is a spiritual identity, a common basis of truth, in all the Biblical teaching on this vital subject. Abraham's righteousness was the state of a man who trustfully accepts God's word of grace, and is thereby set right with God, and put in the way of being and doing right thenceforward. In virtue of his faith, God regarded and dealt with Abraham as a righteous man. Righteousness of character springs out of righteousness of standing. God makes a man righteous by counting him so! This is the Divine paradox of Justification by Faith. When the Hebrew author says, "God counted it to him for righteousness," he does not mean *in lieu of righteousness*, as though faith were a substitute for a righteousness not forthcoming and now rendered superfluous; but so as to amount to righteousness, with a view to righteousness. This "reckoning" is the sovereign act of the Creator, who gives what He demands, "who maketh alive the dead, and calleth the things that are not as though they were" (Rom. iv. 17-22). He sees the fruit in the germ.

There is nothing arbitrary, or merely forensic in this imputation. Faith is, for such a being as man, the spring of all righteousness before God, the one act of the soul which is primarily and supremely right. What is more just than that the creature should trust his Creator, the child his Father? Here is the root of all right understanding and right relations between men and God—that which gives God, so to speak, a moral hold upon us. And by this trust of the heart, yielding itself in the "obedience of faith" to its Lord and Redeemer, it comes into communion with all those energies and purposes in Him which make for righteousness. Hence from first to last, alike in the earlier and later stages of revelation, man's righteousness is "not his own;" it is "the righteousness that is of God, based upon faith" (Phil. iii. 9). Faith unites us to the source of righteousness, from which unbelief severs us. So that Paul's teaching leads us to the fountain-head, while other Biblical teachers for the most part guide us along the course of the same Divine righteousness for man. His doctrine is required by theirs; their doctrine is implied, and indeed more than once expressly stated, in his.\*

The Old Testament deals with the materials of character, with the qualities and behaviour constituting a righteous man, more than with the cause or process that makes him righteous. All the more significant therefore are such pronouncements as that of Gen. xv. 6, and the saying of Hab. ii. 4, Paul's other leading quotation on this subject. This second reference, taken from the times of Israel's declension, a thousand years and more after Abraham, gives proof of the vitality of the righteousness of faith. The haughty, sensual Chaldean is master of the earth. Kingdom after kingdom he has trampled down. Judah lies at his mercy, and has no mercy to expect. But the prophet looks beyond the storm and ruin of the time. "Art Thou not from everlasting, my God, my Holy One? We shall not die" (Hab. i. 12). The faith of Abraham lives in his breast. The people in whom that faith is cannot die. While empires fall, and races are swept away in the flood of conquest, "The just shall live by his faith." If faith is seen here at a different point from that given before, it is still the same faith of Abraham, the grasp of the soul upon the Divine word—*there* first evoked, *here* steadfastly maintained, there and here the one ground of righteousness, and therefore of life, for man or for people. Habakkuk and the "remnant" of his day were "blessed with faithful Abraham;" how blessed, his splendid prophecy shows. Righteousness is of faith; life of righteousness: this is the doctrine of Paul, witnessed to by law and prophets.

Into what a life of blessing the righteousness of faith introduced "faithful Abraham," these Galatian students of the Old Testament very well knew. Twice† is he designated "the friend of God." The Arabs still call him *el khalil*,—the friend. His image has impressed itself with singular force on the Oriental mind. He is the noblest figure of the Old Testament, surpassing Isaac in force, Jacob in purity, and both in dignity of character. The man to whom God said, "Fear not, Abraham: I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward;" and

\* Rom. viii. 4; 1 Cor. vi. 9; Eph. v. 9; Tit. ii. 12-14; etc.  
† 2 Chron. xx. 7; Isa. xli. 8; comp. Jas. ii. 23.



again, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be thou perfect:" on how lofty a platform of spiritual eminence was he set! The scene of Gen. xviii. throws into striking relief the greatness of Abraham, the greatness of our human nature in him; when the Lord says, "Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I do?" and allows him to make his bold intercession for the guilty cities of the Plain. Even the trial to which the patriarch was subjected in the sacrifice of Isaac, was a singular honour, done to one whose faith was "counted worthy to endure" this unexampled strain. His religion exhibits an heroic strength and firmness, but at the same time a large-hearted, genial humanity, an elevation and serenity of mind, to which the temper of those who boasted themselves his children was utterly opposed. Father of the Jewish race, Abraham was no Jew. He stands before us in the morning light of revelation a simple, noble, archaic type of *man*, true "father of many nations." And his faith was the secret of the greatness which has commanded for him the reverence of four thousand years. His trust in God made him worthy to receive so immense a trust for the future of mankind.

With Abraham's faith, the Gentiles inherit his blessing. They were not simply blessed *in* him, through his faith which received and handed down the blessing—but blessed *with* him. Their righteousness rests on the same principle as his. Religion reverts to its earlier, purer type. Just as in the Epistle to the Hebrews Melchizedek's priesthood is adduced as belonging to a more Christlike order, antecedent to and underlying the Aaronic; so we find here, beneath the cumbrous structure of legalism, the evidence of a primitive religious life, cast in a larger mould, with a happier style of experience, a piety broader, freer, at once more spiritual and more human. Reading the story of Abraham, we witness the bright dawn of faith, its spring-time of promise and of hope. These morning hours passed away; and the sacred history shuts us in to the hard school of Mosaism, with its isolation, its mechanical routine and ritual drapery, its yoke of legal exaction ever growing more burdensome. Of all this the Church of Christ was to know nothing. It was called to enter into the labours of the legal centuries, without the need of sharing their burdens. In the "Father of the faithful" and the "Friend of God" Gentile believers were to see their exemplar, to find the warrant for that sufficiency and freedom of faith of which the natural children of Abraham unjustly strove to rob them.

II. But if the Galatians are resolved to be under the Law, they must understand what this means. *The legal state*, Paul declares, instead of the blessing of Abraham, *brings with it a curse*: "As many as are of law-works, are under a curse."

This the Apostle, in other words, had told Peter at Antioch. He maintained that whoever sets up the law as a ground of salvation, "makes himself a transgressor" (ii. 18); he brings upon himself the misery of having violated law. This is no doubtful contingency. The law in explicit terms pronounces its curse against every man who, binding himself to keep it, yet breaks it in any particular.

The Scripture which Paul quotes to this effect, forms the conclusion of the commination ut-

tered by the people of Israel, according to the directions of Moses, from Mount Ebal, on their entrance into Canaan: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them."\* How terribly had that imprecation been fulfilled! They had in truth pledged themselves to the impossible. The Law had not been kept—could not be kept on merely legal principles, by man or nation. The confessions of the Old Testament, already cited in ii. 16, were proof of this. That no one had "continued in all things written in the law to do them," goes without saying. If Gentile Christians adopt the law of Moses, they must be prepared to render an obedience complete and unfaltering in every detail (v. 3)—or have this curse hanging perpetually above their heads. They will bring on themselves the very condemnation which was lying so heavily upon the conscience of Israel after the flesh.

This sequence of law and transgression belonged to Paul's deepest convictions. "The law," he says, "worketh out wrath" (Rom. iv. 14, 15). This is an axiom of Paulinism. Human nature being what it is, law means transgression; and the law being what it is, transgression means Divine anger and the curse (see p. 849). The law is just; the penalty is necessary. The conscience of the ancient people of God compelled them to pronounce the imprecation dictated by Moses. The same thing occurs every day, and under the most varied moral conditions. Every man who knows what is right and will not do it, *execrates* himself. The consciousness of transgression is a clinging, inward curse, a witness of ill-desert, foreboding punishment. The law of conscience, like that of Ebal and Gerizim, admits of no exceptions, no intermission. In the majesty of its unbending sternness it can only be satisfied by our *continuing in all things* that it prescribes. Every instance of failure, attended with whatever excuse or condonation, leaves upon us its mark of self-reproach. And this inward condemnation, this consciousness of guilt latent in the human breast, is not self-condemnation alone, not a merely subjective state; but it proceeds from God's present judgment on the man. It is the shadow of His just displeasure.

What Paul here proves from Scripture, bitter experience had taught him. As the law unfolded itself to his youthful conscience, he approved it as "holy and just and good." He was pledged and resolved to observe it in every point. He must despise himself if he acted otherwise. He strove to be—in the sight of men indeed he was—"touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." If ever a man carried out to the letter the legal requirements, and fulfilled the moralist's ideal, it was Saul of Tarsus. Yet his failure was complete, desperate! While men accounted him a paragon of virtue, he loathed himself; he knew that before God his righteousness was worthless. The "law of sin in his members" defied "the law of his reason," and made its power the more sensible the more it was repressed. The curse thundered by the six tribes from Ebal resounded in his ears. And there was no escape. The grasp of the law was relentless, be-

\* Deut. xxvii. 16; Jos. viii. 32-35. "All things" given by the LXX. in the former passage, is wanting in the Hebrew. But the phrase is true to the spirit of this text, and is read in the parallel Deut. xxviii. 15.



cause it was just, like the grasp of death. Against all that was holiest in it the evil in himself stood up in stark, immitigable opposition. "O wretched man that I am," groans the proud Pharisee, "who shall deliver me!" From this curse Christ had redeemed him. And he would not, if he could help it, have the Galatians expose themselves to it again. On legal principles, there is no safety but in absolute, flawless obedience, such as no man ever has rendered, or ever will. Let them trust the experience of centuries of Jewish bondage.

Verses 11, 12 support the assertion that the Law issues in condemnation, by a further, negative proof. The argument is a syllogism, both whose premises are drawn from the Old Testament. It may be formally stated thus. *Major premise* (evangelical maxim): "The just man lives of faith"\* (ver. 11). *Minor*: The man of law does not live of faith (for he lives by doing: legal maxim, ver. 12).† *Ergo*: The man of law is not just before God (ver. 11). While therefore the Scripture by its afore-cited commination closes the door of life against righteousness of works, that door is opened to the men of faith. The two principles are logical contradictions. To grant righteousness to faith is to deny it to legal works. This assumption furnishes our minor premise in ver. 12. The legal axiom is, "He that doeth them shall live in them:" that is to say, *The law gives life for doing* not therefore *for believing*; we get no sort of legal credit for that. The two ways have different starting-points, as they lead to opposite goals. From faith one marches, through God's righteousness, to blessing; from works, through self-righteousness, to the curse.

The two paths now lie before us—the Pauline and the legal method of salvation, the Abrahamic and the Mosaic scheme of religion. According to the latter, one begins by keeping so many rules—ethical, ceremonial, or what not; and after doing this, one expects to be counted righteous by God. According to the former, the man begins by an act of self-surrendering trust in God's word of grace, and God already reckons him just on that account, without his pretending to anything in the way of merit for himself. In short, the Legalist tries to *make God believe in him*: Abraham and Paul are content to *believe in God*. They do not set themselves over against God, with a righteousness of their own which He is bound to recognise; they commit themselves to God, that He may work out His righteousness in them. Along this path lies blessing—peace of heart, fellowship with God, moral strength, *life* in its fulness, depth, and permanence. From this source Paul derives all that was noblest in the Church of the Old Covenant. And he puts the calm, grand image of Father Abraham before us for our pattern, in contrast with the narrow, painful, bitter spirit of Jewish legalism, inwardly self-condemned.

III. But how pass from this curse to that blessing? How escape from the nemesis of the broken law into the freedom of Abraham's faith? To this question ver. 13 makes answer: "Christ bought us out of the curse of the law, having become a curse for us." Christ's redemption changes the curse into a blessing.

We entered this Epistle under the shadow of the cross. It has been all along the centre of

the writer's thought. He has found in it the solution of the terrible problem forced upon him by the law. Law had led him to Christ's cross; laid him in Christ's grave; and there left him, to rise with Christ a new, free man, living henceforth to God (ii. 19-21). So we understand the purpose and the issue of the death of Jesus Christ; now we must look more narrowly at the fact itself.

"Christ became a curse!" Verily the Apostle was not "seeking to please or persuade men." This expression throws the scandal of the cross into the strongest relief. Far from veiling it or apologising for it, Paul accentuates this offence. His experience taught him that Jewish pride must be compelled to reckon with it. No, he would not have "the offence of the cross abolished" (v. 11).

And did not Christ *become a curse*? Could the fact be denied by any Jew? His death was that of the most abandoned criminals. By the combined verdict of Jew and Gentile, of civil and religious authority, endorsed by the voice of the populace, He was pronounced a malefactor and blasphemer. But this was not all. The hatred and injustice of men are hard to bear; yet many a sensitive man has borne them in a worthy cause without shrinking. It was a darker dread, an infliction far more crushing, that compelled the cry, "My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me!" Against the maledictions of men Jesus might surely at the worst have counted on the Father's good pleasure. But even that failed Him. There fell upon His soul the death of death, the very curse of sin—*abandoned by God*! Men "did esteem Him"—and for the moment He esteemed Himself—"smitten of God." He hung there abhorred of men, forsaken of His God; earth all hate, heaven all blackness to His view. Are the Apostle's words too strong? Delivering up His Son to pass through this baptism, God did in truth *make Him a curse* for us. By His "determinate counsel" the Almighty set Jesus Christ in the place of condemned sinners, and allowed the curse of this wicked world to claim Him for its victim.

The death that befell Him was chosen as if for the purpose of declaring Him accursed. The Jewish people have thus stigmatised Him. They made the Roman magistrate and the heathen soldiery their instrument in *gibbeting* their Messiah. "Shall I crucify your King?" said Pilate. "Yes," they answered, "crucify Him!" Their rulers thought to lay on the hated Nazarene an everlasting curse. Was it not written, "A curse of God is every one that hangeth on a tree?" This saying attached in the Jewish mind a peculiar loathing to the person of the dead thus exposed. Once *crucified*, the name of Jesus would surely perish from the lips of men; no Jew would hereafter dare to profess faith in Him. His cause could never surmount this ignominy. In later times the bitterest epithet that Jewish scorn could fling against our Saviour (God forgive them!) was just this word of Deuteronomy, *hattaliy*—*the hanged one*.

This sentence of execration, with its shame freshly smarting, Paul has seized and twined into a crown of glory. "Hanged on a tree, crushed with reproach—*accursed*, you say, He was, my Lord, my Saviour! It is true. But the curse He bore was *ours*. His death, unmerited by Him, was our ransom-price, endured to *buy*

\* Hab. ii. 4.

† Lev. xviii. 5.



us out of our curse of sin and death." This is the doctrine of the *vicarious sacrifice*. In speaking of "ransom" and "redemption," using the terms of the market, Christ and His Apostles are applying human language to things in their essence unutterable, things which we define in their effects rather than in themselves. "We know, we prophesy, in part." We know that we were condemned by God's holy law; that Christ, Himself sinless, came under the law's curse, and taking the place of sinners, "became sin for us;" and that His interposition has brought us out of condemnation into blessing and peace. How can we conceive the matter otherwise than as it is put in His own words: He "gave Himself a ransom—The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep?" He suffers in our room and stead; He bears inflections incurred by our sins, and due to ourselves; He does this at the Divine Will, and under the Divine Law: what is this but to "buy us out," to pay the price which frees us from the prison-house of death?

"Christ redeemed *us*," says the Apostle, thinking questionless of himself and his Jewish kindred, on whom the law weighed so heavily. His redemption was offered "to the Jew first." But not to the Jew alone, nor as a Jew. The time of release had come for all men. "Abraham's blessing," long withheld, was now to be imparted, as it had been promised, to "all the tribes of the earth." In the removal of the legal curse, God comes near to men as in the ancient days. His love is shed abroad; His spirit of sonship dwells in human hearts. In Christ Jesus crucified, risen, reigning—a new world comes into being, which restores and surpasses the promise of the old.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### THE COVENANT OF PROMISE.

GALATIANS iii. 15-18.

GENTILE Christians, Paul has shown, are already sons of Abraham. Their faith proves their descent from the father of the faithful. The redemption of Christ has expiated the law's curse, and brought to its fulfilment the primeval promise. It has conferred on Jew and Gentile alike the gift of the Holy Spirit, sealing the Divine inheritance. "Abraham's blessing" has "come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus." What can Judaism do for them more? Except, in sooth, to bring them under its inevitable curse.

But here the Judaist might interpose: "Granting so much as this, allowing that God covenanted with Abraham on terms of faith, and that believing Gentiles are entitled to his blessing, did not God make a *second covenant with Moses*, promising further blessings upon terms of law? If the one covenant remains valid, why not the other? From the school of Abraham the Gentiles must pass on to the school of Moses." This inference might appear to follow, by parity of reasoning, from what the apostle has just advanced. And it accords with the position which the legalistic opposition had now taken up. The people of the circumcision, they argued, retained within the Church of Christ their peculiar call-

ing; and Gentiles, if they would be perfect Christians, must accept the covenant-token and the unchangeable ordinances of Israel. Faith is but the first step in the new life; the discipline of the law will bring it to completion. Release from the curse of the law, they might contend, leaves its obligations still binding, its ordinances unrepealed. Christ "came not to destroy, but to fulfil."

So we are brought to the question of the *relation of law and promise*, which is the theoretical, as that of Gentile to Jewish Christianity is the practical problem of the Epistle. The remainder of the chapter is occupied with its discussion. This section is the special contribution of the Epistle to Christian theology—a contribution weighty enough of itself to give to it a foremost place amongst the documents of Revelation. Paul has written nothing more masterly. The breadth and subtlety of his reasoning, his grasp of the spiritual realities underlying the facts of history, are conspicuously manifest in these paragraphs, despite the extreme difficulty and obscurity of certain sentences.

This part of the Epistle is in fact a piece of inspired *historical criticism*; it is a magnificent reconstruction of the course of sacred history. It is Paul's theory of doctrinal development, condensing into a few pregnant sentences the *rationale* of Judaism, explaining the method of God's dealings with mankind from Abraham down to Christ, and fitting the legal system into its place in this order with an exactness and consistency that supply an effectual verification of the hypothesis. To such a height has the apostle been raised, so completely is he emancipated from the fetters of Jewish thought, that the whole Mosaic economy becomes to his mind no more than an interlude, a passing stage in the march of Revelation.

This passage finds its counterpart in Romans xi. Here the past, there the future fortunes of Israel are set forth. Together the two chapters form a Jewish theodicy, a vindication of God's treatment of the chosen people from first to last. Rom. v. 12-21 and 1 Cor. xv. 20-57 supply a wider exposition, on the same principles, of the fortunes of mankind at large. The human mind has conceived nothing more splendid and yet sober, more humbling and exalting, than the view of man's history and destiny thus sketched out.

The Apostle seeks to establish, in the first place, the *fixedness of the Abrahamic covenant*. This is the main purport of the passage. At the same time, in verse 16, he brings into view the *Object of the covenant*, the person designated by it—*Christ*, its proper Heir. This consideration, though stated here parenthetically, lies at the basis of the settlement made with Abraham; its importance is made manifest by the after-course of Paul's exposition.

At this point, where the discussion opens out into its larger proportions, we observe that the sharp tone of personal feeling with which the chapter commenced has disappeared. In verse 15 the writer drops into a conciliatory key. He seems to forget the wounded apostle in the theologian and instructor in Christ. "Brethren," he says, "I speak in human fashion—I put this matter in a way that every one will understand." He lifts himself above the Galatian quarrel, and from the height of his argument addresses himself to the common intelligence of mankind.



But is it *covenant* or *testament* that the Apostle intends here? "I speak after the manner of men," he continues; "if the case were that of a man's διαθήκη, once ratified, no one would set it aside, or add to it. The presumption is that the word is employed in its accepted, everyday significance. And that unquestionably was "testament." It would never occur to an ordinary Greek reader to interpret the expression otherwise. Philo and Josephus, the representatives of contemporary Hellenistic usage, read this term, in the Old Testament, with the connotation of διαθήκη, in current Greek.\* The context of this passage is in harmony with their usage. The "covenant" of verse 15 corresponds to "the blessing of Abraham," and "the promise of the Spirit" in the two preceding verses. Again, in verse 17, "promise" and "covenant" are synonymous. Now a "covenant of promise" amounts to a "testament." It is the *prospective* nature of the covenant, the bond which it creates between Abraham and the Gentiles, which the Apostle has been insisting on ever since verse 6. It belongs "to Abraham and to his seed"; it comes by way of "gift" and "grace" (vv. 18, 22); it invests those taking part in it with "sonship" and rights of "inheritance" (vv. 18, 26, 29, etc.) These ideas cluster round the thought of a *testament*; they are not inherent in *covenant*, strictly considered. Even in the Old Testament this latter designation fails to convey all that belongs to the Divine engagements there recorded. In a covenant the two parties are conceived as equals in point of law, binding themselves by a compact that bears on each alike. Here it is not so. The disposition of affairs is made by God, who in the sovereignty of His grace "hath granted it to Abraham." It was surely a reverent sense of this difference which dictated to the men of the Septuagint the use of διαθήκη rather than συνθήκη, the ordinary term for *covenant* or *compact*, in their rendering of the Hebrew *berith*.

This aspect of the covenants now becomes their commanding feature. Our Lord's employment of this word at the Last Supper gave it the affecting reference to His death which it has conveyed ever since to the Christian mind.† The Latin translators were guided by a true instinct when in the Scriptures of the New Covenant they wrote *testamentum* everywhere, not *fœdus* or *pactum*, for this word. The testament is a covenant—and something more. The testator designates his heir, and binds himself to grant to him at the predetermined time (iv. 2) the specified boon, which it remains for the beneficiary simply to accept. Such a Divine *testament* has come down from Abraham to his Gentile sons.

I. Now when a man has made a testament, and it has been ratified—"proved," as we should say—it *stands good for ever*. No one has afterwards any power to set it aside, or to attach to it a new codicil, modifying its previous terms. There it stands—a document complete and unchangeable (ver. 15).

Such a testament God gave "to Abraham and his seed." It was "ratified" (or "confirmed") by the final attestation made to the patriarch

\* See the able and convincing elucidation of διαθήκη in Cremer's "Biblico-Theological Lexicon of N. T. Greek."

† See Heb. ix. 16-18, where so much ingenuity has been expended to turn "testament" into "covenant."

"Sweet is the memory of His name,  
Who blessed us in His will."

after the supreme trial of his faith in the sacrifice of Isaac: "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven; . . . and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."\* In human testaments the ratification takes place through another; but God "having no greater," yet "to show to the heirs of the promise the immutability of His counsel" confirmed it by His own oath. Nothing was wanting to mark the Abrahamic covenant with an indelible character, and to show that it expressed an unalterable purpose in the mind of God.

With such Divine asseveration "were the promises spoken to Abraham, and *his seed*." This last word diverts the Apostle's thoughts for a moment, and he gives a side-glance at the person thus designated in the terms of the promise. Then he returns to his former statement, urging it home against the Legalists: "Now this is what I mean: a testament previously ratified by God, the Law which dates four hundred and thirty years later cannot annul, so as to abrogate the Promise" (verse 17). The bearing of Paul's argument is now perfectly clear. He is using the promise to Abraham to overthrow the supremacy of the Mosaic law. The Promise was, he says, the prior settlement. No subsequent transaction could invalidate it or disqualify those entitled under it to receive the inheritance. That testament lies at the foundation of the sacred history. The Jew least of all could deny this. How could such an instrument be set aside? Or what right has any one to limit it by stipulations of a later date?

When a man amongst ourselves bequeaths his property, and his will is publicly attested, its directions are scrupulously observed; to tamper with them is a crime. Shall we have less respect to this Divine settlement, this venerable charter of human salvation? You say, The Law of Moses has its rights: it must be taken into account as well as the Promise to Abraham. True; but it has no power to cancel or restrict the Promise, older by four centuries and a half. The later must be adjusted to the earlier dispensation, the Law interpreted by the Promise. God has not made *two* testaments—the one solemnly committed to the faith and hope of mankind, only to be retracted and substituted by something of a different stamp. He could not thus stultify Himself. And we must not apply the Mosaic enactments, addressed to a single people, in such a way as to neutralise the original provisions made for the race at large. Our human instincts of good faith, our reverence for public compacts and established rights, forbid our allowing the Law of Moses to trench upon the inheritance assured to mankind in the Covenant of Abraham.

This contradiction necessarily arises if the Law is put on a level with the Promise. To read the Law as a continuation of the older instrument is virtually to efface the latter, to "make the promise of none effect." The two institutes proceed on opposite principles. "If the inheritance is of law, it is no longer of promise" (verse 18). Law prescribes certain things to be done, and guarantees a corresponding reward—so much pay for so much work. That, in its proper place, is an excellent principle. But the promise stands on another footing: "God hath bestowed it on Abraham by way of grace" (κεχάρισται, ver. 18).

\*Heb. vi. 17.



It holds out a blessing conferred by the Promiser's good will, to be conveyed at the right time without demanding anything more from the recipient than faith, which is just the will to receive. So God dealt with Abraham, centuries before any one had dreamed of the Mosaic system of law. God appeared to Abraham in His sovereign grace; Abraham met that grace with faith. So the Covenant was formed. And so it abides, clear of all legal conditions and claims of human merit, an "everlasting covenant" (Gen. xvii. 7; Heb. xiii. 20).

Its permanence is emphasised by the *tense* of the verb relating to it. The Greek *perfect* describes settled facts, actions or events that carry with them finality. Accordingly we read in vv. 15 and 17 of "a ratified covenant"—one that *stands* ratified. In ver. 18, "God hath granted it to Abraham"—a grace never to be recalled. Again (ver. 19), "the seed to whom the promise hath been made"—once for all. A perfect participle is used of the Law in ver. 17 (γεγονώς), for it is a fact of abiding significance that it was so much later than the Promise; and in ver. 24, "the Law hath been our tutor,"—its work in that respect is an enduring benefit. Otherwise the verbs relating to Mosaism in this context are past in tense, describing what is now matter of history, a course of events that has come and gone. Meanwhile the Promise remains an immovable certainty, a settlement never to be disturbed. The emphatic position of ὁ Θεός (ver. 18), at the very end of the paragraph, serves to heighten its effect. "It is God that hath bestowed this grace on Abraham." There is a challenge in the word, as though Paul asked, "Who shall make it void?"\*

Paul's chronology in ver. 17 has been called in question. We are not much concerned to defend it. Whether Abraham preceded Moses by four hundred and thirty years, as the Septuagint and the Samaritan text of Exod. xii. 40, 41 affirm, and as Paul's contemporaries commonly supposed; or whether, as it stands in the Hebrew text of Exodus, this was the length of time covered by the sojourn in Egypt, so that the entire period would be about half as long again, is a problem that Old Testament historians must settle for themselves; it need not trouble the reader of Paul. The shorter period is amply sufficient for his purpose. If any one had said, "No, Paul; you are mistaken. It was six hundred and thirty, not four hundred and thirty years from Abraham to Moses;" he would have accepted the correction with the greatest good will. He might have replied, "So much the better for my argument." It is possible to "strain out" the "gnats" of Biblical criticism, and yet to swallow huge "camels" of improbability.

II. Ver. 16 remains for our consideration. In proving the steadfastness of the covenant with Abraham, the Apostle at the same time directs our attention to the *Person designated by it*, to whom its fulfilment was guaranteed. "To Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed—to thy seed," which is Christ."

This identification the Judaist would not question. He made no doubt that the Messiah was the legatee of the testament, "the seed to whom it hath been promised." Whatever partial and germinant fulfilments the Promise had received,

it is on Christ in chief that the inheritance of Israel devolves. In its true and full intent, this promise, like all predictions of the triumph of God's kingdom, was understood to be waiting for His advent.

The fact that this Promise looked to Christ, lends additional force to the Apostle's assertion of its indelibility. The words "unto Christ," which were inserted in the text of ver. 17 at an early time, are a correct gloss. The covenant did not lie between God and Abraham alone. It embraced Abraham's descendants in their unity, culminating in Christ. It looked down the stream of time to the last ages. Abraham was its starting-point; Christ its goal. "To thee—and to thy seed:" these words span the gulf of two thousand years, and overarch the Mosaic dispensation. So that the covenant vouchsafed to Abraham placed him, even at that distance of time, in close personal relationship with the Saviour of mankind. No wonder that it was so evangelical in its terms, and brought the patriarch an experience of religion which anticipated the privileges of Christian faith. God's covenant with Abraham, being in effect His covenant with mankind in Christ, stands both first and last. The Mosaic economy holds a second and subsidiary place in the scheme of Revelation.

The reason the Apostle gives for reading Christ into the promise is certainly peculiar. He has been taxed with false exegesis, with "rabbinical hair-splitting" and the like. Here, it is said, is a fine example of the art, familiar to theologians, of torturing out of a word a predetermined sense, foreign to its original meaning. "He doth not say, and to *seeds*, as referring to many; but as referring to one, and to thy *seed*, which is Christ." Paul appears to infer from the fact that the word "seed" is grammatically singular, and not plural, that it designates a single individual, who can be no other than Christ. On the surface this does, admittedly, look like a verbal quibble. The word "seed," in Hebrew and Greek as in English, is not used, and could not in ordinary speech be used in the plural to denote a number of descendants. It is a collective singular. The plural applies only to *different kinds* of seed. The Apostle, we may presume, was quite as well aware of this as his critics. It does not need philological research or grammatical acumen to establish a distinction obvious to common sense. This piece of word-play is in reality the vehicle of an historical argument, as unimpeachable as it is important. Abraham was taught, by a series of lessons,\* to refer the promise to the *single line* of Isaac. Paul elsewhere lays great stress on this consideration; he brings Isaac into close analogy with Christ; for he was the child of faith, and represented in his birth a spiritual principle and the communication of a supernatural life.† The true seed of Abraham was in the first instance *one*, not many. In the primary realisation of the Promise, typical of its final accomplishment, it received a *singular* interpretation; it concentrated itself on the one, spiritual offspring, putting aside the many, natural and heterogeneous (Hagarite or Keturite) descendants. And this sifting principle, this law of election which singles out from the varieties of nature the Divine type, comes into play all along the line of descent, as in the case of Jacob, and of David.

\* Comp. Rom. viii. 33, 34; Acts xi. 17; 2 Cor. i. 21, for a similar emphasis.

\* Gen. xii. 2, 3; xv. 2-6; xvii. 4-8, 15-21; xxii. 16-18.

† Ch. iv. 21-31; Rom. iv. 17-22; comp. Heb. xi. 11, 12.



It finds its supreme expression in the person of Christ. The Abrahamic testament devolved under a law of spiritual selection. By its very nature it pointed ultimately to Jesus Christ. When Paul writes "Not to seeds, as of many," he virtually says that the word of inspiration was singular in *sense* as well as in form; in the mind of the Promiser, and in the interpretation given to it by events, it bore an individual reference, and was never intended to apply to Abraham's descendants at large, to the many and miscellaneous "children according to flesh."

Paul's interpretation of the Promise has abundant analogies. All great principles of human history tend to embody themselves in some "chosen seed." They find at last their true heir, the *one man* destined to be their fulfilment. Moses, David, Paul; Socrates and Alexander; Shakespeare, Newton, are examples of this. The work that such men do belongs to themselves. Had any promise assured the world of the gifts to be bestowed through them, in each case one might have said beforehand, It will have to be, "Not as of many, but as of one." It is not multitudes, but men that rule the world. "By *one man* sin entered into the world: we shall reign in life through *the one* Jesus Christ." From the first words of hope given to the repentant pair banished from Eden, down to the latest predictions of the Coming One, the Promise became at every stage more determinate and individualising. The finger of prophecy pointed with increasing distinctness, now from this side, now from that, to the veiled form of the Chosen of God—"the seed of the woman," the "seed of Abraham," the "star out of Jacob," the "Son of David," the "King Messiah," the suffering "Servant of the Lord," the "smitten Shepherd," the "Son of man, coming in the clouds of heaven." In His person all the lines of promise and preparation meet; the scattered rays of Divine light are brought to a focus. And the desire of all nations, groping, half-articulate, unites with the inspired foresight of the seers of Israel to find its goal in Jesus Christ. There was but *One* who could meet the manifold conditions created by the world's previous history, and furnish the key to the mysteries and contradictions which had gathered round the path of Revelation.

Notwithstanding, the Promise had and has a generic application, attending its personal accomplishment. "Salvation is of the Jews." Christ belongs "to the Jew first." Israel was raised up and consecrated to be the trustee of the Promise given to the world through Abraham. The vocation of this gifted race, the secret of its indestructible vitality, lies in its relationship to Jesus Christ. They are "His own," though they "received Him not." Apart from Him, Israel is nothing to the world—nothing but a witness against itself. Premising its essential fulfilment in Christ, Paul still reserves for his own people their peculiar share in the Testament of Abraham—not a place of exclusive privilege, but of richer honour and larger influence. "Hath God cast away His people?" he asks: "Nay, indeed. For I also am an Israelite, of *the seed of Abraham*." So that, after all, it is something to be of Abraham's children by nature. Despite this hostility to Judaism, the Apostle claims for the Jewish race a special office in the dispensation of the Gospel, in the working out of God's ultimate designs for mankind.\*

Would they only accept their Messiah, how exalted a rank amongst the nations awaits them! The title "seed of Abraham" with Paul, like the "Servant of Jehovah" in Isaiah, has a double significance. The sufferings of the elect people made them in their national character a pathetic type of the great Sufferer and Servant of the Lord, His supreme Elect. In Jesus Christ the collective destiny of Israel is attained; its prophetic ideal, the spiritual conception of its calling, is realised,—*"the seed to whom it hath been promised."*

Paul is not alone in his insistence on the relation of Christ to Abraham. It is announced in the first sentence of the New Testament: "the book of the generation of Jesus Christ, *son of Abraham*, son of David." And it is set forth with singular beauty in the Gospel of the Infancy. Mary's song and Zacharias' prophecy recall the freedom and simplicity of an inspiration long silenced, as they tell how "the Lord hath visited and redeemed His people; He hath shown mercy to our fathers, in remembrance of His holy covenant, the oath which He sware *unto Abraham our father*." And again, "He hath helped Israel His servant in remembrance of His mercy, as He spake to our fathers, *to Abraham and to his seed* for ever."† These pious and tender souls who watched over the cradle of our Lord and stood in the dawning of His new day, instinctively cast their thoughts back to the Covenant of Abraham. In it they found matter for their songs and a warrant for their hopes, such as no ritual ordinances could furnish. Their utterances breathe a spontaneity of faith, a vernal freshness of joy and hope to which the Jewish people for ages had been strangers. The dull constraint and stiffness, the harsh fanaticism of the Hebrew nature, have fallen from them. They have put on the beautiful garments of Zion, her ancient robes of praise. For the time of the Promise draws near. Abraham's Seed is now to be born; and Abraham's faith revives to meet Him. It breaks forth anew out of the dry and long-barren soil of Judaism; it is raised up to a richer and an enduring life. Paul's doctrine of Grace does but translate into logic the poetry of Mary's and Zacharias' anthems. The Testament of Abraham supplies their common theme.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

#### THE DESIGN OF THE LAW.

GALATIANS iii. 19-24.

"WHAT then is the law?" So the Jew might well exclaim. Paul has been doing nothing but disparage it.—"You say that the Law of Moses brings no righteousness or blessing, but only a curse; that the covenant made with Abraham ignores it, and does not admit of being in any way qualified by its provisions. What then do you make of it? Is it not God's voice that we hear in its commands? Have the sons of Abraham ever since Moses' day been wandering from the true path of faith?" Such inferences might be drawn, not unnaturally, from the Apostle's denunciation of Legalism. They were actually

\* Rom. xi.

† Luke i. 54, 55, 68-73.



drawn by Marcion in the second century, in his extreme hostility to Judaism and the Old Testament.

This question must indeed have early forced itself upon Paul's mind. How could the doctrine of Salvation by Faith and the supremacy of the Abrahamic Covenant be reconciled with the Divine commission of Moses? How, on the other hand, could the displacement of the Law by the Gospel be justified, if the former too was authorised and inspired by God? Can the same God have given to men these two contrasted revelations of Himself? The answer, contained in the passage before us, is that the two revelations had different ends in view. They are complementary, not competing institutes. Of the two, the Covenant of Promise has the prior right; it points immediately to Christ. The Legal economy is ancillary thereto; it never professed to accomplish the work of grace, as the Judaists would have it do. Its office was external, but nevertheless accessory to that of the Promise. It guarded and schooled the infant heirs of Abraham's Testament, until the time of its falling due, when they should be prepared in the manhood of faith to enter on their inheritance. "The law hath been our tutor for Christ, with the intent we should be justified by faith" (ver. 24).

This aspect of the Law, under which, instead of being an obstacle to the life of faith, it is seen to subserve it, has been suggested already. "For I," the Apostle said, "through law died to law" (ii. 19). The Law first impelled him to Christ. It constrained him to look beyond itself. Its discipline was a preparation for faith. Paul reverses the relation in which Faith and Law were set by the Judaists. They brought in the Law to perfect the unfinished work of faith (ver. 3): he made it preliminary and propædæutic. What they gave out for more advanced doctrine, he treats as the "weak rudiments," belonging to the infancy of the sons of God (iv. 1-11). Up to this point, however, the Mosaic law has been considered chiefly in a negative way, as a foil to the Covenant of grace. The Apostle has now to treat of its nature more positively and explicitly, first indeed *in contrast with the promise* (vv. 19, 20); and secondly, *in its co-operation with the promise* (vv. 22-24). Ver. 21 is the transition from the first to the second of these conceptions.

I. "For the sake of the transgressions (committed against it) the law was added." The Promise, let us remember, was complete in itself. Its testament of grace was sealed and delivered ages before the Mosaic legislation, which could not therefore retract or modify it. The Law was "superadded," as something over and above, attached to the former revelation for a subsidiary purpose lying outside the proper scope of the Promise. What then was this purpose?

1. *For the sake of transgressions.* In other words, the object of the law of Moses was to *develop sin*. This is not the whole of the Apostle's answer; but it is the key to his explanation. This design of the Mosaic revelation determined its form and character. Here is the standpoint from which we are to estimate its working, and its relation to the kingdom of grace. The saying of Rom. v. 20 is Paul's commentary upon this sentence: "The law came in by the way, in order that the trespass (of Adam) might multiply." The same necessity is ex-

pressed in the paradox of 1 Cor. xv. 56: "The strength of sin is the law."

This enigma, as a psychological question, is resolved by the Apostle in Rom. vii. 13-24. The law acts as a spur and provocative, rousing the power of sin to conscious activity. However good in itself, coming into contact with man's evil flesh, its promulgation is followed inevitably by transgression. Its commands are so many occasions for sin to come into action, to exhibit and confirm its power. So that the Law practically assumes the same relation to sin as that in which the Promise stands to righteousness and life. In its union with the law our sinful nature perpetually "brings forth fruit unto death." And this mournful result God certainly contemplated when He gave the Law of Moses.

But are we compelled to put so harsh a sense on the Apostle's words? May we not say that the Law was imposed in order to *restrain* sin, to keep it within bounds? Some excellent interpreters read the verse in this way. It is quite true that, in respect of public morals and the outward manifestations of evil, the Jewish law acted beneficially, as a bridle upon the sinful passions. But this is beside the mark. The Apostle is thinking only of inward righteousness, that which avails before God. The wording of the clause altogether excludes the milder interpretation. *For the sake of* (χάρω, Latin *gratia*) signifies *promotion*, not *prevention*. And the word *transgression*, by its Pauline and Jewish usage, compels us to this view.\* Transgression presupposes law. It is the specific form which sin takes under law—the reaction of sin against law. What was before a latent tendency, a bias of disposition, now starts to light as a flagrant, guilty fact. By bringing about repeated transgressions the Law reveals the true nature of sin, so that it "becomes exceeding sinful." It does not make matters worse; but it shows how bad they really are. It aggravates the disease, in order to bring it to a crisis. And this is a necessary step towards the cure.

2. The Law of Moses was therefore a *provisional dispensation*,—"added until the Seed should come to whom the promise hath been made." Its object was to make itself superfluous. It "is not made for a righteous man; but for the lawless and unruly" (1 Tim. i. 9). Like the discipline and drill of a strictly governed boyhood, it was calculated to produce a certain effect on the moral nature, after the attainment of which it was no longer needed and its continuance would be injurious. The essential part of this effect lay, however, not so much in the outward regularity it imposed, as in the inner repugnancy excited by it, the consciousness of sin unsubdued and defiant. By its operation on the conscience the Law taught man his need of redemption. It thus prepared the platform for the work of Grace. The Promise had been given. The coming of the Covenant-heir was assured. But its fulfilment was far off. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise,"—and yet it was two thousand years before "Abraham's seed" came to birth. The degeneracy of the patriarch's children in the third and fourth generation showed how little the earlier heirs of the Promise were capable of receiving it. A thousand years later, when the Covenant was renewed with David, the ancient predictions

\* Comp. the reference to this word in chapter ix., p. 849.



seemed at last nearing their fulfilment. But no; the times were still unripe; the human conscience but half-disciplined. The bright dawn of the Davidic monarchy was overclouded. The legal yoke is made more burdensome; sore chastisements fall on the chosen people, marked out for suffering as well as honour. Prophecy has many lessons yet to inculcate. The world's education for Christ has another millennium to run.

Nor when He came, did "the Son of man find faith in the earth"! The people of the Law had no sooner seen than they hated "Him to whom the law and the prophets gave witness." Yet, strangely enough, the very manner of their rejection showed how complete was the preparation for His coming. Two features, rarely united, marked the ethical condition of the Jewish people at this time—an intense moral consciousness, and a deep moral perversion; reverence for the Divine law, combined with an alienation from its spirit. The chapter of Paul's autobiography to which we have so often referred (Rom. vii. 7-24) is typical of the better mind of Judaism. It is the *ne plus ultra* of self-condemnation. The consciousness of sin in mankind has ripened.

3. And further, the Law of Moses revealed God's will in a *veiled and accommodated fashion*, while the Promise and the Gospel are its direct emanations. This is the inference which we draw from vv. 19, 20.

We are well aware of the extreme difficulty of this passage. Ver. 20 has received, it is computed, some four hundred and thirty distinct interpretations. Of all the "hard things our beloved brother Paul" has written, this is the very hardest. The words which make up the sentence are simple and familiar; and yet in their combination most enigmatic. And it stands in the midst of a paragraph among the most interesting and important that the Apostle ever wrote.

Let us look first at the latter clause of ver. 19: "ordained through angels, in the hand (*i. e.*, by means) of a mediator." These circumstances, as the orthodox Jew supposed, *enhanced* the glory of the Law. The pomp and formality under which Mosaism was ushered in, the presence of the angelic host to whose agency the terrific manifestations attending the Law-giving were referred, impressed the popular mind with a sense of the incomparable sacredness of the Sinaitic revelation. It was this assumption which gave its force to the climax of Stephen's speech, of which we hear an echo in these words of Paul: "who received the law at the disposition of angels—and have not kept it!" The simplicity and informality of the Divine communion with Abraham, and again of Christ's appearance in the world and His intercourse with men, afford a striking contrast to all this.

More is hinted than is expressly said in Scripture of the part taken by the angels in the Law-giving. Deut. xxxiii. 2 and Ps. lxxviii. 17 give the most definite indications of the ancient faith of Israel on this point. But "the Angel of the Lord" is a familiar figure of Old Testament revelation. In Hebrew thought impressive physical phenomena were commonly associated with the presence of spiritual agents. The language of Heb. i. 7 and ii. 2 endorses this belief, which in no way conflicts with natural science, and is in keeping with the Christian faith.

But while such intermediacy, from the Jewish standpoint, increased the splendour and authority

of the Law, believers in Christ had learned to look at the matter otherwise. A revelation "administered *through angels*," spoke to them of a God distant and obscured, of a people unfit for access to His presence. This is plainly intimated in the added clause, "by means of a *mediator*,"—a title commonly given to Moses, and recalling the entreaty of Exodus xx. 19; Deut. v. 22-28: "The people said, Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die." These are the words of sinful men, receiving a law given, as the Apostle has just declared, on purpose to convict them of their sins. The form of the Mosaic revelation tended therefore in reality not to exalt the Law, but to exhibit its difference from the Promise and the distance at which it placed men from God.

The same thought is expressed, as Bishop Lightfoot aptly shows, by the figure of "the veil on Moses' face," which Paul employs with so much felicity in 2 Cor. iii. 13-18. In the external glory of the Sinaitic law-giving, as on the illuminated face of the Law-giver, there was a fading brightness, a visible lustre concealing its imperfect and transitory character. The theophanies of the Old Covenant were a magnificent veil, hiding while they revealed. Under the Law, *angels, Moses* came between God and man. It was God who in His own grace conveyed the promise to justified Abraham (ver. 18).

The Law employed a *mediator*; the Promise did not (ver. 19). With this contrast in our minds we approach verse 20. On the other side of it (ver. 21), we find Law and Promise again in sharp antithesis. The same antithesis runs through the intervening sentence. The two clauses of ver. 20 belong to the Law and Promise respectively. "Now a mediator is not of one:" that is an axiom which holds good of *the Law*. "But God is one:" this glorious truth, the first article of Israel's creed, applies to *the Promise*. Where "a mediator" is necessary, unity is wanting,—not simply in a numerical, but in a moral sense, as matter of feeling and of aim. There are separate interests, discordant views to be consulted. This was true of Mosaism. Although in substance "holy and just and good," it was by no means purely Divine. It was not the absolute religion. Not only was it defective; it contained, in the judgment of Christ, positive elements of wrong, precepts given "for the hardness of men's hearts." It largely consisted of "carnal ordinances, imposed till the time of rectification" (Heb. ix. 10). The theocratic legislation of the Pentateuch is lacking in the unity and consistency of a perfect revelation. Its disclosures of God were refracted in a manifest degree by the atmosphere through which they passed.

"But God is one." Here again the unity is moral and essential—of character and action, rather than of number. In the Promise God spoke immediately and for Himself. There was no screen to intercept the view of faith, no go-between like Moses, with God on the mountain-top shrouded in thunder-clouds and the people terrified or wantoning far below. Of all differences between the Abrahamic and Judaic types of piety this was the chief. The man of Abraham's faith sees God in His unity. The Legalist gets his religion at second-hand, mixed with undivine elements. He believes that there is one God; but his hold upon the truth is formal. There is no unity, no simplicity of faith in his



conception of God. He projects on to the Divine image confusing shadows of human imperfection.

God is one: this great article of faith was the foundation of Israel's life. It forms the first sentence of the *Shemá*, the "Hear, O Israel" (Deut. vi. 4-9), which every pious Jew repeats twice a day, and which in literal obedience to the Law-giver's words he fixes above his house-door, and binds upon his arm and brow at the time of prayer. Three times besides has the Apostle quoted this sentence. The first of these passages, Rom. iii. 29-30,\* may help us to understand its application here. In that place he employs it as a weapon against Jewish exclusiveness. If there is but "*one God*," he argues, there can be only *one* way of justification, for Jew and Gentile alike. The inference drawn here is even more bold and singular. There is "*one God*," who appeared in His proper character in the Covenant with Abraham. If the Law of Moses gives us a conception of His nature in any wise different from this, it is because other and lower elements found a place in it. Through the whole course of revelation there is *one God*—manifest to Abraham, veiled in Mosaism, revealed again in His perfect image in "the face of Jesus Christ."

II. So far the Apostle has pursued the contrast between the systems of Law and Grace. When finally he has referred the latter rather than the former to the "*one God*," we naturally ask, "Is the Law then *against* the promises of God?" (ver. 21). Was the Legal dispensation a mere reaction, a retrogression from the Promise? This would be to push Paul's argument to an antinomian extreme. He hastens to protest.—"The law against the promises? Away with the thought." Not on the Apostle's premises, but on those of his opponents, did this consequence ensue. It is *they* who set the two at variance, by trying to make law do the work of grace. "For if a law had been given that could bring men to life, righteousness would verily in that case have been of law" (ver. 21). That righteousness, and therefore life, is not of law, the Apostle has abundantly shown (ii. 16; iii. 10-13). Had the Law provided some efficient means of its own for winning righteousness, there would then indeed have been a conflict between the two principles. As matters stand there is none. Law and Promise move on different planes. Their functions are distinct. Yet there is a connection between them. The design of the Law is to mediate between the Promise and its fulfilment. "The trespass" must be "multiplied," the knowledge of sin deepened, before Grace can do its office. The fever of sin has to come to its crisis, before the remedy can take effect. Law is therefore not the enemy, but the minister of Grace. It was charged with a purpose lying beyond itself. "Christ is the end of the law, for righteousness" (Rom. x. 4).

1. For, in the first place, the law cuts men off from all other hope of salvation.

On the Judaistic hypothesis, "righteousness would have been of law." But quite on the contrary, "the Scripture shuts up everything under sin, that the promise might be given in the way of faith in Jesus Christ, to them that believe" (ver. 22). Condemnation inevitable, universal, was pronounced by the Divine word under the Law, not in order that men might remain crushed be-

neath its weight, but that, abandoning vain hopes of self-justification, they might find in Christ their true deliverer.

The Apostle is referring here to the general support of "the Scripture." His assertion embraces the whole teaching of the Old Testament concerning human sinfulness, embodied, for example, in the chain of citations drawn out in Rom. iii. 10-18. Wherever the man looking for legal justification turned, the Scripture met him with some new command which drove him back upon the sense of his moral helplessness. It fenced him in with prohibitions; it showered on him threatenings and reproaches; it besieged him in ever narrowing circles. And if he felt less the pressure of its outward burdens, all the more was he tormented by inward disharmony and self-accusation.

Now the judgment of Scripture is not uttered against this class of men or that, against this type of sin or that. Its impeachment sweeps the entire area of human life, sounding the depths of the heart, searching every avenue of thought and desire. It makes of the world one vast prison-house, with the Law for jailor, and mankind held fast in chains of sin, waiting for death. In this position the Apostle had found himself (Rom. vii. 24-viii. 2); and in his own heart he saw a mirror of the world. "Every mouth was stopped, and all the world brought in guilty before God" (Rom. iii. 19). This condition he graphically describes in terms of his former experience, in ver. 23: "Before faith came, under law we were kept in ward, being shut up unto the faith that was to be revealed." The Law was all the while standing guard over its subjects, watching and checking every attempt to escape, but intending to hand them over in due time to the charge of Faith. The Law posts its ordinances, like so many sentinels, round the prisoner's cell. The cordon is complete. He tries again and again to break out; the iron circle will not yield. But deliverance will yet be his. The day of faith approaches. It dawned long ago in Abraham's Promise. Even now its light shines into his dungeon, and he hears the word of Jesus, "Thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace." Law, the stern jailor, has after all been a good friend, if it has reserved him for this. It prevents the sinner escaping to a futile and illusive freedom.

In this dramatic fashion Paul shows how the Mosaic law by its ethical discipline prepared men for a life which by itself it was incapable of giving. Where Law has done its work well, it produces, as in the Apostle's earlier experience, a profound sense of personal demerit, a tenderness of conscience, a contrition of heart which makes one ready thankfully to receive "the righteousness which is of God by faith." In every age and condition of life a like effect is wrought upon men who honestly strive to live up to an exacting moral standard. They confess their failure. They lose self-conceit. They grow "poor in spirit," willing to accept "the abundance of the gift of righteousness" in Jesus Christ.

Faith is trebly honoured here. It is the condition of the gift, the characteristic of its recipient (vv. 22, 24), and the end for which he was put under the charge of Law (ver. 23). "To them that believe" is "given," as it was in foretaste to Abraham (ver. 6), a righteousness unearned, and bestowed on Christ's account (iii.

\* Comp. 1 Cor. viii. 6; 1 Tim. ii. 5; also Mark xii. 29, 30; Jas. ii. 19.



13; Rom. v. 17, 18); which brings with it the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, reserved in its conscious possession for Abraham's children in the faith of Christ (iii. 14; iv. 4). These blessings form the commencement of that true life whose root is a spiritual union with Christ, and which reaches on to eternity (ii. 20; Rom. v. 21; vi. 23). Of such life the Law could impart nothing; but it taught men their need of it, and disposed them to accept it. This was the purpose of its institution. It was the forerunner, not the finisher, of Faith.

2. Paul makes use of a second figure to describe the office of the Law; under which he gives his final answer to the question of ver. 19. The metaphor of the jailor is exchanged for that of the tutor. "The law hath been our *παιδαγωγός* for Christ." This Greek word (*boy-leader*) has no English equivalent; we have not the thing it represents. The "pedagogue" was a sort of nursery governor,—a confidential servant in the Greek household, commonly a slave, who had charge of the boy from his infancy, and was responsible for his oversight. In his food, his clothes, his home-lessons, his play, his walks—at every point the pedagogue was required to wait upon his young charge, and to control his movements. Amongst other offices, his tutor might have to conduct the boy to school; and it has been supposed that Paul is thinking of this duty, as though he meant, "The Law has been our pedagogue, to take us to Christ, our true teacher." But he adds, "That we might be justified of faith." The "tutor" of ver. 24 is parallel to the "guard" of the last verse; he represents a distinctly disciplinary influence.

This figure implies not like the last the imprisoned condition of the subject—but *his childish, undeveloped state*. This is an advance of thought. The Law was something more than a system of restraint and condemnation. It contained an element of progress. Under the tutelage of his pedagogue the boy is growing up to manhood. At the end of its term the Law will hand over its charge mature in capacity and equal to the responsibilities of faith. "If then the Law is a *παιδαγωγός*, it is not hostile to Grace, but its fellow-worker; but should it continue to hold us fast when Grace has come, then it would be hostile" (Chrysostom).

Although the highest function, that of "giving life," is denied to the Law, a worthy part is still assigned to it by the Apostle. It was "a tutor to lead men to Christ." Judaism was an education for Christianity. It prepared the world for the Redeemer's coming. It drilled and moralised the religious youth of the human race. It broke up the fallow-ground of nature, and cleared a space in the weed-covered soil to receive the seed of the kingdom. Its moral regimen deepened the conviction of sin, while it multiplied its overt acts. Its ceremonial impressed on sensuous natures the idea of the Divine holiness; and its sacrificial rites gave definiteness and vividness to men's conceptions of the necessity of atonement, failing indeed to remove sin, but awakening the need and sustaining the hope of its removal (Heb. x. 1-18).

The Law of Moses has formed in the Jewish nation a type of humanity like no other in the world. "They dwell alone," said Balaam, "and shall not be reckoned amongst the nations." Disciplined for ages under their harsh "pedagogue,"

this wonderful people acquired a strength of moral fibre and a spiritual sensibility that prepared them to be the religious leaders of mankind. Israel has given us David and Isaiah, Paul and John. Christ above all was "born under law—of David's seed according to flesh." The influence of Jewish minds at this present time on the world's higher thought, whether for good or evil, is incalculable; and it penetrates everywhere. The Christian Church may with increased emphasis repeat Paul's anticipation, "What will the receiving of them be, but life from the dead!" They have a great service still to do for the Lord and for His Christ. It was well for them and for us that they have "borne the yoke in their youth."

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE EMANCIPATED SONS OF GOD.

GALATIANS iii. 25-29.

"FAITH has come!" At this announcement Law the tutor yields up his charge; Law the jailor sets his prisoner at liberty. The age of servitude has passed. In truth it endured long enough. The iron of its bondage had entered into the soul. But at last Faith is come; and with it comes a new world. The clock of time cannot be put back. The soul of man will never return to the old tutelage, nor submit again to a religion of rabbinism and sacerdotalism. "We are no longer under a pedagogue;" we have ceased to be children in the nursery, schoolboys at our tasks—"ye are all sons of God." In such terms the new-born, free spirit of Christianity speaks in Paul. He had tasted the bitterness of the Judaic yoke; no man more deeply. He had felt the weight of its impossible exactions, its fatal condemnation. This sentence is a shout of deliverance. "Wretch that I am," he had cried, "who shall deliver me?—I give thanks to God through Jesus Christ our Lord; . . . for the law of the Spirit of life in Him hath freed me from the law of sin and death" (Rom. vii. 24; viii. 2).

Faith is the true emancipator of the human mind. It comes to take its place as mistress of the soul, queen in the realm of the heart; to be henceforth its spring of life, the normal and guiding principle of its activity. "The life that I live in the flesh," Paul testifies, "I live in faith." The Mosaic law—a system of external, repressive ordinances—is no longer to be the basis of religion. Law itself, and for its proper purposes, Faith honours and magnifies (Rom. iii. 31). It is in the interests of Law that the Apostle insists on the abolishment of its Judaic form. Faith is an essentially just principle, the rightful, original ground of human fellowship with God. In the age of Abraham, and even under the Mosaic régime, in the religion of the Prophets and Psalmists, faith was the quickening element, the well-spring of piety and hope and moral vigour. Now it is brought to light. It assumes its sovereignty, and claims its inheritance. Faith is come—for Christ is come, its "author and finisher."

The efficacy of faith lies in *its object*. "Works" assume an intrinsic merit in the doer; faith has its virtue in Him it trusts. It is the soul's recumbency on Christ. "Through faith in Christ



Jesus," Paul goes on to say, "ye are all sons of God." Christ evokes the faith which shakes off legal bondage, leaving the age of formalism and ritual behind, and beginning for the world an era of spiritual freedom. "In Christ Jesus" faith has its being; He constitutes for the soul a new atmosphere and habitat, in which faith awakens to full existence, bursts the confining shell of legalism, recognises itself and its destiny, and unfolds into the glorious consciousness of its Divine sonship.

We prefer, with Ellicott and Meyer, to attach the complement "in Christ Jesus"\* to "faith" (so in A. V.), rather than to the predicate, "Ye are sons"—the construction endorsed by the *Revised* comma after "faith." The former connection more obvious in itself, seems to us to fall in with the Apostle's line of thought. And it is sustained by the language of verse 27. Faith in Christ baptism into Christ, and putting on Christ are connected and correspondent expressions. The first is the spiritual principle, the ground or element of the new life; the second, its visible attestation; and the third indicates the character and habit proper thereto.

I. It is *faith in Christ* then which *constitutes us sons of God*. This principle is the foundation-stone of the Christian life.

In the Old Testament the sonship of believers lay in shadow. Jehovah was "the King, the Lord of Hosts," the "Shepherd of Israel." They are "His people, the sheep of His pasture"—"My servant Jacob," He says, "Israel whom I have chosen." If He is named *Father*, it is of the collective Israel, not the individual; otherwise the title occurs only in figure and apostrophe. The promise of this blessedness had never been explicitly given under the Covenant of Moses. The assurance quoted in 2 Cor. vi. 18 is pieced together from scattered hints of prophecy. Old-Testament faith hardly dared to dream of such a privilege as this. It is not ascribed even to Abraham. Only to the kingly "Son of David" is it said, "I will be a Father unto him; and he shall be to me for a son" (2 Sam. vii. 14).

But "beloved, now are we children of God" (1 John iii. 2). The filial consciousness is the distinction of the Church of Jesus Christ. The Apostolic writings are full of it. The unspeakable dignity of this relationship, the boundless hopes which it inspires, have left their fresh impress on the pages of the New Testament. The writers are men who have made a vast discovery. They have sailed out into a new ocean. They have come upon an infinite treasure. "Thou art no longer a slave, but a son." What exultation filled the soul of Paul and of John as they penned such words! "The Spirit of glory and of God" rested upon them.

The Apostle is virtually repeating here what he said in vv. 2-5 touching the "receiving of the Spirit," which is, he declared, the distinctive mark of the Christian state, and raises its possessor *ipso facto* above the religion of externalism. The antithesis of *flesh and spirit* now becomes that of *sonship and pupilage*. Christ Himself, in the words of Luke xi. 13, marked out the gift of "the Holy Spirit" as the bond between the "heavenly Father" and His human children.

\*The phrase "faith in Christ Jesus" is a link between this Epistle and those of the third and fourth groups; Comp. Col. i. 4; Eph. i. 15; 1 Tim. iii. 13; 2 Tim. i. 13; iii. 15. More frequently in this connection our "in" represents εἰς ("into"), not ἐν as here.

Accordingly Paul writes immediately in iv. 6, 7, of "God sending forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts" to show that we "are sons," where we find again the thought which follows here in ver. 27, viz., that *union with Christ* imparts this exalted status. This is, after all, the central conception of the Christian life. Paul has already stated it as the sum of his own experience: "Christ is in me" (ii. 20). "I have put on Christ" is the same thing in other words. In ii. 20 he contemplates the union as an inner, vitalising force; here it is viewed as a matter of status and condition. The believer is *invested with Christ*. He enters into the filial estate and endowments, since he is *in Christ Jesus*. "For if Christ is Son of God, and thou hast put on Him, having the Son in thyself and being made like to Him, thou wast brought into one kindred and one form of being with Him" (Chrysostom).

This was true of "so many as were baptised into Christ"—an expression employed not in order to limit the assertion, but to extend it coincidentally with the "all" of ver. 26. There was no difference in this respect between the circumcised and uncircumcised. Every baptised Galatian was a son of God. Baptism manifestly presupposes faith. To imagine that the *opus operatum*, the mechanical performance of the rite, apart from faith present or anticipated in the subject, "clothes us with Christ," is to hark back to Judaism. It is to substitute baptism for circumcision—a difference merely of form, so long as the doctrine of ritual regeneration remains the same. This passage is as clear a proof as could well be desired, that in the Pauline vocabulary "baptised" is synonymous with "believing." The baptism of these Galatians solemnised their spiritual union with Christ. It was the public acceptance, in trust and submission, of God's covenant of grace—for their children haply, as well as for themselves.

In the case of the infant, the household to which it belongs, the religious community which receives it to be nursed in its bosom, stand sponsors for its faith. On them will rest the blame of broken vows and responsibility disowned, if their baptised children are left to lapse into ignorance of Christ's claims upon them. The Church which practises infant baptism assumes a very serious obligation. If it takes no sufficient care to have the rite made good, if children pass through its laver to remain unmarked and unshepherded, it is sinning against Christ. Such administration makes His ordinance an object of superstition, or of contempt.

The baptism of the Galatians signalised their entrance "into Christ," the union of their souls with the dying, risen Lord. They were "baptised," as Paul phrases it elsewhere, "into His death," to "walk" henceforth with Him "in newness of life." By its very form—the normal and most expressive form of primitive baptism, descent into and rising from the symbolic waters—it pictured the soul's death with Christ, its burial and its resurrection in Him, its separation from the life of sin and entrance upon the new career of a regenerated child of God (Rom. vi. 3-14). This power attended the ordinance "through faith in the operation of God who raised Christ from the dead" (Col. ii. 11-13). Baptism had proved to them "the laver of regeneration" in virtue of "the renewing of the Holy Spirit," under those spiritual conditions of accepted mercy and "jus-



tification by grace through faith,"\* without which it is a mere law-work, as useless as any other. It was the outward and visible sign of the inward transaction which made the Galatian believers sons of God and heirs of life eternal. It was therefore a "putting on of Christ," a veritable assumption of the Christian character, the filial relationship to God. Every such baptism announced to heaven and earth the passage of another soul from servitude to freedom, from death unto life, the birth of a brother into the family of God. From this day the new convert was a member incorporate of the Body of Christ, affianced to his Lord, not alone in the secret vows of his heart, but pledged to Him before his fellow-men. He had *put on Christ*—to be worn in his daily life, while He dwelt in the shrine of his spirit. And men would see Christ in him, as they see the robe upon its wearer, the armour glittering on the soldier's breast.

By receiving Christ, inwardly accepted in faith, visibly assumed in baptism, we are made sons of God, *He* makes us free of the house of God, where He rules as Son, and where no slave may longer stay. Those who call themselves "Abraham's seed" and yet were "slaves of sin," must be driven from the place in God's household which they dishonoured, and must forfeit their abused prerogatives. They were not Abraham's children, for they were utterly unlike him; the Devil surely was their father, whom by their lusts they featured. So Christ declared to the unbelieving Jews (John viii. 31-44). And so the Apostle identifies the children of Abraham with the sons of God, by faith united to "the Son." Alike in the historical sonship toward Abraham and the supernatural sonship toward God, Christ is the ground of filiation. Our sonship is grafted upon His. He is "the vine," we "branches" in Him. He is *the* seed of Abraham, *the* Son of God; we, sons of God and Abraham's seed—"if we are Christ's." Through Him we derive from God; through Him all that is best in the life of humanity comes down to us. Christ is the central stock, the spiritual root of the human race. His manifestation reveals God to man, and man also to himself. In Jesus Christ we regain the Divine image, stamped upon us in Him at our creation (Col. i. 15, 16; iii. 10, 11), the filial likeness to God which constitutes man's proper nature. Its attainment is the essential blessing, the promise which descended from Abraham along the succession of faith.

Now this dignity belongs universally to Christian faith. "Ye are *all*," the Apostle says, "sons of God through faith in Him." Sonship is a human, not a Jewish distinction. The discipline Israel had endured, it endured for the world. The Gentiles have no need to pass through it again. Abraham's blessing, when it came, was to embrace "all the families of the earth." The new life in Christ in which it is realised, is as large in scope as it is complete in nature. "Faith in Christ Jesus" is a condition that opens the door to every human being,— "Jew or Greek, bond or free, male or female." If then baptised, believing Gentiles are sons of God, they stand already on a level higher than any to which Mosaism raised its professors. "Putting on Christ," they are robed in a righteousness brighter and purer than that of the most blameless legalist. What can Judaism do for them

\* Rom. vi. 1, 2; Tit. iii. 4-7 ("not of *works* . . . that we had done").

more? How could they wish to cover their glorious dress with its faded, worn-out garments? To add circumcision to their faith would be not to rise, but to sink from the state of sons to that of serfs.

II. On this first principle of the new life there rests a second. The sons of God are brethren to each other. Christianity is the perfection of society, as well as of the individual. *The faith of Christ restores the broken unity of mankind.* "In Christ Jesus there is no Jew or Greek; there is no bondman or freeman; there is no male and female. You are all one in Him."

The Galatian believer at his baptism had entered a communion which gave him for the first time the sense of a common humanity. In Jesus Christ he found a bond of union with his fellows, an identity of interest and aim so commanding that in its presence secular differences appeared as nothing. From the height to which his Divine adoption raised him these things were invisible. Distinctions of race, of rank, even that of sex, which bulk so largely in our outward life and are sustained by all the force of pride and habit, are forgotten here. These dividing lines and party-walls have no power to sunder us from Christ, nor therefore from each other in Christ. The tide of Divine love and joy which through the gate of faith poured into the souls of these Gentiles of "many nations," submerged all barriers. They are one in the brotherhood of the eternal life. When one says "I am a child of God," one no longer thinks, "I am a Greek or Jew, rich or poor, noble or ignoble—man or woman." A son of God!—that sublime consciousness fills his being.

Paul, to be sure, does not mean that these differences have ceased to exist. He fully recognises them; and indeed insists strongly on the proprieties of sex, and on the duties of civil station. He values his own Jewish birth and Roman citizenship. But "in Christ Jesus" he "counts them refuse" (Phil. iii. 4-8). Our relations to God, our heritage in Abraham's Testament, depend on our faith in Christ Jesus and our possession of His Spirit. Neither birth nor office affects this relationship in the least degree. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. viii. 14). This is the Divine criterion of churchmanship, applied to prince or beggar, to archbishop or sexton, with perfect impartiality. "God is no respecter of persons."

This rule of the Apostle's was a new principle in religion, pregnant with immense consequences. The Stoic cosmopolitan philosophy made a considerable approach to it, teaching, as it did, the worth of the moral person and the independence of virtue of outward conditions. Buddhism previously, and Mahomedanism subsequently, each in its own way addressed themselves to man as man, declaring all believers equal and abolishing the privileges of race and caste. To their recognition of human brotherhood the marvellous victories won by these two creeds are largely due. These religious systems, with all their errors, were a signal advance upon Paganism with its "gods many and lords many," its local and national deities, whose worship belittled the idea of God and turned religion into an engine of hostility instead of a bond of union amongst men.

Greek culture, moreover, and Roman government, it has often been observed, had greatly tended to unify mankind. They diffused a common atmosphere of thought and established one



imperial law round the circuit of the Mediterranean shore. But these conquests of secular civilisation, the victories of arms and arts, were achieved at the expense of religion. Polytheism is essentially barbarian. It flourishes in division and in ignorance. To bring together its innumerable gods and creeds was to bring them all into contempt. The *one law*, the *one learning* now prevailing in the world, created a void in the conscience of mankind, only to be filled by the *one faith*. Without a centre of spiritual unity, history shows that no other union will endure. But for Christianity, the Græco-Roman civilisation would have perished, trampled out by the feet of Goths and Huns.

The Jewish faith failed to meet the world's demand for a universal religion. It would never have saved European society. Nor was it designed for such a purpose. True, its Jehovah was "the God of the whole earth." The teaching of the Old Testament, as Paul easily showed, had a universal import and brought all men within the scope of its promises. But in its actual shape and its positive institutions it was still tribal and exclusive. Mosaism planted round the family of Abraham a fence of ordinances, framed of set purpose to make them a separate people and preserve them from heathen contamination. This system, at first maintained with difficulty, in course of time gained control of the Israelitish nature, and its exclusiveness was aggravated by every device of Pharisaic ingenuity. Without an entire transformation, without in fact ceasing to be Judaism, the Jewish religion was doomed to isolation. Under the Roman Empire, in consequence of the ubiquitous dispersion of the Jews, it spread far and wide. It attracted numerous and influential converts. But these proselytes never were, and never could have been generally amalgamated with the sacred people. They remained in the outer court, worshipping the God of Israel "afar off" (Eph. ii. 11-22; iii. 4-6).

This particularism of the Mosaic system was, to Paul's mind, a proof of its temporary character. The abiding faith, the faith of "Abraham and his seed," must be broad as humanity. It could know nothing of Jew and Gentile, of master and slave, nor even of man and woman; it knows only *the soul and God*. The gospel of Christ allied itself thus with the nascent instinct of humanity, the fellow-feeling of the race. It adopted the sentiment of the Roman poet, himself an enfranchised slave, who wrote: *Homo sum et humani a me nil alienum puto*. In our religion human kinship at last receives adequate expression. The Son of man lays the foundation of a world-wide fraternity. The one Father claims all men for His sons in Christ. A new, tenderer, holier humanity is formed around His cross. Men of the most distant climes and races, coming across their ancient battle-fields, clasp each other's hands and say, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

The practice of the Church has fallen far below the doctrine of Christ and His Apostles. In this respect Mohammedans and Buddhists might teach Christian congregations a lesson of fraternity. The arrangements of our public worship seem often designed expressly to emphasise social distinctions, and to remind the poor man of his inequality. Our native *hauteur* and conventionality are nowhere more painfully conspicuous than in the house of God. English Christianity

is seamed through and through with caste-feeling. This lies at the root of our sectarian jealousies. It is largely due to this cause that the social ideal of Jesus Christ has been so deplorably ignored, and that a frank brotherly fellowship amongst the Churches is at present impossible. Sacerdotalism first destroyed the Christian brotherhood by absorbing in the official ministry the functions of the individual believer. And the Protestant Reformation has but partially re-established these prerogatives. Its action has been so far too exclusively negative and *protéstant*, too little constructive and creative. It has allowed itself to be secularised and identified with existing national limitations and social distinctions. How greatly has the authority of our faith and the influence of the Church suffered from this error. The filial consciousness should produce *the fraternal consciousness*. With the former we may have a number of private Christians; with the latter only can we have a Church.

"Ye are all," says the Apostle, "one (man) in Christ Jesus." The numeral is masculine, not neuter—one *person* (no abstract unity),\* as though possessing one mind and will, and that "the mind that was in Christ." Just so far as individual men are "in Christ" and He becomes the soul of their life, do they realise this unity. The Christ within them recognises the Christ without, as "face answereth to face in a glass." In this recognition social disparity vanishes. We think of it no more than we shall do before the judgment-seat of Christ. What matters it whether my brother wears velvet or fustian, if Christ be in him? The humbleness of his birth or occupation, the uncouthness of his speech, cannot separate him, nor can the absence of these peculiarities separate his neighbour, from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Why should these differences make them strangers to each other in the Church? If both are *in Christ*, why are they not *one in Christ*? A tide of patriotic emotion, a scene of pity or terror—a shipwreck, an earthquake—levels all classes and makes us feel and act as one man. Our faith in Christ should do no less. Or do we love God less than we fear death? Is our country more to us than Jesus Christ? In rare moments of exaltation we rise, it may be, to the height at which Paul sets our life. But until we can habitually and by settled principle in our Church-relations "know no man after the flesh," we come short of the purpose of Jesus Christ (comp. John xvii. 20-23).

The unity Paul desiderates would effectually counteract the Judaistic agitation. The force of the latter lay in antipathy. Paul's opponents contended that there must be "Jew and Greek." They fenced off the Jewish preserve from uncircumcised intruders. Gentile non-conformists must adopt their ritual; or they will remain a lower caste, outside the privileged circle of the covenant-heirs of Abraham. Compelled under this pressure to accept the Mosaic law, it was anticipated that they would add to the glory of Judaism and help to maintain its institutions unimpaired. But the Apostle has cut the ground from under their feet. It is *faith*, he affirms, which makes men sons of God. And faith is equally possible to Jew or Gentile. Then Judaism is doomed. No system of caste, no principle of social exclusion has, on this assumption, any foothold in the Church. Spiritual life, near-

\* Comp. Eph. ii. 15; iv. 13; but *neuter* in ii. 14.



ness and likeness to the common Saviour—in a word *character*, is the standard of worth in His kingdom. And the range of that kingdom is made wide as humanity; its charity, deep as the love of God.

And “if you—whether Jews or Greeks—are Christ’s, then are you Abraham’s seed, heirs in terms of the Promise.” So the Apostle brings to a close this part of his argument, and links it to what he has said before touching the falsehood of Abraham. Since ver. 18 we have lost sight of the patriarch; but he has not been forgotten. From that verse Paul has been conducting us onward through the legal centuries which parted Abraham from Christ. He has shown how the law of Moses interposed between promise and fulfilment, schooling the Jewish race and mankind in them for its accomplishment. Now the long discipline is over. The hour of release has struck. Faith resumes her ancient sway, in a larger realm. In Christ a new, universal humanity comes into existence, formed of men who by faith are grafted into Him. Partakers of Christ, Gentiles also are of the seed of Abraham; the wild scions of nature share “the root and fatness of the good olive-tree.” All things are theirs; for they are Christ’s (1 Cor. iii. 21-23).

Christ never stands alone. “In the midst of the Church—firstborn of many brethren” He presents Himself, standing “in the presence of God for us.” He has secured for mankind and keeps in trust its glorious heritage. In Him we hold in fee the ages past and to come. The sons of God are heirs of the universe.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE HEIR’S COMING OF AGE.

#### GALATIANS iv. 1-7.

THE main thesis of the Epistle is now established. Gentile Christians, Paul has shown, are in the true Abrahamic succession of faith. And this devolution of the Promise discloses the real intent of the Mosaic law, as an intermediate and disciplinary system. Christ was the heir of Abraham’s testament; He was therefore the end of Moses’ law. And those who are Christ’s inherit the blessings of the Promise, while they escape the curse and condemnation of the Law. The remainder of the Apostle’s polemic, down to chap. v. 12, is devoted to the illustration and enforcement of this position.

In this, as in the previous chapter, the pre-Christian state is assigned to the Jew, who was the chief subject of Divine teaching in the former dispensation; it is set forth under the first person (ver. 3), in the language of recollection. Describing the opposite condition of sonship, the Apostle reverts from the first to the second person, identifying his readers with himself (comp. chap. iii. 25, 26). True, the Gentiles had been in bondage (vv. 7, 8). This goes without saying. Paul’s object is to show that *Judaism* is a bondage. Upon this he insists with all the emphasis he can command. Moreover, the legal system contained worldly, unspiritual elements, crude and childish conceptions of truth, marking it, in comparison with Christianity, as an inferior religion. Let the Galatians be convinced of this, and they will understand what Paul is going to

say directly; they will perceive that Judaic conformity is for them a backsliding in the direction of their former heathenism (vv. 8-10). But the force of this latter warning is discounted and its effect weakened when he is supposed, as by some interpreters, to include *Gentile* along with Jewish “rudiments” already in ver. 3. His readers could not have suspected this. The “So we also” and the “held in bondage” of this verse carry them back to chap. iii. 23. By calling the Mosaic ceremonies “rudiments of the world” he gives Jewish susceptibilities just such a shock as prepares for the declaration of ver. 9, which put them on a level with heathen rites.

The difference between Judaism and Christianity, historically unfolded in chap. iii., is here restated in graphic summary. We see, first, *the heir of God in his minority*; and again, *the same heir in possession of his estate*.

I. One can fancy the Jew replying to Paul’s previous argument in some such style as this. “You pour contempt,” he would say, “on the religion of your fathers. You make them out to have been no better than slaves. Abraham’s inheritance, you pretend, under the Mosaic dispensation lay dormant, and is revived in order to be taken from his children and conferred on aliens.” No, Paul would answer: I admit that the saints of Israel were sons of God; I glory in the fact—“who are Israelites, whose is *the adoption of sons* and the glory and the covenants and the law-giving and the promises, whose are the fathers” (Rom. ix. 4, 5). *But they were sons in their minority*. “And I say that as long as the heir is [legally] an infant, he differs in nothing from a slave, though [by title] lord of all.”

The man of the Old Covenant was a child of God *in posse*, not *in esse*, in right but not in fact. The “infant” is his father’s trueborn son. In time he will be full owner. Meanwhile he is as subject as any slave on the estate. There is nothing he can command for his own. He is treated and provided for as a bondman might be; put “under stewards” who manage his property, “and guardians” in charge of his person, “until the day foreappointed of the father.” This situation does not exclude, it implies fatherly affection and care on the one side, and heirship on the other. But it forbids the recognition of the heir, his investment with filial rights. It precludes the access to the father and acquaintance with him, which the boy will gain in after-years. He sees him at a distance and through others, under the aspect of authority rather than of love. In this position he does not yet possess the spirit of a son. Such was in truth the condition of Hebrew saints—heirs of God, but knowing it not.

This illustration raises in ver. 2 an interesting legal question, touching the latitude given by Roman or other current law to the father in dealing with his heirs. Paul’s language is good evidence for the existence of the power he refers to. In Roman and in Jewish law the date of civil majority was fixed. Local usage may have been more elastic. But the case supposed, we observe, is not that of a *dead* father, into whose place the son steps at the proper age. A grant is made by a father *still living*, who keeps his son in pupillage till he sees fit to put him in possession of the promised estate. There is nothing to show that paternal discretion was limited in these circumstances, any more than it is in English law. The father might fix eighteen, or twenty-one, or thirty



years as the age at which he would give his son a settlement, just as he thought best.

This analogy, like that of the "testament" in chap. iii., is not complete at all points; nor could any human figure of these Divine things be made so. The essential particulars involved in it are first, the childishness of the infant heir; secondly, the subordinate position in which he is placed for the time; and thirdly, the right of the father to determine the expiry of his infancy.

1. "When we were children," says the Apostle. This implies, not a merely formal and legal bar, but an intrinsic disqualification. To treat the child as a man is preposterous. The responsibilities of property are beyond his strength and his understanding. Such powers in his hands could only be instruments of mischief, to himself most of all. In the Divine order, calling is suited to capacity, privilege to age. The coming of Christ was timed to the hour. The world of the Old Testament, at its wisest and highest, was unripe for His gospel. The revelation made to Paul could not have been received by Moses, or David, or Isaiah. His doctrine was only possible after and in consequence of theirs. There was a training of faculty, a deepening of conscience, a patient course of instruction and chastening to be carried out, before the heirs of the promise were fit for their heritage. Looking back to his own youthful days, the Apostle sees in them a reflex of the discipline which the people of God had required. The views he then held of Divine truth appear to him low and childish, in comparison with the manly freedom of spirit, the breadth of knowledge, the fulness of joy which he has attained as a son of God through Christ.

2. But what is meant by the "stewards and guardians" of this Jewish period of infancy? Ver. 3 tells us this, in language, however, somewhat obscure: "We were held in bondage under the *rudiments* (or *elements*) of the world"—a phrase synonymous with the foregoing "under law" (chap. iii. 23). The "guard" and "tutor" of the previous section reappears, with these "rudiments of the world" in his hand. They form the system under which the young heir was schooled, up to the time of his majority. They belonged to "the world" inasmuch as they were, in comparison with Christianity, unspiritual in their nature, uninformed by "the Spirit of God's Son" (ver. 6). The language of Heb. ix. 1, 10 explains this phrase: "The first covenant had a *worldly* sanctuary," with "ordinances of flesh, imposed till the time of rectification." The sensuous factor that entered into the Jewish revelation formed the point of contact with Paganism which Paul brings into view in the next paragraph. Yet, rude and earthly as the Mosaic system was in some of its features, it was Divinely ordained and served an essential purpose in the progress of revelation. It shielded the Church's infancy. It acted the part of a prudent steward, a watchful guardian. The heritage of Abraham came into possession of his heirs enriched by their long minority. Mosaism therefore, while spiritually inferior to the Covenant of grace in Christ, has rendered invaluable service to it (comp. ver. 24: chapter xiv. p. 868).

3. *The will of the Father* determined the period of this guardianship. However it may be in human law, this right of fore-ordination resides in the Divine Fatherhood. In His unerring foresight He fixed the hour when His sons should step into their filial place. All such "times and sea-

sons," Christ declared, "the Father hath appointed on His own authority" (Acts i. 7). He imposed the law of Moses, and annulled it, when He would. He kept the Jewish people, for their own and the world's benefit, tied to the legal "rudiments," held in the leading-strings of Judaism. It was His to say when this subjection should cease, when the Church might receive the Spirit of His Son. If this decree appeared to be arbitrary, if it was strange that the Jewish fathers—men so noble in faith and character—were kept in bondage and fear, we must remind ourselves that "so it seemed good in the Father's sight." Hebrew pride found this hard to brook. To think that God had denied this privilege in time past to His chosen people to bestow it all at once and by mere grace on Gentile sinners, making them at "the eleventh hour" equal to those who had borne for so long the burden and heat of the day! that the children of Abraham had been, as Paul maintains, for centuries treated as *slaves*, and now these heathen aliens are made *sons* just as much as they! But this was God's plan; and it must be right. "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?"

II. However, the nonage of the Church has passed. God's sons are now to be owned for such. *It is Christ's mission to constitute men sons of God* (vv. 4, 5).

His advent was the turning-point of human affairs, "the fulness of time." Paul's glance in these verses takes in a vast horizon. He views Christ in His relation both to God and to humanity, both to law and redemption. The appearance of "the Son of God, woman-born," completes the previous course of time; it is the goal of antecedent revelation, unfolding "the mystery kept secret through times eternal," but now "made known to all the nations" (Rom. xvi. 25, 26). Promise and Law both looked forward to this hour. Sin has been "passed by" in prospect of it, receiving hitherto a partial and provisional forgiveness. The aspirations excited, the needs created by earlier religion demanded their satisfaction. The symbolism of type and ceremony, with their rude picture-writing, waited for their Interpreter. The prophetic soul of "the wide world, dreaming of things to come," watched for this day. They that looked for Israel's redemption, the Simeons and Annas of the time, the authentic heirs of the promise, knew by sure tokens that it was near. Their aged eyes in the sight of the infant Jesus descried its rising. The set time had come, to which all times looked since Adam's fall and the first promise. At the moment when Israel seemed farthest from help and hope, the "horn of salvation was raised up in the house of David,"—*God sent forth His Son*.

1. *The sending of the Son* brought the world's servitude to an end. "Henceforth," said Jesus, "I call you not servants" (John xv. 15). Till now "servants of God" had been the highest title men could wear. The heathen were enslaved to false gods (ver. 8). And Israel, knowing the true God, knew Him at a distance, serving too often in the spirit of the elder son of the parable, who said, "Lo these many years do I *slave* for thee" (Luke xv. 29). None could with free soul lift his eyes to heaven and say, "Abba, Father." Men had great thoughts about God, high speculations. They had learnt imperishable truths concerning His unity, His holiness, His majesty as Creator and Lawgiver. They



named him the "Lord," the "Almighty," the "I Am." But His *Fatherhood*, as Christ revealed it, they had scarcely guessed. They thought of Him as humble bondmen of a revered and august master, as sheep might of a good shepherd. The idea of a personal *Sonship* toward the Holy One of Israel was inconceivable, till Christ brought it with Him into the world, till *God sent forth His Son*.

He sent Him as "His Son." To speak of Christ, with the mystical Germans, as the *ideal Urmensch*—the ideal Son of man, the foretype of humanity—is to express a great truth. Mankind was created in Christ, who is "the image of God, firstborn of all creation." But this is not what Paul is saying here. The doubly compounded Greek verb at the head of this sentence (repeated with like emphasis in ver. 6) signifies "sent forth from" Himself: He came in the character of *God's Son*, bringing His sonship with Him. He was the Son of God before He was sent out. He did not become so in virtue of His mission to mankind. His relations with men, in Paul's conception, rested upon His pre-existing relationship to God. "The Word" who "became flesh, was with God, was God in the beginning." "He called God His own Father, making Himself equal with God" (John v. 18): so the Jews had gathered from His own declarations. Paul admitted the claim when "God revealed His Son" to him, and affirms it here unequivocally.

"The Son of God," arriving "in the fulness of time," enters human life. Like any other son of man, He is *born of a woman, born under law*. Here is the *kenosis*, the emptying of Divinity, of which the Apostle speaks in Phil. ii. 5-8. The phrase "born of woman," does not refer specifically to the *virgin-birth*; this term describes human origin on the side of its weakness and dependence (Job xiv. 1; Matt. xi. 11). Paul is thinking not of the difference, but of the identity of Christ's birth and our own. We are carried back to Bethlehem. We see Jesus a babe lying in His mother's arms—*God's Son a human infant*, drawing His life from a weak woman!\*

Nor is "born under law" a distinction intended to limit the previous term, as though it meant a *born Jew*, and not a mere woman's son. This expression, to the mind of the reader of chap. iii., conveys the idea of *subjection*, of humiliation rather than eminence. "Though He was (God's) Son," Christ must needs "learn His obedience" (Heb. v. 8). The Jewish people experienced above all others the power of the law to chasten and humble. Their law was to them more sensibly what the moral law is in varying degree to the world everywhere, an instrument of condemnation. God's Son was now put under its power. As a man He was "under law;" as a Jew He came under its most stringent application. He declined none of the burdens of His birth. He submitted not only to the general moral demands of the Divine law for men, but to all the duties and proprieties incident to His position as a man, even to those ritual ordinances which His coming was to abolish. He set a perfect example of loyalty. "Thus it becometh us," He said, "to fulfil all righteousness."

The Son of God who was to end the legal bondage was sent into it Himself. He wore the legal yoke that He might break it. He took "the form of a servant," to win our enfranchise-

ment. "God sent forth His son, human, law-bound—that He might *redeem those under law*."

Redemption was Christ's errand. We have learned already how "He redeemed us from the curse of the law," by the sacrifice of the cross (chap. iii. 13). This was the primary object of His mission: to ransom men from the guilt of past sin. Now we discern its further purpose—the positive and constructive side of the Divine counsel. Justification is the preface to *adoption*. The man "under law" is not only cursed by his failure to keep it; he lives in a servile state, debarred from filial rights. Christ "bought us out" of this condition. While the expiation rendered in His death clears off the entail of human guilt, His incarnate life and spiritual union with believing men sustain that action, making the redemption complete and permanent. As enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son; now "reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom. v. 10). Salvation is not through the death of Christ alone. The Babe of Bethlehem, the crowned Lord of glory, is our Redeemer, as well as the Man of Calvary. The cross is indeed the centre of His redemption; but it has a vast circumference. All that Christ is, all that He has done and is doing as the Incarnate Son, the God-man, helps to make men sons of God. The purpose of His mission is therefore stated a second time and made complete in the words of ver. 5 *b*: "that we might *receive the adoption of sons*." The sonship carries everything else with it—"if children, then heirs" (ver. 7). There is no room for any supplementary office of Jewish ritual. That is left behind with our babyhood.

2. So much for the ground of sonship. Its proof lay in the *sending forth of the Spirit of the Son*.

The mission of the Son and that of the Spirit are spoken of in vv. 3-6 in parallel terms: "God sent forth His Son—sent forth the Spirit of His Son," the former into the world of men, the latter "into" their individual "hearts." The second act matches the first, and crowns it. Pentecost is the sequel of the Incarnation (John ii. 21; 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20). And Pentecost is repeated in the heart of every child of God. The Apostle addresses himself to his readers' experience ("because ye are sons") as in iii. 3-6, and on the same point. They had "received the Spirit:" this marked them indubitably as heirs of Abraham (iii. 14)—and what is more, sons of God. Had not the mystic cry, *Abba, Father*, sounded in their hearts? The filial consciousness was born within them, supernaturally inspired. When they believed in Christ, when they saw in Him the Son of God, their Redeemer, they were stirred with a new, ecstatic impulse; a Divine glow of love and joy kindled in their breasts; a voice not their own spoke to their spirit—their soul leaped forth upon their lips, crying to God, "Father, Father!" They were children of God, and knew it. "The Spirit Himself bore them witness" (Rom. viii. 15).

This sentiment was not due to their own reflection, not the mere opening of a buried spring of feeling in their nature. *God sent it* into their hearts. The outward miracles which attended the first bestowment of this gift, showed from what source it came (chap. iii. 5). Nor did Christ personally impart the assurance. He had gone, that the Paraclete might come. Here was another Witness, sent by a second mission from the

\* Comp. Rom. i. 3, 4; ix. 5; 2 Cor. xiii. 4; Eph. iv. 9, 10; Ph. ii. 6-8; Col. i. 15, 18; ii. 9; 1 Tim. iii. 16.



Father (John xvi. 7). His advent is signalised in clear distinction from that of the Son. He comes in the joint name of Father and of Son. Jesus called Him "the Spirit of the Father;"\* the Apostle, "the Spirit of God's Son."

To us He is "the Spirit of adoption," replacing the former "spirit of bondage unto fear." For by His indwelling we are "joined to the Lord" and made "one spirit" with Him, so that Christ lives in us (chap. ii. 20). And since Christ is above all things the Son, His Spirit is a spirit of sonship; those who receive Him are sons of God. Our sonship is through the Holy Spirit derived from His. Till Christ's redemption was effected, such adoption was in the nature of things impossible. This filial cry of Gentile hearts attested the entrance of a Divine life into the world. The Spirit of God's Son had become the new spirit of mankind.

*Abba*, the Syrian vocative for *father*, was a word familiar to the lips of Jesus. The instance of its use recorded in Mark xiv. 36, was but one of many such. No one had hitherto approached God as He did. His utterance of this word, expressing the attitude of His life of prayer and breathing the whole spirit of His religion, profoundly affected His disciples. So that the *Abba* of Jesus became a watchword of His Church, bearing the proper name of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Gentile believers pronounced it, conscious that in doing so they were joined in spirit to the Lord who said, "My Father, and your Father!" Greek-speaking Christians supplemented it by their own equivalent, as we by the English *Father*. This precious vocable is carried down the ages and round the whole world in the mother-tongue of Jesus, a memorial of the hour when through Him men learned to call God Father.

"Because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit," with this cry. The witness of sonship follows on the adoption, and seals it. The child is born, then cries; the cry is the evidence of life. But this is not the first office of the Holy Spirit to the regenerate soul. Many a silent impulse has He given, frequent and long-continued may have been His visitations, before His presence reveals itself audibly. From the first the new life of grace is implanted by His influence. "That which is *born of the Spirit*, is spirit." "He dwelleth with you, and *is in you*,"† said Jesus to His disciples, before the Pentecostal effusion. Important and decisive as the witness of the Holy Spirit to our sonship is, we must not limit His operation to this event. Deeply has He wrought already on the soul in which His work reaches this issue; and when it is reached, He has still much to bestow, much to accomplish in us. All truth, all holiness, all comfort are His; and into these He leads the children of God. Living by the Spirit, in Him we proceed to walk (v. 25).

The interchange of person in the subject in vv. 5-8 is very noticeable. This agitated style betrays highstrung emotion. Writing first, in ver. 3, in the language of Jewish experience, in ver. 6 Paul turns upon his readers and claims them for witnesses to the same adoption which Jewish believers in Christ (ver. 5) had received. Instantly he falls back into the first person; it is his own joyous consciousness that breaks forth in the filial cry of ver. 6b. In the more calm conclud-

ing sentence the second person is resumed; and now in the individualising singular, as though he would lay hold of his readers one by one, and bid them look each into his own heart to find the proof of sonship, as he writes: "So that thou art no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, also an heir through God."

*An heir through God*—this is the true reading, and is greatly to the point. It carries to a climax the emphatic repetition of "God" observed in vv. 4 and 6. "God sent His Son" into the world; "God sent" in turn "His S n's Spirit into your hearts." God then, and no other, has bestowed your inheritance. It is yours by His fiat. Who dares challenge it? Words how suitable to reassure Gentile Christians, brow-beaten by arrogant Judaism! Our reply is the same to those who at this day deny our Christian and churchly standing, because we reject their sacerdotal claims.

What this inheritance includes in its final attainment, "doth not yet appear." Enough to know that "now are we children of God." The redemption of the body, the deliverance of nature from its sentence of dissolution, the abolishment of death—these are amongst its certainties. Its supreme joy lies in the promise of being with Christ, to witness and share His glory. "Heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ"—a destiny like this overwhelms thought and makes hope a rapture. God's sons may be content to wait and see how their heritage will turn out. Only let us be sure that we are His sons. Doctrinal orthodoxy, ritual observance, moral propriety do not impart, and do not supersede, "the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." The religion of Jesus the Son of God is the religion of the filial consciousness.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE RETURN TO BONDAGE.

#### GALATIANS IV. 8-II.

"Sons of God, whom He made His heirs in Christ, how are you turning back to legal bondage!" Such is the appeal with which the Apostle follows up his argument. "Foolish Galatians," we seem to hear him say again, "who has bewitched you into this?" They forget the call of the Divine grace; they turn away from the sight of Christ crucified; nay, they are renouncing their adoption into the family of God. Paul knew something of the fickleness of human nature; but he was not prepared for this. How can men who have tasted liberty prefer slavery, or full-grown sons desire to return to the "rudiments" of childhood? After knowing God as He is in Christ, is it possible that these Galatians have begun to dote on ceremonial, to make a religion of "times and seasons;" that they are becoming devotees of Jewish ritual? What can be more frivolous, more irrational than this? On such people Paul's labours seem to be thrown away. "You make me fear," he says, "that I have toiled for you in vain."

In this expostulation two principles emerge with especial prominence.

I. First, that knowledge of God, bringing spiritual freedom, lays upon us higher responsibilities. "Then indeed," he says, "not knowing

\* Comp. Rom. viii. 31-35; Acts xi. 17.

\* Matt. x. 20; Luke xi. 13; John xiv. 16; Acts i. 4, 5.

† John xiv. 17; the "present" (ἐστί) is the preferable reading. See Westcott *ad loc.*



God, you were in bondage to false gods. Your heathen life was in a sense excusable. But now something very different is expected from you, since you have come to know God."

We are reminded of the Apostle's memorable words spoken at Athens: "The times of ignorance God overlooked" (Acts xvii. 30). "Ye say, We see," said Jesus; "your sin remaineth" (John ix. 41). Increased light brings stricter judgment. If this was true of men who had merely heard the message of Christ, how much more of those who had proved its saving power. Ritualism was well enough for Pagans, or even for Jews before Christ's coming and the outpouring of His Spirit—but for Christians! For those into whose hearts God had breathed the Spirit of His Son, who had learned to "worship God in the Spirit and to have no confidence in the flesh"—for Paul's Galatians to yield to the legalist "persuasion" was a fatal relapse. In principle, and in its probable issue, this course was a reverting toward their old heathenism.

The Apostle again recalls them, as he does so often his children in Christ, to the time of their conversion. They had been, he reminds them, idolaters; ignorant of the true God, they were "enslaved to things that by nature are no gods." Two definitions Paul has given of idolatry: "There is no idol in the world;" and again, "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God" (1 Cor. viii. 4; x. 20). Half lies, half devilry: such was the popular heathenism of the day. "Gods many and lords many" the Galatian Pagans worshipped—a strange Pantheon. There were their old, weird Celtic deities, before whom our British forefathers trembled. On this ancestral faith had been superimposed the frantic rites of the Phrygian Mother, Cybele, with her mutilated priests; and the more genial and humanistic cultus of the Greek Olympian gods. But they were gone, the whole "damned crew," as Milton calls them; for those whose eyes had seen the glory in the face of Jesus Christ, their spell was broken; heaven was swept clear and earth pure of their foul presence. The old gods are dead. No renaissance of humanism, no witchcraft of poetry can reanimate them. To us after these eighteen centuries, as to the Galatian believers, "there is one God the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through Him." A man who knew the Old Testament, to say nothing of the teaching of Christ, could never sacrifice to Jupiter and Mercurius any more, nor shout "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." They were painted idols, *shams*; he had seen through them. They might frighten children in the dark; but the sun was up. Christianity destroyed Paganism as light kills darkness. Paul did not fear that his readers would slide back into actual heathenism. That was intellectually impossible. There are warnings in his Epistles against the spirit of idolatry, and against conformity with its customs; but none against return to its beliefs.

The old heathen life was indeed a *slavery*, full of fear and degradation. The religious Pagan could never be sure that he had propitiated his gods sufficiently, or given to all their due. They were jealous and revengeful, envious of human prosperity, capable of infinite wrong-doing. In the worship of many of them acts were enjoined revolting to the conscience. And this is true of

Polytheism all over the world. It is the most shameful bondage ever endured by the soul of man.

But Paul's readers had "come to know God." They had touched the great Reality. The phantoms had vanished; the Living One stood before them. His glory shone into their hearts "in the face of Jesus Christ." This, whenever it takes place, is for any man the crisis of his life—when he *comes to know God*, when the *God-consciousness* is born in him. Like the dawn of self-consciousness, it may be gradual. There are those, the happy few, who were "born again" so soon as they were born to thought and choice; they cannot remember a time when they did not love God, when they were not sensible of being "known of Him." But with others, as with Paul, the revelation was made at an instant, coming like a lightning-flash at midnight. But unlike the lightning it remained. Let the manifestation of God come how or when it may, it is decisive. The man into whose soul the Almighty has spoken His I Am, can never be the same afterwards. He may forget; he may deny it: but he has *known God*; he has seen the light of life. If he returns to darkness, his darkness is blacker and guiltier than before. On his brow there rests in all its sadness "Sorrow's crown of sorrow, remembering happier things."

Offences venial, excusable hitherto, from this time assume a graver hue. Things that in a lower stage of life were innocent, and even possessed religious value, may now be unlawful, and the practice of them a declension, the first step in apostasy. What is delightful in a child becomes folly in a grown man. The knowledge of God in Christ has raised us in the things of the spirit to man's estate, and it requires that we should "put away childish things," and amongst them ritual display and sacerdotal officiations, Pagan, Jewish, or Romish. These things form no part of the knowledge of God, or of the "true worship of the Father."

The Jewish "rudiments" were designed for men who had not known God as Christ declares Him, who had never seen the Saviour's cross. Jewish saints could not worship God in the Spirit of adoption. They remained under the spirit of servitude and fear; their conceptions were so far "weak and poor" that they supposed the Divine favour to depend on such matters as the "washing of cups and pots," and the precise number of feet that one walked on the Sabbath. These ideas belonged to a childish stage of the religious life. Pharisaism had developed to the utmost this lower element of the Mosaic system, at the expense of everything that was spiritual in it. Men who had been brought up in Judaism might indeed, after conversion to Christ, retain their old customs as matters of social usage or pious habit, without regarding them as vital to religion. With Gentiles it was otherwise. Adopting Jewish rites *de novo*, they must do so on grounds of distinct religious necessity. For this very reason the duty of circumcision was pressed upon them. It was a means, they were told, essential to their spiritual perfection, to the attainment of full Christian privileges. But to know God by the witness of the Holy Spirit of Christ, as the Galatians had done, was an experience sufficient to show that this "persuasion" was false. It did not "come of Him that called them." It introduced them to a path the opposite of that they had entered at their con-



version, a way that led downwards and not upwards, from the spiritual to the sensuous, from the salvation of faith to that of self-wrought work of law.

"Known God," Paul says,—“or rather *were known of God*.” He hastens to correct himself. He will not let an expression pass that seems to ascribe anything simply to human acquisition. “Ye have not chosen Me,” said Jesus; “I have chosen you.” So the Apostle John: “Not that we loved God, but that He loved us.” This is true through the entire range of the Christian life. “We apprehend that for which we were apprehended by Christ Jesus.” Our love, our knowledge—what are they but the sense of the Divine love and knowledge in us? Religion is a bestowment, not an achievement. It is “God working in us to will and work for the sake of His good pleasure.” In this light the gospel presented itself at first to the Galatians. The preaching of the Apostle, the vision of the cross of Christ, made them sensible of God’s living presence. They felt the gaze of an infinite purity and compassion, of an All-wise, All-pitiful Father, fixed upon them. He was calling them, slaves of idolatry and sin, “into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ.” The illuminating glance of God pierced to their inmost being. In that light God and the soul met, and knew each other.

And now, after this profound, transforming revelation, this sublime communion with God, will they turn back to a life of puerile formalities, of slavish dependence and fear? Is the strength of their devotion to be spent, its fragrance exhaled in the drudgery of legal service? Surely they know God better than to think that He requires this. And He who knew them, as they have proved, and knows what was right and needful for them, has imposed no such burden. He granted them the rich gifts of His grace—the Divine sonship, the heavenly heirship—on terms of mere faith in Christ, and without legal stipulation of any kind. Is it not enough that God knows them, and counts them for His children!

So knowing, and so known, let them be content. Let them seek only to keep themselves in the love of God, and in the comfort of His Spirit. Raised to this high level, they must not decline to a lower. Their heathen “rudiments” were excusable before; but now even Jewish “rudiments” are things to be left behind.

II. It further appears that the Apostle saw an element existing in Judaism common to it with the ethnic religions. For he says that his readers, formerly “enslaved to idols,” are “now turning back to the weak and beggarly rudiments, to which they would fain be in bondage *over again*.”

“The rudiments” of ver. 9 cannot, without exegetical violence, be detached from “the rudiments of the world” of ver. 3. And these latter plainly signify the Judaic rites (see chapter xvi.). The Judaistic practices of the Galatians were, Paul declares, *a backsliding toward their old idolatries*. We can only escape this construction of the passage at the cost of making the Apostle’s remonstrance inconsequent and pointless. The argument of the letter hitherto has been directed with concentrated purpose against Judaic conformity. To suppose that just at this point, in making its application, he turns aside without notice or explanation to an entirely different matter, is to stultify his reasoning. The only ground for referring the “days and seasons” of ver. 10

to any other than a Jewish origin, lies in the apprehension that such reference disparages the Christian Sabbath.

But how, we ask, was it possible for Paul to use language which identifies the revered law of God with rites of heathenism, which he accounted a “fellowship with demons”? Bishop Lightfoot has answered this question in words we cannot do better than quote: “The Apostle regards the higher element in heathen religion as corresponding, however imperfectly, to the lower in the Mosaic law. For we may consider both the one and the other as made up of two component parts, the *spiritual* and the *ritualistic*. Now viewed in their *spiritual* aspect, there is no comparison between the one and the other. In this respect the heathen religions, so far as they added anything of their own to that sense of dependence on God which is innate in man and which they could not entirely crush, were wholly bad. On the contrary, in the Mosaic law the spiritual element was most truly divine. But this does not enter into our reckoning here. For Christianity has appropriated all that was spiritual in its predecessor. . . . The *ritualistic* element alone remains to be considered, and here is the meeting-point of Judaism and Heathenism. In Judaism this was as much lower than its spiritual element, as in Heathenism it was higher. Hence the two systems approach within such a distance that they can, under certain limitations, be classed together. They have at least so much in common that a lapse into Judaism can be regarded as a relapse into the position of unconverted Heathenism. Judaism was a system of bondage like Heathenism. Heathenism had been a disciplinary training like Judaism” (Commentary *in loc.*).

This line of explanation may perhaps be carried a step further. Judaism was rudimentary throughout. A religion so largely ritualistic could not but be spiritually and morally defective. In its partial apprehension of the Divine attributes, its limitation of God’s grace to a single people, its dim perception of immortality, there were great deficiencies in the Jewish creed. Its ethical code, moreover, was faulty; it contained “precepts given for the hardness of men’s hearts”—touching, for example, the laws of marriage, and the right of revenge. There was not a little in Judaism, especially in its Pharisaic form, that belonged to a half-awakened conscience, to a rude and sensuous religious faculty. Christ came to “fulfil the law;” but in that fulfilment He did not shrink from correcting it. He emended the letter of its teaching, that its true spirit might be elicited. For an enlightened Christian who had learned of Jesus the “royal law, the law of liberty,” to conform to Judaism was unmistakably to “turn back.” Moreover, it was just the weakest and least spiritual part of the system of Moses that the legalist teachers inculcated on Gentile Christians; while their own lives fell short of its moral requirements (vi.12).

Mosaism had been in the days of its inspiration and creative vigour the great opponent of idolatry. It was the Lord’s witness throughout long centuries of heathen darkness and oppression, and by its testimony has rendered splendid service to God and man. But from the standpoint of Christianity a certain degree of resemblance begins to be seen underlying this antagonism. The faith of the Israelitish people combated idolatry with weapons too much like its



own. A worldly and servile element remained in it. To one who has advanced in front, positions at an earlier stage of his progress lying apart and paths widely divergent now assume the same general direction. To resort either to Jewish or heathen rites meant *to turn back from Christ*. It was to adopt principles of religion obsolete and unfit for those who had known God through Him. What in its time and for its purpose was excellent—nay, indispensable—in doctrine and in worship in time also had “decayed and waxed old.” To tie the living spirit of Christianity to dead forms is to tie it to corruption.

“Weak and beggarly rudiments”—it is a hard sentence; and yet what else were Jewish ceremonies and rules of diet, in comparison with “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost”? What was circumcision, now that there was no longer Jew and Greek”? What was there in Saturday more than in any other day of the week, if it ceased to be a sign between the Lord of the Sabbath and His people? These things were, as Paul saw them, the cast-clothes of religion. For Gentile Christians the history of the Jewish ordinances had much instruction; but their observance was no whit more binding than that of heathen ceremonies. Even in the ancient times God valued them only as they were the expression of a devout, believing spirit. “Your new moons and your appointed feasts,” He had said to an ungodly generation, “My soul hateth” (Isa. i. 14). And was He likely to accept them now, when they were enforced by ambition and party-spirit, at the expense of His Church’s peace; when their observance turned men’s thoughts away from faith in His Son, and in the power of His life-giving Spirit? There is nothing too severe, too scornful for Paul to say of these venerable rites of Israel, now that they stand in the way of a living faith and trammel the freedom of the sons of God. He tosses them aside as the swaddling-bands of the Church’s infancy—childish fetters too weak to hold the limbs of grown men. “He brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made; for the children of Israel did burn incense to it; and he called it *Nehushtan—a piece of brass*” (2 Kings xviii. 4). Brave Hezekiah! Paul does the same with the whole ceremonial of Moses. “Beggarly rudiments,” he says. What divine refreshment there is in a blast of wholesome scorn! It was their traditions, their ritual that the Judaists worshipped, not the Holy One of Israel. “They would compass sea and land to make one proselyte,” and then “make him twofold more the child of hell than themselves.” This was the only result that the success of the Judaistic agitation could have achieved.

In thus decrying Jewish ordinances, the Apostle by implication allows a certain value to the rites of Paganism. The Galatians were formerly in bondage to “them that are no gods.” Now, he says, they are turning *again* to the like servitude by conforming to Mosaic legalism. They wish to come *again* under subjection to “the weak and poor rudiments.” In Galatian heathenism Paul appears to recognise “rudiments” of truth and a certain preparation for Christianity. While Judaic rites amounted to no more than rudiments of a spiritual faith, there were influences at work in Paganism that come under the same category. Paul believed that “God had

not left Himself without witness to any.” He never treated heathen creeds with indiscriminate contempt, as though they were utterly corrupt and worthless. Witness his address to the “religious” Athenians, and to the wild people of Lycaonia (Acts xiv. 15-17; xvii. 22-31). He finds his text in “certain of your own (heathen) poets.” He appeals to the sense of a Divine presence “not far from any one of us;” and declares that though God was “unknown” to the nations, they were under His guidance and were “feeling after Him.” To this extent Paul admits a *Preparatio evangelica* in the Gentile world; he would have been prepared, with Clement of Alexandria and Origen, and with modern students of comparative religion, to trace in the poets and wise men of Greece, in the lawgivers of Rome, in the mystics of the East, presentiments of Christianity, ideas and aspirations that pointed to it as their fulfilment. The human race was not left in total darkness beyond the range of the light shining on Zion’s hill. The old Pagans, “suckled in a creed outworn,” were not altogether God-forsaken. They too, amid darkness like the shadow of death, had “glimpses that might make them less forlorn.” And so have the heathen still. We must not suppose either that revealed religion was perfect from the beginning; or that the natural religions were altogether without fragments and rudiments of saving truth.

“Days you are scrupulously keeping, and months, and seasons, and years,”—the weekly sabbath, the new moon, the annual festivals, the sacred seventh year, the round of the Jewish Calendar. On these matters the Galatians had, as it seems, already fallen in with the directions of the Jewish teachers. The word by which the Apostle describes their practice, *παρατηρείσθε*, denotes, besides the fact, the manner and spirit of the observance—an *assiduous, anxious attention*, such as the spirit of legal exaction dictated. These prescriptions the Galatians would the more readily adopt, because in their heathen life they were accustomed to stated celebrations. The Pagan Calendar was crowded with days sacred to gods and divine heroes. This resemblance justified Paul all the more in taxing them with relapsing towards heathenism.

The Church of later centuries, both in its Eastern and Western branch, went far in the same direction. It made the keeping of holy days a prominent and obligatory part of Christianity; it has multiplied them superstitiously and beyond all reason. Amongst the rest it incorporated heathen festivals, too little changed by their consecration.

Paul’s remonstrance condemns in principle the enforcement of sacred seasons as things essential to salvation, in the sense in which the Jewish Sabbath was the bond of the ancient covenant. We may not place even the Lord’s Day upon this footing. Far different from this is the unforced and grateful celebration of the First Day of the week, which sprang up in the Apostolic Church, and is assumed by the Apostles Paul and John (1 Cor. xvi. 2; Rev. i. 10). The rule of the seventh day’s rest has so much intrinsic fitness, and has brought with it so many benefits, that after it had been enforced by strict law in the Jewish Church for so long, its maintenance could now be left, without express re-enactment, as a matter of freedom to the good sense and right feeling of Christian believers, “sons of the resurrection.”



Its legislative sanction rests on grounds of public propriety and national well-being, which need not to be asserted here. Wherever the "Lord of the Sabbath" rules, His Day will be gladly kept for His sake.

The Apostle in protecting Gentile liberties is no enemy to order in worship and outward life. No one can justly quote his authority in opposition to such appointments as a Christian community may make, for reasons of expediency and decorum, in the regulation of its affairs. But he teaches that the essence of Christianity does not lie in things of this kind, not in questions of meat and drink, nor of time and place. To put these details, however important in their own order, on a level with righteousness, mercy, and faith, is to bring a snare upon the conscience; it is to introduce once more into the Church the leaven of justification by works of law.

"Weak and poor" the best forms of piety become, without inward knowledge of God. Liturgies, creeds and confessions, church music and architecture, Sundays, fasts, festivals, are beautiful things when they are the transcript of a living faith. When that is gone, their charm, their spiritual worth is gone. They no longer belong to *religion*; they have ceased to be a bond between the souls of men and God. "According to our faith"—our actual, not professional or "confessional" faith—"it shall be done unto us": such is the rule of Christ. To cling to formularies which have lost their meaning and to which the Spirit of truth gives no present witness, is a demoralising bondage.

But this is not the only, nor the commonest way in which the sons of God are tempted to return to bondage. "Whosoever committeth sin," Christ said, "is the servant of sin." And the Apostle will have to warn his readers that by their abuse of liberty, by their readiness to make it "an occasion to the flesh," they were likely to forfeit it. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh" (chap. v. 24). This warning must be balanced against the other. Our liberty from outward constraint should be still more a liberty from the dominion of self, from pride and desire and anger; or it is not the liberty of God's children. Inward servitude is, after all, the vilest and worst.

"You make me afraid," at last the Apostle is compelled to say, "that I have laboured in vain." His enemies had caused him no such fear. While his children in the faith were true to him, he was afraid of nothing. "Now we live," he says in one of his Epistles, "if ye stand fast in the Lord!" But if they should fall away? He trembles for his own work, for these wayward children who had already caused him so many pangs. It is in a tone of the deepest solicitude that he continues his exposulatio in the following paragraph.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### PAUL'S ENTREATY.

GALATIANS iv. 12-20.

THE reproof of the last paragraph ended in a sigh. To see Christ's freemen relapsing into bondage, and exchanging their Divine birthright

for childish toys of ceremonial, what can be more saddening and disappointing than this? Their own experience of salvation, the Apostle's prayers and toils on their behalf, are, to all appearance, wasted on these foolish Galatians. One resource is still left him. He has refuted and anathematised the "other gospel." He has done what explanation and argument can do to set himself right with his readers, and to destroy the web of sophistry in which their minds had been entangled. He will now try to win them by a gentler persuasion. If reason and authority fail, "for love's sake he will rather beseech" them.

He had reminded them of their former idolatry; and this calls up to the Apostle's mind the circumstances of his first ministry in Galatia. He sees himself once more a stranger amongst this strange people, a traveller fallen sick and dependent on their hospitality, preaching a gospel with nothing to recommend it in the appearance of its advocate, and which the sickness delaying his journey had compelled him, contrary to his intention, to proclaim amongst them. Yet with what ready and generous hospitality they had received the infirm Apostle! Had he been an angel from heaven—nay, the Lord Jesus Himself, they could scarcely have shown him more attention than they did. His physical weakness, which would have moved the contempt of others, called forth their sympathies. However severely he may be compelled to censure them, however much their feelings toward him have changed, he will never forget the kindness he then received. Surely they cannot think him their enemy, or allow him to be supplanted by the unworthy rivals who are seeking their regard. So Paul pleads with his old friends, and seeks to win for his arguments a way to their hearts through the affection for himself which he fain hopes is still lingering there.

*Hoc prudentis est pastoris*, Calvin aptly says. But there is more in this entreaty than a calculated prudence. It is a cry of the heart. Paul's soul is in the pangs of travail (ver. 19). We have seen the sternness of his face relax while he pursues his mighty argument. As he surveys the working of God's counsel in past ages, the promise given to Abraham for all nations, the intervening legal discipline, the coming of Christ in the fulness of time, the bursting of the ancient bonds, the sending forth of the Spirit of adoption—and all this for the sake of these Galatian Gentiles, and then thinks how they are after all declining from grace and renouncing their Divine inheritance, the Apostle's heart aches with grief. Foolish, fickle as they have proved, they are his children. He will "travail over them in birth a second time," if "Christ may yet be formed in them." Perhaps he has written too harshly. He half repents of his severity.\* Fain would he "change his voice." If he could only "be with them," and see them face to face, haply his tears, his entreaties, would win them back. A rush of tender emotion wells up in Paul's soul. All his relents are stirred. He is no longer the master in Christ rebuking unfaithful disciples; he is the mother weeping over her misguided sons.

There are considerable difficulties in the exegesis of this passage. We note them in succession as they arise:—(1) In ver. 12 we prefer, with Meyer and Lightfoot, to read, "Be as I, for I became (rather than *am*) as you—brethren, I

\* Comp. 2 Cor. ii. 4; vii. 8.



beseech you." The verses preceding and following both suggest the past tense in the ellipsis. Paul's memory is busy. He appeals to the "auld lang syne." He reminds the Galatians of what he "had been amongst them for their sake,"\* how he then behaved in regard to the matters in dispute. He assumed no airs of Jewish superiority. He did not separate himself from his Gentile brethren by any practice in which they could not join. He "became as they," placing himself by their side on the ground of a common Christian faith. He asks for reciprocity, for "a recompense inlike kind" (2 Cor. vi. 13). Are they going to set themselves above their Apostle, to take their stand on that very ground of Mosaic privilege which he had abandoned for their sake? He implores them not to do this thing. The beseechment, in the proper order of the words, comes in at the close of the sentence, with a pathetic emphasis. He makes himself a suppliant. "I beg you," he says, "by our old affection, by our brotherhood in Christ, not to desert me thus."

(2) Suddenly Paul turns to another point, according to his wont in this emotional mood: "There is nothing in which you have wronged me." Is he contradicting some allegation which had helped to estrange the Galatians? Had some one been saying that Paul was affronted by their conduct, and was actuated by personal resentment? In that case we should have looked for a specific explanation and rebutment of the charge. Rather he is anticipating the thought that would naturally arise in the minds of his readers at this point. "Paul is asking us," they would say, "to let bygones be bygones, to give up this Judaistic attachment for his sake, and to meet him frankly on the old footing. But supposing we try to do so, he is very angry with us, as this letter shows; *he thinks we have treated him badly*; he will always have a grudge against us. Things can never be again as they were between ourselves and him."

Such feelings often arise upon the breach of an old friendship, to prevent the offending party from accepting the proffered hand of reconciliation. Paul's protest removes this hindrance. He replies, "I have no sense of injury, no personal grievance against you. It is impossible I should cherish ill-will toward *you*. You know how handsomely you treated me when I first came amongst you. Nothing can efface from my heart the recollection of that time. You must not think that I hate you, because I tell you the truth" (ver. 16).

(3) "Because of an infirmity of the flesh" (physical weakness), is the truer rendering of ver. 13; and "your temptation in my flesh" the genuine reading of ver. 14, restored by the Revisers. Sickness had arrested the Apostle's course during his second missionary tour, and detained him in the Galatic country. So that he had not only "been with" the Galatians "in weakness," as afterwards when during the same journey he preached at Corinth (1 Cor. ii. 3); but actually "because of weakness." His infirmities gave him occasion to minister there, when he had intended to pass them by.

Paul had no thought of evangelising Galatia; another goal was in view. It was patent to them—indeed he confessed as much at the time—that if he had been able to proceed, he would not have lingered in their country. This was certainly an

unpromising introduction. And the Apostle's state of health made it at that time a trial for any one to listen to him. There was something in the nature of his malady to excite contempt, even loathing for his person. "That which tried you in my flesh ye did not *despise*, nor *spit out*:" such is Paul's vivid phrase. How few men would have humility enough to refer to a circumstance of this kind; or could do so without loss of dignity. He felt that the condition of the messenger might well have moved this Galatian people to derision, rather than to reverence for his message.

At the best Paul's appearance and address were none of the most prepossessing.\* The "ugly little Jew" M. Renan calls him, repeating the taunts of his Corinthian contemners. His sickness in Galatia, connected, it would appear, with some constitutional weakness, from which he suffered greatly during his second and third missionary tours, assumed a humiliating as well as a painful form. Yet this "thorn in the flesh," a bitter trial assuredly to himself† had proved at once a trial and a blessing to his unintended hearers in Galatia.

(4) So far from taking offence at Paul's unfortunate condition, they welcomed him with enthusiasm. They "blessed themselves" that he had come (ver. 15). They said one to another, "How fortunate we are in having this good man amongst us! What a happy thing for us that Paul's sickness obliged him to stay and give us the opportunity of hearing his good news!" Such was their former "gratulation." The regard they conceived for the sick Apostle was unbounded. "For I bear you witness," he says, "that if possible, you would have *dug out your eyes* and given them me!"

Is this no more than a strong hyperbole, describing the almost extravagant devotion which the Galatians expressed to the Apostle? Or are we to read the terms more literally? So it has been sometimes supposed. In this expression some critics have discovered a clue to the nature of Paul's malady. The Galatians, as they read the sentence, wish they could have taken out their own eyes and given them to Paul, *in place of his disabled ones*. This hypothesis, it is argued, agrees with other circumstances of the case and gives shape to a number of scattered intimations touching the same subject. Infirmity of the eyes would explain the "large characters" of Paul's handwriting (chap. vi. 11) and his habit of using an amanuensis. It would account for his ignorance of the person of the High Priest at his trial in Jerusalem (Acts xxiii. 2-5). The blindness that struck him on the way to Damascus may have laid the foundation of a chronic affection of this kind, afterwards developed and aggravated by the hardships of his missionary life. And such an affliction would correspond to what is said respecting the "thorn" of 2 Cor. xii. 7, and the "temptation" of this passage. For it would be excessively painful, and at the same time disabling and disfiguring in its effects.

This conjecture has much to recommend it. But it finds a very precarious support in the text. Paul does not say, "You would have plucked out *your own* (A. V.) eyes and given them *me*," as though he were thinking of an exchange of eyes; but, "You would have plucked out your

\* 1 Cor. ii. 3; 2 Cor. iv. 7; x. 1, 10; xi. 6.

† Comp. 2 Cor. xii. 7-10, referring apparently to the first outbreak of this mysterious affliction.

\* Comp. 1 Thess. i. 5; ii. 7, 8.



eyes and given them me"—as much as to say, "You would have done anything in the world for me then,—even taken out your eyes and given them to me."\* In the phrase "dug out" we may detect a touch of irony. This was the genuine Galatian style. The Celtic temperament loves to launch itself out in vehemencies and flourishes of this sort. These ardent Gauls had been perfectly enraptured with Paul. They lavished upon him their most exuberant metaphors. They said these things in all sincerity; he "bears them record" to this. However cool they have become since, they were gushing enough and to spare in their affection towards him then. And now have they "so quickly" turned against him? Because he crosses their new fancies and tells them unwelcome truths, they rush to the opposite extreme and even think him their enemy!

(5) Suddenly the Apostle turns upon his opposers (ver. 17). The Judaisers had disturbed his happy relations with his Galatian flock; they had made them half believe that he was their enemy. The Galatians must choose between Paul and his traducers. Let them scrutinise the motives of these new teachers. Let them call to mind the claims of their father in Christ. "They are courting you," he says,—“these present suitors for your regard—dishonourably; they want to shut you out and have you to themselves, that you may pay court to them.” They pretend to be zealous for your interests; but it is their own they seek (chap. vi. 12).

So far the Apostle's meaning is tolerably clear. But ver. 18 is obscure. It may be construed in either of two ways, as *Paul* or *the Galatians* are taken for the subject glanced at in the verb *to be courted* in its first clause: "But it is honourable to be courted always in an honourable way, and not only when I am present with you." Does Paul mean that he has no objection to the Galatians making other friends in his absence? or, that he thinks they ought not to forget him in his absence? The latter, as we think. The Apostle complains of their inconstancy towards himself. This is a text for friends and lovers. Where attachment is honourable, it should be lasting. "Set me as a seal upon thine heart," says the Bride of the Song of Songs. With the Galatians it seemed to be, "Out of sight, out of mind." They allowed Paul to be pushed out by scheming rivals. He was far away; they were on the spot. He told them the truth; the Judaisers flattered them. So their foolish heads were turned. They were positively "bewitched" by these new admirers; and preferred their sinister and designing compliments to Paul's sterling honour and proved fidelity.

The connection of vv. 17, 18 turns on the words *honourable* and *court*, each of which is thrice repeated. There is a kind of play on the verb *ζηλώω*. In ver. 18 it implies a true, in ver. 17 a counterfeit affection (an affectation). Paul might have said, "It is good one should be *loved*, followed with affection, *always*," but for the sake of the verbal antithesis. In ver. 17 he taxes his opponents with unworthily courting the favour of the Galatians; in ver. 18 he intimates his grief that he himself in his absence is no longer courted by them.

(6) In the next verse this grief of wounded affection, checked at first by a certain reserve, breaks out uncontrollably: "My children, for whom again I am in travail, till Christ be formed

in you!" This outcry is a pathetic continuance of his expostulation. He cannot bear the thought of losing these children of his heart. He stretches out his arms to them. Tears stream from his eyes. He had been speaking in measured, almost playful terms, in comparing himself with his supplanters. But the possibility of their success, the thought of the mischief going on in Galatia and of the little power he has to prevent it, wrings his very soul. He feels a mother's pangs for his imperilled children, as he writes these distressful words.

There is nothing gained by substituting "little children" (John's phrase) for "children," everywhere else used by Paul, and attested here by the best witnesses. The sentiment is that of 1 Thess. ii. 7, 8; 1 Cor. iv. 14-16. The Apostle is not thinking of the littleness or feebleness of the Galatians, but simply of their relation to himself. His sorrow is the sorrow of bereavement. "You have not many *mothers*," he seems to say: "I have traileved over you in birth, and now a second time you bring on me a mother's pains, which I must endure until Christ is formed in you and His image is renewed in your souls."

Paul stands before us as an injured friend, a faithful minister of Christ robbed of his people's love. He is wounded in his tenderest affections. For the sake of the Gentile Churches he had given up everything in life that he prized (ver. 12; 1 Cor. ix. 21); he had exposed himself to the contempt and hatred of his fellow-countrymen—and this is his reward, "to be loved the less, the more abundantly he loves" (2 Cor. xii. 15)!

But if he is grieved at this defection, he is equally perplexed. He cannot tell what to make of the Galatians, or in what tone to address them. He has warned, denounced, argued, protested, pleaded as a mother with her children; still he doubts whether he will prevail. If he could only see them and meet them as in former days, laying aside the distance, the sternness of authority which he has been forced to assume, he might yet reach their hearts. At least he would know how matters really stand, and in what language he ought to speak. So his entreaty ends: "I wish I could only be present with you now, and speak in some different voice. For I am at a loss to know how to deal with you."

This picture of estrangement and reproach tells its own tale, when its lines have once been clearly marked. We may dwell, however, a little longer on some of the lessons which it teaches:—

I. In the first place, it is evident that *strong emotions and warm affections are no guarantee for the permanence of religious life.*

The Galatians resembled the "stony ground" hearers of our Lord's parable,—“such as hear the word, and immediately with joy receive it; but they have no root in themselves; they believe for a time.” It was not "persecution" indeed that "offended" them; but flattery proved equally effectual. They were of the same fervid temper as Peter on the night of the Passion, when he said, "Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee in anywise,"—within a few hours thrice denying his Master, with "oaths and curses." They lacked seriousness and depth. They had fine susceptibilities and a large fund of enthusiasm; they were full of eloquent protestations; and under excitement were capable of great efforts and sacrifices. But there was a flaw in their nature. They were creatures of impulse

\* Comp. Matt. xviii. 9.



—soon hot, soon cold. One cannot help liking such people—but as for *trusting* them, that is a different matter.

Nothing could be more delightful or promising than the appearance these Churches presented in the early days of their conversion. They heard the Apostle's message with rapt attention; they felt its Divine power, so strangely contrasting with his physical feebleness. They were amazingly wrought upon. The new life in Christ kindled all the fervour of their passionate nature. How they triumphed in Christ! How they blessed the day when the gospel visited their land! They almost worshipped the Apostle. They could not do enough for him. Their hearts bled for his sufferings. Where are all these transports now? Paul is far away. Other teachers have come, with "another gospel." And the cross is already forgotten! They are contemplating circumcision; they are busy studying the Jewish ritual, making arrangements for feast-days and "functions," eagerly discussing points of ceremony. Their minds are poisoned with mistrust of their own Apostle, whose heart is ready to break over their folly and frivolity. All this for the want of a little reflection, for want of the steadiness of purpose without which the most genial disposition and the most ardent emotions inevitably run to waste. Their faith had been too much a matter of feeling, too little of principle.

II. Further, we observe how prone are those who have put themselves in the wrong to fix the blame on others.

The Apostle was compelled in fidelity to truth to say hard things to his Galatian disciples. He had previously, on his last visit, given them a solemn warning on account of their Judaic proclivities (i. 9). In this Epistle he censures them roundly. He wonders at them; he calls them "senseless Galatians"; he tells them they are within a step of being cut off from Christ (v. 4). And now they cry out, "Paul is our enemy! If he cared for us, how could he write so cruelly! We were excessively fond of him once, we could not do too much for him; but that is all over now. If we had inflicted on him some great injury, he could scarcely treat us more roughly." Thoughtless and excitable people commonly reason in this way. Personalities with them take the place of argument and principle. The severity of a holy zeal for truth is a thing they can never understand. If you disagree with them and oppose them, they put it down to some petty animosity. They credit you with a private grudge against them; and straightway enrol you in the number of their enemies, though you may be in reality their best friend. Flatter them, humour their vanity, and you have them at your bidding. Such men it is the hardest thing in the world honestly to serve. They will always prefer "the kisses of an enemy" to the faithful "wounds of a friend."

III. Men of the Galatian type are *the natural prey of self-seeking agitators*. However sound the principles in which they were trained, however true the friendships they have enjoyed, they must have change. The accustomed palls upon them. Giddy Athenians, they love nothing so much as "to hear and tell some new thing." They ostracise Aristides, simply because they are "tired of hearing him always called the Just." To hear "the same things," however "safe" it may be, even from an Apostle's lips is to them intolerably

"grievous." They never think earnestly and patiently enough to find the deeper springs, the fresh delight and satisfaction lying hidden in the great unchanging truths. These are they who are "carried about with divers and strange doctrines," who run after the newest thing in ritualistic art, or sensational evangelism, or well-spiced heterodoxy. Truth and plain dealing, apostolic holiness and godly sincerity, are out-matched in dealing with them by the craft of worldly wisdom. A little judicious flattery, something to please the eye and catch the fancy—and they are persuaded to believe almost anything, or to deny what they have most earnestly believed.

What had the legalists to offer compared with the gifts bestowed on these Churches through Paul? What was there that could make them rivals to him in character or spiritual power? And yet the Galatians flock around the Judaist teachers, and accept without inquiry their slanders and perversions of the gospel; while the Apostle, their true friend and father, too true to spare their faults, stands suspected, almost deserted. He must forsooth implore them to come down from the heights of their would-be legal superiority, and to meet him on the common ground of grace and saving faith. The sheep will not hear their shepherd's voice; they follow strangers, though they be thieves and hirelings. "O foolish Galatians!"

Whether the Apostle's entreaty prevailed to recall them or did not, we cannot tell. From the silence with which these Churches are passed over in the Acts of the Apostles, and the little that is heard of them afterwards, an unfavourable inference appears probable. The Judaistic leaven, it is to be feared, went far to leaven the whole lump. Paul's apprehensions were only too well-grounded. And these hopeful converts who had once "run well," were fatally "hindered" and fell far behind in the Christian race. Such, in all likelihood, was the result of the departure from the truth of the gospel into which the Galatians allowed themselves to be drawn.

Whatever was the sequel to this story, Paul's protest remains to witness to the sincerity and tenderness of the great Apostle's soul, and to the disastrous issues of the levity of character which distinguished his Galatian disciples.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE STORY OF HAGAR.

#### GALATIANS iv. 21-v. 1.

THE Apostle wishes that he could "change his voice" (ver. 20). Indeed he has changed it more than once. "Any one who looks closely may see that there is much change and alteration of feeling in what the Apostle has previously written" (Theodorus). Now he will try another tone; he proceeds in fact to address his readers in a style which we find nowhere else in his Epistles. He will tell his "children" a story! Perhaps he may thus succeed better than by graver argument. Their quick fancy will readily apprehend the bearing of the illustration; it may bring home to them the force of his doctrinal contention, and the peril of their own position,



as he fears they have not seen them yet. And so, after the pathetic appeal of the last paragraph, and before he delivers his decisive, official protest to the Galatians against their circumcision, he interjects this "allegory" of the two sons of Abraham.

Paul cites the history of *the sons of Abraham*. No other example would have served his purpose. The controversy between himself and the Judaizers turned on the question, Who are the true heirs of Abraham? (iii. 7, 16, 29). He made faith in Christ, they circumcision and law-keeping, the ground of sonship. So the inheritance was claimed in a double sense. But now, if it should appear that this antithesis existed in principle in the bosom of the patriarchal family, if we should find that there was an elder son of Abraham's flesh opposed to the child of promise, how powerfully will this analogy sustain the Apostle's position. Judaism will then be seen to be playing over again the part of Ishmael; and "the Jerusalem that now is" takes the place of Hagar, the slave-mother. The moral situation created by the Judaic controversy had been rehearsed in the family life of Abraham.

"Tell me," the Apostle asks, "you that would fain be subject to the law, do you not know what it relates concerning Abraham? He had two sons, one of free, and the other of servile birth. Do you wish to belong to the line of Ishmael, or Isaac?" In this way Paul resumes the thread of his discourse dropped in ver. 7. Faith, he had told his readers, had made them sons of God. They were, in Christ, of Abraham's spiritual seed, heirs of his promise. God had sent His Son to redeem them, and the Spirit of His Son to attest their adoption. But they were not content. They were ambitious of Jewish privileges. The Legalists persuaded them that they must be circumcised and conform to Moses, in order to be Abraham's children in full title. "Very well," the Apostle says, "you may become Abraham's sons in this fashion. Only you must observe that Abraham had *two* sons. And the Law will make you his sons by Hagar, whose home is Sinai—not Israelites, but *Ishmaelites!*"

Paul's Galatian allegory has greatly exercised the minds of his critics. The word is one of ill repute in exegesis. *Allegory* was the instrument of Rabbinical and Alexandrine Scripturists, an infallible device for extracting the predetermined sense from the letter of the sacred text. The "spiritualising" of Christian interpreters has been carried, in many instances, to equal excess of riot. For the honest meaning of the word of God anything and everything has been substituted that lawless fancy and verbal ingenuity could read into it. The most arbitrary and grotesque distortions of the facts of Scripture have passed current under cover of the clause, "which things are an allegory." But Paul's allegory, and that of Philo and the Allegorical school, are very different things, as widely removed as the "words of truth and soberness" from the intoxications of mystical idealism.

With Paul the spiritual sense of Scripture is based on the historical, is in fact the moral content and import thereof; for he sees in history a continuous manifestation of God's will. With the Allegorists the spiritual sense, arrived at by *a priori* means, replaces the historical, destroyed to make room for it. The Apostle points out in the story of Hagar a spiritual intent, such as exists in every scene of human life if we had eyes

to see it, something other than the literal relation of the facts, but nowise alien from it. Here lies the difference between legitimate and illegitimate allegory. The utmost freedom may be given to this employment of the imagination, so long as it is true to the *moral* of the narrative which it applies. In principle the Pauline allegory does not differ from the type. In the type the correspondence of the sign and thing signified centres in a single figure or event; in such an allegory as this it is extended to a group of figures and a series of events. But the force of the application depends on the actuality of the original story, which in the illicit allegory is matter of indifference.

"Which things are allegorised"—so the Apostle literally writes in ver. 24—*made matters of allegory*. The phrase intimates, as Bishop Lightfoot suggests, that the Hagarene episode in Genesis (xvi., xxi. 1-21) was commonly interpreted in a figurative way. The Galatians had heard from their Jewish teachers specimens of this popular mode of exposition. Paul will employ it too; and will give his own reading of the famous story of Ishmael and Isaac. Philo of Alexandria, the greatest allegorist of the day, has expounded the same history. These eminent interpreters both make Sarah the mother of the spiritual, Hagar of the worldly offspring; both point out how the barren is exalted over the fruitful wife. So far, we may imagine, Paul is moving on the accepted lines of Jewish exegesis. But Philo knows nothing of the correspondence between Isaac and *Christ*, which lies at the back of the Apostle's allegory. And there is this vital difference of method between the two divines, that whereas Paul's comparison is the illustration of a doctrine proved on other grounds—the painting which decorates the house already built (Luther)—with the Alexandrine idealist it forms the substance and staple of his teaching.

Under this allegorical dress the Apostle expounds once more his doctrine, already inculcated, of the difference between the Legal and Christian state. The former constitutes, as he now puts the matter, a bastard sonship like that of Ishmael, conferring only an external and provisional tenure in the Abrahamic inheritance. It is contrasted with the spiritual sonship of the true Israel in the following respects:—It is a state of *nature* as opposed to *grace*; of *bondage* as opposed to *freedom*; and further, it is *temporary* and soon to be ended by the Divine decree.

I. "He who is of the maid-servant is *after the flesh*; but he that is of the free-woman is through promise. . . . Just as then he that was *after the flesh* persecuted him that was *after the Spirit*, so now" (vv. 23, 29). The Apostle sees in the different parentage of Abraham's sons the ground of a radical divergence of character. One was the child of nature, the other was the son of a spiritual faith.

Ishmael was in truth the fruit of unbelief; his birth was due to a natural but impatient misreading of the promise. The patriarch's union with Hagar was ill-assorted and ill-advised. It brought its natural penalty by introducing an alien element into his family life. The low-bred insolence which the serving-woman, in the prospect of becoming a mother, showed toward the mistress to whom she owed her preferment, gave a foretaste of the unhappy consequences. The promise of posterity made to Abraham with a childless wife, was expressly designed to try his



faith; and he had allowed it to be overborne by the reasonings of nature. It was no wonder that the son of the Egyptian slave, born under such conditions, proved to be of a lower type, and had to be finally excluded from the house.

In Ishmael's relation to his father there was nothing but the ordinary play of human motives. "The son of the handmaid was born after the flesh." He was a *natural* son. But Ishmael was not on that account cut off from the Divine mercies. Nor did his father's prayer, "O that Ishmael might live before Thee" (Gen. xvii. 18), remain unanswered. A great career was reserved by Divine Providence for his race. The Arabs, the fiery sons of the desert, through him claim descent from Abraham. They have carved their name deeply upon the history and the faith of the world. But sensuousness and lawlessness are everywhere the stamp of the Ishmaelite. With high gifts and some generous qualities, such as attracted to his eldest boy the love of Abraham, their fierce animal passion has been the curse of the sons of Hagar. Mohammedanism is a bastard Judaism; it is the religion of Abraham sensualised. Ishmael stands forth as the type of the carnal man. On outward grounds of flesh and blood he seeks inheritance in the kingdom of God; and with fleshly weapons passionately fights its battles.

To a similar position Judaism, in the Apostle's view, had now reduced itself. And to this footing the Galatian Churches would be brought if they yielded to the Judaistic solicitations. To be circumcised would be for them to be born again after the flesh, to link themselves to Abraham in the unspiritual fashion of Hagar's son. Ishmael was the first to be circumcised (Gen. xvii. 23-26). It was to renounce salvation by faith and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. This course could only have one result. The Judaic ritualism they were adopting would bear fruit after its kind, in a worldly, sensuous life. Like Ishmael they would claim kinship with the Church of God on fleshly grounds; and their claims must prove as futile as did his.

The persecution of the Church by Judaism gave proof of the Ishmaelite spirit, the carnal animus by which it was possessed. A religion of externalism naturally becomes repressive. It knows not "the demonstration of the Spirit"; it has "confidence in the flesh." It relies on outward means for the propagation of its faith; and naturally resorts to the secular arm. The Inquisition and the Auto-da-fé are a not unfitting accompaniment of the gorgeous ceremonial of the Mass. Ritualism and priestly autocracy go hand in hand. "So now," says Paul, pointing to Ishmael's "persecution" of the infant Isaac, hinted at in Gen. xxi. 8-10.

The laughter of Hagar's boy at Sarah's weaning-feast seems but a slight offence to be visited with the punishment of expulsion; and the incident one beneath the dignity of theological argument. But the principle for which Paul contends is there; and it is the more easily apprehended when exhibited on this homely scale. The family is the germ and the mirror of society. In it are first called into play the motives which determine the course of history, the rise and fall of empires or churches. The gravamen of the charge against Ishmael lies in the last word of Gen. xxi. 9, rendered in the Authorised Version *mocking*, and by the Revisers *playing*, after the Septagint and the Vulgate. This word in the

Hebrew is evidently a play on the name *Isaac*, *i. e.*, *laughter*, given by Sarah to her boy with genial motherly delight (vv. 6, 7). Ishmael, now a youth of fourteen, takes up the child's name and turns it, on this public and festive occasion, into ridicule. Such an act was not only an insult to the mistress of the house and the young heir at a most untimely moment, it betrayed a jealousy and contempt on the part of Hagar's son towards his half-brother which gravely compromised Isaac's future. "The wild, ungovernable and pugnacious character ascribed to his descendants began to display itself in Ishmael, and to appear in language of provoking insolence; offended at the comparative indifference with which he was treated, he indulged in mockery, especially against Isaac, whose very name furnished him with satirical sneers."\* Ishmael's jest cost him dear. The indignation of Sarah was reasonable; and Abraham was compelled to recognise in her demand the voice of God (vv. 10-12). The two boys, like Esau and Jacob in the next generation, represented opposite principles and ways of life, whose counter-working was to run through the course of future history. Their incompatibility was already manifest.

The Apostle's comparison must have been mortifying in the extreme to the Judaists. They are told in plain terms that they are in the position of outcast Ishmael; while uncircumcised Gentiles, without a drop of Abraham's blood in their veins, have received the promise forfeited by their unbelief. Paul could not have put his conclusion in a form more unwelcome to Jewish pride. But without this radical exposure of the legalist position it was impossible for him adequately to vindicate his gospel and defend his Gentile children in the faith.

II. From this contrast of birth "according to flesh" and "through promise" is deduced the opposition between *the slave-born and free-born sons*. "For these (the slave-mother and the free-woman) are two covenants, one indeed bearing children unto bondage—which is Hagar" (ver. 24). The other side of the antithesis is not formally expressed; it is obvious. Sarah the princess, Abraham's true wife, has her counterpart in the original covenant of promise renewed in Christ, and in "the Jerusalem above, which is our mother" (ver. 26). Sarah is the typical mother,† as Abraham is the father of the children of faith. In the *systoichia*, or tabular comparison, which the Apostle draws up after the manner of the schools, *Hagar and the Mosaic covenant, Sinai and the Jerusalem that now is* stand in one file and "answer to" each other; *Sarah and the Abrahamic covenant, Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem* succeed in the same order, opposite to them. "Zion" is wanting in the second file; but "Sinai and Zion" form a standing antithesis (Heb. xii. 18-22); the second is implied in the first. It was to *Zion* that the words of Isaiah cited in ver. 27 were addressed.

The first clause of ver. 25 is best understood in the shorter, marginal reading of the R. V., also preferred by Bishop Lightfoot (τὸ γὰρ Σινᾶ ὄρος ἐστὶν κ. τ. λ.). It is a parenthesis—"for mount Sinai is in Arabia"—*covenant* running on in the mind from ver. 24 as the continued subject of ver. 25b: "and it answereth to the present Jerusalem." This is the simplest and most consistent construction of the passage. The in-

\* Kalisch, "Commentary," on Genesis xxi. 9.

† Comp. Heb. xi. 11, 12; 1 Pet. iii. 6.



terjected geographical reference serves to support the identification of the Sinaitic covenant with Hagar, *Arabia* being the well-known abode of the Hagarenes. Paul had met them in his wanderings there. Some scholars have attempted to establish a verbal agreement between the name of the slave-mother and that locally given to the Sinaitic range; but this explanation is precarious, and after all unnecessary. There was a real correspondence between place and people on the one hand, as between place and covenant on the other. Sinai formed a visible and imposing link between the race of Ishmael and the Mosaic law-giving. That awful, desolate mountain, whose aspect, as we can imagine, had vividly impressed itself on Paul's memory (i. 17), spoke to him of bondage and terror. It was a true symbol of the working of the law of Moses, exhibited in the present condition of Judaism. And round the base of Sinai Hagar's wild sons had found their dwelling.

Jerusalem was no longer the mother of free-men. The boast, "we are Abraham's sons; we were never in bondage" (John viii. 33), was an unconscious irony. Her sons chafed under the Roman yoke. They were loaded with self-inflicted legal burdens. Above all, they were, notwithstanding their professed law-keeping, enslaved to sin, in servitude to their pride and evil lusts. The spirit of the nation was that of rebellious, discontented slaves. They were Ishmaelite sons of Abraham, with none of the nobleness, the reverence, the calm and elevated faith of their father. In the Judaism of the Apostle's day the Sinaitic dispensation, uncontrolled by the higher patriarchal and prophetic faith, had worked out its natural result. It "gendered to bondage." A system of repression and routine, it had produced men punctual in tithes of mint and anise, but without justice, mercy, or faith; vaunting their liberty while they were "servants of corruption." The law of Moses could not form a "new creature." It left the Ishmael of nature unchanged at heart, a child of the flesh, with whatever robes of outward decorum his nakedness was covered. The Pharisee was the typical product of law apart from grace. Under the garb of a freeman he carried the soul of a slave.

But ver. 26 sounds the note of deliverance: "The Jerusalem above is free; and she is our mother!" Paul has escaped from the prison of Legalism, from the confines of Sinai; he has left behind the perishing, earthly Jerusalem, and with it the bitterness and gloom of his Pharisaic days. He is a citizen of the heavenly Zion, breathing the air of a Divine freedom. The yoke is broken from the neck of the Church of God; the desolation is gone from her heart. There come to the Apostle's lips the words of the great prophet of the Exile, depicting the deliverance of the spiritual Zion, despised and counted barren, but now to be the mother of a numberless offspring. In Isaiah's song, "Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not" (liv.), the laughter of the childless Sarah bursts forth again, to be gloriously renewed in the persecuted Church of Jesus. Robbed of all outward means, mocked and thrust out as she is by Israel after the flesh, her rejection is a release, an emancipation. Conscious of the spirit of sonship and freedom, looking out on the boundless conquests lying before her in the Gentile world, the Church of the New Covenant glories in her tribulations. In Paul is fulfilled the joy of

prophet and psalmist, who sang in former days of gloom concerning Israel's enlargement and world-wide victories. No legalist could understand words like these. "The veil" was upon his heart "in the reading of the Old Testament." But with "the Spirit of the Lord" comes "liberty." The prophetic inspiration has returned. The voice of rejoicing is heard again in the dwellings of Israel. "If the Son make you free," said Jesus, "ye shall be free indeed." This Epistle proves it.

III. "And the bondman *abideth not in the house for ever*; the Son *abideth for ever*" (John viii. 35). This also the Lord had testified: the Apostle repeats His warning in the terms of this allegory.

Sooner or later the slave-boy was bound to go. He has no proper birthright, no permanent footing in the house. One day he exceeds his license, he makes himself intolerable; he must begone. "What saith the Scripture? Cast out the maidservant and her son; for the son of the maidservant shall not inherit with the son of the freewoman" (ver. 30). Paul has pronounced the doom of Judaism. His words echo those of Christ: "Behold your house is left unto you desolate" (Matt. xxiii. 38); they are taken up again in the language of Heb. xiii. 13, 14, uttered on the eve of the fall of Jerusalem: "Let us go forth unto Jesus without the camp, bearing His reproach. We have here no continuing city, but we seek that which is to come." On the walls of Jerusalem *ichabod* was plainly written. Since it "crucified our Lord" it was no longer the Holy City; it was "spiritually Sodom and Egypt" (Rev. xi. 8),—*Egypt*, the country of Hagar. Condemning Him, the Jewish nation passed sentence on itself. They were slaves who in blind rage slew their Master when He came to free them.

The Israelitish people showed more than Ishmael's jealousy toward the infant Church of the Spirit. No weapon of violence or calumny was too base to be used against it. The cup of their iniquity was filling fast. They were ripening for the judgment which Christ predicted (1 Thess. ii. 16). Year by year they became more hardened against spiritual truth, more malignant towards Christianity, and more furious and fanatical in their hatred towards their civil rulers. The cause of Judaism was hopelessly lost. In Rom. ix.-xi., written shortly after this Epistle, Paul assumes this as a settled thing, which he has to account for and to reconcile with Scripture. In the demand of Sarah for the expulsion of her rival, complied with by Abraham against his will, the Apostle reads the secret judgment of the Almighty on the proud city which he himself so ardently loved, but which had crucified his Lord and repented not. "Cut it down," Jesus cried, "why cumbereth it the ground?" (Luke xiii. 7). The voice of Scripture speaks again: "Cast her out; she and her sons are slaves. They have no place amongst the sons of God." Ishmael was in the way of Isaac's safety and prosperity. And the Judaic ascendancy was no less a danger to the Church. The blow which shattered Judaism at once cleared the ground for the outward progress of the gospel and arrested the legalistic reaction which hindered its internal development. The two systems were irreconcilable. It was Paul's merit to have first apprehended this contradiction in its full import. The time had come to apply in all its rigour Christ's



principle of combat, "He that is not with Me is against Me." It is the same rule of exclusion which Paul announces: "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom. viii. 9). Out of Christ is no salvation. When the day of judgment comes, whether for men or nations, this is the touchstone: Have we, or have we not "the Spirit of God's Son"? Is our character that of sons of God, or slaves of sin? On the latter falls inevitably the sentence of expulsion. "He will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity" (Matt. xiii. 41).

This passage signalises the definite breach of Christianity with Judaism. The elder Apostles lingered in the porch of the Temple; the primitive Church clung to the ancient worship. Paul does not blame them for doing so. In their case this was but the survival of a past order, in principle acknowledged to be obsolete. But the Church of the future, the spiritual seed of Abraham gathered out of all nations, had no part in Legalism. The Apostle bends all his efforts to convince his readers of this, to make them sensible of the impassable gulf lying between them and outworn Mosaism. Again he repeats, "We are not children of a maidservant, but of her that is free" (ver. 31). The Church of Christ can no more hold fellowship with Judaism than could Isaac with the spiteful, mocking Ishmael. Paul leads the Church across the Rubicon. There is no turning back.

Ver. 1 of chap. v. is the application of the allegory. It is a triumphant assertion of liberty, a ringing summons to its defence. Its separation from chap. iv. is ill-judged, and runs counter to the ancient divisions of the Epistle. "Christ set us free," Paul declares; "and it was *for freedom*—not that we might fall under a new servitude. *Stand fast* therefore; do not let yourselves be made bondmen over again." Bondmen the Galatians had been before (iv. 8), bowing down to false and vile gods. Bondmen they will be again, if they are beguiled by the Legalists to accept the yoke of circumcision, if they take "the Jerusalem that now is" for their mother. They have tasted the joys of freedom; they know what it is to be sons of God, heirs of His kingdom and partakers of His Spirit; why do they stoop from their high estate? Why should Christ's freemen put a yoke upon their own neck? Let them only know their happiness and security in Christ, and refuse to be cheated out of the substance of their spiritual blessings by the illusive shadows which the Judaists offer them. Freedom once gained is a prize never to be lost. No care, no vigilance in its preservation can be too great. Such liberty inspires courage and good hope in its defence. "Stand fast therefore. Quit yourselves like men."

How the Galatians responded to the Apostle's challenge, we do not know. But it has found an echo in many a heart since. The Lutheran Reformation was an answer to it; so was the Scottish Covenant. The spirit of Christian liberty is eternal. Jerusalem or Rome may strive to imprison it. They might as well seek to bind the winds of heaven. Its home is with God. Its seat is the throne of Christ. It lives by the breath of His Spirit. The earthly powers mock at it, and drive it into the wilderness. They do but assure their own ruin. It leaves the house of the oppressor desolate. Whosoever he be, Judaist

or Papist, priest, or king, or demagogue—that makes himself lord of God's heritage and would despoil His children of the liberties of faith, let him beware lest of him also it be spoken, "Cast out the bondwoman and her son."

## CHAPTER XX.

### SHALL THE GALATIANS BE CIRCUMCISED?

#### GALATIANS v. 2-6.

SHALL the Galatians be circumcised, or shall they not? This is the decisive question. The denunciation with which Paul begins his letter, the narrative which follows, the profound argumentation, the tender entreaty of the last two chapters, all converge toward this crucial point. So far the Galatian Churches had been only dallying with Judaism. They have been tempted to the verge of apostasy; but they are not yet over the edge. Till they consent to be circumcised, they have not finally committed themselves; their freedom is not absolutely lost. The Apostle still hopes, despite his fears, that they will stand fast (ver. 10; iv. 11; iii. 4). The fatal step is eagerly pressed on them by the Judaisers (vi. 12, 13), whose persuasion the Galatians had so far entertained that they had begun to keep the Hebrew Sabbath and feast-days (iv. 10). If they yield to this further demand, the battle is lost; and this powerful Epistle, with all the Apostle's previous labour spent upon them, has been in vain. To sever this section from the polemical in order to attach it to the practical part of the Epistle, as many commentators do, is to cut the nerve of the Apostle's argument and reduce it to an abstract theological discussion.

This momentous question is brought forward with the greater emphasis and effect, because it has hitherto been kept out of sight. The allusion to Titus in ii. 1-5 has already indicated the supreme importance of the matter of circumcision. But the Apostle has delayed dealing with it formally and directly, until he is able to do so with the weight of the foregoing chapters to support his interdict. He has shattered the enemies' position with his artillery of logic, he has assailed the hearts of his readers with all the force of his burning indignation and subduing pathos. Now he gathers up his strength for the final charge home, which must decide the battle.

I. Lo, I Paul tell you! When he begins thus, we feel that the decisive moment is at hand. Everything depends on the next few words. Paul stands like an archer with his bow drawn at full stretch and the arrow pointed to the mark. "Let others say what they may; this is what *I* tell you. If my word has any weight with you, give heed to this:—if you be circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing."

Now his bolt is shot; we see what the Apostle has had in his mind all this time. Language cannot be more explicit. Some of his readers will have failed to catch the subtler points of his argument, or the finer tones of his voice of entreaty; but every one will understand this. The most "senseless" and volatile amongst the Galatians will surely be sobered by the terms of this warning. There is no escaping the dilemma. Legalism and Paulinism, the true and the false



gospel, stand front to front, reduced to their barest form, and weighed each in the balance of its practical result. *Christ—or Circumcision: which shall it be?*

This declaration is no less authoritative and judicially threatening than the anathema of chap. i. That former denouncement declared the false teachers severed from Christ. Those who yield to their persuasion, will be also "severed from Christ." They will fall into the same ditch as their blind leaders. The Judaisers have forfeited their part in Christ; they are false brethren, tares among the wheat, troublers and hinderers to the Church of God. And Gentile Christians who choose to be led astray by them must take the consequences. If they obey the "other gospel," Christ's gospel is theirs no longer. If they rest their faith on circumcision, they have withdrawn it from His cross. Adopting the Mosaic regimen, they forego the benefits of Christ's redemption. "Christ will profit you nothing." The sentence is negative, but no less fearful on that account. It is as though Christ should say, "Thou hast no part with Me."

Circumcision will cost the Galatian Christians all they possess in Jesus Christ. But is not this, some one will ask, an over-strained assertion? Is it consistent with Paul's professions and his policy in other instances? In ver. 6, and again in the last chapter, he declares that "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision nothing"; and yet here he makes it *everything*! The Apostle's position is this. In itself the rite is valueless. It was the sacrament of the Old Covenant, which was brought to an end by the death of Christ. For the new Church of the Spirit, it is a matter of perfect indifference whether a man is circumcised or not. Paul had therefore circumcised Timothy, whose mother was a Jewess (Acts xvi. 1-3), though neither he nor his young disciple supposed that it was a religious necessity. It was done as a social convenience; "uncircumcision was nothing," and could in such a case be surrendered without prejudice. On the other hand, he refused to submit Titus to the same rite; for he was a pure Greek, and on him it could only have been imposed on religious grounds and as a passport to salvation. For this, and for no other reason, it was demanded by the Judaistic party. In this instance it was needful to show that "circumcision is nothing." The Galatians stood in the same position as Titus. Circumcision, if performed on them, must have denoted, not as in Timothy's case, the fact of Jewish birth, but *subjection to the Mosaic law*. Regarded in this light, the question was one of life or death for the Pauline Churches. To yield to the Judaisers would be to surrender the principle of salvation by faith. The attempt of the legalist party was in effect to force Christianity into the grooves of Mosaism, to reduce the world-wide Church of the Spirit to a sect of moribund Judaism.

With what views, with what aim were the Galatians entertaining this Judaic "persuasion"? Was it to make them sons of God and heirs of His kingdom? This was the object with which "God sent forth His Son;" and the Spirit of sonship assured them that it was realised (chap. iv. 4-7). To adopt the former means to this end was to renounce the latter. In turning their eyes to this new bewitchment, they must be conscious that their attention was diverted from the Redeemer's cross and their confidence in it weak-

ened (chap. iii. 1). To be circumcised would be to rest their salvation formally and definitely on works of law, in place of the grace of God. The consequences of this Paul has shown in relating his discussion with Peter, in chap. ii. 15-21. They would "make" themselves "transgressors;" they would "make Christ's death of none effect." In the soul's salvation Christ will be all, or nothing. If we trust Him, we must trust Him altogether. The Galatians had already admitted a suspicion of the power of His grace, which if cherished and acted on in the way proposed, must sever all communion between their souls and Him. Their circumcision would be "the sacrament of their excision from Christ" (Huxtable).

The tense of the verb is *present*. Paul's readers may be in the act of making this disastrous compliance. He bids them look for a moment at the depth of the gulf on whose brink they stand. "Stop!" he cries, "another step in that direction, and you have lost Christ."

And what will they get in exchange? They will saddle themselves with all the obligations of the Mosaic law (ver. 3). This probably was more than they bargained for. They wished to find a *via media*, some compromise between the new faith and the old, which would secure to them the benefits of Christ without His reproach, and the privileges of Judaism without its burdens. This at least was the policy of the Judaic teachers (chap. vi. 12, 13). But it was a false and untenable position. "Circumcision verily profiteth, *if thou art a doer of the law*." (Rom. ii. 25); otherwise it brings only condemnation. He who receives the sacrament of Mosaism, by doing so pledges himself to "keep and do" every one of its "ordinances, statutes, and judgments"—a yoke which, honest Peter said, "Neither we nor our fathers were able to bear" (Acts xv. 10). Let the Galatians read the law, and consider what they are going to undertake. He who goes with the Judaists a mile, will be compelled to go twain. They will not find themselves at liberty to pick and choose amongst the legal requirements. Their legalist teachers will not raise a finger to lighten the yoke (Luke xi. 46), when it is once fastened on their necks; nor will their own consciences acquit them of its responsibilities. This obligation Paul, himself a master in Jewish law, solemnly affirms: "I protest (I declare before God) to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to perform the whole law."

Now this is a proved impossibility. Whoever "sets up the law," he had avouched to Cephas, "makes himself a transgressor" (chap. ii. 18). Nay, it was established of set purpose to "multiply transgressions," to deepen and sharpen the consciousness of sin (chap. iii. 19; Rom. iii. 20; iv. 15; v. 20). Jewish believers in Christ, placed under its power by their birth, had thankfully found in the faith of Christ a refuge from its accusations (chap. ii. 16; Rom. vii. 24-viii. 4). Surely the Galatians, knowing all this, will not be so foolish as to put themselves gratuitously under its power. To do this would be an insult to Christ, and an act of moral suicide. This further warning reinforces the first, and is uttered with equal solemnity. "I tell you, Christ will profit you nothing; and again I testify, the law will lay its full weight upon you." They will be left, without the help of Christ, to bear this tremendous burden.



This double threatening is blended into, one in ver. 4. The pregnant force of Paul's Greek is untranslatable. Literally his words run, "You were nullified from Christ—κατηργήθητε ἀπὸ Χριστοῦ—brought to nought (being severed) from Him, you that in law are seeking justification." He puts his assertion in the past (*aorist*) tense, stating that which ensues so soon as the principle of legal justification is endorsed. From that moment the Galatians cease to be Christians. In this sense they "are abolished," just as "the cross is" virtually "abolished" if the Apostle "preaches circumcision" (ver. 11), and "death is being abolished" under the reign of Christ (1 Cor. xv. 26). He has said in ver. 2 that Christ will be made of none effect to them; now he adds that they "are made of none effect" in relation to Christ. Their Christian standing is destroyed. The joyous experiences of their conversion, their share in Abraham's blessing, their Divine sonship witnessed to by the Holy Spirit—all this is nullified, cancelled at a stroke, if they are circumcised. The detachment of their faith "from Christ" is involved in the process of attaching it to Jewish ordinances, and brings spiritual destruction upon them. The root of the Christian life is faith in Him. Let that root be severed, let the branch no longer "abide in the vine"—it is dead already.\*

Cut off from Christ, they "have fallen from grace." Paul has already twice identified *Christ* and *grace*, in chap. i. 6 and ii. 21. The Divine mercies centre in Jesus Christ; and he who separates himself from Him, shuts these out of his soul. The verb here used by the Apostle (*ἐξενέσται*) is commonly applied (four times, *e. g.*, in Acts xxvii.) to a ship driven out of her course. Some such image seems to be in the writer's mind in this passage. These racers made an excellent start, but they have stumbled (ver. 7; chap. iii. 3); the vessel set out from harbour in gallant style, but she is drifting fast upon the rocks. This sentence "is the exact opposite of 'stands in the grace,' Rom. v. 2" (Beet).†

That he who "seeks justification in law" has fallen from *grace*," needs no proof after the powerful demonstration of chap. ii. 14-21. The moralist claims quittance on the ground of his deservings. He pleads the quality of his "works," his punctual discharge of every stipulated duty, from circumcision onwards. "I fast twice a week," he tells his Divine Judge; "I tithe all my gains. I have kept all the commandments from my youth up." What can God expect more than this? But with these performances Grace has nothing to do. The man is not in its order. If he invokes its aid, it is as a make-weight, a supplement to the possible short-comings in a virtue for the most part competent for itself. Now the grace of God is not to be set aside in this way; it refuses to be treated as a mere *succedaneum* of human virtue. Grace, like Christ, insists on being "all in all." "If salvation is by grace, it is no longer of works;" and "if of works, it is no more grace" (Rom. xi. 6). These two methods of justification imply different moral tempers, an opposite set and direction of the current of life. This question of circumcision brings the Galatians to the parting of the ways. *Grace* or *Law*—which of the two roads

will they follow? Both they cannot. They may become Jewish proselytes; but they will cease to be Christians. Leaving behind them the light and joy of the heavenly Zion, they will find themselves wandering in the gloomy desolations of Sinai.

II. From this prospect the Apostle bids his readers turn to that which he himself beholds, and which they erewhile shared with him. Again he seems to say, "Be ye as I am, brethren" (chap. iv. 12); not in outward condition alone, but still more in inward experience and aspiration. "For *we* by the Spirit, on the ground of faith are awaiting the hope of righteousness" (ver. 5).

Look on this picture, and on that. Yonder are the Galatians, all in tumult about the legalistic proposals, debating which of the Hebrew feasts they shall celebrate and with what rites, absorbed in the details of Mosaic ceremony, all but persuaded to be circumcised and to settle their scruples out of hand by a blind submission to the Law. And here, on the other side, is Paul with the Church of the Spirit, walking in the righteousness of faith and the communion of the Holy Spirit, joyfully awaiting the Saviour's final coming and the hope that is laid up in heaven. How vexed, how burdened, how narrow and puerile is the one condition of life; how large and lofty and secure the other. "We," says the Apostle, "are looking *forwards*, not *backwards*, to Christ and not to Moses."

Every word in this sentence is full of meaning. *Faith* carries an emphasis similar to that it has in chap. ii. 16; iii. 22; and in Rom. iv. 16. Paul supports by contrast what he has just said: "Your share in the kingdom of grace is lost who seek a legal righteousness (ver. 4); it is *by faith* that we look for our heritage." *Hope* is clearly *matter of hope*, the future glory of the redeemed, described in Rom. viii. 18-25, Phil. iii. 20, 21, in both of which places there appears the remarkably compounded verb (*ἀν-εκ-δεχόμεθα*) that concludes this verse. It implies an intent expectancy, sure of its object and satisfied with it. The hope is "righteousness' hope"—the hope of the righteous—for it has in righteousness its warrant. The saying of Psalm xvi., verified in Christ's rising from the dead, contains its principle: "Thou wilt not leave my soul to death; nor suffer Thine holy one to see the pit." This was the secret "hope of Israel,"\* that grew up in the hearts of the men of faith, whose accomplishment is the crowning glory of the redemption of Christ. It is the goal of faith. Righteousness is the path that leads to it. The Galatians had been persuaded of this hope and embraced it; if they accept the "other gospel," with its phantom of a legal righteousness, their hope will perish.

The Apostle is always true to the order of thought here indicated. Faith saves from first to last. The present righteousness and future glory of the sons of God alike have their source in faith. The act of reliance by which the initial justification of the sinner was attained, now becomes the habit of the soul, the channel by which its life is fed, rooting itself ever more deeply into Christ and absorbing more completely the virtue of His death and heavenly life. Faith has its great ventures; it has also its seasons of endurance, its moods of quiet expectancy, its un-

\* Comp. John xv. 5, 6, where in ἐβλήθη, ἐξηράνθη, there is a like *summary aorist*.

† Comp. 2 Pet. iii. 17; for the figure suggested, Eph. iv. 14; 1 Tim. i. 19.

\* Acts xxiii. 6; xxiv. 15; xxvi. 6-8; comp. John vi. 39, 40, 44.



wearable patience. It can wait as well as work. It rests upon the past, seeing in Christ crucified its "author;" then it looks on to the future, and claims Christ glorified for its "finisher." So faith prompts her sister Hope and points her to "the glory that shall be revealed." If faith fails, hope quickly dies. Unbelief is the mother of despair. "Of faith," the Apostle says, "we look out!"

A second condition, inseparable from the first, marks the hope proper to the Christian righteousness. It is sustained "by the Spirit." The connection of faith and hope respectively with the gift of the Holy Spirit is marked very clearly by Paul in Eph. i. 13, 14: "Having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit, who is *the earnest of our inheritance*." The Holy Spirit seals the sons of God—"sons, then heirs" (chap. iv. 6, 7; Rom. viii. 15-17). This stamps on Christian hope a *spiritual* character. The conception which we form of it, the means by which it is pursued, the temper and attitude in which it is expected, are determined by the Holy Spirit who inspires it. This pure and celestial hope is therefore utterly removed from the selfish ambitions and the sensuous methods that distinguished the Judaistic movement (chap. iv. 3, 9; vi. 12-14). "Men of worldly low design" like Paul's opponents in Galatia, had no right to entertain "the hope of righteousness." These matters are spiritually discerned; they are "the things of the Spirit, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him" (1 Cor. ii. 9-14).

If faith and hope are in sight, *love* cannot be far off. In the next verse it comes to claim its place beside the other two: "faith working through love." And so the blessed trio is complete, *Fides, amor, spes: summa Christianismi* (Bengel). Faith waits, but it also *works*; and love is its working energy. Love gives faith hands and feet; hope lends it wings. Love is the fire at its heart, the life-blood coursing in its veins; hope the light that gleams and dances in its eyes. Looking back to the Christ that hath been manifested, faith kindles into a boundless love; looking onward to the Christ that shall be revealed, it rises into an exultant hope.

These closing words are of no little theological importance. "They bridge over the gulf which seems to separate the language of Paul and James. Both assert a principle of practical energy, as opposed to a barren, inactive theory" (Lightfoot). Had the faith of Paul's readers been more practical, had they been of a diligent, enterprising spirit, "ready for every good word and work," they would not have felt, to the same degree, the spell of the Judaistic fascination. Idle hands, vain and restless minds, court temptation.

A manly, energetic faith will never play at ritualism or turn religion into a round of ceremonial, an æsthetic exhibition. Loving and self-devoting faith in Christ is the one thing Paul covets to see in the Galatians. This is the working power of the gospel, the force that will lift and regenerate mankind. In comparison with this, questions of Church-order and forms of worship are "nothing." "The body is more than the raiment." Church organisation is a means to a certain end; and that end consists in the life of faith and love in Christian souls. Each man is worth to Christ and to His Church just so much as he possesses of this energy of the Spirit, just so much as he has of love to

Christ and to men in Him. Other gifts and qualities, offices and orders of ministry, are but instruments for love to employ, machinery for love to energise.

The Apostle wishes it to be understood that he does not condemn circumcision on its own account, as though the opposite condition were in itself superior. If "circumcision does not avail anything, *neither does uncircumcision*." The Jew is no better or worse a Christian because he is circumcised; the Gentile no worse or better, because he is not. This difference in no way affects the man's spiritual standing or efficiency. Let the Galatians dismiss the whole question from their minds. "One thing is needful," to be filled with the Spirit of love. "God's kingdom is not meat and drink;" it is not "days and seasons and years;" it is not circumcision, nor rubrics and vestments and priestly functions; it is "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." These are the true *notes* of the Church; "by love," said Christ, "all men will know that you are My disciples."

In these two sentences (vv. 5 and 6) the religion of Christ is summed up. Ver. 5 gives us its *statics*; ver. 6 its *dynamics*. It is a condition, and an occupation; a grand outlook, and an intent pursuit; a Divine hope for the future, and a sovereign power for the present, with an infinite spring of energy in the love of Christ. The active and passive elements of the Christian life need to be justly balanced. Many of the errors of the Church have arisen from one-sidedness in this respect. Some do nothing but sit with folded hands till the Lord comes; others are too busy to think of His coming at all. So waiting degenerates into indolence; and serving into feverish hurry and anxiety, or mechanical routine. Let hope give calmness and dignity, buoyancy and brightness to our work; let work make our hope sober, reasonable, practical.

"These three abide—faith, hope, and love." They cannot change while God is God and man is man. Forms of dogma and of worship have changed and must change. There is a perpetual "removing of the things that are shaken, as of things that are made;" but through all revolutions there "remain the things which are not shaken." To these let us rally. On these let us build. New questions thrust themselves to the front, touching matters as little essential to the Church's life as that of circumcision in the Apostolic age. The evil is that we make so much of them. In the din of controversy we grow bewildered; our eyes are blinded with its dust; our souls chafed with its fretting. We lose the sense of proportion; we fail to see who are our true friends, and who our foes. We need to return to the simplicity that is in Christ. Let us "consider Him"—Christ incarnate, dying, risen, reigning,—till we are changed into the same image, till his life has wrought itself into ours. Then these questions of dispute will fall into their proper place. They will resolve themselves; or wait patiently for their solution. Loyalty to Jesus Christ is the only solvent of our controversies.

Will the Galatians be true to Christ? Or will they renounce their righteousness in Him for a legal status, morally worthless, and which will end in taking from them the hope of eternal life? They have nothing to gain, they have everything to lose in submitting to circumcision.



## CHAPTER XXI.

## THE HINDERERS AND TROUBLERS.

GALATIANS V. 7-12.

THE Apostle's controversy with the Legalists is all but concluded. He has pronounced on the question of circumcision. He has shown his readers, with an emphasis and clearness that leave nothing more to be said, how fearful is the cost at which they will accept the "other gospel," and how heavy the yoke which it will impose upon them. A few further observations remain to be made—of regret, of remonstrance, blended with expressions of confidence more distinct than any the Apostle has hitherto employed. Then with a last contemptuous thrust, a sort of *coup de grace* for the Circumcisionists, Paul passes to the practical and ethical part of his letter.

This section is made up of short, disconnected sentences, shot off in various directions; as though the writer wished to have done with the Judaistic debate, and would discharge at a single volley the arrows remaining in his quiver. Its prevailing tone is that of conciliation towards the Galatians (comp. chapter xviii.), with increasing severity towards the legalist teachers. "See how bitter he is against the deceivers. For indeed at the beginning he directed his censures against the deceived, calling them 'senseless' both once and again. But now that he has sufficiently chastened and corrected them, for the rest he turns against their deceivers. And we should observe his wisdom in both these things, in that he admonishes the one party and brings them to a better mind, being his own children and capable of amendment; but the deceivers, who are a foreign element and incurably diseased, he cuts off" (Chrysostom).

There lie before us therefore in this paragraph the following considerations:—*Paul's hope concerning the Galatian Churches, his protest on his own behalf, and finally his judgment respecting the troublers.*

I. The more hopeful strain of the letter at this point appears to be due to the effect of his argument upon the writer's own mind. As the breadth and grandeur of the Christian faith open out before him, and he contrasts its spiritual glory with the ignoble aims of the Circumcisionists, Paul cannot think that the readers will any longer doubt which is the true gospel. Surely they will be disenchanted. His irrefragable reasonings, his pleading entreaties and solemn warnings are bound to call forth a response from a people so intelligent and so affectionate. "For my part," he says, "*I am confident in the Lord that you will be no otherwise minded* (ver. 10), that you will be faithful to your Divine calling, despite the hindrances thrown in your way." They will, he is persuaded, come to see the proposals of the Judaisers in their proper light. They will think about the Christian life—its objects and principles—as he himself does; and will perceive how fatal would be the step they are urged to take. They will be true to themselves and to the Spirit of sonship they have received. They will pursue more earnestly the hope set before them and give themselves with renewed energy to the work of faith and love (vv. 5, 6), and forget as soon as possible this distracting and unprofitable controversy.

"In the Lord" Paul cherishes this confidence. "In Christ's grace" the Galatians were called to enter the kingdom of God (ver. 8; chap. i. 6); and He was concerned that the work begun in them should be completed (Phil. i. 6). It may be the Apostle at this moment was conscious of some assurance from his Master that his testimony in this Epistle would not prove in vain. The recent\* submission of the Corinthians would tend to increase Paul's confidence in his authority over the Gentile Churches.

Another remembrance quickens the feeling of hope with which the Apostle draws the conflict to a close. He reminds himself of the good confession the Galatians had aforetime witnessed,† the zeal with which they pursued the Christian course, until this deplorable hindrance arose: "You were running well—*finely*. You had fixed your eyes on the heavenly prize. Filled with an ardent faith, you were zealously pursuing the great spiritual ends of the Christian life (comp. vv. 5, 6). Your progress has been arrested. You have yielded to influences which are not of God who called you, and admitted amongst you a leaven that, if not cast out, will corrupt you utterly (vv. 8, 9). But I trust that this result will be averted. You will return to better thoughts. You will resume the interrupted race, and by God's mercy will be enabled to bring it to a glorious issue" (ver. 10).

There are kindness and true wisdom in this encouragement. The Apostle has "told them the truth;" he has "reproved with all authority;" now that this is done, there remains nothing in his heart but good-will and good wishes for his Galatian children. If his chiding has wrought the effect it was intended to produce, then these words of softened admonition will be grateful and healing. They have "stumbled, but not that they might fall." The Apostle holds out the hand of restoration; his confidence animates them to hope better things for themselves. He turns his anger away from them, and directs it altogether upon their injurers.

II. The Judaisers had troubled the Churches of Galatia; *they had also maligned the Apostle Paul*. From them undoubtedly the imputation proceeded which he repudiates so warmly in ver. 11: "And I, brethren, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still persecuted?" This supposition a moment's reflection would suffice to refute. The contradiction was manifest. The persecution which everywhere followed the Apostle marked him out in all men's eyes as the adversary of Legalism.

There were circumstances, however, that lent a certain colour to this calumny. The circumcision of Timothy, for instance, might be thought to look in this direction (Acts xvi. 1-3). And Paul valued his Hebrew birth. He loved his Jewish brethren more than his own salvation (Rom. ix. 1-5; xi. 1). There was nothing of the revolutionary or the iconoclast about him. Personally he preferred to conform to the ancient usages, when doing so did not compromise the honour of Christ (Acts xviii. 18; xxi. 17-26).

It was false that he "taught the Jews not to circumcise their children, nor to walk by the customs" (Acts xxi. 20-26). He did teach them that these things were "of no avail in Christ Jesus;" that they were in no sense necessary to salvation;

\* See chap. i. p. 818, on the *date* of the Epistle.

† Comp. ch. iii. 4: "ye suffered so many things."



and that it was contrary to the will of Christ to impose them upon Gentiles. But it was no part of his business to alter the social customs of his people, or to bid them renounce the glories of their past. While he insists that "there is no difference" between Jew and Gentile in their need of the gospel and their rights in it, he still claims for the Jew the first place in the order of its manifestation.

This was an entirely different thing from "preaching circumcision" in the legalist sense, from heralding (κηρύσσω: verse 11) and crying up the Jewish ordinance, and making it a religious duty. This difference the Circumcisionists affected not to understand. Some of Paul's critics will not understand it even now. They argue that the Apostle's hostility to Judaism in this Epistle discredits the narrative of the Acts of the Apostles, inasmuch as the latter relates several instances of Jewish conformity on his part.

What pragmatism is this! Paul's adversaries said, "He derides Judaism amongst you Gentiles, who know nothing of his antecedents, or of his practice in other places. But when he pleases, this liberal Paul will be as zealous for circumcision as any of us. Indeed he boasts of his skill in 'becoming all things to all men;' he trims his sail to every breeze. In *Galatia* he is all breadth and tolerance; he talks about our 'liberty which we have in Christ Jesus;' he is ready to 'become as you are;' no one would imagine he had ever been a Jew. In *Judea* he makes a point of being strictly orthodox, and is indignant if any one questions his devotion to the Law."

Paul's position was a delicate one, and open to misrepresentation. Men of party insist on this or that external custom as the badge of their own side; they have their party-colours and their uniform. Men of principle adopt or lay aside such usages with a freedom which scandalises the partisan. What right, he says, has any one to wear our colours, to pronounce our shibboleth, if he is not one of ourselves? If the man will not be with us, let him be against us. Had Paul renounced his circumcision and declared himself a Gentile out and out, the Judaists might have understood him. Had he said, *Circumcision is evil*, they could have endured it better; but to preach that *Circumcision is nothing*, to reduce this all-important rite to insignificance, vexed them beyond measure. It was in their eyes plain proof of dishonesty. They tell the Galatians that Paul is playing a double part, that his resistance to their circumcision is interested and insincere.

The charge is identical with that of "man-pleasing" which the Apostle repelled in chap. i. 10 (see chapter iii). The emphatic "still" of that passage recurs twice in this, bearing the same meaning as it does there. Its force is not *temporal*, as though the Apostle were thinking of a former time when he did "preach circumcision:" no such reference appears in the context, and these terms are inappropriate to his pre-Christian career. The particle points a *logical* contrast, as, e. g., in Rom. iii. 7; ix. 19: "If I still (notwithstanding my professions as a Gentile apostle) preach circumcision, why am I still (notwithstanding my so preaching) persecuted?"

Had Paul been known by the Jews to be in other places a promoter of circumcision, they would have treated him very differently. He

could not then have been, as the Galatians knew him everywhere to be, "in perils from his fellow-countrymen."

The rancour of the Legalists was sufficient proof of Paul's sincerity. They were themselves guilty of the baseness with which they taxed him. It was in order to escape the reproach of the cross (ver. 11), to atone for their belief in the Nazarene, that they persuaded Gentile Christians to be circumcised (vi. 11, 12). They were the man-pleasers. The Judaisers knew perfectly well that the Apostle's observance of Jewish usage was no endorsement of their principles. The print of the Jewish scourge upon his back attested his loyalty to Gentile Christendom (vi. 17; 2 Cor. xi. 24). A further consequence would have ensued from the duplicity imputed to Paul, which he resents even more warmly: "Then," he says, "if I preach circumcision, the offence of the cross is done away!" He is charged with treason against the cross of Christ. He has betrayed the one thing in which he glories (vi. 14), to which the service of his life was consecrated! For the doctrine of the cross was at an end if the legal ritual were re-established and men were taught to trust in the saving efficacy of circumcision—above all, if the Apostle of the Gentiles had preached this doctrine! The Legalists imputed to him the very last thing of which he was capable. This was in fact the error into which Peter had weakly fallen at Antioch. The Jewish Apostle had then acted as though "Christ died in vain" (ii. 21). For himself Paul indignantly denies that his conduct bore any such construction.

But he says, "the scandal of the cross"—that scandalous, offensive cross, the stumbling-block of Jewish pride (1 Cor. i. 23). The death of Christ was not only revolting in its form to Jewish sentiment; \* it was a fatal event for Judaism itself. It imported the end of the Mosaic economy. The Church at Jerusalem had not yet fully grasped this fact; they sought, as far as possible, to live on good terms with their non-Christian Jewish brethren, and admitted perhaps too easily into their fellowship men who cared more for Judaism than for Christ and His cross. For them also the final rupture was approaching, when they had to "go forth unto Jesus without the camp." Paul had seen from the first that the breach was irreparable. He determined to keep his Gentile Churches free from Judaic entanglements. In his view, Calvary was the terminus of Mosaism.

This was true *historically*. The crime of national Judaism in slaying its Messiah was capital. Its spiritual blindness and its moral failure had received the most signal proof. The congregation of Israel had become a synagogue of Satan. And these were "the chosen people," the world's *élite*, who "crucified the Lord of glory"! *Mankind* had done this thing. The world has "both seen and hated both Him and the Father."

Now to set up circumcision again, or any kind of human effort or performance, as a ground of justification before God, is to ignore this judgment; it is to make void the sentence which the cross of Christ has passed upon all "works of righteousness which we have done." This teaching sorely offends moralists and ceremonialists, of whatever age or school; it is "the offence of the cross."

\* Comp. chap. xii. p. 86o.



And further, as matter of *Divine appointment* the sacrifice of Calvary put an end to Jewish ordinances. Their significance was gone. The Epistle to the Hebrews develops this consequence at length in other directions. For himself the Apostle views it from a single and very definite standpoint. The Law, he says, had brought on men a curse; it stimulated sin to its worst developments (iii. 10, 19). Christ's death under this curse has expiated and removed it for us (iii. 13). His atonement met man's guilt in its culmination. The Law had not prevented—nay, it gave occasion to the crime; it necessitated, but could not provide expiation, which was supplied "outside the law" (Rom. iii. 21: *ἔξωτος νόμου*).

The "offence" of the doctrine of the cross lay just here. It reconciled man with God on an extra-legal footing. It provided a new ground of justification and pronounced the old worthless. It fixed the mark of moral impotence and rejection upon the system to which the Jewish nature clung with passionate pride. To preach the cross was to declare legalism abolished: to preach circumcision was to declare the cross and its offence abolished.

This dilemma the Circumcisionists would fain escape. They fought shy of Calvary. Like some later moralists, they did not see why the cross should be always pushed to the front, and its offence forced upon the world. Surely there was in the wide range of Christian truth abundance of other profitable topics to discuss, without wounding Jewish susceptibilities in this way.

But this endeavour of theirs is just what Paul is determined to frustrate. He confronts Judaism at every turn with that dreadful cross. He insists that it shall be realised in its horror and its shame, that men shall feel the tremendous shock which it gives to the moral conceit, the self-justifying spirit of human nature, which in the Jew of this period had reached its extreme point. "If law could save, if the world were not guilty before God," he reiterates, "why that death of the cross? God hath set Him forth a *propitiation*." And whoso accepts Jesus Christ must accept Him *crucified*, with all the offence and humiliation that the fact involves.

In later days the death of Christ has been made void in other ways. It is veiled in the steam of our incense. It is invested with the halo of a sensuous glorification. The cross has been for many turned into an artistic symbol, a beautiful idol festooned with garlands, draped in poetry, but robbed of its spiritual meaning, its power to humble and to save. Let men see it "openly set forth," in its naked terror and majesty, that they may know what they are and what their sins have done.

We rely on birth and good breeding, on art and education as instruments of moral progress. Improved social arrangements, a higher environment, these, we think, will elevate the race. Within their limits these forces are invaluable; they are ordained of God. But they are only *law* at the best. When they have done their utmost, they leave man still unsaved—proud, selfish, unclean, miserable. To rest human salvation on self-improvement and social reform is legalism over again. To civilise is not to regenerate. These methods were tried in Mosaism, under circumstances in many respects highly favourable. "The scandal of the cross" was the result. Ed-

ucation and social discipline may produce a Pharisee, nothing higher. Legislation and environment work from the outside. They cannot touch the essential human heart. Nothing has ever done this like the cross of Jesus Christ. He who "makes it of none effect," whether in the name of Jewish tradition or of modern progress, takes away the one practicable hope of the moral regeneration of mankind.

III. We are now in a position to estimate more precisely the character and motives of the Judaistic party, *the hinderers and troublers* of this Epistle.

In the first place it appears that they had entered the Galatian communities from without. The fact that they are called *troublers* (*disturbers*) of itself suggests this (ver. 10; i. 7). They came with a professed "gospel," as messengers bringing new tidings; the Apostle compares them to himself, the first Galatian evangelist, "or an angel from heaven" (i. 8, 9). He glances at them in his reference to "false brethren" at an earlier time "brought into (the Gentile Church) unawares" (ii. 4). These men are "courting" the favour of Paul's Galatian disciples, endeavouring to gain them over in his absence (iv. 17, 18). They have made misleading statements respecting his early career and relations to the Church, which he is at pains to correct. They professed to represent the views of the Pillars at Jerusalem, and quoted their authority against the Apostle Paul.

From these considerations we infer that "the troublers" were *Judaistic emissaries from Palestine*. The second Epistle to Corinth, contemporaneous with this letter, reveals the existence of a similar propaganda in the Greek capital at the same period. Paul had given the Galatians warning on the subject at his last visit (i. 9). There were already, we should suppose, in the Galatian societies, before the arrival of the Judaisers, Jewish believers in Christ of legalistic tendencies, prepared to welcome and support the new teachers. But it was the coming of these agitators from without that threw the Churches of Galatia into such a ferment, and brought about the situation disclosed in this Epistle.

The allusion made in ii. 12 to "certain from James,"\* taken in connection with other circumstances, points, as we think, to the outbreak of a systematic agitation against the Apostle Paul, which was carried on during his third missionary tour, and drew from him the great evangelical Epistles of this epoch. This anti-Pauline movement emanated from Jerusalem and pretended to official sanction. Set on foot at the time of the collision with Peter at Antioch, the conflict is now in full progress. The Apostle's denunciation of his opponents is unsparing. They "hinder" the Galatians "from obeying truth" (ver. 7); they entice them from the path in which they had bravely set out, and are robbing them of their heritage in Christ. It was a false, a perverted gospel that they taught (i. 7). They cast on their hearers an envious spell which drew them away from the cross and its salvation (ii. 21; iii. 1). Not truth, but self-interest and party-ends were the objects they pursued (iv. 17; vi. 12, 13). Their "persuasion" was assuredly not of God, "who had called" the Galatians through the Apostle's voice. If God had sent Paul

\* Compare chap. ix. pp. 845-46. We refer this occurrence to the interval between the second and third of Paul's missionary journeys (Acts xviii. 22), A. D. 54.



amongst them, as the Galatians had good reason to know, clearly He had not sent these men, with their "other gospel."

The vitiating "leaven" at work in the spiritual life of the Galatians, if not arrested, would soon "leaven the whole lump." The Apostle applies to the Judaistic doctrine the same figure under which he described the taint of immorality found in the Church of Corinth (1 Cor. v. 6-8). So jealous and unscrupulous, so deadly in its effect on evangelical faith and life was the spirit of Jewish legalism. The Apostle trusts that his Galatians will after all escape from this fatal infection, that they will leave "the troublers" alone to "bear the judgment" which must fall upon them (ver. 10). The Lord is the Keeper, and the Avenger of His Church. No one, "whosoever he be," will injure it with impunity. Let the man that makes mischief in the Church of Jesus Christ take care what he is about. The tempted may escape; sins of ignorance and weakness can be forgiven. But woe unto the tempter!

Against the wilful perverters of the gospel the Apostle at the outset delivered his anathema. For these Circumcisionists in particular he has one further wish to express. It is a grim sort of suggestion, to be read rather by way of sarcasm than in the strict letter of fulfilment. The devotees of circumcision, he means to say, might as well go a step farther. If the physical mark of Judaism, the mere surgical act, is so salutary, why not "cut off" the member altogether, like the emasculated priests of Cybelé (ver. 12)? This mutilation belonged to the worship of the great heathen goddess of Asia Minor, and was associated with her debasing cultus. Moreover it excluded its victim from a place in the congregation of Israel (Deut. xxiii. 1).

This mockery, though not to be judged by modern sentiment, in any case went to the verge of what charity and decency permit. It breathes a burning contempt for the Judaising policy. It shows how utterly circumcision had lost its sacredness for the Apostle. Its spiritual import being gone, it was now a mere "concision" (Phil. iii. 2), a cutting of the body—nothing more.

Such language was well calculated to disgust Gentile Christians with the rite of circumcision. It helps to account for the implacable hatred with which Paul was regarded by orthodox Jews. It accords with what he intimated in iv. 9, to the effect that Jewish conformity was for the Gentiles in effect *heathenish*. Apart from its relation to the obsolete Mosaic covenant, circumcision was in itself no holier than the deformities inflicted by Paganism on its votaries.

The Judaisers are finally described, not merely "overthrow you." The Greek word (*ἀναστρέω*) as "troublers" and "hinderers," but as "those that *unsettle* you"—or more strongly still, occurs in Acts xvii. 6, xxi. 38, where it is rendered, *turn upside down, stir to sedition*. These men were carrying on a treasonable agitation. False themselves to the gospel of Christ, they incited the Galatians to belie their Christian professions, to betray the cause of Gentile liberty, and to desert their own Apostle. They deserved to suffer some degrading punishment. "Full" as they were "of subtlety and mischief, perverting the right ways of the Lord," Paul did well to denounce them and to turn their zeal for circumcision to derisive scorn.

## THE ETHICAL APPLICATION.

### CHAPTER v. 13-vi. 10.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE PERILS OF LIBERTY.

#### GALATIANS v. 13-15.

OUR analysis has drawn a strong line across the middle of this chapter. At ver. 13 the Apostle turns his mind in the ethical direction. He has dismissed "the troublers" with contempt in ver. 12; and until the close of the Epistle does not mention them again; he addresses his readers on topics in which they are left out of view. But this third, ethical section of the letter is still continuous with its polemical and doctrinal argument.

It applies the maxim of ver. 6, "Faith works through love"; it reminds the Galatians how they had "received the Spirit of God" (iii. 2, 3; iv. 6). The rancours and jealousies opposed to love, the carnal mind that resists the Spirit—these are the objects of Paul's dehortations. The moral disorders which the Apostle seeks to correct arose largely out of the mischief caused by the Judaisers. And his exhortations to love and good works are themselves indirectly polemical. They vindicate Paul's gospel from the charge of antinomianism, while they guard Christians from giving occasion to the charge. They protect from exaggeration and abuse the liberty already defended from legalistic encroachments. The more precious and sacred is the freedom of Gentile believers, the more on the one hand do those deserve punishment who would defraud them of it; and the more earnestly must they on their part guard this treasure from misuse and dishonour. In this sense ver. 13a stands between the sentence against the Circumcisionists in ver. 12 and the appeal to the Galatians that follows. It repeats the proclamation of freedom made in ver. 1, making it the ground at once of the judgment pronounced against the foes of freedom and the admonition addressed to its possessors. "*For you were called* (summoned by God to enter the kingdom of His Son) *with a view to liberty*—not to legal bondage; nor, on the other hand, that you might run into license and give the reins to self-will and appetite—not *liberty for an occasion to the flesh*."

I. Here lies *the danger of liberty*, especially when conferred on a young, untrained nature, and in a newly emancipated community.

Freedom is a priceless boon; but it is a grave responsibility. It has its temptations, as well as its joys and dignities. The Apostle has spoken at length of the latter: it is the former that he has now to urge. Keep your liberties, he seems to say; for Christ's sake and for truth's sake hold them fast, guard them well. You are God's regenerated sons. Never forego your high calling. God is on your side, and those who assail you shall feel the weight of His displeasure. Yes, "stand fast" in the liberty wherewith "Christ made you free." But take care how you employ your freedom; "only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh." This significant *only* turns the other side of the medal, and bids us



read the legend on its reverse front. On the obverse we have found it written, "The Lord knoweth them that are His" (2 Tim. ii. 19; comp. Gal. iv. 6, 9). This is the side of *privilege* and of grace, the spiritual side of the Christian life. On the reverse it bears the motto, "Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity." This is the second, the ethical side of our calling, the side of *duty*, to which we have now to turn.

The man, or the nation that has won its freedom, has won but half the battle. It has conquered external foes; it has still to prevail over itself. And this is the harder task. Men clamour for liberty, when they mean license; what they seek is the liberty of the flesh, not of the Spirit, freedom to indulge their lusts and to trample on the rights of others, the freedom of outlaws and brigands. The natural man defines freedom as the power to do as he likes; not the right of self-regulation, but the absence of regulation is what he desires. And this is just what the Spirit of God will never allow (ver. 17). When such a man has thrown off outward constraint and the dread of punishment, there is no inward law to take its place. It is his greed, his passion, his pride and ambition that call for freedom; not his conscience. And to all such libertarians our Saviour says, "He that committeth sin is *the slave of sin*." No tyrant is so vile, so insatiable as our own self-indulged sin. A pitiable triumph, for a man to have secured his religious liberty only to become the thrall of his vices!

It is possible that some men accepted the gospel under the delusion that it afforded a shelter for sin. The sensualist, deterred from his indulgences by fear of the Law, joined in Paul's campaign against it, imagining that Grace would give him larger freedom. If "where sin abounded grace did superabound," he would say in his heart, Why not sin the more, so that grace might have a greater victory? This is no fanciful inference. Hypocrisy has learned to wear the garb of evangelical zeal; and teachers of the gospel have not always guarded sufficiently against this shocking perversion. Even the man whose heart has been truly touched and changed by Divine grace, when the freshness of his first love to Christ has passed away and temptation renews its assaults, is liable to this deception. He may begin to think that sin is less perilous, since forgiveness was so easily obtained. He may presume that as a son of God, sealed by the Spirit of adoption, he will not be allowed to fall, even though he stumble. He is one of "God's elect"; what "shall separate him" from the Divine love in Christ? In this assurance he holds a talisman that secures his safety. What need to "watch and pray lest he enter into temptation," when the Lord is his keeper? He is God's enfranchised son; "all things are lawful" to him; "things present" as well as "things to come" are his in Christ. By such reasonings his liberty is turned into an *occasion to the flesh*. And men who before they boasted themselves sons of God were restrained by the spirit of bondage and fear, have found in this assurance the occasion, the "starting-point" (*ἀφορμή*) for a more shameless course of evil.

In the view of Legalism, this is the natural outcome of Pauline teaching. From the first it has been charged with fostering lawlessness. In the Lutheran Reformation Rome pointed to the Antinomians, and moralists of our own day

speak of "canting Evangelicals," just as the Judaists alleged the existence of immoral Paulinists, whose conduct, they declared, was the proper fruit of the preaching of emancipation from the Law. These, they would say to the Apostle, are your spiritual children; they do but carry your doctrine to its legitimate issue. This reproach the gospel has always had to bear; there have been those, alas! amongst its professors whose behaviour has given it plausibility. Sensualists will "turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness;" swine will trample under their feet the pure pearls of the gospel. But they are pure and precious none the less.

This possibility is, however, a reason for the utmost watchfulness in those who are stewards in the administration of the gospel. They must be careful, like Paul, to make it abundantly clear that they "establish" and do not "make void law through faith" (Rom. iii. 31). There is an evangelical Ethics, as well as an evangelical Dogmatics. The ethics of the Gospel have been too little studied and applied. Hence much of the confessed failure of evangelical Churches in preserving and building up the converts that they win.

II. Faith in Christ gives in truth a new efficacy to the moral law. For it works through love; and love fulfils all laws in one (vv. 13b, 14). Where faith has this operation, liberty is safe; not otherwise. *Love's slaves are the true freemen*.

The legalist practically takes the same view of human nature as the sensualist. He knows nothing of "the desire of the Spirit" arrayed against that of the flesh (ver. 17) nothing of the mastery over the heart that belongs to the love of Christ. In his analysis the soul consists of so many desires, each blindly seeking its own gratification, which must be drilled into order under external pressure, by an intelligent application of law. Modern Utilitarians agree with the ancient Judaists in their ethical philosophy. Fear of punishment, hope of reward, the influence of the social environment—these are, as they hold, the factors which create character and shape our moral being. "Pain and pleasure," they tell us, "are the masters of human life." Without the faith that man is the child of God, formed in His image, we are practically shut up to this suicidal theory of morals. *Suicidal* we say, for it robs our spiritual being of everything distinctive in it, of all that raises the moral above the natural; it makes duty and personality illusions.

Judaism is a proof that this scheme of life is impracticable. For the Pharisaic system which produced such deplorable moral results was an experiment in external ethics. It was in fact the application of a highly developed and elaborate traditional code of law, enforced by the strongest outward sanctions, *without personal loyalty to the Divine Lawgiver*. In the national conscience of the Jews this was wanting. Their faith in God, as the Epistle of James declares, was a "dead" faith, a bundle of abstract notions. Loyalty is true law-keeping. And loyalty springs from the personal relationship of the subject and the law-making power. This nexus Christian sonship supplies, in its purest and most exalted form. When I see in the Lawgiver my Almighty Father, when the law has become incarnate in the person of my Saviour, my heart's King and Lord, it wears a changed aspect. "*His commandments are not grievous*." Duty, required by Him, is honour and delight. No abstract law, no



"stream of tendency" can command the homage or awaken the moral energy that is inspired by "the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Here the Apostle traverses antinomian deductions from his doctrine of liberty. In the Epistle to the Romans (vi.) he deals at length with the theoretical objection to his teaching on this subject. He shows there that salvation by faith, rightly understood and experienced, renders continuance in sin impossible. For faith in Christ is in effect the union of the soul with Christ, first in His death, and then consequently in His risen life, wherein He lives only "to God." Nay, Christ Himself lives in the believing man (Gal. ii. 20). Instead of our sinning "because we are not under the law, but under grace," this is precisely the reason why we need not and must not sin. Faith joins us to the risen Christ, whose life we share—so Paul argues—and we should not sin any more than He. Here, from the practical standpoint, he lays it down that faith works by love; and love casts out sin, for it unites all laws in itself. Faith links us to Christ in heaven (Romans); faith fills us with His love on earth (Galatians). So love, marked out in ver. 6 as the energy of faith, now serves as the guard of liberty. Neither legalist nor law-breaker understands the meaning of faith in Christ.

At this point Paul throws in one of his bold paradoxes. He has been contending all through the Epistle for freedom, bidding his readers scorn the legal yoke, breathing into them his own contempt for the pettiness of Judaistic ceremonial. But now he turns round suddenly and bids them *be slaves*: "but let love," he says, "make you bondmen to each other" (ver. 13). Instead of breaking bonds, he seeks to create stronger bonds, stronger because dearer. Paul preaches no gospel of individualism, of egotistic salvation seeking. The self-sacrifice of Christ becomes in turn a principle of sacrifice in those who receive it. Paul's own ideal is, to be "conformed to His death" (Phil. iii. 10). There is nothing anarchic or self-asserting in his plea for freedom. He opposes the law of Pharisaic externalism in the interests of the law of Christian love. The yoke of Judaism must be broken, its bonds cast aside, in order to give free play to "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." Faith transfers authority from flesh to spirit, giving it a surer seat, a more effective, and in reality more lawful command over man's nature. It restores the normal equipoise of the soul. Now the Divine law is written on "the tablets of the heart"; and this makes it far more sovereign than when engraved on the stone slabs of Sinai. Love and law for the believer in Christ are fused into one. In this union law loses nothing of its holy severity; and love nothing of its tenderness. United they constitute the Christian sense of *duty*, whose sternest exactions are enforced by gratitude and devotion.

And love is ever conqueror. To it toil and endurance that mock the achievement of other powers, are a light thing. Needing neither bribe nor threat, love labours, waits, braves a thousand dangers, keeps the hands busy, the eye keen and watchful, the feet running to and fro untired through the longest day. There is no industry, no ingenuity like that of love. Love makes the mother the slave of the babe at her breast, and wins from the friend for his friend service that no compulsion could exact, rendered

in pure gladness and free-will. Its power alone calls forth what is best and strongest in us all. Love is mightier than death. In Jesus Christ love has "laid down life for its friends"; the fulness of life has encountered and overcome the uttermost of death. Love esteems it bondage to be prevented, liberty only to be allowed to serve.

Without love freedom is an empty boon. It brings no ease, no joy of heart. It is objectless and listless. Bereft of faith and love, though possessing the most perfect independence, the soul drifts along like a ship rudderless and masterless, with neither haven nor horizon. Wordsworth, in his "Ode to Duty" has finely expressed the weariness that comes of such liberty, unguided by an inward law and a Divine ideal:

"Me this unchartered freedom tires;  
I feel the weight of chance desires;  
My hopes no more must change their name;  
I long for a repose that ever is the same."

But on the other hand,

"Serene will be our days and bright,  
And happy will our nature be,  
When love is an unerring light,  
And joy its own security."

This "royal law" (James ii. 8) blends with its sovereignty of power the charm of simplicity. "The whole law," says the Apostle, "hath been fulfilled in one word—Love" (ver. 14). The Master said, "I came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil." The key to His fulfilment was given in the declaration of the twofold command of love to God and to our neighbour. "On these two hang all the law and the prophets." Hence the Apostle's phrase, "*hath been fulfilled*." This unification of the moral code is accomplished. Christ's life and death have given to this truth full expression and universal currency. Love's fulfilment of law stands before us a positive attainment, an incontestable fact. Paul does not speak here as in Rom. xiii. 9, of the comprehending, the "summing up" of all laws in one; but of the bringing of law to its completion, its realisation and consummation in the love of Christ. "O how I love Thy law," said the purer spirit of the Old Testament. "Thy love is my law," says the true spirit of the New.

It is remarkable that this supreme principle of Christian ethics is first enunciated in the most legal part of the Old Testament. Leviticus is the Book of the Priestly Legislation. It is chiefly occupied with ceremonial and civil regulations. Yet in the midst of the legal minutiae is set this sublime and simple rule, than which Jesus Christ could prescribe nothing more Divine: *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself* (Levit. xix. 18). This sentence is the conclusion of a series of directions (vv. 9-18) forbidding un-neighbourly conduct, each of them sealed with the declaration, "I am Jehovah." This brief code of brotherly love breathes a truly Christian spirit; it is a beautiful expression of "the law of kindness" that is on the lips and in the heart of the child of God. We find in the law-book of Mosaism, side by side with elaborate rules of sacrificial ritual and the homeliest details touching the life of a rude agricultural people, conceptions of God and of duty of surpassing loftiness and purity, such as meet us in the religion of no other ancient nation.

The law, therefore, opposed and cast out in the



name of faith, is brought in again under the shield of love. "If ye love Me," said Jesus, "*keep my commandments.*" Love reconciles law and faith. Law by itself can but prohibit this and that injury to one's neighbour, when they are likely to arise. Love excludes the doing of any injury; it "worketh no ill to its neighbour, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. xiii. 10). That which law restrains or condemns after the fact, love renders impossible beforehand. It is not content with the negative prevention of wrong; it "overcomes" and displaces "evil with good."

"What law could not do," with all its multiplied enactments and redoubled threats, faith "working by love" has accomplished at a stroke. "The righteousness of the law is fulfilled in those who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. viii. 3, 4). Gentile Christians have been raised to the level of a righteousness "exceeding that of scribes and pharisees" (Matt. v. 20). The flesh, which defied law's terrors and evaded its control, is subdued by the love of Christ. Law created the need of salvation; it defined its conditions and the direction which it must take. But there its power ceased. It could not change the sinful heart. It supplied no motive adequate to secure obedience. The moralist errs in substituting duty for love, works for faith. He would make the rule furnish the motive, the path supply strength to walk in it. The distinction of the gospel is that it is "*the power of God unto salvation,*" while the law is "*weak through the flesh.*"

Paul does not therefore override the law in the interest of faith. Quite the contrary, he establishes, he magnifies it. His theology rests on the idea of Righteousness, which is strictly a legal conception. But he puts the law in its proper place. He secures for it the alliance of love. The legalist, desiring to exalt law, in reality stultifies it. Striving to make it omnipotent, he makes it impotent. In the Apostle's teaching, law is the rule, faith the spring of action. Law makes the path, love gives the will and power to follow it. Who then are the truest friends of law—Legalists or Paulinists, moralists or evangelicals?

III. Alas, the Galatians at the present moment afford a spectacle far different from the ideal which Paul has drawn. Instead of "serving each other in love," they are "biting and devouring one another." The Church is in danger of being "consumed" by their jealousies and quarrels (ver. 15).

These Asiatic Gauls were men of a warm temperament, quick to resent wrong and prone to imagine it. The dissensions excited by the Judaic controversy had excited their combative temper to an unusual degree. "Biting" describes the wounding and exasperating effect of the manner in which their contentions were carried on; "devour" warns them of its destructiveness. Taunts were hurled across the field of debate; vituperation supplied the lack of argument. Differences of opinion engendered private feuds and rankling injuries. In Corinth the spirit of discord had taken a factious form. It arrayed men in conflicting parties, with their distinctive watchwords and badges and sectional platforms. In these Churches it bore fruit in personal affronts and quarrels, in an angry, vindictive temper, which spreads through the Galatian societies and broke out in every possible form of contention (v. 20).

If this state of things continued, the Churches of Galatia would cease to exist. Their liberty would end in complete disintegration.

Like some other communities, the Galatian Christians were oscillating between despotism and anarchy; they had not attained the equilibrium of a sober, ordered liberty, the freedom of a manly self-control. They had not sufficient respect either for their own or for each other's rights. Some men must be bridled or they will "bite;" they must wear the yoke or they run wild. They are incapable of being a law unto themselves. They had not faith enough to make them steadfast, nor love enough to be an inward guide, nor the Spirit of God in measure sufficient to overcome the vanity and self-indulgence of the flesh. But the Apostle still hopes to see his Galatian disciples worthy of their calling as sons of God. He points out to them the narrow but sure path that leads between the desert of legalism on the one hand, and the gulf of anarchy and license on the other.

The problem of the nature and conditions of Christian liberty occupies the Apostle's mind in different ways in all the letters of this period. The young Churches of the Gentiles were in the gravest peril. They had come out of Egypt to enter the Promised Land, the heritage of the sons of God. The Judaists sought to turn them aside into the Sinaitic wilderness of Mosaism; while their old habits and associations powerfully tended to draw them back into heathen immorality. Legalism and license were the Scylla and Charybdis on either hand, between which it needed the most firm and skilful pilotage to steer the bark of the Church. The helm of the vessel is in Paul's hands. And, through the grace of God, he did not fail in his task. It is in *the love of Christ* that the Apostle found his guiding light. "Love," he has written, "never faileth."

Love is the handmaid of faith, and the first-born fruit of the Spirit of Christ (vv. 6, 22). Blending with the law, love refashions it, changing it into its own image. Thus moulded and transfigured, law is no longer an exterior yoke, a system of restraint and penalty; it becomes an inner, sweet constraint. Upon the child of God it acts as an organic and formative energy, the principle of his regenerated being, which charges with its renovating influence all the springs of life. Evil is met no longer by a merely outward opposition, but by a repugnance proceeding from within. "The Spirit lusteth against the flesh" (v. 17). The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus becomes the law of the man's new nature. God known and loved in Christ is the central object of his life. Within the Divine kingdom so created, the realm of love and of the Spirit, the soul henceforth dwells; and under that kingdom it places for itself all other souls, loved like itself in Christ.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### CHRIST'S SPIRIT AND HUMAN FLESH.

#### GALATIANS v. 16-26.

LOVE is the guard of Christian freedom. The Holy Spirit is its guide. These principles accomplish what the law could never do. It with-



held liberty, and yet did not give purity. The Spirit of love and of sonship bestows both, establishing a happy, ordered freedom, the liberty of the sons of God.

From the first of these two factors of Christian ethics the Apostle passes in ver. 16 to the second. He conducts us from the consequence to the cause, from the human aspect of spiritual freedom to the Divine. Love, he has said, fulfils all laws in one. It casts out evil from the heart; it stays the injurious hand and tongue; and makes it impossible for liberty to give the rein to any wanton or selfish impulse. But the law of love is no natural, automatic impulse. It is a Divine inspiration. "Love is of God." It is the characteristic "fruit of the Spirit" of adoption (ver. 22), implanted and nourished from above. When I bid you "by love serve each other," the Apostle says, I do not expect you to keep this law of yourselves, by force of native goodness: I know how contrary it is to your Galatic nature; "but I say, walk in the Spirit," and this will be an easy yoke; to "fulfil the desire of the flesh" will then be for you a thing impossible.

The word *Spirit* (*πνεῦμα*) is written indefinitely; but the Galatians knew well what Spirit the Apostle meant. It is "the Spirit" of whom he has spoken so often in this letter, the Holy Spirit of God, who had entered their hearts when they first believed in Christ and taught them to call God Father. He gave them their freedom: He will teach them how to use it. The absence of the definite article in *Pneuma* does not destroy its personal force, but allows it at the same time a broad, qualitative import, corresponding to that of the opposed "desire of the flesh." The walk governed "by the Spirit" is a *spiritual* walk. As for the interpretation of the *dative* case (rendered variously *by*, or *in*, or even *for the Spirit*), that is determined by the meaning of the noun itself. "The Spirit" is not the path "in" which one walks; rather He supplies the *motive principle, the directing influence* of the new life.\* Ver. 16 is interpreted by vv. 18 and 25. To "walk in the Spirit" is to be "led by the Spirit"; it is so to "live in the Spirit" that one habitually "moves" (*marches*: ver. 25) under His direction.

This conception of the indwelling Spirit of God as the actuating power of the Christian's moral life predominates in the rest of this chapter. We shall pursue the general line of the Apostle's teaching on the subject in the present chapter, leaving for future exposition the detailed enumeration of the "fruit of the Spirit" and "works of the flesh" contained in vv. 19-23. This antithesis of Flesh and Spirit presents the following consideration:—(1) *the diametrical opposition of the two forces*; (2) *the effect of the predominance of one or the other*; (3) *the mastery over the flesh which belongs to those who are Christ's*. In a word, Christ's Spirit is the absolute antagonist and the sure vanquisher of our sinful human flesh.

I. "I say, Walk by the Spirit, and you will verily not fulfil the lust of the flesh." On what ground does this bold assurance rest? Because, the Apostle replies, *the Spirit and the flesh are opposites* (ver. 17). Each is bent on destroying the ascendancy of the other. Their cravings and tendencies stand opposed at every point. Where the former rules, the latter must succumb. "For

the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh."

The verb *lust* in Greek, as in English, bears commonly an evil sense; but not necessarily so, nor by derivation. It is a sad proof of human corruption that in all languages words denoting strong desire tend to an impure significance. Paul extends to "the desire of the Spirit" the term which has just been used of "the lust of the flesh," in this way sharpening the antithesis. Words appropriated to the vocabulary of the flesh and degraded by its use, may be turned sometimes to good account and employed in the service of the Holy Spirit, whose influence redeems our speech and purges the uncleanness of our lips.

The opposition here affirmed exists on the widest scale. All history is a battlefield for the struggle between God's Spirit and man's rebellious flesh. In the soul of a half-sanctified Christian, and in Churches like those of Corinth and Galatia whose members are "yet carnal and walk as men," the conflict is patent. The Spirit of Christ has established His rule in the heart; but His supremacy is challenged by the insurrection of the carnal powers. The contest thus revived in the soul of a Christian is internecine; it is that of the kingdoms of light and darkness, of the opposite poles of good and evil. It is an incident in the war of human sin against the Holy Spirit of God, which extends over all time and all human life. Every lust, every act or thought of evil is directed, knowingly or unknowingly, against the authority of the Holy Spirit, against the presence and the rights of God immanent in the creature. Nor is there any restraint upon evil, any influence counteracting it in man or nation or race, which does not proceed from the Spirit of the Lord. The spirit of man has never been without a Divine Paraclete. "God hath not left Himself without witness" to any; and "it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth." The Spirit of truth, the Holy Spirit, is the Spirit of all truth and holiness. In the "truth as it is in Jesus" He possesses His highest instrument. But from the beginning it was His office to be God's Advocate, to uphold law, to convict the conscience, to inspire the hope of mercy, to impart moral strength and freedom. We "believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life."

This war of Spirit and Flesh is first ostensibly declared in the words of Gen. vi. 3. This passage indicates the moral reaction of God's Spirit against the world's corruption, and the protest which in the darkest periods of human depravity He has maintained. God had allowed men to do despite to His good Spirit. But it cannot always be so. A time comes when, outraged and defied, He withdraws His influence from men and from communities; and the Flesh bears them along to swift destruction. So it was in the world before the Flood. So largely amongst later heathen peoples, when God "suffered all nations to walk in their own ways." Even the Mosaic law had proved rather a substitute than a medium for the free action of the Spirit of God on men. "The law was spiritual," but "weak through the flesh." It denounced the guilt which it was powerless to avert.

With the advent of Christ all this is changed. The Spirit of God is now, for the first time, sent forth in His proper character and His full energy. At last His victory draws near. He

\*The construction of ch. vi. 16; Rom. iv. 12; Phil. iii. 16, is not strictly analogous.



comes as the Spirit of Christ and the Father, "*poured out upon all flesh.*" "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you. I will put My Spirit within you" (Ezek. xxxvi. 25-27): this was the great hope of prophecy; and it is realised. The Spirit of God's Son regenerates the human heart, subdues the flesh, and establishes the communion of God with men. The reign of the Spirit on earth was the immediate purpose of the manifestation of Jesus Christ.

But what does Paul really mean by "the flesh?" It includes everything that is not "of the Spirit." It signifies the entire potency of sin. It is the contra-spiritual, the undivine in man. Its "works," as we find in vv. 20, 21, are not bodily vices only, but include every form of moral debasement and aberration. *Flesh* in the Apostle's vocabulary follows the term *spirit*, and deepens and enlarges its meaning precisely as the latter does. Where *spirit* denotes the super-sensible in man, *flesh* is the sensible, the bodily nature as such. When *spirit* rises into the supernatural and superhuman, *flesh* becomes the natural, the human by consequence. When *spirit* receives its highest signification, denoting the holy Effluence of God, His personal presence in the world, *flesh* sinks to its lowest and represents unrenewed nature, the evil principle oppugnant and alien to God. It is identical with *sin*. But in this profound moral significance the term is more than a figure. Under its use *the body* is marked out, not indeed as the cause, but as the instrument, the vehicle of sin. Sin has incorporated itself with our organic life, and extends its empire over the material world. When the Apostle speaks of "the body of sin" and "of death," and bids us "mortify the deeds of the body" and "the members which are upon the earth,"\* his expressions are not to be resolved into metaphors.

On this definition of the terms, it is manifest that the antagonism of the Flesh and Spirit is fundamental. They can never come to terms with each other, nor dwell permanently in the same being. Sin must be extirpated or the Holy Spirit will finally depart. The struggle must come to a definitive issue. Human character tends every day to a more determinate form; and an hour comes in each case when the victory of flesh or spirit is irrevocably fixed, when "the filthy" will henceforth "be filthy still," and "the holy, holy still" (Rev. xxii. 11).

The last clause of ver. 17, "that ye may not do the things that ye would," has been variously interpreted. The rendering of the Authorised Version ("so that ye *cannot*") is perilously misleading. Is it that the flesh prevents the Galatians doing the good they would? Or is the Spirit to prevent them doing the evil they otherwise would? Or are both these oppositions in existence at once, so that they waver between good and evil, leading a partly spiritual, partly carnal life, consistent neither in right nor wrong? The last is the actual state of the case. Paul is perplexed about them (chap. iv. 20); they are in doubt about themselves. They did not "walk in the Spirit," they were not true to their Christian principles; the flesh was too strong for that. Nor would they break away from Christ and follow the bent of their lower nature; the Holy Spirit held them back from doing this. So they

have two wills,—or practically none. This state of things was designed by God,—"*in order that ye may not do the things ye haply would;*" it accords with the methods of His government. Irresolution is the necessary effect of the course the Galatians had pursued. So far they stopped short of apostasy; and this restraint witnessed to the power of the Holy Spirit still at work in their midst (chap. iii. 5; vi. 1). Let this Divine hand cease to check them, and the flesh would carry them, with the full momentum of their will, to spiritual ruin. Their condition is just now one of suspense. They are poised in a kind of moral equilibrium, which cannot continue long, but in which, while it lasts, the action of the conflicting forces of Flesh and Spirit is strikingly manifest.

II. These two principles in their development lead to entirely opposite results.

(1) *The works of the flesh*—"manifest" alas! both then and now—*exclude from the kingdom of God*. "I tell you beforehand," the Apostle writes, "as I have already told you: they who practise such things will not inherit God's kingdom" (v. 21).

This warning is essential to Paul's gospel (Rom. ii. 16); it is good news for a world where wrong so often and so insultingly triumphs, that there is a judgment to come. Whatever may be our own lot in the great award, we rejoice to believe that there will be a righteous settlement of human affairs, complete and final; and that this settlement is in the hands of Jesus Christ. In view of His tribunal the Apostle goes about "*warning and teaching every man.*" And this is his constant note, amongst profligate heathen, or hypocritical Jews, or backsliding and antinomian Christians,—"*The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*" For that kingdom is, above all, *righteousness*. Men of fleshly minds, in the nature of things, have no place in it. They are blind to its light, dead to its influence, at war with its aims and principles. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him—the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—and walk in darkness, *we lie*" (1 John i. 6). "Those who do such things" forfeit by doing them the character of sons of God. His children seek to be "perfect as their heavenly Father is perfect." They are "blameless and harmless, imitators of God, walking in love as Christ loved us" (Phil. ii. 15; Eph. v. 1, 2). The Spirit of God's Son is a spirit of love and peace, of temperance and gentleness (v. 22). If these fruits are wanting, the Spirit of Christ is not in us and we are none of His. We are without the one thing by which He said all men would know His disciples (John xiii. 35). When the Galatians "*bite and devour one another,*" they resemble Ishmael the persecutor (chap. iv. 29), rather than the gentle Isaac, heir of the Covenant.

"If children, *then heirs.*" Future destiny turns upon present character. The Spirit of God's Son, with His fruit of love and peace, is "the earnest of our inheritance, sealing us against the day of redemption" (Eph. i. 14; iv. 30). By selfish tempers and fleshly indulgences He is driven from the soul; and losing Him, it is shut out from the kingdom of grace on earth, and from the glory of the redeemed. "There shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean;" such is the excommunication written above the gate of the Heavenly City (Rev. xxi. 27). This sentence of the Apocalypse puts a final seal upon the teaching of Scripture. The God of revelation is the

\* See Rom. vi. 6, 12; vii. 4, 5, 23, 24; viii. 10-13; Col. ii. 11-13; iii. 5.



Holy One; His Spirit is the Holy Spirit; His kingdom is the kingdom of the saints, whose atmosphere burns like fire against all impurity. Concerning the men of the flesh the Apostle can only say, "Whose end is perdition" (Phil. iii. 19).

Writing to the Corinthians, Paul entreats his readers not to be deceived upon this point (1 Cor. vi. 9, 10; Eph. v. 5). It seems so obvious, so necessary a principle, that one wonders how it should be mistaken, why he is compelled to reiterate it as he does in this place. And yet this has been a common delusion. No form of religion has escaped being touched by Antinomianism. It is the divorce of piety from morality. It is the disposition to think that ceremonial works on the one hand, or faith on the other, supersede the ethical conditions of harmony with God. Foisting itself on evangelical doctrine this error leads men to assume that salvation is the mere pardon of sin. The sinner appears to imagine he is saved in order to remain a sinner. He treats God's mercy as a kind of bank, on which he may draw as often as his offences past or future may require. He does not understand that sanctification is the sequel of justification, that the evidence of a true pardon lies in a changed heart that loathes sin.

(2) Of the opposite principle the Apostle states not the ultimate, but the more immediate consequences. "Led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law" (ver. 18); and "Against such things—love, peace, goodness, and the like—there is no law" (ver. 23).

The declaration of ver. 18 is made with a certain abruptness. Paul has just said, in ver. 17, that the Spirit is the appointed antagonist of the flesh. And now he adds, that if we yield ourselves to His influence we shall be no longer under the law. This identification of sin and the law was established in chap. ii. 16-18; iii. 10-22. The law by itself, the Apostle showed, does not overcome sin, but aggravates it; it shuts men up the hopeless prisoners of their own past misdoing. To be "under law" is to be in the position of Ishmael, the slave-born and finally out-cast son, whose nature and temper are of the flesh (chap. iv. 21-31). After all this we can understand his writing law for sin in this passage, just as in 1 Cor. xv. 56 he calls "the law the power of sin." To be under law was, in Paul's view, to be held consciously in the grasp of sin. This was the condition of which Legalism would reduce the Galatians. From this calamity the Spirit of Christ would keep them free.

The phrase "under law" reminds us once more of the imperilled liberty of the Galatians. Their spiritual freedom and their moral safety were assailed in common. In ver. 16 he had said, "Let the Holy Spirit guide you, and you will vanquish sin"; and now, "By the same guidance you will escape the oppressive yoke of the law." Freedom from sin, freedom from the Jewish law—these two liberties were virtually one. "Sin shall not lord it over you, because ye are not under law, but under grace" (Rom. vi. 14). Ver. 23 explains this double freedom. Those who possess the Spirit of Christ bear His moral fruits. Their life fulfils the demands of the law, without being due to its compulsion. Law can say nothing against them. It did not produce this fruit; but it is bound to approve it. It has no hold on the men of the Spirit, no charge

to bring against them. Its requirements are satisfied; its constraints and threatenings are laid aside.

Law therefore, in its Judaistic sense and application, has been abolished since "faith has come." No longer does it rule the soul by fear and compulsion. This office, necessary once for the infant heirs of the Covenant, it has no right to exercise over spiritual men. Law cannot give life (chap. iii. 21). This is the prerogative of the Spirit of God. Law says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God;" but it never inspired such love in any man's breast. If he does so love, the law approves him, without claiming credit to itself for the fact. If he does not love his God, law condemns him and brands him a transgressor. But "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost." The teaching of this paragraph on the relation of the believer in Christ to God's law is summed up in the words of Rom. viii. 2: "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and death." Law has become my friend, instead of my enemy and accuser. For God's Spirit fills my soul with the love in which its fulfilment is contained. And now eternal life is the goal that stands in my view, in place of the death with the prospect of which, as a man of the flesh, the law appalled me.

III. We see then that deliverance from sin belongs not to the subject of the law, but to the freedom of the Spirit. This deliverance, promised in ver. 16, is declared in ver. 24 as an accomplished fact. "Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. . . . They that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and its lusts." The tyranny of the flesh is ended for those who are "in Christ Jesus." His cross has slain their sins. The entrance of His Spirit imports the death of all carnal affections.

"They who are Christ's did crucify the flesh." This is the moral application of Paul's mystical doctrine, central to all his theology, of the believer's union with the Redeemer (see chapter x. pp. 852-53). "Christ in me—I in Him;" there is Paul's secret. He was "one spirit" with Jesus Christ—dying, risen, ascended, reigning, returning in glory. His old self, his old world was dead and gone—slain by Christ's cross, buried in His grave (chap. ii. 20; vi. 14). And the flesh, common to the evil world and the evil self—that above all was crucified. The death of shame and legal penalty, the curse of God had overtaken it in the death of Jesus Christ. Christ had risen, the "Lord of the Spirit" (2 Cor. iii. 18), who "could not be holden" by the death which fell on "the body of His flesh." They who are Christ's rose with Him; while the flesh of sin stays in His grave. Faith sees it there, and leaves it there. We "reckon ourselves dead unto sin, and living unto God, in Christ Jesus." For such men, the flesh that was once—imperious, importunate, law-defying—is no more. It has received its death-stroke. "God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and a sacrifice for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. viii. 3). Sin is smitten with the lightning of His anger. Doom has taken hold of it. Destroyed already in principle, it only waits for men to know this and to understand what has been done, till it shall perish everywhere. The destruction of the sinful flesh—more strictly of "sin in the flesh"—occurred, as Paul understood the matter, virtually



and potentially in the moment of Christ's death. It was our human flesh that was crucified in Him—slain on the cross because, though in Him not personally sinful, yet in us with whom He had made Himself one, it was steeped in sin. Our sinful flesh hung upon His cross; it has risen, cleansed and sanctified, from His grave.

What was then accomplished in principle when "One died for all," is realised in point of fact when we are "baptised into His death"—when, that is to say, faith makes His death ours and its virtue passes into the soul. The scene of the cross is inwardly rehearsed. The wounds which pierced the Redeemer's flesh and spirit now pierce our consciences. It is a veritable crucifixion through which the soul enters into communion with its risen Saviour, and learns to live His life. Nor is its sanctification complete till it is "conformed unto His death" (Phil. iii. 10). So with all his train of "passions and of lusts," the "old man" is fastened and nailed down upon the new interior Calvary, set up in each penitent and believing heart. The flesh may still, as in these Galatians, give mournful evidence of life. But it has no right to exist a single hour. *De jure* it is dead—dead in the reckoning of faith. It may die a lingering, protracted death, and make convulsive struggles; but die it must in all who are of Christ Jesus.

Let the Galatians consider what their calling of God signified. Let them recall the prospects which opened before them in the days of their first faith in Christ, the love that glowed in their hearts, the energy with which the Holy Spirit wrought upon their nature. Let them know how truly they were called to liberty, and in good earnest were made sons of God. They have only to continue as heretofore to be led by the Spirit of Christ and to march forward along the path on which they had entered, and neither Jewish law nor their own lawless flesh will be able to bring them into bondage. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Where He is not, there is legalism, or license; or, it may be, both at once.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE WORKS OF THE FLESH.

#### GALATIANS V. 19-21.

THE tree is known by its fruits: the flesh by its "works." And these works are "manifest." The field of the world—"this present evil world" (chap. i. 4)—exhibits them in rank abundance. Perhaps at no time was the civilised world so depraved and godless as in the first century of the Christian era, when Tiberius, Caligula, Nero, Domitian, wore the imperial purple and posed as masters of the earth. It was the cruelty and vileness of the times which culminated in these deified monsters. By no accident was mankind cursed at this epoch with such a race of rulers. The world that worshipped them was worthy of them. Vice appeared in its most revolting and abandoned forms. Wickedness was rampant and triumphant. The age of the early Roman Empire has left a foul mark in human history and literature. Let Tacitus and Juvenal speak for it.

Paul's enumeration of the current vices in this passage has, however, a character of its own. It differs from the descriptions drawn by the same hand in other Epistles; and this difference is due doubtless to the character of his readers. Their temperament was sanguine; their disposition frank and impulsive. Sins of lying and injustice, conspicuous in other lists, are not found in this. From these vices the Galatic nature was comparatively free. Sensual sins and sins of passion—*unchastity, vindictiveness, intemperance*—occupy the field. To these must be added *idolatry*, common to the Pagan world. Gentile idolatry was allied with the practice of impurity on the one side; and on the other, through the evil of "sorcery," with "enmities" and "jealousies." So that these works of the flesh belong to four distinct types of depravity, three of which come under the head of immorality, while the fourth is the universal principle of Pagan irreligion, being in turn both cause and effect of the moral debasement connected with it.

I. "The works of the flesh are these—*fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness*." A dark beginning! Sins of impurity find a place in every picture of Gentile morals given by the Apostle. In whatever direction he writes—to Romans or Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, or Thessalonians—it is always necessary to warn against these evils. They are equally "manifest" in heathen literature. The extent to which they stain the pages of the Greek and Roman classics sets a heavy discount against their value as instruments of Christian education. Civilised society in Paul's day was steeped in sexual corruption.

*Fornication* was practically universal. Few were found, even among severe moralists, to condemn it. The overthrow of the splendid classical civilisation, due to the extinction of manly virtues in the dominant race, may be traced largely to this cause. Brave men are the sons of pure women. John in the Apocalypse has written on the brow of Rome, "the great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth," this legend: "*Babylon the great, mother of harlots*" (Rev. xvii. 5). Whatever symbolic meaning the saying has, in its literal sense it was terribly true. Our modern Babylons, unless they purge themselves, may earn the same title and the same doom.

In writing to Corinth, the metropolis of Greek licentiousness, Paul deals very solemnly and explicitly with this vice. He teaches that this sin, above others, is committed "against the man's own body." It is a prostitution of the physical nature which Jesus Christ wore and still wears, which He claims for the temple of His Spirit, and will raise from the dead to share His immortality. Impurity degrades the body, and it affronts in an especial degree "the Holy Spirit which we have from God." Therefore it stands first amongst these "works of the flesh" in which it shows itself hostile and repugnant to the Spirit of our Divine sonship. "Joined to the harlot" in "one body," the vile offender gives himself over in compact and communion to the dominion of the flesh, as truly as he who is "joined to the Lord" is "one Spirit with Him" (1 Cor. vi. 13-20).

On this subject it is difficult to speak faithfully and yet directly. There are many happily in our sheltered Christian homes who scarcely know of the existence of this heathenish vice,



except as it is named in Scripture. To them it is an evil of the past, a nameless thing of darkness. And it is well it should be so. Knowledge of its horrors may be suitable for seasoned social reformers, and necessary to the publicist who must understand the worst as well as the best of the world he has to serve; but common decency forbids its being put within the reach of boys and innocent maidens. Newspapers and novels which reek of the divorce-court and trade in the garbage of human life, in "things of which it is a shame even to speak," are no more fit for ordinary consumption than the air of the pest-house is for breathing. They are sheer poison to the young imagination, which should be fed on whatsoever things are honourable and pure and lovely. But bodily self-respect must be learned in good time. Modesty of feeling and chastity of speech must adorn our youth. "Let marriage be honourable in the eyes of all," let the old chivalrous sentiments of reverence and gentleness towards women be renewed in our sons, and our country's future is safe. Perhaps in our revolt from Mariolatry we Protestants have too much forgotten the honour paid by Jesus to the Virgin Mother, and the sacredness which His birth has conferred on motherhood. "Blessed," said the heavenly voice, "art thou among women." All our sisters are blessed and dignified in her, the holy "mother of our Lord" (Luke i. 42, 43).\*

Wherever, and in whatever form, the offence exists which violates this relationship, Paul's fiery interdict is ready to be launched upon it. The anger of Jesus burned against this sin. In the wanton look He discerns the crime of adultery, which in the Mosaic law was punished with death by stoning. "The Lord is an avenger in all these things"—in everything that touches the honour of the human person and the sanctity of wedded life (1 Thess. iv. 1-8). The interests that abet whoredom should find in the Church of Jesus Christ an organisation pledged to relentless war against them. The man known to practise this wickedness is an enemy of Christ and of his race. He should be shunned as we would shun a notorious liar—or a fallen woman. Paul's rule is explicit, and binding on all Christians, concerning "the fornicator, the drunkard, the extortioner—with such a one no, not to eat" (1 Cor. v. 9-11). That Church little deserves the name of a Church of Christ, which has not means of discipline sufficient to fence its communion from the polluting presence of "such a one."

*Uncleanness* and *lasciviousness* are companions of the more specific impurity. The former is the general quality of this class of evils, and includes whatever is contaminating in word or look, in gesture or in dress, in thought or sentiment. "Lasciviousness" is uncleanness open and shameless. The filthy jest, the ogling glance, the debauched and sensual face, these tell their own tale; they speak of a soul that has rolled in corruption till respect for virtue has died out of it. In this direction "the works of the flesh" can go no further. A lascivious human creature is loathsomeness itself. To see it is like looking through a door into hell.

A leading critic of our own times has, under this word of Paul's, put his finger upon the

plague-spot in the national life of our Gallic neighbours—*Aselgeia*, or Wantonness. There may be a certain truth in this charge. Their disposition in several respects resembles that of Paul's Galatians. But we can scarcely afford to reproach others on this score. English society is none too clean. *Home* is for our people everywhere, thank God, the nursery of innocence. But outside its shelter, and beyond the reach of the mother's voice, how many perils await the weak and unwary. In the night-streets of the city the "strange woman" spreads her net, "whose feet go down to death." In workshops and business-offices too often coarse and vile language goes on unchecked, and one unchaste mind will infect a whole circle. Schools, wanting in moral discipline, may become seminaries of impurity. There are crowded quarters in large towns, and wretched tenements in many a country village, where the conditions of life are such that decency is impossible; and a soil is prepared in which sexual sin grows rankly. To cleanse these channels of social life is indeed a task of Hercules; but the Church of Christ is loudly called to it. Her vocation is in itself a purity crusade, a war declared against "all filthiness of flesh and spirit."

II. Next to *lust* in this procession of the Vices comes *idolatry*. In Paganism they were associated by many ties. Some of the most renowned and popular cults of the day were open purveyors of sensuality and lent to it the sanctions of religion. Idolatry is found here in fit company (comp. 1 Cor. x. 6-8). Peter's First Epistle, addressed to the Galatian with other Asiatic Churches, speaks of "the desire of the Gentiles" as consisting in "lasciviousness, lusts, wine-bibblings, revellings, carousings, and *abominable idolatries*" (iv. 3).

Idolatry forms the centre of the awful picture of Gentile depravity drawn by our Apostle in his letter to Rome (chap. i.) It is, as he there shows, the outcome of man's native antipathy to the knowledge of God. Willingly men "took lies in the place of truth, and served the creature rather than the Creator." They merged God in nature, debasing the spiritual conception of the Deity with fleshly attributes. This blending of God with the world gave rise, amongst the mass of mankind, to Polytheism; while in the minds of the more reflective it assumed a Pantheistic shape. The manifold of nature, absorbing the Divine, broke it up into "gods many and lords many"—gods of the earth and sky and ocean, gods and goddesses of war, of tillage, of love, of art, of statecraft and handicraft, patrons of human vices and follies as well as of excellences, changing with every climate and with the varying moods and conditions of their worshippers. Nor longer did it appear that God made man in His image; now men made gods in "the likeness of the image of corruptible man, and of winged and four-footed and creeping things."

When at last under the Roman Empire the different Pagan races blended their customs and faiths, and "the Orontes flowed into the Tiber," there came about a perfect chaos of religions. Gods Greek and Roman, Phrygian, Syrian, Egyptian jostled each other in the great cities—a *colluvies deorum* more bewildering even than the *colluvies gentium*, each cultus striving to outdo the rest in extravagance and license. The system of classic Paganism was reduced to impotence. The false gods destroyed each other. The mix-

\* Comp. 1 Tim. ii. 13-15: "saved through the childbearing"—i. e., surely, the bearing of the Child Jesus, "the seed of the woman."



ture of heathen religions, none of them pure, produced complete demoralisation.

The Jewish monotheism remained, the one rock of human faith in the midst of this dissolution of the old nature-creeds. Its conception of the Godhead was not so much metaphysical as ethical. "Hear, O Israel," says every Jew to his fellows, "the Lord our God is one Lord." But that "one Lord" was also "*the Holy One of Israel*." Let his holiness be sullied, let the thought of the Divine ethical transcendence suffer eclipse, and He sinks back again into the manifold of nature. Till God was manifest in the flesh through the sinless Christ, it was impossible to conceive of a perfect purity allied to the natural. To the mind of the Israelite, God's holiness was one with the *aloneness* in which He held Himself sublimely aloof from all material forms, one with the pure spirituality of His being. "There is none holy save the Lord; neither is there any rock like our God:" such was his lofty creed. On this ground prophecy carried on its inspired struggle against the tremendous forces of naturalism. When at length the victory of spiritual religion was gained in Israel, unbelief assumed another form; the knowledge of the Divine unity hardened into a sterile and fanatic legalism, into the idolatry of dogma and tradition; and Scribe and Pharisee took the place of Prophet and of Psalmist.

The idolatry and immorality of the Gentile world had a common root. God's anger, the Apostle declared, blazed forth equally against both (Rom. i. 18). The monstrous forms of uncleanness then prevalent were a fitting punishment, an inevitable consequence of heathen impiety. They marked the lowest level to which human nature can fall in its apostasy from God. Self-respect in man is ultimately based on reverence for the divine. Disowning his Maker, he degrades himself. Bent on evil, he must banish from his soul that warning, protesting image of the Supreme Holiness in which he was created.

"He tempts his reason to deny  
God whom his passions dare defy."

"They did not like to retain God in their knowledge." "They loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." These are terrible accusations. But the history of natural religion confirms their truth.

*Sorcery* is the attendant of idolatry. A low, naturalistic conception of the Divine lends itself to immoral purposes. Men try to operate upon it by material causes, and to make it a partner in evil. Such is the origin of magic. Natural objects deemed to possess supernatural attributes, as the stars and the flight of birds, have divine omens ascribed to them. Drugs of occult power, and things grotesque or curious made mysterious by the fancy, are credited with influence over the Nature-gods. From the use of drugs in incantations and exorcisms the word *pharmakeia*, here denoting *sorcery*, took its meaning. The science of chemistry has destroyed a world of magic connected with the virtues of herbs. These superstitions formed a chief branch of sorcery and witchcraft, and have flourished under many forms of idolatry. And the magical arts were common instruments of malice. The sorcerer's charms were in requisition, as in the case of Balaam, to curse one's enemies, to weave some spell that should involve them in destruc-

tion. Accordingly *sorcery* finds its place there between *idolatry* and *enmities*.

III. On this latter head the Apostle enlarges with edifying amplitude. Enmities, strife, jealousies, ragings, factions, divisions, parties, envyings—what a list! Eight out of fifteen of "the works of the flesh manifest" to Paul in writing to Galatia belong to this one category. The Celt all over the world is known for a hot-tempered fellow. He has high capabilities; he is generous, enthusiastic, and impressionable. Meanness and treachery are foreign to his nature. But he is *irritable*. And it is in a vain and irritable disposition that these vices are engendered. Strife and division have been proverbial in the history of the Gallic nations. Their jealous temper has too often neutralised their engaging qualities; and their quickness and cleverness have for this reason availed them but little in competition with more phlegmatic races. In Highland clans, in Irish septs, in French wars and Revolutions the same moral features reappear which are found in this delineation of Galatic life. This persistence of character in the races of mankind is one of the most impressive facts of history.

"Enmities" are private hatreds or family feuds, which break out openly in "strife." This is seen in Church affairs, when men take opposite sides not so much from any decided difference of judgment, as from personal dislike and the disposition to thwart an opponent. "Jealousies" and "wraths" (or "rages") are passions attending enmity and strife. There is *jealousy* where one's antagonist is a rival, whose success is felt as a wrong to oneself. This may be a silent passion, repressed by pride but consuming the mind inwardly. *Rage* is the open eruption of anger which, when powerless to inflict injury, will find vent in furious language and menacing gestures. There are natures in which these tempests of rage take a perfectly demonic form. The face grows livid, the limbs move convulsively, the nervous organism is seized by a storm of frenzy; and until it has passed, the man is literally beside himself. Such exhibitions are truly appalling. They are "works of the flesh" in which, yielding to its own ungoverned impulse, it gives itself up to be possessed by Satan and is "set on fire of hell."

Factions, divisions, parties are words synonymous. "Divisions" is the more neutral term, and represents the state into which a community is thrown by the working of the spirit of strife. "Factions" imply more of self-interest and policy in those concerned; "parties" are due rather to self-will and opinionativeness. The Greek word employed in this last instance, as in 1 Cor. xi. 19, has become our *heresies*. It does not imply of necessity any doctrinal difference as the ground of the party distinctions in question. At the same time, this expression is an advance on those foregoing, pointing to such divisions as have grown, or threaten to grow into "distinct and organised parties" (Lightfoot).

Envyings (or grudges) complete this bitter series. This term might have found a place beside "enmities" and "strife." Standing where it does, it seems to denote the rankling anger, the persistent ill-will caused by party-feuds. The Galatian quarrels left behind them grudges and "resentments" which became inveterate. These "envyings," the fruit of old contentions, were in turn the seed of new strife. Settled rancour is the last and worst form of contentiousness. It



is so much more culpable than "jealousy" or "rage," as it has not the excuse of personal conflict; and it does not subside, as the fiercest outburst of passion may, leaving room for forgiveness. It nurses its revenge, waiting, like Shylock, for the time when it shall "feed fat its ancient grudge."

"Where jealousy and faction are, there," says James, "is confusion and every vile deed." This was the state of things to which the Galatian societies were tending. The Judaizers had sown the seeds of discord and they had fallen on congenial soil. Paul has already invoked Christ's law of love to exorcise this spirit of destruction (vv. 13-15). He tells the Galatians that their vainglorious and provoking attitude towards each other and their envious disposition are entirely contrary to the life in the Spirit which they professed to lead (vv. 25, 26), and fatal to the existence of the Church. These were the "passions of the flesh" which most of all they needed to crucify.

IV. Finally we come to sins of intemperance—drunkenness, revellings, and the like.

These are the vices of a barbarous people. Our Teutonic and Celtic forefathers were alike prone to this kind of excess. Peter warns the Galatians against "wine-bibblings, revellings, carousings." The passion for strong drink, along with "lasciviousness" and "lusts" on the one hand, and "abominable idolatries" on the other, had in Asia Minor swelled into a "cataclysm of riot," overwhelming the Gentile world (1 Peter iv. 3, 4). The Greeks were a comparatively sober people. The Romans were more notorious for gluttony than for hard drinking. The practice of seeking pleasure in intoxication is a remnant of savagery, which exists to a shameful extent in our own country. It appears to have been prevalent with the Galatians, whose ancestors a few generations back were northern barbarians.

A strong and raw animal nature is in itself a temptation to this vice. For men exposed to cold and hardship, the intoxicating cup has a potent fascination. The flesh, buffeted by the fatigues of a rough day's work, finds a strange zest in its treacherous delights. The man "drinks and forgets his poverty, and remembers his misery no more." For the hour, while the spell is upon him, he is a king; he lives under another sun; the world's wealth is his. He wakes up to find himself a sot! With racked head and unstrung frame he returns to the toil and squalor of his life, adding new wretchedness to that he had striven to forget. Anon he says, "I will seek it yet again!" When the craving has once mastered him, its indulgence becomes his only pleasure. Such men deserve our deepest pity. They need for their salvation all the safeguards that Christian sympathy and wisdom can throw around them.

There are others "given to much wine," for whom one feels less compassion. Their convivial indulgences are a part of their general habits of luxury and sensuality, an open, flagrant triumph of the flesh over the Spirit. These sinners require stern rebuke and warning. They must understand that "those who practise such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God," that "he who soweth to his own flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption." Of these and their like it was that Jesus said, "Woe unto you that laugh now; for ye shall mourn and weep."

Our British Churches at the present time are more alive to this than perhaps to any other social evil. They are setting themselves sternly against drunkenness, and none too soon. Of all the works of the flesh this has been, if not the most potent, certainly the most conspicuous in the havoc it has wrought amongst us. Its ruinous effects are "manifest" in every prison and asylum, and in the private history of innumerable families in every station of life. Who is there that has not lost a kinsman, a friend, or at least a neighbour or acquaintance, whose life was wrecked by this accursed passion? Much has been done, and is doing, to check its ravages. But more remains to be accomplished before civil law and public opinion shall furnish all the protection against this evil necessary for a people so tempted by climate and by constitution as our own.

With *fornication* at the beginning and *drunkenness* at the end, Paul's description of "the works of the flesh" is, alas! far indeed from being out of date. The dread procession of the Vices marches on before our eyes. Races and temperaments vary; science has transformed the visible aspect of life; but the ruling appetites of human nature are unchanged, its primitive vices are with us to-day. The complicated problems of modern life, the gigantic evils which confront our social reformers, are simply the primeval corruptions of mankind in a new guise—the old lust and greed and hate. Under his veneer of manners, the civilised European, untouched by the grace of the Holy Spirit of God, is still apt to be found a selfish, cunning, unchaste, revengeful, superstitious creature, distinguished from his barbarian progenitor chiefly by his better dress and more cultivated brain, and his inferior agility. Witness the great Napoleon, a very "god of this world," but in all that gives worth to character no better than a savage!

With Europe turned into one vast camp and its nations groaning audibly under the weight of their armaments, with hordes of degraded women infesting the streets of its cities, with discontent and social hatred smouldering throughout its industrial populations, we have small reason to boast of the triumphs of modern civilisation. Better circumstances do not make better men. James' old question has for our day a terrible pertinence: "Whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your pleasures that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and covet, and cannot obtain. Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may spend it on your pleasures."

## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT.

GALATIANS v. 22, 23.

"THE tree is known by its fruits." Such was the criterion of religious profession laid down by the Founder of Christianity. This test His religion applies in the first instance to itself. It proclaims a final judgment for all men; it submits itself to the present judgment of all men—a judgment resting in each case on the same ground, namely that of *fruit*, of moral issue and effects. For character is the true *summum bonum*; it is the thing which in our secret hearts and in our



better moments we all admire and covet. The creed which produces the best and purest character, in the greatest abundance and under the most varied conditions, is that which the world will believe.

These verses contain the ideal of character furnished by the gospel of Christ. Here is the religion of Jesus put in practice. These are the sentiments and habits, the views of duty, the temper of mind, which faith in Jesus Christ tends to form. Paul's conception of the ideal human life at once "commends itself to every man's conscience." And he owed it to the gospel of Christ. His ethics are the fruit of his dogmatic faith. What other system of belief has produced a like result, or has formed in men's minds ideas of duty so reasonable and gracious, so just, so balanced and perfect, and above all so practicable, as those inculcated in the Apostle's teaching?

"Men do not gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles." Thoughts of this kind, lives of this kind, are not the product of imposture or delusion. The "works" of systems of error are "manifest" in the moral wrecks they leave behind them, strewn the track of history. But the virtues here enumerated are the fruits which the Spirit of Christ has brought forth, and brings forth at this day more abundantly than ever. As a theory of morals, a representation of what is best in conduct, Christian teaching has held for 1800 years an unrivalled place. Christ and His Apostles are still the masters of morality. Few have been bold enough to offer any improvements on the ethics of Jesus; and smaller still has been the acceptance which their proposals have obtained. The new idea of virtue which Christianity has given to the world, the energy it has imparted to the moral will, the immense and beneficial revolutions it has brought about in human society, supply a powerful argument for its divinity. Making every deduction for unfaithful Christians, who dishonour "the worthy name" they bear, still "the fruit of the Spirit" gathered in these eighteen centuries is a glorious witness to the virtue of the tree of life from which it grew.

This picture of the Christian life takes its place side by side with others found in Paul's Epistles. It recalls the figure of Charity in 1 Cor. xiii., acknowledged by moralists of every school to be a masterpiece of characterisation. It stands in line also with the oft-quoted enumeration of Phil. iv. 8: "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are reverend, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are chaste, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are kindly spoken, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." These representations do not pretend to theoretical completeness. It would be easy to specify important virtues not mentioned in the Apostle's categories. His descriptions have a practical aim, and press on the attention of his readers the special forms and qualities of virtue demanded from them, under the given circumstances, by their faith in Christ.

It is interesting to compare the Apostle's definitions with Plato's celebrated scheme of the four cardinal virtues. They are wisdom, courage, temperance, with righteousness as the union and co-ordination of the other three. The difference between the cast of the Platonic and Pauline ethics is most instructive. In the Apostle's catalogue the first two of the philosophical virtues

are wanting; unless "courage" be included, as it properly may, under the name of "virtue" in the Philippian list. With the Greek thinker, *wisdom* is the fundamental excellence of the soul. Knowledge is in his view the supreme desideratum, the guarantee for moral health and social well-being. The philosopher is the perfect man, the proper ruler of the commonwealth. Intellectual culture brings in its train ethical improvement. For "no man is knowingly vicious:" such was the dictum of Socrates, the father of Philosophy. In the ethics of the gospel, *love* becomes the chief of virtues, parent of the rest.

*Love* and *humility* are the two features whose predominance distinguishes the Christian from the purest classical conceptions of moral worth. The ethics of Naturalism know love as a passion, a sensuous instinct (*ἔρως*); or again, as the personal affection which binds friend to friend through common interest or resemblance of taste and disposition (*φιλία*). Love in its highest sense (*ἀγάπη*). Christianity has re-discovered, finding in it a universal law for the reason and spirit. It assigns to this principle a like place to that which gravitation holds in the material universe, as the attraction which binds each man to his Maker and to his fellows. Its obligations neutralise self-interest and create a spiritual solidarity of mankind, centring in Christ, the God-man. Pre-Christian philosophy exalted the intellect, but left the heart cold and vacant, and the deeper springs of will untouched. It was reserved for Jesus Christ to teach men how to love, and in love to find the law of freedom.

If love was wanting in natural ethics, *humility* was positively excluded. The pride of philosophy regarded it as a vice rather than a virtue. "Lowliness" is ranked with "pettiness" and "repining" and "despondency" as the product of "littleness of soul." On the contrary, the man of lofty soul is held up to admiration, who is "worthy of great things and deems himself so,"—who is "not given to wonder, for nothing seems great to him,"—who is "ashamed to receive benefits," and "has the appearance indeed of being supercilious" (Aristotle). How far removed is this model from our Example who has said, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." The classical idea of virtue is based on the greatness of man; the Christian, on the goodness of God. Before the Divine glory in Jesus Christ the soul of the believer bows in adoration. It is humbled at the throne of grace, chastened into self-forgetting. It gazes on this Image of love and holiness till it repeats itself within the heart.

Nine virtues are woven together in this golden chain of the Holy Spirit's fruit. They fall into three groups of three, four, and two respectively—according as they refer primarily to God, *love, joy, peace*; to one's fellow-men, *longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faith*; and to oneself, *meekness, temperance*. But the successive qualities are so closely linked and pass into one another with so little distance, that it is undesirable to emphasise the analysis; and while bearing the above distinctions in mind, we shall seek to give to each of the nine graces its separate place in the catalogue.

I. The fruit of the Spirit is love. That fitliest first. Love is the Alpha and Omega of the



Apostle's thoughts concerning the new life in Christ. This queen of graces is already enthroned within this chapter. In ver. 6 Love came forward to be the minister of Faith; in ver. 14 it reappeared as the ruling principle of Divine law. These two offices of love are united here, where it becomes the prime fruit of the Holy Spirit of God, to whom the heart is opened by the act of faith, and who enables us to keep God's law. Love is "the fulfilling of the law;" for it is the essence of the gospel; it is the spirit of sonship; without this Divine affection, no profession of faith, no practice of good works has any value in the sight of God or intrinsic moral worth. Though I have all other gifts and merits—wanting this, "I am nothing" (1 Cor. xiii. 1-3). The cold heart is dead. Whatever appears to be Christian that has not the love of Christ, is an unreality—a matter of orthodox opinion or mechanical performance—dead as the body without the spirit. In all true goodness there is an element of love. Here then, is the fountain-head of Christian virtue, the "well of water springing up into eternal life" which Christ opens in the believing soul, from which flow so many bounteous streams of mercy and good fruits.

This love is, in the first instance and above all, *love to God*. It springs from the knowledge of His love to man. "God is love," and "love is of God" (1 John iv. 7, 8). All love flows from one fountain, from the One Father. And the Father's love is revealed in the Son. Love has the cross for its measure and standard. "He sent the Only-Begotten into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love: hereby know we love" (1 John iii. 16; iv. 9, 10). The man who knows this love, whose heart responds to the manifestation of God in Christ, is "born of God." His soul is ready to become the abode of all pure affections, his life the exhibition of all Christ-like virtues. For the love of the Father is revealed to him; and the love of a son is enkindled in his soul by the Spirit of the Son.

In Paul's teaching, love forms the antithesis to *knowledge*. By this opposition the wisdom of God is distinguished from "the wisdom of this world and of its princes, which come to nought" (1 Cor. i. 23; ii. 8; viii. 1, 3). Not that love despises knowledge, or seeks to dispense with it. It requires knowledge beforehand in order to discern its object, and afterwards to understand its work. So the Apostle prays for the Philippians "that their love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment" (i. 9, 10). It is not *love without knowledge*, heat without light, the warmth of an ignorant, untempered zeal that the Apostle desiderates. But he deplores the existence of *knowledge without love*, a clear head with a cold heart, an intellect whose growth has left the affections starved and stunted, with enlightened apprehensions of truth that awaken no corresponding emotions. Hence comes the pride of reason, the "knowledge that puffeth up." Love alone knows the art of building up.

Loveless knowledge is not wisdom. For wisdom is lowly in her own eyes, mild and gracious. What the man of cold intellect sees, he sees clearly; he reasons on it well. But his data are defective. He discerns but the half, the poorer half of life. There is a whole heaven of facts of which he takes no account. He has an acute and sensitive perception of phenomena coming within the range of his five senses, and of every-

thing that logic can elicit from such phenomena. But he "cannot see afar off." Above all, "he that loveth not, *knoweth not God*." He leaves out the Supreme Factor in human life; and all his calculations are vitiated. "Hath not *God* made foolish the wisdom of the world?"

If knowledge then is the enlightened eye, love is the throbbing, living heart of Christian goodness.

2. The fruit of the Spirit is joy. Joy dwells in the house of Love; nor elsewhere will she tarry.

Love is the mistress both of joy and sorrow. Wronged, frustrated, hers is the bitterest of griefs. Love makes us capable of pain and shame; but equally of triumph and delight. Therefore the Lover of mankind was the "Man of sorrows," whose love bared its breast to the arrows of scorn and hate; and yet "for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame." There was no sorrow like that of Christ rejected and crucified; no joy like the joy of Christ risen and reigning. This joy, the delight of love satisfied in those it loves, is that whose fulfilment He has promised to His disciples (John xv. 8-11).

Such joy the selfish heart never knows. Life's choicest blessings, heaven's highest favours fail to bring it happiness. Sensuous gratification, and even intellectual pleasure by itself, wants the true note of gladness. There is nothing that thrills the whole nature, that stirs the pulses of life and sets them dancing, like the touch of a pure love. It is the pearl of great price, for which "if a man would give all the substance of his house, he would be utterly condemned." But of all the joys love gives to life, that is the deepest which is ours when "the love of God is shed abroad in our heart." Then the full tide of blessedness pours into the human spirit. Then we know of what happiness our nature was made capable, when we know the love that God hath toward us.

This joy in the Lord quickens and elevates, while it cleanses, all other emotions. It raises the whole temperature of the heart. It gives a new glow to life. It lends a warmer and a purer tone to our natural affections. It sheds a diviner meaning, a brighter aspect over the common face of earth and sky. It throws a radiance of hope upon the toils and weariness of mortality. It "glories in tribulation." It triumphs in death. He who "lives in the Spirit" cannot be a dull, or peevish, or melancholy man. One with Christ his heavenly Lord, he begins already to taste His joy,—a joy which none taketh away and which many sorrows cannot quench.

Joy is the beaming countenance, the elastic step, the singing voice of Christian goodness.

3. But joy is a thing of seasons. It has its ebb and flow, and would not be itself if it were constant. It is crossed, varied, shadowed unceasingly. On earth sorrow ever follows its track, as night chases day. No one knew this better than Paul. "Sorrowful," he says of himself (2 Cor. vi. 10), "yet always rejoicing:" a continual alternation, sorrow threatening every moment to extinguish, but serving to enhance his joy. Joy leans upon her graver sister *Peace*.

There is nothing fitful or febrile in the quality of Peace. It is a settled quiet of the heart, a deep, brooding mystery that "passeth all understanding," the stillness of eternity entering the



spirit, the *Sabbath of God* (Heb. iv. 9). It is theirs who are "justified by faith" (Rom. v. 1, 2). It is the bequest of Jesus Christ (John xiv. 27). He "made peace for us through the blood of His cross." He has reconciled us with the eternal law, with the Will that rules all things without effort or disturbance. We pass from the region of misrule and mad rebellion into the kingdom of the Son of God's love, with its ordered freedom, its clear and tranquil light, its "central peace, subsisting at the heart of endless agitation."

After the war of the passions, after the tempest of doubt and fear, Christ has spoken, "Peace, be still!" A great calm spreads over the troubled waters; wind and wave lie down hushed at His feet. The demonic powers that lashed the soul into tumult, vanish before His holy presence. The Spirit of Jesus takes possession of mind and heart and will. And His fruit is peace—always peace. This one virtue takes the place of the manifold forms of contention which makes life a chaos and a misery. While He rules, "the peace of God guards the heart and thoughts" and holds them safe from inward mutiny, outward assault; and the disolute, turbulent train of the works of the flesh find the gates of the soul barred against them.

Peace is the calm, unruffled brow, the poised and even temper which Christian goodness wears.

4. The heart at peace with God has patience with men. "*Charity suffereth long.*" She is not provoked by opposition; nor soured by injustice; no, nor crushed by men's contempt. She can afford to wait; for truth and love will conquer in the end. She knows in whose hand her cause is, and remembers how long *He* has suffered the unbelief and rebellion of an insensate world; she "considers Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself." Mercy and longsuffering are qualities that we share with God Himself, in which God was, and is, "manifest in the flesh." In this ripe fruit of the Spirit there are joined "the love of God, and the patience of Christ" (2 Thess. iii. 5).

Longsuffering is the patient magnanimity of Christian goodness, the broad shoulders on which it "beareth all things" (1 Cor. xiii. 7).

5. "*Charity suffereth long and is kind.*"

*Gentleness* (or *kindness*, as the word is more frequently and better rendered,) resembles "longsuffering" in finding its chief objects in the evil and unthankful. But while the latter is passive and self-contained, kindness is an active, busy virtue. She is moreover of a humble and tender spirit, stooping to the lowest need, thinking nothing too small in which she may help, ready to give back blessing for cursing, benefit for harm and wrong.

Kindness is the thoughtful insight, the delicate tact, the gentle ministering hand of Charity.

6. Linked with *kindness* comes *goodness*, which is its other self, differing from it only as twin sisters may, each fairer for the beauty of the other. Goodness is perhaps more affluent, more catholic in its bounty; kindness more delicate and discriminating. The former looks to the benefit conferred, seeking to make it as large and full as possible; the latter has respect to the recipients, and studies to suit their necessity. While kindness makes its opportunities, and seeks out the most needy and miserable, goodness throws its doors open to all comers. Good-

ness is the more masculine and large-hearted form of charity; and if it errs, errs through blundering and want of tact. Kindness is the more feminine; and may err through exclusiveness and narrowness of view. United, they are perfect.

Goodness is the honest, generous face, the open hand of Charity.

7. This procession of the Virtues has conducted us, in the order of Divine grace, from the thought of a loving, forgiving God, the Object of our love, our joy and peace, to that of an evil-doing, unhappy world, with its need of *longsuffering* and *kindness*; and we now come to the inner, sacred circle of brethren beloved in Christ, where, with goodness, *faith*—that is, *trustfulness*, *confidence*—is called into exercise.

The Authorised rendering "*faith*" seems to us in this instance preferable to the "*faithfulness*" of the Revisers. "Possibly," says Bishop Lightfoot, "*πίστις* may here signify 'trustfulness, reliance,' in one's dealings with others; comp. 1 Cor. xiii. 7;" we should prefer to say "probably," or even "unmistakably," to this. The use of *pistis* in any other sense is rare and doubtful in Paul's Epistles. It is true that "God" or "Christ" is elsewhere implied as the object of faith; but\* where the word stands, as it does here, in a series of qualities belonging to human relationships, it finds, in agreement with its current meaning, another application. As a link between *goodness* and *meekness*, *trustfulness*, and nothing else, appears to be in place. The parallel expression of 1 Cor. xiii., of which chapter we find so many echoes in the text, we take to be decisive: "*Charity believeth all things.*"

The faith that unites man to God, in turn joins man to his fellows. Faith in the Divine Fatherhood becomes trust in the human brotherhood. In this generous attribute the Galatians were sadly deficient. "Honour all men," wrote Peter to them; "love the brotherhood" (1 Pet. ii. 17). Their factiousness and jealousies were the exact opposite of this fruit of the Spirit. Little was there to be found in them of the love that "envieth and vaunteth not," which "imputeth not evil, nor rejoiceth in unrighteousness," which "beareth, believeth, hopeth, endureth all things." They needed more faith in *man*, as well as in God.

The true heart knows how to *trust*. He who doubts every one is even more deceived than the man who blindly confides in every one. There is no more miserable vice than cynicism; no man more ill-conditioned than he who counts all the world knaves or fools except himself. This poison of mistrust, this biting acid of scepticism is a fruit of irreligion. It is one of the surest signs of social and national decay.

The Christian man knows not only how to stand alone and to "bear all things," but also how to lean on others, strengthening himself by their strength and supporting them in weakness. He delights to "think others better" than himself; and here "*meekness*" is one with "*faith*." His own goodness gives him an eye for everything that is best in those around him.

Trustfulness is the warm, firm clasp of friendship, the generous and loyal homage which goodness ever pays to goodness.

8. *Meekness*, as we have seen, is the other side of *faith*. It is not tameness and want of spirit, as those who "judge after the flesh" are apt to think. Nor is meekness the mere quietness



of a retiring disposition. "The man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." It comports with the highest courage and activity; and is a qualification for public leadership. Jesus Christ stands before us as the perfect pattern of meekness. "I intreat you," pleads the Apostle with the self-asserting Corinthians, "by the meekness and gentleness of Christ!" Meekness is self-repression in view of the claims and needs of others; it is the "charity" which "seeketh not her own, looketh not to her own things, but to the things of others." For her, self is of no account in comparison with Christ and His kingdom, and the honour of His brethren.

Meekness is the content and quiet mien, the willing self-effacement that is the mark of Christ-like goodness.

9. Finally *temperance*, or *self-control*,—third of Plato's cardinal virtues.

By this last link the chain of the virtues, at its higher end attached to the throne of the Divine love and mercy, is fastened firmly down into the actualities of daily habit and bodily regimen. *Temperance*, to change the figure, closes the array of the graces, holding the post of the rear-guard which checks all straggling and protects the march from surprise and treacherous overthrow.

If *meekness* is the virtue of the whole man as he stands before his God and in the midst of his fellows, *temperance* is that of his body, the tenement and instrument of the regenerate spirit. It is the antithesis of "drunkenness and revellings," which closed the list of "works of the flesh," just as the preceding graces, from "peace" to "meekness," are opposed to the multiplied forms of "enmity" and "strife." Amongst ourselves very commonly the same limited contrast is implied. But to make "temperance" signify only or chiefly the avoidance of strong drink is miserably to narrow its significance. It covers the whole range of moral discipline, and concerns every sense and passion of our nature. Temperance is a practised mastery of self. It holds the reins of the chariot of life. It is the steady and prompt control of the outlooking sensibilities and appetencies, and inwardly moving desires. The tongue, the hand and foot, the eye, the temper, the tastes and affections, all require in turn to feel its curb. He is a temperate man, in the Apostle's meaning, who *holds himself well in hand*, who meets temptation as a disciplined army meets the shock of battle, by skill and alertness and tempered courage baffling the forces that outnumber it.

This also is a "fruit of the Spirit"—though we may count it the lowest and least, yet as indispensable to our salvation as the love of God itself. For the lack of this safeguard how many a saint has stumbled into folly and shame! It is no small thing for the Holy Spirit to accomplish in us, no mean prize for which we strive in seeking the crown of a perfect self-control. This mastery over the flesh is in truth the rightful prerogative of the human spirit, the dignity from which it fell through sin, and which the gift of the Spirit of Christ restores.

And this virtue in a Christian man is exercised for the behoof of others, as well as for his own. "I keep my body under," cries the Apostle, "I make it my slave and not my master; lest, having preached to others, I myself

should be a castaway"—that is self-regard, mere common prudence; but again, "It is good not to eat flesh, nor drink wine, nor to do anything whereby a brother is made to stumble or made weak" (1 Cor. ix. 27; Rom. xiv. 21).

Temperance is the guarded step, the sober, measured walk in which Christian goodness keeps the way of life, and makes straight paths for stumbling and straying feet.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### OUR BROTHER'S BURDEN AND OUR OWN.

GALATIANS VI. 1-5.

THE division of the chapters at this point is almost as unfortunate as that between chaps. iv. and v. The introductory "Brethren" is not a form of transition to a new topic; it calls in the brotherly love of the Galatians to put an end to the bickerings and recriminations which the Apostle has censured in the preceding verses. How unseemly for *brethren* to be "vainglorious" towards each other, to be "provoking and envying one another!" If they are spiritual men, they should look more considerably on the faults of their neighbours, more seriously on their own responsibilities.

The Galatic temperament, as we have seen, was prone to the mischievous vanity which the Apostle here reproves. Those who had, or fancied they had, some superiority over others in talent or in character, prided themselves upon it. Even spiritual gifts were made matter of ostentation; and display on the part of the more gifted excited the jealousy of inferior brethren. The same disposition which manifests itself in arrogance on the one side, on the other takes the form of discontent and envy. The heart-burnings and the social tension which this state of things creates, make every chance collision a danger; and the slightest wound is inflamed into a rankling sore. The stumbling brother is pushed on into a fall; and the fallen man, who might have been helped to his feet, is left to lie there, the object of un pitying reproach. Indeed, the lapse of his neighbour is to the vainglorious man a cause of satisfaction rather than of sorrow. The other's weakness serves for a foil to his strength. Instead of stooping down to "restore such a one," he holds stiffly aloof in the eminence of conscious virtue; and bears himself more proudly in the lustre added to his piety by his fellow's disgrace. "God, I thank Thee," he seems to say, "that I am not as other men,—nor even as this wretched back-slider!" The compellation "Brethren" is itself a rebuke to such heartless pride.

There are two reflections which should instantly correct the spirit of vain-glory. The Apostle appeals in the first place to *brotherly love*, to the claims that an erring fellow-Christian has upon our sympathy, to the meekness and forbearance which the Spirit of grace inspires, in fine to Christ's law which makes compassion our duty. At the same time he points out to us *our own infirmity* and exposure to temptation. He reminds us of the weight of our individual responsibility and the final account awaiting us. A proper sense at once of the rights of others and of our own obligations will make this shallow vanity impossible.

This double-edged exhortation takes shape in



two leading sentences, sharply clashing with each other in the style of paradox in which the Apostle loves to contrast the opposite sides of truth: "Bear ye one another's burdens" (ver. 2); and yet "Every man shall bear his own burden" (ver. 5).

I. What then are the considerations that commend *the burdens of others* for our bearing?

The burden the Apostle has in view is that of *a brother's trespass*: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in some trespass."

Here the question arises as to whether Paul means *overtaken by the temptation*, or *by the discovery of his sin*—surprised into committing, or in committing the trespass. Winer, Lightfoot, and some other interpreters, read the words in the latter sense: "*surprised, detected* in the act of committing any sin, so that his guilt is placed beyond a doubt" (Lightfoot). We are persuaded, notwithstanding, that the common view of the text is the correct one. The manner of the offender's detection has little to do with the way in which he should be treated; but the circumstances of his fall have everything to do with it. The suddenness, the surprise of his temptation is both a reason for more lenient judgment, and a ground for hope of his restoration. The preposition "in" (ἐν), it is urged, stands in the way of this interpretation. We might have expected to read "(surprised) *by*," or perhaps "*into* (any sin)." But the word is "trespass," not "sin." It points not to the cause of the man's fall, but to the *condition in which it has placed him*. The Greek preposition (according to a well-known idiom of verbs of *motion*) indicates the result of the unexpected assault to which the man has been subject. A gust of temptation has caught him unawares; and we now see him lying overthrown and prostrate, involved "in some trespass."

The Apostle is supposing an instance—possibly an actual case—in which the sin committed was due to weakness and surprise, rather than deliberate intention; like that of Eve, when "the woman being beguiled fell into transgression." Such a fall deserves commiseration. The attack was unlooked for; the man was off his guard. The Gallic nature is heedless and impulsive. Men of this temperament should make allowance for each other. An offence committed in a rash moment, under provocation, must not be visited with implacable severity, nor magnified until it become a fatal barrier between the evil-doer and society. And Paul says expressly, "If a *man* be overtaken"—a delicate reminder of our human infirmity and common danger (comp. 1 Cor. x. 13). Let us remember that it is a man who has erred, of like passions with ourselves; and his trespass will excite pity for him and apprehension for ourselves.

Such an effect the occurrence should have upon "the spiritual," on the men of love and peace, who "walk in the Spirit." The Apostle's appeal is qualified by this definition. Vain and self-seeking men, the irritable, the resentful, are otherwise affected by a neighbour's trespass. They will be angry with him, lavish in virtuous scorn; but it is not in them to "restore such a one." They are more likely to aggravate than heal the wound, to push the weak man down when he tries to rise, than to help him to his feet. The work of restoration needs a knowledge of the human heart, a self-restraint and patient skill, quite beyond their capability.

The *restoration* here signified denotes not only, or not so much, the man's inward, spiritual renewal, as his recovery for the Church, the mending of the rent caused by his removal. In 1 Cor. i. 10; 2 Cor. xiii. 11; 1 Thess. iii. 10, where, as in other places, the English verb "perfect" enters into the rendering of καταρτίζω, it gives the idea of readjustment, the right fitting of part to part, member to member, in some larger whole. Writing to the Corinthian Church at this time respecting a flagrant trespass committed there, for which the transgressor was now penitent, the Apostle bids its members "confirm their love" to him (2 Cor. ii. 5-11). So here "the spiritual" amongst the Galatians are urged to make it their business to *set right* the lapsed brother, to bring him back as soon and safely as might be to the fold of Christ.

Of all the fruits of the Spirit, *meekness* is most required for this office of restoration, the meekness of Christ the Good Shepherd—of Paul who was "gentle as a nurse" amongst his children, and even against the worst offenders preferred to "come in love and a spirit of meekness," rather than "with a rod" (1 Thess. ii. 7; 1 Cor. iv. 21). To reprove without pride or acrimony, to stoop to the fallen without the air of condescension, requires the "spirit of meekness" in a singular degree. Such a bearing lends peculiar grace to compassion. This "gentleness of Christ" is one of the finest and rarest marks of the spiritual man. The moroseness sometimes associated with religious zeal, the disposition to judge hardly the failings of weaker men is anything but according to Christ. It is written of Him, "A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench" (Isa. xlii. 3; Matt. xii. 20).

Meekness becomes sinful men dealing with fellow-sinners. "Considering *thyself*," says the Apostle, "lest thou also be tempted." It is a noticeable thing that men morally weak in any given direction are apt to be the severest judges of those who err in the same respect, just as people who have risen out of poverty are often the harshest towards the poor. They wish to forget their own past, and hate to be reminded of a condition from which they have suffered. Or is the judge, in sentencing a kindred offender, seeking to reinforce his own conscience and to give a warning to himself? One is inclined sometimes to think so. But reflection on our own infirmities should counteract, instead of fostering censoriousness. Every man knows enough of himself to make him chary of denouncing others. "Look to *thyself*," cries the Apostle. "Thou hast considered thy brother's faults. Now turn thine eye inward, and contemplate thine own. Hast thou never aforetime committed the offence with which he stands charged; or haply yielded to the like temptation in a less degree? Or if not even that, it may be thou art guilty of sins of another kind, though hidden from human sight, in the eyes of God no less heinous." "Judge not," said the Judge of all the earth, "lest ye be judged. With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you" (Matt. vii. 1-5).

This exhortation begins in general terms; but in the latter clause of ver. 1 it passes into the individualising singular—"looking to *thyself*, lest even *thou* be tempted." The disaster befalling one reveals the common peril; it is the signal for every member of the Church to take



heed to himself. The scrutiny which it calls for belongs to each man's private conscience. And the faithfulness and integrity required in those who approach the wrongdoer with a view to his recovery, must be chastened by personal solicitude. The fall of a Christian brother should be in any case the occasion of heart-searching and profound humiliation. Feelings of indifference towards him, much more of contempt, will prove the prelude of a worse overthrow for ourselves.

The burden of a brother's trespass is the most painful that can devolve upon a Christian man. But this is not the only burden we bring upon each other. There are burdens of anxiety and sorrow, of personal infirmity, of family difficulty, of business embarrassment, infinite varieties and complications of trial in which the resources of brotherly sympathy are taxed. The injunction of the Apostle has an unlimited range. That which burdens my friend and brother cannot be otherwise than a solicitude to me. Whatever it be that cripples him and hinders his running the race set before him, I am bound, according to the best of my judgment and ability, to assist him to overcome it. If I leave him to stagger on alone, to sink under his load when my shoulder might have eased it for him, the reproach will be mine.

This is no work of supererogation, no matter of mere liking and choice. I am not at liberty to refuse to share the burdens of the brotherhood. "Bear ye one another's burdens," Paul says, "and so fulfil the law of Christ." This law the Apostle has already cited and enforced against the contentions and jealousies rife in Galatia (v. 14, 15). But it has a further application. Christ's law of love not only says, "Thou shalt not bite and devour; thou shalt not provoke and envy thy brother;" but also, "Thou shalt help and comfort him, and regard his burden as thine own."

This law makes of the Church one body, with a solidarity of interests and obligations. It finds employment and discipline for the energy of Christian freedom, in yoking it to the service of the over-burdened. It reveals the dignity and privilege of moral strength, which consist not in the enjoyment of its own superiority, but in its power to bear "the infirmities of the weak." This was the glory of Christ, who "pleased not Himself" (Rom. xv. 1-4). The Giver of the law is its great Example. "Being in the form of God," He "took the form of a servant," that in love He might serve mankind; He "became obedient, unto the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 1-8). Justly is the inference drawn, "We also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John iii. 16). There is no limit to the service which the redeemed brotherhood of Christ may expect from its members.

Only this law must not be abused by the indolent and the overreaching, by the men who are ready to throw their burdens on others and make every generous neighbour the victim of their dishonesty. It is the need, not the demand, of our brother which claims our help. We are bound to take care that it is his necessity to which we minister, not his imposture or his slothfulness. The warning that "each man shall bear his own burden" is addressed to those who *receive*, as well as to those who render aid in the common burden-bearing of the Church.

II. The adjustment of social and individual duty is often far from easy, and requires the nicest discernment and moral tact. Both are brought into view in this paragraph, in its latter as well as in its former section. But in vv. 1, 2 the need of others, in vv. 3-5 our personal responsibility, forms the leading consideration. We see on the one hand, that a true self-regard teaches us to identify ourselves with the moral interests of others: while, on the other hand, a false regard to others is excluded (ver. 4) which disturbs the judgment to be formed respecting ourselves. The thought of *his own burden* to be borne by each man now comes to the front of the exhortation.

Ver. 3 stands between the two counterpoised estimates. It is another shaft directed against Galatian vainglory, and pointed with Paul's keenest irony. "For if a man thinketh he is something, being nothing, he deceiveth himself."

This truth is very evident. But what is its bearing on the matter in hand? The maxim is advanced to support the foregoing admonition. It was their self-conceit that led some of the Apostle's readers to treat with contempt the brother who had trespassed; he tells them that this opinion of theirs is a *delusion*, a kind of mental hallucination (*φρεναπατῆ ἑαυτῶν*). It betrays a melancholy ignorance. The "spiritual" man who "thinks himself to be something," says to you, "I am quite above these weak brethren, as you see. Their habits of life, their temptations are not mine. Their sympathy would be useless to me. And I shall not burden myself with their feebleness, nor vex myself with their ignorance and rudeness." If any man separates himself from the Christian commonalty and breaks the ties of religious fellowship on grounds of this sort, and yet imagines he is following Christ, he "deceives himself." Others will see how little his affected eminence is worth. Some will humour his vanity; many will ridicule or pity it; few will be deceived by it.

The fact of a man's "thinking himself to be something" goes far to prove that he "is nothing." "Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight." Real knowledge is humble; it knows its nothingness. Socrates, when the oracle pronounced him the wisest man in Greece, at last discovered that the response was right, inasmuch as he alone was aware that he knew nothing, while other men were confident of their knowledge. And a greater than Socrates, our All-wise, All-holy Saviour, says to us, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." It is in humility and dependence, in self-forgetting that true wisdom begins. Who are we, although the most refined or highest in place, that we should despise plain, uncultured members of the Church, those who bear life's heavier burdens and amongst whom our Saviour spent His days on earth, and treat them as unfit for our company, unworthy of fellowship with us in Christ?

They are themselves the greatest losers who neglect to fulfil Christ's law. Such men might learn from their humbler brethren, accustomed to the trials and temptations of a working life and a rough world, how to bear more worthily their own burdens. How foolish of "the eye to say to the hand" or "foot, I have no need of thee"! "God hath chosen the poor of this world rich in faith." There are truths of which they are our best teachers—priceless lessons of



the power of Divine grace and the deep things of Christian experience. This isolation robs the poorer members of the Church in their turn of the manifold help due to them from communion with those more happily circumstanced. How many of the evils around us would be ameliorated, how many of our difficulties would vanish, if we could bring about a truer Christian fraternisation, if caste-feeling in our English Church-life were once destroyed, if men would lay aside their stiffness and social *hauteur*, and cease to think that they "are something" on grounds of worldly distinction and wealth which in Christ are absolutely nothing.

The vain conceit of their superiority indulged in by some of his readers, the Apostle further corrects by reminding the self-deceivers of *their own responsibility*. The irony of ver. 3 passes into a sterner tone of warning in vv. 4 and 5. "Let each man try his own work," he cries. "Judge yourselves, instead of judging one another. Mind your own duty, rather than your neighbours' faults. Do not think of your worth or talents in comparison with theirs; but see to it that your *work* is right." The question for each of us is not, What do others fail to do? but, What am I myself really doing? What will my life's work amount to, when measured by that which God expects from me?

This question shuts each man up within his own conscience. It anticipates the final judgment-day. "Every one of us must give account of *himself* to God" (Rom. xiv. 12). Reference to the conduct of others is here out of place. The petty comparisons which feed our vanity and our class-prejudices are of no avail at the bar of God. I may be able for every fault of my own to find some one else more faulty. But this makes *me* no whit better. It is the intrinsic, not the comparative worth of character and daily work of which God takes account. If we study our brother's work, it should be with a view to enable him to do it better, or to learn to improve our own by his example; not in order to find excuses for ourselves in his shortcomings.

"And then"—if our work abide the test—"we shall have our glorying in ourselves alone, not in regard to our neighbour." Not his flaws and failures, but my own honest work will be the ground of my satisfaction. This was Paul's "glorying" in face of the slanders by which he was incessantly pursued. It lay in the testimony of his conscience. He lived under the severest self-scrutiny. He knew himself as the man only can who "knows the fear of the Lord," who places himself every day before the dread tribunal of Christ Jesus. He is "made manifest unto God;" and in the light of that searching Presence he can affirm that he "knows nothing against himself." But this boast makes him humble. "*By the grace of God*" he is enabled to "have his conversation in the world in holiness and sincerity coming of God." If he had seemed to claim any credit for himself, he at once corrects the thought: "Yet not I," he says, "but God's grace that was with me. I have my glorying in Christ Jesus in the things pertaining to God, in that which Christ hath wrought in me" (1 Cor. xv. 10; Rom. xv. 16-19).

So that this boast of the Apostle, in which he invites the vainglorious Galatians to secure a share, resolves itself after all into his one boast,

\* 1 Cor. iv. 1-5; 2 Cor. i. 12; v. 10-12.

"in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (ver. 14). If his work on trial should prove to be gold, "abiding" amongst the world's imperishable treasures and fixed foundations of truth (1 Cor. iii. 10-15), Christ only was to be praised for this. Paul's glorying is the opposite of the Legalist's, who presumes on his "works" as his own achievements, commending him for righteous before God. "Justified by works," such a man hath "whereof to glory, but not toward God" (Rom. iv. 2). His boasting redounds to himself. Whatever glory belongs to the work of the Christian must be referred to God. Such work furnishes no ground for magnifying the man at the expense of his fellows. If we praise the stream, it is to commend the fountain. If we admire the lives of the saints and celebrate the deeds of the heroes of faith, it is *ad maiorem Dei gloriam*—"that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. iv. 11).

"For each will bear his own load." Here is the ultimate reason for the self-examination to which the Apostle has been urging his readers, in order to restrain their vanity. The emphatic repetition of the words *each man* in vv. 4 and 5 brings out impressively the personal character of the account to be rendered. At the same time, the deeper sense of our own burdens thus awakened will help to stir in us sympathy for the loads under which our fellows labour. So that this warning indirectly furthers the appeal for sympathy with which the chapter began.

Faithful scrutiny of our work may give us reasons for satisfaction and gratitude towards God. But it will yield matter of another kind. It will call to remembrance old sins and follies, lost opportunities, wasted powers, with their burden of regret and humiliation. It will set before us the array of our obligations, the manifold tasks committed to us by our heavenly Master, compelling us to say, "Who is sufficient for these things?" And besides the reproofs of the past and the stern demands of the present, there sounds in the soul's ear the message of the future, the summons to our final reckoning. Each of us has his own life-load, made up of this triple burden. A thousand varying circumstances and individual experiences go to constitute the ever-growing load which we bear with us from youth to age, like the wayfarer his bundle, like the soldier his knapsack and accoutrements—the individual lot, the peculiar untransferable vocation and responsibility fastened by the hand of God upon our shoulders. This burden we shall have to carry up to Christ's judgment-seat. He is our Master; He alone can give us our discharge. His lips must pronounce the final "Well done"—or, "Thou wicked and slothful servant!"

In this sentence the Apostle employs a different word from that used in ver. 2. There he was thinking of the weight, the *burdensomeness* of our brother's troubles, which we haply may lighten for him, and which is so far common property. But the second word, *φορτίον* (applied for instance to a *ship's lading*), indicates that *which is proper to each* in the burdens of life. There are duties that we have no power to devolve, cares and griefs that we must bear in secret, problems that we must work out severally and for ourselves. To consider them aright, to weigh well the sum of our duty will dash our self-complacency; it will surely make us serious and humble. Let us wake up from dreams of



self-pleasing to an earnest, manly apprehension of life's demands—"while," like the Apostle, "we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen and eternal" (2 Cor. iv. 18).

After all, it is the men who have the highest standard for themselves that as a rule are most considerate in their estimate of others. The holiest are the most pitiful. They know best how to enter into the struggles of a weaker brother. They can appreciate his unsuccessful resistance to temptation; they can discern where and how he has failed, and how much of genuine sorrow there is in his remorse. From the fullness of their own experience they can interpret a possibility of better things in what excites contempt in those who judge by appearance and by conventional rules. He who has learned faithfully to "consider himself" and meekly to "bear his own burden," is most fit to do the work of Christ, and to shepherd His tempted and straying sheep. Strict with ourselves, we shall grow wise and gentle in our care for others.

In the Christian conscience the sense of personal and that of social responsibility serve each to stimulate and guard the other. Duty and sympathy, love and law are fused into one. For Christ is all in all; and these two hemispheres of life unite in Him.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### SOWING AND REAPING.

#### GALATIANS vi. 6-10.

EACH shall bear his own burden (ver. 5)—but let there be communion of disciple with teacher in all that is good. The latter sentence is clearly intended to balance the former. The transition turns upon the same antithesis between social and individual responsibility that occupied us in the foregoing chapter. But it is now presented on another side. In the previous passage it concerned the conduct of "the spiritual" toward erring brethren whom they were tempted to despise; here, their behaviour toward teachers whom they were disposed to neglect. There it is inferiors, here superiors that are in view. The Galatian "vainglory" manifested itself alike in provocation toward the former, and in envy toward the latter (v. 26). In both ways it bred disaffection, and threatened to break up the Church's unity. The two effects are perfectly consistent. Those who are harsh in their dealings with the weak, are commonly rude and insubordinate toward their betters, where they dare to be so. Self-conceit and self-sufficiency engender in the one direction a cold contempt, in the other a jealous independence. The former error is corrected by a due sense of our own infirmities; the latter by the consideration of our responsibility to God. We are compelled to feel for the burdens of others when we realise the weight of our own. We learn to respect the claims of those placed over us, when we remember what we owe to God through them. Personal responsibility is the last word of the former paragraph; social responsibility is the first word of this. Such is the contrast marked by the transitional *But*.

From this point of view ver. 6 gains a very comprehensive sense. "All good things" cannot surely be limited to the "carnal things" of 1 Cor. ix. 11. As Meyer and Beet amongst recent commentators clearly show, the context gives to this phrase a larger scope. At the same time, there is no necessity to exclude the thought of temporal good. The Apostle designedly makes his appeal as wide as possible. The reasoning of the corresponding passage in the Corinthian letter is a deduction from the general principle laid down here.

But it is *spiritual fellowship* that the Apostle chiefly desiderates. The true minister of Christ counts this vastly more sacred, and has this interest far more at heart than his own temporalities. He labours for the unity of the Church; he strives to secure the mutual sympathy and co-operation of all orders and ranks—teachers and taught, officers and private members—"in every good word and work." He must have the heart of his people with him in his work, or his joy will be faint and his success scant indeed. Christian teaching is designed to awaken this sympathetic response. And it will take expression in the rendering of whatever kind of help the gifts and means of the hearer and the needs of the occasion call for. Paul requires every member of the Body of Christ to make her wants and toils his own. We have no right to leave the burdens of the Church's work to her leaders, to expect her battles to be fought and won by the officers alone. This neglect has been the parent of innumerable mischiefs. Indolence in the laity fosters sacerdotalism in the clergy. But when, on the contrary, an active, sympathetic union is maintained between "him that is taught" and "him that teacheth," that other matter of the temporal support of the Christian ministry, to which this text is so often exclusively referred, comes in as a necessary detail, to be generously and prudently arranged, but which will not be felt on either side as a burden or a difficulty. Everything depends on the fellowship of spirit, on the strength of the bond of love that knits together the members of the Body of Christ. Here, in Galatia, that bond had been grievously weakened. In a Church so disturbed, the fellowship of teachers and taught was inevitably strained.

Such communion the Apostle craves from his children in the faith with an intense yearning. This is the one fruit of God's grace in them which he covets to reap for himself, and feels he has a right to expect. "Be ye as I am," he cries—"do not desert me, my children, for whom I travail in birth. Let me not have to toil for you in vain" (iv. 12-19). So again, writing to the Corinthians: "It was I that begat you in Christ Jesus; I beseech you then, be followers of me. Let me remind you of my ways in the Lord. . . O ye Corinthians, to you our mouth is open, our heart enlarged. Pay me back in kind (you are my children), and be ye too enlarged" (1 Cor. iv. 14-17; 2 Cor. vi. 11-13). He "thanks God" for the Philippian "on every remembrance of them," and "makes his supplication" for them "with joy, because of their fellowship in regard to the gospel from the first day until now" (Phil. i. 3-7). Such is the fellowship which Paul wished to see restored in the Galatian Churches.

In ver. 10 he extends his appeal to embrace in it all the kindly offices of life. For the love in-



spired by the Church, the service rendered to her, should quicken all our human sympathies and make us readier to meet every claim of pity or affection. While our sympathies, like those of a loving family, will be concerned "especially" with "the household of faith," and within that circle more especially with our pastors and teachers in Christ, they have no limit but that of "opportunity;" they should "work that which is good toward all men." True zeal for the Church widens, instead of narrowing, our charities. Household affection is the nursery, not the rival, of love to our fatherland and to humanity.

Now the Apostle is extremely urgent in this matter of communion between teachers and taught. It concerns the very life of the Christian community. The welfare of the Church and the progress of the kingdom of God depend on the degree to which its individual members accept their responsibility in its affairs. Ill-will towards Christian teachers is paralysing in its effects on the Church's life. Greatly are *they* to blame, if their conduct gives rise to discontent. Only less severe is the condemnation of those in lower place who harbour in themselves and foster in the minds of others sentiments of disloyalty. To cherish this mistrust, to withhold our sympathy from him who serves us in spiritual things, this, the Apostle declares, is not merely a wrong done to the man, it is an affront to God Himself. If it be God's Word that His servant teaches, then God expects some fitting return to be made for the gift He has bestowed. Of that return the pecuniary contribution, the meed of "carnal things" with which so many seem to think their debt discharged, is often the least and easiest part. How far have men a right to be hearers—profited and believing hearers—in the Christian congregation, and yet decline the duties of Church fellowship? They eat the Church's bread, but will not do her work. They expect like children to be fed and nursed and waited on; they think that if they *pay* their minister tolerably well, they have "communicated with" him quite sufficiently. This apathy has much the same effect as the Galatian bickerings and jealousies. It robs the Church of the help of the children whom she has nourished and brought up. Those who act thus are trying in reality to "mock God." They expect *Him* to sow his bounties upon them, but will not let Him reap. They refuse Him the return that He most requires for His choicest benefits.

Now, the Apostle says, God is not to be defrauded in this way. Men may wrong each other; they may grieve and affront His ministers. But no man is clever enough to cheat God. It is not Him, it is *themselves* they will prove to have deceived. Vain and selfish men who take the best that God and man can do for them as though it were a tribute to their greatness, envious and restless men who break the Church's fellowship of peace, will reap at last even as they sow. The mischief and the loss may fall on others now; but in its full ripeness it will come in the end upon themselves. The final reckoning awaits us in another world. And as we act by God and by His Church now, in our day, so He will act hereafter by us in His day.

Thus the Apostle, in vv. 6 and 7, places this matter in the searching light of eternity. He brings to bear upon it one of the great spiritual maxims characteristic of his teaching. Paul's

unique influence as a religious teacher lies in his mastery of principles of this kind, in the keenness of insight and the incomparable vigour with which he applies eternal truths to commonplace occurrences. The paltriness and vulgarity of these local broils and disaffections lend to his warning a more severe impressiveness. With what a startling and sobering force, one thinks, the rebuke of these verses must have fallen on the ears of the wrangling Galatians! How unspeakably mean their quarrels appear in the light of the solemn issues opening out before them! It was *God* whom their folly had presumed to mock. It was the harvest of eternal life of which their factiousness threatened to defraud them.

The principle on which this warning rests is stated in terms that give it universal application: *Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.* This is in fact the postulate of all moral responsibility. It asserts the continuity of personal existence, the connection of cause and effect in human character. It makes man the master of his own destiny. It declares that his future doom hangs upon his present choice, and is in truth its evolution and consummation. The two-fold lot of "corruption" or "life eternal" is in every case no more, and no less, than the proper harvest of the kind of sowing practised here and now. The use made of our seed-time determines exactly, and with a moral certainty greater even than that which rules in the natural field, what kind of fruitage our immortality will render.

This great axiom deserves to be looked at in its broadest aspect. It involves the following considerations:—

I. *Our present life is the seed-time of an eternal harvest.*

Each recurring year presents a mirror of human existence. The analogy is a commonplace of the world's poetry. The spring is in every land a picture of youth—its morning freshness and innocence, its laughing sunshine, its opening blossoms, its bright and buoyant energy; and, alas, oftentimes its cold winds and nipping frosts and early, sudden blight! Summer images a vigorous manhood, with all the powers in action and the pulses of life beating at full swing; when the dreams of youth are worked out in sober, waking earnest; when manly strength is tested and matured under the heat of mid-day toil, and character is disciplined, and success or failure in life's battle must be determined. Then follows mellow autumn, season of shortening days and slackening steps and gathering snows; season too of ripe experience, of chastened thought and feeling, of widened influence and clustering honours. And the story ends in the silence and winter of the grave! *Ends?* Nay, that is a new beginning! This whole round of earthly vicissitude is but a single spring-time. It is the mere childhood of man's existence, the threshold of the vast house of life.

The oldest and wisest man amongst us is only a little child in the reckoning of eternity. The Apostle Paul counted himself no more. "We know in part," he says; "we prophesy in part—talking, reasoning like children. We shall become *men*, seeing face to face, knowing as we are known" (1 Cor. xiii. 8, 11, 12). Do we not ourselves feel this in our higher-moods? There is an instinct of immortality, a forecasting of some ampler existence, "a stirring of



blind life" within the soul; there are visionary gleams of an unearthly Paradise haunting at times the busiest and most unimaginative men. We are intelligences in the germ, lying folded up in the chrysalis stage of our existence. Eyes, wings are still to come. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be," no more than he who had seen but the seed-sowing of early spring and the bare wintry furrows, could imagine what the golden, waving harvest would be like. There is a glorious, everlasting kingdom of heaven, a world which in its duration, its range of action and experience, its style of equipment and occupation, will be worthy of the elect children of God. Worship, music, the purest passages of human affection and of moral elevation, may give us some foretaste of its joys. But what it will be really like, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard; nor heart of man conceived."

Think of that, struggling heart, worn with labour, broken by sorrow, cramped and thwarted by the pressure of an unkindly world. "The earnest expectancy of the creation" waits for your revealing (Rom. viii. 19). You will have your enfranchisement; your soul will take wing at last. Only have faith in God, and in righteousness; only "be not weary in well-doing." Those crippled powers will get their full play. Those baffled purposes and frustrated affections will unfold and blossom into a completeness undreamed of now, in the sunshine of heaven, in "the liberty of the glory of the sons of God." Why look for your harvest here? It is *March*, not August yet. "*In due season* we shall reap, if we faint not." See to it that you "sow to the Spirit," that your life be of the true seed of the kingdom; and for the rest, have no care nor fear. What should we think of the farmer who in winter, when his fields were frost-bound, should go about wringing his hands and crying that his labour was all lost! Are we wiser in our despondent moods? However dreary and unpromising, however poor and paltry in its outward seeming the earthly seed-time, your life's work will have its resurrection. Heaven lies hidden in those daily acts of humble, difficult duty, even as the giant oak with its centuries of growth and all its summer glory sleeps in the acorn-cup. No eye may see it now; but "the Day will declare it!"

II. In the second place, *the quality of the future harvest depends entirely on the present sowing.*

In *quantity*, as we have seen, in outward state and circumstance, there is a complete contrast. The harvest surpasses the seed from which it sprang, by thirty, sixty, or a hundred-fold. But in *quality* we find a strict agreement. In degree they may differ infinitely; in kind they are one. The harvest multiplies the effect of the sower's labour; but it multiplies exactly that effect, and nothing else. This law runs through all life. If we could not count upon it, labour would be purposeless and useless; we should have to yield ourselves passively to nature's caprice. The farmer sows wheat in his cornfield, the gardener plants and trains his fig-tree; and he gets wheat, or figs, for his reward—nothing else. Or is he a "sluggard" that "will not plough by reason of the cold?" Does he let weeds and thistles have the run of his garden-plot? Then it yields him a plentiful harvest of thistles and of weeds! What could he expect? "Men do not gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles." From the highest to the lowest order

of living things, each grows and fructifies "after its kind." This is the rule of nature, the law which constituted *Nature* at the beginning. The good tree brings forth good fruit; and the good seed makes the good tree.

All this has its moral counterpart. The law of reproduction in kind holds equally true of the relation of this life to the next. Eternity for us will be the multiplied, consummated outcome of the good or evil of the present life. Hell is just sin ripe—rotten ripe. Heaven is the fruitage of righteousness. There will be two kinds of reaping, the Apostle tells us, because there are two different kinds of sowing. "He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption:" there is nothing arbitrary or surprising in that. "Corruption"—the moral decay and dissolution of the man's being—is the natural retributive effect of his carnality. And "he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Here too, the sequence is inevitable. Like breeds its like. Life springs of life; and death eternal is the culmination of the soul's present death to God and goodness. The future glory of the saints is at once a Divine reward, and a necessary development of their present faithfulness. And eternal life lies germinally contained in faith's earliest beginning, when it is but as "a grain of mustard seed." We may expect in our final state the outcome of our present conduct, as certainly as the farmer who puts wheat into his furrows in November will count on getting wheat out of them again next August.

Under this law of the harvest we are living at this moment, and sowing every day the seed of an immortality of honour or of shame. Life is the seed-plot of eternity; and *youth is above all the seed-time of life*. What are our children doing with these precious, vernal years? What is going into their minds? What ideas, what desires are rooting themselves in these young souls? If it be pure thoughts and true affections, love to God, self-denial, patience and humility, courage to do what is right—if these be the things that are sown in their hearts, there will be for them, and for us, a glorious harvest of wisdom and love and honour in the years to come, and in the day of eternity. But if sloth and deceit be there, and unholy thoughts, vanity and envy and self-indulgence, theirs will be a bitter harvesting. Men talk of "sowing their wild oats," as though that were an end of it; as though a wild and prodigal youth might none the less be followed by a sober manhood and an honoured old age. But it is not so. If wild oats have been sown, there will be wild oats to reap, as certainly as autumn follows spring. For every time the youth deceives parent or teacher, let him know that he will be deceived by the Father of lies a hundred times. For every impure thought or dishonourable word, shame will come upon him sixty-fold. If his mind be filled with trash and refuse, then trash and refuse are all it will be able to produce. If the good seed be not timely sown in his heart, thorns and nettles will sow themselves there fast enough; and his soul will become like the sluggard's garden, rank with base weeds and poison-plants, a place where all vile things will have their resort,—rejected and nigh unto a curse."

Who is "he that soweth to his own flesh?" It is, in a word, the *selfish* man. He makes his personal interest, and as a rule his bodily pleas-



ure, directly or ultimately, the object of life. The sense of responsibility to God, the thought of life as a stewardship of which one must give account, have no place in his mind. He is a "lover of pleasure rather than a lover of God." His desires, unfixed on God, steadily tend downwards. Idolatry of self becomes slavery to the flesh. Every act of selfish pleasure-seeking, untouched by nobler aims, weakens and worsens the soul's life. The selfish man gravitates downward into the sensual man; the sensual man downward into the bottomless pit.

This is the "minding of the flesh" which "is death" (Rom. viii. 5-8, 13). For it is "enmity against God" and defiance of His law. It overthrows the course of nature, the balance of our human constitution; it brings disease into the frame of our being. The flesh, unsubdued, and uncleansed by the virtue of the Spirit, breeds "corruption." Its predominance is the sure presage of death. The process of decay begins already, this side of the grave; and it is often made visible by appalling signs. The bloated face, the sensual leer, the restless, vicious eye, the sullen brow tell us what is going on within. The man's soul is rotting in his body. Lust and greed are eating out of him the capacity for good. And if he passes on to the eternal harvest as he is, if that fatal corruption is not arrested, what doom can possibly await such a man but that of which our merciful Saviour spoke so plainly that we might tremble and escape—"the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched!"

III. And finally, *God Himself is the Lord of the moral harvest*. The rule of retribution, the nexus that binds together our sowing and our reaping, is not something automatic and that comes about of itself; it is directed by the will of God, who "worketh all in all."

Even in the natural harvest we look upwards to Him. The order and regularity of nature, the fair procession of the seasons waiting on the silent and majestic march of the heavens, have in all ages directed thinking and grateful men to the Supreme Giver, to the creative Mind and sustaining Will that sits above the worlds. As Paul reminded the untutored Lycaonians, "He hath not left Himself without witness, in that He gave us rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." It is "God" that "gives the increase" of the husbandman's toil, of the merchant's forethought, of the artist's genius and skill. We do not sing our harvest songs, with our Pagan forefathers, to sun and rain and west wind, to mother Earth and the mystic powers of Nature.

In these poetic idolatries were yet blended higher thoughts and a sense of Divine beneficence. But "to us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through Him." In the harvest of the earth man is a worker together with God. The farmer does his part, fulfilling the conditions God has laid down in nature; "he putteth in the wheat in rows, and the barley in its appointed place; for his God doth instruct him aright, and doth teach him." He tills the ground, he sows the seed—and there he leaves it *to God*. "He sleeps and rises night and day; and the seed springs and grows up he knows not how." And the wisest man of science cannot tell him how. "God giveth it a body, as it hath pleased Him."

But *how*—that is His own secret, which He seems likely to keep. All life in its growth, as in its inception, is a mystery, hid with Christ in God. Every seed sown in field or garden is a deposit committed to the faithfulness of God; which He honours by raising it up again, thirty, sixty, or a hundred-fold, in the increase of the harvest.

In the moral world this Divine co-operation is the more immediate, as the field of action lies nearer, if one may so say, to the nature of God Himself. The earthly harvest may, and does often fail. Storms waste it; blights canker it; drought withers, or fire consumes it. Industry and skill, spent in years of patient labour, are doomed not unfrequently to see their reward snatched from them. The very abundance of other lands deprives our produce of its value.

The natural creation "was made subject to vanity." Its frustration and disappointment are overruled for higher ends. But in the spiritual sphere there are no casualties, no room for accident or failure. Here life comes directly into contact with the Living God, its fountain; and its laws partake of His absoluteness.

Each act of faith, of worship, of duty and integrity, is a compact between the soul and God. We "*commit our souls* in well-doing unto a faithful Creator" (1 Pet. iv. 19). By every such volition the heart is yielding itself to the direction of the Divine Spirit. It "sows unto the Spirit," whenever in thought or deed His prompting is obeyed and His will made the law of life. And as in the soil, by the Divine chemistry of nature, the tiny germ is nursed and fostered out of sight, till it lifts itself from the sod a lovely flower, a perfect fruit, so in the order of grace it will prove that from the smallest seeds of goodness in human hearts, from the feeblest beginnings of the life of faith, from the lowliest acts of love and service, God in due season will raise up a glorious harvest for which heaven itself will be the richer.

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## THE EPILOGUE.

### CHAPTER vi. 11-18.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### THE FALSE AND THE TRUE GLORYING.

#### GALATIANS vi. 11-14.

THE rendering of ver. 11 in the Authorised Version is clearly erroneous (*see how large a letter*). Wickliff, guided by the Latin Vulgate—*with what maner lettris*—escaped this error. It is a *plural* term the Apostle uses, which occasionally in Greek writers denotes an epistle (as in Acts xxviii. 21), but nowhere else in Paul. Moreover the noun is in the *dative* (instrumental) case, and cannot be made the object of the verb.

Paul draws attention at this point to his penmanship, to the size of the letters he is using and their autographic form. "See," he says,



"I write this in large characters, and under my own hand." But does this remark apply to the whole Epistle, or to its concluding paragraph from this verse onwards? To the latter only, as we think. The word "look" is a kind of *nota bene*. It marks something new, designed by its form and appearance in the manuscript to arrest the eye. It was Paul's practice to write through an amanuensis, adding with his own hand a few final words of greeting or blessing, by way of authentication.\* Here this usage is varied. The Apostle wishes to give these closing sentences the utmost possible emphasis and solemnity. He would print them on the very heart and soul of his readers. This intention explains the language of ver. 11; and it is borne out by the contents of the verses that follow. They are a postscript, or *Epilogue*, to the Epistle, rehearsing with incisive brevity the burden of all that it was in the Apostle's heart to say to these troubled and shaken Galatians.

The past tense of the verb (literally, *I have written*: ἔγραψα) is in accordance with Greek epistolary idiom. The writer associates himself with his readers. When the letter comes to them, Paul *has written* what they now peruse. On the assumption that the whole Epistle is autographic it is hard to see what object the large characters would serve, or why they should be referred to just at this point.

Ver. 11 is in fact a sensational heading. The last paragraph of the Epistle is penned in larger type and in the Apostle's characteristic hand, in order to fasten the attention of these impressionable Galatians upon his final deliverance. This device Paul employs but once. It is a kind of practice easily vulgarised and that loses its force by repetition, as in the case of "loud" printing and declamatory speech.

In this emphatic *finale* the interest of the Epistle, so powerfully sustained and carried through so many stages, is raised to a yet higher pitch. Its pregnant sentences give us—*first*, another and still severer denunciation of "the troublers" (vv. 12, 13); *secondly*, a renewed protestation of the Apostle's devotion to the cross of Christ (vv. 14, 15); *thirdly*, a repetition in animated style of the practical doctrine of Christianity, and a blessing pronounced upon those who are faithful to it (vv. 15, 16). A pathetic reference to the writer's personal sufferings, followed by the customary benediction, brings the letter to a close. The first two topics of the Epilogue stand in immediate contrast with each other.

I. *The glorying of the Apostle's adversaries.* "They would have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh" (ver. 12).

This is the climax of his reproach against them. It gives us the key to their character. The boast measures the man. The aim of the Legalists was to get so many Gentiles circumcised, to win proselytes through Christianity to Judaism. Every Christian brother persuaded to submit himself to this rite was another trophy for them. His circumcision, apart from any moral or spiritual considerations involved in the matter, was enough of itself to fill these proselytisers with joy. They counted up their "cases";

they rivalled each other in the competition for Jewish favour on this ground. To "glory in your flesh—to be able to point to your bodily condition as the proof of their influence and their devotion to the Law—this," Paul says, "is the object for which they ply you with so many flatteries and sophistries."

Their aim was intrinsically low and unworthy. They "want to make a fair show (to present a good face) in the flesh." *Flesh* in this place (ver. 12) recalls the contrast between *Flesh* and *Spirit* expounded in the last chapter. Paul does not mean that the Judaisers wish to "make a good appearance in outward respects, in human opinion:" this would be little more than tautology. The expression stamps the Circumcisionists as "carnal" men. They are "not in the Spirit," but "in the flesh;" and "after the flesh" they walk. It is on worldly principles that they seek to commend themselves, and to unspiritual men.

What the Apostle says of himself in Phil. iii. 3, 4, illustrates by contrast his estimate of the Judaisers of Galatia: "We are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." He explains "having confidence in the flesh" by enumerating his own advantages and distinctions as a Jew, the circumstances which commended him in the eyes of his fellow-countrymen—"which were gain to me," he says, "but I counted them loss for Christ" (ver. 7). In that realm of fleshly motive and estimate which Paul had abandoned, his opponents still remained. They had exchanged Christian fidelity for worldly favour. And their religion took the colour of their moral disposition. To *make a fair show*, an imposing, plausible appearance in ceremonial and legal observance, was the mark they set themselves. And they sought to draw the Church with them in this direction, and to impress upon it their own ritualistic type of piety.

This was a worldly, and in their case a cowardly policy. "They constrain you to be circumcised, only that for the cross of Christ they may not suffer persecution" (ver. 12). This they were determined by all means to avoid. Christ had sent His servants forth "as sheep in the midst of wolves." The man that would serve Him, He said, must "follow Him, taking up His cross."

But the Judaists thought they knew better than this. They had a plan by which they could be the friends of Jesus Christ, and yet keep on good terms with the world that crucified Him. They would make their faith in Jesus a means for winning over proselytes to Judaism. If they succeeded in this design, their apostasy might be condoned. The circumcised Gentiles would propitiate the anger of their Israelite kindred, and would incline them to look more favourably upon the new doctrine. These men, Paul says to the Galatians, are sacrificing you to their cowardice. They rob you of your liberties in Christ in order to make a shield for themselves against the enmity of their kinsmen. They pretend great zeal on your behalf; they are eager to introduce you into the blessings of the heirs of Abraham: the truth is, they are victims of a miserable fear of persecution.

The cross of Christ, as the Apostle has repeatedly declared (comp. chapters xii. and xxi.), carried with it in Jewish eyes a flagrant reproach;

\* See 2 Thess. iii. 17, 18; 1 Cor. xvi. 21-23. In ver. 22 of the latter passage we can trace a similar autographic message, on a smaller scale. Comp. also Phil. i. 19.



and its acceptance placed a gulf between the Christian and the orthodox Jew. The depth of that gulf became increasingly apparent the more widely the gospel spread, and the more radically its principles came to be applied. To Paul it was now sorrowfully evident that the Jewish nation had rejected Christianity. They would not hear the Apostles of Jesus any more than the Master. For the preaching of the cross they had only loathing and contempt. Judaism recognised in the Church of the Crucified its most dangerous enemy, and was opening the fire of persecution against it all along the line. In this state of affairs, for a party of men to compromise and make private terms for themselves with the enemies of Christ was treachery. They were surrendering, as this Epistle shows, all that was most vital to Christianity. They gave up the honour of the gospel, the rights of faith, the salvation of the world, rather than face the persecution in store for those "who will live godly in Christ Jesus."

Not that they cared so much for the law in itself. Their glorying was *insincere*, as well as selfish: "For neither do the circumcised themselves keep the law.—These men who profess such enthusiasm for the law of Moses and insist so zealously on your submission to it, dishonour it by their own behaviour." The Apostle is denouncing the same party throughout. Some interpreters make the first clause of ver. 13 a parenthesis, supposing that "the circumcised" (participle present: *those being circumcised*) are *Gentile perverts* now being gained over to Judaism, while the foregoing and following sentences relate to the Jewish teachers. But the context does not intimate, nor indeed allow such a change of subject. It is "the circumcised" of ver. 13a who in ver. 13b wish to see the Galatians circumcised, "in order to boast over their flesh,"—the same who, in ver. 12, "desire to make a fair show in the flesh" and to escape Jewish persecution. Reading this in the light of the previous chapters, there seems to us no manner of doubt as to the persons thus designated. They are the Circumcisionists, Jewish Christians who sought to persuade the Pauline Gentile Churches to adopt circumcision and to receive their own legalistic perversion of the gospel of Christ. The present tense of the Greek participle, used as it is here with the definite article,\* has the power of becoming a *substantive*, dropping its reference to time; for the act denoted passes into an abiding characteristic, so that the expression acquires the form of a title. "The circumcised" are *the men of the circumcision*, those known to the Galatians in this character.

The phrase is susceptible, however, of a wider application. When Paul writes thus, he is thinking of others besides the handful of troublers in Galatia. In Rom. ii. 17-29 he levels this identical charge of hypocritical law-breaking against the Jewish people at large: "Thou who gloriest in the law," he exclaims, "through thy transgression of the law dishonourest thou God?" This shocking inconsistency, notorious in contemporary Judaism, was to be observed in the conduct of the legalist zealots in Galatia. They broke themselves the very law which they tried

to force on others. Their pretended jealousy for the ordinances of Moses was itself their condemnation. It was not the glory of the law they were concerned about, but their own.

The policy of the Judaisers was dishonourable both in spirit and in aim. They were false to Christ in whom they professed to believe; and to the law which they pretended to keep. They were facing both ways, studying the safest, not the truest course, anxious in truth to be friends at once with the world and Christ. Their conduct has found many imitators, in men who "make godliness a way of gain," whose religious course is dictated by considerations of worldly self-interest. A little persecution, or social pressure, is enough to "turn them out of the way." They cast off their Church obligations as they change their clothes, to suit the fashion. Business patronage, professional advancement, a tempting family alliance, the *entrée* into some select and envied circle—such are the things for which creeds are bartered, for which men put their souls and the souls of their children knowingly in peril. *Will it pay?*—this is the question which comes in with a decisive weight in their estimate of matters of religious profession and the things pertaining to God. But "what shall it profit?" is the question of Christ.

Nor are they less culpable who bring these motives into play, and put this kind of pressure on the weak and dependent. There are forms of social and pecuniary influence, bribes and threats quietly applied and well understood, which are hardly to be distinguished morally from persecution.

Let wealthy and dominant Churches see to it that they be clear of these offences, that they make themselves the protectors, not the oppressors, of spiritual liberty. The adherents that a Church secures by its worldly prestige do not in truth belong to the "kingdom that is not of this world." Such successes are no triumphs of the cross. Christ repudiates them. The glorying that attends proselytism of this kind is, like that of Paul's Judaistic adversaries, a "glorying in the flesh."

II. "But as for me," cries the Apostle, "far be it to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (ver. 14). Paul knows but one ground of exultation, one object of pride and confidence—*his Saviour's cross*.

Before he had received his gospel and seen the cross in the light of revelation, like other Jews he regarded it with horror. Its existence covered the cause of Jesus with ignominy. It marked Him out as the object of Divine abhorrence. To the Judaistic Christian the cross was still an embarrassment. He was secretly ashamed of a crucified Messiah, anxious by some means to excuse the scandal and make amends for it in the face of Jewish public opinion. But now this disgraceful cross in the Apostle's eyes is the most glorious thing in the universe. Its message is the good news of God to all mankind. It is the centre of faith and religion, of all that man knows of God or can receive from Him. Let it be removed, and the entire structure of revelation falls to pieces, like an arch without its keystone. The shame of the cross was turned into honour and majesty. Its foolishness and weakness proved to be the wisdom and the power of God. Out of the gloom in which Calvary was shrouded there now shone forth the clearest light of holiness and love.

\* οἱ περιτεμνόμενοι ("Revised Text"). On this idiom, see Winer's "Grammar," p. 444; A. Buttmann's "N. T. Grammar," p. 296. In ch. i. 23, and in ii. 2 (τ. δοκοῦσι), we have had instances of this usage.



Paul gloried in the cross of Christ because it manifested to him *the character of God*. The Divine love and righteousness, the entire range of those moral excellences which in their sovereign perfection belong to the holiness of God, were there displayed with a vividness and splendour hitherto inconceivable. "God so loved the world," and yet so honoured the law of right, that "He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." How stupendous is this sacrifice, which baffles the mind and overwhelms the heart! Nowhere in the works of creation, nor in any other dispensation of justice or mercy touching human affairs, is there a spectacle that appeals to us with an effect to be compared with that of the Sufferer of Calvary.

Let me look, let me think again. Who is He that bleeds on that tree of shame? Why does the Holy One of God submit to these indignities? Why those cruel wounds, those heart-breaking cries that speak of a soul pierced by sorrows deeper than all that bodily anguish can inflict? Has the Almighty indeed forsaken Him? Has the Evil One sealed his triumph in the blood of the Son of God? Is it God's mercy to the world, or is it not rather Satan's hate and man's utter wickedness that stand here revealed? The issue shows with whom victory lay in the dread conflict fought out in the Redeemer's soul and flesh. "*God was in Christ*"—living, dying, rising. And what was He doing in Christ?—"reconciling the world unto Himself."

Now we know what the Maker of the worlds is like. "He that hath seen Me, said Jesus on Passion Eve, "hath seen the Father. From henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him." What the world knew before of the Divine character and intentions towards man was but "poor, weak rudiments." Now the believer has come to *Peniel*; like Jacob, he has "seen the face of God." He has touched the centre of things. He has found the secret of love.

Moreover, the Apostle gloried in the cross because it was *the salvation of men*. His love for men made him boast of it, no less than his zeal for God. The gospel, burning in his heart and on his lips, was "God's power unto salvation, both to Jew and Greek." He says this not by way of speculation or theological inference, but as the testimony of his constant experience. It was bringing men by thousands from darkness into light, raising them from the slough of hideous vices and guilty despair, taming the fiercest passions, breaking the strongest chains of evil, driving out of human hearts the demons of lust and hate. This message, wherever it went, was *saving* men, as nothing had done before, as nothing else has done since. What lover of his kind would not rejoice in this?

We are members of a weak and suffering race, groaning each in his own fashion under "the law of sin and death," crying out ever and anon with Paul, "O wretched man that I am!" If the misery of our bondage was acute its darkness extreme, how great is the joy with which we hail our Redeemer! It is the gladness of an immense relief, the joy of salvation. And our triumph is redoubled when we perceive that His grace brings us not deliverance for ourselves alone, but commissions us to impart it to our fellow-men. "Thanks be to God," cries the Apostle, "who always leadeth us in triumph, and maketh known the savour of His knowledge by us in every place" (2 Cor. ii. 14).

The essence of the gospel revealed to Paul, as we have observed more than once, lay in its conception of the office of the cross of Christ. Not the Incarnation—the basis of the manifestation of the Father in the Son; not the sinless life and superhuman teaching of Jesus, which have moulded the spiritual ideal of faith and supplied its contents; not the Resurrection and Ascension of the Redeemer, crowning the Divine edifice with the glory of life eternal; but *the sacrifice of the cross* is the focus of the Christian revelation. This gives to the gospel its *saving* virtue. Round this centre all other acts and offices of the Saviour revolve, and from it receive their healing grace. From the hour of the Fall of man the manifestations of the Divine grace to him ever looked forward to Calvary; and to Calvary the testimony of that grace has looked backward ever since. "By this sign" the Church has conquered; the innumerable benefits with which her teaching has enriched mankind must all be laid in tribute at the foot of the cross.

The atonement of Jesus Christ demands from us a faith like Paul's, a faith of *exultation*, a boundless enthusiasm of gratitude and confidence. If it is worth believing in at all, it is worth believing in heroically. Let us so boast of it, so exhibit in our lives its power, so spend ourselves in serving it, that we may justly claim from all men homage toward the Crucified. Let us lift up the cross of Christ till its glory shines world-wide, till, as He said, it "draws all men unto Him." If we triumph in the cross, we shall triumph by it. It will carry the Church to victory.

And the cross of Jesus Christ is the salvation of men, just because it is the revelation of God. It is "life eternal," said Jesus to the Father, "*to know Thee*." The gospel does not save by mere pathos, but by knowledge—by bringing about a right understanding between man and his Maker, a reconciliation. It brings God and man together in the light of truth. In this revelation we see *Him*, the Judge and the Father, the Lord of the conscience and the Lover of His children; and we see *ourselves*—what our sins mean, what they have done. God is face to face with the world. Holiness and sin meet in the shock of Calvary, and flash into light, each illuminated by contrast with the other. And the view of what God is in Christ—how He judges, how He pities us—once fairly seen, breaks the heart, kills the love of sin. "The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," sitting on that thorn-crowned brow, clothing that bleeding Form rent with the anguish of Mercy's conflict with Righteousness on our behalf—it is this which "shines in our hearts" as in Paul's, and cleanses the soul by its pity and its terror.

But this is no dramatic scene, it is Divine, eternal fact. "We have beheld and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. We *know* and have believed the love that God hath to us" (1 John iv. 14, 16).

Such is the relation to God which the cross has established for the Apostle. In what position does it place him toward *the world*? To it, he tells us, he has bidden farewell. Paul and the world are dead to each other. The cross stands between them. In ch. ii. 20 he had said, "*I am crucified with Christ*;" in ch. v. 24, that his "*flesh with its passions and lusts*" had undergone this fate; and now he writes, "Through



the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ *the world* is crucified to me, and I to the world."

Literally, *a world*—a whole world was crucified for Paul when his Lord died upon the cross. The world that slew Him put an end to itself, so far as he is concerned. He can never believe in it, never take pride in it, nor do homage to it any more. It is stripped of its glory, robbed of its power to charm or govern him. The death of shame that old "evil world" inflicted upon Jesus has, in Paul's eyes, reverted to itself; while for the Saviour it is changed into a life of heavenly glory and dominion. The Apostle's life is withdrawn from it, to be "hid with Christ in God."

This "crucifixion" is therefore mutual. The Apostle also "is crucified to the world." Saul the Pharisee was a reputable, religious man of the world, recognised by it, alive to it, taking his place in its affairs. But that "old man" has been "crucified with Christ." The present Paul is in the world's regard another person altogether—"the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things," no better than his crucified Master and worthy to share His punishment. He is dead—"crucified" to it. Faith in Jesus Christ placed a gulf, wide as that which parts the dead and living, between the Church of the Apostles and men around them. The cross parted two worlds wholly different. He who would go back into that other world, the world of godless self-pleasing and fleshly idolatry, must step over the cross of Christ to do it.

"To me," testifies Paul, "the world is crucified." And the Church of Christ has still to witness this confession. We read in it a prophecy. Evil must die. The world that crucified the Son of God has written its own doom. With its Satanic Prince it "has been judged" (John xii. 31; xvi. 11). Morally, it is dead already. The sentence has passed the Judge's lips. The weakest child of God may safely defy it, and scorn its boasting. Its visible force is still immense; its subjects multitudinous; its empire, to appearance, hardly shaken. It towers like Goliath confronting "the armies of the living God." But the foundation of its strength is gone. Decay saps its frame. Despair creeps over its heart. The consciousness of its impotence and misery grows upon it.

Worldliness has lost its old serenity irrecoverably. The cross incessantly disturbs it, and haunts its very dreams. Antichristian thought at the present time is one wide fever of discontent. It is sinking into the vortex of pessimism. Its mockery is louder and more brilliant than ever; but there is something strangely convulsive in it all; it is the laughter of despair, the dance of death.

Christ the Son of God *has* come down from the cross, as they challenged Him. But coming down, He has fastened there in His place the world that taunted Him. Struggle as it may, it cannot unloose itself from its condemnation, from the fact that it has killed its Prince of Life. The cross of Jesus Christ must save—or destroy.

The world must be reconciled to God, or it will perish. On the foundation laid of God in Zion men will either build or break themselves for ever. The world that hated Christ and the Father, the world that Paul cast from him as a dead thing, cannot endure. It "passeth away, and the lust thereof."

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### RITUAL NOTHING: CHARACTER EVERYTHING.

GALATIANS vi. 15, 16.

VERSE 14 comprehends the whole theology of the Epistle, and ver. 15 brings to a head its practical and ethical teaching. This apothegm is one of the landmarks of religious history. It ranks in importance with Christ's great saying: "God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him, must worship in spirit and truth" (John iv. 21-24). These sentences of Jesus and of Paul taken together mark the dividing line between the Old and the New Economy. They declare the nature of the absolute religion, from the Divine and human side respectively. God's pure spiritual being is affirmed by Jesus Christ to be henceforth the norm of religious worship. The exclusive sacredness of Jerusalem, or of Gerizim, had therefore passed away. On the other hand, and regarding religion from its psychological side, as matter of experience and attainment, it is set forth by our Apostle as an inward life, a spiritual condition, dependent on no outward form or performance whatsoever. Paul's principle is a consequence of that declared by his Master.

If "God is a Spirit," to be known and approached as such, ceremonial at once loses its predominance; it sinks into the accidental, the merely provisional and perishing element of religion. Faith is no longer bound to material conditions; it passes inward to its proper seat in the spirit of man. And the dictum that "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision nothing" (comp. chap. v. 6; 1 Cor. vii. 19), becomes a watchword of Christian theology.

This Pauline axiom is advanced to justify the confession of the Apostle made in ver. 14; it supports the protest of vv. 12-14 against the devotees of circumcision, who professed faith in Christ but were ashamed of His cross. "That Judaic rite in which you glory," he says, "is nothing. Ritual qualifications and disqualifications are abolished. Life in the Spirit, the new creation that begins with faith in Christ crucified—that is everything." The boasts of the Judaizers were therefore folly: they rested on "nothing." The Apostle's glorying alone was valid; the new world of "the kingdom of God," with its "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost," was there to justify it.

I. *For neither is circumcision anything.*—Judaism is abolished at a stroke! With it circumcision was *everything*. "The circumcision" and "the people of God" were in Israelitish phrase terms synonymous. "Uncircumcision" embraced all that was heathenish, outcast, and unclean.

The Mosaic polity made the status of its subjects, their relation to the Divine covenant, to depend on this initiatory rite. "Circumcised the eighth day," the child came under the rule and guardianship of the sacred Law. In virtue of this mark stamped upon his body, he was *ipso facto* a member of the congregation of the Lord, bound to all its duties, so far as his age permitted, and partner in all its privileges. The constitution of Mosaism—its ordinances of worship, its ethical discipline, its methods of administration, and the type of character which it formed in the Jewish nation—rested on this



fundamental sacrament, and took its complexion therefrom.

The Judaists necessary therefore made it their first object to enforce circumcision. If they secured this, they could carry everything; and the complete Judaizing of Gentile Christianity was only a question of time. This foundation laid, the entire system of legal obligation could be reared upon it (chap. v. 3). To resist the imposition of this yoke was for the Pauline Churches a matter of life and death. They could not afford to "yield by subjection—no, not for an hour." The Apostle stands forth as the champion of their freedom, and casts all Jewish pretensions to the winds when he says, "Neither is *circumcision* anything."

This absolute way of putting the matter must have provoked the orthodox Jew to the last degree. The privileges and ancestral glories of his birth, the truth of God in His covenants and revelations to the fathers, were to his mind wrapped up in this ordinance, and belonged of right to "the Circumcision." To say that circumcision is nothing seemed to him as good as saying that the Law and the Prophets were nothing, that Israel had no pre-eminence over the Gentiles, no right to claim "the God of Abraham" as her God.

Hence the bitterness with which the Apostle was persecuted by his fellow-countrymen, and the credence given, even by orthodox Jewish Christians, to the charge that he "taught to the Jews apostasy from Moses" (Acts xxi. 21). In truth Paul did nothing of the kind, as James of Jerusalem very well knew. But a sentence like this, torn from its context, and repeated amongst Jewish communities, naturally gave rise to such imputations.

In his subsequent Epistle to the Romans the Apostle is at pains to correct erroneous inferences drawn from this and similar sayings of his concerning the Law. He shows that circumcision, in its historical import, was of the highest value. "What is the advantage of the Jew? What the benefit of circumcision? Much every way," he acknowledges. "Chiefly in that to them were entrusted the oracles of God" (Rom. iii. 1, 2). And again: "Who are Israelites; whose is the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the lawgiving, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers,—and of whom is the Christ as concerning the flesh, who is over all, God blessed for ever" (Rom. ix. 4, 5). Eloquently has Paul vindicated himself from the reproach of indifference to the ancient faith. Never did he love his Jewish kindred more fervently, nor entertain a stronger confidence in their Divine calling than at the moment when in that Epistle he pronounced the reprobation that ensued on their rejecting the gospel of Christ. He repeats in the fullest terms the claims which Jesus Himself was careful to assert, in declaring the extinction of Judaism as a local and tribal religion, that "Salvation is of the Jews" (John iv. 21-24). In the Divine order of history it is still "to the Jew first." But natural relationship to the stock of Abraham has in itself no spiritual virtue; "circumcision of the flesh" is worthless, except as the symbol of a cleansed and consecrated heart. The possession of this outward token of God's covenant with Israel, and the hereditary blessings it conferred, brought with them a higher responsibility, involving heavier punishment in case of unfaith-

fulness (Rom. ii. 17-iii. 8). This teaching is pertinent to the case of children of Christian families, to those formally attached to the Church by their baptism in infancy and by attendance on her public rites. These things certainly have "much advantage every way." And yet in themselves, without a corresponding inner regeneration, without a true death unto sin and life unto righteousness, these also are nothing. The limiting phrase "in Christ Jesus" is no doubt a copyist's addition to the text, supplied from chap. v. 6; but the qualification is in the Apostle's mind, and is virtually given by the context. No ceremony is of the essence of Christianity. No outward rite by itself makes a Christian. We are "joined to the Lord" in "one Spirit." This is the vital tie.

*Nor is uncircumcision anything.* This is the counterbalancing assertion, and it makes still clearer the bearing of the former saying. Paul is not contending against Judaism in any anti-Judaic spirit. He is not for setting up Gentile in the place of Jewish customs in the Church; he excludes both impartially. Neither, he declares, have any place "in Christ Jesus," and amongst the things that accompany salvation. Paul has no desire to humiliate the Jewish section of the Church; but only to protect the Gentiles from its aggressions. He lays His hand on both parties and by this evenly balanced declaration restrains each of them from encroaching on the other. "Was any one called circumcised?" he writes to Corinth: "let him not renounce his circumcision. Hath any one been called in uncircumcision? Let him not be circumcised." The two states alike are "nothing" from the Christian standpoint. The essential thing is "keeping the commandments of God" (1 Cor. vii. 18, 19).

Christian Gentiles retained in some instances, doubtless, their former antipathy to Jewish practices. And while many of the Galatians were inclined to Legalism, others cherished an extreme repugnance to its usages. The pretensions of the Legalists were calculated to excite in the minds of enlightened Gentile believers a feeling of contempt, which led them to retort on Jewish pride with language of ridicule. Anti-Judaists would be found arguing that circumcision was a degradation, the brand of a servile condition; and that its possessor must not presume to rank with the free sons of God. In their opinion, *uncircumcision* was to be preferred and had "much advantage every way." Amongst Paul's immediate followers there may have been some who, like Marcion in the second century, would fain be more Pauline than the Apostle himself, and replied to Jewish intolerance with an anti-legal intolerance of their own. To this party it was needful to say, "Neither is uncircumcision anything."

The pagan in his turn has nothing for which to boast over the man of Israel. This is the caution which the Apostle urges on his Gentile readers so earnestly in Rom. xi. 13-24. He reminds them that they owe an immense debt of gratitude to the ancient people of God. Wild branches grafted into the stock of Abraham, they were "partaking of the root and fatness" of the old "olive-tree." If the "natural branches" had been "broken off through unbelief," much more might they. It became them "not to be high-minded but to fear." So Paul seeks to protect Israel after the flesh, in its rejection and sorrowful exile from the fold of Christ, against Gentile



insolence. Alas! that his protection has been so little availing. The Christian persecutions of the Jews are a dark blot on the Church's record.

The enemies of bigotry and narrowness too often imbibe the same spirit. When others treat us with contempt, we are apt to pay them back in their own coin. They unchurch us because we cannot pronounce their shibboleths; they refuse to see in our communion the signs of Christ's indwelling. It requires our best charity in that case to appreciate their excellences and the fruit of the Spirit manifest in them. "I am of Cephas," say they; and we answer with the challenge, "I of Paul." Sectarianism is denounced in a sectarian spirit. The enemies of form and ceremony make a religion of their Anti-ritualism. Church controversies are proverbially bitter; the love which "hopeth and believeth all things," under their influence suffers a sad eclipse. On both sides let us be on our guard. The spirit of partisanship is not confined to the assertors of Church prerogative. An obstinate and uncharitable pride has been known to spring up in the breasts of the defenders of liberty, in those who deem themselves the exponents of pure spiritual religion. "Thus I trample on the pride of Plato," said the Cynic, as he trod on the philosopher's sumptuous carpets; and Plato justly retorted, "You do it with greater pride."

The Apostle would fain lift his readers above the level of this legalist contention. He bids them dismiss their profitless debates respecting the import of circumcision, the observance of Jewish feasts and Sabbaths. These debates were a mischief in themselves, destroying the Church's peace and distracting men's minds from the spiritual aims of the Gospel; they were fatal to the dignity and elevation of the Christian life. When men allow themselves to be absorbed by questions of this kind, and become Circumcisionist or Uncircumcisionist partisans, eager Ritualists or Anti-ritualists, they lose the sense of proportion in matters of faith and the poise of a conscientious and charitable judgment. These controversies pre-eminently "minister questions" to no profit but to the subverting of the hearers, instead of furthering "the dispensation of God, which is in faith" (1 Tim. i. 4). They disturb the City of God with intestine strife, while the enemy thunders at the gates. Could we only let such disputes alone, and leave them to perish by inanition! So Paul would have the Galatians do; he tells them that the great Mosaic rite is no longer worth defending or attacking. The best thing is to forget it.

II. What then has the Apostle to put in the place of ritual, as the matter of cardinal importance and chief study in the Church of Christ? He presents to view a *new creation*.

It is something *new* that he desiderates. Mosaism was effete. The questions arising out of it were dying, or dead. The old method of revelation which dealt with Jew and Gentile as different religious species, and conserved Divine truth by a process of exclusion and prohibition, had served its purpose. "The middle wall of partition was broken down." The age of faith and freedom had come, the dispensation of grace and of the Spirit. The Legalists minimised. They practically ignored the significance of Calvary. Race-distinctions and caste-privileges were out of keeping with such a religion as Christianity. The

new creed set up a new order of life, which left behind it the discussions of rabbinism and the formularies of the legal schools as survivals of bygone centuries.

The novelty of the religion of the gospel was most conspicuous in *the new type of character* that it created. The faith of the cross claims to have produced not a new style of ritual, a new system of government, but new men. By this product it must be judged. *The Christian* is the "new creature" which it begets.

Whatever Christianity has accomplished in the outer world—the various forms of worship and social life in which it is embodied, the changed order of thought and of civilisation which it is building up—is the result of its influence over the hearts of individual men. Christ, above all other teachers, addressed Himself directly to the heart, whence proceed the issues of life. There His gospel establishes its seat. The Christian is the man with a "new heart." The prophets of the Old Testament looked forward to this as the essential blessing of religion, promised for the Messianic times (Heb. viii. 8-13). Through them the Holy Spirit uttered His protest against the mechanical legalism to which the religion of the temple and the priesthood was already tending. But this witness had fallen on deaf ears; and when Christ proclaimed, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing," when He said, "The things that defile a man come out of his heart," he preached revolutionary doctrine. It is the same principle that the Apostle vindicates. The religion of Christ has to do in the first place with the individual man, and in man with his heart.

What then, we further ask, is the character of this hidden man of the heart, "created anew in Christ Jesus"? Our Epistle has given us the answer. In him "faith working by love" takes the place of circumcision and uncircumcision—that is, of Jewish and Gentile ceremonies and moralities, powerless alike to save (v. 6). Love comes forward to guarantee the "fulfilling of the law," whose fulfilment legal sanctions failed to secure (v. 14). And the Spirit of Christ assumes His sovereignty in this work of new creation, calling into being His array of inward graces to supersede the works of the condemned flesh that no longer rules in the nature of God's redeemed sons (v. 16-24).

The Legalists, notwithstanding their idolatry of the law, did not *keep* it. So the Apostle has said, without fear of contradiction (ver. 13). But the men of the Spirit, actuated by a power above law, in point of fact do keep it, and "law's righteousness is fulfilled" in them (Rom. viii. 3, 4). This was a new thing in the earth. Never had the law of God been so fulfilled, in its essentials, as it was by the Church of the Crucified. Here were men who truly "loved God with all their soul and strength, and their neighbour as themselves." From Love the highest down to Temperance the humblest, all "the fruit of the Spirit" in its clustered perfection flourished in their lives. Jewish discipline and Pagan culture were both put to shame by this "new creation" of moral virtue. These graces were produced not in select instances of individuals favoured by nature, in souls disposed to goodness, or after generations of Christian discipline; but in multitudes of men of every grade of life—Jews and Greeks, slaves and freemen, wise and unwise—in those who had been steeped in infamous vices, but



were now "washed, sanctified, justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God."

Such regenerated men were the credentials of Paul's gospel. As he looked on his Corinthian converts, drawn out of the very sin of heathen corruption, he could say, "The seal of my apostleship are ye in the Lord." The like answer Christianity has still to give to its questioners. If it ever ceases to render this answer, its day is over; and all the strength of its historical and philosophical evidences will not avail it. The Gospel is "God's power unto salvation"—or it is nothing!

Such is Paul's *canon*, as he calls it in ver. 16—the rule which applies to the faith and practice of every Christian man, to the pretensions of all theological and ecclesiastical systems. The true Christianity, the true churchmanship, is that which turns bad men into good, which transforms the slaves of sin into the sons of God. A true faith is a *saving* faith. The "new creation" is the sign of the Creator's presence. It is God "who quickeneth the dead" (Rom. iv. 17).

When the Apostle exalts character at the expense of ceremonial, he does this in a spirit the very opposite of religious indifference. His maxim is far removed from that expressed in the famous couplet of Pope:

"For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight;  
His can't be wrong whose life is in the right."

The gospel of Christ is above all things a *mode of faith*. The "new creature" is a son of God, seeking to be like God. His conception of the Divine character and of his own relationship thereto governs his whole life. His "life is in the right," because his heart is right with God. All attempts to divorce morality from religion, to build up society on a secular and non-religious basis, are indeed foredoomed to failure. The experience of mankind is against them. As a nation's religion has been, so its morals. The ethical standard in its rise or fall, if at some interval of time, yet invariably, follows the advance or decline of spiritual faith. For practical purposes, and for society at large, religion supplies the mainspring of ethics. Creed is in the long run the determinant of character. The question with the Apostle is not in the least whether religion is vital to morals; but whether this or that formality is vital to religion.

One cannot help wondering how Paul would have applied his canon to the Church questions of our own day. Would he perchance have said, "Episcopacy is nothing, and Presbyterianism is nothing;—but keeping the commandments of God"? Or might he have interposed in another direction, to testify that "Church Establishments are nothing, and Disestablishment is nothing; charity is the one thing needful"? Nay, can we even be bold enough to imagine the Apostle declaring, "Neither Baptism availeth anything, nor the Lord's Supper availeth anything,—apart from the faith that works by love"? His rule at any rate conveys an admonition to us when we magnify questions of Church ordinance and push them to the front, at the cost of the weightier matters of our common faith. Are there not multitudes of Romanists on the one hand who have, as we believe, perverted sacraments, and Quakers on the other hand who have no sacra-

ments, but who have, notwithstanding, a penitent, humble, loving faith in Jesus Christ? And their faith saves them: who will doubt it? Although faith must ordinarily suffer, and does in our judgment manifestly suffer, when deprived of these appointed and most precious means of its expression and nourishment. But what authority have we to forbid to such believers a place in the Body of Christ, in the brotherhood of redeemed souls, and to refuse them the righthand of fellowship, "who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we"? "It is the Spirit that beareth witness:" who is he that gainsayeth? Grace is more than the means of grace.

"And as many as shall walk by this rule, peace be on them and mercy, and upon the Israel of God." Here is an Apostolic benediction for every loyal Church. The "walk" that the Apostle approves is the measured, even pace, the steady *march*\* of the redeemed host of Israel. On all who are thus minded, who are prepared to make spiritual perfection the goal of their endeavours for themselves and for the Church, Paul invokes God's peace and mercy.

Peace is followed by the *mercy* which guards and restores it. Mercy heals backslidings and multiplies pardons. She loves to bind up a broken heart, or a rent and distracted Church. Like the pillar of fire and cloud in the wilderness, this twofold blessing rests day and night upon the tents of Israel. Through all their pilgrimage it attends the children of Abraham, who follow in the steps of their father's faith.

With this tender supplication Paul brings his warnings and dissuasives to an end. For the betrayers of the cross he has stern indignation and alarms of judgment. Towards his children in the faith nothing but peace and mercy remains in his heart. As an evening calm shuts in a tempestuous day, so this blessing concludes the Epistle so full of strife and agitation. We catch in it once more the chime of the old benediction, which through all storm and peril ever rings in ears attuned to its note: *Peace shall be upon Israel* (Ps. cxxv. 5).

## CHAPTER XXX.

### THE BRAND OF JESUS.

GALATIANS vi. 17, 18.

THE Apostle's pen lingers over the last words of this Epistle. His historical self-defence, his theological argument, his practical admonitions, with the blended strain of expostulation and entreaty that runs through the whole—now rising into an awful severity, now sinking into mother-like tenderness—have reached their conclusion. The stream of deep and fervent thought pouring itself out in these pages has spent its force. This prince of the Apostles in word and doctrine has left the Church no more powerful or characteristic utterance of his mind. And Paul has marked the special urgency of his purpose by his closing message contained in the last six verses, an Epistle within the Epistle, penned in large, bold strokes from his own hand, in which his very soul transcribes itself before our eyes.

It only remains for him to append his signature. We should expect him to do this in some

\* Στοιχείουσιν: comp. ch. v. 25.



striking and special way. His first sentence (i. 1-10) revealed the profound excitement of spirit under which he is labouring; not otherwise does he conclude. Ver. 17 sharply contrasts with the words of peace that hushed our thoughts at the close of the last paragraph. Perhaps the peace he wishes these troubled Churches reminds him of his own troubles. Or is it that in breathing his devout wishes for "the Israel of God," he cannot but think of those who were "of Israel," but no sons of peace, in whose hearts were hatred and mischief toward himself? Some such thought stirs anew the grief with which he has been shaken; and a pathetic cry breaks from him like the sigh of the departing tempest.

Yet the words have the sound of triumph more than of sorrow. Paul stands a conscious victor, though wounded and with scars upon him that he will carry to his grave. Whether this letter will serve its immediate purpose, whether the defection in Galatia will be stayed by it, or not, the cause of the cross is sure of its triumph; his contention against its enemies has not been in vain. The force of inspiration that uplifted him in writing the Epistle, the sense of insight and authority that pervades it, are themselves an earnest of victory. The vindication of his authority in Corinth, which, as we read the order of events, had very recently occurred, gave token that his hold on the obedience of Gentile Churches was not likely to be destroyed, and that in the conflict with legalism the gospel of liberty was certain to prevail. His courage rises with the danger. He writes as though he could already say, "I have fought the good fight. Thanks be to God, which always leadeth us in triumph" (2 Tim. iv. 7; 2 Cor. ii. 14).

The warning of ver. 17 has the ring of *Apostolic dignity*. "From henceforth let no man give me trouble!" Paul speaks of himself as a sacred person. God's mark is upon him. Let men beware how they meddle with him. "He that toucheth you," the Lord said to His people after the sorrows of the Exile, "toucheth the apple of Mine eye" (Zech. ii. 8). The Apostle seems to have had a similar feeling respecting himself. He announces that whosoever from this time lays an injurious hand upon him does so at his peril. *Henceforth*—for the struggle with Legalism was the crisis of Paul's ministry. It called forth all his powers, natural and supernatural, into exercise. It led him to his largest thoughts respecting God and man, sin and salvation; and brought him his heaviest sorrows.

The conclusion of this letter signalises the culmination of the Judaistic controversy, and the full establishment of Paul's influence and doctrinal authority. The attempt of Judaism to strangle the infant Church is foiled. In return it has received at Paul's hands its death-blow. The position won in this Epistle will never be lost; the doctrine of the cross, as the Apostle taught it, cannot be overthrown. Looking back from this point to "prove his own work," he can in all humility claim this "glorying in regard to himself" (ver. 4). He stands attested in the light of God's approval as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. He has done the cause of truth an imperishable service. He takes his place henceforth in the front rank amongst the spiritual leaders of mankind. Who now will bring reproach against him, or do dishonour to the cross which he bears? Against that man God's displeasure will go forth.

Some such thoughts were surely present to the Apostle's mind in writing these final words. They cannot but occur to us in reading them. Well done, we say, thou faithful servant of the Lord! Ill must it be for him who henceforth shall trouble thee.

"Troubles" indeed, and to spare, Paul had encountered. He has just passed through the darkest experience of his life. The language of the Second Epistle to Corinth is a striking commentary upon this verse. "We are pressed on every side," he writes; "perplexed, pursued, smitten down" (iv. 8, 9). His troubles came not only from his exhausting labours and hazardous journeys; he was everywhere pursued by the fierce and deadly hatred of his fellow-countrymen. Even within the Church there were men who made it their business to harass him and destroy his work. No place was safe for him—not even the bosom of the Church. On land or water, in the throngs of the city or the solitudes of the desert, his life was in hourly jeopardy (1 Cor. xv. 30; 2 Cor. xi. 26).

Beside all this, "the care of the Churches" weighed on his mind heavily. There was "no rest" either for his flesh or spirit (2 Cor. ii. 13; vii. 5). Recently Corinth, then Galatia, was in a ferment of agitation. His doctrine was attacked, his authority undermined by the Judaic emissaries, now in this quarter, now in that. The tumult at Ephesus, so graphically described by Luke, happening at the same time as the broils in the Corinthian Church and working on a frame already overstrung, had thrown him into a prostration of body and mind so great that he says, "We despaired even of life. We had the answer of death in ourselves" (2 Cor. i. 8, 9). The expectation that he would die before the Lord's return had now, for the first time, it appears, definitely forced itself on the Apostle, and cast over him a new shadow, causing deep ponderings and searchings of heart (2 Cor. v. 1-10). The culmination of the legalistic conflict was attended with an inner crisis that left its ineffaceable impression on the Apostle's soul.

But he has risen from his sick bed. He has been "comforted by the coming of Titus" with better news from Corinth (2 Cor. vii. 6-16). He has written these two letters—the Second to the Corinthians, and this to the Galatians. And he feels that the worst is past. "He who delivered him out of so great a death, will yet deliver" (2 Cor. i. 10). So confident is he in the authority which Christ gave and enabled him to exercise in utter weakness, so signally is he now stamped as God's Apostle by his sufferings and achievements, that he can dare any one from this time forth to oppose him. The anathema of this Epistle might well make his opponents tremble. Its remorseless logic left their sophistries no place of refuge. Its passionate entreaties broke down suspicion and sullenness. Let the Circumcisionists beware how they slander him. Let fickle Galatians cease to trouble him with their quarrels and caprices. So well assured is he for his part of the rectitude of his course and of the Divine approval and protection, that he feels bound to warn them that it will be the worse for those who at such a time lay upon him fresh and needless burdens.

One catches in this sentence too an *undertone of entreaty*, a confession of weariness. Paul is tired of strife. "Woe is me," he might say, "that I sojourn in Meshech, that I dwell among



the tents of Kedar! My soul hath long had her dwelling with him that hateth peace." "Enmities, ragings, factions, divisions"—with what a painful emphasis he dwells in the last chapter on these many forms of discord. He has known them all. For months he has been battling with the hydra-headed brood. He longs for an interval of rest. He seems to say, "I pray you let me be at peace. Do not vex me any more with your quarrels. I have suffered enough." The present tense of the Greek imperative verb (*παρεχέτω*) brings it to bear on the course of things then going on: as much as to say, "Let these weapons be dropped, these wars and fightings cease." For his own sake the Apostle begs the Galatians to desist from the follies that caused him so much trouble, and to suffer him to share with them God's benediction of peace.

But what an argument is this with which Paul enforces his plea,—“for I bear the brand of Jesus in my body!”

“The *stigmata* of Jesus”—what does he mean? It is “in my body”—some marks branded or punctured on the Apostle’s person, distinguishing him from other men, conspicuous and humiliating, inflicted on him as Christ’s servant, and which so much resembled the inflictions laid on the Redeemer’s body that they are called “the marks of Jesus.” No one can say precisely what these brands consisted in. But we know enough of the previous sufferings of the Apostle to be satisfied that he carried on his person many painful marks of violence and injury. His perils endured by land and sea, his imprisonments, his “labour and travail, hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness,” his three shipwrecks, the “night and day spent in the deep,” were sufficient to break down the strength of the stoutest frame; they had given him the look of a worn and haggard man. Add to these the stoning at Lystra, when he was dragged out for dead. “Thrice” also had he been beaten with the Roman rods; “five times” with the thirty-nine stripes of the Jewish scourge (2 Cor. xi. 23-27).

Is it to these last afflictions, cruel and shameful as they were in the extreme, that the Apostle specially refers as constituting “the brand of Jesus”? For Jesus was *scourged*. The allusion of 1 Peter ii. 24—“by whose *stripes* (literally, *bruise* or *wear*) ye were healed” shows how vividly this circumstance was remembered, and how strongly it affected Christian minds. With this indignity upon Him—His body lashed with the torturing whip, scored with livid bruises—our Blessed Lord was exposed on the cross. So He was branded as a malefactor, even before His crucifixion. And the same brand Paul had received, not once, but many times, for his Master’s sake. As the strokes of the scourge fell on the Apostle’s shuddering flesh, he had been consoled by thinking how near he was brought to his Saviour’s passion: “The servant,” He had said, “shall be as his Lord.” Possibly some recent infliction of the kind, more savage than the rest, had helped to bring on the malady which proved so nearly fatal to him. In some way he had been marked with fresh and manifest tokens of bodily suffering in the cause of Christ. About this time he writes of himself as “always bearing about in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus” (2 Cor. iv. 10); for the corpse-like state of the Apostle, with the signs of maltreatment visible in his frame, pathetically imaged the suf-

fering Redeemer whom he preached. Could the Galatians have seen him as he wrote, in physical distress, labouring under the burden of renewed and aggravated troubles, their hearts must have been touched with pity. It would have grieved them to think that they had increased his afflictions, and were “persecuting him whom the Lord had smitten.”

His scars were badges of dishonour to worldly eyes. But to Paul himself these tokens were very precious. “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for you,” he writes from his Roman prison at a later time: “and am filling up what is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh” (Col. i. 24). The Lord had not suffered everything Himself. He honoured His servants by leaving behind a measure of His afflictions for each to endure in the Church’s behalf. The Apostle was companion of his Master’s disgrace. In him the words of Jesus were signally fulfilled: “They have hated Me; they will also hate you.” He was following, closely as he might, in the way that led to Calvary. All men may know that Paul is Christ’s servant; for he wears His livery, the world’s contempt. Of Jesus they said, “Away with Him, crucify Him;” and of Paul, “Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live” (Acts xxii. 22). “Enough for the disciple to be as his Master:” what could he wish more?

His condition inspired reverence in all who loved and honoured Jesus Christ. Paul’s Christian brethren were moved by feelings of the tenderest respect at the sight of his wasted and crippled form. “His bodily presence is weak (2 Cor. x. 10): he looks like a corpse!” said his despisers. But under that physical feebleness there lay an immense fund of moral vigour. How should he not be weak, after so many years of wearying toil and relentless persecution and torturing pain? Out of this very weakness came a new and unmatched strength; he “glories in his infirmities,” for there rests upon him the strength of Christ (2 Cor. xii. 9).

Under the expression “*stigmata* of Jesus” there is couched a reference to the practice of marking criminals and runaway slaves with a brand burnt into the flesh, which is perpetuated in our English use of the Greek words *stigma* and *stigmatise*. A man so marked was called *stigmatias*, i. e., a branded scoundrel; and such the Apostle felt himself to be in the eyes of men of the world. Captain Lysias of Jerusalem took him for an Egyptian leader of banditti. Honourable men, when they knew him better, learned to respect him; but such was the reputation that his battered appearance, and the report of his enemies, at first sight gained for him.

The term *stigmata* had also another and different signification. It applied to a well-known custom of religious devotees to *puncture*, or tattoo, upon themselves the name of their God, or other sign expressive of their devotion (Isaiah xlv. 5; Rev. iii. 12). This signification may be very naturally combined with the former in the employment of the figure. Paul’s *stigmata*, resembling those of Jesus and being of the same order, were signs at once of reproach and of consecration. The prints of the world’s insolence were witnesses of his devotion to Christ. He loves to call himself “the slave of Christ Jesus.” The scourge has written on his back his Master’s name. Those dumb wounds proclaim him the bondman of the Crucified. At the lowest



point of personal and official humiliation, when affronts were heaped upon him, he felt that he was raised in the might of the Spirit to the loftiest dignity, even as "Christ was crucified through weakness, yet liveth through the power of God" (2 Cor. xiii. 4).

The words *I bear*—not united, as in our own idiom, but standing the pronoun at the head and the verb at the foot of the sentence—have each of them a special emphasis. *I*—in contrast with his opponents, man-pleasers, shunning Christ's reproach; and *bear* he says exultantly—"this is my burden, these are the marks I carry," like the standard-bearer of an army who proudly wears his scars (Chrysostom). In the profound and sacred joy which the Apostle's tribulations brought him, we cannot but feel even at this distance that we possess a share. They belong to that richest treasure of the past, the sum of

"Sorrow which is not sorrow, but delight  
To hear of, for the glory that redounds  
Therefrom to human kind and what we are."

The *stigmatisation* of Paul, his puncturing with the wounds of Jesus, has been revived in later times in a manner far remote from anything that he imagined or would have desired. *Francis of Assisi* in the year 1224 A. D. received in a trance the wound-prints of the Saviour on his body; and from that time to his death, it is reported, the saint had the physical appearance of one who had suffered crucifixion. Other instances, to the number of eighty, have been recorded in the Roman Catholic Church of the reproduction, in more or less complete form, of the five wounds of Jesus and the agonies of the cross; chiefly in the case of nuns. The last was that of Louise Lateau, who died in Belgium in the year 1883. That such phenomena have occurred, there is no sufficient reason to doubt. It is difficult to assign any limits to the power of the human mind over the body in the way of sympathetic imitation. Since St. Francis' day many Romanist divines have read the Apostle's language in this sense; but the interpretation has followed rather than given rise to this fulfilment. In whatever light these manifestations may be regarded, they are a striking witness to the power of the cross over human nature. Protracted meditation on the sufferings of our Lord, aided by a lively imagination and a susceptible physique, has actually produced a rehearsal of the bodily pangs and the wound-marks of Calvary.

This mode of knowing Christ's sufferings "after the flesh," morbid and monstrous as we deem it to be, is the result of an aspiration which, however misdirected by Catholic asceticism, is yet the highest that belongs to the Christian life. Surely we also desire, with Paul, to be "made conformable to the death of Christ." On our hearts His wounds must be impressed. Along the pathway of our life His cross has to be borne. To all His disciples, with the sons of Zebedee, He says, "Ye shall indeed drink of My cup; and with the baptism that I am baptised withal shall ye be baptised." But "it is the Spirit that quickeneth," said Jesus; "the flesh profiteth nothing." The pains endured by the body for His sake are only of value when, as in Paul's case, they are the result and the witness of an inward communion of the Spirit, a union of the will and the intelligence with Christ.

The cup that He would have us drink with Him is one of sorrow for the sins of men. His

baptism is that of pity for the misery of our fellows, of yearning over souls that perish. It will not come upon us without costing many a pang. If we receive it there will be ease to surrender, gain and credit to renounce, self to be constantly sacrificed. We need not go out of our way to find our cross; we have only not to be blind to it, not to evade it when Christ sets it before us. It may be part of the cross that it comes in a common, unheroic form; the service required is obscure; it consists of a multitude of little, vexing, drudging sacrifices in place of the grand and impressive sacrifice, which we should be proud to make. To be martyred by inches, out of sight—this to many is the cruellest martyrdom of all. But it may be Christ's way, the fittest, the only perfect way for us, of putting His brand upon us and conforming us to His death.

Yes, conformity of spirit to the cross is *the mark of Jesus*. "If we suffer with Him"—so the Apostolic Churches used to sing—"we shall also be glorified together." In our recoil from the artificial penances and mortifications of former ages, we are disposed in these days to banish the idea of mortification altogether from our Christian life. Do we not study our personal comfort in an un-Christlike fashion? Are there not many in these days, bearing the name of Christ, who without shame and without reproof lay out their plans for winning the utmost of selfish prosperity, and put Christian objects in the second place? How vain for them to cry "Lord! Lord!" to the Christ who "pleased not Himself!" They profess at the Lord's Table to "show His death;" but to show that death in their lives, to "know" with Paul "the fellowship of His sufferings," is the last thing that enters into their minds. How the scars of the brave Apostle put to shame the self-indulgence, the heartless luxury, the easy friendship with the world, of fashionable Christians! "Be ye followers of me," he cries, "as I also of Christ." He who shuns that path cannot, Jesus said, be My disciple.

So the blessed Apostle has put his mark to this Epistle. To the Colossians from his prison he writes, "Remember my bonds." And to the Galatians, "Look on my wounds." These are his credentials; these are the armorial bearings of the Apostle Paul. He places the seal of Jesus, the sign-manual of *the wounded hand* upon the letter written in His name.

### THE BENEDICTION.

ONE benediction the Apostle has already uttered in ver. 16. But that was a general wish, embracing all who should walk according to the spiritual rule of Christ's kingdom. On his readers specifically he still has his blessing to pronounce. He does it in language differing in this instance very little from that he is accustomed to employ.

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" is the distinctive blessing of the New Covenant. It is to the Christian the supreme good of life, including or carrying with it every other spiritual gift. *Grace* is Christ's property. It descended with the Incarnate Saviour into the world, coming down from God out of heaven. His life displayed it; His death bestowed it on mankind. Raised to His heavenly throne, He has become on the



Father's behalf the dispenser of its fulness to all who will receive it. There exalted, thence bestowing on men "the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness," He is known and worshipped as *our Lord Jesus Christ*.

What this grace of God in Christ designs, what it accomplishes in believing hearts, what are the things that contradict it and make it void, this Epistle has largely taught us. Of its pure, life-giving stream the Galatians already had richly tasted. From "Christ's grace" they were now tempted to "remove" (i. 6). But the Apostle hopes and prays that it may abide with them.

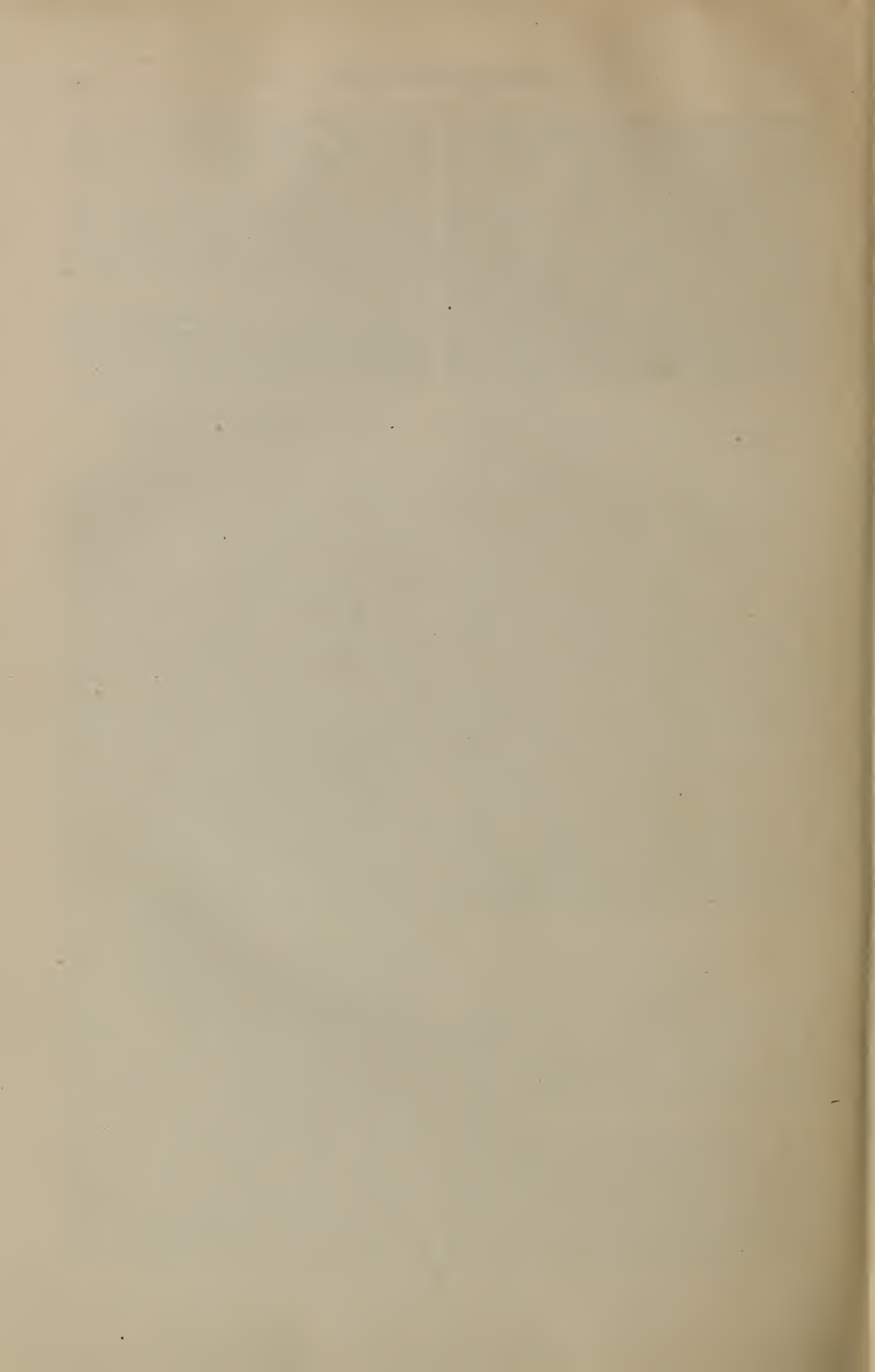
"With your spirit," he says; for this is the place of its visitation, the throne of its power. The spirit of man, breathed upon by the Holy Spirit of God, receives Christ's grace and be-

comes the subject and the witness of its regenerating virtue. This benediction contains therefore in brief all that is set forth in the familiar threefold formula—"the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost."

After all his fears for his wayward flock, all his chidings and reproofs, forgiveness and confidence are the last thoughts in Paul's heart: "Brethren" is the last word that drops from the Apostle's pen,—followed only by the confirmation of his devout *Amen*.

To his readers also the writer of this book takes leave to address the Apostle Paul's fraternal benediction: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.



























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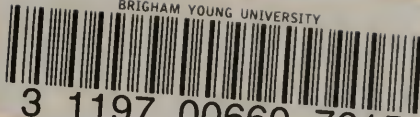
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