

THE
TEACHING
OF
JESUS

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TEACHING OF JESUS

BY THE

REV. GEORGE JACKSON, B.A.

AUTHOR OF "A YOUNG MAN'S RELIGION," ETC.

*"Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of
Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same
hath both the Father and the Son."*—2 JOHN IX (R. V.).

NEW YORK

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TO
MY CHILDREN
DORA, KENNETH, BASIL, ARNOLD
MY WISEST TEACHERS
IN THE THINGS OF GOD

PREFACE

THE following chapters are the outcome of an attempt to set before a large Sunday evening congregation—composed for the most part of working men and women—the teaching of our Lord on certain great selected themes. The reader will know, therefore, what to look for in these pages. If he be a trained Biblical scholar he need go no further, for he will find nothing here with which he is not already thoroughly familiar. On the other hand, the book will not be wholly without value even to some of my brother-ministers if it serve to convince them that a man may preach freely on the greatest themes of the gospel, and yet be sure that the common people will hear him gladly, if only he will state his message at once seriously and simply, and with the glow that comes of personal conviction. Indeed, one may well doubt if there is any other kind of preaching that they really care for.

My indebtedness to other workers in the same field is manifold. As far as possible detailed acknowledgment is made in the footnotes. Wendt's *Teaching of Jesus* and Bey-schlag's *New Testament Theology* have been always at my elbow, though not nearly in such

continual use as Stevens' *Theology of the New Testament*, a work of which it is impossible to speak too highly. Bruce's *Kingdom of God*, Stalker's *Christology of Jesus*, Harnack's *What is Christianity?* Horton's *Teaching of Jesus*, Watson's *Mind of the Master*, Selby's *Ministry of the Lord Jesus*, and Robertson's *Our Lord's Teaching* (a truly marvellous sixpenny worth), have all been laid under contribution, not the less freely because I have been compelled to dissent from some of their conclusions. Like many another busy minister, I am a daily debtor to Dr. Hastings and his great *Dictionary of the Bible*. And, finally, I gladly avail myself of this opportunity of expressing once more my unceasing obligations to the Rev. Professor James Denney, of Glasgow. Now that Dr. Dale has gone from us, there is no one to whom we may more confidently look for a reasonable evangelical theology which can be both verified and preached.

It only remains to add that in these pages critical questions are for the most part ignored, not because the pressure of the problems which they create is unfelt, but because as yet they have no place among the certainties which are the sole business of the preacher when he passes from his study to his pulpit.

GEORGE JACKSON.

EDINBURGH, 1903.

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INTRODUCTORY

I

B

“O LORD and Master of us all!
Whate'er our name or sign,
We own Thy sway, we hear Thy call,
We test our lives by Thine.

We faintly hear, we dimly see,
In differing phrase we pray;
But, dim or clear, we own in Thee
The Light, the Truth, the Way.”

WHITTIER.

I

INTRODUCTORY

"A prophet mighty in word before God and all the people."—
LUKE xxiv. 19.

"A teacher come from God."—JOHN iii. 2.

IN speaking of the teaching of Jesus it is scarcely possible at the present day to avoid at least a reference to two other closely-related topics, viz. the relation of Christ's teaching to the rest of the New Testament, and the trustworthiness of the Gospels in which that teaching is recorded. Adequate discussion of either of these questions here and now is not possible; it must suffice to indicate very briefly the direction in which, as it appears to the writer, the truth may be found.

First, then, as to the relation of the teaching of Jesus to the rest of the New Testament, and especially to the Epistles of St. Paul. There can be no doubt, largely, I suppose, through the influence of the Reformers, that the words of Jesus have not always received the attention that has been given to the writings of Paul. Nor is

this apparent misplacing of the accent the wholly unreasonable thing which at first sight it may seem. After all, the most important thing in the New Testament—that which saves—is not anything that Jesus said, but what He did; not His teaching, but His death. This, the Gospels themselves being witness, is the culmination and crown of Revelation; and it is this which, in the Epistles, and pre-eminently the Epistles of Paul, fills so large a place. Moreover, it ought plainly to be said that the Church has never been guilty of ignoring the words of her Lord in the wholesale fashion suggested by some popular religious writers of our day. Really, the Gospels are not a discovery of yesterday, nor even of the day before yesterday. They have been in the hands of the Church from the beginning, and, though she has not always valued them according to their true and priceless worth, she has never failed to number them with the choicest jewels in the casket of Holy Scripture. Nevertheless, it may be freely granted that the teaching of Jesus has not always received its due at the Church's hands. "Theology," one orthodox and Evangelical divine justly complains, "has done no sort of justice to the Ethics of Jesus."¹ But in our endeavour to rectify one error on the one side, let us see to it that we do not stumble into another and worse on the other side. The doctrines of Paul are not so much theological baggage, of which the

¹ J. Stalker, *The Christology of Jesus*, p. 23, footnote.

Church would do well straightway to disencumber itself. After all that the young science of Biblical Theology has done to reveal the manifold variety of New Testament doctrine, the book still remains a unity; and the attempt to play off one part of it against another—the Gospels against the Epistles, or the Epistles against the Gospels—is to be sternly resented and resisted. To St. Paul himself any such rivalry would have been impossible, and, indeed, unthinkable. There was no claim which he made with more passionate vehemence than that the message which he delivered was not his, but Christ's. "As touching the gospel which was preached by me," he says, "neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ." The Spirit who spoke through him and his brother apostles was not an alien spirit, but the Spirit of Christ, given according to the promise of Christ, to make known the things of Christ; so that there is a very true sense in which their words may be called "the final testimony of Jesus to Himself." "We have the mind of Christ," Paul said, and both in the Epistles and the Gospels we may seek and find the teaching of Jesus.¹

¹ "The sources for our knowledge of the actual teaching of Jesus do not lie merely in the Gospel accounts, but also in the literature of the apostolic age, especially in the Epistles of Paul. . . . Even had no direct accounts about Jesus been handed down to us, we should still possess, in the apostolic literature, a perfectly valid testimony to the historical existence and epoch-making significance of Jesus as a teacher."—H. H. Wendt, *Teaching of Jesus*, vol. i, p. 28.

It is, however, with the teaching of Jesus as it is recorded in the Gospels that, in these chapters, we are mainly concerned. We come, therefore to our second question: Can we trust the Four Gospels? And this question must be answered in even fewer words than were given to the last. As to the external evidence, let us hear the judgment of the great German scholar, Harnack. Harnack is a critic who is ready to give to the winds with both hands many things which are dear to us as life itself; yet this is how he writes in one of his most recent works: "Sixty years ago David Friedrich Strauss thought that he had almost entirely destroyed the historical credibility, not only of the fourth, but also of the first three Gospels as well. The historical criticism of two generations has succeeded in restoring that credibility in its main outlines."¹ When, from the external, we turn to the internal evidence, we are on incontestable ground. The words of Jesus need no credentials, they carry their own credentials; they authenticate themselves. Christian men and women reading, *e.g.*, the fourteenth of St. John's Gospel say within themselves that if these are not the words of Jesus, a greater than Jesus is here; and they are right. The oft-quoted challenge of John Stuart Mill is as unanswerable to-day as ever it was. "It is of no use to say," he declares, "that Christ, as exhibited in the Gospels, is not historical, and that we know not

¹ *What is Christianity?* p. 20.

how much of what is admirable has been super-added by the traditions of His followers. . . . Who among His disciples, or among their proselytes, was capable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Jesus, or of imagining the life and character revealed in the Gospels?"¹.

I

Assuming, therefore, without further discussion, the essential trustworthiness of the Gospel records, let us pass on to consider in this introductory chapter some general characteristics of Christ's teaching as a whole.

Mark at the outset Christ's own estimate of His words: "The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life;" "If a man keep My word he shall never see death;" "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away;" "Every one which heareth these words of Mine and doeth them"—with him Christ said it should be well; but "every one that heareth these words of Mine and doeth them not"—upon him ruin should come to the uttermost. Sayings like these are very remarkable, for this is not the way in which human teachers are wont to speak of their own words; or, if they do so speak, this wise world of ours knows better than to take them at their own valuation. But the astonishing fact in the case of Jesus is that the world has

¹ *Three Essays on Religion*, p. 253.

admitted His claim. Men who refuse utterly to share our faith concerning Him and the significance of His life and death, readily give to Him a place apart among the great teachers of mankind. I have already quoted the judgment of John Stuart Mill. "Jesus," says Matthew Arnold, "as He appears in the Gospels . . . is in the jargon of modern philosophy an absolute"¹—we cannot get beyond Him. Such, likewise, is the verdict of Goethe: "Let intellectual and spiritual culture progress, and the human mind expand, as much as it will; beyond the grandeur and the moral elevation of Christianity, as it sparkles and shines in the Gospels, the human mind will not advance."² It would be easy to multiply testimonies, but it is needless, since practically all whose judgment is of any account are of one mind.

But now if, with these facts in our minds, and knowing nothing else about the teaching of Jesus, we could suppose ourselves turning for the first time to the simple record of the Gospels, probably our first feeling would be one of surprise that Jesus the Teacher had won for Himself such an ascendancy over the minds and hearts of men. For consider some of the facts which the Gospels reveal to us. To begin with, this Teacher, unlike most other teachers who have influenced mankind, contented Himself from first to last with merely oral instruction: He left no book;

¹ *Literature and Dogma*, p. 10.

² See Harnack's *What is Christianity?* p. 4.

He never wrote, save in the dust of the ground. Not only so, but the words of Jesus that have been preserved by the evangelists are, comparatively speaking, extremely few. Put them all together, they are less by one-half or two-thirds than the words which it will be necessary for me to use in order to set forth His teaching in this little book. And further, the little we have is, for the most part, so casual, so unpremeditated, so unsystematic in its character. Once and again, it is true, we get from the Evangelists something approaching what may be called a set discourse; but more often what they give us is reports of conversations—conversations with His disciples, with chance acquaintances, or with His enemies. Sometimes we find Him speaking in the synagogues; but He is quite as ready to teach reclining at the dinner-table; and, best of all, He loved to speak in the open air, by the wayside, or the lake shore. Once, as He stood by the lake of Gennesaret, the multitude was so great that it pressed upon Him. Near at hand were two little fishing-boats drawn up upon the beach, for the fishermen had gone out of them, and were washing their nets. “And He entered into one of the boats, which was Simon’s, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes out of the boat.” It is all so different from what we should have expected; there is about it such an air of artless, homely

simplicity. Finally, we cannot forget that Jesus was a Jew speaking to Jews. Son of God though He was, He was the son of a Jewish mother, trained in a Jewish home, in all things the child of His own time and race. Whatever else His message may have been, it was, first of all, a message to the men of His own day; therefore, of necessity, it was their language He used, it was to their needs He ministered, it was their sins He condemned. The mould, the tone, the colouring of His teaching were all largely determined by the life of His country and His time.

Yet this is He concerning whom all ages cry aloud, "Never man spake like this man." This is He before whom the greatest and the wisest bow down, saying, "Lord" and "Master." How are we to explain it? Much of the explanation lies outside of the scope of our present subject; but if we will turn back to the Gospels again we may find at least a partial answer to our question.

II

(1) I said just now that Christ's teaching was addressed in the first place to the Jews of His own day. Yet the note of universality is as unmistakable as are the local tone and colouring. Christ may speak as the moment suggests, but His words are never for the moment only, but for all time. He refused almost sternly to go unto any save unto the lost sheep of the

house of Israel; yet the Gospels make it abundantly plain that in His own thoughts His mission was never limited to the tiny stage within which, during His earthly years, He confined Himself. "I am the light of the world," He said; and in His last great commission to His disciples He bade them carry that light unto the uttermost parts of the earth. In the great High-Priestly prayer He intercedes not only for His disciples, but for those who through their word should believe on Him. "I will build My church," He declared, "and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."

(2) So, again, too, in regard to the form of Christ's sayings; to speak of their artlessness and homely simplicity is to tell only a small part of the truth concerning them. They are, indeed, and especially those spoken in Galilee, and reported for the most part in the Synoptists, the perfection of popular speech. How the short, pithy, sententious sayings cling to the memory like burs! Let almost any of them be commenced, and as Dr. Stalker says, the ordinary hearer can without difficulty finish the sentence. Christ was not afraid of a paradox. When, *e.g.*, He said, "Whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also," He was ready to risk the possibility of being misunderstood by some prosaic hearer, that He might the more effectually arouse men to a neglected duty. His language was concrete, not

abstract; He taught by example and illustration; He thought, and taught others to think, in pictures. How often is the phrase, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto—" on His lips! Moreover, His illustrations were always such as common folk could best appreciate. The birds of the air, the lilies of the field, the lamp on the lamp-stand, the hen with her chickens under her wings, the servant following the plough, the shepherd tending his sheep, the fisherman drawing his net, the sower casting his seed into the furrow, the housewife baking her bread or sweeping her house,—it was through panes of common window-glass like these that Christ let in the light upon the heaped-up treasures of the kingdom of God. No wonder "the common people heard Him gladly"; no wonder they "all hung upon Him listening"; or that they "came early in the morning to Him in the temple to hear Him"! Yet, even in the eyes of the multitude the plain homespun of Christ's speech was shot with gleams of more than earthly lustre. There mingled—to use another figure—with the sweet music of those simple sayings a new deep note their ears had never heard before: "the multitudes were astonished at His teaching; for He taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes." It was not the authority of powerful reasoning over the intellect, reasoning which we cannot choose but obey; it was the authority of perfect spiritual intuition. Christ never speaks as one

giving the results of long and painful gropings after truth, but rather as one who is at home in the world to which God and the things of the spirit belong. He asserts that which He knows, He declares that which He has seen.

(3) Another quality of Christ's words which helps us to understand their world-wide influence is their winnowedness, their freedom from the chaff which, in the words of others, mingles with the wholesome grain. The attempt is sometimes made to destroy, or, at least, to weaken, our claim for Christ as the supreme teacher by placing a few selected sayings of His side by side with the words of some other ancient thinker or teacher. And if they who make such comparisons would put into their parallel columns all the words of Jesus and all the words of those with whom the comparison is made, we should have neither right to complain nor reason to fear. Wellhausen puts the truth very neatly when he says, "The Jewish scholars say, 'All that Jesus said is also to be found in the Talmud.' Yes, all, and a great deal besides."¹ The late Professor G. J. Romanes has pointed out the contrast in two respects between Christ and Plato. He speaks of Plato as "the greatest representative of human reason in the direction of spirituality"; yet he says "Plato is nowhere in this respect as compared with Christ." While in Plato there are errors of all kinds, "reaching even to absurdity in respect of reason, and to sayings

¹ See A. S. Peake's *Guide to Biblical Study*, p. 244.

shocking to the moral sense," there is, he declares, in literal truth no reason why any of Christ's words should ever pass away in the sense of becoming obsolete. And it is this absence from the biography of Christ of any doctrines which the subsequent growth of human knowledge—whether in natural science, ethics, political economy, or elsewhere—has had to discount which seems to him one of the strongest arguments in favour of Christianity.¹

(4) One other quality of Christ's words, which specially caught the attention of His hearers in the synagogue at Nazareth, should not be overlooked: "All bare Him witness, and wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of His mouth." The reference is, as Dr. Bruce says,² rather to the substance of the discourse than to the manner. That there was a peculiar charm in the Teacher's manner is undoubted, but it was what He said, rather than the way in which He said it—the message of grace, rather than the graciousness of the Messenger—which caused the eyes of all in the synagogue to be fastened on Him. He had just read the great passage from the Book of the prophet Isaiah:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
Because He anointed Me to preach good tidings to the
poor.
He hath sent Me to proclaim release to the captives,

¹ *Thoughts on Religion*, p. 157.

² *The Kingdom of God*, p. 50.

And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty them that are bruised,
To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”

Then, when the reading was finished, and He had given back the roll to the attendant, and was sat down, He began to say unto them, “To-day hath this Scripture been fulfilled in your ears.” This was His own programme; this was what He had come into the world to do—to bear the burden of the weary and the heavy-laden, to give rest unto all who would learn of Him.

This, then, is the Teacher whose words we are to study together in these pages. He Himself is saying to us again, “He that hath ears to hear let him hear.” See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. And again He says, “Take heed how ye hear.” Gracious as He is, this Teacher can be also very stern. “If any man,” He says, “hear My sayings and keep them not, I judge him not. . . . He that receiveth not My sayings hath one that judgeth him; the word that I speak, the same shall judge him in the last day.” We read of some to whom “good tidings” were preached, whom the word did not profit. Let us pray that to writer and readers alike it may prove the word of eternal life.

CONCERNING GOD

“Our Father, who art in Heaven.

What meaneth these words?

God lovingly inviteth us, in this little preface, truly to believe in Him, that He is our true Father, and that we are truly His children; so that full of confidence we may more boldly call upon His name, even as we see children with a kind of confidence ask anything of their parents.”—LUTHER’S CATECHISM.

II

CONCERNING GOD

"Holy Father."—JOHN xvii. 11.

IT is natural and fitting in an attempt to understand the teaching of Jesus that we should begin with His doctrine of God. For a man's idea of God is fundamental, regulative of all his religious thinking. As is his God, so will his religion be. Given the arc we can complete the circle; given a man's conception of God, from that we can construct the main outlines of his creed. What, then, was the teaching of Jesus concerning God?

I

In harmony with what has been already said in the previous chapter, concerning Christ's manner and method as a teacher, we shall find little or nothing defined, formal, systematic in Christ's teaching on this subject. In those theological handbooks which piloted some of us through the troublous waters of our early theological thinking, one chapter is always occupied

with proofs, more or less elaborate, of the existence of God, and another with a discussion of what are termed the Divine "attributes." And for the purposes of a theological handbook doubtless this is the right course to take. But this was not Christ's way. Search the four Gospels through, and probably not one verse can be found which by itself would serve as a suitable definition for any religious catechism or theological textbook. Christ, we must remember, did not, in His teaching, begin *de novo*. He never forgot that He was speaking to a people whose were the law and the prophets and the fathers; throughout He assumed and built upon the accepted truths of Old Testament revelation. To have addressed elaborate arguments in proof of the existence of God to the Jews would have been a mere waste of words; for that faith was the very foundation of their national life. Nor did Christ speak about the "attributes" of God. Again that was not His way. He chose to speak in the concrete rather than in the abstract, and, therefore, instead of defining God, He shows us how He acts. In parable, in story, and in His own life He sets God before us, that so we may learn what He is, and how He feels toward us.

Christ, I say, built upon the foundation of the Old Testament. To understand, therefore, the true significance of His teaching about God, we must first of all put ourselves at the point of view

of a devout Jew of His day, and see how far he had been brought by that earlier revelation which Christ took up and carried to completion. What, then, did the Jews know of God before Christ came?

They knew that God is One, Only, Sovereign: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one God." It had been a hard lesson for Israel to learn. Centuries had passed before the nation had been purged of its idolatries. But the cleansing fires had done their work at last, and perhaps the world has never seen sterner monotheists than were the Pharisees of the time of Christ.¹ And He whom thus they worshipped as Sovereign they knew also to be holy: "The Holy One of Israel," "exalted in righteousness." True, Pharisaism had degraded the lofty conceptions of the great Hebrew prophets; it had taught men to think of God as caring more for the tithing of mint, and anise, and cummin than for the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith, making morality merely an affair of ceremonies, instead of the concern of the heart and the life. But, however Jewish teachers might blind themselves and deceive their disciples, the Jewish Scriptures still remained to testify of God and righteousness, and of the claims which

¹ "Christian apologists," says Dr. Sanday, "have often done scant justice to the intensity of this [monotheistic] faith, which was utterly disinterested and capable of magnificent self-sacrifice."—Art. "God," Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. ii, p. 205.

a righteous God makes upon His people: "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well." Nor, accustomed though we are to think of the God of the Old Testament as stern rather than kind, were the tenderer elements wanting from the Jewish conception of Deity. Illustration is not now possible, but a very little thought will remind us that it is to the Hebrew psalmists and prophets that we owe some of the most gracious and tender imagery of the Divine love with which the language of devotion has ever been enriched.

Nevertheless, with every desire to do justice to a faith which has not always received its due, even at Christian hands, it is impossible for us, looking back from our loftier vantage-ground, to ignore its serious defects and limitations. It was an exclusive faith. It magnified the privileges of the Jews, but it shut out the Gentiles. God might be a Father to Israel, but to no other nation under heaven did He stand in any such relation. It was the refusal of Christ to recognize the barriers which the pride of race had set up which more than anything else brought Him into conflict with the authorities at Jerusalem. And when once from the mind and heart of the Early Church the irrevocable word had gone forth, "God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to Him," the final breach was

made; no longer could the new faith live with the old. And even within the privileged circle of Judaism itself men's best thoughts of God and of His relation to them were maimed and imperfect. He was the God of the nation, not of the individual. Here and there elect souls like the psalmists climbed the heights whereon man holds fellowship with God, and spake with Him face to face, as a man with his friend. But with the people as a whole, even as with their greatest prophets, not the individual, but the nation, was the religious unit.

Such was the Old Testament idea of God. Now let us return to the teaching of Jesus. And at once we discover that Christ let go nothing of that earlier doctrine which was of real and abiding worth. The God of Jesus Christ is as holy, as sovereign—or, to use the modern term—as transcendent as the God of the psalmists and the prophets. Their favourite name for God was "King," and Christ spake much of the "kingdom of God." To them God's people were His servants, owing to Him allegiance and service to the uttermost; we also, Christ says, are the servants of God, to every one of whom He has appointed his task, and with whom one day He will make a reckoning. But if nothing is lost, how much is gained! It is not merely that in Christ's teaching we have the Old Testament of God over again with a *plus*, the new which is added has so transformed and transfigured

the old that all is become new. To Jesus Christ, and to us through Him, God is "the Father."

It is, of course, well known that Christ was not the first to apply this name to God. There is no religion, says Max Müller,¹ which is sufficiently recorded to be understood that does not, in some sense or other, apply the term Father to its Deity. Yet this need not concern us, for though the name be the same the meaning is wholly different. There is no true comparison even between the occasional use of the word in the Old Testament and its use by Christ. For, though in the Old Testament God is spoken of as the Father of Israel, it is as the Father of the nation, not of the individual, and of that nation only. Even in a great saying like that of the Psalmist:

"Like as a father pitieth his children,
So the Lord pitieth them that fear Him,"

it is still only Israel that the writer has in view, though we rightly give to the words a wider application. But there is no need of argument. Every reader of the Old Testament knows that its central, ruling idea of God is not Fatherhood, but Kingship: "The Lord reigneth." Even in the Psalms, in which the religious aspiration and worship of the ages before Christ find their finest and noblest expression, never once is God addressed as Father. But when we turn to the

¹ See R. F. Horton's *Teaching of Jesus*, p. 59.

Gospels, how great is the contrast! Though not even a single psalmist dare look up and say, "Father," in St. Matthew's Gospel alone the name is used of God more than forty times. Fatherhood now is no longer one attribute among many; it is the central, determining idea in whose revealing light all other names of God—Creator, Sovereign, Judge—must be read and interpreted. And the God of Jesus Christ is the Father, not of one race only, but of mankind; not of mankind only, but of men.

II

It was indeed a great and wonderful gospel which Christ proclaimed—so great and wonderful that all our poor words tremble and sink down under the weight of the truth they vainly seek to express. By what means has Christ put us into possession of such a truth? How have we come to the full assurance of faith concerning the Divine Fatherhood? In two ways: by His teaching and by His life; by what He said and by what He did. And once more a paragraph must perforce do, as best it can, the work of an essay.

To the ear and heart of Christ all nature spoke of the love and care of God. "Behold the birds of the heaven," He said; "they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they?" And again He

said, "Consider the lilies of the field"—not the pale, delicate blossom we know so well, but "the scarlet martagon" which "decks herself in red and gold to meet the step of summer"—"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; yet I say unto you that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" Or, He bade men look into their own hearts and learn. "God's possible is taught by His world's loving;" from what is best within ourselves we may learn what God Himself is like. Once Christ spoke to shepherds: "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, and having lost one of them"—how the faces in the little crowd would light up, and their ears drink in the gracious argument! You care for your sheep, but how much better is a man than a sheep? If you would do so much for them, will God do less for you? And once the word went deeper still, as He spoke to fathers: "What man is there of you, who, if his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone; or if he shall ask for a fish will give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" Why, Christ asks, why do you not let your own hearts teach you? If

love will not let you mock your child, think you, will God be less good than you yourselves are?

But more even than by His words did Christ by His life reveal to us the Father. "He that hath seen Me," He said to Philip, "hath seen the Father." In what He was and did, in His life and in His death, we read what God is. We follow Him from Bethlehem to Nazareth, from Nazareth to Gennesaret, from Gennesaret to Jerusalem, to the Upper Room, to Gethsemane, and to Calvary, and at every step of the way He says to us, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." We are with Him at the marriage feast at Cana of Galilee, and in the midst of the mourners by the city gate at Nain; we see Him as He takes the little children into His arms and lays His hands upon them and blesses them; we hear His word to her that was a sinner in the house of Simon the Pharisee; we stand with John and with Mary under the shadow of the Cross; and still, always and everywhere, He is saying to us, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; if ye had known Me ye should have known my Father also." Within the sweep of this great word the whole life of Jesus lies; there is nothing that He said or did that does not more fully declare Him whom no man hath seen at any time. To read "that sweet story of old" is to put our hand on the heart of God; it is to know the Father.

III

“Yes,” says some one, “it is a beautiful creed—if only one could believe it.” Christ took the birds and the flowers for His text, and preached of the love of God for man, but is that the only sermon the birds and flowers preach to us? Does not “nature, red in tooth and claw with ravine,” shriek against our creed? And when we turn to human life the tragedy deepens. Why, if Love be law, is the world so full of pain? Why do the innocent suffer? Why are our hearts made to sicken every day when we take up our morning paper? Why does not God end the haunting horror of our social ills? They are old-world questions which no man can answer. Yet will I not give up my faith, and I will tell you why. “I cannot see,” Huxley once wrote to Charles Kingsley, “one shadow or tittle of evidence that the great unknown underlying the phenomena of the universe, stands to us in the relation of a Father—loves us, and cares for us as Christianity asserts.” And, perhaps, if I looked for evidence only where Huxley looked, I should say the same; but I have seen Jesus, and that has made all the difference. It is He, and He alone, who has made me sure of God. He felt, as I have never felt, the horrid jangle and discord of this world’s life; sin and suffering tore His soul as no soul of man was ever torn; He both saw suffering innocence and Himself suffered being innocent,

and yet to the end He knew that love was through all and over all, and died with the name "Father" upon His lips. And, therefore, though the griefs and graves of men must often make me dumb, I will still dare to believe with Jesus that God is good and "Love creation's final law."

But while thus, on the one hand, we use Christ's doctrine of God to our comfort, let us take care lest, on the other hand, we abuse it to our hurt and undoing. There has scarcely ever been a time when the Church has not suffered through "disproportioned thoughts" of God. To-day our peril is lest, in emphasizing the Divine Fatherhood, we ignore the Divine Sovereignty, and make of God a weak, indulgent Eli, without either purpose or power to chastise His wilful and disobedient children. "God is good; God is love; why then should we fear? Will He not deal tenderly with us and with all men, forgiving us even unto seventy times seven?" The argument is true—and it is false. As an assurance to the penitent and to the broken in heart, it is true, blessedly true; in any other sense it is false as hell. He whom Christ called, and taught us to call "Father," He also called "Holy Father" and "Righteous Father." Have we forgotten Peter's warning—we do not need to ask at whose lips he learned it—"If ye call on Him as Father . . . pass the time of your sojourning in fear." This is no contradiction of the doctrine of Fatherhood; strictly speaking, it is not even

a modification of it; rather is it an essential part of any true and complete statement of it. Peter does not mean God is a Father, and He is also to be feared; that is to miss the whole point of his words; what he means is, God is a Father, and, therefore, He is to be feared; the fear follows necessarily on the true idea of Fatherhood. Ah, brethren, if we understood Peter and Peter's Lord aright, we should be not the less, but the more anxious about our sins, because we have learnt to call God "Father." "Evil," it has been well said, "is a more terrible thing to the family than to the state."¹ Acts which the law takes no cognizance of a father dare not, and cannot, pass by; what the magistrate may dismiss with light censure he must search out to its depths. The judgment of a father—there is no judgment like that. And if it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, for him who all his life through has set himself against the Divine law and love, it is a still more fearful thing because those hands are the hands of a Father.

But this is not the note on which to close a sermon on the Fatherhood of God. Let us go back to a chapter from which, though I have only once quoted its words, we have never been far away—the fifteenth of St. Luke, with its three-fold revelation of the seeking love of God. The parables of the chapter are companion pictures, and should be studied together in the light of the

¹ A. M. Fairbairn, *Christ in Modern Theology*, p. 244.

circumstances which were their common origin. "The Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." These parables are Christ's answer. Mark how He justifies Himself. He might have pleaded the need of those whom the Pharisees and scribes had left alone in their wretchedness and sin, but of this He says nothing; His thoughts are all of the need of God. The central thought in each parable is not what man loses by his sin, but what God loses. As the shepherd misses his lost sheep, and the woman her lost coin, and the father his lost son, so, Christ says, we are all missed by God until, with our heart's love, we satisfy the hunger of His. The genius of a prose poet shall tell us the rest. We have all read of Lachlan Campbell and his daughter Flora, how she went into the far country, and what brought her home again. "It iss weary to be in London"—this was Flora's story as she told it to Marget Howe when she was back again in the glen—"it iss weary to be in London and no one to speak a kind word to you, and I will be looking at the crowd that is always passing, and I will not see one kent face, and when I looked in at the lighted windows the people were all sitting round the table, but there was no place for me. Millions and millions of people, and not one to say 'Flora,' and not one sore heart if I died that night." Then one night she crept into a church as the people were singing. "The sermon wass

on the Prodigal Son, but there is only one word I remember. 'You are not forgotten or cast off,' the preacher said: 'you are missed.' Sometimes he will say, 'If you had a plant, and you had taken great care of it, and it was stolen, would you not miss it?' And I will be thinking of my geraniums, and saying 'Yes' in my heart. And then he will go on, 'If a shepherd was counting his sheep, and there was one short, does he not go out to the hill to seek for it?' and I will see my father coming back with that lamb that lost its mother. My heart was melting within me, but he will still be pleading, 'If a father had a child, and she left her home and lost herself in the wicked city, she will still be remembered in the old house, and her chair will be there,' and I will be seeing my father all alone with the Bible before him, and the dogs will lay their heads on his knee, but there is no Flora. So I slipped out into the darkness and cried, 'Father,' but I could not go back, and I knew not what to do. But this was ever in my ear, 'missed,'—and this was the word that brought her back to home and God.¹

¹ On the subject of this chapter see especially G. B. Stevens' *Theology of the New Testament*, chap. vi.

CONCERNING HIMSELF

“Christ either deceived mankind by conscious fraud, or He was Himself deluded and self-deceived, or He was Divine. There is no getting out of this trilemma. It is inexorable.”

JOHN DUNCAN, *Colloquia Peripatetica*.

III

CONCERNING HIMSELF

“Who say ye that I am?”—MATT. xvi. 15.

I

THIS was our Lord's question to His first disciples ; and this, by the mouth of Simon Peter, was their answer : “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And in all ages this has been the answer of the Holy Catholic Church throughout all the world. In the days of New Testament Christianity no other answer was known or heard. The Church of the apostles had its controversies, as we know, controversies in which the very life of the Church was at stake. Division crept in even among the apostles themselves. But concerning Christ they spoke with one voice, they proclaimed one faith. The early centuries of the Christian era were centuries of keen discussion concerning the Person of our Lord ; but the discussions sprang for the most part from the difficulty of rightly defining the true relations of the Divine and the human in the one Person, rather than

from the denial of His Divinity; and, as Mr. Gladstone once pointed out, since the fourth century the Christian conception of Christ has remained practically unchanged. Amid the fierce and almost ceaseless controversies which have divided and sometimes desolated Christendom, and which, alas! still continue to divide it, the Church's testimony concerning Christ has never wavered. The Greek Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the various Protestant Churches, Lutherans, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Methodists, Christian men and women out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,—all unite to confess the glory of Christ in the words of the ancient Creed: "I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God."

This, beyond all doubt, has been and is the Christian way of thinking about Christ. But now the question arises, Was this Christ's way of thinking about Himself? Did He Himself claim to be one with God? or, is it only we, His adoring disciples, who have crowned Him with glory and honour, and given Him a name that is above every name? To those of us who have been familiar with the New Testament ever since we could read, the question may appear so simple as to be almost superfluous. Half-a-dozen texts leap to our lips in a moment by way of answer. Did He not claim to be the Messiah in whom Old

Testament history and prophecy found their fulfilment and consummation? Did He not call Himself the Son of God, saying, "The Father hath given all judgment unto the Son; that all may honour the Son, even as they honour the Father"? Did He not declare, "I and My Father are one"? and again, "All things have been delivered unto Me of My Father: and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him"? And when one of the Twelve bowed down before Him, saying, "My Lord and my God," did He not accept the homage as though it were His by right? What further need, then, have we of witnesses? Is it not manifest that the explanation of all that has been claimed for Christ, from the days of the apostles until now, is to be found in what Christ claimed for Himself?

This is true; nevertheless it may be well to remind ourselves that Christ Himself did not thrust the evidence on His disciples in quite this wholesale, summary fashion. It is an easy thing for us to scour the New Testament for "proof-texts," and then, when they are heaped together at our feet like a load of bricks, to begin to build our theological systems. But Peter and Thomas and the other disciples could not do this. The revelation which we possess in its completeness was given to them little by little as they were able to receive it. And the moment we begin to study the life of

Jesus, not in isolated texts, but as day by day it passed before the eyes of the Twelve, we cannot fail to observe the remarkable reserve which, during the greater part of His ministry, He exercised concerning Himself. When first His disciples heard His call and followed Him, He was to them but a humble peasant teacher, who had flung about their lives a wondrous spell which they could no more explain than they could resist. Indeed, there is good reason to believe, as Dr. Dale has pointed out,¹ that the full discovery of Christ's Divinity only came to the apostles after His Resurrection from the dead. At first, and for long, Christ was content to leave them with their poor, imperfect thoughts. He never sought to carry their reason by storm; rather He set Himself to win them—mind, heart, and will—by slow siege. He lived before them and with them, saying little directly about Himself, and yet always revealing Himself, day by day training them, often perhaps unconsciously to themselves, "to trust Him with the sort of trust which can be legitimately given to God only."² And when at last the truth was clear, and they knew that it was the incarnate Son of God who had companied with them, their faith was the result not of this or that high claim which He had made for Himself, but rather of "the sum-total of all His words and works, the united and accumulated impression of all He was

¹ *Christian Doctrine*, p. 77.

² Bishop Gore, *Bampton Lectures*, 1891, p. 13.

and did" upon their sincere and receptive souls.¹

Are there not many of us to-day who would do well to seek the same goal by the same path? We have listened, perhaps, to other men's arguments concerning the Divinity of our Lord, conscious the while how little they were doing for us. Let us listen to Christ Himself. Let us put ourselves to school with Him, as these first disciples did, and suffer Him to make His own impression upon us. And if ours be sincere and receptive souls as were theirs, from us also He shall win the adoring cry, "My Lord and my God." Let us note, then, some of the many ways in which Christ bears witness concerning Himself. In a very true sense all His sayings are "self-portraits." Be the subject of His teaching what it may, He cannot speak of it without, in some measure at least, revealing His thoughts concerning Himself; and it is this indirect testimony whose significance I wish now carefully to consider.

II

Observe, in the first place, how Christ speaks of God and of His own relation to Him. He called Himself, as we have already noted, "the Son of God." Now, there is a sense in which all men are the sons of God, for it is to God that all men owe their life. And there is,

¹ J. Denney, *Studies in Theology*, p. 25.

further, as the New Testament has taught us, another and deeper sense in which men who are not may "become" the sons of God, through faith in Christ. But Christ's consciousness of Sonship is distinct from both of these, and cannot be explained in terms of either. He is not "a son of God"—one among many—He is "*the* son of God," standing to God in a relationship which is His alone. Hence we find—and we shall do well to mark the marvellous accuracy and self-consistency of the Gospels in this matter—that while Jesus sometimes speaks of "*the* Father," and sometimes of "*My* Father," and sometimes, again, in addressing His disciples, of "*your* Father," never does He link Himself with them so as to call God "*our* Father." Nowhere does the distinction, always present to the mind of Christ, find more striking expression than in that touching scene in the garden in which the Risen Lord bids Mary go unto His brethren and say unto them, "I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and My God and your God."

This sense of separateness is emphasized when we turn to the prayers of Christ. And in this connection it is worthy of note that though Christ has much to say concerning the duty and blessedness of prayer, and Himself spent much time in prayer, yet never, so far as we know, did He ask for the prayers of others. "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat: but I made supplication for thee,

that thy faith fail not." So did Jesus pray for His disciples ; but we never read that they prayed for Him, or that He asked for Himself a place in their prayers. How significant the silence is we learn when we turn to the Epistles of St. Paul and to the experience of the saints. "Brethren, pray for us"—this is the token in almost every Epistle. In the long, lone fight of life even the apostle's heart would have failed him had not the prayers of unknown friends upheld him as with unseen hands. There is no stronger instinct of the Christian heart than the plea for remembrance at the throne of God. "Pray for me, will you?" we cry, when man's best aid seems as a rope too short to help, yet long enough to mock imprisoned miners in their living tomb. But the cry which is so often ours was never Christ's.

It has further been remarked that, intimate as was Christ's intercourse with His disciples, He never joined in prayer with them.¹ He prayed in their presence, He prayed for them, but never with them. "It came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, that when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray, even as John also taught his disciples. And He said unto them, When ye pray, say——." Then follows what we call "The Lord's Prayer."

¹ For an admirable statement of the argument of this paragraph see D. W. Forrest's *Christ of History and Experience*, chap. i. and note 4, p. 385.

But, properly speaking, this was not the Lord's prayer; it was the disciples' prayer: "When ye pray, say——." And when we read the prayer again, we see why it could not be His. How could He who knew no sin pray, saying, "Forgive us our sins"? The true "Lord's Prayer" is to be found in the seventeenth chapter of St. John's Gospel. And throughout that prayer the holy Suppliant has nothing to confess, nothing to regret. He knows that the end is nigh, but there are no shadows in His retrospect; of all that is done there is nothing He could wish undone or done otherwise. "I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do." It is so when He comes to die. Among the Seven Words from the Cross we are struck by one significant omission: the dying Sufferer utters a cry of physical weakness—"I thirst"—but He makes no acknowledgment of sin; He prays for the forgiveness of others—"Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do"—He asks none for Himself. The great Augustine died with the penitential Psalms hung round his bed. Fifty or sixty times, it is said, did sweet St. Catharine of Siena cry upon her deathbed, *Peccavi, Domine miserere mei*, "Lord, I have sinned: have mercy on me." But in all the prayers of Jesus, whether in life or in death, He has no pardon to ask, no sins to confess.

We are thus brought to the fact upon which

of recent years so much emphasis has been justly laid, namely, that nowhere throughout the Gospels does Christ betray any consciousness of sin. "Which of you," He said, "convicteth Me of sin?" And no man was able, nor is any man now able, to answer Him a word. But the all-important fact is not so much that they could not convict Him of sin; *He could not convict Himself*. Yet it could not be that He was self-deceived. "He knew what was in man;" He read the hearts of others till, like the Samaritan woman, they felt as though He knew all things that ever they had done. Was it possible, then, that He did not know Himself? Not only so, but the law by which He judged Himself was not theirs, but His. And what that was, how high, how searching, how different from the low, conventional standards which satisfied them, we who have read His words and His judgments know full well. Nevertheless, He knew nothing against Himself; as no man could condemn Him neither could He condemn Himself. Looking up to heaven, He could say, "I do always the things that are pleasing to Him."¹ This is not the language of sinful men; it is not the language of even the best and holiest of men. Christ is as separate from "saints" as He is from "sinners."

¹ Cp. Denney's note on St. Paul's description of Christ, "Him who knew no sin," in 2 Cor. v. 21: "The Greek negative (*μη*), as Schmiedel remarks, implies that this is regarded as the verdict of some one else than the writer. It was Christ's own verdict upon Himself."

The greatest of Hebrew prophets cries, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." The greatest of Christian apostles laments, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" Even the holy John confesses, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." It is one of the commonplaces of Christian experience that the holier men become the more intense and poignant becomes the sense of personal shortcoming. "We have done those things which we ought not to have done; we have left undone those things which we ought to have done:" among all the sons of men there is none, who truly knows himself, who dare be silent when the great confession is made—none save the Son of Man; for He, it has well been said, was *not* the one thing which we all are; He was *not* a sinner.

This consciousness of separateness runs through all that the evangelists have told us concerning Christ. When *e.g.* He is preaching He never associates Himself, as other preachers do, with His hearers; He never assumes, as other preachers must, that His words are applicable to Himself equally with them. We exhort; He commands. We say, like the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "Let us go on unto perfection"; He says, "Ye shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." We speak as sinful men to sinful men, standing

by their side ; He speaks as from a height, as one who has already attained and is already made perfect. Or, the contrast may be pointed in another way. We all know what it is to be haunted by misgivings as to the wisdom of some course which, under certain trying circumstances, we have taken. We had some difficult task to perform—to withstand (let us say) a fellow-Christian to his face, as Paul withstood Peter at Antioch ; and we did the unpleasant duty as best we knew how, honestly striving not only to speak the truth but to speak it in love. And yet when all was over we could not get rid of the fear that we had not been as firm or as kindly as we should have been, that, if only something had been which was not, our brother might have been won. There is a verse in Paul's second letter to the Church at Corinth which illustrates exactly this familiar kind of internal conflict. Referring to the former letter which he had sent to the Corinthians, and in which he had sharply rebuked them for their wrong-doing, he says, "Though I made you sorry with my epistle, I do not regret it, though I did regret"—a simple, human touch we can all understand. Yes ; but when did Jesus hesitate and, as it were, go back upon Himself after this fashion ? He passed judgment upon men and their ways with the utmost freedom and confidence ; some, such as the Pharisees, He condemned with a severity which almost startles us ; towards others, such as she "that was a sinner," He was all love and tender-

ness. Yet never does He speak as one who fears lest either in His tenderness or His severity He has gone too far. His path is always clear ; He enters upon it without doubt ; He looks back upon it without misgiving.

This contrast between Christ and all other men, as it presented itself to His own consciousness, may be illustrated almost indefinitely. His fore-runners the prophets were the servants of God ; He is His Son. All other men are weary and in need of rest ; He has rest and can give it. All others are lost ; He is not lost, He is the shepherd sent to seek the lost. All others are sick ; He is not sick, He is the physician sent to heal the sick. All others will one day stand at the bar of God ; but He will be on the throne to be their Judge. All others are sinners—this is the great, final distinction into which all others run up—He is the Saviour. When at the Last Supper He said, “ This is My blood of the covenant which is shed for many unto remission of sins ” ; and again, when He said, “ The Son of Man came to give His life a ransom for many,” He set Himself over against all others, the one sinless sacrifice for a sinful world.

There is in Edinburgh a Unitarian church which bears carved on its front these words of St. Paul . “ There is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.” I say nothing as to the fitness of any of Paul’s words for such a place—perhaps we can imagine what

he would have said ; I pass over any questions of interpretation that might very justly be raised ; I have only one question to ask : Why was the quotation not finished ? Paul only put a comma where they have put a full stop ; the next words are : “ *Who gave Himself a ransom for all.* ” But how could He do that if He was only “ the *man* Christ Jesus ” ?

“ No man can save his brother’s soul,
Nor pay his brother’s debt,”

and how could He, how dare He, think of His life as the ransom for our forfeited lives, if He were only one like unto ourselves ? There is but one explanation which does really explain all that Christ thought and taught concerning Himself ; it is that given by the first disciples and re-echoed by every succeeding generation of Christians—

“ THOU ART THE KING OF GLORY, O CHRIST.
THOU ART THE EVERLASTING SON OF THE FATHER.”

CONCERNING HIS OWN DEATH

“While there is life in thee, in this death alone place thy trust, confide in nothing else besides ; to this death commit thyself altogether ; with this shelter thy whole self ; with this death array thyself from head to foot. And if the Lord thy God will judge thee, say, Lord, between Thy judgment and me I cast the death of our Lord Jesus Christ ; no otherwise can I contend with Thee. And if He say to thee, Thou art a sinner, say, Lord, I stretch forth the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between my sins and Thee. If He say, Thou art worthy of condemnation, say, Lord, I set the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between my evil deserts and Thee, and His merits I offer for those merits which I ought to have, but have not of my own. If He say that He is wroth with thee, say, Lord, I lift up the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between Thy wrath and me.”—ANSELM.

IV

CONCERNING HIS OWN DEATH

“The Son of Man came . . . to give His life a ransom for many.”—MARK X. 45.

THE death of Jesus Christ has always held the foremost place in the thought and teaching of the Church. When St. Paul writes to the Corinthians, “I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,” he is the spokesman of every Christian preacher and teacher, of the missionary of the twentieth century no less than of the first. It is with some surprise, therefore, we discover when we turn to the teaching of Jesus Himself, that He had so little to say concerning a subject of which His disciples have said so much. It is true that the Gospels, without exception, relate the story of Christ’s death with a fulness and detail which, in any other biography, would be judged absurdly out of proportion. But this, it is said, reveals the mind of the evangelists rather than the mind of Christ. And those who love that false com-

parison between the Gospels and the Epistles of which so much is heard to-day, have not been slow to seize upon this apparent discrepancy as another example of the way in which the Church has misunderstood and misinterpreted the simple message of the Galilean Prophet.

But, in the first place, as I will show in a moment, the contrast between the Gospels and Epistles in this matter is by no means so sharply defined as is often supposed. And further, granting that there is a contrast—that what in the Gospels is only a hint or suggestion, becomes in the Epistles a definite and formal statement—it is one which admits of a simple and immediate explanation. Christ—this was Dr. Dale's way of putting it—did not come to preach the gospel; He came that there might be a gospel to preach. This must not be pressed so far as to imply that it is only the death and not also the life of Christ that has any significance for us to-day; but if that death had any significance in it at all, if it was anything more to Him than death is to us, if it stood in any sort of relation to us men and our salvation, manifestly the teaching which should make this plain would more fittingly follow than precede the death. And they at least who accept Christ's words, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He shall guide you into all truth"—they, I say, who accept these words can find

no difficulty in believing that part of the revelation which it was the good pleasure of the Father to give to us in His Son, came through the lips of men who spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Moreover, when we turn to the Gospels we see at once that the interpretation of Christ's death was just one of those things which the disciples as yet were unable to bear. The point is so important that it is worth while dwelling upon it for a moment. So far were the Twelve from being able to understand their Lord's death, that they would not even believe that He was going to die. "Be it far from Thee, Lord," cried Peter, when Christ first distinctly foretold His approaching end; "this shall never be unto Thee." When, at another time, He said unto His disciples, "Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of Man shall be delivered up into the hands of men," St. Luke adds, "But they understood not this saying." And again, after another and similar prophecy, the evangelist writes with significant reiteration, "They understood none of these things; and this saying was hid from them, and they perceived not the things that were said." So was it all through those last months of our Lord's life. His thoughts were not their thoughts, neither were His ways their ways. They followed Him as He pressed along the highway, His face steadfastly set to go up to Jerusalem, but they could not understand Him. Why, if as He had said, death

waited Him there, did He go to seek it? Think what utter powerlessness to enter even a little way into His thoughts is revealed in a scene like this: Two of His disciples, James and John, came to Him to ask Him that they might sit, one on His right hand, and one on His left hand, in His glory. Jesus said unto them, "Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink the cup that I drink? or to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" And they said unto Him, "We are able." What could Jesus do with ignorance like this—ignorance that knew not its own ignorance? He could be "sorry for their childishness"; but how could He show them the mystery of His Passion? What could He do but wait until the Cross, and the empty grave, and the gift of Pentecost had done their revealing and enlightening work?

At the same time, as I have already pointed out, it is altogether a mistake to suppose that Christ has left us on this subject wholly to the guidance of others. From the very beginning of His ministry the end was before Him, and as it drew nearer He spoke of it continually. At first He was content to refer to it in language purposely vague and mysterious. Just as a mother who knows herself smitten with a sickness which is unto death, will sometimes try by shadowed hints to prepare her children for what is coming, while yet she veils its

naked horror from their eyes, so did Jesus with His disciples. "Can the sons of the bride-chamber fast," He asked once, "while the bridegroom is with them? . . . But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then will they fast in that day." But from the time of Peter's great confession at Cæsarea Philippi all reserve was laid aside, and Christ told His disciples plainly of the things which were to come to pass: "From that time began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up." And if we will turn to any one of the first three Gospels, we shall find, as Dr. Denney says, that that which "characterized the last months of our Lord's life was a deliberate and thrice-repeated attempt to teach His disciples something about His death."¹ Let me try, very briefly, to set forth some of the things which He said.

I

First of all, then, *Christ died as a faithful witness to the truth.* Like the prophets and the Baptist before Him, whose work and whose end were so often in His thoughts, He preached righteousness to an unrighteous world, and

¹ *The Death of Christ*, p. 28.

paid with His life the penalty of His daring. That is the very lowest view which can be taken of His death. No Unitarian, no unbeliever, will deny that Jesus died as a good man, choosing rather the shame of the Cross than the deeper shame of treason to the truth. And thus far Christ is an example to all who follow Him. In one sense His cross-bearing was all His own, a mystery of suffering and death into which no man can enter. But in another sense, as St. Peter tells us, He has left us by His sufferings an example that we should follow His steps. It is surely a significant fact that the words which immediately follow Christ's first distinct declaration of His death are these, "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." His death was the supreme illustration of a law which binds us, the servants, even as it bound Him, the Master. In the path of every true man there stands the cross which he must bear, or be true no more. Let no one grow impatient and say this is no more than the fringe of Christ's thoughts about His death; even the fringe is part of the robe, and if, as the words I have quoted seem clearly to indicate, Christ thought of His death as in any sense at all a pattern for us, let us not miss this, the first and simplest lesson of the Cross.

There are few more impressive scenes in the

history of the Christian pulpit than that in which Robertson of Brighton, preaching the Assize Sermon at Lewes, turned as he closed to the judges, and counsel, and jury, and bade them remember, by "the trial hour of Christ," by "the Cross of the Son of God," the sacred claims of truth: "The first lesson of the Christian life is this, Be true; and the second this, Be true; and the third this, Be true."

II

But though this be our starting-point, it is no more than a starting-point. If Jesus was only a brave man, paying with His life the penalty of His bravery in the streets of Jerusalem, it is wasting words to call Him "the Saviour of the world." If His death were only a martyrdom, then, though we may honour Him as we honour Socrates, and many another name in the long roll of "the noble army of martyrs," yet He can no more be our Redeemer than can any one of them. But it was not so that Christ thought of His death. The martyr dies because he must; Christ died because He would. The strong hands of violent men snatch away the martyr's life from him; but no man had power to take away Christ's life from Him: "I lay it down of Myself," He said. The Son of Man *gave* His life. He was not dragged as an unwilling

victim to the sacrifice and bound upon the altar. He was both Priest and Victim; as the apostle puts it, "He gave Himself up." True, the element of necessity was there—"the Son of Man *must* be lifted up"; but it was the "must" of His own love, not of another's constraint. Not Roman nails or Roman thongs held Him to the Cross, but His own loving will. It is important to emphasize this fact of the *voluntariness* of our Lord's death, because at once it sets the Cross in a clearer light. It changes martyrdom into sacrifice; and Christ's death, instead of being merely a fate which He suffered, becomes now, as Principal Fairbairn says, a work which He achieved—the work which He came into the world to do: "The Son of Man came . . . to give His life."¹

III

Again, Christ taught us that His death was *the crowning revelation of the love of God for man*. And it is well to remind ourselves of our need of such a revelation. We speak sometimes as though the love of God was a self-evident truth altogether independent of the facts of New Testament history. "God is love"—of course, we say; this at least we are sure of, whatever becomes of the history. But this jaunty assurance will not bear looking into. The truth is that, apart from

¹ *The Philosophy of the Christian Religion*, p. 408.

Christ, we have no certainty of the love of God. A man may cry aloud in our ears, "God is love, God is love"; but if he have no more to say than that, the most emphatic reiteration will avail us nothing. But if he can say, "God is love, and He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son"; if, that is to say, he can point us to the Divine love made manifest in life, then he is proclaiming a gospel indeed. But let us not deceive ourselves and imagine that we can have Christ's gospel apart from Christ.

Now, according to the teaching of the Gospels, all Christ's life—all He was and said and did—is a revelation of the love of God. But the crown of the revelation was given in His death. It is the Cross which was, in a special and peculiar sense, as Christ Himself declared,¹ the glory both of the Father and the Son. And the apostles, with a unanimity which can only be explained as the result of His own teaching, always associate God's love with Christ's death in a way in which they never associate God's love with Christ's life. "God," says St. Paul, "commendeth His own love toward us, in that . . . Christ died for us."

Christ's death, then, we say, establishes the love of God. But how does this come to pass? How does the death of one prove the love of another? If—to use a very simple illustration—I am in danger of drowning, and another man, at the cost of his own life, saves mine, his act undoubtedly

¹ John xii. 27, 28; xiii. 31; xvii. 1.

proves his own love ; but how does it prove anything concerning God's love? If the apostle had said, "*Christ* commendeth His own love towards us, in that He died for us," we could have understood him ; but how, I ask again, does Christ's death prove *God's* love? The question is answerable, as indeed the whole of the New Testament is intelligible, only on the assumption of the Trinitarian doctrine of Christ. If Christ were indeed the Son of God, standing to God in such a relation that what He did was likewise the doing of God the Father, we can understand the apostle's meaning. On any other hypothesis his language is a riddle of which the key has been lost. A further question still remains to be answered. I said just now that if St. Paul had written, "*Christ* commendeth His own love towards us, in that He died for us," we could have understood Him. But here, also, something is implicit which requires to be made explicit. How does Christ in His death prove His love for us? Obviously, only in one way : by bearing responsibilities which must otherwise have fallen upon us. There must be, as Dr. Denney rightly argues, some rational relation between our necessities and what Christ has done before we can speak of His act as a proof of His love. If, to borrow the same writer's illustration, a man lose his own life in saving me from drowning, this is love to the uttermost ; but if, when I was in no peril, he had thrown himself into the water and got drowned " to prove his love

for me," the deed and its explanation would be alike unintelligible. We must take care when we speak of the death of Christ that we do not make it equally meaningless. How Christ Himself thought of it as related to the necessities of sinful men, the next and last division of this chapter will, I hope, make plain.

IV

"The Son of Man came to give His life a ransom for many;" "This is My blood of the covenant which is shed for many unto remission of sins." These are the two great texts which reveal to us the mind of Christ concerning the significance of His death. There has been much discussion of their meaning into which it is impossible here to enter. But whatever questions modern scholarship may raise, there can be little doubt as to the sense in which Christ's words were understood by the first disciples. "His own self," said Peter, "bare our sins in His body upon the tree." "Herein is love," said John, "not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." He "loved me," said Paul, "and gave Himself for me." It is open, doubtless, to question the legitimacy of these apostolic deductions, and to fall back upon Matthew Arnold's *Aberglaube*; but who, it has been well said, "are most likely to have correctly apprehended the significance which Jesus attached

to His death, men like John and Peter and Paul, or an equal number of scholars in our time, however discerning and candid, who undertake to reconstruct the thoughts of Jesus, and to disentangle them from the supposed subjective reflections of His disciples? Where is the subjectivity likely to be the greatest—in the interpretations of the eye and ear witness, or in the reconstructions of the moderns?"¹

Christ gave His life "a ransom for many." The truth cannot be put too simply: "God forgives our sins because Christ died for them;" "in that death of Christ our condemnation came upon Him, that for us there might be condemnation no more;" "the forfeiting of His free life has freed our forfeited lives."²

"Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
In my place condemned He stood;
Sealed my pardon with His blood;
Alleluia! what a Saviour!"

If this is true, the New Testament has a meaning, and, what is more, we sinful men have a gospel. If it is not true, it is difficult to know why the New Testament was written, and still more difficult to know what we must do to be saved. It does not help to point us to the parable of the Prodigal Son, and tell us that there is a story of salvation without an atonement.

¹ G. B. Stevens, *Theology of the New Testament*, p. 133.

² I quote once more from Dr. Denney.

The whole gospel cannot be put into a parable, not even into such a parable as this. Besides, if the argument proves anything, it proves too much. The parable is not only a story of salvation without an atonement, it is a story of salvation without Christ; and if no more is needed than what is given here, Christ Himself is no part of His own gospel, forgiveness can be had with no reference to Him. But it is not so the redeemed have learned Christ; it is not thus they have received forgiveness. They *know* that it is "in Him" they have their redemption, through His blood; and apart from Him there is no salvation and no gospel.

It is time to bring our reasonings to an end. We are under the shadow of the Cross; let us worship and adore. When Christ died on the tree nineteen hundred years ago, there were some that mocked, and some that watched and yet saw nothing — nothing but a miserable criminal's miserable end; a few there were that wept, and one there was who cried, with lips already white with death, "Jesus, remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom." And still does that Cross divide men. Where is our place, and with whom are we? Not, I think, with them that mock; for these to-day are a broken and discredited few. We choose rather the centurion's cry, "Certainly this was a righteous man." But is this all we have to say? He who gave His life-blood for us, shall He have no more than

this—the little penny-pieces of our respect? If we owe Him aught we owe Him all; and if we give Him aught let us give Him all—not our thanks but our souls. “He loved *me*, and gave Himself up for *me*”—there is the secret of the Cross which no man knows save he who cannot speak of it without the personal pronouns. Until then we are but as blind watchers that look and see not.

“Jesus, remember me”—this is the word that becomes us best. Let us cry unto Him now, and He who heard the robber’s prayer on the Cross will hear and save us.

CONCERNING THE HOLY SPIRIT

“ COME, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,
And lighten with celestial fire ;
Thou the Anointing Spirit art,
Who dost Thy sevenfold gifts impart.
Thy blessed unction from above
Is comfort, life, and fire of love :
Enable with perpetual light
The dulness of our blinded sight ;
Anoint and cheer our soilèd face
With the abundance of Thy grace ;
Keep far our foes ; give peace at home ;
Where Thou art guide no ill can come ;
Teach us to know the Father, Son,
And Thee of Both, to be but One :
That, through the ages all along,
This, this may be our endless song,
‘ Praise to Thy eternal merit,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit ! ’ ”

Amen !

BISHOP JOHN COSIN.

V

CONCERNING THE HOLY SPIRIT

"I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth."—JOHN xiv. 16.

"It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send Him unto you."—JOHN xvi. 7.

IT was the night in which He was betrayed. Jesus and His disciples were spending their last hours together before His death. For Him the morrow could bring with it no surprise. He knew that His hour was come—the hour to which all other hours of His past had pointed; and He was ready. Before He left that Upper Room, He lifted up His eyes to heaven and said, "Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son." But to the disciples that night was a night of darkness, and terror, and confusion. They remembered how He had told them He must die; they knew the bloodhounds in Jerusalem were on His track; they could see the shadow's black edge creeping nearer and nearer; and yet they could do nothing; they could not even

persuade Him that anything needed to be done. Nay, it almost seemed as if He were taking part with His enemies against them. "It is expedient for you," He said, "that I go away"—veiling in His pity the horror of His going. "Expedient" for them? How could He speak like that? Was He not everything to them? If He went away, what was to befall them? They would be as sheep in the midst of wolves, as orphans in an unkindly world. Is it any wonder that sorrow filled their hearts?

And not only to these His first disciples, but to many of His followers in later days, this word of Jesus has proved a hard saying. If only, we think, He were with us as He was with Peter and James and John; if only we could hear Him teach in our streets, or in our church, as once He taught in the streets of Jerusalem and the synagogue at Nazareth; if only He could enter our homes, as once He entered the home at Bethany, how easy it would be to believe! But, now He is no longer here, the air is filled with doubting voices, and faith is very hard.

So sometimes we speak. But, have we noticed, this is never the language of the New Testament. To begin with, it is not the language of Christ. There is an unmistakable emphasis in His words: "Because I have spoken these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is expedient for you that I go away." When Paul was a prisoner

in Rome, he wrote to the Philippians, saying, "I am in a strait betwixt the two, having the desire to depart and be with Christ; for it is very far better; yet to abide in the flesh is more needful for your sake." That is how a good man, in the prospect of death, naturally feels towards those who are in any way dependent on him. But Christ's language is the very opposite of this; He says, not that it is needful to abide, but that it is expedient to depart. And in every reference to Christ by the apostles after His Ascension, the same note is struck. It is hardly too much to say, as one writer does, "that no apostle, no New Testament writer, ever *remembered* Christ."¹ They thought of Him as belonging, not to the past, but to the present; He was the object, not of memory, but of faith. Never do they wish Him back in their midst; never do they mourn for Him as for a friend whom they have lost. On the contrary, they felt that Christ was with them now in a sense in which He had never been. There is no hint that any even of the Twelve would have gone back to the old days had it been possible. They had lost, but they had also gained, and their gain was greater than their loss. "Even though we have known Christ after the flesh," they also would have said, "yet now we know Him so no more." Read over again St. Luke's account of our Lord's Ascension: "He led them out until they were

¹ J. Denney, *Studies in Theology*, p. 154.

over against Bethany; and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He parted from them, and was carried up into heaven. And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and were continually in the temple, blessing God." Christ had gone from them a second time, no more to return as before He had returned from the tomb; yet now it is not despair but joy which fills their hearts: "They returned to Jerusalem with great joy." When in the Upper Room, Christ had said, "It is expedient for you that I go away," sorrow had filled their hearts; but, now that He is gone, their sorrow is turned into joy. How shall we explain this strange reversal?

I

It is to be explained in part, of course, by the Resurrection of Christ from the dead, but mainly—and this is the fact with which just now we are concerned—by the gift of the Holy Spirit whom Christ had promised to His disciples to abide with them for ever. But now, what do we mean when we speak of the gift of the Holy Spirit? What is the Holy Spirit, and what is it that He does for us? Many of us, I think, must have felt how extremely unreal, and therefore unsatisfying, the discussions of this great subject often are. The doctrine somehow fails to find a place among the proved realities of our Christian

experience. It remains, so to speak, outside of us, a foreign substance which life has not assimilated. And hence it has come to pass that there is no small danger to-day lest New Testament phrases about being filled with the Spirit, baptized with the Spirit, and so forth, become the mere jargon of a school which wholly fails to interpret the mind of Christ. Doubtless there are faults on both sides, the faults of neglect and the faults of false emphasis, and for both the true remedy is a more careful study of the teaching of Jesus.

What, then, is the Holy Spirit, and what is it He does for us? "I will pray the Father," Christ said, "and He shall give you another Comforter," or "another Paraclete." The word translated "Comforter," which occurs so often in this discourse of our Lord, is found nowhere else in the New Testament except in the First Epistle of St. John, where it is rendered "Advocate"; "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous." And this, without doubt, is a more faithful rendering of the word which Christ used than the more familiar "Comforter." An advocate is one who is called to our side to be our friend and helper, more especially to plead our cause in a court of justice; and this also is the meaning of the word "Paraclete." Perhaps, however, the word "Comforter" may be retained without loss, if only we remember to give it its full and original meaning. To "comfort" is not primarily and originally to

console, but to strengthen, to *fortify*; and the "Comforter" whom Christ promised to His disciples was not only one who should soothe them in their sorrows, but should stand by them in all their conflicts, their unfailing friend and helper.

Further, Christ said God "shall give you *another* Comforter." That is to say, Christ Himself was a Comforter, and all that He had been to His disciples the Holy Spirit should be also. And, if we examine the three chapters of this Gospel which contain this great discourse of our Lord, we shall find this idea taken up, and repeated, and developed in passage after passage. The Holy Spirit was to come in Christ's name, as Christ's representative and interpreter. "He shall not speak from Himself," Christ said; "He shall bear witness of Me. He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall declare it unto you." In the presence of the Spirit Christ Himself would be present: "I will not leave you desolate," He said; "I come unto you;" "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice." And, for the sake of such a presence, a presence which was to be not for a little while but for ever, it was best for His friends that He should leave them.¹

It is in these words, I believe, that we have the key to the New Testament doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the Spirit of Christ; He is sent by Christ; He comes to continue

¹ See W. N. Clarke's *Outlines of Christian Theology*, p. 373.

the work of Christ. He is, as one writer has it, Christ's *alter ego*, or, as it was said long ago, Christ's "Vicar," or substitute, on the earth.¹ When, therefore, we speak of the presence of the Spirit, what we mean, or what we ought to mean, is the spiritual presence of Christ. In the Holy Spirit Christ Himself is present, wherever, as He said, two or three are gathered together in His name. In the Holy Spirit, given to be with us for ever, He makes good to His disciples the great word of His promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." This is the fact continually to be kept in mind—the Spirit is the Spirit of Christ; for, if this be forgotten, then, as all experience shows, either the doctrine is wholly ignored, or it is made the subject of that vague, unreal way of speaking, which, alas! is so often the bane of spiritual truth.

At the same time, what has been said must not be interpreted so as to suggest that the Holy Spirit is merely an impersonal influence. On the contrary, the words of our Lord quoted above distinctly imply what we call "personality," and a personality separate from His own. If all that Jesus really meant to teach was that He would

¹ "It is the Holy Spirit who supplies the *bodily presence* of Christ, and by Him doth He accomplish all His promises to the Church. Hence, some of the ancients call Him 'Vicarium Christi,' 'The Vicar of Christ,' or Him who represents His person and dischargeth His promised work: *Operam navat Christo vicariam.*" —Owen, *Works*, vol. iii. p. 193.

manifest His own invisible presence to His disciples by spiritual influences, we can only conclude that His words have been tampered with ; as they stand, it is impossible that this should exhaust their meaning. To teach, to bear witness, to guide, to bring to remembrance, to declare the things that are to come,—these are the acts, not of a Power, but of a Person ; and all these things, Christ said, the Holy Spirit should do. Indeed, it is not easy to see how language could have been framed to set forth the idea of a Divine Person, separate alike from the Father and the Son, more explicitly than we find it in these chapters.¹

II

We turn now to the second part of our question : What is it that the Holy Spirit does for us? Christ's teaching on the work of the Spirit may be gathered up under two heads: (1) His work in the Church ; (2) His work in the world.

(1) When we speak of the Spirit's work in the Church, it must be understood that the reference is to no particular ecclesiastical organization, but to the people of Christ generally, "the men and women in whom the spiritual work of Christ is going forward." And among these the Holy Spirit works in two ways.

¹ "Our sources with the utmost possible uniformity refer to the Spirit in terms implying personality."—Stevens, *Theology of the New Testament* (p. 215), where the whole question is discussed with great fulness and fairness.

(a) He is the Spirit of truth, the Divine Remembrancer: "He shall guide you into all the truth;" "He shall take of Mine, and shall declare it unto you;" "He shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you." It is not, it will be observed, all truth, but all the truth of Christ, with which the Spirit deals—the truth concerning Him, and the truth which He taught. Nor is it a new revelation which the Spirit gives, but rather a more perfect understanding of that which has been already given in Christ. Here, then, is the test by which to try all that claims the authority of spiritual truth. Does it "glorify" Christ? Does it lead us into a fuller knowledge of Him "in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden"? "Whosoever goeth onward," says St. John, in a remarkable passage, for which English readers are indebted to the Revised Version, "and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God." In other words, no true progress is possible except as we abide in Christ. If He be ignored and left behind, though we still keep the name and boast ourselves "progressives," we have lost the reality. On the other hand, every new discovery, every movement in the life of men, every intellectual and spiritual awakening which serves to make manifest the glory of Christ as Creator, or Revealer, or Redeemer, is a fresh fulfilment of His promise concerning the guiding Spirit of truth. Perhaps our best commentary is the history of the

Church. In the New Testament itself we have the first-fruits of the Spirit's work. There we may see, in Gospels and Epistles, how the Spirit took of the things of Christ and showed them unto His disciples. And all through the varied history of the Church's long past, that same Divine Remembrancer has been at work, calling us through the lips of an Augustine, a Luther, or a Wesley, into the fulness of the inheritance of truth which is ours in Christ Jesus.

(*b*) The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of power. "Behold," said the ascending Christ, "I send forth the promise of My Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city until ye be clothed with power from on high." And, again, "Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you." Of Jesus Himself it was said by one of His disciples "that God anointed Him with the Holy Ghost and with power"; and of His disciples Jesus said: "He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall He do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto the Father." Here, again, our best commentary is the history of the Church, and especially the first chapter of that history as it is written in the Acts of the Apostles. This was the promise, "Ye shall receive power," and this, in brief, the story of its fulfilment, "With great power gave the apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus." Let any one read the early chapters of St. Luke's narrative; let him mark

the utter disparity between the "acts" and the "apostles"—between the things done and the men by whom they were done—and then let him ask if there is any explanation which does really bridge the gulf short of this, that behind Peter and John and the rest there stood Another, speaking through their lips, working through their hands, Himself the real Doer in all those wondrous "acts"? When D. L. Moody was holding in Birmingham one of those remarkable series of meetings which so deeply stirred our country in the early 'seventies, Dr. Dale, who followed the work with the keenest sympathy, and yet not without a feeling akin to stupefaction at the amazing results which it produced, once told Moody that the work was most plainly of God, for he could see no real relation between him and what he had done. Is not this disparity the very sign-manual of the Holy Spirit's presence? "Why," asked Peter, when the multitude were filled with wonder and amazement at the healing of the lame man, "Why fasten ye your eyes on us as though by our own power or godliness we had made him to walk?" Work that is really of God can never be accounted for in that fashion. There is always a something in the effects which cannot be traced back to a human cause. Let "our own power and godliness" be what they may—and they can never be too great—they are all vain and helpless apart from the power of God. "I planted, Apollos watered; God gave

the increase." Wherefore let the Church trust neither in him that planteth nor in him that watereth, but in God who giveth the increase.

(2) We come now to the Holy Spirit's work in the world. And, just as in speaking of the "Church" it was not any visible organization which we had in mind, so now by the "world" is not meant merely the persons who are outside all such organizations. There is, as we are often reminded nowadays, a Church outside the Churches; and, on the other hand, not a little of what Christ meant by the "world" is often to be found inside what we mean by the "Church." The "world," then, is simply the mass of men, wherever they are to be found, who are living apart from God. Now, of this world Christ said it "cannot receive" the Spirit of truth; "it beholdeth Him not, neither knoweth Him." If, therefore, there is a ministry of the Spirit in the world, it must be wholly different in kind from that spoken of above. And this is what we learn from Christ's teaching: "He, when He is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." There is a ring of judicial sternness in the words; they call up to our minds the solemnities of a court of justice—the indictment, the conviction, the condemnation. And yet one can well believe that there were hours in the after life of the apostles when, of all the comforting, reassuring words which Christ had spoken to them in that Upper Room, there were

none more helpful than these. For they knew now that, when they stood up to bear their witness before a hostile world, they had a fellow-witness in men's hearts. They could go nowhere—in Jerusalem, Judæa, Samaria, or the uttermost parts of the earth—where the gracious ministries of the Spirit had not preceded them. He, the Paraclete, was not only with them, their “strong-siding Champion,” He was in the world also, in the hearts even of them who set themselves most stoutly against the Lord and against His Anointed, subduing their rebelliousness and reconciling them to God. We who teach and preach to-day, do we think of these things as we ought? Does not our message sometimes win a response which is at once a surprise and a rebuke to us? We knew that the seed which we cast into the ground was the word of God; but the soil seemed so poor and thin we scarce had looked for any harvest; yet the seed sprang up and grew, we knew not how. We had forgotten that over all that wide field which is the world the Divine Husbandman is ever at work, at work while men sleep, breaking up the fallow ground, and making ready the soil for the seed. We need to learn to count more on God, to grasp more fully the glorious breadth of promise which He has given us in His Spirit, to remember that, not only in the Church, but in the world—which is His world—that Spirit is always present to testify of God, to convict men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.

And yet, while we encourage ourselves with thoughts like these, we dare not forget that men may resist, they may grieve, they may quench the Holy Spirit. He is grieved whensoever He is resisted ; He may be resisted until He is quenched. It was Christ Himself who spoke of a sin against the Holy Spirit which "hath never forgiveness." Is there any more painful, perplexing, and yet more certain fact in life than this, that man can resist God? Is there any that has bound up with it more terrible and inevitable issues? "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears," cried the martyr Stephen to his judges, "ye do always resist the Holy Ghost : as your fathers did, so do ye." And the end for their fathers and for them we know. Wherefore the Holy Spirit saith : "To-day, if ye shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts."

CONCERNING
THE KINGDOM OF GOD

“The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.”—ST. PAUL.

VI

CONCERNING THE KINGDOM OF GOD

“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth.”—MATT. vi. 10.

I

ONE of the most obvious features of the teaching of Jesus is the prominence which it gives to what is called “the kingdom of heaven,” or, “the kingdom of God.” And this prominence becomes the more striking when we turn from the Gospels to the Epistles where the phrase is only rarely to be found. With Jesus the kingdom was a kind of watchword which was continually on His lips. Thus, *e.g.*, St. Mark begins his account of the preaching of Jesus in these words: “After that John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of God and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe in the Gospel.” In like manner, St. Matthew tells us that “Jesus went about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom.” Parable after parable opens with the formula

“The kingdom of heaven is like unto——,” or, “So is the kingdom of God as if——,” or, “How shall we liken the kingdom of God?” When Christ sent forth the Twelve, this was His command, “Go . . . and as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Again, when He sent forth the Seventy, He said, “Into whatsoever city ye enter . . . say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.” And in the great Forty Days, before He was received up, it was still of “the things concerning the kingdom of God” that He spake unto His disciples. Every time a little child is baptized we call to mind His words, “For of such is the kingdom of God.” Every time we repeat the prayer He taught His disciples to pray we say, “Thy kingdom come.” In all, it is said, there are no less than one hundred and twelve references to the kingdom to be found in the Gospels.

When, however, we turn to the Epistles what do we find? In the whole of St. Paul's Epistles the kingdom is not named as often as in the briefest of the four Gospels. It is mentioned only once by St. Peter, once by St. James, once by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and not at all in the three Epistles of St. John. Not only so, but at least until quite recent times, the Church of Christ has in the main followed the lead of the apostles, and has said but little of the kingdom of God. How is this to be explained? Does it mean that the whole Church of Christ, including

the Church of the apostles, has failed to understand the mind of the Master, and has let slip an essential element of His teaching? So some recent writers do not hesitate to declare. Burke once said that he did not know how to draw up an indictment against a whole people; but these, apparently, have no difficulty in drawing up an indictment against the whole Church. "With all respect to the great Apostle," writes one of them, "one may be allowed to express his regret that St. Paul has not said less about the Church and more about the Kingdom."¹ To which I hope one may be forgiven if he is tempted to retort that the great apostle probably knew what he was about as well as his modern critic can tell him. We shall do well to pause, and pause again, before we accept any interpretation of the facts of the New Testament which implies that we to-day have a better understanding of the mind of Christ than the apostles had. For my own part, whenever I come across any writer who tries to correct Paul by Jesus, I find it safest to assume that he has mis-read Paul, or Jesus, or both. Moreover, though we need make no claim of infallibility for the Church, yet, if we believe in a Holy Spirit

¹ John Watson, *The Mind of the Master*, p. 321. May we remind Dr. Watson of what he has himself written on the first page of his *Doctrines of Grace*: "It was the mission of St. Paul to declare the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to the nations, and none of his successors in this high office has spoken with such persuasive power. *Any one differs from St. Paul at his intellectual peril*, and every one may imitate him with spiritual profit."

given to guide the disciples of Christ into all the truth of Christ, we shall find it difficult to believe at the same time that the whole Church has from the beginning missed the right way, and in a matter so important as this, failed to apprehend the thought of Christ.

We are not, however, shut up to any such unworthy conclusions. There is another and sufficient explanation of the facts to which reference has been made. It was natural that Jesus, speaking in the first instance to Jews, should move as far as possible within the circle of ideas with which they were already familiar. Now, no phrase had a more thoroughly familiar sound to Jewish ears than this of the kingdom of God. It needed, of course, to be purified and enlarged before it could be made the vehicle of the loftier ideas of Jesus. Still, the idea was there, "a point of attachment," as one writer says, in the minds of his hearers to which Jesus could fasten what He wished to say. But after our Lord's Resurrection and Ascension, and especially after the fall of Jerusalem, the whole condition of things was changed. A phrase which in the synagogues of the Jews proved helpful and illumining, might easily become, among the populations of Asia Minor, of Greece, and of Italy, to whom the gospel was now preached, useless, and even misleading. Is it any wonder, therefore, if the first Christian missionaries quietly dropped the old phrase and found others to take its place? Men

who knew themselves guided by the Spirit of Jesus would not feel compelled to quote the words of Jesus, if, under altered circumstances, other words more fittingly expressed His thoughts.¹

II

What did Jesus mean when He spoke of the kingdom of God? The idea as set forth in the Gospels is so complex, the phrase is used to cover so many and different conceptions, that it is practically impossible to frame a definition within which all the sayings of Jesus concerning the kingdom can be included. The nearest approach to a definition which it is necessary to attempt is suggested by the two petitions in the Lord's Prayer which are quoted above. The second petition explains the first: the kingdom comes in proportion as men do on earth the will of God. For our present purpose, therefore, we may think of the kingdom as a spiritual commonwealth embracing all who do God's will. To much that Christ taught concerning the kingdom—its Head, its numbers, its growth and development—it is impossible, in one brief discourse, even to refer. Here again, it must suffice to single out one or two points for special emphasis.

¹ See, in confirmation of the argument of this paragraph, Orr's *Christian View of God and the World*, p. 401 ff., and Art. "The Kingdom of God," in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*; Denney's *Studies in Theology*, Lect. VIII.

(1) In the doctrine of the kingdom of God, we have set before us the social aspect of Christ's teaching ; it reminds us of what we owe, not only to Him who is its King, but to those who are our fellow-subjects. Of particular duties it is impossible to speak, though these, as we know, fill a large place in the teaching of Jesus. But let us at least bring home to ourselves the thought of obligation, obligation involved in and springing out of our common relationship as members of the kingdom of God. The obligation is writ large on every page of the New Testament—in the Gospels, in the doctrine of the kingdom ; in the Epistles, in the corresponding doctrine of the Church. It can hardly be said too often, that, according to the New Testament ideal, there are no unattached Christians. The apostles never conceive of religion as merely a private matter between the soul and God. All true religion, as John Wesley used to say, is not solitary but social. Its starting-point is the individual, but its goal is a kingdom. Christ came to save men and women in order that through them He might build up a redeemed society in which the will of God should be done. We do, indeed, often hear of Christians whose religion begins and ends with getting their own souls saved. This simply means that so far as it is true they are not yet Christian. To think only of oneself is to deny one of the first principles of the kingdom. Wesley taught the early Methodists to sing—

“A charge to keep I have,
A God to glorify ;
A never-dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky ;”

and some of his followers, both early and later, seem to have thought that this was the whole of the hymn ; but the verse goes on without a full stop—

“To serve the present age,
My calling to fulfil ;
O may it all my powers engage
To do my Master’s will !”

And until we who profess and call ourselves Christians have learned this lesson of service, and have entered into Christ’s thought of the kingdom, with its interlacing network of obligations, we have still need that some one teach us again the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God.

(2) Again, the kingdom of God, Christ taught, is *present* ; it is not of, but it is in, this world, set up in the midst of the existing order of things. There are, it is true, passages in which Christ speaks of the kingdom as in the future, and to come. Thus, *e.g.*, He speaks of a time when men “shall come from the east and west, and from the north and south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God” ; when “the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” ; when they shall “inherit the kingdom prepared for” them “from the foundation of the world” ; and so forth. But there is no real contradiction between this and

what has been already said. The kingdom is a growth, a movement working itself out in history, and therefore it may be said to be past, present, or future, according to our point of view. In the sense that it has not yet fully come, that its final consummation is still waited for, it is future; and so sometimes Christ speaks of it. But it is simply impossible to do justice to all His sayings and deny that in His thought the kingdom is also present. Its consummation may belong to the future, its beginnings are here already. When Christ calls it the kingdom of *heaven*, it is rather its origin and character that are suggested than the sphere of its realization. In parable after parable He speaks of it as a secret, silent energy already at work in the world. He called on men here and now to seek it, and to enter it. So eagerly were the lost and the perishing pressing into it that once He declared that from the days of John the Baptist the kingdom of heaven suffered violence. Not in some future heaven but here "on earth" He bade His disciples pray that God's will might be done. "When Jesus said the kingdom of heaven, be sure He did not mean an unseen refuge, whither a handful might one day escape, like persecuted and disheartened Puritans fleeing from a hopeless England, but He intended what might be and then was in Galilee, what should be and now is in England."¹ "Thy kingdom come"—it is here on earth we must look for the

¹ J. Watson, *The Mind of the Master*, p. 323.

answer to our prayer. And every man who himself does, and in every possible way strives to get done, God's will among men, is Christ's co-worker and fellow-builder.

“I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.”

That is the spirit of all the true servants of Jesus.

(3) But the most important fact concerning the kingdom in Christ's view of it is that it is *spiritual*. And, because it is spiritual, it failed wholly to satisfy the earth-bound ambitions of the Jews. For generations they had fed their national pride with visions of a world obedient to Israel's sway, and when one who claimed to be the Messiah nevertheless told them plainly that His kingdom was not of this world, they turned from Him as from one that mocked. He and they both spoke of a kingdom of God, but while they emphasized the “kingdom” He emphasized “God.” So wholly did men fail to enter into His mind that on one occasion two of His own disciples came to Him asking that they might sit, one on the right hand, and one on the left hand in His glory. And even when He was just about to leave them, and to return to His Father, the old ambitions still made themselves heard. “Lord,” said they, “dost Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” But with all such dreams of temporal

sovereignty Christ would have nothing to do ; He had put them from Him, definitely and for ever, in the Temptation in the wilderness. He completely reversed the current notions concerning the kingdom. "Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God cometh, He answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation ; neither shall they say, Lo, here ! or, There ! for lo, the kingdom of God is within you." And when self-complacent religious leaders flattered themselves that, of course, the first places in the kingdom would be theirs, He sternly warned them that they might find themselves altogether shut out while the publicans and harlots whom they despised were admitted. Through all His teaching Christ laid the emphasis on character. Pride, and love of power, and sordid ambitions, and all self-seeking—for these things, and for them that cherished these things, the kingdom had no place. "Blessed," Christ said, "are the poor in spirit : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." "Whosoever would become great among you, shall be your minister ; and whosoever would be first among you shall be servant of all"—these are they that are accounted worthy of the kingdom of God.

The earliest account of Christ's preaching which has already been quoted, gives us the right point of view for the interpretation of Christ's idea of the kingdom as spiritual : "Jesus came into

Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: Repent ye, and believe in the gospel." He had come to establish a kingdom whose dominion should be for ever, against which the gates of hell should not prevail, and the foundation of it He laid in the penitent and obedient hearts of men. This explains why Christ had so little to do with programmes, and so much to do with men. If a man's right to the title of reformer be judged by the magnitude of the revolution which he has effected, it is but bare justice to call Him the greatest reformer who ever lived. Yet He put out no programme; He made Himself the spokesman of no party, the advocate of no social or political reform. To the disappointment of His friends, as much as to the confusion of His enemies, He absolutely refused to take sides on the vexed political questions of the hour. "Unto Cæsar," He said, "render the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's." But on individuals He spent Himself to the uttermost. "He is not only indifferent to numbers, but often seems disinclined to deal with numbers. He sends the multitude away; He goes apart into a mountain with His chosen disciples; He withdraws Himself from the throng in Jerusalem to the quiet home in Bethany; He discourses of the profoundest purposes of His mission with the Twelve in an upper room; He opens the treasures of His wisdom before one Pharisee at night, and

one unresponsive woman by the well.”¹ Always His work is done not by “external organization or mass-movements or force of numbers,” but from within : “Repent ye and believe in the gospel.”

Now, this was the very last kind of message that the Pharisees of Christ’s day were looking for. They wanted the world put right—according to their own ideas of right—it is true ; but to be told that they must begin with themselves was not at all what they wanted. Are not many of us in the same case to-day ? We are all eager for reforms, at least so long as they are from without. We have a touching faith in the power of machinery and organization. We are quite sure that if Parliament would only pass this, that, and the other bit of legislative reform, on which our hearts are set, the millennium would be here, if not by the morning post, at least by the session’s end. And there is much, undoubtedly, that Parliament can and ought to do for us. Nevertheless, was not Christ right ? Instead of the old prayer, “Create in me a clean heart, O God ; and renew a right spirit within me,” some of us, as one writer says, would rather pray, “Create a better social order, O God ; and renew a right relation between various classes of men.” We are ready to begin anywhere rather than with ourselves, at any point in the big circumference rather than at the centre. “I don’t deny, my friends,” wrote Charles Kingsley to the Chartists, “it is much cheaper and pleasanter

¹ F. G. Peabody, *Jesus Christ and the Social Question*, pp. 88, 89.

to be reformed by the devil than by God ; for God will only reform society on the condition of our reforming every man his own self, while the devil is quite ready to help us to mend the laws and the Parliament, earth and heaven, without ever starting such an impertinent and 'personal' request as that a man should mend himself." Yet without self-reform nothing is possible. "The character of the aggregate," says Herbert Spencer, "is determined by the characters of the units." And he illustrates thus : Suppose a man building with good, square, well-burnt bricks ; without the use of mortar he may build a wall of a certain height and stability. But if his bricks are warped and cracked or broken, the wall cannot be of the same height and stability. If again, instead of bricks he use cannon-balls then he cannot build a wall at all ; at most, something in the form of a pyramid with a square or rectangular base. And if, once more, for cannon-balls we substitute rough, unhewn boulders, no definite stable form is possible. "The character of the aggregate is determined by the characters of the units." Every attempt to reconstruct society which leaves out of account the character of the men and women who constitute society is foredoomed to failure. Behind every social problem stands the greater problem of the individual, the redemption of character. We may get, as assuredly we ought to get, better houses for the working-classes ; but unless we also get better working-classes for the houses, we shall not

have greatly mended matters. And no turn of the Parliamentary machine will produce these for us. We can pass new laws ; only the grace of God can make new men. "For my part," says Kingsley once more, speaking through the lips of his tailor-poet, "I seem to have learnt that the only thing to regenerate the world is not more of any system, good or bad ; but simply more of the Spirit of God." "*Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*"

CONCERNING MAN

“THO’ world on world in myriad myriads roll
Round us, each with different powers,
And other forms of life than ours,
What know we greater than the soul?”

TENNYSON.

VII

CONCERNING MAN

“There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.”—LUKE xv. 10.

THIS is one of many sayings of our Lord which reveal His sense of the infinite worth of the human soul, which is the central fact in His teaching about man, and the only one with which in the present chapter we shall be concerned. Other aspects of the truth will come into view in the following chapter, when we come to consider Christ's teaching about sin.

I

“The infinite worth of the human soul”—this is a discovery the glory of which, it is no exaggeration to say, belongs wholly to Christ. It is said that one of the most magnificent diamonds in Europe, which to-day blazes in a king's crown, once lay for months on a stall in a piazza at Rome labelled, “Rock-crystal, price one franc.” And it was thus that for ages the priceless jewel

of the soul lay unheeded and despised of men. Before Christ came, men honoured the rich, and the great, and the wise, as we honour them now; but man as man was of little or no account. If one had, or could get, a pedestal by which to lift himself above the common crowd, he might count for something; but if he had nothing save his own feet to stand upon, he was a mere nobody, for whom nobody cared. We turn to the teaching of Jesus, and what a contrast! "Of how much more value," He said, "are ye than the birds!" "How much then is a man"—not a rich man, not a wise man, not a Pharisee, but a man—"of more value than a sheep!" "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" It was by thought-provoking questions such as these that Jesus revealed His own thoughts concerning man. And, of course, when He spoke in this way about the soul, when He said that a man might gain the whole world, but that if the price he paid for it were his soul, he was the loser, He was not speaking of the souls of a select few, but of the souls of all. Every man, every woman, every little child—all were precious in His sight. It is man as man, Christ taught, that is of worth to God.

Consider how much is involved in the bare fact that Christ came into the world the son of a poor mother, and lived in it a poor man. "A man's life," He said, "consisteth not in the

abundance of the things which he possesseth." And the best commentary on the saying is just His own life; for He had nothing. There is something very suggestive in Christ's use of the little possessive pronoun "My." We know how we use the word. Listen to the rich man in the parable: "My fruits," "my barns," "my corn," "my goods." Now listen to Christ. He says: "My Father," "My Church," "My friends," "My disciples"; but He never says "My house," "My lands," "My books." The one perfect life this earth has seen was the life of One who owned nothing, and left behind Him nothing but the clothes He wore. And not only was Christ poor Himself, He spent His life among the poor. "To believe that a man with £60 a year," Canon Liddon once said, "is just as much worthy of respect as a man with £6000, you must be seriously a Christian." You must indeed. Yet that which is for us so hard never seems to have cost Christ a struggle. We cannot so much as think of mere money, more or less, counting for anything in His sight. The little artificial distinctions of society were to Him nothing, and less than nothing. He went to be guest with a man that was a sinner. A woman that was a harlot He suffered to wash His feet with her tears, and to wipe them with her hair. "This man," said His enemies, with scorn vibrant in every word, "receiveth sinners and eateth with them." And they were right; but what they

counted His deepest shame was in reality His chiefest glory.

Now, what does all this mean but simply this, that it was for man as man that Christ cared? Observe the difference in the point at which He and we become interested in men. We are interested in them, for the most part, when, by their work, or their wealth, or their fame, they have added something to themselves; in other words, we become interested when they become interesting. But that which gave worth to man in Christ's eyes lay beneath all these merely adventitious circumstances of his life, in his naked humanity, in what he was, or might be, in himself. This is why to Him all souls were dear. We love them that love us, the loving and the lovable; Christ loved the unloving and the unlovable. He was named, and rightly named, "Friend of publicans and sinners." Then were bad men of worth to Christ? They were; for, as Tennyson says, "If there be a devil in man, there is an angel too." Christ saw the possible angel in the actual devil. He knew that the lost might be found, and the bad become good, and the prodigal return home; and He loved men, not only for what they were, but for what they might be.

It would be easy to show that this high doctrine of man underlies, and is involved in, the whole life and work and teaching of Jesus. It is involved in the doctrine of God. Indeed, as Dr. Dale says, the Christian doctrine of man is

really a part of the Christian doctrine of God.¹ Because God is a Father, every man is a son of God, or, rather, every man has within him the capacity for sonship. It is involved in the doctrine of the Incarnation; that stupendous fact reveals not only the condescension of God but the glory and exaltation of man. If God could become man, there must be a certain kinship between God and man; since God has become man, our poor human nature has been thereby lifted up and glorified. The same great doctrine is implied in the truth of Christ's atonement. When He who knew Himself to be the eternal Son of God spoke of His own life as the "ransom" for the forfeited lives of men, He revealed once more how infinite is the worth of that which could be redeemed only at such tremendous cost.

Such, then, is Christ's teaching about man. And, as I have already said, it was a new thing in human history. Nowhere is the line which divides the world B.C. from the world A.D. more sharply defined than here. Before Christ came, no one dared to say, for no one believed, that the soul of every man, and still less the soul of every woman and child, was of worth to God, that even a slave might become a son of the Most High. But Christ believed it, and Christ said it, and when He said it, the new world, the world in which we live, began to be. The great difference between ancient and modern civilizations, one

¹ *Fellowship with Christ*, p. 157.

eminent historian has said, is to be found here, that while ancient civilization cared only for the welfare of the favoured few, modern civilization seeks the welfare of all. And when we ask further what has made the difference, history sends us back for answer to the four Gospels and the teaching of Jesus concerning the infinite worth of the soul of man.

II

And now, to bring matters to a practical issue, have we who profess the faith of Christ learnt to set, either upon others or upon ourselves, the value which Christ put upon all men? Far as we have travelled from ancient Greece and Rome, are we not still, in our thoughts about men, often pagan rather than Christian? Our very speech bewrayeth us, and shows how little even yet we have learnt to think Christ's thoughts after Him. He declared, in words which have already been quoted, that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Nevertheless, in our daily speech we persist in measuring men by this very standard; we say that a man "is worth" so much, though, of course, all that we mean is that he has so much. Again, we allow ourselves to speak about the "hands" in a factory, as if with the hand there went neither head nor heart. If we must put a part for the whole, why should

it not be after the fashion of the New Testament? "And there were added unto them in that day"—so it is written in one place—"about three thousand souls"—"souls," not "hands."¹ And we may depend upon it there would be less soulless labour in the world, and fewer men and women in danger of degenerating into mere "hands," if we would learn to think of them in Christ's higher and worthier way.

Let me try to show, by two or three examples, how Christ's teaching about man is needed through all our life.

(1) There was, perhaps, never a time when so many were striving to fulfil the apostle's injunction, and, as they have opportunity, to do good unto all men. More and more we busy ourselves to-day with the good works of philanthropy and Christian charity. And what we must remember is that our philanthropy needs our theology to sustain it. They only will continue Christ's work for man who cherish Christ's thoughts about man. Sever philanthropy from the great Christian ideas which have created and sustained it, and it will very speedily come to an end of its resources. All experience shows that philanthropy cut off from Christ has not capital enough on which to do its business. And the reason is not far to seek. They who strive to save their fellows, they who go down into the depths that they may lift men up, see

¹ See Trench's *Study of Words*, p. 100.

so much of the darkened under-side of human life, they are brought so close up to the ugly facts of human baseness, human trickery, human ingratitude, that, unless there be behind them the staying, steadying power of the faith and love of Christ, they cannot long endure the strain; they grow weary in well-doing, perchance even they grow bitter and contemptuous, and in a little while the tasks they have taken up fall unfinished from their hands. "Society" takes to "slumming" for a season—just as for another season it may take to ping-pong—but the fit does not last; and only they keep on through the long, grey days, when neither sun nor stars are seen, who have learnt to look on men with the eyes, and to feel toward them with the heart, of Jesus the Man of Nazareth.

(2) "Whoso shall cause one of these little ones that believe on Me to stumble, it is profitable for him that a great mill-stone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be sunk in the depth of the sea." Once more is revealed Christ's thought of the worth of the soul. How the holy passion against him who would hurt "one of these little ones" glows and scorches in His words! Is this a word for any of us? Is there one among us who is tempting a brother man to dishonesty, to drink, to lust; who is pushing some thoughtless girl down the steep and slippery slope which ends—we know where? Then let him stop and listen, not to me, but to

Christ. Never, I think, did He speak with such solemn, heart-shaking emphasis, and He says that it were better a man should die, that he should die this night, die the most miserable and shameful death, than that he should bring the blood of another's soul upon his head. It must needs be that occasions of stumbling come, but woe, woe to that man by whom they come, when he and the slain soul's Saviour shall stand face to face! Oh, if there be one among us who is playing the tempter, and doing the devil's work, let him get to his knees, and cry with the conscience-smitten Psalmist, "Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, Thou God of my salvation"; and peradventure even yet He may hear and have mercy.

(3) Let fathers and mothers ponder what this teaching of Jesus concerning man means for them in relation to their children. There came into your home a while ago a little child, a gift from God, just such a babe as Jesus Himself was in His mother's arms in Bethlehem. The child is yours, bone of your bone, flesh of your flesh, and it bears your likeness and image; but it is also God's child, and it bears His image. What difference is the coming of the little stranger making in you? I do not ask what difference is it making *to* you, for the answer would be ready in a moment, "Much, every way"; but, what difference is it making *in* you? Does it never occur to you that you ought to be a different man—a better man—that you ought

to be a different woman—a better woman—for the sake of the little one lying in the cradle? Do you know that of all the things God ever made and owns, in this or all His worlds, there is nothing more dear to Him than the soul of the little child He has committed to your hands? What hands those should be that bear a gift like that! Perhaps we never thought of it in that way before. But it is true, whether we think of it or not. Is it not time to begin to think of it? This night, as we stand over our sleeping child, let us promise to God, for the child's sake, that we will be His.

(4) Last of all, we must learn to set Christ's value upon ourselves. This is the tragedy of life, that we hold ourselves so cheap. We are sprung of heaven's first blood, have titles manifold, and yet, when the crown is offered us, we choose rather, like the man with the muck-rake, in Bunyan's great allegory, to grub among the dust and sticks and straws of the floor. In the times of the French Revolution, French soldiers, it is said, stabled their horses in some of the magnificent cathedrals of France; but some of us are guilty of a far worse sacrilege in that holy of holies which we call the soul. "Ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold," but with blood, precious blood, even the blood of Christ. And the soul which cost that, we are ready to sell any day in the open market for a little more pleasure or a little more pelf.

The birthright is bartered for the sorriest mess of pottage, and the jewel which the King covets to wear in His crown our own feet trample in the mire of the streets. The pity of it, the pity of it!

In one of Dora Greenwell's simple and beautiful *Songs of Salvation*, a pitman tells to his wife the story of his conversion. He had got a word like a fire in his heart that would not let him be, "Jesus, the Son of God, who loved, and who gave Himself for me."

"It was for me that Jesus died! for me, and a world of men,
Just as sinful, and just as slow to give back His love again;
And He didn't wait till I came to Him, but He loved me at my worst;
He needn't ever have died for me if I could have loved Him first."

And then he continues:—

"And could'st Thou love such a man as me, my Saviour! Then I'll take
More heed to this wand'ring soul of mine, if it's only for Thy sake."

Yes, we are all of worth to God, but we must needs go to the Cross to learn how great is our worth; and, as we bow in its sacred shadow, may we learn to say: "For Thy sake, O Christ, for Thy sake, I'll take more heed to this wandering soul of mine."¹

¹ The chapter entitled "Christ's Doctrine of Man" is one of the most suggestive chapters in Dr. Bruce's admirable work *The Kingdom of God*.

CONCERNING SIN

“O MAN, strange composite of heaven and earth !
Majesty dwarfed to baseness ! fragrant flower
Running to poisonous seed ! and seeming worth
Choking corruption ! weakness mastering power !
Who never art so near to crime and shame,
As when thou hast achieved some deed of name.”

NEWMAN.

VIII

CONCERNING SIN

“*When ye pray, say. . . . Forgive us our sins.*”—LUKE xi. 2, 4.

A RECENT writer has pointed out that sin, like death, is not seriously realized except as a personal fact. We really know it only when we know it about ourselves. The word “sin” has no serious meaning to a man, except when it means that he himself is a sinful man. And hence it comes to pass that we can still turn to the penitential Psalms, to the seventh chapter of Romans, to the *Confessions* of St. Augustine, or to the *Grace Abounding* of John Bunyan, and make their words the language of our own broken and contrite hearts. For when Bunyan and Augustine and Paul and the psalmists spoke of sin, they spoke not the thoughts of others, but their knowledge of themselves; they looked into their own hearts and wrote. That is why their words “find” us to-day. Nevertheless, paradox though it may seem, our greatest Teacher concerning sin, Himself “knew no sin.” Born without sin, living and dying without sin, Christ

yet "knew what was in man," knew the sin that was in man, and from His own sinless height once for all revealed and judged and condemned it. Let us seek, then, to learn the mind of Christ on this great matter.

And once more, as I have had occasion to point out in a previous chapter, we must not look for anything formal, defined, systematic in Christ's teaching. We cannot open the Gospels, as we might some modern theological treatise, and read out from them a scientific exposition of sin—its origin, its nature, its treatment. The New Testament is not like a museum, where the flowers are dried and pressed, and the fossils lie carefully arranged within glass cases, and everything is duly classified and labelled. Rather it is like nature itself, where the flowers grow wild at our feet, and the rocks lie as the Creator's hand left them, and where each man must do the classifying and labelling for himself. Museums have their uses, and there will always be those who prefer them—they save so much trouble. But since Christ's aim was not to save us trouble, but to teach us to see things with our own eyes, to see them as He saw them, and to think of them as He thinks, it is no wonder that He has chosen rather to put us down in the midst of a world of living truths than in a museum of assorted and dead facts.

I

What, then, is the teaching of Jesus concerning sin? His tone is at once severe and hopeful. Sometimes His words are words that shake our hearts with fear; sometimes they surprise us with their overflowing tenderness and pity. But however He may deal with the sinner, we are always made to feel that to Jesus sin is a serious thing, a problem not to be slurred over and made light of, but to be faced, and met, and grappled with. Christ's sense of the gravity of sin comes out in many ways.

(1) It is involved in His doctrine of man. He who made so much of man could not make light of man's sin. It is because man is so great that his sin is so grave. No one can understand the New Testament doctrine of sin who does not read it in the light of the New Testament doctrine of man. When we think of man as Christ thought of him, when we see in him the possibilities which Christ saw, the Scripture language concerning sin becomes intelligible enough; until then it may easily seem exaggerated and unreal. It is the height for which man was made and meant which measures the fall which is involved in his sin.

(2) Call to mind the language in which Christ set forth the effects of sin. He spoke of men as blind, as sick, as dead; He said they were as sheep gone astray, as sons that are lost, as men in debt which they can never pay, in bondage from

which they can never free themselves. The very accumulation of metaphors bears witness to Christ's sense of the havoc wrought by sin. Nor are they metaphors merely ; they are His reading of the facts of life as it lay before Him. Let me refer briefly to two of them. (*a*) Christ spoke of men as in bondage through their sin. "If," He said once, "ye abide in My word . . . ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." And straightway jealous Jewish ears caught at that word "free." "Free?" they cried, "Free? we be Abraham's seed, and have never yet been in bondage to any man: how sayest Thou, Ye shall be made free?" Yet even as they lift their hands in protest Christ hears the clink of their fetters: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, every one that committeth sin is the bond-servant—the slave—of sin." "To whom ye present yourselves as servants unto obedience, his servants—his slaves—ye are whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness." Apostle and Lord mean the same thing, true of us as it was true of the Jews: "Every one that committeth sin is the slave of sin." (*b*) Further, Christ says, men are in debt through their sin. In one parable He tells us of a certain lender who had two debtors; the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty; but neither had wherewith to pay. In another parable we hear of a servant who owed his lord ten thousand talents—a gigantic sum, vague in its vastness, "millions"

as we might say—and he likewise had not wherewith to pay. Further, in the application of each parable, it is God to whom this unpayable debt is due. Now, it is just at this point that our sense of sin to-day is weakest. The scientist, the dramatist, the novelist are all proclaiming our responsibility toward them that come after us; with pitiless insistence they are telling us that the evil that men do lives after them, that it is not done with when it is done. Yet, with all this, there may be no thought of God. It is the consciousness not merely of responsibility, but of responsibility God-ward, which needs to be strengthened. When we sin we may wrong others much, we may wrong ourselves more, but we wrong God most of all; and we shall never recover Christ's thought of sin until, like the psalmist and the prodigal, we have learned to cry to Him, "Against Thee have I sinned, and done that which is evil in Thy sight."

(3) But sin, in Christ's view of it, is not merely something a man does, it is what he is. Go through Paul's long and dismal catalogue of "the works of the flesh": "Fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, heresies, envyings, drunkenness, revellings, and such like." Yet even this is not the whole of the matter. Sin is more than the sum-total of man's sins. The fruits are corrupt because the tree which yields them is corrupt; the stream is tainted because the fountain whence it flows is impure;

man commits sin because he is sinful. It was just here that Christ broke, and broke decisively, with the traditional religion of His time. To the average Jew of that day righteousness and sin meant nothing more than the observance or the non-observance of certain religious traditions. "For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands diligently, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders : and when they come from the market-place, except they wash themselves, they eat not ; and many other things there be which they have received to hold, washings of cups, and pots, and brazen vessels. "Nay," said Jesus, "you are beginning at the wrong end, you are concerned about the wrong things, for from within, out of the heart of men, evil thoughts proceed, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, covetings, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, railing, pride, foolishness : all these evil things proceed from within." Deep in the heart of man evil has its seat, and until that is touched nothing is done.

(4) And, lastly, Christ says all men are sinful. Of course, He did not say, nor did He imply that all are equally sinful. On the contrary, He said plainly that whereas the debt of some is as fifty pence, the debt of others is as five hundred pence. Neither did Christ teach that man is wholly sinful, in the sense that there is in man nothing that is good, or that every man is by nature as bad as he can be. Nor, let it be said in passing, is this what

theology means when it speaks, as it still sometimes does, about the "total depravity" of human nature. What is meant is, as Dr. Denney says, that the depravity which sin has produced in human nature extends to the whole of it.¹ If I poison my finger, it is not only the finger that is poisoned; the poison is in the blood, and, unless it be got rid of, not my finger merely, but my life is in peril. And in like manner the sin which taints my nature taints my whole nature, perverting the conscience, enfeebling the will, and darkening the understanding. But with whatever qualifications Christ's indictment is against the whole human race. He never discusses the origin of sin, but He always assumes its presence. No matter how His hearers might vary, this factor remained constant. "If ye, being evil"—that mournful presupposition could be made everywhere. He spoke of men as "lost," and said that He had come to seek and save them. He summoned men, without distinction, to repentance. He spoke of His blood as "shed for many unto remission of sins." The gospel which, in His name, was to be preached unto all the nations was concerning "repentance and remission of sins." Even His own disciples He taught, as they prayed, to say, "Forgive us our sins." And though it is true He said once that He had not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance, He did not thereby mean to suggest that there really are some righteous

¹ *Studies in Theology*, p. 83.

persons who have no need of repentance ; rather was He seeking by the keenness of His Divine irony to pierce the hard self-satisfaction of men whose need was greater just because it was unfelt.

“ All have sinned ; ” but once more let us remind ourselves, sin is not seriously realized except as a personal fact. The truth must come home as a truth about ourselves. The accusing finger singles men out and fastens the charge on each several conscience : “ Thou art the man ! ” And as the accusation is individual, so, likewise, must the acknowledgment be. It is not enough that in church we cry in company, “ Lord have mercy upon us, miserable offenders ” ; each must learn to pray for himself, “ God be merciful to me a sinner. ” Then comes the word of pardon, personal and individual as the condemnation, “ The Lord also hath put away thy sin. ”

II

In what has been said thus far I have dwelt, for the most part, on the sterner and darker aspects of Christ's teaching about sin. And, as every student of contemporary literature knows, there are voices all around us to-day ready to take up and emphasize every word of His concerning the mischief wrought by moral evil. Take, *e.g.*, a passage like this from Thomas Hardy's powerful but sombre story, *Tess* :—

"Did you say the stars were worlds, Tess?"

"Yes."

"All like ours?"

"I don't know; but I think so. They sometimes seem to me like the apples on our stubborn-tree. Most of them splendid and sound—a few blighted."

"Which do we live on—a splendid one, or a blighted one?"

"A blighted one."

Or, turn to the works of George Eliot. No prophet of righteousness ever bound sin and its consequences more firmly together, or proclaimed with more solemn emphasis the certainty of the evil-doer's doom. "Our deeds are like children that are born to us," she says; "nay, children may be strangled, but deeds never"—this is the note one hears through all her books. If we have done wrong, it is in vain we cry for mercy. We are taken by the throat and delivered over to the tormentors until we have paid the uttermost farthing.

"The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,
Moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it."

And this is all that writers such as these have to say to us. Retribution they know, but not Redemption. "There are no arresting angels in the path"—only the Angel of Justice with the drawn sword.

But this is not the teaching of Jesus concerning sin. He is not blind, and if we give ear to

Him He will not suffer us to be blind, either to its character or its consequences ; but He says that sin can be forgiven, and its iron bondage broken. Jesus believed in the recoverability of man at his worst. It is a fact significant of much that the first mention of sin in the New Testament is in a prophecy of its destruction : "Thou shalt call His name Jesus ; for it is He that shall save His people from their sins." And throughout the first three Gospels sin is named almost exclusively in connection with its forgiveness.¹ What Christ hath joined together let no man put asunder. Herein is the very gospel of God, that Christ came not to condemn the world, but that the world, through Him, might be saved. "Do you know what Christ would say to you, my girl?" said a missionary to a poor girl dying. "He would say, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee.'" "Would He, though, would He?" she cried, starting up ; "take me to Him, take me to Him." Yes, thank God, we know what to do with our sin ; we know what we must do to be saved.

Let us go back again for a moment over the ground we have already travelled. We are in debt, with nothing to pay ; but Christ has taken the long account, and has crossed it through and through. We are in bondage, with no power to set ourselves free ; but Christ has come to rend the iron chain and proclaim deliverance to the captives. We are wrong, wrong within, wrong at

¹ See Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, Art. "Sin," vol. iii. p. 533.

the core ; but again He is equal to our need, for concerning Him it is written that He shall take away not only the "sins" but the "sin" of the world. Is anything too hard for Him? Just as a lover of pictures will sometimes discover a portrait, the work of an old master, marred and disfigured by the dirt and neglect of years, and will patiently cleanse and retouch it, till the lips seem to speak again, and the old light shines in the eyes, and all its hidden glory is revealed once more, so does Christ bring out the Divine image, hidden but never lost, in the sinful souls of men. And all this He can do for all men ; for Christ knows no hopeless ones.

One of the saddest sights in a great city is its hospital for incurables. Who can think but with a pang of pity and of pain of these—old men and little children joined in one sad fellowship—for whom the physician's skill has done its best and failed, for whom now nothing remains save to suffer and to die? But in the world's great hospital of ailing souls, where every day the Good Physician walks, there is no incurable ward. He lays His hands on the sick, and they are healed ; He touches the eyes of the blind, and they see ; unto the leper as white as snow his flesh comes again as the flesh of a little child ; even souls that are dead through their trespasses and sins He restores to life. But never, never does He turn away from any, saying, "Thou art too far gone ; there is nothing that I can do

for thee." "I spake to Thy disciples," cried the father of the child which had a dumb spirit, "I spake to Thy disciples that they should cast it out; and they were not able." "Bring him unto Me," said Jesus. Then He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying unto him, "Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I command thee, come out of him and enter no more into him." Verily, with authority He commandeth even the unclean spirits and they obey Him.

Therefore let us despair of no man; therefore let no man despair of himself. If we will, we can; we can, because Christ will. "I was before," says St. Paul, "a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; howbeit I obtained mercy." "I am a wretched captive of sin," cries Samuel Rutherford, "yet my Lord can hew heaven out of worse timber." There is no unpardonable sin—none, at least, save the sin of refusing the pardon which avails for all sin. "'Mine iniquity is greater than can be forgiven.'¹ No, Cain, thou errest; God's mercy is far greater, couldst thou ask mercy. Men cannot be more sinful than God is merciful if, with penitent hearts, they will call upon Him."

We have all read of the passing of William MacLure in Ian Maclaren's touching idyll. "A'm gettin' drowsy," said the doctor to Drumsheugh, "read a bit tae me." Then Drumsheugh put on his spectacles, and searched for some comfortable Scripture. Presently he began to read: "In My

¹ This is the R. V. marginal rendering of Gen. iv. 13.

Father's house are many mansions ;" but MacLure stopped him. "It's a bonnie word," he said, "but it's no' for the like o' me. It's ower guid ; a' daurna tak' it." Then he bid Drumsheugh shut the book and let it open of itself, and he would find the place where he had been reading every night for the last month. Drumsheugh did as he was bidden, and the book opened at the parable wherein the Master tells what God thinks of a Pharisee and a penitent sinner. And when he came to the words, "And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner," once more the dying man stopped him : "That micht hae been written for me, Paitrick, or ony ither auld sinner that hes feenished his life, an' hes naething tae say for himsel."

Nothing to say for ourselves—that is what it comes to, when we know the truth about ourselves. And when at last our mouth is stopped, when our last poor plea is silenced, when with penitent and obedient hearts we seek the mercy to which from the first we have been utterly shut up, then indeed we

"have found the ground wherein
Sure our soul's anchor may remain."

"Not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to His mercy He saved us."

CONCERNING RIGHTEOUSNESS

“I spend my whole life in going about and persuading you all to give your first and chiefest care to the perfection of your souls, and not till you have done that to think of your bodies, or your wealth; and telling you that virtue does not come from wealth, but that wealth, and every other good thing which men have, whether in public, or in private, comes from virtue.”—SOCRATES.

IX

CONCERNING RIGHTEOUSNESS

“Seek ye first . . . His righteousness.”—MATT. vi. 33.

RIGHTEOUSNESS, as it was understood and taught by Christ, includes the two things which we often distinguish as religion and morality. It is right-doing, not only as between man and man, but as between man and God. The Lawgiver of the New Testament, like the lawgiver of the Old, has given to us two tables of stone. On the one He has written, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind”; and on the other, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” In these two commandments the whole law is summed up, the whole duty of man is made known. It is well to emphasize this two-fold aspect of the truth at a time when we are often tempted to define religion wholly in the terms of morality, and, while insisting on the duties which we owe to each other, to forget those which we owe to God. If there be a God righteousness must surely have a meaning in relation to Him; it cannot be simply another

name for philanthropy. Christ at least will not call that man just and good who does right to all except his Maker. In the Christian doctrine of the good life room must be found for God. At the present moment, however, it is the subject in its man-ward aspect that I wish specially to keep in view, partly because some limitation is obviously necessary, and partly also because it is this of which Christ Himself had most to say.

I

What, then, is Christ's idea of righteousness? In other words, what did He teach concerning the good life? Now here also, as in His teaching about God, Christ did not need to begin *de novo*. Those to whom He spoke had already their own ideals of duty and holiness. True, these were sadly in need of revision and correction. Nevertheless, such as they were, they were there, and Christ could use them as His starting-point. Consequently, therefore, we find His ideas of righteousness defined largely by contrast with existing ideas. "It was said to them of old time . . . but I say unto *you*." This is the note heard all through the Sermon on the Mount. The contrast may be stated in two ways.

(1) In the first place, Christ said that the righteousness of His disciples must exceed that of publicans and heathen: "If ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? Do not even

the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the Gentiles the same?" There are virtues exhibited in the lives of even wholly irreligious men. There are rudimentary moral principles which they that know not God nevertheless acknowledge and obey. It was so in Christ's time ; it is so still. The popular American ballad, " Jim Bludso," and Ian Maclaren's touching story of the Drumtochty postman, are familiar illustrations of self-sacrificing virtues revealed by men of coarse and vicious lives. Nor ought we to deny the reality of such virtues ; still less ought we to follow the bad example of St. Augustine and call them "splendid vices." Such was not Christ's way. He assumed the existence and reality of this "natural goodness," and with familiar illustrations of it on His tongue turned upon His disciples with the question, "What do ye more?"

"What do ye more?" Yet in some respects, it is to be feared, the morality of the Church sometimes falls behind that of the world. One of the most painful passages in St. Paul's epistles is that in which he tells the Corinthian Christians that one of their own number had been guilty of immorality such as would have shocked even the conscience of an unbelieving Gentile. And it was but the other day that I came across this sentence from the pen of an observant and friendly critic of contemporary religious life : "I am afraid," he said, "it must be admitted that the idea of honour,

though in itself an essential part of Christian ethics, is much stronger outside the Churches than within them." How far facts justify the criticism I will not stay to inquire; but the very fact that a charge like this can be made should prove a sharp reminder to us of the stringency of the demands which Jesus Christ makes upon us. There is no kind of sound moral fruit which is to be found anywhere in the wide fields of the world which He does not look for in richer and riper abundance within the garden of His Church.

A great Christian preacher has given an admirable illustration of one way in which we may examine ourselves in this matter. He has grouped together a number of precepts from the writings of some of the great heathen moralists, such as Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, and then has urged the question how far we who profess to be the disciples of a loftier faith are true even to these ancient heathen ideals.¹ Perhaps, however, this is not a method of self-examination which is open to us all. But this, at least, we can do: we can test ourselves by that moral law, which God gave to the Jews by Moses, and which Christ reinterpreted in the Sermon on the Mount. "Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit adultery"—all these commandments in their literal meaning we must observe; yet this is not enough; "do not even the publicans the same?" and Christ's demand is, "What do ye

¹ R. W. Dale, *Evangelical Revival and other Sermons*, p. 66 ff.

more than others?" The murderous thought, Christ says, that is murder; the lustful look, that is adultery. "Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you." As we listen to words like these must not we also confess, "Either these sayings are not Christ's, or we are not Christians"?

(2) Christ's idea of righteousness is further defined by contrast with that of the Pharisees: "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." What was the Pharisees' idea of religion? Let us take the words which Christ Himself put into the lips of a representative of his class: "God, I thank Thee, that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I get." This is a full-length portrait of the finished Pharisee. Religion to him was a round of prescribed ritual, a barren externalism, a subjection to the dominion of the letter, which never touched the heart, nor bowed the spirit down in penitence and humility before God. The Pharisee's whole concern was with externals; but Christ declared that he who is only right outwardly is not right at all. There is no such thing, He said, as goodness which is not from within. The alms-deeds, the prayer, the fasting of the Pharisee

were all done before men, to be seen of them ; and so long as that which men saw was right and seemly, he was satisfied. But Christ went back behind the outward act to the heart. A man is really, He said, what he is there. You may hang grapes on a thorn-bush, that will not make it a vine ; you may put a sheep's fleece on a wolf's back, but that will not change its wolfish heart. And men are what they are within. Just as to get good fruit you must first of all make the tree good, so to secure good deeds you must first make good men. This was the truth which Pharisaism ignored ; with what results all the world knows. In the long history of man, it remains, perhaps, the supreme illustration of the fatal facility with which religion and morality are divorced when once the emphasis is laid upon the outward and ceremonial instead of the inward and spiritual. All experience helps us to understand how the system works. There is no deliberate intention of setting ritual above righteousness, but it is so much easier to count one's beads than to curb one's temper, so much easier to fast in Lent than to be unswervingly just, that if once the easier thing gets attached to it an exaggerated importance, fidelity in it is allowed to atone for laxity in greater things, and the last result is Pharisaism, where we see conscience concerned about the tithing of garden herbs, but with no power over the life, and religion not merely tolerating but actually ministering to moral evil. It was in

the name of religion that the Pharisees suffered a man to violate even the sanctities of the Fifth Commandment, and to do dishonour to his father and mother. The righteous man in their eyes was not he who loved mercy, and did justly, and walked humbly with his God, but he who observed the traditions of the elders. So that, as Professor Bruce says,¹ it was possible for a man to comply with all the requirements of the Rabbis and yet remain in heart and life an utter miscreant. "Outwardly," said Christ, "ye appear righteous unto men, but inwardly ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." Is it any wonder that He should call down fire from heaven to consume a system which had yielded such bitter, poisonous fruits as these?

But let us remember, as Mozley well says,² there are no extinct species in the world of evil. The value for us of Christ's condemnation lies in this, that it is a permanent tendency of human nature which He is condemning. Pharisaism is not dead. Have I not seen the Pharisee dressed in good broad-cloth and going to church with his Bible under his arm? And have I not seen him sitting in church and reading the twenty-third chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, and thinking to himself what shockingly wicked people these men must have been of whom Christ spoke such

¹ *The Kingdom of God*, p. 203.

² In his famous sermon on the Pharisees, *University Sermons*, p. 32.

terrible words, and never once supposing that there is anything in the chapter that concerns him? No, Pharisaism is not dead; and when we read of those who devoured widows' houses and for a pretence made long prayers, using their religion as a cloak for their villainy, let us remember that Christ says to His disciples to-day, even as He said to them centuries ago, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven."

II

Thus far we have considered Christ's idea of righteousness only in contrast with other ideas. When we seek to define it in itself we fall back naturally on the words of the two great commandments which have already been quoted: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind;" and "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Righteousness, Christ says, is love, love to God and love to man.

But to them of old time it was said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour." Where, then, is the difference between the old commandment and the new? It lies in the new definition of "neighbour." The old law which said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour," said also, "and hate thine enemy"; which meant that some are and some

are not our neighbours, and that toward those who are not love has no obligations. But Christ broke down for ever the middle wall of partition, and declared the old distinction null and void. In His parable of the Good Samaritan He taught that every man is our neighbour who has need of us, and to whom it is possible for us to prove ourselves a friend. As we have opportunity we are to do good unto all men. The same lesson with, if possible, still greater emphasis, Christ taught in the Upper Room: "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." A love that goes all the way with human need, that gives not itself by measure, that is not chilled by indifference, nor thwarted by ingratitude, that fights against evil until it overcomes it—such was the love He gave, and such is the love He asks. And in that command all other commands are comprehended. Christ might have made His own the daring word of St. Augustine, "Love, and do what you like."

When first men heard this law of the heavenly righteousness how wondrous simple it must have seemed in contrast with the elaborate scribe-made law which their Rabbis laid upon them. Pharisaism had reduced religion to a branch of mechanics, a vast network of rules which closed in the life of man on every side, a burden grievous and heavy to be borne, which crushed the soul under its weary load. This was the yoke of

which Peter said that neither they nor their fathers were able to bear it. Was it any marvel that from such a system men should turn to Him who cried, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for My yoke is easy, and My burden is light"? But if Christ's law of love is simpler it is also far more exacting than the old law which it superseded. It has meshes far finer than any that Pharisaic ingenuity could weave. Rabbinical law can secure the tithing of mint and anise and cummin, the washing of cups and pots, and many such like things; it can regulate the life of ritual and outward observance; and after that it has no more that it can do. But Christ's law of love is a mentor that searches out the deep things of man. The inside of the cup and platter, the things that are within, the hidden man of the heart—it is on these its eyes are fixed. It gives heed both to the words of the mouth and the meditations of the heart. And, sometimes, when the lips are speaking fair, suddenly it will fling open the heart's door and show us where, in some secret chamber, Greed and Pride and Envy and Hate sit side by side in unblest fellowship. Verily this law of love is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart.

There is no room to do more than mention the fact which crowns the revelation of this new law of righteousness. Christ's words about good-

ness do not come to us alone ; they come united with a life which is their best exposition. Christ is all His followers are to be ; in Him the righteousness of the kingdom is incarnate. From henceforth the righteous man is the Christ-like man. The standard of human life is no longer a code but a character ; for the gospel does not put us into subjection to fresh laws ; it calls us to "the study of a living Person, and the following of a living Mind."¹ And when to Jesus we bring the old question, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" He does not now repeat the commandments, but He says, "If thou wouldest be perfect, follow Me, learn of Me, do as I have done to you, love as I have loved you."

III

Such, then, is the good life which Christ reveals, and to which He calls us. To say that to Him we owe our highest ideal of righteousness, is only to affirm what no one now seriously denies. John Stuart Mill has, it is true, alleged certain defects against Christianity as an ethical system, yet Mill himself has frankly admitted that "it would not be easy now, even for an unbeliever, to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract to the concrete, than to endeavour so to live that Christ would approve our life." If Christ be not our one Master in the

¹ R. W. Church, *Gifts of Civilisation*, p. 71.

moral world, it will at least be soon enough to discuss a rival's claims when he appears ; as yet there is no sign of him. But the point I am most anxious to emphasize just now is not simply that Jesus has put before us an ideal, the highest of its kind in the world, but that there is nothing of any kind to be desired before it. To be good as Christ was good, here in very truth is the *summum bonum* of life, the greatest thing in the world, that which, before all other things, a man should seek to make his own. There are times, perhaps, in the lives of all of us when we are tempted to doubt it—times when the kingdoms of this world, the kingdoms of wealth and power and knowledge lie stretched at our feet, and the whispering fiend at our elbow bids us bow and enter in. But once again, if we be true men, the moment comes,

“When the spirit's true endowments
Stand out plainly from its false ones,”

when the sacred, saving faith in righteousness returns, and we know that Christ was right, that for ever and for ever it is true that better than to be rich, or to be clever, or to be famous, is it to be true, to be pure, to be good.

Yes, goodness is the principal thing ; therefore get goodness, and with all thy getting—at the price of all that thou hast gotten (such is the true meaning of the words)¹—get righteousness. Is

¹ Prov. iv. 7 : “Get wisdom ; and with all thy getting get understanding,” which does not mean simply, “Whatever else you

this what we are doing? Goodness is the first thing; are we putting it first? Day by day are we saying to it, "Sit thou on my right hand," while we put all other things under our feet? "Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth if I remember thee not; if I prefer not thee above my chief joy"—is this the kind of honour that we are paying to it? "We make it our ambition," said St. Paul, "to be well pleasing unto Him."¹ Where this is the master ambition, all other lawful ambitions may be safely cherished and given their place. But if some lesser power rule, whose right it is not to reign over us, the end is chaos and night. "Seek ye first His righteousness;" we subvert Christ's order at our peril. And this righteousness must be sought. As men seek wealth, as men seek knowledge, as men seek power, so must we seek goodness. "Wherefore giving all diligence"—in no other way can the pearl of great price be secured; it does not lie by the roadside for any lounge to pick up. "With toil of heart and knees and hands," so only can the "path upward" and the prize be won. "Blessed," said Jesus, "are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness." Blessed, He meant, are they who long more than anything else to be

get, be sure to get understanding." The marginal reference is to Matt. xiii. 44: wisdom, like the pearl of great price, is to be secured with, *i.e.* at the cost and sacrifice of, everything else that can be gotten. (See J. R. Lumby on "Shortcomings of Translation," *Expositor*, second series, vol. iii, p. 203.)

¹ 2 Cor. v. 9 R.V. margin.

good ; for all such longing shall be abundantly satisfied. Exalt righteousness, and she shall promote thee ; she shall bring thee to honour when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thine head a chaplet of grace ; a crown of beauty shall she deliver to thee.

It is fitting that a chapter on righteousness should follow one on sin, for this may find some to whom the other made no appeal. At a meeting of Christian workers held some years ago in Glasgow, the chairman invited the late Professor Henry Drummond, who was present, though his name was not on the programme, to say a few words. He accepted the invitation, but said he would do no more than state a fact and ask a question. The fact was this, that in recent revival movements, in which he had had large experience, there were few indications of that deep and overwhelming conviction of sin which had been so characteristic a feature of similar revivals in past days. And this was the question, Did it mean that the Holy Spirit was in any way modifying the method of His operation? What answer the wise men of the meeting gave to the Professor's question I do not know. But fact and question alike deserve to be carefully pondered. The Spirit, when He is come, Christ said, "will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." "Will convict the world of righteousness"—have we not sometimes forgotten this? Have we not put the

full stop at "sin," as though the Holy Spirit's convicting work ended there? Nevertheless, there are many to-day whose religious life begins, not so much in a sense of their own sin and guilt and need, as rather in the consciousness of the glory and honour of Christ. It is what they find within themselves which brings some men to Christ; it is what they find in Him which brings others. Some are driven by the strong hands of stern necessity; some are wooed by the sweet constraint of the sinless Son of God. Some are crushed and broken and humbled to the dust, and their first cry is "God be merciful to me a sinner"; some when they hear the call of Christ leap up to greet Him with a new light in their eyes and the glad confession on their lips, "Lord I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest."

What, then, shall we say to these things? What but this, "There are diversities of workings, but the same God, who worketh all things in all." Travellers to the same country do not always journey by the same route; and for some of the heavenly pilgrims the Slough of Despond lies on the other side of the Wicket Gate. After all, it is of small moment what brings a man forth from the City of Destruction; enough if he have come out and if now his face is set toward the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

CONCERNING PRAYER

“Who seeketh finds : what shall be his relief
Who hath no power to seek, no heart to pray,
No sense of God, but bears as best he may,
A lonely incommunicable grief?
What shall he do? One only thing he knows,
That his life flits a frail uneasy spark
In the great vast of universal dark,
And that the grave may not be all repose.
Be still, sad soul ! lift thou no passionate cry,
But spread the desert of thy being bare
To the full searching of the All-seeing eye :
Wait—and through dark misgiving, blank despair,
God will come down in pity, and fill the dry
Dead plain with light, and life, and vernal air.”

J. C. SHAIRP.

X

CONCERNING PRAYER

“What man is there of you, who, if his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone; or if he shall ask for a fish, will give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?”—MATT. vii. 9-11.

THERE has been in our day much painful disputation concerning prayer and the laws of nature. Whole volumes have been written to prove that it is possible, or that it is impossible, for God to answer prayer. I am not going to thresh out again this dry straw just now. Discussions of this kind have, undoubtedly, their place; indeed, whether we will or no, they are often forced upon us by the conditions of the hour; but they had no place in the teaching of Jesus, and I do not propose to say anything about them now. I wish rather, imitating as far as may be the gracious simplicity and directness of the argument of Jesus which we have just read, to gather up some of the practical suggestions touching this great matter which are strewn throughout the Gospels alike in the precepts and practice of our Lord.

I

First of all, then, let us get fixed in our minds the saying of Jesus that "men ought always to pray and not to faint." The very form of the saying suggests that Christ knew how easy it is for us to faint and grow weary in our prayers. Men cease from prayer on many grounds. Some there are in whom the questioning, doubting spirit has grown so strong that for a time it has silenced even the cry of the heart for God. Some there are who are so busy, they tell us, that they have no time for prayer; and after all, they ask, is not honest work the highest kind of prayer? And some there are who have ceased to pray, because they have been disappointed, because nothing seemed to come of their prayers. They asked but they did not receive, they sought but they did not find, they knocked but no door was opened to them; there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded; and now they ask, they seek, they knock no more. And some of us there are who do not pray because, as one of the psalmists says, our soul "cleaveth unto the dust." The things of God, the things of the soul, the things of eternity—what Paul calls "the things that are above"—are of no concern to us; we have sold ourselves to work, to think, to live, for the things of the earth and the dust.

Nevertheless, be the cause of our prayerlessness what it may, Christ's word remains true.

Man made in the image of God ought always to pray and not to faint. And even more than by His words does Christ by His example prompt us to prayer. Turn, *e.g.*, to the third Gospel. All the Evangelists show us Jesus at prayer; but it is to Luke that we owe almost all our pictures of the kneeling Christ. Let us glance at them as they pass in quick succession before our eyes :

“Jesus having been baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened” (iii. 21).

“He withdrew Himself in the deserts, and prayed” (v. 16).

“It came to pass in these days, that He went out into the mountain to pray; and He continued all night in prayer to God” (vi. 12).

“It came to pass, as He was praying alone, the disciples were with Him” (ix. 18).

“It came to pass about eight days after these sayings, He took with Him Peter and John and James and went up into the mountain to pray. And as He was praying the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment became white and dazzling” (ix. 28, 29).

“It came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, that when He ceased, one of the disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray, even as John also taught his disciples” (xi. 1).

“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat; but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not” (xxii. 32).

“ And He kneeled down and prayed, saying, Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless not My will, but Thine be done. . . . And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground ” (xxii. 41, 44).

“ And Jesus said, Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do ” (xxiii. 34).

And if thus I.e., the Redeemer, prayed, how much greater need have we, the redeemed, always to pray and not to faint ?

“ But we are so busy, we have no time.” Then let us look at another picture. This time it is Mark who is the painter. He has chosen as his subject our Lord's first Sabbath in Capernaum. The day begins with teaching : “ He entered into the synagogue and taught.” After teaching comes healing : “ There was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit ;” him, straightway, Jesus healed. Then, “ straightway, when they were come out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and straightway they tell Him of her ; and He came and took her by the hand, and raised her up.” So the day wore on toward evening and sunset, when “ they brought unto Him all that were sick, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And He healed many that were sick

with divers diseases and cast out many devils." So closed at last the long day's busy toil. "*And in the morning, a great while before day, He rose up and went out and departed into a desert place, and there prayed;*" as if just because He was so much with men the more did He need to be with God. *Laborare est orare*, we say, "work is prayer." And, undoubtedly, "work may be prayer"; but we are deceiving ourselves and hurting our own souls, if we think that work can take the place of prayer. And if there is one lesson that these earthly years of the Son of Man—busy as they were prayerful, prayerful as they were busy—can teach us, it is surely this, that just because our activities are so abounding, the more need have we to make a space around the soul wherein it may be able to think, and pray, and aspire.

One of the best-known pictures of the last half century is Millet's "Angelus." The scene is a potato-field, in the midst of which, and occupying the foreground of the picture, are two figures, a young man and a young woman. Against the distant sky-line is the steeple of a church. It is the evening hour, and as the bell rings which calls the villagers to worship, the workers in the field lay aside the implements of their toil, and with folded hands and bowed heads, stand for a moment in silent prayer. It is a picture of what every life should be, of what every life must be, which has taken as its pattern the Perfect Life in which work and prayer are blent like bells of sweet accord.

II

Another saying of Christ's concerning prayer, not less fundamental is this: "When ye pray, say, Our Father, which art in heaven." How essential to prayer is a right thought of God it can hardly be necessary to point out. "When ye pray say——" what? All depends on how we fill in the blank. Our thought of God determines the character of all our intercourse with Him. If "God" is only the name which we give to the vast, unknown Power which lies behind the visible phenomena of the universe, if He is only a dim shadow projected by our own minds, or a collection of attributes whose names we have learned from the Catechism, our prayers will soon come to an end. When Jesus prayed He said always "Father"; and the Father to whom He prayed, and whom He revealed, He it is to whom our prayers should be offered.

This is a matter the practical importance of which it would be hard to exaggerate. Think, *e.g.*, of the questions concerning prayer which would be answered straightway, had we but made our own Christ's thought of God. We are all familiar with the little problems about prayer with which some good people are wont to tease themselves and their friends and their ministers: Is it right to pray for rain, for fine weather, for the recovery of health, for the success of some temporal enterprize, and so forth? How shall we meet

questions of this sort? Shall we draw a line and say, all things on this side of the line we may pray about, all things on that side of the line we may not pray about? This will not help us. Rather we must keep Christ's great word before us: "When ye pray, say, Father." There or nowhere is the answer to be found. Just as every wise father seeks to train his child to make of him his confidant, to have no secrets from him, to trust him utterly, and in everything, so would God have us feel towards Him; as free, as frank, as unfettered, should our fellowship with Him be. To put it under constraint, to fence it about with rules, would be to rob it of all that gives it worth. And, therefore, I cannot tell any man, and I do not want any man to tell me, what we may pray for, or what we may not pray for. "When ye pray, say, Father;" and for the rest let your own heart teach you. But if we are left thus free shall we not ask many things which we have no right to ask, which God cannot grant? Undoubtedly we shall, just as a boy of five will ask many things that his father, because he loves him, must refuse. Nevertheless, no wise father would wish to check the childish prattle. There is nothing that he values more than just these frank, uncalculating confidences, for he knows that it is by means of them that the shaping hands of love can do their perfect work. And the remedy for our mistakes in prayer is not a set of little man-made rules, telling us what to pray for and what not to pray

for, but rather a deeper insight into, and a fuller understanding of, the glory and blessedness of the Divine Fatherhood.

III

Passing now from these preliminary counsels concerning prayer, let us note how great is the importance which, both by His precepts and His example, Christ attaches to the duty of intercessory prayer. I have been much struck of late in reading several books on this subject, to note how one writer after another judges it needful to warn his readers against the idea that prayer is no more than petition. What they say is, of course, true; prayer is much more than petition. But, unless I misread the signs of the times, this is not the warning which just now we most need to hear. Rather do we need to be told that prayer is more than communion, that petition, simple asking that we may obtain, is a part, and a very large part of prayer. "Who rises from prayer a better man," says George Meredith, "his prayer is answered." This is true, but it is far from being the whole truth. The duty of intercession, of prayer for others, is writ large on every page of the New Testament; but intercession has simply no meaning at all unless we believe that God will grant our requests as may be most expedient for us and for them for whom we pray. Let me illustrate the wealth of Christ's teaching on this matter by two or three examples.

(1) We have all read Tennyson's question—

“What are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friends?”

“For themselves and those who call them friends’
—but Christ will not suffer us to stop there.
“Bless them that curse you,” He said; “pray for
them that despitefully use you.” So He spoke,
and on the Cross He made the great word luminous
for ever by His own prayer for His murderers:
“Father, forgive them; for they know not what
they do.”

(2) Christ prayed for His disciples and for His Church: “I pray for them . . . neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on Me through their word.” “I will pray the Father and He shall give you——.” Only once are the actual words recorded, but they cover, we are sure, great stretches of Christ's intercourse with God. And when once in their work for Him they had failed, He puts His finger on the secret of their failure thus: “This kind can come out by nothing save by prayer.” Do we pray for our Church? We find fault with it; but do we pray for it? We blame its office-bearers and criticize its ministers; but do we pray for them? We go to the house of God on the Sabbath day; but no fire is burning on the altar, the minister has no message for us, we come away no whit better than we went. Whose is the blame? Let the man in

the pulpit take his share ; but is it all his ? Must not some of it be laid at the door of his people ? How many of them during the week had prayed for him, that his eyes might be opened and his heart touched, that as he sat and worked in his study he might get from God to give to them ? Dr. Dale used to say that if ever he preached a good sermon, a sermon that really helped men, it was due to the prayers of his people as much as to anything he had done himself. If in all our churches we would but proclaim a truce to our bickerings and fault-findings, and try what prayer can do !

(3) Christ prayed for the children : “ Then were there brought unto Him little children that He should lay His hands on them, and pray. . . . And He took them in His arms, and blessed them, laying His hands upon them.” It is surely needless to dwell on this. What man is there who, if he have a child, will not speak to God in his behalf ? “ And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God that we die not. . . . And Samuel said unto the people, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you.” God have mercy on him who has little children who bear his name, but who never cries to heaven in their behalf ! “ He blessed them,” *i.e.* He invoked a blessing, God’s blessing, upon them. And we are sure the prayer was heard, and the little ones were blessed. And will not God hear our prayers for

our children? When Monica, the saintly mother of Augustine, besought an African bishop once and again to help her with her wilful, profligate son, the good man answered her, "Woman, go in peace; it cannot be that the child of such tears should be lost." "God's seed," wrote Samuel Rutherford to Marion M'Naught about her daughter Grizel, "shall come to God's harvest." It shall, for the promise holds, and what we have sown we shall also reap.

(4) And, lastly, Christ prayed for individuals: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you,"—all of you," that is; the pronoun is plural—"that he might sift you as wheat; but I made supplication for thee"—"thee, Peter"; now the singular pronoun is used—"that thy faith fail not." The words point to a definite crisis in the experience of Peter, when the onset of the Tempter was met by the intercession of the Saviour. To me Gethsemane itself is not more wonderful than this picture of Christ on His knees before God, naming His loved disciple by name, and praying that, in this supreme hour of his life, his faith should not utterly break down. "Making mention of thee in my prayers"—does this not bring us near to the secret of prevailing prayer? We are afraid to be individual and particular; we lose ourselves in large generalities, until our prayers die of very vagueness. There is surely a more excellent way. "My God," Paul wrote to the Philippians, "shall fulfil"—not merely "all your need," as the Authorized Version

has it, but—"every need of yours." There is a fine discrimination in the Divine love which sifts and sorts men's needs, and applies itself to them one by one, just as the need may be. And when in prayer we speak to God, let it be not only of "all our need," flung in one great, careless heap before Him, but of "every need of ours," each one named by its name, and all spread out in order before Him.

IV

And as Christ teaches us to pray for others, so also does He teach us to pray for ourselves. Two points only in this connection can be noted.

(1) Let us pray when we enter into our Gethsemane ; for every life has its Gethsemane. Some there are who have not yet entered it ; they are young, and their way thus far has been among the roses and lilies of life. But for them, too, the path leads to Gethsemane, and some day they also will lie prostrate in an agony, under the darkening olive trees. And some there are to whom life seems but one long Gethsemane. In that dread agony God help us to pray ! Nay, what else then can a man do but, as Browning says, catch at God's skirts and pray ? But that he can do. Death may build its dividing walls great and high, such as our feet can never scale ; it cannot roof them over and shut us out from God. We remember how it was with Enoch Arden, stranded on an isle, "the loneliest in a lonely sea" :—

“Had not his poor heart
Spoken with That, which being everywhere
Lets none, who speaks with Him, seem all alone,
Surely the man had died of solitude.”

Were it not for the doors opened in heaven what should man that is born of a woman do? But when in our Gethsemane we offer up “prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears,” it is after Christ’s manner that we must pray. I said just now that there are some to whom life seems one long Gethsemane. Can it be because hitherto they have only prayed, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me”? Not until with Christ we bow our heads and say, “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt,” will the iron gates unfold and the shadows of the Garden lie behind us.

(2) “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.” And if there be some to whom my last word had little or no meaning, here, at least, Christ speaks to all. And this time I have nothing of my own to add by way of comment; but I copy out this passage from Charles Kingsley’s *Yeast*, for every young man who reads these words to lay to heart: “I am no saint,” says Colonel Bracebridge, “and God only knows how much less of one I may become; but mark my words—if you are ever tempted by passion, and vanity, and fine ladies, to form liaisons, as the jezebels call them, snares, and nets and labyrinths of blind ditches, to keep you down through life, stumbling and grovelling, hating

yourself and hating the chain to which you cling—
in that hour pray—pray as if the devil had you by
the throat—to Almighty God, to help you out of
that cursed slough! There is nothing else for it but
pray, I tell you!

CONCERNING THE FORGIVENESS
OF INJURIES

“SHE, who kept a tender Christian hope,
Haunting a holy text, and still to that
Returning, as the bird returns, at night,
‘Let not the sun go down upon your wrath,’
Said, ‘Love, forgive him :’ but he did not speak ;
And silenced by that silence lay the wife,
Remembering her dear Lord who died for all,
And musing on the little lives of men,
And how they mar this little by their feuds.”

TENNYSON.

XI

CONCERNING THE FORGIVENESS OF INJURIES

“Then came Peter, and said to Him, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? until seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times; but, until seventy times seven.”—MATT. xviii. 21, 22.

THIS would seem to be plain enough, even though we had nothing more from the lips of Jesus concerning the duty of forgiveness. In point of fact, however, the lesson of these words is repeated a full half-dozen times throughout the Gospels. It may be well, therefore, to begin by bringing together our Lord's sayings on the subject.

I

We turn first to the Sermon on the Mount: “Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you.” Then, in the Lord's Prayer we have the familiar petition, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass

against us." And it is surely a fact full of significance that at the close of the prayer our Lord should single out this one petition from the rest with this emphatic comment: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." The words quoted thus far are taken from the first Gospel. Similar teaching is found in the second and third. Thus, in Mark, we read: "And whensoever ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any one; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses;" and in Luke: "If thy brother sin, rebuke him, and if he repent, forgive him. And if he sin against thee seven times in the day, and seven times turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him." Again, we have the teaching recorded by Matthew, out of which Peter's question sprang—"If thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his fault between thee and him alone; if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother"—followed by the parable of the Unforgiving Servant, with its solemn warning of immitigable doom: "So shall also My heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts." And, finally, all these words are made fast for ever in the minds and consciences of men, by the great act on the Cross when the dying Redeemer prayed for the men who slew Him:

“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”

The meaning of all this is unmistakable. No child could miss the point of the solemn parable to which I have referred. At the same time, it may not be out of place to point out that there are not a few instances in which people may feel themselves wronged, which, nevertheless, do not come within the scope of Christ's teaching about forgiveness. An illustration will best explain my meaning. It sometimes happens, both in business life and in the Church, that two men, equally honourable and true, but with almost nothing else in common, are often thrown into each other's company. They have to deal with the same facts, but they look upon them with wholly different eyes, they approach them from wholly different points of view. The results are obvious. There are not only widely differing opinions, but occasional misunderstandings, and sometimes sharper words than ought ever to pass between Christian men. Now, to say broadly that one is right and the other wrong, that the one owes confession and the other forgiveness, is simply not true; what is true is that the men are different, different in temperament, different in training, different in their whole habits of thought and life. And what is needed is that each should learn frankly to recognize the fact. This is not a case for rebuking, and repenting, and forgiving, but for mutual forbearance. There are multitudes

of good people, people whose goodness no one who knows them would ever question, whom yet we cannot take to our bosoms, and treat as intimate personal friends. Even religion does not all at once straighten out all the twists in human nature, nor rub down all its hard angularities. And, as I say, it is our simple, common-sense duty to recognize the fact; and if sometimes we find even our fellow-Christians "very trying," well, we must learn to bear and forbear, always remembering that others probably find us no less trying than we sometimes find them. But where grave and undeniable injury has been done, immediately Christ's teaching comes into operation. The injured one must banish all thought of revenge. Never must we say, "I will do so to him as he hath done to me; I will render to the man according to his work." Rather must we strive to overcome evil by good, and by the manifestation of a forgiving spirit to win the wrong-doer to repentance and amendment.

II

When, now, we take these precepts of Jesus and lay them side by side with the life of the world, or even with the life of the Church, as day by day it passes before our eyes, our first thought must be, how little yet do men heed the words of Jesus, how much mightier is the pagan spirit of revenge than the Christian spirit of for-

giveness. Indeed, of all the virtues which Christ inculcated, this, perhaps, is the most difficult. True forgiveness—I do not speak of the poor, bloodless phantom which sometimes passes by the name :

“Forgive! How many will say ‘forgive,’ and find
A sort of absolution in the sound
To hate a little longer,”

—not of such do I speak, but of true forgiveness, and this, I say, can never for us men be an easy thing. Perhaps a frank consideration of some of the difficulties may contribute to their removal.

(1) One chief reason why Christ’s command remains so largely a dead letter is to be found in our unwillingness to acknowledge that we have committed an injury. That another should have wronged us we find no difficulty in believing; that we have wronged another is very hard to believe. Look at the very form of Peter’s question: “How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?” “My brother” the wrong-doer, myself the wronged — that is what we are all ready to assume. But what if it is I who have need to be forgiven? But this is what our pride will not suffer us to believe. That “bold villain” Shame, who plucked Faithful by the elbow in the Valley of Humiliation, and sought to persuade him that it is a shame to ask one’s neighbour forgiveness for petty faults, or to make restitution where we have taken from any, is always quick to seize his opportunity. And he is

especially quick when acknowledgment is due to one who is socially our inferior. If an employé be guilty of some gross discourtesy towards his master, or a servant towards her mistress, the master or mistress may demand a prompt apology on pain of instant dismissal. But when it is the servant or employé who is the injured person he has no such remedy; yet surely, in Christ's eyes, his very dependence makes the duty of confession doubly imperative. "If," Christ said, "thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee"—note exactly Christ's words; He did not say, "If thou rememberest that thou hast aught against thy brother"; alas, it is very easy for most of us to do that; what He said was, "If thou rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee." Whom did I overreach in business yesterday? Whose good name did I drag through the mire? What heart did I stab with my cruel words? "If thou rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

(2) If the difficulties are great when we have committed the wrong, they are hardly less when we have suffered it. Thomas Fuller tells how once he saw a mother threatening to beat her little child for not rightly pronouncing the petition in the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." The

child tried its best, but could get no nearer than "trepases," and "trepases." "Alas!" says Fuller, it is a shibboleth to a child's tongue wherein there is a confluence of hard consonants together ;" and then he continues, "What the child could not pronounce the parents do not practise. O how lispingly and imperfectly do we perform the close of this petition : As we forgive them that trespass against us." In the old Greek and Roman world, we have been told, people not only did not forgive their enemies, but did not wish to do so, nor think better of themselves for having done so. That man considered himself fortunate who, on his death-bed, could say, on reviewing his past life, that no one had done more good to his friends or more mischief to his enemies. And though we profess and call ourselves Christians, how strong in many of us still is the old heathen desire to be "even with" one who has wronged us, and to make him smart for it. Many of us, as Dr. Dale says,¹ have given a new turn to an old text. In our own private Revised Version of the New Testament we read : "Whosoever speaketh a word or committeth a wrong against God, it shall be forgiven him ; but whosoever speaketh a word or committeth a wrong against me, it shall not be forgiven him ; certainly not in this world, even if it is forgiven in the world to come." Resentment against moral evil every good man must feel ; but when with the clear, bright flame of a holy wrath

¹ *Laws of Christ for Common Life*, p. 59.

there mingle the dark fumes of personal vindictiveness, we do wrong, we sin against God.

Nowhere in Scripture, perhaps, have we such a lesson on the difficulty of forgiveness as in the reference to Alexander the coppersmith, in St. Paul's last letter to Timothy. Even if we read his words in the modified and undoubtedly accurate form in which they are found in the Revised Version, we still feel how far short they come of the standard of Christ. "Paul," says Dr. Whyte, "was put by Alexander to the last trial and sorest temptation of an apostolic and a sanctified heart."¹ And with all the greatness of our regard for the great apostle, we dare not say that he came out of the trial wholly unscathed. Did ever any man come out of such a fire unhurt—any save One? Yet it is not for me to sit in judgment on St. Paul; only let us remember we have no warrant from God to hate any man and to hand him over to eternal judgment even though, like Alexander, he heap insult and injury, not only upon ourselves, but upon the cause and Church of Christ.

(3) And then to this native, inborn unwillingness to forgive there comes in to strengthen it our knowledge of the fact that forgiveness is sometimes mistaken for, and does, in fact, sometimes degenerate into, the moral weakness which slurs over a fault, and refuses to strike only because it dare not. Nevertheless, though there be counterfeits current, there is a reality; there is a forgiving

¹ *Bible Characters: Stephen to Timothy*, p. 95.

spirit which has no kinship with cowardice or weakness or mere mushiness of character, but which is the offspring of strength and goodness and mercy, in short, of all in man that is likest God. And it is *this* not that which God bids us make our own ; and not the less so because in the rough ways of the world that so often passes for this.

III

It would be easy to go on enumerating difficulties, but long as the enumeration might be, Christ's command would still remain in all its explicitness, the Divine obligation would be in no way weakened. We must forgive ; we must forgive from our hearts ; and there must be no limit to our forgiveness. Nor is this all. The whole law of forgiveness is not fulfilled when one who has done us an injury has come humbly making confession, and we have accepted the confession and agreed to let bygones be bygones. We should be heartless wretches indeed, if, under such circumstances, we were not willing to do as much as that. But we must do more : " If thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his fault between thee and him alone ; if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." We, we who have been wronged, must take the first step. We must not wait for the wrong-doer to come to us ; we must go to him. We must lay aside our vindictiveness, and earnestly, patiently, making our

appeal to his better self, by every art and device which love can suggest, we must help him to take sides against the wrong which he has done, until at last forgiving love has led him captive, and our brother is won. This is the teaching of Jesus. Let me suggest, in conclusion, a three-fold reason why we should give heed to it.

Let us forgive *for our own sake*. A man of an unforgiving spirit is always his own worst enemy. He "that studieth revenge," says Bacon, "keeps his own wounds green, which otherwise would heal and do well." "If thou hast not mercy for others," says Sir Thomas Browne, "yet be not cruel unto thyself; to ruminate upon evils, to make critical notes upon injuries, is to add unto our own tortures, to feather the arrows of our enemies." There is no misery worse than that of a mind which broods continually over its own wrongs, be they real or only fancied. There is no gloom so deep and dark as that which settles on a hard and unrelenting soul. And, on the other hand, there is no joy so pure, there is none so rewarding, as that of one who, from his heart, has learned to say, "I forgive." He has tasted the very joy of God, the joy of Him of whom it is written that He delighteth in mercy. Just as when a sea-worm perforates the shell of an oyster, the oyster straightway closes the wound with a pearl, so does a forgiving spirit heal the hidden hurt of the heart, and win for itself a boon even at the hands of its foe.

Let us forgive *for our brother's sake*. "What," asks George MacDonald, "am I brother for, but to forgive?" And how much for my brother my forgiveness may do! All love, not Christ's love only, has within it a strange redemptive power. We often profess ourselves puzzled by that hard saying of Jesus concerning the binding and loosing of men's sins. Yet this is just what human love, or the want of it, is doing every day. When we forgive men their sins, we so far loose them from them; we help them to believe in the power and reality of the Divine forgiveness. When we refuse to forgive, we bind their sins to them, we make them doubt the love and mercy of God. Have we forgotten the part which Ananias played in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus? St. Augustine used to say that the Church owed Paul to the prayers of Stephen. Might he not have said, with equal truth, that the Church owed Paul to the forgiveness of Ananias? For three days, without sight, and without food or drink, Saul waited in Damascus, pondering the meaning of the heavenly vision. Then came unto him, sent by God, the man whose life he had meant to take: "Ananias entered into the house; and, laying his hands on him, said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, who appeared unto thee in the way which thou camest, hath sent me." "*Brother Saul*"—how his heart must have leapt within him at the sound of the word! It was a voice from without confirming the voice within; it was the love and forgiveness of man

sealing and making sure the love and forgiveness of God. Wherefore, let us take heed lest, by our sullen refusal to forgive, we be thrusting some penitent soul back into the miry depths, whence, slowly and painfully, it is winning its way into the light and love of God.

Let us forgive *for Christ's sake*, because of that which God through Him has done for us. When, day by day, we pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us," what we are asking is, that God will deal with us as we are dealing with others. Do we mean what we say? Are we showing a mercy as large as we need? Chrysostom tells us that many people in his day used to omit the words, "As we forgive them that trespass against us." They did not dare to ask God to deal with their sins as they were dealing with the sins of those who had wronged them, lest they brought upon themselves not a blessing but a curse. And would it not go hardly with some of us, if, with the measure we mete, God should measure to us again? Yet there is no mistaking Christ's words: "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Therefore, let me think of myself, of my own sin, of the forgiveness even unto seventy times seven which I need; and then let me ask, can I, whose need is so great, dole out my forgiveness with a grudging hand, counting till a poor "seven times" be reached, and then staying my hand? Rather, let me pray, Lord,

“Make my forgiveness downright—such as I
Should perish if I did not have from Thee.”

“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and railing, be put away from you, with all malice ; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you.”

“O man, forgive thy mortal foe,
Nor ever strike him blow for blow ;
For all the souls on earth that live
To be forgiven must forgive,
Forgive him seventy times and seven :
For all the blesséd souls in Heaven
Are both forgivers and forgiven.”

CONCERNING CARE

“ MY spirit on Thy care,
Blest Saviour, I recline ;
Thou wilt not leave me in despair,
For Thou art Love Divine.

In Thee I place my trust,
On Thee I calmly rest ;
I know Thee good, I know Thee just,
And count Thy choice the best.

Whate'er events betide,
Thy will they all perform ;
Safe in Thy breast my head I hide,
Nor fear the coming storm.

Let good or ill befall,
It must be good for me,
Secure of having Thee in all,
Of having all in Thee.”

H. F. LYTE.

XII

CONCERNING CARE

“*Be not anxious for your life . . . nor yet for your body. . . . Be not anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? . . . Be not anxious for the morrow.*”—MATT. vi. 25, 31, 34.

I

“*T*AKE no thought for your life” is the more familiar rendering of the Authorized Version. And if the words conveyed the same meaning to us to-day as they did to all English-speaking people in the year 1611, there would have been no need for a change. A great student of words, the late Archbishop Trench, tells us that “thought” was then constantly used as equivalent to anxiety or solicitous care; and he gives three illustrations of this use of the word from writers of the Elizabethan age. Thus Bacon writes: “Harris, an alderman in London, was put in trouble, and died with *thought* and anxiety before his business came to an end.” Again, in one of the *Somer’s Tracts*, we read, “Queen Katharine Parr died of *thought*”; and in Shakespeare’s *Julius Cæsar*, “*Take thought* and die for Cæsar,”

where "to take thought" is to take a matter so seriously to heart that death ensues.¹ In 1611, therefore, the old translation did accurately reproduce Christ's thought. To-day, however, it is altogether inadequate, and sometimes, it is to be feared, positively misleading. For neither in this chapter nor anywhere in Christ's teaching is there one word against what we call forethought, and they who would find in the words of Jesus any encouragement to thriftlessness are but misrepresenting Him and deceiving themselves. Every man, who is not either a rogue or a fool, must take thought for the morrow; at least, if he does not, some one must for him, or the morrow will avenge itself upon him without mercy. What our Lord forbids is not prudent foresight, but worry: "Be ye not *anxious*." The word which Christ uses (*μεριμνᾶτε*) is a very suggestive one; it describes the state of mind of one who is drawn in different directions, torn by internal conflict, "distracted," as we say, where precisely the same figure of speech occurs. A similar counsel is to be found in another and still more striking word which only Luke has recorded, and which is rendered, "Neither be ye of doubtful mind." There is a picture in the word (*μετεωρίζεσθε*), the picture of a vessel vexed by contrary winds, now uplifted on the crest of some huge wave, now labouring in the trough of the sea. "Be ye not thus," Christ says to His disciples, "the sport of your cares, driven

¹ *On the Authorized Version of the New Testament*, p. 14.

by the wind and tossed ; but let the peace of God rule in your hearts, and be ye not of doubtful mind."

It cannot surprise us that Jesus should speak thus ; rather should we have been surprised if it had been otherwise. How could He speak to men at all and yet be silent about their cares ? For how full of care the lives of most men are ! One is anxious about his health, and another about his business ; one is concerned because for weeks he has been without work, and another because his investments are turning out badly ; some are troubled about their children, and some there are who are making a care even of their religion, and instead of letting it carry them are trying to carry it ; until, with burdens of one kind or another, we are like a string of Swiss pack-horses, such as one may sometimes see, toiling and straining up some steep Alpine pass under a blazing July sun. Poor Martha, with her sad, tired face, and nervous, fretful ways, "anxious and troubled about many things," is everywhere to-day. Nor is it the poor only whose lives are full of care. It was not a poor man amid his poverty, but a rich man amid his riches, who, in Christ's parable, put to himself the question, "What shall I do?" The birds of care build their nests amid the turrets of a palace as readily as in the thatched roof of a cottage. The cruel thorns—"the cares of this life," as Jesus calls them—which choke the good seed, sometimes spring up more easily within the carefully fenced

enclosure of my lord's park than in the little garden plot of the keeper of his lodge. On the whole, perhaps, and in proportion to their number, there is less harassing, wearing anxiety in the homes of the poor than in those of the wealthy. And what harsh taskmasters our cares can be! How they will lord it over us! Give them the saddle and the reins, and they will ride us to death. Seat them on the throne, and they will chastise us not only with whips but with scorpions. It is no wonder that Christ should set Himself to free men from this grinding tyranny. He is no true deliverer for us who cannot break the cruel bondage of our cares.

II

Let us listen, then, to Christ's gracious argument and wise remonstrances. What, He asks, is the good of our anxiety? What can it do for us? "Which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto his stature? If, then, ye are not able to do that which is least, why are ye anxious concerning the rest?" "But, the morrow! the morrow!" we cry. "Let the morrow," Christ answers, "take care of itself; sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof; learn thou to live a day at a time." "Our earliest duty," says a great writer of our day, "is to cultivate the habit of not looking round the corner;" which is but another version of Christ's simple precept. And the saying, simple and obvious as it may seem, never fails

to justify itself. For one thing, the morrow rarely turns out as our fears imagined it. Our very anxiety blurs our vision, and throws our judgment out of focus. We see things through an atmosphere which both magnifies and distorts. We remember how it was with Mr. Fearing: "When he was come to the entrance of the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I thought"—it is Greatheart who tells the story—"I should have lost my man: not for that he had any inclination to go back,—that he always abhorred; but he was ready to die for fear. Oh, the hobgoblins will have me! the hobgoblins will have me! cried he; and I could not beat him out on't." Yet see how matters fell out. "This I took very great notice of," goes on Greatheart, "that this valley was as quiet while he went through it as ever I knew it before or since." And again, when Mr. Fearing "was come at the river where was no bridge, there again he was in a heavy case. Now, now, he said, he should be drowned for ever, and so never see that face with comfort, that he had come so many miles to behold." But once more his fears were put to shame: "Here, also, I took notice of what was very remarkable: the water of that river was lower at this time than ever I saw it in all my life. So he went over at last, not much above wet-shod."

And even though the morrow should prove as bad as our fears, Christ's precept is still justified, for the worst kind of preparation for such a

day is worry. Worry, like the undue clatter of machinery, means waste, waste of power. Anxiety, it has been well said, does not empty to-morrow of its sorrows, but it does empty to-day of its strength. Therefore, let us not be anxious. Let us climb our hills when we come to them. God gives each day strength for the day; but when, to the responsibilities of to-day we add the burdens of to-morrow, and try to do the work of two days in the strength of one, we are making straight paths for the feet of failure and disappointment. All the many voices of reason and experience are on Christ's side when He bids us, "Be not anxious."

Yet, true as all this is, how inadequate it is! When the tides of care are at the flood they will overrun and submerge all such counsels as these, as the waves wash away the little sand-hills which children build by the sea-shore. "We know it is no good to worry," people will tell us, half-petulantly, when we remonstrate with them; "but we cannot help ourselves, and if you have no more to say to us than this, you cannot help us either." And they are right. Care is the cancer of the heart, and if our words can go no deeper than they have yet gone, it can never be cured. It is an inward spiritual derangement, which calls for something more than little bits of good advice in order to put it right. And if, again, we turn to the words of Jesus, we shall find the needed something more is given. The

careworn soul, for its cure, must be taken out of itself. "Oh the bliss of waking," says some one, "with all one's thoughts turned outward!" It is the power to do that, to turn, and to keep turned, one's thoughts outwards that the care-ridden need; and Christ will show us how it may be ours.

"Be not anxious," says Jesus; and then side by side with this negative precept He lays this positive one: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." Christ came to establish a kingdom in which "all men's good" should be "each man's rule," and love the universal law. When, therefore, He bids the anxious seek the kingdom, what He means is that they are to find an escape from self and self-consuming cares in service. "When you find yourself overpowered by melancholy," said John Keble, "the best way is to go out and do something kind to somebody or other." And thousands who are sitting daily in the gloom of a self-created misery, with all the blinds of the spirit drawn, if they would but "go out" and begin to care for others, would speedily cease their miserable care for themselves. "When I dig a man out of trouble," some one quaintly writes, "the hole he leaves behind him is the grave in which I bury my own trouble."¹ This is not the whole cure for care; but if the mind is to be kept from burrowing in the dark of its own fears and anxieties, it must be set resolutely and

¹ I am indebted for these two quotations to Bishop Paget's *Spirit of Discipline*, p. 66.

constantly on those nobler ends to which Christ in His gospel summons us all.

The care-worn, Christ says, must think of others; and, most of all, they must think of God. "Let not your heart be troubled . . . believe." This is the great argument into which all other arguments run up. This is the larger truth, within whose wide circumference lie all Christ's words concerning care. We are not to care because we are cared for, cared for by God. There is, Christ teaches us, a distribution of duties between ourselves and God. We, on our part, make it our daily business to get God's will done on earth as it is done in heaven; He, on His, undertakes that we shall not want.

"Make you His service your delight,
He'll make your wants His care."

Once more we see how fundamental is Christ's doctrine of the Divine Fatherhood. It is not so much because our anxiety is useless, or because it unfits us for service, but because God is what He is, that our worry is at once a blunder and a sin. It is mistrust of the heavenly love that cares for us. The sovereign cure for care is—God.

III

But now a difficulty arises. Christ's doctrine of the Divine Fatherhood is, without doubt, fundamental; but is it true? A God who

clothes the blowing lilies with their silent beauty, without whom no sparrow falleth to the ground, who numbers the very hairs of our head—it is a glorious faith, if one could but receive it. But can we? It was possible once, we think, in the childhood of the world; but that time has gone, and we are the children of a new day, whose thoughts we cannot choose but think. So long as men thought of our earth as the centre of the universe, it was not difficult to believe that its inhabitants were the peculiar care of their Creator. But astronomy has changed all that; and what once we thought so great, we know now to be but a speck amid infinite systems of worlds. The old question challenges us with a force the Psalmist could not feel: “When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained; what is man that Thou are mindful of him? and the son of man that Thou visitest him?” The infinity of God, the nothingness of man: the poor brain reels before the contrast. Is it thinkable, we ask, that He whose dwelling-place is eternity should care for us even as we care for our children? So the question is often urged upon us to-day. But arguments of this kind, it has been well said, are simply an attempt to terrorize the imagination, and are not to be yielded to. As a recent writer admirably says: “We know little or nothing of the rest of the universe, and it may very well be that in no other planet but this is there

intelligent and moral life ; and, if that be so, then this world, despite its material insignificance, would remain the real summit of creation. But even if this be not so, still man remains man—a spiritual being, capable of knowing, loving, and glorifying God. Man is that, be there what myriads of worlds there may, and is not less than that, though in other worlds were also beings like him. . . . No conception of God is less imposing than that which represents Him as a kind of millionaire in worlds, so materialized by the immensity of His possessions as to have lost the sense of the incalculably greater worth of the spiritual interests of even the smallest part of them.”¹

But this is not the only difficulty ; for some it is not the chief difficulty. We have no theories of God and the universe which bar the possibility of His intervention in the little lives of men. There is nothing incredible to us in the doctrine of a particular Providence. But where, we ask, is the proof of it? We would fain believe, but the facts of experience seem too strong for us. A hundred thousand Armenians butchered at the will of an inhuman despot, a whole city buried under a volcano’s fiery hail, countless multitudes suffering the slow torture of death by famine—can such things be and God really care? Nor is it only great world tragedies like these which challenge our faith.

¹ P. Carnegie Simpson, *The Fact of Christ*, pp. 116, 117.

The question is pressed upon us, often with sickening keenness, by the commonplace ills of our own commonplace lives: the cruel wrong of another's sin, the long, wasting pain, the empty cradle, the broken heart. How can we look on these things and yet believe that Eternal Love is on the throne?

Except we believe in Jesus we cannot; if we do, we must. For remember, Jesus was no shallow optimist; He did not go through life seeing only its pleasant things; He was at Cana of Galilee, but He was also at Nain; over all His life there lay a shadow, the shadow of the Cross; He died in the dark, betrayed of man, forsaken of God; surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. And yet through all, His faith in God never wavered. He prayed, and He taught others to pray. When He lifted His eyes towards heaven, it was with the word "Father" upon His lips; and in like manner He bade His disciples, "When ye pray, say 'Father.'" He took the trembling hands of men within His own, and looking into their eyes, filled as they were with a thousand nameless fears, "Fear not," He said, "your heavenly Father knoweth; let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

"Learn of Me . . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls;" herein is the secret of peace. But it is not enough that we give ear to the words of Christ; we must make our own the

whole meaning of the fact of Christ. "God's in His heaven," sings Browning ; "all's right with the world." But if God is only in His heaven, all is *not* right with the world. In Christ we learn that God has come from out His heaven to earth ; and in the Cross of Christ we find the eternal love which meets and answers all our fears. Fear not,

"Or if you fear,
Cast all your cares on God ; that anchor holds."

"Let not your heart be troubled, neither let **it** be afraid."

CONCERNING MONEY

“Now I saw in my dream, that at the further side of that plain was a little hill called Lucre, and in that hill a silver-mine, which some of them that had formerly gone that way, because of the rarity of it, had turned aside to see ; but going too near the brink of the pit, the ground being deceitful under them, broke, and they were slain ; some also had been maimed there, and could not to their dying day be their own men again.”—JOHN BUNYAN.

XIII

CONCERNING MONEY

*“How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to enter in through a needle’s eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.”—*LUKE xviii. 24, 25.

I

THE most significant thing in the teaching of Jesus concerning money is the large place which it fills in the records of our Lord’s public ministry. How large that place is few of us, perhaps, realize. Even religious writers who take in hand to set forth Christ’s teaching in detail, for the most part, pass over this subject in silence. In Hastings’ great *Dictionary of the Bible* we find, under “Money,” a most elaborate article, extending to nearly twenty pages, and discussing with great fulness and learning the coinage of various Biblical periods; but when we seek to know what the New Testament has to say concerning the use and perils of wealth, the whole subject is dismissed in some nine lines.

Very different is the impression which we receive from the Gospels themselves. It is not

possible here to bring together all Christ's words about money, but we may take the third Gospel (in which the references to the subject are most numerous) and note Christ's more striking sayings in the order in which they occur. In the parable of the sower, in the eighth chapter, the thorns which choke the good seed are the "cares and riches and pleasures of this life." Chapter twelve contains a warning against covetousness, enforced by the parable of the rich fool and its sharp-pointed application, "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." The fourteenth chapter sheds a new light on the law of hospitality: "When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, nor thy kinsmen, nor rich neighbours . . . but when thou makest a feast, bid the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind; and thou shalt be blessed." Chapter fifteen tells how a certain son wasted his substance with riotous living. Chapter sixteen opens with the parable of the unjust steward; then follow weighty words touching the right use of "the mammon of unrighteousness." But the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, when they heard these things, "scoffed at Him." Christ's answer is the parable of Dives and Lazarus, with which the chapter closes. Chapter eighteen tells of a rich young ruler's choice, and of Christ's sorrowful comment thereon: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God." And then, lastly, in the nineteenth chapter,

we hear Zacchæus, into whose home and heart Christ had entered, resolving on the threshold of his new life that henceforth the half of his goods he would give to the poor, and that where he had wrongfully exacted aught of any man he would restore four-fold. It is indeed a remarkable fact, the full significance of which few Christians have yet realized, that, as John Ruskin says, the subject which we might have expected a Divine Teacher would have been content to leave to others is the very one He singles out on which to speak parables for all men's memory.¹

II

The question is sometimes asked how the teaching of Jesus concerning money is related to that strange product of civilization, the modern millionaire. The present writer, at least, cannot hold with those who think that Christ was a communist, or that He regarded the possession of wealth as in itself a sin. Nevertheless, it is impossible not to sympathize with the feeling that the accumulation of huge fortunes in the hands of individuals is not according to the will of Christ. Mr. Andrew Carnegie is reported to have said that a man who dies a millionaire dies disgraced; and few persons who take their New Testament seriously will be disposed to contradict him. But, inasmuch as all millionaires are not prepared like Mr.

¹ *Time and Tide*, p. 224.

Carnegie to save themselves from disgrace, the question is beginning to arise in the minds of many, whether society itself should not come to the rescue—its own and the rich man's. No man, it may be pretty confidently affirmed, can possibly *earn* a million; he may obtain it, he may obtain it by methods which are not technically unjust, but he has not earned it. Be a man's powers what they may, it is impossible that his share of the wealth which he has helped to create can be fairly represented by a sum so vast. If he receives it, others may reasonably complain that there is something wrong in the principle of distribution. And unless, both by a larger justice to his employés, and by generous benefactions to the public, he do something to correct the defects in his title, he must not be surprised if some who feel themselves disinherited are driven to ask ominous and inconvenient questions.

This, however, is a matter which it is impossible now to discuss further. Turning again to Christ's sayings about money, we may summarize them in this fashion: Christ says nothing about the making of money, He says much about the use of it, and still more about its perils and the need there is for a revised estimate of its worth. Following the example of Christ, it is the last point of which I wish more especially to speak. But before coming to that, it may be well briefly to recall some of the things which Christ has said touching the use of wealth. Wealth, He declares, is a trust,

for our use of which we must give account unto God. In our relation to others we may be proprietors ; before God there are no proprietors, but all are stewards. And in the Gospels there are indicated some of the ways in which our stewardship may be fulfilled. I will mention two of them.

(1) "When thou doest alms"—Christ, you will observe, took for granted that His disciples would give alms, as He took for granted that they would pray. He prescribes no form which our charity must take ; we have to exercise our judgment in this, as in other matters. Obedience is left the largest liberty, but not the liberty of disobedience ; and they who open their ears greedily to take in all that the political economist and others tell us of the evils of indiscriminate charity, only that they may the more tightly button up their pockets against the claims of the needy, are plainly disregarding the will of Christ. If what we are told is true, the more binding is the obligation to discover some other way in which our alms-giving may become more effective. The duty itself no man can escape who calls Christ Jesus Lord and Master.

(2) But wealth, Christ tells us, may minister not merely to the physical necessities, but to the beauty and happiness of life. When Christ was invited to the marriage-feast at Cana of Galilee, when Matthew the publican made for Him a feast in His own house, He did not churlishly refuse, saying that such expenditure was wasteful and

wicked excess. When in the house of Simon the leper Mary "took a pound of ointment of spike-nard, very precious, and anointed the feet of Jesus," and they that sat by murmured, saying, "To what purpose is this waste? for this ointment might have been sold for above three hundred pence and given to the poor," Jesus threw His shield about this woman and her deed of love: "Let her alone; why trouble ye her? She hath wrought a good work on Me." These words, it has been well said, are "the charter of all undertakings which propose, in the name of Christ, to feed the mind, to stir the imagination, to quicken the emotions, to make life less meagre, less animal, less dull."¹ Do not let us speak as though the only friends of the poor were those who gave them oatmeal at Christmas, or who secure for them alms-houses in their old age. There is a life which is more than meat, and all heavenly charity is not to be bound up in bags of flour. He who strives to bring into the grey, monotonous lives of the toilers of our great cities the sweet, refining influences of art, and music and literature, he who helps his fellows to see and to love the true and the beautiful and the good, is not one whit less a benefactor of his kind than he who obtains for them better food and better homes. Man shall not live by bread alone, and they who use their wealth to minister to a higher life serve us not less really than they who provide for our physical needs.

¹ F. G. Peabody, *Jesus Christ and the Social Problem*, p. 219.

III

Much, however, as Christ has to say concerning the noble uses to which wealth may be put, it is not here, as every reader of the Gospels must feel, that the full emphasis of His words comes. It is when He goes on to speak of the perils of the rich, and of our wrong estimates of the worth of wealth, that His solemn warnings pierce to the quick. Christ did not live, nor does He call us to live, in an unreal world, though perhaps there are few subjects concerning which more unreal words have been spoken than this. The power of wealth is great, the power of consecrated wealth is incalculably great; and this the New Testament freely recognizes; but wealth is *not* the great, necessary, all-sufficing thing that ninety-nine out of a hundred of us believe it to be. And when we put it first, and make it the standard by which all things else are to be judged, Christ tells us plainly that we are falling into a temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts; we are piercing ourselves through with many sorrows. For once at least, then, let us try to look at money with His eyes and to weigh it in His balances.

Christ was Himself a poor man. His mother was what to-day we should call a working-man's wife, and probably also the mother of a large family. When, as an infant, Jesus was presented in the Temple, the offering which His parents

brought was that which the law prescribed in the case of the poor: "a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons." When He came to manhood, and entered on His public ministry, He had no home He could call His own. In His Father's house, He said, were many mansions; but on earth He had not where to lay His head. Women ministered unto Him of their substance. We never read that He had any money at all. When once He wanted to use a coin as an illustration, He borrowed it; when, at another time, He needed one with which to pay a tax, He wrought a miracle in order to procure it. As He was dying, the soldiers, we are told, parted His garments among them—that was all there was to divide. When He was dead, men buried Him in another's tomb. More literally true than perhaps we always realize was the apostle's saying, "He became poor."

Who, then, will deny that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth? Yet how strangely materialized our thoughts have become! Our very language has been dragged down and made a partner with us in our fall. When, for example, our Authorized Version was written in 1611, the translators could write, without fear of being misunderstood, "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's *wealth*" (I Cor. x. 24).¹ But though the nobler

¹ Emerson had surely overlooked this nobler meaning of the word when he wrote, "They [the English] put up no Socratic prayer, much less any saintly prayer, for the queen's mind; ask

meaning of the word still survives in "well" and "weal," "wealth" to-day is rarely used save to indicate abundance of material good. When Thackeray makes "Becky Sharp" say that she could be good if she had £4000 a year, and when Mr. Keir Hardie asks if it is possible for a man to be a Christian on a pound a week, the thoughts of many hearts are revealed. There is nothing to be done without money, we think; money is the golden key which unlocks all doors; money is the lever which removes all difficulties. This is what many of us are saying, and what most of us in our hearts are thinking. But clean across these spoken and unspoken thoughts of ours, there comes the life of Jesus, the man of Nazareth, to rebuke, and shame, and silence us. Who in His presence dare speak any more of the sovereign might of money?

This is the lesson of the life of the Best. Is it not also the lesson of the lives of the good in all ages? The greatest name in the great world of Greece is Socrates; and Socrates was a poor man. The greatest name in the first century of the Christian era is Paul; and Paul was a working-man and sometimes in want. It was Calvinism, Mark Pattison said, that in the sixteenth century saved Europe, and Calvin's strength, a Pope once declared, lay in this, that money had no charm for him. John Wesley re-created modern England

neither for light nor right, but say bluntly, 'grant her in health and wealth long to live'" (*English Traits*).

and left behind him "two silver teaspoons and the Methodist Church." The "Poets' Corner" in Westminster Abbey, it has been said, commemorates a glorious company of paupers. And even in America, the land of the millionaire and multi-millionaire, the names that are graven on the nation's heart, and which men delight to honour, are not its Vanderbilts, or its Jay Goulds, but Lincoln, and Grant, and Garfield, and Webster, and Clay.

This is not mere "curb-stone rhetoric"; I speak the words of soberness and truth. Would that they in whose blood the "narrowing lust of gold" has begun to burn might be sobered by them! In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, and of all the noblest of the sons of men, let us deny and defy the sordid traditions of mammon; let us make it plain that we at least do not believe "the wealthiest man among us is the best." "Godliness with contentment," said the apostle, "is great gain;" and though these are not the only worthy ends of human effort, yet he who has made them his has secured for himself a treasure which faileth not, which will endure when the gilded toys for which men strive and sweat are dust and ashes.

It is further worthy of note that it was always the rich rather than the poor whom Christ pitied. He was sorry for Lazarus; He was still more sorry for Dives. "Blessed are ye poor. . . . Woe unto you that are rich." This two-fold note sounds through all Christ's teaching. And the

reason is not far to seek. As Jesus looked on life, He saw how the passionate quest for gold was starving all the higher ideals of life. Men were concentrating their souls on pence till they could think of nothing else. For mammon's sake they were turning away from the kingdom of heaven. The spirit of covetousness was breaking the peace of households, setting brother against brother, making men hard and fierce and relentless. Under its hot breath the fairest growths of the spirit were drooping and ready to die. The familiar "poor but pious" which meets us so often in a certain type of biography could never have found a place on the lips of Jesus. "Rich but pious" would have been far truer to the facts of life as He saw them. "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully," and after that he could think of nothing but barns: there was no room for God in his life. "The Pharisees who were lovers of money heard these things; and they scoffed at Him;" of course, what could their jaundiced eyes see in Jesus? And even to one of whom it is written that Jesus, "looking upon him loved him," his great possessions proved a magnet stronger than the call of Christ. It was Emerson, I think, who said that the worst thing about money is that it so often costs so much. To take heed that we do not pay too dearly for it, is the warning which comes to us from every page of the life of Jesus. Are there none of us who need the warning? "Ye cannot serve God and

mammon ;” we know it, and that we may the better serve mammon, we are sacrificing God and conscience on mammon’s unholy altars. And to-day, perhaps, we are content that it should be so. But will our satisfaction last? Shall we be as pleased with the bargain to-morrow and the day after as we think we are to-day? And when our last day comes—what? “Forefancy your death-bed,” said Samuel Rutherford; and though the counsel ill fits the mood of men in their youth and strength, it is surely well sometimes to look forward and ask how life will bear hereafter the long look back. “This night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared whose shall they be?”—not his, and he had nothing else. He had laid up treasure for himself, but it was all of this world’s coinage; of the currency of the land whither he went he had none. In one of Lowell’s most striking poems he pictures the sad retrospect of one who, through fourscore years, had wasted on ignoble ends God’s gift of life; his hands had

“plucked the world’s coarse gains
As erst they plucked the flowers of May;”

but what now, in life’s last hours, are gains like these?

“God bends from out the deep and says,
‘I gave thee the great gift of life;
Wast thou not called in many ways?
Are not My earth and heaven at strife?”

I gave thee of My seed to sow,
Bringest thou Me My hundred-fold ?
Can I look up with face aglow,
And answer, ' Father, here is gold ' ? ”

And the end of the poem is a wail :

“ I hear the reapers singing go
Into God's harvest ; I, that might
With them have chosen, here below
Grove shuddering at the gates of night.”

Wherefore let us set not our minds on the things that are upon earth ; let us covet earnestly the best gifts ; let us seek first the kingdom of God ; and all other things in due season and in due measure shall be added unto us.¹

¹ To those who are interested in the subject of this chapter Prof. Peabody's book already referred to, and an article entitled "The Teaching of Christ concerning the Use of Money" (*Expositor*, third series, vol. viii. p. 100 ff.) may be recommended.

CONCERNING THE SECOND
ADVENT

“ LO as some venturer, from his stars receiving
 Promise and presage of sublime emprise,
Wears evermore the seal of his believing
 Deep in the dark of solitary eyes,

Yea to the end, in palace or in prison,
 Fashions his fancies of the realm to be,
Fallen from the height or from the deeps arisen,
 Ringed with the rocks and Sundered of the sea ;—

So even I, and with a heart more burning,
 So even I, and with a hope more sweet,
Groan for the hour, O Christ ! of Thy returning,
 Faint for the flaming of Thine advent feet.”

F. W. H. MYERS, *Saint Paul.*

XIV

CONCERNING THE SECOND ADVENT

“ They shall see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. . . . Of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only.”—MATT. xxiv. 30, 36.

THE doctrine of our Lord's Second Coming occupies at the present moment a curiously equivocal position in the thought of the Christian Church. On the one hand by many it is wholly ignored. There is no conscious disloyalty on their part to the word of God ; but the subject makes no appeal to them, it fails to “ find ” them. Ours is a sternly practical age, and any truth which does not readily link itself on to the necessities of life is liable speedily to be put on one side and forgotten. This is what has happened with this particular doctrine in the case of multitudes ; it is not denied, but it is banished to what Mr. Lecky calls “ the land of the unrealized and the inoperative.” But if, on the one hand, the doctrine has suffered from neglect, on the other it has suffered hardly less from undue attention. Indeed of late years the whole subject of the

“Last Things” has been turned into a kind of happy hunting-ground for little sects, who carry on a ceaseless wordy warfare both with themselves and the rest of the Christian world. Men and women without another theological interest in the world are yet keen to argue about Millenarianism, and to try their 'prentice hands on the interpretation of the imagery of the apocalyptic literature of both the Old Testament and the New. As Spurgeon used to say, they are so taken up with the second coming of our Lord that they forget to preach the first. So that one hardly knows which to regret more, the neglect and indifference of the one class, or the unhealthy, feverish absorption of the other.

As very often happens in cases of this kind each extreme is largely responsible for the other. Neglect prepares the way for exaggeration; exaggeration leads to further neglect. Moreover, in the case before us, both tendencies are strengthened by the very difficulty in which the subject is involved. Vagueness, uncertainty, mystery, attract some minds as powerfully as they repel others. And, assuredly, the element of uncertainty is not wanting here. In the first place, this is a subject for all our knowledge of which we are wholly dependent upon revelation. Much that Christ and His apostles have taught us we can bring to the test of experience and verify for ourselves. But this doctrine we must receive, if we receive it at all, wholly on the authority of

One whom, on other grounds, we have learned to trust. Verification, in the nature of the case, is impossible. Further, we have gone but a little way when revelation itself becomes silent; and, as I have said, when that guide leaves us, we enter at once the dark forest where instantly the track is lost.

Let us seek to learn, then, what Christ has revealed, and what He has left unrevealed, concerning His coming again.

I

As to the *fact* of Christ's coming we are left in no doubt. Our Lord's own declarations are as explicit as language can make them. Thus, in Matthew xvi. 27 we read that "the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then shall He render unto every man according to his deeds." In the great discourse on the Last Things, recorded by all the Synoptists, after speaking of the fall of Jerusalem, Christ goes on, "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." And again, in the Upper Room, He said to His disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto Myself; that where I am ye

may be also." The hope of that return shines on every page of the New Testament: "This Jesus," said the angels to the watching disciples, "which was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld Him going into heaven." The early Christians were wont to speak, without further definition, of "that day." St. Paul reminds the Thessalonians how that they had "turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven." *Maran atha*—"our Lord cometh"—was the great watchword of the waiting Church. When, at the table of the Lord, they ate the bread and drank the cup, they proclaimed His death "till He come." "Amen; come, Lord Jesus," is the passionate cry with which our English Scriptures close.

For all those, then, to whom the New Testament speaks with authority, the fact of Christ's return is established beyond all controversy. But what will be the nature of His coming? Will it be visible and personal, or spiritual and unseen? Will it be once and never again, or repeated? Will Christ come at the end of history, or is He continually coming in those great crises which mark the world's progress towards its appointed end? These questions have been answered with such admirable simplicity and scriptural truth by Dr. Denney that I cannot do better than quote his words: "It may be frankly admitted," he says, "that the return of Christ to His disciples

is capable of different interpretations. He came again, though it were but intermittently, when He appeared to them after His resurrection. He came again, to abide with them permanently, when His Spirit was given to the Church at Pentecost. He came, they would all feel who lived to see it, signally in the destruction of Jerusalem, when God executed judgment historically on the race which had rejected Him, and when the Christian Church was finally and decisively liberated from the very possibility of dependence on the Jewish. He comes still, as His own words to the High Priest suggest—From this time on ye shall see the Son of Man coming—in the great crises of history, when the old order changes, yielding place to the new; when God brings a whole age, as it were, into judgment, and gives the world a fresh start. But all these admissions, giving them the widest possible application, do not enable us to call in question what stands so plainly in the pages of the New Testament,—what filled so exclusively the minds of the first Christians—the idea of a personal return of Christ at the end of the world. We need lay no stress on the scenery of New Testament prophecy, any more than on the similar element of Old Testament prophecy; the voice of the archangel and the trump of God are like the turning of the sun into darkness and the moon into blood; but if we are to retain any relation to the New Testament at all, we must

assert the personal return of Christ as Judge of all.”¹

So far I think is clear. It is when we come to speak of the time of our Lord's return that our difficulties begin. It appears to me impossible to doubt that the first Christians were looking for the immediate return of our Lord to the earth. At one time even St. Paul seems to have expected Him within his own life-time. Nor does this fact in itself cause us any serious perplexity. What does perplex us is to find in the Gospels language attributed to Christ which apparently makes Him a supporter of this mistaken view. *E.g.*, we have these three separate sayings, recorded in St. Matthew's Gospel: "But when they persecute you in this city, flee into the next; for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man be come" (x. 23); "Verily I say unto you, There be some of them that stand here, which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom" (xvi. 28); "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be accomplished" (xxiv. 34). This seems plain enough; and if we are to take the words as they stand, we seem to be shut up to the conclusion that our Lord was mistaken, that He ventured on a prediction which events have falsified. Let us see if this really be so. I leave, for the moment, the words I have quoted

¹ *Studies in Theology*, p. 239.

in order to cite other words which point in a quite different direction.

To begin with, we have the emphatic statement: "But of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only." We remember also Christ's words to His disciples, on the eve of the Ascension, "It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within His own authority." There is, further, a whole class of sayings, exhortations, and parables, which seem plainly to involve a prolonged Christian era, and, consequently, the postponement to a far distant time, of the day of Christ's return. Thus, there are the passages which speak of the preaching of the gospel to the nations beyond: "Wheresoever the gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, that also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her" (Mark xiv. 9); "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt. xxiv. 14). There is the parable which tells of the tarrying of the bridegroom till even the wise virgins slumbered and slept. "After a long time," we read in another parable, "the Lord of those servants cometh and maketh a reckoning with them." What is the significance of the parable of the leaven hid in three measures of meal, and still more, of that group of parables which depict the growth of the kingdom—the parables of the

sower, the wheat and tares, the mustard-seed, and the seed growing gradually? Does not all this point not to a great catastrophe nigh at hand, which should bring to an end the existing order of things, but rather to just such a future for the kingdom of God on earth as the actual course of history reveals? And this, and no other, was, I believe, the impression which Christ desired to leave on the minds of His disciples.

What, then, are we to make of those other and apparently contrary words which I have quoted, but meanwhile have left unexplained? They constitute, without doubt, one of the most perplexing problems which the interpreter of the New Testament has to face,¹ and any suggestion for meeting the difficulty must be made with becoming caution. I can but briefly indicate the direction in which the probable solution may be found. Our Lord, as we have already seen, spoke of His coming again, not only at the end of the world, but in the course of it: in the power of His Spirit, at the fall of Jerusalem, in the coming of His kingdom among men. But the minds of the disciples were full of the thought of His *final* coming, which would establish for ever the glory of His Messianic kingdom; and it would seem that this fact has determined both

¹ "There is no subject on which it is more difficult to ascertain the teaching of Christ than that which relates to the future of the kingdom."—A. B. Bruce, *The Kingdom of God*, p. 273.

the form and the setting of some of Christ's sayings which they have preserved for us. Words which He meant to refer to Israel's coming judgment-day they, in the ardour of their expectation, referred to the last great day. In the first Gospel, especially, we may trace some such influence at work. When, *e.g.*, Matthew represents our Lord as saying, "There be some of them that stand here which shall in no wise taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom," it is evident, both from the words themselves and from the context, that he understood them to refer to the final return. Luke, however, speaks only of seeing "the kingdom of God," and Mark of seeing "the kingdom of God come in power." And if these words were our only version of the prophecy they would present no difficulty; we should feel that they had received adequate fulfilment in the events of the great day of Pentecost. We conclude, therefore, "that of the three reports before us the second and third, which are practically the same, reproduce more correctly the words actually spoken by Christ; and that the account given in the first Gospel was coloured by the eager hope of the early followers of Christ for their Master's speedy return."¹

To sum up in a sentence the results of this brief inquiry: Christ's teaching concerning His return leaves us both in a state of certainty and

¹ J. Agar Beet, *The Last Things*, p. 46.

uncertainty. "We believe that Thou shalt come to be our Judge"—that is our certainty; "Of that day and hour knoweth no one"—that is our uncertainty. And each of these carries with it its own lesson.

II

"Of that day and hour knoweth no one;" and we must be content not to know. There are things that are "revealed"; and they belong to us and to our children. And there are "secret things," which belong neither to us, nor to our children, but to God. Just as a visitor to Holyrood Palace finds some rooms open and free, through which he may wander at will, while from others he is strictly excluded, so in God's world there are locked doors through which it is not lawful for any man to enter. And it is our duty to be faithful to our ignorance as well as to our knowledge. There is a Christian as well as an anti-Christian agnosticism. To pry into the secret things of God is no less a sin than wilfully to remain ignorant of what He has been pleased to make known. The idly inquisitive spirit which is never at rest save when it is poking into forbidden corners, Christ always checks and condemns. "Lord," asked one, "are there few that be saved?" But He would give no answer save this: "Strive to enter in by the narrow door." "Lord, and this man what?" said Peter, curious concerning the un-

revealed future of his brother apostle. But again idle curiosity must go unsatisfied: "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou Me." "Lord dost Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" But once more He will give no answer: "It is not for you to know the times or seasons which the Father hath set within His own authority." And yet, strangely enough, that which Christ has seen good to leave untold is the one thing concerning His coming on which the minds of multitudes have fastened. It says little, either for our religion or our common-sense, that one of the most widely circulated religious newspapers of our day is one which fills its columns with absurd guesses and forecasts concerning those very "times" and "seasons" of which Christ has told us that it is not for us to know. Christ has given us no detailed map of the future, and when foolish persons pester us with little maps of their own making, let us see to it that they get no encouragement from us. Let us dare always to be faithful to our ignorance.

But if there is much we do not know, this we do know: the Lord will come. And, alike on the ground of what we know and of what we do not know, our duty is clear: we must "watch," so that whether He come at even, or at midnight, or at cock-crowing, or in the morning, He shall find us ready. Christ's solemn injunction left an indelible mark on the mind of the Early Church. "Yourselves know perfectly," St. Paul writes in

the first of his apostolic letters, "that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night . . . so then let us not sleep, as do the rest, but let us watch and be sober." As St. Augustine says, "The last day is hidden that every day may be regarded." But what, exactly, is the meaning of the command to "watch"? It cannot be that we are to be always "on the watch." That would simply end in the feverish excitement and unrest which troubled the peace of the Church of Thessalonica. The true meaning is given us, I think, in the parable of the Ten Virgins. Five were wise, not because they watched all night for the bridegroom, for it is written "they *all* slumbered and slept," but because they were prepared; and five were foolish, not because they did not watch, but because they were unprepared. "The fisherman's wife who spends her time on the pier-head watching for the boats, cannot be so well prepared to give her husband a comfortable reception as the woman who is busy about her household work, and only now and again turns a longing look seaward."¹ So Christ's command to "watch" means, not "Be ye always on the watch," but, "Be ye always ready."

Spurgeon once said, with characteristic humour and good sense, that there were friends of his to whom he would like to say, "Ye men of Plymouth, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? Go on with your work." He who in a world like

¹ Marcus Dods, *The Parables of our Lord* (first series), p. 238.

ours can sit and gaze with idly folded hands—let not that man think he shall receive anything of the Lord. A lady once asked John Wesley, “Suppose that you knew you were to die at twelve o’clock to-morrow night, how would you spend the intervening time?” “How, Madam?” he replied; “why just as I intend to spend it now. I should preach this night at Gloucester, and again at five to-morrow morning. After that I should ride to Tewkesbury, preach in the afternoon, and meet the societies in the evening. I should then repair to friend Martin’s house, who expects to entertain me, converse and pray with the family as usual, retire to my room at ten o’clock, commend myself to my heavenly Father, lie down to rest, and wake up in glory.” This is the right attitude for the Christian. The old cry must not fade from our lips, nor the old hope from our heart: *Maran atha*, “our Lord cometh.” But meanwhile He hath given to every man his work; and we may be sure there is no preparation for His coming like the faithful doing of the appointed task. “Blessed is that servant whom His Lord when He cometh shall find so doing.”

CONCERNING THE JUDGMENT

“I often have a kind of waking dream; up one road the image of a man decked and adorned as if for a triumph, carried up by rejoicing and exulting friends, who praise his goodness and achievements; and, on the other road, turned back to back to it, there is the very man himself, in sordid and squalid apparel, surrounded not by friends but by ministers of justice, and going on, while his friends are exulting, to his certain and perhaps awful judgment.”—R. W. CHURCH.

XV

CONCERNING THE JUDGMENT

“When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then shall He sit on the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all the nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats: and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.”—MATT. xxv. 31-33.

HE, the speaker, will do this. It is the most stupendous claim that ever fell from human lips. A young Jewish carpenter whose brief career, as He Himself well knew, was just about to end in a violent and shameful death, tells the little, fearful band which still clung to Him, that a day is coming when before Him all the nations shall be gathered, and by Him be separated as a shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats. In the world's long history there is nothing like it.

That Jesus did really claim to be the Judge of all men, it is, I believe, impossible to doubt. The passage just quoted is by no means our only evidence. In the Sermon on the Mount, which foolish persons who love to depreciate theology sometimes speak of as though it were the pith

and marrow of the Christian gospel, Christ says, "Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by Thy name, and by Thy name cast out devils, and by Thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity." Again, He says, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man also shall be ashamed of Him when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels;" and again, "The Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then shall He render unto every man according to His deeds." The fourth Gospel also represents Him as saying, "Neither doth the Father judge any man, but He hath given all judgment to the Son . . . and He gave Him authority to execute judgment because He is the Son of Man." And if still further evidence be necessary it would be easy to show both from the Acts and the Epistles that from the very beginning all the disciples of Jesus believed and taught that He would come again to be their Judge.

Consider what this means. Reference has already been made in an earlier chapter to Christ's witness concerning Himself, to His deep and unwavering consciousness of separateness from all others. But more striking, perhaps, than any illustration mentioned there is that furnished by the fact before us now. What must His thoughts

about Himself have been who could speak of Himself in relation to all others as Christ does here? When men write about Jesus as though He were merely a gentle, trustful, religious genius, preaching a sweet gospel of the love of God to the multitudes of Galilee, they are but shutting their eyes to one half of the facts which it is their duty to explain. Speaking generally, we do well to distrust the dilemma as a form of argument; but in this case there need be no hesitation in putting the alternative with all possible bluntness: either Christ was God, or He was not good. That Jesus, if He were merely a good man, with a good man's consciousness of and sensitiveness to His own weakness and limitations, could yet have arrogated to Himself the right to be the supreme judge and final arbiter of the destinies of mankind, is simply not thinkable. And the more we ponder the stupendous claim which Christ makes, the more must we feel that it is either superhuman authority which speaks to us here or superhuman arrogance. Either Christ spoke out of the depths of His own Divine consciousness, knowing that the Father had committed all judgment unto the Son; or He made use of words and put forth claims which were, and which He must have known to have been, empty, false, and blasphemous.

Such is the significance of Christ's words in their relation to Himself. It is, however, with their relation to ourselves that we are primarily concerned now. Of the wholly unimaginable cir-

cumstances of that day when the Son of Man shall come in His glory and all the nations be gathered before Him I shall not attempt to speak. As Dean Church has well said,¹ no vision framed with the materials of our present experience could adequately represent the truth, and, indeed, it is well that our minds should be diverted from matters which lie wholly beyond our reach, that they may dwell upon the solemn certainties which Christ has revealed. Let us think, first of the fact, and secondly of the issues, of Judgment.

I

The persistent definiteness with which the fact of judgment is affirmed by the New Testament we have already seen. Nor is the New Testament our only witness. The belief in a higher tribunal before which the judgments of time are to be revised, and in many cases reversed, may be said to be part of the creed of the race. Plato had his vision of judgment as well as Jesus. And in the Old Testament, and especially in the Book of Psalms, the same faith finds repeated and magnificent utterance: "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence; a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him. He shall call to the heavens above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people;" and again, "For He cometh, for He

¹ *Cathedral and University Sermons*, p. 10.

cometh to judge the earth: He shall judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with His truth."

Here, then, is the fact which demands a place in the thoughts of each of us—we are all to be judged. Life is not to be folded up, like a piece of finished work, and then laid aside and forgotten; it is to be gone over again and examined by the hand and eyes of Perfect Wisdom and Perfect Love. Each day we are writing, and often when the leaf is turned that which has been written passes from our mind and is remembered no more; but it is there, and one day the books—the Book of Life, of our life—will be opened, and the true meaning of the record revealed. Life brings to us many gifts of many kinds, and as it lays them in our hands, for our use and for our blessing, it is always, had we but ears to hear, with the warning word, "Know thou, that for all these things, God will bring thee into judgment."

It is, indeed, a tremendous thought. When Daniel Webster was once asked what was the greatest thought that had ever occupied his mind, he answered, "the fact of my personal accountability to God." And no man can give to such a fact its due place without feeling its steadying, sobering influence through all his life. Lament is often made to-day, and not without reason, of our failing sense of the seriousness of life. A plague of frivolity, more deadly than the locusts of Egypt, has fallen upon us, and is smiting all

our green places with barrenness. Somehow, and at all costs, we must get back our lost sense of responsibility. If we would remember that God has a right hand and a left hand; if we would put to ourselves Browning's question, "But what will God say?" if sometimes we would pull ourselves up sharp, and ask—this that I am doing, how will it look then, in that day when "Each shall stand full-face with all he did below"? if, I say, we would do this, could life continue to be the thing of shows and make-believe it so often is? It was said of the late Dean Church by one who knew him well: "He seemed to live in the constant recollection of something which is awful, even dreadful to remember—something which bears with searching force on all men's ways and hopes and plans—something before which he knew himself to be as it were continually arraigned—something which it was strange and pathetic to find so little recognized among other men." But, alas! this is how ye refuse to live. We thrust the thought of judgment from us; we treat it as an unwelcome intruder, a disturber of our peace; we block up every approach by which it might gain access to our minds. We do not deny that there is a judgment to come; but our habitual disregard of it is verily amazing. "Judge not," said Christ, "that ye be not judged;" yet every day we let fly our random arrows, careless in whose hearts they may lodge. "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall

give account thereof in the day of judgment ;” yet with what superb recklessness do we abuse God’s great gift of speech ! “ We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of God ;” yes, we know it ; but when do we think of it ? What difference does it make to us ?

What can indifference such as this say for itself ? How can it justify itself before the bar of reason ? Do we realize that our neglect has Christ to reckon with ? These things of which I have spoken are not the gossamer threads of human speculation ; they are the strong cords of Divine truth and they cannot be broken. “ You seem, sir,” said Mrs. Adams to Dr. Johnson, in one of his despondent hours, when the fear of death and judgment lay heavy on him, “ to forget the merits of our Redeemer.” “ Madam,” said the honest old man, “ I do not forget the merits of my Redeemer ; but my Redeemer has said that He will set some on His right hand and some on His left.” Yes, it is the words of Christ with which we have to do ; and if we are wise, if we know the things which belong unto our peace, we shall find for them a place within our hearts.

II

The issues of the Judgment may be summed up in a single word — separation : “ He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats

on the left." Stated thus broadly, the issue of the Judgment satisfies our sense of justice. If there is to be judgment at all, separation must be the outcome. And in that separation is vindicated one of man's most deep-seated convictions. As right is right and wrong is wrong, and right and wrong are not the same, so neither can their issues be the same. "We have a robust common-sense of morality which refuses to believe that it does not matter whether a man has lived like the Apostle Paul or the Emperor Nero." We "can never crush out the conviction that there must be one place for St. John, who was Jesus' friend, and another for Judas Iscariot, who was His betrayer."¹ This must be,

"Else earth is darkness at the core,
And dust and ashes all that is."

We must be sure that God has a right hand and a left, that good and evil are distinct, and will for ever remain so, that each will go to his own place, the place for which he is prepared, for which he has prepared himself, or our day would be turned into night and our whole life put to confusion.

So far, Christ's words present no difficulty. To many, however, it is a serious perplexity to find that Christ speaks of but two classes into which by the Judgment men are divided. There are the sheep and the goats, the good and the

¹ John Watson, *The Mind of the Master*, pp. 203, 204.

bad, and there are no others. To us it seems impossible to divide men thus. They are not, we think, good *or* bad, but good *and* bad. "I can understand," some one has said, "what is to become of the sheep, and I can understand what is to become of the goats, but how are the alpacas to be dealt with?"¹ The alpaca, it should be said, is an animal possessing some of the characteristics both of the sheep and the goat, and the meaning of the question is, of course, what is to become of that vast middle class in whose lives sometimes good and sometimes evil seems to rule?

Now it is a remarkable fact that Scripture knows nothing of any such middle class. Some men it calls good, others it calls evil, but it has no middle term. Note, *e.g.*, this typical contrast from the Book of Proverbs: "The path of the righteous is as the light of dawn, that shineth more and more unto the noon-tide of the day. The way of the wicked is as darkness; they know not at what they stumble." Or listen to Peter's question: "If the righteous is scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?" In both instances the assumption is

¹ See T. G. Selby's *Imperfect Angel and other Sermons*, p. 211. Cf. Zachariah Coleman in "Mark Rutherford's" *Revolution in Tanner's Lane*: "That is a passage that I never could quite understand. I never hardly see a pure breed, either of goat or sheep. I never see anybody who deserves to go straight to heaven or who deserves to go straight to hell. When the Judgment Day comes it will be a difficult task."

the same: there, on the one hand, are the righteous; and there, on the other, are the wicked; and beside these there are no others. The same classification is constant throughout the teaching of Jesus. He speaks of two gates, and two ways, and two ends. There are the guests who accept the King's invitation and sit down in His banqueting hall, and there are those who refuse it and remain without. In the parable of the net full of fishes the good are gathered into vessels, but the bad are cast away. The wheat and the tares grow together until the harvest; then the wheat is gathered into the barn, and the tares are cast into the fire. The sheep are set on the right hand, and the goats on the left hand; and there is no hint or suggestion that any other kind of classification is necessary in order that all men may be truly and justly dealt with.

All this may seem very arbitrary and impossible until we remember that the classification is not ours but God's. It is not we who have to divide men, setting one on the right hand and another on the left; that is God's work; and it is well to remind ourselves that He invites none of us to share His judgment-throne with Him, or, by any verdict of ours, to anticipate the findings of the last great day. And because to us such a division is impossible, it does not therefore follow that it should be so to Him before whom all hearts are open and all desires known. *We* cannot separate men thus because human character is so

complex. But complexity is a relative term ; it depends on the eyes which behold it ; and our naming a thing complex may be but another way of declaring our ignorance concerning it. We all know how a character, a life, a course of events, which, on first view, seemed but a tangled, twisted skein, on closer acquaintance often smooths itself out into perfect simplicity. And there is surely no difficulty in believing that it should be so with human life when it is judged by the perfect knowledge of God. Life is like a great tree which casts forth on every side its far-spreading branches. Yet all that moving, breathing mystery of twig and branch and foliage springs from a single root. To us the mystery is baffling in its complexity : we have looked at the branches. To God it is simple, clear : He sees the hidden root from which it springs. So that, to go back to our former illustration, it is only our ignorance which compels us to speak of "alpacas" in the moral world. To perfect knowledge they will prove to be, as Mr. Selby says, either slightly-disguised sheep or slightly-disguised goats.

There is a further fact also to be taken into account in considering Christ's two-fold classification. Since it is the work of infinite knowledge and justice it will have regard to all the facts of our life. God looks not only at the narrow present, but back into the past, and forward into the future. He marks the trend of the life, the bent and bias of the soul. He chalks down no line

saying, "Reach this or you are undone for ever." He sets up no absolute standard to which if a man attain he is a saint, or falling short of which he is a sinner. And when He calls one man righteous and another wicked, He means very much more than that one has done so many good deeds, and another so many evil deeds; "righteous" and "wicked" describe what each is in himself, what each will decisively reveal himself to be, when present tendencies have fully worked themselves out. There are two twilights, the twilight of evening and the twilight of morning; and therefore God's question to us is not, how much light have we? but, which way do we face? to the night or to the day? Not "What art thou?" but "What wilt thou?" is the supreme question; it is the answer to this which sets some on the right hand and some on the left.

Let us close as we began, remembering that it is Christ who is to be our Judge. Therefore will the judgment be according to perfect truth. We know how He judged men when He was here on earth—without respect of persons, undeceived by appearances, seeing things always as they are, calling them always by their true names. And such will His judgment be hereafter. On the walls of the famous Rock Tombs of Thebes, there is a group of figures representing the judging of the departed spirit before Osiris, the presiding deity of the dead. In one hand he holds a

shepherd's crook, in the other a scourge ; before him are the scales of justice ; that which is weighed is the heart of the dead king upon whose lot the deity is called to decide. The pictured symbol is a dim foreshadowing of that perfect judgment which He who looketh not at the outward appearance but at the heart will one day pass on all the lives of men. And yet an apostle has dared to write of "boldness in the day of Judgment"! Surely St. John is very bold ; yet was his boldness well-based. He remembered the saying of his own Gospel : "The Father hath given all judgment unto the Son . . . because He is the Son of Man." Yes ; He who will come to be our Judge is He who once for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was made man, and upon the Cross did suffer death for our redemption. Herein is the secret of the "boldness" of the redeemed.

"Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress ;
'Midst flaming worlds in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.

Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who aught to my charge shall lay ?
Fully absolved through these I am,
From sin and fear, from guilt and shame."

CONCERNING THE FUTURE LIFE

“ My knowledge of that life is small,
The eye of faith is dim ;
But 'tis enough that Christ knows all,
And I shall be with Him.”

RICHARD BAXTER.

XVI

CONCERNING THE FUTURE LIFE

“Where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.”—MATT. vi. 20.

“Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.”—MARK ix. 48.

THESE are both sayings of Christ, and each has reference to the life beyond death; together they illustrate the two-fold thought of the future which finds a place in all the records of our Lord's teaching.

Popular theology, it is sometimes said, seriously misunderstands and misinterprets Jesus. And so far as the theology of the future life is concerned there need be no hesitation in admitting that, not unfrequently, it has been disfigured by an almost grotesque literalism. The pulpit has often forgotten that over-statement is always a blunder, and that any attempt to imagine the wholly unimaginable is most likely to end in defeating our own intentions and in dissipating, rather than reinforcing, our sense of the tremendous realities of which Christ spoke. Nevertheless, much as theology may have erred in the form of its teaching

concerning the future, its great central ideas have always been derived direct from Christ. It has not, we know, always made its appeal to what is highest in man; it has sometimes spoken of "heaven" and "hell" in a fashion that has left heart and conscience wholly untouched; nevertheless, the time has not yet come—until men cease to believe in Christ, the time never will have come—for banishing these words from our vocabulary. Unless Christ were both a deceiver and deceived, they represent realities as abiding as God and the soul, realities towards which it behoves every man of us to discover how he stands. In the teaching of Jesus, no less than in the teaching of popular theology, the future has a bright side and it has a dark side; there is a heaven and there is a hell.

I

That there is a life beyond this life, that death does not end all, is of course always assumed in the teaching of Jesus. But it is much more than this that we desire to know. What kind of a life is it? What are its conditions? How is it related to the present life? What is the "glory" into which, as we believe, "the souls of believers at their death do immediately pass"? Perhaps our first impression, as we search the New Testament for an answer to our questions, is one of disappointment; there is so much that still remains unrevealed. We do indeed read of dead men raised

to life again by the power of God, but of the awful and unimaginable experiences through which they passed not a word is told.

“Where wert thou, brother, those four days?”
There lives no record of reply.

Behold a man raised up by Christ!
The rest remaineth unreveal'd;
He told it not; or something seal'd
The lips of that Evangelist.”

How much even Christ Himself has left untold! At His incarnation, and again at His resurrection, He came forth from that world into which we all must pass; yet how few were His words concerning it, how little able we still are to picture it! Nevertheless, if He has not told us all, He has told us enough. Let us recall some of His words.

He spoke of “everlasting habitations” — “eternal tabernacles” — into which men should be received. Here we are as pilgrims and sojourners, dwelling in a land not our own.

“Earth’s but a sorry tent,
Pitched but a few frail days;”

and the chances and changes of this mortal life often bear heavily upon us. But there these things have no place. Moth and rust, change and decay, sorrow and death cannot enter there.

“The day’s aye fair
I’ the land o’ the leal.”

Again, Christ said, “I go to prepare a place for

you." Just as when a little child is born into the world it comes to a place made ready for it by the thousand little tenderesses of a mother's love, so does death lead us, not into the bleak, inhospitable night, but into the "Father's house," to a place which love has made ready for our coming. "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." *Into Thy hands*—thither Jesus passed from the Cross and the cruel hands of men; thither have passed the lost ones of our love; thither, too, we in our turn shall pass. Why, then, if we believe in Jesus should we be afraid? "Having death for my friend," says an unknown Greek writer, "I tremble not at shadows." Having Jesus for our friend we tremble not at death.

Further, Christ taught us, the heavenly life is a life of service. Every one knows how largely the idea of rest has entered into our common conceptions of the future. It is indeed a pathetic commentary on the weariness and restlessness of life that with so many rest should almost have come to be a synonym for blessedness. But rest is far from being the final word of Scripture concerning the life to come. Surely life, with its thousand-fold activities, is not meant as a preparation for a Paradise of inaction. What can be the meaning and purpose of the life which we are called to pass through here, if our hereafter is to be but one prolonged act of adoration? We shall carry with us into the future not character only but capacity; and can it be that God will lay aside as useless

there that which with so great pains He has sought to perfect here? It is not so that Christ has taught us to think: "He that received the five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: lo, I have gained other five talents. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." God will not take the tools out of the workman's hands just when he has learned how to handle them; He will not "pension off" His servants just when they are best able to serve Him. The reward of work well done is more work; faithfulness in few things brings lordship over many. Have we not here a ray of light on the mystery of unfinished lives? We do not murmur when the old and tired are gathered to their rest; but when little children die, when youth falls in life's morning, when the strong man is cut off in his strength, we know not what to say. But do not "His servants serve Him" there as well as here? Their work is not done; in ways beyond our thoughts it is going forward still.¹

One other question concerning the future with which, as by an instinct, we turn to Christ for answer is suggested by the following touching little poem:

¹ See the very striking and beautiful chapter entitled "The Continuity of Life" in Watson's *Mind of the Master*.

“I can recall so well how she would look—
 How at the very murmur of her dress
 On entering the room, the whole room took
 An air of gentleness.

That was so long ago, and yet his eyes
 Had always afterwards the look that waits
 And years, and waits again, nor can disguise
 Something it contemplates.

May we imagine it? The sob, the tears,
 The long, sweet, shuddering breath; then on her breast
 The great, full, flooding sense of endless years,
 Of heaven, and her, and rest.”

Can we quote the authority of Jesus for thoughts like these? The point is, let it be noted, not whether we shall know each other again beyond death, but whether we shall be to each other what we were here. At the foot of the white marble cross which his wife placed upon the grave of Charles Kingsley are graven these three words: *Amavimus, Amamus, Amabimus* (“We have loved, we love, we shall love”). After Mrs. Browning’s death her husband wrote these lines from Dante in her Testament: “Thus I believe, thus I affirm, thus I am certain it is, that from this life I shall pass to another better, there, where that lady lives, of whom my soul was enamoured.” Will Christ counter-sign a hope like this? I do not know any “proof-text” that can be quoted, yet it were profanation to think otherwise. There are many flowers of time, we know, which cannot be transplanted; but “love never faileth,” love is the true *immortelle*. And whatever changes death may

bring, those who have been our nearest here shall be our nearest there. And though, as I say, we can quote no "proof-text," our faith may find its guarantee in the great word of Jesus: "If it were not so, I would have told you." This is one of the instincts of the Christian heart, as pure and good as it is firm and strong. Since Christ let it pass unchallenged, may we not claim His sanction for it? If it were not so, He would have told us.

II

I turn now to the reverse side of Christ's teaching concerning the future. And let us not seek to hide from ourselves the fact that there *is* a reverse side. For, ignore it as we may, the fact remains: those same holy lips which spoke of a place, "where neither moth nor rust doth consume," spoke likewise of another place, "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

In considering this solemn matter we must learn to keep wholly separate from it a number of difficult questions which have really nothing to do with it—with which, indeed, we have nothing to do—and the introduction of which can only lead to mischievous confusion and error. What is to become of the countless multitudes in heathen lands who die without having so much as heard of Christ? How will God deal with those even in our own Christian land to whom, at least as it seems to us, this life has brought no adequate

opportunity of salvation? What will happen in that dim twilight land betwixt death and judgment which men call "the intermediate state"? Will they be few or many who at last will be forever outcasts from the presence of God? These are questions men will persist in asking, but the answer to which no man knows. Strictly speaking, they are matters with which we have nothing to do, which we must be content to leave with God, confident that the Judge of all the earth will do right, even though He does not show us how. What we have to do with, what does concern us, is the warning of Jesus, emphatic and reiterated, that sin will be visited with punishment, that retribution, just, awful, inexorable, will fall on all them that love and work iniquity.

"But why," it may be asked, "why dwell upon these things? Is there not something coarse and vulgar in this appeal to men's fears? And, after all, to what purpose is it? If men are not won by the love of God, of what avail is it to speak to them of His wrath?" But fear is as real an element in human nature as love, and when our aim is by all means to save men, it is surely legitimate to make our appeal to the whole man, to lay our fingers on every note—the lower notes no less than the higher—in the wide gamut of human life. The preacher of the gospel, moreover, is left without choice in the matter. It is no part of his business to ask what is the use of this or of that in the message given to him

to deliver; it is for him to declare "the whole counsel of God," to keep back nothing that has been revealed. And the really decisive consideration is this—that this is a matter on which Christ Himself has spoken, and spoken with unmistakable clearness and emphasis. Shall, then, the ambassador hesitate when the will of the King is made known? More often—five times more often, it is said¹—than Jesus spoke of future blessedness did He speak of future retribution. The New Testament is a very tender book; but it is also a very stern book, and its sternest words are words of Jesus. "For the sins of the miserable, the forlorn, the friendless, He has pity and compassion; but for the sins of the well-taught, the high-placed, the rich, the self-indulgent, for obstinate and malignant sin, the sin of those who hate, and deceive, and corrupt, and betray, His wrath is terrible, its expression is unrestrained."² "Jesu, Thou art all compassion," we sometimes sing; but is it really so? St. Paul writes of "the meekness and gentleness of Christ"; and for many of the chapters of Christ's life that is the right headline; but there are other chapters which by no possible manipulation can be brought under that heading, and they also are part of the story. It was Jesus who said that in the day of judgment it should be more tolerable for even Tyre and

¹ See T. G. Selby's *Ministry of the Lord Jesus*, p. 279.

² R. W. Church, *Human Life and its Conditions*, p. 103.

Sidon than for Bethsaida and Chorazin ; it was Jesus who uttered that terrible twenty-third chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, with its seven times repeated "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" it was Jesus who spoke of the shut door and the outer darkness, of the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched, of the sin which hath never forgiveness, neither in this world, nor in that which is to come, and of that day when He who wept over Jerusalem and prayed for His murderers and died for the world will say unto them on His left hand, 'Depart from Me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels.' These are *His* words, and it is because they are His they make us tremble. He *is* "gentle Jesus, meek and mild" ; that is why His sternness is so terrible.

These things are not said in order to defend any particular theory of future punishment—on that dread subject, indeed, the present writer has no "theory" to defend ; he frankly confesses himself an agnostic—but rather to claim for the solemn fact of retribution a place in our minds akin to that which it held in the teaching of our Lord. We need have no further concern than to be loyal to Him. Does, then, such loyalty admit of a belief in universal salvation ? Is it open to us to assert that in Christ the whole race is predestined to "glory, honour, and immortality" ? The "larger hope" of the universalist—

“that good shall fall
At last—far off—at last, to all,
And every winter change to spring”—

is, indeed, one to which no Christian heart can be a stranger; yearnings such as these spring up within us unbidden and uncondemned. But when it is definitely and positively asserted that “God has destined all men to eternal glory, irrespective of their faith and conduct,” “that no antagonism to the Divine authority, no insensibility to the Divine love, can prevent the eternal decree from being accomplished,” we shall do well to pause, and pause again. The old doctrine of an assured salvation for an elect few we reject without hesitation. But, as Dr. Dale has pointed out,¹ the difference between the old doctrine and the new is merely an arithmetical, not a moral difference: where the old put “some,” the new puts “all”; and the moral objections which are valid against the one are not less valid against the other also. I dare not say to myself, and therefore I dare not say to others, that, let a man live as he may, it yet shall be well with him in the end. The facts of experience are against it; the words of Christ are against it. “The very conception of human freedom involves the possibility of its permanent misuse, of what our Lord Himself calls ‘eternal sin.’” If a man can go on successfully resisting Divine grace in this life,

¹ In a striking article entitled “The Old Antinomianism and the New” (*Congregational Review*, Jan. 1887).

what reason have we for supposing that it would suddenly become irresistible in another life? Build what we may on the unrevealed mercies of the future for them that live and die in the darkness of ignorance, let us build nothing for ourselves who are shutting our eyes and closing our hearts to the Divine light and love which are already ours.

“Behold, then, the goodness and severity of God;” and may His goodness lead us to repentance, that His severity we may never know. This is, indeed, His will for every one of us: He has “appointed us not unto wrath, but unto the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.” If we are lost we are suicides.

THE END

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