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THE GOD THAT JESUS SAW

BY
W. GARRETT HORDER

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ROBERT BROWNING

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FOREWORD

PREACHING before the University of Cambridge in the year 1846, Frederick Myers of Keswick—one of the seers of the nineteenth century—said: "I fear it may be that in some degree our theology has been impairing our religion," and then he added, "the remedy for this is a firmer and fuller faith in the highest Idea of God." [1]

No words could better express my own feeling in writing these pages. I have always felt that the one thing vital to a true religion is the moral and spiritual perfection of its God; and I have, therefore, refused to give assent or to make known anything out of harmony with such perfection, even though it may have been included in the Creeds, Confessions, or dogmas of the Churches. Indeed, the one test I have applied to every doctrine has been: "Is it consistent with the idea of perfect Fatherhood in God?" For I have always believed that the central and supreme purpose of Jesus was to reveal this perfect God whom He called and encouraged men to call "Father."

[1] Sermons before the University of Cambridge by the late Frederic Myers, M.A., Perpetual Curate of St. John's, Keswick, 1852, p. 22.

In the assurance of this perfect Fatherhood of God I have found the resting-place for my soul, and I am anxious that others who have not, should find this place of rest. Long experience of life has shown me that many obstacles bar the way thereto, and, therefore, in the pages which follow I have done what little I could to remove such obstacles. If in any small measure I have succeeded my heart will be made glad.

Whilst I alone am responsible for the beliefs expressed, I am greatly indebted to Miss Maud Russell Beasley for unsparing devotion of time and thought, to the Rev. Gerald H. Paulet, B.A., Oxon, for valuable suggestions, and to Dr. Hastings Rashdall, Dean of Carlisle, of whose wide and accurate learning I was glad to avail myself, and who with great kindness read the manuscript and sent me notes of much value. To all these I offer my most hearty thanks.

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THE GOD THAT JESUS SAW

PART I

I

THE PERFECT FATHER JESUS SAW

THAT was a very wise collier who, when leading a Bible-class of his mates, said: "Whatever we do, lads, let us keep clear the character of God." It seems, indeed, a positive duty for all who think on this great matter to reach the truest possible conclusions. As Dr. Wicksteed says: "For inasmuch as a man who has formed a wholly false conception of God and feels emotionally moved towards this creature of his imagination is not really loving God, it follows that, in proportion as our conception of God approaches the truth, so our love is indeed love of God, and not of an idol." [1] It is said that Queen Victoria idolised her husband, the Prince Consort; but the Prince did not want to be idolised, he wanted to be understood. The Queen never understood him, and the Prince was a lonely man to the end. Would it not be true to say that the Great Father longs to be understood—that is, in an ethical and

[1] *Reactions between Dogma and Philosophy*, p. 261.

spiritual sense apprehended—rather than idolised, that He would rather be apprehended as to His vital relationship to men than ignorantly and so wrongly worshipped by His children, since to apprehend Him, in even a far-off way, would draw them to something far higher than idolising—to response of heart and obedience of life.

As I have gone over the representations men have made of Him in the metaphysics of the Greek and the legalism of the Latin, culminating in the awful articles of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, I could not help feeling how the great Fatherly heart must have suffered. Far beyond anything else, the conception of the character of his God determines the nature of a man's religion. That is usually estimated by the creed he recites, or the mode in which he worships, whether through extemporary or liturgical forms, with a simple or ornate ritual, but far deeper and more influential is the character of God which rises before his mind and moves his heart.

This has been controverted by pointing to men and women with the most terrible conceptions of the character of God, who have yet lived very pure and noble lives. No one who has considered the subject will deny this. With even the vision of a Sultanic God before their eyes, many have pursued with steadfast purpose the way of righteousness, and have left the memory of very holy lives. But a closer acquaintance with them would have brought to light the fact that their hearts ached at the thought of God

which filled their minds, and that, amid all their fidelity, their service was that of servants and did not rise, or rose only fitfully, in moments of ecstasy, to the joyousness and freedom of sons. Within the circle of my own acquaintances there have been many devoted and holy lives, which called forth my warmest admiration, but all the while beneath the surface there was often a heart agony, a distress of mind, caused by their wrong vision of God, which made lives, nobly lived and which should have been filled with joy, to be shadowed by the vision which filled their minds and troubled their hearts. And only when the true vision of the Father which Christ revealed rose before their eyes did they pursue the way of holiness, not with the trembling feet of fear, but with the gladness of those whose vision had wakened a love which casts out the fear which hath torment. No sight can be sadder than that of men and women steadily pursuing the way of holiness, but with a distorted vision of God that robs them of much of a joy which is rightly theirs, and which would be theirs if they saw God, not through the unworthy doctrines which men have framed of God, but through the great revealing of Him who, above and beyond all others, really knew God.

Two incidents in the career of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen may serve to show how great a change is wrought in mind and heart by realisation of the Fatherhood of God :

" He once met a shepherd in the Highlands, to whom, ' in that tone which combined in so peculiar

a manner sweetness and command,' he put the unlooked-for question, ' Do you know the Father ? ' The shepherd, taken aback, said nothing ; but the wonderful tone and personality of the questioner made so deep an impression upon his mind that he could not get past the question put to him, nor yet dismiss it from his mind, with the remarkable result that, meeting Mr. Erskine many years afterwards, the shepherd recognised him at once, and said, ' I know the Father now.' " [1]

The other incident may show that the surest way to lead to confidence in this Fatherhood is the human one indicated by Jesus : " If ye, being evil, know how to give good things unto your children, how much more will your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him ? "

" Mr. Erskine was once taken by Lady Matilda Maxwell to see a farmer of whose recovery there was no hope, but who was terribly afraid, and said, ' I cannot face the idea of dying.' To calm his mind, Mr. Erskine asked, ' Would you like me to go with you ? ' which called forth the obvious reply, ' How can a man go with another when he is dying ? ' But, as the farmer grew more excited, Mr. Erskine asked, " Would you *like* me to go with you if I *could* ? ' ' Of course I would,' said the farmer. ' Why ? ' asked Mr. Erskine. ' Oh, because that now we are such friends, I am sure you wouldn't let anything very bad happen to me.' On this said Mr. Erskine, ' Do you think I am better than God ? Anything which you like in me comes out from Him, for I did not make myself. Depend upon it that He is better than I am, and likes you better too ;

[1] *Erskine of Linlathen*, by H. E. Henderson, p. 122.

depend upon it that He will not let anything very bad happen to you. Believe me, it will not be so bad as you think; believe me, it will be easier. Just put it into His hands, just leave yourself with Him, and I am sure that He will see you through it better than I could.' Next day Mr. Erskine returned, and the farmer said, 'I have been thinking, sir, of what you said, and I find something in it; and I am trying to lift it from myself and put it upon God, and I feel a kind of help in it.' A few days after, when death came, he met it not only without fear, but with hope and even triumph." [1]

It should be enough to point all walking in the shadow of unworthy ideas of God to the clear, definite, emphatic declaration of Christ of His perfect Fatherhood. But, unhappily, there are often many old and deeply rooted ideas of God in the mind which prevent the entrance of the nobler ones presented by Christ; and there are many things both in the world and in Scripture which seem to bar the way to the great Evangel of Christ as to this perfect Fatherhood. And the purpose of the pages which follow is to open the road by clearing away the obstacles to the full assurance of Christ's great declaration, " Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

Two prefatory remarks must be made to set this declaration in its proper light. *The first is, that the perfection here spoken of is that of a Father.* There are varieties of perfection. There is the perfection

[1] *Present-day Papers*, edited by Bishop Ewing. Third Series pp. 17–19.

of the craftsman, reached when his work cannot be better done. There is the perfection of the judge whose judgments are just. There is the perfection of the ruler whose rule is for his people's good; besides many others which need not be named. And a man may be perfect in any one of these, but imperfect in other respects.

Now, the perfection here spoken of is that of a Father. Of course, God must be perfect in every respect; but it is to the perfection of His Fatherhood we are here pointed—that is, perfection in His relation to us, His children on earth.

The second thing is, that the name "Father" really stands for parent, and includes the fatherly and motherly element. We males have no right to monopolise parentage, either in the home or in our idea of God. Theodore Parker, the great American preacher, always spoke of God as Father-Mother God. And he was right. The prophet discerned this when he put into the mouth of Jehovah the declaration, wonderful for that age, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." That should bring into our thought a tender element, quite lacking in those who always speak of Him as the Almighty, which is Society's word, and reveals the hardness and crudeness of its idea of Him.

Thousands of hearts are troubled because they have had thrust upon them the vision of a far from perfect God—one, indeed, who is said to have taken their loved ones from their side in the recent war, or taken their babies from the nurture of their

bosom, as many a sorrowing parent has been told by unthinking comforters. Such terrible caricatures of God as these have not only been turning hearts away from religion, but have caused inexpressible anguish. And cases have come under my notice in which, when such misrepresentations of God have been wisely and tenderly removed, a great agony of heart has been healed, which has found expression even outwardly in the features of the face.

It seems almost incredible that nearly two thousand years after Jesus declared the perfection of God's Fatherhood refutation of such misrepresentations should be needed; but so it is! And there is no truth which followers of Jesus should more clearly and vigorously make known than this perfection.

Protestants have often taken more care of the character of their Bible than of their God. Chillingworth's declaration that the Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants is a sign of this. Catholics have often taken more care of the character of their Church than of their God, and thus the Church has practically become their God. A nobleman who claimed to be a good Catholic declared to a relative of mine that he "did not believe in Christ or the Bible, but he believed in the Church, and the Church, when he died, would see him through." He will surely find in the other world that neither his Church nor any other Church will have any such power. But the supreme matter is the character of God. If, before men's eyes everywhere, the vision of a perfect

Father could be lifted and kept, it would gradually but surely waken the sense of brotherhood among men which just now is the supreme need of the world. No effort should be too great to banish the hard visions of God's character which have held the minds of men and to put in their place that perfect fatherhood which was the very centre of Christ's teaching and the very goal of His ministry. But, though nearly two thousand years have elapsed since He declared the perfection of this Fatherhood, it is even now rarely realised in its fulness.

In his sermon to the Church Congress of 1920 at Southend, the Archbishop of Canterbury preached on the Fatherhood of God. He said :

" Less than a hundred years ago George Canning told this story to a listening House of Commons : He had gone, he said, a few Sundays before to a poor little Presbyterian church in Hatton Garden. There he heard from an inconspicuous preacher—it was Edward Irving, not yet famous—a new and startling phrase which had haunted him ever since—the Fatherhood of God."

The Archbishop then said :

" The underlying thought of the phrase which came to him so arrestingly was, of course, in no sense new. But, strangely enough, the actual phrase does not seem to have been previously in use."

Now the Archbishop is wrong in his story. Canning did not hear the phrase—it was reported to him by Sir James Mackintosh, who *had* heard Irving

in his prayer speak of some orphans as " thrown upon the Fatherhood of God." But the Archbishop makes a more serious mistake when he says that the thought was in no sense new. It *was* new to that time. If the thought had been there, it would have found, as thought always does, some phrase for its expression. Indeed, even in the earlier years of my own life, the Fatherhood of God was regarded as heresy, and men were thrust from their pulpits for proclaiming it. That was the case with Dr. McLeod Campbell, who was ejected from the church at Row, on the Gareloch, and Alexander J. Scott, who, thrust from the ministry for the same reason, became the first Principal of Owens College, which is now the University of Manchester. Through the fidelity to the teaching of Christ of such and other like-minded men, the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God has almost ceased to be regarded as a heresy; but it is still imperfectly accepted and applied, and there are still many things which are urged against it.

In one sense the Fatherhood of God has been known from the time of Christ to our own; and in a certain sporadic way, it was known and proclaimed before His time by the Hebrew prophets, to say nothing concerning hints of it in quite other realms. And all down the Christian centuries it could not have been wholly missed, since it forms the preface to the Lord's Prayer, which has always held its place in and even beyond the Church. But from the earliest down to almost our own time it has rarely if ever reached the fulness and vitality of

meaning which really belongs to the idea of Fatherhood. It would be difficult to find, till quite recent times, those who extended it to the whole race which owes its existence to God. Everywhere, or nearly everywhere, it was limited to those who believed or had been baptized or were in some way within the pale of the Church. Whilst, beyond this, those who believed in the Fatherhood seemed to be able at the same time to believe things absolutely incompatible with it. For example, Fatherhood, in any real sense, rules out the idea of everlasting punishment, even to those unresponsive to its calls and persuasions. And it also rules out what has even yet been rarely realised, the need for any *persuasions* to obtain the mercy of God. All that the earthly father, in spite of his imperfections, demands as a condition of his mercy to an offending child, is such sorrow for wrongdoing that his forgiveness can be rightly given and received. But men believed, or thought they believed, in the Divine Fatherhood when all the while they regarded Jesus, not as the expression or commendation, but as the persuasion of that Father to forgiveness of His repentant children. In this respect the Divine Fatherhood even now is rarely apprehended in its breadth and fulness.

As an article of the Creed, Fatherhood in God has never been absent from the faith of the Church, but as a vitality of experience, with all its great implications, it has even now reached but a small proportion even of those who bear the name of Christian. And

it was not till men like Thomas Erskine, Alexander John Scott, and McLeod Campbell were persuaded of the Divine Fatherhood and their ideas gained expression through preachers like Frederic Denison Maurice and poets like George MacDonald that the idea in its vitality and with its great implications became the conviction of any great number of Christian people.

When this idea of the Fatherly nature of God, which had emerged in the teaching of the men just named and other pioneer minds, passed out into wider circles, it was objected that no place was found in it for those sterner elements which find expression in the teaching of Scripture, and that it placed on the throne of the universe a weakly indulgent rather than a righteous ruler. Doubtless, in the representations of ill-balanced minds this was sometimes the case, but it certainly was not so in the case of the men to whom I have referred, whose vision was of Fatherhood in its fulness and perfection. Even in the case of earthly fatherhoods, when they reach to high levels, there are found the characteristics of the king and the judge; they are at once rulers and judges over their families, but it is love which is the very heart of their fatherhood, and the regal and judicial qualities are only the ways through which love best expresses itself and reaches its end.

This is my own conception of the Fatherly nature of God and that it works not through direct action, rewarding and punishing from without, but, as it were, from within, through that constitution of

Nature which ever leads to the overthrow of the evil and the establishment of the good. The Hebrew mind thought of the action of God as direct and from without. The modern mind, believing quite as fully as the Hebrew in Divine influence, regards it as springing out of the very order of the universe, as originally constituted by God. But, however that may be, the vision of Divine Fatherhood presented in these pages is not of one who loves not wisely but too well, but of one " righteous in all His ways and holy in all His works."

Now, there are many things in the Old Dispensation which have wrongly been brought into the New, which tend to conceal this perfect Fatherhood. In the pages of the Old Testament Jehovah is mixed up with much that is warlike. There is the record of many campaigns, and Jehovah is said to be the Patron of Israel and to fight on its behalf. And because of this the name " the Lord of Hosts " has been given to Him in the Psalms and other parts of the Old Testament. And so the title " the Lord of Hosts " is still applied to Him, even in our Christian dispensation. " The Lord of Hosts is with us " was not only the battle-cry of Cromwell and his troops, who used the Old far more than the New Testament, but in our Christian worship we often use the same words when we sing of Him. It is indeed difficult to get this fighting name for God out of even the devotional parts of the Old Testament used in our worship. And the battle stories of the Old Testament, with their belief in Jehovah as the great Captain, have

done and are still doing much to keep alive that fighting tendency which hinders the peace and concord so needed by the nations of the world.

And, of course, the idea of God as the inspirer and leader of war, and His title as the Lord of Hosts, are absolutely out of accord with the declaration of Christ of His perfect Fatherhood. The two cannot exist side by side in the same mind. Perfect Fatherhood must thrust out utterly all such ideas, for a Father—a perfect Father of all—could not be either the inspirer or leader of war between different parts of His family. We must get rid of all names for Him which make Him a Captain of Battles rather than the Head of a Family.

In the fourth century Bishop Ulphilas, who gave the Goths a written language and translated the Bible for them, omitted the Books of Kings and Samuel in order that his people might not find in them an additional stimulus to their warlike enterprises, an example worthy of imitation, for the war stories of the Old Testament greatly foster the war spirit.

And then, too, theology has often been a great obscurer of this Perfect Fatherhood of God.[1] Until quite recently, the idea rarely appeared in works of theology, and when it did it was with all sorts of limitations or reservations. If a Father, He was only of a

[1] More than three-quarters of a century ago that far-seeing man, Frederick Myers, of Keswick, saw this, for, preaching before the University of Cambridge, he said: "I fear it may be that in some degree our theology has been impairing our religion" (*Six Sermons*, p. 22).

little company who believed, and their belief must be of a very definite and orthodox kind. And in many theologies only an elected company, and that a small one, could be in His family, and the rest—and that a vast rest—were doomed to eternal omission from the family, and, worse than that, to eternal punishment for not becoming what the Divine decree had made impossible. No greater hiders of the perfect Fatherhood of God ever darkened the earth than those called Calvinists. There was really some ground for John Wesley's saying that "the Calvinist's God was worse than his devil, for his devil only tempted him to sin, and his God compelled him to sin."

And then this awful calumny against God's Fatherhood filtered out from books and professors of theology into the pulpit, and so reached the people at large. Until comparatively recently, the perfect Fatherhood of God was more preached *against* than *preached.* It was argued against; it was ridiculed; it was denounced as "heresy." And the greater part of the doctrine actually preached was absolutely out of harmony with such Fatherhood. St. Paul says it "pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe"—of course, he did not mean that by *foolish* preaching men would be saved; what he meant was that preaching seemed a foolish method to save men. If foolish preaching could have saved men, there has been such a vast quantity of it down the ages that by this time all in Christendom should have been saved!

And it cannot be doubted that foolish preaching has greatly hidden the perfection of God's Fatherhood. In my early days what was preached was not the perfect Fatherhood of God, but the three R's: Ruin by the Fall, which Christ never preached; Redemption by the Blood; and Regeneration by the Holy Ghost. All three were usually got out of every text. In many an age and place the pulpit has obscured rather than revealed this Fatherhood. And this has not wholly ceased. In support of this, let me quote from a sermon preached at the beginning of the war:

"The God after this war will be to many different from the God before the war, because we shall have seen His power and grace and know by experience who can help us best. There will be a revival of true Christianity after this, and it was needed and prayed for a long time; but we never thought it would come this way—that a war-cloud would be big with mercy and would break with blessing on our head. But God brings His olive-branches of peace in chariots of war—for what was Calvary but the battle-ground of God?—and when Christ conquered by dying He became our peace."[1]

And then, too, even some of the poets who should have been revealers of this Divine Fatherhood have often been its obscurers. And, unfortunately, the charm of their verse has carried their influence into circles beyond the Church. This is the case with two of the greatest poets of the world, Dante and

[1] *Why God permits War*, a sermon by the Rev. W. L. Gibbs, 1914.

Milton, whose poems have obscured rather than revealed the Divine Fatherhood. It was their misfortune to be cast in ages whose theology was spiritually hard. Dante drew in the mediæval theology with his breath. Milton, though himself an Arian, was of the Puritan period, which was Calvinistic. And these theologies, which had no place for a real Fatherhood of God, find expression in their poems—that of Dante in the *Divine Comedy*, that of Milton in *Paradise Lost*. In these, poetic phrasing is at its highest, theology at its lowest. I have been going over the first section of the *Divine Comedy* called "Hell," where each circle holds sinners of a particular type, to whom are meted out punishments like to their sins, and I have asked myself: Can one imagine a real father dooming any of his family, however sinful, to such never-ending woe?

I suppose the best-known line of Dante is the inscription over the gate of Hell: "All hope abandon, ye who enter here." Would any true father banish hope from the sky even of a prodigal son? I was once asked for advice as to what course a father, whose son had gone astray, should take. I at once replied, "Let him never close the door of the home against him." And I am sure that in such advice I was in harmony with the will of God. The door *was* kept open, and that prodigal son is now within the home circle.[1]

[1] What is here said about Dante is in regard to the influence the *Divine Comedy* has had in framing *popular* conceptions of

And in lesser degree it may be said of Milton's *Paradise Lost*—great poetry, but bad theology. No one can imagine a perfect Father planning the world as pictured in either Dante or Milton. These works have enriched our poetry, but they have not aided or uplifted our religion. And as Dante's cosmogony of the earth as the centre of the Universe and stationary, and the sun as rising and setting, is now obsolète, so his theology, which was equally erroneous, should be regarded as also obsolete. If we want aid from the poets to the vision of the Fatherhood of God, we must come to later ones, touched by the breath of the spirit which has been

the other world. This has tended, in my judgment, to render that world, even to the godly, an object of fear rather than of anticipation. The writer of the article " The Spirit World " in the Dante Supplement to *The Times* on the six hundredth anniversary of his death, who clearly is a fervent Dante-lover, says : " The tragedies they tell create pity and fear that are unforgettable. Yet not all the beauties of the cantos devoted to ' Malebolge,' and they are many, can redeem the repulsiveness of the physical torments described. The floggings and the boiling pitch, the devils with horns and hoofs, the serpents, the butcheries, and the loathsome diseases are merely hideous. Their ugliness and their grossness jar with the rest of the picture, as Fra Angelico's Hell jars with the lovely Heaven, both plainly inspired by Dante, in his ' Last Judgment.' " To the ordinary reader who cannot strip off this awful mediævalism, Dante's picture of Hell cannot but cast a dark shadow over the face of God.

It may be otherwise with those whose minds are able to do what, in his letter to Can Grande, Dante himself suggests—that his " poem may be interpreted both allegorically and mystically as well as literally," and who can thus reach down to the eternal realities or essences hidden beneath Dante's mediævalism. Help to this may be found in Six Sermons by Dr. Wicksteed, especially in the Appendix, who in his last book makes the

liberating our religion from the hardness of earlier times.

It may be asked, What bearing has all this upon us to-day? It has a great bearing, for the vision of God before our eyes has the most potent influence upon our character and course. If our vision be of a Lord of Hosts, then there is justification for advocacy of war; for if God be indeed the Leader of Armies, then there is no reason why we should not advocate and even join in war. There is no more potent influence against efforts to make wars cease than the idea that they are approved of God. Until

following illuminating distinction between Aquinas and Dante: "Aquinas shocks us so deeply when he speaks of Hell, not because he believes in it, but because he seeks to show that *to our human judgment* its existence proves itself as good; Dante believed in Hell as firmly as Aquinas did, but he conceals neither from himself nor from his readers the revolt of his feelings against its apparent injustice" (*Reactions between Dogma and Philosophy*, p. 564). But this naturally makes us ask, If the injustice was apparent to Dante, how much more apparent must it have been to the perfectly just eye of God?

And for myself, I come back from reading of Dante, especially the "Hell," and ask myself the question, Is it worth while to occupy my mind with pictures of Hell which revolt my sense of justice, and which must therefore be out of harmony with the infinitely higher sense of justice in God, because of the supreme literary skill with which those pictures are painted? Should I be willing to ponder descriptions which did injustice to a dear friend simply because of the literary skill with which they were written? Admiration for genius may thus hurt what is far more important: the sense of Perfect Fatherhood in God. For that I confess I am very jealous. It may be the writer in *The Times* supplement already quoted is not without some such feeling, for he says: "We wonder for what supposed treasure so fair a casket was wrought; but the key is lost. We praise the workmanship, and turn away perplexed and disappointed."

warlike ideas of God are rooted out, wars are likely to continue. Not until the idea of a Divine Warrior fades before Christ's picture of a perfect Fatherhood in God are counsels of peace likely to prevail among the nations.

If our vision be of a God who is so unjust as to choose out an elect few for eternal life and pass by the rest and condemn them to eternal misery for their sins—to the praise of His glorious justice, as the *Westminster Confession of Faith* declares—so long as that vision of God remains before our eyes justice will find neither example nor warrant in the Divine Nature.

So long as our vision of God is of one who only cares for accuracy of doctrine we shall be content with orthodoxy—right opinion, instead of what is far more important—orthopraxy—right practice, right living, right character.

The great directing force in religion is our vision of God—if it be a right vision it will lead us in the right way; if it be a wrong vision it will lead us in the wrong way.

And then, beyond this, unless our vision of God be that of a perfect Father, we are not true to Jesus Christ, the Leader and Lord of our Faith. Unless that be our vision we are not really in the Christian way or true to the Christian type. Perfect Fatherhood in God was the very heart of Christ's Evangel to the world. To lead us to that He lived, taught, laboured, died. To miss or turn away from that is to turn away from Christ Himself. It is almost

unthinkable—it is certainly horrible—to know that for teaching God's perfect and universal Fatherhood, saintly and faithful men were driven out of the Church which bore the name of Christ. But such is the terrible fact, and it is a great blot on the Church's escutcheon. Till it is quite erased the Church will stand dishonoured before the world.

The supreme effort of the Church to-day should be not only to wipe out such false pictures of God—of the warrior God, of the unjust God, of the hard God—but to put in their place the perfect Father in whom Christ trusted and whom He revealed to the world.

Let the Great Revealer's vision of the Father sink down into our mind and heart, and we cannot help looking out on men everywhere as dear to Him and therefore knit to us by ties which can never be broken.

For centuries the world has had a distorted and unfatherlike vision of God; hence the confusions which so perplex our hearts. It is high time that the true vision of God as Perfect Father dawned on our sight, for it will be the great dynamic to that peace and concord which beyond all else the world so sorely needs.

II

THE REVEALING OF GOD'S PERFECTION THROUGH HIS REQUIREMENTS

EVERYONE who thinks, at some time or other must wonder what God's attitude to humanity really is. The soldier who came to his chaplain with the question, "Padre, what is God *like*?" gave voice to an almost universal curiosity. It is *that*, rather than the question "Is there a God?" which occupies the minds of men. In some form or other all men believe that God exists. Matthew Arnold recognised Him as "a power not ourselves making for righteousness," Emerson as "an Over-Soul," Herbert Spencer as "an Eternal Energy," Sir John Seeley as "a Natural Law," the Christian Scientist thinks of Him as "a Divine Principle," and even Lucretius says, "When I think of the atoms moving through space a kind of divine rapture lays hold of me." All these thus acknowledged an *existence* for which the common name is God. Even those calling themselves atheists, when forced to define their position, always, or nearly always, admit there is a God, or something to take His place.

Travelling once from Leghorn to Pisa, I got into

conversation with a Frenchman, who said, "I am an atheist, you know." I answered, "I don't believe it; for I never yet met an atheist." He replied, "Of course, I believe there is a God, but I don't think we can know anything about Him." I said, "You are *not* an atheist, for an atheist denies the existence of God. Your proper name is Agnostic —one who denies the possibility of any knowledge of Him."

It is not the *existence* of God of which men are in doubt; it is concerning His nature that they are perplexed. It is not so much as to whether He is immanent or transcendent—that is, whether He is present in all things, or dwelling apart; it is rather what is His *attitude*, His *feeling* to men, that they are so anxious to know. That lies at the core of the cry of Moses: "I pray Thee, show me Thy glory"—show me what is Thy feeling and purpose to me. That lies at the heart of the great cry of Job: "Oh that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to His seat!"—that is, to such close contact as to know His inner nature.

These are *world* cries—they *express* what often lies *unexpressed* in the heart of men everywhere. We all long to know what is the attitude, the relationship, the feeling of God to us men and women. Any light, however feeble, on this great matter is welcome. Light comes to us from many quarters—from the world in which our lot is cast, from our own natures, especially from what we call "conscience"; but some light may be ours from a quarter

which is rarely explored, but which has been finely opened in those two lines of Whittier:

> "By all that He requires of me,
> I know what God Himself must be."

Those are two of the most significant lines in English poetry. I know of none more significant, even in the greatest poets, such as Dante or Milton—greater in the poetic art, but not so great as Whittier in their insight into Divine matters. Indeed, I know of no poet whose vision of God so commends itself to my heart and mind, which seems so reasonable and spiritual, and in which I can rest my soul. Dante pictures a God who wakens fear; but Whittier pictures a God in whom both my heart and mind can rest.

And in the lines I have quoted he opens a new pathway to the knowledge of what God really is—that is, of how He really feels to us men and women. And in his doing of this he moves along the way opened by Jesus Christ, who of all the sons of men saw the deepest into the heart of God—who by His doing of the Will was closest to God, and knew most of the secrets of His nature. It is happily becoming more and more acknowledged that in spiritual vision of God, Jesus Christ is supreme. That idea is gradually spreading itself over the earth. In a recent book in which the thoughts of all sorts of people are expressed—of orthodox and heretic, of the West and East—Jesus is acknowledged to be the nearest to God, and so the surest exponent of His nature.

And when we look closely into His teaching, we find that *one* way of knowing what God is like is to see what *He would have us be.* His precepts to men are an outshining of His own Nature. *What He would have men be is an expression of that which is deepest in His own heart.* In an earthly home, the precepts of the parents, by which they would regulate the course of their children, which reveal what they would have their children do and so become, are a very sure indication of what they themselves are. And if we go over the words of Christ in such utterances as the Sermon on the Mount we may discover not only His ideal for men, but in that ideal an expression of the deepest nature of God as He saw Him. Christ bids men obey these precepts— *that "they may be perfect, even as their Father who is in heaven is perfect."* If obedience to the precepts is to liken men to God, it is clear that they must be an expression of His own nature. When, therefore, we look at these precepts, we see what, to the mind of Jesus, is in the nature of God; and so we get some help—indeed, much help —in knowing what God is like. God must Himself be in harmony with the precepts He lays on us.

It must be admitted that there are *certain* precepts, say, of the Sermon on the Mount, which only apply to *men*, and cannot apply to *God* at all, as in an earthly home there are things incumbent on the children which are not incumbent on the parents. For example, obedience is a duty for the child; it is scarcely a duty for the parent. It must be evident

that certain precepts of the Sermon on the Mount are applicable only to *men*, and not to God. Certain even of the Beatitudes cannot apply to Him; for example, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." We cannot think of God hungering and thirsting for a righteousness which, in the very nature of things, must be eternally His.

But, then, in the earthly home there *are* things proper to and binding on parents and children *alike*, where there is no difference between them save in age and experience of life. Truthfulness, justice, kindness, love are incumbent on both parents and children. Precepts concerning these apply to both.

And if we go over the precepts of Christ, especially in the Sermon on the Mount, whilst we shall find certain that apply, and can only apply, to *men*, to whom they are addressed, we shall find certain others which, if I may reverently say so, are as binding on God as on us. Indeed, they are the outcome of His appreciation of and loyalty to them. Take the precept, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." And that this is so is made clear by what follows: "*that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven*"—in other words, that ye may be like your Father—who, therefore, must Himself be loving to His enemies. Now that is a far-reaching idea, which makes a good deal that passes for Christianity look rather foolish. Until

recently, we were taught that God felt something very different from *love* to His enemies. We used to hear that for them there was a punishment that would be everlasting; and it is not very long ago that the punishment was declared to be physical, and pictures were painted, both in colour and in words, of torments such as even the Spanish Inquisitors, even at their worst, never reached, for their torments were limited to earth, but those of God had no limit. If that is how God treats His enemies He does not obey His own precepts! And many a man and woman of forgiving temper has risen to greater heights of goodness than that. A God who hated His enemies and meted out to them everlasting torment could not, would not dare to bid *us* love our enemies. That precept alone, without the great declaration "God is Love," or "God so loved the world," is enough to consign to the limbo of forgetfulness the idea that He hates and visits His enemies with never-ending torment.

And of God's love, even of His enemies, Jesus saw clear illustration in the world of Nature. "For He maketh His sun to shine on the evil and the good, and sendeth His rain on the just and the unjust." There, before our eyes, Jesus seems to say, is visible proof of universal love and not hate in God.[1] In this realm, God does not hold off His blessed confer-

[1] "Christ had no scientific light to guide Him to this conclusion. Nevertheless, He seems to have reached it by *His faith in the perfect moral character of God*, whose love He held to extend to those who hated as well as loved Him."—*The Spirit of Christianity*, by Frederick Seebohm, p. 106.

ments of sun and rain from those who hold aloof from Him. Their aloofness from Him will bring its own loss, but the Great Lover loves them still, and His love prompts to gifts as generous to them as to the most responsive.

And then Jesus says, "If ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?" To say, as many do, that God loves only those who respond to His love is to reduce His love to the level of the publican. It is a shocking thing to hear people thoughtlessly take God's name in vain, but it is really more shocking to hear men knowingly attribute to God things below the level of the publican. The taking of God's name in vain is often only of the lip; but to deliberately frame a doctrine of Him which brings Him down to the publican's level is infinitely worse. Lord Bacon says: "It were better to have no opinion of God at all, than such an opinion as is unworthy of Him; for the one is unbelief, the other is contumely, and certainly superstition is the reproach of the Deity." And then he quotes Plutarch: "Surely I had rather a great deal men should say there is no such man as Plutarch at all, than that they should say there was one Plutarch that would eat his children as soon as they were born." Unbelief has often been better than the affirmations concerning God sometimes made by the Church. To these is due much of the current neglect of religion.

Or, take another precept of Christ. In answer to

the question of Peter, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Till seven times?" Jesus saith unto him: "I say not unto thee, till seven times, but until seventy times seven," which surely means continual forgiving—forgiveness without limit. *That is the precept for men; that, therefore, must be the actual practice of God—eternal forgiving, forgiving to which there is no limit.* And yet, until recently, the forgiveness of God was declared to fall short of that enjoined on men. In the early times of the Church's history a great question of debate was whether sin after baptism *could* be forgiven!

Within recent years a great part of the Protestant Church held that the Divine forgiveness was limited, and did not reach beyond the few and fleeting years of man's life on earth. Sin unrepented of here could never find remission. If that were the procedure of God, then it fell far short of what He enjoined on man. Seventy times seven must man forgive—to his forgiveness there must be no limit; but God's forgiveness must not reach beyond this earthly sphere. This is placing God below man. This is convincingly expressed in the belief of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen, given by his friend, Bishop Ewing: "He believed that God was directing all things to good ends, worthy of and satisfactory to Himself and His creation. His necessary character involved, he conceived, the necessary well-being of creation. He did not believe this was accomplished if any of His little ones perished, or His

sheep, if 'lost,' were not again 'found.' He could not imagine a creature in eternal punishment saying, 'Can you or will you do no better for me than this?' The power of putting such a question as 'Why hast Thou made me thus?' involved, he felt, the possibility and the assurance of an answer satisfactory to one to whom the Creator had given the power to put the query, constituted as judge; and to whom, if no proper answer *could* be given, no power of such sitting in judgment would have been given." [1]

What God enjoins on man is His own eternal practice. The seventy times seven enjoined on us points to an eternal forgiving in Him. And, therefore, when our hearts ask "What is God like?" a part of the answer must be, "Like what he enjoins on us."

I have known of many cases in which parents feared because their children had not shown signs of faith in God or of repentance toward Him on earth that, when they died, their one and only opportunity was over. I have known of parents whose sons at the very outbreak of the late war, not waiting to be conscripted, willingly offered themselves for the defence of their country, and fell in the great struggle, who, because they had not made a religious profession, feared they might be doomed, without any opportunity of salvation, in the other world. Of such surely it may be said that their very offering

[1] *Present-day Papers*, edited by Bishop Ewing. Third Series, p. 11.

of themselves in the great cause showed that deep in their hearts there was something of the same spirit which led Jesus to the cross—they denied themselves, even as Jesus did. But, even beyond this, it should be noted that God must act upon His own precept to forgive, not once or twice, but until seventy times seven—that is, without end, so that any turning of the heart to Him in the other world would be met, as the father met the prodigal, with the cry, " This my son was dead, and is alive again, and was lost and is found."

Any worthy man or woman, certainly any worthy father or mother, at the smallest sign of sorrow for wrongdoing, is not only ready but longing to forgive; and " If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven," whose " ways are higher than our ways, and His thoughts than ours," who " knoweth our frame and remembereth that we are dust " ?

In the past the theologians, and some of the poets, have terribly lowered the character of God in that they thus limited the Holy One of Israel. We must lift the character of God up to the highest of which our thought is capable. As we see any examples of love, pity, forgiveness in men, we should say: " Yes, these are beautiful ; but they are only broken lights of Thee, and Thou, O Lord, art more than they ! "

This is boldly expressed by that most reverent man, George MacDonald, in one of his earliest

stories in which he puts the following words on the tomb of one of its characters :

" Here lie I, Martin Elginbrodde ;
Hae mercy o' my soul, Lord God,
As I wad do were I Lord God
And Ye were Martin Elginbrodde."

PART II

WHAT HIDES GOD'S PERFECTION FROM MEN?

I

HIS NON-INTERVENTION

THE chief difficulty with many in believing in the Fatherhood of God is that He does not *intervene directly or visibly* in human affairs; that, for example, in the recent terrible war, He did nothing to bring decisive victory to the right and defeat to the wrong, that He did nothing to bring to an end the appalling suffering and waste of life, often of the most valuable kind. Why did He not intervene in such a tremendous crisis? is the question which is filling the hearts and minds of multitudes with doubt of the reality of His Fatherhood.

It may be frankly admitted that in moments of crisis or peril the desire for such intervention often springs up in the human heart. With all reverence it may be said, it did so even in the heart of Jesus, in His temptations in the wilderness. Was not the very core of those temptations that there flashed

across His mind the possibility and even desirability of some external intervention of God on His behalf? In the first temptation, that contrary to the ordinary routine of Nature He should suddenly provide the bread needed for His body; in the second temptation, the desirability of His Kingdom being brought in by external force; in the third temptation, the desire for Divine intervention to save Him from the influence of gravitation,—all these, which were temptations to secure external intervention on His behalf, were promptly and utterly rejected.

It is difficult to get from those who feel in this way any clear indication of *how* they think God could or should have intervened. It may be they fancy that by earthquake He might have swallowed up the guilty, or by a rain of fire from heaven He might have consumed them. When ways in which He might have intervened are thought out, intervention does not seem quite so clear or easy a matter.

There are those who think that in past days God *did* intervene, did actually and visibly *do* something.

Intervention of such a kind is, to my mind, clearly not the Divine way. I look over history and I do not discover the signs of it. I look at the human scene to-day, but there I cannot discern it. So far as I am able to see, this is not the Divine method. No one believes more fully than I do in the closeness of God's contact with men—that He is not merely near to us, but that *He is in us, and that in Him we live, move, and have our being; that whilst He does*

not intervene from without, He is always working from within our hearts.

> " Though Master keep aloof,
> Signs of His presence multiply from roof
> To basement of the building."[1]

But that He intervenes in a direct or visible or tangible way in human affairs, of that I see no trace either in history or in the world of to-day. His method does not seem to be one of intervention: that would place us under a theocracy. And the world as it is to-day would be no credit to such a Theos.

There does not appear to be intervention in human affairs to bring to an end some great evil due to the wrongdoing of men. Nor does there seem to be such intervention when the natural order, for which God is regarded as responsible, fails to provide for the inhabitants of great districts, as in China, where for a whole year no rain fell, causing an entire failure of crops and leading to the death, it is said, of twelve millions of people. Nor does there seem to be such intervention even by the seismic needles provided by science in the way of warning when the internal forces of nature are about to break forth in earthquake, swallowing up in some cases the entire population of great districts. The Lisbon earthquake in 1755 seems to have completely overthrown the faith of many, and more recent ones have had a like effect.

These things might not have led to such overthrow

[1] R. Browning, *Francis Furini*.

of faith if men had faced the fact—for fact it seems to be—that the Divine method is not one of perpetual interposition, but that the race has been placed on this planet we call earth, *within* which there are great fires and *around* which there are great forces of wind and water, both of which usually make for the good of men, but now and then relieve themselves by means of earthquakes, storms, simooms, siroccos. And men are left to search out the nature and method of such forces, so as to preserve themselves by getting into right relationship with them.

These outbursts of Nature in earthquakes, which are apparently reckless and relentless, *do* present a terrible problem. The problem does not perhaps arise in the case of Pompeii, where, because of the beauty of its situation, men built and dwelt in a city right under a volcanic mountain, an evident safety-valve of nature, which they must have known was to expose themselves and their city to the peril of sudden burial. It *does* arise, however, in regions where, with no signs of a volcanic nature, whole populations have been overwhelmed.

In such instances faith in the Fatherhood of God may, perhaps, be kept by the surmise that the earth has not yet been brought into harmony with the eternal order. Relief has come to some minds which find it hard to believe that such things can be in harmony with the Fatherhood of God, by the idea which has constantly been floating about in the world that some influence is

hindering and even warping the Creator's work. The later, if not the earliest, Zoroastrians met such problems by a bold dualism. "The first chapter of the *Vendidad* tells how Ahura Mazda created in order the several Iranian countries with their various excellences, and how for each Angra Mainyu created corresponding plagues—the killing cold of winter, intemperate heat; serpents, locusts, ants; rapine and lust, foreign oppression; unnatural vice, magic and witchcraft; the interment of the dead, and the eating of carrion; pride, doubts, disbelief, evil spirits and demons, men of devilish character, who are in fact demons on earth as well as after death; beasts of prey and noxious vermin,—all belong to Angra Mainyu, and the ninety-nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine diseases the flesh is heir to are his inventions." [1]

In the Bible the same idea emerges, though not so definitely.

In the picture parable of Genesis there is the malign influence of the Serpent. In the book of Job Satan the adversary is the chief protagonist, and even in the New Testament there is revealed the hindering and harming influence of the devil. After the oriental manner all these are personalised, but when turned into their western equivalents they seem to point to some force, or influence, or imperfection, not yet in harmony with the will of the Creator. If such things are not of God, their shadow does not darken His face, and so men may

[1] G. F. Moore, *History of Religions*, vol. i, p. 381.

still look up thereto and worship. This disposes of the difficulty, but by a dualism which personally I cannot accept.[1]

If men *will* persistently cling to interventional ideas of the universe, and so expect deliverance (which does not come) from accident, storm, earthquake, when it does not come they are naturally disappointed and under the disappointment their faith gives way. Surely it is wiser to face the facts of the universe, which seem to show that men are left to grapple with its difficulties as they arise, to apply the powers of mind and hand with which they are endowed, not only to subduing and replenishing but to gaining the mastery over the earth.[2]

When interventional ideas of the universe prevailed, men naturally looked for and even prayed for

[1] Dr. J. H. Moulton hesitates to affirm that this dualism is found earlier in the original doctrine of Zarathustra as set forth in the Gathas. He says: "I had rejected it, since it seemed to me inconsistent with an optimist outlook on the future. Whatever view Parsism has taken as to the past history of the evil principle, it has always declared that its future is utter and final destruction. If we restrict ourselves to the origin of evil and its development during human history, past and future, we may use the term 'dualism' fairly enough" (*Early Zoroastrianism*, p. 125).

[2] "Here, in the interior of China, my 'parish' is constantly suffering from floods, caused by a river breaking its banks, and making new courses across the country year after year, and the people sit by and starve, seeing no means of coping with the devastations. We coming from the West know that the trouble is not inevitable, that if the people or their Government had enough of the spirit of love to make them able to work together for the common good, there is engineering knowledge and skill adequate for preventive measures. The catastrophes could be avoided by men coming more in tune with God."—*Where is Christ?* by an Anglican priest in China, p. 61.

such intervention. In cholera and other epidemics they flocked to the churches and prayed for their removal. It was not till men ceased to regard these as visitations of God, and saw that they grew out of neglect of sanitary laws, that they set to work themselves to remove the causes out of which they sprang. Moving along the same way men have turned malarial into quite healthy districts, as at Panama, whilst in Central Africa great stretches of country through which only a few years ago men travelled at great peril have now been rendered healthy abodes even for Europeans. And it may be—we cannot tell—that the great forces of Nature which now sometimes bring havoc and ruin may be so understood and treated as to bring, not destruction, but enrichment to men. So long as men looked for intervention to deliver them from peril, they did not seek to deliver themselves. When they come to see, as they are now doing, that God has made them only a little lower than Himself, that they may help themselves, and it may be help Him in His great purpose, then the great forces of Nature, which now sometimes carry havoc and ruin, will be yoked to man's chariot, carrying order and blessing wherever it goes. And thus, it may be, man will be helping to bring things which, from causes we cannot at present discover, are not in harmony with His Fatherly feeling, into harmony therewith. All down the ages men of clear vision have felt that there *was* something in Nature out of harmony with the Divine will; perchance through the co-operation

of His children that something may be brought into such harmony. It may be that this or something akin to this was in St. Paul's thought when he said: "The earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of Him who subjected it, in hope; because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God": [1] which opens out a vision of a time when not only man but Nature will come into full harmony with the feeling and will of God, man, the son, being used by his Father to bring about this great consummation.

Minds filled with traditional ideas may raise the objection that in the Old Testament history there *are* instances of intervention from without on behalf of the Hebrew race; but, if they will candidly consider the whole matter, they must surely see that the writers of that history were poorly equipped for the task of judging whether events which *seemed* to be interposition from *without* were really so, since their minds were imaginative rather than scientific—after the oriental manner, what they felt within they seemed to see with their eyes, and so it gained a kind of objectivity, whilst beyond this, their knowledge of Nature was so superficial that they were not competent judges. No idea of the vastness of the universe had dawned upon them; they fancied that the planet called earth on which

[1] Rom. vii. 20–21.

they stood was the only one, that it was flat, and stationary. They did not know that the earth was only one of the vast number which astronomy has discovered peopling space, that the earth was a globe ever in motion, and that the sun which seemed to rise and set was stationary, whilst it was the earth which really rises and sets, or, rather, is ever in motion. An example of this is found in the book of Joshua (x. 12–14), where we read :

" Then spake Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel ; and he said in the sight of Israel :

Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon ;
And thou, moon, in the valley of Azalon.
And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed,
Until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies.

Is not this written in the book of Jasher ? And the sun stayed in the midst of heaven and hasted not to go down about a whole day. And there was no day like that before or after ; thus the Lord hearkened to the voice of man, for the Lord fought for Israel."

Now, to say nothing of the conception of God involved in this passage—that He should divert the whole order of the universe to give the little nation of Israel victory over its enemies—science to-day, indeed, any intelligent person, would say that from beginning to end the whole conception of the universe lying behind this story is out of harmony with fact.[1]

[1] Baron von Hugel points out that " men in the past were but little alive to the difference between Factual Event and Symbolical Narrative, and that men in the present are keenly sensitive to this difference."—*Eternal Life*, p. 344.

A people on which science had not even begun to throw its revealing light was quite unqualified to judge whether events which seemed interpositions on their behalf were really so. The science of to-day, looking at the events they regarded as interpositions might be able to show that they were only the working out of forces in the original scheme of the universe. These ancient views, therefore, which have come down to us and gained acceptance because included in Scripture, need not and should not be regarded as having authority, but only as the views of a people at the child-stage, who judged by appearance and did not in this respect reach reality.[1]

Beyond this we do well to judge the Divine method in the past by what we see of that method in our own day, which clearly is not one of interposition from without on behalf of men. If that be the method to-day, as science affirms, since the Lord changes not, it must have been His method in all previous ages. The earlier and less known should be judged by the later, and, through the clearer light of science, the infinitely better known. "The modern scientific view, just so far as it is loyally accepted, frees us from the prejudice of local relationships and the narrow-mindedness of temporary

[1] "God had been supposed to give evidence of His existence by interfering with the course of Nature from time to time; but, with the growth of a scientific and critical temper of mind, the evidence of such interference becomes more and more suspect and the inferences themselves less and less credible."—A. Seth Pringle-Pattison, in *The Spirit*, p. 12.

conditions, and brings us out into the broad spaces of the peace and wisdom of God."[1]

Those who stand for intervention from without usually confine such intervention to the Hebrew race, or, if they extend it, do so only to the British people, which they regard as a kind of extension of Israel, in whose history they claim to find examples. But this is to make God a respecter of nations, although it is expressly declared in Scripture that He is not a respecter of *persons*, which seems to involve the idea that He is not a respecter of nations. But the idea of such limitation of intervention to a single nation is quite unworthy of One "whose tender mercies are over all His works," and cannot be brought into harmony with the idea of that Divine Fatherhood which is more and more coming to be seen as the very core of the Evangel of Christ.

The objection has been raised by some that in times of outward difficulty or danger or peril men cannot help appealing for Divine interposition, and they regard this as a kind of instinct which justifies and involves the possibility, and even probability, and, in some cases, the certainty of such interposition on their behalf. It must be admitted that such appeal to God is natural, and I should be the last to turn any away from it; indeed, it is of great value in quieting and calming the mind, and in awakening the feeling that the *ultimate*, if not the temporal *issues* are in Fatherly hands. Such appeal, therefore, will not be with-

[1] *Where is Christ?* by an Anglican Priest in China, p. 27.

out its blessed results. It was so in the case of St. Paul, who thrice prayed that his thorn in the flesh—a bodily ailment of some kind, probably an affection of the eyes—might be removed; but though *that* thrice-repeated prayer met with no response, though the weakness was not removed, though probably the apostle had to bear it to the end of his days—that is, *though there was no outward intervention on his behalf, there was an inward and spiritual response*: "My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Like St. Paul, we may rightly respond to this instinct, leading us to turn to God in times of outward trouble, and to us, as to him, though there may not come the deliverance sought, there may come what is infinitely better, "The peace of God which passeth all understanding, which shall keep our hearts and minds by Jesus Christ."

And surely it is often better for us to be granted strength to bear than to have the burden removed; better, that is, for character, which, in God's view, is the final object of life. And surely a world without perpetual intervention on behalf of men is a finer sphere for character building than one in which every danger or difficulty would be lifted by an arm from the sky.

But, if to pray be an instinct, like all instincts, it may need to be regulated by the wisdom of Jesus and by observation of life. When unregulated it may lead to quite wrong conceptions of prayer, making us depend on its quantity and vehemence

rather than its spirit. When this is the case there is forgetfulness of the fact that Jesus corrected those who fancied they would be heard for their much speaking by the declaration that "your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him," and then gave a model prayer whose very brevity was a reproof of *much* speaking in prayer, and in which all the requests are for spiritual blessings save that for daily bread, which some refer to bread for the soul.

It is sometimes taken for granted that those who resort to prayer for the intervention of God in outward trouble or difficulty stand upon a higher spiritual level than those who question whether such outward visible aid is given of God. But it may be questioned whether appeal to God for such interference with the order which He seems to have constituted is not rather a defect than a virtue. Which is the higher type of child—the one always applying to his parent to interfere with the order he has fixed in home and school—an order the outcome of much thought and affection—or the child who, recognising his parent's wisdom and love, accepts the order arranged as the best?

In this matter of prayer it is needful to discern whether we are seeking to bring down the will of God to our level by importuning Him to grant what we ask, or whether, discerning that will as of necessity the best, we desire to be lifted up to its height.

This question seems to be settled by the attitude

of Him who beyond all the sons of men had real insight into the nature of God. *Instinct* led Him to pray, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me"; *knowledge* of His Father led Him at once to the higher position: "Nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done."

But to return to this question of intervention which some desire and which they hold was at one time granted, such intervention, I hold, would not be for the good of men. It looks as if a Theocracy—a *direct* government by God—would be the very ideal; but in reality it would be far from ideal. It would surely prove rather for men's enfeeblement than for their development.

There seems a special significance in that parable which opens with these words, which read like a vision of Christ of the order of the world[1]: "*For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants and delivered unto them his goods.*" And later on in the parable we are told: "*After a long time the Lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them.*" That seems to give us a glimpse into Christ's idea of the relationship of God to men—*so far as outward control is concerned, He is as one travelling into a far country for a long time*—leaving to men the

[1] I know full well the danger of pressing the details of parables as if they were their vitalities, but I cannot repress the feeling that the opening words of this parable *do* set forth the idea of Jesus as to His Father's attitude and relationship to men, an attitude of trust expressing itself in giving the fullest liberty possible.

management of His affairs, throwing them on their own resources. And the parable seems to indicate that, though the risk of failure was great, yet the plan was successful, for two out of the three servants gained by their trading—indeed, they doubled their talents—their capital, as we should say. It was a great risk, but in the main success followed.

Now, suppose the man, instead of travelling into a far country for a long time, had remained at home and guided and controlled the business. There would have been less risk—there might have been larger profits; but one thing is certain: the servants would have had less opportunity for development in character; they would have remained *servants*, and never have become fit to be *masters*. But, thrown on their own responsibility, they gained even more in character than they did in goods.

And here lies, it seems to me, the clue to the relationship of God to men. Had that relationship been one of perpetual intervention, if at every point of difficulty deliverance came from God, life might have been much easier, but man would have been a much feebler creature. For the best men have been made so not by a rest-and-be-thankful, but by a strenuous career. I suppose life is lived at its easiest in the South Sea Islands, with abundance of fruit and with the softest of climates; but do the natives count for anything in the councils of the nations? The difficulty there is to make them take thought for the morrow. And if the Divine purpose had been to give men an easy time, then all the

world should have had the climate and fruitfulness of those islands. If *ease* was the end, the world is wrongly arranged ; but if *character* be the end, then perhaps it is quite rightly arranged. If mere happiness is the end, the non-intervention of God is a mistake ; but, if character be the end, such non-intervention is the supremest wisdom.

There are parents whose one desire for their children is freedom from care, and so at every point of difficulty they are there to help or deliver. But look at those children when they are grown up ! And there are parents who love their children quite as well, but who, at the proper age, throw them on their own resources. Look at those when they are grown up !

But, though God does not seem to intervene from *without*, He has so constituted the world that, whilst evil tends to death, good makes for life. The world, and especially the human world, has a moral texture, so that the wrong in the long run is sure to fail, and the right to stand. Even generals who are inclined to think that only force brings victory, yet often speak of the *morale* of their troops. The very use of that word is a tribute to the power which lies in the moral realm.

We shall never understand the method of God till we see that we are here, not to have an easy time, but to be educated—to be made men and women. And no education is worth the name which does not include sweat of brow and ache of brain. No teacher is worth his salt who solves every problem

for his scholars. There is a great significance in those two lines of Miss Guiney :

> " A short life in the saddle, Lord,
> Not long life by the fire."

Imagine that through all the history of the world God had intervened with deliverance at every point of danger or difficulty. The world to-day is very far from what we desire, but under such a government men and women would be still in the childhood stage. The world is far from being what it should be ; but if, as science shows, humanity began very low down in the scale, the method of God has not been a failure, for, in spite of all our troubles, the world probably stands on a higher plane ethically and spiritually, certainly scientifically, than it ever did before. And, if this be so, the Divine plan of non-intervention has justified itself, and, if so, then it is surely wiser, instead of craving and crying for an arm from the sky, to use the Divine within us—the Spirit of God in our hearts—by which we shall be led, not, it may be, into the easy, but certainly into the right way—the Way Everlasting.

There are many who say, " The Divine Fatherhood is asserted in Scripture—that we readily admit—but does God *act* in a Fatherly way ? Looking out over the past history of the world, or looking out on the world to-day, do we discover proofs of His Fatherly action in relation to men ? In other words, is the declaration by Christ of this Fatherhood ratified by the facts of history in the past or of the world to-day ? Such persons say, and they are

justified in saying, that declarations count for little unless ratified by *facts*. They say, after all, the final appeal is to facts, or, as our common proverb puts it, "Actions speak louder than words." And I at once admit that if the world, especially the world of humanity, does not show signs of God's Fatherly relationship, then the mere declaration of it in Scripture, falls to the ground like a house without foundation. I admit that the final appeal here, as everywhere, is to facts. If the facts do not support the declaration, then we must sorrowfully but certainly give it up.

There have been firm believers in God, even in His Fatherhood, who have been puzzled and even bewildered by His attitude to the world. Thomas Carlyle asked concerning God, "Why doesn't He *do* something?" And Theodore Parker used to say, "God is not in a hurry, but I am." And Thomas Erskine of Linlathen, whom Dr. Hanna, the editor of his letters, described to me as the holiest man he had ever known, once spoke to his friend Principal Shairp, of the "awful silence of God; how it sometimes became oppressive, and the heart longed to hear, in answer to its cry, some audible voice." And thousands, especially in the awful times through which the world has been and is still passing, have asked, or, if they have not *asked*, have *thought*, "Why doesn't God interfere in human affairs to stop the evil and to help the good?"[1]

[1] "God is in the order of Nature as a whole, not specifically in gaps."—C. W. Emmet, in *The Spirit*, p. 219.

That feeling is very widespread to-day. Indeed, it is that which makes it so hard for many to hold their faith in this Fatherhood of God. It is not a fancied but a real difficulty, and I will set forth how I have been able, amid all the welter of recent years, to hold my faith in this Fatherhood.

Let me first call your attention to certain things which should form a part of the scene if we are rightly to judge whether God really cares for men. We are apt to judge by what God does *not* do, and to lose sight of what He *is already doing*. With our eyes on the outlook for the *extra*ordinary, we are apt to lose sight of the ordinary working of God; just as children fail to see proofs of their parents' love in the every-day provision for their lives, and only see such love in special gifts on special occasions. For a right estimate of any matter, we must bring into account not only the *extraordinary* but the *ordinary*.

I suppose most would acknowledge that a certain Fatherliness is shown in the world where man is placed by its provision for his needs. It does not matter, for our present purpose, how that world came to be what it is—nor how many ages it took—that is only a matter of method. Here is the world on which we tread, the air we breathe, the light by which we see. Here is the day for work and the night for rest. And on all these we can depend. We have never to ask will there be earth, air, light, day, or night? Beyond these, in the world, there lies the capacity for growth, so that seed put therein brings forth harvests for food. The earth, if rightly

used, is capable of bringing forth enough for all the people that are born into it. And then there is not only this power of increase in the world to-day, but there is laid up for us under the earth vast stores of heat—the sunlight of ages ago, which first gave birth to the forests and then, by an age-long process, became coal. Then, too, there are precious and other metals and stones, the outcome and result of great cataclysms in the past. These and many more such things which came into being when there were few or none to use and profit by them, have come down as a precious legacy to us. And so we are provided, among other things, with much of our light and heat to-day. Whilst beyond all these necessary things, without which we could not live, there is the beauty of the world, of flower, shrub, tree, mountain, valley, lake, river—the beauty of the skies, the modest flush of the sunrise, the bolder glory of the sunset, by which life is enriched and uplifted.

And then, beyond these, there is the mind of man by which all these are utilised, developed, enjoyed. It matters not how mind came—by conferment or by slow development—here *is* mind, without which all would be in vain.

And then, beyond this, again, there is what in common phrase we call the *heart*, which knits us together in families, societies, nations—love, the greatest, most vital of all our endowments.

Now, if we look at these things which I have mentioned, and many other things which might be,

but which I have not mentioned, surely it must be admitted that, as a whole, the world spells the word "good," and that "good" points to *care* in the source from which it has come.

"Should we not be led to admire and revere increasingly the wonder of it all, as there grows upon us the sense of the quietness and gentleness, the foresight and the infinite patience of the Being of beings, who will never obtrude His presence and action upon us, just because He would help us to be our own, not dead, but living, and would have us rise with Him to the highest things." [1]

Of course, on this earthly scene there are ugly things—upheavings of land we call earthquakes, upheavings of the sea we call storms, stirrings of the air we call simooms or siroccos, to which I have already referred, and these sometimes work terrible havoc with human lives. Yes, but they are not the *rule*, they are the exception—and the havoc of human life would be vastly less if men would not live in volcanic districts, or if they would not put to sea when all indications point to storms. For aught we know, these things may be needful—they may serve some great and good purpose. Anyway, they are the exceptional, not the usual. And even these exceptional things may be due to something in the material of the universe which, for some reason we cannot now quite perceive, is beyond the reach of the Great Father's heart. The universe may possibly be like the veined marble

[1] *Where is Christ?* by an Anglican Priest in China, p. 59.

which renders it impossible for the sculptor to produce just the statue which rises before his imagination and which he would like to see actualised. The universe, it may be, is not yet such as the Father desires it to be—that is, in harmony with the deepest in his heart—and which, perhaps, through the aid of His children it may gradually be brought to be.

And when we come to the human realm there are sights which distress our hearts and make us ask, " Does God really care for men ? " Disease and poverty especially arouse this question. But in this realm the blame must be laid at the right door. I make bold to say that disease is not from God, but from man. More and more disease is being traced to immoral causes, not, of course, always in the actual sufferers, but often in the wrongdoing of ancestors. One of the most distinguished of modern surgeons declared that he could discover germs of disease in the teeth of children arising from immorality three or four generations earlier. Travelling once with a consulting physician, I remarked that probably he would not agree with me when I said that a very great proportion of disease was due to immoral causes. He replied that, in his judgment, 95 per cent. of disease had such a cause. Dr. R. W. Mackenna says :

" It will be a good day for England when every father asks the suitor for his daughter's hand, not what his bank balance is, but whether his blood is clean ; for more women have been ruined in health and more children doomed to a heritage of suffering

through the neglect of this pertinent but not impertinent question than Nero ever butchered or Herod's soldiers slew. Of old it was said: 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the teeth of the children are set on edge'; and the proverb still holds true." [1]

Surely, therefore, the blame should be laid on its true cause, which is not in God, but in men. If it were possible to root out immorality, in a few generations we should be making some approach to a healthy race.

In this connection it may be well to call attention to that active Divine energy which is always battling with disease, even when it is due to men's perverted courses. Perhaps the most wonderful sign of the Divine beneficence is to be found in that *vis medicatrix naturæ*, which, beyond any skill or remedies of the physician, is the great healer, and without which all his efforts would utterly fail. Practically all that the wise physician of to-day even attempts to do is to furnish the conditions under which this great healing force may carry on its work. This force seems to be active in every realm—vegetable, animal, human. Damage a plant or shrub or tree, and presently this healing force will begin and carry on its work of restoration. Let an animal be damaged in body by accident or by the sport of man, and, if the damage is not too great, the animal's instinct will lead it to lie in such a position that the healing may go forward and in many cases be nearly

[1] *The Adventure of Life*, by R. W. Mackenna, M.A., M.D., p. 120.

or quite completed. And in the human realm rest and quietness are often alone needed for this healing force to lead the body back to health. I know of nothing which seems so suggestive of care in the source of all things.

Then, too, poverty, rightly regarded, must be traced, not to God, but to man. It is not that the Divine supplies are inadequate. The earth is capable of providing for the needs of all its inhabitants. The board of God is amply spread, but the distribution by men leaves much to be desired. Overmuch—more than they can use or enjoy—is gathered by some, and too little, less than they need, by others.

It might be well for us to face the fact—for fact it is—that God is the great Provider, but that men are left to be the distributors of His provisions. Probably there never has been a period in which His earth did not bring forth, or was not capable of bringing forth, sufficient for all the dwellers upon its surface. But again and again, though the supply has been ample, the distribution has been at fault—that is, men, not God, have been at fault either through their ignorance or their selfishness. The realisation of this would clear many a shadow from the face of God.

I was once visiting the mansion of one of the wealthiest men in England—full to overflowing with lovely objects. I said to its owner: "Your house is full of lovely things; it would take a long

time to examine them all." He replied, "You think God has given me too much, and you too little?" I said, "I am quite content with my little, but don't bring God into the matter of your abundance, for He has nothing to do with it." Provision is of God, distribution is of men. Therefore, if the distribution is faulty—which it certainly is—let men bear the blame.

In judging of such questions, if the optimist overlooks the dark spots in the picture—which he often does—the pessimist, who is most in evidence to-day, sees all through blackened spectacles. God forbid that I should say one word to put out of sight the suffering of the world, or to cause any to cease from grappling with it. But, at the same time, it is quite easy to exaggerate that suffering. It has, for example, been shown to me by both doctors and nurses that often when a patient seems to be suffering an agony of pain he is actually unconscious of it, so that the watchers by the bedside, through their sympathy for him, are suffering far more.

George Crabbe and Oliver Goldsmith both painted the same dwellers in villages in their poems, but Crabbe's pictures are of almost unalleviated misery, whilst Goldsmith's reveal much simple joy under hard conditions. And the reason for the difference is that Crabbe saw only the external, whilst Goldsmith saw by the light of his own experience the internal, the simple joy which often lay beneath.

Klaus Groth probably hits the mark when he says :

" Thou must not
Condemn as worthless what thou dost not know.
For every station has a world its own,
And each one's life is moulded to its form.
Survey it from without and all within
Looks cold and lifeless to thine eye, although
Within the life is throbbing as before.
And each has got his share of grief and joy,
For empty through the world no heart may go.
. . . . .
The peasant, too, has got his little world—
He that would see it must have eye to see—
And has it then grown sadder than of old ?
Let him but take a closer, surer look ;
Then he will see this world is still as true,
As happy, and as homely, and as gay
As all the fairest tales that e'er were told."[1]

But, if all this be admitted, this is no argument for leaving any class unprovided with the conditions which will enable its members to reach any position, however lofty, for which their ability fits them. To reach this state of things, to which all right-hearted men should be helpers, very much ground has yet to be travelled.

Dr. Wicksteed says :

" It is none other than the great monist Plotinus himself who assures us that evil is not here in order to conduce to the perfection of the universe ; on the contrary, it is due to the imperfection inherent in a graded universe. But nowhere is the transcendent might of good more triumphantly displayed than in its power to extract some good out of every

[1] *The Poets and Peoples of Foreign Lands*, by J. W. Crombie, p. 112.

evil. If we understood this (as I am convinced we may) to mean that we can make every evil yield some specific good of its own, we shall have a creed that will enable us to face every evil thing with a high heart and to welcome with ungrudging thankfulness every good, great or small, that it can be forced to yield, though all the time we are trying utterly to destroy evil." [1]

Or, as Whittier puts it in his poem :

" The clouds, which rise with thunder, slake
Our thirsty souls with rain ;
The blow most dreaded falls to break
From off our limbs a chain ;
And wrongs of man to man but make
The love of God more plain.
As through the shadowy lens of even
The eye looks farthest into heaven
On gleams of star and depths of blue
The glaring sunshine never knew ! "

[1] *Reactions between Dogma and Philosophy*, pp. 251–2.

II

UNFATHERLY ELEMENTS IN NATURE

PROBABLY the greatest difficulty felt by many in realising the perfect Fatherhood of God is the sight which certain parts of Nature present as "red in tooth and claw with ravine." This at first sight seems to indicate that there are parts of His creation to which His Fatherly feeling does not extend. I confess that this to me in past days has been the greatest hindrance to confidence in His Fatherly feeling. I remember looking out, one lovely summer day, on my little lawn and seeing a thrush hopping about in a state of perfect happiness. The sight was beautiful, but presently I noticed the thrush strike his beak into the grass and pull out and swallow a worm. And the beauty died out of the scene. For, when all has been said in mitigation—that, unlike the human, the worm did not live in constant fear of attack, that, when it came, its lower vitality rendered the attack less painful, and that all was soon over—yet this very order of things seems to militate against that perfect Fatherhood which Jesus discerned.

I found some relief in the idea that, though there

was the Divine action on Nature, yet it could not accomplish all that it desired on account of the very nature of what we call "matter"—that there might be in Nature some resisting, or, at least, some lack of response to the Divine action. That view may be held without dropping into the old Manichean idea that matter is essentially evil. Matter has and can have no moral quality, even when the latest view of matter taken by science is accepted that ranks it near to the spiritual. But the view may perhaps still be held that Nature is not at present all that God would desire because of an inherent lack of response to the Divine action.

This finds strong support in Bergson, who says:

"The impetus of life of which we are speaking consists in a need of creation. . . . It cannot create absolutely, because it is confronted with matter. . . . But it seizes upon this matter and strives to introduce into it the largest possible amount of indetermination and liberty. But we must take into account, retrogressions, arrests, accidents of every kind. . . . Hence a discord, striking and terrible, but for which the original principle of Life must not be held responsible." [1]

This suggests that possibly the present is not the ultimate order, but a part of the groaning and travailing in pain of the creation of which St. Paul speaks and which points to a final order of a vastly higher and more gracious kind. Of such a higher, ultimate order there are foregleams even in the

[1] *Creative Evolution*, chap. iii.

Hebrew prophets of the long ago. In both the first and second Isaiahs there are vivid pictures of the time when the conflict between different species of animals shall cease, when the ravening and overthrowing instinct which leads to continual conflict shall pass, and, instead of Nature red in tooth and claw with ravine, the various animals shall form a happy family, enjoying each other's society, and not destructive, but helpful to each other.

It may be said, and will probably be said by some, that this is only the dreaming of a prophet, or, as we should now say, of a poet, and not a reasoned forecast of science. And there are minds which regard the poet only as a dreamer of dreams and not as a foreseer of realities. They know little of the poets who think in this way. It would be easy, from the words of such men as Goethe, Blake, Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning to show that in their visions they foresaw what has since become actual fact[1]; whilst in the writings of Roger Bacon —a writer of prose, but with much of the spirit of the poet—there is to be found, as I will show in a later chapter, an actual forecast in the thirteenth of what has come to pass in the twentieth century.

In his exposition of the book of Isaiah Sir George Adam Smith paints a picture of scenes, which may be seen in certain lands, approaching to this ideal:

[1] Professor Wildon Carr in his book, *The Principle of Relativity*, says: "It will be found, as it has always been found, that the poets, with their mythical interpretations, and the philosophers with their speculative hypotheses, have led the way in this new advance."

"But surely there is no genial man who has watched the varied forms of life that sport on the southern seashore, who will not sympathise with the prophet in his joyous vision. Upon a warm spring day in Palestine, to sit upon the grass beside some old dyke or ruin with its face to the south is indeed to obtain a rapturous view of the wealth of life with which the bountiful God has blessed and made merry man's dwelling-place. How the lizards come and go among the grey stones, and flash like jewels in the dust! And the timid snake rippling quickly past through the grass, and the leisurely tortoise with his shining back, and the chameleon, shivering into new colour as he passes from twig to stone and stone to straw—all the air the while alive with the music of the cricket and the bee! You feel that the ideal is not to destroy these pretty things as vermin. What a loss of colour the lizards alone would imply! . . . the ideal is to bring them into sympathy with ourselves, to make pets of them and playthings for children, who indeed stretch out their hands in joy to the pretty toys. Why should we need to fight with or destroy any of the happy life the Lord has created? Why have we this loathing to it, and need to defend ourselves from it, when there is so much suffering we could cure, and so much childlikeness we could amuse, and be amused by, and yet it will not let us near."

The alienation, leading to conflict, between man and certain animals, science itself, in the person of Charles Darwin, traces to the wrong conduct of man. He says:

"It deserves notice that at an extremely ancient period, when man first entered any country the animals living there would have felt no instinctive

or inherited fear of him, and would consequently have been tamed far more easily than at present. Quadrupeds and birds which have seldom been disturbed by man dread him no more than do English birds the cows or horses grazing in the field."[1]

I may, perhaps, be permitted to quote here a letter from a lady friend who has thought long and deeply on this subject :

"The problem with which you are dealing—destructiveness in Nature, the strife, the apparent indifference and cruelty—is being acutely felt at this hour. In speaking to a large gathering of men last summer I tried to deal with this, and was surprised by the warmth of their response. I had been reading, a few days previously, the report of a speech in the House of Commons, in which a militant member declared there must always be war, for, said he, Nature was full of strife—Nature was war. I had realised that the character of God, not only the God of the Bible, but of Nature, must be cleared of this charge before we can consistently denounce war among men. I spoke from the full assurance of my own heart when I bade them take their children to the bluebell glades of Kew and see there, in that vision of loveliness, the *unthwarted will* of their Father in heaven. But when, I told them, I had recently heard cries of anguish in my little garden, and, looking out, saw a baby thrush in the jaws of a cat, and found myself too late to save aught but a little bundle of feathers ; when I saw the poignant grief of the father and mother thrushes whose tenderest care had been unavailing

[1] Darwin's *Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication.*

to shield their wee song-life, *then* I dared to say it is *not* the will of my Father that one of these little ones should perish.' Something here is hindering the will of God. This is not in harmony with the heart of the Father; this is not His ultimate will. And must not His ultimate be also His primal will? "

It is now beginning to be questioned whether essentially Nature is so red in tooth and claw with ravine as men have believed. It is true that J. H. Fabre, in *Insect Life*, says that brigandage is the law in the struggle among living things, but Forel proves that the war-making instinct is not fundamental. This, he says, does not exist in the early stages of ant life. Putting together newly hatched ants belonging to three different species, Forel obtained a mixed ant community whose members lived in perfect harmony. The only primitive instinct of newly-hatched ants is that for domestic work and the care of larvæ; not until later do they realise that they are members of a single ant community, on behalf of which they have to fight.

But what is still more surprising is that the intensity of the warrior instinct is distinctly proportional to the size of the collectivity. Two ants of enemy species meeting at a distance from their respective nests, or from their own folk, will avoid one another and run away in opposite directions. Even if you come across the armies in full combat, and you remove from their ranks an ant belonging

to either side and shut the two in a small box they will do one another no harm. If, instead of taking merely two, you shut up a moderate number from either side within a narrow space, they will fight half-heartedly for a while, but soon cease to struggle, and often end by making friends. In such circumstances they will never resume the struggle. But put these same ants back among the fighting forces of their respective sides, and separate them by a reasonable distance, so that they might live at peace, and you will see them return to the attack.[1]

This seems to suggest that the fighting instinct in the ant, and it may be in other creatures, is not so deep as is usually believed. It may be to some extent a case of evil communications corrupting good manners.

It is the conviction of many in our day that even man, the highest in the scale, is only in process of development, and that the man of the future will far excel the man of to-day. That is the note which runs through two of the latest poems of Tennyson. In "The Dawn" he speaks of Babylon as a child new born, and of London and Paris, and all the rest, as yet but in leading-strings, and he closes with the words:

> "Ah! what will *our* children be—
> The men of a hundred thousand, a million summers away?"

And in "The Making of Man":

[1] *The Forerunners*, by Romain Rolland, pp. 179-80.

" Man as yet is being made, and ere the crowning Age of ages,
Shall not æon after æon pass and touch him into shape ?
All about him shadow still, but while the races flower and fade,
Prophet-eyes may catch a glory slowly gaining on the shade,
Till the peoples all are one, and all their voices blend in choric
Hallelujah to the Maker ! ' It is finish'd. Man is made ! ' "

The same note runs through that noble hymn of John Addington Symonds, which is finding ever greater favour in the Churches :

" These things shall be ! a loftier race
Than ere the world has known shall rise,
With flame of freedom in their souls
And light of knowledge in their eyes.

They shall be gentle, brave, and strong
To spill no drop of blood, but dare
All that may plant man's lordship firm
On earth, and fire, and sea, and air.

Nation with nation, land with land,
Unarmed shall live as comrades free ;
In every heart and brain shall throb
The pulse of one fraternity.

Man shall love man with heart as pure
And fervent as the young-eyed throng
Who chant their heavenly psalms before
God's face with undiscordant song.

New arts shall bloom of loftier mould,
And mightier music thrill the skies,
And every life shall be a song,
When all the earth is paradise.

There shall be no more sin, nor shame,
Though pain and passion may not die ;
For man shall be at one with God
In bonds of firm necessity."

And if man, the highest, is destined to rise still

higher; if his progress up from low and slow beginnings to his present position is only a part of the journey he is destined to travel in the future, how much more may be expected of creatures far lower in the scale of life? It may be that on the largest scale the Pauline word may yet be fulfilled—"the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God."

It may be objected that the vista opened here points straight to vegetarianism, which is regarded by some as the way taken by ill-balanced minds. But, supposing it *does* point to vegetarianism, is the vision so very repellent? I do not practise vegetarianism myself, and so condemn myself in that which I allow; but I see clearly enough that there are many things to be said in its favour. Certainly it is a pleasanter thing to feel that we are nourished by fruit taken from the tree, vegetables cut from the stock, and roots lifted from the ground, than by meat which involves the destruction of animals which in life we admire. Possibly a vegetable and fruit diet may be more conducive to health. Certainly many physicians now recommend a greater reliance on it, and less on animal food. It may be if we lived only on the fruits of the earth certain diseases would be less frequent and some might even disappear. Possibly we British folk might be less pugnacious if our bodies were not so largely nourished by animal food. Possibly the life of the spirit might be increased by the less stimulating and exciting food grown in garden or

field. It may be that the far more religious spirit observable in India, is due, not only as some would say, to the environment of Indian lives, to the stupendous scenery and great natural forces of their land awakening the sense of awe which is akin to religion, but to the avoidance of all animal food and the use of only the products of the earth. When reliance is placed entirely on such food men cannot rightly be regarded as taking a quite exceptional and erratic course, since a great part of the human race never permits a single particle of animal food to cross its lips. Whilst, if it be said that strength for heavy labour could not be drawn from a vegetable diet, it may be reflected that some of the strongest animals, such as the horse, the buffalo, or the elephant, draw their strength entirely from the products of the ground.

To-day vegetarianism may be regarded as an oddity of life; to-morrow it may be regarded as the normal way. A century ago an abstainer from alcohol was frequently the butt for ridicule; to-day the ridicule has ceased, and the United States, with its huge population, is by law abstinent, save where foreign embassies are located whose houses are regarded as a part of the countries they represent, and where their home customs are allowed to prevail.

Humanity cannot rightly be regarded as having reached perfection either in its fashions or customs or diet. Certainly, the diet which does not involve destruction or cruelty to animal life is far the more

delightful to contemplate. A greengrocer's or fruiterer's shop presents a far more attractive picture than the butcher's, especially in England, where the meat is displayed in a way to remind of the slaughterhouse and its processes. In France and Italy, and probably in other lands, the eye is not offended or the heart pained by the sight of the carcases of animals bearing the marks of the slaughterer's hand: an example which might well be followed in this country.

Even those who may not be prepared to accept the idea of a time when the strife among animals shall give place to a happy relationship may yet be ready to think of a time when the greater carnivora shall cease to exist on the earth, even as the monsters of the slime, huge in size and terrible in their fierceness, which roamed the world of a far-off prehistoric time, have quite ceased to be, leaving no representatives, save, perhaps, in such animals as the rhinoceros or the alligator, or, in bulk, the elephant on land and the whale in the sea.

But the world would be a far less interesting place to live in if all the animals with any fierceness of nature were brought to an end. Their preservation, with natures somewhat changed, allowing of less dangerous relationships with men, presents a far more interesting prospect, by keeping for us a far more diversified world. This seems at present too great a hope to be entertained, but it is well sometimes to remember the poet Clough's pregnant line:

"If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars."

III

CERTAIN PASSAGES IN SCRIPTURE

HERE I might have left the subject, but that I know, both from my own experience in the past and from observation of others, that there is something else which makes faith in the perfect Fatherhood of God difficult. It is that in the Gospels there are words about God, even said to be from the lips of Christ, which, to many minds, do not seem consistent with this perfect Fatherhood—that is, God is said to do things out of harmony with the perfect love of a perfect Father—things which even an earthly father worthy of the name would not do to his children. In these God does not seem to carry out the precepts of Christ which He laid on us.

I refer to such words as those which close the parable of the Pounds: "Those Mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before Me," together with other words of a like kind scattered over the pages of the Gospels, especially that of St. Matthew, chiefly in the endings of parables.

I remember how such passages troubled me when I was quite a child—how they darkened many hours

of my life, how they led to fear rather than love of God. In those days people were obliged to keep their religious difficulties to themselves, since to express them often brought the charge of unbelief and even wickedness. Let me give an illustration of this recorded in Sir J. T. Coleridge's *Memoir of John Keble*. About the time to which I have been referring the son of the author of that memoir—who afterwards became a well-known judge—was telling Mr. Keble of the difficulties he felt on the question of the inspiration of the Scriptures, which he said were widely felt, and that it seemed very desirable that some competent person should deal with this question. Mr. Keble put the question aside as long as he could, but, upon being pressed by Mr. Coleridge, he replied that "*most of those who had difficulties of this kind were too wicked to be reasoned with.*" That reply was the result either of ignorance of the men of that time, or of a great lack of charity. As a matter of fact, those with such doubts are often the most keenly conscientious, who will not say what they do not believe. Indeed, it is often such persons who lead on to a purer and less superstitious faith. In my own case, when difficulties arose as I read the Scriptures, there was no one to whom I could refer them. The pulpit of that time went its dreary round of religious platitudes, and never met the problems seething in many minds, especially among the young.

And one of these difficulties in my own case was that, whilst in the Gospels God was declared to be

a perfect Father, who loved the world, who was indeed called Love itself, yet there were passages in which He was described as acting in a very unfatherly —that is, an unforgiving—way. The difficulty I felt then many now feel. Indeed, no one reading the Gospels with an open mind can fail to see the contrast thus presented between the picture of God in the Sermon on the Mount, which draws and holds our hearts, and some passages in certain of the parables of Christ. I refer not only to the parable of the Pounds, but to others of a like type contained in the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, which all end with some terrible sentence of age-long punishment for the unfaithful—a punishment with no ray of hope, no assurance of forgiveness, even if repentance sprang up in their hearts when undergoing such punishment.

Let me now do what I can to throw light upon this difficulty, which must be felt by thoughtful minds. *And, first, let me remark that all these parables are expressed in Oriental terms—in other words, they reach us through Eastern minds.* And the East is not precise and careful in its expressions as is the West. Eastern minds work through the imagination far more than do Western. This leads to an exaggerated kind of utterance—understood by Easterns, but not easily understood by Westerns. This should always be remembered as we read the Scriptures or any oriental book. But this has been often quite overlooked by expositors of Scripture, to our great harm and loss. I once said to a Pro-

fessor of New Testament Exegesis, that "no man was fit to be an expositor of Scripture who had not a touch of poetry in his nature to enable him to understand the oriental, which is essentially a poetical mind," to which he gave his full assent. But from another Professor—a Professor of Theology—to whom I said that the effort of the commentator should be to understand the oriental mind so as to give it its proper equivalent in Western language, I could get no assent. From the latter type we get writings which misrepresent the original record. "A prosaic treatment of poetry has been a constant bane of theology."

Then let me remark that the words which seem to present God in an unfatherly light—which, indeed, present Him rather as a Sultan than as a Father—are found in parables. And parables, seemingly the easiest, are really the hardest of the words of Jesus to understand. They are pictures at which we look and, seeing, fancy we understand. The difficulty with the parable is to discern what is its essential teaching and what is the mere adorning of that teaching—what it was actually *meant* to teach, and what was only to arrest the hearer's attention.

Most people would say, as St. Peter probably did, that the hardest parts of the New Testament to understand are the arguments of St. Paul. And they *seem* so. But in reality the hardest are the parables, and for the reason I have given—that we are never quite sure what in them is vital and what is ornamental. It may be that the words which

trouble us in some of the parables are only of the ornamental kind. *And that this is likely will be seen from another consideration: that the parables in which these difficulties about God occur are of what is now called an apocalyptic kind*—that is, of a kind which refer rather to another world than to this one.[1] The age in which our Lord did His work was flooded with this apocalyptic literature. The period between the close of the Old and the opening of the New Testament era—when the prophets had ceased to speak, when, indeed, Prophecy—that is, what we should call preaching—by such men as Isaiah, Amos, Malachi—had ceased, there sprang up apocalyptic writers who did not, like the prophets, so much try to show men their present duty as to lift the veil from the unseen world or to indicate what would happen on the earth. That was a period of almost unbroken adversity to Israel, when trouble followed hard upon trouble, and no sign of deliverance appeared on the human plane. It is not strange, therefore, that, to sustain the hearts of the people, writers arose pointing to coming deliverance from heaven; no hope being seen in the human realm, men were pointed to a higher

[1] Father Tyrrell, in his book *Christianity at the Cross Roads*, seems to me to give the word "apocalyptic" a wider meaning, and makes it stand for the *theologic*, as distinguished from the ethical, element in Scripture. That is an undue extension of this word. I use it as referring only to all which is declared to be coming on the earth, or to what will be in the next world: such things as are presented in certain parts of the book of Daniel in the Old Testament, and the Revelation of St. John in the New.

one. This probably is how the vast apocalyptic literature arose with which this period was flooded.

We see the beginning of this in the book of Daniel —the favourite book of the Millenarians, and those who profess to tell us how long the world is going to last. Within my own memory, how many predictions of the end of the world have been put forth, most of them founded on the book of Daniel? I have lived through many *ends* of the world as predicted by these folk! But, nothing daunted, they go on predicting—to the great harm of the religion with which they connect their predictions.

But Daniel was only one of a vast company who, as the men of that age thought, could lift the veil and show what would befall the earth. The actual writers of the apocalyptic books are unknown, but in order to give their writings authority they were named after men famed in the earlier history of Israel—such as Enoch, Isaiah, Moses, Solomon, and the twelve Patriarchs. These apocalyptic books had a great vogue, and to a large extent put out of sight the far greater works of the prophets of the Old Testament. The minds of the people were full of them, and they provided as it were an idiom, a way of thinking, in which the thoughts—certainly the religious thoughts—of the people of our Lord's age naturally ran. We cannot rightly understand the parables of Christ into which these final things are introduced without remembering this, and especially remembering that in this apocalyptic literature God figured rather as an

Eastern despot or Sultan than as the Father whom Christ revealed. Therefore, it is not surprising that certain parables are framed, as it were, in this apocalyptic way, and that in them God appears rather as Despot than as Father. The essential teaching of these parables can be received and the incidental references of a despotic kind can be dropped.

I have been going over such parables, and I see that their essential teaching can practically all be preserved without the words of doom at their close —which seem out of harmony with the Fatherhood and forgivingness of God declared in the unparabolic —that is, the direct teaching of Jesus.

Indeed, it is not at all unlikely that the apocalyptic elements in these parables were not from the lips of Christ at all, but were after-additions by the compilers or editors or later copyists of the Gospels. We must remember that Jesus made no kind of provision for the preservation of His words—that He never promised the world any record. He only promised the *Spirit* as the Guide to truth—that is, to truth in a universal sense. In those days there were no reporters or shorthand writers. The words of Christ fell into the *memories* of those who heard Him speak, and they handed on reports to other memories; and it was not till after two or three generations that the Gospels got into form and were written down. And then, too, in those early days men did not trouble much about accuracy in ascriptions of authorship of books or of pieces quoted in them. To-day it is regarded as an offence to quote

another writer without acknowledgment, or without putting quotation marks against the extract; but in those days, and until a century or so ago, there was great carelessness about such matters. I have no doubt myself that many things have thus been attributed to Christ that He never said. I cannot imagine the lips which said "Love your enemies," saying "And those Mine enemies that would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before Me!" [1]

And then, it should be remembered that a right rule is to interpret the difficult by the plain, not the plain by the difficult. The right way is to interpret the parabolic by the didactic—the picture-writing by the clear declarations of Christ. We are quite safe in taking our stand on the definite word of Christ which tells of the perfection of God, and which bids us address our prayers to "Our Father which is in heaven," and to forgive, not to slay, our enemies.

And then, too, these plain and beautiful precepts of the Sermon on the Mount are approved by our conscience. They "find us," as Coleridge used to say; but the terrible words which close some of the

[1] The passages which seem to point to everlasting punishment "are all derived from the first Gospel, and, if there is a conclusion to which the results of recent Gospel criticism point, it is that sayings in the first Gospel, unsupported by the other Synoptists, are very frequently coloured by the doctrinal beliefs or ecclesiastical arrangements of the Judæo-Christian Church at the end of the first century A.D. These passages may well be 'ecclesiastical additions,' or, at least, they are in all probability much modified by the unconscious influence of ecclesiastical tradition."—*Conscience and Christ*, by Hastings Rashdall, pp. 298–9.

parables—surely due, not to the mind and heart of Christ, but to the apocalyptic way of that age—cause us trouble, disturb and darken our hearts. They may well, therefore, be disregarded as due not to Christ but to the spirit of that age.

I was once visiting a very thoughtful friend, deeply interested in religious matters, but who is now invalided, I fear for life, and who is living in that anticipation of the other world which is a great clearer of thought, and he said to me: "I do not trouble myself now about the details of Scripture. I am content to rest in God's good Fatherhood, and that He will do the best that is possible for me." The nearing of the other world often clears away many of the dogmatisms of theology. A well-known minister who was in his time of retirement a listener to me in my early days, and who, though we were the best of friends, used to reproach me kindly for the lack of theology in my utterances, and when I responded to his wish and gave more theology, said he "didn't like it," yet, as I stood by his bedside as the end drew near, said to me with deep feeling, and evidently referring to his old craving for more theology, "I see many things in a very different light now." And I shall never forget how, when the late Pasteur Wagner, of Paris, whose books are known all over the world, was visiting me, as we talked together of great matters in my study late into the night, he exclaimed, "'Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit' is enough for me!"

To a like confidence a like-minded soul was led, and his confidence is expressed in his poem, "The Eternal Goodness," which has done so much to assure and comfort sensitive but perplexed minds:

"I bow my forehead to the dust,
I veil mine eyes for shame,
And urge, in trembling self-distrust,
A prayer without a claim.

I see the wrong that round me lies,
I feel the guilt within;
I hear, with groan and travail-cries,
The world confess its sin:

Yet, in the maddening maze of things,
And tossed by storm and flood,
To one fixed trust my spirit clings:
I know that God is good.

Not mine to look where cherubim
And seraphs may not see.
But nothing can be good in Him
Which evil is in me.

The wrong that pains my soul below
I dare not throne above:
I know not of His hate—I know
His goodness and His love!

I dimly guess, from blessings known,
Of greater out of sight,
And with the chastened psalmist own
His judgments too are right.

I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care.

And Thou, O Lord, by whom are seen
Thy creatures as they be,
Forgive me if too close I lean
My human heart on Thee!"[1]

[1] John Greenleaf Whittier.

IV

CREEDS AND CONFESSIONS

Not only have hindrances been found in certain things in Scripture, which needed and often lacked right explanation, and, in some cases, were not parts of the original Gospel, but the vision of the perfect Fatherhood has been sadly hidden by the forms into which the original message has been forced by the theologians, pushed on by the ecclesiastics, so that the Christian Faith reaches great numbers not in its pristine simplicity but in metaphysical or legal systems, and so denuded of its original vitality and variety. To a large extent these systems were framed by races very different in their methods of thought and expression from the Semitic, amid which the Christian Faith arose, who were people of simple rather than of abstract thought.

The Hebrews were rather poets than philosophers. They used their imagination far more than their reason. The Bible would have been a very different book had it come to us through the Greek, who *was* given to subtle thinking. It is fortunate for us that the Bible came to us through a simple-

minded rather than through a subtle-minded race, for thus it can, in the main, be understood by the simple-minded. As it declares of the way of holiness, "the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein."

How does it come about, then, that the religion whose book is, in the sense I have named, so simple, has become so difficult? For that it has become difficult is seen in the demands made upon those who would bear the Christian name—in the creeds of the Catholic and the confessions of faith of the Protestant Churches. They are alike in this, that they have both changed a simple into a difficult faith—a faith of pictures and poetry into one abstract and abstruse. Bear in mind the twenty-third psalm of the Old Testament, which may well stand for Christ's vision of God, or the parable of the Prodigal Son, in which He pictures His Father's feeling even to the rebellious and wayward; and then read the creeds which the Catholic Church holds up before all who would bear the Christian name—in which the Christian Faith is declared to be defined. The creed which goes by the name of The Apostles' is, perhaps, an exception as to simplicity, though objection may be and is taken by many to certain of its phrases. But of the Nicene Creed it may be said that, whether its theology be accurate or not, its method is leagues away from that adopted by Jesus or the Apostles, whilst of the creed which goes under the name of St. Athanasius it may be said that it belongs to

quite another world and spirit than that of the New Testament.[1]

The Apostles probably would not have understood what such creeds meant, and, certainly, would not have approved of much which they declare. There is, as everyone can see, a whole world of difference between them. They do not seem to belong to the same religion either in spirit or substance. Of these creeds the Apostles would have said they contained a Gospel which was not the Gospel of their Master Jesus—of that Jesus who spoke the Sermon on the Mount or the parable of the Prodigal Son.

With these Gospels in its hands, it may well be asked how was the Catholic Church led to frame creeds so different both in substance and spirit. To answer that question fully would need a volume rather than a chapter. All that can be attempted is to indicate in outline how all this came about.

The Christian Faith came to the world through the Semitic, or, as we usually call it, the Hebrew race. From beginning to end the Bible arose among a race which had a special fitness for giving the world a religion of the highest kind. That race had the finest ethical and spiritual capacity for the discernment of God. In other words, it had a genius for religion. And, happily, its mind ran in simple

[1] Of all these creeds it may be said that they are lacking in inspirational force, and, whilst they express belief in God and His manifestations, they do not hold up, as they might, the spirit and way of life which should be men's response to the God they declare.

channels. It *could not* and *did not* think in the abstract and metaphysical way that the Greeks could and did.[1] The Hebrews of the olden time could not and did not give the world a Plato or an Aristotle; if such as these had been employed the Bible might have been intelligible only to scholars or thinkers. But a Bible was wanted for the world—the world made up chiefly of those who are neither scholars nor thinkers. Somebody has said, " God must love ordinary people very much, since He has made so many of them," and, because most of us are ordinary folk, the Bible came, not through philosophers like Plato and Aristotle, whose writings many of us could not understand, but through plain, straightforward men like the prophets of the Old Testament, who were not scholars, who came from the farm or from common work, and the Apostles of the New Testament, who were mostly men who plied the fisherman's net, and, above all, by Jesus, all but three years of whose life was spent, not in the schools of the Rabbis, but in a carpenter's cottage. And, since the Bible comes to us, not through the schools of philosophy, but through the minds of simple men, it is a book which comes home to our business and bosoms, and which he who runs may read. In its pages simple folk can find all that their souls need. The only difficulty of method lies in the writings of one writer—Paul—who did have a train-

[1] For a striking description of the contrast between the Sermon on the Mount and the Nicene Creed see the Introduction to Dr. Hatch's Hibbert Lectures on *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages.*

ing in the colleges of that time, first Greek in Tarsus, and then Hebrew in Jerusalem, and in whose epistles there are the greatest difficulties, partly, it may be, because of his college training. In his little book called *Polonius*, Edward Fitzgerald says: "We cannot doubt that Christianity itself made way by means of such parables as were never uttered before or after. Imagine (be it with reverence) that Jeremy Bentham had had the promulgation of it." And the Christian Faith, having reached us mainly through these simple men, should have been kept in the essentially simple form they gave it to us. If we had received the Christian Faith *direct* from them, it would almost certainly have remained in those simple forms. But we did not get it direct from those Hebrew folk. It has reached us through other peoples, and to them is due the vast change which has passed over it.

It was not long before the Christian Faith practically left the country of its origin—that is, Palestine —and the people among whom it was born—that is, the Hebrews—and passed out into the Greek-speaking world.

It is a thousand pities that the Hebrews rejected the Gospel and that the Apostles had to turn to the Gentiles; for those Hebrews would have been just the right race to preserve the Christian Faith in its original and proper form. Christianity was the child of Judaism, and the Jews, had they accepted it, would have known how to preserve their own child. *They would have kept it as a religion, and not made a*

philosophy of it. As I turned over the pages of a Jewish Prayer Book, with its intense spirit of worship, especially of awe before Jehovah, I could not help thinking how wonderful the worship of the Jew might have become if into that awe had been infused the love element which Jesus infused into religion. With this infusion the Jewish Prayer Book would have far surpassed the Book of Common Prayer, with its too often abject feeling and its introduction in many parts of metaphysical and legal elements so alien to the original Gospels. The sure instinct of the Jew for worship is seen in this fact, that he does not introduce into his Prayer Book the whole of the book of Psalms, even though it is his peculiar possession, but only some forty psalms suited to public worship, and in which I do not find any of those imprecatory notes which jar upon the feelings of the right-minded Christian worshipper in the *whole* Psalter as included in the Book of Common Prayer.

But the Jew rejected the Christian Faith, and so it passed on to a people who did not know how to preserve it in its simplicity. It fell first into the hands of the Greeks, and after their manner they made it abstract and metaphysical. Whilst it was amongst the Hebrews it was like a fair flower, alive, growing, full of colour and fragrance in the garden ; but the Greeks plucked the flower, dried it, pressed it, labelled it, put it into a museum—in other words, they made a creed—a theology from which all the life had been pressed out ; and so it has come down

to us in the Catholic Church. Read the Gospels, and then read the Nicene or the Athanasian Creeds, and say if it is not so,

In this connection it may be well to remember that the East has been the birthplace of all the great religions of the world—Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism and its two derivative religions—Christianity and Islamism—all arose under Eastern skies. That surely suggests some special fitness in the East for giving birth to religion! Robert Browning probably discerns wherein the fitness lay—when he makes Luria exclaim:

> "My own East!
> How nearer God we were! He glows above
> With scarce an intervention, presses close
> And palpitatingly, His soul o'er ours:
> We feel Him, nor by painful reason know
> The everlasting minute of creation
> Is felt there; now it is, as it was then;
> All changes at His instantaneous will,
> Not by the operation of a law
> Whose maker is elsewhere at other work,
> His hand is still engaged upon His world."

Now, if the East is the great bringer to birth of religion, it surely follows that religion thrives best when kept to its Eastern type and method, and thus it is in danger of losing something when changed from the imaginative, pictorial, mystical method of the East into the logical, defining, and often legal methods of the West.

Doubtless it was inevitable that when the Christian religion—that child of the East—was

brought into the different atmosphere of the West, through the impact of Western minds upon it, it should lose something of its oriental character; but surely it might have been kept closer to its original idiom and method; and it probably would have been, had not the theologians forced it into their moulds. Had it been entrusted to widest commonalty, whilst to some extent being Westernised, it would have kept more of its oriental character —the picturesque, the imaginative, the emotional in which the common people delight, as is clearly shown by their following of Jesus, whose speech was so pictorial and parabolic.

Matthew Arnold lamented that we had Hebraised our religion too much. If he had seen a little deeper, he would have lamented that we had not kept it to its Hebrew way. The mischief was done by the Greeks, who turned it from a religion into a philosophy, and so there was lost the simplicity and directness which in other parts of his writings Arnold pleaded for. Kept in the Hebrew idiom, it would have commended itself even to him, if anything could ever have commended itself to his somewhat superior mind.

In the Apostles' time, and in the very early Church, they did not repeat a creed in their worship. It is not a very seemly thing to repeat a creed—when a child comes into his father's presence he does not say: "O Father, I really do believe in you!" That is taken for granted. And, as a matter of fact, the creeds were built up, not to express faith in God, but

to drive and keep out those regarded as heretics—who sometimes were the right believers. It is not a very Christian proceeding to make an expression of faith in order to keep out those from whom we differ in mind. There is therefore very good ground for not reciting a creed in worship. Speaking of the earliest Christians, John Ruskin says:

"In their pure, early, and practical piety they saw there was no need for codes of morality or systems of metaphysics. Their virtue comprehended everything, entered into everything, it was too vast and spiritual to be defined; but there was no need of definitions. For through faith, working by love, they knew that all human excellence would be developed in due order, for that, without faith, neither reason could define nor effort reach the lowest phase of Christian virtue."[1]

Up to the time of the Council of Nicæa, "Each local community had its own confession of belief to be employed in connection with the baptismal rite. Probably, judging by New Testament hints, it was of the simplest order: 'Jesus is Lord,' or 'I believe in Jesus, the Son of God,' or 'I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.'"[2]

Even the Free Churches, though not using creeds in their worship, have not escaped the tendency of which I have spoken—the Gospel has not reached them in its original purity, simplicity, and picturesqueness, since it has not reached them direct from its Hebrew source. There is a good deal of the Greek influence upon it of which I have spoken, but

[1] *The Stones of Venice*, vol. ii, ch. viii, par. 45.
[2] *Early Church History*, by R. Martin Pope, p. 72.

there is still more of the Latin influence. Christianity has come to them chiefly through the Latins, who were not so much given to abstract as to legal thought. They were rather law-makers than philosophers. Our English laws owe much to their jurisprudence. And so the Gospel has come to the Free Churches chiefly in legal forms. It has been regarded rather in the light of the law court than in the light of the home, and God has been looked on as a great Judge rather than as a perfect Father. Thus there arose what has passed under various names as Predestinationism, Augustinianism, and, last of all, Calvinism.

The origin of this must be sought in the Epistles of St. Paul, especially that to the Romans. This Apostle had been trained in the Rabbinical School at Jerusalem and could not quite escape the influence of certain of its ideas. Against many of these, it is true, he fought with all his might; but the Particularism in relation to the Jewish *nation* held so strongly in that school and against which St. Paul fought passed over in his mind, probably quite unconsciously to himself, and was applied to *individuals* and found definite expression in the doctrine of election in his Epistle to the Romans. When quite free from this old Rabbinical Particularism, the Apostle moves out into a Universalism of the most pronounced kind.

And then, later, Augustine adopted this particularist view of St. Paul, and, as Dr. Pusey, his great admirer and translator, admits, gave birth to the

Jansenists and Luther and Calvin, who were detested by him.

Centuries later, this doctrine was taken up by John Calvin, and less strongly by Martin Luther, and through them most of the Churches called Protestant have received their Gospel. And so from the sixteenth century down to nearly our own time Christianity has reached them chiefly through the mind of John Calvin, who was far more of a lawyer than an apostle.[1] And we see the result in the Confessions of Faith which until recently ruled most of the Protestant Churches.

One example of this is found in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, which was accepted by practically all the English-speaking Protestant Churches, save the Methodist, who arose later, down to the middle of the nineteenth century and was the basis of all Presbyterian Churches till about the year 1890, when it was relieved of some of its awful features, especially that on the Decrees of God—the most awful declaration concerning God ever made, which attributes to Him injustice of the most terrible kind.

The legal rendering of the Christian Faith which came first from Augustine, and then through

[1] "If the Christian Apostles, St. Peter or St. Paul, could return to the Vatican, they might possibly inquire the name of the Deity who is worshipped with such mysterious rites in that magnificent temple; at Oxford or Geneva they would experience less surprise; but it might still be incumbent on them to peruse the Catechism of the Church, and to study the orthodox commentators on their own writings and the words of the Master."—Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. vi, p. 282.

Calvin, reached down to quite modern times, if not dead is fast dying, save in a few obscure corners, and therefore does not need consideration here; but the metaphysical rendering of the Faith, which came through the Greeks, still more or less holds possession, especially in Churches whose religion, to use Sabatier's phrase, is a "Religion of Authority," and, therefore, the question whether it is true to the Christian type as revealed in the Gospel, which is the ultimate test, *does* need consideration.

Doubtless it was inevitable that when the Christian Gospel passed out into the Greek-speaking world, its thinkers should apply their minds to, and, after their manner, philosophise about it. It is well that mind should be brought into the service of religion. It cannot be fully served without. But the Christian religion was not well served by the reduction of its Gospel to the fixed articles of a creed, and its imposition as a form and limit to the thought of all who believed. This was to present a naked skeleton instead of one clothed with flesh for men to behold and admire! Was not this creed-making a departure from the way of the earlier Greek both in his religion and his philosophy, both in temple and grove? Was the Greek ever before given to concise credal formularies? Can a creed be discovered in the religion of the Greeks? Was not their religion singularly free from any rigid definitions? Was not the very idea of orthodoxy, correctness of belief, conspicuous by its absence?

Surely this creed-making was quite alien both

to the example and spirit of those earlier times. Had the Christian Gospel arisen centuries earlier and fallen into the hands of the Greeks, say, in the time of Plato or Aristotle, or, if we can imagine it, into the hands of those great thinkers, it may be gravely questioned whether they would have even attempted to give it concise credal form; indeed, judging from their own writings, this would have been to them a quite alien proceeding.[1]

This creed-making of the Christian Gospel is the unhappy result of people who spoke the Greek language, but were leagues away both in their speech and spirit from that great people to whom we owe not only a wonderful language but a wonderful literature.

Orthodoxy has become the boast of the Church which, in later and present days, goes by the name of Greek, but the real Greeks would have rejected both the name and the idea, for they were too thoughtful to imagine that absolute accuracy could be reached or expressed in words on so tremendous a theme as the object of religion. And, even if they had philosophised about it, they would have left some range or margin in which the human mind could work, and not fenced all in by high credal

[1] "The cold reception given by the early Greeks to the art of writing and traces of the way in which they disparaged treatises and literature appear even in Plato (*Phædrus*, 275, 276). This shy suspicion was due to the Hellenic instinct for flexibility through politics, morality, religion, they felt a certain horror for whatever tended to fix and petrify ideas."—*The Historical New Testament*, Moffatt, p. 259.

barriers. Such range or margin is an essential coudition of thinking to any purpose. Creeds check rather than encourage thought. And often the great effort of thinkers is how to evade or explain them away. But if in a degenerate age like the fourth century the leaders of the Church, to preserve what they regarded as orthodoxy by driving out those looked on as heretics, felt that they must frame their creeds, it surely would have been wiser to keep them within the schools of theology and not to impose them on the people at large, leading them, as they were sure to do, and actually did, to think that the chief thing in religion was right opinion and not, as it is, a right spirit and a right life. And if the harm was great in those early times to people who spoke the Greek language, how much greater the harm when those creeds came to be translated into other languages which often imperfectly represented, and sometimes even misrepresented, the originals! All these efforts to reduce a Gospel which came to the woild in suggestive, pictorial, and, therefore, unsystematic forms, to the supposed precision of creeds has lessened the force of its appeal and so proved rather a hindrance than a help to its progress in the world.

Dr. Briggs, who is rather disposed to defend definite expressions of the Faith, is obliged to say:

"The Nicene Creed did not promote the peace and unity of the Church. As Duchesne says:

"'It only resulted in a short suspension of hostili-

ties, followed by a war abominable and fratricidal, which divided the whole of Christendom from Arabia as far as Spain, and was only quieted after sixty years of scandal that bequeathed to succeeding generations the germs of schisms from which the Church still suffers.' [1]

"Synods and provincial councils were summoned by the different parties, in which these condemned and excommunicated each other. Political and national questions became involved with those that were religious and doctrinal; and Christianity became so distracted that it could not have survived if it had not been for the Divine energy of the Holy Spirit, which guided it safely through a multitude of disasters." [2]

It is, indeed, difficult to follow those who assert that Athanasius saved the Christian Faith at Nicæa by securing the insertion in the creed of the word "Homoousion" instead of the word "Homoiousion" —that Christ was of the *same* instead of being of *like* substance with the Father! And it is still more difficult to follow the English Church Union when, through its President, Lord Halifax, it declared that the far later creed wrongly attributed to St. Athanasius is the anchor of that Faith. Especially when it is so evident that both the Nicene and the so-called Athanasian Creed were set in an idiom so different from that of the Gospels.

I have tried to see what the actual effects of this metaphysical rendering of the Christian Faith were, especially in the early days of the Church. It at

[1] *Histoire Ancienne de l'Église*, vol. ii, p. 157.
[2] *Christian Symbolics*, by C. A. Briggs, p. 85.

once occurred to me to ask what were its results in the very regions where the Nicene Creed was framed and enforced. If that Creed was so vital and essential, then its effects on the Churches which first accepted it should have been to the last degree beneficent, and should have rendered them so rightly established in the Faith that they would have been able to resist all attacks and stand strong and permanent for all after-ages. Was this the case? Were those Churches rendered so strong by this vital definition as to be standing and flourishing to-day? Is not the very opposite the case? Have not practically all the Churches which first accepted these metaphysical renderings of the Faith perished from the earth? What Christianity is there left to-day in Nicæa, where in A.D. 325 the creed which took its name was first accepted; or in Constantinople, where in A.D. 381 it was approved; or in Chalcedon, where in A.D. 451 it was finally adopted? What report would a traveller through Asia Minor and Northern Africa, where the Christian Church was once apparently firmly established on the basis of the Nicene Creed, bring to us of their condition to-day? Would he not have to report that they have all practically passed out of existence? That they were rendered so weak by dependence on minute metaphysical distinctions that when Mohammedanism came along, with its simple doctrine of God, in spite of its coldness and hardness, they were powerless to resist and were swept out of existence, so that the places that knew them once know them no

more, and the Christian Faith has to be newly propagated where once it seemed firmly established.[1]

Thomas Carlyle discerns the real cause of this when he says : " Mahomet's creed we called a kind of Christianity ; and, really, if we look at the wild, rapt earnestness with which it was believed and laid to heart, I should say a better kind than of those miserable Syrian sects, with their vain janglings about *Homoiousion* and *Homoousion*, the head full of worthless noise, the heart empty and dead." [2]

If the principle of Jesus, that by their fruits ye shall know them, be applied to this metaphysical rendering of the Christian Faith, is it not altogether discredited ?

This is the more remarkable when it is remembered that the Church of those early days possessed men of exceptional ability, now known as the Fathers of the Church, who could and did defend her teaching. It was from no lack of ability in her preachers and commentators and apologists that the regions where most of them lived and laboured have practically lost their Christianity. If it had been sufficiently vital to be preserved the ability was there in these Fathers to preserve it. But it was not preserved, because along this metaphysical

[1] "The metaphysical questions on the attributes of God and the liberty of man have been agitated in the schools of Mahometans as well as in those of the Christians ; but among the former they have never engaged the passions of the people, or disturbed the tranquillity of the State."—Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, vol. vi, p. 283.

[2] *Lectures on Heroes*, p. 58.

line the essential vitality of the Gospel message was lost. Christianity came to be regarded as an orthodoxy—a right opinion, instead of an orthopraxy—a right practice; and the saying "Lord, Lord," did not lead on to doing of the will; the house was built upon the sand, and when the storm came it fell, and great was the fall thereof.

This metaphysical rendering of the Christian Faith passed over to the Latin Church, by which, in the ninth century, the Nicene Creed in its official Western form was finally adopted at Rome; but the Latins did not lay so much stress on it as the Greeks, whose successors in lands where the Christian Church survives still call theirs the Orthodox Church. The less subtle and practical mind of the Latins laid more stress on organisation and obedience, and so, perhaps, it comes to pass that whilst in its original homes the Greek Church has practically perished, the Latin Church still flourishes, not only in new regions, but in its first home at Rome.

But it may, perhaps, be said: If the first results of a metaphysical Christianity were in those early times so disastrous, have not some of its later ones been more encouraging? It may be said that the Oxford Movement, which arose about eighty years ago, was a return to the faith and methods of the third or fourth century, as is seen in the fact that one of its early efforts was the production of the Library of the Fathers in an English dress; indeed, that movement was a return to the Fathers and

their doctrine and methods. Certainly it was that, rather than a return to the methods and teaching of the New Testament, which is evident in the fact that, though the Oxford leaders were deeply versed in the Fathers, none of them took rank as New Testament scholars. New Testament scholarship must be sought in a very different section of the English Church: in Lightfoot, Westcott, Hort, who had no part in nor sympathy with the Oxford Movement, but were rather its opponents. Still, it may be asked, Did not the Oxford Movement give a new impulse to the English Church? Certainly it did. This, it may be, was due partly to the low state of that Church, which rendered it disposed to welcome any offered uplift, and partly to the personal charm of Keble, Newman, Pusey, Hurrell, Froude, and other less known leaders of the Oxford Movement.[1]

That Movement arose at a time in which the Church of England was practically in the hands of two parties. The first of these—the High and Dry, as it has been called—regarded their Church as one great means of keeping things as they were.

[1] I have used the word 'charm' concerning the leaders of the Oxford Movement, and the word certainly applies to John Henry Newman, its genius. I used to wonder, as I read his sermons, at the great influence they exerted at Oxford; but in an interview with him, when a smile flitted over his somewhat plain features, my wonder ceased. John Keble's influence was largely due to his great success at a very early age in the schools, which wakened an attitude of almost reverence for him at Oxford. As I heard him at Hursley—and I often did so—I could not help wondering at the part he had played in so

Though it repudiated politics in religion, it was in reality a great conservative force in England. For the most part religious fervour was lacking, and in some cases even decried, in this party. All that was insisted upon was a close adherence to the rubrics of the Prayer Book.

The second was the Evangelical party, in which the fervour lacking in the High Church section was the prominent feature, personal conversion the great desideratum, and full reliance on the letter of Scripture, construed in a mildly Calvinistic direction, the guiding light. Speaking broadly, by both these sections church buildings and their surroundings were sadly neglected, services slovenly conducted, music in worship and art in the embellishment of church buildings considered rather as a hindrance than a help to devotion. This was specially the case in the Evangelical section.

To such a condition of things the Oxford Movement came and worked many beneficent changes. Its advent practically put an end to the High and Dry Party, which soon ceased to be a factor of any weight in the Church of England. It aroused a greater interest in church buildings and their

great a movement, as neither matter nor utterance nor expression of face was arresting. Richmond's portrait glorifies his face; indeed, he confessed that he had told the truth in love. I never had the good fortune to see or hear Dr. Pusey, but my conception of him is of an aristocratic ascetic, for ascetic he certainly was, as is shown in the fact that he obtained from Mr. Keble, his confessor, permission to wear a hair-shirt. There was about the leaders a certain aloofness and mystery which gave distinction to and greatly helped that Movement.

surroundings, and made them seem objects worthy of religious care. Restoration of neglected, and in some cases of dilapidated buildings, went on all over the land. Window-painters and ecclesiastical art workers grew busy. Music was enlisted and musicians were given a higher place in the services of the Church. For the most part all this moved along worthy lines; but, of course, in so widespread a movement it sometimes fell below. But, speaking broadly, the results were worthy. For many a long day the Evangelicals stood out against, resisted, and even denounced the Movement and all its works, but gradually the spell worked, and they began to care more for their buildings, to allow the ecclesiastical art worker and window-painter and the sacred musician to find their way into their midst. Few are the churches which at some point or other have wholly escaped the influence of the Oxford Movement, and in some ways the influence has been for good.

It may be urged—indeed, it has been urged—that "the Oxford Movement was an advance upon the narrower and still more obscurantist Evangelicalism which preceded it, and that to substitute the Church for the Bible as the seat of ultimate authority was a step in advance, though not intended as such; and, in point of fact, Liberalism within the Church has found much more favour than amongst the Evangelicals, who now at last are only awakening to the impossibility of the Biblical infallibility theory." [1]

[1] Dr. Hastings Rashdall in a letter to the author.

It is undoubtedly true that the Oxford Movement rendered a valuable service in that it carried its followers over from the authority of a Book, which, by its very nature, is fixed, to the authority of a Church, which, since it consists of living persons, is able to move. And if the choice has to be made between the authority of a Book and of a Church, the truer decision would be for the Church; and if the Church were, as it ought to be, the expression of the ever-living and active Spirit of God, the results would be in a high degree salutary. But the claim of the Oxford Movement is not for the Church of the *present* but of the *past*, and the latest period to which it will defer is that of the undivided Church of long centuries ago, so that to all intents and purposes the Church to which it defers is as fixed and unalterable as the Book. In its view there was a period in which the fullest expression of the Divine mind was reached by the Church. In this respect the Church of Rome is in a stronger position than the Anglican, since it possesses in the Pope, who claims with the aid of the College of Cardinals in Council assembled to speak as the Vicar of Christ, and so has a *living* voice. If that claim could be made good—if the reality corresponded with the claim—then if there *must be* an outward authority, here it would be found, rather than in a Book whose last word is nearly two thousand years old. But the Anglican Church does not possess, and does not even claim to possess, any such living voice of authority over faith and morals, and so it is tied to the de-

cisions and doctrine of the undivided Church on which it lays so much stress and by which its course is directed. It may have in some degree delivered the more thoughtful of its followers from the bondage of an infallible Book, but in doing so it has placed them under the bondage of a Church many centuries old, and so it cannot respond as it should do to the needs and thoughts of the new world in which it now stands. If it would only move forward and recognise the action of the living Spirit of God on individual minds and so in the Church of which they are members, if it would rely on the inward voice of the Spirit rather than on the ancient *dicta* of the Church, it would pass from among the religions of Authority to the company of the religions of the Spirit, and would be able to bear a living witness to this distracted world.

Churches of the Oxford Movement type, and, indeed, all Churches, need to remember that the great end is not to keep under authority, but the uplift, ethically and spiritually, of those who gather for worship, or, to put it more definitely and precisely, their likening to Christ and their being made to realise their sonship to the Father on which He laid such tremendous stress. This is the final test of every Church—does it draw its adherents to a sense of relationship of children to the Father, on which Christ ever insisted, out of which spring the response and repose of the heart and the obedience of the life?

Auguste Sabatier, the great French theologian,

in his principal book, divides religions into those of Authority and those of the Spirit. It is a vital distinction, and the results are widely different. Religions of authority naturally keep their adherents on the plane of servitude. They are ruled from without by commands, not moved from within by inspirations and convictions. They are not encouraged to rise to the position designed by Christ for His followers: "I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth; but I have called you friends, for whatsoever I have heard of My Father, I have made known unto you." And it is because the Oxford Movement led its adherents back to the ideas of earlier ages, when Christianity was regarded as a religion of authority, that its results are not of the highest kind, for authority working from without does not, and in the very nature of things cannot, produce results as vital and spiritual as love working from within. Authority awakens the sense of servitude, the Spirit wakens the sense of sonship. Sabatier says:

"As the ultimate power of moral development in the human being, the Spirit of God brings to it no constraint from without; it determines and animates us from within, and thus maintains its life. When the Christian religion becomes an inward reality, a fact of consciousness, it is nothing more than consciousness raised to its highest power."

And he quotes Alexander Vinet, the great Swiss theologian: "*That which I absolutely repudiate is authority.*" And it is because the Oxford leaders

and their successors relied on outward authority in religion, which Christ never did, that the results, in the very nature of things, are, and must be, lacking in spontaneity and breadth. Along such lines the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free cannot be known.

Even though it should spread itself over the world, and draw men into its enclosures, would it not, must it not, fail to do what Christ meant His Gospel to do—to awaken that vital sense of sonship, which kindles love in the heart and glad obedience in the life ? [1]

It is thankfully and gladly acknowledged here that many living under a religion of authority have risen to the sense of sonship, and have been full of the filial feeling, just as many who accepted Calvin's despotic idea of God reached a like position, though often their lives were clouded by the creed they had accepted. Of many men and women it has been remarked that " they were better than their creed." This is commendatory of the believers, but condemnatory of their creed : a creed, however, should be high above, not beneath. And,

[1] Since this chapter was written I notice that the Rev. R. Miklejohn, writing in *The Challenge* of April 29, 1921, says: " Tractarianism once more galvanised the corpse into the semblance of life and activity. There was about Tractarianism a glamour which attracted certain types of mind; particularly it attracted that type of clerical mind which finds, and rejoices to find, in the magnification of the ecclesiastical idea a corresponding exaltation of the priestly office. With the Tractarian movement the sacerdotal idea entered upon the latest, and, we may hope, the last of its spasmodic semblances of vitality."

though under a religion of authority many have risen above it, yet it must be evident to all that in the very nature of things the *normal* effect of such a religion is to keep in servitude, not to lift to the filial position.

The mission of the Church, when it understands its mission aright, is not to keep men and women in bondage to itself, but to render them independent, through their close fellowship with the Father, so that even if away from all Churches, they would feel that they were not away from God.

Coventry Patmore expresses this when he says:

"The work of the Church in the world is not to teach the mysteries of life so much as to persuade the soul to that arduous degree of purity at which God Himself becomes her teacher. The work of the Church ends where the knowledge of God begins."[1]

If the Roman Catholic Church, to which Mr. Patmore belonged, and the Churches that rely on authority, would only follow his lead, they would rise to the higher position of what Sabatier calls religions of the Spirit. When such knowledge of God is reached that real fellowship with Him is set up, the soul will naturally seek worship with those like-minded, if not so much for its own sake, for the encouragement and help of those carrying on the work of the Church; but the Christian name may not and should not be denied, as is so often the case, to those who do not feel drawn to public worship. In our day some of those who never cross

[1] *Rod, Root, and Flower*, by Coventry Patmore.

the threshold of any church excel in spirituality, and certainly in service to their fellows, those who spend much time in what is wrongly called Divine *service*. In some cases such persons have been repelled by the routine way in which worship has been conducted or by the incompetence of the pulpit. For the non-attendance at public worship it is constantly deploring, the Church is largely responsible, since its services have often been so perfunctory and uninteresting. Attendance at services is not the test which Christ Himself would have applied, but the doing of the will of the Father. *The Christianity of Christ is not nearly so ecclesiastical as it has been made to appear by priests and parsons.* Many of those who won the highest commendation from Christ were not only outside the company of His followers, but outside even the pale of Judaism, and, indeed, outside all ecclesiastical enclosures!

The Christian Faith, as it arose, was like a stream high up in the mountains, clear and pure and sparkling, but on its way to the sea it drew into itself the outflow of the cities on its banks, until its clearness and purity and beauty were well-nigh lost. In other words, the Gospel as it fell from the lips and was reflected from the life of its Founder—simple, picturesque, heart-moving—became under Greek influences abstract and difficult, and under Latin influences it became hard, legal, often unjust.

Dr. Horace Bushnell says:

"Nothing makes infidels more surely than the spinning, splitting, nerveless refinements of theology.

This endeavour to get the truths of religion away from the imagination into propositions of the speculative understanding makes a most dreary and sad history. They were plants alive and in flower, but now the flavours are gone, the juices are dried, and the skeleton parts packed away and classified in a dry herbarium called theology. Scientific theology will be completely thought out about the same time that words are substituted for algebraic notions and poetry reduced to the methods of the calculus or the logarithmic tables."

And then he makes a comparison between Turretin the theologian and Bunyan the dreamer :

" The venerable dogmatiser is already far gone by, but the glorious Bunyan fire still burns, because it is fire, kindles the world's imagination more and more, and claims a right to live till the sun dies out in the sky. His Pilgrim holds on its way still fresh and strong as ever—nay, fresher and stronger than ever, never to be put off the road till the last traveller heavenward is conducted in."

At last, after all these long centuries, in many quarters men are waking up to the fact that, if they are to know what the Christian Faith really is, they must go, not to Greek thinkers or to Latin lawmakers, but to Him who preached and in His life illustrated the Gospel, and that they must learn of Him if they are to find rest unto their souls.

Professor Troeltsch seems to see signs of the coming of this better feeling, for, speaking of modern religion, he says :

" Religion is completely transferred from the

sphere of the substantial sacramental communication of grace and of ecclesiastical authority to the psychologically intelligible sphere of the affirmation of a thought of God and of God's grace, and all the ethico-religious effects arise with psychological clearness and obviousness from this central thought. The sensuous sacramental miracle is done away with, and in its stead appears the miracle of thought—that man, in his sin and weakness, can grasp and confidently assent to such a thought. That is the end of priesthood and hierarchy, the sacramental communication of ethico-religious powers after the manner of a sensible substance, and the ascetic withdrawal from the world, with its special merits."[1]

Surely it must be evident to all that what our hearts crave is that which awakens confidence in God, in His perfect Fatherhood; and that can be brought about only in simple ways. Confidence is rarely, if ever, awakened by subtle argument which taxes the intellect to understand, but only by that which makes its appeal to our hearts, and such appeal must always be of a simple nature. The lovable is always essentially simple, so that when we see it we cannot help loving it, and this is the method in our Christian Faith as it reaches its culmination in Jesus Christ, whom really to see is to love. "We love Him because He first loved us."

Dr. H. Symonds, of Christ Church Cathedral, Montreal, whose recent death was so great a loss to the Canadian Church, says:

"To-day authority of the external kind has

[1] *Protestantism and Progress*, p. 193.

broken down, and, to adopt the words of the distinguished South African, Smuts: 'Theology has once more struck its tents and is again on the march.' And to-day the quest is for 'The Religion of the Spirit'! And because the religion of Jesus was not credal or dogmatic in form, but spiritual, it is capable of, and, indeed, demands purer and more spiritual expression to-day. Men are still asking for foundations infallible, unchangeable, immovable foundations on which to build up the fabric of religion. They suppose that religion cannot continue without infallible books, churches, parsons. But what is religion? Is it not the attraction of the soul to the Infinite Source from which it comes? And if Jesus, being the effulgence of the glory of our Spiritual Sun, loses His attractive power no systems of doctrine will avail us anything. Are we not discovering that we do not need a dogmatic basis for Christianity any more than the captain of the ship needs his chart when the pilot is on board? It is by the Spirit that we live, and the Spirit is the attractive power of the spiritual order. The attempt to hold men to truth by dogma is largely inspired by fear and doubt of the Holy Spirit. Theology, indeed, we may and must have; a theology, on the one hand, not dissociated from the past, nor, on the other hand, a mere rearrangement of specimens preserved from the past—a *hortus siccus*, but a theology which we may call our own. We shall express the old faith in a new way, our own way, but we shall not erect our new way into an absolute test of Christianity. No one of the myriad forms of the activity of the one Spirit upon many minds will be imposed as a test of membership within the family of God, still less of salvation; but rather they will be guides and helps, a means to bring men to the full consciousness

of the attractive power of the 'Christ after the Spirit.'" [1]

Since the war, signs are multiplying of a yearning, not for metaphysical definitions nor for rigid ecclesiastical embodiments of the Faith, but for the Faith itself as expressed in the words and illustrated in the life of Him of whom we are told "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." If all down the ages that Faith had been allowed to reach men in its original and vital forms surely it would have been much further on toward the conversion of the world.[2]

Creedless Saints

Men who would limit the way of holiness to those whose thoughts are confined within the bounds of creeds or theological systems, or even to those who look on the letter of Scripture as the one food for their souls—who thus limit the Holy One of Israel—would have cause to pause if they faced the fact, for fact it is, that some of the loftiest saints the world has ever known pursued the upward way with little or no dependence on these outward aids, who

[1] *The Modern Churchman* for November 1920.

[2] Since this chapter was written I notice that Canon Alexander, preaching in St. Paul's Cathedral, declared that "the task of the Church was to clear away from religion the accretions and accumulations, the things that were accidental or of secondary value, so that men might get as close as they could to the real meaning of Christ for humanity. The question was: How could we recover that ancient splendour?"

indeed answered to the description of Robert Browning in "Christmas Eve":

> "I, then, in ignorance and weakness,
> Taking God's help, have attained to think
> My heart does best to receive in meekness
> That mode of worship, as most to his mind
> Where earthly aids being cast behind,
> His All in All appears serene
> With the thinnest human veil between,
> Leaving the mystic lamps, the seven,
> The many motions of his spirit,
> Pass, as they list, to earth from heaven."

This seems to have been the way which some of the finest of the saints pursued. As examples take only two—and those in widely severed communions—St. Francis of Assisi in the Roman Church, and John Woolman in the Society of Friends. No one acquainted with the lives of these men will doubt that they travelled far up in the holy way.

Ernest Renan declares St. Francis to be "the only perfect Christian since Jesus. He stands alone, as having with boundless faith and love endeavoured to fulfil the law laid down in Galilee. Of all men, after Jesus, he possessed the clearest conscience, the most perfect simplicity, the strongest sense of his filial relation to the Heavenly Father. God was truly his beginning and his end. In him, Adam never seemed to have sinned."[1] Renan did not know of John Woolman, nor was he acquainted with his *Journal*, or surely he would have bracketed him as the equal of St. Francis. Of John Wool-

[1] *Studies in Religious History*, p. 315.

man, Henry Crabbe Robinson, the friend of Goethe, Wordsworth and Coleridge, says :

"He is a *schöne Seele*, a beautiful soul. His religion was love. His whole existence and all his passions were love. His Christianity is most inviting. It is fascinating."

William Ellery Channing, Dora Greenwell, Charles Lamb, and a host of other keen-eyed observers have regarded him in like manner, whilst John Greenleaf Whittier says :

"Guided thus, how passing lovely
Is the track of Woolman's feet!
And his brief and simple record—
How serenely sweet!

O'er life's humblest duties throwing
Light the earthling never knew,
Freshening all its dark waste places
As with Hermon's dew.

All which glows in Pascal's pages,
All which sainted Guyon sought,
Or the blue-eyed German Rahel
Half unconscious taught:

Beauty such as Goethe pictured,
Such as Shelley dreamed of, shed
Living warmth and starry brightness
Round that poor man's head."[1]

And yet neither of these men had any formal theology, and depended very little, if at all, on the letter of Scripture.

[1] To —— with a copy of Woolman's *Journal*, with the advice, "Get the writings of John Woolman by heart and love the early Quakers."—*Essays of Elia*.

Ernest Renan says of St. Francis:

"It is probable that in France, or, indeed, anywhere but in that sweet and shady Umbrian valley, he would have been accused of heresy. He drew little from the Bible, which he seldom read. He was no scholastic; he was neither priest nor theologian." [1]

It was once made a complaint against John Woolman "that his *Journal* had so little to say of doctrines, and so much of duties"; and the readers of that *Journal* will search in vain for any sign of reliance on the letter of Scripture.

St. Francis seems to have been moved only by the vision of Jesus which shone upon his eyes, and John Woolman chiefly by the gracious influence of the Spirit within his soul. Such lives should convince us that "the chief desideratum in a Church is that it should allow no shibboleth, no creed, no ritual to take the primary place which belongs to goodness of character," and should warn us against demanding as necessary qualifications for the Christian calling any doctrinal forms in which men have cast their thoughts of the Christian Faith, or insistence or assent to or dependence on the letter of the Scriptures. The lives of these men should prevent us limiting the leading of God to any man-made channels—and help us to realise that "the wind bloweth where it listeth," and to regard all those who respond to such gales of the Spirit as members of the Household of Faith. Profoundly true but

[1] *Studies in Religious History*, p. 310.

often forgotten is the declaration of Renan: "Moreover, when a certain degree of holiness has been attained, heresy is impossible, for at a certain height dogma no longer exists, and there is no ground for controversy." [1]

Minds which believe that the grace of God must of necessity run only in ecclesiastical or sacramental channels have of late been startled by the sight of, and still more by contact with and in some cases by joining in silent worship with, members of the Society of Friends; and when, beyond this, it has come to their knowledge that the Friends have probably excelled all other Christian communities in relieving the famine and hunger which have followed the war. The fruits, so rich and plentiful, surely point to the goodness of the tree—and yet that tree has never been tended by men claiming Apostolical Succession, nor nourished by sacraments deemed and declared by many to be vital.

Such sights, if allowed their proper weight, must do much to break down the fences regarded as necessary to the Christian Faith, and to get rid of that monopoly of the grace of God so often and so long claimed by the ecclesiastical and theological and priestly mind. Let those who find help in ecclesiastical forms and sacraments, and those whose faith runs in doctrinal channels or depends greatly on the Scripture, use and profit by these; but let them not insist that what seems needful to them should be

[1] *Studies in Religious History*, p. 326.

demanded of others whose minds need and profit by a larger, freer, more spiritual atmosphere, and who find aid to their soul's life in realms beyond the Church's pale.

It is high time that all monopolies in God, whether of the priest or the doctrinaire or the Bibliolater, should cease, and they *will* cease when Christ's vision of Him as Spirit prevails, for out of that sprang Christ's declaration that the time would come when neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem should He be worshipped—which meant that the limitations of sacred places and all connected with them should cease to be regarded as vital necessities, and that God, being Spirit, and therefore everywhere diffused, should be felt as everywhere and directly accessible to the devout soul.

Those who fear any shock to long-held convictions, which in many cases should be called prejudices, who are always fearful for the soul of the weak brother—too long the bugbear and hindrance of the Church—such as these will call this dangerous teaching, but truth is never really dangerous, and even if it were it is well to remember Stevenson's word: "'Tis man's perdition to be safe"; and they would do well to take to heart Dr. Fairbairn's word, "Churches are here not to conserve the actual but to create the ideal."

Many years ago there appeared in the magazine of the college to which I then belonged a piece called "A Sacred Drama," printed there anonymously, but now known to have been from the pen of the

late Charles Callaway, D.Sc., where one of the characters, expressing the writer's mind, says:

"I never will believe
That God's great love flows in the narrow gutters
Of human doctrines and of man-made creeds.
'Tis like the sea, whose paths are free to all;
'Tis like the air, whose breath gives life to all;
'Tis like the blessed sun, that shines on all.
Oh, 'tis a strange, a wondrous thing; I know
Not *yet*, how high, how deep, how vast it be;
One thing I know—the love of God is free."

and if that Love be free—the channels through which it finds expression must also be free.

PART III

I

JESUS CALLING MEN TO THIS PERFECTION

"BE YE THEREFORE PERFECT"

To the mind of Jesus, the perfection which is in His Father is the goal for humanity—men are not only to rest in and enjoy this perfect Fatherhood, but they are to strive after a like perfection. This is the ideal He holds up before all who accept His leadership.

"Christ never claimed for Himself what He did not claim as within the aspiration of all men. He was Son of God, but there were other sons of God. He was the Son at one with the Father, but He taught that this was a communion in which He would have all men share."[1]

It is, perhaps, futile to discuss the question whether such perfection has ever been or can be reached by mortal men. There have been those who claimed that they had reached it, and that no consciousness of failure or sin existed in their minds. On the other hand, there have been those who strenuously resisted

[1] *The Diary of a Church-goer*, by Lord Courtney of Penwith, p. 87.

the idea that such perfection had been or could be reached here on earth.

The experience of St. Paul, as recorded in his Epistle to the Philippians, probably presents what may be regarded as something like the possible. There we see him responding to the call of His Master to the pursuit of this perfection—but all the time he "counts not himself to have apprehended," but he is pressing "toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," and he calls as many as are perfect—which clearly means all who are seeking to be perfect—to be like-minded—that is, to be pressing toward the mark which should be the aim of all who bear the name of Christ.

St. Paul's may be regarded as a kind of classic in the realm of Christian experience. And it is interesting to observe how closely it has been followed by those who, like him, had reached to great heights of holiness, in whom we see at once the pressing toward the mark, and, even when that mark was most nearly reached, the feeling that they had not attained nor had yet been made perfect. Such as these, to use Emerson's well-known phrase, had hitched their waggon to a star which had lifted them above the miry or dusty roads of earth, but had not drawn them up to the lofty heights of that star.

Onlookers of such lives may have regarded them as having reached, or nearly reached, perfection, but they would have regarded themselves as falling far short of it. In the way of holiness, as in the way

of knowledge, the farther men travel the longer seems the road which lies untravelled before them. It is the ignorant who fancy they know. The learned discern how much their ignorance exceeds their knowledge.

It may, indeed, be questioned whether for us mortals the zest would not die out of life if we felt that we had attained, since zest lies in the pursuit and not in the attainment.

Thorwaldsen is said to have been seen looking at his statue of the Christ in the Cathedral at Copenhagen and the tears were streaming down his face. Asked the reason, he replied, "I am satisfied with my work; advance is no longer possible to me."

When the possibility of advance in any region, whether of commerce or literature or science or art or religion, dies down in the heart the glory of life is over. Possibly it is so in all worlds, certainly it is so in our present one.

Walter Rauschenbusch says:

"In personal religion we look with seasoned suspicion at any who claim to be holy and perfect; but we always tell men to become holy and seek perfection. We make it a duty to seek what is unattainable. But every approximation is worth while. Every step toward personal purity and peace, though it only makes the consciousness of imperfection more poignant, carries its own exceeding great reward, and everlasting pilgrimage toward the kingdom of God is better than contented stability in the tents of wickedness."[1]

[1] *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, by Walter Rauschenbusch, pp. 362–3.

The author of the *Theologia Germanica* seems to regard perfection as more within men's reach, for he says :

" But it behoveth you to know that a master hath said on this passage of Dionysius [referring to the possibility of reaching perfection] that it is possible, and may happen to a man often till he become so accustomed to it as to be able to look into eternity whenever he will."[1]

It must be admitted that at first sight this goal seems utterly beyond our reach. When presented we naturally cry, " It is high ; I cannot attain unto it." The very name " God " brings before us one so unutterably great that to think of becoming like Him seems quite beyond our reach. And it must be evident that there are elements in the perfection of God out of such reach.

It is only when His Fatherhood is emphasised as it is by Jesus that there seems any possibility of even approaching such perfection. But then the precept runs : " Be ye therefore perfect, even as *your Father* which is in heaven is perfect." And in a father the *imposing* elements of character fall into the background, and only those which allure and constrain are prominent.[2] And if man be indeed, as Jesus asserts, the child—that is, the outcome of the Father's life—then the idea that the child should

[1] *Theologia Germanica*, Golden Treasury Edition, p. 23.

[2] This is emphasised by the reading of this passage in St. Luke's Gospel : " Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful," which confines the precept to that which is ethical and spiritual.

become like his Father does not seem to belong to the realm of the quite unattainable. But then, this perfection must be regarded as within the limits of this relationship between Father and child, and as excluding in the present order of things, certain realms in the nature of God from the reach of men.

I. *The Realm of Knowledge.*

This age of ours is, it may be, a little over-elated by the knowledge it has acquired. During the last century, and the opening years of the present one, vast strides have been taken in this respect, in almost every direction, of the earth on which we dwell, and the nature of what we call matter of which it consists; of the life—vegetable, animal, human—which exists upon it; of the worlds of space, their nature, size, distances and relationship the one with the other. And not only of the world as it is, but of the world of the past and of the beings which then existed upon it. The secrets of the earth, of the heavens, of life in its various forms have been to a wonderful extent discovered; and these secrets have not only been discovered, but they have been utilised by science for the benefit and comfort of men.

So vast have been the discoveries of the last century that it may be we have become a little too proud of our knowledge. This is not to be wondered at—it is a quite natural elation. It may be that this has led some to the idea that nothing is beyond man's reach. But, great as the knowledge of man has become, what is it to the knowledge of God? Man has been trying to discover how this earth of

ours came into being, and up till now his conclusion—or perhaps it should be said his *conjecture*—is that it came out of a fire-mist, or, as a recent American poet has described the genesis :

"A fire-mist and a planet—
A crystal and a cell—
A jelly-fish and a saurian,
And caves where cave-men dwell ;
Then a sense of law and beauty,
And a face turned from the clod—
Some call it Evolution,
And others call it God." [1]

A not unlikely conjecture—but, after all, only a *conjecture*—of men whose days are so few on a matter which is separated from them by probably millions upon millions of years. Man, a creature who, if he lives a century, is thought a prodigy, is trying to look back over ages upon ages to discover, if he can, how things began to be. But God must have been, in some way or other that we cannot understand, *present* at the beginning of things, if there was ever a beginning. In His nature must be some picture of the origins for which we are blindly groping. What man has to search out as history—written on the earth and humanity—God is conscious of as a beholder or as an experience. From His standpoint, therefore, probably all our discoveries are only approximations to truth. It may be that even those of which science is most sure to-day are only a little farther away from error than those which they displaced. If, side by side, we could see the best

[1] W. H. Carruth.

that science has done, and the reality in the mind of God, how vast would be the difference! We have only to think of it for a moment to see that it is not along the line of *knowledge* that we can reach the perfection that is in God. As Owen Feltham says:

"We are all fellow servants, and we know not how our Grand Master will brook insolences in His family. How darest thou, that art but a piece of earth that heaven has blown into, presume thyself into the impudent usurpation of a majesty unshaken?

"The top feather of the plume began to give himself airs, and toss his head and look down contemptuously on his fellows. But one of them said, 'Peace! we are all of us but feathers; only He that made us a plume was pleased to set thee as the highest.'"

II. *The Realm of Power.*

In this realm the present age has excelled all previous ones. This is so even when we remember the vast erections of Babylon and Egypt and other lands, which puzzle us to know how they were reared. No previous age has reached such heights of power. Most of the inventions foreseen by the seers of the past have been reached in our day. And some of their visions of the things that should be are very wonderful. In the thirteenth century Roger Bacon wrote—and the passage is literally translated from his works:

"For vessels may be made for navigation without any men to navigate them, so that ships may be borne on under the guidance of a single man with

greater speed than if they had been full of sailors. Carriages may also be made so as to be moved without any animal force, with an incalculable impetus."

After describing glasses, by which all that an enemy did might be discovered at any distance, he adds:

"So also we might make the sun, moon, and stars come down lower here. Contrivances may also be made to walk on the bottom of the sea or rivers without danger to the body. Bridges also may be made across rivers without danger to the body. Machines also for flying may be made, so that a man seated in the middle may turn round a certain mechanism by which artificial wings may beat the air, flying like a bird."

Bacon, however, expresses some doubt as to the latter marvel.[1]

I scarcely know which is the more wonderful—the foreseeing of Roger Bacon of the thirteenth, or the accomplishment in the twentieth century. And, naturally, the age of such accomplishment is not a little proud. That is, perhaps, inevitable. Man's doings in the age in which we now stand are indeed very wonderful. But what are these in comparison with the power which lies in the Divine Nature? With long thinking and tremendous effort, men *do* accomplish great things; but, so far as we can see, the great things of God come about without effort—but, though without effort, they quite surpass those of men. If Nature be the expression of the Divine

[1] Cf. *Simon de Montfort*, by Alfred Hayes.

Mind, then the thought of that mind can effect what all the efforts of men could not. A change of wind will create a cold which all our fires cannot quite dispel, or so heat the atmosphere that all our fans cannot quite cool. Without apparent effort, the upper air may be so changed that snow descends in such quantity that the land becomes suddenly white; and not till the air grows warmer will its snowy covering be quite cleared. There are things in the Nature of God which seem beyond human reach. To these Jesus did not point us. Indeed, these lay outside the realm in which Jesus Himself moved. *His sphere was the moral and spiritual. There, and there alone, was He needed. All others He left severely alone.* The perfection to which He summons us, then, is moral and spiritual.

This is clear from the fact that this precept is the centre of a discourse that, from beginning to end, is of that nature, and perhaps even more moral than spiritual—in that it points far more to things to be done than things to be felt.

And this moral sphere is open to us all—the way to perfection of this kind we may all pursue. Were we summoned to perfection of an intellectual kind we might say, " That way is not for me, for my mind is not strong enough." Were we summoned to perfection of power, we might reply, " That way is not for me; my strength is not great enough." But to the call to a perfection that is *moral*, our hearts assure us we can and therefore ought to respond.

" So nigh is grandeur to our dust,
So near is God to man,
When Duty whispers low, ' *Thou must,*'
The youth replies, ' *I can.*' "[1]

In this realm response is harder to some than others. It is easier for some to be saints than for others to be passably decent. Some seem to be born with a strong tendency to good. But then, such goodness is not really so meritorious as goodness won in strife against evil tendencies. A little good in those born of an evil stock is of more merit than great goodness in those with a better parentage. Some, indeed, are born at a great distance from this perfection, and others far on the way to it; but, far or near, we all feel that we can move toward and even take some steps along this road, which is not closed, but ever open to our feet. In this respect, " Not failure, but low aim, is crime."

Cannot this be confidently said, that at this moral point God has more in common with man than at any other? May it not be said that, God is in men not chiefly intellectually and energetically, He is in them most vitally in a moral and spiritual sense?

That man is the temple of God most really in an ethical and spiritual sense is indicated by the Scripture declaration that he is the Temple of the *Holy Spirit.* And it is quite certain that the bonds which bind us to God most closely are *moral and spiritual.* Indeed, these are the only bonds which really bind

[1] Ralph Waldo Emerson.

men to one another, as the race will sooner or later have to realise if it is not to be brought to an end by international or industrial strife. Man can, therefore, at least *aspire* in a moral and spiritual sense to the perfection of God. That is the only sense in which the Scripture summons us thereto. In other senses Scripture regards God as unreachable, but in this sense we may be nearer to Him than we think, and we may press toward a still greater nearness.

An illustration may render this a little clearer. Here, say, is a father who is head of a vast business, employing thousands of men ; and here is his little child. The child knows nothing, is not capable of knowing about his father's affairs or methods—here they are worlds apart ; but you may go into that manufacturer's home some evening and find him crawling along the ground playing games with that child. What is the tie that binds that great manufacturer to that little child ? Not the bond of knowledge or of power, but of love. There, how close father and child are together ! And so we may say :

> " Oh ! how close the ties that bind
> Spirits to the Eternal Mind ! "

And that is the message of the Christian Gospel—that God and man, separated as to knowledge or power, may be close together in the realm of *love*. So that we are told " Everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God." *Love*, then, can bridge the enormous distance between creature and Creator, even as among creatures it often bridges the great

distance between the simplest and the profoundest. As Tennyson says of the simple-minded wife mated to one of large knowledge:

> "Her faith is fixed and cannot move:
> She darkly feels him great and wise,
> She dwells on him with faithful eyes:
> 'I cannot understand; I love!'"

This call to perfection, then, is not up to the inaccessible heights of *wisdom* or *power*, but to the accessible heights of love which, in Fatherhood, is deepest of all.

But this centrality and supremacy of Love need not, and should not, put knowledge quite out of court as is done by Robert Browning, who boldly stakes everything on love, leaving no place for knowledge in the relationship between men and God. Probably no poet ever trusted so exclusively to love. For example, in "In a Balcony" he exclaims:

> "There is no good of life but love—but love!
> What else looks good is some shade flung from love;
> Love gilds it, gives it worth. Be warned by me;
> Never you cheat yourself one instant! Love,
> Give love, ask only love, and leave the rest!"

And we are vastly indebted to him for pointing to and pressing home upon us the centrality and importance of love in the whole scheme of things. Certainly, love is the great dynamic, but a dynamic is powerless apart from machinery, even though it be of the simplest kind. And it may be questioned whether love can arise or exist entirely without knowledge. It need not be the knowledge of men "by logic ruled and not at all by love"—but

there is a certain element of knowledge even where love *seems* to stand alone, even in " the maiden passion for a maid "—in love at first sight. Even there, is some knowledge, real or imaginary, of the maid who kindles the love. Love, apart from all knowledge, is beyond our power to conceive, just as when we try to conceive of spirit, strive as we may, we are compelled to clothe it with some form, however attenuated or shadowy ; and it is so with love—it can only arise in our hearts or be conceived of in others, associated in some way with knowledge. The flame of love may burn so brightly as to seem only flame, but there is in it some fuel of knowledge without which it could not burn at all.

Dr. George Matheson surely was right when he said : " I do not believe that moments of devotion are moments of mental vacancy ; the wings of the spirit must always be wings of thought." The great passage of St. John which lays such stress on love as the way to God, " For everyone that loveth is born of God," concludes with the declaration " and knoweth God," so that love lands us in knowledge, though that knowledge glows with the fire of love.

" With the heart man believeth unto righteousness," but, though the heart is the prompter, there is something to be believed.

Indeed, love, apart from all knowledge, could not find its way or reach its goal. It would be like some great force in Nature under no law—which no force

of Nature is—and so erratic, and as likely to be destructive as constructive.

Tremendous as is the insistence on love in the New Testament, perhaps as tremendous is its insistence on knowledge. Its call to know God is as insistent as its call to love Him. It declares that eternal life is in the *knowledge* of God. And, by its double insistence on love and knowledge, it points to a knowledge warmed by love, and a love illuminated by knowledge. It is no refutation of this to say that in these high matters knowledge is imperfect; this may be said of knowledge in every realm—of all realms it is true that we see but through a glass darkly; yet in all realms some truth is probably reached. It may be that, in religion, truth is as really though not as provably reached as in other realms; some would say more really reached. I remember how, many years ago, in a conversation with Sir James Paget, the renowned surgeon, he said: "We have more certainty than you"; and then suddenly he exclaimed, "No! we haven't as much certainty as you!"

Knowledge and love should go so closely hand in hand together, that knowledge shall always be inspired by love and love be always directed by knowledge. Thus, love will not follow wandering fires, and knowledge will keep its glow. Perhaps this lies at the core of the oft-quoted saying of Pascal, "The heart has its reasons which reason cannot understand"—that is, the heart has its intuitions which are as reasonable for its own sphere as the

pure reason for that in which it works. When the heart is allowed its proper place and influence it will not only give a glow to, but will get direction from, the mind. William Morris is right when he exclaims " Love is enough " ; but the love which is enough cannot even be apprehended apart from the mind. " What God hath joined together let no man put asunder."

All this, of course, proceeds on the assumption that the moral and spiritual are, in *essence*, the same in man and God—that when the Scripture says, " God so loved the world," it means that the love, though purer, is of the same nature as that which bears the name of love among us here on earth. And so with all the virtues which we call moral and spiritual.

Unfortunately, this has been denied by those who should have been its strongest affirmers. Dr. Mansel, once Dean of St. Paul's, declared that moral qualities, such as love, truth, justice, are quite different in their essence in God from what they are in men. Of course, in Him they are perfect, whereas in men they are far from perfect ; but the Dean declared that their very perfection in God altered their essential nature, which is very much like saying that a sovereign in the full pocket of a millionaire is essentially different from a sovereign in the pocket of a peasant. Happily, there were those who saw the fallacy of the Dean's position, amongst them being John Stuart Mill, the philosopher. And the one occasion on which I heard Charles Kingsley

preach—it was in the Chapel Royal, when this controversy was raging—after reading Mill's refutation of Mansel, in his impassioned way he exclaimed, "I am for the philosopher, and against the theologian!" If Dr. Mansel were right, we might as well tear up our Gospels; for if the love in God spoken of in them is not *love* such as we feel in our hearts to those dear to us, they would have no meaning. No! love in my heart here must be of the same nature as that which beats in the heart of God; the only difference is that it is infinitely weaker and less pure, in essence it is—and must be—of the same kind.

The perfection to which Jesus urges us is set out in detail in the Sermon on the Mount. There it is pictured. Perfection is the goal, but *there* is an indication of the road. As we read over these precepts they seem to set forth a merely human perfection. But what God urges upon us He Himself is.

Responding, then, to His requirements, as they are set forth in the words of Jesus, we move along the road whose end is likeness to the Father. The road seems to lead only to a human perfectness; in reality it leads to a Divine perfection, which was the ultimate ideal of God when by His inbreathing man became a living soul. And in this we have Jesus Himself as an exemplar, who is called "*the first-born among many brethren*," implying that the after-born may be like Him—and who showed in His actual life what the feeling and action of a perfect

son to a perfect Father should be. In that life, not in its details, but in its spirit, not in its oriental, but translated into our Western setting, we may discern the True Leader for our lives.

Now, the road to this perfection indicated by Jesus is not doctrinal—in it there is no intricate theory of salvation. Nor is it difficult of understanding, as Peter found many things in his brother Apostle Paul's arguments. All is within the understanding, even of the wayfaring man, though a fool; and yet along the simple road of obedience to His precepts we travel toward the goal indicated by Jesus when He says, " Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

And, for our encouragement, it may be affirmed that not a few of the sons and daughters of men have travelled far along this road. H. M. Stanley said of Dr. Livingstone, " I grant he is not an angel, but he approaches as near as the nature of a living man will allow." Francis William Newman, after reading Benson's *Life of Fletcher of Madeley*, said: " He appeared to me an absolutely perfect man." When Tennyson was reproached with speaking of his friend Arthur Henry Hallam as perfect, he replied that " he was as near perfect as man could be on earth." Alexander John Scott said that " after he knew Mr. Erskine, he never thought of God but the thought of Mr. Erskine was not far away." To some minds such close approach of the human to the Divine perfection seems impossible, and the assertion of it lacking in humility. But if the word of Christ,

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," be accepted, then real advance along that road should be looked for, not only in certain souls such as I have named, but in a multitude of men and women of whom the world has never heard who actually travel this road and to whom Mr. Lowell's lines apply:

> "All saints—the unknown good that rest
> In God's still memory folded deep;
> The bravely dumb that did their deed,
> And scorned to blot it with a name,
> Men of the plain heroic breed
> That loved Heaven's silence more than fame."

It may be that one great hindrance to the pursuit of such perfection lies in the fact that it has so often been regarded as of an ecclesiastical rather than of a human type. By far the greater part of those canonised as saints have been priests or monks or nuns. Even in Protestant circles those regarded as saints have often been not far removed from this type, and so the road seems closed to ordinary folk. It has not yet been realised, as it should be, that Christianity is essentially a lay, not a priestly, religion. Its founder, Jesus, was a layman, not an ecclesiastic; all its first Apostles, save St. Paul (and he, though a student in a Rabbinical school, was not a priest), were gathered from and remained all their days in the ranks of the laity. It was only as time went on and there were departures from the original type that the Christian religion became priestly and ecclesiastical.

Speaking of the latter part of the fourth century, Dr. Fisher says:

"There was growing up a strong feeling that the clergy should stand aloof from secular life, and exhibit a higher form of morality than was required of the laity. The clergyman was thus set over against the layman: there were two ideals of Christian life. This contrast tempted the one to a false pride in his superior sanctity, and the other to a dangerous contentment in mere external morality." [1]

This soon led to the idea that sainthood was only possible to the clergy of the Church, and, in the course of time, it led on to a division between those who ministered in the services of the Church and those who led a monastic life; the former being regarded and spoken of as *secular* and the latter as *religious*! The higher heights of goodness thus came to be regarded as only attainable by those taking the monastic way. An illustration of the mischievous effects of this lately came under my notice. A relative was urging one of her domestics who belonged to the Roman Church to do something which was evidently right, but which this domestic did not want to do, although acknowledging its rightness; but she exclaimed, "That is a religion for monks and nuns, but not for me!" And this distinction made by the Roman has filtered out into the other Churches, allowing a morality lower to the laity than to the clergy; and into the

[1] *The History of the Church*, by Dr. G. P. Fisher, p. 101.

larger world, leading to a distinction on a broader scale between things secular and things sacred—a distinction unknown to the mind of Jesus, and denounced by the Apostles, and which puts a serious obstacle to men at large in the way of response to this call of Jesus to the perfection seen in His Father.

"Why should our professions and employments be held sacred and those of laymen be set down as secular? Why should we have much more constant access to the means of grace than others have? We may disclaim the intention, but we can hardly deny the fact of this broad distinction between clerical and lay life." [1]

Not until Christianity is rescued from such priestly and ecclesiastical ideas, which divide life in a way which cannot be justified, which draw false distinctions between things secular and things sacred; not until it is felt that it can run along simple, natural, human lines, and cast its influence over life as a whole, will it accomplish the purpose which lay in the mind and heart of its Founder.

Doubtless, for its preservation and diffusion in the world, Christianity was bound to furnish itself, as life always does, with an organisation which demanded officers by which the Kingdom of God—the ultimate end—should be established; but it is clear, from the silence of Jesus on the matter, that He never contemplated any cast-iron and, therefore,

[1] *Where is Christ?* by an Anglican Priest in China, p. 92.

unchangeable organisation such as the Church has fashioned. Clearly, He refrained from plan-making, that any Church which might arise should remain plastic, and so be able to suit itself to the various countries to which it would be carried, and to the changing ages of the world's history; and that, above all, it should, as do the organisms of the natural world, *ex*press and not *re*press the life of which it is only the clothing.

Forgetfulness and neglect of this quite evident and undeniable truth has led the Church not only to keep rigid its organisation, doctrine, and ritual in lands where it has for centuries been established—which, in itself was a huge mistake, since in these lands there have been great developments in every other realm — but it has resolutely carried this organisation, doctrine, and ritual to the lands in which it has sought to propagate the Christian Faith. The folly of this is greatest in relation to Eastern people, who, of necessity, must be fitter to understand a message delivered first of all to the East and in the Eastern idiom. It needs no argument to show that a faith originally presented to Eastern peoples must be easier of comprehension to them than to Western peoples, whose modes of thought are so essentially different.

"The Eastern mind has yet to give us its interpretation of the Christ, and the Eastern nature has yet to furnish us with its representation of the Christian life, ere the revelation is complete."[1]

[1] *The Empire of Christ*, by Bernard Lucas, p. 37.

To press upon the East the organisation, doctrine, form, modes of worship of the West, is surely the height of absurdity. This has done much, especially in India, to hinder the progress of the Christian Faith. Rabindranath Tagore tells us that years ago there was a considerable movement in India towards Christianity among the educated classes led by Mozoomdar and Chunder Sen, but that it was seriously checked and almost stopped by the insistence on the part of certain Protestant missionaries of the doctrinal forms of the West, which, at that time, were of a somewhat Calvinistic type. Surely this is in direct opposition to the way of Jesus, whose wisdom shines out so clearly in the fact that He did not cast His thoughts in rigid doctrinal form, that He made no plans for His society, but left the great Evangel to the world shining out of His life, expressed by His words, and pregnant with His vitality, to clothe itself with an organism both doctrinal and ecclesiastical suited to the lands and peoples to which it should be carried.

The Church, as well as the individual, would do well to respond to the noble call of Oliver Wendell Holmes :

" Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
As the swift seasons roll !
Leave thy low-vaulted past !
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea ! "

II

THE OPEN DOORS OF GOD

In the previous chapter stress has been laid upon the ethical and spiritual as the way to the perfection that is in the Father; but certain natures seem drawn to work through other channels, through knowledge and even through power, that, in their case, these ethical and spiritual elements are not *so* evident. There are those, for example, whose natures seem bent on knowledge, on the pursuit of truth—that is the attitude of the finest scientific minds. There are others whose natures seem bent on the attainment of power—the best of these not for their own aggrandisement, but for the well-being and happiness of the race. It is not wise, therefore, to so limit the road to the *openly and distinctly ethical and spiritual* as to exclude those whose way *seems* to lie along the line of knowledge or power in the sense I have indicated, where, *hidden in the heart*, there is often the ethical and even spiritual element, though in forms which are not so evident as to be easily recognised. This has too often led to the closing of doors by the Church against men and women of the scientific type, or

those in whom the ethical and spiritual found expression in service to men rather than in the worship of God. This has impoverished the Christian company by robbing it of many of those with great mental power, and of many of those strenuous natures which effect great things and so benefit the race.

How different would be the position of the Christian Church to-day if, in the past, instead of frowning upon and even opposing and rejecting real seekers after truth in the natural world, which *is* a book of God as really as the Bible, though relating to a lower realm, she had kept an open mind for all their discoveries which were proved to be true! If, for example, in earlier days the Catholic Church, instead of resisting, denouncing, and persecuting, had accepted the proved conclusions of Galileo; and, in later times, if the whole Church, instead of taking up an attitude of opposition, had encouraged Lyell, and Darwin, and Huxley in their investigations, and had accepted their discoveries, recognising them as searchers in the realm of Nature, as her own sons were in the realm of Grace, how beneficent would have been the result! And the benefits would have been mutual. The Church would have benefited by retaining in her company these men of science and so adding to her force and prestige. Thus, she would have become more attractive to the thinkers, especially among the young, many of whom at present are repelled rather than attracted to service in her ministry, which is seen in the sad fact that very few of the Honours men in the Universities present them-

selves for ordination. Beyond this, men like Lyell, Darwin, and Huxley, men of the highest ethical character though they were, would themselves have benefited by the *spiritual* atmosphere of the Church, which might have kept alive and active a part of their nature apt to be weakened and even withered by an exclusive devotion to work in the realm of Nature. It may be that if Darwin had not been repelled by the opposition of the Church to his discoveries, but had been encouraged in them, he might have been attracted to and have come into close contact with the Christian company. This, perchance, might have helped to keep alive and active that part of his nature which he admitted and deplored had withered through his exclusive devotion to the pursuit of natural science. Far-seeing observers in the Church lament her short-sighted action in the past, which has robbed her of so much power which might have been hers. The harm thus done in the past cannot now be undone, but it may be prevented in the future, and it *will* be prevented if Christian people will only learn the lesson taught by their Master, that His Spirit's mission was to lead into *all* truth, and, therefore, that all sincere seekers after truth, in the natural as well as in the spiritual realm, belong, though in different ways, to the company of Jesus.[1]

It is certainly significant that "the Holy City

[1] "After centuries of bickering, Religion and Science at last have shaken hands—and if they would only go a step further and become fast friends, they could, by pooling their resources, regenerate the world."—B. H. Streeter, *The Spirit*, p. 10.

Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, and having the glory of God," is described in the Revelation which goes under the name of St. John as having not *one* but *twelve* gates, four on each side, making it easy of access, shall we say, to the inhabitants of the four quarters of the globe, or, shall we say, to people of widely different types ?

It is certainly significant that in the book of a Jew inclined to limit blessings to his own nation there should be so many gates to the Holy City named after Jerusalem, his capital. It is not safe to press the imagery of a book like that of the Revelation, but this *does* seem at least to suggest that the Holy, which had become the Earthly City, might be entered by various gates suited to the differing natures found amongst men !

That man of wide outlook and insight, Dr. George Matheson, is in close accord with this idea of the many-gated city in one of his hymns :

" Three doors there are in the temple
Where men go up to pray,
And they that wait at the outer gate
May enter by either way.

O Father, give each his answer—
Each in his kindred way ;
Adapt Thy light to his form of night,
And grant him his needed day.

O give to the yearning spirits,
That only Thy rest desire,
The power to bask in the peace they ask,
And feel the warmth of Thy fire.

Give to the soul that seeketh,
'Mid cloud, and doubt, and storm,
The glad surprise of the straining eyes
To see on the waves Thy form.

Give to the heart that knocketh
At the doors of earthly care
The strength to tread in the pathway spread
By the flowers Thou hast planted there.

For the middle wall shall be broken,
And the light expand its ray,
When the burdened of brain and the soother of pain
Shall be ranked with the men that pray."[1]

And there is something analogous to these many gates of the Holy City in the greatly differing response which Jesus made to those who appealed to Him for instruction or help. Did He ever give the same answer, or respond in the same way? Too often His followers have had a stereotyped answer to all applicants, which, by constant use, has lost all or nearly all its meaning; but the Master—did He ever repeat his prescriptions for ailing humanity?

A fairly long and wide observation of men and women has shown me how wise was this variety of method employed by Jesus, and how it was demanded by the great variety in the natures of men. There are those whose religion seems chiefly to go *upward* to God and to whom the chief thing is worship, reaching sometimes to ecstasy. These are the people who are recognised as specially religious. There *are*, however, others whose natures do not

[1] Cf. *Worship Song*, 416.

move, or move only slightly upward to God, but outward to the help of their fellow-men. I once remarked to a dear departed friend—who belonged to this latter class and who often travelled hundreds of miles to take his place as chairman of a school board, " Your religion is love of education—which, at heart, is love of your fellow-men." It may be that to the Great Father, love leading to service of His children is as acceptable, perchance more acceptable, even than worship of Himself!

And perhaps we may go beyond this, though I tremble as I do it, for fear of irreverence, and point to certain exceptionally gifted natures who " think God's thoughts after Him " and so move along the way of knowledge toward Him, and even reach some of His secrets. For example, two centuries and a half ago Sir Isaac Newton discovered the law of gravitation, which has opened so many doors into the great house of Nature. Here, surely, he as it were touched the mind of God, of which the Universe is an expression. And Newton has had many successors, some by means of the microscope discovering the secrets of the infinitesimally minute; others by means of the telescope and the spectrum reaching up to the vastnesses and wonders of the worlds of space. Thus they have come into the region, if it be only its very outskirts, of the mind of God. And so knowledge has been one of the steps in their upward way to the Father. Through their toil the foregleams of poets have been shown to be facts of science.

A hundred and twenty years ago William Blake wrote :

> " To see a World in a grain of sand,
> And Heaven in a wild flower,
> Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
> And Eternity in an hour."

Most who read his words regarded them as only the airy dreamings of the poet, but the science of to-day, with its marvellous story of electrons, shows them to be absolutely true. And the same may be said of words written sixty-six years ago, in a now forgotten book by Henry Septimus Sutton, the Manchester poet : " Matter is spirit which has lost its spiritual rarity and has assumed fixity and bound. And by Spirit or Essence, we mean the great Fount and Origin of all things, the Immaterial One of whom the worlds of the Universe are made."[1]

Dare we include power as well as knowledge in men's approach to the Father ? Surely it is not irreverent to say that the power to which men have reached by means of science in the use and control of the vast forces of the world is, if only slightly, akin to the infinitely greater power of God visible in the Universe.

Even if all this be granted, man's highest reach both in knowledge and power has been attained by the faculties conferred upon him, though they may have been only in germ, by God, whilst his highest attainments both in the realm of knowledge and of power fall unspeakably short of these in God, as

[1] *Quinquenergia*, p. 37.

Tennyson reminds us even of the more accessible ethical way:

> "For merit lives from man to man,
> And not from man, O Lord, to Thee."

Yet surely it may be said that, through their passionate pursuit of truth, their entire response to what every fact they meet teaches, the men of science are of the number of those whom Jesus promised that the Spirit should lead into all truth; whilst through their strenuous endeavours to accomplish some great work for the benefit of humanity—such as their researches in the realm of bacteriology, which have led to the mitigation of suffering and to the saving of countless lives which otherwise would have been lost to the world—may we not rightly and quite reverently regard such men as fulfilling the prediction contained in the Fourth Gospel: "He that believeth in Me the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto the Father"? Many of these discoverers may not have believed in Jesus in a way that would have satisfied the orthodoxy of the Church, which has often been leagues away from the teaching and spirit of Jesus; but surely some of them, perhaps most of them, were moved in their efforts by love to humanity, which Jesus ranked with love to God. Surely, it is this love to humanity which Jesus rated so highly that has been the great spiritual dynamic which has given us the medicine and surgery that are amongst the greatest blessings of our time. And surely the Great Father rejoices

in the sight of His children seeking and so often reaching the secrets hidden in the worlds both of Nature and Humanity which He has left unrevealed, not because He would conceal, but that He would honour men by allowing them to search and find, and through such searching develop their own powers.

Recurring to the illustration already used of the great manufacturer with his child, who meet and could meet *then* only at the point of affection ; yet as that child grows in years and power of understanding, that manufacturer-father will only be too glad to introduce his child to all the plans and even secrets of his great organisation, and, still later, when he is fitted for it, make him a partner in his vast business.

And may we not say that the Father Spirit in God does not close, could not close—no true Father would close—any doors by which His children may come not only ever closer to Him, but be sharers of all He is and possesses.

The exclusive ideas of God in the earlier portion of the Old Testament present only the crude conceptions of men of earlier and less developed ages. I refer to such incidents as the Eden story, where, from fear that Adam would take of the tree of life and live for ever, he was thrust forth from the garden where that tree stood ; or the Babel story, where, because of the growing strength of men, which threatened to rival and even overcome that of Jehovah, they were visited with confusion of

tongues. They regarded God as a King, and, as the only kings they had any experience of were despots, jealous of any interference with their rights, God could only be regarded as of the same kind.

Such ideas have been for ever put out of court by the higher teaching of the New Testament as to the Fatherhood of God, in which there is no jealousy of men, neither of their knowledge nor of their power, where the Great Father's rôle, like that of the worthy parent of earth, is not *ex*clusive but *in*clusive, whose great desire is that His children should be partakers of His nature, and, therefore, sharers of all He possesses.

This may seem to some like a modern and overbold idea, but it is in reality very ancient, since St. Athanasius said, " He [that is, Jesus] became man that we might be made God," and St. Augustine said, " He called men gods, as being deified by His grace, not as born of His substance." It is reported that certain of the sages of Japan deem it not impossible that man may be allowed, in other spheres, to join in the creativeness of the Creator. And the thought of Browning runs along the same line when, through the mind of the Pope, he pictures man destined to become—

> " Creative and self-sacrificing too,
> And thus eventually God-like (aye,
> ' I have said ye are gods '—shall it be said for naught ?)."[1]

And perchance what Browning makes Festus say to Paracelsus—man to man—might have been humbly

[1] *The Ring and the Book*, Book X, 1382–4.

but rightly said by certain men of science—man to God—when they reached some great discovery:

> "Thou hast infused
> Thy soul in mine, and I am grand as Thou,
> Seeing I comprehend Thee,—I so simple,
> Thou so august."

PART IV

I

THE RIGHT ATTITUDE TO THE WORD

In a previous chapter certain passages out of harmony with faith in the perfect Fatherhood of God have been considered, and, so far as was possible to the writer, set in their proper light. But the Bible itself, to which men turn as the authority for their Faith, when wrongly regarded and interpreted, has often put the most serious obstacles in the way of many to complete confidence in the great Fatherhood. In this and the chapters which follow the attempt is made to set forth what the writer believes is the right attitude to the Scriptures.

What is commonly called the Holy Bible consists of two parts: the first, The Preparation; the second, The Fulfilment,—the Old Testament, revealing the education of a nation for giving birth to the true Revealer of the Father; and the New Testament, describing Him and the Faith He founded. Yet this bringing together of the preparation and its fulfilment within the covers of a single volume was sure to lead, and it has led, to much confusion of thought—the preparatory in the Old Testament

often being put on a level with the fulfilment in the New, whilst, beyond this, the use of these two parts in public worship without any distinction being drawn between them has led, and still leads, to many erroneous ideas.

The use of *parts* of the book of the Jews by Christians was inevitable and desirable, since the New Testament does not provide certain things they needed; for example, material for praise such as that contained in the book of Psalms, for which practically no provision is made in the pages of the New Testament, to say nothing of the rich poetic words of the prophets. This has led to other parts of the Old Testament, such as the historical books of Kings and Chronicles, often quite out of harmony with the Christian idea and feeling, being brought into unsuitable use in the Christian Church, and has led to the Old Testament in its entirety being sent forth to peoples we are seeking to win to the Christian Faith—which is really placing before them both Judaism and Christianity for their acceptance, often to their confusion and repellence from the Christian Faith, whilst at home the stock objections of sceptical speakers and writers to the Christian Faith are drawn chiefly from the Old Testament.

This has caused great confusion in the past and is causing it to-day to those taught by their clergy that the whole Book, from Genesis to Revelation, is the Word of God. *For that astounding position is still held.* Quite recently a vicar declared that " the Bible was the Word of God from the first

chapter of Genesis to the last of Revelation"! For an accredited teacher of the Christian Faith to attribute to God all the terrible doings and sayings recorded in the Old Testament shows a closing of the mind to the light which Biblical research has thrown upon the Scriptures, and, even worse, a shrinking from the prompting of the heart against all ascription of the low, mean, and cruel to the Great Father. It did not need the findings of what is called the Higher Criticism to show that much in the Old Testament ascribed to God is only the low and undeveloped estimates of men of primitive times.

Even as a child my heart revolted against much that is in the Old Testament; my heart assured me that all that was low, mean, and cruel was wrongly ascribed to God. The unsophisticated heart of the child is often a surer judge than the most learned theologian. As Jesus declared, "things hidden from the wise and prudent are revealed unto babes." And if the vicar to whom I have referred would let what remains in him of the child-heart speak, he would soon be led to worthier ideas of the Great Father. But, even if the child-heart in him does not speak, as a teacher of the people he is bound to bring to them every proved conclusion of Scripture scholars.

Were he a physician he would be bound to know and act upon the latest discoveries of the bacteriologists, which have revolutionised the science of medicine. To fail in this would be to fail in his duty in the healing art and to his patients. A

like obligation rests upon him, as a teacher of the Christian Faith, to present that Faith in the fullest light accessible in our day. I notice that Sir A. Macalister is establishing a post-graduate school for medical practitioners, to which they can resort to learn the latest findings of medical and surgical science. A similar school is sadly needed for many preachers, where they could hear of the new light thrown upon the Scriptures and the larger ideas of the Christian religion which have grown up in our day. Large numbers of those who teach from our pulpits to-day need themselves to be taught.

Let me pause here for a moment to utter my protest against children in schools being led through the Old to the New Testament Scriptures, and being taught stories of God which are put out of court by the fuller and higher revealing of Jesus Christ.

It is the testimony of teachers well qualified to judge that some of the stories of the Old Testament, such as the ordering of Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac by Jehovah, greatly trouble many sensitive scholars and sometimes lead to wakeful and agitated nights. "Did Isaac's *mother know* what was going to happen to him?" questioned an eight-year-old, adding, "I am sure she would never have let him go if she knew what his father was going to do."[1]

The Director of Religious Instruction of the Diocese of Manchester says:

"From one of the healthiest and happiest of

[1] *Present-day Problems in Religious Teaching*, by Hetty Lee, p. 73.

schools, after the story had been told by one of the gentlest and kindest of teachers, a little boy went home, and in the evening, as he sat by the fire, wept disconsolately for an hour or more, as he thought over the story of the morning. Others have shown in other ways that the story has done them harm in the mental and spiritual impression it has made, and mothers have asked that their little ones should not be told the story again."

A child taught on the old lines remarked one day to his mother apropos of these Old Testament stories, " God *has* improved since then, hasn't He, mother ? "[1]

I fail utterly to see why ethically imperfect representations of God, which need all the teacher's skill to explain, the explanations being often forgotten and the story remembered, should be taught to children at all, for they wound their young and sensitive hearts, and, though their wounds may be healed, the scars often remain all the after-life. Why should not children be taken direct to the higher vision of God presented by Christ ? This surely should be the *first*, and so *the most abiding impression made on their young minds*. Let that first be fixed, and the less worthy visions of the Old Testament, when afterwards read, will not matter much. Let the child's mind be first and firmly fixed on the revealing of God through Jesus Christ ; let its mind be fully persuaded that God is the sum of all perfection ; and then, later on, it may roam over the

[1] *The Child's Knowledge of God*, by the Rev. T. Grigg Smith, M.A., pp. 43, 77.

broad fields of the Old Testament Scriptures, rejoicing in and gathering around its vision of God every beautiful word of psalmist and prophet; and beyond this absorbing all the literary charm of the Authorised Version, made when our English language was at its purest and most melodious; but always free to roam in these Old Testament fields without the quite needless and false idea that everything there is literally, vitally, and eternally true of the Great Father.

That wise man George MacDonald was once asked by my wife to write a book on the Old Testament history. He refused, for, said he, "I never teach it to my own children." Why should children be taken to the twilight of the Old when the noonday of the New Testament may and should at once be theirs?

It needs to be more clearly perceived that the treasure is in an earthen vessel, but that the treasure itself, which is "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, is in the face of Jesus Christ."

A lady friend once said to me, "I feel very wicked because I do not like certain parts of the Bible." I replied, "Neither do I—the warlike parts of the Old Testament, the Imprecatory Psalms, the Song of Solomon, furnish no religious uplift or inspiration to me." And then I added, "A friend invites you to dinner; does he say, 'Of every dish in every course you must partake, or out you go!'? Does he not rather say, 'Take what suits your constitution?'" This is the proper way to

use the feast provided in the Scriptures. Take what "finds you," to use the pregnant phrase of Coleridge, and be undisturbed by the rest. Or, as Dr. Wicksteed asks, "What if we were to try the Christian tradition itself?—not by the strength of its claim to dominate the human spirit, but by the depth of the response it wakes in us?" "O testimony of the soul, Christian by its very nature!" cried Tertullian. Or, as he further says, "When men strive to maintain the credit of beliefs, the sincerity of which has faded, for the sake of retaining the treasures associated with them, they are cutting the very roots from which the sap of health and vitality flows, and are striving to keep the living by chaining them to the dead." [1]

"On the other hand, if living truth has once been found and has recorded itself in living utterance, its power depends, not on the history that tells us how it was reached, but on the 'Testimony of the Soul,' that tells us what it is." [2]

In this respect inclination or the desire to go one's own wild way, or to yield to the lower cravings, must not be allowed to turn one from a single word of Scripture *which commends itself to the conscience as in the sight of God.* To turn from such would be to do harm to one's true nature. Every word of Scripture that is to us "quick and powerful, and pierces to the dividing asunder of joints and marrow and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the

[1] *Reactions between Dogma and Philosophy*, p. 560.
[2] Ibid., p. 562.

heart "[1] must be accepted, or there will be infinite loss and harm to the soul. Even Whittier, who had so clear a vision of the love of God, saw that that love does not bend down to our low ideals or desirings, but stands firm and abiding to draw us up thereto :

"For ever round the Mercy-seat
The lights of Love shall quenchless burn ;
But what, if habit-bound, thy feet
Shall lack the will to turn ?

What if thine eye refuse to see,
Thine ear of Heaven's free welcome fail ?
And thou a willing captive be,
Thyself thy own dark jail ?

Oh doom beyond the saddest guess,
As the long years of God unroll,
To make thy dreary selfishness
The prison of a soul !

To doubt the Love that fain would break
The fetters from thy self-bound limb,
And dream that God can thee forsake
As thou forsakest Him !"[2]

Or, as David Attwood Wasson says :

"Not to content our lowness, but to lure
And lift us to your angelhood,
Do your surprises pure,
Dawn far and sure
Above the tumult of young blood,
And, star-like, there endure."[3]

[1] That passage does not refer, as many think, to the *written*, but to the living Word of God, by His Spirit whose action it so accurately describes.

[2] *Worship Song*, 494.

[3] *The Treasury of American Sacred Song*, p. 139.

And, if we are wise to our soul's good, we shall not choose just those Scriptures which only soothe us, but also those which stir our natures to the pursuit of the highest ethical and spiritual ideals.

What portions of Scripture form the real Bible of my readers I cannot tell; but I will hazard the conjecture that in most if not all cases there would be in the Old Testament certain parts of the Psalter and of the Prophets, and in the New Testament the Sermon on the Mount, the parable of the Prodigal Son, the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel which goes under the name of St. John, and St. Paul's great lyric of love. All these passages run along the line of that Perfect Fatherhood of God of which these pages treat, and they bear their meaning on their face and have more of the character of poetry than prose. In such passages we find the comfort and direction our souls crave. These and other passages of a like kind are to all intents and purposes our real Bible. Were I to turn over the pages of any continually used Bible, I should find those containing these and similar passages thumb-marked or worn with use. To such parts we turn when our souls need direction, sustenance, or comfort, or when trouble or sorrow falls on our path.

I should not find similar marks of frequent use in the books of Kings or Chronicles, which tell of the wars of Israel. And it may be I should not find such marks even in the New Testament at the intricate arguments of St. Paul. Our favourite passages are not those which tax our mind to unravel

or understand. They are such as he who runs may read. Simplicity, picturesqueness, appeal to the heart, are their chief characteristics. These are the qualities which go to make up the Bible we love, our *real* Bible. We may profess to like a *whole* Bible, but such parts as I have described form our real Bible.

Auguste Sabatier says :

" In the presence of texts which produce no effect, or which might even prove dangerous if the letter were blindly followed, you say that the authority of the Bible has no force. Where its influence is of slight importance you esteem its authority small, where it is convincing, luminous, regenerating, and sanctifying you attribute to it even divine authority. But where do you find the criterion by which you establish these degrees and justify these differences ? Is it not in your Christian consciousness illuminated by the light of the Spirit ? There is a diamond in the book, a life-draught in the vase of clay. But you do not value the case equally with the jewel, nor the clay as the liquor."[1]

A few guiding principles in our use of the Bible may perhaps be helpful to certain minds.

And chiefly this, that the standard for the Christian Faith is to be found, not in the Old, but in the New Testament. The Old is the book of Judaism, the New Testament that of Christianity. That seems to need neither proof nor argument, but it has been to a large extent overlooked in practice by those who

[1] *The Religions of Authority and the Religions of the Spirit*, by Auguste Sabatier, pp. 276–8.

say they like a whole Bible, and by many sections of the Church, which place passages of the Old and New Testaments before their congregations without any indication as to the different levels on which they stand, and no guidance as to the higher authority, for Christians, of the New over the Old Testament. Sensitive worshippers often suffer a jar to their feelings when in the same service the first lesson from the Old Testament presents stories or sentiments of a far lower ethical and spiritual type than the second lesson from the New Testament, suffused with the far higher spirit of Jesus. It is surely to the last degree desirable that the distinction between the Old, or Judaic, and the New Testament or Christian should be made clear to listeners in the services of the Church.

The need for attention being fixed on the Gospels as the essential documents of the Christian Faith was finely enforced some years ago by an incident at Oxford. An undergraduate was about to begin the study of theology, and he sought the advice of Dr. Routh, who had attained to a venerable age and was regarded as the patriarch of the University of Oxford. To his appeal for advice, this venerable man, speaking in low and measured tones and with long intervals between his sentences, said: "There is an ancient work which goes by the name of the Gospel according to St. Matthew. I *think* I should advise you to read that." Then, after a long pause, "There is an ancient work which goes by the name of the Gospel according to St. Mark; I *think* I should

advise you to read that" ; the same being repeated till all the Gospels had been recommended. Could better advice have been given? For, surely, to know any faith, or, indeed, any subject, it is wisest to go to its original sources.

Then, beyond this, in the New Testament, the words of Jesus must be regarded as supreme. If He is the Light of the World, then His words must be the clearest expression of that Light. This has too often been overlooked, and the words of the Apostles found in the Epistles of the New Testament have been lifted to a level with those of Christ; indeed, by some they have been lifted above them and regarded as a fuller expression of the essence of the Christian Faith.[1] The Apostles, if they were here, certainly Paul, would vigorously reject such a method, as his words clearly show: "Who, then, is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers [servants] by whom ye believed?" Surely, to any open and candid mind, in the words of Christ we have the thinnest veil between us and the Eternal; in the case of the Apostles there is an added veil woven all unconsciously by the minds of the Apostles, and sometimes rendered denser by ideas imbibed in their earlier days from the beliefs, especially the apocalyptic ones, then current around them. And yet, so strange is sometimes the working of the theologic mind, that the very persons who assign to Jesus

[1] My old friend Edward White strenuously affirmed that the real Christian Faith was to be found in the Epistles rather than in the Gospels!

a place on the throne of the universe lift the words of the Apostles to a level higher than His. If the New Testament declaration be accepted that Jesus is the Revealer of the Father, then it follows that in the Revealer's words we come nearest to Him whom He revealed.

Another guiding principle is well expressed in the lines of Lord Houghton (Monckton Milnes):

> " Mohammed's truth lay in a Holy Book,
> Christ's in a sacred life.
>
> So, while the world rolls on from change to change,
> And realms of thought expand,
> The letter stands without expanse or range,
> Stiff as a dead man's hand.
>
> While, as the life-blood fills the glowing form,
> The Spirit Christ has shed
> Flows through the ripening ages fresh and warm,
> More felt than heard or read.
>
> The tide of things rolls onward, surge on surge,
> Bringing the blessed hour
> When in Himself the God of Love shall merge
> The God of Will and Power."

" It was not His will that His religion should be, like Islam, the religion of a book. He wrote His message on the hearts of a few faithful men, where it was not to be imprisoned in Hebrew or Greek characters, but was to germinate, like a seed in fruitful soil: 'The words which I have spoken to you,' says the Johannine Christ, 'They are spirit, and they are life.' "[1]

[1] *Faith and its Psychology*, by Dr. Inge, p. 122.

That keeps before us the great fact that Jesus is the clearest spoken Word of God we mortals have yet received. It may be His consciousness that not a written, but a Living Word, would be the Life and Light of men, led Him to give no instructions to prepare any record. That shows how deeply He was assured that the *Life* He had quickened among men would go on influencing and guiding their lives. And such is the power of Life, that it may be it *would* have gone on doing so through the ages. This assurance is probably involved in the fact that Jesus never promised or ordered or provided for *a written* Gospel, but promised with greatest emphasis the Spirit to guide into all truth. But what Jesus never prepared for nor ordered was sure, in the very nature of things, to be brought about—the story was sure to get written, otherwise His life and words might have gradually grown dim ; but the refraining from any instructions to make a record surely indicated how Jesus felt that, by a life in harmony with the will of God rather than by any book which might afterwards come into being, He was unveiling the Father. And when it is realised, as it should be, that Jesus on earth was the temporal symbol of an eternal Divine reality, then the Record will be kept in its proper place, out of which it is too often taken by unthinking minds.

" We study and we teach what Christ was and did for our predecessors, rather than what He is and does for our contemporaries. We hold to what He said then, and hardly expect to hear Him say any-

thing fresh to-day. The Word of God that the prophets heard we read in books. The very phrase 'the Word of God' becomes technalised and limited to the record of His words to the Jews."[1]

Rabindranath Tagore is surely right when he says:

"The religion that comes to us from external Scriptures never becomes our own; our only tie with it is that of habit. To gain religion *within* is man's great life-long adventure."

And Dr. Deissman shows fine insight when he says:

"Book religion, even historically considered, is legal religion; its associations are with technicality."[2]

If that be always kept in mind we shall not sink down to Bibliolatry—the putting of a book where Christ only should stand—the caring more for *what* we believe than *whom* we believe; but our minds and hearts will, as Lord Houghton suggests, be bound not to a holy book, but to a sacred Life—the Life which is the light of men.

[1] *Where is Christ?* by an Anglican Priest in China, p. 72.

[2] Deissman, quoted by Moffatt in *The Historical New Testament*, p. 259.

II

THE PERILS OF BIBLIOLATRY

THAT the message of the Gospel reaches us in the pages of a library—which, rather than a book, the Bible is—creates a great peril, since, to many, it gives birth to the idea that all in this library is the object of faith. This tends to associate with God, seen in the face of Jesus, a number of things which have little or nothing to do with vital Christianity, such as the mode and period of the world's origination, the history of a particular nation, and many other things which might be named, which, in the very nature of things, cannot be the object of a faith which is really religious. And so it often comes to pass that, when science comes along and shows that certain of the statements in the Bible about these extraneous objects are not in harmony with fact, the foundations of faith to many seem to be slipping away. These extraneous things, through being recorded in the library of books we call the Bible, have become so associated with the Gospel that they seem to be a part of that Gospel, when all the while they are neither essential nor vital to its message. It is very significant that, in the second

epistle to Timothy, the author exclaims, "I know *whom* I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to preserve that which I have committed unto Him." He does not say, "I *know what* I have believed." His faith goes out to "*Him whom*" he believed. Faith, when it is of the right kind, is always fixed on the *whom*—it has *one*, not *many*, objects. When people declare that the story of Jonah as factual is vital to the Christian Faith, or when a great preacher declares that if the authenticity of the book of Daniel were overthrown his faith in Christianity would be overthrown, I marvel that they should have so learned—or, rather, mislearned—Christ, and should have so departed not only from His clear teaching but from that of the first Apostles and the example of the first Christians.

And the harm done when such an attitude becomes known is great, since it tends to turn away many who would be attracted if the one true object of faith—God reflected in Jesus—were presented to them. Many who turn away from the vast collection of the Old Testament would be attracted were they left alone with Jesus as the great Revealer of God.

On this matter there is the clear and explicit witness of the New Testament. Take whatever view we may of the actual story of the Transfiguration, there shines out of it the unmistakable belief of the earliest age of the Church's history—that Jesus is the great revealer of the heart of God, for on that mount, with Moses the representative of the Law, and Elias, the representative of the Prophets—both

together standing for the Old Testament Scripture—there sounds out the emphatic declaration concerning Jesus: "This"—not Moses nor Elias—"is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye Him." And the three chosen Apostles then present learnt the lesson, for in after-days they were preachers, not of Moses and Elias with Jesus, but of Jesus alone.

It may also be very seriously questioned whether the study of the political relationships of Israel with other nations, and especially her warlike conflicts with Egypt, Nineveh, Babylon, and Persia, recorded in the Old Testament, have any real religious uplift for readers in these days. Because the story of these is contained in the Bible many people fancy that, in studying them, they are engaged in a specially devotional exercise, whilst, all the while, they are only engaged in an historical study, which is no more religious than the study of the history of their own or of any other nation. Inclusion in the Bible does not give any exceptional sanctity to such studies, and, indeed, the study of wars between nations tends rather away from, than towards, true religion. Here and there in the historical books of the Old Testament may be found moral and spiritual precepts and warnings from the prophetic souls who regarded their events from a high standpoint; but the body of such warlike history not only tends to awaken the warlike spirit, but to turn the mind away from the central and vital truths of spiritual religion.

The ill effect of such study of the Old Testament

is seen in the case of the Puritans, who were more frequent readers of the Old than of the New Testament, which is shown not only in their more numerous quotations from the Old than the New Testament, but in the frequent conferment of the names of Old Testament characters on their children. As a matter of fact, the religion of the Puritans was more allied to Judaism than Christianity. Hence it is that, in spite of their great virtues and the great services they rendered to their nation, their religion was lacking in those gentler virtues extolled and enforced in the pages of the New Testament, and this did much to bring about the revolt of the English nation from Puritanism at the time of the Restoration.

There were, of course, noble exceptions to this, but no one can read the story of the Puritans, both in England and in North America, without keen regret at their hardness both in thought and action—leading, as this did in North America, to a great revolt from what they considered orthodoxy, an orthodoxy which out-Calvined Calvin. Revolt from this drove some of the finest minds into that Unitarianism out of which sprang the foremost writers of New England.

The study of the historical parts of the Old Testament leads, and naturally leads, to a religion more Judaic than Christian, whilst, beyond this, the time spent on such history might better be devoted to the history of our own times. The politics of the Jewish nation belong to a long-past age which no efforts of ours can alter. The politics and international

relationships of our own time belong to a realm where we may exert some small influence.

I remember to have read somewhere how the late Dr. R. W. Dale of Birmingham pleaded for a study of our present-day English history, on the ground that, if we have only eyes to see it, God is in it quite as surely as in that of Israel. It is to the last degree unbelieving to fancy that God is only in the history of the ancient, and not in that of the modern world. A Living God *must belong* to the present quite as fully as to the past. He *must be as active* now as in ages which through the lapse of centuries have grown dim to our eyes. When prophetic spirits now arise, as they often do, they see the action of His eternal laws quite as clearly in the modern as in the ancient world, and the action of those laws to-day is of more consequence to us than their action long centuries ago.

No verses of Francis Thompson are truer, or have gone more home to men, in spite of their awkwardness, than the closing stanzas of his poem, "The Kingdom of God":

> "The angels keep their ancient places;—
> Turn but a stone, and start a wing!
> 'Tis ye, 'tis your estrangèd faces,
> That miss the many-splendoured thing.
>
> But (when so sad thou canst not sadder)
> Cry;—and upon thy so sore loss
> Shall shine the traffic of Jacob's ladder
> Pitched between Heaven and Charing Cross.
>
> Yea, in the night, my soul, my daughter,
> Cry,—clinging Heaven by the hems,
> And lo, Christ walking on the water
> Not of Gennesareth, but Thames!"

And Thomas Hornblower Gill, that keen student of history and writer of very noble hymns, gives expression, with a fine lyric glow, to the same conviction of the equal nearness of God to our age as to any past one when he says :

"Not, Lord, Thine ancient works alone,
Thy wonders to past ages shown,
Make our glad spirits glow !
Our eyes behold Thy works of might ;
On us full beam Thy wonders bright ;
The Living God we know.

We joy, not only to be told
How with Thy saints and seers of old
Thou madest sweet abode :
We of Thy presence bright can tell ;
Thou in Thy living saints dost dwell :
We feel the Living God.

Within, Thy presence music makes ;
Forth from our lips the rapture breaks ;
A strain divine we raise ;
Thou sendest down this heavenly fire,
This very song Thou dost inspire ;
The Living God we praise.

Thou settest us each task divine ;
We bless that helping hand of Thine,
This strength by Thee bestowed :
Thou minglest in the glorious fight ;
Thine own the cause ! Thine own the might !
We serve the Living God" [1]

This keen sense of a Living God, whose laws are working in the world to-day, as really as in ancient days, would lead us to regard the politics and international relationships of to-day as quite as sacred,

[1] *Worship Song*, 778.

and, indeed, a more profitable study than those of any far-off time.

A Christian man is, therefore, better occupied in the careful study, by the best lights he can find, of the home and foreign politics of to-day than in trying to trace out the politics and international relationships of Israel long centuries ago, even if he does this under the illuminating guidance of the books of Sir George Adam Smith. Let him, by all means, absorb all that the Hebrew prophets have to say of spiritual and ethical moment; but, even if he should succeed in mastering the intricate relationships of Israel with other nations, which very few do, since all these belong to a past whose history has but small influence on the present, he is much better employed in mastering the relationships of the nations to-day, on which it is his duty to exert what influence he may possess.

I remember how, in my college days, when Dr. Newman Hall, then a well-known London minister, who had been invited to spend the day with the men, was asked to give advice as to the best way of preparing for preaching, he replied, "Read your Greek New Testament, and the *Times* newspaper" —by which he meant the Greek Testament to learn the message to be delivered, the *Times* newspaper to understand the age to which the hearers belong.

To follow that advice would be to preach the true Christian religion contained, not in the Old, but in the New Testament, and to avoid that foolish

antiquarianism which has so long been, and in some quarters still is, the bane of the Church.

Such a serious study of the politics, home and foreign, of to-day, being gradually diffused by such students, would lead to greater intelligence on such subjects among the people at large, and would do much to give us wiser legislation at home and better relationships with other nations, and so be one factor in bringing nearer the Kingdom of God, which the world so sorely needs to cure its great and widespread evils.

At the present moment, for example, it is far more important to study the famine, with its resulting disease, now raging in Russia, and how it may be alleviated, than to study the famine in Samaria, long centuries ago, for here our thought may and should lead to the effort to relieve, whereas the Samaria famine can only be a matter for study and not for action.

A similar attitude is needed in relation to the biographical parts of the Bible, especially of the Old Testament. It is surely time that discourses in the Church should not be limited, as, for the most part, they have been, to the lives recorded in the pages of Scripture. It is evident that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews did not approve of such limitation, for, after giving a long list of the heroes of faith in the Old Testament, he concludes with these remarkable words. "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promises, God having provided some better thing

for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." Evidently there was in his mind the idea that the list he presented of the men of faith should not be regarded as a closed one, but that it should be ever receiving additions as the ages passed along.

Julius Charles Hare, in his book *The Victory of Faith*, acts upon this, and continues the list of the men of faith from the point it closes in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and, with fine touches of biographical description, brings it down to the year 1840, in which his book was published. And so he indicates that the study of the Church should not be confined to the biographies of men and women in the pages of Scripture, but should be extended to those who, by their lives, showed that they were true successors of those whose record is in the Scriptures.

Too often the Church has regarded the Canon of Sacred Biography as closed, like the Canon of Scripture; but lives quite as saintly, and, therefore, quite as worthy of study, have been lived in post-Biblical as in Biblical times. It is quite an unbelieving idea to think that the early fruits of the tree of faith were the only, or even the finest, ones. A tree exhausted by its first fruit-bearing, or whose first fruits were its finest, would scarcely be worth preserving. It may be confidently affirmed that its later and even its latest, fruits are quite equal—perhaps, in some senses superior—to its earlier ones. Indeed, the tree of life, when nourished by the breath and spirit of Christ should produce, and has produced, fruits far finer than those of pre-Christian

times. The post-New Testament ages can show characters as Christlike as those of the age recorded in the New Testament. The world to-day has saints whose sainthood is as real as that even of the Apostles. It would be a poor Faith whose fruits grew poorer as the ages went on. And, if this be so—and I am sure that it is—then the study of modern Christian lives is quite as legitimate as that of New Testament biography, and far more profitable than that of Old Testament biography.

Beyond this, such study has certain advantages. The materials for it are fuller. For the study of most of the scriptural lives the materials are to the last degree meagre. How slight is our information concerning even the outstanding names of the New Testament, such as St. John or St. Peter! St. Paul's is the only life recorded in any detail. For a multitude of modern saints we have detailed and adequate biographies. The material for the preacher is, therefore, richer, and so his discourse may be made more interesting.

Moreover, the saints of the modern world are nearer to us—their environment is more like our own, and so their careers can be more easily apprehended.

And the study of their lives, so much nearer to us, and set in a similar environment to our own, naturally bears in upon our minds the conviction that saintliness is as possible in the modern as in the ancient world, and so helps to get rid of the idea, all too widely spread, that saintliness, to be real, must

be antique; whilst, beyond all this, the study of such lives would have a freshness which would tend to interest and hold the attention of hearers. If truth must be told, hearers often grow somewhat tired of hearing the story of the Biblical lives, and when the story begins they are apt to settle themselves down and say, "We know all about *them*." A lady friend tells me that, when teaching a class in a ragged school, and she said that the lesson would be about Abraham, a tiny child looked at her and said, "We know all about 'im." He had the courage to say out what many listeners in church think but do not say! In many cases the materials for the study of Scripture characters are so scanty that the speaker has to draw very largely on his imagination. He is in the position of the Israelites, who had to make bricks without straw—as my friend Benjamin Waugh had to do when he wrote a book on *The Childhood of Jesus*, concerning which the actual information does not extend beyond two or three sentences in the New Testament.

But when attention is called to more modern lives, which may be quite as saintly as the ancient ones, there is the advantage which the lecturer has who tells his hearers of something which they did not know before, and so more easily holds their attention. Such a method might do something to render services more interesting, since one great cause for the diminishing attendance at church is that its services do not interest—they are often set in a too-far-off environment, and so do not come home

to men's business and bosoms. The Great Teacher found subjects of discourse in what was actually passing before the eyes of His hearers—in the sower sowing his seed, in the birds of the air or the flowers of the field. There was nothing of the antiquarian in his method, as in that of the Scribes and Pharisees, and we are told that the common people heard Him gladly. A reversion to His method might have a like result, as, indeed, where it is adopted it does have.

All this seems to need no proof or argument, and yet, when the effort has been made to draw on the rich stores of modern biography for the enrichment of the services of the church, so strongly rooted is the idea that all instruction should be drawn from the pages of the Bible, for which there is no warrant in Scripture, so widespread is this Bibliolatry, that the greatest opposition has often been raised. I believe I was the first to move out into this larger realm when some forty years ago I delivered a series of Sunday evening lectures on "The Christian Life as seen in Modern Biography." Appeal was made to the editor of a widely read religious newspaper to stop such a proceeding. Happily, he was broader-minded, and approved and commended rather than condemned. He even went beyond this, and welcomed to one of the papers he owned the biographical discourses which from time to time I delivered.[1]

[1] Biographical references were often introduced into what were called Funeral Sermons. In those earlier days it seemed fitting to refer to those who had just died; indeed, some of the finest

A beautiful life lived in the nineteenth or twentieth century is just as worthy of study as such a one lived in the first age of Christianity. Inclusion in Scripture would not add to nor does exclusion therefrom detract from, its worthiness. Distance may lend enchantment to the view, but if it does it is a false, not a true enchantment. If St. Francis of Assisi, Fletcher of Madeley, and John Woolman had happened to live in the first age of Christianity, their names and characters might have gained inclusion in the New Testament record, and so they might have become subjects of discourse; but they would have been not a whit the worthier on that account. It is surely time that inclusion in the Book should not be regarded as rendering lives worthier, or exclusion from it as rendering them less worthy in our eyes. The saint is not made by the record, nor unmade by being left out of it. Canonisation by the Church does not make, but only recognises the saint, and there are far more saints uncanonised than canonised, to say nothing of the fact that often the canonised were not specially worthy of such honour. If our eyes were open we should discern saints without canonisation to direct us, for real goodness forms a living epistle known and read of all men, as St. Paul declared. Mr. Ruskin tells us that the greatest thing we can do is to *see*, and the greatest thing to be seen, far greater than

specimens of pulpit oratory are to be found in such sermons; but, these apart, it would be difficult, if not impossible, before our own times, to find sermons on lives outside the Biblical record.

anything in earth or sky, great as these are, is a beautiful human life. Blind indeed are we if we cannot recognise such beauty when it comes within our range, whether it be clothed in the robe of sanctity or of common life, whether its dress be that of wealth or of poverty, for "the cowl does not make the monk" nor dress of any kind the saint.

And what applies to Biography applies to History. The Acts of the Apostles is but the opening chapter of the history of the spread of Christianity in the world, and all true missionary work should be regarded as a continuation of that history. Robert Moffatt was just as truly the apostle to the Bechuanas as St. Paul was to the dwellers in Asia Minor. Henry Martyn was quite as real an apostle to Persia as St. Peter to those of the Circumcision. James Chalmers, the "Great Heart of New Guinea," as Robert Louis Stevenson called him, who laid down his life for the natives of New Guinea he loved so well, belongs to the noble army of martyrs just as truly as any of the Apostles. But nearness to our own age often robs them, which it should not do, of the halo which is their due.

One of the most impassioned pieces of eloquence I ever remember to have heard was from the lips of Dr. Robert Vaughan, a really great orator, just after the persecution of the Christians and the martyrdom of many of them in Madagascar, when he claimed that the story formed the latest and noblest addition to the Acts of the Apostles, of which it should be regarded as a continuation.

It is surely the height of blindness to discern the noble only in the far-off, and to miss it in that which is near.

It is true far-off-ness may and does hide whilst nearness reveals the faults which cling even to the best; but in the far-off, as in the near, they are really present, as we should probably have discovered if we had lived under the same roof as the Apostles or those now bearing the name of saints. It is easy to be admirers of the saints already canonised, but it takes a little discernment to perceive the saints around us doing, it may be, ordinary work in ordinary dress; just as it is easy to praise authors who have become classic, but it needs a far keener insight to discover and praise authors who deserve to be, but have not yet become, classic.

But that man must be in a very poor environment who does not discern beautiful and even saintly lives therein. Certainly, in my own case, I could compile a considerable list of men, and still more of women, deserving place in the saintly company, and whose characters, if they had their due, would be worthy of study and imitation—a study which would help to kill that antiquarianism which is the great bane of the Church, and at whose heart lies utter unbelief of the faith professed and of the livingness of God by whose gracious influence such Lives are lifted to holy levels just as truly, and far more numerously to-day, than in the so-called, but falsely called, ages of faith. If the Christian influence did not make saints to-day, not of the ascetic or cloistral, but of the

human type, men and women doing their ordinary work in a beautiful spirit, I should be in sore danger of losing my faith in Christianity. Lives thus lived are indeed one great support to my faith—the fruits are a proof to me of the goodness of the tree.

Margaret Gilbert Dickinson's words are worthy of remembrance, for they set forth a fact largely overlooked by the Church:

"Not cloistered saints that bid the world
Remember they forget—its lure defy,
Whose abnegating robes accost the glance
Of lost humanity;
Not they whose moving lips attest
Repeated prayer, to shame the throng or mart,
Whose fingers outward clasp a crucifix;
Not they who stand apart—
Are Thy swift followers alone,
Sweet Christ! Unveiled, untonsured, they there be
Who hold their mirèd brothers to their heart,
Even for love of Thee,
Who didst remember to the end
Thy world, though they had Thee forgot and fled—
A hillside Calvary Thy holy lot,
Mountain and sea Thy bed."[1]

[1] *The Treasury of American Sacred Song*, revised and enlarged edition, p. 349.

III

A HOMOGENEOUS BIBLE

LONG pondering on the subject has convinced me that the Church which bears the name of Christ needs to get rid of the infallibilities it has set up—the Catholic portion of the infallibility of the Church centred and expressed in the Pope, and the Protestant of the infallibility of the Bible which was started by John Calvin, who, having to fight the idea of an infallible Church, thought he could best fight it with another infallibility which he found, or thought he found, in the Bible. It may be confidently asserted that nothing expressed or reaching us through purely human channels is, or in the nature of things can be, infallible. "It is impossible to find in anything which comes through the medium of a human mind an absolute 'Revelation.' There is always some dross with the gold, something individual and peculiar, temporary and inadequate. 'No man hath seen God at any time,' nor is His voice heard speaking from heaven."[1] And the Bible bears on its very face the signs, not of infallibility, but of fallibility. The Old Testament portion is a progressive revealing,

[1] C. W. Emmet, in *The Spirit*.

and its very progressiveness excludes the idea of infallibility. It presents differing accounts of the same event—for example, of the creation story in the book of Genesis. It ascribes the same thing in one place to Jehovah, in another to Satan—as in the case of the numbering of the people by David, to name only two out of a multitude of such differences. Reams of good paper have been spoilt in attempts to reconcile such differences; lives have been spent over them, but all in vain. Infallibility has been claimed for a book which makes no such claims for itself. "The idea of the verbal infallibility of Scripture is dead; not so its chief presupposition that somehow revelation must be the imparting of correct information, and inspiration the power of receiving it. And so attempts are still made, even by those who claim to accept the modern view of inspiration, to vindicate a special position and authority for the Bible, based not on its inherent truth and intrinsic appeal, but on something which can be regarded as unique in the manner of its composition. It must, at all costs, be given a special status in a class by itself, different not only in degree but in kind from all other books."[1] The oft-quoted passage in support of such a claim will not bear its weight, for it does not say all Scripture is inspired of God—and even if this were the right rendering it would not prove infallibility; there may be inspiration, and yet the writer may quite unconsciously mingle with its message the lower ideas and wishes of his own mind.

[1] C. W. Emmet, in *The Spirit*, p. 202.

What the passage referred to says is this: "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for doctrine, for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness" [1]—the inspired must of necessity in some way or other be profitable. But, in spite of this, many Protestants have in the past, and still do, set up the Bible as an infallible standard, probably desiring to feel that they have something infallible, and so are on an equality with the Catholic section of the Church. But all the claims and all the arguments will never endow either the Church or the Bible, both being at all events partly human creations, with an infallibility that the human never reaches. They may be inspired, they may have elements of truth, they may be highly profitable, but infallible, in the very nature of things, they cannot be. Only a book dropped straight from heaven could be infallible.

"To many religious minds it will seem to be no light thing to abandon this hope of some external infallible authority. In our weakness we crave something definite on which to lean, something which may tell us without possibility of error what we are to believe. And yet here, too, the message of Christianity is that by losing our life we find it. It tells us to live dangerously and to take risks. It never allows us merely to play for safety; in thought no less than in action we must be ready for adventure, to set forth into the unknown, each one for himself. in reliance on the Spirit of God." [2]

[1] 2 Timothy iii. 16, Revised Version.
[2] C. W. Emmet, in *The Spirit*, p. 216.

This idea of the infallibility of the Book has been fraught with the most harmful results. To many minds it has set the Book upon the throne, and has made it the monarch whose every word is of abiding authority, and, since that monarch gives varying and often contradictory commands, the result has been confusion of mind.

It is high time, therefore, that out of this library we call the Bible, the product of many ages, and the outcome of many levels of ethical and spiritual ideals, there should be gathered that which is homogeneous with the teaching and spirit of Him who is the fullest and finest expression of the Divine Will with which we mortals have been blessed. The world needs a book harmonious in all its parts with Him who is its centre and climax. If out of the library we call the Bible such a book were compiled, before it every other sacred book of the world and every other religious book would hide their diminished heads.

Objection may, and probably would be, raised by some to any touching of the Old Testament because of it having been quoted by Jesus. Many pleas have been put forward to show, by the use which Jesus made of it, that the Old Testament is authoritative, and so sacrosanct over faith. But a little candid consideration will show how groundless is this claim. Let us try to realise the position of Jesus in regard to the Old Testament. To all intents and purposes it formed the whole literature to which He had access, or with which He was familiar.

There were other and later literatures, chiefly of an apocalyptic kind, written since the last of the books included in the Old Testament Canon ; but, though these influenced the thought of the people, they were not so accessible as were the Old Testament writings, rolls of which were found in the synagogues of that age which existed in every town and even village. To one in the position of a peasant—which was that of Jesus—the Old Testament books were the only literature, the only library accessible. Portions of these he had as a child committed to memory, and as the oriental memory, from lack of books and difficulty of writing as an aid to it, was very retentive, these portions were sure to be prominent in His mind. Upon these, therefore, it was natural for Jesus to draw in illustration of His teaching, or in replies to His opponents, or in sustenance of His own soul. The preacher or teacher or writer may, to illustrate the subject in hand, quote from Shakespeare, or Milton, or Dante, or Tennyson, or Browning, or even Walt Whitman ; but it does not follow that he approves or believes every statement or sentiment contained in their writings ; indeed, some of these he may very heartily disapprove or even condemn. And it certainly does not follow that because Jesus quoted certain passages, that He set His seal on the whole book from Genesis to Malachi as the abiding Word of God. To make such a claim is manifestly absurd, and will convince no one who brings a candid mind to its consideration.

I have gone carefully over all the passages said to have been quoted by Jesus from the Old Testament, and I am impressed, not by their number, but, considering that it was the only literature with which He was familiar, by their fewness. Many of these, instead of giving support to the Old Testament, are occupied with refutation of its teaching, or in showing how it has been rendered obsolete by the fuller light He had brought ; whilst some are only references to what existed in the olden time, especially that which is called Mosaic. Many passages often regarded as quotations by Jesus did not fall from His lips at all, but from those of the Evangelists. Hence the survey I have made in no wise tends to make the Old Testament so sacrosanct that it must be so regarded as everywhere the Word of God as not to be judged in the light of the fuller revealing of Jesus and its contents estimated thereby. There is not a word that I have come across that should lead us to think that the Old Testament is inerrant. Indeed, a candid consideration of the treatment by Jesus of the Old Testament points in quite a different direction. The attempt, therefore, on the part of some, by speaking of "the Saviour's Bible," to warn men off from a reasonable but reverent treatment of its contents, after long and careful consideration, in my judgment, falls to the ground.

" There was nothing in Christ's attitude or example to justify anyone in any belief which is out of harmony with the true Christian spirit or the perfect

moral goodness of the Divine Character, or which is found to be inconsistent with truth, however made known, on the plea that it may be supported by hymns, prayer-books, or Old and New Testament Scriptures. All these must of necessity partake of the temporary peculiarities and infirmities belonging to various mental environments, and, therefore, their highest moral aim can only be fulfilled age after age, as Christ fulfilled the moral aim of the 'Law' and the 'Prophets' by rising morally out of and beyond their human infirmities, by departing, if needs be, from their letter in order to follow the higher guidance of their spirit."[1]

There is no valid reason why, leaving out all that has been rendered obsolete by the fuller light of Christ, but retaining all that is in harmony with His teaching and spirit, and so for their edification, men now should not, by joining such parts of the Old to the New Testament, make for the Christian people of to-day a book which through and through should be so in harmony with their Master's thought and feeling as to be a direction and stimulus to their devotion and obedience to Him who is above and beyond all others the Light and Life of men.

Books have been edited by very able men which give those portions of the Old and New Testaments remarkable for their literary beauty. A like work needs to be done which should give all of the Bible that is in harmony with the mind and spirit of Jesus, and so for the quickening and nourishing of His spirit in its readers.

[1] *The Spirit of Christianity*, by Frederic Seebohm, p. 99.

The entire Bible should and would remain in the Authorised Version as a great piece of literature, remarkable both for its actual contents, as contributed by its writers in its original languages, and for the loveliness of its English rendering, through which people might roam as they do through other books which have attained classic rank, but with no compulsion to accept all its varied and often contradictory religious views. There the entire book would stand for use by scholars and lovers of literature, and all those interested in the evolution of the Christian religion.

"A religion that makes a particular tradition determinative of its action prejudices to the modern mind its claim to Divine sanction. For to modern men, as to the first Christians, what is primary in religion is not the Then and There, but the Now and Here of God's relation to men."[1]

More than half a century ago the English-speaking Churches set their best scholars, or those they deemed their best, to revise the Authorised Version of the Bible, and after years of toil they gave us what is called the Revised Version, which, though falling short of the lovely English of its predecessor, *does* correct many errors, and makes more clear many passages which before were difficult of comprehension.

A still more needed work remains to be done—out of the library we call the Bible, to choose and give the world all that is in accord with the spirit and

[1] *Where is Christ?* by an Anglican Priest in China, p. 85.

teaching of Him who is admitted to be its very Centre and Crown.

But there are also things in the New Testament out of harmony with this supreme Word, and which have given infinite trouble, not to the careless or indifferent, but to the most sensitive and holy souls. I mean such passages as that concerning foreknowledge, predestination, and election in the Epistle to the Romans—which are quite out of harmony, not only with the words and spirit of Jesus, but out of harmony with St. Paul himself in his higher and clearer moments. The doctrine contained in such passages is rejected and denounced by the Methodist Church in all its branches,[1] which has a larger membership than any other save the Roman Catholic. It was the doctrine of election that grew out of this passage which separated and led to strife between Wesley and Whitefield, the two great leaders of the Evangelical Revival in the eighteenth century. To-day, save in a section of the Baptists which followed Mr. Spurgeon, and in certain of the Brethren who go under the name of Plymouth, this predestination and election doctrine is rejected, and even where it is not formally rejected it is rarely, if ever, preached. This doctrine can easily be refuted from other parts of the writings of St. Paul himself, who, if he were here, would probably wish it excised from his writings. Indeed, St. Paul's own doctrine, as

[1] There are those in Wales who call themselves Calvinistic Methodists, but I believe, whilst retaining the Methodism, they have dropped, or nearly so, the Calvinism.

expressed in his Epistles, is not homogeneous. It has been clearly shown that, as time went on, his doctrine was developed and clarified by his growing knowledge and experience. Dr. George Matheson says of the Epistle to the Romans, in which this doctrine of election and predestination occurs, "it is still within the boundary of the old, though it belongs to a glimmering of the new."

When this doctrine of predestination appears in philosophical works under the name of Necessarianism or Determinism it is the object of sharp attack from many religious quarters. And yet because the Apostle, under the influence of his old Rabbinic teachers—an influence he had not then wholly thrown off—put this doctrine into one of his epistles, there it remains as a cause of trouble to vast numbers in the past and of division between those who were really one at heart. St. Paul was a great Apostle, to whom our debt is very great, and, at his best, a superlatively fine teacher of the Gospel; but truth is more than even a great Apostle, as he would be the first to acknowledge, as we can see from his own words: "Who, then, is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed?" As Dr. Inge says: "The ultimate authority, which alone is infallible, is the eternal and living truth." [1] Reverence for an Apostle must give way to reverence for truth. Passages

[1] *Faith and its Psychology*, by Dr. Inge, p. 123. Plato makes Socrates say to Phædrus: "You seem to consider not whether a thing is or is not true, but who the speaker is and from what country he comes."—*Phædrus*, 276.

out of harmony with the standard of truth in Jesus, if not removed from the pages of the New Testament, should be regarded as not authoritative over faith. The Presbyterian Church *has* removed from its Confession of Faith the article on the Decrees of God founded on St. Paul's words ; surely something should be done to render innocuous the root from which that terrible Article sprang. The greatness of truth is more than the greatness of an Apostle, great as he was, and the truth should be allowed to prevail.

And if such a homogeneous Bible is needed for Christian lands, how much greater is the need for it when missionaries go to call other peoples to the Christian Faith. Surely they should go not with two books—one setting forth the Jewish and the other the Christian Faith—but with *one* book presenting one object for faith and permeated with one spirit. To compel or even encourage the heathen to enter the Christian Church by the gate of a Jewish book is, in another form, to do the very thing against which St. Paul fought with all his might. He firmly took his stand on this, that the Gentiles should be allowed to enter the Christian company without the initiatory or any other rite peculiar to Judaism ; only faith should be demanded of them. But to present the Old Testament, with all wherein it falls short or differs in matter or spirit from the New, as in any way essential, is substantially to take the very course against which St. Paul fought with all his energy. Whilst, beyond this, to present

the warlike parts of the Old Testament to tribes such as those in Africa, all too disposed to fighting one another, is most inadvisable. For this very reason, as I have shown in a previous chapter, in the fourth century Ulphilas, the translator of the Bible for the Goths, omitted the books of Kings, including the books of Samuel, from his translation. To take the Old Testament, in which there are many examples of polygamy, even in the case of the Hebrew patriarchs, who are held in honour in its pages, is only to encourage tribes given to polygamy in a course from which missionaries seek to turn them.[1] In a word, to present to those as yet unwon to Christianity a book which in many cases contains lower ideals and teaching than those of that faith is manifestly the wrong way, and if men were not so wedded to the misleading idea that they must have a whole Bible this would at once be seen. So long as men's vision is obsessed by that unsound idea the progress of Christianity will be hindered at home and still more abroad.

An incident once came under my notice which shows this to be the case. A mother anxious for the spiritual welfare of her son, who was going to sea, gave him a Bible, making him promise that he would read it every day. Desiring to keep his promise, he opened the great library called the Bible and happened on something in the Old Testament which rather shocked than helped him; as a result, the

[1] The Mormons support their practice of polygamy by references to the examples of it in the Old Testament Scriptures.

book was put aside. Some time afterwards a wise friend spoke to him of some beautiful incident in the Gospels, which arrested his attention and drew him to faith. What the whole Bible, of which so many unwisely talk, did not accomplish, a small part wisely chosen *did* accomplish.

There may be, there often is, over-emphasis on the book, emphasis which sometimes hides the real Word of God. Those laying such undue emphasis on the book—the whole book—should remember that the earliest, and, in some senses, the greatest successes of the Christian Faith were won without a book, for, in the earliest days of Christianity the Apostles did not carry the Old Testament in their hands, and the New Testament Scriptures had not then been written. In the earliest days of Christianity only letters of St. Paul had been *written*, and they were known only to the little companies to which they were addressed, and not till many a year had passed was the Gospel record written; so that the earliest, and, perhaps, greatest triumphs of the Christian Faith were not won with a book, but by the story of the Christ proclaimed in the method of the herald, illustrated and enforced by the lives of those who thus proclaimed it.

For the task of compiling such a book as I have indicated the Church should select, not as in the case of Bible revision, its finest scholars, but its men, aye, and its women, too, of loftiest Christian character, of purest heart, and so clearest in their vision of God, and of deepest insight into the

needs of men, and, in the most devout and reverent spirit, they should give themselves to this great and deeply needed work.

Oh, what hindrances such a book would remove! What difficulties it would solve! What heartaches it would save!

Such a book would be the Golden Book of the World.[1]

For advocating such a book there will probably come down on me the maledictions of the Bibliolaters at the touching of their idol. But these will not move me. In a long life, truths for which I stood and became the target for many shafts, have now come to be accepted. And it may be that what I now advocate, when the attacks it is sure to meet have died down, will, some day—it may be near, it may be far off—be realised, to the help and assurance of a multitude of souls and to the increase of the Kingdom of God in the world.

Freed from the tyranny of the literalist and the dogmatist, this great result of a Bible homogeneous in spirit may and probably will be achieved, to

[1] There are already in existence many examples of selection from the Scriptures, not only for literary but for *religious* purposes, such as the Lectionary of the Anglican Church, which, unhappily, is not homogeneous; only portions of Scriptures are given in the Roman Breviary, whilst in the Jewish Prayer Book only certain psalms from the Psalter appear. Many sections of the Free Churches follow this Jewish example, and Professor Sanday pleaded for the elimination of the unsuitable portions of the Psalter from the Book of Common Prayer, whilst Professor Mayor published a selection of parts suitable for use in Christian worship.

the prosperity of the Christian Faith and its wider acceptance in the world.

And even if such a book should not come into existence—and the prejudices in the way may prevent it for many a long day—the presentation of the idea of a Bible from beginning to end in harmony with the thought and spirit of Him who is the real Word of God may help men to feel free to accept for their own edification only that in the whole Bible which is really in harmony with the fullest expression of the heart of God which has reached us.

IV

THE EVER-INSPIRING SPIRIT

THERE is still another question which remains to be considered—Did inspiration cease with the close of the Canon of Scripture? I may, perhaps, best introduce this question by quoting a paragraph which appeared in a widely read paper on " Making your own Bible " :

" ' Then why don't you make your own Bible? I have made mine, and in the reading and the making it has helped me more than anything else except the good influence of others.' There was nothing profane in the suggestion. That gracious personality dwelling in the frail body of an invalid on her couch, away from the busy life lived outside, was utterly incapable of profanity. With an intuition that partook of the miraculous, she discovered lonely boys and girls and got them to come and have tea with her, especially on Sundays. It was my turn last Sunday, and I had been just frank with her, as I could have been with no one else in the universe. ' No,' I repeated, ' I don't go to church or chapel much, because I find it so generally unsatisfactory, and I find the Bible the hardest book in the world to read profitably. I suppose it's my own fault.' ' My dear,' she said, ' to-morrow I will send you a

nice big manuscript book, and therein make your own Bible. Write down in it anything—verses from the Bible, from the poets, sentences from sermons, books, plays, conversations—anything on which your own heart puts the hall-mark of approval, and you will have a Bible worthy of the name.' "

The suggestion of this gracious personality of a greater Bible would in many quarters startle and arouse the most violent opposition, for the idea is widespread that Divine inspiration ceased centuries ago with the closing of the Biblical Canon. It is, therefore, worth while to ask what does the idea of the ceasing of inspiration with the close of the Canon of the Bible involve? That, for a certain period in the world's history, and to a certain tiny nation in Palestine, God was in the habit of speaking, but that is now over. Having said His last word nearly two thousand years ago, He is now silent. He is an ancient, not a living God. He once had contact with men, but He has this no longer. He is a subject for the antiquarian, discoverable only in musty manuscripts written in other languages and idioms than ours—a God of the ancient, not of the modern world—a God of a closed and finished book. Such a God does not and should not satisfy men. Certainly, my heart craves, nothing less will satisfy it, than *a Living God*, as near to us as to any ancient race, as surely inspiring men to-day as in any past period of the world's history. One of the first to fight the idea of a silenced God was Thomas Carlyle, whose words, strong as they are, are not too strong

against the antiquarianism which has so long afflicted the Church.

"There is no creature more fatal than your pedant; safe as he esteems himself, the terriblest issues spring from him. Human crimes are many, but the crime of being deaf to God's voice, of being blind to all but parchments and antiquarian rubrics when the Divine handwriting is abroad on the sky—certainly there is no crime which the Supreme Powers do more terribly avenge."[1]

Dr. Inge follows along the same line when he says:

"The Bible of the race is not yet fully written; and we must not forget that an exaggerated view of the infallibility of Holy Writ depresses and deprives of authority all the other channels through which we are justified in believing that the Divine will is made known to us. I do not refer only to the writings of great and good men outside the Canon, and even outside the Christian Church, to whom a minor degree of inspiration may be attributed without any disrespect to the Bible, but to Divine revelation through science, through art, through the beauties of nature, through the course of history, and so forth. Make any one of these infallible, and the rest lose their value."[2]

"We insist on the universality and the continuity of the creative working of the Divine Spirit. If He is always and everywhere helping and raising man He is also always teaching him."[3]

[1] Carlyle: *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*, Part VI.
[2] *Faith and its Psychology*, by Dr. Inge, p. 121.
[3] C. W. Emmet: *The Spirit*, p. 200.

"An Anglican Priest in China" sees that love involves continued intercourse with men:

"The unreadiness of theology to accept the data of the present is bound up with ignorance of the facts of love. We do not know what love is doing in the world." [1]

The first followers of Jesus were led to expect this by the assurance which the Fourth Gospel contains of a Spirit who should lead into all truth, which surely must have given them not a backward but a forward look. And indeed, certain of them, those who wrote the Epistles, wrote with the consciousness of an inspiring Spirit. They were the leaders in an inspirational way which has never been closed. And men and women in all the ages following theirs have written with a consciousness more or less clearly felt of the influence of the same inspiring Spirit. Many, perhaps most great writers, especially the poets, have been conscious of such an inspiring influence.

That remarkable man, Jones Very, once the teacher of Greek at Harvard, would not allow his sonnets to be touched, for, he said, "I value them not because they are mine, but because they are not mine." That gifted hymn-writer, Thomas Hornblower Gill, once said to me, "I am conscious of tides of song when verse flows from me, I know not how. At other times I cannot write, and if I do the results are worthless." One of the really great

[1] *Where is Christ?* by an Anglican Priest in China.

hymns of recent times, " O Love that will not let me go," was written by my friend Dr. George Matheson, in a few minutes, and he says, " I felt myself rather in the position of one who was being dictated to than of an original artist."

" R. L. Stevenson, not altogether playfully, attributes his stories to the Brownies, both when he is asleep and even, to some extent, during his waking hours. Blake attributes his poems to spiritual helpers. As he walked along the shore he was haunted by the forms of Moses and the prophets, of Homer and Milton, who seemed to communicate to him directly what he was to write. ' I may praise it,' he says, ' since I dare not pretend to be other than the secretary; the authors are in eternity. I have written this poem from immediate dictation, twelve, or sometimes, twenty or thirty, lines at a time without premeditation and even against my will.' So Boehme, speaking of his visions, says, ' Whatever I could bring into outwardness that I wrote down. The work is none of mine, but the Lord's instrument, wherewith He doeth what He will.' "[1]

That this is not a conviction only of our modern days is clear from the fact that it was asserted by John Milton, who says :

" This is not to be obtained but by devout prayer to that Eternal Spirit that can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends His Seraphim with the hallowed fire of His Altar to touch and purify the lips of whom He pleases."

[1] C. W. Emmet: *The Spirit*, p. 211.

And, five centuries before the birth of the Christian Faith, Plato said :

" For the poet is a light and winged and holy thing, and there is no invention in him until he has been inspired, and is out of his senses, and the mind is no longer in him ; when he has not attained to this state he is powerless, and is unable to utter his oracles." [1]

" Then I knew that not by wisdom do poets write poetry, but by a sort of genius and inspiration ; they are like diviners or soothsayers who also may say many things, but do not understand the meaning of them." [2]

" For poets are a divine race, and often in their strains by the aid of the Muses and Graces they attain truth." [3]

And if inspiration is to be judged by its results, there are a multitude of passages, not only in the great but even in little-known authors, who, in some high moments, have given birth to words which the world will never willingly let die, and which not only deserve rank with, but in many instances rise far above, certain portions of Scripture.[4]

The Scriptures have a special preciousness as being to *us* the earliest expression of that Divine inspiration whose culmination was the Life which

[1] *Ion*, 534. [2] *Apology*, 22.

[3] *Laws*, 682. Jowett's translation.

[4] Instances of these may be seen in the case of what is regarded by competent judges as the finest sonnet in the language, by Blanco White, " Mysterious Night," in Francis William Bourdillon's " The Night has a Thousand Eyes," in David Attwood Wasson's " All's well," and in others which might be named.

is the Light of the World. Beyond this they give us the earliest representations of the influence of such inspiration on the souls of men., in the Old Testament on the Jew and in the New Testament on the Christian. These, being first experiences, became types, and, unfortunately in some cases, moulds into which later experiences were made to run. The Scriptures are to the religious what the Greek classics are to the intellectual realm—first expressions. They both have the dew of youth upon them. They are the founts of inspiration. They are the leaders of those who come after. But neither the Bible nor the Greek classics should be regarded as closing the door against any after inspiration. The greatest lover of Plato or Aristotle does not say, "Here is the end." They are rather beginnings, and no wise man will ever say: "The Bible is the end, the closing of the door against any after inspirations." No, the central figure of the Bible—the Christ—says: "The Spirit of Truth shall lead you into all truth." The look of Christ is not backward to the past but forward to the future.

I agree with every word of Mr. Lowell in his great poem "Bibliolaters":

"God is not dumb, that He should speak no more.
If thou hast wanderings in the wilderness
And find'st not Sinai, 'tis thy soul is poor.
There towers the Mountain of the Voice no less,
Which whoso seeks shall find, but he who bends
Intent on manna still and mortal ends,
Sees it not, neither hears its thundered lore.

" Slowly the Bible of the race is writ,
And not on paper leaves nor leaves of stone:
Each age, each kindred, adds a verse to it,
Texts of despair or hope, of joy or moan.
While swings the sea, while mists the mountains shroud,
While thunder surges burst on cliffs of cloud,
Still at the prophet's feet the nations sit."

And all this is justified by the facts. God is still inspiring men, just as really now as in the ancient times. Emerson clearly discerned and finely expressed this:

" Out from the heart of nature rolled
The burdens of the Bible old;
The litanies of nations came,
Like the volcano's tongue of flame
Up from the burning core below—
The canticles of love and woe."

And later in the same poem he says:

" The word by seers and sibyls told,
In groves of oak or fanes of gold,
Still floats upon the morning wind,
Still whispers to the willing mind.
One accent of the Holy Ghost
The heedless world hath never lost."

Every thoughtful person's Bible is made up not only from the words there which have found his soul, but from a multitude of later inspired minds. Search into the inner sanctuary of souls and you will find alongside of dear passages from the Bible others from inspired writers of later ages—from men who were as conscious of inspiration as Isaiah or Paul. I should find in some, by the side of chosen Bible words, passages from greatly loved hymns. To

many the hymn-book is almost as precious as the Bible, for it is the Bible in solution—Bible truth fused into forms of beauty suited to our modern times. In others I should find passages from the great spiritual men we call poets: from Milton, Shakespeare, Herbert, Vaughan, Tennyson, the Brownings, George MacDonald, and others too numerous to mention. In others I should find words from the really great preachers, like Robertson of Brighton, or Phillips Brooks of Boston, or Thomas Binney, or James Martineau. By such men souls have been nourished.

If I were to reveal my own experience I should need to quote from a great variety of writers, both in verse and prose, a multitude of passages on which my soul has often been stayed. To give only one or two. I am not well versed in Dante, nor, indeed, a fervid lover of him; but here and there I have found in him great words of support. For example, that brief word of which Matthew Arnold was so fond, and which he reckoned the finest line in poetry:

> "In His will is our peace."

Then there are lines in Arthur Hugh Clough:

> "It fortifies my soul to know
> That, though I perish, Truth is so,
> That, howsoe'er I stray or range,
> Whate'er I do, Thou dost not change.
> I steadier step when I recall
> That if I slip Thou dost not fall."

Then, in Tennyson's lines in "In Memoriam,"

I have found the most concise and convincing argument for our immortality :

> " Thou madest man, he knows not why :
> He thinks he was not made to die ;
> And Thou hast made him : Thou art just." [1]

Whilst there often creeps into my soul the tender, plaintive music of those lines of his :

> " And the stately ships go on
> To their haven under the hill ;
> But, oh ! for the touch of a vanished hand,
> And the sound of a voice that is still ! "

which suggests that as ships which vanish from our sight do not cease to be, so those whose hands we can no longer clasp and whose voices we can no longer hear have not ceased out of the universe of God.

Mrs. Browning has often kindled faith in my heart, and her husband has helped me when the stress of doubt has been heavy on my soul. What a rationale of the Gospel is that with which the " Epistle of the Arab Physician " closes :

> " Think, Abib ; dost thou think ?
> So, the All-Great were the All-Loving too—
> So, through the thunder comes a human voice,
> Saying, ' O heart I made, a heart beats here !
> Face My hands fashioned, see it in Myself.
> Thou hast no power nor may'st conceive of Mine,
> But Love I gave thee, with Myself to love,
> And thou must love Me, who have died for thee ! "

[1] That is to say, in the very warp and woof of man's nature—that nature being of God—there is the conviction that he was not made to die—therefore, God must fulfil the conviction which springs out of the nature He has given.

What a directory for faith I have found in Whittier when, for example, he says :

> " By all that He requires of me
> I know what God Himself must be."

Or when he says :

> " Nothing can be good in Him
> Which evil is in me."

Or in those lines which have brought comfort to thousands :

> " I know not where His islands lift
> Their fronded palms in air ;
> I only know I cannot drift
> Beyond His love and care."

The poets, far more than the theologians, have tided us over dark times when faith almost suffered eclipse. Poets like Tennyson and Browning have been the chief helpers to faith to multitudes in our day.

We have all in our minds passages *outside* as well as *inside* the Bible, which have " found us." And, remember, inclusion in the Bible does not render words true, nor does exclusion render them less true. Truth stands on its own feet. Truth shines by its own light. We should not put truths found in the Bible in a class apart.

" The test whether a writer is inspired is simply whether his message is true. All revelation must be judged by its inherent truth, by its power of finding us and appealing to our conscience, by the

degree in which it calls out the best in us and awakens the response of the highest part of our nature."[1]

There is fellowship in truth; all truth is akin. There is a real brotherhood among all God's prophets; the covers of the Bible do not shut any in or shut any out. The prophets of God in all ages know each other and join hands with one another. It is ours to welcome all who "find us," to make them friends, and respond to their inspired words.

Even John Keble, narrowed though he was by his ecclesiastical ideas, yet, when his poetic nature lifted him higher, could not help discerning this, and so we find him exclaiming:

"Meanwhile, with every son and saint of Thine
Along the glorious line,
Sitting by turns beneath Thy sacred feet,
We'll hold communion sweet;
Know them by look and voice, and thank them all
For helping us in thrall.
For words of hope and bright examples given,
To show through moonless skies that there is light in heaven."

[1] C. W. Emmet: *The Spirit*, pp. 215–16.

PART V

A FORWARD LOOK

In the later part of the nineteenth century, when visions of the Fatherhood of God dawned upon certain men and filled and possessed their minds, after being kept so long within the limits of metaphysical or legal theologies, they were so fascinated to find that it was the very centre of the Gospel, that its great implication of the Brotherhood of Men, even though it had been drawn out and made explicit by Jesus and His first Apostles, was not clearly discerned. I am far from saying that those who saw this vision of Fatherhood did not *act* in a brotherly way to their fellows; many of them certainly did, and in a very noble spirit; but their mental gaze was so intent, if I may so phrase it, *upward* to the Father, that it could not look laterally to the members of His great family.

Perhaps one sign of this is the fact that sociology, which is concerned with relationships among men, did not arise till about thirty or forty years ago, and only of late did it begin to gain a place beside theo-

logy—the science of God[1]—and so find its way into the thought of the Church. It may be that this was because men seem only able to go in one direction at one time—one road seems to open before them, and in that, unconscious of any other, they walk.

But now, at last, Brotherhood among men—the implication of Fatherhood in God—is taking rank with the truth out of which it sprang; and perhaps in some quarters, is obscuring and almost hiding the truth out of which it sprang.

On the Continent, certainly in France, the Brotherhood idea came first into existence. There it had not a religious but a political origin. It was the child of the Revolution, and ever since the establishment of the Republic in France, fraternité has been a prominent idea in that country. Go where you will in France, the word "Fraternité" meets the eye, as part of the Republic's motto: "Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité"; but it seems suspended in mid-air, without any dynamic to force it into fulfilment. In France the sense of the Divine Paternité is needed to give life, to provide the dynamic to that of Fraternité. In other words, Fraternité needs the warmth of religious feeling to make it really influential.

It is to be feared that this is sometimes lacking in the leaders of the trade unionists. Many of the

[1] My use of that term does not imply approval of it, since I hold that a science of God is impossible here and now to men.

original leaders were reared within the Churches, specially the Free Churches, where they not only learnt the art of speaking, but were influenced by their religious spirit. Happily this is still the case with some of these leaders; but it is less evident in those of a later generation. It is somewhat to be feared that in their case the sense of brotherhood, which often reaches to a very high ethical level, leading to noble self-sacrifice which I, for one, greatly admire, should miss that sense of the Divine Fatherhood which would tend to permeate it with a religious spirit and so keep it alive and enduring. It is greatly to be desired that this sense of the Divine Fatherhood should be acquired by these younger leaders, for it would lift and keep their propaganda at loftier levels and fill it with a sweeter spirit.

On the other hand, there are gleams of hope in the Brotherhoods which grew out of the Adult Schools and now have a vast membership, where the sense of Human Brotherhood is in close contact with the sense of the Divine Fatherhood, and is thus deeply permeated with a religious spirit. If these Brotherhoods will carry that spirit into the larger company of workers to which they belong they will do a vast service to the whole of society.

But if there be some little fear of the sense of the Fatherhood being lost in that of the Brotherhood in the Labour Movement in Great Britain and America, it is not so in that movement in India. Mr. B. P. Waida, of the Madras Labour Union, speaking at

a conference in Browning Hall on "Labour and Religion," said of the Trade Union Movement in India that "the religious point of view is fundamental; it is not merely idealistic, not only producing a vision, but is applied in a very practical fashion. Our labourers, our people, believe that they are in a particular sphere, born into this particular life, not to get rich, not to get on in the world, but so to use their own powers, the moral law within them, to unfold those powers to such an extent that they may realise in a better fashion by practical experience the Fatherhood of God."

Doubtless, in India, religion is so the first factor in life that this is easier there than in the West; but even in the West religion, if not so *ex*plicit, is really *im*plicit, and needs only to be called out by a true vision of the Fatherhood. At the same conference Mr. W. H. Eastman, who all his life has been in the ranks of Labour, and a trade union member, expressed his conviction that the religion which is *im*plicit can be made *ex*plicit, and said that, whilst the Labour Movement up to the present has not been materialistic, it is in danger of becoming so at the present moment, and that nothing will save it from becoming materialistic more than a direct appeal to the spiritual and deeper part in each one of us.

Here, then, lies the task of the followers of Jesus, the great Revealer of this Fatherhood, to carry the great idea of Fraternity, warmed and so made powerful by the idea of the Divine Paternity, to

all men, so that it shall become the *zeitgeist* of the days to come.

That an idea *can* be wrought into the thinking of a nation has been abundantly proved by the fact that a worship of the State leading to entire obedience to its commands *was* forced by books, teaching, personal influence into the mind of Germany, and provided the widespread feeling which culminated in the Great War, and led to that country's overthrow. And if a false idea (and falsehood has in it no inherent life) can be wrought into a nation's mind, how much more can a true idea, which, like every true idea, has life in it, be in still higher ways wrought into the very texture of the mind and heart of a nation, and even of the world.

To some minds the black doings of 1914–18 seem a decisive denial of this idea of brotherhood, and a bar to its progress. But, it may be, this was only an awful parenthesis between the vision of the Fatherhood and the attainment of Brotherhood, which needs must follow it as the day the night; or, it may be, it was the overthrow of false ideas of how the race could be kept in peace, such as the complexity of commerce, or the bonds which art, science, knowledge, weave between the nations, which all gave way under the stress of passion, to throw men back upon the eternal idea of Fatherhood in God leading to Brotherhood among men, and so upon those ethical and spiritual elements which alone lead to a unity which can bear the strain arising in times of sudden crisis. Surely it is clear that the

only uniting forces among men *are and must be ethical and spiritual*, and that these rise to their highest character and force when they spring out of our vision of Him " in whom we live and move and have our being."

No greater task can be laid by the elders whose days are chiefly in the past upon those with the greater part of life before them than to carry forward with fiery zeal this message, not only with the words of the lips, but still more by the action and spirit of their lives; for in this alone seems to lie not merely the blessedness but the very continuance of the race.

The awful outlook on the world of to-day seems to suggest that the race *must*, in an ethical and spiritual sense, become better, or before long it will come to an end. If, for example, men's hands are not restrained by the enthusiasm of humanity in their hearts from the use of the destructive inventions which science is every day rendering more destructive, then the day mey not be far distant when the whole earth may be rendered as tenantless as the Great Sahara.

But surely it cannot be that the human race, which through long æons has slowly climbed from the lowest levels up to its present high position, can, by the very growth of its capacity, used in a wrong direction for destructive rather than constructive purposes, come to such an awful and untimely end! *All that is needed to change the whole relationship between individuals and nations, and so save the world,*

is a right feeling behind man's great powers, which would lead to a right use of those powers, and to a proper relationship between the various families of which the earth's population is composed. "Out of the heart are the issues of life"; and from a like source must come, if it ever come, the concord and unity of mankind. And the only dynamic to this seems to lie in the One Great Fatherhood which, really accepted, issues, and must issue, in a real Brotherhood of Men.

And so we are brought back to Jesus and His Gospel, to which, in any vital sense, we owe the vision of this Divine Fatherhood—the true source of any Brotherhood worthy of the name, and vital enough to become the bond binding men everywhere to one another because vitally bound to the One Great Father.

More than thirty years ago Dr. Hatch closed his Hibbert Lectures with these prophetic words:

"For, though you may believe that I am but a dreamer of dreams, I seem to see, though it be on the far horizon—the horizon beyond the fields which either we or our children will tread—a Christianity which is not new but old, which is not old but new—a Christianity in which the moral and spiritual elements will again hold their place, in which men will be bound together by the bond of mutual service, which is the bond of the sons of God, a Christianity which will actually realise the Brotherhood of Men, the ideal of the first communities."[1]

[1] *The Hibbert Lectures* (1888), by Dr. Hatch, p. 553.

"A mighty change,
Enfolded in the troubled womb of time,
Shapeth itself in silence; foolish hopes
And fond alarms disquiet faithless breasts;
Love waits the birth unfaltering. The wise world
Hath not forgot how in a simple room
A Jewish craftsman with his fisher friends
Once ate their farewell supper; high priests hissed
Their spite; Rome curled a lip of sickly scorn:
But life was with the little brother-band,
And mankind's slow salvation. Love can wait."[1]

[1] *The March of Man*, by Alfred Hayes.

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