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by

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# CHRISTVS CRVCIFIXVS

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## PREFACE

MEN are always asking what is the seat of authority in religion but answering the question in various ways. It is a true instinct which leads the human mind to the conviction that its spiritual history must not be the development of its own religious opinions but the response of its whole being to the message of divine truth. The minister of religion has no message, as the phrase goes, if he is merely suggesting to his hearers a point of view, or recommending an attitude towards life. A pulpit, which is used for the popularisation of liberal theology, will have no effect upon conscience and conviction. And this will be the case, not because the pulpit is no place for a liberal, but because it is no place for a theologian. That is the great mistake which, as it seems to me, many modern preachers are making. Liberalism in religion is essentially destructive. It is not without its

uses. But to kill superstition and prejudice, even when it is a duty, is not the function of the pulpit, which is to preach Christ. What, then, is the seat of authority, in other words the standard of positive teaching?

The New Testament leaves us in little doubt as to the Christian answer to this question. It is that which is supplied by St. Paul in the Epistle to the Galatians: "If any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema." The nature of that gospel is evident from the First Epistle to the Corinthians: "I delivered unto you . . . that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures." This is the gospel of Christ Crucified, of Divine Forgiveness achieved through the Cross and attested by the Resurrection. It is the message which has once for all been committed to the Christian community. We may believe, if we like, that Moses did not write the Pentateuch, or even that the Fourth Gospel is a document of the second century, but it is only journalistic or academic preachers who will think these subjects food sufficient for hungry sheep. Those who do not mind

declaring what to Jews is a stumbling-block and to Greeks foolishness will continue to proclaim Christ Crucified as the power of God. There is a strange correspondence between this gospel and the consciences of men.

The two sermons which stand first in this volume were preached before a University. "The message of the Epistle to the Hebrews," which stands next, was in the first instance addressed to the clergy, while the rest of the book is comprised of sermons and addresses given before parochial audiences. They have but one theme, set forth with due submission to the authority of the gospel as delivered by the apostles.



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## I

### THE MEEKNESS OF THE CROSS \*

“Not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others.”—PHILIPPIANS ii. 4.

OXFORD is, perhaps, the last place in which a preacher would be tolerated who should speak irreverently of founders and benefactors. We owe too much to the munificence of such as was Sir Thomas Pope to allow ourselves in thought or speech that should seem to deflower their memory or dim the lustre of their name. But, while our piety and our prospects alike forbid the use of language which might deter the favourites of fortune from the high endeavour to emulate our sires, and to reproduce this noble type of human excellence, we are yet

\* The annual sermon on Humility preached before the University of Oxford, at St. Mary's, on Quinquagesima Sunday, 1908.

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bound not to ignore the peculiar perils that beset the pathway of the magnificent.

It is at least important to remember that magnificence, whether in public expenditure or in that larger public service of which this is a particular form, is not in itself a Christian grace. For the service of man need not involve the spirit of sacrifice which is the joy of Calvary, may lack that great humility which is the mind of Christ. "Blessed are ye poor." "Be not ye called benefactors."

The appeal of Jesus is to something higher than the merely moral man. Those who are indeed to be constrained by the love of Christ must be prepared for adventures into a region which lies beyond the ethics of the marketplace. The graces of the Christian character—meekness, forgiveness, humility—are not such as can be expressed in terms of scientific analysis. They are, as a recent writer has put it, manifested rather than defined. Surely this is true. Definition is only possible when we are dealing with facts and qualities that lie four-square within the limits of our daily experience. It fails when we reach the vistas, the distances, the horizon of human life. May not one of the reasons for the comparative failure of the Christian appeal in this generation be the fact



that the official teachers of the faith are too ready to adapt its message to the petty needs of a limited morality, when in reality it should be deep calling unto deep? Men who are honest in business, scrupulous in conduct, temperate in life, know very well that church will not influence their integrity, nor worship improve their honour, nor sacraments elevate their morals. Have I not from my youth up kept all these things? Is your Christian a better citizen, neighbour, friend, than I am? Does not bankruptcy overtake churchwardens? Has piety no dealings with divorce? It is the moral man who turns away from what appears to him the hypocrisies of the preacher to the sober realities of an intelligible life. And there is our failure. It is a vaster life, a fuller character, a completer personality that men need. It is the ethics not of this world, but of that which is to be, that are revealed in Jesus. Not duty, but the transfiguration of duty—it is for this that men need the power of the world to come. And that big soul, which in shrewd, practical men, of whom Christ's kingdom stands in need, is often pathetically anxious to gain touch with eternity, and to find itself in tune with the infinite, we are not bold enough to claim for the Master.

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How different was the method of Christ Himself! Watch Him in His dealings with the young man who asked what good thing he should do to inherit eternal life. It was the opportunity of a great spiritual romance that the Lord offered to him. He had come prepared to do great things. There was nothing about him that was sordid or base. No sooner had the Master's eye rested on him than Jesus loved him. It is clear that in his great possessions the young man saw large possibilities of service. It was no selfish refusal to abandon the means of personal pleasure or sensuous delights that at length sent him away sorrowful. There was a true nobility, not the mean desire to secure the next world in order that he might enjoy this, that expressed itself in the eager question, "What good thing shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Many a young man of ample fortune and gentle nurture, coming up to this University with a genuine love of his fellow-men and a generous desire to make the best use of his life, might put the same question to a teacher who should inspire him with rich conceptions of service and high ideals of noble effort. The pathos of the story lies surely in the inability of an otherwise large heart to take the one step which should cut him off from the prospect of

an honourable success and transform the spirit of magnanimous service into the heart of humble sacrifice. If Christ had said, "Spend your wealth, occupy your time, devote your life for the good of others; place those exceptional advantages of head and heart with which liberal Fortune has endowed you at the service of your fellow-men," would he not eagerly have embraced the prospect of a useful and honourable career which the Master had opened before him? But there was something so paradoxical in the demand which Jesus really made; the romance of it was altogether so baffling to the imagination that in the very moment of a glad surrender to a great enthusiasm the young man shrank back from the impossible. "Sell all that thou hast. Make your act of distribution to the poor once for all. Cut off once and for ever all further opportunities for benevolence and kindly patronage. Seek that treasure which is to be the instrument of your devotion not on earth, but in heaven, and come follow Me. Henceforth be poorer than the foxes and the birds. Call no place your home. Stand forth in the simplicity of your personal life, and, when the time comes, be ready for the cross of a criminal and the ignominious death of a slave."

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I think it is just that demand, and nothing less, that Christ is making of the men of this generation. If, like the young man of old, the men of to-day fail to rise to the romantic offer and to follow the example of His humility, it will not be because their minds are set upon the vulgar pleasures of the irresponsible millionaire, or because, steeped in carnal and sordid luxury, they have no motto but "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." The age is full of generous impulse. There are, as of course there always have been, the idle rich, the frivolous wastrels, who are not grieved for the afflictions of Joseph. But there is no lack of those who are not only willing but eager to make the best of their lives, to occupy positions of responsible usefulness, and to become real servants of their fellow-men. He would not need to search this University with candles who should desire to discover many of this honourable type. And these are the men who will make, as they have ever made, the grandest Christians. God does not build His Church upon lives that have never learned to hunger and thirst after righteousness until under the shadow of the Cross they have learned the vanity of evil courses and discovered the selfishness of sin. Ours would indeed be a narrow Gospel if we could see in it nothing but

a message for broken men, if the Church were nought but a vast Salvation Army. The triumph of the Kingdom of Heaven is when the kings of the earth bring their glory and honour into it. When men are at their best, then is it that they have most need of Christ—who calls for chivalry, who proposes a quest, who promises romance. It is a Paul, with his Hebrew passion for righteousness, with his Greek devotion to whatsoever things are lovely, that Jesus summons to the joy of eventful living, to an adventurous apostleship, “in labours more abundant, in deaths oft.” It is the high-minded man whom He would fain transfigure into the humble servant of God.

Christian humility is not an alternative to greatness of soul. It is a protest against the limitations by which it is too often hedged. The spirit, aware of its high capacities, but scarce daring to trust itself, seeks command of manifold resources whereby it may manipulate the world for the benefit of mankind. “What is the use,” said Cecil Rhodes in one of his published speeches, “what is the use of having big ideas if you have not the cash to carry them out?” That is the way in which the man who knows his power expresses the requirement of an adequate opportunity in terms intelligible to



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the average mind. Give me the sphere appropriate to my personal powers and I will use it, not for the purpose of vulgar acquisition, but for the accomplishment of a great task, for the realisation of a magnificent idea. This is the spirit that year by year is filling, with the best intelligence which the country can command, all those posts and offices of public service in which men may gratify the noble ambition of working for the common weal with benefit to the State and credit to themselves. But what if Christ should apply to any such the supreme test, "Sell all that thou hast," what then would be the answer? You would be perfect — then renounce the opportunity. You seek a real adventure — forego your vantage-ground of wealth, station, official responsibility; take up your cross and follow Me." How many would be ready to court the tragedy which such a choice would all but inevitably bring?

If I were a modern painter, I think I would try to represent the wonderful interview between Jesus Christ and Pontius Pilate somewhat after this fashion. There stands the Son of Man clad in the coarse brown garments of the Syrian peasant, His arms bound together by a hempen cord, His beard bedraggled with the rheum with which the minions of Hebrew

officialism have covered it. There is no beauty in the figure of the solitary Outcast, whose life has been straitened by hardships unknown even to the foxes. But on that face, more marred than any man's, there is the sunlight of an unconquerable faith, the unflinching conviction of One who has no need to strive or cry because He labours not for the meat that perishes, but will bring forth judgment into victory. Then, how shall we represent the other figure? I care not what his actual character may have been. Clothe Pontius Pilate in the garments of our modern world. He is the best type of a civil servant. Behind him is a public school and an English University. He stands for the forces of an empire. His moral code is *noblesse oblige*. His religion is that of all wise men, which no wise man ever tells. He is efficient, upright, honourable. He possesses whatsoever goes to the making of a noble man save the one thing needful—a spiritual ideal. For him the world is what it seems to be. He has neither the courage nor the capacity to fail. As he sits at his desk, with its piles of neatly-folded official papers, he looks up at the silent Form which convicts his own life, with all its usefulness, of one thing lacking. Does he remember his old

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school-friend who surrendered a career to champion the cause of the people? Or that member of his College who renounced power to find a missionary's grave in Africa? Yes; but, after all, the one made shipwreck on the rock of enthusiasm, the other was quickly stranded amid the shoals of sentiment. The service of man can be effectively achieved without these painful tragedies. Some rational leverage is necessary if we are to shift the burden of the human race. These idealists have no sense of proportion, no power of accommodating themselves to facts. He will try to bring the good but misguided Man who stands there before him in those pitiful trappings to some sort of appreciation of his real situation. "You understand your position. You cannot, surely, suppose that it will help your case to stand out against the Imperial Government in furtherance of an unpractical theory. 'Knowest thou not that I have power to release thee, and have power to crucify?'" And it is God who answers him: "Thou wouldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above."

I say it is God who answers him. Pass from this ante-chamber of Golgotha to the scene of the Crucifixion itself. Interpret Calvary in the

light of that great revelation of the mind of Christ which St. Paul gives us in the Philippian Epistle, and you will see that the limitation which besets the mind of such a one as I have just attempted to describe is failure to respond to that unfolding of the character of the Eternal God, of which the Passion of Jesus is the abiding pledge. No Christian, as he stands beneath the Cross of his Redeemer, can be content with the popular conception of God as the universal Providence, or as the Frenchman in his lighter vein calls Him, *le bon Dieu*, looking with the eye of a thoughtful benevolence down from the heights of an existence beyond our ken upon the dwellers in this lower sphere, whose hearts He fills with food and gladness, of whose lives He is the Father and Protector. It was no benefactor of the human race who planned the event of Calvary. I do not pretend that we can fathom either the mystery of the mercy that is gathered up in the atoning work of Christ. But that awe with which we bow the head in contemplation of the Cross should warn us against all narrow criticisms of a Fact that surprises us by a new and unsuspected vision of the moral character of God.

Difficulties about the Atonement only arise because we fail to give their full force to the



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language in which St. Paul here describes it as the act of the Eternal, who, in the Person of the Son, empties Himself of all that lifts Him above the race of men whom He comes forth to redeem. He approaches mankind not as their benefactor, but as their debtor. The form of a slave is no human pageantry but the sacramental expression of a Divine surrender. Tragedy enters into the very existence of the Living God. The Eternal Himself passes through the Valley of Humiliation. As the Bible shows us Redemption, it is not an Almighty Benefactor conferring a priceless boon upon His graceless children, but the Servant of servants, who lays aside His vesture and girds Himself as with an apron that He may wash His people's feet. "He took upon Him the form of a slave." Those are the Apostle's words; and we denude them of their appropriate meaning if we fail to see that as St. Paul spoke them it is God Himself to whom they are properly applied, and not alone that Manhood which, in the terms of our orthodox theology, we say that God assumed. For He who from all eternity was in the form of God is God. God, and none but God, could humble Himself when, renouncing those riches which were His before



the worlds, for our sakes He became poor, and from a life of servitude passed to a Cross of Shame. Nor can there be aught transitory or uncongenial to the Eternal Being in that character which was manifested in the consummation of His purpose when for us men and for our salvation the Divine Son came down from heaven. One of the first lessons of theology, and it is a lesson fraught with tremendous moral issues, is that there is nothing merely economic in that revelation by which God approaches the children of men. What He then did, that He for ever is. If, Thou, O my God, so lovest the world that Thou didst give Thine only Son, this was nothing else but the adaptation to human need of an eternal fact:—

“When heaven and earth were yet unmade,  
 When time was yet unknown,  
 Thou in Thy bliss and majesty  
 Didst live and love alone.”

Humility was not first brought to the birth in the stable at Bethlehem, nor was the Cross the earliest throne where it received the Crown. Its reign was already from of old when the morning stars sang together. It was as the sword in the hand of St. Michael when Lucifer

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was thrust down from heaven. It is the spirit in which from creation's earliest dawn the Divine finger has wakened all things into life; the spirit in which a bounteous Providence, beholding the things that are in heaven and earth, has crowned the year with His goodness; the spirit in which the Father has wistfully sought the love and friendship of His children. Humility is not the creation of God's hand. It lives in the beating of His heart. As He loves so He humbles Himself. And the Death of His Son was no benefaction with which, out of the riches of an infinite liberality, He endowed the poor, but the offering with which He pressed His suit upon a reluctant people, saying to each one of us, "My son, give Me thy heart."

This is the consideration which gives to humility its true dignity and value in the character of the Christian man. It is for this reason that many of the definitions—or, we had better say, descriptions—by which men endeavour to express it fall infinitely short of its true proportions. It is doubtless true that "God is in heaven and thou upon earth," and that therefore it becomes the children of men to refrain their souls and keep them low. But just as many a man will talk bravely of the

rights of property who is yet careful to add that "Of course, we are only stewards," so the infinite distance which separates the creature from the Creator may encourage rather than repress a spirit which is the reverse of humility in the narrower sphere where comparison is not impossible, but inevitable. Nor can that lay claim to rank as a Christian virtue which depends for its realisation upon the chasm that separates human personality from Divine. Rather may it be expected to flourish among those who say that God is great and Mohammed is His prophet. If it be true that, as the Hebrew prophet bids us, we are to walk humbly with our God, or as the Christian Apostle puts it, to humble ourselves beneath His mighty hand, we must seek the principle of this self-abasement elsewhere than in the infinite distance which separates our little lives from His august Eternity.

It is the same thought which prevents us from fixing this principle in the recognition of human sin. For those who have sinned the broken and the contrite heart will never fail to be one aspect of Christian humility. God must indeed break the backbone of that stubborn pride to which the Cross is a perpetual scandal and Calvary a superfluity of pain. But

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in proportion as Christian men attain the height of their destiny, in proportion as they are conformed to the image of the Eternal Son—nay, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory—then, though to themselves the shadow of a sin-stained past is ever present to move to self-abhorrence and unseal the fount of penitential tears, yet it is the reflection of the heavenly vision which brings others to take knowledge of them that they have been with Him who is meek and lowly in heart.

Humility, like every aspect of the character that is truly and properly Christian, must find its spring no less than its goal in the character of God. For it is from Him that Christ comes forth, as it is to Him that He returns. We cannot weigh it by the moral standard of the market-place, because it belongs to the revelation of a mystery which recedes into the distances of the Eternal Being. Like the kindred virtue of forgiveness, it can never fully justify its place in the ethics of daily experience. It awaits the disclosure of that new, that surprising tone in the paternal heart of God made once for all in the oblation of the Cross. Therefore it is not enough to identify humility with the spirit of service. A royal maundy is

no adequate substitute for the washing of the feet. A servant of servants and a Prime Minister represent very different functions in the human polity, nor was it to any sort of position resembling the latter office that the Saviour bade His chiefest disciples to aspire. It is not the fact but the manner of service that likens us to the Crucified. The doffing of the garments, the towel wherewith He is girded, the thorny crown, the bitter tree, these are not the impressive, not to say sensational, presentation of an act of Divine beneficence the essential worth of which would yet have remained unaltered, had it arrived along the more conventional and commonplace channels of service. No, these instruments of the Passion are the Sacrifice of Christ. He took upon Him the form not of a servant, but of a slave. Is it altogether a paradox, or is it not rather an attempt to express what the Apostle would suggest, if I say that the Eternal God must have understood something of what it is in lowliness of mind to esteem others better than Himself, or in the Person of the Incarnate Son He would never have died that we might live?

St. Peter had entered into the mind of the Master when he gave the exhortation to be



“clothed with humility.” The word is, as you remember, ἐγκομβώσασθε. It is not every act of service that requires the server to don the apron. There is, therefore, something deeper than service in the imitation of Christ; yes, deeper even than a service which knows itself conditioned by the capacities of others. I have seen the statement that humility is a due recognition of our own limitations. Does such a description either meet the facts or correspond with the Divine Pattern? The proudest Proconsul that ever ruled a British province is fully aware that he cannot polish his own shoes, and his success in government depends upon his power of enlisting the genius of others to supplement his own inadequacy. A high appreciation of one’s own worth is not incompatible with a liberal estimate of the services rendered by our neighbours. No, the man whose character exhibits this crowning grace is he who in his work for the good of others is not unwilling to believe that those on whose behalf he labours are ever his superiors; who so banishes self-consciousness that his personality and not his goods is at the disposal of his fellow-men; and for whom the object of his loving solicitude is “the brother for whom Christ died.” An undergraduate of this University who shall find his



tutor, of whose straightforward sincerity he can entertain no doubt, craving permission to make a note of his own feeble and halting utterances, will feel himself in the presence of humility. The man who instinctively rejects all talk of inferior races, and to whom it is against the grain to speak of the aborigines or the proletariat, is learning to be humble. These are traits that reveal the man. They exhibit something of that Divine courtesy which could not bear help to mankind except in the character of a slave. Servitude to our fellow-men is an attitude that is painful to us all. But it is the brand of the Lord Jesus. That great Christian St. Paul gave as the motive of his abundant labours, his tireless activity, his ceaseless solicitude, the truly remarkable reason—I am a debtor. As with Sir Walter Scott, the desire to pay his creditors quickened his genius. He was expressing the mind that was in Christ Jesus. How full of romance will be the career of him who day by day can go forth to new opportunities, new conquests, new achievements, under this great compulsion—I am a debtor! No man will be dull if only you can approach him with the thought—I am a debtor. No dependence will be a wound to our self-esteem if only joyfully and thankfully

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we can exclaim, "We are debtors." There is the limitation of which I spoke in the world's conception of the magnanimous man that always assigns him the invidious and entirely uninteresting situation of a creditor. And I can well imagine that it is just the man of millions who would most readily appreciate, even if he lacked the courage to accept, the prospect of a life both blessing and blessed, such as Jesus offered to the rich young man. But, whether this be so or not, it is never the service that he renders but the spirit in which he renders it that distinguishes the Christian. Whatever the conditions of his outward life may be, poverty is always his bride. Even if his station be splendid, he wears it but as the pontificals of office, beneath which are the coarse garments of his daily life. His ideal is not to live for others, but to die for them. He wastes no time in dreaming of a stewardship that may never be his. He works while it is called to-day. And when they have even parted his raiment and cast lots upon his vesture, through his poverty he will make the many rich. The humble man is he who is capable of that only form of self-sacrifice which admits of no degrees because it is whole, final, and complete, and that is the sacrifice of himself.

It is not inappropriate that this sermon should have been appointed for the Sunday before Lent, when our thoughts are once again fixed on the sorrows of the Saviour. The idea is not fashionable except in those limited circles where it happens to be the peculiar form which fashion takes. To many its conventional austerities wear rather the appearance of that voluntary humility which St. Paul deprecates in the Epistle to the Colossians than of any virtue remotely suggestive of the wilderness. But is it quite so certain as is sometimes supposed that the formed habits of the Christian are independent of external observance and, like the Spirit, blow where they list? I well remember a wealthy manufacturer of the North sitting portly and stiff-backed at his comfortable board, who would admonish the undisciplined asceticism of the callow curate by telling him how "Our Vicar says, and I quite agree with him, that we are to fast in spirit." Whether a similar rule is expected to develop the Christian virtue of liberality I do not know; but I am quite certain that the translators of the Prayer-book Version of the Psalms unconsciously revealed their appreciation of the English character when they married "a proud look" to "a high stomach." We have, perhaps,

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almost outgrown the charity dinner as a method of social service, but there is still something so well-fed about our British benevolence as to suggest that abstinence may be needed to purify our conception of the wants of others. When St. Paul acknowledged himself all men's debtor, he went on to indicate the form in which he hoped to discharge the account—"So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Gospel." Like his Divine Master, he had learned through the things which he suffered that man doth not live by bread only, but by the living Word. And these have ever been the uses of the desert—"I humbled thee and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna which thou knewest not." Pride scorns the notion of a Lenten fast. Why sojourn in a barren land? Shall God indeed prepare a table in the wilderness? But the humble, as His friends and guests, take their place at God's board; they eat of His bread and drink of the wine that He has mingled. So Christ gives to them the heart of sacrifice, and among the servants of men they are distinguished by one mark of difference, and by one only. As with the rest they go forth to their work and to their labour until the evening, the brow of each is circled with a crown of thorns.

## II

### THE POWER OF THE CROSS\*

"I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me."—  
PHILIPPIANS iv. 13.

"CRUCIFIED with Christ." Such is the language in which the author of the Epistle to the Philippians elsewhere describes his relation to Calvary. But is there any life which, unless we are admitted to its secret history, seems less like crucifixion than the career of the stout Apostle Paul? There is no paleness in its presentation. Its hours are crowded with glorious life. It is romantic, adventurous, and vivid. If happiness indeed consist in the unimpeded exercise of function there is abundance of this quality in the missionary journeys which the Acts records.

\* Preached before the University of Oxford in St. Mary's on the eighteenth Sunday after Trinity, 1909.



St. Paul is perhaps the most vigorous, efficient, self-realising character in the pages of the New Testament. He who bids the Christian imitate the humility of Him who took upon Him the form of a slave is himself one of the world's masters. He would withstand you to the face as soon as look at you. He knows his mind and carries through his purpose. No doubt he was impatient of dull wits, and was, it may be, too ready to call the tiresome unbeliever a fool, the priestly bully a whited wall. None can deny him the honour of the strong man, who leaves his mark, creates ideals, and makes history. "I can do all things" seems to portray the man more faithfully than "I am crucified."

It is often asserted by persons whose knowledge of Christian history is apparently as superficial as their view of modern needs, that the word of the Cross is wholly inapplicable to a strenuous age. Their imagination represents the typical Christian as seated in some cloistered mediæval shade, and learning to sacrifice all freedom, pride, and confidence of spirit in the soft placidity of prayer. He lives in an atmosphere of renunciation, patience, and pain. His enthusiasm is religious neurosis. His morality is that of the Oriental slave. The system, of which the saint is the product, has



been devised in the interests of the inferior classes, which by its means have gained a temporary ascendancy over the real masters of the world. It retards the progress of mankind by developing an unreal altruism—in politics democracy, in economics socialism—that holds in check the faculties which ought to rule, and stays the due reward of merit. What society needs to-day is the efficient man who, stimulated by self-interest, is eager to develop all the latent capacities of mind and body, the excellencies which he does not share with his fellows, and which promote instead of retarding the natural inequalities of human personality. A frank paganism and not a sophisticated Christianity is what the spirit of the age requires. Not martyrs to hang on crosses, but adventurers to discover poles are fit objects of veneration. Insurrection unto life, not obedience unto death, is the demand of the hour.

Now, even though it be perilous to identify the cause of the Church, either with a political party or with an economic theory, it cannot be said, without assuming a foresight which few would care to claim, and a confidence in reaction which it were hard to justify, that Christianity, if indeed it possess affinities with

democratic socialism, is at variance with the world's development. But, however this may be, there can be little doubt that energy and efficiency, no less than enthusiasm, were characteristic of Apostolic Christianity. It was the enterprise of the age in which it rose. Some twenty years ago, Friedrich Nietzsche, who to-day shares with Mrs. Baker Eddy and others the suffrages of the enlightened, proposed the Salvation Army as a type of the religious mood, and by a strange irony as a study for mad doctors. I venture to think that the philosopher was not acquainted with General Booth. Nor could he have realised the fact that it was just among the plutocratic believers in efficiency that this organisation was to find some of its most convinced supporters. But where shall we find these three elements of successful enterprise—energy, efficiency, and enthusiasm—more happily united than in the Apostle Paul himself? Festus at the public hearing called him mad, but was probably shrewd enough to regret the *obiter dicta* of the bench when he examined the details of the appeal to Cæsar. From the record of St. Luke we may reconstruct the colloquy which would take place among the members of the missionary party, when, forbidden, as they believed,

by Divine authority to preach the Word in proconsular Asia, they were doubting in which direction they should bend their steps. The materials for his vision at Troas which was to decide the momentous question of a passage into Europe, were already shaping themselves in the busy brain of St. Paul. "Shall we strike up into the distant uplands of Bithynia?" This would be the suggestion of some evangelist filled with the romance of missions. "Nay, brother, nay; the Spirit of Jesus suffers us not. Let us north-west to Troas!" Truly an efficient answer; a Cromwellian answer. The spirit of the prophets—it is a characteristic of Apostolic Christianity—is subject to the prophets. A right judgment in all things—direction, purpose, the due subordination of means to ends—power, not vehemence—that is the gift of the Holy Ghost. The apostles were impressed with the fact that they were builders, that their work was constructive, that a world purpose was being effected through their ministry. The eye of St. Paul never left, if we may so put it, the map of the great Empire which he was to claim for Christ. "Fear not, Paul, thou must also see Rome." His conversion meant the conviction of an imperial, nay, a universal apostolate committed

to him and making constant demands not only upon an intensity, to which all things were possible, but upon a statesmanship, an economy of opportunity, a husbandry of power, which could trust in God and keep its powder dry. He is never carried away by the impetuous impulse, though the imperious claim of the gospel never lets him rest. He is master of himself and therefore commands the situation. There is no tactless anxiety for the salvation of souls. He knows how to become all things to all men in the strenuous effort to save some. He knows how to abound as well as how to suffer loss. His life is confined in no narrow channel. For him truth, beauty, excellence, as these things are understood by the cultivated intelligence, retained their interest and meaning. The evangelist has not ceased to be the critic, the observer, and the gentleman. What strikes the mind in contemplating the career of St. Paul is not so much "Here is a man who has made the great renunciation," but

Here is the man of power." His missionary journeys rival in interest the travels of Odysseus. They impress us by the fulness of their experience rather than by the greatness of their self-sacrifice. The strong man delights in dangers, in hair-breadth escapes, in critical

situations. The adventurous lad who first hears the celebrated catalogue of Pauline perils hardly pities the man who encountered them. These are all in the day's work of him who would earn the reward of efficiency. The strong man, who disdains crucifixion, shrinks from no suffering:—

“I sought where-so the wind blew keenest. There  
                                   I learned to dwell  
 Where no man dwells, on lonesome, ice-born fell,  
 And unlearned man and God and curse and prayer,  
 Became a ghost, haunting the glaciers bare.”

When pain means freedom, power, achievement, it becomes worthy of the aristocracy, incidental to what in the slipshod jargon of the day is called the will to power. Now it is just this power which is conspicuous in those primitive Christians who in less than a hundred years from the birth of the Nazarene built up an organisation which the Roman Government could not afford to ignore. Not only was the career of St. Paul such as the adventurous might envy, but, if meekness was the characteristic of the Pentecostal brotherhood, it was at least the meekness that inherits the earth. Who would not envy the boldness of Peter and John? It is not the resignation but the fire



of St. Stephen which lives in the imagination, his face like that of an angel, terrible as an army with banners. What a wonderful record of sane, effective, and triumphant enterprise is the Acts of the Apostles, written, as we know, by one who had the eye and the brain of a genuine historian! You can no more construct history out of subjective enthusiasms or the pietism of the street corner than you can make bricks without straw. Nor would any rhetorician have begun his narrative with the mysteries of the Ascension and the fiery earth-shaking event of Pentecost and left Paul prosaically preaching the Word in a hired house at Rome. It is the power as of iron, now molten and vivid, now hard and resistless, that meets us in this wonderful book. The men of whom it tells knew both worlds, and never forgot either. They have a grasp of realities and facts. It is only those who mean business that can see the humours of their own campaign. We have a glimpse of the conversations which must have cheered the loneliness of St. Paul, when only Luke was with him, in that charming account of the Ephesian riot, which relieves the spiritual intensity of the Acts, with its sweating citizens and angry tradesmen and remon-



strant officials, whose ears were deafened with shouts about the image that fell down from Jupiter. Verily these men, who were turning the world upside down, had no tinge of fanaticism. Theirs was not the spirit of a Lord George Gordon. Rather were they like honest Hugh Latimer, whose sermons are the delight of all who love reality, and who has done more for the English Reformation than reams of Protestant controversy could accomplish, by the famous words in which he showed how he could jest at the dawn with death. So, too, the apostles were masterful, strong, and free. They were neither visionaries nor slaves. They could do all things. They could play the man.

The Christian, then, according to the type which is presented to us in the New Testament, is the man that can do all things, or, to borrow a striking phrase from the Lord's own teaching, who through faith can remove mountains. The characteristic note of the gospel is not sacrifice but salvation. "In hoc signo vinces" is the legend inscribed upon the banner of the Cross. Calvary is the symbol not of renunciation but of life. It is very easy to get a distorted view of the real message which the gospel brings to human needs if we go



for our ideals outside the range of the Apostolic Church, if we seek for the pattern of Christian manhood whether in mediæval or modern times. We need not hesitate to acknowledge the witness of the saints in every age to the manifoldness of Christ if we look rather to the New Testament for the due proportions of Christian discipleship. It is a Peter, a John, or a Paul, rather than a Francis, a Luther, or a Pusey, who will exhibit the wholeness of the Christian believer, who will show the impress of the immediate facts, uninfluenced by the conventionalities of statement, if not the imperfections of apprehension which inevitably result from the intervening centuries of formulated theology. Take, for example, the fascinating figure of St. Francis. The ardour of his affection, the depth of his renunciation, the width of his sympathy, his passionate surrender to the love of the Divine Master—these are all essential marks of the personality which has been baptized into the death of Christ. With the preaching and example of St. Francis a new power of social regeneration took its place among the living forces of Europe. Yet as we contemplate the form of the saint with the stigmata in the delicate hands we become

aware that there is something neither fully Christian nor wholly human in the picture. It is a reading and a legitimate reading of the gospel, but it is not the gospel. The tone, the key, the adjustment of the New Testament is somehow different. There is more of the *Stabat Mater* than the regnant Christ, a cross of infinite tenderness rather than of prevailing power. When the Apostle, glorying in the Cross, declares that he bears in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus, he is in his sternest mood—"From henceforth let no man trouble me." Galatians is, perhaps, the least attractive, as it is certainly the least eucharistic of his writings. But the dominant note of St. Paul, as in the epistle to the Philippians, is joy; not a pale ecstatic sentiment, but a man's joy, the joy of an immense activity, the joy of an abounding life.

The reason of this is that St. Paul has been able rightly to interpret the characteristic experience of a Christian, which many another has, no doubt, possessed but to which through the prejudice of training or the imperfection of analytic ability he has failed to give appropriate expression. St. Paul preached Christ crucified among the nations, but it was the risen and ascended King who had

appeared to him on the road to Damascus. The gospel of the Cross, therefore, was no apotheosis of pain, but the proclamation of power. It presents to our gaze a spectacle of divine tenderness only because it is the message of victorious life. And for St. Paul it is the gospel which is the fixed thing in Christianity; the inviolable unchangeable centre of authority; the standard presentation of the fact of Christ which gives unity, cohesion, and solidity to all the riches of wisdom and knowledge which are hid in Him. Christ may be, Christ is the firstborn, the heir, the beginning of the creation of God, but this is not the gospel. Christ may be, Christ is the guarantee of human brotherhood, the pledge and source of all human enfranchisement, but this is not the gospel. Christ may be, Christ is the comfort of mourners, the inspiration of sufferers, the consolation of martyrs whose pains He has for ever consecrated by His tears at the grave of Lazarus, His agony in the garden, the witness of His death on Calvary; but once again, this is not the gospel. All these things are, if you will, the presuppositions, the consequences, the corollaries of the gospel. But the gospel they are not. What, then, is this peculiar witness which quickens faith, which



inspires missionaries, and which alone can give its true orientation to the Christian character?

For those whose profession of faith is no vague acknowledgment of the existence of Christianity as a body of religious beliefs incorporated in a historical institution, which is supposed to have conferred a balance of beneficent influence upon the human race, but a positive conviction of the truth of a definite testimony enshrined in the pages of the New Testament, there can be but one answer. The gospel is the good news conveyed to all mankind through the witness of the apostles to the amazing love of God, whereby through the Cross He has exalted Jesus Christ, His eternal Son, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give remission of sins. The Cross is God's act of love, prevalent for pardon, blotting out offences, covering transgressions, restoring to sinners the dignity of sons. The angelic choirs in the Dream of Gerontius may count it the highest effort of the sorrows of God "to teach His brethren and inspire to suffer and to die.' In the New Testament the company of heaven cries aloud, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive the power." Go where you will to the concise reports of the primitive preaching which the Acts contains, to the short summaries

of his evangel which St. Paul delivers in his letters, to the praises of the Lamb in the visions of the Apocalypse; the testimony is ever the same. It is the mystery into which the angels desired to look, says St. Peter. "Herein is love," says St. John, "that God sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself"—that is the message which, constrained by Christ's love, St. Paul, as God's ambassador, knows that he must faithfully proclaim. Then the central thing of Christianity is not love, or self-sacrifice, or fatherhood, all of which have from time to time been advanced as its characteristic aspect; it is divine forgiveness. It is God's love manifested and bestowed in the Cross. It is self-sacrifice freely exerted for the salvation of mankind from the slavery of sin. It is Fatherhood which redeems. There is one and only one new element in Christianity and that neither a concept nor a doctrine, but a fact. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Not our ideas about God, but our relations with God by what God Himself has wrought. "I am not ashamed of the Gospel, it is the power of God." "God sent His Son into the world that we might live through Him."



It is this which gives to suffering its true and proportionate relation to the scheme of the Christian life. It was one of the strongest of our moderns, who when he set before him the prospect of death, cried, "Let me taste the whole of it." It is a mark not of the weakness but of the strength of Christianity that it has dignified suffering and given it a place in the imagination of such as have "the will to power." But you must rise in the scale of human achievement before you can learn its glory. You must have the spirit of power before you can tread the way of sorrows. First the power of His resurrection, then the fellowship of His sufferings. Small men who live in villas can nowadays think imperially, but God, who dwells on high, always thought universally. He does not set up an empire in the world. He redeems the world. For all men suffering is a part of life, and it is the whole of life which has been transfigured by Christ. And it is just because refusal of pain is the surest test of human weakness that endurance becomes the most certain evidence of Jesus' triumphant power. When in the magnificent climax of the epistle to the Romans, St. Paul carries us from height to height in his description of the ransomed

life, there is a sudden drop into the valley of humiliation before the feet of the forgiven sinner reach the highest step of the throne. Yes, but the witness of the spirit to the victory won precedes the warning of pain to be endured. "If children, then heirs ; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ"—that is the glory which is both the Alpha and the Omega of the gospel. To believe it is the victory that overcomes the world. Thus to be crucified with Christ means not so much to suffer as He suffered, to die as He died, but rather to have passed through union with Christ's Death into a life where death is swallowed up in victory.

Such language, which has risen to the lips of Christians from the days of the apostles right down to the times in which we live and which cannot be regarded as the mere jargon of professional saints in the mouth of a Kempis, a Baxter, a Wesley, or to come to contemporary history, a George Howard Wilkinson, will always appear unmeaning verbiage to those who have no spiritual experience of their own. But language is no mere jingle of empty phrases. Thought is always the attempt to express life, nor can Christian language and Christian thought be any exception to the universal rule. The believer has indeed passed

out into a range of experience which is beyond the levels on which men transact the ordinary business of the world. And here we come upon analogies and coincidences of thought where perhaps we should least expect to find them.

I have spoken of Friedrich Nietzsche, the exponent of that peculiar philosophy which we are told is entirely appropriate to the activities of the present age. Like the Christian theologian, this exponent of modern thought is dealing, not with the narrow sphere of practical precepts, but with the springs of action, the fountains of life, the foundations of belief. I take up the preface in which an enthusiastic disciple introduces to English readers a translation of the work which he has entitled "Beyond Good and Evil." An enthusiastic disciple can rarely see the humour either of himself or of his subject. It is therefore scarcely surprising to be told that there are new elements in this system which entitle its author to be regarded as an original discoverer in a realm that has been supposed incapable of yielding any entirely fresh results. One thing at least is certain that the objection that has been urged against this teaching that, by attempting to get beyond good and evil it

undermines the basis of morality, is precisely the objection that has been urged from the beginning against the greatest interpreters of Christianity, against a Luther, an Augustine, a St. Paul. Europe has never forgiven Luther his penetrating paradoxes, when he cries "Crede fideliter, pecca fortiter," or "Thou art my righteousness, I am thy sin." Pelagius, the guardian of the ethical interest, will always stumble at the doctrine of grace. If St. Paul is allowed to speak for himself, he still with his justification shocks and scandalises the moral mind. The instructed Christian will see nothing revolutionary, or had we not better say reactionary, in the claim that the will to power—if we are still to use the phrase—must, in seeking the highest excellence of society, transcend the pettifogging limits of a conventional moral code, such, for example, as blindly hurls the eighth commandment at the social reformer, as though forsooth its current interpretation is what was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. St. Paul's Jew is exactly the respectable law-keeper, whose arrogant claim to insight is the measure of his blindness, the Pelagian from among the bourgeoisie who in every age resists the Spirit, which bloweth wheresoever it listeth. This it is which is the



true slave morality, which, whatever else it may be, is certainly not Christian. Only when these new philosophers begin to speak of a master-morality, which shall elevate the human race to super-men, does the Christian disciple come forward with the assurance of a great experience and proclaim the mind of the Master, which entering into holy souls maketh them sons of God. What system of ethics was ever yet invented which when brought to the test of practical life is not found, if taken as in itself the perfect guide, to be but as the play of Hamlet without the prince? Few there are which will not work in experience, if only the good, the true, the highest excellence of society—call it what you will—which each in turn proposes as the end, can be determined in accordance with reality. The genius of Christianity reveals itself just at the point where each ethical system in turn fails to reach the mark. There in Christ stands what in Hebrew phrase is called the revelation of Righteousness not on this side of the Law, but beyond it, no positive rule but a personal ideal. It is indeed a true instinct of power which impels the strong man to resent the shackles of a conventional morality that is ever saying to the ardent impulses of his spirit, "Thus far



shalt thou go and no further; here shall thy proud waves be stayed." Beyond good and evil—that is exactly where a man must arrive if he is indeed to be free. But that is nothing more nor less than your Christian, who judges all things, but is himself judged of none. He is strong because he sets new standards, gives new values, carries the social life of man out of its narrow ruts to larger possibilities. But he is not merely the strong man, who is in himself a very doubtful asset in the life of the world. What is the value of strength, unless you take into account direction? It may be as irrational as the Minotaur, as sinister as Chemosh and Ashtoreth. A horse is counted but a vain thing to save a man, nor can any one who prays for deliverance from earthquake regard with equanimity the hopping of the high hills. The dukes of Edom belong to a primitive stage in the development of the world, nor is it they that come with dyed garments from Bozrah, travelling in the greatness of their strength, mighty not to destroy but to save. It is now many years since, as a young man, I was fascinated by Carlyle's "Heroes." He chooses, it is true, the mighty men for whom he bespeaks our admiration. But the permanent impression that such a

book leaves upon the mind is surely this that, given only they be strong, it is all one whether it be a Luther or a Loyola, a Strafford or a Cromwell, a Napoleon or a Joan of Arc that moves our reverence. I tremble for the future of any country which moved by reactionary fears commits its safety to such as please to regard themselves as a natural aristocracy. To forsake right reason for political athletics in the development of human society is only less dangerous than to hang theology in the interest of muscular Christianity. Better far to keep well on this side of good and evil than to make excursions into the regions beyond under the guidance of "the strong." Nor is history without its warnings for the apostles of efficiency, who imagine that their little fingers are thicker than their father's loins. Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, but know that for all this thou shalt stand at the bar of Right Reason, yea, God will bring thee to judgment.

How different is the exhortation of the apostle of Jesus Christ: "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." The message which we have to deliver is the gospel of Pentecost. Which is the most disastrous to human life, an ideal without power, or power

without an ideal, legalism or lawlessness, it is indeed difficult to say. Of both St. Paul would have said that they are under sin. The genius of Christianity is that it is neither but transcends them both. It is the revelation, the gift, the baptism of a fiery spirit. In Jesus pain is transmuted into power, only because to Him is given all authority in heaven and in earth, and in His hands He bears the keys of hell. In Him we behold no servile submission of the creature to the Law of the God who made it. He is Himself the very son and substance of the Everlasting Will, enthroning the humanity which He assumes, manifested as the goal and destiny of all creation. How near to every age and to each human life He seems—how near and yet how far! As when some traveller among the mountains has climbed the shoulder of a westward hill and almost thinks his journey at an end; the scene expands; the perspective widens; ridge behind ridge, alp behind alp, peak behind peak appears, rising in stairs and terraces to meet the horizon now almost lost in dreamy distances of dazzling light; so Christ the end of human life becomes a vaster Christ the nearer we attain.

But with God all things are possible. This is no formal acknowledgment of an omnipo-

tence, which, if it have concrete existence, is a fact too general and remote to have any real bearing upon the practical concerns of life, but a great experience which has made men strong. "Ye shall receive power" was the form in which the Risen Master renewed the promise of an energising influence, an inward presence, a controlling Personality, which entering into His elect should make them sons of God. "Repent ye and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins," such was the burthen of St. Peter's witness on the Day of Pentecost, "and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

The great cloud of witnesses who in every age have found the Word of the Cross to be pardon, peace, and power, reiterate the great confession that where the Spirit is there is liberty. And we, too, must accept that message, renew that experience, and repeat that witness, if our lives are to be not indeed a success nor a force, nor even an influence, but that which is greater and stronger than all these, an inspiration.





THE MESSAGE OF  
THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS



## REVELATION IN A SON

THE text of the Epistle to the Hebrews will be found in the first verse of the third chapter, "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, even Jesus." Like all Christian teaching, it finds its centre in the historic Personality and Life, which is the constant element because it is the divine Fact. The significance of that Fact is appreciated by interpreting it under the forms which the Old Testament supplies. These forms, even the recognition of Jesus as Messiah, are not themselves part of the eternal Truth itself. But it is difficult to see how as a matter of fact the significance of the gospel could ever have been realised without them, and they have so far entered into the fabric of Christian Theology as to be practically indispensable vehicles for the conveyance of the religious reality to the human mind.

The two ideas here regarded as finding their realisation in Jesus are those of Apostle and High Priest, but it is only the latter which has passed into permanent use. The former would have been more arresting if it had occurred alone. We have grown so familiar with the term as applied to our Lord's chosen representatives that we almost imagine it to have been reflected back from the disciples to the Master. This, however, is not so. For the word, as it is applied to the Twelve, is in the first instance used quite untechnically in the New Testament, and is derived from that conception of "sending forth" or "delegation" which Jesus Himself transfers to them as the extenders of His own mission. "As thou didst send Me into the world, even so sent I them."\* And although the word is not used in the Septuagint, except to translate the Hebrew word for ambassador, yet it is obviously akin to such words as Messenger or Prophet, both of which come in these opening chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews.† It carries the idea of a minister of the Word, a proclaimer of the righteous will of God, a prophet, "My messenger that I send."‡ But its connection with the idea of embassy would seem to suggest

\* John xvii. 18.

† Chap. i. 1, 7, &amp;c.

‡ Isa. xlii. 19.

a more comprehensive idea, such as delegate, which would be applied to Christ as to Moses, the representative of the prophetic dispensation, who is here compared and contrasted with Him. We are therefore bidden to consider Jesus as the Messenger of God, who declares and interprets to us the Divine Will.

When we turn to the epistle itself, in which the writer passes to the consideration of this great theme, we find that apparently he does not develop the thought of Christ the Revealer but dwells exclusively upon His eternal priesthood. This is the other term which he applies to Jesus, who is not only the Apostle but the High Priest of our confession. Now why is this? Why did he not either leave out the title of Apostle altogether as irrelevant to his immediate subject, or else draw out all that Christ has become on either side of His activity, both as Revealer and as Reconciler? We shall see, I think, that the first idea runs through the argument which leads up to the main theme no less than the latter. But it is certain from what follows that priesthood is not regarded as a by-product or side aspect of the activity of Christ, like, for example, his social message, but as representing what that activity essentially is. We are confronted with the main issues



of the gospel in this epistle. Even if the High Priest be only one figure under which Christ may be presented, yet it is the whole Christ who is thus interpreted. Consequently it is in the High Priest that we are to see the Apostle. He is not first the Apostle and then the High Priest. His delegacy is exercised in His Atone-ment; His Prophetical character is consummated in Priesthood.

It is of the utmost importance to make clear to ourselves the fact that the work of Christ is essentially a unity, that He is not at one time concerned with making known the name of God, at another with fulfilling His Will in the redemption of mankind. He manifests the love of God, as He could not fail to do, in fulfilling the Father's loving purpose of reconciliation through death. The Fact of Christ crucified, the work of Calvary, the Death of the Cross is itself God's word, God's message. It is this position, established in the first two chapters, that justifies the author in proceeding to his theme. "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession."

Knowing as we do the contents of the epistle, we are somewhat surprised that its opening words should be the familiar passage which is

read in our churches at Christmas. This is only because, like Christian philosophers in earlier ages, we are too ready to build an independent teaching on the doctrine of the Word made Flesh, forgetting that for St. John it was the Lamb of God, not the Babe of Bethlehem, which was the beginning of his Christian experience. It is worthy of notice that the Incarnation is absent from the introductory sentences of Hebrews. It is only subsequently that it comes into the argument, when it is necessary to bring out the difference between the ministry of angels and the work of the Son. Here in the first instance we simply read that God spake unto us in a Son who, having made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high. Let us look at the words more closely.

“God spake” \*—this is common both to the Old Dispensation and the New. But it is the difference of the form of speech upon which attention is fastened. In old time God spake in the prophets. At the end of the days, a crises like that at which “in the beginning” † He created the heavens and the earth, God spake “in (a) son.” The emphasis is on the method of speech in either case, and this is still further

\* Heb. i. 1.

† Gen. i. 1.

marked by the absence of the article in the second. It becomes clear wherein the difference consists when we pass to the relative clause, "whom he appointed heir of all things."\* The prophets are within a circle of divine dealing, they are parts of a divine economy, as Moses, himself a prophet, is "faithful" in the "house."† That is why their messages are essentially in many parts and in many modes. "A son" is over the house, He stands in a relation of superiority to the whole economy. What this means is still further brought out by the second relative clause—"through whom also He made the worlds." A prophet is a part of creation, fulfilling his own special function amid a whole system of organs of divine revelation, whereas a son is the medium through which God institutes and carries on a system of divine dealing like that which we call creation. The point, therefore, is this: In Jesus we have God speaking, but not as He might be said to speak through the medium of human speech, human intelligence, and human teaching. It is not therefore Christ's conception of God or His instruction in righteousness that is the essentially Christian thing. God speaks in Jesus as He speaks in creation through the accomplished

\* Heb. i. 2.

† Ibid. iii. 2.

fact, not through the spoken word. "The spacious firmament on high" does not proclaim its Maker, as the preacher unfolds the being and attributes of God. It is not primarily the function of the Sun as he cometh forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber to instruct mankind in the power, wisdom, or love of the Eternal, but simply to run his unwearied course. The universe is working out its own end irrespective of the revelation of the Mind of God which it affords to the intelligence that surveys and contemplates its operations. Prophets may arise to explain in terms of human thought such sections of the universal drama as they are able to interpret. But the facts themselves, which are collectively the creative activity of the Son, are the medium through which God speaks. It is what God does that manifests in the course of the action what God is and what God's will is.

We may, therefore, express the difference between the two methods thus: When God speaks in the prophets, He does so indirectly, mediately, through the interposition of the human voice. When God speaks in a Son, He does so directly, immediately, through the facts themselves, which the human voice more or less imperfectly represents. It is the difference



between nature and science, between reality and representation, between the actual world and the lesson-books which describes its processes. Prophecy interprets God's purposes: facts realise them.

I called your attention to the fact that the Incarnation itself is passed over in these opening sentences. I do not, of course, mean that it is not implied in the words that express the work of Christ. But the writer passes immediately from what in subsequent theology would be called the doctrine of the Eternal Word to that of the Atonement. The stress is laid upon the immediate action of God in a Son. "Who,"\* the passage proceeds, "being the effulgence of His glory and the expression of His substance, and upholding the universe by the word of His power," not, as perhaps with our theological instinct we might have anticipated, "and having taken upon Him our flesh and being found in fashion as man," but "having made purification of sins sat down." God spoke; His message was contained, not in the Sermon on the Mount or the Parables of the Kingdom, but in the Redeeming Action of Christ's Passion, and in the triumphant issue wherein, as St. Paul has it, He was marked off as the Son of

\* Heb. i. 3, 4.



God in the purification of sins and the exaltation of the Saviour. The clause "having made purification of sins" is the language of ritual, which is in the mind of the writer from the beginning, and which for him is so much the appropriate figure for representing the cardinal facts of the gospel that he is hardly using the language of metaphor at all. Figure and fact have blended in one conception. The oblation of Christ—that sacrifice of Himself which implies something very different from His self-sacrifice—the provision of a covering for sin is itself the divine message, the good news which the Apostle of our confession proclaims in the very act whereby He gives it reality.

It is important to remember that this union of the messenger and the priest was already portrayed in the pages of that Old Testament prophet the fulfilment of whose ideal in Jesus the Messiah was the characteristic discovery of the Apostolic Church. The second Isaiah is the great anticipator of the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is he who fixes for ever the sacrificial idea as the only adequate expression of the deliverance, the opening of the prison to them that are bound, which the Messenger and Servant should preach as a gospel to the poor. For this elect and beloved representative of Jehovah was to

be, not like the prophets a preacher of righteousness, but a bringer of salvation,\* and as such a man of sorrows, led as the sacrificial lamb to the slaughter, bearing the iniquity of His people, and because He had poured out His soul unto death, dividing the spoil with the strong. I think we shall best represent the difference between the work of the Servant and the work of that long line of "servants in the house," from Moses onwards, who had preceded Him, if we say that, while the prophets declared the righteousness of God, in the Suffering Servant that righteousness was to become redemptive. It is the active, creative element in the work of this Messenger that renders it different in quality from that of His predecessors. He is to represent Jehovah in an entirely new way, for in him Jehovah is Himself to come as the bringer of salvation. It is characteristic of the Evangelical Prophet that he represents Righteousness, if not as identical with, at least as parallel to Salvation. "My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth."† "My righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation to all generations."‡ "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, marching in the

\* Isa. liii.

† Ibid. li. 5.

‡ Ibid. li. 8.

greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.”\*

We see at once that the Epistle to the Hebrews is written in the spirit of the second Isaiah, when we read the second and third verses of the second chapter: “If the word spoken through angels became sure . . . how shall we escape,” not, as we might expect, if we neglect the word spoken in a Son, but “if we neglect so great salvation.” Transgression against the law of Righteousness is parallel to refusal of God’s Righteousness, that is, of His Salvation. The ministration of the Word through angels was “of condemnation”; † the ministration through the Lord Christ is “of salvation.” In the one case Righteousness is a damnatory declaration, in the other a redeeming fact. And this—which is the directly divine character of the word spoken through Christ—is further brought out by what immediately follows. This salvation, the writer proceeds, “was made sure unto us by them that heard, God bearing witness together with them by signs and wonders and various sorts of powers, and by distributions of Holy Spirit according to His will.” ‡ There is, as we here perceive, something within the

\* Isa. lxiii. 1.

† Heb. ii. 2, cf. 2 Cor. vii. 9.

‡ Heb. ii. 3, 4.

Christian system corresponding to the voices of the prophets speaking in many parts and in many modes under the Old Covenant. That is the testimony delivered by those who, as St. Luke puts it, were "eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word," \* and ratified by the miraculous gifts of the Spirit to which the last verse of Mark refers in the phrase, "The Lord confirming the word with signs following."

Now, if we doubted whether the teaching of this epistle with regard to the Priesthood of Christ were meant to represent, not a mere side issue, but the very staple of the gospel, these questions ought at once to be set at rest by reference to the primitive preaching in the Acts of the Apostles, to the contents of which we are here obviously referred. The way in which the testimony of Jesus, the Apostle of our Confession, reaches us, is through the report of the Twelve. What Jesus began both to do and to teach is carried on by those who themselves handled the Word of Life. The message as described by the epistle is this: "He who is the expression of God's substance, having made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high." There is one point which is not explicitly stated in the Pentecostal

\* Luke i. 2.



preaching, and that is the relative clause—"who is the expression of his substance"—which defines the person of Christ. The main sentence is almost in set terms the form under which the gospel was first presented. Thus St. Peter, immediately after the descent of the Spirit, declares that Jesus of Nazareth, "a man approved of God unto you by mighty works,"\* was raised up and exalted to the right hand of the Father. The promise held out to them that shall repent and be baptized is "the remission of sins."† There can surely be no doubt that what the apostle realised was the fulfilment of Jeremiah's prophecy of a new covenant through the forgiveness of sins‡ in that Messianic kingdom of which the presence and power of the Spirit was the experimental testimony. The sermon which has for its text the healing of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate carries the interpretation of Christ a stage further. It becomes evident that the development given to the hope of Jeremiah and Ezekiel § by the second Isaiah has fixed itself in the minds of the disciples. Jesus is the Servant of Jehovah, whose exaltation through the resurrection marks off His shameful Death

\* Acts ii. 22.

† Ibid. ii. 38.

‡ Jer. xxxi. 31-34.

§ Ezek. xxxvi. 24-27 ; xxxvii. 26.



as the act by which His people's iniquities were turned away. He is no longer the "man approved of God," but "the Holy and Righteous One," "the Prince of Life"\* (the word used being that which in the Epistle to the Hebrews is applied to Him as the captain of salvation † and the author of our faith ‡). It is "in His name," § as in that of God Himself, "the name which is above every name," || that the lame man has been cured and that sins are to be blotted out. This is repeated in the defence before the Sanhedrin, in which the name of Jesus, Messiah of Nazareth, is set forth as "the only name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved," ¶ for in none other is there salvation. What the apostles preached, then, was Jesus as the Messiah, the Anointed through whom God was visibly reigning among His people and delivering them. The keynote is God the Saviour. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus," as St. Matthew records, "for He shall save His people from their sins." And the whole spirit of the opening paragraphs of the Epistle to the Hebrews is summed up in the words which form the substance of the

\* Acts iii. 14.

† Heb. ii. 10.

‡ Ibid. xii. 2.

§ Acts iii. 16.

|| Phil. ii. 9, cf. Isa. xlv. 23.

¶ Acts iv. 12.

apostolic reply to the Jewish High Priest after their second imprisonment: "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, hanging Him on a tree. Him did God exalt with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins. And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him." \*

Precisely the same is true of the Hellenistic St. Stephen. His speech was cut short by the fury of his audience, but not before the drift had become clearly discernible. The summary of the dealings of God with Israel in the Old Testament leads up to the statement that those to whom he spoke had become the murderers of that Righteous One whose coming had been foreshewn by the persecuted prophets. It is clear that his gospel was to be developed upon the same lines as that of the Twelve. His last words are noteworthy as containing a remarkable parallel to the Epistle to the Hebrews—"Ye who received the law as it was ordained by angels, and kept it not." † And his dying vision is that of "the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." ‡

The priestly mediation of Jesus, of which His

\* Acts v. 30-32.

† Ibid. vii. 53.

‡ Ibid. vii. 56.

death is the embodiment, and His exaltation the divine acceptance, is not only the subject of the Epistle to the Hebrews, but is itself the message of the gospel. He is God's Apostle in His capacity as priest. This means an entirely different view of the proportions of the Christian Faith from that with which we have been made familiar by the teaching, for example, of the late Bishop Westcott, whose interpretation of this epistle is, if my view be correct, prejudicially affected by the general point of sight which he adopts. There is, as I believe, in the New Testament no gospel of the Incarnation as such, far less a gospel of creation. The Scriptures give us no warrant for speculation as to whether the Word would have become flesh independently of the actual conditions under which God intervened in human life. Christ is not presented as the necessary consummator of a development which, apart from the fact of sin, would have been incomplete without Him. We simply do not know what such a development would have meant. But He is the reconciler, His death being the essential feature in this historical manifestation: "I am the living one, and I became dead."\* To acknowledge this is of the highest impor-

\* Rev. i. 18.

tance if we are to appreciate the self-surrender and voluntary love of God, the debt we owe Him, and the dependence in which we stand towards His Christ, who for our sakes became poor, took upon Him" (the exact expression which follows should be noticed) "the form of a slave,"\* and endured the cross. And it enables us to understand what the writer of Hebrews means by God speaking to us in a Son. He does not mean us to dwell upon the Incarnate Son as an object of contemplation, His personality, His teaching, His self-expression as a revelation of the Eternal Father, and then to go on to consider His redeeming work. He has not really omitted to develop in detail the work of the Son as the Apostle, referring us, as it were, to the Gospel according to St. John for a fuller treatment of the subject. No, God's speech is nothing else but the facts of the sufferings of Christ and the glory in which they issued. "When He had made purification of sins, He sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high."

In what has just been said there emerges a great principle of Divine Revelation. Facts are God's speech, the silent teachers whereby we discern His nature and purpose. "There is neither voice nor language, but their voices

\* Phil. ii. 6.



are heard." Words are really an indirect method of revelation, a human commentary upon facts. When we speak of the Word of God, we are transferring a term which carries with it the associations of what is an imperfect representation of reality to the realm of reality itself. And there is this important difference between words and facts. It is the function of the former to reveal, while the latter only reveal in the cause of discharging another purpose. Does not this enable us to see the real relation of the Work of Christ to the revelation of His Person? He did not come into the world as a higher kind of prophet to proclaim the truth of God's love, but as a Redeemer whose task was to do the will of Him that sent Him in making atonement for the sins of the world. And the revelation which this affords of the supreme love of God is parallel to the manifestation of His eternal power and wisdom which is given in the processes of the natural world. "Herein," as St. John puts it, "was the love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him." \*

\* 1 John iv. 9.



## II

### INCARNATION AND ATONEMENT

WE must now go on to inquire how the doctrine of the Incarnation is related to the primary presentation of the gospel in the Epistle to the Hebrews. We have already noticed that the writer introduces into his opening statement a clause which is not explicit in the earliest form of the gospel message. St. Peter declares that Jesus is a Prince and a Saviour in consequence of His exaltation to the right hand of God. The Epistle to the Hebrews connects this Sonship with a very explicit doctrine of pre-existence: "Whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; being the effulgence of His glory, and the very image of His substance." The relative clauses, it is evident, are intended to explain what is meant in describing this new medium of manifestation

as "a son." The language undoubtedly identifies Jesus with God, or, if another phrase less suggestive of metaphysical implication be desired, we may follow Dr. Denney in saying that it puts Him on the side of God in relation to ourselves. This, of course, is antecedent to His human career, and cannot be mistaken, therefore, for a mere honorary apotheosis. And it undoubtedly goes further in explicit statement than the primitive preaching. St. Paul may perhaps be said to imply it in the thirteenth of Acts when, like the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, he quotes the words of the second Psalm, "Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee." But, though it is certain that at a later date he asserted the pre-existence of Jesus, in language akin to the writer in this passage, in the Acts he is emphasising the resurrection, and he might even be taken to mean that this great event was in some sense the begetting of the Son. The second Psalm itself is one of that group of Messianic passages, in which it must remain uncertain how far the Lord's Anointed was regarded as in fact or only in the divine intention pre-existent. What we see, then, both in Hebrews and in Philippians and Colossians is a distinct stride to a wider expression of

the universality of the Son's Personality. A there are two questions which arise : (1) Whence does this assertion of the pre-existence of Christ before all worlds arise? (2) What is its place in the fulness of the Christian teaching with regard to His work?

To take the second question first, we shall find its significance if we try to understand the meaning of the phrase, "He taketh hold of the seed of Abraham."\* It is remarkable, as are all the other phrases which in the New Testament describe the bringing into the world of the only-begotten,—“The Word became flesh”;† “God sent forth his Son.”‡ They are none of them the natural description of the entrance into life of an ordinary human being. Here the contrast is between taking hold of the race of Abraham and taking hold of angels. To appreciate this we have to look back to the fourth verse of the first chapter where the Son is spoken of as “so much better than the angels, as He hath inherited a more excellent name than they.”§ This is followed by the citation of the second Psalm, with its assertion of the superiority of the anointed Son to the angels who are ministering

\* Heb. ii. 16, cf. Isa. xli. 8, 9.

† John i. 14.

‡ Gal. iv. 4.

§ Heb. i. 4.

spirits. The sequence of thought is shown in the second chapter where the prophetic revelation of the Old Testament, of which the Law is the centre and symbol, is called "the word spoken through angels."\* This is exactly parallel to the phraseology used by St. Stephen, as quoted above, in his indictment of the Jews for not having kept "the law as it was ordained by angels."† So St. Paul in the Epistle to the Galatians speaks of the Law as having come in between the promise and the fulfilment, being "ordained through angels in the hand of a mediator."‡ The point of this is that the revelation of the Old Covenant was not, as it were, the direct action of God Himself, but was in its very nature second-hand, involving as its human and historical side the mediation of Moses and those who followed him as interpreters of the Divine Will, and on its heavenly side, as the Rabbis taught, the ministry of angels. St. Stephen represents what in the Old Testament is the direct intercourse on Sinai between Jehovah and Moses, as conducted through "the angel which spake to him in the mount."§

Let it then be understood that "the angels"

\* Heb. ii. 2.

† Gal. iii. 19

‡ Acts vii. 53.

§ Acts vii. 38.

stand in the present argument for the Old Covenant at the point, so to speak, where it links itself on to God, and the meaning of an otherwise obscure discussion becomes plain. That Old Covenant with its system of law and prophecy was not in itself redemptive. It was therefore not part of the direct creative activity of God Himself, but a ministration of service mediated on the earthly side through human agents to those who in the providence of God were afterwards to inherit the promise. On the heavenly side it was a service of angels. "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation?"\* It was not in itself a method of salvation; on the contrary, it was, as St. Paul had expressed it, a "ministration of death." It was in word rather than fact; a "schoolmaster to bring us to Christ." It had a shadow of good things to come, but was not itself the reality.

The Son, then, as the writer of Hebrews expresses it, did not take hold of the nature of angels. The matter is viewed from the Godward side. Looked at from the human side this would mean that in Jesus of Nazareth we do not see one of the prophets, not even

\* Heb. i. 14.



the greatest of them. He is not the same as those who spoke in many parts, and in many modes to the fathers within the circle of the angelic covenant, but is expressly contrasted with them. He is not a missionary to the human race, a servant whose task it is to warn and to interpret. We do not think of Him as a mere "voice," like Isaiah, Jeremiah, John the Baptist. The personality, the relation to the race of such as these is of no importance. They may appear out of the mists like Elijah; but, on the other hand, they may be like Elisha, the holy man of God who passes by continually, and whose father and mother we know. Enough that they discharged their ministration to men by delivering the message with which they were entrusted.

But the Son lays hold of the seed of Abraham. It is the immediate and direct relation to the race, not as springing from it, but as gathering it all up into vitalising contact with Himself, that the language is meant to suggest. We need to go back for several verses in order to appreciate its full force. In the fourth verse of the second chapter reference has been made to the signs that accompanied the Apostolic witness. This was the manifestation in the Church of that glorious life of the risen

and exalted Christ, which He received from the Father, the powers of the world to come. This was a supremacy which did not belong to the angels, nor to that dispensation whereof they were the ministers. "John did no miracle." It was by the truth of what was said that the prophets were judged. But in the eighth Psalm is celebrated the dominion, the crown of glory, of which the human race—man and the Son of man as it is there called—was the destined inheritor. There is the same appeal to the experience which we possess of the noble aspirations and soaring ambitions of our nature, which breaks out in *Hamlet*: "What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! . . . in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god!" It is the cry of the great human heart within us which reaches upward above principalities and powers. "Thou has made him but little lower than the Elohim"\* is the meaning of the Hebrew; he is partaker of the divine nature. But there is the other side of the picture. Just as Hamlet cries, "Man delights me not," so the Psalmist asks, "What, after all, is man, and what is the Son of man?" When our thoughts dwell upon the heavens which are

\* Heb. ii. 7, cf. Psa. viii. 4-6.

the work of God's fingers, the moon and the stars which He has ordained, man is indeed lower, not only than God, but than the very angels, who are His messengers. The vastness of the universe was appalling then, as it is now, when the eye gazes into its abysses, and the mind contemplates its infinite space. Human weakness in the presence of forces that must finally crush is as real an experience as the other, and induces a despairing pessimism. The spirit would fain enjoy the freedom of glorious life, but through fear of death is all its lifetime subject to bondage. "We see not yet all things put under him." This is the commentary of daily experience upon the enthusiasm of the Psalmist.

Yes, but we see Jesus. It is an appeal to the experience of the worshipping Church. His very name is human; He is Himself made lower than the angels, of whose succours in the hour of mortal agony He becomes the recipient, wearing the form of a slave and sweating great drops of blood under stress of that fear of death which is the symbol and evidence of human servitude. We see Jesus exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, crowned with glory and honour in virtue of that very suffering of death which is the badge of man's

humiliation. This suffering is the necessary presupposition of that eucharistic life, that voice of thanksgiving in the Church, which is the present experience of Christians. This the writer expresses in the words of the second part of the twenty-second Psalm: "I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto thee."\* Jesus Himself had precented the Psalm on Calvary: "My God! My God! why hast thou forsaken me?" Its desolation and pain had all been summed up in His own experience: the piercing of the feet, the parting of the garments, the dereliction, the dust of death. Now the declaration of the gospel message to those who were His own flesh and blood, and the praise of the great congregation which followed upon it is the consummation of Christ's victory.

Clearly, then, the exaltation of Jesus is not for Himself alone. He carries up with Him those whom He is not ashamed to call His brethren—nay those who, because they are dependent on what He has done on their behalf, may even be spoken of, in the language of Isaiah, as "the children which God hath given" † Him, those who have cleaved to Him

\* Ver. 22.

† Heb. ii. 13.



as a result of that act of personal confidence in God, whereby He has been brought through His ordeal of pain. Thus in Christ the dominion of man over all things, his exaltation above the angels, which apart from Christ we do not see, has in fact been attained. The sons of men reign with Him, they are exalted in the words of the Ascension Collect to the same place whither their Saviour Christ has gone before. Sonship, freedom, and royalty are mediated to them through Jesus. So we get, as sooner or later is inevitable by whatever road we travel, to the priesthood of Him who is pre-eminently Son of man.

It is in the light of this idea that we must understand the words: "It became him, on account of whom are all things and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain (or author) of their salvation perfect through sufferings." \* The problem, so to speak, which was before the Lord of the universe was to bring many sons—*i.e.*, the whole human race—to glory. Salvation is the means, the channel, through which for all and each this consummation was to be reached. He who accomplishes this salvation on behalf of men is their mediator,

\* Heb. ii. 10.



their priest. It is at this point that the writer translates almost unconsciously the primitive gospel of the Prince and the Saviour into the language of sacrifice. And we shall not follow his thought unless we recognise that all the terms here employed have a sacerdotal meaning. Thus "he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one."\* We must understand the verb here used in the ritualistic sense of consecration. There is no thought here of him who imparts and they who receive the gift of holiness. The consecration without which no man shall see the Lord is in the thought of this epistle that preliminary preparation of a new and living way, absolutely independent of their own efforts, whereby men may be brought as sons into the presence of a propitious Father. What the priest does on their behalf is to consummate the propitiatory rites. And that surely is what is meant by the phrase, "to make perfect through sufferings." The language is sacrificial not moral. There is no idea of a progress in personal holiness wrought out by the discipline of pain. Whether that would be true of our Lord or not is nothing to the point. The writer means to say that suffering was the

\* Heb. ii. 11.

appropriate ritual of sacrifice, whereby God's priest must be made perfect, or complete his initiation as the mediator of mankind. Some other offering might have sufficed if any other race of beings were to be introduced to the glory of God. But the suffering of death was the only possible atonement for those on behalf of whom it was, as a matter of fact, his task to act as priest. Or to translate the thought into the language of the original gospel, it was only through death that the Messiah could be exalted as a Prince and a Saviour for to give remission of sins.

Indeed, in this passage the various figures under which redemption may be expressed are intimately interwoven. Just as St. Paul passes almost imperceptibly from his ordinary methods of expressing the work of Christ into the use of terms like "propitiation," \* which is rather characteristic of the Epistle to the Hebrews, so here the writer blends the various ideas. It is not the Priest but the Prince of Salvation who attains his consecration through suffering.† And the argument suddenly changes in its course, in order to present another side of the work of Christ which largely occupied the mind of the Divine Sufferer Himself at the crisis of the

\* Rom. iii. 25.

† Heb. ii. 10.

Passion according to the narrative of St. John, and which prominently represented to St. Paul's thought the meaning of the gospel: "he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are of one." This, as we saw above, is a sacerdotal idea. That is closely followed by another point of view: "since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."\* That view of His Death which represents it as a hand-to-hand conflict with Satan, in which Jesus Christ was victorious, was prominent in the Saviour's own mind as the Passion drew to its consummation. "The prince of the world cometh, and he hath nothing in me."† "Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out."‡ The mystery which we feel rather than understand is that sin could only be overcome by suffering, and death by dying. And the point of it all is that it was a victory won on behalf of others. "For their sakes"—for "the children whom God hath given me"—"I sanctify myself."§ It was to turn mankind from the power of Satan unto God, and thus to

\* Heb. ii. 14.

† Ibid. xii. 31.

‡ John xiv. 30.

§ Ibid. xvii. 19.

give them an inheritance among the consecrated. He tastes death on behalf of every man, that all may be delivered from him who has the power of death.

This brings out with clear emphasis the unique character of Christ's work. He takes hold of the human race, to use once again the writer's striking phrase, in order that He may withdraw it from the power of Satan and hand it over to God. It is thus a work done once for all—consummated, accomplished without assistance or co-operation on the part of those who, as children, do nothing but inherit the results. "It is finished." And this is still further emphasised in the concluding verses of the paragraph when we revert to the figure, if indeed we may so call what has become interwoven with the very texture of Christian ideas, of the eternal priest.

But some care is needed in order to separate the essential meaning of what is here said from associations that inevitably cling to the language. "Wherefore it behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest."\* The first adjective "merciful" is apt, if we are not careful, to deflect our minds from the plane of the writer's thought. Notice that it is in "the things that

\* Heb. ii. 17.



look towards God" that the priest acts. Elsewhere it is laid down that this is the appropriate sphere of sacerdotal activity—"Every high priest is appointed on behalf of men in things that look towards God,"\* *i.e.*, his face is towards God, his action on behalf of men is directed not towards men themselves but towards God. It is still further defined as "to offer both gifts and sacrifices." And this in respect of Christ is here expressed in the words, "to make propitiation for the sins of the people."† The verb here employed is the regular ritual word for that action whereby the face of God is made propitious. Clearly it is that work which precedes His exaltation as a Prince and a Saviour, and of the acceptance of which His glory is the sign, not that subsequent intercession of which mention is made later, that is here indicated. It is identical with the purification of sins of which the third verse of the first chapter speaks. Much has been said about the presentation of the blood within the sanctuary as constituting the true priestly oblation. But this, as will appear more fully on a later page, is a misunderstanding of the epistle. Christ has been exalted to the right hand of God, and thereby has brought many sons to glory. The salvation

\* Heb. v. 1.

† Ibid. ii. 17.



and sonship is ours already in virtue of a finished work, and the question is simply how shall we escape if we neglect it.\* The suffering of death † is the essential act in the ministry of the eternal Priest, just as in St. Paul's gospel it is Christ crucified that is placarded before the eyes of men.‡ I do not know what exactly is meant by the phrase that we often hear repeated, that death was the means to the liberation of the life, and, as it were, an incident, though a necessary one, in its presentation. Hebrews represents whatever happens after Calvary as the application of what was there transacted to those who become partakers of the New Covenant in Christ's Blood.

The mercifulness of the High Priest, no less than His faithfulness, is connected with His main function. The latter we readily understand. He must be faithful to Him that appointed Him in fulfilling with thoroughness the task committed to Him; faithful, that is, in building that house of God, which is the Church, upon the foundation of His oblation of Himself. But what are we to understand by "merciful"—a "merciful high priest"? It is further explained both in this and subsequent passages. He who has himself suffered being tempted is able to

\* Heb. ii. 3.

† Ibid. ii. 9.

‡ Gal. iii. 1.

succour them also who are tempted. "He can bear gently with the ignorant and erring, for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity." \* This is said not of Jesus only. The writer means that this sympathy with human weakness is essential to the very character of a priest. But does that mean that he must enter into the sorrows of others so that he may relieve them by a manifestation of sympathy? Does it mean that he may be able to bestow blessings upon his brothers, who are suffering as he has suffered? It is sometimes pointed out that the priesthood here ascribed to our Lord is after the order of Melchisedek, and is therefore a priesthood of blessing rather than of sacrifice. But, if we assent to this, we must still ask what form the blessing takes. And here we are met with a remarkable coincidence with the primitive preaching. "Unto you first," says St. Peter to the Jews, "God, having raised up his Servant, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities." † The form, then, which the blessing takes is the forgiveness of sins, which is correlative to the sin-bearing of the Servant, and this brings us back to the Cross. But, indeed, no interpretation which seeks to differentiate the Melchisedek priesthood from

\* Heb. v. 2.

† Acts iii. 26.

the Levitical in this particular will bear examination. It is a priesthood of sacrifice all through the argument that is ascribed to Christ, differing from that of Aaron as the substance from the shadow, the eternal and universal from the particular and transient. We must therefore see in the mercifulness of the High Priest a quality that fits him for the discharge, not of a manward, but of a Godward function, and that enlarges his capacity of offering. The true bearing of the epithet surely becomes apparent when we look at the practical consequence for ourselves based upon the knowledge that our High Priest is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. "Let us draw near with boldness to the throne of grace."\* It is that absolute confidence that comes from the realisation that Christ has sounded all the depths of human need, and therefore that the means of access to the Father which He has provided are entirely adequate. "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many."† Nay, more in the very place where it is laid down that the true priest must be able to bear gently with weakness, it is added, "And by reason thereof" (*i.e.*, of his share in weakness) he is bound, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins."‡ These words

\* Heb. iv. 16.

† Isa. liii. 11.

‡ Heb. v. 3.

are added, not as expressing the necessary limitations of a merely human priest, but as further describing what is involved in the idea of priesthood. It would seem that there can be no priesthood where the priest does not himself share the burden he has come to remove. Our Lord bore our sicknesses, as though their removal involved in the first instance direct contact with the disease, as though, so to speak, He drew it into His own body there to destroy it. So—

“I lay my sins on Jesus,  
The spotless Lamb of God,  
He bears them all and frees us  
From the accurséd load.”

When, therefore, it is said, “He is able to succour them also that are tempted,”\* the nature of the help given is determined by the context. It does not mean, however true the thought may be in itself, that Jesus Christ was fitted by the experience of this our temptation to bear aid in the time of trial to those who have to meet the assaults of Satan. It does mean that He is able to perform the great act of succour in winning eternal redemption for all the sons of men, through the Godward act of self oblation when the offering of His body is made once for all.

\* Heb. ii. 18.



This will become still clearer if we look once again at that passage which describes the Godward activity of the true priest. "Every high priest," it declares, "is appointed on behalf of men in the things that look towards God,"\* the purpose of the appointment being, not that he may confer blessings upon men, but that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. So St. Clement of Rome speaks of our Lord as "the High Priest of our offerings." Then follows a participial clause by which He is still further defined: "Who is able by sympathy to take the exact measure of the needs of those whose characteristic it is to be erring (or ignorant) and deceived," and that for two reasons: (a) because he shares the infirmity, (b) because in consequence he shares in the propitiation which he offers. It is in this point that the priest, who effects salvation, differs essentially from the prophet, who ministers to those who are to receive salvation; the servant whose ears God has opened, from the son for whom a body is prepared. The priest is consummated, capable of presenting the offering, and therefore of effecting salvation, only when he has passed through that stern discipline of human experience—its tears, its struggles, and its prayers—

\* Heb. v. 1.



which teaches him what "the obedience"\* (in a consciously theological writing like the Epistle to the Hebrews we are right, I think, in insisting upon the article) that is set before him really is, and so enables him just to make that sacrifice of the body prepared for him,† which is actually necessary.

It is further important to give full effect to the phrase descriptive of the human situation in which sinners are described as those "who err and are deceived." This would seem to be explained by that aspect of the Passion as a conflict with the Evil One, which is prominent in the Gospels, and which has already found a place in the argument of the epistle, when the purpose of the Atonement is described as the destruction "of him that hath the power of death, that is the devil."‡ Nothing could be clearer, as it seems to me, than the light which this passage throws on the necessity for a sympathetic acquaintance on the part of the Son with the sins—I do not hesitate to affirm that this is what is meant—for which He makes propitiation. It is clear that what is true of every priest must apply in fullest measure to the High-priestly Son. He is compassed with our infirmities, not that He may fully sympathise

\* Heb. v. 7, 8.

† Ibid. x. 5.

‡ Ibid. ii. 14.

with our temptations, but that He may make an availing sacrifice. And if, as is abundantly manifest, this writer insists that, though He is in all points tempted like as we are, the Saviour is Himself apart from sins,\* that only brings into higher relief the mighty truth, in the realisation of which he takes his place beside the testimony of the New Testament generally, that Christ bore our sins in His body,† that in a mystery He made our iniquities His own,‡ and that therefore the finished sacrifice of Calvary is the act whereby He makes intercession for the transgressors.

We are now in a position to sum up as briefly as may be the relation in which the Incarnation stands to the Atonement in the conception of the gospel which is set before us in the Epistle to the Hebrews. In the first place God's message to mankind in the Son is the propitiation for sins consummated on Calvary. The writer, as indeed are all the first preachers of Christianity, is supremely conscious of the presence and power of God in the fact of Christ. When we kneel before the Cross in contemplation of the Passion we indeed realise one of those moments in which, to borrow the phrase of John Henry Newman, there are but

\* Heb. iv. 15.

† 1 Peter ii. 24.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 21.

two luminously self-evident things in the whole universe, the soul and the God who made it. God-consciousness is indeed the supreme attitude of the Bible, and nowhere is it stronger than here. How our whole attitude towards the Crucifixion is changed when we inscribe over the Cross, "In the end of the days God spake to us in a Son *thus*." Here God lays hold of a human seed.

This is just one of those remarkable expressions which at once lead us to inquire how these apostolic teachers understood the entrance of the Christ into the world. It is accompanied with those significant phrases descriptive of His pre-existence which occur in the opening sentences of Hebrews, and have, as we know, their parallel in St. Paul, but are not found in the records of the primitive preaching—I mean such phrases as "the express image of his substance," "upholding all things through the word of his power," "through whom also he made the worlds," "He bringeth the only-begotten into the world." The crucified is the very God. Some of those, who would seem to have been baptized on the strength of the primitive preaching, very soon, as we know, betrayed a limitation of vision, far removed from this apostolic view of the Son, and

as Ebionites fell away from the main stream of apostolic witness. How are we to account for the unhesitating language of the New Testament, not elaborated as the conclusion of a long discussion, but assumed as the premiss of these interpretations of the gospel? I am increasingly convinced that there is only one thing that can explain it, which is, that like all the early teaching it is the interpretation, the inevitable interpretation of a fact. "Hidden from the prince of this world," says Ignatius in his Epistle to the Ephesians, written within a very few years of the death of the last apostle, "was the Virginity of Mary and her child-bearing, and likewise also the death of the Lord, three mysteries to be cried aloud—the which were wrought in the silence of God." It was the first of these, which had already begun to be repudiated among the Ebionites. There are to-day many orthodox believers, who are not particularly disposed to deny the article of the creed which affirms that Jesus Christ was "conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary," but who fail to perceive its intimate relation to the essential teaching of Christianity. I do not myself think that the primitive gospel would have long survived unless those who



preached it had been able unhesitatingly to affirm with St. Paul, not that Jesus was born, but that God sent forth His Son, and that when He took upon Him to deliver man, He did not abhor the Virgin's womb. What had happened between the Pentecostal preaching and the composition of the Epistle to the Hebrews was the publication within the Christian Society of the Virgin birth.

But if the thought uppermost in our minds must always be that with which the twenty-second Psalm ends, "He hath done it,"\* God Himself has wrought salvation, it must be closely followed by that bold assertion of the real humanity of the Son which is a conspicuous feature of the Epistle to the Hebrews. This is a conviction which rests, not upon any conclusions drawn from the circumstances of His birth, but upon the facts of an actual experience. What sort of a birth it was necessary for Him to have in order that He might become fully man is a question which it is irrelevant to discuss. It is His prayers, His sufferings, His disappointments, His agonies of decision, His strong crying and tears which are the irrefragable evidence that He was in all points tempted like as we are. His power to forgive

\* Ver. 31, R.V.



sins is something that has been brought down to this very earth, and is thus available for our salvation. This teaching of the Incarnation may no doubt develop, and has developed, into a Christian philosophy of life which illuminates many problems and unifies our conceptions of Nature. Only let us see to it always and everywhere that our preaching has the true Christian focus, and finds its centre in the Cross.

In the beautiful city of flowers, which is the chief glory of the Vale of Arno, is gathered that wealth of marvellous beauty which witnesses to the glory of the Word made Flesh. But when the day came for me to pay my first visit to the convent of San Marco, I passed along the dim corridors, where one by one the eye rests upon the frescoes of a Fra Angelico with their celestial tenderness, till I reached the little flight of steps which leads to the prior's cell. There was his desk, his chair, and his crucifix; and turning to the wall whereon hung the old faded banner of Savonarola, the tears welled up as I read the most wonderful legend in all Florence: "NOS PREDICAMVS CHRISTVM CRVCIFIXUM."

### III

## THE PASSING OF THE OLD

THE Hebrews, to whom this epistle was addressed, were face to face with a prospect which was full of terror and dismay for every faithful Israelite, the final ruin by the relentless force of Roman arms of a temple and city the very existence of which was bound up in the imagination of the nation with the Everlasting Covenant. Was God's covenant of day and night itself about to fail? Was there nothing stable to which faith and hope might cling? Those were the questions that would inevitably take possession of the minds of the children of Abraham, and perhaps with all the more disturbing force, if they had been brought to recognise in Jesus the consolation of their race. But it is doubtful whether as yet the trend of events had become so clear to the vision of this community of Jewish Christians

that they could discern, as clearly as the author of the epistle, that the venerable system in which they had been reared was "nigh unto vanishing away."\* No doubt the great argument, with which we are concerned, was intended to preserve them against the moral and spiritual dangers which must attend "the removing of those things that are shaken,"† by creating a fresh assurance that the inheritance which as Christians they had received was "a kingdom that cannot be shaken."‡ But the trouble with which the Hebrews themselves saw that they were encompassed was probably, as Westcott points out, something more immediate. For it is something in the nature of persecution that the writer seems to contemplate, some last stroke of fanatical, unbelieving rage on the part of their fellow-countrymen, something that he expresses under the figure of going forth to Jesus "without the camp, bearing His reproach."§ "The gainsaying of sinners against themselves" || which they had hitherto endured, the patience with which they had suffered, was not yet to be compared with the patience of Christ, with that resistance unto blood where-with He had striven against sin. Like all

\* Heb. viii. 13.

† Ibid. xii. 27.

‡ Ibid. xii. 28.

§ Ibid. xiii. 13.

|| Ibid. xii. 3.

disciples, who see plainly enough some portion of the pain which their confession must involve, they could not know, until time cleared the issues, all the bitterness of Christian loyalty. "We are able"\* is not only an initial venture which all must make, it is an ideal which can never cease to be in front of those who with hands that often hang down and feeble knees struggle forward to its attainment. The immediate prospect, then, was probably exclusion, not only from the synagogue, but from the Temple itself. It is only inveterate prejudice, belonging to the imagination rather than the reason, and refusing to believe that Christianity could ever have seemed to involve what we ourselves have no temptation to associate with it, which fails to perceive what a staggering shock would be given to the faith of many by denial of their place in "the covenant," of that entrance by representation into the holy place which no effort of fancy, as it would seem, could dissociate from communion with God. It was by continual attendance, like Anna, upon the praises of Israel in the Temple courts that apostles themselves had realised their newborn joy in the Ascended Master. It was at the Beautiful Gate that Peter and John had attested

\* Mark. x. 39.

the real presence of the Unseen Lord when they made the lame man to leap as an hart. Even the stout Apostle Paul, who had stirred many misgivings in the hearts of the believers by his Luther-like paradoxes—"If ye receive circumcision, Christ will profit you nothing,"\* and the like—had undertaken long and arduous journeys to keep the feast at Jerusalem. But neither the sender nor the recipients of this letter seem to have been touched with a Pauline "liberalism." They were probably much more like the author of Second Peter, who found in "our beloved brother"† many things that were at least "hard to be understood." They did not think in paradoxes. They were, like most of us, all for tradition, for continuity, for dove-tailing the new with the old experience. They believed in the Messiah, accepting the first principles of repentance and faith in His Resurrection. But they could not view with complacency the loss of the Temple with all its associations of reality and religion. To some it might even seem more natural to forsake the assembling of themselves together as Christians than to abandon a worship hallowed by a thousand memories, recommended by a thousand loyalties.

\* Gal. v. 2.

† Chap. iii. 15.



This, then, is the situation which has to be met. Let us try to remember that the issue was by no means sharply defined. Men do not always think clearly. It is, after all, only the minds of exceptional power that can take in at a glance the essential points of a position. Forbearance would be a much commoner virtue than it is if we could realise this. It is by no means clear that even the familiar dilemma of the first three centuries—"Christ or Cæsar"—was always a well-defined choice between a brave confession and a timorous compliance. The oblation of incense before an imperial statue was a mark of political allegiance, and to provoke a conflict between Church and State is not the action of wise Christian statesmanship. The dangers attending the separation of the Church from Judaism were graver even than these, because the complications were infinitely more serious. To explain all the promises of the Old Testament, as though they were sufficiently satisfied thereby, of a Christian society, which admitted Israelites to its membership on no other basis than that of a common humanity, was scarcely ingenuous. It was as if a king were asked to accept the position of an ordinary voter in a democratic republic as a sufficient discharge of the most solemn

pledges of a secure authority. Nor had St. Paul himself dreamed of an interpretation of Scripture so fatal to the good faith of God as this. If the Gentiles were fellow-heirs with the Jews, this was not because Jerusalem had been destroyed, but because the middle wall of partition had been broken down.\* To him as to all the apostles the Jew was ever first.† And he who declares in the very spirit of Moses that he could wish himself accursed from God for the sake of his brethren makes it clear in the Epistle to the Romans that, while, alas! a hardening in part had befallen Israel, nevertheless their unbelief could not cancel the promises, that the prerogative of the Jew was precisely what it had been, and that, so far from their conversion being a mere incident in the enlargement of the Christian Church, the receiving of them would in fact be nothing short of life from the dead.‡

But it is just this last phrase that indicates the true line of demarcation between the faithful and the unbelieving, and, when the unanswerable logic of facts indicates what the immediate future is to be, enables the discerning spirit to distinguish between the transient and the permanent, and gives birth to an epistle to

\* Eph. ii. 14.

† Rom. i. 16.

‡ Chap. xi. 15, 25, &c.

the Hebrews. "The sure mercies of David,"\* the promise made to a thousand generations, because it is divine, is in other keeping than ours, even in the hands of Him who "fulfils Himself in many ways." What was the whole history of God's purpose as it consummated itself in Christ but a commentary on the principle of life from the dead, of resurrection and revival with which human expectation of the lines which fulfilment must necessarily take had nothing whatever to do? God's love finds out the way, where to us there is no prospect but apparent failure. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."† With God anticipation is never better than the reality, which springs out of the very defeat of a baffled anticipation. While, therefore, with all charity to Gentile believers, the Jewish Christians were not only justified but even bound not to sever their connection with the Temple, which was not only the palladium of Hebrew nationality but the symbol of the ancient covenant, so long as its gates stood open for their entrance; a new duty was imposed upon them, when through human malignity, closely followed by divine vengeance, the door was being shut. It has been always

\* Isa. lv. 3.

† John ii. 19.

thus in the development of God's purpose in Christ. The plan of salvation cannot be thought out as in the study of a theologian, so that once for all it can be understood what are the limits of the essential, what the transitory elements. Even apostles had to beat out their theology amid the changes of a rapid experience. It was not for the people of God to destroy the Temple. But if God Himself was depriving them of it, the Christians must believe that facts can never be inconsistent with the completion of His purpose, they must leave Him to build again the tabernacle of David that was broken down, and through the guiding of the Eternal Spirit learn to believe that the worship of Zion which they had loved was after all but the shadow of those good things which are the abiding inheritance of the saints.

Again and again has the pride or faithlessness of Christian men presumed to take the promises of God into its own hands and to dictate the terms upon which the pledge of Christ must be fulfilled and the gates of hell be powerless to prevail against the Church. The one thing that is infallible is God's promises, and the way in which in the past He has fulfilled them ought surely to teach



His children the lesson of patience and humility. There is something eminently sacrilegious in the way in which men battle against the plain facts of history in the endeavour to secure an infallibility upon their own terms. We had far better leave our Lord God to look after infallibility Himself. Remembering the years of the right hand of the Most High, we may indeed say that He has proved Himself worthy of the trust. Pope, council, creed, or Bible—it is all one which of these we erect into the criterion of God's faithfulness, or whether we have some institution of our own whose existence we regard as the article of a standing or a falling church, like the snap-dragon on the wall between Balliol and Trinity, which Norman took as the symbol of his perpetual residence in the University. There the symbol outlived the thing signified, but the reverse may equally well be the case. It is a sure sign that faith is beginning to fail when we declare our intention of retiring into lay communion, or denying our whole experience by some ecclesiastical *volte face*, or doing something of a drastic and desperate nature, if some contingencies that are both far more likely and infinitely less alarming than the disappearance of the Temple must



have seemed to primitive Christians, are converted into accomplished facts. Really great Christians never have nerves, which are neither catholic nor apostolic. They paralyse corporate action. They create diplomatic episcopates. They make sectional interests into nasty, jagged rocks amid which it is the highest art of ecclesiastical statesmanship effectively to steer. Now the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews kept his eye steadily upon the approaching fact. Whether they would or not, Christians were no longer to have communion with that altar of which the children of Abraham had the ancestral right to eat. With tender, loving sympathy he deals with those to whom this exclusion is indeed a fiery trial. His joy in an all-sufficient Christ is not unmingled with a natural, human regret for that which is waxing old and vanishing. He has no jibes about Aaron's wardrobe or the rubbish of ritual. Nay, rather that majestic system bears its indispensable witness to the Messiah. He dwells upon its details, as the transfigured Christ Himself talked with Moses and Elijah in the holy mount. But when at length the Old Covenant has yielded up its witness we pass from this converse to see Jesus only. And how vastly has the new ex-

perience enriched for all time the Person and the Work of Him who gave His life a ransom for many. Nothing could more effectively prove the inspiration of this writer than the light which for all time He has thrown upon the suffering and victorious Son of Man.

Multitudes, who have no sympathy with the Levitical worship as such, and to whom it is barely intelligible that the passing of a barbarous system of animal sacrifice should ever have threatened the faith of Christian believers, have found comfort and peace in the thought of the Eternal Priest, through the oblation of whose Body they have found access to the Throne of a Father's grace. They would even resent the suggestion that this aspect of Redemption is after all a figure, if not a metaphor, a point of view, if not an imperfect realisation of the evangelical fact. But it must have required no ordinary courage to write the Epistle to the Hebrews. It would be contrary to all analogy to suppose that its perusal among a community, to which hitherto the assumptions of the Epistle of St. James had seemed entirely adequate, would cause misgiving or debate, and even precipitate those apostasies which, when the last excommunication was launched, were certain to arise. And, when the clouds of the final disaster

clear away, we see those sects of imperfect, hesitating disciples, which go by the name of Ebionites and Nazareans, dragging out a brief existence alongside the Apostolic Church. There is always loss and gain. But who that has read the Hebrew epistle will for one moment doubt that the cleavage, which is inevitable from the wielding of the two-edged sword of the active and living Word, was not too great a price? There is "a removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that have been made, that those things that are not shaken may remain." Whatever else may perish, one conviction abides, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day yea, and for ever." \*

\* Heb. xiii. 8.

## IV

### THE SANCTUARY OF THIS WORLD

WHAT does the Epistle to the Hebrews mean by the adjective made-with-hands (*χειροποίητος*)? The answer to this question at once carries us deep into the heart of its teaching. The Mosaic shrine is "a holy place made with hands" \* as distinguished from the "more perfect tabernacle not made with hands." † The epithet would have associations for the first readers of the epistle that would not be altogether happy. It is the word used in the Septuagint to describe graven images, "the work of men's hands, wood and stone." ‡ In St. Mark's account of the trial of Jesus, the false witnesses are reported as ascribing to Him the words, "I will destroy this temple that is made with hands." § But there was disagree-

\* Heb. ix. 24.

† Ibid. ix. 11.

‡ Psa. cxv. 4.

§ Chap. xiv. 58.

ment in their testimony, and the reference in St. Matthew \* to the famous utterance suggests that the form in which it is preserved by the Fourth Gospel, where the epithet does not occur, more accurately represents the original statement. It is different, however, with the speech of the Alexandrian Stephen, which with its account of the tabernacle in the wilderness has, as we have already seen, a close bearing on this epistle. It is significant that when he comes to the replacement of this tabernacle, made according to the figure that Moses had seen, by the Temple of Solomon, he exclaims, "Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in *houses* made with hands!" † What stirred the fury of the unbelieving Sanhedrin, with its suggestion that they were no better than idolaters, could not but arrest the attention even of the Hebrew Christians.

A short study of the text will, I think, make it clear that it is human construction, not material embodiment, that the word is intended to represent. The passage from the later Isaiah, which St. Stephen quotes to attest his statement, if it declares that the heaven is God's throne, asserts also that the earth is His footstool. ‡ It is only when a house, "your house" § as Christ

\* Chap. xxvi. 61.

† Ibid.

‡ Acts vii. 48.

§ Matt. xxiii. 38.



Himself had called the earthly sanctuary, is identified with the Temple of the Lord, that there bursts forth the indignant question, "What manner of house will ye build me . . . or what is the place of my rest?" To deny that "the earth is the Lord's" would be to contradict not only a first principle of the life of the Son of God, "through whom also he made the worlds," as the Epistle to the Hebrews has it, but one of the main lines of its argument concerning Christ, that a body was prepared Him wherewith to offer.\* And, when we look more closely at the precise context in which the epithet appears, it becomes obvious that it is the human, not the material element, in the tabernacle which confines it to the sphere of representation. The holy place made with hands is "like in pattern to the true."† Here again the writer is anticipated by St. Stephen who had recalled the statement of Exodus concerning Moses, that he was bidden to "make it according to the figure that he had seen."‡ "See, saith he," is the corresponding passage in Hebrews, "that thou make all things according to the pattern that was showed thee in the mount."§ The point surely is that the tabernacle is not

\* Heb. x. 5, 10.

† Ibid. ix. 24.

‡ Acts vii. 44.

§ Heb. viii. 5.

a direct expression of the Divine Mind, which was disclosed only to its architect amid the darkness of Sinai. Moses alone saw the pattern. Inspired though he may have been, nevertheless the tabernacle, as Israel viewed it, was the offspring of his intelligence, the work of human hands, a figure of the true, and not the very image of the heavenly things themselves. So we have the interpretation of his own epithet, which the writer of Hebrews himself gives—"not made with hands" (he is speaking of the greater tabernacle), "that is to say, not of this creation."\* This does not mean "immaterial" as is shown by the words that immediately follow, where the blood of goats and calves is contrasted with the Blood of Christ. The former is "of this creation" in a sense that the latter is not, although material substance may be predicated of both. But the Blood of Christ, like the greater tabernacle, does not belong to this creation, because it belongs to the realm of fact not of representation, because it is related immediately to the Maker of the Universe and is not mediated through human thought. This point will best be illustrated by one or two obvious examples.

A painting is "of this creation." It is

\* Heb. ix. 11.

customary to speak of a picture as an expression of the artist's thought. We need not object to this way of putting it, if it be clearly understood that he uses a material which is not his own creation. It might be more accurate to call it a representation in matter of the painter's idea. The idea itself is the Divine thing, the pattern shown to him, of which he makes a copy in the substance ready to his hand. Directly it is the construction of the man's hand. But it is God who "paints the wayside flower."

A poem is "of this creation." Words may be a more plastic medium. They may reflect more accurately the thinking mind. They are its natural and inevitable organ. Yet even words but "half reveal," while at the same time they "half conceal" the mind within. And, as a poet has himself reminded us, it is the "fancies that broke through language and escaped" that the man was really "worth to God." A poem, no less than a painting, involves human mediation. St. Paul might have said of it, as he said of the Law, "it was ordained through angels in the hand of a mediator."

And the same is true of a political constitution. When Aristotle uttered his famous dictum, "Man is a political animal," he at once corrected his statement by the words "or rather

a marrying animal." By which he meant that into the constitution of cities there entered an element of convention or human arrangement, which made them artificial institutions after all, rather than material facts.

This, then, is what I conceive the author of Hebrews to mean when he calls the tabernacle a thing "of this creation"—not that it is a material fact, but a human institution, and as such capable only of reflecting eternal realities, a principle which is not affected by the admission that it was of divine appointment. If it is objected that St. Paul used the adjective "made with hands" of material, as contrasted with spiritual things, there is an obvious answer. It is one of the simplest arguments for the non-Pauline character of Hebrews that the use of words in this epistle by no means corresponds with their use by St. Paul. Instances that will at once occur are "faith" and "holiness," and the interpretation of the statement of Habakkuk that "the just shall live by his faith."\* But further, it is not at all certain that we should be right in assenting to this view of St. Paul's mind. There is only one occasion on which he uses the word in question. But the passage in Ephesians, where it occurs,

\* Cf. Rom. i. 17 and Gal. iii. 11 with Heb. x. 36-38.



is closely related to another in Colossians which employs the negative form. In either case the reference is to circumcision. In Ephesians the apostle speaks of "that which is called circumcision in the flesh, made by hands."\* And in the Colossians he tells his readers that "they were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands."† Here Lightfoot's note says "*i.e.* 'immaterial,' 'spiritual.'" But, while it must be allowed that it is "the true circumcision of the spirit" which is here in question, it must be remembered that it is in this epistle that emphasis is laid on the bodily character of the Incarnation in refutation of the Colossian heresy, and that circumcision is just one of those ceremonial observances which are before us in Hebrews. The insistence, in one case as in the other, is upon reality as distinguished from representation, not upon spirit as opposed to matter. The passage in Second Corinthians is, perhaps, more doubtful. There "the earthly house of our tabernacle" which is to be dissolved is opposed to "a house not made with hands."‡ But, heavenly and eternal though such a house is, it is still a dwelling for the spirit, and cannot therefore be itself spirit. And

\* Eph. ii. 11.

† Col. ii. 11.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 1-4.



it is not without significance that St. Paul does not say that our earthly tenement is "made with hands," and it may well be that the figure, under which he has introduced it, suggested, as perhaps it was, by our Lord's reference to the Temple, when, as the fourth evangelist comments, "He spake of the temple of His body," and by St. Stephen's speech, to which he had himself attentively listened, produced in the second half of the antithesis an epithet, the exact counterpart of which could not properly be applied to the human body even under its present transient conditions. I suggest, therefore, that there is no essential difference between St. Paul and the Epistle to the Hebrews; that with neither does realisation in matter form the point of distinction between the "earthly" and the "heavenly"; and that the worship and ceremonial of the tabernacle is described as "made with hands" because it belongs to the sphere of human representation, which is the product of the craftsman's art, not of divine fact, "whose builder and maker is God."

Those who have followed the argument so far will have perceived that, according to the view here taken of the epistle, the writer is seen to adopt the same attitude towards priesthood in its relation to Christ, which he has already

taken with regard to prophecy. The Son is differentiated from the prophets, as fact from representation. To describe the Son as the Word is, therefore, to explain the perfect by the analogy of the imperfect, and is open to all the dangers which attend the attempt to discover "natural" law in the spiritual world." The Eternal reality breaks through the form under which we try to apprehend it. Precisely the same is true when we come to express the work of Christ on our behalf and our relationship to God through Him in terms of worship and sacrifice. So closely are our ideas of the Cross interwoven with the associations of religious worship that we find it difficult to realise that the gospel was first proclaimed in language that is not sacrificial. So intimately related to our fundamental religious ideas is the instinct of ritual oblation that it is perhaps scarcely possible to develop a theological statement of what is involved in our experience of the Death of Christ without an ultimate recourse to its language. Thus St. Paul in the midst of a famous passage in the Romans, the imagery of which is mainly judicial, passes almost insensibly into the phraseology of sacrifice when he declares that God set forth Jesus "*to be a propitiation through faith in His*

blood.”\* And St. John, when in a figure similar to that of St. Paul he has spoken of Christ as “an Advocate with the Father,” immediately adds, “He is the propitiation for our sins.”† We cannot, then, wonder if some demur to the statement that to describe Christ as “our High Priest” is to take an idea from the region of human representation and apply it to the realm of divine fact, and, if we press it, may carry implications which we have no right to associate inseparably with the gospel. And yet there is nothing obviously sacrificial in the circumstances of Calvary.

The principle, which is here applied to the Old Covenant in general, is applicable to worship in general. Forms of worship are only in a secondary sense divine. They are the method by which man attempts to express in symbolic action the approach of the spirit and the surrender of the body to the eternal. Do we realise, as clearly as we might, that this is true of Christian worship and even of the forms in which we celebrate the Christian sacraments? No doubt in respect of the latter there is a divinely given element, which is clearly recognised by the Epistle to the Hebrews. In our access to God our bodies must be “washed with

\* See p. 80.

† 1 John ii. 1, 2.

pure water,"\* a plain reference to Christian baptism. And if the reference to the Eucharist is less obvious—"our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience"—it is probably, as Westcott believes, none the less real. But we are speaking of the form in which the Church has organised the celebration of these Christian institutions, and more especially of the Eucharist, as rites of worship. Even though the meal, at which the Eucharist was instituted was, if not properly the Passover, at any rate a Paschal supper, it cannot be maintained that the manner in which it has been crystallised into "the highest act of Christian worship," the liturgical forms, the denomination of the board at which the action is performed as an altar or of the minister who performs it as a priest, the traditional ritual by which it has been surrounded, are anything else but representative forms under which the Christian Church has endeavoured to express those analogies, drawn from sacrificial institutions, which seem to illuminate its essential character. I am far from seeking to disparage these forms or to suggest that our apprehension of the Sacrament is not thereby enriched. What I want to emphasise is that they belong to the sphere of

\* Heb. x. 22.



representation and may, if their limitations are not perceived, impede rather than promote our appreciation of eternal facts.

We have, for example, before our minds a picture of a celebration of the Eucharist according to the manner which is traditional in the Western Church. The priest, robed in the vestments of his office and attended by a train of white-stoled ministers, stands before the altar, and the devout mind, thinking of the action there being accomplished as in line with the ministry of the Incarnate Son, is led to represent our advocate with the Father as standing before the Throne pleading His Death for the sins of the world, and presenting the prayers and offerings of the congregation in union with His own immaculate sacrifice. So even the Methodist hymn, wonderful as it is in its realisation of the spiritual power of the Holy Communion, thinks of our Saviour as adopting the Eastward position in the act of His abiding intercession.

"Thou didst for all mankind atone,  
And *standest* now before the Throne."

But have we any right so to express the attitude of the unseen Jesus? The Christian fact as represented in the appendix of St. Mark, as proclaimed in the primitive preaching, as enshrined in the



traditional language of the creed, is symbolised in the words, "He sitteth at the right hand of God." Any expansion of this idea in human language must be implicitly contained in it. To press analogies from the forms and acts of worship may involve serious misapprehension. The author of Hebrews is betrayed into no such adaptation of the divine fact in conformity with earthly ritual. "When he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, He sat down on the right hand of God."\* The presence of the risen and ascended Christ is itself the abiding intercession, as it is accurately expressed in another hymn:—

"His manhood pleads where now it lives  
On heaven's eternal Throne."

What a vast gain in the direction both of controversial charity and Christian unity would result from an adequate appreciation on all sides of the principle from which the Epistle to the Hebrews sets out to assure its readers that all which was really valuable in the Old Covenant is fulfilled and consummated in Christ. Forms of worship belong to the order of things made with hands. As figures of the true they express and illustrate aspects of reality, but in

\* Chap. x. 12.

the last resort are not essential modes of conceiving it. Men debate the question of the sacerdotal character of the Church. Are its ministers priests? Is the table of communion properly an altar? Hebrews does not work out the analogy so far as to cover these questions. But the extension is surely not illegitimate. The writer seems to suggest it, when speaking of the outer chamber of the sanctuary, into which "the priests go in continually accomplishing the services,"\* he mentions certain details concerning it "of which things we cannot now speak severally." And, if, as we have seen, there is one hidden reference to the Eucharist in the sprinkled Blood, it is difficult to resist the suggestion that another is intended, where reference is made to the "altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle."† Nor must it be forgotten that the point of the argument concerning the replacement of many priests by the one Eternal Priest is to be sought in the succession of high priests in the line of Aaron, because by death they are hindered from continuing‡ not at all in the multiplicity of subordinate officers who perform the various ministries of the Levitical law. And there can be little doubt that when, at the end

\* Heb. ix. 6.

† Ibid. xiii. 10.

‡ Ibid. vii. 23.

of the epistle, Jesus Christ, who was brought again from the dead with the blood of the eternal covenant, is called "the *great* Shepherd of the sheep,"\* the contrast implied in the epithet has reference to those overseers, to whom, a few sentences before, the obedience of the Christian community is enjoined as to those that under a sense of accountability "watch for" their souls.† It is certain that the earliest ecclesiastical writings recognise a priestly element in the work of the Christian ministry. According to the Didaché the prophets are to receive a Levitical tithe, "for they are your chief priests." And St. Clement of Rome, who was familiar with the Epistle to the Hebrews, not only calls Christ Himself "the High Priest of our offerings," uniting the conceptions of priest and pastor in the phrase "our High Priest and Guardian Jesus Christ," but unmistakably sees in the hierarchy of Aaron an analogy for the official ministries of the Church. I do not think it can be doubted that the same analogy was present to the mind of the author of Hebrews.

But, on the other hand, it would be erroneous to assert that Christ Himself established a priesthood or to condemn those who fail to see the significance of this aspect of the Christian

\* Heb. xiii. 20.

† Ibid. xiii. 17.

eldership. St. Paul did indeed see the analogy between the Table of the Lord, and both the Hebrew altar and even the "table of demons."\* But it is a simple fact, which admits of no contradiction, that apostolic Christians did not at first perceive that the Mosaic system was destined within a few years to pass away, and that, while their assemblies were organised to some extent on the pattern of the Jewish synagogue, it was only, when causes beyond their own control were separating them from the earthly sanctuary, that they were driven to ask whether all that was vital in that cherished system was not really present in the institutions of their own society. Priests the Christian ministers were in no technical sense, because Christ in that sense was no High Priest. And it was much more evident to the first disciples than it can ever be to us "that our Lord hath sprung out of Judah; as to which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priests."† "The order of Melchizedek" belongs to a realm of ideas in which technical and constitutional considerations have no place. How futile, then, appears that process of reasoning which would decide the validity of a ministry by whether its members at their ordination purported to

\* 1 Cor. x. 14-22.

† Heb. vii. 14.



receive authority to offer sacrifice. We may believe with all our hearts that priesthood is an entirely appropriate word by which to describe their office. But so also is ministry, or pastorate, or oversight, and it would be as rational to divide the body of Christ on the application of these terms as on that of the other. The Christian minister is what he is independently of all analogies by which religious thought in various ages has sought to represent his character. If Christ, the Chief Shepherd, is a High Priest, if the chosen people of God is itself a royal priesthood, then and to that extent, and only to that extent, the ministers of Christ according to the degree of their function are priests also. But let us always beware of mingling theological representation with historical fact. Christ "made twelve that they might be with Him, and that He might send them forth."\* That is the historic root of the ministry; an event, surely, as unsacerdotal in appearance as the Cross itself. So also with the Eucharistic Bread and Wine. It is for us supremely necessary to escape alike from the denials and from the affirmations of age-long controversies, and set ourselves alongside these

\* Mark iii. 14.



primitive Christians, when from house to house they realised their fellowship in the breaking of the Bread. Theology is a matter of tremendous importance, because it represents the sum of Christian experience throughout the centuries. The man who despises such testimony, even when it is given with crude speech and broken utterance, is not to be envied. He will not learn much concerning "the deep things of God." But from theology there must always be the appeal to history. And he who would fain have the faith of a little child must track the river to its source. Never let us limit the power of an indissoluble life by the law of a carnal commandment, or imagine that because God has manifested Himself in flesh He must needs dwell in temples made with hands.

## V

### THE CHRISTIAN FACTS

THE argument of the Epistle to the Hebrews is conceived in very broad and bold outlines. We are apt not clearly to perceive this, and to imagine that it is a finely adjusted comparison between the details of Mosaic worship and the eternal realities to which they are presumed to correspond. And it is not impossible that many are warned off from the study of this great epistle because they have no taste for an ingenious correspondence of type and anti-type, drawn out with an elaboration of detail like a curate's allegory. But like the New Testament generally this epistle is of a piece with essential apostolic Christianity, in which there was nothing finicking or fine-spun. The genius which conceives it is akin rather to the majesty of Michael Angelo than to the delicacy of Van Eyck. "Thy righteousness standeth like the strong mountains: thy judgments are like

the great deep." It is the faith of a Christian in all its rugged simplicity that is set forth as fulfilling the needs which had found a temporary but incomplete satisfaction in the ritual of the Old Covenant.

The Christianity of this epistle involves no elements that are not contained in the primitive preaching.\* This may be described as the proclamation of the fact of Christ's Resurrection in its threefold significance for human life. It was an invitation addressed to all men to become members of a community which rested on a big fact, lived by a big faith, and rejoiced in a big hope. It was extended to those who had a past to be covered, a present to be empowered, and a future to be faced; to whom it was "appointed once to die and after death the judgment." The gospel, as the apostles delivered it, was one grand message, but it included a memorial, a life, an expectation. Believers must look at Christ as the Israelites gazed on the brazen serpent; they must look to Him, as the fathers to the Rock which followed them; they must look for Him, as Simeon and Anna waited for the consolation of Israel. This will become apparent if we will but take the trouble to bring together those summaries of the apostolic

\* See, however, pp. 91-94.

preaching which the Acts affords. "This Jesus," says St. Peter in the Pentecostal sermon, who had been crucified by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, "did God raise up," and "being by the right hand of God exalted," He has "received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit," and baptized into His name believers shall "receive the remission of sins." \* "Repent," he says again to the crowd that gather round the apostles on the recovery of the impotent man, "and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send the Messiah, who hath been appointed for you, *even* Jesus; whom the heaven must receive until the times of the restoration of all things." † "With great power," is the testimony of Acts, "gave the apostles their witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus." ‡ "Him did God exalt with His right hand," thus did "Peter and the apostles" deliver their witness before the Sanhedrin, "*to be* a Prince and a Saviour for to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins." § In this, as in each of the previous cases, the exaltation of the Saviour follows upon His suffering on the tree,

\* Acts ii. 33, 34.

† Ibid. iii. 19-21.

‡ Ibid. iv. 33.

§ Ibid. v. 31.

as the true interpretation of an event shameful in the eyes of men, but prevalent and powerful in the purposes of God. The report of St. Paul's earliest utterances, made with that peculiar difference which suggests his characteristic experience of the Righteous One, crucified and exalted, is in complete correspondence. "Be it known unto you, therefore, brethren, that through this man is proclaimed unto you remission of sins: and by him every one that believeth is justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." \*

Here we get to the bedrock of Christianity, the foundation of gospel fact upon which all theologies must rest. Beware of putting your trust in systems. Truth is not a matter of orthodoxy as against heresies. Faith can repose only on the inviolable thing, which neither an apostle nor an angel from heaven may change. St. Paul gives us a criterion whereby the consciousness of the Christian disciple may judge even the epistle to the Galatians and pronounce it, if need so require, an epistle of straw.† An orthodox religious system is not necessarily free from wood, hay, and stubble. What is the living secret of the

\* Acts xiii. 38, 39.

† Gal. i. 8, 9.



fellowship of believers? "The primitive community," says Harnack, "called Jesus its Lord because He had sacrificed His life for it, and because its members were convinced that He had been raised from the dead and was then sitting on the right hand of God." This nearly expresses the fundamental Christian experience as it is contained in the apostolic preaching, but not quite. Harnack further speaks of "the expectation of the *Christ's return in the near future*" as exercising a strong formative influence upon the life and faith of the early Church. But apparently he looks upon this hope as an element extraneous to the essential experience of the Christian. Like the conviction of the empty tomb, it would be to him but as the "coverings of bark," without which the tree "does not struggle up into life free and isolated." Surely bark is more essentially part of the tree's life than this use of the figure would lead us to suppose. But, be this as it may, it is clear that, if we omit the nearness of the Lord's approach, the Second Coming, which has strangely fallen into the background of Christian thought, except in minds saturated in biblical Christianity like that of the late Primus of Scotland, belongs to the very warp and weft of the evangelical proclamation. The gospel is a threefold cord:

Christ died for the Church, Christ lives in the Church, Christ comes to the Church. Let us consider these simple strands one by one.

And, first of all, the gospel of Christ crucified. This is often represented quite legitimately even in the New Testament as the whole of the message. "It is appointed unto all men once to die." . . . "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many."\* There is the one concrete fact of present experience, which represents the bondage of fear to which all their life the sons of men are subject; there, too, is the great liberating fact which, thanks be to our victorious God, turns slavery into sonship, and sorrow into joy. "Ye were called for freedom,"† writes St. Paul to the Galatians, "before whose eyes Jesus Christ was openly set forth crucified."‡ It is as though he had but one thought, one purpose, one message, when as an evangelist he had stood in their midst. "I determined," as he says elsewhere to the Corinthians, "to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified."§ Such is the permanent form of the witness to Jesus and the Resurrection, which was first given by the apostles in Jerusalem. For it was seen almost immediately that the

\* Heb. ix. 28.

† Gal. v. 13.

‡ Ibid. iii. 1.

§ 1 Cor. ii. 2.

event, which had marvellously transformed broken and despairing men into bold and triumphant champions, had revealed the Cross as God's paradox of power. The Resurrection meant a reversal of the whole relations of Death and Life. It is not the patience but the power of Calvary that became the apostolic gospel. This needs to be asserted with renewed emphasis to-day, when it is freely assumed that Christianity reaffirms the "Hebrew ideal" of the Man of Sorrows in a world which can only be conquered by the mighty. But there is something fatally unprimitive, the very reverse of what is catholic and apostolic, in a creed which can present it as the climax of the atoning work, that Christ was uplifted on the cross "to teach His brethren and inspire to suffer and to die." No. It was the charter of a world's emancipation that the first preachers of the gospel proclaimed when they published the glorious news of Christ's death. He died "that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death," that He "might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." \*

But the Apostolic Fellowship were aware of a new life astir in the midst of them as the

\* Heb. ii. 14, 15.

community of the Crucified. Pentecost was a vivid experience. The Spirit was a presence and a power, the reality of which it was no more possible to doubt than the fact of their own existence. It required no catechism, no positive instruction, no theological statement to assure the primitive believer that by entry into the society of Jesus Christ he was indeed born again, born from above. Even the world could detect the advent of some new mysterious force which put a difference between the Christians and their unbelieving neighbours. The gospel was the explanation offered to the multitude for the things which they saw and heard. The works, the activity, the life of Jesus were thus reproduced in the society and its several members. From that same source, from which come "life and breath and all things," was now shed forth upon the community a spirit which they could recognise as "the Spirit of Jesus." Jesus was now acting upon them under conditions of the Godhead. He who had told His followers that He came forth and went to God, as a Son from and to a Father, had now proved the claim in the fulfilment of His own promise of the Spirit. This belief, involving as it did in the invisible order the sense of the perpetual presence in power of Him who died, could only



be expressed in a figure, and the Church affirmed it in the formula "He sitteth at the right hand of God." This is the central mystery of the fellowship into which disciples were initiated by baptism. Let us be careful to observe its limitations, and remember that the most fully elaborated teaching concerning the "intercession" which "he ever liveth to make" imports nothing into the simple belief which is not already expressed in the statement that "he sat down at the right hand of God."\* On earth the Cross, in heaven the Presence.

But then there is the Coming. Just as the gospel may be said to be satisfied by the proclamation of Christ's Death, so far as they are concerned who are still "without God in the world," so for those who have found themselves "accepted in the Beloved," it may suffice to teach that He, in whom they have received the Reconciliation, is the "head over all things to the Church." But the primitive preaching did not, and could not, stop here. "Whom the heaven must receive," said St. Peter, "until the times of restoration."† However they may have conceived it for themselves, not one of the apostles ever asserted that Jesus was returning in glory to-morrow. It is clear enough that for them, as

\* Mark xvi. 19.

† Acts iii. 21.



for most of us, the future was foreshortened, as Schiehallion or Ben Cruachan, though it be miles away, will often appear as if rising just behind the nearest ridge. Faith always beholds the Judge standing at the door and the coming of the Lord drawing nigh; while it is the evil servant who rejoices in the thought "My lord tarrieth,"\* and reiterates the great lie "from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were."† But it is only an unpractical quietism that is content to believe that reality must always be belied by appearance, and, looking out upon the sins and sorrows of the world can rest contented with a Christ

" Whose pale face on the Cross sees only this  
After the passion of a thousand years."

Whatever we may believe "we see not yet all things put under him."‡ This is true even of Jesus. There is still "the last enemy."§ So from the first the victory of Christ had a significance for the future, as well as for the present and the past. The Gospel, when fully presented, included the promise of Christ's coming, when He "shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for him unto

\* Matt. xxiv. 48. † 2 Pet. iii. 4. ‡ Heb. ii. 8. § 1 Cor. xv. 26.

salvation." \* Do we realise that the manifestation of the sons of God, the redemption of the body, the final reconciliation, are not independent revelations of the Divine intention, but inferences from that future aspect and significance of the resurrection which is part of the primary gospel? They are the light which the great hope of the Church shed upon the destiny of the redeemed, when believers began to depart and sorrowing survivors needed the assurance that "we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep." † But it is the hope of the Lord's coming itself which is the great Christian fact. And it is only the failure of imagination, which cannot help contemplating what really belongs to the eternal order under conditions of time, hastening or deferring, as the case may be, that has robbed the Church for all practical purposes of what is integral to its faith. It is in connection with this hope that patience in waiting for Christ and fellowship in suffering with Him come as in the Epistle to the Hebrews into the purview of the Christian life. *Maran atha*, the Lord is at hand.

What, then, is the picture of Christianity, which we must have in our mind, as we ap-

\* Heb. ix. 28.

† 1 Thess. iv. 15

proach the central teaching of the Hebrews? First of all it is a society, the members of which have been initiated into the mystery by the lustral rite of baptism, and maintain their fellowship by participation in a common meal. The basis of this unity is the Death of Christ through which it is believed that remission of sins and reconciliation with God have been effected jointly and severally for the whole body of believers. The secret of its life is the Exaltation of the Saviour to the Throne of the Universe from whence He can be present in power and effect wherever two or three are gathered in His Name. Its hope is the Second Coming. There we have Christianity reduced to what we may call its simplest apostolic terms. This is what would remain for a society of Hebrew disciples, when the Temple worship which, even after their surrender to Christ, continued to express so much more of their religion than it is possible for us fully to understand, was torn out of their lives. Round the breaking of bread and the prayers, which had hitherto been for some, perhaps, of the brotherhood little more than a sort of freemasonry within the larger framework of the authorised service, must henceforth cluster all those associations of worship and sacrifice which had found expression in the

ancestral rites. They must be made to feel that the facts, on which this simple system rested, fulfilled, and more than fulfilled, those instincts that hitherto had fastened upon the oblations which did no more than commemorate the need which in symbol they were supposed to satisfy. The Community, the Death, the Exaltation, the Return of Jesus Christ, these were the elements which the Epistle to the Hebrews was to touch with a new radiance and in so doing to work into a Christian religious philosophy.

## VI

### THE HEAVENLY THINGS

IF the institutions of the tabernacle are “copies of the things in the heavens,” it falls now to deal with “the heavenly things themselves.” What does the epistle mean by this term? We had better begin by remembering that its antithesis is that which is “made with hands,” and that we have already confined this idea to the sphere of human representation. Next it becomes apparent that a distinction must be drawn between “the heavenly things,” and “the heaven” into which Christ has entered and where He appears “before the face of God for us.”\* Clearly this is parallel to the Holy of Holies into which on the Day of Atonement the High Priest entered “not without blood.”† But the presence of God requires no cleansing,

\* Heb. ix. 23, 24.

† Ibid. ix. 7.



whereas, speaking of "the heavenly things," the writer says that they must be cleansed with better sacrifices than those, the blood of which consecrated the book, the people, the tabernacle with its vessels of ministry—in fact all to which is applied the description of "copies" of the true.\* It is obvious, therefore, that our conception of "the heavenly things" must be wide enough to include a sphere that stands in need of reconciliation to God's service by some process that shall correspond to the shedding of blood in ritual sacrifice without which there "is no remission."

If there is one antithesis which is contrary to the whole tenor of Scripture, it is that which opposes the material to the spiritual as the evil to the good. No point of view is more common, but none is more certain to turn the mind aside from a true understanding of the Christian religion, than that which persistently identifies the spiritual with the good. It may be true enough that the language even of Scripture is not always consistent, and that the same writer may at times express ideas that are not wholly to be adjusted to the general line of his thought, but it is certain that the New Testament places sin no less than

\* Heb. ix, 18-22.

salvation in the spiritual region. The sinner is not the sense-bound but the spiritually rebellious. There is a dualism in the Bible, but it does not follow the lines of Platonic or Oriental thought. Matter is in itself neither good nor evil, but may become the organ of either. The opposing powers are God and the Devil, and both are spiritual. The author of Hebrews was not the first Christian writer to speak of "the heavenly things" as standing in need of cleansing. It is instructive to follow the use of the kindred expression "the heavenly places" as it appears in the Epistle to the Ephesians.\* "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," says St. Paul, "hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ."† This is still further defined as a result of the quickening which those who had been dead through trespasses have experienced through the risen life of Jesus, in consequence of which God has "made us to sit with Him in the heavenly *places*."‡ So far it might almost seem that "the heavenly" is synonymous with the Divine Presence. But

\* It should be noted that both in Ephesians and Hebrews the Greek has simply "the heavenly," "places" and "things" being only added for clearness in the English.

† Eph. i. 3.

‡ Ibid. ii. 6.

the exaltation of Christ, made to "sit at God's right hand in the heavenly places," is described as "far above all rule, and authority . . . not only in this world, but also in that which is to come."\* And these principalities and powers, who are "put in subjection under His feet,"† are themselves described as being "in the heavenly places."‡ So the way is prepared for the remarkable passage in which, counselling the Christian to array himself in God's panoply, the apostle describes our warfare as being "not against flesh and blood" but "against the spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*."§ Thus we are brought to that central significance of the Cross as having its effect in a sphere larger than that in which human sin and the blotting out of human transgressors have place, where Christ has "put off from Himself the principalities and the powers . . . triumphing over them in it,"|| where He not only delivers from the fear of death the race of mankind, but "brings to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."

This view of the universe, as inhabited by spiritual agents, evil as well as good, not only

\* Eph. i. 20, 21.

† Ibid. i. 22.

‡ Ibid. iii. 10.

§ Ibid. vi. 12.

|| Col. ii. 14, 15.

in that narrow corner of it where man has his present dwelling, but throughout the length and breadth of its vast distances, inwardly to the heart of its invisible depths as outwardly to the verge of its farthest manifestations, is entirely in accord with the spirit of Scripture. Nor is it foreign to the intimations of common human experience. Those who have turned aside at Fearnan from the banks of Loch Tay, and crossed the low ridge of hills over which the road descends to Fortingall, may recall the strange mingling of sensations with which the steep, dark side of the pass of Glenlyon strikes the beholder. He may not remember at the time the sinister associations which link the name of James Campbell with that sombre vale, but when he reads again the story of Glencoe, after visiting this weird, mysterious spot, he will feel that there are unnamed influences surrounding human life which make even the foulest deed less unaccountable than once it seemed. There are other recesses than the human conscience that need the cleansing of the precious Blood.

So, at least, the Epistle to the Hebrews teaches. "According to the law, I may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood."\* "It

\* Heb. ix. 22.

was necessary therefore that the copies of the things in the heavens should be cleansed with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these." We are now in a position to understand what the writer meant when he spoke of "the heavenly things." He meant all that we mean when we speak of the universe of God, that mighty realm of fact, visible and invisible, near and far, inward and outward, material and spiritual, through which God expresses Himself and in which He manifests His presence, the immense theatre of the Divine activity. Earth and sky and sea are all part of it. So also is the inner world of thought, emotion, and will, which is none the less real, because eye hath not seen nor ear heard the radiance of its face and the beating of its heart. The consciences of men and the bodies which God has prepared for them as the instruments of their service, the organs of their obedience, both alike are the creation of the Divine finger. But the thought of man is too small to range over the vast spaces which He, who maketh His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire, has included in the great tabernacle which He has pitched, within the curtains which He has outspread as a tent to dwell in.



“The heavenly things,” then, must be cleansed or reconciled, if they are to stand in a right relation to Him whose unseen Presence is the hope and power of all things. The writer can now return upon Christian experience, as it is illustrated by that representative system of ritual and worship which to the regret, if not to the despair, of his readers is now slipping away from them. Observe that he distinguishes two spheres of ceremonial action, and two only. To those familiar with the Book of Exodus it might seem that there were three: first the court, in which the sacrifices were slain and consumed; then the Holy Place, into which the priests alone entered, “accomplishing the service”; and last of all the Holy of Holies, into which only the High Priest entered, and that but once a year. But the Hebrews has only two, the first and the second tabernacle. There is the action without the veil and the action within it. There is the public service and the solitary ministration. To the court in which the people assembled there is no explicit reference. But in it stood the altar of burnt-offering, which “belonged to” the “first” tabernacle, as the altar of incense did, standing before the veil, to the “second.” When Jesus is spoken of as entering into “the holy place,”

it is obvious that only the inner shrine is contemplated; and that the chamber, wherein were "the candlestick, and the table, and the shew-bread," though structurally one with the Holy of Holies, is considered as a part of that sphere of public ministry in which the sacrifices, burnt in view of the worshippers, were daily offered.

Now there is only one great fact of religion which for the Christian fills the whole foreground of the world, and that is the Cross. Every scene in the universe of his experience is a Calvary. The most glorious pictures in nature, those amphitheatres of purple hills which are the wonder of a Highland landscape, are, as it were, the natural setting of the *Passionspiel*, in which Christ suffers for sin. The crowds which fill the streets of our large cities are, as he approaches, seen to be surrounding a great sight—the crucifix of the world's Redeemer. He looks up at some majestic hillside, and there upon the summit outlined against the sky is the Tree. Golgotha has no local situation; it is everywhere. The Crucifixion is no mere event in history; it is an ever-present reality. All his days are passed beneath its shadow. If he prays, he pleads its merit; if he sings, he hails its power; if he meditates, he knows its presence. "We behold

Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that by the grace of God He should taste death for every *man*."\*

This is the one fact in the real world which the Epistle to the Hebrews seizes as completely satisfying the whole of that human need which finds expression in the sacrifices of representative ritual. The testimony of the Christian was that "he came to a place somewhat ascending, and upon that place stood a cross, and a little below, in the bottom, a sepulchre." There he found peace for the guilty conscience and the power of a reconciled life. But it was just this that the sacrificial system, with its yearly remembrance of sin, had taught "them that draw nigh"† to expect. "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord . . . shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"‡ Here, then, to adopt the language of that ritual, was the offering for sin. Here was the covenant, of which Jeremiah had spoken, established upon the basis of forgiven sin, ratified in death, sprinkled with blood.

" My faith looks up to Thee,  
Thou Lamb of Calvary,  
Saviour Divine."

\* Heb. ii. 9.

† Ibid. x. 1.

‡ Mic. vi. 6.

The realisation of pardon was itself the assurance that Christ fulfilled the type. The language borrowed from the Mosaic Law is not unreal or conventional, because it is addressed to those whose consciences have been cleansed from dead works to serve the living God, to those who know as experimentally that they have been accepted in Christ, as the woman with the issue of blood knew that she was healed of her plague. Let us never forget that the analogy of the Epistle to the Hebrews is addressed to Christians, to those who want to interpret to themselves a redemption that is already theirs. This will enable us to understand both the power and the limitations of the terms which the writer employs. It will prevent us from elaborating the symbolism beyond the point which the circumstances demand. It is, for example, the Death of Christ, which is the ground of our hope. And there is nothing more remarkable than the way in which, as we pass from the type to its fulfilment, all the details of the oblation are focussed, so to speak, on Calvary itself. It is remarkable because, so long as the writer is occupied with the Mosaic ritual, the stress would almost seem to be laid not so much

upon the death of the victim, as upon the subsequent manipulation of the blood. This has, no doubt, led some modern commentators to neglect the fact that, as soon as we pass to the Eternal Sacrifice, the whole emphasis is thrown back upon His death, and to interpret the epistle as exhibiting Christ in the act of presenting His offered life before the Father. It was a truer instinct which led Wesley rather to go beyond the imagery of the epistle and to say—

“The offering smokes through earth and skies.”

For, though we read that “through His own blood, He entered in once for all into the holy place,”\* that is only as His death is elsewhere declared to be “a new and living way . . . that is to say, his flesh,”† whereby is secured our approach to the Throne. Again and again it is conspicuous how the oblation is concentrated upon the Cross. Christ enters the holy place, “having obtained eternal redemption for us.”‡ He “offered Himself without blemish unto God.”§ A death has taken place “for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant.”||

\* Heb. ix. 12.

† Ibid. x. 20.

‡ Ibid. ix. 12.

§ Ibid. ix. 14.

|| Ibid. ix. 15.



“Now once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”\* Observe in this last passage that the sacrifice is definitely associated with the manifestation of Christ, with His work upon the stage of history. Again, “we have been sanctified” (*i.e.*, consecrated) “through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”† “He, when he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down.”‡ What, therefore, in the ceremonial type is distributed over a series of ritual acts is concentrated in the one fact of the Eternal Order of which the historical manifestation is the Cross. We should all feel that there was something unreal in the language of any who should affirm that the examinations successfully passed were only preliminary to the ceremony whereby the degree was conferred, the deed of valour which won the Victoria Cross only the necessary prelude to the gracious act of the sovereign in affixing the decoration to the soldier’s tunic. Is it not something of the same instinct of reality that has prevented the author of Hebrews attempting to develop the details of the sacrificial system in reference to the reconciliation which

\* Heb. ix. 26.

† Ibid. x. 10.

‡ Ibid. x. 12.

Christ effects? The ground of our acceptance with God is Christ crucified. It is in the same spirit that St. Paul describes the action of the Christian body in the Eucharist, not as the performance of a rite parallel with a liturgy offered by Christ in heaven, but as an announcement of the Lord's death "till he come."\* There is, I am convinced, a real distinction here. The Cross is the great covering fact of the Church's life and service in the outer courts of God's spiritual Temple.

This brings us to the second great thought which emerges from the comparison between the facts of our redemption and the ministrations of the Mosaic tabernacle, "the heaven" into which Christ has entered.† Imagination is so closely beset by what is almost a geographical conception of the departure of Jesus Christ from the scene of His earthly service that His entrance into the Holy Place becomes in our minds the symbol of His absence. "Still the holy Church is here, although her Lord is gone," are the words of a well-known hymn. But that is to neglect one of the leading points of the analogy. For the Mercy Seat is the very centre of

\* 1 Cor. xi. 26.

† Heb. ix. 24.

Hebrew worship, surrounded on every side by the courts in which the sacrificial worship was performed. Veiled it no doubt was from the gaze of the throng of worshippers, and even of the priests themselves. The repetition of the high priest's entry from year to year testified to the unreality—that is, the representative character of the shrine; or, in other words, signified that the way into the (true) holy place was not yet made plain. But if it stood for one thing rather than another it was the Presence of God in the assembly of His people, the indwelling of God at the very heart of the covenanted worship. When the congregation of Israel was convoked it was not that they might commemorate an absent God, but that they might come before Jehovah and bow themselves in his holy place.

“There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God,

The holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High.

God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved:

God shall help her, and that right early.”\*

Immanuel—God with us—that is the very conception of the tent pitched among men.

\* Psa. xlii. 4, 5.

There is the camp, all Israel dwelling in their tents, and in the centre the dwelling of their Divine Chief. "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."\*

But that is exactly what the apostolic Christians had experienced as the secret inner life of the brotherhood. "Lo I am with you alway," had been the promise with which their risen Master had accompanied the gift of its charter. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I," was a declaration that they had proved again and again with demonstration of the Spirit and of power. "Closer is He than breathing, nearer than hands and feet," was a truth of sovereign might, which they expressed in the formula, "He sitteth at the right hand of God." Outwardly the historic cross, inwardly the Abiding Presence, that was the paradox of the Church's experience. If, on the one hand, they announced His Death,† on the other they ate and drank at His Table;‡ their cup was the communion of His Blood, their bread the fellowship of His Body.§ Lift your eyes to His Cross, was their message, and you shall feed on heavenly

\* Exod. xxxiii. 14.

† Luke xxii. 30.

† 1 Cor. xi. 26.

§ 1 Cor. x. 16.

manna, you shall drink of a spiritual rock that throughout your pilgrimage shall be ever at your side. The anxious multitude, waiting in awe and fear while their representative passed into the blackness and darkness of the Old Covenant, is replaced by the expectant Church, rejoicing that Jesus, their mediator, has passed through the luminous veil to the very heart of the universe, turning the consuming fire into a kindling influence, transforming the "fearful expectation of judgment"\* into "the assurance of things hoped for."†

But if it is necessary to insist upon the nearness of the unseen and exalted Christ, it is equally important to guard against an error which is alike contrary to Christian experience and subversive of the true balance of the writer's argument. The Christian still walks by faith, which is "the evidence of things unseen." That boldness of approach upon which the epistle dwells does not involve the withdrawal of the veil. Hope is the anchor of the soul "entering into that which is within the veil," but Jesus is still the forerunner, hidden for a time from the eyes of His waiting people, who still remain in the outer courts, content to

\* Heb. x. 27.

† Ibid. xi. 1.



approach the throne of grace only through their appointed High Priest, "who is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him." \* The point of contrast between the Old Covenant and the New is not the removal of mystery, which is an essential element in all religion. It is not at all that the individual Christian is made free of the Audience Chamber of God, nor even that he can discern as plainly as though he had been there all that is going forward in that august Presence. What the epistle does say is that before the Death of Christ "the way into the holy place" had "not yet been made manifest," † which is an entirely different thing. Sinai still frowned above the shrinking people. Aaron was not the bringer of salvation when the golden bells were heard approaching from the darkness of the sanctuary. But for the Christian the joyful assurance of forgiveness and the mercy that never fails him in the time of need is the measure of the calm and glad patience with which he awaits the approach of the Day.

The third and last point which we must notice is that, just as the whole of the Sacrifice is concentrated upon the Cross, so the whole of the heavenly intercession is gathered up in the

\* Heb. vii. 25.

† Ibid. ix. 8.

Session at God's right hand. It is the reverent agnosticism of the Christian which refrains from elaborating a picture of the activities of heaven. "He ever liveth"\*—that is the simple yet sovereign fact of the faith of the Church. On earth we come, to use Bishop Andrewes' famous phrase, *usque ad cadaver*, right up to the prevailing Death, and then it is *Noli me tangere*, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father."† "His Manhood pleads where now it lives" is the accurate language of Dr. Bright's Eucharistic hymn. It is a later theology which speaks of Christ pleading His Passion or presenting His Blood. There is no word of this in the Epistle to the Hebrews. And, though we may not unreasonably say that this teaching presents aspects of the truth, there is always the danger of mistaking inference for revelation. Primitive Christianity passes right up to the Throne, to the ultimate, supreme fact of the Saviour's existence there. May we not say that its simplicity in this respect is its power? All the perplexities, all the problems, all the mysteries of our dark passage through the world illuminated by one thought—Jesus lives!

We may illustrate this by the teaching concerning the communion of saints, which is given

\* Heb. vii. 25.

† John xx. 17.

incidentally in a passage of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the splendid eloquence of which must have dried the tears on the faces of countless mourners. The words are evangelical in their simplicity, and to those accustomed to frequent Eucharists seem to weave themselves in with that sublime preface of our Anglican liturgy which stands with few rivals among the masterpieces of the English tongue. "Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus."\* There are those who will have it that a system of religious devotion, which includes definite intercession on behalf of the departed, represents a fuller realisation of the fellowship of saints than a more reticent worship which they would speak of as a bald and negative Protestantism. Nowhere will you find a more joyful sense of the fellow-citizenship of the saints, including as it does those who sleep in Jesus, than in the pages of the New Testament, but the tone is wholly different from that which has produced the wistful

\* Heb. xii. 22-24.

requiems of a later Catholicism. The practice of the Jews, for whom light and immortality was not yet brought to light, and the doubtful reference to a soul departed in an ejaculatory prayer for mercy given in one of St. Paul's epistles, are a very insecure foundation on which to build a practice strangely at variance with the sure and certain hope of the primitive disciples. I am no apologist for the funeral customs of this country, but when I compare the quiet beauty of some of our modern cemeteries in England with the gruesome incongruity of a burying-place like that of San Miniato at Florence, I am not impressed with the latter as a more signal manifestation of apostolic faith and hope. What the writer of Hebrews feels is the wonderful union of the saints in that rare atmosphere in which, crossing the interspace of dubious twilight, the soul can bless itself with the radiance of the Presence among the spirits of just men made perfect—"Christ the firstfruits, then they that are Christ's, at his coming." We need to recover some of that joyous thanksgiving for those who depart hence in Jesus which can say, not so much "Grant them Thine eternal rest," as "Blest are the departed who in the Lord are sleeping, they rest from their labours." *Sursum*

*corda*—lift up your hearts. “Ye are come unto Mount Zion.” \*

“Give me the wings of faith to rise  
Within the veil, and see  
The saints above, how great their joys,  
How bright their glories be.

Once they were mourning here below,  
And wet their couch with tears;  
They wrestled hard, as we do now,  
With sins and doubts and fears.

We ask them, whence their victory came:  
They, with united breath,  
Ascribe the conquest to the Lamb,  
Their triumph to His Death.

They mark'd the footsteps that He trod,  
His zeal inspired their breast;  
And following their incarnate God,  
They reach'd the promised rest.

Our glorious Leader claims our praise  
For His own pattern given;  
While the great cloud of witnesses  
Show the same path to heaven.”

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\* There is no intention here to deprecate the public commemoration of the departed, but only the growth of a system of definite intercession. The use of precatory, or rather optative, forms in the expression of the Christian hope is not without analogies in Scripture, for example in the ascription of greatness to God.



## VII

### THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH

“CHRIST having been once offered to bear the sins of many shall appear a second time apart from sin to them that wait for Him unto salvation.”\* Nothing more surely marks the interval which separates our Christianity from the faith of the first days than the absence of any real expectation of the Second Coming of Christ. Here and there is found a small group of persons who believe that the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. But too often, as when the late Piazzì Smythe thought he had discovered the approaching end of the age in the exact measurements of the Great Pyramid, the hope is expressed in so predictive a form as to gain for itself nothing but the reputation of a weak-minded enthusiasm. So I think it would be safe to say that the doctrine of the

\* Heb. ix. 28.

Second Coming of Christ exercises at the present day no appreciable influence upon the lives of those who are called Christians. This was not so in the days of the Church's early devotion to the risen Master. There are abundant indications that the confidence with which the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews looked forward to the return of the great High Priest, who had passed into the sanctuary of the heavens, was shared by multitudes of believing men for many generations, inspiring the hope of confessors, sustaining the faith of martyrs, establishing the patience of the saints. The testimony of primitive times amply shows that the spirit of the Seer of Patmos never died out of the community of Jesus till the age of Constantine, bringing with it the very equivocal advantage of State patronage and control, branded Millenarianism as a heresy and dulled the simplicity of Christian hope. Nor even then did the great hope wholly fade. In times of stress, when the wind and waves have roared, and hearts have failed for fear, God's saints have been upheld by the vision of the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power and coming in the clouds.

This hope is part of the gospel. As death and judgment are linked together in the destiny

of mankind, so the Cross and the Throne, the Crucifixion and the Coming blend in one glad message of faith and hope concerning Him who is alike author and finisher, the Alpha and the Omega of our Redemption. It is in our great hymn of praise that we are bidden joyfully to sing, "We believe that Thou shalt come." Can it be said that we in the Church of to-day are looking for and hasting unto that Day which *Te Deum* hails, when a returning Christ shall send forth judgment unto victory? Year by year the parochial clergy greet us with the conventional phrase, "Once more the Advent trumpet sounds in our midst." Year by year fresh preachers discover how admirably suited to the exigencies of an Advent course are those mysterious subjects which in ecclesiastical language are called the Four Last Things. And then the holly and the bay recall us to the current homeliness of Yule, and the Christmas cards help us to forget that Christ is coming again. But even where the Advent message is not forgot, it too often finds a lodgment in the heart rather as a dread warning than a glad hope. It is "sinners filled with guilty fears," and "the wrath of the Lamb," and "the book exactly worded," which fill the imagination. But the joy which turned the lonely *Ægean*

rock or the dark Roman catacomb into the antechamber of heaven itself was far other than this. To some rare spirits among us it is not unknown, and it finds expression in words like those with which Frances Ridley Havergal, our modern English St. Cæcilia, interprets this note of the Hebrew epistle :—

“Thou art coming, O my Saviour,  
 Thou art coming, O my King,  
 In Thy beauty all-resplendent,  
 In Thy glory all-transcendent;  
 Well may we rejoice and sing;  
 Coming ! In the opening east  
 Herald brightness slowly swells ;  
 Coming ! O my glorious Priest,  
 Hear we not Thy golden bells ? ”

The promise lies at the very root of all Christian hope. Before the coming of the Pentecostal gift; before the realisation of the invisible presence of the risen Master; before the unfolding of that long roll of Christian experience which is the inner meaning of Church history; the hearts of the disciples already glowed with the prospect of the Lord's return. “This same Jesus shall so come as ye have seen Him go.” It was the secret of their patience, the strength of their confidence. There was nothing inexact, indefinite, uncertain

in the promise of the future. Those pierced feet which had disappeared in the cloud would again be planted firm on the Mount of Olives. That form but lately rent and torn on Calvary's deserted cross would one day sit on David's throne, admired in them that believe and glorified in His saints. As travellers enter Jerusalem by the Jaffa gate, as pilgrims throng the shrines which tradition identifies with the sacred sites, is it only the memories of a glorious past, or is it also the sure and certain hope of a future yet more glorious that should kindle devotion and waken the hymn of praise?

St. Peter never forgot the message of the angel. The revelation of Jesus Christ was the inspiring power of that faith in which "with joy unspeakable and full of glory"\* he waited for the crown that should be his in the day when the Chief Shepherd should be manifested.† With St. Paul it is the secret of joyous service. Only one of his epistles, if we omit the short private letter to Philemon, has no apparent reference to the coming of the Lord. But Galatians, full though it is of priceless treasures of Christian teaching, is the one epistle which falls short of the full expression of Christian thankfulness and praise. To the Thessalonians,

\* 1 Peter i. 8.

† Ibid. v. 4.



who have turned from the worship of pagan vanities to wait for God's Son from heaven, the thought of God's people gathered to meet the returning King is the hope with which their loved ones are to be laid to rest.\* In the abounding spiritual life of the Corinthian Church the apostle with thankful heart sees the fruit of that triumphal patience which waits for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.† From his gloomy prison at Rome, when his work might indeed have seemed a failure and the future a prospect of blank and comfortless despair, Paul, the aged, summons the Ephesians and Colossians to buy up every opportunity that life affords,‡ encouraging one another the while with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs§ and calls upon his dear Philippians to "rejoice in the Lord alway."|| "For our citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we wait for a Saviour."¶ So he goes on his way till the end draws near. Still, it is the Second Coming to which his hope leaps forward. If the thought of the return of Christ had brought comfort in those early days when first the faithful began to fall asleep, it is the same when the shadows lengthen about his own life and night draws on.

\* 1 Thess. iv. 14.

† 1 Cor. i. 7.

‡ Eph. v. 16.

§ Col. iii. 16.

|| Phil. iv. 4.

¶ Ibid. iii. 20.

To the young man strong to labour, eager to take up the work as it drops from older hands, he holds out no prospect of success, no assurance of a ministry acceptable to men. "I charge thee . . . that thou keep the commandment until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ."\* Then, as the old man ready to be offered looks back over the stern fight now nearing its close, he gives thanks for one thing only, that he has saved the colours, that he has kept the faith, and looks forward, like Peter and James, who in the days long ago had given him the right hand of fellowship, to the crown of righteousness which Jesus Himself will give in that day "to all them that have loved His appearing." †

We, too, ought to love His appearing. No single clause in that Apostles' Creed which we recite from week to week but has a value for life. No article of Christian faith but should translate itself into Christian practice. And the times in which we live call for a revival in our midst of that great expectation of the personal Coming of Him who is our personal Saviour, which is the true strength of Christian effort, the true motive of Christian endeavour. It is not too much to say that the days in which we

\* 1 Tim. vi. 13, cf. 2 Tim. iv. 1.

† 2 Tim. iv. 8.

live are days of disillusionment. Institutions are said to be on their trial. This means that men are calling upon them to justify themselves by results such as they can measure, by influence such as they can appraise. Under pressure of this claim we sit still, we begin to lose our nerve, we become paralysed Christians. Look at those early times with their fulness of spiritual life, the richness of their manifold gifts, the largeness of their Christian hope. The apostles were under no illusions as to the conditions under which the expectant servants were to wait with girded loins for the returning Lord. "It will not be, except the falling away come first."\* So wrote St. Paul in the earlier years of his ministry. And the Second Epistle to Timothy with its picture of the last days looks, as we read it, as though in many of its leading features it were drawn from our own age. "Preach the word," cries the apostle; "be instant in season, out of season."† Why? Because if you are only earnest enough, if you are only eloquent enough, you will fill the churches with attentive and reverent hearers? Oh no; here is the paradox: "Preach the word, for the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine."‡

\* 2 Thess. ii. 3.

† 2 Tim. iv. 2.

‡ Ibid. iv. 3.

Dwindling congregations, empty churches, that is what the preacher sees immediately before him. And as he looks abroad, what is it that he sees? "In the last days grievous times shall come. Men shall be lovers of self, lovers of money . . . lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." \*

Dare we say that much in this forecast of St. Paul is not vividly realised in our own time? These disintegrating forces are doing their deadly work in our midst to-day. No class is exempt. Rich men seek pleasure. Poor men seek pleasure. Men hunger and thirst after pleasure. They eat and are not satisfied. They drink and their throat is dry. And religion? What we have to fear is not those groups of men who profess themselves agnostic. It is the attitude of the average man, who refuses to commit himself, on whom we can never rely for decisive moral action, who has not allowed himself so to be overmastered by Christian principle as to stand forth without reserve as a follower of the Crucified. A Laodicean Church in an evil world, a church that will invent a thousand reasons for a neutral course of abstention from interference in the actual business of life, a Church whose bugle call does not ring out

\* 2 Tim. iii. 1.

clear for action. So we let slip the opportunity because the days are evil. So our psalms and hymns and spiritual songs become whispers of nervous apprehension, and brother clasps the hand of brother treading softly through the night.

It was not the hope of capturing the Empire for Christ; it was not the assurance that the principles of the Cross would become dominant in the society of that ancient world that upheld apostles and prophets, martyrs and saints in the conflict against principalities and powers. They knew their gospel far too well to be deluded by the easy optimism which too often forms the rhetorical flourish to a missionary sermon, when we are bidden to look forward to the time when the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. It shall be so, but when Christ comes. Is our Christianity the strong, manly hope which beat in the breast of St. Peter and St. Paul? Is our belief in the cause of the Cross measured by its obvious success, or are we in the very spirit of Christ's own commission prepared to preach the gospel of the kingdom throughout the world for a testimony, looking for the fulfilment of the promise that "then shall the end come"? \*

\* Matt. xxiv. 14.



Are we zealous of good works because we are members of a chosen race purified from all iniquity through the sacrifice of Calvary, and looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour?

There can be no question that the practical disappearance of this glad expectation from the Church of Christ has altered the whole proportions of our faith in more directions than one. I have not time to attempt to show you how the greatest enemy of a truly spiritual Christianity, the power and authority of the Roman Papacy, thrives upon forgetfulness that the great Head of the Church is coming again. No Vicar of Christ was needed when men still held as a living faith that "the Judge standeth before the doors."\* But there is another way in which a view of God's purposes which is not genuinely Christian may gravely affect our Christian character. St. Paul reminds the Thessalonians that they knew perfectly—it was Christ Himself who had told them—that the day of the Lord would come as a thief.† How does this fit in with the method of regarding the eternal purpose which is characteristic of our own day? That far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves, of which

\* James v. 9.

† 1 Thess. v. 2.

Tennyson with gentle wistfulness sings in "In Memoriam" is something far different from the coming of the living God, who fulfils His purposes otherwise and at other times than men expect. Who but they who know somewhat of their Father's innermost mind, dreamed that in an empire which believed in its universal mission God's highest purpose for mankind should be fulfilled through an obscure member of a hated race in the meanest dependency of Imperial Rome? To-day from that same race, still hated and despised, yet now by those whose lips have cried "Hosanna to the Son of David," there goes up from many a centre of persecution, a cry to the God of Abraham that He will look upon the everlasting covenant, and cause the captivity of Judah and of Jerusalem to return. To what quarter do we look for the accomplishment of God's purpose and the setting up of His Kingdom? To that youthful empire of the rising sun which has made good its claim to a foremost place in the fellowship of nations? To the Anglo-Saxon race as it spreads over continent and island? Why not to God's ancient people which, though they have sustained an age-long passion in lands which are not theirs, are as strong, as tenacious, as vigorous to-day as when Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees in the

dawn of history? I cannot understand the objection that we Christians have failed to convert the Jews. Is there one word in the New Testament which leads us to suppose that Messiah's kingdom is to be established through the gradual absorption in the Gentile Church of those of whom, according to the flesh, Christ came? If St. Paul did not understand what the preaching of Christ among the Gentiles was intending to effect, who did? "I would not," he says to the Romans, "have you ignorant of this mystery, that a hardening in part hath befallen Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." \*

"When will that be?" you ask. When will the way be prepared for the Second Coming of Christ? The answer is, What are you doing to prepare it? The Lord Himself would never have bidden us to pray "Thy kingdom come," if those times and seasons which no man knows were so irrevocably fixed that our efforts could not hasten, our sins could not retard the wheels of His chariot. Only let it be a living hope and our energies will kindle into flame. No listless inactivity, no despair born of the experience of life, but that joyous readiness which leaps up with undaunted will to meet the new trial be-

\* Rom. xi. 25.

longs to those who are looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God. And a new power comes into worship itself as we bow before the throne of Him who is waiting to be manifested. The disciples first heard the promise that the Master would come again before they began to receive tokens of His unseen nearness to the congregation. And as we listen to the venerable words of the liturgy, celebrated with ever-gathering associations until His coming again, we enter into that which is beyond the veil.

**THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON**





# I

## DISILLUSIONMENT

“When he came to himself.”—LUKE xv. 17.

THE supreme need of the present day is the gospel. Some months ago I read that among the answers given to the inquiry of a newspaper as to the chief want of the twentieth century was the almost cynical commentary upon the spirit of the times—the chief want of the new century is money. I read in the New Testament—you will find it in the third chapter of the Second Epistle to Timothy, at the second verse—that in the last days men shall be lovers of money. Some there are who tell us that whatever may be true of other countries, we in England, at any rate, are responding to noble ideals and great purposes. Do not let us deceive ourselves with

words and names. Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light, and the spiritual value of what wears the appearance of high energy and sacrifice is measured only by the ends which are covered by ambiguous phrases. You cannot study the record of passing events, you cannot take a serious survey of society, without being deeply impressed with the conviction that the problem which thousands of our fellow-countrymen are proposing to themselves may be expressed in the words, "How the British Empire spells—my own advantage." "Behold, I have set before you an open door," saith the Lord in the revelation which He gave to His servant John, and to the men of this generation such voices as that of David Livingstone still sound with something of an ominous ring: "Gentlemen, I have opened the door; it is for you to see that it is never closed." But if the policy of the open door means nothing more than the provision of new markets for the interchange of merchandise, full half of which is as useful to human life as the ivory, apes, and peacocks which swelled the magnificence and weakened the manhood of Solomon's Court, then I say, beware lest he who enters by those gates be not the King of Glory, but that mighty lord who moves—

“In golden armour with a crown of gold  
About a casque all jewels.”

This picture of the age is no ugly nightmare of a diseased imagination, but the sober testimony of whosoever looks upon our society with eyes unblinded by the god of this world. Those who, from time to time, follow the sordid stories of forgery and fraud which are unfolded in all their naked unattractiveness in the criminal courts, will recognise their typical significance. “Dreams such as these”—they are the words in which the *Yorkshire Post* describes the fatal fascination of wealth—“have no necessary trace of nobility in them, though they are often lauded nowadays as if a man benefited his fellows by the mere fact of making a fortune for himself.” This judgment is true. We are oppressed on all sides with the weight of evidence that comes from the commercial world, from the practice of society and the Court, from our system of education, from the disinclination which is manifesting itself among our young men towards professions that involve certain toil and uncertain profit, from the haste to be rich which is steadily degrading our national sports to the level of a brutish athleticism and turning our workshops and factories into gambling

saloons—we are oppressed, I say, with the weight of testimony which no sober-minded thinker can resist, to the respect and reverence with which all classes of society regard the man of wealth. Let a man be but wealthy and his good qualities are enhanced a thousandfold. It requires a strong effort of will and imagination to realise that, apart from all considerations of Scripture and religion, there is nothing inherently beneficial either to the possessor or to the rest of mankind in the ownership of this world's gear. Ah! men and women, you do not believe me. In your heart of hearts you do not believe me. We read of the rich man and the needle's eye. You doff your cap to Him who spoke those terrible words, and pass on, one to his farm and another to his merchandise. And the result? I hold in my hand a pamphlet which was sent me by one who, I suppose, would call himself a London stockbroker. It is one from among many similar advertisements which reach me during the course of the year. This I select because of its peculiar capacity for exhibiting the devilry of modern finance. On the front cover there is nothing but a quotation from Adam Smith, and sure the author of the "Wealth of Nations" would turn in his grave if he could know to what use his



words were put : "Sudden fortunes indeed are sometimes made in such places by what is called the trade of speculation." The firm by which this document is issued appeals to the cupidity of the public by offering upon £100 the chance of a net profit of £106 at the risk of losing some £10 or £20. Those who practise the trade of speculation may give an air of business to such a transaction by producing working examples, apparently involving the transfer of thousands of pounds. But where, I ask, is the morality, where is the common honesty of depositing with these gentlemen, I suppose as a mark of confidence, a sum which is expected to produce what by all the laws under which we eat bread such a sum has no right to yield? But this is going on all around us. It is peculiar to no class of our society. It is the tendency of modern days, as the chief magistrate at Bow Street explained to the Committee of the House of Lords—"Everybody wishes to get rich, and the people who hold out these temptations are the people that get rich."

Time was when I used to wonder—as I make little doubt that some of you wonder—why the desire to be rich should have been given an evil prominence in the teaching of our Lord and His apostles. The fact is most significant, represent

it as you will. The publicans and the harlots press into that kingdom which, it is the Lord's own declaration, it is hard for the rich man to enter. The antithesis to God, as the object of human adoration, is neither lust nor intemperance nor wrath. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." The subtlest form of opposition to the gospel of God's free grace in the earliest days when the apostles preached, came not from envy or spite or contention. "When Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money." That was St. Peter's experience; it was also St. Paul's. "If any man teacheth a different doctrine," he writes to Timothy, "he is puffed up, supposing that godliness is a trade—a way of gain." It was an unerring instinct—nay, I will be sufficiently old-fashioned to say that it was the inspiration of the Spirit of God—which drew from the great apostle the declaration that the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. For it is the worship and service of the creature, of what we see and touch and taste, the slavery of the mind to what is vulgar, base, and mean, if the heart desire it, which is the proper antithesis of the love of Him whom to know is to live, whom to serve is to reign. When, therefore, I look out upon the world in

which we live, as conspicuous for its lack of great men as for its love of gigantic enterprise, and see what I may call the financial spirit the one keen interest of the day, seeking to express all our common life in terms of itself, and to press all ideals into its unhallowed service, until a "business government" is the only phrase by which a people of proud traditions can describe the men to whom they would wish to intrust the destinies of their country; when, too, I become aware—as many observers of the temper of the times more competent than I have become all too sadly aware—of the lassitude, the weariness, the languid interest in many things which will kindle into enthusiasm for none, that marks these latter times, I am constrained to call aloud to our Lord God that he will once again baptise us with power from on high. That is what we want—men and women of to-day—we want a baptism, we want power. Great resources are the curse of a weakened manhood. But, strong in the Lord and in the power of his might, we shall make weakness itself, like the sling and the stone of the Shepherd King, the instrument of a perfect victory.

The Prodigal in this, the greatest of Jesus' parables, was a miser. You will tell me that

I am speaking in paradoxes. Well, I know it. But what I want you to see is that he is the type and picture of the present day. You tell me that there is no vice so abhorrent to your nature as avarice. You say that the thin, bloodless, shrivelled creature, whose lean and bony claws are nervously outstretched to rake in the glittering coin, and who hugs his money-bags beside the dying embers of a penurious fire, has no place in our free and generous English life, where those who have money are expected to turn it over, and a liberal hand is all but inseparable from a full purse. And we are scarcely less ready to repudiate the life of riot and excess, which dissipates upon unworthy pleasures what has been painfully amassed by years of unremitting toil. If a generous, we are a thrifty people, and of reckless waste we are no less scornful than of miserly stint. But pardon me, what is it in the miser that seems to your enlightened judgment absurd, incomprehensible, and vain? Is it not the strange, unreasonable fascination with which he fondles the yellow pieces or smooths out the curling notes? Poor dotard! you exclaim, unhinged in mind and fancy. To wear the chain of a bondage to those inanimate tokens which should be the ministers of his own comfort and happiness!

He has lost his conception of the end in the eagerness with which he gathers the means. For him the means have become the end. He is a bondservant, a slave. But is it not precisely the same with him whom you call the prodigal? He, like the miser, is squandering his opportunities. He has exchanged his coin for that which it represents. He has purchased his money's worth of that material outside himself which a modern philosopher has described as permanent possibilities of sensation. That only means what you can touch or taste, hear or see. The spendthrift is only surrounding himself with a profusion of material means, so that the prodigal and the miser are alike in what is essential to both characters—the exaltation into an end of what, according to the true proportion of things, has no value whatever except as a means to the development of a higher life. No matter how great the prudence, no matter how wide the generosity with which you administer the things which belong to this life, nevertheless you are in bondage to the rudiments of this world if in any sense it is true that for them you live. The words which I am about to read to you have, of course, the usual exaggeration of satire. You will tell me it is a caricature. But there is no



such thing as caricature which does not lay hold of prominent characteristics of morals or manners and give them that emphasis which enables us to see them as they are. Here, then, is a recent criticism on the spirit of our modern civilisation of the West:—

“Your triumphs in the mechanical arts are the obverse of your failure in all that calls for spiritual insight. Machinery of every kind you can make and use to perfection; but you cannot build a house or write a poem or paint a picture; still less can you worship or aspire. Look at your streets! Row upon row of little boxes, one like another, lacking in all that is essential, loaded with all that is superfluous—that is what passes among you for architecture. Your literature is the daily press, with its stream of solemn fatuity, of anecdotes, puzzles, puns, and police-court scandal. Your pictures are stories in paint, transcripts of all that is banal, clumsily botched by amateurs, as devoid of tradition as of genius. Your outer sense as well as your inner is dead; you are blind and deaf. Ratiocination has taken the place of perception; and your whole life is an infinite syllogism from premises you have not examined to conclusions you have not anticipated or willed. Everywhere means, nowhere an end.”

Does not that accurately represent the lives of multitudes of men and women in these great cities where we congregate with no clear aim, no definite will that frames for itself both a purpose and a way to reach it? It is the failure to realise the one thing which of all things that are is of infinite value, and that is ourselves. St. Paul has a name for this habit of mind—he calls it conformity to this world. You may prefer a modern phrase, and call it adaptation to environment. But by whatever name you call it, the thing is the same. We allow ourselves to be overmastered by that illusion of independent reality which belongs to the vast system of things by which what seem to us our petty lives are surrounded. We are often reminded of the wonderful power of ministry which has been placed in our hands by that growing knowledge of material things and physical forces which is a chief characteristic of our age. But the picture has another side. We remember, for example, that if some of the best intelligence of the world is occupied with the investigation of pain and disease, other intellects no less acute are busily bringing to a grim perfection those deadly engines of destruction which crowd our battleships and bristle in our batteries. And this at any rate

is certain, that though a larger knowledge of the universe and a vaster empire over the forces which it holds is a summons to the spiritual man to arise and gird on his armour, what in fact we see is the sad spectacle of men who grovel in the dust before the mighty giant who comes against them in a coat of mail which their own hands have forged.

We stand upon an exceeding high mountain, and we look down with wondering and wistful eyes upon the far-stretching plain below. There are the great towns with their mills and factories, the crowding houses crossed and recrossed by millions of electric wires, the luxurious provision for transit from one point of the compass to another, the technical schools, the halls of science, the palaces of popular amusement, and on the horizon the merchant fleets hurrying to the port from a once remote and unvisited shore—all the accumulated evidence of what seems, viewed from that superior height, the obedient service of natural forces and the disappearance of human toil. And in our ears—like a whisper of delight—the voice of material progress, “All these things will I give thee, if——”

And then the man looks upward, and at once the mountain of temptation has become the mount of vision. He has come to himself. He

has seen the Lord. And the world is at his feet. He has learned the power of penitence. He knows the dread prerogative of his manhood. And then with the bitter pang of discovered sin, but with the glorious joy of a recovered sonship, he utters a great cry which is the charter of his freedom because it is the recognition of his debt:—

“The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.”

## II

### THE RETURN

“I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned.”—LUKE xv. 18.

THERE are three presuppositions of salvation which may be represented by the three words, “Man,” “God,” and “Sin.” They are involved in the personality of our Lord Jesus Christ. “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself,” says St. Paul to the Corinthians. And to Timothy the same apostle declares that there is “one mediator between God and men, Himself man, Christ Jesus.” Reconciliation implies enmity. And enmity implies the possibility of friendship; a common ground; a community of nature. Our Lord is God and Man—the mean between both which is both.

Till you have realised in all the fulness of



their meaning these three great facts—What I am, What God is, What sin is—the story of the Gospel, that old, old story which yet becomes a fresh experience to the weary and heavy laden, who from age to age find pardon and peace in the blood of the Cross, will seem to you but a vain imagination and an idle tale. But when you are convinced with your whole soul of the tremendous realities which these words express, then the spirit turns again home, and the intense conviction of an awakened conscience translates itself into an act. “I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned.”

Which is the keyword of that great representative utterance? What is it that carries with it the vivid realisation of the great truth of existence, and that expresses all the new energy of purpose that has come into a jaded and embittered life? Is it not the word “Father”? He whose heart had been set on the portion of goods has learned that in the strongest, tenderest, personal relations lies the only end which is worthy of a human being. It has taught him the infinite value of himself. It has revealed to him the unfathomable depth of his sin.

“My Father.” There are many people who imagine that it is possible to propose an end for human effort and a motive of human activity without taking into account the transcendent personality of God and finding room in a crowded world for the Eternal Fatherhood. I remember well a few years ago a conversation which some of us had in what was then the Clergy House, with a man of considerable practical ability and still greater rhetorical power, who in those days was an influential leader of the Labour Movement. And I recollect how one of his great difficulties in accepting what in this place we are bold to declare is the one unfailing motive of all effective character was his failure to perceive how a belief in the Fatherhood of God was the guarantee, the only safeguard and pledge, of the brotherhood of man. I do not deny that lives of heroic sacrifice and untiring service in the cause of others have been lived upon this earth by men whose lips could never frame the words of that prayer which Jesus taught His disciples. But we only reach the source of power when we come to know God as a gracious presence and a loving person; a knowledge which reveals to men at once their incomparable dignity and their unutterable degradation.

I am. When a man feels the reality of himself as the central fact in relation to which all that surrounds him obtains a value and importance, he makes his mark upon his day and generation. He seeks to realise himself—that is the phrase which we use to express our meaning—in the material which he finds ready to his hand. The strong man impresses himself—so we say—upon his surroundings. The very furnishing of his house is not the conventional appointments of drawing-room or parlour which the same firm is ready to supply to his neighbour upon similar terms. The shelves of his library are not filled by contract of the local bookseller. There is the stamp of individuality in everything he does. Such men as this have a strong belief in themselves. They are confident that, if only they give free play to their own character, what they are themselves will pass into the general progress of the world. That the race needs men who will not be niggardly or frugal in their output of energy admits of no manner of doubt. But how great are the forces which tend to confine these energies within the narrow channel of custom and habit! We analyse our own existence until, in spite of the testimony of experience,

we almost come to believe that there is nothing in our nature which cannot be assigned to causes independent of our conscious will. We take an extended survey of the ages which have preceded our birth, or perhaps it would be truer of most of us to say that we assume that survey to have been made by others. We are antiquarians. We allow our imaginations to be occupied with the long line of ancestors whose forgotten past lives again in the existence through which we in our turn are called upon to pass. That habit of looking backward, which has been imposed upon our thought by the historical and scientific methods of our time, too often proves fatal to a strong movement onward and upward. Unlike Abraham, who, in obedience to a voice from heaven, went forth not knowing whither he went, and was justified by faith and by history, we are caught among the precedents of former ages and the results of past generations. That ancestral ape with his arboreal habits stares at us from the leafy darkness of the primeval forest and mocks us with the implied reminder that our noblest efforts can never raise us above the limits of the life which kings and priests and prophets have inherited from the parents of their race. We have learned the

fatal habit of analysing our personal existence as though we could reconstruct the awful mystery of our nature out of its constituent elements. We are entangled in the complex machinery of that civilisation which our knowledge of the mechanism of the universe has enabled us to pile up all round us. We grow weak as the vast external system is revealed to minds that have almost ceased to wonder. Yes, this is an age of enfeebled personality. There is boundless knowledge. There is a scientific skill that increases from year to year in the delicacy of its manipulation and the exquisite precision with which it accommodates itself to the great elemental forces. But the strong, unconquerable force of free, vigorous personality, the venturous spirit of a brave, manly faith, which dares to assert itself as the dominant factor in human progress—where has it gone? We are so busy in these days examining the structure of the planet in which we live and the human nature which has entered into our own being that we lose the opportunities of action which can only take its rise in a strong belief. Our interest in ourselves is morbidly self-conscious. As we lose the sense of the Divine presence, we develop a strange and contradictory interest



in physical life, forming societies of all kinds for the diminution of pain, while we gravely discuss the advisability of eliminating what our narrow wisdom pleases to regard as the unfit. We abhor capital punishment or the extinction of the abandoned criminal; we are inclined to believe in euthanasia or the extermination of the hopeless invalid. We refuse to suppress the germs of moral degradation which batten in the pages of the daily press, or meet us on the bookstall; while even the convocations of our Church are exercised about the germs of physical infection that may cling to the communion-cup. Ah! be sure of it, there is no guarantee for a healthy, vigorous manhood unless you cease to deal with your life upon the valetudinarian methods of the convalescent, and believe that the testimony of your conscience, the unsophisticated experience of your childhood, and the witness of strong lives in every age is true. "I am." That is the central point for action. That is the asset with which in the commerce of your mortal life you are to trade. That, and that only, is the contribution which it is yours to make to the general progress of the world. To realise yourself, as the one eternal, ever-present charge which is committed to your

trust—that, stripped of all theological associations and expressed in terms which make the thought available for the activities of life, is what the Bible means when it speaks of the salvation of your soul.

And this salvation—again it is the analogy of experience—can only be secured by the establishment of a personal relation. What we cry for above all things is a home, and home means the tender bond of friendship and affection. What is there more touching in its appeal to our compassion than the widow and the fatherless? What legend more frequently meets the eye of the parish priest in the houses of his parishioners than the words, the familiarity of which almost provokes a smile till the day comes when they look down upon a silent coffin: “What is home without a mother?” It is the chill word “death” that represents all that is fighting against the realisation of ourselves amid the change and decay of human affairs. It is this thought which numbs the arm and strikes cold into the heart. St. Paul got right to the root of the matter when he spoke of the power of death. So did the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews when he spoke of those “who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” We deceive our-

selves when we try not to believe that Death is still the king of terrors, and that the same veiled figure still haunts the imagination of those for whom he inexorably waits. Men can meet death to-day, as they have always done, with an unflinching brow, and for one moment of glorious life exchange the chance of a few more years of equivocal happiness. But I say that it is death when, in the silent watches of the night, we contemplate its coming from afar, or in the meridian of our active lives are reminded that the day wears onward and the night will surely come; it is death which still waits on life, and which, when they have been staled by custom, makes its pleasures but as the husks which the swine eat; and which, when we seek comfort from the sympathy and companionship of friends, robs us of those consolations which no man gives to us or can give. It is the strange, mysterious warfare of personality with death which is the real bitterness of life. "I am." The longer I live, the more I know, the more deeply I feel, yes—I will even say it—the more intensely I suffer, the more terrible, the more awful, the more intolerable is the thought, that lies heavy on the heart in those moments of faithlessness, when death is anticipated as a final anæsthetic stifling and pressing out of existence all that I delight in as myself.

“I am.” When do you come to know that this great practical truth, without which no man can live, without which no man can die, rests upon a sure foundation? It is when you turn from rummaging in the charnel-house of a dead past to Him who is ever the same, builder and maker of houses not made with hands, the source out of which our being springs and the ocean into which it flows, that the hope, the courage, the simplicity of life returns. “I will arise and go to my father.” What a joy to feel once more the grasp of the everlasting arms, the shelter of the eternal home! Above the firmament, beyond those inexorable laws which surround our mortal life and the pressure of which has brought down our strength in our journey, outside the circle of the earth which nevertheless depends upon His word and waits on His decree, is the Father, that wonderful presence which, watching over Israel, slumbers not nor sleeps. Look up, look up! There is the Father on His sapphire throne, waiting to be gracious, working out through all the changes, the chances, the enigmas of your mortal life His own unalterable purpose of love.

But there is one thing more. There is a God, and He is my Father. That is the belief of the strong man. Very well. Are you, then, pre-



pared to take up the strong man's burden? To believe in the Fatherhood of God does not involve blindness to the facts of experience. And to be sons of God, to be capable of personal relations with Him, who is the author of our being, involves responsibility to Him for the use we have made of our opportunities. There is no escape from this proposition. Deny man's personal identity, refuse him the right of his sonship, take from him the free disposal of the portion of goods which falleth to him ; and, while you expose him to his own contempt as the puppet of superior forces, you enable him to explain his broken pledges, his lost ideals, his infirm purposes, his wasted opportunities by reference to circumstance or environment or heredity, or a thousand other pleas, which look well enough in the eyes of his fellow-sinners, but which can have no validity when his free manhood is summoned to the presence of the God who made it, and the son stands before the Father whose home he has slighted and whose love he has despised. In the Cross He commends His love. It is because He loves ; because it is our glorious birthright, men and brothers, to be capable of love, that the Father keeps the ever-open door, and beside the hearth the vacant seat. And if on earth there is no



sight more full of joy than the return of the broken-hearted, I can understand why there is a joy such as no mortal can know in the great heart of God, which is shared and re-echoed by the angels, when the soul in the strength of its penitent manhood turns again home.

### III

#### THE GREETING

“While he was yet afar off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.”—LUKE xv. 20.

“**T**AKE up the strong man’s burden.” Such is the message addressed to those who are strong enough to believe that God has made man for Himself and that the heart can find no rest until it rests in Him. You must be ready to arise and go to your Father, just as you are, weighed down by that burden of responsibility which you have incurred by leaving His home, and wasting His substance, and despising His love. And the next stage in the great drama of reconciliation finds simple and beautiful expression in the words of Bunyan’s noble allegory:—

“Now I saw in my dream that the highway,

up which Christian was to go, was fenced on either side with a Wall, and that Wall was called *Salvation*. Up this way, therefore, did burdened Christian run, but not without great difficulty, because of the load on his back. He ran thus till he came at a place somewhat ascending; and upon that place stood a Cross, and a little below, in the bottom, a Sepulchre. So I saw in my dream, that first as Christian came up with the Cross, his Burden loosed from off his shoulders, and fell from off his back, and began to tumble; and so continued to do, till it came to the mouth of the Sepulchre, where it fell in, and I saw it no more."

Here, then, we are carried right up into the heart of the Christian revelation. We shall be prepared to allow, I think, that the picture of the father, going forth with eager haste to anticipate his son's return, requires some justification, before it can be accepted as adequately representing the Christian doctrine of the forgiveness of sins. What I mean is this. There is a passage in the Epistle to the Romans, in which the Apostle Paul declares that the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, the propitiation set forth in His Blood, meets a great necessity, which could not have been satisfied by an act of amnesty extended to transgressors

of the eternal law. God cannot pronounce a verdict of acquittal which is not true in fact. He cannot be the justifier of the ungodly and at the same time just, unless He can show, make good, and vindicate His righteousness.

The Lord Jesus has Himself made it plain to us that there is a true analogy between human and Divine forgiveness, and that the oblivion, in which the tenderness of human compassion will consent to shroud the unhappy past, is the counterpart of that remission of sins, whereon are based the relations of the Father with His reconciled children in the kingdom of heaven. A pardon freely granted has justified itself again and again in the experience of ordinary human relations. Transgressors have risen up in the power of that mercy, which has covered the past, to a new career of honourable service. But it requires no very wide experience to be assured that this is by no means always the case. And, when forgiveness is based upon the chances of amendment, when it is tentatively offered in the hope that the recipient may be induced to turn over a new leaf, the act has lost the freshness of its beautiful reality. We must give out of the fulness of our hearts, asking for nothing again.

Such primary instincts as this defy analysis.

We feel their essential truth, not because we can square them with our ordinary notions of right and wrong, but simply because they awaken within us the response of all that is best and noblest and most human. But for their rational justification we must turn to that sublimest act of mercy towards the fallen which is proclaimed in the words, "God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." "Thou oughtest, therefore, to have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had compassion on thee."

Nothing can be plainer than the certainty with which Scripture ascribes the whole work of our redemption from the penalty and power of sin to the free grace and spontaneous loving-kindness of the Eternal Father. It was God who "so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son." It was God who was "in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." It is God who "commendeth his love towards us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." "This," says the Saviour Himself, "is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth in him, may have eternal life." Or again: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Passage after passage, Scripture after Scripture, might be quoted to show



that the atoning work of Christ takes its rise in the heart of the Divine Fatherhood. Nor has Christian theology failed to recognise this great fact. It is no new discovery of these latter times that the Father Himself loved us, and, beholding us from afar, came forth to meet and to restore His penitent children. It is a caricature of Christian teaching to declare that the doctrine of the Atonement represents the forgiveness of sins as wrung from the unwilling justice of the Almighty by the exceeding love of the Eternal Son. "When we treat of the merit of Christ"—it is not the large-hearted Maurice nor the generous Kingsley, but the severe Calvin who speaks—"we do not place the beginning in Him, but we ascend to the ordination of God as the primary cause." The plan of our salvation, as it is unfolded to our adoring gaze, is nought if it be not the means which the Father has Himself devised that His banished may return.

But, while we make this declaration without reserve, it must be claimed with equal emphasis that the Scripture sets forth the Crucifixion as a meritorious act of propitiatory sacrifice. What else but the language of ancient ritual is uttered by the Baptist when he cries, "Behold the Lamb of God"? What is the whole argument of the

Epistle to the Hebrews but an exhibition of the reconciling work of Christ, in terms of the Mosaic ritual, as an expiation offered for the sins of the people by a merciful and faithful High Priest? "God hath set (Him) forth to be a propitiation," says St. Paul. "He is the propitiation for our sins," says St. John. Such language as this will not hold in the ordinary relations of mankind. It would not be true to say that a noble deed of self-sacrifice was an act of propitiation, nor yet, except by a strong use of metaphor, to affirm that death willingly incurred for the good of others was the oblation of a life. There may be—I believe, indeed, that there is—a true proportion between all vicarious suffering and what is properly called sacrifice. We speak of sacrifice of time, of money, of opportunity. We say that this man or that is capable of great self-sacrifice. But the word itself has no reference whatever to any one of these actions or dispositions. It is true that a sacrifice, as it approaches the ideal, will involve an entire surrender of self, a passionate yearning for the good of others, and a dedication of all that life can offer to a supreme end. And it is because all these things found their highest perfection in the death of Christ that the word "sacrifice" passed into current speech as

applied to a thousand things that would be inappropriately described as sacrificial.

That epithet, surely, puts us on the right track for discovering what is meant by a sacrifice. It is a term that comes directly from those rites of worship which are all but co-extensive with the human race. It implies a god, an altar, and a victim. It is connected, not alone with the blood of bulls and goats streaming in the court of the Temple at Jerusalem, but with the hecatombs of many lands and diverse cults. Such associations as these may move the disgust of superior persons, who are content to thank God that they are better than their fathers, but should command the patient attention of all who hold that in the comparative study of religious beliefs and practices we are more likely to reach the truth on the greatest of all subjects of human inquiry than by interrogating the sophisticated conscience of a rationalistic age. When, therefore, I find the Epistle to the Hebrews declaring that "without shedding of blood is no remission," I see in these words the expression of that great mystery of propitiation, which provides "the lamb for the burnt-offering," the perfect substitute, the complete representative, which covers the approach of the outcast to a God from whom he has been separated by his sins.

The testimony of the ages to this central truth gathers in volume and intensity with the growth of knowledge. Shift the centre of religion from this point, and the proportions, which from the dawn of worship it has assumed, are lost. To enter into union with God through the reconciliation effected by sacrifice—this has been the dominant feature of religion since the day when the first keeper of sheep brought of the firstlings of the flock an offering unto the Lord. Here is a universal fact that the progress of historical inquiry makes it increasingly difficult to evade. Explain it how you will, it yet remains true, and, while human nature continues what it is, it will always remain true, that no religion will satisfy the heart of man which does not turn upon the presentation of an offering for sin. And, if it is a fact that Christ reveals the Father as the fountain of inexhaustible love, the source of a compassionate forgiveness, it is also a fact that He reveals Himself as the Way, the new and living Way, which through the offering of His Body He has consecrated once for all, and of which He declares that “no man cometh unto the Father but by me.”

I cannot simplify and I cannot rationalise the Atonement. I cannot simplify it into a



mere exhibition of the forgiving love of God. The Cross only becomes a revelation of supreme self-sacrifice if it achieves a result commensurate with the surrender of God's only Son. I cannot see in it merely the road by which it became necessary, under conditions imposed by human sin, to reach the kingship of mankind. I cannot see in it merely the supreme test of obedience or the expression of a flawless human penitence. All these things unquestionably it was. But none of them exhausts or even approaches the true significance of Calvary. Men have clung to the Cross with a devotion which sought but the instrument of their salvation could have inspired. It has been venerated, loved, adored. In times of superstition its very wood has been the object of a reverence indistinguishable from worship. The Apostles' Creed passes from the Lord's birth of a virgin to His crucifixion under Pontius Pilate. Nor does the Nicene allow that the birth of God's Son discharged the whole of the eternal purpose, because it adds that "for our salvation" He "came down from heaven."

Christ crucified was the "foolishness" of apostolic preaching. Look at the climax of the familiar words of St. Paul in the Epistle to the Philippians. "He emptied himself, taking



the form of a servant." That, we say, is the incarnation. Surely there can be no condescension greater than this, that God should be found in fashion as a man. Poverty, suffering, shame—yea, death itself—are, at the worst, incidents in a mortal career; nor could the habiliments of a king be less galling than the fetters of a slave, when He who wears them is the Son of God! But St. Paul thought otherwise. The death of Christ witnessed to a humiliation, for which the assumption of human flesh was but the preparatory step. "He humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross." This means what the whole trend of the Gospel narrative clearly exhibits, what in every stage of its history the Church of Christ has joyfully perceived, that, unlike other men, Jesus our Lord came into the world to die, and to give His life a ransom for many.

No nobler epitaph could be graven on the tomb of mortal man than the words, "He lived for others." But the words which have aroused faith, and quickened hope, and kindled love in the hearts of millions are very different from these. "Jesus died for me" has been the rock on which the saints have built, the pillow on which they have laid their dying heads. I do not understand all that the great utterances

imply. But my heart burns within me, and all that is deepest and most human in my nature vibrates with a glad response, when I listen to St. Peter: "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ"; or to St. Paul: "He hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son, in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." I trust the great human instinct which knows that God may be approached only under cover of a propitiation. I know that reconciliation with God is a truth of religion, and that there is no religion where there is no mystery. Redemption is a mystery which has been made known in Christ, yet "which, unless it were too vast for our full intellectual comprehension, would surely be too narrow for our spiritual needs." When, therefore, I see the image of the invisible God in the face of Jesus Christ; when I behold in Him the satisfaction of my highest ideals of goodness, purity, and love; when I discern in His personality that perfect humanity which alone can be presented faultless before the Father with the joy of an undoubting confidence; when, too, I see the language proper to that mystery of propitiation, which finds a typical expression not alone in the old Hebrew ritual, but also,

with all their moral imperfections, in the religious customs of the Gentiles, employed not only by the early preachers of the Gospel, but by the Lord Himself, to express the true import of His death—when I take all these facts together, I know that I am in the presence of a stupendous act of Divine condescension, whereby the Father has come forth out of His place and, in the person of the Son of His love, vindicated His own Eternal Righteousness, and held out the right hand of His redeeming compassion to me a sinner.

If you ask how it is possible for Christ to take my place, to become my substitute, dying the just for the unjust, to bring me to God, I can only answer by suggesting another profound truth, that “as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” Let me not be misunderstood. I do not seek to rob the Atonement of half the mystery and more than half the mercy by limiting its scope to those remedial influences which gradually transform the character and issue in the fruits of righteousness. I do not forget that the chief glory of the Cross is the peace with God, the pardon of sin, the imputed righteousness. But, when the New Testament declares that there is a vital union between Christ and the believer,

an intimate relation between the Head and the members of His body, there is nothing shocking to my moral sense in the identification of the Saviour with the sinner. Only when we fail to recognise that it is in the sphere of mystery which surrounds our earthly life that Christ is our substitute does the Atonement appear to be an immoral teaching, a mere "fiction of mercy."

On its manward side the Cross of Jesus is big with the power of an intense morality—the victory of patience, the consecration of pain, the supremacy of love, the power of a regenerated life. On its Godward side it is a truth veiled yet manifested. "He tasted death for every man." "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." "He made him to be sin for us." It is because such words ring out from Calvary that it is eloquent also of a Divine mystery.

## IV

### THE HOME

“The father said to his servants.”—LUKE xv. 22.

WE pass now in our consideration of the parable to an inference suggested by the words, “The father said to his servants.” Then there was a home with all its ordered ministries and bountiful provisions to which the prodigal was welcomed. The significance of the parable is not exhausted when the father falls on his son’s neck. We have here not merely reconciliation but restoration. That joyful meeting on the highway of penitence is not the final consummation. The wanderer recovers his lost estate in the jubilant household. There is the holiday attire; the banquet of love; the song of the redeemed. It is the life of filial service, wrought out under the shelter of a father’s benediction, that is



inaugurated amid the triumph of this festal night.

The subject of our last sermon was the greatest theme that could engage the lips of the Christian preacher. Not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit do we determine to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. There is great urgency in this matter. We are ministers of the gospel and we speak to dying men. We offer you Christ as the one source of peace in this world, the one hope of happiness in the next. With St. Paul we exclaim, "Be it known unto you therefore, brethren, that through this man is proclaimed unto you remission of sins." This is the whole gospel of the grace of God from which we are bound to keep nothing back and to which we dare not add.

Yet it is none the less true that if we stop short at this point we shall have failed to present the good news of the forgiveness of sins in all the grand completeness with which it is set before us in the pages of the New Testament. There is a thought which is very common in the writings of St. Paul. He speaks of the forgiveness of our trespasses "according to the riches of his grace." It was because God

was "rich in mercy" that He quickened us together with Christ. It is the "riches" of God's goodness that sinners are warned not to despise. I see, then, in this word "riches" a declaration of the fulness of that salvation which is offered to men in Christ. We have not exhausted the contents of the gospel or viewed the forgiveness of sins in all its relations when we have summoned the penitent to the foot of the Cross. For it is not enough to say that in Christ we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins, unless, with the Apostle Paul, we give thanks to the Father who has not only delivered us out of the power of darkness, but translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.

What a prominent place, if you will think of it, the kingdom plays in the first proclamation of the gospel! "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God." So runs the evangelist's narrative. What, then, was the burthen of His message? What are these good tidings which He brings? It is expressed in the very next words. Jesus came, saying, "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand." So St. Matthew describes the commencement of the Lord's public ministry: "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

They are the very words in which the Baptist had heralded the approach of Christ. It is the same message which is entrusted to the chosen Twelve, when they are sent forth upon their missionary journey: "Go preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand." There is something very remarkable in this. Why should Jesus thus have identified the gospel, the good tidings of pardon and reconciliation, with the coming of what He called the kingdom? There can be no doubt that the thought deeply occupied His mind throughout the days of His earthly ministry. It is the keys of the kingdom that He gives to His representatives. It is the kingdom into which all men must be brought, and which the rich shall find it hard to enter. And it is the kingdom which, under the name of His congregation or His Church, Christ promises to build upon the foundation of apostolic faith. We have here no addition to the gospel; no fresh development of teaching which is to succeed the message of salvation. It is not as though the Saviour of men declared His intention of gathering together into a kingdom those whom he had already saved from the penalty and power of sin. The remarkable feature of the gospel story—the point which any attentive reader of the evangelists

ought to notice—is that the good news from God as it was first published by our Lord Himself in the days of the Galilean ministry is the proclamation of a kingdom.

Now what we of the Church of England are often told by those who, while they refuse our communion, are jealous of the Gospel message, is that our insistence upon the Church and Sacraments robs the free gift of salvation through Christ Jesus of the simplicity of its personal appeal. There are, of course, those who oppose what they call sacerdotalism upon grounds which no thoughtful man would venture to describe as Christian. They oppose it, as they would oppose all religion, which claims to be anything more than a vague and irresponsible sentiment. But there are others—and I am too deeply impressed with the supreme necessity of guarding evangelical Christianity not to sympathise with their suspicions—who hesitate to interpose a system, as they would phrase it, between the sinner and the Saviour. I know too well that my own salvation rests upon the finished work of Christ not to believe that the one offering is a sufficient sacrifice for the sins of all. The question, then, as it presents itself to my mind, is this: Here are Jesus of Nazareth and His messengers preach-

ing throughout all Galilee the gospel of the kingdom. And we find the risen Christ interpreting His death to the disciples who met Him on their way to Emmaus, in language which all would recognise as in the familiar sense evangelical, "And He said unto them, Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name unto all the nations." Is there any essential difference between the message of the Galilean ministry and the gospel of the Pentecostal preaching? When St. Peter proclaimed repentance and remission of sins, was it other than the message of his Master when He announced the kingdom of God.

I have here a copy of the *Marked Testament*, as it was called, issued two or three years ago under the auspices of a committee of evangelicals, and presented to persons engaged in any kind of mission work throughout the country. It was thus that a copy came into my hands as the head of a mission congregation in Dundee. "The verses marked in this Testament," so runs an inscription on the flyleaf, "will, under the Holy Spirit's teaching, help to make plain God's way of salvation through Christ." The book presents some curious



phenomena. For example, the fifteenth chapter of St. Luke, from which I have been labouring to preach the gospel to you on these Sunday evenings, and which contains not only the Parable of the Prodigal Son, but of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Piece of Money, is not marked at all. The Acts of the Apostles, which is the longest book in the whole New Testament, is only marked in ten places, and of these five occur in the account of St. Peter's early sermons. Are we, then, to conclude that the Acts, though no personality is more prominent in its pages than that of the Holy Spirit, contains little or nothing which under His guidance will "help to make plain God's way of salvation"? I cannot believe it. My friends, I would say to you, *Read your Bible*. There is much need. I would say to you, *Mark your Bible*. That will enable you to learn its lesson. But be very careful to remember that what you have read, marked, and learned is not of necessity the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. It is only those whose minds are ever open to behold the wondrous things of God's law whom the Blessed Spirit will through larger vision and deeper insight guide into all the truth. Now there are two chapters which illustrate my meaning in this marked New Testament. The

first is the second chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians. Here we have three passages marked which are dear to the hearts of all true evangelicals. I will ask you to listen to them.

“God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.” “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.” “Now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.”

Those are the passages. But what I want you to observe is that their full significance can only be understood in relation to the unmarked context in which they stand. What, for example, is meant by “made nigh by the blood of Christ”? You will at once answer me that it means “made nigh to God.” This is only true indirectly, as you will hear when I read the verse as it stands in St. Paul’s text. I begin, then, at the twelfth verse:—

“Ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world; but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made

nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us . . . that he might reconcile both in one body by the cross." It becomes plain, when we have the whole passage before us, that it is not individuals, who are brought near to God in a covenant relation, but rather a commonwealth, a nation, a society. To be made nigh by the blood of Christ is, then, to be given a place within the covenant. It is the Church, as the same apostle says in another place, which Christ purchased with His precious blood. And when in this place he declares that Christ is our peace, his meaning is that the old enmity which separated the chosen people of Israel from the nations of the world is obliterated by the disappearance of the middle wall of partition, and the universalising of the Divine society upon the basis of the redemption wrought on Calvary. Can anything be more certain than this—that the proclamation of the Kingdom and the preaching of the Cross are not different messages, but one? For it was the purpose of the Father to reconcile mankind to Himself not as separate individuals, but in one body by the Cross. So the chapter from which these great words come concludes with that magnificent

utterance which we have enshrined in one of the noblest of our collects and one of the most inspiring of our familiar hymns :—

“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God ; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone ; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.”

So closely is St. Paul’s evangelicalism interwoven with his churchmanship.

But that you may not fail to perceive that all this is a practical reality and not a mere rhetorical sentiment, I will ask you to turn to yet one other of these marked passages. This is in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Colossians, and it is rendered more emphatic by the fact that it is distinguished by a hand pointing to the text, and by a significant red cross against the heading of the page, which is *the ritual law abolished*. These are the words :—

“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.”

I quite agree with the evangelical committee

that marked this Testament. It would be quite impossible to find language which more triumphantly asserted the completeness of the work wrought out on Calvary. But I cast my eye upward along the page, and in the verse but one before that which I have quoted I find words which are evidently intended to be read in close connection.

“Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.”

“Buried with him in baptism.” I beseech you to consider what such language must always have meant to Christians. Baptism, whatever else it may be, has certainly at all times and in all places been the ceremony by which persons are initiated into that outward society which is at least called the Church of Christ. And St. Paul says in this place most distinctly that it is through baptism that we are so united with Christ that our sins may be forgiven for His sake and the nailing of the handwriting to the cross become effective for our salvation. It is in baptism, whensoever that sacrament becomes a reality to us through faith in the working of God (and St. Paul never says that baptism operates independently of



our faith), that we died with Christ, that we rose with Him, that in the Church we sit with Him in heavenly places. That is the evident teaching of St. Paul in this Epistle to the Colossians. This is a point of great importance and you will, I know, excuse me if I labour it somewhat. Is this really what St. Paul means? Search the Scriptures. It is no use having an open Bible if you do not search it. I take my Bible, therefore, and look out the reference to Romans vi. 4. This is the most evangelical of all the epistles, and contains no less than twenty-three marked passages. They have not, however, marked this one, though I should have thought God's way of salvation was tolerably plain on the face of it.

"Know ye not," so runs the argument, "that so many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life."

And I find this same apostle saying to the Galatians that to be baptized is to put on Christ; and speaking to Titus of salvation through the washing of regeneration. And the significance of baptism is explained, not as a

charm, but as a means of entrance into the one body which, as we saw, is the primary object of redemption, when in the Ephesian epistle it is declared that "by one spirit we are all baptized into one body."

With such a commentary as this upon our Lord's intention, I have no difficulty in explaining the terms of His last commission: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation": that is how the postscript of St. Mark's Gospel phrases the marching orders of the Church, the trust committed to the Christian ministry. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," so proceed the Lord's words as here reported. St. Matthew's vision is substantially the same: "Go ye and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them." We cannot preach the gospel unless we are also setting up the Church. A Society for the Propagation of the Gospel must seek to extend the Church. A Church Missionary Society must preach the Gospel. A minister of the Gospel and a priest of the Church ought to be, and in their intention are the same thing. Men are reconciled in one body. The one body exists for one purpose and for one purpose only, that mankind may be reconciled to God. To say that to believe in the Church is to interpose

a system between the sinner and the Saviour is to misconceive the whole situation. Nowhere is our relation to Christ, to the atonement which He wrought, to the forgiveness which he won, to the imputed righteousness (I have no fear whatsoever of that expression) of Him whose merits are our only plea, more profoundly and yet more luminously expressed than in the fifth of Romans :—

“As through one trespass the judgment came unto all men to condemnation; even so through one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to justification of life. For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous.”

Can there be any doubt what this means? Both for evil and for good we are bound up together in the bundle of a common humanity. No man lives to himself, no man dies to himself. Nothing can be more certain than the fact of our own separate existence. Yet it is no less certain that all that we have and are is linked together by the mysterious bonds of kinship to that family of which we were born and into which we have entered. By the facts of our common human inheritance we are alienated

from the life of God. We come into this world "unhouselled, disappointed, unaneled." As our catechism puts it, we are by nature the children of wrath. And the great reconciliation is effected, as how should it not be, by the creation of a new humanity, the establishment of a new race, a new society, a new family in which whosoever believeth is made nigh through the blood of the new covenant. We are made the "children" of grace, so that it is no metaphor, no figure of speech, but the deepest of all deep realities which the Master set forth in his converse with Nicodemus. "Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God." To hold that the Church of God is the sphere in which the Father reconciles men to Himself is not the product of a High Church imagination. It is no less a Protestant than grand old Martin Luther himself, who exclaims in his own vigorous language, "The Church is full of the forgiveness of sins"—"within the fold of the Christian Church, God daily and richly forgives me all my sins"—"the Church, as a mother, bears and nurtures every individual through the Word." For it was in no "epistle of straw," but in his own Galatians, that he read, "Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all."

And what a magnificent ideal of churchmanship it is which is here set before us ! Not only does the Father meet me upon the sad highway with the embrace of a great forgiveness, but He brings me into His banqueting house, and His banner over me is love. Some people are content to believe that a Churchman is one who believes in a national establishment of religion. Establishments are not without their advantages to the life of a Christian nation, but it is at least a proposition not entirely outside the region of legitimate argument whether the price which we in England have to pay for this boon is not too heavy. Others there are whose cultured taste or antiquarian sense is satisfied by the existence in our midst of an ancient hierarchical society entrusted with the administration of religion. And others, again, take higher ground, and feel that adherence to, if not more active membership of, a society which is in direct succession with the Christianity which was brought to these shores by representatives of a yet more ancient community in Ireland or in Rome, and may well be regarded as possessing an apostolic origin, is some guarantee of privileges and blessings which the sect of yesterday may scarcely claim. But, as I go up and down the country, and view our



English Churchmanship as it is manifested in our congregations, I am sadly forced to the conclusion that the ecclesiastical theory of large numbers of English Christians amounts to little more than a mild predilection for an incomparable rendering of an incomparable liturgy by a not too reverent choir, which can scarcely be regarded otherwise than as our Anglican equivalent for the finest prayer ever addressed to a Boston audience.

Churchmanship! What is it, if Christian men will only rise to the fulness of their inheritance? It is the citizenship of the saints! It is membership in the household of Him from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named. It is the assertion of a claim to make real and effective those exceeding great and precious promises of union with the risen Master and Saviour and Lord, which arise out of the forgiveness of sins and the adoption of sons. It is the realisation of the most blessed, the most spiritual of all unions, our fellowship one with another in the unity of the Father and the Son. It is the enjoyment of a life which, hid with Christ in God, takes its rise in the new birth of baptism and is strengthened by that food convenient for His children which the House-father dispenses in the Sacrament of His dear

Son's Body and Blood. Translated into the kingdom—there is the master-thought which shall determine the activities of service, which mark the daily toil of the Christian as he goeth forth to his work and to his labour until the evening. We sing:—

“Jerusalem the golden,  
With milk and honey blest,  
Beneath thy contemplation  
Sink heart and voice opprest.”

But surely in referring this splendid vision with St. Bernard to a future yet dim and unrealised, we miss the true glory of the children of God. The ransomed Church, the sphere in which the reconciled, the risen life is to be lived, is a present fact. For “ye are come unto Mount Zion and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator,” in whose Blood we have right to the tree of life and have entered in through the gates into the City.

## V

### THE ROBE

“Bring forth quickly the best robe, and put it on him.”—  
LUKE xv. 22.

SO we reach the accomplishment of the purpose of reconciliation. The awakening, the meeting, the home-coming, and now the festal array. “Bring forth”—the Father speaks to his servants; the robe is laid up for the penitent sinner in the father’s house. “Quickly”—then it is a transformation which is immediate and complete. “The best robe”—it is the garment of praise which they wear who feast in kings’ houses. “Put it on him”—it is the grace and favour of him who makes the feast which clothes the returning wanderer in a vesture not his own. “They found the man sitting, clothed and in his right mind, at the feet of Jesus.”

Here I see the great truth to which the Reformation of the sixteenth century recalled the mind of the Church, the doctrine of justification by faith which carries with it, as I believe, the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. It is the teaching, I rejoice to think, of the Church of England, and nowhere has it received a nobler vindication than in the writings of the greatest English theologian. "Faith," says Richard Hooker, "is the only hand which putteth on Christ unto justification; and Christ the only garment which, being so put on, covereth the shame of our defiled natures, hideth the imperfections of our works, preserveth us blameless in the sight of God." While this is preached from our pulpits you need have no fear for the Protestantism of our Church. Remember that the issue turns not upon outward observance and ceremonial. You may be thoroughly loyal to the Reformation, and yet acknowledge the benefit of auricular confession. Do not, I beseech you, be suspicious of the lighting of a candle or the swinging of a censer. But be very jealous for the evangelical doctrine of justification by faith.

Statements are sometimes made which impugn its validity. People are sometimes so deeply concerned for the morality of God's

dealings with sinful men, that in what they believe to be the interest of His justice they impose limitations upon His mercy. Others are so strongly convinced of the necessity of sacraments that they are ready to attack a principle which to them seems inconsistent with the reverent use of them. I am not surprised that many earnest-minded men are strangers to the home-life of the Church when, in a work that has at least achieved a considerable sale, a writer of repute in the American Church can commit himself to such a misrepresentation of the gospel as this :—

“By the imparted righteousness of Christ through the sacraments and the appropriation of these through the co-operation of the human will, man is enabled, as it were, to weave into his very character the righteousness of Christ, and so to obtain ‘the wedding-garment required of God in Holy Scripture’—‘holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.’ This *imparted* righteousness must be carefully distinguished from the Lutheran doctrine of *imputed* righteousness, a legal fiction which represents God as covering human nature, defiled by all its sins, with the garment of Christ’s righteousness—in which case the righteousness becomes



no more a part of the nature of man than is the coat which he wears. By the imparting of Christ's righteousness man is *made* holy; by the imputation of it he is by an unworthy fiction only *accounted* as holy, while his sinfulness still remains."

The student of the sixteenth century would, of course, at once notice that the point at issue in this statement, represented by the phrases *imparted* and *imputed* righteousness, is the old controversy of the Reformation. If you want teaching which—to use a popular phrase—goes behind the Reformation, here you will find it. I am not concerned to justify every expression that Martin Luther, in the vehemence of his strong, impulsive nature, may have used. And for the German reformation we in England are not responsible. But for this modern Catholicism, with its deliberate preference for the unscriptural theology of the Middle Ages, with its appeal from the Church of England to something which is regarded as the universal Church, with its distrust of the sound theology of our English divines—I will have none of it! The prevalence of such teaching as that which I have cited constitutes a grave danger to the preaching of that pure Gospel which is the supreme need of our country in the present

day. With Hooker I believe that Christ is the only garment that covereth our defiled natures. For sure the poor returning prodigal was not sent to some workshop in the purlieus of his father's mansion, there to weave, and weave, and weave till he had got himself a sorry garment to wear in the ancestral hall. "Haste," cried the father to his servants, "let there be no delay: bring forth quickly the best robe, and put it on him."

Let us see for ourselves how the witness of Scripture contradicts at every turn the paragraph to which reference has been made. The writer contrasts being *made* holy with being *accounted as* holy. He is evidently trying to fix the meaning of justification. We had better retain St. Paul's language, and speak of being made, or accounted, righteous, and then we must say that it is just in the sense which is here termed unworthy that justification occurs in the New Testament. No one who is really familiar with Greek usage would venture for a moment to translate the word "to justify," as though it meant "to make holy." The word means "to pronounce righteous." The figure is that of a court of justice in which a verdict is to be given. That verdict may or may not accord with the facts. A verdict of acquittal

clears the panel, but it does not make him not guilty, if in fact he has committed the crime. In this and no other sense must the word be understood when we find it in the New Testament. It occurs, as you will remember, again and again in the Epistle to the Romans. "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight." "Or," says the margin of the Revised Version, "accounted righteous." Again: "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, by his blood . . . for the showing of his righteousness at this present season: that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus." One other crucial passage will not only draw out the full sense of the word, but will also bring it into relation to that other phrase whose meaning was vividly apprehended at the Reformation: "Now to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the impious, his faith is reckoned for righteousness." Here we have two statements which ought to be sufficiently unmistakable. God is first of all represented as pronouncing a verdict of acquittal upon the impious man. He accounts him innocent; He treats him as though he were righteous. However unworthy such

a legal fiction may appear to the superficial theologian, it is nevertheless the scriptural account of the matter. There is no escape from this conclusion. "The facts of language are inexorable." Then, secondly, it is clear that justification is made to rest upon faith, as an equivalent for righteousness. To say that faith, because it is the right attitude of the soul towards God, is practically the same thing as righteousness, may from one point of view be true enough. But it obscures the whole force of the argument to introduce this thought, where it does not properly enter. What St. Paul seems to see before him is the impious man, with no clean record of a life to present before God, with no goodness of his own to plead, with a long score of evil behaviour against his name, yet returning, just as he is, to the Father, relying upon the Divine promise, taking God at His word, eagerly accepting the salvation that is in Christ, and so finding himself at once forgiven, accepted, restored.

And I say that the correlative of the doctrine of justification by faith is the imputed righteousness of Christ. God covers us with the robe of righteousness, which is the merits of our adorable Redeemer. For consider what

the full statement of the doctrine of justification is. It is expressed thus: "By grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." We have, then, to ask, What does the Bible mean when it speaks of grace? A word so constantly on the lips of the preacher as this is apt to lose the fulness of its meaning in the variety of its applications. What, then, is grace?

Grace, as the Bible employs the term, is God's free favour. St. Paul opposes it to debt. "To him that worketh the reward is not reckoned as of grace, but as of debt." The contrast is obvious. It is with a salvation to which we have earned the right by our own toil that we contrast a salvation bestowed upon us as God's free gift. This is the very breath and life of the gospel. Of our own we have nothing save the surrender of faith to Christ. All the rest, including those fruits of righteousness which manifest themselves in the saintly life, is His, and remains His, even when it seems to become ours. We must not look upon grace as an influence co-operating with our work. That, so far as I am able to unravel a somewhat tangled theology, is the mistake of the system which at the present day is most nearly represented by the Roman communion. We must



not compare grace to the forces of nature which co-operate with the labourer's toil in the production of the harvest. In the sweat of our brow we eat bread, and the labourer is worthy of his food. It is by an act of free favour that our past, as it increases day by day, is forgiven. It is by an act of free favour that the unworthy receive the adoption of sons and are placed in contact with those covenanted channels whereby they are united in mystical fellowship with Christ. "Not for works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us." That is the great covering principle which must be grasped and firmly held at the very outset of the Christian life, on the very threshold of the Christian system.

I want you to see that there is a wide difference between the view of grace which I have tried to put before you, and that other view with which it stands contrasted. Let me remind you once again what the difference is. Grace is either the favour of God in consequence of which man receives his salvation as a free gift, or else it is spiritual strength infused into the character of man, by co-operating with which he may ultimately become worthy of eternal life. Now it is not that the one is

bound to reject the Church with its sacraments and ordinances, while the other substitutes the ecclesiastical system for the atoning work of Christ. For we have tried to make it plain how it is in one body that the Cross becomes to believers the power of God. And you may seek the strengthening and refreshing of your soul at a prayer-meeting as well as at the Lord's Table. No; the distinction does not lie there. Illustrations are apt to be misleading, and no analogy can afford to be pressed home. But I think I may venture to speak of the man to whom grace is nothing but the imparted gift of God, as endeavouring by constant effort to build up a spiritual capital which he hopes may ultimately prove sufficient; while the other is covered at each moment of his course by the full insurance of the merits of the Cross.

My friends, our hearts must be full of Christ, it is in Him that our minds must be absorbed, if there is to be true freedom in the Christian life, if we are to attain even a small portion of that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. I mistrust a great deal of what passes for Catholic devotion, because its tendency is to replace the service of Christ by the culture of character. Evangelicalism, in spite of the defects which I have sought to make plain,

always seems to me to keep the true proportion by exalting the personal relation to Christ. Let us beware of the anxiety of self-consciousness. The whole power of the Gospel, its moral and spiritual power to transform the life and transfigure the character, lies in its appeal to the disturbed and anxious soul to cast all its care on Him who has wrought salvation. "Be of good cheer, my son, thy sins are forgiven. Believe in Jesus Christ who was crucified for thy sins." I do not want the assurance that by the careful use of a medicine provided for sick souls I may at last achieve a character upon which God can look with approval. I want the message that the debt is paid, that the pardon is sealed, that my restored sonship is an actual and present fact. Could the holiest man in this church, if he was summoned into the presence of His Maker this very night, venture to trust, I will not say to the righteousness which he has already attained, but to the righteousness which, by the help of God, has already been wrought out in him, to plead for his pardon and salvation? That is the question by which to bring the matter to a practical test. I appeal to the conscience of any man who, knowing the reality of sin, has lived a life closely in touch with the redemptive in-

fluences of the gospel, has, it may be, for years been a regular guest at the Lord's Table, and has endeavoured by prayer, by sacrament, by every other appointed means, to bring himself into vital union with Christ the Head. I will ask such a man whether he does not hide himself under a presence which clothes his nakedness and covers his sin? Is it the life of Christ as already realised in his own character, or is it the merits of the Crucified as overshadowing his felt unworthiness upon which his hope is set? Can he, in the face of the eternal God, so detach himself from his own past that a shelter is no longer needed? Does he not realise, as he never realised before, that what he needs now and ever is to be accounted righteous for His sake who died, and was buried, and who rose again? It is only because of the freedom that this thought gives that I can even go on trying to be good. It is because each time that I approach that Holy Table I can say:—

“Look, Father, look on His anointed face,  
And only look on us as found in Him.  
Look not on our misusings of Thy grace,  
Our prayers so languid, and our faith so dim;  
For lo! between our sins and their reward,  
We set the passion of Thy Son our Lord.”

It is only because He can within Himself make pure the sin-stained oblation of my life, that I can know the blessedness of eating bread in the kingdom. And when I look forward to that last hour, when God shall call me to appear before Him, and when I pray that then I may receive the sacrament which Sunday by Sunday I have taken at the earthly altar, oh then it is not merely as the last and best vaticum of my dear Lord's Body and Blood that I shall wish to be accounted worthy of that Holy Thing; but that in the darkness, when the destroying angel is hovering above my mortal tenement, I may claim the unfailing promise, "When I see the blood I will pass over."

It is only under cover of this shelter that we can make anything of our lives at all. What is the difference between the man whose life has been a daily advance in holiness, and the man dead in trespasses and sins, when compared with the perfect righteousness which alone can satisfy the demands of the eternal law? It is no gospel for sad human hearts, tied and bound as with a chain, to speak of the doctrine of grace as though it were a prescription for sin, a course of treatment for iniquity, a systematic cure. We are sensitive about morality. We are jealous for the system of the Church.



From the rationalism of Protestant pulpits, from the ecclesiasticism of the Catholic schools, we turn to the theology of the death-bed. What Catholic would desire to fix his dying eyes upon aught else but the crucifix of his Divine Redeemer? What words could speak sweeter comfort to the departing Protestant than those which bring him, still a penitent, to the foot of the Cross:—

“Just as I am, without one plea  
But that Thy Blood was shed for me,  
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,  
O Lamb of God, I come”?

Than such a vision, than such holy voices, I want none other in the hour of death. In the Day of Judgment I only dare plead that Jesus died for me.

It is related of one of the greatest men who have ever consecrated the finest gifts of intellect to the furtherance of religion and the service of the Church of England,\* that, as he lay a-dying, he confessed to his chaplain that he was oppressed with a sense of his own unworthiness. If there ever was a man who might have been content to stand upon his achievement, then this was the man. Not only

\* Bishop Butler.

had he lived a pure and blameless life, but he had given to the Church an immortal vindication of faith in his *Analogy of Religion*. But in the hour of death he was great enough to know that of himself he had nought to plead. "But, my lord," replied the chaplain, "our Saviour has said, 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.'" "Ah," was the answer, "I had forgot. I die happy."



**THE LAST WORDS OF THE CRUCIFIED**





# I

## “FATHER, FORGIVE THEM”

“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”  
—LUKE xxiii. 34.

“**F**ATHER.” In that word, uttered with the entire surrender of a perfect correspondence of understanding, affection, will, between the mind of Jesus and the heart of Him from whom He came forth and to whom He goes, lies the secret of the peace of Calvary. It is the first thought of the Redeemer when He is lifted upon the Cross; it is the last thought with which He bows His head. Within its large embrace are gathered all the activities of the Crucified—the intercession for sinners, the absolution of the penitent, the ministry to the faithful, the spiritual combat, the bodily pains, the finished work. That dear Name thus twice repeated is the great bracket which holds

together the series of the seven words. Men once believed that this earth of ours was encompassed by the ocean, which like a mighty river flowed ever onward around its uttermost shores. Forest and hill, fruitful plain and desolate mountain, pasture and stream, cities and wastes—all encircled by a broad belt of sea. That is a picture of our manifold life, girded by the perpetual presence of the Divine Fatherhood. The career which is worked out under the most changeful circumstances may nevertheless, if attentively studied, be seen to possess a unity impressed upon it by the oneness of the man's character. There is a dominant chord, a prevailing tone, a tenacious purpose. When the eye rests upon the Almighty Father sitting upon the circle of the earth, upholding the whole sum of existence within the everlasting arms, complete beyond all incompleteness, perfect above all imperfection, then for us love is the abiding background of the universe, and ours is God's Peace. "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principedoms, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God." "Who shall separate?" It was the consciousness of a union

which no power could break, of a bond which no force could sever, that breathed in the first word that fell from the lips of the Divine Sufferer.

*Father, forgive.*—The prayer implies forgiveness on the part of Him who prayed. If competition be the law of human life, resentment is not only natural but reasonable. Each man has his life to live, his career to shape, his good to seek. It is only part of the struggle to hate whatsoever opposes the achievement of this purpose, the attainment of this end. And if it be men who thwart our efforts, we shall seek to revenge upon them the hindrances that have been placed in the way of our own advancement. This must be so. To admit that others have a claim upon our consideration, independent of the services which they may render to us, is at once to acknowledge the presence of some other law which ought to direct our actions. Let us thank God, as we kneel beneath the Cross which is the token, the pledge, the safeguard, the very sacrament of the Law of Sacrifice, for all those dim instincts of brotherhood which stir in the hearts of men, which have prompted deeds of heroic self-devotion, and produced lives of noble self-surrender. Prudence tells me to love them that love me. Reason and logic cannot carry me

beyond the maxim, uttered by them of old time, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy." But the big human heart is wider than the limits within which the head can reason. The noblest things of life and character are beyond reason. Such is the loyalty with which love clings to persons who have long forfeited all claim even to respect. Such, too, is the abandonment with which men will give up their years, nay, will lay down their lives, for the common weal. It is a grand impulse which drives men, heedless of personal gain, to work, to live, to die for others. We all admit it; yet how few act upon the admission! Prudence forbids. Such action is quixotic. But Christ obeys an impulse which is grander still. He works, He dies, He forgives. Surely it needs a clearer faith than the vague perception of a possible brotherhood of men to justify this uttermost surrender! Great sacrifices of time, of opportunity, of life, may be made in the promotion of a high ideal. But the love which forgives the malice that has brought ruin upon the highest ideal, and shattered the noblest work the world has ever seen, witnesses to the presence of a peace of mind which knows that failure only seems to be defeat. Cease to believe in the final triumph of goodness, justice,

and truth, and you have ceased to love. Cease to hope in the possibility of repentance in the lives of men, and you leave no place for the spirit that forgives. But Christ can say, “Father, forgive.” There is the unbroken fellowship with God, which is the one true end of human life. “Thou, O Lord God, art the thing that I long for.” “Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee. My heart and my flesh faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.” God’s rest, that is the goal of life; to rest in Him, that is the end of pain and sorrow, of toil and care. Nothing can defeat God’s great purpose of love. In the supreme hour of His agony Christ realised, as none else can, the intensity of that love of the Eternal Father which works its sovereign will even through the bitter hostility, the fierce resentment, of men. He knew the meaning of that holy calm which no violence can dispel, no rage disturb, which is kind to the unthankful and the evil. He had fathomed the depths of that Divine compassion which had sent Him forth to suffer, the just for the unjust, that He might bring them to God. “Father”—in that word lay the promise of the future, the pledge of repentance, the



power to transform. Not what man is but what God is—that carries with it the hope of what man may become. He who fully knows the Father’s lovingkindness can bear with the ingratitude of the children. The completeness of Christ’s Sonship is the measure of His forgiveness. “If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you.” When a man feels that he cannot forgive, his peace is gone; but it is not the malice of his enemies that has robbed him, it is the loss of the vision of the Divine Fatherhood.

*Father, forgive them.*—The intercession of God’s Priest was offered for His enemies—not those only, or chiefly, who drove in the nails, but all. “When we were enemies, we were reconciled.” That Cross has no meaning as a universal atonement, if the words of St. Paul are not true. “We were enemies.” Our position in the Church implies this fact; each sacrament whereof we are partakers is the witness to it. We have been “brought nigh by the blood of Christ.” The Cross is first the intercession of the Son of Man on behalf of all. “Father, forgive them.”

*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*—It is wilful, deliberate, conscious transgression for the forgiveness of which the

Crucified Saviour pleads. The soldiers, Pilate, the Jews, the sons of men—all are responsible, all have disobeyed conscience, all have wilfully trifled with their souls. The soldiers make their game of an unoffending prisoner. Pilate condemns a man whom he knows to be innocent. The Jews have rejected the Holy One. But none of the actors in that great tragedy—save only, as it would seem, Judas the son of Simon, of whom the Master said “it were good for that man if he had never been born”—had made evil his good and thus crucified the Son of God. All were betrayed, seduced, deceived into sin—the soldier by his love of brutal sport, the governor by his fear of the people, the Jew by his lust of worldly power—of all it was true that they knew not what they did. Let us thank God for the mitigation of our offences that spring from the dulness of our blinded sight. It is the ignorance in which we sin that makes it possible for us to return along the pathway of penitence which He provides. We know not what we do. But Christ knows, and it is the secret alike of His prayer for pardon and of His power to save. “By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.” “He hath made peace by the blood of his cross.”

## II

### “WITH ME IN PARADISE”

“Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”—LUKE xxiii. 3.

WE have heard the first word of peace: the priestly intercession for the transgressors. Now we listen to the comfortable word that the Son of Man addresses to one who truly turns to Him. There is a natural sequence: first the sinner, then the penitent. The prayer of Christ is no sooner uttered than it begins to be answered. The firstfruits of the Cross is the malefactor who hangs by Jesus' side.

And the robber receives a message of peace. Christ's gift to him is the entire absolution of the penitent, the assurance of a speedy entrance into the Paradise of God, the pledge of fellowship in the joy of his Lord.

It is no cheap gift. When we are tempted to

think lightly of the forgiveness which Christ bestows, let us remember that Calvary was the price which both the Giver and the receiver had to pay for this absolution. It was the Cross of Jesus that opened the gate of Paradise. Not till his sins had bound him to the shameful tree did this poor man “look at heaven and long to enter in.” Such opportunities are rare. To two only in the history of the world came the opportunity of Golgotha, and for one of the two even that was of no avail. And further, what passed upon the spirit of the penitent thief was Conversion. “If there be a spiritual experience,” says a modern writer, “to which the history of religion bears witness, it is that of Reconciliation with God.” It is a travesty of the faith to represent heaven and happiness as purchased by a mere *amende honorable* to the offended dignity of God. The changed life, the transformed character—that is the result which faith achieves. A man’s career is God’s effort to convert him. Crucifixion in presence of the World’s Ransom! What a supreme effort for the salvation of two human souls! “And one of the malefactors that were hanged was blaspheming him, saying, ‘Art thou not the Messiah? Save thyself and us.’” The curses of the impenitent, so true to the ex-

perience of life, are a pledge of the reality of the other's faith. Calvary with its three crosses is an epitome of the Christian centuries.

"Two men shall be in one bed: the one shall be taken and the other left."

"But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost thou not even fear God?" It is the awakened conscience. These passing crowds, these rude soldiers, these insolent priests, may utter their profane blasphemies and hideous taunts. They are still in the midst of life; for them death is still a far-off dream; the great realities are banished from their thoughts. But thou and I—we are face to face with the awful mystery; a few hours, and for us, as for Him who is the object of these profane taunts, the veil will be lifted that hides the great unseen. "Dost thou not even fear God?" That awful holiness, that severe righteousness, that sublime justice—if they have no attraction, have they no terrors for thee? That is the first stage in true penitence. The soul realises its separation from God. Then, as by a flash of Divine insight, the stricken conscience recognises the power of that spectacle of pain and patience which is there presented to dying eyes. "The same condemnation" for the robber is the due reward of his deeds, for the majestic



Sufferer is a very priesthood of mediation for the sins of others. “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the ~~Jesus~~”—he reads the proclamation of the Messiah. “Father, forgive them”—he hears the intercession of Him who is wounded for His people’s sins, and by whose stripes they are healed. “The title Father,” it has been well said, “which Jesus gave to God at the very moment when God was treating Him in so cruel a manner, had revealed in Him a Being who was living in an intimate relation to Jehovah, and led Him to feel His Divine greatness.” One condition of the Mediator is here fulfilled: “Such a High Priest became us, holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.” And the other. “Every High Priest is taken from among men and is appointed on behalf of men in the things that look towards God, that he may offer gifts and sacrifice for sins, being able to bear gently with the ignorant and erring, since himself also is compassed with infirmity.” This too is fulfilled. The voice of intercession breaks from the lips of Him who is one with the convict by His side in the fellowship of the Cross. Can He who prays for His murderers forget the companion of His pain? There is a bond that nought can break; there is a partnership that

nothing can dissolve. The appeal is made, the Messiah confessed, His priestly absolution claimed. It does not take the form of a prayer for pardon. As a Jew the robber would probably hold that for his sins death was an expiation. It is a prayer for a place in recollection, "Jesus, remember me, when thou comest in thy kingdom."

The answer is the saving utterance of royal favour, of priestly power, of Divine peace: "Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." It is absolution certain, immediate, complete.

I. It is certain.—"Verily I say unto thee," "Amen, I say." The words are familiar, to all readers of the Gospels, as Christ's accustomed phrase in declaring a truth of peculiar significance. The promise made to the dying thief is a revelation of the state of the blessed dead, for whose absolute reality Christ pledges His honour, His character, His truth. It is no statement of opinion, no expression of probability, no protestation of moral certainty that is here involved. "Amen, I say," is the *ipse dixit* of one who claims to know. In the awful moments, when amid the agonies of the Cross the sands of life were fast running out, is it possible to account for the calm

assurance of the meek, the gentle, the patient Son of Man, as He not only accepts the homage of His fellow-sufferer, but accords to him a place of light and refreshment in the unseen world, if this word be not spoken out of that serene life of the Eternal, where there are no shadows? Let us thank God for the *Amen* of Calvary. “Verily, verily I say unto you” is not the teacher’s trick of phrase, the unconscious exaggeration of the controversialist, the eager emphasis with which the preacher’s enthusiasm marks his words. Such eloquence deserts the sufferer in the day of agony and the hour of death. It is the peace of an eternal certainty that breathes in the unfaltering pledge. “Amen, I say unto thee.”

II. *The absolution is immediate.*—The robber had recognised the Messiah in the dying Jesus. But it was a far, indefinite future to which he looked forward. His was not the “sure and certain hope” of the Christian. For the present all is over: a few hours and the curtain of night will cover up this earthly scene. And then—ah, what? The terrors of death and judgment and, it may be far, far off, the Coming of the Kingdom. If only then, whensoever that kingdom come, the Messiah will not forget him! “Remember me when thou comest in thy

kingdom." "And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day." Life is not the possibility of the remote future; forgiveness is an actual fact; salvation is a present power. "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." That is the law of absolution. "Thy sins are forgiven." "To-day shalt thou be with me."

III. *The absolution is complete.*—"With me"—full communion; "In Paradise"—eternal rest. "Remember me" was the man's wistful appeal. If Thou hast room in that large heart of Thine for those who are doing Thee to death, Thou wilt surely find a place for me. It is the voice of true penitence. "I am not worthy to be called thy son. Make me as one of thy hired servants." "The publican stood afar off." There is nothing conditional in God's absolution. Doubtless we are right to test penitence by probation; to put the offender on his trial; not to restore until repentance is assured. Yet have we nothing to learn from the large heart of Christ? "I can forgive, but I cannot forget." Is there not something of this spirit in most mended friendships, where too the wrong is not always, nor usually, entirely on one side? The spirit of Jesus is about to pass into the Paradise of God, where holy souls in blissful peace await the day of resurrection. There He will receive

the robber. “Thou shalt be with me”—that is the promise. The words mean even more than the English is able to express. Not “in my company”—though that were indeed joy unspeakable: “Where Christ is, there is life, there is a kingdom,” says St. Ambrose. But “sharing with Me” the rest of Paradise as now thou sharest the pain of the cross. “He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory.” Once again, in this second word from the Cross, there is concentrated the whole power and purpose of the Incarnation of the Son of God, who condescended to the fellowship of our mortal weakness that He might raise us to the fellowship of His deathless glory, who for our sakes became poor that we, through His poverty, might be rich. “The Jews despised Him”—they are St. Augustine’s words—“when He raised the dead; the robber despised Him not when He hung with Him upon the Cross.” And the benediction of Jesus’ poverty spoke to his heart a peace that can be purchased neither with silver nor gold. “Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.”



### III

#### “BEHOLD, THY MOTHER”

“Woman, behold, thy son! . . . Behold, thy mother ”  
—JOHN xix. 26, 27.

THE last word of farewell is addressed to the faithful. Christ has prayed for the sinner; He has welcomed the penitent; He now dismisses with tender solicitude them that are His.

As the hours of the crucifixion wear on, as the darkness which is to overwhelm the spirit of the Saviour draws near, it would seem as though the intense reality of His human nature were made the more abundantly evident, that men might know that it was in very deed their brother who in the silence of the three hours of spiritual night poured out His soul unto death. The pride of intellect, which could not abide the thought of the passionless Son

of God working a redemption for the sins of men by the agony and bloody sweat of a true human body, was not slow to represent the sacred flesh of Jesus as an unreal phantom or semblance of a form, and Calvary as an empty pageantry of pain. “He held His peace as in no wise having pain”—thus does the legendary gospel of Peter, robbing the Cross of all its sympathy with human pangs, pass by those “moments rich in blessing” when Jesus spoke the first three words. How different the story of the evangelists! With each utterance that falls from those dying lips the tide of His perfect human sympathy rolls stronger and deeper. “Father, forgive them”—Christ pleads on behalf of men. “Thou shalt be with me”—Christ draws men into fellowship with Himself. “Woman, behold, thy son! Behold, thy mother!” Christ is Himself the human-hearted man. This secular provision is on a lower level—so we think—than the priestly prayer, the royal pardon. Yet a deeper spiritual insight will discern that the words are arranged in the true order of ascent. The Son of God comes nearest to our human life when He unites Himself with His faithful people in the familiar intercourse of home. He absolves the souls, for whom He intercedes, in order that He may walk with

them in the house of God as friends, that He may come in and sup with them, that He may hallow their daily life by sharing its joys, its duties, its sorrows. For priesthood, as Christ interprets the mediatorial office, is not the interposition of some mysterious nature—more than human, less than Divine—between earth and heaven, but the taking of the Manhood into God. If from our watch beneath the Cross of Jesus we have gained nought save a deeper, fuller, broader view of His true and real humanity, our station has not been kept in vain. The history of Christian doctrine has made it abundantly clear that men have found it harder to represent to themselves the real manhood of the Son of God than the perfect Godhead of the Son of Man. The suffering Messiah was the rock on which the Jews stumbled. Jesus the Nazarene is the living picture which has from age to age to be restored to the imagination of the Christian Church. Whether it be the subtle logic of the Middle Age which spins its endless webs about the simple gospel, or the ingenious exposition of the reformer which builds up a philosophy of atonement out of the epistles of St. Paul, or the false sentiment of reverence which transfers to the mother the pure humanity of the Son,

it is hard to realise that the one mediator between God and Man is the *Man* Christ Jesus. We do well to call up before our minds the group of the Saviour's devoted followers, who, undeterred by the horror of that awful scene, are faithful to their beloved Lord. We do well to sing our Stabat Mater. We do well to read and ponder the words of him who saw these things, and whose record is true.

“The soldiers therefore, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his tunic: now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore one to another, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the Scripture might be fulfilled, They parted my garments among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did. But there were standing by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister; Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold, thy son! Then saith he unto the disciple, Behold, thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.”

That is a contrast with which we are familiar enough in the experience of life. On the one hand the soldiers, to whom the personality of the sufferer is nothing. He has passed through their hands in the ordinary routine—a criminal delivered up to execution—a common prisoner upon whom they have discharged the ordinary duties of the hangman's task. It is all in the day's work, and now they are dividing the perquisites of their office, the convict's cloak and girdle, cap and sandals, and casting lots for the odd article, the tunic, whose it shall be. Then at the cross-foot the host of loving friends to whom that dear personality is still everything, and whose presence witnesses to the individual story which has centred about the life which is fast ebbing away. It is a contrast which may be seen any day in the wards of a large city hospital. The brutal soldier is replaced by the considerate physician and the tender nurse; but for the professional watchers, with their daily round, in spite of the noble and successful efforts which many make to individualise the men and women entrusted to their care, it must always be to some extent "The boy in the corner bed" or "The case of phthisis in No. 6." But here and there, down the long rows, the eye rests upon



a bed surrounded by a small group, where for the moment those few square feet of a large ward are the world's centre, as husband, son, or mother is slowly passing away. And what associations of quiet and gentle humanity cluster round the Cross, as we see the devoted women, the beloved disciple, the blessed mother, gazing up into the Sufferer's face! The still night when He lay a Babe in Bethlehem, Simeon uttering his *Nunc Dimittis*—yes, and saying those dark, mysterious words about the sword; the beautiful home at Nazareth; the visit to Jerusalem, when the anxious mother found her Boy listening to the Temple doctors; the marriage at Cana; the eventful day when the young fisherman followed for the first time the Master who was to make him a fisher of men; the chivalrous compassion which won the passionate loyalty of a sinful woman's heart; the thousand tendernesses of a strong, pure, manly life. And that surely was the perfection of the priesthood of the Son of Man. It is human life made quite natural by its consecration to the service of God. The true peace of a man's life depends upon its simplicity. Our days are necessarily passed among homely surroundings and ordinary occupations and common things. It is the crookedness, the perversity of his character,

that makes the wicked like a troubled sea that cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. The simplest duty is dignified by being simply done. And the last ministry of Christ upon the Cross gathers up into one word of power the peace of a simple, manly, natural life. Sometimes we allow ourselves to think that there is nothing spiritual in our characters because our tongues are slow to frame the language of religion ; our minds are not always at church ; our hearts are not always set on heavenly desires. Does it seem so ? Then let us remember that when the Man Christ Jesus had reached the verge of His last great conflict, and had come to the edge of the valley of the shadow, His last word to faithful hearts was this : "Woman, behold, thy son ! . . . behold, thy mother !"

## IV

### “WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?”

“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

MARK xv. 34.

THE Redeemer is at peace with all men. He has said His last farewell. The veil that creeps up over the sky and shrouds the world in night is nature's witness to the loneliness of that struggle, which, though it is to employ all the manifold forces of the Lord's human person, must be hidden from mortal sight, unfathomed by mind of man. He has passed the limit where the sympathy of others can avail Him aught. To some extent His is an experience which all must undergo. The solitary conflict is the destiny of every soul. “Every man shall bear his own load.” “The heart knoweth its own bitterness.” We have our outward history, which for the average man

is a dull, monotonous record of conformity to usage, compliance with custom, concealment of the deepest realities beneath the cloke of conventional phrase and contemporary fashion. But the unseen struggle—which is the most real of all real things to me—when the soul fights its way through the gloom or sits in helpless anguish in the valley of the shadow of death—that struggle which leaves its scar upon the physical frame, but the measure of whose woe no words can ever convey to the heart of my friend—that, O my Saviour, is all known to Thee. But Thy silence I cannot even faintly understand. I must leave Thee alone with sin, Thy Soul, and God! For this is the Atonement. The words of Scripture assert the fact; they cannot penetrate the meaning of thine incommunicable pains.

"He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

"Who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness."

"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."

Many explanations of the Atonement have been offered; now it is remedial suffering, now

vicarious toil, and now the recreative forces of nature to which appeal has been made for light upon the mystery of the Cross. But it remains a mystery—wrapt in the silence of those three hours when the sinless became sin and the blessed One was made a curse. That great transaction, as in an ancient tragedy, was wrought out off the stage of man's experience. When next the scene opens, and the great Cross looms out of the darkness, the deed is done, the warfare is accomplished, the sin pardoned. And Jesus cried with a loud voice, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

The Fourth Word is a word of peace. Does this seem a paradox? Yet it is surely true. It is a question; therefore it indicates perplexity; yet it is addressed to God. The calm of the human spirit is disturbed, not by ignorance, but by doubt. And Christ never doubts. He who in the first moments of the agony cried to the Father, still says, “My God, my God.” “Why” is the great problem of existence. It meets us everywhere; no sooner do we begin to reflect on the meaning of the life we live, than we ask, each one for himself, the universal question, whose answer mankind still awaits. And, with reverence let it be said, there would be room for doubting whether our Lord was



really man, compassed with our infirmities, made under the law which limits us, if He had never known the temptation of the unanswered *why*. That supreme word which alone of all the seven is twice recorded, as though in some sense it were the characteristic utterance of the Cross, reveals the sympathy of Jesus with our perplexities. But it reveals also the secret of patient endurance and prevailing power. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee."

But the peace of this word is yet deeper. This is no random cry wrung from the derelict heart of Jesus. It is the first sentence of the twenty-second Psalm. Christ, as it were, proclaims the theology of Golgotha. That wonderful picture of the suffering servant of God which the exiles of Jerusalem engraved, as with a point of steel, upon the pages of the Old Testament, and which their less spiritual successors had excluded altogether from their expectation of Messiah, is now applied to Himself by Him who abundantly fulfils it all. Turn, then, to the Psalm. Was that great song of complaint and prayer, of sorrow turned into joy, of defeat into victory, composed in the days when the prophet of the exile drew his portrait of the Man of Sorrows, acquainted with

grief? We cannot tell ; it would seem so. The thought at least is the same. The sufferer pours out the sorrow of his heart before God, who though He hide Himself, is ever the same, “throned above the praises of Israel.” “I am a worm,” he exclaims, “a reproach of men, and despised of the people.” The jeering crowd passes by with scornful laughter. “Cast thyself upon Jehovah,” they cry, shaking their heads in malicious joy, “let him rescue him. Let him deliver him, seeing he delighteth in him.” To the insults flung in the sufferer’s face are added the fierce pangs of the racking torture. His very soul is poured out like water; the bones separate and start; his life dissolves; his strength is gone; his tongue cleaves to his gums; he is brought into the dust of death. Once more it is his enemies, closing around him like the savage unclean dogs of the East, that fill up his misery. They have pierced the hands and feet; they stare with greedy eyes upon his mangled form. His very clothes are stripped from him and become the plunder of his foes. “They part my garments among them, and upon my vesture do they cast lots.” Then the critical moment arrives; the life’s extremity; the soul’s eclipse. And faith bursts out with a cry sudden, overwhelming, victorious: “Thou

hast answered me." Then follows the praise of triumph won: "He hath not hid his face from him; and when he cried unto him he heard." The glad sacrifice of thanksgiving arising from the great congregation is the fruit of the lonely sufferer's victory. He beholds the banquet spread in the kingdom of heaven, and all the ends of the earth turning to Jehovah, the families of the nations worshipping before him. "They shall come," cries the Psalmist—this new generation, this Church of God which is the fruit of the passion—"They shall come, they shall declare his righteousness to a people that shall be born, that he hath done it."

Read, I pray you, this twenty-second Psalm in the light of the Cross. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—that is its troubled opening. "He hath done it"—that is its victorious close. Then turn over the leaves of your Bible till you come to the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. There you have the portrait of the sufferer whose inward experience is given in this Passion Psalm.

"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace

was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. . . . It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul unto death: and was numbered with the transgressors: yet he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

For centuries that wonderful passage lay inscribed upon the rolls of Hebrew prophecy, uninterpreted, unrealised, unfulfilled. But Christ suffers on Golgotha, and lo! its theology is already written.

For centuries the Passion Psalm had held a place in the collection of Jewish sacred song, expressing an experience that none had ever known. But Christ precepts it from Calvary. And Christendom with a mighty voice celebrates the praise of Him who is there uplifted that He may draw all men unto Himself.

## V

### “I THIRST”

“After this Jesus, knowing that all things are now finished, that the scripture might be accomplished, saith, I thirst.”—  
JOHN xix. 28.

IT is a request. Jesus needs help. Not indeed to enable Him to carry out the work of redemption. That is already over. The victory to be proclaimed in the succeeding word is already won. “After this” is the narrative of St. John, “Jesus knowing that by this time it is all finished, that the scripture might be made perfect, saith, I thirst.” We lose the force of the original in the translation to which we are accustomed. The finished work is a fact; the knowledge of it is present to the mind of Christ. It only remains to perfect the picture of the Divine Sufferer, whose outlines are traced in the writings of prophet



and psalmist, by the announcement of the pang of body which the work of redemption has cost the Son of Man. In that work none other has part or lot. “Of the people there was none with me.” His own arm brings salvation; in the greatness of His own strength is He mighty to save. But then comes the need of others. That human force has spent itself upon the splendid struggle which has wrought atonement. He who refused the precious draught which would have deadened the dance of pain and lulled to rest those thrilling, sensitive nerves, now needs the poor drink of sour wine which the soldiers have brought for their own refreshment. He who tenderly dismissed His blessed mother and beloved friend from their station beneath the Cross, now makes His gentle appeal to the rude, rough men, whose only relation to Himself has been that of executioner to victim, and whose only words have been those of mocking insult and coarse jest. The forces of that tortured frame have yet to be gathered for one more supreme effort. The act to Godward is performed; sin’s price is paid; its punishment borne; its power broken. The sacrifice has been offered. But the word has yet to be proclaimed. Before the offered life is resigned to the gracious keeping of God,

the message of salvation must ring out from Golgotha, in the full, deep tones of that loud voice which is to sound on throughout the ages, bearing the glad tidings of the Gospel of Peace. For this effort, as it would seem, the dying Saviour needs the soldier's sympathy, the hyssop stalk, the sponge, the draught of cheap, sour wine.

The peace of Christ's finished work breathes in the one utterance which tells of His bodily suffering. Petulance could never have restrained all reference to physical pain till just that moment when it became necessary to the completeness of the Cross. Most of us have some acquaintance with nervous anguish, if it be only in those forms which belong to the casual experience of life. How it banishes thought, and makes us seek a solitude where the irritation of converse with others shall not provoke the outburst of querulous complaint! How few of us have that superb self-control which springs out of the sense of victory. The peace which no pain can subdue, speaks in the single word which, when all things are now finished, issues from the parched lips of Jesus, expressing no peevish impatience, conveying only a necessary request—"I thirst."

Then, to whom is the prayer addressed? Not

to friends, but to enemies—to those who have mocked, scourged, and crucified Him. Pride, ashamed to make confession of poverty or weakness, refuses to make request of those who would count it an honour to give. It is not the truly brave that will be beholden to none. Jesus, in the peace of the great forgiveness, is too strong not to seek the human sympathy of His foes. Nor is the confidence of the Man in the fundamental goodness of human nature vain and unsatisfied. For "having placed a sponge full of the vinegar upon hyssop they put it to his mouth."

There is a false view of the relation of Christ's humanity to our own which is perhaps not formally held or explicitly stated, but which nevertheless exercises an unconscious influence upon the attitude of Christian men towards the world and towards life. It is a view which fails to take adequate account of the fact that Christ as really partakes of our human nature as we partake of His. We may believe, for instance, that the Church lives through its incarnate Lord, that in baptism men are regenerated, new-born into the body of Christ, that in the Eucharist the faithful receive a communication of the Flesh and Blood of their Divine Redeemer, that the

spiritual life is in very deed a growth into the character of Jesus—we may believe all this, and yet at the same time fail to understand that our relation with the world outside Christ springs out of any deeper fact than the general benevolence of the Christian or the desire to win recruits for the kingdom of heaven. Or again, the interest of churchmen in what are called secular affairs is often either divorced from their spiritual activities altogether or called forth only by the desire to lay the world under contribution for immediate Church ends. Thus men surround the Church, as it were, with an impassable ring fence, forgetful that, according to the Lord's own image, the sheep go out and in and find pasture. Surely this conception of the Church is not at all an uncommon one. The world outside is regarded merely as a mass of possibilities—children to be baptized, men and women to be confirmed, sinners to be converted, souls to be saved. Such a view would regard every effort to enter into relations with that world not consciously prompted by the desire to gain adherents to the cause, as a grave peril, if not a fatal compromise.

Surely such a view fails to realise the fact that the Crucified first shares our humanity

before He admits us to a share in His. On the Cross, when He had reached the height of His self-oblation for the sins of men, Jesus said "I thirst." The fact that at that great moment He needed, not the spiritual support of souls which were rising toward Him, but the physical ministrations of ordinary earth-bound mortals, consecrates for ever the secular activities of life, the service and sympathy of the foreigner, as within the scope and purpose of the mission of the Son of God. No mention is made of the penitence of these poor soldiers. We are nowhere told that the loving appeal of Jesus from the Cross won their hearts to His service. For all we know, they remained until the day of their death aliens to the truth of God and strangers to the grace of Christ. All we know is that the Son of Man touched a sympathetic chord in their rough nature, that He needed their friendly office, and that the demands of pity were obeyed. What the Lord needed was the draught of vinegar and the pity which should hold the sponge to His dying lips. Not for one moment would I seek to disparage the mystical thought of Christ's Divine thirst for the souls of men. But I am speaking of the plain and obvious meaning of the word. It was in the calm consciousness



of His finished work that at a supreme moment Christ risked, if we may reverently say it, the misrepresentation of His appeal to mortal compassion, by uttering the words "I thirst." And if, resting calmly on that finished work, we seek to claim for Christ the things of this world, to interest ourselves in the occupations of ordinary men, their business, their pleasure, their politics, their creeds, to draw tighter the cords of sympathy which bind that humanity which the Church shares with her Lord to the common inheritance of all Eve's family, let us trust and not be afraid. They will say that we temporise, that we seek popularity rather than truth, that we are literal when we should be loyal, and that, losing our faith in God, we put our trust in men. But, methinks, though the Son of Man would fain drink the new wine in the kingdom of heaven, the vinegar on earth He will still not refuse. Though He longs for the faith and loyalty of the Church, He will not despise, for He needs them, the ministrations of the world.

And remember this. It is a spiritual end for which He needs this secular service. For it is not simply for the refreshment of His weary, tortured body that Jesus gently asks for the

draught of vinegar. The narrative of St. John seems at least to suggest that the support thus afforded was necessary to the utterance of that sixth word which publishes to all the world the peace achieved and the victory won. "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished."

There is a great joy in the thought that for the Church also, which is Christ's Body, there is need of the simple ministries of ordinary life, sometimes when discharged by those who are its enemies, in order that the gospel of God's grace may sound forth with loud voice to all the world.

## VI

### “IT IS FINISHED”

“When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up his spirit.”  
—JOHN xix. 30.

THE words are spoken by a young man at the point of departure. In the church of which I was once rector is a tablet placed there to the memory of a young man, and the words chosen by those who knew and loved him to describe his death are these: “Cut off in the flower of his age.” Hopes unrealised, purposes unmatured, work incomplete are sadly, if gratefully, recalled by such an epitaph. But in the life of Christ there is no “might have been.” The proper legend for the Cross is Christ’s own word—“It is finished.” Remember that Jesus uttered this word with a great voice. It is not the last sigh of death, but the full,

rich shout of triumph that rings out upon the still air. He has seen of the travail of His soul and is satisfied. It is the joy of harvest, the exultation of victory, the peace of a finished work.

Have you ever known what it is to have a great work to do, a heavy duty to fulfil, a weary travail to endure? You have, it may be, willingly surrendered yourself to the duty that lies before you; you have counted the cost, you are ready to pay the price. Yet how heavily it hangs! Perhaps you have not known that. But at any rate you have experienced the weight that oppresses the mind when a task which must be accomplished is still unfinished. You know that wonderful sense of relief which thrills through brain and body, when the duty lies behind you and the work is done. That will enable us faintly, though really, to understand the relief which found vent in the exultant cry "It is finished." Read the gospel narrative attentively and you will find evidence enough that the anticipation of His Passion brooded over the Saviour's spirit during the days of His ministry. Jesus was no light-hearted optimist, whose head was filled with wondrous schemes for the welfare of His people, but who at last died a victim of His ill-balanced

enthusiasm through the malicious spite of an envious hierarchy. The shadow of the Cross was upon that life from its earliest years. The Galilean ministry was hardly over when the first definite reference to the Cross was made by Jesus Himself: "He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me." And we remember how the Master pressed onwards upon that last journey to Jerusalem under stress of what must have seemed to the disciples some great nervous impulse that hastened His movements and pre-occupied His mind. St. Mark brings out into striking prominence the strange solemnity characteristic of this critical period in the Lord's ministry. "They were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed they were afraid." One after another the Master gives to His disciples intimations of the dread anticipations that have fixed themselves in His mind. Those twelve apostles—can they forsake all for Him? Those sons of Zebedee—can they drink of the cup that He drinks of? He tells them of His sufferings, His rejection, His death. And yet He must go right on. He is caught by the fascination of the coming agony. He sees the world aflame, and Himself baptized in



blood. He must plunge into the flood of His Passion. “How am I straitened, afflicted, oppressed until it be accomplished.” Do any of us know what it is to go about our work with a load upon the heart? It is with us when we wake in the morning; it hangs like a cloud over the day hours; it sinks down like night when the evening comes. What, then, must the approaching Passion have been to the Son of Man? “The prospect of His sufferings,” it has been well said, “was a perpetual Gethsemane.” Then we see Him in the temple courts, under the severe strain of His enemies’ questions, giving those matchless answers, uttering those stern rebukes. And we marvel when we remember the trouble that He hid beneath that calm demeanour. “Now is my soul troubled: and what shall I say? Father save me from this hour.” Then comes the peril, the danger, the intense strain that accompanies the institution of the Eucharist in that secret chamber; the agony and bloody sweat; the pain of the crucifixion; the last conflict of Calvary. And now it is over; it is gone; the night is departing; the day breaks. The pall which hung over Golgotha has lifted from the world, and as the evening sun shines out upon the green earth, bright with spring flowers, and glistens on the

white tents of the paschal worshippers, dotted across the slopes, the sunlight of a great joy bursts upon the soul of the victorious Redeemer, and he cries aloud "It is finished."

But this is not all. The Cross is not only the altar where the one sacrifice is offered; not only the throne where the royal bounty is bestowed; it is also the station from whence is published the King's proclamation. Christ is God's herald, proclaiming from the Cross of Calvary the gospel of the Finished Work, to all ages the pledge of pardon and the source of peace to the weary and heavy-laden children of men. The law and the prophets are fulfilled. Christ is the first to attest the consummation that He Himself has wrought. His seal, His certificate, His testimony are given in the loud voice: "It is finished." This is the work He calls His Church to share. He summons its members to the foot of His Cross that, listening to the great assurance, they may tell it out among the nations that the Lord is King. The history of the Church, so far as it has been true to the great commission, is one long commemoration of the Cross, one grand witness to the finished work. Not the symbolical evidence of a monument, but the sacramental testimony of a life. The witness of the Church is a life; the Church's

life is a witness. So it has been from the beginning. “It is finished,”—from lip to lip the dying utterance of the Lord is caught up. “It is finished,”—age after age has known its ever-present power.

St. Paul, the great preacher to whom, under God, the world owed its Christian faith, deliberately sets aside whatever else might commend the new ideas to the minds—often the cultured minds—of those whom he addresses. “I am determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified.” The beauty of the life of Christ, the power of His stainless example, the glory of His obedience—these were by the great Apostle put second. The Christian life begins at the foot of the Cross; first the reconciliation, the great forgiveness, the full atonement; then the imitation of Christ. “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” To the Jews, the comfortable, the complacent, the respectable, this doctrine will always be a stumbling-block; to the Greeks, the subtle, the

educated, the philosophical, it will always be foolishness. But the fact remains, the plain fact of history—it was the crucified Saviour that in those early days the apostles preached. "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

It was the crucified Saviour that the apostles preached—it was the crucified Saviour who conquered the Roman world. It was to find the cross—the very wood that had borne the Sacred Body, the very nails that had pierced the Hands, that Helena made her pilgrimage to the Holy Land. It was the flaming cross that Constantine inscribed upon the banner of his conquering host. And the sign of the cross was upon the lives of Christians and upon the faith of the Church all through those early centuries. Listen to Athanasius, as he points to that which made the Christian triumphant amid defeat, patient in suffering, exultant over death: "Death has been conquered and branded by the Saviour in the Cross, He has bound it hand and foot, and all who are living in Christ trample it underfoot, and bearing witness to the Christ they flout death, mocking at it and exclaiming what hath been writ before concerning it, 'Where, death, is thy victory? where, hell, thy sting?'"



And all through the long Middle Age it was still the Cross. What is the great symbol of the Christian faith which we connect more especially with this period of the Church's life, but the Crucifix, the sign of the finished work? What hymn has more closely entwined itself with the heart and kernel of Christian worship, enriched by the loving labour that countless musicians have lavished upon it, than the *Agnus Dei*, “O Lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world, grant us thy peace”? It was Anselm, our own Archbishop, who set vividly forth in one of the greatest mediæval writings the great doctrine of the Atonement. And every movement that since the days of the Middle Age has attended the expansion of the Church has, almost without exception, centred round the atoning work of Christ. So it was with the Reformation. Whatever may be said of the evils that attended that great upheaval of religious thought, this at least is true: the Reformers were very jealous for the one perfect and sufficient sacrifice, once offered for the sins of the whole world. And Luther made all Germany ring with the glad news that “the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” The watchword of our evangelical fathers—pray God that among all



the fuller, richer expansion of Church life into which we have entered the thought may only become deeper, truer, larger—was Christ's Finished Work. And when men cavil at what seems to them the moral absurdity of individual effort, and the endeavour after personal holiness, being surrendered in favour of faith in a redemptive life which has stood complete for nineteen hundred years, let us summon the great cloud of witnesses, the multitude which no man can number, of all kindreds and peoples and tongues, whose white robes and pure lives witness to a power which has cleansed and a presence which has transformed—and lo! each outstretched hand points backward to the Cross, each voice proclaims aloud the Finished Work.

## VII

### “INTO THY HANDS”

“Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”—LUKE  
xxiii. 46.

THE first word from the Cross breathed the calm of an unbroken communion between the Father and the Son, which made the sufferings of the wounded body of Jesus an act of intercession for the transgressors. And the last expresses the sweet surrender of the loyal spirit into the hands of its faithful guardian. The peace of a perfect love and the peace of a finished work blend in the peace of a perfect trust, as the life “which drew from out the boundless deep turns again home.”

The first thought that springs out of this last word is a very obvious one. Jesus came forth from God and goeth to God. That is the explanation of His whole career; it is the

interpretation alike of His loving ministry and of His perfect life. For the mass of mankind self-contemplation is, of all occupations, the most dangerous and the most unsatisfactory. Not so with the Master. His meat and drink was to do the will of Him that sent Him. His ministry was the revelation of the Father to men. "I have finished the work—I have manifested thy name." There is no exaggeration, no hypocrisy, nothing but a glad and thankful reality in the estimate which Jesus forms of His own life-task, because, throughout the centre of His life, the pivot of His character, the home of His heart is the Father. There is nothing surprising, nothing unexpected in the fact that the last movement of the spirit of Jesus is homeward, heavenward, Godward. "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

Secondly, they are human lips that utter the sweet words of peace. It is a human spirit that is committed as a precious deposit into the safe keeping of the Father's hands. Heresy was not slow to invent fantastic theories of the Passion, and to tell how, when the agony of crucifixion laid hold of the human flesh of Jesus, the Power of the Highest, the Eternal Word which had supported Him throughout His ministry, deserted its earthly tenement and

returned into the Godhead from which it came. No—it was my manhood, my spirit, my weak and dying nature that the Son of Man united in bonds indissoluble with His strong Godhead, when the Word became Flesh. Nor did He fail it in that last hour of its extremity, when the sands of life were running out, but yielded it, fragrant with the odour of His sacrifice, into those hands which had made and fashioned it.

The last words of Jesus convey “no sadness of farewell.” In the old Greek tragedy *Aias*, the warrior king, passes out in the night of self-destruction, with a pathetic lament for “the light of golden day,” and the “sacred land that was my home”: “To you that fed my life I bid farewell.”

What a contrast is this hopeless misery to the quiet confidence of the Son of Man. When the sun is going down toward the west, beyond the roofs and towers of Jerusalem, and the evening shadows creep gently up over the braes of Olivet, the dying Saviour greets the dawn of the endless day and commits Himself to the guardianship of His eternal home: “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”

Two facts account for the striking contrast: (1) the revelation of Fatherhood, (2) the unique character of Christ’s surrender of life.

If the ultimate fact of all existence be neither force nor fate but fatherhood, then there can be no death except separation from the living will that loves. Dr. Newman has a sermon, the title of which is *The thought of God the stay of the soul*. That surely is the truth. "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die" is a philosophy that brings no satisfaction. From the bodily life men turn to the society of their fellows; the intercourse of friendship, the affections of the family, the love of home. But these too pass away, for "man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live." But to call Him Father who exists behind all change, is to find rest. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon the earth that I desire in comparison of thee: my heart and my flesh faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever." This was the sure trust that gave peace at the last to Jesus.

(2) The unique character of Jesus' death.

When we speak of a man's exit from the world, we say "he died" or "he breathed his last." If it be a person of more than ordinary piety whose death we record, we say "he entered into rest," or "he fell asleep." None of these expressions are used by the evangelists to describe the death of Jesus. St. Matthew says



“He let go his spirit,” St. John “He bowed his head and yielded up his spirit.” And it is clear that much more is implied in the words of commendation which Christ borrows from the thirty-first Psalm than they originally meant or have been employed by others to mean. Some men have cheerfully acquiesced in the necessity of dying. Others have chosen the manner, method, or time of death. But the death of the Son of Man, as the Gospel writers present it to us, is as willing, as self-determined, as free as the acceptance or refusal of any of the ordinary duties of life. It is the obedience of a glad mind to a Divine call. “I lay it down of myself.” “No man taketh it from me.” In committing His spirit as a deposit to the hands of His Father, Christ exercises the free right of disposition which is His. His confidence is the peace of an unflinching loyalty. His own implicit faithfulness is the measure of His implicit trust in the utter faithfulness of God.

There are points few enough and far between in the midway of this mortal life when we seem to realise the supporting Presence and to discern the Father’s hands. But the great act of self-committal—who among us has been loyal enough to the Supreme Will to make that last venture of human faith with the serene

confidence which sees God in His heaven? Faithfulness to the King of the spiritual city, who is the Father of spirits, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of change, that for weak mortals is an impossible loyalty. But if the Agony and Bloody Sweat, the Cross and Passion, the Death and Burial, bear any relation to our lives at all, surely it is the birth of a new loyalty which can inspire hope, restore faith and perfect love; covering the past with the cloud of its pardon, shedding over the future the radiance of its peace. Loyalty to the person of Jesus is the fundamental act of faith. We vex our souls because we are not sure whether for us the doctrines of the Creed are more than formal statements received on the authority of others. But is that the question? Is it not rather this? Am I utterly, absolutely, and with my whole heart, loyal to Christ? Loyalty is the salt of all human relationships. Criticism is the sharp knife which sunders friends. Devotion is the bond of love. The critic of Jesus will never know His power to save; for him the Creed of Christendom will never become the deepest of all truth. But he that wills to do His will shall know of the doctrine. A life that begins in a loyal devotion to Christ soon learns what

it is to grow incorporate into Him. Unity of will develops into unity of life. In Christ to live—what power! In Christ to die—what confidence! In Christ for time and for eternity—what peace!

So good Jesus, in the hour of death and in the day of judgment, let me be found in Thee. Give me a place in Thy compassionate intercession; grant me Thy absolution and the assurance of Paradise; take me to Thine own home. Often have I forsaken Thee, but, O Lord, forsake not me, nor suffer me at my last hour for any pains of death to fall from Thee. I rest upon Thy Finished Work. Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

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