

# **Pauline Meditations**

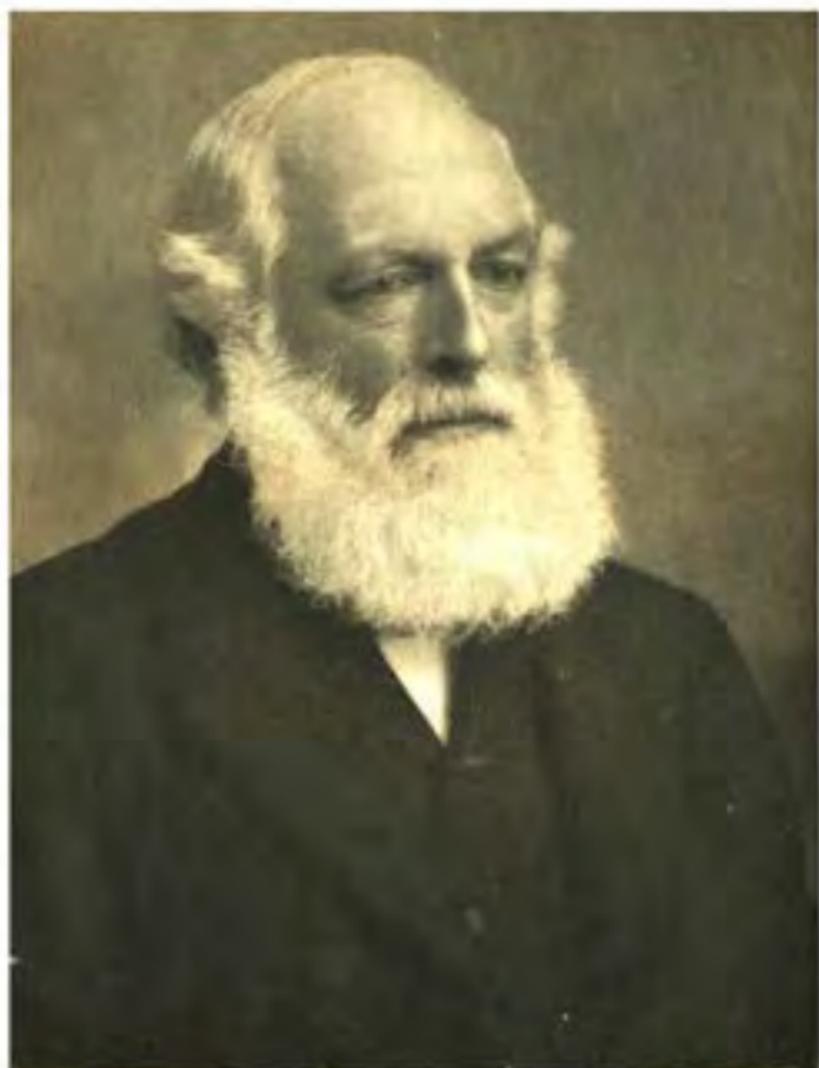
**James  
Drummond**

Edgar Shee  
Wallasey,  
June 14 21.



[www.unitarian.org.uk/docs](http://www.unitarian.org.uk/docs)

Scanned by  
**James Barry**  
as a volunteer



Portrait of Rev. James Drummond

James Drummond, 1840

*Rev. James Drummond*  
*M.A., LL.D., D.D.*

# Pauline Meditations

BY  
JAMES DRUMMOND  
M.A., LL.D., LITT.D.

WITH  
MEMORIAL INTRODUCTION  
BY  
EDITH DRUMMOND  
AND  
PROFESSOR G. DAWES HICKS

THE LINDSEY PRESS  
5 ESSEX STREET, STRAND, LONDON, W.C.  
1919

## PREFACE

THIS volume of Pauline Studies was ready for the press at the time of my father's death. The selection of the material is his own. Its publication has been delayed partly by the shortage of labour and paper during the war, but also by our desire to make it a not unworthy memorial of one who combined in an unusual degree the noblest qualities of the scholar and the saint. In the Introduction my sister Edith has written of him as we knew him in his home and among his friends, while Professor G. Dawes Hicks has traced the main lines of his thought and influence as a Christian teacher and theologian with an insight born of deep reverence and affection. The volume also owes much to the care with which the Rev. V. D. Davis has seen it through the press.

All who knew my father will feel how fitting it is that his own name should be linked in this way with that of the great Apostle, to the interpretation of whose writings he brought such exact learning and deep religious insight. To him St. Paul was always the passionate Christian soul, and the Epistles owed their unfading fascination to the experience of recovered fellowship with God which they at once interpret and enshrine. To many readers the pages which follow will bring a new conviction of the truth that it is only those who live themselves in the light of God who can explain to others the thought and vision of a kindred soul.

W. H. DRUMMOND.

March 31, 1919.

## I. PERSONAL MEMORIES

BY ONE OF HIS DAUGHTERS

THE life of the saint or the scholar is often uneventful. It is not to his deeds but to the man himself that we look for an interpretation of the part which he played, or the influence which he exerted on the life of his time. And yet the finer, the more spiritual that influence, the harder it is to express, or of which to convey any sense to those who have not felt it. This was emphatically true of my father. His long life has few striking events to record, but those who were privileged to come under his influence felt and knew that here was one who not only had the Vision himself, but who had that further great spiritual gift, the power to 'impart the gift of seeing to the rest.' Dr. Martineau says 'that is the most finished character which begins in beauty and ends in power,' for it is only those who have had the vision of beauty who can attain at last to the power through which they can do all things. This might almost be taken to describe the long life which has just ended.

My father was born in Dublin in 1835. He was the youngest of the four children of the Rev. W. H. Drummond by his second wife, and though one sister died in childhood, his brother (Rev. R. B.

Drummond, of Edinburgh) and his sister (Mrs. Campbell) have survived him. His father was minister to the congregation of Strand Street, Dublin, and had already made a name for himself as a scholar and a poet. Thus the boy grew up surrounded by intellectual and literary interests, while he inherited from his Irish ancestors a quick, passionate temperament and an abounding love of fun and gaiety. Naturally highly strung, sensitive and delicate, he had to be kept back rather than pressed on, and it was not until he was almost twelve that he began to attend school regularly. But during these early years he had been learning other things. His home was a very happy one; in his sister he found always a delightful and sympathetic companion, while his love of the beauty of his native country remained an abiding joy to him throughout his life. To the end he spoke with intense delight of his long walks with his brother Robert and others round Bray Head or over the Wicklow Hills, where he first experienced that communion with Nature—particularly with the mountains and the sea—which always formed such a large part of his spiritual life.

At School, as later at College, his brilliant abilities quickly made themselves felt, for he combined in the happiest way the exactness and thoroughness of the scholar with wide sympathies and a thirst for knowledge of every kind. His nature was a surprisingly rich and varied one. In spite of the extreme shyness from which he suffered all his life, his sunny nature, his love of fun and his quick sympathy attracted others; already at fifteen or sixteen 'he was,' writes one of his old school friends (Canon Acheson), 'a

scholar and a student,' while beneath and beyond all this there was 'an attractiveness which arose from his own personal life,' where he had already realized the words of our Lord 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.' He speaks himself of the glowing faith of his boyhood, which accepted whole-heartedly the leadership of Christ, and throughout his life it was impossible to know him, even casually, without realizing that this was the key-note of his very being.

In 1851 he entered Trinity College, and he notes this year as the turning point of his life, not indeed because of the change to College, but because in that year he read, for the first time, the *Life of the great American preacher, W. E. Channing*, and from that moment he never faltered in his resolution to fit himself for his proposed work as a minister of the Gospel. Four years later he graduated, gaining the First Classical Gold Medal, and the following year he left Ireland for the first time to begin his definite training in London at Manchester New College. These were years which bore rich fruit later. Under the guidance of such teachers as John James Tayler and James Martineau he began to realize his own powers, he made many friends, and beneath all he was undergoing that intense spiritual struggle which all the saints have known. He has left some record of those days, which shows how, through periods of physical weakness and through times of intense mental and spiritual depression, he clung, with wrestling and prayer to the vision of the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ which had been vouchsafed to him, till he was able to rise through him to that serene and blessed faith 'where life becomes

righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.' To those who knew him only in his later life, when the certainty of the knowledge of the abiding Presence seemed ever with him, it is hard to realize these passionate struggles : but it was only because his constant prayer was 'May the Cross dwell in my heart ; may I be ever drawn more and more to my Saviour, and may Christ crucified be to me indeed sanctification and redemption,' that he attained to that vision which is granted only to the few.

In 1860 he became the colleague of the Rev. William Gaskell at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, and in the following year he married Frances, youngest daughter of John Classon, of Dublin. Thus the ten years of his life which were to be given to the active ministry opened singularly happily, for there began then that perfect union of spirit which knew not one jar through fifty-seven years of married life, whilst his work amongst his people satisfied his deepest needs. Those who were brought under his influence at the very beginning of his ministry felt at once that here was indeed a quickening spirit. Dr. Martineau had warned him that his cross would be to meet and overcome the apathy of men ; but his own ardent faith, his gift of eloquence and perhaps above all his unfeigned belief in the goodness of others seldom failed to awaken a response. As a preacher he had great gifts—eloquence, a beautiful choice of language, and a voice which rang out with amazing passion and certainty as he denounced sin and wrongdoing, and which thrilled and trembled as he tried to express something of what lay hidden at the very roots of his own life. One of those who regularly

heard his preaching in those years (Professor C. H. Herford) writes of his 'electric eloquence, full of passion and poetry and glowing with the light of a piercing spiritual vision. He spoke as one rapt into the very presence of divine things, and able from that vantage-ground to see into the very depths and lay bare the secrets of all the souls before him.'

But it was not alone as a preacher that he made his power felt. The Lower Mosley Street Sunday Schools brought him into touch with another side of Manchester life. And here, as well as among the congregation at Cross Street, his gift as a pastor found ample scope, for the children loved him, he was the friend of many a poor home, while he was the guide and inspiration of the band of workers he gathered round him. The friend above quoted has sent me his recollections of him at this time, and they help to fill in the picture I am trying to paint. He writes: 'I was a boy of six when Dr. Drummond came to Manchester, and only seventeen when he left. But I was very open to the impression made by a mind like his, and the memory of my impression remains after fifty years extraordinarily vivid. He was intimate in our home, and I think liked to be there. My father and mother were amongst the most devoted friends he had in Manchester, and he was a frequent guest at our evening reunions in Acomb Street, where R. D. Darbishire, S. B. Worthington, William Gaskell (Mrs. Gaskell died in 1865), Stanley Jevons (not yet publicly known), and one or two other professors of the neighbouring Owens College might chance to be found. My maternal grandmother, daughter of William Turner, of Newcastle,

## xii      Memorial Introduction

who lived with us till her death in 1869, was usually present, and had some compensation for almost total deafness in the retention, at the age of eighty, of the keenest of eyes and the shrewdest of wits. Seated in her arm-chair by the fire, she would watch the groups of talkers, measure their quality, and piece out from gesture and the play of eye and lip the course of a discussion. Afterwards, when all the guests were gone, she would give us her reflections. I remember, on one such occasion, her saying: "I looked round at all the faces one after another, and James Drummond's was the noblest face and the highest forehead of them all!" And, indeed, I have never seen another face so irradiated with spiritual beauty as his was in those years. He was still in his early prime, his whole frame delicately moulded and at first sight even slight, but in reality lithe and elastic and alive with nervous energy perfectly controlled. He was not, in the ordinary sense, a "conversationist," and when small talk was current would mostly sit silent, being all his life rather conspicuously devoid of that commodity. But he had the keenest relish for wit and humour, and his laugh was like the "slim feasting smile" of Molière breaking out into quietly joyous music. But if he rarely, even when great topics were under discussion, took a leading part, or said very striking things, I have never met anyone whose reticences were so pregnant with the sense of reserve power. On two or three occasions between 1865 and 1870 he spent a week or two with my father and mother in North Wales—at Penmaenmawr (then of unspoiled beauty) or at a still more romantic haunt of ours above Nant Gwynant, facing the precipices and peak of

Snowdon. I was usually the only other member of our family accompanying them. He was an enthusiastic climber, agile and elastic, and incapable of fatigue. His gladness as he climbed would betray itself in a kind of sportive intonation of commonplace words, occasionally breaking out in almost boyish fun. I remember some mountain excursions in which we were joined by a fellow minister, S—, a man of somewhat heavy corporeal build, who did not willingly diverge from the path unless to take an easier way round. They were on excellent terms, but S— was the perpetual butt of Drummond's hilarious chaff as they trod the elastic heather of the Penmaenmawr heights, S— tramping doggedly straight ahead, while his nimble colleague frisked and leapt about him, gaily alluring him to pursuit, or inviting him to a race. We used to call them "body and soul." This was indeed but the light overflow of his passion for the grandeur of mountain scenery—a passion fed from the same deep source as his religion, and indeed a part of it. To walk with him on one of the sublime crag paths of that region, as on that which skirts the great precipices of the Carnedd, looking down on the vast cwm, with the glittering belt of sea ten miles away and three thousand feet below, was to feel oneself in the presence of an awe which forbade speech, so vividly was the sense of divine things, speaking through the great symbolism of the mountains, written in his face. I remember, on such an occasion, saying to him as we stood side by side, "How wonderful a storm would be here." And his answer, in that deep intense note which all his friends knew: "Yes, indeed, Harold." Both the remark and the reply

were in themselves obvious, even banal. But those three simple words had for me an accent of rapt apprehension which would not have been out of place had we been standing on Mount Horeb and the "storm" been the prelude to the audible voice of God. That may seem extravagant, but it will not do so, I am assured, to those who knew the man in his lonely exaltations, whether among scenes like these, or when he was interpreting to simpler or more secular minds his own intense vision of spiritual things.'

During those years many opportunities of what seemed perhaps more important work presented themselves, but it was not till 1869 when he was invited to succeed John James Tayler as lecturer on Biblical and Historical Theology at Manchester New College, that he contemplated leaving Manchester. Even then the struggle was a hard one. It was not merely that his life had taken root and he had formed many warm friendships during his work at Cross Street; it was the feeling that he was giving up the active work of the ministry, and that never again would he be brought into quite the same vital relations with his people, that made him hesitate. But against this was the knowledge that he had just those gifts of scholarship and influence which were needed to fill the post to which he had been called, while he was always in the fullest sympathy with the free theological position of the College dedicated to Truth, Liberty, and Religion. He never regretted his choice, though he missed much of his Manchester work, and during the long years which he devoted to the College he was able not only to give his students the benefit of his exact scholarship, but to set before them a

vision and a goal. He moved to Hampstead at the end of 1869, and from that time until his resignation he devoted himself unsparingly to the best interests of the College. London life, too, was absorbing, and apart from his purely theological work, he devoted much time and thought to the great political and social questions which were to him the practical working out of the principles by which he ruled his own life. An ardent Liberal, he threw himself whole-heartedly into the Home Rule movement, and spoke several times on this subject at political meetings: international peace and arbitration, and temperance were movements he had greatly at heart, while on the 'woman question,' whether it was with Mrs. Josephine Butler attempting to deal with the whole question of moral degradation, or whether it was the claim for wider education, or more recently for the vote, he was always on the side of freedom, and he spared nothing which he thought might help.

Yet, while his life was thus largely the life of a scholar and a public worker, it was by no means entirely so, and many other pictures of these busy years crowd into the memory. To his friends and children in holiday times he was the gayest of companions, full of fun and nonsense, of jokes and laughter and quick sympathy. Long summer vacations were spent amongst the Welsh mountains where, in spite of his natural delicacy, his abounding vitality found its outlet in long walks and climbs which sent him back with renewed vigour to his mental work. An intimate family friend of this time (Mrs. R. T. Herford) who knew him well and saw him almost daily during those years in London has sent me her recollections of him, and I may

quote what she says of him, 'Perhaps my strongest impression is of his gaiety; when his work was laid aside for the time it seemed as if the sun came out, and his quaint and humorous talk and kindly banter made every meal-time a centre of enjoyment. His great practical ability, all the clever and useful things he could do with his hands were an unending source of interest and wonder, and when he could spare an evening to show us his air-pump and electrical machine, it seemed like a journey to another world.' Or, again, she writes of the time when he became superintendent of the little Sunday School at Rosslyn Hill: 'He set before us a high ideal of faithfulness and sympathy, and those of us who were serving our apprenticeship to Sunday School work learned much from him: though it was only in later days that we realized the sacrifice it must have meant for him in his busy life. Whoever else failed, he was always there punctually, always gentle and ready to encourage us, though his own shyness made it difficult to approach him, and I fear he never realized how great was the barrier our very admiration and respect raised between us.' Or once more, 'Of all my memories the one or two glorious summer holidays I was privileged to spend with him stand out most vividly. He was such a splendid companion for a walk, and I can remember one wild race over the downs when he challenged us to jump every furze-bush, and clearing them lightly himself, turned to help us out of the prickles.'

In 1885 he succeeded Dr. Martineau as Principal; and when in 1889 it was decided to move Manchester New College (henceforth known as

Manchester College) to Oxford, he left London, and Oxford became his home for the remainder of his life. Once more the change was not an easy one. Caring intensely for the principle of freedom, he set this in the forefront of his Address at the opening of the College, and for this he worked untiringly. It was this which governed all his dealings with the College, and it was this again, combined with his sympathetic nature, which made it possible for him to enter into and appreciate the many different types of character and schools of thought with which he was brought into contact. Never, indeed, was anyone more generous to those who differed from him. Of a keenly critical nature where questions of scholarship were concerned, he yet combined therewith an extraordinary personal humility which held him from judging other people. What was right for him need not necessarily be right for them, and more than one from another church who came to him in doubt found it possible to go back, through his help, restored and strengthened, to his work in his own communion. This charity of judgment was indeed one of his most marked characteristics, and only those who know his naturally quick temper realized how great a self-control and how deep a humility made it possible. Against wrongdoing his anger would blaze forth, but the ordinary harsh or contemptuous judgments which men pass on each other were to him quite unknown.

Fortunately the beautiful College Chapel again gave him a chance of preaching regularly, while the greater quiet of Oxford life left him leisure for the literary work which marks these years. But of this it is not my purpose to write. I have tried

merely to convey some impression, however faint, of what he seemed like to those who knew him best. In 1906 he retired from the Principalship of Manchester College, and during his last few years his increasing deafness cut him off somewhat from outside society. But his own life, spiritual and intellectual, was unimpaired, as those knew who were brought into intimate relation with him. His enjoyment of Nature, whether in England or on the long Swiss holidays, was as keen as when he was a boy; his cycle and his carpenter's bench found him as active as ever; while to the end he was busy with his pen, as this book will show. His last years were, it is true, overshadowed by the War, and it was bitter for him, as for others whose life's work seemed accomplished, to face what appeared like the shattering of so many ideals. Yet here, as always, his faith did not fail him, for the growing serenity of old age with him came not from any stepping aside from life, but rather from the confidence that, in spite of all the horror and the suffering, right must triumph, and the world must win its way through to a better life. His interest whether in present work or in the problems which must be faced after the War was as fresh and keen as ever, and yet beyond all this one felt always the peace was there which only an unwavering faith can give. Like all true mystics he had indeed passed beyond the necessity of outward things to the glorious radiance of the Vision<sup>1</sup> itself. With him was constantly the sense of the abiding Presence, and to know him made doubt impossible. Others might be blind; he saw. Thus when

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Dr. Drummond's interpretation of the Divine Vision, pp. 189 and 199, also p. lvii.

death came in June of last year there could be no grieving ; the gates of life opened, for he belonged in spirit and in truth to the great company of all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

EDITH DRUMMOND.

*January, 1919.*

## 2. THE RELIGIOUS TEACHER AND THEOLOGIAN

BY ONE OF HIS STUDENTS

'**I**F,' as Epicurus said, 'we should above all be grateful to the past, the first need is from the scholar due to the teachers of earlier years, and not least those who have now entered into their rest.' When I was asked to write some account of Dr. Drummond's thought and work in the wide fields of religion and theology, these words of William Wallace with reference to Jowett came to my mind, and prescribed, as it were, the spirit in which the task should be undertaken. For naturally at this season, the feeling of what they owe to their departed leader will be uppermost in the consciousness of those who studied under him and who cherished towards him a love and affection which a beautiful character such as his can alone excite.

And yet in actually attempting to explain to oneself, much more to express in words, the subtle influence of his personality, how impossible a task it seems! Dr. Drummond had none of the vulgar marks that frequently characterize a successful leader either of thought or action. He founded no school; and, in the ordinary sense of the term,

he gathered round him no disciples. And to those who believe that no religious teacher can stamp his impress upon his generation unless he be either a partisan or a dogmatist, the winning power which he exerted will remain a perplexing and baffling enigma. But to those whose privilege it was to know him and to be able to converse with him on the highest and deepest subjects, the secret of his power was no enigma, though it was of the character he was wont to ascribe to all things spiritual and eluded the grasp of the merely discursive reason. We cannot hope to meet again in this world the counterpart of that mind, so scrupulously careful and exact where care and exactness were essential for sound judgment, and yet so firm and unhesitating when assured of a truth, however opposed that truth might be to the views of those with whom he would fain have been in accord. Still less can we hope to meet again a nature such as his ; the union of a trained scientific and scholarly intellect with the simplicity and modesty of the humblest craftsman ; an understanding keen, alert and untiring, but entirely divorced from the remotest tinge of self-assertion and wholly absorbed in the interests to which his life was devoted. Upon his unfailing and delicate kindness we could always count ; his perfect courtesy, his tranquil serenity, his unaffected piety, his placid trust in the goodness of the Power that rules the universe made us feel as though in his presence we were breathing an atmosphere rarer and purer than that which encircles the earth. These are the traits, or some of them, that endeared him to his friends, and which now by 'the idealizing touch of death'

they are enabled to realize more clearly. Yet how utterly insufficient the enumeration will be to reveal to others the manner of man he was! In short, we have in himself a confirmation of the truth he was constantly inculcating—the significance, namely, of personality in all the higher realms of being.

## I.

**JAMES DRUMMOND** was but twenty-four years of age when, after a brilliant career as a student, first at Trinity College, Dublin, and later at Manchester New College (then in London, with John James Tayler as its Principal and James Martineau in its Chair of Philosophy), he was called in 1859 to be the colleague of William Gaskell ('a beloved and sweet-souled man,' as he described him) at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester. Mrs. Gaskell was at the height of her literary fame; 'Mary Barton,' that pathetic story of Greenheys and Ancoats, 'Ruth,' 'Cranford,' and the 'Life of Charlotte Brontë' had all been published; and in the troublous days of the Cotton Famine she and her husband were mainly occupied in organizing methods of relief—the one topic, as she writes in one of her letters, 'which was literally haunting us in our sleep, as well as being the first thoughts in waking and the last at night.' The problems of the time were such as to draw forth the latent energy of the young Irish preacher; and often have I heard from the lips of Manchester citizens of the wondrous force and penetration and rich eloquence of James Drummond's early sermons. 'It is easy,' he once said, 'to imagine an ideal

of preaching—a soul absorbed, transported, by the great thoughts amid which it lives, pouring forth with the sincerity of a deep conviction and love, the word that wells up irrepressibly within it'; and there are many who could testify to the way in which in those days the ideal was realized.

Some of the fruits of that ministry are happily preserved in the volume entitled 'Spiritual Religion' assuredly one of the most beautiful series of devotional utterances in our own or in any language. The book is addressed to 'that increasing class of men, who, while profoundly conscious of a spiritual power in Christianity, are yet unable to accept any of the current representations of it'; and, as contrasted with appeals to an external authority or to a miraculous revelation, presents a noble plea for the trustworthiness of religious experience as an actual fact in human consciousness,—a fact bearing its own guarantee no less convincingly than the experience of visible objects bears to their presence and reality.

The opening discourses have for their theme to determine the nature of the Christian's distinctive faith, the specific characteristic that differentiates Christianity from the other faiths of the world and gives to the universal principles of religion and morality a peculiarly Christian aspect. Almost would it seem that the perplexities of Mrs. Gaskell's creation, John Barton, were in the preacher's thought when he declared that if Christianity is to be carried to the dark and neglected districts of our great cities, which 'offer so appalling a comment upon our national religion,' there ought to be an anxiety to present it in its true character, and a shrinking from tendering in the place of it

some poor counterfeit of our own. He carries his hearers back to the New Testament and bids them observe how there the dominating influence of one gracious personality is the central consideration everywhere emphasized. The men whose writings are therein contained had been through a profound spiritual experience; their souls had been stirred to the depths, they were conscious of having entered upon a higher level of being, of having risen to the apprehension of truths hitherto unrealized. With one accord they refer to Christ as the source of this change. Their thoughts circle round his person; his spirit, as the finished beauty of man's filial nature, is, they are persuaded, the one true spirit for themselves and for others. Faith in Christ was satisfying the hunger of their souls, transforming death into life, raising the human mind to intimate communion with God. They present to the world, then, the clear issue whether Christ was in truth the pitiful impostor that the priests and rulers had affirmed, or the perfect manifestation of the life for which man was craving, whose voice would ever thrill human hearts and whose love would never fail to awaken an answering response.

'Son of God' they call him, and he too had himself made use of the same mode of expression. Yet in their writings the term carries with it none of the later theological significance. Its natural implications are alone dwelt upon. It implied for them, in the first place, spiritual likeness to God, the infinite worth of a human soul as the 'image' of the divine. It implied, farther, a close relationship with the Father, a means of direct approach to him, mind with mind, spirit with spirit, without the interposition either of agents or symbols.

It implied lastly, a sense of dependence, a feeling of humility, of trust, of submission; the Father gave, the son received. And in the life of Christ, as it is unfolded to us, these traits are exhibited with unmistakable force and clearness. His humility is at least as pronounced as the loftiness of his claims; and the claims arise from the strength of his conviction that the oracles of truth of which he is the vehicle are no discoveries made by him but authentic disclosures of an intelligence to which his must bow. The testimony of the two greatest of the apostles is, in this respect, unequivocal. St. Paul was captivated by the very view of Christ's sonship which in later times has been thought to be derogatory; his most daring flights of reasoning depend upon the assumption that the sonship of which Christ was conscious is the ideal condition of human nature, that it revealed the meaning of humanity's long pilgrimage, and even the aim which the entire creation is groaning and travailing to attain. St. John, emphasizing though he does the pre-eminence of Christ as the chosen representative of God to the world, yet ascribes Christ's power and wisdom to the indwelling of the Father, and records the prediction of a similar indwelling being vouchsafed to each of the faithful. The Master's glory was to be shared by his disciples; the *spirit* of truth was to encompass them; the Father would come and take up his abode with them. If, then, the apostles were rightly interpreting the distinctive feature of the religion they cherished as consisting of the acceptance of Jesus as the son of God, the object of Christianity, as they conceived it, may be said to be to lead mankind to a higher

## xxiv Memorial Introduction

some poor counterfeit of our own. He carries his hearers back to the New Testament and bids them observe how there the dominating influence of one gracious personality is the central consideration everywhere emphasized. The men whose writings are therein contained had been through a profound spiritual experience; their souls had been stirred to the depths, they were conscious of having entered upon a higher level of being, of having risen to the apprehension of truths hitherto unrealized. With one accord they refer to Christ as the source of this change. Their thoughts circle round his person; his spirit, as the finished beauty of man's filial nature, is, they are persuaded, the one true spirit for themselves and for others. Faith in Christ was satisfying the hunger of their souls, transforming death into life, raising the human mind to intimate communion with God. They present to the world, then, the clear issue whether Christ was in truth the pitiful impostor that the priests and rulers had affirmed, or the perfect manifestation of the life for which man was craving, whose voice would ever thrill human hearts and whose love would never fail to awaken an answering response.

'Son of God' they call him, and he too had himself made use of the same mode of expression. Yet in their writings the term carries with it none of the later theological significance. Its natural implications are alone dwelt upon. It implied for them, in the first place, spiritual likeness to God, the infinite worth of a human soul as the 'image' of the divine. It implied, further, a close relationship with the Father, a means of direct approach to him, mind with mind, spirit with spirit, without the interposition either of agents or symbols.

It implied lastly, a sense of dependence, a feeling of humility, of trust, of submission; the Father gave, the son received. And in the life of Christ, as it is unfolded to us, these traits are exhibited with unmistakable force and clearness. His humility is at least as pronounced as the loftiness of his claims; and the claims arise from the strength of his conviction that the oracles of truth of which he is the vehicle are no discoveries made by him but authentic disclosures of an intelligence to which his must bow. The testimony of the two greatest of the apostles is, in this respect, unequivocal. St. Paul was captivated by the very view of Christ's sonship which in later times has been thought to be derogatory; his most daring flights of reasoning depend upon the assumption that the sonship of which Christ was conscious is the ideal condition of human nature, that it revealed the meaning of humanity's long pilgrimage, and even the aim which the entire creation is groaning and travailing to attain. St. John, emphasizing though he does the pre-eminence of Christ as the chosen representative of God to the world, yet ascribes Christ's power and wisdom to the indwelling of the Father, and records the prediction of a similar indwelling being vouchsafed to each of the faithful. The Master's glory was to be shared by his disciples; the spirit of truth was to encompass them; the Father would come and take up his abode with them. If, then, the apostles were rightly interpreting the distinctive feature of the religion they cherished as consisting of the acceptance of Jesus as the son of God, the object of Christianity, as they conceived it, may be said to be to lead mankind to a higher

and nobler life, the life of conscious sonship, of membership in a divine community. For faith in Christ, as distinguished from mere opinions about his nature, must have the effect of gradually transforming us into his likeness, must have as its consequence the quickening and developing in us of the filial attitude, must bring us face to face with God in that inner sanctuary where alone we can be face to face with Him. The Christ formed within us will mean that our thought will be hallowed by reverence, our feeling grounded in tenderness, our aspiration shaped into purity of desire and simplicity of purpose. In short, while the infinitude of space and time and nature may remain beyond our ken, another and greater infinitude will be ours—the infinitude of love, of goodness, of beauty, to which the limitations of mortality can set no bar.

It was a great argument; and the author drew a striking contrast between the essence of Christian truth as thus contemplated and the conception of sacerdotal religion claiming the special sanction and authority of a priesthood and certain forms of worship as necessary to salvation. 'The Mass,' declared Cardinal Newman, 'is not a mere form of words—it is a great action, the greatest action that can be on earth. It is, not the invocation merely, but, if I dare use the word, the evocation of the Eternal. He becomes present on the altar in flesh and blood, before whom angels bow and devils tremble.' 'Evocation of the Eternal,' exclaims the preacher, what a depth of unbelief is contained in that word! And yet it is the key to the whole priestly idea of religion. Have we verily to evoke, to call from some dim recess,

to summon from some distant throne, Him who dwells within the contrite heart? Is it not our cold, dull selves that need to be evoked rather than the benign Father in whom 'we live and move and have our being'? 'Sacredotal and spiritual religion are indeed "different religions." The one would summon God from his clouds and darkness; the other, believing that God is light, would scatter the darkness of the soul. The one would appease the avenging wrath of the Almighty, and bring him tranquilized to his children; the other, believing that God is love, would tame man's rebellious will, and bring it in meek submission to a Father's feet. The one sees God most clearly in the exceptional, the strange, the terrible; the other finds him most in the divine order of creation, in blessings daily given, and in that still centre of our being where his calm voice rebukes our passions and our fears.'<sup>1</sup>

In vivid and impressive words, charged with intense earnestness and feeling, the lineaments of 'spirituality' are set forth and portrayed. Were obedience to a supreme moral ruler the highest level of human attainment, the realization of inward peace would be but a delusive dream. For who would presume to claim that, judged by the standard of what the law prescribes, he had earned the approval of eternal righteousness? And even supposing such a claim could be preferred, would not the very assertion of it be destructive of that humility which sets its seal upon beauty of character? Yes; but the assurance of another relation to God, that of children to a father, opens the way not only to a goodness unspoiled by self-righteous

<sup>1</sup> *Spiritual Religion*, p. 63.

## xxviii Memorial Introduction

pride but to a wide expanse beyond. From it a new and higher order of aspirations and emotions springs into being. Faith, trust, reverence, love—these acquire forthwith a richness and fullness of meaning they can never have so long as obedience is taken to be the end and aim of human existence. The dawning consciousness of such meaning is a re-birth for the soul. To many, to more probably than we at all suspect, the change comes suddenly and abruptly; the experience that initiates it sweeps over them as little short of a revolution. To others, it comes as the result of silent growth, and the various stages of the soul's progress melt into one another by imperceptible degrees. But, once accomplished, its consequences are, in either case, similar. The world within and the world without appear in a totally altered light. Within, a spiritual elevation has been reached where obedience passes into spontaneity, and the old strife between inclination and duty no longer perturbs the mind. A creature of sensuous appetites and desires the individual still may be, but any painful or protracted struggle with these will be a thing of the past. Under the influence of a nobler and boundless affection, of a love which is not merely love to God but God's own love pervading his inmost being, the lower self is crucified and the truer self has emerged to find its freedom in unison with the divine will. A new energy, a strength unknown before, fills the soul; and the selfish element, the root of moral evil, has been expelled and vanquished. Innocent pleasures delight, because they are tokens of a divine solicitude; sorrow is mingled with sweetness, because through it a divine consolation makes itself felt

worked 'in pure and unbroken harmony' with Dr. Martineau, who succeeded Mr. Tayler as Principal; and then, in 1885, on Dr. Martineau's retirement, was himself called upon to assume the Principalship, a position which he continued to fill for twenty-one years, resigning the office in 1906. The early years of his Principalship were eventful years in the history of the college. Its removal in 1889 to Oxford threw upon him a heavy load of responsibility. The students of those days, and I may venture to speak as one of them, look back with unqualified admiration to the way in which their Principal rose to the demands of the situation. Naturally of a reserved and unobtrusive disposition, with an inveterate repugnance to anything approaching self-advertisement or display, it is surprising how on every public occasion he invariably contrived to say the right thing, and how, under his direction, the unsectarian position which the college represented, speedily came to be understood in Oxford. In his Address at the simple opening ceremony in October, 1889, he vindicated the claims of theology to be pursued, as every other science is pursued, by the patient accumulation of evidence and the application of sound methods of criticism. 'A pledge, which binds teacher or learner to any foregone conclusion, even if that conclusion should be true, may yet,' he urged, 'bias the intellect and strain the conscience, and so impair the spiritual faculty by which truth is apprehended. It is not by chains and servitude that men are withheld from error; and truth needs not, as a weak pretender, the shelter of a gilded prison, but moving in imperial freedom among the free, commands with native

authority those who have sworn allegiance to her alone.' And in his sermons from the college pulpit the fundamental principles of Christianity were unfolded with the simple persuasiveness of irresistible conviction, which seemed to pierce to one's most inward needs and to envelop life with a sacredness it was sacrilege to violate. The eloquent voice is silent; but I sincerely trust that it may be possible some day to give to the world those utterances which to the men of my generation came home as a great call to the service of the ideal.

Dr. Drummond believed in the capacity of the mind to attain to truth, but he did not believe that the road to truth was a smooth and easy road. He felt that the search for truth exacted alike from teacher and from pupil not only strenuous labour of the intellect but readiness to wrestle with irksome details. No teaching could have been more thorough than his, certainly none has earned more grateful recognition from all who were able and willing to pursue the intellectual aim he set before them. It was an extensive domain of study for which at the college he was responsible—New Testament Criticism and Doctrinal Theology—and the labour involved merely in keeping abreast of the current literature must have taxed his strength to the utmost. But throughout, and in everything he handled, his method was the same—the method of resolute and many-sided inquiry, of undeviating loyalty to fact, and of vigilant care in drawing conclusions. For the theological student it was a priceless discipline, engendering those habits of intellectual honesty and of independent judgment which are so

essentially requisite in men who are to stimulate the thought and touch the souls of their fellows.

To single out for special comment any one of the many departments of research into which we were led under Dr. Drummond's guidance is not easy. Personally, I look back with a feeling of deep thankfulness to the days when we were following him along the intricate and thorny paths of Pauline theology. His careful and exhaustive treatment of the Epistle to the Romans, disclosing at every turn the fresh results of his own investigation and reflection, gave one an altogether new conception of the Apostle's message and made one realize the profound significance of that great religious genius in the history of Christian thought.

First of all, in a very full and complete Introduction, the integrity of the Epistle was defended against the doubts which have been raised in regard to the last two chapters and which in some cases have been extended to all that succeeds the eleventh chapter; then the question as to the character and origin of the Christian community at Rome to which the Epistle is addressed was handled, and handled in a singularly interesting and suggestive way; and finally the contents, occasion and object of the Epistle were discussed so as to prepare the ground for the exposition that was to follow. I recall especially the conclusive refutation, as it seemed to us, of the view of Baur and the Tübingen school that the Roman Church consisted mainly of Jewish Christians who were opposed to St. Paul's universalism and who maintained the superiority of Jew to Gentile. Dr. Drummond showed how little many of the arguments of the Epistle would touch a Jewish

Christian church with only a little knot of Gentile proselytes, and how they are quite in place if addressed to a fraternity comprising principally Greeks and native speaking Romans with perhaps a sprinkling of Jewish believers. So far as the main scope of the Epistle is concerned, it was maintained that its author aimed at confirming in their faith the Christians in Rome, occupying, as they did, what seemed to be a kind of forlorn outpost in the midst of a hostile world, and that the letter is a defence of the gospel in a form adapted to the conditions of the time and intended for the encouragement and support of believers.

The outstanding feature of Dr. Drummond's exposition of Pauline teaching was his total rejection of the ordinary view of it as involving the doctrine of imputed righteousness. His own interpretation was presented in the course of an elaborate and searching analysis of the notion *δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ* ('righteousness of God'). Usually the phrase is supposed to have been used by the apostle in the dogmatic sense of *justification*, and, agreeably to this view, 'righteousness' has been defined as 'the condition of a guilty man who, on account of faith reposed in Christ, is graciously held by God for innocent.' I think Dr. Drummond succeeded in proving convincingly that neither the Old nor the New Testament lends any sanction to the opinion that *δικαιοσύνη* denotes a forensic idea of this sort, and not, what the etymological meaning of the term naturally implies, the quality of one who is righteous. With respect to the contention that the 'righteousness of God' cannot be an attribute of either God or man, that contention rests, he argued, upon an individualistic

philosophy and upon our modern individualistic ways of regarding personality. Judging, however, the philosophy of St. Paul in the light of Philo's,<sup>1</sup> and in the light also of his own apparent ascription of reality to abstract ideas, 'righteousness' would be for him not the mere characteristic of a particular individual, but an eternal essence by participation in which individual men become righteous. As such it would necessarily have its seat in God, and be an attribute of God. It would both reside *in*, and issue forth *from*, God; and its reception by any particular mind might be conditioned by that mind's faith. St. Paul, it is true, distinguishes this 'righteousness,' which is a state of *being*, from another kind of 'righteousness' which is attained by *doing*. The latter, legal righteousness, consisted in the conformity of conduct to a righteous law. For the Jews, this law was the Mosaic code; for the Gentiles, it was the voice of conscience; but in either case it was an imposed command exacting obedience. On the other hand, the 'righteousness of God' was an inward spirit of holiness, justice, and love—a divine attribute ever waiting to enter the soul that is not barred against it, the germ and potency of all pure and beneficent activity. To this extent alone was the doctrine of imputed righteousness involved in St. Paul's teaching: a prodigal returning home smitten with the sense of sin and crying out that he is not worthy to be called a son may become in that very act more worthy in the sight of God than he had ever been before.

Of Dr. Drummond's comprehensive and masterly lectures on the Synoptic Gospels it is out of the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. pp. xli. and xlii.

question to convey in a few words anything like an adequate impression. On such important critical issues as the historical character of the narratives of Christ's birth, the claim of Jesus to be the Messiah, and the account of the temptation in the wilderness, he swept the curve of discussion through the really significant points of the subject, marshalled the various pieces of evidence with expert skill, and arrived, in each case, at a result characterized no less by its originality than by its 'sweet reasonableness.'

I select for mention his extremely helpful and impartial treatment of the New Testament miracles. With unerring logical precision, he laid his finger upon the weak point of Hume's contention that, since a miracle is a violation of the laws of nature, and an unalterable experience has established those laws, the proof against a miracle is as entire as any argument from experience can be. For what, he asked, does Hume's assertion that 'there must be a uniform experience against every miraculous event' amount to but a circuitous way of defining a miracle as that which has never occurred? And if the start be made from a definition of that kind, obviously there is nothing more to be said. But 'the uniform experience' against them which Hume alleges to be a fact is exactly what those who believe in miracles maintain to be a fiction. Moreover, there is no contradiction between the subsistence of a law of nature and its violation, seeing that the former is the logical precondition of the latter. In a lawless and capricious world miracles could not happen, and it is a strange result to reach that the very ground which renders miracles possible proves them at the

philosophy and upon our modern individualistic ways of regarding personality. Judging, however, the philosophy of St. Paul in the light of Philo's,<sup>1</sup> and in the light also of his own apparent ascription of reality to abstract ideas, 'righteousness' would be for him not the mere characteristic of a particular individual, but an eternal essence by participation in which individual men become righteous. As such it would necessarily have its seat in God, and be an attribute of God. It would both reside *in*, and issue forth *from*, God; and its reception by any particular mind might be conditioned by that mind's faith. St. Paul, it is true, distinguishes this 'righteousness,' which is a state of *being*, from another kind of 'righteousness' which is attained by *doing*. The latter, legal righteousness, consisted in the conformity of conduct to a righteous law. For the Jews, this law was the Mosaic code; for the Gentiles, it was the voice of conscience; but in either case it was an imposed command exacting obedience. On the other hand, the 'righteousness of God' was an inward spirit of holiness, justice, and love—a divine attribute ever waiting to enter the soul that is not barred against it, the germ and potency of all pure and beneficent activity. To this extent alone was the doctrine of imputed righteousness involved in St. Paul's teaching: a prodigal returning home smitten with the sense of sin and crying out that he is not worthy to be called a son may become in that very act more worthy in the sight of God than he had ever been before.

Of Dr. Drummond's comprehensive and masterly lectures on the Synoptic Gospels it is out of the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. pp. xli. and xlii.

question to convey in a few words anything like an adequate impression. On such important critical issues as the historical character of the narratives of Christ's birth, the claim of Jesus to be the Messiah, and the account of the temptation in the wilderness, he swept the curve of discussion through the really significant points of the subject, marshalled the various pieces of evidence with expert skill, and arrived, in each case, at a result characterized no less by its originality than by its 'sweet reasonableness.'

I select for mention his extremely helpful and impartial treatment of the New Testament miracles. With unerring logical precision, he laid his finger upon the weak point of Hume's contention that, since a miracle is a violation of the laws of nature, and an unalterable experience has established those laws, the proof against a miracle is as entire as any argument from experience can be. For what, he asked, does Hume's assertion that 'there must be a uniform experience against every miraculous event' amount to but a circuitous way of defining a miracle as that which has never occurred? And if the start be made from a definition of that kind, obviously there is nothing more to be said. But 'the uniform experience' against them which Hume alleges to be a fact is exactly what those who believe in miracles maintain to be a fiction. Moreover, there is no contradiction between the subsistence of a law of nature and its violation, seeing that the former is the logical precondition of the latter. In a lawless and capricious world miracles could not happen, and it is a strange result to reach that the very ground which renders miracles possible proves them at the

same time to be impossible. Grant the uniformity of law, and miracles would still be as capable of attestation as any other events. The considerations which really weigh with those who doubt the alleged occurrence of miracles are, in truth, of an altogether different character. For one thing, it is felt, and rightly felt, that the purpose for which a miracle is introduced must be an adequate purpose, no less solemn and significant than the order which it momentarily disturbs. It is realized also that human testimony is peculiarly liable to error in regard to the happening of marvellous events. In short, whether miracles really have happened appeared to Dr. Drummond purely a question of fact, a question which could only be settled by an examination of the historical evidence, and an examination unswayed by any predilections of our own.

With conscientious care and discrimination he went through the evidence for the Gospel miracles in detail. Roughly speaking, thirty-five distinct miracles are ascribed to Christ, and, of these, twenty-six are miracles of healing, in regard to the accounts of which a large element of truth might be conceded, whilst allowing, at the same time, for exaggeration, uncertainty, and mistake. There are three cases of the raising of the dead, but only one is related by more than one evangelist, and here there is no proof that the girl really was dead, except the belief of the people about her, whereas Jesus himself is reported to have said 'she is not dead, but sleepeth.' Of the miracles upon inanimate nature, scrutiny of the evidence discloses in each case that it will not bear the weight imposed upon it. For instance, the calming of

the storm is narrated by all three synoptists and, therefore, although differently placed in each Gospel, must be supposed to be part of the current tradition. All the same, it is a record not of a scientific investigation nor of a great public occurrence, but of the impressions of the few fishermen who accompanied Jesus in the boat. The boat set sail late in the evening; and, by the time the storm came on, it might have been already night, when men's minds are readily susceptible to strange alternations of feeling and to the awe of the supernatural. Supposing that Jesus by his intrepid faith allayed the fears of the disciples and the squall suddenly ceased, or that they soon found themselves in smoother waters, might they not very naturally have transferred to the winds and waves a portion of the rebuke administered to their faithless alarm, and have told to their companions the next day the story of how Jesus had stilled the raging billows?

Even the testimony in support of the resurrection of Christ, although by far the strongest that can be found for any recorded miracle, did not seem to Dr. Drummond calculated to sustain the demand of the evidential theory. In the first place, the primitive attestation itself is by no means clear, and there are manifest traces of a vacillation of view. The body which at one time has flesh and bones and is capable of being handled seems at another time to lose these characteristics. It appears and disappears in a mysterious way and finds no barrier in closed doors. It is obvious, too, that Jesus does not live the old life with his disciples; he comes to them only to vanish and there is no anticipation of his having to die again.

## xxxviii Memorial Introduction

In the second place, the statements in the Gospels vary to the extent of very serious discrepancy, Matthew representing the appearance of Jesus to the disciples as taking place by express appointment in Galilee, whereas Luke no less explicitly limits the appearance to Judea, says that the disciples were expressly desired to remain in Jerusalem, and affirms that they did so. And, in the third place, according to the unanimous testimony, the appearances were, with a single exception, confined to believers. Apart from St. Paul, the cultured men in Jerusalem had no experience which could induce them to alter the attitude which culture usually adopts towards a new faith. Whilst, then, rejecting the view that the dead body was restored to life, Dr. Drummond was inclined to explain the appearances, not as the offspring of fevered imaginations, but as self-revelations, made in some way we know not, of the immortal Christ. And the view of St. Paul, although it is not perfectly clear on every point, is, he urged, quite consistent with this surmise.

To Dr. Drummond it seemed that Christianity in its whole conception and mode of appeal was utterly alien to the evidential theory. God has, no doubt, many avenues of approach to the soul of man, but it is through the holiness and love and self-sacrifice of Christ, rather than through any wonder-working agency, that the devotion of the human heart has been called forth and won. And such spontaneous response is a surer witness to spiritual things than ten thousand miracles could possibly be.

It was not alone in the class-room that Dr. Drummond's students came to know the mind of

their teacher. Shy and reserved in manner though he was, he was a delightful companion in a country walk or in other hours of relaxation, and one repeatedly made the discovery of unsuspected traits of his somewhat hidden nature. No scholar ever bore his weight of learning more lightly. Keenly interested in literature, in the progress of science, in politics and social problems, he would converse, with evident enjoyment, upon a large variety of topics. He was 'a lover of the meadows and the woods and the mountains,' and would wander for miles with one or another of his pupils over the hills whence 'the eye travels down to Oxford's towers' or beyond Godstow, 'where black-winged swallows haunt the glittering Thames,' after which the afternoon's excursion would end with tea in his beautiful home that seemed to be filled with his own spirit of simplicity and peacefulness. And, on returning to the evening's work, one realized in a measure the inner meaning of the experience, as one reflected on the happiness that had radiated from his presence, and not seldom pondered over some pregnant hint of his which would set going a whole train of thoughts.

An academic institution could not have had for its Principal a man who more amply justified the conferring upon him of a great trust. Continuing from first to last himself a student among students he had all the student's eagerness to learn from others and yet the ripened wisdom that was proof against passing 'winds of doctrine.' Bringing to bear upon current controversies an intimate knowledge of theological thought in its historical development, he regarded them from a point of view singularly unbiassed and freed from the taint of

partisanship. And thus upon younger inquirers, ever on the look out, like the Athenians of old, for some new thing, his was a remarkably strong and steadying influence; they speedily came to respect his judgment and to feel confidence in his counsel. What was of inestimable value to him—his working hours, his learning, his practical insight—he put ungrudgingly at their service, without its even occurring to him that he was making a sacrifice. And yet he found time for attending to the minor details of college administration, time for preparing his lectures, time for reading, time for writing books of European reputation, time for everything, except perhaps for living a great deal in 'general society,' which is sometimes supposed to be a Principal's main function.

## iii.

**D**R. DRUMMOND'S theological works are all of them of recognized and acknowledged importance as permanent contributions to the science. All his publications were the result of painstaking and independent research, each of his volumes being characterized by that laborious care and finish of workmanship which mark the productions of a genuine scholar.

Eight years after his appointment to the chair of theology and before he became Principal of the college, there appeared, in 1877, his elaborate study of the Messianic Idea among the Jews. It has been the forerunner of a number of subsequent investigations by others, and of these there are few which are not more or less indebted to his pioneer survey of the whole field. His object was

to exhibit, in a systematic form, the doctrine concerning the Messiah, as it was held among the Jews in the centuries during which Christianity appeared, and, as subsidiary to such main purpose, to introduce the English reader, more fully than had hitherto been done, to the Apocalyptic and kindred literature. The Apocalyptic literature, although it does not possess the authority which attaches to the discussions and decisions of the Rabbinical schools, yet seemed to him to bring us nearer to the popular aspirations and thus to furnish a sample, of the soil in which Christianity was first planted.

The great treatise on Philo and the Jewish-Alexandrian Philosophy, which was issued in 1888, is still, and is likely long to remain, the standard work upon an intricate and difficult subject. Dr. Drummond was led to form a much higher estimate of Philo's speculative achievement than the 'strange and incoherent jumble' ascribed to him by some expositors would have warranted, and on fundamental points of interpretation he differed from the current representations of Philo's philosophy. In particular, as the outcome of a very complete and exhaustive examination of the available evidence, he reached the conclusion that the Logos, as Philo conceived it, was not a distinct personality, but the thought of God, a mode of the divine essence, which, while a characteristic, indeed, of the infinite Mind, was also planted out and made permanently objective in the order of the universe. Though intimately connected with the material world, as the tissue of logical relations which gives the material world reality, it is yet distinguishable from that world,

because, being immaterial, it is apprehensible not through the senses but only by the higher faculty of reason. Using the analogy of the artist and his statue, it may be said to be as though the artist's thought were not only visible in the form of the statue, but were the pervasive power which kept its particles together, and prevented them from falling into a mere heap of dust. In such a case, were the constraining thought of the artist taken away the statue as a work of art would cease to be; and, on the other hand, the thought embodied in it would have no reality except as an inseparable expression of the artist's mind. So Philo, as Dr. Drummond interpreted him, conceived of the Logos as mediating between the divine Mind and the material world—the bond of union, so to speak, between the ultimately real and the phenomenal realms, but not a Demiurge who acts for or instead of God. Nature and man were ruled by the same divine Reason: the law which is interfused through every part of the material cosmos being identical with the law underlying the seeming fortuity of our human lot and directing the vicissitudes of nations. Both alike were the Logos, but it was only in individual minds that the Logos assumed personality.

Into the paths of research just referred to Dr. Drummond had doubtless been originally led by his desire to approach the problems raised by the Fourth Gospel fully equipped for the task.<sup>1</sup> It

<sup>1</sup> That the study of Philo largely influenced Dr. Drummond's interpretation of Johannine teaching there can be no question. He was strongly of opinion that the Logos of the Proem is not to be regarded as a personal being. And, indeed, it is surprising that the opposite view has been so generally held. Dr. Martineau, for instance,

was not, I believe, until 1890 that he commenced to lecture at Manchester College on the Fourth Gospel; and, although he had previously published three or four considerable monographs on special Johannine questions, it was not until 1903 that his now well-known work saw the light. That it belongs to the front rank of scholarly criticism has been the estimate of all competent judges. To not a few its contents must have occasioned feelings of surprise. Written by one who had consistently rejected the orthodox Christology, it pronounced definitely in favour of St. John, the son of Zebedee, as the author of the Gospel; and, in opposition to a large consensus of opinion, argued that the Gospel was used, not only by Justin, but by both the Gnostic leaders, Basilides and Valentinus, and that traces of it are to be found in the Apostolic Fathers—Ignatius, Barnabas, and Hermas. More optimistic in this regard than even Professor Sanday, Dr. Drummond held that 'the external evidence is all on one side.' On the other hand, the really formidable argument against the Johannine authorship appeared to him to be that which rested on the unhistorical character of the book. For, in respect both to the speeches and the events, he felt compelled to attribute a lower historical value to the Fourth Gospel than to the Synoptics. While refusing to allow the validity of the contention that a being divine enough to be in a special sense

asserts that 'the phrase "son of God" is applied to the pre-existing "Word" in the Fourth Gospel.' But, as a matter of fact, it is never once affirmed in the Gospel that the Logos is the son of God. The title 'son of God' is reserved for Jesus alone, and there is no explicit identification of Jesus with the Logos.

the 'son of God,' would be the last to think or say it, he was yet prepared to admit that 'the personal claims of Jesus were probably less plain, direct and frequent than the Fourth Gospel would lead us to suppose.' So, too, as against the account of repeated visits of Jesus to Jerusalem, he considered the balance of historical evidence inclined to the Synoptic tradition of there having been only one such visit which terminated with the crucifixion; the Baptist of the Fourth Gospel, so like the author of the book himself in thought and speech, had not in his judgment the historical probability of the marked and ascetic personality, the rugged denouncer of wickedness, who stands out in such bold relief in the short record of the other Gospels; and he held it to be highly improbable that Jesus could have succeeded in cleansing the Temple, if he had appeared there as an utterly unknown youth, with no following but one or two obscure friends. Moreover, not only on general grounds was he unable to believe that such miracles as the turning of water into wine and the raising of Lazarus were really performed, but the way in which these events are recorded in the Fourth Gospel made it for him difficult to suppose that we have here before us actual history. But Dr. Drummond urged that even a large admission of unhistorical elements is in truth by no means fatal to the traditional view of the authorship of the Gospel. For on the opposite hypothesis of late authorship the unhistorical character of much of the narrative still presents a problem which requires substantially the same solution as is demanded if the apostolic origin be conceded. In either case, one will be compelled to take into

account the method widely prevalent at the time among Hebrew writers and the Jews of Alexandria of making use of historical persons and events as symbolic or allegorical illustrations of the divine meaning they took to lie behind nature and human life. An interesting item of evidence as to the earliest view taken of the Gospel has been preserved by Eusebius from one of the lost writings of Clement of Alexandria. The fragment, purporting to give the tradition of the Presbyters from the first, says 'that John, having observed that the bodily things had been exhibited in the Gospels, being exhorted by his friends, and inspired by the Spirit, produced a spiritual Gospel.' And in the language of Alexandria, 'that which is bodily' would denote the literal sense of Scripture, while 'that which is spiritual' would signify the figurative or allegorical meaning. To Dr. Drummond, then, there seemed to be nothing improbable in the view that the Apostle, as he looked back across the years and pondered upon the thought and mission of Jesus, may have come to care less and less for the merely outward incidents, and more and more for the inward meaning and significance of that wandrous life.

The earnest desire to penetrate into the consciousness of Christ was the animating motive of Dr. Drummond's strenuous labours as a theologian. He looked upon the advent of Christianity as the most tremendous fact of the human centuries; and even though the records which have come down to us be less reliable than has usually been supposed, and elements in them of Jewish misconception and of Hellenistic theory have to be admitted, yet from all this he found the gracious

personality of its author disengaging itself in greatness more signal and beautiful, and claiming still the spontaneous veneration of mankind as the perfect realization of a soul in harmony with the divine. In his valuable 'Studies in Christian Doctrine,' published in 1908, as also in the Hibbert Lectures of 1894 and in other smaller writings, Dr. Drummond laid out in detail the conception, which in his early book he had sketched in broad outline, of the root-ideas of Christianity and of the relation of Christ to the individual who is conscious of God as the divine Father.

## iv.

HAD Dr. Drummond been appointed Gifford Lecturer he would probably have felt no little compunction in handling his theme. For he was inclined to be distrustful of metaphysical speculation bearing on 'the being, nature and attributes of the Infinite.' No intellectual proof of the existence of God could, in his view, ever carry with it the convincing assurance of direct spiritual discernment; the function of the reflective understanding was rather to interpret and bring into connexion with the rest of our knowledge a revelation which it was not in itself competent to grasp. Not that the human soul was made up of air-tight compartments; knowing, feeling and willing were each of them involved in spiritual apprehension. But, all the same, the latter was a specific attitude of mind, directed upon that which could only be apprehended in a specific way, just, for example, as the aesthetically beautiful can only be apprehended in a specific way. The busi-

ness of the theologian was not to weave speculative systems, but to wait patiently upon the facts which have their seat in the depths of the soul, and to throw into the terms of a science that which comes to us in the concrete setting of daily experience. Dr. Drummond rather shrank, I think, from the discussion of such problems as the nature of the divine essence and its relation to the universe as bordering upon presumption. Concerning omniscience, for example, he tells us that it seems to him 'most reverent not to speculate'; and were it not that the doctrine of the Trinity is accepted by those who hold it as a part of supernatural revelation, that doctrine, he confesses, would appear to him as 'a piece of irreverence, prying with vain conceit into the mysteries of God.'

Nevertheless, he would not have lent his countenance to Harnack's dictum that the history of dogma is a record of the progressive obscuration of religious truth by Hellenic philosophy and other 'secularizing' influences. Certain philosophical propositions he was prepared to lay down and to defend by purely philosophical argument. The following were some of them. No conception of God could be, in his view, philosophically adequate in which abstraction was made of the elements of personality. God, it was true, is not a person, if by that be meant one of a class of many persons. But there is no reason for assuming that finitude is the necessary condition of personality; and, in attributing personality to God, we may legitimately imply not that God is a kind of magnified man, but that in God there is contained in unlimited measure that which distinguishes a person from a thing or from a mere animal. Self-consciousness, reason,

## xlviiii      Memorial Introduction

will—these are the distinctive features of personality; and, limited though they cannot but be in us, they do not in themselves inherently involve limitation. So, again, the creativeness of God stands, he maintained, in no real antithesis to the fact, as it may now be taken to be, of evolution. Whether the world arose as a result of an instantaneous fiat or by means of the operation of laws extending through millions of years, its existence may still be due to the activity of a mind working out a purpose which we can only dimly fathom but which we can implicitly believe to be that of a gradual realization of the highest good. Once more, religious experience would, he urged be inexplicable apart from the reality of those predicates which the devout soul invariably assigns to the object of its devotion—holiness, righteousness, love. God is holy, because the term 'good' in reference to God carries with it the implication not of obedience to the moral law but of the ultimate source of that law, the eternal fount of unacquired purity and virtue. God is righteous, because in relation to morally constituted beings God is just, in the deeper meaning of that term, and 'desireth not the death of a sinner but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live.' God is love, because it is unthinkable that the love we feel is greater than the love we ought to trust.

But for the religious consciousness something more is requisite. If religion is to rest upon a stable foundation, the God to whom it leads must be a self-revealing Power—a consciousness that comes forth of itself to meet individual experience and individual needs, a Presence that waits not to be discovered by the inquisitive search of a small

band of philosophers but is accessible to the humblest human intelligence. For were that not so, were the sustainer of the universe a solitary, isolated, self-identical essence, complete and self-contained in the unity of his own being, then there would be wanting in him that element which more than all others stamps a nature as spiritual—the element just referred to, the element namely, of love. Life that was not life in the life of others would not be spiritual life; a self that had not its inner wealth of feeling and thought and will called forth in relation to other selves, receiving back from them in reciprocated knowledge and affection the wealth it bestows, would not be a self. The lowliest mother folding her child to herself in tender embrace would be a soul of higher range, of diviner compass, than a mere chief of mechanicians, a Prime Mover of atoms or of worlds.

Before the point was mooted 'What is God?'  
 No savage man inquired, 'What am myself?'  
 Much less replied, 'First, last and best of things.'  
 Man takes that title now if he believes  
 Might can exist with neither will nor love  
 In God's case—what he names now Nature's Law—  
 While in himself he recognizes love.  
 No less than might and will.

Look, however, at the actual facts of human development which the labours of modern investigators have brought to light and see, urged Dr. Drummond, whether they really warrant any such hypothesis. You find, no doubt, that the primitive modes of expressing the religious sentiment were crude and coarse. But even the darkest superstition is not untinged by a vague undefined feeling of reverential awe, which is the germ or inchoate

consciousness, the *showing*, of what comes later, in the mature mind, to more or less clear recognition. And there stands forth in every epoch of human history, as one of its great dominant features, the fact that man is essentially a religious being. Man does not accidentally stumble into religion; religion is as native to his mental life as air is to his bodily life. In nations the most unlike one another, the most remote from common influences and pursuing the most divergent lines of civilization—everywhere the human mind has been led to recognize the presence in its life and environment of those factors which when the deeper bearing of them comes to be grasped are characterized as 'divine.' Religious thoughts and feelings are, then, no peculiarities of the world's childhood; man does not outgrow them and cast them aside, as he outgrows and casts aside his stone implements, his cave dwellings, his magic, and his belief in ghosts. On the contrary, these religious thoughts and feelings persistently survive the demolition of countless false ideas and prejudices; and, like all things that do not die, their later and more perfect expressions are a surer indication of their true significance than any multitude of their rudimentary types. Whenever some particular form of religion has shown signs of being weak with the decrepitude of age, that has implied not the decease of religion but its resurrection from the tomb in which its detractors would bury it, and the reassertion, in renewed and purified aspect, of its hold upon the human soul.

With wellnigh undeviating constancy, so Dr. Drummond considered historical testimony enables us to affirm, the process of transfiguration and revival has come about in one way. It has come

about, namely, through the vivifying power and influence of some unique personality, gifted, beyond the level of those around him, with a richness of character and fullness of insight all his own, in whom and by whom the old faith has been purged of its foreign and external ingredients, and from whom it has issued forth in more inward, more human, more godlike lineaments. Of this, the origin of each of the great religious movements of the civilized world, no less than that of the several successive phases through which any one of them may have passed, will supply ample confirmation. The progressive unfolding to us of the contents of God's personality has proceeded through the medium of the elect spirits of our race; and, in order that 'the thoughts of many hearts should be revealed,' it has not been needful for messages to be flashed across the sky, or indented on tables of stone; it has been enough that among the 'sons of men' there have been those whose consciousness has been filled and illumined by the divine reality, and who, by the vivid light of their own faith, could render unmistakably visible to others what they in like manner ought to see. The religious 'education of the human race' has, in short, been accomplished not through charms or spells or mystic rites, but through the normal, healthy, natural working of our human intelligence; a brave and fearless soul, a severity of conscience, a heart of love and compassion—these have been the instrumentalities through which the eternal verities have proclaimed themselves, and on earth there has been no devotion so pure as that which has spontaneously sprung from the depths of our common human life.

Now, as Dr. Drummond viewed it, it belonged not to any defect but to the glory of the Christian religion that it formed no exception to the rule just indicated. Why should we seek to remove Christ from the lineage and company of those whose mission it has been to bring us to a consciousness of the meaning of spiritual existence, to annul the whole fictitious distance supposed to separate the infinite from the finite mind, and to unveil the fathomless Goodness by which we are folded round? He himself made no claim to supersede Moses and the Prophets; he came, he said, not to destroy, but to fulfil. What if his power and knowledge were, like theirs, limited? What if he shared to some extent fallacious notions current in his day and had no inkling of the astronomy of modern times? Surely the love of God may burn its way into the world's history through the words and deeds of a mortal life, even though that life be partly moulded by the ideas of its age, and be not exempt from the errors and blunders of contemporary intellects. Is it objected that this is at once to reduce Christ to 'a mere man'? Then the reply is that the objection is founded on a notion of manhood which it was one of the main purposes of Christ's teaching to cast for ever aside. If by 'a mere man' he meant simply a creature of material origin, then certainly Christ as 'a mere man' would be an inexplicable enigma, but so also in that case would be the least of his disciples. Nor would the phrase 'an ordinary man' be any more appropriate. Great men are not 'ordinary men,' just in virtue of their being great; and, looked at merely from the point of view of history, Christ belongs to a very small group of men who have founded religions

of stupendous influence and significance. Nay, more. In this small group the pre-eminence of Christ is unquestionable; the wondrous beauty of his individual character, the great new world of spiritual truths he brought to recognition, the clearness and persuasiveness with which he made articulate the thoughts of God that may indwell in man—these have raised the prophet of Nazareth to a position where he stands alone among the leaders of mankind, and no life has gone on reliving itself through the ages as his life has done, nor has there emanated from any other the power it has exerted of triumphing over selfishness and evil. Now, that this should be a mere accident in the stream of human events, a mere freak of natural selection operating in the sphere of mental existence, was to Dr. Drummond an impossible thought. 'The great men in history,' said Hegel, 'are those whose own private ends embody the will of the world-spirit'; and, unless the notion of a divine 'education of the human race' be a fiction, Christ must be conceived as fulfilling a mission to which he was specially called; or, in the language of the New Testament, he must have been 'sent' by God. The description of him as '*the* Son of God' was, therefore, no incongruity, because in a very real sense he does stand apart in solitary greatness—he whose filial consciousness so made manifest the inner being of the Ruler of nature that ever since he dwelt on earth the vast community calling itself by his name has worshipped a God resembling him, a God of whom he himself was the image, a soul living amid a company of souls, whose affection encircles all, leaving not the sinner, nor the sorrowful, without a place in his parental home.

I shall not, I believe, be misrepresenting Dr. Drummond when I say that the essential truth which, as he viewed it, lay at the root of Christ's teaching, separating it from anything that had gone before, might be expressed in the form that, as an integral part of the divine scheme of things, each individual soul has, as such, a perfectly infinite value. Round this cardinal principle its dominant ideas clustered—its discovery of greatness in simple humanity, its discernment of the unfathomable depths of love, its conception of a divine suffering, its exemplification of the gentleness of spiritual strength—traits, these, that opened out for man illimitable perspectives and an immensely wider appreciation of a man's station and its duties. By Christ, as by no previous teacher, the conviction of a divine humanity was made into the guiding maxim of conduct, and in his personality it found concrete and perfect embodiment. Can it be, therefore, a matter of importance whether we call that personality the ideal of manhood or the incarnate Word? God can be imaged in a pure and holy life, as He never can be by the greatest objects of the material universe; the 'mind of Christ,' wrought into the fabric of human history, has become the impelling force which has carried myriads of struggling men and women beyond the confines of the sensuous world, and set them amid an eternal scene, which philosophic reflection has contemplated, but which they could only contemplate as mirrored and reflected in a nature like their own. Thus, to countless thousands, the great Father has become manifest not so much in 'the light of setting suns, and the round ocean, and the living air, and the blue sky' as in 'the mind of man'; nay, those who

have pondered the story of that mission of unwearied beneficence, those who have gazed upon that gentle compassionate being in whom sorrow found its best consoler, and penitence its pure, yet pitying, friend, have felt the profound truth of the dictum, whether uttered by vocal lips or breathed in silence to a loving disciple's heart, 'he that hath seen me hath seen the Father.' Looking, then, at the life of man as a whole, we are able, so Dr. Drummond conceived, to discriminate in the development of religion a peculiar form and quality of the religious spirit which is marked off from other forms and qualities of it. A certain combination of graciousness and purity of soul, of tender regard for others, of loving self-forgetfulness, of trustful acceptance of the divine will, together with an assurance of intimate communion with God and a felt relationship with Christ, constitute what may be called the 'Christian consciousness.' And whoever tries to specify what it is that gives uniqueness to this type of consciousness will find it to be that which is denoted by the phrase 'a sense of sonship,' a sense of oneness of nature between the infinite Mind and minds that are finite but yet born of His.

The realization of Christ's sense of sonship in our individual existence presented itself to Dr. Drummond as the very goal and culmination of religious endeavour. He would not, indeed, have denied that in some men there may be an immediate and unclouded assurance of a divine companionship—of a presence, a power, an authority, which though in them is yet above them, which they have neither made nor can unmake, and which relies not for confirmation upon the kindred experience of some greater brother soul. Only I think he would have

felt that this solitary flight to the transcendent God is not without its dangers, and is apt to be stripped in its ascent of those homelier virtues which humble and sweeten the Christian consciousness. For does it not almost require another Christ, combining as Christ combined the purest loftiness of soul with the gentlest and most winning love, to safely dispense, in moments of beatific vision, with every human help and live alone with Him who is the unerring judge of all? Be this, however, as it may, there are, Dr. Drummond insisted, at any rate but few who can move securely in this upper air of complete conviction and direct communion; the vast majority of us are not insensible of the aid that can come from the fellowship of a son of man who, once in history, did express in the focus of a finite soul the inner splendour of divine love and compassion, as the heavens declare the sublimity of its outer glory. The power and persuasiveness of the Christian revelation have been largely due to the fact that it comes to us as the Word made flesh. As being the disclosure of a pure and consecrated life, shedding the love of God into the midst of the world's sin and woe, it has brought that near to us of which, had we to attain it by our own unaided strength, we might have had good reason to despair.

Perhaps I may venture to say what I have just said in a somewhat different way. In the realm of spiritual character, it has been truly observed, 'there is no such problem as that about the "origin of species."' Here the difference even between infinitude and finitude involves not difference of nature; God himself, with all the wealth of his perfections, is still a soul and lives in company with

other souls. And just as there is spiritual affinity between God and man, so is there spiritual affinity between man and man. The 'more life and fuller that we want' is only possible through a breaking down of the barriers which separate one individual self from another, and the pursuit of a good unmarred by the taint of selfishness. But, although the bond of affinity is in essence the same in both, the sense of sonship is not identical with the sense of brotherhood. There is, for instance, a feeling of dependence implied in the former which is not at all similar to the feeling of dependence that may be included in the latter. Once more, the sense of sonship of which one soul is conscious may be shared by a kindred soul; and this, again, is not the same experience as sharing directly in the life of God. For, although it be true that godlike qualities, being not spatially large 'can glow within the human limits as clearly as in the scale of infinitude,' yet as there evinced they have passed through the medium of a dependent mind, and are consequently touched with those traits of trust, obedience and gratitude which the response of the latter has added to them. Now, if the sense of sonship first became a reality for the world in the soul of Christ, if through his consciousness of sonship, the Fatherhood of God, and all that it involves, first dawned upon the human mind, that in itself suffices to explain how it comes about that in the experience of sonship Christians feel themselves to be in touch with the personality of him who was the first-born of many brothers. Nay, why should we doubt the genuineness of the truth to which that experience testifies? Only a superficial and mechanical theory of human nature would throw

## Iviii      Memorial Introduction

obstacles in the way of a faith in the continual presence of Christ with our humanity, not only as the remembered exemplar of an incarnation of God in man which is perpetually happening, but as an actually living 'quickening spirit' that may be the light of our seeing and impart to us the strength and peace of filial devotion. The influence which one soul exerts upon another eludes the grasp of the scientific intellect. Yet, though we cannot analyse it into its constituents nor trace the laws to which it is subject, such influence is an indisputable fact of daily occurrence; and, in the face of human experience, he would be a bold man who should dogmatically assert that the influence must cease when death bears away the one life and leaves the other to tread earth's paths alone. What, then, a departed father or mother, husband or wife, friend or comrade, may be to the individual, that, surely, in the Providence of God, Christ may be to the community of Christendom and to each member of it.

Well—if to us such prophecy be given,  
Strong to illuminate when sight is dim,  
Then, tho' our Lord be holy in the heaven,  
How should the heavens sunder us from Him ?

In the sense I have been trying to bring out, the uniqueness of Christ is beyond the reach of question. The sonship of which he was conscious no other child of God had disclosed to him; it was through the whispers of the Father's spirit mingling mysteriously with his own that he came to be aware of his filial relationship. But to separate Christ from our race and to place him on a pinnacle of superhuman isolation seemed to Dr. Drummond

to be offering him a spurious honour and to be spurning the gift which he died to bestow. If the term 'son of God' when applied to him be used with a significance totally different from that which the term has when applied to other men, the whole Christian argument is rendered incoherent and becomes lost in obscurity. Not to reveal himself but to reveal the Father was the purpose of Christ's mission—to carry us beyond himself into the actual presence of the Soul of souls, to be a conductor of spiritual life from the source of spiritual life. And allowing the sayings recorded in the Fourth Gospel to be, to some extent, authentic, they by no means assert any proud claim on his part to superior position and status. For if the consciousness of the divine had reached in him an unexampled power and clearness, if the thought and speech by which he thrilled the multitudes surprised and awed his own soul, if the love which he felt for the sinful and the sad seemed to flood his inward being from a source beyond him, if he appeared to himself to be an instrument in God's hands, is it strange he should have told his disciples that he could do nothing of himself, that the love on which they relied was the love of God, that the righteousness which they revered was the righteousness of God, and that in so far as they beheld what was deepest and most inspiring in him, they beheld, not the transient frailty of a mortal, but the eternal being of the Father who sent him?

If, then, as the founder of a spiritual brotherhood, Christ stands alone, in his pre-eminence as '*the son of God,*' the essence of his message consisted in the declaration that all might participate in that sonship. Complete harmony with the will of

God is thus the Christian ideal of life. Ere the ideal can be attained every feeling of alienation or indifference that can separate us from the leading of God's spirit must be removed. To regard his will as supremely good, to loathe in ourselves every impulse and pleasure which would thwart it, to confide in him in sorrow's trying hour, to adore him in the performance of duty's arduous behest, to implore his guidance and to love him with heart and soul as the wisest and best of friends—this is to be 'reconciled to God,' this is to be his son. Then his Spirit works freely in us, and gradually moulds us into a diviner image. We become 'the righteousness of God.' Then the thoughts that thrill us with their sublimity, the emotions that seem to lift us out of ourselves, the voice of duty that has ceased to be a thing of self-denial and which has become the expression of an irresistible desire—these we are conscious of as the contents of the divine Mind invading and filling ours. But, though the Christian ideal, as Dr. Drummond beheld it, involves the rejection of a false view of man as an individual complete in himself, and drawing his goodness from certain resources of his own, it involves, on the other hand, no crude pantheism such as would reduce the human self to a mere thoroughfare along which divine influences operate to produce specific results. Though our minds be open to the advent of eternal truths and ideas, these are not to be thought of as acting upon us after the manner in which physical forces act on material bodies. Spiritual qualities are not things that can be rained into our minds or be deposited there ready-made. Appeal to us they may, but from us the response must come. Whatever con-

straining power may be theirs, a responsible being cannot, as has been wisely said lately, be commanded; even the divine importunity will not force an entrance. 'Behold I stand at the door and knock'—such is the mode of Christ's approach; and his promise is 'if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him.'

The love of God the Father—to bring this home to the hearts of men is, Dr. Drummond was never weary of insisting, the supreme aim of the Christian teacher. He was persuaded that the only religion that could meet the needs of the modern world must be based on the Christian principle of sonship, and must go back to Christ as the inspirer and leader of our pilgrim troop in quest of the heavenly kingdom. For if conscious sonship be the essence of religion, then he to whom that sonship was a truth so absorbing as to make it a reality to the world must stand in an undying relation to the spiritual movement of which he is the source. 'Nothing more sublime can I imagine,' declared Dr. Drummond in an unpublished Address of singular impressiveness, 'than the truth as it is in Jesus, nothing which so fills the cravings of the soul as the spirit of life in him. Every aberration from that spirit appears to me, not progress, but retrogression; and the more some modern reformers think we have outgrown him, the more profoundly do I feel our need of him. The love of Christ outgrown! We think so because we have not so much as seen it. Oh! that men's hearts were filled with it, and what a world would ours be!' His own heart *now* filled with it. Miss Drummond tells us that in earlier days her father had to struggle, like other men, with doubts and misgivings. But in his

## lxii      Memorial Introduction

riper years those struggles had been surmounted, and by his own life—a life permeated with the Christian sense of sonship—he was showing us how the love of God in Christ can lift all the actions and events of our individual existence into a higher plane, and shed a beauty and dignity around its least and lowliest details. Of him one might venture to say, in a very literal sense of the words, that his life was in its inner being, as it was lived from day to day, a life that was 'hid with Christ in God.'

His was a soul from visionary hill  
Watching and hearkening for ethereal news,  
Looking beyond life's storms and death's cold dews  
To habitations of the eternal will.

G. DAWES HICKS.

*January, 1919.*

## PAULINE MEDITATIONS

---

*Ὁ νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ  
ἠλευθέρωσέν με ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ τοῦ  
θανάτου.*

*Τὸ πνεῦμα πάντα ἐρευνᾷ, καὶ τὰ βάθη τοῦ Θεοῦ.*

### ST. PAUL

VICTORIOUS MARTYR to the good and true  
Thy path lies not through gain or pleasure soft,  
But, worn by hardship, and in perils oft,  
Thou dost the righteousness of God pursue ;  
And keeping still the hallowed cross in view,  
Redeemed, thou hast sin's heavy shackles doffed,  
And on light wings of faith hast soared aloft  
To that pure realm where God makes all things new  
There thou hast seen in revelation clear  
The mystery of Love, which, yearning, bears  
The weight of sin and sorrow not its own,  
That human hearts, entranced, may yet appear  
Where Love, constraining and triumphant, wears  
A crown of glory near th' eternal throne.

## CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I	PAUL AS A PREACHER . . . . . 1
II	RECONCILIATION . . . . . 9
III	'NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL' . . . . . 21
IV	SALVATION BY GRACE . . . . . 42
V	PREDESTINATION . . . . . 50
VI	KNOWLEDGE AND LOVE . . . . . 62
VII	THE GLORY THAT REMAINS . . . . . 81
VIII	THE VEIL UPON THE HEART . . . . . 93
IX	THE KINGDOM OF GOD . . . . . 105
X	THE CHURCH . . . . . 117
XI	THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT . . . . . 128
XII	LAW AND FAITH . . . . . 139
XIII	THE HOPE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS . . . . . 153
XIV	LIBERTY AND AUTHORITY IN RELIGION . . . . . 165
XV	CHRISTIAN IDEAL AND POWER . . . . . 191
XVI	THE ROOT OF CHRISTIAN MORALITY . . . . . 201
XVII	PAUL'S KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS . . . . . 221
XVIII	WRESTLING WITH EVIL . . . . . 236
XIX	THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER . . . . . 247
XX	ANXIETY AND PEACE . . . . . 256
XXI	THE LAW OF MUTUAL HELPFULNESS . . . . . 272
XXII	THE FULLNESS OF THE PERFECT MAN . . . . . 280
XXIII	RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT . . . . . 303

## CHAPTER I

### PAUL AS A PREACHER

PAUL was a born preacher. He himself clearly recognized this fact, and habitually regarded himself as a missionary preacher of glad tidings. He tells us that he was set apart from his birth, and called through the grace of God to preach among the Gentiles.<sup>1</sup> He could not boast of his preaching, as though it were a work within his own choice; for a necessity was laid upon him, and woe to him if he did not preach.<sup>2</sup> There were other functions in the Church, the importance of which he fully acknowledged; but he himself was sent, not to baptize, but to preach.<sup>3</sup> It is needless to refer to passages in which he describes himself as an Apostle, that is one who is sent, a missionary.<sup>4</sup> He also speaks of himself as an ambassador to plead for Christ.<sup>5</sup> This last expression marks a wide difference between him and Christ. Christ, too, regarded himself as sent;<sup>6</sup> but he received his message directly from the highest Source, and

<sup>1</sup> Gal. i. 15, 16; Rom. i. 1.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 16. <sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. i. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Used in this general sense in John xiii. 16 and Philip. ii. 25. <sup>5</sup> 2 Cor. v. 20; Eph. vi. 20.

<sup>6</sup> Two often in the Fourth Gospel for references to be given.

found his Divinest word within himself. Paul, though believing himself the recipient of immediate revelations, yet heard in the voice of the Spirit the voice of Christ, and saw the light of God within his heart as a gleam from the face of Christ.<sup>1</sup> In a word, he preached not himself, but Christ Jesus as Lord,<sup>2</sup> and his whole gospel had relation to that great and original teacher.

This view which Paul took of his work is so rich in suggestion that we must pause to reflect on its wealth of meaning, and its application to modern times.

From the fact, then, that Paul preached not himself, but Christ Jesus as Lord, we may deduce the aim of the Christian preacher. It is not to preach himself, but to efface himself, that the Divine Spirit may reach, by an unperverted way, the hearts of the hearers, and God alone may be glorified in every soul. This aim is clearly right, and is readily acknowledged, but it is not so easily retained. Nowhere is the taint of self so fatal to true success, and yet nowhere do the temptations of self-love blend so insidiously with the higher motives. Where a definite external result is to be gained, as in commerce, politics, or war, personal ambition may add energy to thought and vigour to the hand, and so make men more efficient in accomplishing their ends, though even in these walks of life the blameless devotee of duty exercises a moral power over his fellow men which far transcends in value any outward success. But in the work of the ministry, where the whole result contemplated is spiritual, ambition can only defeat the end in view, and men cannot win except by

<sup>1</sup> See Rom. viii. 9-11; 2 Cor. iv. 6.   <sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 5.

complete absorption in their cause. And yet the constant appearance in public, the obligation to speak at times when they would rather be silent, the false judgments which come with flattering tongue or injudicious blame, the conversion of the loving and spontaneous services of a brother-man into the official duties of a recognized pastor, all make it difficult to preserve the pure simplicity of godliness; and only through an exalted faith, nurtured by continual prayer, can the minister of Christ be raised above the temptations of self-will, and keep the eye single.

Let it not be said that the character thus sketched would be wanting in manly and independent judgment. Manliness and independence do not consist in asserting ourselves, but in asserting great principles, and doing our duty with a noble simplicity and directness. For the sake of the very men whom he would serve, the preacher cannot consent for one moment to palter with truth or to lower the standard of right; and if he is misunderstood, as Paul so often was, and incurs undeserved odium, so be it; he stands before the supreme Judge of all, and him he cannot disobey. Real greatness lies in this high disinterested service; and, even where the intellectual gifts are not of the first order, a character cast in the mould of Christian dedication never fails to be impressive. For who is it that most moves and commands us in the spiritual kingdom? Is it not he whose utterances have become to his own inmost conviction revelations of God, messages of awe and light from the Spirit, which he himself reverently obeys as the rule of eternal Love and Righteousness mingling in the darkness and transience of our

frail humanity? But, as Paul wrote, 'we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.' The glory and the power are from God, and if only a man can tell what he has seen and heard in moments when prayer has most completely lifted him out of himself, wherever his words fall they will be words of eternal life. Generally, however, men can see these things only as in a mirror darkly, and are obliged to present them through the imperfect media of their own meagre knowledge and limited intelligence, and so, as was the case even with Paul, what is only their own, perhaps mistaken, view mingles inevitably with the revelation of God. But to the man who has been redeemed from the claims of self it is possible so to exhibit the truth that the form, which is his own, and therefore more or less temporary and local, shall be wholly subordinated to the spiritual impression, which may abide and become a revealing organ in the minds of others.

Here it may be asked, is this independent preaching from the hidden depths of the soul compatible with preaching 'Christ Jesus as Lord'? Yes, entirely so; for Paul has just said that the Lord is the Spirit, and he everywhere conceives of Christ, not as one who imposes commands from without, and exacts a mechanical obedience, but as one who dwells as a perpetual inspiration in loving and faithful hearts. And what a wonderful contrast Christianity presents in this respect to other religions. It will accept nothing that is not genuine and inward. We cannot be Christians by attending to any observances, ceremonial or moral by teasing ourselves with ascetic practices or as-

suming the outward garb of holiness, or by professing beliefs which never rise above the region of dry intellectual formulæ, but only by possessing a heavenly and Christlike mind, which moves with free and sovereign rights amid the superficial framework and symbols of our faith and love. The whole aim of the gospel as delivered by Paul is to create in men a peculiar quality of interior life; and accordingly, while we find in his writings great principles of thought and conduct, we find no attempt to lay down a formal code of morals or a dogmatic system of theology. An inward principle of life modifies its organism to meet changing conditions; and so, while justice and brotherly love remain unalterable except in their depth and power, laws are subject to revision and improvement, and, while faith and devotion must ever strive for a fuller supremacy, theologies rise and pass away with the progress of knowledge and the general enlargement of the human mind.

We may observe in this connexion how admirably the Gospels are adapted to convey this grand spiritual appeal to men. What an abject and servile Christianity we should probably have, if they had been constructed on the scale and the method of modern biographies. But happily the curiosity which would have rifled the workshop at Nazareth and dragged into the glare of day the most sacred privacy of the home at Capernaum is baffled, and, in place of the outside accidents of life, which often hide as much as they reveal the essential and ideal man, those who have eyes to see behold a spiritual glory, flashes of eternal truth, depths of insight and wisdom, and the tragic story of a soul most divine and loving, which poured itself out unto death that

the reign of God might be established in men's hearts. Thus Christ remains to us, as he was to Paul, a Spirit-Lord; and if there is something of dimness and uncertainty in the features of his earthly life, yet the grandeur of his spirit shines upon us with a brightness exceeding the brightness of the sun. It is such a Lord that the preacher has to proclaim, the head and inspirer of the great Christian movement, the first-born among many brethren, the leader of the sons of God to liberty and light.

And is it not good that the preacher should call men to the mightiest spiritual power that the world has known, and not cast it off merely because it has been compelled to work through human means, through crude millennial or Messianic dreams, through forms of philosophy and science which, however profound, were not the final word of man's intellect, and even through the baseness and cruelty of ignorant and superstitious passion? The time may come when, according to the enraptured vision of Paul, the Son shall have delivered up the kingdoms to God, even the Father, that God may be all in all, and when the fullness of our communion with the eternal Spirit shall be so perfect that we shall no more stretch forth groping hands to feel after God, or sigh for departed aspiration and the vanished glory of a world once seen with younger eyes, or mourn for a heart made desolate by sin. But that time is not yet; and indeed it may not be intended to come on earth, and it may be a permanent part of the providential plan that religion should bind us to our brethren as well as to God by coming to us in human form and dispensing through human hands the sweetest

and tenderest blessings that the soul can receive. Religious love and gratitude towards those who have given us light or called us out of the death of sin can in no way interfere with our love and gratitude towards the great Source of all, nor need our prayers lose ought of the adoration which is due to him alone when we come in conscious fellowship with those who have unsealed the fountains of prayer within us, or when we thank our Father that through them we have heard his voice.

For this religious affection towards others than God does not drag *him* down, but lifts *man* up. It is the Divine in them whose power we feel, and whose beauty we admire, and henceforth men cease, in our eyes, to be mere creatures of the earth, and become children of God. The ancient Stoic was able to recognize the Divine presence even in the meanest objects; and when we see in the face of Christ a glory as of another world, a righteousness so pure, so pitying, so persuasive that our hearts tremble with faith and joy, and that vision abides with us as an unfading light of life, shall we not say that it is the glory of God, that glory in the ineffable and incomprehensible Majesty which it is possible for us to know, which the soul craves, and receiving finds rest?

This recognition of the Divine in Christ (and in its due proportion in all who are Christlike) is proved by the history of the Christian Church and the profoundest experiences of Christian men to be an essential element in the conquering power of Christianity. As a system of mere human teaching, as a record of the struggles of a faithful soul to realize the noblest aspirations, it may be very

beautiful and edifying ; but till it speaks to us in the name of God, till it manifests the love of God, till we look behind the veil of the flesh, and perceive that the beauty and the tenderness and the sympathy and the pleading are all Divine, it cannot rend the bonds of sin, or turn our doubt and despair into the joy of faith. It is well to see a man like ourselves striving, suffering, and conquering ; but what we need religiously is the vision of God so clear and captivating as to rivet our gaze, that, dogged no more by the dark, malignant shadow of ourselves, we may look only at his wonderful love, which will not, cannot leave us, which fills us with peace because, abandoning self, our faith rests in it alone, and which gives promise of a holiness that is to be. We may have to change the forms in which these things once reached the human heart ; but let us beware lest in changing the form we lose the substance. If the preacher cannot feed men's souls with bread of life from heaven, we may as well close our places of worship ; but if in simplicity he speaks what he has seen and known, some will receive his testimony, and find in Jesus Christ a Lord who rules only that he may emancipate, and who, because he sought not his own will, but the will of him that sent him, spoke the words of God and manifested the Spirit of God.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The above reflections, now modified, have already appeared in a religious journal.

## CHAPTER II

### RECONCILIATION

PAUL describes himself as an 'ambassador for Christ'; and the message which he had to deliver on behalf of him for whom he acted is summed up in the few words, 'be ye reconciled to God.'<sup>1</sup> These words, then, are Paul's epitome of Christ's appeal to the world, and he regarded that appeal itself as God's entreaty spoken through human agents. What are the implications of this appeal?

To be reconciled implies a state of previous enmity. Are there, then, people who feel enmity against God, who dislike him, and wish him ill? Personal hatred, as between rivals, can hardly exist on the part of the finite towards the infinite, and we must look for something more inward and subtle than the coarse antagonisms of earth. We need not have any sense of personal animosity, or associate what we dislike with the supreme Ruler of the world; and yet we may have an antipathy to what is Divine, and set ourselves in opposition to the higher Will. We shall perhaps readily concede this in the case of the bad man, to whom the

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 20.

moral law presents itself only as an obstacle in the way of gratifying his desires, and who shapes his life for no other end than his own pleasure. He who deliberately and wilfully does wrong makes an attack on the eternal order, and proclaims himself to that extent an enemy of God. What are all the frauds, the robbery, the violence, the drunkenness, the cruelty, the impurity, the selfish scheming and preying upon one another, which we conditionally read of in the newspapers, if we have not made more intimate acquaintance with them—what are all these but a declaration of war against the empire of righteousness, and an attempt to place a diabolical power on the throne of the only Good? But when we look at the matter in this light, we see that the enmity against God is not to be measured by the grade of criminality in the judgment of human law. What, owing to our imperfect modes of decision, we are obliged to treat as moral differences are often only differences in culture, or prudence, or good taste. Perhaps the Pharisee who was so certain that Jesus could not be a prophet because he allowed himself to be touched by a sinful woman, was not an enemy of God, but at all events he loved him less than the despised sinner who bathed with grateful tears the feet of him who had awakened a sense of Divine pity in her heart. And so it may be that there are many who present a fair appearance to the eye of the world, and would on no account violate any of the conventional proprieties, but whose affections and purposes lie outside the Divine order, and who thus belonging to an alien realm, and retarding the advent of the kingdom of God, are in need of reconciliation.

But must we not go further, and say that, if we faithfully search our own hearts, there are few of us who will not discover some root of enmity? We may be sincerely anxious to do the will of God, and sometimes even delight in his law, and yet at other times be swept away as by some hostile power, and find our inward peace rudely violated by passions that clamour for an unlawful mastery. Then, for the moment at least, we resent the pressure of a higher authority, and are offended at the steadfast laws of the universe, which will not bend before our capricious desires; and to our dismay we become conscious that we are on the side of the enemies of God. Or possibly we may go to our duties, admitting indeed their rightful claim over us, and determined to fulfil them, but with our hearts dry and bitter, and with none of the glad alacrity of love. This is not the spirit of a friend of God, who is delighted to fight on his side, and to endure hardness for his sake; rather is it the spirit of a slave, who yields to superior force, and longing to escape from daily drudgery, cherishes a secret enmity against the taskmaster who drives him. Or, again, we may be discontented with our inevitable lot, and harbour sullen thoughts, not directly and consciously against God, for we shrink from that, but against arrangements which are a portion of his providence. And this discontent may show itself either in a permanently wrong temper towards the general plan of our lives, or in a disposition to grumble at the trivial incidents of the fleeting moment. In large things we may put forth our strength to endure, and yet fall miserably before little frets and worries that ought to find no access to him whose mind is staid on God. But

whether they be small or great, what at bottom are all the anxiety and impatience and wounded self-love, which add so terribly to the sum of human unhappiness but enmity against him who has placed us here to bear the discipline of conflict, and to attain, through humility and faith the calmness of a victorious strength ?

We may all, then, find something in our own experience to give point to the Apostle's words, and enable us to understand the significance of his appeal. And this experience of the working of sin in ourselves will supply the answer to the question, what is it to be reconciled ?

To be reconciled is to lay aside our enmity ; to acquiesce in the Divine ways, and feel that they are best ; no longer to shun or to dread God as an enemy, but to seek him and love him as a friend. Christianity, then, would reconcile the world to God by destroying man's enmity. Moving among the inner springs of our nature it would not proceed by the harsh methods of repression, but, allowing to all their rightful place in the economy of life, it would so purify and arrange them in fitting subordination as to make them expressive of the Divine order and beauty. Addressing itself to the will, it would not crush it by fear, leaving it in secret rebellion against him who has equally the right and the power to rule, but would seek to bring its preferences into coincidence with those of God, and so substitute for the obedience of a servant the free co-operation of a son. Thus it would blend the human and the Divine, no longer presenting them merely in the hard contrast of finite and infinite, and treating them as opposite even when they are not hostile, but making the heart of

man a throne for the Spirit of God, and his will participant in the loving purpose which controls the universe. Man ideally is born of God, and therefore sharer of the Divine nature. Christianity would make this birth a reality; and having abolished all man's alienation from the life of God would consecrate the human form as a home for the eternal word of truth and righteousness.

Nevertheless, reconciliation does not imply sinlessness, or who among men could be said to be reconciled? It does, however, imply the endeavour to be sinless; and to be without sin must be its complete and final result. Here we must distinguish between the prevailing temper of the mind and those transient outbursts of a lower mood which come, like a shock of earthquake or a devastating flood, to destroy our sense of security, and keep us humble before God. In the larger sense we may have been reconciled, and have owned the call of God in our conscience, and felt the constant nearness of that Love which has been patiently waiting at our side through all our time of ignorance and carelessness, and yet now and again the old untamed nature may assert its force, and rudely violate our peace. But then we recognize our own foe in the foe of God, and we seek our Father's face with the sorrow of an erring child for having grieved his Spirit; and, folded in his sympathy and forgiveness, we learn more deeply that our true life is in him. It is in this way that our faith is counted for righteousness, and the lowly offering of our heart's devotion, which is only the germ and promise of a consecrated life, is accepted as though it were the ripened fruit of heavenly goodness. Still we must be careful

not to mistake the true character of those offences which cast us down in momentary disaster as we march along the upward way. All sin is enmity against God, and just in proportion to its extent and power alienates us from him. Thus within that larger reconciliation which determines the general tenor of our lives are many minor acts of reconciliation, when we turn with penitence and confession to him whose love we have offended. But must we not hope and believe that these will be fewer as our characters become more established, that our faith in the perfect goodness of the Divine Will will be at last complete, and the Spirit of God will flow without obstruction over our hearts, and cleanse all the hidden fountains of our lives? Then the work of reconciliation will be finished, and we shall walk in the liberty of the sons of God.

Throughout these remarks it has been assumed that it is man who must be reconciled to God, and not God to man. This is the order invariably observed in the Epistles of St. Paul, and it is not without significance. It is sometimes said that the relations of enmity and of reconciliation are necessarily mutual, and that therefore it does not matter in which direction you view them, and that, though St. Paul in fact speaks only of reconciling man to God, this implies reconciling God to man, and, as it is God, who has been justly offended with man's perversity, the latter is the more proper and reasonable expression. This is a specious, if not very reverent, correction of the Apostle's imperfect language, and derives an apparent support from our experiences on the low level of human animosities, where one has seldom any marked superiority over the other in magnani-

mity and justice, and still more rarely in the possession of a love that has been cleansed from all selfish considerations. But when we carry the case up into the Divine realm, the two phrases become expressive of lines of thought which are diametrically opposed to one another. When we speak of reconciling man to God, we imply that man must change, laying aside his opposition to the Divine Will and his enmity against goodness, and coming to recognize in God the supreme Friend of the soul, whose love abides unchangeably even as the father in the parable never ceased to love his son, though that son scorned the home of his childhood, and wasted his substance in riotous living. But when we speak of reconciling God to man, we imply that God must change, laying aside his enmity against sin, and, however we may try to disguise it in a cloud of words, being brought to approve, or at least to act as though he approved, of things of which formerly he disapproved, and to love beings who are no more lovable than they were when he regarded them with aversion, and threatened them with his vengeance. Thus this doctrine denies in effect either the steadfast holiness of God or the supreme and unalterable evil of sin, and offers husks to the famished soul instead of the bread of life; for it represents God's just judgment as bought off, and man as exempted from the penalty which he still deserves, though every true-hearted man longs for deliverance from sin, and would welcome the penalty which was needed for his purification.

Let us settle it in our minds that God cannot be reconciled to sin; else would he cease to be the Holy One. It is the vainest of all vain imagina-

tions to suppose that righteousness can ever acquiesce in iniquity, love in hatred, purity in impurity. Righteousness, love, and purity belong to the eternal Spirit, and cannot abdicate their sovereignty; their opposites are but the empty struggles of a vanishing egotism, and only through their unconditional surrender can we enjoy the peace of him who is at one with God. The quietness of a dead conscience is not peace, but only shows how far we have removed from God, and hardened ourselves against the healing pains of his remonstrance. Yet, while it is impossible for God to be reconciled to sin, he loves the sinner, and would reconcile him to himself. With us, till we have entered into the mystery of Christian love, it is not so. We blend personal offence with our hatred of wrongdoing, and look with anger or loathing on the ugly ruin where sin has too manifestly made its foul abode. But God stands among the thorns and briars that choke the entrance to the heart, and knocks, if haply he may gain admittance, and plead with the stubborn will to lay aside its enmity, to leave the rank and squalid wilderness, and come to the fair paradise where his children walk in godly fellowship with him and with one another.

If we ask in what way Christianity endeavours to reconcile men to God, we may well hesitate before trying to lay down any definite doctrine. Schemes of salvation may serve to petrify, and so give permanence to, some forms of truth; but they are more adapted to the rigid compartments of a theological system than to the multifarious movements of our spiritual relations. God is not baffled because the appeal which has reached and

stirred the soul of one finds no response in another; for on the thousand strings of the human heart the great musician may play in many ways, and draw forth sweet melody; and surely the strain of devout thankfulness and love is not less heavenly because, while we can hear the delicate modulations, we cannot trace the path of the Spirit that strikes the hidden chords.

Christianity, however, while sympathizing with all means by which man may be brought nearer to God, has its own peculiar method of reconciliation.

First, Christ brought home to men with unexampled clearness the reality and beauty of a life in harmony with God. We need not go into details, to some of which it is possible for objectors to take exception. We may rely upon the verdict of history, and the impression which the New Testament as a whole makes upon the mind. It brings before us a soul that was at one with God, and imprinted this ideal of life upon the world. We come to see and understand God's will concerning us, feel in our own breasts the aspirations of that ship of which we had been unconscious, and to acknowledge that the heavenly Father is the end, as he is the source, of our being. If we have ears to hear, Christ calls us to the communion in which he himself dwells, and shows us how friendship with God is the secret of eternal peace. Thus to see and know that the will of the Holy One is absolutely good, and that a life in conformity with that will is the highest which men or angels can attain, is the first step towards reconciliation.

But, secondly, there is a power mightier than knowledge. Knowledge may pass away, and fade out of the memory, or its sublime visions may

remain cold and impalpable while passion flings its glowing pleasures at our feet, or with tight embrace drags us whither we would not. What power will go down into the deep, and break the spell of passion, and breathe a Divine order over our desires and impulses? It is love, love to him who has first loved us, and who, when we no longer resist, gives us of his own Spirit. Christ was more than a noble example who points the way heavenward for those who choose to follow him. This indeed he was, if at least we consider the example as residing not in the outward moulding of his life, but in the spirit which lay at its centre. But an example appeals only to our admiration, and leaves our love untouched; and if we pause in this view, we fail to give any adequate response to the Christian feeling, and deprive the gospel of its most moving power. We may admire that which transcends our capacity for imitation, and an example which is too far above us may depress rather than exalt. It is the love of Christ that constrains men. In his history he does not appear before us living in a sublime solitude, and enshrining within himself a distant and cold ideal. But he is down among the sinful and the lost, teaching them, pleading with them, suffering for them, and showing a sympathy and love so strange, so sweet, so thrilling, that hearts given over to despair beat with new hope, and feel as though the Divine life had chosen them, and gathered them up into itself. This impression, so powerful while, as a minister of love, he went about doing good, was deepened, as in every case of martyrdom, by that torturing death in which, in order to reconcile the world to God, he gave all that he could—himself.

And so, when he was gone, his memory lingered as a vision of heavenly peace. It seemed as though God had besought men through him; for this wondrous graciousness and beauty, this entreating, suffering love, must have come straight from the Father in whose name he spoke. It is here that the great moral power of Christianity resides. It is a seeking of the lower by the higher. It is a coming down of the Divine holiness among sinful men, in order to win them and inspire them. It is an offering of love to the soul, wakening that answering love which glows into the consciousness of sonship, and is the sustaining power of spiritual life.

Before leaving this subject we may observe that a clear apprehension of the view here set forth will save us from many perplexities amid the changing thought of the present day. If Christianity addressed itself primarily to the intellect, and its object were to reveal certain facts or truths which could not be otherwise known, and to preserve the record of these in writings possessed of miraculous authority, and thereby to save men from error and establish an orthodoxy, its claims to the acceptance of the modern world would, to say the least, be trembling in the balance; and he who accepts this view of Christianity is liable to continual shocks as the forms of mediæval thought successively dissolve in the light of our recent knowledge. But if the purpose of Christ's ministry was not to correct the mistaken, but to save the sinful, then the advance of learning and the vicissitudes of thought may enlarge and purify our conception of this purpose, and suggest new conditions for promoting it, but can never conflict with or destroy it. He who has this conception of Christ's object will

escape the alarm and uneasiness which are so apt to beset the mind when radical changes of religious belief are taking place. He will discover friends where others can see only foes, and will be able to enter into brotherly co-operation with all who are sincerely endeavouring to elevate human character, and are working towards a nobler ideal of social and international life. He will perceive that some of the most characteristic tendencies of the present age, however they may be opposed to the forms in which the Christian effort first expressed itself, are in reality legitimate developments of that effort, and, instead of being attacks on the spirit of Christ, are but the strugglings of that spirit to clothe itself in a finer organism.

### CHAPTER III

#### 'NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL'

TO us, as we look back on the strenuous and devoted life of the Apostle Paul, and on the great results of his labours, it may appear a very superfluous declaration on his part that he was not ashamed of the gospel. Besides, what was there to be ashamed of? Should not we feel more tempted to be ashamed if we rejected the gospel, and were wholly unable to appreciate its message of righteousness and love? To answer these questions we must go back in imagination to the time when Paul was writing his Epistle to the Romans.

For some years he had been wishing to visit Rome, but had been prevented from doing so by the variety of his engagements in the eastern parts of the empire. And now there was one more delay. He was about to enter on a dangerous mission, and carry to Jerusalem a contribution from the Gentile Christians to the poor who belonged to the mother church among the Jews; and after that, if he came safely through the perils that were before him, he hoped to turn his face to the west, and enjoy a season of spiritual rest in communion with the disciples in Rome. Now, it

is possible that some captious members of the church in Rome may have thought that these repeated delays might have been avoided, and that Paul was in reality ashamed to come and preach the gospel amid the pride and wealth, the culture and wickedness of Rome. That there was much at that time to tempt one to be ashamed we may gather from the saying of Christ himself, 'Who-soever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man also will be ashamed of him, when he shall come in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.'

Even some thirty years after these words were spoken Christianity was still a small and struggling movement. Men of wealth and refinement looked upon it with supercilious contempt as the vapouring of a few fanatical fools. Even its great leader had done nothing to astonish the world, and to the wiseacres of the day he was only an illiterate and troublesome peasant, who had been very properly executed by Pilate. Paul himself was a learned man in his way; but he belonged to a despised and hated race; and even his own people could not put up with him, but treated him as a blasphemous agitator. At best he seemed to be a wild visionary, talking about the approaching end of the world, and saying that a crucified man was coming from heaven to judge it. And was he forsooth wanting to visit Rome, and, like other bringers of strange and unhallowed religions, to air oriental nonsense in the very centre of imperial pomp and power? Well might the little Jew, with his feeble presence and contemptible speech, be ashamed to show himself in the midst of Roman majesty, and to

mock at the venerable gods whose favour had carried the victorious eagles far and wide over the nations of the world.

It is not only of their evil deeds that men are ashamed, but sometimes of the good which separates them from their baser fellows, whose derision or hatred they dread. But Paul was not ashamed; for he believed that the seer of visions, and the dreamer of great dreams, might do more for the progress of mankind than triumphant generals, fresh from fields of carnage, or ambitious statesmen, with their worldly wisdom. A Divine power had entered into his soul which he felt to be higher and grander than all the wisdom that philosophy could teach, and mightier to cleanse the poisoned fountains of human life than the holiest laws which the strongest government could impose. Let us glance, then, in detail at the reasons which he himself gives for not being ashamed of the gospel.

The end which the gospel sought to accomplish was salvation. In the idea of salvation we may generally distinguish two elements, that which is real and permanent, and that which is picturesque and imaginative, and therefore assumes changing forms according to the varying enlightenment of successive ages. The one has its seat in the depths of individual character; the other presents visions of the future destinies of the race.

The first generation of Christians were looking forward with ardent hope to the return of Christ, who was expected to judge the world, and establish his Messianic reign. Those who proved worthy to be admitted to his kingdom would be saved, while the unbelieving and godless would be left

to perish beneath the wrath that could no longer endure the wickedness of men. This expectation was not fulfilled; the fathers fell asleep, and the world went on in the old routine. Thus the pictorial element in the early idea of Christian salvation faded away; and when we reflect on the ardour and confidence of this delusive hope, we can scarcely help wondering that Christianity survived so great a disappointment; and the fact that it did so shows in a remarkable way that there was in it a force of spiritual vitality, and a profound assurance of salvation in Christian experience, which no changes in the forms of the imagination or in the conceptions of the understanding could destroy.

Behind all the picturesque imagery in which faith from time to time expresses itself is the deep and lasting need of the soul for salvation from its own inherent evils; and although it cannot be denied that Paul's mind was deeply imbued with that part of the Messianic belief which was among the things destined to pass away, we should do him a great injustice if we did not recognize his firm grasp of the permanent spiritual principle which expressed itself in that transient form. Salvation meant first and always deliverance from the power of sin, and the acquisition of true righteousness. In the passage under review this alone is considered.<sup>1</sup> Their failure to produce a righteous and godly society is the impeachment which he brings against heathenism and Judaism alike. Dreadful is the picture which he draws of the heathen world. Of course he is speaking of men in the mass, and we need not suppose that he

<sup>1</sup> Romans i., ii.

was blind to the virtues which remained unstained amid the general pollution, or regarded them only as splendid sins. Indeed he admits expressly that there were Gentiles who kept the moral law, and shamed the laxer morality of the Jews, and were thus entitled to 'glory and honour and peace.' But looked at in the mass, Roman society was corrupt, and there was nothing in the religion of idolatry which could redeem it from the rot of impurity and selfishness.

The case of the Jew was different; for he had a religion and a law which Paul himself believed to be Divine; and in pointing out its failure to produce a national righteousness corresponding to its professions, it must be confessed that his attack is very feeble compared with the terrible charges which he brings against heathenism. In fact the moral life of the Jews moved upon a far higher level than that of the average Greek or Roman, and it is only in the latter part of his Epistle that we gain an insight into Paul's real complaint against Judaism, namely, that the righteousness which it produced was external, and rendered men blind to real sanctity of heart which did not conform to the traditional ways. Here, too, as in the case of the Gentiles, there may have been many exceptions. But Paul speaks from his own profound experience of a sense of sin combined with an unusually strict observance of the law. He looked back upon despairing struggles and a blindness of soul which were proportioned to the zeal of his conscientiousness. In Christianity he had found light and peace, which were due to a new principle of righteousness. This was true salvation, deliverance from the enemies which destroy the soul.

But we cannot confine ourselves to the simple facts of experience. The inward and abiding power of a redeemed life kindles the imagination, and the future comes before the prophetic vision with a golden glory; a new earth, with a perfected society, rises into view; and, according to our varying gifts we picture to ourselves the blessedness of a kingdom of God. But these outward things, useful symbols of the glory to be revealed, are not themselves the salvation; that lies in a soul surrendered to God, and filled with his eternal life.

Had Paul, gifted with less ideal vision, been able to look forward through the centuries, and survey the dreary and disappointing history of Christianity, his heart must have been filled with at least a momentary despair. After a period when, as a persecuted sect, it had cherished a holy and beautiful life, he would have seen the church degraded into an imperial institution, succumbing to all the temptations over which Christ had triumphed, forcing its opinions on the world at the point of the sword, and borrowing the instruments of hell for the extirpation of what it regarded as heresy. He would have noticed that every vice which he so unsparingly exposes as the decisive condemnation of heathenism might be found in the great Christian cities, and might have wept tears of indignant sorrow over the scandal and horror of the night-side of rich and boastful London. He would have seen a great multitude every year sinking down into a dishonoured grave through the ravages of drink. He would have been appalled by the widespread worship of wealth, that vulgar passion which goes grovelling about the world with its muck rake, and proclaiming aloud the lie that

man's life consists in the abundance of the things which he possesses. And, as a result of the reign of mammon, he would have seen, amid abundant wealth, a vast amount of sordid wretchedness; he would have seen widows' houses devoured by fraudulent speculators; he would have seen high and low wrecked or driven into criminal courses by the rage for gambling. And, taking a wider look, he would have observed a vast and ruinous expenditure upon the means and the perpetration of mutual butchery, because men mistake greed for greatness, and no nation can trust the honour and justice of its neighbours. Still the creation groans and travails; and one wonders whether our modern civilization, of which we talk so exceeding proudly, is to go the way of Egypt, and Babylon, and Assyria, and Greece, and Rome. Yes, we need a new reformation if Christendom is to be saved; not the mere reformation of doctrinal opinions, a matter of very subordinate importance, but a fresh outpouring of the Spirit, a fresh kindling of Divine fire in the heart.

But if the Apostle did not despair then, why should we despair now? When Israel, like Christendom, had proved false to its high destiny, the Divine response was able to say, 'I have left me seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.' In Christendom there are far more than seven thousand who are guided by the spirit of Christ; and all through the ages, amid the turbulence and faction and brutality and superstition of professing Christians, there has been a line of genuine saints, and the hidden life of souls in communion with God has never perished from the world. We may ponder for our comfort the

great lesson of the Teacher, that the kingdom of God is like a concealed leaven, which requires time to permeate the reluctant mass, or like a seed buried in the ground, which does not spring instantaneously into a tree, but follows its own orderly development; and we may trust that there is in society now a power for good which was not present in the ancient civilizations and, however it may seem to be stifled under the weight of material and sensuous grandeur, it is still working as a redemptive agency, and preserving many a plot in holiness amid the surrounding corruption, and filling many a heart with a diviner life than was known to the heathen world of old.

This may help us to find an answer to a problem which sometimes proves so perplexing and oppressive—why has Christianity been, comparatively speaking, such a failure? Why, after its great conquests, has it now for many centuries made so little progress in the world? And why are the mass of Christians so little influenced by the religion they profess?

We may find the answer in the perfection of the religion, in its lofty spirituality, in the high demands which it makes on the individual conscience, and in its reliance on the free determination of the individual judgment, under the guidance of the Spirit of God. It is a religion which has left childish things behind, and is suited only to the mature manhood of our race. As Paul teaches, when we were children we were necessarily governed by the definite forms and precepts of a law; we were subject to sacred times and sacred places, and when we had conformed to the prescribed rules we had satisfied the requirements of

religion. But under Christianity all times and places have become sacred. It is not that the Sabbath has been made secular, and Jerusalem or Gerizim disenchanting of the presence of God; but all time and space are filled with the presence of the Holy One, the universe has become his transparent vesture, and, wherever we may be, the place whereon we stand is holy ground. And so we are called to a worship, not of forms and symbols, but of spirit and truth, and to a life, not of special doings and abstentions, but freely expressive of the spirit of Divine sonship.

Now, to the immature man this is too vague. He needs definite direction, and seeks satisfaction for his religious instincts in a prescribed ceremonial and a few simple and easily understood commandments. Paul was astonished that the Galatians could fall away from his spiritual teachings. But though grieved, he need not have been astonished; for men cannot leap in a moment from childhood into manhood. It was inevitable that Christianity in the slow unfolding of its Divine power in the world, should become mingled with the thoughts and institutions belonging to a lower stage of religion, and should require long ages before it could permeate the mass of men with its own spiritual ideals. Here, then, we see a source of comparative failure. It is far easier for the immature man to observe a clear and definite rule, which allows him to feel that the obligations of religion have been discharged when he has shown the required respect to fixed hours and consecrated buildings, and kept the elementary precepts of morality, than to live worthily in the freedom of the spirit, surrendering the whole of

life to the dominion of purity and love, and allowing these great principles to bear their spontaneous fruit, varying according to the nature of the mind in which they are planted and the circumstances by which they are surrounded. Hence it is that while Christianity has appealed to the highest class of minds, and has produced many of the noblest saints that the world has known, it has had multitudes of nominal adherents who have never felt its real power or entered into its interior life.

To those, however, who have apprehended it, it is a power of God unto *salvation*. This is a word of profound meaning, and one with which we cannot dispense. The world is afflicted with innumerable ills from which it needs to be saved, and Christianity comes with promises of salvation. The great ills from which men are suffering are spiritual, or at least have their source in spiritual malady; and Christianity would bring a divine healing to this malady of the soul, and redeem society from its woes through the purification of individual character. Its grand ideal of love in holy communion with God wakens in us the sense of sin, and makes us cry out for redemption. We can no longer be satisfied with an outward righteousness, while within there is a deep-seated estrangement from that perfect harmony with God which is the prize of our high calling. The light of divine sonship has streamed in upon the soul while we were feeding among the swine, and a great yearning for our Father's home has been awakened within us. Famished and feeble, we pray for deliverance; and lo! a divine strength comes down upon the heart. The desires that misled us die away, and heavenly love glows with

an aspiring flame. Henceforth the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus is the rule of conduct, and we feel him to be in the highest sense a Saviour, while all in our thoughts and feelings that is unworthy of him sinks away abashed, and he leads us towards his own spirit of purity and peace.

We must now reflect upon the statement which Paul, reasoning from his own experience, makes of the means whereby the salvation was accomplished.

In the gospel, he says, God's righteousness is being revealed. We must observe the present tense, the force of which is hardly expressed with sufficient clearness by the translation 'is revealed.' The Greek word points to a continual process, a gradual unveiling of something to the spiritual eye, as men became qualified to receive it. Accordingly it cannot refer to the preternatural announcement of some dogma, made once for all; for this would be described as having been, not as being, revealed. To any ordinary reader, indeed, it might seem plain that Paul is not referring here to the communication of dogmas which are inaccessible to the natural reason; for the thing revealed is described as 'the righteousness of God.' One's first impression in reading these words is that Paul's central idea of the Christian revelation is that it is a disclosure of the character of God, an unveiling to human apprehension of that righteousness which alone is Divine and eternal. But the ingenuity of theologians is boundless, and they have diligently set themselves to empty this passage of a meaning which is equally simple and sublime, and to turn our eyes from the light which streams from the opened heavens to the contemplation of a hard and unspiritual doctrine. A long and intricate

subject of controversy is thus presented, which is too technical for the present work; and we must be content with meditating on what appear to a simple reader to be the leading ideas of the passage.

If we inquire into the nature of righteousness, we meet with two very different conceptions. It may be regarded as the conformity of our actions to the moral law; and when we look round upon society, this is necessarily the chief criterion which we apply. A man who does what is right, and abstains from what is wrong, is properly described as a righteous man. But when we retire into the quiet retreats of conscience, and commune with our own souls, we may feel that this definition is profoundly unsatisfactory. The moral law may present itself as only the temporal and outward expression of an eternal righteousness, to which we must have an inward and not merely an outward conformity. The very strength of our sense of duty may make us aware how little of this eternal righteousness abides within us; for the fulfilment of duty is a hard struggle, and our virtuous life attests rather the energy of our will than the purity of our heart.

This is the source of the inward struggle of which Paul gives us such a vivid account. He was a Pharisee of the Pharisees, with an overwhelming sense of the obligations of the law, making clean the outside of the cup and platter; and yet the more eagerly he pressed along the path of obedience, the more fiercely the fiends of temptation seemed to assail him, and the very commandment which was designed to repress corrupt desires startled sin from its sleep, and gave it its opportunity. By this way, then, harmony with God

and peace of mind could not be attained. The man who lived in all good conscience before his fellow men was torn with conflicting passions, and haunted by a sense of sin which gave him no rest. There was no remedy unless God's own righteousness came down, and took up its abode within, a Spirit of Love, shed abroad in the heart, and spontaneously offering far more than the law demanded, a Spirit of Holiness, lifting the mind to those pure and serene heights where base desire cannot come.

Now, Paul says this righteousness was being revealed. Men were invited, not to accept some metaphysical dogma, but to gaze into the unveiled secrets of the Spirit, and behold with direct intuition the eternal nature of righteousness. We are not told in the passage we are considering how the revelation was made, except that it was in the gospel, or good news, a term which briefly sums up the whole of the Christian message. But Paul's view is readily gathered from many other parts of his writings, and on this point he uses different language, he is in substance in accord with John.

The revelation, then, was in the first instance made in Jesus Christ. With him a new ideal of life entered into the world. It may be quite true that there is no formula in which we can sum up the nature of this life so as to exhibit its perfect originality. Many men before Jesus had been pious and kind and unselfish, and gone about doing good; and nevertheless the personality of Jesus, viewed as a whole, made an impression of simple and balanced grandeur which was wholly unique in the experience of his disciples. They saw into hitherto unopened depths in the human spirit and beheld it in such closeness of communion with

God that the veil before the holy of holies seemed to have been rent away, and the very righteousness of God to have come down and made its tabernacle with men. Here was one who was not merely a prophet, but himself enshrined the Word which prophets had spoken. Here was manifested, not one of the changing moods of human thought and endeavour, but the eternal life, the life of God abiding in the heart of man.

In this way, then, as Paul says in a later passage, God's righteousness had been made manifest. The essence of this righteousness was love; and it was chiefly through the cross, interpreted by all that had gone before, that the depth of this love was brought to light, and that one Spirit revealed by which Jew and Gentile alike had access to the Father, and were constituted his children. Hence it was that, as we have seen, the revelation was continuous. The manifested life was not confined to him in whom it first appeared; but from him, as a quickening spirit, it passed on to others, spreading like a Divine fire from heart to heart.

When the Epistle to the Romans was written, there were a number of little Christian societies dotted about the Roman empire; and these, in proportion to their faithfulness, were animated by the spirit of Christ. They cherished a sweet and holy life, and showed forth a Divine righteousness in the midst of the prevalent corruption. Paul speaks of them as a 'temple of God,' in which the Spirit of God dwelt. The individual members of these societies, being 'led by the Spirit of God,' were sons of God. The possession of the same mind that was in Christ was the one mark of genuine discipleship.

Here, then, was an instrument of continuous revelation. The word of the inspired preacher, telling the beautiful and pathetic story of the Master's life and death, with the added affirmation that the death of self-sacrifice had been only the entrance to a more exalted life, may have touched and kindled new hope in many a heart, and the appeal to the intellect in controversial argument may have had its place in drawing disciples within the ranks of the holy brotherhood; but the revelation was in the life, in the chastened language, in the kindly look, in the unselfish and loving deed, in the devout worship, in the thousand indescribable expressions of the new spirit, which bound the brethren in a sacred fellowship with one another and with God. Thus the righteousness of God, the original and creative source of all just laws, that which abides and changes not amid the conventional rules of varying times and states, was being made manifest, and every Christian society was a centre of revealing light.

This, then, is the method of Christian revelation. From that time till now the life has been transmitted from soul to soul; and ever and anon, as Christendom has appeared to be sinking into worldliness and corruption, some saint, with transcendent gifts, has appeared, and made the righteousness of God glow with a concentrated brilliance in the surrounding darkness. But while in this way the life has never been allowed to perish, and has mingled with the most deplorable departures from the primitive Christian ideals, Christendom as a whole has long ceased to manifest the righteousness of God, and to appeal to the world by the majesty of its justice, the holy simplicity of its love, and

the faith which lifts it above the mean ambitions, the petty jealousies, and the cruel covetousness of our earthly nature. In the glowing vision of Paul the Church was to be the body of Christ, the submissive and expressive organ of his Spirit, continually revealing the deep things of God in the only way in which they can be revealed, through consecrated souls in which the Spirit of God dwells. This life was to be all pervasive, manifesting itself not in a particular class, nor in special institutions or ceremonies, but in every disciple according to his gift, and in every vocation which men must exercise in the world. The high and spotless life of the merchant or manufacturer or operative, bringing a sweet breath from heaven into the world's business and turmoil, reveals the righteousness of God. We need not a change of calling or a withdrawal from the world in order to keep us from its evil, but a surrender of soul that the Divine righteousness may come down, and make its abode with us; for so the humblest toil is glorified, and a Divine guest sits with us at every meal.

It will be observed that a revelation such as has been here described is, to the man who apprehends it, more than an intellectual light which he may follow if he so chooses. It is at the same time a source of Divine strength, 'a power of God unto salvation,' and in this respect it is contrasted with the weakness of mere law in producing genuine moral results.

The spiritual struggles of Paul, to which we must once more refer, the contention of rival principles within him, were, owing to his impassioned temperament, more vehement and less mixed than they are in men of a less ardent nature. Whatever

course he adopted, he followed it with all his energy, so that the different phases of his mind stand apart from one another, and exhibit their intrinsic character unrelieved by that mingling of different principles which we may notice in less consistent minds. As an observer of the law he was an extreme legalist, and believed that salvation was to be found only in strict adhesion to the letter of the commandments. But he could never satisfy the demands of his own conscience. There seemed to be an enemy within that dragged him down against his will from the high level of unwavering duty. And so he found that the law of God, though it placed before him the Divine standard of conduct, was too weak for the attainment of spiritual ends, and gave him no power to fulfil its own commands.

A law, if it be entirely outward, can appeal only to selfish motives, and can have no higher sanction than reward and punishment; and though in this way the manners of a people may be trained, and the grossest manifestations of wickedness prevented, the appeal to selfishness can never destroy selfishness, or kill the roots of sin within the heart. The inward law of duty, however, is far higher; for it appeals to our sense of right, and places before us what we feel to be superior to all our selfish ends. It was probably in this form that the law, though embodied in an outward code, presented itself in the main to the mind of Paul; for nothing lower than this could create the consciousness of moral weakness and spiritual unrest from which he suffered. The sense of duty, bound by the obligations of a universally acknowledged law, places before us the Divine standard of conduct, awful in its holiness and perfection, and demanding com-

plete submission, while presenting as its highest sanction the inward certainty of its absolute authority, and leaving it entirely to our own feeble will to scale the heavens, and trample on the fiends that attempt to bar our way. Hence the haunting sense of sin, because we continually come short of the glory of God, and, though we delight in his law according to the inward man, our earthly part drags us down, and the fair image of unbroken duty lies in shattered fragments around us.

In Christianity, however, Paul obtained the needed strength. In seeing the new principle of life revealed in Christ he found it already operative in himself. He had not gained it by any efforts of his own; indeed his efforts had been fiercely exerted against it. An appeal of Divine and forgiving love had come to him, and at the same time had flooded his heart with an answering love, and he now felt within himself, as an impelling power, that righteousness of God which he had vainly striven to fulfil. The law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus made him free from the law of sin and death. The fullness of love in Christ was a kindling energy which lighted a flame of love in disciples' hearts. Thus the Divine life spread from soul to soul, and believers were conscious of a force within which transfigured them into the image of him whom they loved. The old selfish cravings, which had fought against the higher knowledge of the spirit, were dead, and troubled them no more; and a holy peace abode within their hearts, so lately torn with conflict. Now they knew that the Spirit of God dwelt in them, and bestowed upon them the dignity of Divine sonship. And this power was made perfect in conscious weakness.

It retreated before the self-assertiveness and boasting of unspiritual men, and came to him who, knowing his own feebleness and blindness, threw himself on the Divine grace, and sought in prayer the inflowing of the Spirit.

Nevertheless, this perfect indwelling of God in man and man in God, rendering all our outward activity a spontaneous expression of the Divine force within, was, even to Paul, an ideal state, and did not wholly supersede the efforts of the will. He had received the earnest of the Spirit; but he still waited for a glory to be revealed. The law of duty remains, though our attitude towards it is changed; and we must never forget the clear light which it holds before us, and the appeal which it makes to our faithfulness. If we live in the Spirit, still we must exercise our will in order to walk in the Spirit. But we can no longer view it as a hard taskmaster. We fulfil its behests as a humble offering of love to him who has loved us, and we find in prayer the strength and renewal which enable us to be true and steadfast. And if at times we must still groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, still we remain folded in the Divine Love; the righteousness of God dwells within us and claims us as its own, and his peace comes, and lulls our storm-driven hearts to rest.

This power of God unto salvation comes to every one who has faith. The objects of faith are not defined; but they naturally include all that is implied in the immediate context: God, the giver of life; Christ, the revealer; and the divinely given righteousness. Faith, however, with Paul, is not a mere belief of the understanding, which can be thrown into intelligible propositions, and

furnished with suitable proofs, can be taught as a lesson to others; and accordingly he repeatedly uses the word without assigning to it any object. It is an inward principle of life, the spiritual power whereby we apprehend spiritual things. Through faith we open the soul towards God, and receive the gifts of the Spirit, and rest with assured conviction in the intimations of that Spirit. Faith in Christ is not a disputable belief that he was this or that, but a confident perception of the divinity of his love, of the righteousness of God which shone forth in his words and deeds. It is through this spiritual apprehension that the new life comes. It grows from faith to faith with ever enlarging vision, from the first deep realization of the presence of God up to the rapt gaze of the perfected saint who is conscious only of the plenitude of the Divine Spirit. Through faith we lift our hearts in prayer, and enter into that high communion which is the true life of man. Through faith we dwell upon the great offering of love, till love enters our own souls, and selfish cares, angry and unforgiving passions, jealous ambitions, and worldly greed vanish like phantoms of the night, and leave us strong and calm under the touch of God.

But faith is itself a Divine gift. We cannot create it; and one of the saddest and most difficult problems of our time is afforded by the decay of faith. We cannot tell why God seems to hide himself from so many of his children; but we may trust that he is preparing the way for some fuller manifestation of the Spirit, and that his righteousness will again break forth as a mighty power for the healing of the nations. Meanwhile it remains for

us to be true to the light which he has given, and to surrender ourselves more and more completely to the Divine power that works within us, so that in our humble sphere we may be revealers of the righteousness of God, and bear a faithful witness to the supremacy of that holy Love, which we have seen and known, and which is the bond of perfectness, the union of earth and heaven, of man and God.

#### CHAPTER IV

### SALVATION BY GRACE

IN the Epistle to the Ephesians it is written, 'By grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, that no man should glory.'<sup>1</sup> But in that to the Philippians is the exhortation 'Work out your own salvation.'<sup>2</sup> And not only do the Epistles generally abound in exhortations, which imply dependence on the free action of the will, but it is expressly asserted that 'God will render to every man according to his works,'<sup>3</sup> and that each man will 'receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad';<sup>4</sup> and the Galatians are warned that 'God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.'<sup>5</sup> At first sight these passages seem to have their source in contradictory beliefs. To effect a reconciliation between these two views has always been regarded as a difficult theological problem; and so little are men able to unite in their own minds such diverse tendencies of thought that they are apt to fall into

<sup>1</sup> Eph. ii. 8, 9.      <sup>2</sup> Philipp. ii. 12.      <sup>3</sup> Rom. ii. 6.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. v. 10.      <sup>5</sup> Gal. vi. 7.

of righteousness and truth. The Ephesians were told, not that they would be saved, but that they had been saved, and therefore the reference is to a past event. Through an unexpected revelation of God's righteousness and love they had passed into a nobler life, and escaped from the thralldom of idolatry and immorality. To them the coming of this new life was a pure act of grace. Does this particular instance throw any light on more ordinary experience?

In the formation of a perfect character we may notice two distinct elements.

First, there is fidelity. By fidelity is meant steadfast adhesion to the highest known principles. If a man possesses this quality, we feel that he is eminently trustworthy. He may be mistaken in his judgment, narrow in his views, and dull in his sympathies; but as soon as a duty lies clearly before him, we are certain that he will not abandon it. What he believes he ought to do he will do, though he may have to take up his cross on the rough and toilsome way. Without this quality, on the other hand, a man may have acute judgment, great capacity, and lively sympathies; yet, however brilliant may be his talent, we dare not trust him unless he regulates his conduct by a sense of duty. Before we entrust one with any important engagement, we ask not only what he can do, but what he *will* do; and if we know that he prefers self-interest to the law of right, we shun him as one who would make a wicked and faithless servant. Now this fidelity, we feel, depends upon the man himself. It is for this that we hold him responsible. We do not blame him because his talents are small, but because such as they are, he

has perverted them to what he knew to be wrong ends. Here, then, is the invariable condition to be fulfilled on the side of man. Here is that wonderful power of free will, which seems to place so much at our own disposal. Standing as we do between good and evil, looking up into eternal light and down into impenetrable darkness, we may choose between them. By fidelity we may follow the good, the true, and the beautiful, till they come and make their abode with us. By unfaithfulness we may enclose ourselves more and more tightly in the prison of our self-will, till the angels of God's grace fly from our desolate souls, and leave us to pursue the false glare which lures us to destruction. From this condition we cannot escape, and no decree of grace could relieve us of our responsibility except by depriving us of our free agency, and making us, like the brutes or the winds, the passive instruments of Divine power. We see, then, abundant room for the exhortation to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.

But this does not constitute the whole case. The will must have a field for its exercise. Hitherto we have recognized only a power of choice; and for such a power to exert itself an alternative must be presented. At least two courses, either of which we are capable of pursuing, must lie open to us before we can exercise this power. Whence, then, comes the alternative? Is it of our own creation? Do we determine the limits of our own capability? Are we the authors of our knowledge of right and wrong? Are we the parents of that Spirit which brings us into conscious relation with God? Clearly not. God might have made us

capable of only those motives which we call lower in contrast with those purer desires which he has mercifully allowed to compete for our allegiance. He might have framed us so dull of soul that no thought of himself would ever plead with us, and no worship ever lift us above the world's meaner interests. It is God who presents the problems which constitute our moral probation; and if these problems are high in character, and, when faithfully accepted, serve to unfold the powers of an immortal spirit, to God alone is our gratitude due. Every blessed feeling of peace and trust and devotion is his gift. No work, however eager, can create these flowers of a spirit watered by Divine grace. And we may not boast; for alas! our unfaithfulness has often sullied heaven's fairest plants, while our perfect fidelity could but leave them in their native loveliness.

We see, then, that while fidelity depends upon man, and the power of free choice constitutes the ground of his responsibility, all that we may term, in contrast, beauty, elevation, spirituality of character depend upon God, and are derived from him alone. In vain we might sullenly beat the round of our proscribed duties; in vain we might proudly trust in the strength of our own arm, and refuse to bend before the allurements of temptation; if God did not awaken new emotions in the heart, and present new visions to the soul, we should make no progress, but, like a caged beast, pace up and down our little path chafing for ever against the same bars, and feeling for ever the hunger of the same temptation. There is a salvation which consists not so much in a change of will as in a change of heart. Paul lived in all good

conscience when he madly persecuted the Christians, and thought that God was a God of the Jews only. His salvation consisted, not in his becoming faithful, but in the infusion of higher affections, holier thoughts, juster views, and larger sympathies, or, in his own language, the revealing of the Son of God within him. And so it may be with us. We may be men of duty, and it is well. But if we boast, as though this were the whole glory of man, and refuse to open our eyes heavenward, that God may enrich us with treasures which only the spirit can know, we may after all be poor, hard, barren, and need some great convulsion to reveal to us our own insignificance, and our dependence upon God for that robe of love and holiness without which none can stand in his presence. But if, on the other hand, while we keep our eye open and our hand ready for every new duty, we feel that this is not the whole of human life, but that God has called us to be his children, and to receive of that eternal life which is with him, then we shall seek in prayer for a light and strength and sanctity which we could not create; and if new truths are revealed within us, and new aspirations begin to glow and new emotions to throb in our hearts, we shall bow in adoration, and confess 'by grace we have been saved, and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God.'

It appears, then, that while man is responsible for his free power of choice, God is the source of our highest blessings, and our salvation, in all the richness and depth of its meaning, is from him. A further thought demands an instant's attention. Faith is the channel in us through which these blessings come. We could not seek after God, or

breathe a prayer, or yield to an aspiration, unless we believed in One higher than ourselves. To rest in God with surrendered heart, and to love him as the Lord of Life, who can quicken the dead and justify the ungodly, is the apostolic idea of faith. Let this exist in all its power, and then man becomes a son of the heavenly Father, and the angels of God ascend and descend upon him. Let its light be wholly quenched, and then the spring of progress is gone, we become companions of despair, and stretch forth groping hands, like travellers on a starless night: And whence comes faith? Obedience may be the condition of its increase, but is not its creator. It too, this primal power, without which all spiritual life were impossible, this too is the gift of God. 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God!' How his love surrounds us, and his goodness surpasses our thought! Let no man boast in his presence. Without him we are nothing; for 'of him, and through him, and to him, are all things,' and by his grace we have been saved.

We cannot leave this subject without remarking that the saving grace came to Paul through Jesus Christ, and that, as in the case of all martyrdoms, the closing scenes stood forth most prominently in the memory, and, while illumining the meaning, obscured the details of that life of love of which the death on the cross was the most pathetic expression. It is in the martyr death that the powers of good and ill are seen in their darkest contrast, and that the latter excites the keenest horror, the former the most reverent admiration. So Paul looked back to the cross as summing up the whole of that life which made such a pene-

trating appeal to those who were groping in the dark for a diviner life. Here was the act of grace that wrought a change in the deepest recesses of Paul's soul, and turned him from a persecuting bigot into a Christian Apostle, himself too prepared to tread the path of martyrdom.

Can we be wholly unconscious of this grace, we whose civilization, in spite of its corruptions and horrors, bears no doubtful impress of Christ's Spirit, and under its guidance is aspiring ever to a broader justice and a purer charity, we who are so largely indebted to him for all that is best in the religious thought and the social life amid which our characters have been formed? Detach us from all personal connexion with him, and still we are borne upon that wave of progress which was first stirred by his spirit of love, and his influence breathes around us on every side. But surely there is a closer union with him than this. His life has dwelt as a quickening power within the circle of our lives, inspiring our most treasured thoughts, kindling our most fervent aspirations, unsealing the purest fountains of our faith, and creating what alone within us deserves the name of love. His sympathy has dulled the keen edge of our sorrows; in moments of severest trial his conquering might has prevailed in our souls; and in the despondency of conscious guilt he has whispered pardon and peace. Dwelling on such thoughts, we too may become alive to the appeal of his love, and own that by grace we have been saved.

## CHAPTER V

### PREDESTINATION

THE subject of predestination is closely connected with that of grace. Time was when questions of election and predestination excited the keenest interest, and men divided themselves into hostile parties according to the views which they entertained upon these high and difficult themes. But nowadays we relegate them to the limbo of barren controversies, and are rather proud of ourselves because we do not care for those lofty ranges of philosophical speculation or religious faith. Nevertheless, the old questions confront us still, only with a change of name. Instead of predestination we speak of determinism; instead of saying that man has been elected we say that he is the product of his environment; and for the will of God we substitute invariable sequence or law. But these things have passed so completely into the domain of philosophy that they excite little more than an academic interest, and men are not conscious that they affect the deepest springs of life and thought. But with some of the master spirits of our world they were indissolubly connected with religious vitality, and the soul's health was bound up with a correct view of them. We must allow the philosophers to work

out their theories along the lines of speculative thought, while we turn here to the religious aspect of the problem; and if we reach the spiritual foundations of belief, we may find that even the question of predestination pierces to the central forces of our being, and affects our entire view of life and its duties.

This question, like most questions of Christian theology, grew, and still grows, from the roots of spiritual experience. A new life had entered into the hearts of those men and women who were banding themselves together into a Church of God, and were seeking through the energy of religious conviction to change the face of society, and convert it into an organ of supreme righteousness. They were filled with an exuberant faith and hope, and it seemed as though the new heaven and new earth of prophetic vision were already revealed to their purified sight. They were consciously 'blessed with every spiritual blessing.'<sup>1</sup>

Historically these blessings had come to them through the life and teaching of Christ. But the mind could not rest in the mere external fact. It tried to connect this fact with the entire constitution of the world, and to trace it to its source in a providential Will, which had guided the destinies of men and nations, and was slowly working out some great purpose which had been formed before the foundation of the world. And besides the necessity of thought, which would pierce to the ultimate Cause of things, the spiritual blessing itself consisted chiefly in a higher conception of God and a more vivid sense of his presence; and the great Teacher himself, in whom that

<sup>1</sup> Eph. i. 3.

presence had become so manifest, always referred his own life to the life of God, and sought through prayer for his own highest wisdom in the indwelling of eternal righteousness and love. Hence the new spiritual blessings could be traced only to the 'God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ';<sup>1</sup> and therefore they were no abnormal and accidental irruption into the steadfast progress of human history, but a predestined stage in the unfolding purposes of God, who governs all things 'according to the good pleasure of his will.'<sup>2</sup>

A doctrine of predestination, then, enlarges our idea of providence till it embraces in one vast design the story of our world, and we see the intended pattern slowly shaping itself, as the ages pass, under the action of Divine and unchangeable laws. The semblance of caprice, and of occasional interferences of Divine care, in an otherwise undivine series of events, vanishes before this extended survey, and we behold the stupendous scene, of which our lives form so minute a part, moving on under the direction of an ever living, ever present Will.

Two questions immediately suggest themselves. Is the trend of things unconditional, and are we merely the conscious puppets of a force which pulls us to and fro for its own ends, and leaves not the smallest power of determining our own fate? And, however this question may be answered, we would inquire further, what is the goal towards which creation moves, heaven or hell, righteousness or sin, happiness or woe?

The most thoroughgoing answer to these questions has been formulated in the Calvinistic school

<sup>1</sup> Eph. i. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. i. 5.

of theology, and it cannot be more succinctly and accurately expressed than in the words of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, which met shortly before the middle of the seventeenth century. They tell us that 'Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving him thereunto; and all to the praise of his glorious grace.' 'The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice.' 'The punishments of sin in the world to come, are everlasting separation from the comfortable presence of God, and most grievous torments in soul and body, without intermission, in hell-fire for ever.' According to these words sin is the prevailing and finally triumphant attribute of mankind, and hell is the dominant feature of the universe, for the vast majority of our race are outside the number of the elect. It is only with grim sarcasm that such a doctrine can be called a gospel; and that the men who proclaimed it should describe themselves as evangelical is surely one of the most curious instances of unconscious irony which the history of thought affords.

Nevertheless, this appalling solution of the problem of existence was founded on very deep, though one-sided, religious impressions. The fact of sin was so universal that it seemed to brood over mankind as a dark fate, and at the same time sin was felt to be so alien to the nature of God that it deserved nothing but his everlasting wrath and condemnation. Then, again, man and all his works appeared so insignificant beside the majesty of God that it was deemed impious to imagine any condition on the human side which could influence the purposes of the supreme Ruler. So close and awful were the wisdom and power of God that there was no escape from his absolute sovereignty; so lofty were the demands of his holiness that even the best of men could have no hope save in that free grace which had elected them from the beginning.

From this theology we may gather these two elements of truth, which at the present day are apt to be regarded with too dim an eye:—the awful nature of sin, and the providential sovereignty of God. But to the doctrine of predestination which was founded on a partial view of these elements there are formidable objections.

In the first place, predestination without conditions does away with human responsibility. It is vain to say that man deserves his fate if it is utterly impossible for him to do anything to avert it; and to describe as justice the act which dooms our impotence to eternal misery is a mere abuse of language. Unless, within certain limits, we are free *persons*, and not simply conscious *things*, our moral life loses all reality, and our goodness is no more virtue than the swiftness of a greyhound

or the bloom of a peach, our badness no more guilt than the poison of a serpent or a blight in our cornfields. But in fact we are endowed with reason, conscience, and will; and, explain it as we may, we all feel that we are responsible for the direction of our lives, and that it is our own fault if we allow ourselves to drift lazily down the stream, and put forth no effort to guide our course aright and press towards some worthy end. It is indeed true that we can do nothing without God. 'It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves.' It is he that has given us our high endowments, with all that variety of range and power which we observe among mankind. It is he that has graven the law of right upon our conscience, and painted on our thought ideals of beauty and perfection. It is he that, having gifted us with a share of his own free personality, pleads with us to choose our true end, and become partakers of his Spirit. But this persuasion of a living Will is wholly different from the constraint of physical law by which dead matter is bound. In some mysterious way the response depends on ourselves; and if we will not hear, if we turn away from the Divine and eternal order, and yield to the transient seductions of the world and of self, ours must be the guilt and shame, and when the inevitable retribution comes, and we reap as we have sown, we must feel that our suffering is deserved.

In the second place, not only does this doctrine destroy human responsibility, but it virtually seats cruelty on the throne of the universe, and gives a picture of the fate of mankind which far surpasses in horror the most dismal nightmare of pessimism. One can only hope that men were of

too dull imagination to understand the meaning of their own words when they taught that the ever-blessed Father, from whom, and to whom are all things, had foredoomed the vast majority of his earthly children to endless and unspeakable torment. It is vain to ask men to love such a being. It would be impossible if it were right, and it would be sinful if it were possible. To many a soul, trained in tender childhood to think thus of God, religion has been nothing but a dark horror, and the dread of an inevitable hell has poisoned the very fountains of all joyous and progressive life. But we may hope that this malign blasphemy is passing away, and Christianity is slowly taking the place of the dark superstition which has so long usurped its name.

Let us now turn to the writings of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, who had really a gospel for the world. He too had a doctrine of predestination, for he felt that the universe was folded in God, and that, in spite of the aberrations of mankind, the infinite Love was working out its own beneficent plans, and guiding the gradual evolution from the natural to the spiritual, from the earthly to the heavenly man.<sup>1</sup> But there was no predestination to evil. Men were predestined only to what was good, to be conformed to the image of God's Son,<sup>2</sup> to be 'holy and without blame before him in love.'<sup>3</sup> This grand predestination, however, was not unconditional. Sin was in deadly opposition to the Divine purpose, and strove against the glory and honour and immortality intended for the children of God. But even man's sin was being overruled for good, and forced to

<sup>1</sup> See 1 Cor. xv. 46-49. <sup>2</sup> Rom. viii. 29. <sup>3</sup> Eph. i. 4.

contribute to the advance of the Divine kingdom. God shut up all unto disobedience that he might have mercy upon all.<sup>1</sup> Mankind was to be vanquished by the irresistible power of love. If the lower animal life, with its passions and its sins, was universal, much more would the Christ-life, with its high spirituality and its intimate communion with God, be universal.<sup>2</sup> Yes, in our sin and folly and rebellion it is not a fiery vengeance that will pursue us, to smite us into hopeless ruin, but an infinite, beseeching, wounded Love, coming, it may be, through some finite form, with pierced hands and bleeding brow, to fan the little spark of goodness that is left in us, to lead us home humbled and penitent, and restore that life which was lost in trespasses and sins. It was the felt power of this redeeming Love, the kindling of the Spirit within, the conscious inworking of the Divine purpose, which had been hidden from past ages, and was at last revealed as the great reconciling influence which was to bind man to man and all to God—it was this that filled the early Christians with rapturous joy, sent them with unbounded faith against the hosts of superstition and sin, and made them go to martyrdom as conquerors to their triumph. 'If God be for us, who can be against us?' None can pluck us out of our Father's hand. The grand issues of his providence may still be far away, and hope deferred may sometimes make the heart sick. But we can trust him whose steps are in the deep, whose patience is not as our restlessness, and whose purpose is not abandoned because through the fleeting ages he works calm

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xi. 32.    <sup>2</sup> Rom. v. 13 sqq., I Cor. xv. 22.

and unseen, 'according to the good pleasure of his will.'<sup>1</sup>

According to this view the coming of Christ was predestined; that is to say, it was part of the providential guidance of the world that, when the fullness of time was come, the gospel of Divine Love should be proclaimed through his teaching, and still more through his life and death, and that he should be the leader of a new order of spiritual manhood. It is always possible to look at events which happen on the stage of the world's history from two different points of view. We may regard them with the eye simply of the critical historian, and see how preparation has been made for them by a long series of occurrences, of which, as we say, they are the natural and inevitable outcome. Everything proceeds by fixed law, and the world's heroes do but float on the crests of the waves of evolution. This naturalistic way of regarding even the grandest episodes in the world's history may give us a true perception of the outward process, but does not admit us to the inner meaning of events. To perceive this we must look at them from the religious point of view, and know where to bestow our admiration and our love. The commonplace intellect sees only what is commonplace; the adoring soul pierces to the secret heart of things, and discovers the Eternal Spirit weaving the tissue of the world's history, and filling with the inspiration of his life the chosen revealers of his thought and will. Accordingly, the more men insist that Christ was the product of his age, the clearer it becomes to the religious mind that his advent was the consumma-

<sup>1</sup> Eph. i. 5.

tion of a long Divine story, the realization of prophetic visions and dreams, and that he was the man predestined to sum up the spiritual gains of Judaism, and, by stripping them of their temporary and national character, to offer them as a gift to mankind. These two aspects of truth are not inconsistent, and we deprecate the former only when it tempts us to sink the Divine in the material, and kills our wonder and awe and love in presence of the great operations of providence, so that we can no longer join in the adoring exclamation of the Apostle—'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out! . . . For of him, and through him, and unto him, are all things. To him be the glory for ever. Amen.'<sup>1</sup>

In this great instance we may see clearly that it is part of the Divine purpose that there should be a progress in the affairs of men, and that individuals should be qualified with various degrees of leadership, some striving to bring their brethren up to what is confessedly best in the ancient ways, others marking out untrodden paths, and conducting a little chosen band into a new era. This method, through which we are so bound to one another by mutual helpfulness and affection, involves an inequality of gifts. Of this inequality we do not complain, so long as it is confined to our intellectual equipment, and no one feels aggrieved because he cannot rival the genius of Plato or Shakespeare; but the facts look more perplexing when we come to the ground of spiritual character. Here there is the same diversity of gifts; and the great

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xi. 33, 36.

religious leaders are fitted with a spiritual power which no man can create for himself by any exercise of will. That such men arise here and not there ; that Christianity began in the Roman empire, and not in the Chinese ; that Jesus and his immediate disciples were Jews, and not Greeks ; that some men were prepared to hear and feel the Divine call, while the hearts of others were hardened with prejudice and the conservatism of an ignorant piety—these facts do not fall within the range of human choice, but belong to the unsearchable counsels of God. Every step forward involves this process of election, the chosen few marching into the light, and holding on high the banner of a nobler spirituality and righteousness. But they know that they are chosen, not for their own sakes, but to do the Divine will, and offer themselves as a sacrifice for their brethren. They feel that they are the first-fruits of a plenteous harvest, that in them is apparent the first victory of an ideal which is finally to vanquish the world. That which is highest, holiest, most heavenly, marks the predestined life of the children of God, and the spiritual power which has captivated a single heart can never die, but must at last draw all men unto it. Such is the Christian idea of predestination, a vast and all-embracing hope for mankind. Righteousness and love are the greatest things in the universe, and God intends them to prevail. But we may delay the fulfilment of that purpose by our obstinacy and sin. Greater things than we have ever realized are close at hand. The Love of God is ever at the door of our hearts, and knocks for admittance. Let us wait in silence and reverence for the revealing of his Will ; and then let us gladly

respond to his high purpose concerning us, and with humble and thankful trust go on our way towards the predestined goal, where, having at last surrendered our souls entirely to his keeping, we shall be 'holy and without blame before him in love.'

## CHAPTER VI

### KNOWLEDGE AND LOVE

**I**N the thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians St. Paul not only gives a beautiful description of love, and assigns to it the supreme and indispensable place in religion, but makes a very remarkable statement, which has been too little regarded, about the transience of all human knowledge. The great Apostle, who is regarded as the earliest in the long line of Christian theologians, has often been represented as the teacher of a rigid and immovable orthodoxy, and as pronouncing on the most disputable points with an infallible authority which it would be impious to dispute. But he gives a very different account of himself, and of the claims of any assumed orthodoxy. In the chapter referred to he plainly declares that, so far at least as this world is concerned, there is no such thing as finality in theological systems. He himself knew only in part, and looked forward to a fuller knowledge. He believed that he had seen, and even reflected, the glory of the Lord; yet he hoped for a glory still to be revealed.<sup>1</sup> He counted not himself to have attained, but pressed ever forward towards the

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 18, 24.

mark.<sup>1</sup> He saw spiritual things in a riddle, through the dim reflections of a mirror, but trusted that the time was coming when there would be open and complete vision.<sup>2</sup> This humble estimate of his powers, resulting in a vast enlargement of his views, so unlike the cramping narrowness of the later theology, was due to reflection on his own experience. As a child he had thought as a child, and perhaps through the fantastic thoughts of childhood had glimpses of a heavenly world, which were afterwards obscured when the forms of his young imagination claimed to be permanent knowledge. Then, later, the crust of self-confident and intolerant opinion broke under the pressure of a holy experience, and his pretentious knowledge crumbled into dust and refuse. And then, with all his abounding faith, he gazed into depths of the unknown; and the earnest of the Spirit, which he felt as the deepest reality within himself, told him of infinite reaches of Divine knowledge which he must continually follow through the vanishing forms of human thought.

We must observe that it is in relation to the Christian religion, the religion which he himself believed and preached, that he maintains this position; for his immediate object is to recall the attention of the Corinthian Church to eternal principles from the changing moods of a particular time and place. The strange and surprising captivates the vulgar eye, and we noisily insist on the superior value of that which lies nearest to our lower mind. The speaking with tongues was regarded by some at Corinth as an essential mark of the Holy Spirit. Paul declared that these

<sup>1</sup> Philip. iii. 13, 14.      <sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

tongues should cease. They have ceased; and we look back upon them, not as vital marks of Christianity, but as the wild expression of a young and untrained enthusiasm. Prophecies too, with all their inspiration, have failed, and the sublime march of Providence has falsified the rapt vision of the seer. But more startling still, the Apostle declares that knowledge shall vanish away, and thus recognizes an element of uncertainty even in the most firmly established opinion. His own doctrine of the speedy reappearance of Christ in glory has long vanished; and we cannot but wonder at the largeness of mind which, amid such exciting engagements, and animated by an enthusiasm which might well have been driven to extravagance by the cruelty of opposition, resolutely maintained a ministry not of the letter, but of the spirit, and calmly reserved as the eternal elements of his gospel a hierarchy of spiritual principles, faith, hope and love, of which love was chief.

The transiency of religious knowledge, or rather of the forms of thought through which religion seeks to express itself, is a subject of vital interest at the present day. The tendency to regard our particular doctrines as infallible truth has not been confined to the Church at Corinth. It has manifested itself in all ages, and is the weakness which is most apt to accompany and qualify the value of religious earnestness. In our own time it still controls the action of the greatest churches, and practically compels them to be exclusive and intolerant. On the other hand, the sense of uncertainty attending every theological doctrine has led to the opposite extreme, the denial of all knowledge of the highest Object of religion, and has

spread through a wide circle of thoughtful men a sense of weakness and loss, as though the solid earth were dissolving into mist before them. Are we compelled to choose between these two positions, and either to be dogmatists, denying all possibility of error in our conception of divine things, and thereby closing our eyes against the dawn of any purer light, or to be sceptics, and so look upon the world disenchanted of its sacred beauty, like the grey dullness of a sky from which the sunset glory has just faded? Paul indicates a third course, which is at once more rational and more religious.

The statement that we 'know in part' contains in effect two propositions: one, that we really know something; the other, that our knowledge is partial. The statement is shown by its context to refer to spiritual truth; but it holds good of all human knowledge, which, in every direction, leads us into a mist of the unknown, and we may find a useful illustration in the progress of natural science. The enormous advance which the latter has made in modern times may justly fill us with wonder at the power of man's intellect; and we need not be surprised at the belief of many that we have at last reached the solid basis of reality, and that the future of our race belongs to science alone. Nevertheless, it would be well to remember through what unnumbered thousands of years man has been slowly climbing towards that pinnacle of knowledge on which he now so proudly stands, and from that pinnacle looks forth upon a universe that in its dimensions baffles all imagination, and opens to the inquiring mind a multitude of unsolved problems. We know only in part. The

history of past ages is strewn with the wrecks of scientific hypotheses, and the knowledge of one period has passed away before the clearer knowledge of its successor.

There are, however, degrees of knowledge, and it is useful to distinguish between our knowledge of facts and our interpretation of facts; for while we may accept the former with immovable conviction, the latter may occupy any position between complete error and absolute certainty. Thus we know as a fact that something affects our various senses, and we believe with a confidence that cannot be shaken that this something is external to ourselves; so that we affirm with conviction, as representing universal human experience, that we live in a universe which, since it reveals itself directly only to the senses, we distinguish by the name material. All physical science is based on these sensible impressions, which it interprets, and at last builds up into a wonderful system, that evades, and may even seem to contradict the senses, and presents itself only to the constructive reason. For ages men of trained intellect observed the starry heavens, and on the basis of the facts thus made known an ingenious scientific theory, known as the Ptolemaic system, was built up; and for centuries this held the field as established knowledge. But improved means of observation accumulated a new store of facts, which made the old hypothesis untenable, and what is generally called the Copernican theory slowly took its place. The observed facts are what we positively know; the solar system as we conceive it cannot be detected by any sense, but is pictured in our thought in a

form which we believe represents the reality. Astronomy, however, with all its amazing discoveries, has not reached its goal, nor is the time come to close our observatories. Our wonder is kept always on the alert. We know in part, and still press forward to a knowledge which is more complete.

Is there elsewhere any analogy to this progress of thought? Yes, beside the material universe there is another and unseen universe, which, not being discoverable by the senses, we distinguish by the term spiritual. The realm of our consciousness, though so intimately mingled with our sensible experience, lies wholly beyond the reach of sight and touch. No physicist, working in the finest laboratory, could discover by scientific methods the existence of consciousness. If any one denied that the men and women around him were conscious beings, it would be difficult to find convincing arguments. But happily the inference is so instantaneous and irresistible that no one doubts, and even an infant's smile betrays its recognition of a consciousness answering to its own. We may, then, affirm that we know that a spiritual universe exists around us and within us. There is a diffused consciousness, of which we partake. There is a universal reason, which we share, and whose laws we trust. There is a love which makes its abode in us, and which we recognize in others. We may, I think, go further, and say that the physical forces, as we call them, are spiritual; for, unless we accept the hypothesis that matter itself is nothing but a form of energy, the senses can discover only their effects; and their mysterious existence betrays itself only to

the reason. We are, in fact, steeped in a spiritual universe, of which we form an insignificant part. Without some invisible sustaining Power working within us we could not move a limb or entertain a thought, and it is precisely because this sustaining Power is so continually present, so intimate a part of our own being, that we are apt to dismiss it from our consciousness. When we breathe without difficulty in a calm and silent atmosphere, we are unconscious of the air on which our life depends every moment; and so we become unconscious of the Power in which 'we live, and move, and have our being.' But a moment's reflection assures us of this mysterious Presence, enfolding our lives, and communicating all our faculties. Even the scientific man who disclaims all theological belief professes to 'stand in awe before the mystery of the universe,' showing that he too recognizes an abiding and unseen Power as the source and cause of all.

This is the elementary fact in religious experience; and theology is the interpretation of this fact. Now, interpretation depends upon the state of knowledge and the exercise of thought, and therefore may vary from childish guesses up to the conclusions of high and cultivated intelligence. We know, but we know only in part; and the formulated knowledge of the progressive soul is always vanishing; childhood's imagination yields to manhood's thought; and the mature man sees his prospect widening into infinite mystery, wooing him to endless progress.

So it has actually proved in human history. The savage, with his very limited knowledge, explained the spiritual world through the crudest

fancies. The phenomenon of dreams suggested real visitations from disembodied spirits, or seemed to bring revelations from some beneficent source. Here, a vengeful demon was supposed to call for cruel sacrifices to appease his wrath; there, magical rites were performed to gain the favour of capricious and spiteful gods. As the mind rose into poetical imagination, their own peculiar deities were supposed to inhabit the groves, the mountains, and the sea, to preside over the harvest and the vintage, and to bless the hearth and home of the devout. Then, when the intellect grasped the idea that the universe was not a jumble of unconnected bodies, but was one reasoned whole, thinkers began to believe in one supreme Ruler, alone eternal and unchangeable amid the vicissitudes of time and place. When conscience too awakened into life, it brought its own revelations, and seated holiness, justice, and mercy on the throne of the universe; and among the Hebrews these high attributes were ascribed to one only God, the Creator of heaven and earth. And finally, the mysterious spiritual Power around us and within us was brought home to the affections of mankind as the Father of all souls, One not far from any of us, present in every place to receive our adoration, in whom to live as partakers of his Divine nature, whom to trust through all that seems most wrong, to love with the devotion of the heart, and through love to obey with consecrated will. But to this day we know only in part. The more wonderful and extensive our prospect, the more wistfully do we gaze into the immensity of the unknown. Our most carefully constructed schemes of thought serve only to

mark the stages of our advance, some commanding our belief for a longer, some for a shorter time, but all at last delivering up their sceptre to wider knowledge and holier instincts.

Nevertheless, though it be only in part, we know. We know the fundamental fact, that we live not only in a material, but in a spiritual universe. And in our interpretations of this consciousness we know that the deep convictions of the genuine Christian are higher and nobler than the guesses of the savage or the superstitions of the selfish and ungodly. We know that faith and hope and love belong to the finest souls, and are far superior to scorn and despair and hate. And when we need, as most of us do, some human guidance, whom shall we trust? As in matters of science we properly accept the conclusions of scientific students, men of exact observation and acute intellect, so in matters spiritual we can accept the judgment only of the spiritual, for it is they alone who can look into the deep things of God, and report the revelations of the Spirit.

Yet there is an important difference between the two cases. Science lays down definite propositions which we can fully understand and accept though the proofs may lie outside of our intellectual gifts. But religious truth cannot be really apprehended and received on the bare statement of another. It must be brought within the range of our own experience, and appeal to our own spiritual vision. Accordingly the prophets of mankind assume, in those whom they address, a deeper knowledge than lies upon the surface, and endeavour to bring this hidden knowledge into the clear light of consciousness. A man, like David,

loses in an hour of temptation all thought of God and of his law, and commits an unjust and cruel wrong; but the prophet touches the benumbed sense of right, and the offender sees his conduct as it really is. It is thus that the prophets, the founders of religions, and above all the Christ, are revealers. It is only by possessing the mind of Christ that we can understand the things of Christ. He came as a light into the world that they who see not may see. Through the splendour of his character, the power of his personality, the exaltation of his faith, the profound sincerity of his love, with its last appeal from the cross, he melts the ice-bound deeps of a diviner knowledge within us, and the waters of eternal life begin to flow. And then we learn to infuse into the current thought of our time a richer meaning, and gradually to transform it into a truer representation of what we have seen and known. And if, under the oppression of the world and our own sluggishness of heart, the vision of faith continually tends to fade, we revive it through communion with the spirit of Christ and of all who are truly his, that invisible and uncircumscribed Church of the holy of which each congregation of worshippers claims to be a part. And in interpreting this deeper life of a holy brotherhood of souls we naturally follow the lines which have been laid down by general consent, so far as they seem to represent our own deepest thought, and to be justified by reason and knowledge. But we know that our interpretations are imperfect, and when we gaze into infinite and universal Reason, Holiness, Justice, and Love, they melt away beyond the limits of distinct vision into a dazzling mist of unfathomable glory. Yes, we

know only in part ; and our divinest wisdom is a little trembling ray from the eternal Father of light and truth, yet a ray which we cannot doubt, and which we must follow towards a glory which is still to be revealed.

It is now apparent where we must look for the permanent in religion. It is in its spirit, not in its form. Paul preached a gospel, not of the letter, but of the spirit ; for the letter, with its dead forms, induced death ; but the spirit, with its vivid adaptation to changing thought, gave life.<sup>1</sup> Knowledge shall vanish away ; but now abide faith, hope, love. As Grecian science, which swayed the human mind for so many centuries, has long vanished, and retains only an historical and antiquarian interest, while Grecian poetry and art are as fresh and living as when they first became conscious of their opening powers, so in religion, we can hardly doubt, the learning and criticism of which we are so proud to-day are destined sooner or later to moulder upon dusty shelves ; but when their tongues have ceased, the utterances of some high-souled genius will be found of everlasting worth. That only abides which comes from some deeper source than the critical intellect, and expresses some moment of felt communion between the soul and God.

In selecting faith, hope, and love as the permanent principles of religion we cannot suppose that the Apostle intended to give an exhaustive classification ; but these terms are so laden with meaning that we may fairly treat them as including all the rest.

FAITH is the power by which we apprehend the

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 6.

presence of eternal things. It frees us from our bondage to the world of sense, and enables us to penetrate behind the superficial appearance in nature and in man, revealing in the one a beauty which is the subtle expression of the indwelling Spirit, and in the other a Divine and ideal law which binds him to a higher order of being. It lifts justice, holiness, and truth above the mere convenience of social arrangement, and exhibits them clothed with inalienable authority, the majestic manifestation of a supreme Will. It is faith which bows us down in prayer, and gives us the feeling of communion with One who is higher than we. It leads us to repose in God as wiser and better than we can understand, and bids us seek not our own will, but the will of Him who speaks in the conscience and touches the heart with holy affections and aspirations. It thus lifts the whole of human life to a higher level. It subdues the greed of our lower nature, and raises us towards the likeness of the Son of God. Without faith we live for what is mean and selfish; with it, we live for what is infinite and eternal.

Now, this apprehension of the Divine abides through all the changes of our theology. In all the higher religions, with their different rites and beliefs, men are alike haunted by a sense of the Divine. Our shifting doctrines express the varying clearness of our vision and grasp of our thought; but that on which our vision rests is really there, and remains eternally the same. This power of spiritual apprehension, the living basis of theology, which we are so apt to lose sight of while contending for our dogmas, is a faculty which we must cherish most carefully in ourselves, and the Church

is bound to cultivate in its members. Without this our dogmas are frigid skeletons; with it, we may trust that, whatever formal error may disfigure the doctrines which we conscientiously maintain, they will serve as the vehicle of inward truth, and prepare the way for a larger knowledge. And let us not forget that spiritual discernment has a mode of expression which is far better suited to our worship than the bald statements of an exact theology. The language of poetry and devotion is fraught with a wealth of meaning which formulated dogma never can contain; and though we must be perfectly faithful to our own convictions, it will be a sad day for us when we fear to abandon ourselves to the spontaneous outpourings of the soul, and sacrifice truth of meaning and impression in obedience to the cramping demands of a mere critical and verbal exactitude.

Horn too abides, precisely because knowledge passes away. 'Now we see through a mirror, in a riddle; but then face to face.'<sup>1</sup> Our vision is imperfect, and neither in action, nor in thought, nor in spirit have we yet a full fruition of the Divine. Tending, as we do, towards the infinite fullness of God, we still look, and must for ever look, for a glory to be revealed. And so our hope expands into immortality, which alone can satisfy the quest of our souls; and when here we stand helpless under the sense of baffled endeavour, when our best achievements are only the marred and scattered fragments of an ideal once symmetrical and grand, and our past life seems but the tombstone of buried dreams, we must lift our eyes to a life beyond the grave, a life of ever clearer

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

faith, of more transparent purity, of deeper wisdom in a word, of nearer communion with the inexhaustible being of God. In the words of St. Paul, 'Then shall I know, even as also I have been known.'<sup>1</sup> This is the end of human aspiration, 'the beatific vision' which awaits the pure in heart and steadfast in obedience, in which all perplexities are resolved, all doubts melt away, and all mysteries are revealed in the unclouded light.

This is the great hope by which we are saved: as we feel our way through the obscurity of our mortal life, and wait patiently for the realization of that which at present we cannot see. It is a consoling and uplifting expectation when we are bowed down, and tempted to despair, by the sorrows of the world. There are mysteries in the ways of Providence, which we cannot pretend to explain, and where we must walk wholly by faith, and not by sight; but what are we, the feeble creatures of a day, that we should comprehend the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, and rules the destinies of unnumbered worlds? Through the trials of faith we are sustained by the hope that some time we shall know. The clouds and darkness will roll away, and God's justice and love stand revealed in spotless light. So it is with the individual sufferer. When a minister of Christ's gospel is asked in agonized tones, 'Oh! what have I done to deserve such pain?' he can only reply, 'What God does thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter'; and the hope that in some higher sphere all will become plain, and the wisdom of God's love be revealed to the adoring

<sup>1</sup> *Ib.*

<sup>2</sup> See Rom. viii. 24.

soul, if it cannot heal the pains of the body, helps the spirit to endure, and may even bring a holy peace amid anguish and tears. Similarly amid the world's agony and the fierce cruelty of man to man, we seem wrapt in mystery, and the faith of many waxes cold. But God's love is not dead because for the moment we cannot see it, and his high purposes stretch far beyond the bounds of our understanding. At times indeed it is apparent that, if the shadow of sorrow were removed from our earth, life would lose something of its depth and nobility; and I cannot but look forward to the time when we shall see all our griefs in their true place and proportion, completing the beauty of the picture, and adding soft and tender tints to what else might be too harsh and crude. 'Now we know in part; but then shall we know even as also we have been known,' and we shall exclaim with the Apostle, 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out! . . . For of him, and through him, and unto him are all things. To him be the glory for ever. Amen.'<sup>1</sup>

Love, unlike the other principles we have noticed, abides, not through any imperfection of ours, but because it is itself eternal and supreme. Faith might be lost in sight, and hope in fruition; and these, therefore, we cannot ascribe to God, who is above them. But love can lose itself in no higher term. It is, accordingly, the greatest of the three abiding principles of the gospel. 'God is Love';<sup>2</sup> and in proportion as the spirit of love possesses us, we share his essential and everlasting life.

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xi. 33, 36.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John iv. 8.

We thus reach the *practical* power of religion. As *faith* forms the foundation of our theology, so does love of our morals. By faith we apprehend the Love of God; and thus is awakened an answering love in our hearts—or rather is it not truer to say that the Divine Love comes and dwells in us, for it is only in proportion as we are in him and he in us that we really love? This love, returning towards its source, becomes the life of devotion, which it is the main object of our religious services to foster and express. This may manifest itself in a great variety of ways. Rites and ceremonies may become obsolete; but the clinging of the heart to God, the willingness to glorify him by the sacrifice of ourselves, the enthusiasm for all that is noble and pure, the penitential sorrow for sin, the gratitude for the Patience that bears with us, for the Forgiveness that heals, for the Spirit that sanctifies—these can never become antiquated, but still, wherever they are allowed to show themselves in the unspoiled simplicity of nature, they flourish in all the grace of an eternal youth.

This love, again, passing on towards our fellow men, becomes the basis of social morals. We are now redeemed from the life of hard obedience to minute precepts, for 'love is the fulfilling of the law.'<sup>1</sup> It is itself the fountain from which every commandment of permanent obligation has flowed. It is the power through which alone these commandments can be adequately kept.<sup>2</sup> Here, too, the forms of our active life admit a large variety, and it is impossible to lay down rules providing for all the details of our mutual intercourse. Social

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xiii. 10.   <sup>2</sup> See Rom. viii. 1-4.

arrangements, political institutions, modes of charity may pass away ; but the serene benignity, the gentle sweetness, the gracious humility, the quick sympathy, the promptness to serve, which characterize Christian love, grow not old nor die. For it is indeed the Divine Spirit dwelling in man, the Love of God acting in and through man upon the world around, and sharing the eternity of its Source.

We may, then, possess our souls in patience amid the fluctuating opinions of the present day. Changes in theology can no more banish God than a change in astronomy can quench the light of the stars. Ancient systems of belief may, for aught we can tell, crumble into ruins ; but from these ruins shall rise a fairer temple dedicated to the same eternal verities, but representing them in grander images and sounding their praise with a nobler worship. And if we are reminded that one leading tendency of liberal thought in our time is towards the non-religious interpretation of the universe, we may reply that that which is opposed to the most living and permanent facts in our nature cannot be more than a temporary and one-sided movement. In periods when old forms of belief are passing away, there must always be some who with the forms will lose the reality as well, and who, having been trained in a dogmatic school, confound the spheres of faith and knowledge, and suppose that the revelations of faith are without value if they cannot be placed on the same logical line as the propositions of science. We shall save ourselves from many a perplexity, if we remember that the language of religion, being an attempt to express what is beyond expression, is

not, like the language of science, absolutely true or false, but is more or less symbolical, and serves only to represent to our understanding that which our finite intelligence can never completely grasp.

The clear recognition of this principle in religious thought may be of the greatest value in broadening and deepening our spiritual life; for it enables us to enter more sympathetically into the history of religious ideas, to detect the implied truth beneath the formal error, and to appreciate not only the earnestness, but the profound insight and rare perception of Divine things which distinguished many a thinker whose theology we are unable to accept. We shall often find that those to whom we are most opposed apprehend a side of the truth which we had missed; and having acquired the habit of seizing the spirit while we allow the intellectual form from which we dissent to drop easily away, we shall derive religious nourishment from the prophets and saints of every school, and so attain to a richer and fuller life, and through this to a broader and more catholic theology, than would otherwise be possible.

And lastly, we find here the true principle of Christian judgment. This must always be directed to the spirit, not the letter; to the inward life, not the expressed opinion. A man whose views are wrong may yet see more of God than another whose theology is unimpeachable. He who has faith, hope, and love, has the eternal life of the Christian, and we must never feel towards such a one any ungenerous suspicion. And on ourselves we must turn the all-revealing light. This is the test by which we must stand or fall. Our dogmatic orthodoxy, our critical sagacity, our assumption of

intellectual superiority, our party zeal, our superficial and flashy accomplishments, will avail us nothing in that day when all that is not eternal must perish in the fiery trial; and then, when our false judgments are abashed, and the self-confidence of our partial truths is cast down, and the reality of the infinite God and the immortal life is seen to transcend all that the tongues of men and of angels can utter, there will still abide, amid the changeless light of the new heavens and the new earth, Faith, Hope, and Love.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE GLORY THAT REMAINS

WE have spoken of the partial nature of all human knowledge, and the consequent changes in man's conception of Divine things; and some further remarks on the sense of loss and of gain as we pass from stage to stage in our thoughts of religion will not be out of place. Paul had memories of a vanished glory, but beheld a higher glory in that which survived the shocks of time.<sup>1</sup>

The transience of all earthly things has been frequently dwelt upon by moralists, in order to wean men's love from unworthy pursuits, and allure them to enduring principles of righteous conduct. 'The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.' But however good it may be for our morals, this transience is apt to cast a shade of melancholy over the mind, and we cannot but view with sorrow the vanishing of things rare and beautiful, of joys that never can return, of hopes that have died without fruition, of objects of affection gone we know not whither. There are few who cannot share the cry:

O for the touch of a vanished hand,  
And the sound of a voice that is still!

<sup>1</sup> See 2 Cor. iii.

And, strange to say, if we come to the higher regions of religion, where we move amid eternal things, even there we meet the law of transience; old ideals disappear, and forms of thought that seemed like adamantine rocks crumble slowly into ruins, and lie amid the neglected rubbish of the world. Where are now the splendours of Greek mythology, where the austere veneration of the Roman? And, to come nearer home, who cannot see that there is in progress a steady disintegration of the mediæval ideas of Christianity, and that we have entered on a new stage in the religious development of mankind?

Nowhere does the ceaseless movement of human thought stir such profound emotions as in the sphere of religion. But these emotions are of various kinds according to the experience and temperament of those who witness the change. There are those who cling passionately to the forms which graced their childhood, and moulded their characters, and gave them strength to stand firm amid the temptations of the world; and they can see in change nothing but the evil working of man's corrupt nature, and the destruction of all that has raised and ennobled mankind. This vehement attachment to a glorious past, dignified by heroic and saintly lives, and sanctified by the blood of martyrs, too often generates a fierce intolerance, and spreads over the heart a veil which, by its impenetrable folds renders invisible the new light of a diviner dawn.

There are others who rush to the opposite extreme, and, having discovered that not everything in the past was wise and good, are unable to see anything in it except wickedness and error.

They have an exulting sense of emancipation, and pour bitter scorn upon all preceding ages, when mankind consisted mainly of knaves and fools. The wild freedom in which they revel may open the way for nobler things to come; but meanwhile the judgment is perverted, and the past is seen through a haze of prejudice and passion. And owing to their spiritual dearth they have a lack of reforming power. The merely negative attack upon ancient error is unable to effect a religious regeneration; and ancient forms of thought, which in their edifice of error enshrined some sanctifying truth, will yield only to that same truth transfigured and redeemed from its temporary imprisonment. Paganism did not fall before the ridicule of the satirist or the scepticism of the philosopher, but surrendered to a higher religion, which, while it informed the intellect, captivated the heart, appealed to the unifying wants of the soul, and so renewed and elevated the spiritual life of mankind. The glory of heathen worship faded before the brighter glory of Christian worship in spirit and in truth.

There is, however, a third way in which we may regard the changes in religion and the dying of old forms of belief; and of this there is no more noted example than that which is afforded by the great Apostle of the Gentiles. Paul is sometimes referred to as though he had been swayed by a violent reaction, which rendered him incapable of judging justly of the Jewish religion, and caused him to give a gross misrepresentation of the law. But of this I find no trace in his Epistles. That his own strict observance of the traditional law had failed to give him spiritual satisfaction and

peace, and that he had experienced a momentous spiritual change, is of course beyond question. But instead of separating Christianity from all dependence on the past, as Marcion did at a later time, instead of pouring scorn upon the Jewish religion in which he had been brought up, he seemed to himself to have discovered its inmost meaning and purpose, and his faith in Christ was linked with the remotest origin of the Hebrew people. No one believed more strongly in the Divine mission of Israel. No one was more convinced that the law was 'holy, and just, and good.' No one was more satisfied that a ray of Divine glory shone from the face of Moses, and that the word of God had come to the prophets whose message was recorded in the Scriptures. Christianity, in its essential principles, went back to the time of Abraham, and was the fulfilment of the promise made to the Patriarch, and of the purpose which had been unfolding itself through the whole course of Hebrew history. It comprised within itself the inward and spiritual essence of Judaism; it accepted and glorified the teaching of psalmist and prophet; and the Gentile converts were members of the commonwealth of Israel, the Israel of God, and spiritual children of Abraham. But the glory of the law was transient, because the law answered a temporary purpose in the education of mankind, and passed away when the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus took possession of the heart and conscience. And so the Divine glory that shone from the face of Moses faded away only as the solemn glory of the stars fades before the brighter glory of the sun. But if the transient law had come amid clouds of glory, much more that which re-

remained, the ethical and spiritual ideals of Israel, were in glory.

We are not, however, to suppose that progress consists merely in clearing away the worn-out habiliments that cling to abiding truth; it involves also an advance into something not hitherto experienced. Accordingly, to Paul all things had become new. The significance attaching to the ancient Scriptures, the Divine, though transient, purpose of the law, revealed themselves to him as a new discovery, while he surveyed them from a higher spiritual elevation. And still more, he had reached this higher spiritual elevation through the personal influence of the life and teaching of Christ, and especially of that martyr death which awakened in him unimagined ideals, and was to his yearning heart a revelation of righteousness as it exists in the mind of God. And it seemed to him that here was a permanent moral power, which sealed the doom of sin, and changed those who placed themselves beneath it into conscious children of God, led by the Spirit of God, and walking daily in a heavenly communion, which produced its own beautiful character, and needed no precepts from a statute-book to guide it. It was thus that the ancient promise was fulfilled, by the introduction of a new spiritual force, which appealed not only to Israel, but to the world. And Paul was right; for the spell of that holy, loving, and devoted life in Palestine has never since been absent from the world, but amid all the selfishness and hypocrisy of professing Christians has still shed its redeeming light; and while so much is perishing in the present day, it remains with a glory that cannot fade.

Towards heathenism Paul's attitude was ne-

cessarily different. In the idolatry and wickedness all around him he could discern no sparks of Divine glory. It is not probable that he was acquainted with the finest literature of Greece, and it was reserved for some of the early fathers to recognize the presence of eternal Reason in the 'divine Plato,' and other Greek philosophers. There too the light had been shining in the darkness, a true glory of God, illumining the night of heathenism. But much in the thought of the philosophers was transient, and failed to command universal assent; and while the splendour of their speculations was slowly fading, Christianity adopted its finest elements, and gave them a new lustre, while it allowed the temporary forms of thought to pass away. Perhaps we too may be allowed to see in the ancient philosophy, and even in the old idolatry, a glory which was necessarily hidden from the eyes of Paul, a glory of exalted thought in the one, a glory of heartfelt devotion in the other; but such glory has faded before the larger thought and the more concentrated and spiritual worship of a later time.

Like the early Christians, we are living in an age of transition. Whether men regard the change with favour or with horror, it is being felt more and more that mediæval forms of belief are incompatible with our modern thought and knowledge. Even conservative theologians are beginning to admit that the creeds have been formulated in the terms of a transient philosophy, and that if they were now to be drawn up for the first time they would be differently expressed. With all the sorrow, with all the doubt and fear, that this state of things involves we well may sym-

pathize. With Paul we may see enough in the past to compel our reverent admiration. While we ourselves are ready for reform, and believe that a more glorious light of God is rising on the world, still we may behold in the ancient churches the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the service of God, and the promises, the saints and the martyrs, the preachers and the philanthropists, the missionaries and the thinkers, men and women who have given up all for God and his truth, of whom the world was not worthy. No wonder there is a clinging to so great an inheritance; no wonder that a pang, as of a sword, pierces the heart amid threatenings of its disappearance. But 'if that which is passing away was with glory, much more that which remaineth is in glory.' We may endeavour to illustrate this in the case of a few of the larger movements of thought.

Perhaps the most remarkable and fundamental change which has occurred and is still in progress, among men at once thoughtful and devout, is the loss of confidence in an external, and what may be called official, authority in the determination of religious belief. The whole of the Protestant world has, of course, long disowned the infallibility of the Pope; but now the spirit of inquiry has invaded Catholicism, and many who would still be true to the ideal of the Church are feeling that the dictates of the Vatican are in conflict with modern knowledge. Far more sweeping and widespread is the change among Protestants. For thinking and cultivated men the infallibility of the Bible is gone, and it is probably not too much to say that no competent theologian would now maintain that every line of it had been written by

the finger of God, or under his immediate and infallible inspiration. But has the glory departed from Church and Bible? No; but for the first time their true glory is shining forth, no longer obscured or rendered powerless by the doubts and perplexities arising from their fragmentary knowledge and imperfect speech. The authority with which they appeal to us has ascended into a more spiritual realm, while with reverent and loving sympathy we penetrate into their heart, and identify ourselves with the struggle and anguish, and the Divine uplifting of prophets and apostles and saints, who have walked in communion with God, and manifested the victory of faith. Gazing, with no official veil between, upon the splendour of consecrated lives, and, above all, upon the concentrated revelation of the Spirit of God in Jesus Christ, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory. The Divine authority, the burden of the Lord, which holy men of old felt laid upon their heart and conscience, we also feel; and while owning with all gratitude and love the educative value of Church and Bible, we are redeemed by their own spiritual power from bondage to their letter, and so walk in the freedom of the spirit, in 'the liberty of the glory of the children of God.' It may be needful for many souls to pass through a dark valley on their way to the mountains of light; and we should treat tenderly and reverentially the hesitation to plunge into the shadow of unfamiliar ways, and try if we cannot exhibit to the reluctant soul a gleam from the far off heights, where the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh see it together. Ah! there was, amid the mistaken notions of the past, a grandeur of self-

renouncing faith and love which we should never cease to honour ; but if that which is passing away was glorious, much more that which remains, the deeper insight, the wider sympathy, the inward authority of the Holy Spirit of God, exceeds in *glory*.

Connected with this is the fading belief in miracle, if at least we attach to the word miracle its old theological sense, denoting an event lying wholly outside the realm of natural causation, and therefore guaranteeing the immediate intervention of God. It was in this sense that miracle was appealed to in works on the evidences of Christianity. Christianity was proved to be Divine by the fact that its first preachers were empowered to work miracles. This argument falls dead upon the modern mind. I do not think the arguments for and against miracles have greatly changed ; but our whole intellectual and spiritual outlook upon the universe has altered, so that the argument, however logical, fails in its appeal. The scientific view of universal law brings before us such a magnificent scene of cosmical order that miracle, in the sense defined, seems like an unworthy intrusion. And spiritually, the notion that God intervened, as though he were a distant Ruler, when in him we live and move and have our being, when he dwells in us and we in him, seems tinged with unbelief in the Divine Power that interpenetrates nature, and in the constant care and love of the heavenly Father. The notion that God once uttered his voice amid an eternal silence, that he once condescended to manifest his sovereignty over the forces of nature, and that now he speaks to no man, and leaves nature to its own mechanical

drift, may have nurtured strong and pious souls, but it has yielded to a grander faith. Spirit communes with Spirit; earth and sky are radiant with a Divine beauty, and tremble through all their being with Divine power. Miracle has enlarged its borders to embrace universal nature, and while ancient evidences are fading away, the witness of the soul comes clothed in radiant garb, and we gaze into a glory that excels.

Closely linked with these changes, though less fundamental, is the growing impatience with dogma, understanding by dogma a doctrine imposed by authority as a condition of religious communion. Dogmas, we must remember, once seemed not only to enshrine, but to be necessary for the preservation of the most majestic truth, truth which alone could lift the soul from its material servitude and the dark doom of inherited sin. To call dogma in question, and teach men that it was untrue, was regarded as rebellion against God, a sin to be punished by torture and death in this world, and by eternal damnation in the next. But now this view is passing away as an evil dream. Men may repeat the damnatory clauses of the Athanasian Creed, but there are few who believe that the souls of the righteous will perish because they have been unable to accept some ancient formula, or that doubt in regard to abstruse points of theology is evidence of an evil heart. It is becoming more and more apparent that dogma, instead of being the preservative element in Christianity, has shivered the Church into fragments, and that union can be restored only by subordinating dogma to the free action of spiritual character. It is not that truth is a matter of in-

difference, but that our vision of it is imperfect, and the forms of thought through which we express it are necessarily shaped by the partial culture of a given time. Hence it is that great systems which once enshrined the spirit of truth, and revealed it to the reverent worshipper, at last repel the seeker after God, and hide the truth which they were intended to express. If their glory is fading away, we are gaining a more direct vision. If the intellect is often dumb before the Infinite, the pure in heart behold him, and the Spirit reveals the deep things of God. If the theological structures of the past, which are slowly yielding to decay, were glorious, much more that which remains, the inner heart of religion, the mystic vision, the immediate communion between the soul and God, the holy and loving character formed by the Spirit of God, exceed in glory, and only shine with a brighter lustre as things outward and ephemeral drift away.

Coincident with this changed attitude towards dogma is a slackening of sectarian zeal. That this, whatever evils may have attended it, fulfilled a noble function in the past, who can deny? Absolute self-devotion to a cause believed to be Divine must command our admiration. It created forcible and independent character, and enabled men, in obedience to the high behests of conscience, to win the battle of freedom against what may well have seemed overwhelming odds. As the hedge of the law preserved the simple monotheism of the ancient Jews against the encroachments of heathenism, so the belief that they were exclusive possessors of the truth of God gave to the sects the heroic courage which evil times demanded, and made

them steadfast in good works amid the scorn and opposition of the world. But now there is a wider survey of the kingdom of God. The sects themselves are acknowledging that that kingdom is not circumscribed by any of our little human enclosures. The walls of partition are crumbling away; men are stretching out brotherly hands to one another; and the unity of the Spirit is becoming a felt reality. With unveiled faces men encircle the throne of God, and in east and west, in north and south, they reflect the Divine radiance, and are being transfigured into sons of God from glory to glory. We know not yet what we shall be; but I seem to behold a kingdom of God embracing the wide world, and the great ideals of the blessed Christ reigning triumphant in the hearts of men, drawing together the nations of the world into one vast brotherhood, bound to one another by the golden chain of a common adoration and a mutual love. Yes, there had been a glory in the past, from the days of paradise to our own time, and through all the transience of earthly things, and all the strivings of the human spirit, a beam of Divine light has been shining; but, nevertheless, the perfect day is still before us. We must not speak of disillusionment or disenchantment, but rather of visions and revelations of the Lord. The past indeed is glorious, and we must never cease to honour its sages and its saints; yet it has no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excels. 'If that which is passing away was with glory, much more that which remains is in glory.'

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE VEIL UPON THE HEART

PAUL'S experience of the transience of religious modes of thought led him to preach a gospel 'not of the letter, but of the spirit';<sup>1</sup> for he perceived that a superstitious attention to the letter had such a deadening effect on men's minds that it made them blind to the quickening spirit of what they read. So it seemed to him that a veil lay upon the heart of the Jews, and concealed from them the deeper meaning of their own Scriptures. This presents only a particular instance of a very common defect, and suggests some thoughts on the nature of the veil which so often hides from us the real significance of what we read.

The great differences which prevail in the interpretation of the Scriptures, widely divergent meanings being often given to the same passage, show that there is either some obscurity in the Scriptures themselves or some defect in the minds of the interpreters. It can hardly be denied that the former explanation is applicable in the case of some passages, where, owing either to the corruption of the text or to an imperfect mode of expression, the meaning is really doubtful; but the variations are

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 6.

largely due to the second cause. Men come to their Bible full of preconceived opinions, and force it to say what they wish to hear. They torture the teaching even of Christ himself into a support of their prejudices, instead of reverently accepting it as a correction of their errors. How, then, shall we approach the Scriptures with some reasonable hope that we shall not go fatally astray in our understanding of them?

If we assume as a fundamental requisite truthfulness of mind, and a *sincere* desire to apprehend the real meaning of what we read, there are two kinds of qualification, widely different in their character, which are necessary for sound interpretation. The first is purely intellectual, and may be acquired by diligent study. We must be acquainted with the languages in which the several works are written, and apply the ordinary rules of grammar to the words before us. We must know the history of the times when the books were composed, and be versed in the thought and culture, in the controversies and religious tendencies, in the midst of which the writers lived. Those who have not the time and opportunity to acquire this knowledge for themselves must be content to take their facts from a commentary, and gain from it the knowledge which has an immediate bearing on the text.

It is not, however, my purpose to dwell on this intellectual equipment. It is essential to all sound interpretation; but it is not enough, and a man might be completely furnished with the most admirable scholarship, and yet fail to comprehend some of the deepest lessons which the Bible contains. What we most want to know is

not the precise meaning of a verse here or a verse there, but the inmost soul of the writer. We want to penetrate behind the dead letter into the living spirit, of which it is the imperfect, but still suggestive and revealing expression. We want to trust with the Psalmist, to love with John, to feel the glow of spiritual ardour with Paul, to worship in spirit and in truth with Jesus Christ, and recognize with him the constant presence of the Father. For this we need a spiritual qualification, a power of holy imagination and sympathy enriched by religious experience and the discipline of life. While this is wanting, a veil is upon our hearts, and the Bible becomes a lifeless theme for learned discussion, and ceases to be the vehicle of a kindling and quickening spirit. So, as it seemed to Paul, the Old Testament had become a dead and sealed book to the Jews. Their superstitious reverence for the letter, their artificial rules of interpretation, their minute and scrupulous knowledge of its exterior, only diverted their attention from its deepest and most permanent lessons, and, while they read, a veil was upon their heart. Paul speaks, we cannot doubt, from his own experience, and it is this fact which gives such force and value to his words. It is true, indeed, that his experience may have been to some extent peculiar to himself, and that others may not have found in the observance of the ancient law the weakness and darkness by which he was oppressed. Men are seldom governed entirely by the principles they profess, but are unconsciously influenced by the larger world around them, or by the healthy instincts of their own nature. But Paul committed himself with all the zeal of a bigot

to the teachings of the law, and therefore he may have felt more truly than others the proper tendencies and effects of two contrasted modes of thought and life. He had been brought up in Rabbinical methods, and the revelation of Christ came to him as a great emancipation. The scales had dropped from his eyes, and the Old Testament was now radiant with a spiritual truth and beauty which in his Pharisaic days he had failed to discern.

We may endeavour to illustrate this position by a few examples. When the Psalmist, expressing his confidence in God, says 'Blessed is the man that trusteth in him,' his words are perfectly simple, and yet how little do we really understand them till we have gone through a similar experience. If we have passed through storms of self-will and discontent and complaining into the calm haven of trust in a Divine guidance and meek surrender to the Divine will, then we know the meaning of that blessedness which, prior to some such experience, had been only an empty word. Or again, when Paul says 'All things work together for good to them that love God,' can we enter fully into the spirit of that saying before we have passed through some crisis of sorrow or trial, and found that our love to God transmutes every pain into a spiritual glory, and still educes good from seeming ill? When Jesus pronounces a benediction on the pure in heart, 'for they shall see God,' we cannot comprehend the depth of his words till in simplicity and guilelessness of thought we commit ourselves to the undefiled instincts of the soul, and the vision of the Holy One reveals itself to the eye of the spirit. Or, to borrow an example

from a more doctrinal expression, if Jesus is spoken of as a Saviour, how little meaning do we attach to the word till the power of that exalted life has mingled itself with our failure and sin, and is felt as a transforming energy which delivers us from selfish passions, low aims, and unworthy cares. And when we read '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,' we may be tempted to give to this profound utterance some hard and antiquarian, or some coarse dogmatic explanation, till we have laboured and suffered for others, and borne in our own loving hearts the pain of the world's sin; and then we begin to perceive the great spiritual law that the redemption of the world comes through the self-sacrifice of the good, and that love which is ready to bear stripes and scorn is the one power by which the ills of mankind can be healed.

These examples may show us how the meaning of very simple words may be hidden from us as by a veil, and with all our sharpness we may be unable to discern the religious experiences and the spiritual facts which form the most important part of Biblical revelation. And now we must ask, what is the nature of the veil that may thus lie upon the heart, and hide from us, as from the people of Jerusalem in the olden time, the things that belong to our peace? Speaking generally, it is a want of correspondence between our nature and that of the writers whom we seek to interpret. This want of correspondence, however, is of two very distinct kinds; and on each of these a few words may be said.

The first and darkest veil that can lie upon the heart is sin. A low and gross mind may be sharp and clever, but with all its cunning it cannot understand the things of the Spirit. There is an eternal antagonism between unrighteousness and the mind of Christ. The wicked may call him Lord, Lord, and have wrought miracles and even have prophesied in his name; but they are none of his; he never knew them; and they, with all their boasting, never knew him. But we must not forget how many are the gradations of sin. A mind wholly surrendered to sin would of course spread a veil, as of night, between us and God, and shut out from our hearts the most precious words of Scripture; but we may hope and believe that the veil is seldom so dense, and that generally light breaks here and there through its folds, allowing partial glimpses, while still hiding some rare aspect of spiritual truth. We need not think of those who in the eyes of the world are depraved and lost in sin. Sometimes they have more discernment than one who lives without reproach among his fellow men. It was the lost and fallen who harkened to John the Baptist, and knew that his message was from heaven. It was the publicans and sinners who hung, with kindling wonder and hope, upon the words of Christ, while the irreproachable leaders of religion crucified him. The vanity which fills a man with a sense of his own importance cannot see deeply into anything and casts away with a self-confident sneer the truth which he needs to save him, but which can save him only through pangs of humiliation. The self-indulgence which never thinks or labours for others knows not that it is really more blessed to

give than to receive. The resentment which preys like a vulture upon mangled self-love hears without response the commandment to love one's enemies, and repeats as a soulless phrase 'forgive us as we forgive.' It is not till we lay aside all this love of self, and surrender ourselves in lowliness and docility to the impression of words which have welled from the soul's deep life in God that we truly know and understand what the Spirit has spoken through the tongues of saints and prophets. Oh! to be so cleansed that no veil of sin should lie upon our hearts to blind us as we read.

The other veil to which I referred is the narrowness of our individual nature. The various temperaments of men determine, in a high degree, their power of religious discernment, so that what appeals strongly to one man may find no response from another. The absence of mutual understanding among religious parties is due, not to want of candour, but to a lack of breadth in the sympathies, and consequent inability to see things from any but one point of view. Puritan and Catholic, Evangelical and High-Churchman, are separated, not by the refusal of one or the other to consider the evidence, but by the whole bent and tendency of their respective natures. To each the bearing of Scripture on their tenets seems equally obvious; and it may do so because on the mind of each there is a veil which hides some balancing truth. If men would probe their thoughts instead of yielding to the antipathies of an ardent but undeveloped nature, they would come nearer to the fullness of Christ, and unexpected meanings would shine from familiar words. If we were suddenly gifted with some unimagined

sense, we should seem to have entered a new universe, and a whole realm of knowledge which is unrevealed to eye or ear would become plain. Sometimes in the life of the spirit a new sense does actually come, some new tenderness of feeling, some deeper apprehension of the Divine Presence, some consciousness of sin and weakness which casts us down in prayer for redemption; and this new sense makes of the old Scriptures a new book, and vivid meanings flash from many a page which hitherto had been a dead letter. Then we know that a veil had been upon our heart. Such an experience should make us humble and cautious, and, above all, charitable. So long as the veil is there we are not conscious of its presence; and while we hold with thankful confidence the truth which we see, we should remember that we know only in part, and that the antipathy which makes us plume ourselves on our manly reason or our rigid orthodoxy might all melt away in a diviner light.

Our narrowness of view may be caused not only by natural deficiency, but by the bias of education. It is difficult to read a book which has suffered from centuries of controversy without importing into its words meanings which they were not intended to bear, while the true spiritual lesson is hidden from sight by the veil of inherited dogma. This dogma is encompassed in our minds with venerable associations, and to maintain it appears to be an act of religious loyalty; and quite unconsciously we thrust the dogma into the Scriptures, and compel the writings of the first century to speak the thoughts of the Middle Ages. But this is not the worst of the evil. The use of the

Bible as a repertory of controversial texts drives away its genuine spirit, and the holiest words, when bandied to and fro by excited champions, lose their sanctity, and cease to awaken the reverence and awe of those who thus use them with profane lips. 'The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God,' and too often what men consider to be zeal for the faith only hides from them the true meaning of faith, and its solemn appeal to the conscience and the will.

It is not unlikely that Paul, in his pharisaic days, had suffered from all these obstructives to his spiritual vision. The pride of race, possibly personal ambition, the fiery zeal of a one-sided and enthusiastic nature, the venerable authority of an ancient law, and the intellectual attraction of an ingenious method of interpretation, all combined to hinder his perception of higher truth, and to make him the leading persecutor of the Christians. And as he surveyed from his Christian position the unbelief and hostility of his countrymen he naturally supposed that their vision was obscured by a similar veil, and that while they had a zeal for God, it was misdirected through lack of spiritual knowledge.

These things contain a lesson for ourselves. If there was a veil upon the heart of the Jews when Moses was read, I fear there is a veil upon the heart of Christendom in the reading of the New Testament, and the light still shines amid an uncomprehending darkness. Yea, a veil may be upon our own hearts, and the blessed Christ still standing among thorns and briers, knocking vainly for admission at the barred door of our self-will. What is the remedy? According to Paul, 'when

it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.' Let us not forget that the great Apostle is speaking out of his own experience. He had come out of darkness into a marvellous light, and the glory of the ancient revelation of God had paled before the higher glory of the new. It was the spirit of Christ that had wrought this change in him, shattering his old prejudices and bigotry, and bringing him out into a large and free life of heavenly communion and love. And so, he believed, from the hearts of all who accepted this new manifestation of God the veil should pass away, and the eternal glory shine in their darkness. Since the time of Paul numbers of longing souls have set their seal upon his words, and have found redemption where he found it. What, then, is meant by this apostolic assurance?

Turning to the Lord does not mean asserting some dogma about him, and taking credit to ourselves for our correct belief, nor does it mean shouting *Hosanna* to his name, and pluming ourselves on honouring him with our empty plaudits, but it implies looking towards him with such humility, faith, and love that we are gradually transfigured into the same image by the power of his spirit. It is thus that Paul himself explains the figure of the veil. The disciples encircle the central light, which is thus reflected as in a mirror, and the glorious image appears in each. To see him as he is is to become like him, at least to the extent of reflecting some pure beam from the full-orbed radiance. The spirit of Divine Sonship is kindled in our hearts, and as we yield ourselves to its quickening power we are transfigured from glory to glory. The veil of sin, of party aims, and of

narrow sympathies drops away, and the deep utterances of prophets, and of the great Teacher himself, come fraught with fresh meaning to our awakened minds. Thus it is through the Spirit that the things of the Spirit are revealed, and without this we can never pass beyond the mere externals of interpretation, or understand the profoundest lessons of the New Testament.

One of the most hopeful signs of our own day is the growing disposition to turn to the Lord, and seek humbly for the spirit of his life and teaching, instead of surrendering oneself to party claims and the traditions of men. The time for any formulated intellectual agreement may still be far distant; and yet I believe that the really dominant ideas of religious men are nearer one another than they have been for ages. Old watch-words, venerable organizations, inherited antipathies, and ancient creeds which many profess but few would formulate at the present time, still keep brothers apart, and the weight of a mighty tradition which has swayed the minds of men for centuries cannot readily yield to the pressure of the newer thought. But as men turn more and more to the Lord, and become more deeply conscious of his Spirit within themselves, the veil which hides them from one another will drop away, and behind the many outward forms of thought and practice they will recognize the same image of the Son of God, and will begin to clasp brotherly hands across the crumbling walls of partition. Oh! that those to whom it has been given to breathe the air of freedom may play their part faithfully in working out this great result. Let them not use freedom as an occasion for self-will in the domain

either of intellect or of morals, but stand fast only in that freedom wherewith Christ has made them free. Turning to him, we enter the wide fellowship of all faithful souls, and catching a vivid ray from his humility and faith and holiness and love share that Divine and eternal life which he, above other sons of men, has made manifest in the world.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE KINGDOM OF GOD

THE earliest teaching of Christianity proclaimed the nearness of a kingdom of God. By this phrase it expressed the highest ideal that could be presented to human aspiration and hope ; and the teaching of Christ especially abounds in illustrations of its nature, of the spiritual laws by which it is governed, and of the conditions under which alone men can be recognized as its subjects. It has two aspects, according to which it is sometimes spoken of as present, sometimes as future. It is present in individuals so far as they are ruled by the Spirit of God ; for it is not an outward realm into which we can enter by change of place, but is within, in the secret recesses of the soul, hidden from the noise and display of human observation. In this sense our modern equivalent is the religious or spiritual or godly life, or the ideal of character which we ought to seek and to cherish. But when we take a wider view, it is future ; for it can find its perfect realization only in a divinely constituted society. This, alas ! is still far away ; and if the prophet declares that it is at hand, it is because his vision pierces through the mist of years, and the brilliance seems to bring it nearer

than it really is. It is indeed always at hand as a spiritual sphere above the world of sense, seeking our homage, and offering the highest communion that is possible to man; but neither in Church nor State has the prayer 'Thy kingdom come' been rendered obsolete through the glory of its advent.

Paul generally refers to the kingdom of God as future, and looks forward to the visible return of Christ to establish it in the world. Those who were deemed worthy to enter it could do so only through the gates of death, or through a wonderful change of the corruptible into the incorruptible; for flesh and blood could not inherit the kingdom of God.<sup>1</sup> From that inheritance all the unrighteous, all those who indulged in various evil practices, would be excluded.<sup>2</sup> The essential feature of the kingdom, accordingly, lay in the spiritual character of its members; and that character might be spoken of as present, so that, in a certain sense, the kingdom might be described as already existing, and laying its imperative commands on those who claimed to be its subjects. Even here, so far as the Christian society could be regarded as representing it, it was 'not in word, but in power,' not in boastful and presumptuous talk, but in the spiritual energy of a sincere and unselfish character.<sup>3</sup> In one passage, where Paul is dealing with differences of opinion and practice, he describes its permanent nature in few, but significant words, which contain one of his great and comprehensive thoughts: 'The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, and

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 50.    <sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10; Gal. v. 21; Eph. v. 5.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 20.

peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.'<sup>1</sup> When read with their context, these words present three contrasted conceptions of the kingdom of God, and therefore opposing ideals of human perfection—a theme which is susceptible of a far wider than its ephemeral and local application. The Apostle of the Gentiles had many practical questions to deal with; and while pronouncing a firm decision of his own, he seeks to convince his readers by setting before them the principle on which his decision rests. Accordingly, though the Epistles are largely occupied with controversies which have long passed away, he so treats of them as to lift us to a higher point of view, from which we may discern the solution of many analogous questions. That we may clearly understand the principle in the present instance we must briefly notice the temporary dispute.

If we judge from the chapter in which it is discussed, we must suppose that the Church at Rome consisted largely of disciples who plumed themselves on the complete enjoyment of Christian liberty. They did not acknowledge any religious distinction between clean and unclean, between different kinds of food, or the superior sanctity of certain days. They were the emancipated, who walked in the strength of Christian faith, and contemptuously obtruded their freedom on men whom they considered to be weak in faith, and who were still governed by time-hallowed scruples. The scrupulous men, on the other hand, severely condemned the laxity of those who esteemed every day alike, and who indulged their appetite without any regard to ancient prohibitions. Paul agreed

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xiv. 17.

in opinion with the freer party. He knew and was persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing was unclean of itself. But this was not sufficient to determine the rule of conduct in all circumstances. There ought to be no discord in the Church, no judging and despising of one another. From the liberal point of view the old distinctions were matters of perfect indifference; but those who so regarded them were bound to remember that, though nothing was unclean of itself, yet to him who believed anything to be unclean it was unclean, and if, by social pressure, he was induced, while still unconvinced, to act against his scruples, he committed sin. On the other hand, it was no sin for the man whose faith had freed him to accommodate himself to the needs of his weaker brother; and because it was no sin, the law of love required him to yield, lest he should destroy with his meat him for whom Christ died. In making this concession he would sacrifice nothing essential; for though the kingdom of God, when rightly understood, proclaimed and established liberty, liberty was not its basis, and things in themselves allowable might be dispensed with out of consideration for the feelings of others. 'The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.' This statement includes by implication the corresponding truth, that the kingdom of God is not scrupulosity about meats and drinks or the observance of days. Thus both parties were lifted to a higher level, and united in the grandeur of a common outlook, which transcended all their differences.

The description of the kingdom of God which is here given is highly significant; and though it was

written in relation to an ephemeral little dispute in the Roman Church, and we need not suppose that Paul was aiming at a precise definition, nevertheless his glowing words contain his essential thought, and in dwelling on them we may find lessons which are valuable for all time.

The kingdom of God, then, or, as we should say, the spiritual life, or the life of God in the soul of man, is, in the first place, righteousness, the observance of the moral law. This was equally open to both parties, and equally obligatory, and to some extent was violated by their mutual re-primination. According to this teaching Christianity is an ethical, and not a dogmatic or ceremonial religion. This view is not confined to a single passage, but pervades this great Epistle, which throughout regards the righteousness of God, real, Divine, eternal righteousness, as the ideal of human perfection. Paul's impeachment of the older religions was that they had failed to produce a kingdom of righteousness. The heathen religions, with their idolstrous and superstitious ceremonies, hardly attempted the difficult task, and philosophy, with its fine precepts and grandiose phrases, made no appeal to the masses of mankind. The Jewish Law, in itself 'holy and just and good,' set forth the severe lines of duty, but failed (so Paul himself had experienced) to reach the roots of sin within the heart.

In his struggles with this problem Christianity brought to him two new thoughts, which in him were so victorious that he expected them to conquer the world.

In the first place, real righteousness did not consist in formal obedience to a commandment, but

in an inward power of *holy life*, from which the good deeds required by the moral law would spontaneously spring, and which would instinctively repudiate the bad deeds which were forbidden. This was in full accordance with the teaching of Christ. The things that defile the man were not the things that entered into him, but those that flowed from a polluted heart; and the baffled desire for an evil pleasure was as truly sin as if the desire had completed the deed. The reality of this inward life in Christ, the supreme beauty of holiness and love dwelling serenely in his soul, the glory of God shining in his face, had revealed a real communion of Divine righteousness as the goal of our humanity. Hence Paul described Christian obligation as 'the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus,' and in this inward law found his emancipation from all that was merely outward and temporary.

The second truth, which had come to him through his own experience, was that the life of God in the soul was not the creation of the will, but was the gift of God, whose Spirit alone could cleanse the secret places of the heart, and make a holy temple of the wayward body. Yet the action of the will was not superseded, except perhaps in some moments of high communion when a man was driven by the Spirit, and all volition seemed for the moment suspended. But we do not habitually move upon these heights, and, though we cannot create holiness or love, it remains with us to be faithful to the heavenly vision, and obedient to the quiet voice which whispers in the conscience. We have the fearful, though exalted power of quenching the Spirit; and he who would be truly

righteous must cleave in faith to the eternal Source of righteousness, and receive with meek submission whatever his loving will appoints.

It is now apparent that, while the kingdom of God is righteousness, it is not merely ethical; for the foundations of its righteousness are *deeply* laid in religion. Here again Paul followed the leading of his Lord. The teaching of the Sermon on the Mount and of most of the parables is, in the main, simply moral, and is entirely free from metaphysical speculation and definition; and, nevertheless, it assumes the reality of a vision of God, the propriety of acts of worship, and the nearness of Divine Beneficence ruling over all. Indeed the phrase which is the subject of all the teaching, 'the kingdom of God,' is itself an expression of religion, and of religion in its most intimate sense, the reign of God in the hearts of men. But the primary manifestations and essential requirements of this inward and spiritual religion were moral, and not doctrinal or ceremonial. The one only distinction which Christ recognizes between those who are accepted and those who are rejected is that between the righteous and the wicked. Thus Paul simply sums up the governing principles of Christ's teaching when he refers to the kingdom of God as the ideal aim of Christian discipleship, and declares that that kingdom is righteousness.

Nevertheless, righteousness is not a sufficient description. The word righteousness, though used in a comprehensive sense, rests, like its Greek equivalent, on the idea of justice, the conformity to a rule of right between man and man. Now, perfect justice, absolute fairness in our actions and

our judgments, is a very lofty, and, I fear, a rare virtue ; but it might conceivably be hard and cold, and need to be balanced by qualities more amiable and attractive. These are suggested by the word 'peace.' I believe, indeed, that nothing tends more powerfully than pure justice to produce peace, and that differences become amicable when there is a consciousness of real candour and justice on each side ; but it is well that the peace of the Divine rule should be distinctly brought out.

This peace has two aspects. There is, first, the inward peace, the subsidence of all tumultuous passion, when the stormy waves of selfish desire sink before the rebuke of the Divine voice. Peace is founded upon trust, and this again on faith in the nearness and goodness of God. It makes us patient and calm when things go contrary to our will. It is our consoler under all suffering and sorrow. It belongs to a region above all the frets and cares of the world, where, as on a mountain peak, from which the earth beneath is hidden by a glory of illuminated cloud, we gaze into the serene heaven, and lose ourselves in the immensity of God. It is known to the religious heart in all ages. It breathes from the deepest faith of Israel — 'Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright ; for the end of that man is peace.' 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.' It is the precious legacy which Christ left to his disciples — 'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you ; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.' It is the peace, passing all understanding, which keeps our hearts and minds when our

desires are turned into the sacrificial offering of prayer, and the answer of Divine Love comes down into our waiting hearts.

This inward peace tends to produce outward peace; for the man who is at peace within himself becomes, through the assuaging power of his own calmness, a peacemaker, and is neither easily provoked nor given to provocation. His efforts, however, in the mingled good and evil of our world, are not always successful; and, accordingly, Paul exhorted the Roman disciples, if it were possible, so far as lay in them, to live peaceably with all men, and added to his definition of the kingdom of God the advice, 'So then let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another.' The true subjects of the kingdom are never the violators of peace. If that kingdom were universal, wars would cease, and men would work together in brotherly co-operation for the good of all. If rival claims arose, whether in international relations or in social and economical questions, they would be settled by law and justice, without any violation of goodwill. 'Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called sons of God.'

The third characteristic of the kingdom of God is 'joy in the Holy Spirit.' Christianity has been sometimes represented as a religion of sorrow and gloom. This misconception may have arisen partly from the application to Jesus of the words of Isaiah, 'a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,' an application which has no warrant in the records of his life. There was indeed the deep anguish of the closing hours; but, before his final conflict with the forces of evil, we may rather

suppose that he lived in a radiant joy, which shed a holy light on the sins and sorrows of those whom he addressed. This aspect of his character is indeed insisted on by the fourth Evangelist—'These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may be in you.' 'These things I speak in the world that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.' Joy is one of the notes of the New Testament. Followers of a martyr, and exposed to martyrdom, the disciples 'rejoiced greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory.' Paul himself, in perils by land and sea, stoned, beaten, imprisoned, in the midst of sorrow was 'always rejoicing,' and calling on his disciples to 'rejoice in the Lord always.'

This joy is closely associated with that peace of mind which removes so many unworthy causes of depression and anxiety. 'The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace'; and Paul's prayer for the Church in Rome is that the God of hope may fill them with 'all joy and peace in believing.' A joy which rises above sorrow, and dwells triumphant amid the shattered remnants of worldly hopes, is heavenly in its nature and origin: it is 'joy in the Holy Spirit.' Like righteousness and peace it comes through faith, faith in the eternal Love, Love not distant and unapproachable, but felt and known within, the abiding life of goodness and beauty which marks the children of God. There is no more exalted joy than that which attends the first awakening of the soul to its Divine relations, the first conscious witness of the Spirit with our spirits that we are children of God, the first sincere uplifting of the heart to God as our Father, ever near, ever helpful, ever loving. Even the ascent from a

lower to a higher form of spiritual faith fills the heart with an unearthly joy, and the rapt face tells of the beatitude within. But something depends upon ourselves. If we are to follow after things that make for peace, though peace is 'the fruit of the Spirit,' we ought also to follow after things that make for joy. For joy is radiant, and not confined to him who feels it. It sheds its gleam on all around it; and as the selfish grumbling and discontent of one makes many unhappy by diffusing an atmosphere of gloom, so nothing tends so powerfully to brighten and alleviate the necessary trials and sorrows of earth as the holy joy of a trusting and loving heart.

The words on which we have been dwelling are the expression of a noble faith, a faith which may be held with a passionate intensity of conviction. They were written to allay a petty and fleeting controversy; yet they contain the principle of a universal religion. Righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit are not confined to any Church, and there is no Church which would venture formally to deny their value, or even their supremacy. But strange to say, on account of their universality they have never been incorporated in a creed, and in the services of the churches they are never uttered as a confession of faith. Paul's grandest and most original utterances are neglected or despised, and a curious fabric of theology, built on a few passages of obscure or doubtful meaning, has assumed his name. If Christendom is ever to return to unity, it can only be the unity of the Spirit, gained through the acceptance of apostolic teaching, that the kingdom of God does not consist of doubtful disputations,

of points of doctrine or forms of ritual, about which men may reasonably differ, but of the spiritual principles which all alike acknowledge, but all too much neglect. This is the basis of Liberal Christianity, which allows every man to be fully persuaded in his own mind in regard to those things about which good men differ, and welcomes a brother and a child of God in every one in whom are manifest the grand tokens of spiritual character, 'righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.'

## CHAPTER X

### THE CHURCH

FROM time to time, especially during the war, various statements have been made, with regret or with exultation according to different views, that the Church and even Christianity itself have failed. In this reproach the word Church does not refer to one particular section of Christendom, but to every denomination of professing Christians; and it is in that large sense that I shall use it throughout this chapter.

What precisely is meant by the proclamation of failure is not altogether clear. In regard to the Church I suppose the intention is to blame its responsible teachers for not having inculcated the principles of Christian morality, and insisted on their application to international affairs. How far this censure is fairly applicable I have no means of judging, and can only hope that it may induce the teachers of religion to pay more attention to its moral requirements, and to insist on the universality of their obligation.

The statement that Christianity has failed has no such easy explanation. In a certain sense it is a mere truism. Christianity is still far away from its goal. Its earliest aim was to convert the world

into a kingdom of God ; it has not yet brought half the world even into nominal adhesion. It intended its disciples to maintain the highest spiritual character, to be the light of the world, the salt of the earth, the witnesses everywhere for God and his righteousness. Multitudes of those who are professedly Christian have no such characteristics. If these facts constitute failure, then we may say that all efforts to ameliorate social conditions have been failures ; for none has ever reached its goal. But if we understand the great Teacher's comparison of the kingdom of God to leaven hidden in three measures of meal, we shall see that Christianity has not failed, but has performed, and is still performing its anticipated work.

The Christian Church displayed its finest features through the early centuries of contempt and persecution ; for then none but men of deep sincerity would belong to it. But when the empire took it over, and converted Christianity from a free and spiritual into a coercive and dogmatic religion, the whole aspect of the Church was gradually changed, and the genuine religion of Christ became a hidden leaven even in the midst of its professed adherents. But that leaven has never lost its power, and has never ceased to work. The Church, with all its corruptions, has had its long line of saints and prophets, of philanthropists and teachers, who have borne witness of Divine things, and striven nobly, and not without effect, for the redemption of the world. And many a man who is too often swayed by lower impulses, and is far indeed from the ideal of the Son of God, is nevertheless conscious that this deep and hidden life is working within him, and slowly claiming him for

purser worship and higher duty. Christianity has indeed failed to cure the world of all its terrible evils; but it has not failed, in that it is an indestructible power, for ever striving against those evils, commanding the affrighted homage even of those who in their hearts despise and hate it, and bringing to those who humbly and lovingly accept it a beauty of holiness, a serenity of peace, an activity of goodness, which reflect, however dimly, the transcendent character of its Founder.

What, then, let us ask, is the ideal of the Christian Church? What is the aim which, however imperfectly, ought to direct its activities? We should naturally turn to the doctrine of Christ himself, were it not that the subject is almost entirely absent from his teaching. In three of the Gospels the word does not occur. In Matthew alone we have the statement, of doubtful meaning, 'On this rock I will build my Church,' which, however we explain it, says nothing of the nature and purpose of the Church. Historically the Church arose after the death of Jesus, when his disciples met together to confirm one another in their loyalty to sacred memories, and to form a society for propagating his religion in the world. Happily, several letters composed by the greatest of the early missionaries have been preserved, and we may find in them an answer to our questions. Paul, indeed, writing on various occasions, and in relation to local circumstances, never lays down any systematic doctrine about the Church; but in his numerous references he flings out, as is his custom, great and suggestive thoughts, which it may be well for us to consider and take to heart.

To begin with, the name is highly instructive,

The word translated 'Church' properly means an assembly duly convened. To the reader of classical Greek it is most familiar as the assembly of Athenian citizens summoned by the public crier. It is used in Acts of the meeting of citizens in connexion with the riotous proceedings at Ephesus. In the Greek translation of the Old Testament it is frequently used of the assembly or congregation of Israel, or of the Lord; and it is perhaps from this circumstance that it passed into Christian usage. By the time the Epistles were written the word had become so technical that it is used without any addition to denote the groups of Christians in any locality; but when a more formal title is needed, these groups are described as 'the assemblies of God' (eleven times), or 'the assembly in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,'<sup>1</sup> or, only once, 'the assemblies of Christ.'<sup>2</sup> From the application of the term to the various local assemblies the transition was easy to its collective use, and accordingly the word 'assembly' is employed several times in the singular to denote the entire Christian society. We learn from these facts that the Church included the whole group of believers, and not merely a select order; that the Christians, however scattered, were consciously united as a single society; and that the Christian congregations formed, amid the heathen and idolatrous populations, a theistic Church under the leadership of Jesus Christ.

These congregations of worshippers were still, it would seem, very loosely organized; for in enumerating various functions of the Church Paul speaks of apostles, prophets, teachers, evangelists,

<sup>1</sup> 1 and 2 Thess. i. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. xvi. 16

and others,<sup>1</sup> and only once in the letters addressed to churches does he refer to 'superintendents and ministers,'<sup>2</sup> both of them common words, but rendered by our translators 'bishops and deacons,' giving the wholly false impression that they were officers peculiar to the Christian Church. Paul was in no official sense 'a deacon,' but he applies the word several times to himself, and he even describes the Roman government as a 'deacon of God'<sup>3</sup>; but in these cases the word is translated 'minister.'

This looseness of organization, however, suggested to the Apostle a figure of speech which was very fruitful in its application. The spiritual unity of the Christian society, combined with a great variety of functions, resembled the unity of the human body, in which the several limbs are all subordinate to one spirit, and contribute in a variety of ways towards one supreme end. Accordingly, the Church is the body of Christ, possessed through all its scattered members of an organic unity, and working out its purpose through the gifts which are bestowed on mankind in innumerable sorts and measures. This unity amid diversity is 'the unity of the Spirit,'<sup>4</sup> the common pervasive life which reduces to harmony and peace the widely different operations through which it seeks expression. 'So we, the many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another.'<sup>5</sup>

Paul completes the metaphor of the body by describing Christ as its head. The use of the word 'head' to denote the controlling authority is so natural that it has virtually ceased to be figurative,

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xii. 28; Eph. iv. 11.   <sup>2</sup> Philip. i. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. xiii. 4.   <sup>4</sup> Eph. iv. 3.   <sup>5</sup> Rom. xii. 5.

as when we speak of the head of an institution or the head of the army. The Apostle himself uses it in this general sense when he says that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of Christ is God.<sup>1</sup> But in relation to the Church as a 'body' the metaphor is fully maintained. From Christ as its head 'all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love.'<sup>2</sup> Thus the metaphor brings before us two important truths. Christ is himself part of the body, though the supreme and controlling part; and the Church, so far as it is not diseased, is the organ of his activity, animated and pervaded by his directing purpose. The one criterion, then, by which it must be decided whether a church or an individual member of it is really Christian is not the creed or the ritual, but the possession of the Spirit of Christ. For a limb which is no longer penetrated by the common life or responsive to the direction of the head, has practically ceased to be part of the body, and has become an encumbrance. To use the figure of the vine and the branches: if a branch has lost the germinating sap and bears no fruit, it is cut off and cast into the fire, having practically ceased to be part of the vine. Accordingly Paul declares quite explicitly that 'if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.'<sup>3</sup>

What, then, is the Spirit of Christ, and what are its characteristics? We must gather our clearest and fullest answer from a docile and reverent reading of the Gospels; but bearing in mind the

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 3.   <sup>2</sup> Eph. iv. 16.   <sup>3</sup> Rom. viii. 9.

impression thus produced, we may learn much from Paul's interpretation. Christ was 'the Son of God according to the spirit of holiness'<sup>1</sup>; and this spirit was identical with the Spirit of God. It followed that not only Christ, but 'as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God'<sup>2</sup>; and men were thus led through the indwelling of the Spirit.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, the Christian society was a holy temple of God,<sup>4</sup> and the individual human body was a temple of the Holy Spirit, in which God was to be glorified.<sup>5</sup>

We have thus reached a thought of wonderful exaltation, yet one which, when we properly apprehend it, commends itself to us as true. The various faculties, of which we are apt to be so vain, as if they were of our own creation, are manifestations of that Divine Power which pervades the universe. But while our life is thus rooted in God, we are not pantheistically identified with him; for we have our personal will, whereby we may be 'alienated from the life of God,'<sup>6</sup> and use his holiest gifts for selfish and degrading ends. To redeem men from this alienation, to deepen their consciousness of Divine Sonship, and to strengthen their fidelity to this high calling, was the great purpose of Christ. He lived and taught in the consciousness of the indwelling God, and drew all his wisdom from the monitions of the Spirit. And so, according to Paul, he became himself a 'life-giving spirit.'<sup>7</sup> His persuasive power over men was due, not so much to particular words and

<sup>1</sup> Rom. i. 4.    <sup>2</sup> Rom. viii. 14.    <sup>3</sup> Rom. viii. 9.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17.    <sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

<sup>6</sup> Eph. iv. 18.    <sup>7</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 45.

deeds as to the whole quality, or, as we say, the spirit of his life. He possessed that magnetic personality which we observe in such various degrees among the greatest men, and through the force of his own life communicated that life to others, and so brought them into his own harmony with the life of God, and awakened their consciousness of Divine Sonship. If we inquire more in detail into the qualities of the Spirit, we may answer in the words of Paul: 'The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control,'<sup>1</sup> and it destroys the inordinate and selfish passions by which the temple of God is desecrated.

We now see that what constitutes a Christian, according to the teaching of Paul, is not the profession of a creed, though the deep-seated faith will express itself in terms of thought; nor the observance of a particular ritual, though every assembly for common worship must have some kind of ritual; nor even a prescribed form of moral activity, though this is a necessary outcome of the inward life; but the indwelling of the Spirit of God, recognized and interpreted through its manifestation in Christ; an inward fountain of Divine power and love, which overflows into an endless variety of channels, all of which it clothes with the perennial verdure and beauty of holiness. The Church is the entire body of those who are thus ruled by the Spirit of Christ; and as the body has a richer and more varied life than any single member, in like manner the Church, so far as it is true to its ideal, supplies a more complete expression of the Spirit than any individual, and is,

<sup>1</sup> Gal. v. 22, 23.

as Paul says, 'the fulness of him that filleth all in all.'<sup>1</sup> The members severally have a diversity of gifts, bestowed in partial measures, but all are marked by one spirit of dedication and unselfishness, and co-operate lovingly in maintaining the larger life of the whole.

From this view it is easy to deduce the supreme function of the Church in its relation to the world. As the body of Christ, it must be the organ of his activity; and as Christ was made a life-giving spirit, it must impart life, that only true and eternal life which is for ever with God, and bring a Divine order into the chaos of rude passions, of fierce competition, of mean jealousies, of unscrupulous ambition and greed. It must break down the deadly barriers of suspicion and ill will and selfish grasping between class and class, and between nation and nation, and bring the madness of arrogance and hatred to sit humbly at the feet of justice and love. And it must teach men who worship the power of lawless will that the will which submits itself humbly and trustfully to the guidance of love is, as the persecuted Church of old amply proved, far more powerful than the will which is the blind slave of its own unhallowed desires.

For the accomplishment of this purpose it is obvious that many agencies are required. The sympathy of the same spiritual life draws men together for common worship; and from this natural movement has sprung the distinctive organization of the Church, setting apart properly qualified men to lead the worship, so that in Paul's words, all things may be done 'decently and in order.'<sup>2</sup> Another important function is that of

<sup>1</sup> Eph. i. 23.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 40.

teaching the vital principles of Christian truth and duty ; and this is fulfilled not only by the clergy and ministers of the several denominations, but by a multitude of voluntary teachers in Sunday schools, and through the sweet influences of Christian homes. And again, men of quite special aptitude are needed for the propagation of Christianity among heathen or less advanced peoples. ' But all these worketh one and the same Spirit, dividing to each one severally as he will,'<sup>1</sup> and apart from the Spirit they are reduced to a deadening formalism. Life can be communicated only through personality ; and the teaching or prophesying of a dead soul will never stir the slumbering deeps in another's heart. And, conversely, the spiritual force of high character is not confined to any calling. Every occupation which is needed for the welfare of our complex society is intrinsically Divine, and affords an opportunity for the manifestation of the life-giving spirit ; and the ability which fits men for their various pursuits is the gift of God, to be used in the exercise of love towards him and towards mankind. The humblest labourer in the great field of industry may, through the lowliness and purity of a Divine manhood, display the majesty of the Spirit ; and the wealthy man who directs far-reaching affairs in business or in the State may, by his noble and honourable character, and his loving consideration towards all who are dependent on him, prove that he is led by the Spirit of God, and unconsciously exert that quickening and redeeming power which belongs to every true member of the Church of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xii. 11.

I am aware that in thus attempting to describe the true character and function of the Christian Church I have presented an ideal which we may sadly think is impossible of attainment. But we must not on that account withdraw our eyes from the heavenly vision. It is as a beacon-light set on a hill to guide our uncertain steps, a glory of God of which we all come short, but which nevertheless shines within us, illumining the dark places of our souls, and attracting us ever forward towards the perfection that is to be. Let no man despair or excuse himself because the claims of the gospel are too high for human frailty ; for those who have experienced its kindling life know that it is a 'power of God unto salvation,' and though its working within them may, through the weakness of their nature, be slow and imperfect, and they may sometimes seem to gaze helplessly into its infinite splendour, they are far other than they would have been if they had never known it. The ideal of imperfect and progressive creatures must be always above them ; but while we gaze upon it, we are being transfigured into its likeness from glory to glory through the indwelling power of the Spirit.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT

**A**LTHOUGH the historical evidence does not represent Paul as the first to apprehend the universal genius of Christianity, there can be no doubt that he saw it with rare clearness, became its most prominent defender, and, in searching for its fundamental principle, was fascinated by a vision of one vast brotherhood of men bound together by the Spirit of Christ. Not only does he repeatedly insist that the religious distinction between Jew and Gentile was abolished, but he takes a wider view, and declares that as there is 'one God and Father of all,'<sup>1</sup> there cannot be 'Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free: but Christ is everything, and in all,'<sup>2</sup> or, in other words 'there can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither slave nor free, there cannot be male and female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.'<sup>3</sup> Such was the vision which, amid all his afflictions, filled him with abounding joy as he looked upon the white and seamless robe of Christ. But he might have wept bitter tears if he could have pierced through the

<sup>1</sup> Eph. iv. 6; and see Rom. iii. 29, 30.   <sup>2</sup> Col. iii. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Gal. iii. 28.

centuries, and beheld that robe defiled and tattered, and only here and there some little shred retaining its pristine beauty.

We are told that the infant Church in Jerusalem exhibited a beautiful and brotherly unity, 'and the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul.'<sup>1</sup> This was the natural result of a newly awakened enthusiasm under the impulse of a powerful and beloved Leader. But even in Jerusalem, when the number of the disciples increased, murmuring and complaints began to be heard.<sup>2</sup> When the new religion spread among the Gentiles there arose a sharp cleavage of opinion respecting the terms on which they should be received into the society; and this unhappily led to bitter recrimination. Paul stood forward as the most prominent defender of Gentile liberty, claiming a position above the dividing lines, and pointing to a 'unity of the Spirit' which rose far above the walls of separation. But even his own favourite churches were dragged into the conflict. He had to write to the Galatians words of argument and appeal to keep them at the higher level of spiritual thought; and most of his Epistles have deep traces of the sectarian strife. In Corinth the disputatious Greeks ranged themselves under different names. Paul, Apollos, Cephas; and so sadly had the worldly spirit corroded the hearts of disciples that there was not only individual sin of a most heinous kind, but the Lord's Supper was conducted with a revolting irreverence that would be incredible if the testimony came from a hostile witness. From that time to this the unity of the Spirit enfolding all mankind, or even embracing

<sup>1</sup> Acts iv. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Acts vi. 1.

the small enclosure of the Church, has been a matter of memory or of aspiration, a glorious dream of Divine harmony and beauty ; and whatever unity there has been has sprung rather from human compulsion in Church or State than from the moulding and combining influences of the Divine Spirit.

In our own day there seems to be a sighing amongst the various churches for something more universal than existing divisions permit of, a desire that the sects may merge into some higher unity which can comprehend them all, a waiting, as it were, for a pentecostal flame to kindle our holiest affections, and for the melting of our Babel voices into one harmonious hymn of faith and gratitude and love.

The consideration of this subject may involve some little repetition, which, however, is necessary for a connected view.

As bearing on this question we may observe that there are two different aspects in which we may regard human nature, its variety and its sameness.

In casting our eyes round upon men and their pursuits the endless variety is probably the first thing that arrests our attention. We readily distinguish each man from every other by his appearance, his character, his habits. In those things in which there seems to be the greatest uniformity we observe material differences as soon as we extend our view so as to embrace large groups or nations. Different ages and peoples have the most various manners and customs, laws and modes of government. Moral usages, which might be supposed to rest on an immovable basis, slowly shift their ground, and undergo successive modifica-

tious. Research into the secrets of nature has been often obliged to review its theories, and in modern times has altered our whole conception of the universe; and the results of speculative thought are proverbially uncertain and multiform. So also the endeavours of art flow in no unalterable channel, but seek directions infinitely varied; Egyptian art is not the same as Grecian, nor Grecian as Christian. Language, so indispensable as a means of mutual intercourse, ramifies into a multitude of dialects; and even what we call the same language insensibly changes from century to century. Wherever we turn, the sense of variety is forced upon us, till we are almost tempted to regard the human race as a loose aggregate of individuals, each possessing a nature of his own, and bound to the rest only by the artificial ties of mutual interest and convenience.

But looking deeper, we observe that beneath this apparently hopeless diversity of manifestation there is an underlying unity, and that human nature, in its inner springs, is the same from age to age. Penetrating behind the forms or modes by which the hidden life expresses itself in the world, and reaching the passions, and sentiments, and affections by which the heart is swayed, we discover a chain which binds us all together in one family, and throws around the variety of our practice the unity of a common nature. However changeable may be the forms of thought, of virtue, of art, yet the great laws of intellect remain the same, and our reverence for goodness, and our admiration for beauty vary only in degree, but not in essence. We sympathize with sorrows over which centuries have rolled. Our hearts beat in

unison with a love whose drama was played out in the morning twilight of history. We recognize the stirrings of a kindred life in the contests of ambition, the thirst for splendour and power, the jealousies, the intrigues, even the vices of a civilization whose palaces have long been buried in the dust of antiquity. And the struggles of conscience, the pains of remorse, the self-abnegation of repentance, the endeavour to subject the waywardness of passion to the authority of law, and the feeling after an eternal object of trust amid the shadows which flit across the mortal scene, were the same in ancient Palestine as in modern England. Thus we perceive that the endless variety which exists in the outer life of man is the blossoming of the same essential nature, and that beneath the differences of individuals, of parties, of nations, of periods, there is still maintained a wonderful unity of the human spirit.

The law here indicated, which prevails in the rest of our nature, is no less observable when we turn our attention to religion. Here, too, ceaseless variety flows from an underlying unity. When we regard the outward aspects of religion, it breaks itself up into innumerable subdivisions; but when we penetrate to its heart, these reunite themselves in a common source, and disappear in a few grand sentiments which belong to us as human beings. It is true, indeed, that the religious sentiments are susceptible of culture and growth, that they are bestowed in various proportions, and that they exist in greater purity and force, and in greater richness of combination, in some than in others. It is also true that differences in their manifestation are in part due to their feebleness or perversion.

But it is no less true that where they exist in the greatest purity and fullness they seek different modes of expression, and instead of presenting human character clipped into an ugly uniformity, they exhibit it in ever changing lines of beauty, and accomplish their complete work by the very diversity of their operation. Reverence is not a feeling which can obtain vent only in some prescribed ritual, but breathes itself through the whole demeanour, and may be found alike in the adornments lavished upon the place where the soul would catch its nearest vision of God, and in the simplicity which closes every sense and disregards all earthly beauty when the spirit bows down before its invisible king. Love shapes for itself its own course, and now appears in the renunciation of the ordinary ties of life that some special work may be fulfilled, and now in the grateful, tender, and patient discharge of every social duty. Shall we have less esteem for the reverence or the love because it pursues a course different from that which ours seeks, or shall we not rather forget the sensible differences in the spiritual identity? It is the same blood which flows now to the head, now to the feet, stimulating at one time the vigour of thought, and again the activity of limb; and so it is the same Spirit which creates all the higher forms of the religious life, making them, in spite of our unbelief, mutually dependent, and constraining them all unconsciously to work together for the same great end, the exaltation of the human soul and its conformity to the image of God.

But if this be true when we regard the instinctive tendency of the soul towards God, those germs of the religious life which are the common heritage of

our race, much truer is it when any near communion with God has been established, when the human spirit has been touched by the Divine Spirit, and through lowly submission to the higher Will has been brought into conformity with that life which abides eternally with the Father. The Spirit is granted in various measures, to one more, to another less, preparing one man for this labour, another for that, revealing to one the beauty of holiness, to another the sublimity of faith, to a third the heroism of virtue; but it is the same Spirit, and bears witness of its identity to those who will receive its witness. When we view its manifestations merely from the outside, and arrogantly assume that our conceptions, our tastes, our duties must be the standard for all mankind, we cut ourselves off from others, and are conscious only of the superficial differences which divide us; but if we go deeper, and have the humility to learn that in us too the darkness is still struggling with the light, and that our *formas of conception and modes of worship* are but the shadows of eternal truth and holiness, then we shall know that our brother also has a ray of light and a voice from on high to direct his steps, and that, though in different ways, we are nevertheless following the same spiritual Lord.

When we forget our controversies, and seek only the fullness of the life of God, we hear the voices of the greatest souls of Christendom blending into solemn harmony, and perceive that the distinctions which have excited so much unworthy passion were transient and unimportant, while the heart of Christian devotion has been ever the same. The Spirit bloweth where it listeth, and refuses the trammels of priestly ritual or theologian's creed.

It chooses a lane, now in the bosom of the oldest and proudest Church, now in some new and despised sect, now in a solitary worshipper whom the churches will not receive. And he who will throw his soul open to hear the accents of the Spirit, by whomsoever they may be uttered, will soon catch, mingled with the technical language of the schools, the breathings of the same living faith and love; his own soul will expand under the genial influence of universal sympathies; and though he may be shunned by the sects, he will have communion with what is holiest in each; and he will know, from his own inner experience, what the Christian world is so slow to learn, that there is a 'unity of the Spirit' which cares nothing for our artificial barriers, but by its own Divine power binds into a true Church of God the faithful of every age and clime.

Paul exhorts the Ephesians to *endeavour* to keep this unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.<sup>1</sup> It needs an endeavour; for the differences which divide us are constantly forced on our attention, but the Spirit which unites us dwells in still and serene depths, where, in the hurry of life, we often fail to notice it. The collisions of thought, the opposing tastes, the contrasted tendencies, which, with all their apparent evils, add so much to the zest and beauty of life, and are so indispensable to human progress, are perpetually both creating differences and making us keenly alive to the existence of those differences. Then our self-love steps in, with its fondness for mastery and impatience of contradiction, Acrimony, mutual contempt, and superstitious horror of one another's

<sup>1</sup> Eph. iv. 3.

views, too speedily follow ; and parties are formed which, for the sake of some subordinate point, forget the vast field which they occupy in common. On the other hand, sects carefully avoid meeting on the common basis of religious hope and love. They do not combine to bear witness against the world's evil, or to pour forth side by side their confessions, their praises, their longing for Christian perfection. All that is deepest, holiest, most vital in them, they reserve for their own special gatherings, and know but little of one another's innermost life. Hence the necessity for an earnest and faithful endeavour to maintain the unity of the Spirit, and prevent its violation by unworthy discord and estrangement.

How shall we endeavour ? Is it not by steadily keeping in our own regards the spirit and the form in the true order of their importance ? What we must seriously consider is not whether men worship in this form or in that, but whether they worship in spirit and in truth, and offer to God the genuine sacrifice of the heart. And in relation to theological truth, however important it may be, it is far more important to purify the inner springs whence truth must flow, to maintain that reverent delicacy of soul without which even a prophet's words must fall dead upon the ear, and to keep the heart as a clear mirror to reflect, undisturbed and undimmed, the image of God. For want of a vigilant and tender humility theology has often degenerated from a calm investigation of Divine truth into a noisy and unedifying wrangle, and, while with orthodox pride or rationalistic smartness we clutch at the seamless robe of truth, we succeed only in rending it, and vainly glory in our tattered

prize. Men who, following truth with devoted love, with candour and breadth of mind, with hearts that still adore her when she dashes their dearest hopes and plucks up their most rooted prejudices—men who so following truth arrive at widely different conclusions are far more at one than those who mutter the same creed, but have never prayed and toiled and suffered in searching for that shrine where, if truth reveals not her form, she yet breathes her spirit upon all her votaries. We must, then, endeavour always to assign the first importance to the Spirit, and, passing behind the outer life of men, to detect the latent bond of Divine sympathy.

Again, we must endeavour to stir into more vivid action the religious life of men. It is well known that any common sentiment, when its power is fully awakened, brings even enemies into temporary union. Political parties forget to be factious when the invader is near the shores. The discipline of common suffering may bring in the sweetness of reconciliation. A great sorrow falling upon every heart reminds us that God has made us of one blood. So, if the Spirit be quick and powerful within us, it will fuse us together by its own spontaneous energy, and those who have any real communion with the Father and the Son must also have fellowship one with another. Where the deepest experiences are the same, men are drawn to one another by an irresistible fascination. Those who love the same God and Father of all, and humbly desire to love him more, and, receiving of his fullness, to know him even as they are known, those who have often sat in spirit at the feet of the same Saviour, and drunk

in his words with thirsting souls, and been touched with a gratitude for which speech is too cold a vehicle, cannot be far from one another. Our peace is violated because our love is dead. Let those who profess to be disciples of Christ stir up the gift that is in them, and beware of quenching the Spirit, without which they are poor indeed. It may be that God will bless their endeavours, and through them bring nearer the time when the sects, consenting humbly and prayerfully to wait upon God, and remembering their brotherhood in him, will join together in the service of a common love, and 'keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.'

## CHAPTER XII

### LAW AND FAITH

A CONSIDERABLE portion of the Apostle's correspondence is occupied with a protest against the imposition of the Jewish law upon Gentile converts. This is indeed the principal theme of the Epistles to the Galatians and the Romans; the former dealing with it in an impassioned style, as an urgent practical question; the latter dwelling more calmly on the different principles involved in the controversy. It has been suggested that the whole difficulty arose from Paul's stupidity in not recognizing the difference between the moral and the ceremonial law—a view which perhaps exhibits the ineptitude of the interpreter rather than of Paul. We are told in Acts<sup>1</sup> that the attack on Gentile liberty was summed up in the proposition that if Gentiles were not circumcised, they could not be saved; and this view is confirmed by several passages in the Epistles. Paul might have opposed this proposition by contending that the ceremonial rested on quite a different basis from that of the moral law, and in doing so he would have followed the lead of the greatest prophets. But in fact

<sup>1</sup> Acts xv. 1.

the Jewish law makes no such distinction. All the commandments and prohibitions have the same Divine sanction. Severe penalties are imposed for breaches of ritual; and even in the Decalogue the observance of the Sabbath stands on a par with abstinence from adultery and murder. It was clear, then, that, whatever outward sanction the moral law possessed, it embraced also the ceremonial. Consequently, the question arose whether there was any fundamental difference of principle between Levitical Judaism and the Gospel of Christ, and whether real righteousness, as it exists in the mind of God, is to be attained along the path of law.

Paul reached the conclusion that there was a higher principle, which made man independent of external law, and at the same time made him capable of fulfilling the abiding law of righteousness with a stricter fidelity. This higher principle was 'the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus,' the Spirit of Divine Sonship, sharing in the life and righteousness of God. But this Spirit did not, as objectors imagined, introduce one into a lawless realm, but was an inward fountain of law, working in a Divine order. On the side of man it was apprehended and appropriated through faith; and hence, in the vocabulary of Paul, law and faith are opposed to one another as representing two conceptions of the mode by which true righteousness is attained.

The Apostle's view is briefly summed up in Romans viii. 3, 4, 'For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and in relation to sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that

the ordinance of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.' The meaning is expressed so succinctly as to leave the construction of the sentence faulty, but is at the same time sufficiently clear to serve as a guide to our meditations.

In speaking of the law Paul, we can hardly doubt, had in mind the Levitical law. Nevertheless, we may perceive, from his whole treatment of the subject, that he is concerned, except incidentally, not with a particular code, but with the principle of law as the regulator of moral conduct, in contrast with another principle, to which he usually applies the term 'faith.' Our meditations, then, may dwell on a universal truth, and not on a particular and extinct controversy. We share, in our degree, in the Apostle's experiences of inward struggle and victorious peace; and the question whence true righteousness is derived has as deep an interest for the wounded conscience to-day as in the time of Paul.

Let us, then, inquire in the first place, what is a law? It is an outward rule of conduct resting upon certain sanctions. It may or may not be written in a book, in the form of precise regulations. There is, for instance, the written law of the land, which contains rules necessary for the well-being of society, and appoints penalties for the violation of these rules. And, again, there is the unwritten law of society, which is the arbiter of fashion and of manners, and also has a severe, though vague, punishment for the transgression of its precepts. So, in regard to right and wrong in general, we may have the law of duty presented to us in a definite code, which describes the proper modes of

action, and proclaims suitable rewards and punishments. And, again, we may have a law no less rigid traced with the finger of God upon the conscience, and a punishment no less terrible, signified in the forebodings of remorse. Or, once more, we may have an unwritten law of right and wrong under the guise of prudence and imprudence, a law requiring careful consultation, and depending for its power on the clearness with which the pleasant or unpleasant consequences of actions are foreseen by the judgment. One or other of these or similar laws will be the accepted guide of different persons according to their education and temperament. Those who are conscious of an inner darkness will rely upon a written code. Those in whom the intellectual faculties predominate will commit themselves to the direction of judgment and caution. And those to whom conscience is the nearest of realities, and to whom its decisions are the most unquestionable of truths, will rely chiefly on the inward light. The punishment also, apprehended in consequence of disobedience, may be very various in kind, misery in the future world, failure and disappointment in this, or an inner defilement which excommunicates us from the presence of God. Yet these rules, apparently so different, are one in principle. They are all laws, aiming simply to impart a knowledge of the best course of conduct, and to secure obedience by certain sanctions.

Now, according to the doctrine of the Apostle, such laws are weak, and unable to compass the very end for the sake of which they exist. They cannot, even when scrupulously obeyed, make men truly righteous. Let us pause a moment to

reflect upon this end, as the aim of both Law and Gospel is so often misapprehended. The one aim of all the dispensations of God is to make men righteous in the highest sense of that word, by bringing them into entire conformity with his holy Will. This aim dominates the whole of the New, as of the Old, Testament. Christ's brethren are not those who shout 'Lord, Lord,' but those who do the will of the heavenly Father, and manifest his holy Spirit of Love. Paul exults in the advent of Christ, because he came, not to exempt us from the severe law of duty, but that the righteous requirements of that law may be fulfilled in us. To be with God, and in harmony with his will, is more blessed than happiness. To be confident that we are safe while the ground is hollow beneath us, to obtain tranquillity by obliterating the lines of distinction between right and wrong, and to imagine that we have obtained the saint's rest while the dominion of sin is not destroyed in the heart—this is more awful than misery. Christianity does nothing for us save so far as it brings us nearer to God, and enables us to see his light, to breathe his love, and to do his will.

Such, then, being the end and aim of our existence, how is this end to be attained? The legal method is this:—give men a clear knowledge of their duties, and of the consequences of obedience and disobedience, and your object will be secured. This is the method which is declared by the Apostle to be weak, and, at best, to be a tutor to lead us to a higher than itself.

Now, what is the effect of our receiving and acknowledging a law of duty? Its first effect is

to awaken a consciousness of sin. Where there is no law there is no transgression. Where there is no discernment of the difference between right and wrong, there can be no guilt. The lower animals, so far as we can judge, blindly follow their strongest impulses, and in so doing deserve neither praise nor blame, because they are unconscious of any rule of right which they ought to obey. Their lives are wholly removed from the sphere of morality, simply because they have no faculty which acquaints them with a moral law. Accordingly, men's accountability is proportioned to their knowledge of right and wrong. Had they no such knowledge, they would evidently have no more consciousness of sin than the brutes. Their lives would be simply innocent, guided by spontaneous impulses, and haunted by no thought of a purer and holier to which they had been unfaithful. But as soon as the law steps in, with its sharp distinctions, 'thou shalt' and 'shalt not,' sin revives, and many a desire which before was pure immediately becomes corrupt; and a wrong act which, when innocently performed, did not deprave the character, becomes a source of moral deterioration, and degrades us before the bar of conscience. Thus, before we have any idea of property, or any clear conception of the rights of others, we may innocently desire any tempting object that presents itself. But as soon as we are informed that that object belongs to another, and understand the law, 'thou shalt not covet,' our desire instantly contracts guilt, we know it to be the evil thing we call covetousness, and recognize it as sin. So again, in a savage state, a man seeking redress for his private injuries may slay another, and pride himself

upon his daring deed ; but when the law appears, ' thou shalt not avenge thyself,' ' thou shalt not kill,' his deed of honour is covered with disgrace. His bold vindication of his rights bears the taint of murder, and, if persisted in, turns the brave and guiltless man into a ruffian, branded with the mark of Cain. Thus ' by the law is the knowledge [and also the strength] of sin.'

Now, in attempting to trace the moral providence of God, the great purpose of law appears to be to awaken this consciousness of sin. At first it might seem a cruel purpose to convert man's innocence into guilt, and to disturb his peace of mind by a sense of imperfection and unfaithfulness. Yet it is necessary that we should know the evil within us, if we are to aspire after the good that is above us. Without this awakening of the conscience we should remain like the beasts of the field, following the same blind instincts from year to year, making no progress, and thirsting for no ideal life. It is well even that our moral perceptions should attain the utmost delicacy, making ' sin exceeding sinful,' that we may know the full depth of our need, and the boundless treasures that might be ours.

But the defect of law is in its weakness. It cannot, and does not pretend to give us power to fulfil its own commands. A desire does not instantaneously cease when we become aware that it is sinful. Appetite is no less clamorous when we know that gratification is unlawful. The brooding love of revenge is not checked by the thought that murder is forbidden. The tongue of slander is still active, though warned by the precept, ' thou shalt not bear false witness.' The law is ' weak

through the flesh.' The evil deeds which it would restrain flow from passions and desires which are grounded in our nature; and such desires will not disappear, or range themselves in a Divine order, the moment the clear light of duty is shed upon their turbulence. Indeed bringing them within the sphere of self-consciousness rather tends to increase their brooding violence and to give them the mastery over us. There are cases in which every one admits that a man is victim to his passion. What we see to be true in these extreme cases is more or less true of us all. We have our tendencies which the mere struggles of our will cannot direct. We say and do things that we would not, and leave undone things that we fain would do. And though we are always prompt to defend ourselves against the rebukes of a fellow mortal, we have our times of lonely sorrow and humiliation when we feel the need of a power mightier than a sense of duty. Many have felt the weakness of the law when they have been reproached by another for a fault which their hearts had already confessed. What has the reproach done for them? It has stabbed them with a deeper consciousness of sin, and made them long for one who would not upbraid, but deliver.

The law, then, while it makes us feel our need of deliverance, is unable itself to deliver us. It may, indeed, to a large extent control our conduct, and train us in virtuous habits, and thus afford a valuable preparation for something more vital and inward. It may be, as Paul says, a tutor to bring us to Christ. But it cannot destroy the carnal mind, or change the corrupt propensities which beguile us into sin. And so long as the

affections linger among low objects, and the strongest impulses are unholy, we shall strive in vain to confine them at all times within the limits which morality prescribes. But what the law cannot do may be accomplished in another way. If earthly aims and desires cannot form the substance of our inner life without frequently breaking into open sin, the lower and carnal nature must be crucified, and the higher and spiritual assume its place. I do not mean that any tendencies which belong to us as human beings are to be unnaturally repressed, for every natural gift is good in its proper place and function; but the love of them, which gives them a disproportionate vehemence, and lifts them out of their proper sphere, must be superseded by a nobler love. In other words, we must not attempt merely to control and direct the outward conduct, but the inward fountains of conduct must be changed and sweetened; and that soul which knew only of an earthly life, and dreamed not of the life of sons of God, must become a temple of the Holy Spirit. Then at last the righteousness of the law will be fulfilled, for the strong inclinations to evil which the law strove in vain to check will be no longer there. A strange calmness will reign within. The man, walking not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit, will feel that as the carnal mind was death, so the spiritual mind is life and peace; and he will bless God that he has received not only a directing light, but a sanctifying power.

Now, according to the teaching of the Apostle, the great purpose of Christ's mission is to confer upon men this spiritual life. It is to raise their thoughts to higher themes, to win their affections

to things above, to bring them into communion with God. It is to give them a holy mind for an unholy, grand and immortal aspirations for poor and perishing desires, piercing-eyed faith for sensual dullness, self-denying love for vengeful passions and sordid greed. It is to draw forth in its finished beauty that Divine image for which man was created, and place on his brow the crown of sonship. Therefore God sent into the world his own Son, one endued with his Spirit, penetrated with his Life, manifesting his Mercy and his Truth. And this Son came 'in the likeness of sinful flesh.' In other words, his nature was like ours; the same, yet different. It was what ours might be, rather than what it is. He felt the nearness of God; and, living in communion with him, saw a light such as had not been revealed to other men. He knew the Father, as kings and prophets had sighed in vain to know him.

This great Messenger of God was sent 'for sin,' or, more literally, 'in relation to sin.' Our Revised Version translates 'as an offering for sin,' but dutifully prints the words 'as an offering' in italic, to show that the phrase belongs to the translators, and not to Paul. There is no justification for such a rendering of the Greek phrase. It is indeed repeatedly used in Leviticus in connexion with sacrifice, and thereby indicates that the sacrifice was a sin-offering; but it cannot by itself denote a sin-offering. The passage in Romans contains not a single word which implies sacrifice, and it is therefore quite unwarrantable to insert a phrase which alters the Apostle's meaning greatly for the worse. Paul here states in briefest phrase his view of the purpose of Christ's mission: it was

'in relation to sin.' It was not primarily to man as an ignorant, but to man as a sinful being that he came. The Spirit was given to him without measure for the benefit of mankind, that they might become heirs with him of the same glory, and be freed from 'the law of sin and death' by 'the law of the Spirit of life' in him. And thus God 'condemned sin in the flesh'; that is, passed sentence against sin within the limits of that very element in which its power seemed to reside. The law also condemned sin; but how different are the two condemnations in their effect upon us. We know that certain things are wrong; the law of God says so, and conscience admits the righteousness of the command; but then, we say, it is natural to do these things, the flesh is weak, and even if we have struggled against them, we come at last to regard them as a sort of fatality. How different if some one comes with commanding character, who does not permit these things to sully him. Through him they are condemned in the flesh; the condemnation is now real and living; and the deadly thought of incurable weakness or of sad fatality is flung off, for may not we too conquer? Thus in every holy man sin is condemned in the flesh, but most of all in him whose whole mission was 'in relation to sin.' Jesus Christ has opened a new world to our vision, and is the earnest of a glorified humanity.

Is it asked how this higher life is communicated? I reply that on the side of man it comes through the receptive power of faith, which apprehends the grander spiritual vision, and so completely trusts it as to open the soul to Divine influences which were unfelt before. But why one was humbly

recipient of this quickening faith, while another was blinded by the self-confidence of religious prejudice and dogmatism, Paul could not tell, except by referring all to the providence of God : nor can we. The faith which was recipient of the Spirit was itself one of the fruits of the Spirit. Many were called, but few were chosen. It was not as a rule the wise and powerful of this world, but the poor and lowly, who listened to the Christian appeal, and felt the beauty and majesty of the new life. But even they were not swayed by an irresistible impulse. Though the inward principle of their life had become spiritual, still they had to listen reverently to the voice of the Spirit, and use their effort to walk 'in the Spirit,' following its behests without stumbling. The appeal itself, whereby God commended his love towards the sinful world, which was dwelt upon by the Christian preachers, and shown forth in the altered life of little groups of 'saints,' was made through the entire manifestation of Christ, his life, his death, his risen glory. If we confine our attention to any single point, we fail to apprehend his full power. In various ways men are drawn to that Spirit ; and in our changing moods we are most struck now with the lofty flight of his thought, and again with his cross of shame ; and now our admiration, now our gratitude, and now our love is the first to own his spell.

The simple revelation of the Divine Life in our humanity possesses an incalculable power. It fills the mind with new ideas and purposes ; and as we gaze with reverence on that image of perfection, we become ourselves transfigured, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, and are

caught up into a third heaven where we hear words of peace and joy unknown to mortal speech, and see sights of wonder which no tongue can tell. And then how paltry appear the seductions and passions before which formerly our strength melted away. We are 'in the Spirit,' and the fleshly nature is dethroned.

Mightier still is the appeal of that Love which for our sakes drank of the bitter cup. 'The Love of God in Christ Jesus,' that Spirit of the Father dwelling in him, beseeching his human children to turn and accept the gift of life, this, when truly felt moves the heart as nothing else can do. In the light of that Love old things pass away, all things become new, and we walk no longer 'after the flesh,' but 'after the Spirit.'

Mighty, too, is the power of trust, which, following Christ into the realm of things unseen and eternal, tells us that God is ever near, to aid the struggling heart, and shower his blessings on the contrite and prayerful soul. A Divine strength is given to the meek and confiding; and he who relies with child-like simplicity upon the Father of spirits is lifted into a higher region where he finds himself at peace, and, in the words of John, 'he cannot sin, because he is born of God.' This is the ideal state, the end of our Christian warfare. Meanwhile it is happy for us if we have felt the weakness of the law, and our own insufficiency, and have been led to seek the guidance of him who alone can satisfy our aspirations and give us the life which we need. Just in proportion as we 'walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,' the righteous requirements of the law will be 'fulfilled in us'; and yet we shall not claim honour for ourselves, but acknow-

ledge that all holiness, truth, and goodness are the gift of the Father of all. We shall not, as when under the law, assert ourselves and boast of our own strength, but in humility and thankfulness exclaim, with Paul, 'I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ that liveth in me.'

It is now apparent that the moral law, which in itself is 'holy and just and good,' never ceases to be obligatory, and yet that the most perfect obedience in our outward conduct, rendered only on account of its rewards and punishments, would not be real righteousness. That can be attained only through faith, which brings us into communion with God, and makes us partakers of his Spirit. Then we are free from the law, not because it has ceased to be binding, but because we have within ourselves the fountain of law, and righteous actions become the natural expression of the inward vitality. Faith without works is dead; for so long as it is living it brings forth, by its own inherent energy, the fruits of the Spirit, and enacts in freedom, according to varying circumstances, the deeds of justice and of love.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE HOPE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

**N**EW religious experiences awaken new thoughts in the mind; and these in turn seek for a new language in which to express themselves. First, words and phrases, then propositions, and finally connected systems of theology arise, all ultimately suggested by some powerful spiritual emotion, the contents of which the intellect endeavours to interpret, and to fix upon a rational basis. Thus when Christianity appeared in the world, and stirred men's hearts with a new sense of the presence of God, with a new love to a great religious leader, with a new feeling of brotherhood through the communion of a spirit larger than that of sects or nations, with a deeper conviction of sin, and at the same time with a sweet assurance of pardon and peace, the mind began to exercise itself upon these things, and to define in words the significance which they possessed in the realms of thought and practice. The relations between God and man were described by the terms Father and sons of God. Christians, as all children of the same parent, were brothers; as consecrated to a life of holiness, were saints. At their head was the Son of God, the Founder of the new spiritual

creation. Grace, faith, justification, reconciliation, regeneration, love became common in men's mouths, and either expressed wholly new ideas or were laden with a weight of meaning they had never borne before. The putting away of old sins and rising into life with God was symbolized by Baptism; the great act of self-sacrificing love, the common spiritual food of Christians, was commemorated by breaking of bread together, and drinking of the same cup; and the depth of the inward renewal was betokened by mutual charity and personal purity. But thought is not complete till it takes the form of a proposition; and accordingly words and symbols which at first denoted with sufficient distinctness the peculiar life of Christianity, became the nucleus of precise doctrines, which after much discussion assumed a permanent form, and thus in the course of many centuries the vast system of Christian dogma was evolved.

Now doctrines, while they help to perpetuate, are apt also to obscure, the emotions out of which they originally sprang. Words which in one generation are the fiery symbols of the soul's most ardent faith become in another the cold counters of an inherited form of thought, and at last the dogma thrusts itself forward as both imperative and sufficient, and, awakening no more a living interest, acts as a dead weight which impedes, if it does not destroy, the higher movements of the spirit. Thus even Paul's great words of freedom have been forged into a yoke of bondage, and his principle of faith has been transmuted into that very principle of law which he spent his life in combating. Salvation has too often come to be regarded as an outward and arbitrary bliss, which

is to be secured by an equally outward and arbitrary belief. When doctrines have been degraded into this condition, and have become mere helpless bodies of thought from which the animating spirit has departed, it is necessary to recover the original emotion, and to a certain extent to reconstruct the doctrine, so as to place it in connexion with the living thought of the time. The same principles remain everlastingly in antagonism, but the form of the controversy which they create varies from age to age, and demands a form of treatment suited to the particular danger of the hour. Paul opposed his doctrine of justification by faith to the tyranny and externality of the Jewish law. Luther set up the same principle in opposition to the deadening influence of the Papacy. We have to assert it in resisting a dogmatic orthodoxy, which would destroy all intellectual and spiritual freedom. In doing so we must use modern language and modern arguments; and, adopting the principle which Paul himself applied to the interpretation of the Old Testament, we must accept the statements of the Apostle in the spirit, and not in the letter, for thus only shall we pass through the temporary phases of his thought into that inner and abiding realm where his soul held communion with God.

What, then, is the question which lies nearest to the heart of practical religion? We have already attempted, in the last section, a solution of this problem; but we may here consider it from a somewhat different point of view. The problem may be thus stated: how shall we attain, or at least advance towards, the Divine ideal of our nature? How shall we reach true righteousness,

the righteousness, not of social etiquette, nor of human law, but of God, that righteousness which alone will stand in the judgment of eternity, and be recognized as genuine when the false estimates of earth have been brought to shame? With nothing less than this can any loyal and simple soul be satisfied; and to throw a graceful cloak around its inward deformity and rottenness, or to provide some substitute for real holiness, is only to mock its profoundest longings, and insult it with a stone when it asks for bread.

In order to obtain an answer to our question, we must reflect for a moment on the twofold nature of man. This twofold nature, however we may explain it, is a fact of experience, which is obvious to every man as soon as he begins to think; and to it the moral conflict of life is due. We have an animal nature, connected with the earth, with all its powers, as far as we can see, adapted only to temporary purposes, and subject to a law of death without reversal. On this side of our being we belong to the animal kingdom, and, if the modern theory be correct, are simply the highest and most complex result of an organic evolution which has been going on for untold ages. But, strange to say, the animal nature has acquired in us an evil taint which is absent from the beasts. The presence of an intellectual and moral life has turned the simplicity of instinct into conscious desire, and the power of choice has converted into sin what would otherwise be innocent. Hence mankind has been, so to say, more animal than the beasts themselves. Appetite has attained an enormity, and resulted in heart-rending miseries, to which there is no parallel among them. Avarice,

luxury, cruelty, cheating, lying, are the result of animal passions using the intellect as their slave; and the horrors of the battle-field, in which all the resources of science are applied to the infliction of destruction and woe, give almost a satanic grandeur to the animalism of man.

But the hideous exaggeration of the brute in us is itself a sign that we are more than brutes, and that we cannot find here the true end of our being. We can retreat into an inner world of thought and sentiment, of self-denial and love, of faith and holiness; and thus we come to recognize a spiritual nature, which has a life and laws of its own, and does not move in concurrence with the instincts of the animal. Of the origin of this nature I say nothing. Poets and philosophers have dreamed that the soul is eternal, and comes down from the celestial ether into the prison-house of the body. Students of physical science assure us that there is no break in the chain of evolution, and that the highest manifestations of mind have slowly grown from the obscurity of some primeval and elementary life. I am content to leave such a question to science, so long as it does not deny the reality of present facts, or mutilate the higher attributes of the mind in order to adapt them to the supposed meanness of their origin. What might be developed in the course of ages from a primitive cell we can only conjecture; but that at present we have intellect, conscience, and will, devotion and reverence, we know with the most absolute certainty, and these are touched with such heavenly grace and power that they rise immeasurably above what we ordinarily designate as the animal nature. But even within

this higher element of our being we must make a distinction. The intellect seems to occupy a neutral place between the flesh and the spirit, and may ally itself with one or the other. It may allow its splendid powers to be dragged captive by lower cravings, and enslaved to the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. But that which we name the spirit cannot thus fall. That within us which speaks of God and righteousness, of eternity and judgment, our reverence, devoutness, trust, may be driven out, to knock with sad and vain remonstrance at the portals of our hearts, and their gentle voice may be drowned by the clamours of the world; but they cannot place themselves at the service of the lower desires, which they are intended to rule. This is the reason why Paul distinguishes the psychical or natural man and the spiritual man. The former is man with all the human endowments of mind and body, except that higher force which brings us into communion with God; the latter is man transfigured with the grace of spiritual character, and showing, however imperfectly, the lineaments of a child of God.

Now these two natures, of which we are so clearly conscious, have powers of apprehension adapted to their different ends. The animal nature is furnished with the senses, which bring it into communication with that physical universe to which it belongs. These senses are the same as in multitudes of less intelligent creatures, and seem, with them, to answer no higher purpose than the guidance of their physical well-being; and if our thought stopped with the immediate impressions which they receive from outward

objects, our knowledge would be of the most elementary kind, if indeed we had anything that could properly be called knowledge. But the intellect, following out its own laws, interprets what the senses report, corrects their illusions, and experimentally submits to their scrutiny multitudes of objects which nature, left to itself, would never bring before them. The whole fabric of science rests ultimately on those little organs of the flesh, on which we rely with such undoubting trust; yet they themselves reveal nothing more than elementary and isolated facts, and lend the same authority to the crude conjectures of the savage and to the mature speculations of the cultivated man.

Similarly the spirit has the power of apprehending spiritual objects. The distinction of right and wrong; the beauty of holiness; the supremacy of love; the presence of a Spirit not our own, and yet in communion with our own; the direction of a Will to which we owe a reverent submission; remorse, penitence, peace, and trust, the nearness of a forgiving grace that heals our inward wounds—these are things we cannot see or touch, and yet we are no less certain of their reality than we are of the reality of sun and moon, of mountain and ocean. Thus we are brought into communication with a spiritual world; but here too we have an immediate discernment only of elementary facts, and in interpreting these facts, and turning them into thought and knowledge, men have had to correct illusions, and pass through many a strange and untenable hypothesis, and feel their way towards a large and enlightened theology. But centuries of error in interpretation cannot disprove

the reality of fundamental facts in our nature; and if the spiritual nature be strong and healthy, we accept its revelations with an undoubting confidence. This confidence we call faith. But as our trust in the senses extends itself to the whole realm of science, so faith does not sit idly beside the rudimentary facts of the spirit, but spreads its wings, and soars aloft to enjoy the vision of that spiritual universe which consecrated reason, the living Word of God within the soul, has built up out of the simple experiences of the devout. Thus we have faith in the unity of God, and believe that all worlds have their centre and home in his eternal being. We have faith in his Fatherhood, and recognize in his inexhaustible Love that spiritual force of attraction which binds into one the universe of souls. We have faith in Christ, whose spirit gives form to our unshaped aspirations, and, passing into the heart, transmutes, through the alchemy of love, our earthly life into his own life with God. We have faith in immortality, for communion with God is the soul's inheritance, and his children have eternal life abiding in them.

Seeing, then, that we have these two natures, the animal and the spiritual, the earthly and the heavenly, it is plain in what direction our salvation lies. It is in the due subordination of the lower to the higher, and in the rich and full development of that spiritual life which allies us with God, and makes us his children. Paul discovers a great moral purpose underlying the slow and painful processes of the physical world: the whole creation groaneth and travaileth, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. And so with the individual

man, the goal of his endeavour is to become a child of God; and his bodily frame does not contain an end in itself, but is the instrument of his education, till, having accomplished its purpose, it is laid aside as a worn-out vesture. True righteousness, therefore, exists in us only in proportion as we realize this Divine idea. It is the indwelling in us of the Spirit of God, from which spontaneously spring, as its unfailing fruit, the words and deeds which the supreme Righteousness requires.

Along what pathway, then, are we to seek for this salvation? Different answers have been given, at which we can only glance.

There is the method of shaping men from the outside by the agency of rewards and punishments. Righteousness, it is said, consists in doing right things; and if only you can bribe or terrify men into doing right things, they will be righteous, and nothing more can be required of them. This is the method of law, on which we have already dwelt in the last section. It has its place in providing a standard of excellence for the outward life, to which it is well to conform, and which society, for its own protection and welfare, has a right to enforce; and while the character is immature, it supplies a needed direction, and may assist in the acquirement of valuable habits of act and speech. But righteousness, in the Christian view, has its seat within, and consists in the conformity of the inner temper of the soul to the will of God. This is laid down in the Sermon on the Mount, and in Christ's teaching generally, as distinctly as by Paul; and the latter only applied this universal principle to a particular controversy. The treasure of good or ill is in the heart. It is

not what a man puts into his mouth that defiles him, but what flows from the poisoned fountains of his life. The outside cleanliness of cup and platter is not righteousness before God. Impotent anger, the impure wish that fails of its gratification, the unforgiving heart that has no opportunity of revenge, are sin in the sight of the supreme Judge ; and there is no sense of blessed peace and communion with him till these things are subdued by the power of the Spirit. This should be carefully remembered in education. Children must be under a law of obedience, in order that wholesome habits may be formed. But if there be nothing more than this, there may in time be a revolt against an authority which is merely felt to be oppressive ; and we have accomplished little unless we have awakened a love of goodness, and filled the young heart with beautiful images of holiness and self-sacrifice, which will make it turn with loathing from sinful pleasures, and be the inspiration of a pure and generous life.

Again, there is the method of self-repression, of waging war against the animal nature, a method which is known by the name of asceticism. Wear the meanest and most uncomfortable clothing ; eat the coarsest food, and triumph over appetite by lengthened fasts ; eschew all riches and luxury ; nay, apply the lash to tame the insolence of the body ; and then the soul will escape from the pestilential air of its dungeon and the clamours of earth, and, rising into the pure ether, listen entranced to the harmony of angels. Asceticism has played its part in rebuking a self-indulgent world, and a little mixture of the ascetic temperament is useful in strengthening the growing charac-

ter. Self-indulgence, even of an apparently innocent kind gradually enervates and corrupts. Still asceticism is not righteousness, and an unnatural self-repression is no guarantee of spiritual health. God knows and provides the trials which we need, and our complacency under self-inflicted pain is no pledge of our sweet submission when he calls us to bear a cross. Christianity asks for a reverent moderation, which shall pervade the entire character, and move with gentle acquiescence beneath the higher Will, enjoying with thankfulness and without selfishness the innocent pleasures which he provides, and accepting with humble trust the pains which are an inevitable portion of our lot.

There remains the method of faith. By faith we take hold of eternal things, and lay ourselves open to the influence of the Spirit of God. Evil thoughts are overcome, not by direct attack, but by thinking of what is good; and so, generally, the evil in us is destroyed only by the advent of a large and noble spirit of life, which leaves the evil no room to grow. So long as we have faith we cannot lose this nobler life. Through weariness and pain, through failure and disappointment, through many a blinding battle with doubt and sin, we hold it still, and rise at last triumphant over the enemies that assail us. Not in a moment can we win the desired peace, for we need much chastening; but through the darkest and dreariest hours we place our trust in God, and 'wait for the hope of righteousness.' But what and where is this victorious faith? It is not belief in a dogma, and comes not by way of argument. It is kindled by those who have faith, and whose lives and

words evoke the slumbering spirit in us. In the language of Paul, it is Christ's faith. Jesus was the man of faith, who lived in conscious communion with God, and drew his life from the overflowing fountains of eternal Love. And so our discipleship to him awakens our faith, and the Son, who lived by the Father, passes on the Divine gift, and quickens with his own life those who are his. And surely the Spirit of the Son within our hearts must at last fill and glorify our whole being, and bring us into that perfect fellowship with God which is our end and aim. But till then, 'we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gal. v. 5.

## CHAPTER XIV

### LIBERTY AND AUTHORITY IN RELIGION

WE have seen that Paul claimed for his Gentile converts freedom from the restrictive authority of the Jewish law. This suggests an inquiry into the nature of Christian liberty, the basis on which it rests, and its relation to authority. Is it merely an escape from injurious trammels, or does it repose on some deep and far-reaching truth, which may have an important bearing on the living interests of to-day ?

Let me suggest, in the first place, that a system resting entirely on negation would be most unsatisfactory to all deep and earnest minds, and that a body of men bound together solely by the assertion of their liberty to deny erroneous doctrines would exercise no sanctifying influence on the world. It is well to be released from groundless prejudices and mistaken opinions, and yet it is a dreary thing to emerge from the warmth and haze of prejudice, which at least gave us a feeling of wonder and awe, into a clear, cold light which shows us nothing to revere. By withholding poison from men's bodies we do not maintain them in health and vigour; and by protesting against error we do not create their minds afresh.

If, then, we can show that any system is one merely of negation, though we do not thereby demonstrate its untruth, we do point out its futility as a vitalizing power in the world. But as every truth involves the denial of its opposite, nothing is easier than to represent a scheme of doctrine in its negative aspect, and speak of that as its characteristic. To those who adhere to the old forms of thought, every new and higher truth wears the appearance only of denial of ancient principles. Christianity itself, though the quickening spirit of the world, could not escape the stigma, but was denounced as atheism by the worshippers of the heathen deities. Paul, whose soul was swayed by a mighty truth, which to him was identical with the cause of God and of humanity, was described as 'the man who teacheth all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place.' It was quite true that he denied the necessity of the Levitical law, and pointed out its inherent inability to bring a universal salvation. This, however, was not his central thought, but a subsidiary inference from the truth which burned within his heart. He had found a power mightier than the Levitical law, wholly independent of local and national peculiarities, which, when received in faith, could transform men into sons of God; and beside this power all else seemed unessential. If he denied the value of special observances, it was only because in Jesus Christ 'a new creature' was the one thing needful, and the spirit of Christ in the heart was wholly independent of such observances. The description, then, which the Jews gave of Paul, though to a certain extent correct, was in its implied meaning

## Liberty and Authority in Religion 167

absolutely false. It implied that his system was one of negation, based on the denial of the Jewish law as everlastingly and universally binding, and so exalted into the rank of his primary principle what was with him only the secondary result. The great Apostle would never have imagined that any denial of the Levitical law's authority could give life to the world. He looked to no negation, but to an inspiring truth, as the living power which was to regenerate mankind. Yet when anyone elevated the law into the grand essential, and insisted that apart from Moses men could not be saved, and that no holiness could exist beyond the limits of a narrow sect, he rose up to deny the proud assumption, and show how futile was the law to produce the deepest and truest holiness. The majesty of truth demands the denial of error, and negation of the local and temporary must ever go hand in hand with the assertion of the universal and eternal.

What, then, is the positive principle on which Christian liberty is based? It is this: that the 'Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus' is the essential thing for ourselves and for all mankind; that in proportion as we are animated by this Spirit we become what we are designed to be, in proportion as we depart from it we forfeit the true honour and dignity of men. By this principle, and by this alone, we should judge of ourselves and of all men, because all other principles sink in the scale of value when compared with this. We should feel an absolute confidence that he is not fatally astray in whose heart dwells the image of the Son of God; and that he, on the other hand, does not belong to the kingdom of heaven who has slighted

that image, and suffered hatred and pride to dwell within him. In whomsoever we see that Spirit of Life enshrined, in him, be his creed and church what they may, we should recognize a Christian brother; and among the heathen of old, who never heard of the name of Christ, we must admire and revere as members of the one great fraternity of the children of God those who foreshadowed that Spirit which was yet to be revealed in its fullness. So too, among the non-Christian races of to-day we ought to estimate men, not by their intellectual apprehension of certain doctrines, but by the degree in which the inward quality of their life approaches the Spirit of Christ. Here, then, is no negation, but an inspiring truth, a truth so high that Christians too often fall beneath it, and prove themselves unworthy of the holy trust committed to them. Would that they entered into the spirit of the great argument of the Apostle. In Paul's comprehensive declaration that 'in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature,'<sup>1</sup> he who understands can easily change the terms, and assert his freedom from the cramping dogmatism of his time through the redeeming power of a higher faith.

It is now time for us to inquire more fully into the nature of that liberty of which the Apostle speaks, and which, in his statement that 'where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,'<sup>2</sup> he represents as one of the notes of Christianity. It has both an outward and an inward side. Paul, as we have seen, was speaking of freedom from the restrictions of the Jewish law. But this, considered

<sup>1</sup> Gal. vi. 15.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 17.

simply as an absence of external obligation, was no peculiarity of the new religion; for all the heathen were in this respect perfectly free. Paul, however, had come out from under what had been to him a system of bondage, and therefore in his thought freedom was naturally associated with the inward principles by which it had been secured, and apart from which he would have deemed it of no value. He had escaped from the thralldom of the ancient law only by apprehending the higher law of the Spirit of Life in Christ; and this new inward Life had brought mental and spiritual freedom, a freedom which might be enjoyed even in the midst of persecution and affliction, freedom from the anxieties of a wounded conscience, freedom from the terrors of a blighting superstition, freedom from the grasp of selfish passion, freedom to exercise his noblest powers as the voice of God within him might dictate, in a word the freedom that comes from communion with the Divine Love, and the certainty that all is well.

In like manner, whenever we speak of freedom, or of civil and religious liberty, there are these two aspects of it. There is outward freedom, the absence of oppression or injurious interference on the part of our fellow men, including for the community the power of self-government, for the individual the power of working out his own thoughts and planning the direction of his own life as he deems best. We look upon this freedom as a thing to be desired, because it tends to foster the independence and self-reliance of the human mind, and so to stimulate its energies and bring about its highest development, while on the other hand slavery, or whatever partakes of the nature of

slavery, depresses the native powers of the soul, and creates peculiar maladies, the falsehood which is the only defence of the feeble and the timid, the revenge which springs from a rankling sense of injustice coupled with despair. Nevertheless, it is obvious that this outward freedom depends for its value on the moral principles upon which it rests. If it only meant 'every man for himself,' and an unrestrained power of competition for securing our worldly interests, it might produce for a time a superficial prosperity, but sooner or later would result in individual decay and in social anarchy. It is beneficial only when it is directed by a lofty moral aim, and is attended by that inward liberty which allows a man, in pure self-devotion, to press forward towards the Divine ideal of his being. Freedom is valuable in proportion as it enables the godlike faculties of the mind to work for their appointed ends, and substitutes for human coercion a sense of responsibility to God. We have more enemies within than we have without, and every man may find in his own heart enough to try his finest energies in battling with oppression, and winning the 'liberty of the glory of the children of God.' We boast that we never were in bondage to any man, and yet the rod of the oppressor may smite us daily. 'Whosoever sinneth is the slave of sin'; and therefore it is only when the Son of God shall set us free that we shall be free indeed, because we shall be enrolled in the fellowship of those who are consecrated to God, and are strong and victorious in the might of his Spirit.

Let us endeavour to illustrate these principles by considering their application to the several departments of our mental life.

## Liberty and Authority in Religion 171

The struggle for intellectual freedom has been long and arduous. The weight of old opinion, which, even when left to itself, is apt to exert an enthralling influence on the mind, has been aggravated by the violence with which men have resolved to maintain it against all enemies. In the ages when superstition rested upon the earth, and covered it with its dark mantle, those who turned their faces to the light did so at their peril. The pioneers of knowledge, if they ventured to attack the current beliefs, had to take their lives in their hands, and to contend not only against the enormous and, we must admit, legitimate force of established opinion, but against violence which was determined to repress, even at the cost of blood, every intellectual movement which could disturb the complacency of inherited thought. But at length, through the courage and resolution of men who were ready to be martyrs rather than deny the truth that was in them, the intellect has broken its chains, and, advancing with the triumphant delight of inexhaustible vigour, has achieved what might almost seem miraculous discoveries in the realm of knowledge, and corresponding successes in the application of the arts. If the former spirit of opposition is not dead, it is old and feeble, and its muttered curse and proud exclusiveness towards all who will not sit in its own dark corner can injure no one but itself.

But, after all, this release from compulsion is only a negative gain, and I am not sure that it does not sometimes beget moral cowardice. The pressure of social opinion is very great, and some whose manhood would be roused by the presence of real danger shrink before the milder injustice

of coldness and obloquy. What we want now is the inner freedom which, in the direction of our own lives, will accord to the intellect its full and perfect rights, and withdraw from it every influence that can disturb its action as a pure instrument of truth. The desire of popularity, the fear of what people will say, the prejudice which holds us in the past, and spreads a mist before our eyes, the love of novelty which hastens after every new and unproved assertion, must be resolutely laid aside, so that the evidence as a whole may be clearly seen, and the judgment exercised with a cautious impartiality. In a word, we must love truth, and not self; and whithersoever truth summons us we must go, neither seeking the applause nor dreading the disapproval of the crowd, but with singleness of heart consecrating ourselves to our high pursuit, and allowing nothing to prescribe our path save our pure devotion to this ideal end. It is thus that the way of the cross is the way of emancipation even for the intellect; for it liberates from all the by-ends which so often lead men into error, and imparts to the mind an elevation of aim and a dignity of method which, even when we are baffled in our search, make the pursuit itself a valuable discipline, and prepare us for the time of revealing, when nature will deliver up her secrets, and the thoughts of God become the thoughts of men.

Passing to the moral sphere, we find our outward liberty in the absence of restrictions upon our activity. So far as we can do what we like without the interference of others we consider ourselves free. Perfect freedom in this sense is impossible so long as men live in communities. The existence

of law necessarily imposes restraints upon some forms of action ; but so long as the law expresses the average judgment of the nation, and has been established with the nation's consent, it is not felt to be oppressive. Oppression begins when laws which are not sanctioned by the judgment of the community are imposed by some central authority, and people feel that they have a natural right to do certain things which they are forbidden to do, or to refrain from doing certain things which they are compelled to do ; and when compliance with such laws is enforced in a cruel and arbitrary manner we speak of the government as a tyranny, and look upon the people as oppressed. Whether these laws are political or ecclesiastical we expect the power of conscience to wither under their blight, and the people who are subject to them to exhibit a stunted form of manhood, even as a limb which is denied its proper exercise must shrivel and become useless. It is not, therefore, from self-will, or a mere desire to do what they like, that strong men have always resented, and have often overthrown, this kind of despotism. It is that they find their nature checked and thwarted in its highest and purest aspirations, and they seek room for their powers to expand, and to take up that independent life for which God designed them. They would enter for themselves the holy place, where they can see with their own eyes the righteousness of God, and whence they can bear away the oracles of his Spirit written upon their hearts.

This freedom of the English people, which has been won by their forefathers, with its deep sense of individual responsibility, with its noble trust

in the righteousness of the untrammelled soul, is a grand privilege which we ought to guard with jealous care. We must not hand over the keeping of our conscience to either statesmen or ecclesiastics, or tamely yield up the inheritance which has been bought at so great a price, but insist upon retaining the largest individual freedom that is compatible with common rights and the welfare of society. The idea, once so firmly held by leading thinkers, that laws which went beyond the provision of security and order were apt, by interfering with the benign processes of nature, to do more harm than good, and that the welfare of mankind was best promoted by throwing every one upon his own resources, and so stimulating to the utmost the exercise of individual faculty and individual initiative, is no longer in much favour; and we are coming to rely more and more upon the law to step in and effect by force the actions which ought to spring spontaneously from the sense of duty and brotherly love. The questions which are thus brought before us are extremely intricate, and it is perhaps impossible to lay down any principle which we should invariably follow; but it would be well always to remember that measures which produce a momentary good may lead, through moral causes, to lasting harm, and that law is not only a useful standard of right for the average man, but also tends to blunt the conscience by diminishing the sense of individual responsibility, and making the legal the measure of moral obligation.

But whether outwardly we are free from restraint or bound by wise or unwise laws, that which most deeply concerns us is to secure moral freedom

## Liberty and Authority in Religion 175

within; and such freedom does not consist in doing what we like, but in liking what we ought to do. The liberty of which as a people we are so proud is worthless unless we surrender ourselves to the law of God written on the heart, and place before ourselves as the goal of our endeavour some noble and disinterested aim. 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty,' because, with our faces turned heavenward, and lighted with the glory that streams from God, we have cast off the entanglements of earth, and all our desire is fixed on our filial relation with God. There, and there alone, in a most blessed service which is the spontaneous offering of love, we find perfect freedom. So long as we are governed by selfishness and cupidity, envious of other men's possessions and careless of their rights, greedy of the world's distinctions, and ready to sell our honour for gain, we are slaves, and the mean stamp of servitude is imprinted on our souls. Would you be a free man, place duty upon the throne of your heart, and crown her with the diadem of majesty, and let her daily witness your faithful homage; and then you shall see the radiance of her face, the immortal beauty of the one imperial power which rules to bless. Then the cruel crowd of sordid passions, with their whips and stings, will flee away; and a retinue of sweet-eyed angels of righteousness and goodwill will take up their abode with you, and you will rest in perfect peace under the Fatherly care of God.

Religious liberty also has its two aspects. Outwardly, it means that we are not subject to penalties for our want of conformity to certain prescribed modes of belief and worship. It is here

that the tyranny of man has been most sedulously exercised, and his folly and wickedness most conspicuously displayed. Ecclesiastical hierarchies have always set themselves to stop the progress of mankind, and especially have endeavoured to crush, and often have too successfully crushed, every movement towards religious enlightenment. It is needless to prove at the present day the barbarism and cruelty of the ancient persecutions, or to show what a blasphemous insult they were to him in whose name they were perpetrated; for who can imagine Jesus sitting in the torture-chamber, and turning the screw upon his wretched victims, whose only offence was that they used their highest faculties, and hearkened to the Divine voice within them, in order to judge for themselves what was right. But what we do need continually to remember is to respect in others the rights of the human mind, and never to condemn men in our hearts because they gaze for themselves into the mysteries of God, and receive a different vision from that which has been vouchsafed to ourselves. The exclusiveness and spiritual pride which are still so prevalent, and to which we are all subject, are remnants of that unchristian temper which in former ages brought such woe upon the world, and the churches still need to receive in its fullness that Spirit of the Lord wherein is liberty. From a political point of view, however, the battle of religious freedom has been won. We can utter our own thoughts, and worship in our own way, with none to make us afraid.

But the value of this outward freedom depends on the use which we make of it. It is precious only so far as it enables us, without check or hind-

## Liberty and Authority in Religion 177

rance, to enter into immediate communion with God, to grapple for ourselves with the solemn problems of life, and to follow the Divine light of consecrated reason as it leads us into the holy of holies. It was not through mere self-will that martyrs laid down their lives, but that they might be true to the voice of God within their hearts, and enter a higher fellowship than any that a priesthood could offer. And if we understand this grand inheritance which has come down to us, we shall never voluntarily place ourselves under a yoke of bondage, and so fall away from that great Redeemer whose spirit is a spirit of liberty, and who died upon the cross that we might enter into the freedom of his expansive life in God.

But it is easy to fall into narrow and mistaken views of what constitutes inward liberty. We sometimes think that freedom consists in violent opposition to antiquity. If a man ridicules traditional beliefs, and knocks them down with grand airs of superior wisdom, we think that he is free, and extol his candour; and yet he may be narrow and prejudiced, and a slave to aversions which spread a thick veil before the mental eye. True freedom involves a certain largeness of human sympathy, and will not treat with contempt any belief, however erroneous, which has entered deeply into the life of men and become associated with their holiest moods. Rather will it try to understand them, and trace the spiritual roots out of which they grew, and explain the intellectual conditions which made them acceptable to wise and good men.

Akin to this error is our habit of associating freedom with certain forms of opinion. It may

be convenient to describe these as liberal in contradistinction from conservative ; but if we assume that they are in themselves indicative of greater freedom of mind, we may be guilty of injustice. A man who holds conservative views in theology may be quite as open-minded, quite as ready to weigh the evidence carefully, and to follow that which seems to his own mind to be conclusive, as any man of extreme opinions. In fact mere opinions have little to do with genuine liberality, which is a form of character rather than of intellect. It is not where certain beliefs are professed, but where the Spirit of the Lord is, and there alone, that there is liberty. It is only when we place ourselves before that high tribunal where the thoughts and feelings of men are justly judged, only when we submit every movement of our minds and hearts to that directing Will before which the vain ambitions and empty pride of men are abashed, that we have true religious liberty. Then the prejudice, the conceit, the self-love, the party-zeal, the thirst for popularity, which hinder the pure vision of truth, and keep the mind enslaved to earthly things, disappear ; for they cannot come into that temple where Holiness and Truth guard the entrance, and only men of pure and humble heart are permitted to pass in. And so in fullness of life, in the exaltation and Divine cleansing of our faculties, in communion with the all-embracing Love of God, we rise out of our servitude, and enter on that freedom with which all the sons of God are free ; for ' where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty.'

Having now gained some insight into the nature of Christian liberty, we have next to inquire into

## Liberty and Authority in Religion 179

the place of authority in religion, and consider whether it can have any place in connexion with such liberty.

A longing is frequently expressed for the restoration of Christian unity; but there are two strongly contrasted conceptions of the mode in which this desirable end is to be reached. Some understand by unity an external uniformity, brought about by the absorption of all parties into one vast Church, based on authoritative dogma, organization, and ritual. Others have come to regard spiritual religion as more fundamental than creed or ritual, and have discovered in their own experience that the Communion of the Holy Spirit, the possession of common ideals and a common love, are more powerful in uniting than differences of belief and practice are in dividing, and that beneath the surface fret of the wavering intellect lies the deep tranquil ocean of Christianity's interior life which belongs to all the sects. This unity of the Spirit does not demand uniformity, and is quite compatible with a large variety of thought and practice, even as the several members of the same body have widely different functions, all contributing to one important end. Is this position inconsistent with all authority, and is the division into religion of the Spirit and religion of authority legitimate and adequate?

Let us begin by defining what is meant, in this connexion, by authority. We must, first of all, set aside the authority of conscience, the supremacy of which is recognized alike by Catholic and Rationalist. The bigot may, indeed, scoff at the conscience of another man as being of a spurious quality; but every man, when his own

conscience has pronounced, admits that for himself it has an authority which he has no right to disregard. Accordingly, when we refer to religions of authority, we do not include under the latter term that inward voice which speaks in the hidden sanctuary of the soul; for in this sense all religion is authoritative. The reference is always to some external and human authority. Perhaps the following definition may be accepted: authority is something external to ourselves, by which we guide our judgment of particular points of faith or practice, owing to our belief that the persons to whom the authority is ascribed are more competent than we are ourselves to decide upon these points. A religion of authority is one in which the power of decision is vested in a certain order of men, whose judgment on disputed points must be accepted as final.

Starting from these definitions, we may say that the Roman Catholic Church exhibits the purest type of authoritative religion. It regards its dogmas, in matters of faith and morals, as infallible, and therefore as final and irreformable. The purity of its tradition is provided for by the succession of Bishops; and when any point is disputed, the decision of the Pope, given under certain conditions, is, through the Divine assistance, infallibly correct. It is common among Protestants and Rationalists to reject this claim as intrinsically absurd, because all human judgment is fallible. For my own part I see in it nothing irrational; it is simply a question of evidence. To me the evidence against it appears so weighty as to command my judgment; but I cannot pretend that while the Pope is fallible, I am

## Liberty and Authority in Religion 181

infallible, and I am quite aware that there may be some prejudice or some limitation in myself which prevents me from seeing things as they really are. From the old Protestant point of view the Catholic may well seem to have the best of the argument; for if a number of known and unknown authors, whose writings, collected in the Bible, extended over many centuries, were infallible, not only in questions of faith and morals, but in history and science, it is probable that some provision would be made for continuing the succession, and securing a true pronouncement when conflicting interpretations are given of the infallible record. But if it be said that all human judgment is fallible, we must ask whether men really think so. Do we not all look upon some of our judgments as infallible? For instance, that the whole is greater than its part, or that a stone let loose in the air will fall, or that it is better to be temperate and merciful than to be licentious and cruel. I fear we must add that numbers of men unconsciously assume their own infallibility, and that too in highly controversial questions; for they become excited and angry if you doubt the soundness of their conclusions. The proposition, then, that the Pope, acting on great and solemn occasions, under a profound sense of responsibility, and after long and prayerful deliberation, is correct in his religious and moral pronouncements, is not intrinsically unreasonable, and is incomparably more reasonable than the implied assumption of some rationalists that they individually are infallible, and are far more competent to pronounce upon religious questions because they have denuded their nature of the very sources of religious judgment.

An authoritative Church is necessarily coercive in regard to all opinions that have been dogmatically defined. But we must carefully distinguish coercion from persecution, though they have been frequently found together. Every society is coercive to the extent of its accepted rules. A teetotal society excludes drunkards, and a liberal party in politics excludes conservatives. Every religious body, whether claiming infallibility or not, excludes formally or by implication those who oppose its fundamental teaching; and we ought not to describe as persecution the excommunication of men who have ceased to believe the authorized doctrines of their Church. This rule applies to the freest domain of thought; and I fancy that a professor of astronomy who taught that the earth was flat, and the sun no larger than the moon, or a professor of history who taught that Julius Casar had conquered America, would have some difficulty in retaining his position. Nevertheless, persecution has often been associated with authority and coercion, and indeed rests upon these as its justification. Persecution so far as it is not the offspring of brutal and arrogant self-will, rests on the assumption that dissentients from the accepted dogma are governed by some moral obliquity, and are a moral danger to the community. I am not aware that that assumption has ever been turned into a dogma; and men have come gradually to see that it is untrue, and that others must be judged by the general evidences of character, and not by the forms of their thought, or, more briefly, that intellectual mistake is compatible with a saintly spirit. Those who pour scorn upon ecclesiastical persecution would do well to re-

member that anger and scorn are of the very essence of the persecuting spirit, and are by no means confined to ecclesiastics. I once heard a very able and original free-thinker, who longed for the utter destruction of Christianity, declaring that Calvinism ought to be suppressed by force, because we *knew* that it was false. Possibly some Calvinist, who *knew* that it was true, may have wished to burn the free-thinker.

It follows, then, that an authoritative is not necessarily a persecuting Church. Indeed, were it not so, we should all be either persecutors or sceptics; for if we believe anything to be true, it becomes to us an authority, and we suppose that those who reject it are in error. But as it is quite possible, even if it is uncommon, for an individual to have deep and strong convictions, and nevertheless respect and admire the fine character of one who does not share them, and to treat his supposed errors with justice and courtesy, so also an authoritative Church, confident of its supernatural infallibility, might be aware that belief cannot be forced, and might try to win men solely by the convincing power of evidence, and by the attraction of its own spiritual splendour. Nevertheless, such a Church tends in practice to create a vast conservative force which obstructs the progress of thought and knowledge. This obstruction, indeed, presents itself in politics, science, and law, as well as in theology; and it always demands unusual independence and courage to oppose the current of popular opinion, and those who raise a protest against national folly or iniquity are howled down by patriotic inquisitors. But these are irregular outbursts of angry feeling; and a Church

can present a far more permanent and consistent obstacle to variations of thought by means of its elaborate organization and its appeal to religious emotion. In this way it seems to those who are unable to accept its claims that the Catholic Church, whether consistently with its principles or not, does in fact raise a barrier against the advance of knowledge and the enlargement of the religious spirit. There is arising in men's minds, directed, as I believe, by the Spirit of God, a longing for a width of communion which is impossible to religions based on official authority, and is indeed by them explicitly repudiated.

In opposition to collective and organized authority stands the right of free inquiry and private judgment. Men who claim this right for themselves (and I believe most men do really, though it may be unconsciously, claim it) are bound in justice to accord it to others. The result may seem to be a vast medley of opinion, which presents a marked contrast to the alleged unity of catholic truth. This, though partly due to the wild wanderings of minds untrained in the use of liberty, is partly the necessary consequence of the imperfection of human thought. In all subjects but religion thought has been free, and yet the path of progress has been strewn with the wrecks of hypotheses. Some of these hypotheses seemed for centuries to be the impregnable citadels of knowledge; but they fell before the slowly accumulated results of investigation. It is thus that advance is made over the stepping-stones of error; and no one would now wish to establish an authorized body of science which might never be scanned with a curious and sceptical eye. So, too, it has

## Liberty and Authority in Religion 185

been with theology wherever men have not been bound by official authority, and indeed to some extent even when they have been so bound. It is easy to point to many a wild and foolish hypothesis; but there have been numbers of sane and cautious investigators; and if, disregarding details, we take a large view, we see that there has been a massive and impressive movement, so that the whole outlook of theology has been altered, and men of reputed orthodoxy say openly things that half a century ago would have been denounced as infidelity. And if the results sometimes appear barren and uninviting, I believe that the total result is an ascent into a higher faith, and a closer approximation to the great ideals of Christianity.

The reaction of private judgment against authority has led some earnest and thoughtful minds to the position that the individual soul needs no support from without, but can obtain full satisfaction in its own intuitions and its own solitary worship. I doubt whether this is true even of the highest and most original minds, and whether in rising to their solitary eminence they have not started from inherited and authorized piety. The soul in its most exalted state, 'rapt into still communion,' may lose all need of dependence on fellow mortals; and undoubtedly to know the Father by direct intuition; to live in him, and see him with unclouded eye; to hear the Divine voice within, sounding clear and strong, while passion and prejudice are reverently hushed—these constitute the true life of the soul, and we hope at some time, with unveiled faces, and no longer through mirrored images, to look upon the glory of God. But how many can say that this

life, this immediate and unvarying communion, so grand and awful, so little known to the very thoughts and aspirations of multitudes of men, is really the breath of their being, a kindling radiance round about them which makes all other lights seem dim? Surely we ought to 'try the spirits, whether they be of God'; and when we find ourselves moving on the solitary path, we ought to test ourselves again and again, lest we should be following some will-o'-the-wisp engendered by the foul vapours of our own vanity and self-will; and only when through prayer and self-renunciation we have conquered the demons of self-love that would mislead us can we be sure that the lonely way is guiding us to the truth and peace of God. Every one, indeed, may have periods of secret and silent communion, when he listens alone to the voice that prescribes his special duty or ministers to his special need; but it is not good for the soul's health to live always in an unpeopled immensity, and yield nothing to the human fellowship in which our lot has been cast.

If the case be so, we may reasonably seek in religion for an authority which will be helpful without being coercive. In doing so we shall bring religion into line with every other department of human nature. Outside of our immediate occupation, in which we can form a judgment of our own, we are all dependent on authority for almost the whole of our knowledge. In science, for instance, most of us accept, without any attempt at verification, multitudes of astounding statements. We believe implicitly in the general course of the world's history, though we may have no personal knowledge of the evidence on which

it rests. How is such belief to be justified? We depend on the authority of experts. We know that several disinterested men, having carefully studied the subject, have come to identical conclusions; or if one stands above all the rest as an authority, we are aware that many competent judges have pronounced him to be a cautious and learned investigator, and have followed him in the acceptance of truths which they might not themselves have been able to discover. And I venture to say that our confidence is increased through our knowledge that every student is liable to mistakes, and every conclusion is open to revision; for, where coercion is absent, mistakes are sure to be detected, and faulty conclusions to be modified in accordance with freshly accumulated knowledge. An authority claiming to be supernatural bars all progress in the subjects which come under its supervision, and in the presence of new facts can only prohibit investigation. In the minds of thinking men this procedure only awakens doubt, which finally disappears through the acceptance of an authority confessedly fallible. Every one now admits that the scientific authority of Galileo was greater than that of the Inquisition, and the motion of the earth round the sun is properly acknowledged by multitudes who are ignorant of the proofs.

The same rule will apply in subjects which are not strictly intellectual. If you wished to award a prize for a work of art or a piece of music, you would not choose as the judge the first man you happened to meet, but one who was known, through his natural gifts and cultivated taste, to be an authority in æsthetics. And if you were

bent on improving your own taste in any art calling for nice judgment, you would have recourse to the recognized masters, who by their ability and acquirements had authority to teach.

Thus we are acting in accordance with a general law of our nature if in spiritual things we look up to some pre-eminent soul as an authority, and listen with reverent attention to the voice of prophets and saints. But even the clearest spiritual insight into the deep things of God and the moral ideal of man is no guarantee of intellectual infallibility; and a failure to recognize this distinction has given rise to perplexity and doubt. To take the great Christian example; if Jesus accepted some opinions of his time which have since been proved to be erroneous, this does not cast a shadow on the splendour of his love, the nobility of his moral teaching, or the beauty and wisdom of his parables; nor does it disprove the fact that his profound consciousness of Divine Sonship uplifted, and is still capable of uplifting, the whole ideal of humanity. This natural authority of an exalted and kindled soul, which breaks open the fountains of life within us, has, I think, been obscured and weakened by ascribing to him an authority purely external and miraculous; and it is not till we enter into the fellowship of his spirit, and heart answers to heart, that we recognize his true ascendancy and power. It is in this sense that he is a mediator, 'the way' by which we come to the Father. The ascending degrees of spiritual vision are admirably exhibited in the words ascribed to him, 'I have known thee, and these have known that thou didst send me.' The lower soul of the disciple had a power of recognizing in the higher a Divine

## Liberty and Authority in Religion 189

beauty and truth which it could not discover in itself, and thereby was drawn to an authority which rested on reverence and love, and trusted an insight greater than its own. So, when our souls are blind to the Divine vision, the human appeal may reach us, and the beauty of holiness and love shining in a human life may convince us that it is sent from God, and may so deeply move us that we too, though it may be still dimly as in a mirror, have the heavenly vision, and begin to worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

We may go a step further, and say that, with most of us, the first movements of veneration towards Christ himself, and of faith in his spiritual teaching, were due to authority. We were born into a Christian atmosphere. From our infancy we have heard his name pronounced with reverence and love. We have witnessed the beauty and power of Christian character in men and women whom we have known and honoured. And at last we have felt for ourselves the truth and sublimity of his spirit. Here, then, we find a genuine authority in the Church, converging lines of testimony from purified souls, who have come under the redeeming spell of that supreme Teacher and Martyr. The man is not to be envied who can look unmoved upon this wonderful spiritual drama, and keep scornfully aloof from the authority of universal Christendom, yea, and of many who would not classify themselves as Christians. For this homage is no creation of priests and rulers, but the spontaneous expression of the soul's vision, the free-will offering of the heart's love.

Thus we have reached an authority which imposes no bonds upon the intellect. It is the voice

of nature, and owes its power to the freedom of its origin. It comes in the form of a vast spiritual unity, a single guiding star which shines through all sorts of refracting media. Every attempt to enforce unity through the claims of coercive authority has ended in division; for the human intellect will not be permanently crushed, or surrender its rights into the keeping of any priesthood. Systems of coercion must yield to the natural authority of independent research and thought; and the broken fragments of Christendom can be brought together only through reverence for the same great ideals, and the spiritual worship of the one God and Father of all, through all, and in all. Then each will contribute his own special gift to the universal treasure, and amid the quickening diversity of thought and usage we shall preserve unbroken 'the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.'

## CHAPTER XV

### CHRISTIAN IDEAL AND POWER

IN a remarkable passage Paul contrasts the old and the new covenants. For this purpose he avails himself of an incident recorded in the Old Testament.<sup>1</sup> When Moses came down from the mountain where he had held communion with God, his face shone, or, as the Greek version renders it, was glorified. The people were at first afraid to come near him; but afterwards they came, and he delivered to them 'all that the Lord had spoken with him in Mount Sinai.' But when he had done speaking with them he put a veil on his face, till he again went to speak with the Lord; and then he removed the veil. It seems clear that Paul regarded the glory on the face of Moses as the glory of God, and supposed that Moses put on the veil because the glory which illuminated his face in the time of communion was transient, and he did not wish the Israelites to see it fading away; but when he turned again to the Lord, he took off the veil, that his face might once more catch the rays of the Divine glory.

Thus far the meaning seems clear; but when we come to details there are serious difficulties, and I

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xxxiv. 29-35.

am inclined to think that the usual interpretation is incorrect. Paul declares that 'the Lord is a Spirit.' It is assumed that 'the Lord' here denotes Jesus Christ, as it generally does in the Epistles, and that therefore Christ is identified with the Holy Ghost—a very disquieting assertion for the dogmatists. But another interpretation seems possible. The word 'Lord' is used in the Old Testament as a substitute for the ineffable name, and is therefore equivalent to 'God.' It thus occurs several times in the writings of Paul in quotations from the Old Testament, and there is no reason why he may not have occasionally used it in this sense in other passages, though there is no proof that he actually does so. There are, however, passages elsewhere in the New Testament where the term is used of God in clear distinction from Christ,<sup>1</sup> and accordingly we are not required by the usage of the time to forbid this interpretation if any passage in Paul's writing seems naturally to suggest it. Now the passage before us clearly contains such a suggestion. The Apostle has just quoted the words, 'when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away,' so that the added explanation naturally means that 'the Lord' in the ancient history represents 'the Spirit' as understood in Christian circles. The fundamental contrast with which the Apostle starts is between the deadening letter and the life-giving Spirit. There is a veil in the reading of the Old Testament; but when one turns from the letter to the spirit, the veil is taken away. Under the new covenant of the Spirit the veil is

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xi. 25, Luke x. 21; Matt. xxi. 9, Luke xix. 38; Luke xx. 37; Acts iv. 29, xvii. 24. It is highly probable in several other passages.

removed; and the glory of God in the face of Christ does not fade.

However this may be, the spiritual force of the words on which I desire to dwell remains unimpaired: 'We all, with unveiled face, reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit.'<sup>1</sup> These words present, in figurative language, the ideal and the power of Christianity in the elevation of mankind, and embody some of its profoundest thoughts. We may dwell upon these in the order in which they occur.

We must observe, then, in the first place, the universality of the Christian life—'We *all*.' In the Old Testament the face of Moses alone is represented as lighted up with a glory caught from his communion with God; and even with him that glory was transitory. It did not shine with so steady and strong a beam as to cast a reflected light upon the faces of the people, and its fading splendour was hidden behind a veil. But in Christianity there is no such limitation. It is not one or two that are caught up into the mount to gaze upon the mysteries of the Spirit. There are no chosen few to whom alone the essence of the truth is revealed, while all others must remain in bondage to the letter of commandments and ordinances dependent on their authority. There is but one faith, one hope, one morality which is the fruit of the Spirit. The grandest aspirations, the purest feelings, the holiest worship, the most vivid insight into truth, the consecration of the body as a temple of the Holy Spirit, are open to all the children of

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 18.

men. There is no height of communion to which the soul of prophet or saint has risen from which the lowliest of God's children is arbitrarily or officially debarred. The Spirit of Life in Christ, if not in all its power, yet in its purity and loveliness, may be ours. Those who bear the seal of consecration enter not the presence of God for us, but invite us to enter with them to taste the same joys and kneel in the same shrine. This, then, is a grand distinction of Christianity—there is one rule, one life, one spirit for all. There are differences in men's faithfulness, and in the measure and variety of their spiritual gifts, but not in their privilege of access to God.

In close connexion with its universality is another distinction, that men gaze directly upon truth, and apprehend its everlasting essence, instead of seeing it dimly through the veil of forms and symbols. 'To this day,' says the Apostle, alluding to the usage of the Synagogue, 'the same veil remains in the reading of the old Covenant, it not being unveiled that it is being abolished in Christ; but to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies upon their heart.' Their religion, as it appeared to Paul, consisted of a number of precise regulations and precepts, which were but the temporary forms that truth adopted to suit the mental capacity of the age. The people, though there may have been exceptions, could not see beyond those forms, and perceive that they owed their value to a more abiding reality behind. They could not escape from the deadening letter of the law, and grasp its living spirit, which would have made them independent of its letter. Hence there was no freedom of movement either in thought or in practice; but

hard and unchanging rules were accepted as the tribunal to which, in cases of difficulty, the ultimate appeal must be addressed. But in Christianity this veil is taken away. The attention of men is not limited to a severe code which claims their absolute and unthinking submission; and the Sermon on the Mount itself is a revelation of the Spirit, and not a compilation of statutes to be legally interpreted. Those who have entered into the mind of Christ do not confound the perishing symbol with the eternal Spirit; but they receive into their hearts the living substance of truth and goodness, which adapts itself with spontaneous ease to the ever varying forms of thought and practice. The letter no longer sits in judgment on the spirit, or condemns a worship which escapes the trammels of formality or a deed of love which forgets that it is the sabbath-day. The spirit is now the judge of the precept, and all regulations are required to move with pliant freedom beneath its moulding power. To it alone must appeal in the last resort be made, and no extraneous authority can be permitted to interfere with its verdict. The hidden glory is revealed. The Life, of which all modes of worship and all systems of morality are but the imperfect and transitory expression, is made known, and 'with unveiled face' we catch its unimpeded rays.

How different is this conception from that which is still too commonly held. Even Christians, alas! have a veil upon their hearts, and instead of exulting in their freedom, enslave themselves to creeds and ceremonies. They too judge of men by their conformity to a rule, and not by the sanctity of their spirit. They too stifle the voice of truth

by the force of an outward authority, and forget the requirements of love while they vindicate some ancient dogma. They cannot recognize the soul of goodness when it comes in collision with stereotyped notions, or violates a long-sanctioned usage. But some, perhaps many, have laid aside the veil of unalterable creeds. Let them beware lest the darker veil of indifference or sin be upon their hearts. If they have free access to the Father, and no shades of superstition hide from them his glory, let holiness be their portion. If they have died to the law, and articles of faith and postures of worship have no terror for them, they must live to righteousness and devotion. Let them lay aside every earthly impediment to their clear vision of the Spirit, and behold it 'with unveiled face.'

I am justified in speaking of the vision of the Spirit; for though Paul here describes it as 'the glory of the Lord,' he has immediately before declared that 'the Lord is the Spirit.' The Law was but a dim foreshadowing of the great reality to come. Jesus was the impersonation of that eternal Spirit of Righteousness and Truth, of which the Law was but a transitory, though glorious, form. In him dwelt the fullness of that Love which prompted every humane precept, of that devotion which signified its beauty through a pompous ritual. And therefore the Law of commandments and ordinances was superseded by the 'Law of the Spirit of Life'; for when the Life which is the groundwork of all moral activity and of the moods of devotion is revealed, the commandment instantly becomes unnecessary; and the righteous deed, which formerly was an act of hard submission to an authority imposed from without, now grows from within, and

is the soft and beautiful fruit of the Spirit. And herein resides perhaps the most distinctive characteristic of Christianity. It requires of us, not the acknowledgment of articles of belief, but the acceptance of a person. It asks us, not to interpret a 'letter,' but to understand a soul. The Truth comes not frozen and stiff, in shapes which profess to be Divine while they exert no living energy, but warm and breathing in one who is a 'quickening Spirit.' Not through sacrificial rite or stern prescription does the eternal Word now shed a feeble ray, but 'a body' has been prepared for it, and enshrined in our human nature it has become 'the Light of the world.' 'Lo! I come to do thy Will, O God,' is its morning prayer; 'It is finished; Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,' is its nightly thanksgiving. When we gaze upon the glory that illumines the face of Christ, the features of Truth disclose themselves in that pure lustre, and Goodness stands confessed in her immortal and unfading charms.

Again, the true Christian not only sees, but reflects, the glory of the Lord. We do not gaze with dull and vacant stare upon the light of his countenance, but it falls upon our faces with such a kindling glow that they too begin to shine. When the sun rises in his splendour, earth does not meet his salutation with blank, unmeaning look, but innumerable unsuspected beauties start forth to greet him. The ocean flashes back his radiance. The solemn mountains clothe themselves in the habiliments of joy. The pearly grass forgets its lowly birth, and glistens with rainbow tints. And while all creation is thus bathed in a flood of light, it does not assume a wearying sameness, but, on the

contrary, this pervading influence relieves the dark uniformity of night, and under its reviving power each object displays its own peculiar beauty, and contributes its *characteristic grace* to the universal loveliness. Thus, of the great throng of faces that surround the central Light of our humanity all are illuminated with the common glory, yet each finds his individual life, not absorbed, but intensified; and then first do our special endowments detect their true office and work with their true energy, when the Christian spirit touches them with its revealing light. In one the intellect returns a clear and colourless ray, and exhibits the sharply defined outlines of truth. In another, imagination reflects a warm and misty glow, and dimly shows the infinite wonders of God. A third shines with the soft, subdued gleam of sympathy and goodwill. And thus, amid the thousand varying gifts of men, there is no fatiguing repetition; but when the glory of the Lord rises upon them, it rescues them from the night of barbarism, where all is monotonous shadow, and human nature unfolds in infinite development, and the light, darting from face to face, while it reveals the communion of a universal brotherhood, discloses at the same time our diverse individual virtues.

Yet we are not left in stature narrow and ill-proportioned, albeit irradiated by the glory of the Lord; but we 'are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory,' and our nature receives an ever expanding growth. Strange power of this spiritual light, that it converts us into the likeness of him from whom it comes. It falls upon our dormant faculties, and they awake to consciousness. We too recognize the presence

of the Father, and hear his solemn voice whispering in the cleansed sanctuary of the soul. We too worship in spirit and in truth, and know that a single lowly heart is worth ten thousand temples of marble, where bulls are sacrificed upon golden altars. We too honour the dignity of righteousness, and confess that the cross of duty is grander than the throne of sin. Our sympathies enlarge, and we weep for human woe, and toil for human progress. Each virtue that adorned the soul of the great Teacher, each thought that uplifted his mind, each feeling that trembled in his heart, becomes our own. His life dwells within us, and throbs in every part. The very body is glorified; and passions, which unsanctified conduct us into sin, now with hallowed potency ennoble the fullness of our manhood, and make us more worthy ministers of the Divine Will. This is no dreamer's vision; for though as yet the image may be roughly hewn, though many a jagged edge and earthy stain may remind us of the shapeless block, though Jesus seems translated to a sphere whither we hardly dare approach, yet the Spirit can transform us, and gradually overcome the dull resistance of our lower nature. Not in a moment do we attain perfection; but, except when our wills rebel, 'we are being transformed,' and are passing 'from glory to glory.' For this glory, shining as it does from 'the Lord the Spirit,' possesses an infinite fullness. As we are fitted to receive it, it discloses new mysteries; and ever and anon a ray unseen before breaks upon our view, and we press forward to catch a nearer vision. And at last, if we are faithful, the completeness of that life shall be ours, and we shall stand in perfected beauty, our unveiled faces beaming with

a radiance of communion which shall never fade.

Such is the grand hope of the Gospel, such the precious gift which Christianity offers to the world—a transforming Divine energy, ending in the perfect spiritual freedom of sons of God.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE ROOT OF CHRISTIAN MORALITY

**T**HE Apostle, in several of his letters, appends to the argumentative portion a series of moral exhortations. These are sometimes of universal application, and sometimes addressed to particular classes; but they are quite unsystematic, and, though they rest on a distinct principle, there is no attempt to fit them into the framework of an ethical philosophy. As we have already seen, Paul finds the root of real righteousness, not in obedience to a moral law, but in the indwelling of the Spirit of Life in Christ. By way of introduction to our meditations on some of his practical advice, we may survey this root of Christian morality a little more closely.

In one of his vehement, yet profound phrases, when he was pleading for the freedom of the Gentiles, the Apostle reveals the secret of his own transfigured life—'I have been crucified with Christ: and it is no longer I that live, but Christ that liveth in me.'<sup>1</sup> 'This,' says a justly celebrated commentator, 'is the language of ecstasy not the reality of this waking world.' If we agreed with this strange remark, it would hardly be worth our

<sup>1</sup> Gal. ii. 20.

while to search for the meaning of the Apostle. When we are in quest of a vital principle by which to rule our characters and regulate our intercourse with our fellow men, we cannot afford to turn aside in pursuit of a visionary's dream. The work of life is too urgent, passion is too vehement, temptation too seductive, to leave time for unsubstantial imaginings which are sure to fail us in the hour of trial. We need not the glow of ecstasy, which is quite compatible with hardness and selfishness in our daily conduct, but deeply rooted and abiding motives which will display themselves most fully amid the realities of the waking world. I believe that Paul's words, far from being merely the language of ecstasy, reveal the true and permanent ground of man's noblest life.

That the truth is expressed in language strongly figurative is undeniable. No one can believe, and Paul himself in his most ecstatic moments did not believe, that he had been literally crucified with Christ, that in consequence he was no longer alive, and that Christ had taken up his abode within his body. He uses the same figure in regard to believers generally. 'They were baptized into Christ's death; their old (or, former) man was crucified with him; they died with him, and were buried with him.'<sup>1</sup> But because spiritual truths are conveyed in figurative language, they do not therefore belong to an unreal world. Human speech is imperfect, and the idea which we can represent only by figures may be quite as clear to our mind as that which admits of the most logical definition. Much of our mental life is best described in figurative language, and accordingly we employ it in our

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vi. 3-8. See also Col. ii. 12. iii. 1.

calmest and most commonplace moods. It most satisfactorily conveys our meaning, and is understood by others more readily than a strictly scientific phraseology could be. When we are told that two persons are closely bound to one another, we do not think our informant beside himself and ignorant of the realities of this waking world, because the two persons in question, instead of being tied together by a strong cord, are separated by hundreds of miles. And we might even, without being accused of violating the proprieties of speech, say of one whom we loved that he should live for ever in our hearts; and indeed Paul himself is not supposed to be raving when he tells the Philippians that he had them in his heart.<sup>1</sup>

It might seem puerile to bring forward such examples were it not for the too prevalent tendency to apply rules of interpretation to the Bible which, if applied to our ordinary conversation, would reduce large portions of it to mere jargon. If it is true that our human affections find their best exponent in symbolical language, much truer is it of the religious sentiments which are expressed in the Bible. In no other way can we present them to our thought. Reduce them to colourless prose, and the most precious portion of the truth will vanish in the process. Forbid us any longer to speak of light and darkness, blind and seeing, hidden and revealed, bondage and freedom, Father and Son, and you will leave us without adequate means of expressing some of our profoundest and clearest thoughts. Accordingly, that series of books, which above all others minister to the religious life, abounds in figurative language,

<sup>1</sup> Philip. i. 7.

so abounds indeed that all have to acknowledge its frequent presence. But in many cases this language has been accepted literally, and forced to signify something strangely different from the original intention, so that the impassioned utterance of exalted and grateful devotion is degraded into some harsh and repellent dogma. It is as if one who had never felt the glow of affection sat down to study the poetry of love. To him the words would possess no natural meaning. Perhaps he would think the writer under the influence of a disordered mind. Perhaps he would frame for himself a theory of love whose grotesque departure from the reality would amuse all wedded hearts. Devotion also has its poetic raptures and its tongues of fire, which seem to the undevout like the madness of intoxication. Affection only can interpret the language of affection; and spiritual depth, rather than the critic's eye, is required to detect the meaning of the words of scripture.

It might seem, then, presumptuous to pretend to have seen even dimly the Apostle's meaning. To a mind so richly stored with spiritual truth every sentence may have had a wealth of significance which our lower minds cannot comprehend. Yet we may bumbly feel after the truth, believing all the time that a longer experience and a more perfect faithfulness will enable us hereafter to see depths of sentiment and thought which now we cannot penetrate.

As the words which I have quoted were originally spoken of himself, it may furnish some clue to their interpretation to glance at the Apostle's history. He, we must remember, had experienced a great and sudden change. He had been brought

## The Root of Christian Morality 205

up in the narrowest sect of Judaism. The Jewish religion, with all its minute ceremonial, he had believed to be the only path to acceptance with God. Circumcision was more essential to man's welfare than benevolence and piety. Evil passions might be enlisted on the side of the true religion. The upstart sect, some of whose votaries seemed to doubt the eternity of the Law, must be crushed with ruthless violence. How he and his fraternity must have prayed that such a vile infidel as Stephen, who appeared to question the lasting authority of Moses, might be put out of the way. The Church was in danger. The salvation even of the little body of the elect was in peril. They had fallen upon evil days. But the energetic Saul would stop the mouth of the blasphemer. Suddenly, however, a light flashed into his soul. The Son of God was revealed within him. He became conscious of a Spirit far unlike any he had known before. He now understood that crucified Jesus whom he had so grossly misinterpreted and maligned. He perceived that 'the Spirit of Life' in him was far above all other life. Jesus, though he had respected, had not been in bondage to the Law; yet none like him had fulfilled the Divine Will. A higher relation was possible for man than that of servant subject to authoritative commandments. He might be a Son, loving God as a Father, holding communion with him, and partaking of his holiness. Yes, that 'Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus' was what he so deeply needed, what all mankind needed. Without that no law could justify; with it no law was required. The Law, then, had grown old and passed away; and all things had become new. He was not now the most perfect man who was

most zealous of the traditions of the fathers, most mad against heretics, and most confident that he could not be mistaken in his creed, but he who had most of the Spirit of the Son of God within his heart.

No one who can appreciate such a change as this will consider the Apostle's language in describing it too strong, or indicative of a mind unable to look realities in the face. If he had mildly said, 'I have altered my opinions, and my character has in consequence been somewhat modified,' he would have expressed far less than the truth. His was no mere change in the form of his doctrine. He did not simply become convinced that certain ceremonies might be dispensed with, while he retained the essential principles which rendered his former belief possible. He did not merely transfer his allegiance from Moses to Christ, and recognize in the latter the same kind of authority that he had previously owned in the former. The inmost essence of his life and thought was altered; for he had embraced a principle directly antagonistic to all his former principles. Inward spiritual life, the life of Christ within the heart, not slavish submission to any outward standard, became the one thing needful. He had been a proud bigot, madly dashing himself against the providence of God. Now he was a humble saint, working out that grand purpose which had been hidden from ages but was at last made manifest in the 'beloved Son.' The old Saul was no more. He was dead, 'crucified with Christ.' His pride and self-will were gone, and a higher Spirit than his own had taken possession of him. It was no longer he that lived; it was Christ that lived in him.

Thus we can understand that the startling figur-

## The Root of Christian Morality 207

ative language which was dictated by his ardent feeling describes the one great reality of Paul's life. Whatever else might be unreal, that great awakening of his mind, that death to the law, that resurrection to a spiritual life, were beyond the possibility of question. That life of the Spirit was not a moment's ecstatic dream, but a most waking certainty, proved by the consistent faithfulness of a laborious and suffering missionary enterprise.

But in order to arrive at the universal truth, we must consider the words a little more closely.

'I have been crucified with Christ.' Is this expression applicable to Paul alone, or does crucifixion symbolize for all men the only way of approach to the highest excellence? What was signified by the crucifixion of Christ? Was it not perfect self-surrender, in trust and love, to the Will of God? And is not this the only path to eternal life? Is not this the only acceptable sacrifice? The cross involved agony; but though the agony deepens the impression of its meaning, that meaning lies, not in the agony, but in the self-renunciation of obedient love. Let us but once apprehend this, its true meaning, the self-abnegation for the sake of righteousness and truth, the superiority to all ambitions and worldly motives, the devotion to the good of others, the loving acquiescence in the Divine Will, which it implies, and we shall see that it manifests the real life of man, and that all so-called schemes of salvation which ignore the necessity of self-sacrifice, are delusions which beguile men to their destruction. We may darken the heavens with the smoke of our offerings; but while we cling to our selfish passions, our incense will be an abomination to our God. We may cry,

Lord, Lord, till heaven is weary of the sound ; but while we persist in working iniquity, the only response will be, depart from me, for I know you not. Christ loved us, and gave himself for us, not that we might do our own will, and yet hope for the favour of God, but that we might be crucified with him, and through the renunciation of self might find our true life, that all sensuality, pride, imperiousness, anger, malice, impatience, discontent, intolerance, and hypocrisy, might die within us, and love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, sincerity, meekness, and temperance, might rise and reign for ever in our hearts. And if, through the solemn consecration of ourselves to the highest Will, we are attaining these things, then indeed the Divine Life has entered our souls and the wrath of unbelieving men cannot separate us from him who has called us to himself. Our worship may ascend from the gorgonian temple, with its throng of votaries and its pomp of ritual, or from a lonely Galilean mountain, where the sighing gale is the only music ; wheresoever we may be, or by whatsoever name we may be called, the devotion of the heart will open the gates of heaven, and he who has been crucified with Christ shall never pray in vain.

When we are thus perfectly surrendered to the Will of God, each of us may truly say 'It is no longer I that live.' In proportion as we commit ourselves to the guidance of the higher Spirit, the merely personal elements which characterize the self will drop away, and we shall cease to pride ourselves on the eccentricities which mark our earthly limitations. There is an ideal symmetry of mind, a fullness of beauty and power, which

we may indefinitely approach. By subordinating our personal distinctions, and allowing the Spirit of God to mould us according to his perfect Will, we become the organs of a nobler and larger life, and divert the attention of men from ourselves to the infinite beauty, holiness, and wisdom, which have found in us an unworthy tabernacle, or, if not a tabernacle, have at least expressed themselves through us in some moment of exalted communion. In proportion as these things abide in us, it is no longer we that live; it is Christ that lives in us.

For in Christ was made manifest that Life which was with the Father, and in which all the children of God are called to participate. The perfect Christian is more than a disciple of Jesus. He is bound to him by a communion of spirit, and, being ruled by the same law of love, is penetrated with the same inward life. Christ lives within him. There are few indeed who must not be humbled by such a thought: for we are continually seeking worthless substitutes for this life, and rejecting the inestimable gift of God. Often and often we prefer our own poor life, our passion, our ambition, our love of pleasure or of gain, to the life of the Son of God within our hearts. Yet that is man's only true and permanent life, his only undying glory, the heavenly consummation of religion, the saint's eternal bliss. May that 'Spirit of Life' come, and dwell in our hearts in such fullness that the old self, with its darkness and sin, may die, and the new man, created in holiness after the likeness of the Son of God, may rise in deathless vigour. Then, in the glad consciousness that we have ceased to dream, and have found at last our true waking life, we too shall exclaim with Paul, 'I have been cruci-

fied with Christ; and it is no longer I that live; it is Christ that liveth in me.'

We have already ventured to extend the significance of Paul's language beyond its immediate application to himself. We are justified in so doing; for in another passage he plainly intimates that the 'law of the Spirit of Life' in the crucified was the root of practical morality for all believers. Having referred to the forgiving love of God, he writes to the Ephesians, 'Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, even as Christ also loved you, and gave himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an odour of a sweet smell.'<sup>1</sup> And again, in the Epistle to the Romans, having wound up his great argument with a description of the universal pity and all-pervading providence of God, he turns to exhortation with the words, 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable (or, spiritual) service.'<sup>2</sup> Christianity has so entirely abolished the ancient notion of sacrifice that we have almost forgotten how purely figurative the language of sacrifice is when used by Christian writers. Sacrifice was offered on an altar, and when an animal was the offering the flesh was burned; and the belief that the savour of the burnt flesh could ascend as a sweet smell to the Deity must seem to us to belong to a very low type of heathen anthropomorphism. Such language, when used by Paul, is of course purely figurative; for Christ had never been a burnt-offering on an altar. To understand the employment of such a figure, we must remember that sacrifice was

<sup>1</sup> Eph. v. 1, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. xii. 1.

## The Root of Christian Morality 211

universally a part of religious observance. The Christians were distinguished by having no sacrifices; their offerings were prayer and thanksgiving, and doing the will of God. They had no temple; but their bodies were the temple of the Holy Spirit. And so, instead of leading bulls to the altar, they were to present themselves as a holy offering, an inward worship of the reason, taking the place of vain ceremonies which could never cleanse the conscience.

With these preliminary observations we may now turn to the passage in Romans already quoted. It forms the beautiful commencement of that portion of Paul's greatest Epistle which relates to the practical duties of life. It comes in with peculiar force after his glowing exposition of God's merciful providence, and of the needs and struggles of the human soul. Here, as elsewhere, he builds the fabric of duty upon the basis of faith, and, having explained the inner essence of the new life, then appeals affectionately to his readers to allow that life to have free course in the direction of their outward activities. He saw that there was a certain coincidence between the idea which men entertained of God and the character which they manifested; and Christianity introduced a new and higher form of character because it furnished a new and higher revelation of God. The will can work only upon the materials presented to it, and with the best intentions and the most earnest striving can never evolve the noblest life out of an unworthy faith. Indeed the will always lags behind our thought, and, however lofty and inspiring may be our faith, we still require beseeching, exhortation, and encouragement. Our life catches

from the will its tinge of faithfulness or unfaithfulness, its apparent completeness or imperfection; but it borrows from our faith its ideal colouring and its hidden essence. It depends upon our faith whether our character resembles, as it were, the massive solidity of an Egyptian, the cold intellectual beauty of a Greek, or the warm spirituality of a Christian temple; but it depends upon the will whether that temple, to whatever type it may belong, is admirably finished in every part, and carefully preserved from contamination, or, on the other hand, is incomplete, defiled, or ruined.

These remarks may be illustrated by noticing the growth of the idea of God through three stages, which may be considered as roughly representing the heathen, the Jewish, and the Christian conceptions.

The earliest notion which the mind would form of God would be naturally that of a Being of super-human power. This idea would be suggested by the mighty forces which are all around us. The voice of the thunder, the rush of the tempest, the fury of the waves, would seem to speak of beings of irresistible strength, while the bubbling fountain and the rustling leaves would indicate a gentler, but nevertheless unseen, unknown, and therefore awful power. The contemplation of nature must have been far more impressive in this respect at a time when its forces must have almost seemed to be expressions of a lawless will, when science had not yet reduced them to order, discovered their beneficent agency, and by her submission learned to rule them. This was a time when might was right, when power was worshipped, and those were esteemed the greatest men who had the most des-

potie wills and the most ample means of making others miserable by the indulgence of selfish or brutal passions. Then the gods were regarded as happy beings who might do as they pleased, and carry out their determinations with an energy which none could dare to resist.

It is evident that the worship of such deities could possess no elevating or sanctifying influence, and would be merely the servile homage of beings conscious of their dependence; and it would most naturally consist of a round of forms and ceremonies, and intended to secure the favour or avert the displeasure of those who had such tremendous means of vengeance at their disposal. The gifts and flattery of men were supposed to be as agreeable to the rulers of the skies as to kings and conquerors; and even the most immoral and revolting practices obtained the consecration, if consecration it may be called, of pagan superstition. So little religion is there in this, the lowest form of faith in God. Yet it is a true faith so far as it goes, and must not be discarded, but rather included and hallowed, by any higher belief. That God is infinitely powerful, and that man is weak and dependent, is a great truth; and no profound religion will lose the feeling of awe and submission which this thought awakens. God is not to be approached with the easy irreverence, nor his name uttered with the unfeeling flippancy which some people seem to consider a sign of religion. If perfect love casts out fear, yet it is only *perfect* love that has a right to do so; and such love increases our veneration, and cherishes the awful sense of the majesty of Omnipotence.

The Jewish conception added to the idea of

almighty power that of spotless righteousness. In Palestine God was regarded not only as 'the Lord of hosts,' but as 'the holy One of Israel.' He was one who had given a law to guide the actions of men, and expected obedience to that law. He favoured the righteous, and crowned them with mercies; and his face was against them that did evil. He searched and knew the heart, and tried whether there were any wicked way therein. He was the Judge to whom all were responsible, and before whom the guilty must tremble.

This form of religion, when held with any earnestness, is calculated to produce a far nobler type of character than the worship of mere power. It is now seen that a lawless strength is not to be honoured, but that even the might of kings must prove its value by subjection to the law of righteousness. God's most glorious attribute is not his omnipotence, but his sanctity; and men must secure his approbation, not by empty flattery, and pretended gifts to him to whom the earth and its fullness belong, but by humble conformity to his holy will. The sense of sin, the consciousness of violated law, awakens in his presence; and men's religious energies are wholly bent upon the fulfilment of the law. So long as the religious conviction is sincere and heartfelt, the character is strong, earnest, and manly, and, if it has not yet attained the height of saintliness, it is at least sound, healthy, and robust. Though this form of religion does not bring God before us in the dearest and tenderest relations, it must nevertheless be included in any higher form and any conception of God's lovingkindness which throws a stain upon his righteousness must be essentially false. He

## The Root of Christian Morality 215

who aspires to be a saint while his conscience is undisciplined, and pretends that he lives in filial fellowship with God while he disregards God's righteous laws is practising a miserable self-deception. In revealing himself as the Father of mercies God does not cease to be the holy One, the Judge of all the earth, and the searcher of hearts ; and when conscience lays down its burden upon the altar of love, it is not because its revelations have ceased to be true, but because its righteous requirements are fulfilled by a higher power than the faint and struggling will.

This leads us to the Christian idea, an idea not obscurely foreshadowed by teachers of an older time, but appearing in the Gospel with unexampled clearness, and becoming the very centre of religion. God is now regarded not only as a righteous legislator and judge, but as a loving Father. All his purposes towards our race flowed out of that deep fountain of love which men had so little understood. Through the ages he had not only been asking for their obedience, but preparing for their blessedness. The burden of ceremonies, the wretchedness of sin, were alike designed to lead men to their true resting-place. He turned not away in anger from the corrupt superstition of the heathen, or the proud self-confidence of the Jew ; but he mourned over their guilt, and pitied the blindness of their hearts. He 'loved the world' ; with all its false worship, its desolating passions, its hungry selfishness, its devotion to the flesh and insensibility to the things of the Spirit, he loved it still, loved it, if one may employ human speech in relation to God, loved it all the more because it so needed his love. He came to seek and

save the lost, and by filling a Son of Man with his own Spirit, to show what love meant, and what love could do. Love does not confine itself to those with whom it has an affinity, and to whom it is drawn by the attraction of sympathy; but it passes on, and pours itself forth upon enemies, even upon those who despise, hate, and crucify it. Wherever a human heart bears the burden of a woe or a sin, whether it be acknowledged or unacknowledged, the Divine Love is there, seeking to pour the oil of consolation and healing, pierced and pained when its holy ministrations are refused, and filled with joy when it is admitted to redeem, to sanctify, and to bless. Ever near, ever tender, forbearing, patient, pleading with us in our guilt and folly, and with gentlest looks of sorrowing compassion drawing forth our contrite tears, whispering comfort to the desolate heart, and saying to our bewildered and longing affection, 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love,' our Father is reconciling us to himself, and beseeching us to be his. Can we any longer withhold our adoring worship? Wronged, dishonoured, grieved, he has still loved us with a love unspeakable, a love which only Gethsemane and Calvary can express; and his Holy Spirit has mingled in our unholy thoughts, his righteousness in our unrighteous deeds. He has given us the hope of eternal life, whose height and depth we know not yet, though he has bestowed on us the earnest of the Spirit, that Spirit of adoption whereby we cry Abba, Father.

What, then, is the life corresponding to this conception, the life which flows from it just in proportion as it rises above a mere conception, and

## The Root of Christian Morality 217

becomes a living faith? Is it not a life of self-consecration. There is no longer a profitless round of ceremonies, or a weary conformity to a law, but a loving, grateful, glad self-surrender to One whose love has found, subdued, and quickened us. No longer is the bleeding victim laid upon the altar, but our own bodies become the living sacrifice, on which is poured the spirit of consecration, and which are now made 'holy, acceptable unto God.'

In mentioning our bodies the Apostle may intend to include our whole nature, denoting that we ourselves are to be the sacrificial offering in the new kingdom of love. But though this idea is certainly included, he has probably a more special reference. Our spirits belong already to God, and ever tend towards him; it is the body, that portion of our nature which connects us with earth, so often smothers our higher aspirations, and concentrates our thoughts and affections upon mean and perishing objects—it is this which requires to be sacrificed. This exhortation was especially appropriate in a letter addressed to a church in Rome, a city where the appetites flourished on a scale proportioned to the size of the empire; where the vilest forms of sensualism excited hardly any repugnance; where banquets displayed, not the hospitality of friendship, but the wealth of the host and the gluttony of the guests; where ferocity was nurtured by the cruel sports of the amphitheatre, and riches commanded a counterfeit of that homage which is due to virtue alone; a city which was the centre of a vast material civilization, in which pomp, power, and fame were the highest objects of ambition, and war, massacre, and pillage were regarded as legiti-

mate means of securing an ephemeral distinction. Who so much as the Romans required to be taught that the body must be consecrated, and offered up as a living sacrifice, that its lusts and passions might be consumed in a heavenly fire? But we all need it; for 'the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh.' And here we find the universal rule for the guidance of the body. Once let us regard it as the sacrifice which we have to offer to God, and we shall not present it to the holy and loving Father stained with impurity. Let us view it as the wonderful, living temple wherein God's Spirit is to be enshrined, and our members will become instruments, not of sin, but of righteousness.

And what is there in the whole round of material forms which so clearly reveals the Spirit as the human body? We think that we trace an expression on the face of nature, and catch the tones of worship in its varied voices; but we only transfer thither what we have more distinctly seen and heard in the countenance and the voice of man. The spirit, itself invisible and impalpable, yet glows in the human eye, melts along the face, and reveals itself in the tones. The body is indeed the great revealer of the spirit, marvellously contrived to be its organ of communication, often by a single look, oftener by a word, awakening in us whole trains of thought and feeling, and bringing us into a far higher Presence than its own. Who that thus regards the body can defile so holy a temple, and pervert it to base ends? It is a thought of almost fearful sublimity that these limbs, that this mouth, may be the organs, not of the poor human self-will, with its earthly aims,

## The Root of Christian Morality 219

cares, and passions, but of the Divine Will, with its eternal purposes, its unstained sanctity, its unfathomable love. Yet this they may be, if God is truly our Father, and sheds abroad in our hearts the Spirit of Adoption.

Sonship implies all this, more, infinitely more, than this. The Divine Spirit abiding in the soul, the Love of the Father acting and speaking through us, a communion which can be described only in the ancient words, 'God dwelling in us, and we in God'—it is to this that we are called in the gospel of the Son. Alas! we are not worthy. Fain would we hide our heads in the dust, for such knowledge is too wonderful for us. Yet the less worthy we are, the more adorable is that Love which places the crown of sonship on our drooping heads, and mingles, with sanctifying power, in the sinful thoughts of our hearts. That Love, we know, is infinite; and therein is the ground of our hope. It is not that we are great, but that God is good. We would not exalt ourselves, or magnify human power; but God exalts the lowly, and gives strength to the simple; and they that have discovered that without God they can do nothing can set no limits to what at last they may do and be in him.

But our idea is not complete till we have remarked that our self-consecration is a service of the reason, an inward and spiritual homage. The true worship of the Father is in the soul. No formal observances, no cold and heartless submission to the outward rules of duty, can satisfy a love like his. He would be enthroned in the palace of the affections, and receive within the heart a deeper veneration than the richest cere-

monial can ever express. Yes! the Christian life is inward, not outward, a dedication of ourselves rather than an offering of what belongs to us. Soul and body must be given to God, till the Spirit of Love, which is his, claim us for its own, and fill us with heavenly light, and we become the sons and daughters of the Lord almighty.

## CHAPTER XVII

### PAUL'S KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS

WE have seen that the root of Christian morality is the 'Spirit of Life in Christ' as manifested in the self-sacrifice of the cross. But the crucifixion, apart from the spirit that lay behind it and the circumstances that led to it, could teach nothing but the barbarity of the men who inflicted such a horrible punishment. Two thieves were crucified at the same time as Christ, and the world has derived from them no saving revelation and appeal. It is therefore natural to ask what Paul knew of the character of Jesus that induced him to attach such importance to the cross. It has been sometimes assumed that the Apostle knew and cared nothing about the life and teaching of the man whom he regarded as the Christ, and that he evolved out of his own visionary imagination the faith which he preached with such wonderful success. It is difficult to conceive a more improbable supposition; for even if Paul himself was wholly destitute of human curiosity and interest, we cannot believe that when those whom he addressed asked who Jesus was, and what he did and taught, they would be content with the reply that he knew nothing about Jesus except that

he was crucified as a blasphemer and rebel, and afterwards appeared to several disciples. What faith ready to encounter martyrdom could be thus awakened, what changed and exalted life could be thus imparted, what knowledge of 'the Spirit of Life in Christ' could be thus received? This supposition rests upon another supposition equally baseless, that Paul in his letters makes a complete statement of everything he knew and believed. But his letters are quite casual, expressive of his friendship, or dealing with particular difficulties which were felt by his converts, or giving needful admonitions for correcting faults and abuses that had arisen in the churches. But notwithstanding their casual nature, very important information affecting our present question may, with a little care, be gleaned from them. We must remember too that not only are the letters themselves casual, but that the words to which we must appeal were written, not in order to convey information, but by way of reminder, or as a passing reference to circumstances well known to the readers.

First, then, it would appear that provision was made for systematic teaching in the churches. Among those who had some kind of official duty there were recognized 'teachers,'<sup>1</sup> and it would seem that those who received instruction from them were expected to make some voluntary contribution to their support.<sup>2</sup> Paul, accordingly, in writing to the Roman Christians, whom he had not visited, assumes that they had been properly taught.<sup>3</sup> The Apostle, though not himself one

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xii. 28; Eph. iv. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. vi. 6. See Lightfoot's note.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. vi. 17, xvi. 17.

of the official teachers of a particular church, refers repeatedly to his own teaching, and more than once intimates that he handed on what he had received from others.<sup>1</sup> What was thus handed on was properly referred to as 'tradition,'<sup>2</sup> a word which, in the Greek, is not limited, as with us, to that which comes down through successive generations, but is applied to any information which is 'delivered' from one to another. The word, however, is very suggestive. It implies that there was among the Christians a current body of teaching which the missionaries received, and passed on to new converts. Further it suggests that this teaching was oral; for the Jewish traditional law, with which Paul was well acquainted,<sup>3</sup> was in his time still oral. This supposition is confirmed by a reference in Galatians<sup>4</sup> to 'him that is taught,' for the Greek word properly means 'taught orally,' and is used of instruction given by a speech in a worshipping assembly.<sup>5</sup> The use of the word leads to a still more important conclusion; namely, that the substance of the catechesis related chiefly to the life and teaching of Jesus. For it is the word employed by Luke in the Preface to his Gospel to describe the instruction which had been received by Theophilus, and which the Evangelist wished to confirm by his narrative; and the narrative itself professed to embody the tradition of eyewitnesses.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 17, xi. 2, 23, xv. 1, 3; Gal. i. 9; Philip. iv. 9; Col. i. 28; 1 Thess. ii. 13, iv. 1; 2 Thess. ii. 15, iii. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Παράδοσις, 1 Cor. xi. 2; 2 Thess. ii. 15, iii. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Gal. i. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Gal. vi. 6, *κατηχούμενος*.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 19.

It may seem at first sight a fatal objection to this view that Paul, in writing to the Galatians, expressly declares that he did not receive his gospel from man, nor was taught it, but through revelation of Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup> If this statement referred to the whole of his teaching, it would of course be decisive; but there are reasons for confining it to certain points. Paul is anxious to claim an independent authority and a Divine sanction for his preaching of a faith which was not bound by the Jewish law. For this purpose he refers to his conversion, which was not the result of argument and instruction, but of a heavenly vision which completely changed his spiritual outlook, and sent him to preach 'the faith of which he once made havoc,' without waiting for any commission from Jerusalem. But this does not imply that he knew nothing of the life and teaching of Jesus; rather, as a persecutor, he must have known, in however perverted a way, the teaching of those whom he persecuted, and the chief facts in the life of him who was said to be the Christ. The revelation consisted in the clear perception that what he had regarded as false and blasphemous was in reality the highest spiritual truth. Surely this much is implied in the glad acknowledgment of the disciples that he was preaching, not something new, but the accepted Christian faith. Not for three years did he go up to Jerusalem, and then not to receive an apostolic commission, but to make the acquaintance of Peter. Would that we had full information about that fortnight in which the two men lived together; but can we believe that they were silent about the great Teacher who was living in

<sup>1</sup> Gal. i. 11, 12.

the heart of each, and that Paul did not learn many details about him from one who had been such an intimate friend ?

Further, it seems evident that in speaking of the gospel which he preached Paul was referring to the point which he had made peculiarly his own, and in which he differed from some of the older disciples ; for this is the special subject of the Epistle. The freedom of the Gentile gospel from the Jewish law was included in the revelation which he had received ; for he saw that the spirit of the Son of God was human, not national, and that its indwelling in the heart raised men above mere prescription, whether moral or ceremonial, and rendered the scrupulous observance of accepted forms ' weak and beggarly ' by comparison.

We are now prepared to gather together what may be gleaned of Paul's knowledge of Jesus from incidental allusions in his Epistles. In doing so let us once more recollect that we have no more reason to expect details of Christ's life in these Epistles than in many a modern sermon, from which it might be inferred, on some critical principles, that the preacher had never so much as heard of Christ.

First, then, we learn a few facts in regard to the outward life of Jesus. He was by birth an Israelite, and was sprung from the seed of David.<sup>1</sup> In both cases the statement is qualified by the phrase ' according to the flesh.' Paul applies the same limitation to himself ; and though he declares that he might boast of his pure Hebrew descent,<sup>2</sup> he refers to the Jews as his ' kindred according to the

<sup>1</sup> Rom. ix. 5, i. 3.      <sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. xi. 22 ; Philip. iii. 5.

flesh.<sup>1</sup> It is a legitimate inference that Jesus, followed by Paul, was antagonistic to the narrow Judaism of the day. He was at least one of the world-spirits who belong, not to a nation, but to mankind. Nevertheless, his actual missionary work was confined to Israel; he was 'a minister of circumcision.'<sup>2</sup> Though his work was thus limited to such a narrow field, his spiritual 'riches' were 'unsearchable,'<sup>3</sup> and his spiritual 'stature' was so full and complete as to be the goal for those who strove after perfection.<sup>4</sup> But in spite of this wealth of endowment, which might so easily have been turned to selfish ends, he lived in poverty for the sake of mankind, that men through that poverty might receive of his spiritual riches.<sup>5</sup> Paul was so impressed with that 'grace' of character that he followed its example; for he speaks of himself as 'poor, yet making many rich.'<sup>6</sup>

Clearly, then, Paul was aware that Jesus had engaged in a ministry of some sort among his countrymen, and that this ministry, in its implications, affected mankind. Though we are without details, we can learn its general import. It was 'in relation to sin,'<sup>7</sup> and indeed it was to save sinners that he came into the world.<sup>8</sup> His mission

<sup>1</sup> Rom. ix. 3.    <sup>2</sup> Rom. xv. 8.    <sup>3</sup> Eph. iii. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Eph. iv. 13.    <sup>5</sup> 2 Cor. viii. 9.

<sup>6</sup> 2 Cor. vi. 10. I am aware that I have not followed the usual interpretation, which I think is forced upon the text through the influence of dogma. *πτωχρέω* does not mean 'to become poor,' but 'to be poor'; and *πλοσιότης αὐ* surely implies that the riches and poverty were simultaneous; through all his outward poverty he was inwardly rich.

<sup>7</sup> Rom. viii. 3.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Tim. i. 15. Whatever may be thought of this Epistle as a whole, the passage referred to seems to me to be Pauline.

led him to his death, and it was on behalf of sinners that he died.<sup>1</sup> As sin is enmity against God, he sought to reconcile men to God through a ministration of Divine love<sup>2</sup>; and the Apostles felt that they were ambassadors on behalf of Christ, and were carrying on his work when, in delivering what they believed to be a Divine message, they implored men to be reconciled to God.<sup>3</sup>

To the details of Christ's life there are but few allusions. We learn, however, that he had brothers,<sup>4</sup> and a special circle of disciples known as 'the twelve.'<sup>5</sup> There is an account of the Last Supper, which took place in the night in which Jesus was delivered up,<sup>6</sup> and it is implied that it was at the time of the Passover, as Christ is figuratively described as 'our passover.'<sup>7</sup> If we may appeal to 1 Timothy, Paul tells us that Jesus 'witnessed a good confession' before, or perhaps in the time of Pontius Pilate.<sup>8</sup> We have already noticed references to the crucifixion, and we may reasonably suppose that allusions to Christ's sufferings<sup>9</sup> are founded upon this agonizing mode of martyrdom. And lastly, there is a formal account of the appearances of Jesus after his death<sup>10</sup>; and it is certainly not improbable that Paul 'received' this account chiefly from Peter, or at least had it confirmed by him, during his first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion. We further learn that Jesus gave commandments,

<sup>1</sup> Rom. v. 6, 8; 1 Cor. v. 7, 8, xv. 3; Gal. i. 4; 1 Tim. i. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. v. 8, 10. <sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. v. 18-20. <sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 5.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 5. <sup>6</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 23-25. <sup>7</sup> 1 Cor. v. 7.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 13, ἐν Πιλατῷ. See Luke iii. 2, ἐν ἀρχαῖς.

<sup>9</sup> 2 Cor. i. 5; Col. i. 24. <sup>10</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 3-8.

which were regarded as a final authority. Two are distinctly mentioned; and both are found in our Gospels. We are told that the Lord ordained that 'they who proclaim the gospel should live of the gospel.'<sup>1</sup> More important is the whole discussion of the subject of divorce, in regard to which some unsettled questions had arisen.<sup>2</sup> In this discussion Paul distinguishes his own judgment from the express commandment of the Lord.<sup>3</sup> This seems to imply an accepted body of precepts, which were well known to the Apostle, and regarded as binding on the disciples.<sup>4</sup>

There is no formal description of Christ's character; and yet a fairly complete portrait may be drawn by combining scattered allusions into a single picture. Clearly the most prominent characteristic is love. 'He loved me, and gave himself up for me,'<sup>5</sup> writes the Apostle; and as he is not referring to personal friendship, this love is, by implication, universal. The same phrase is used in relation to the Ephesians<sup>6</sup> in a passage where it is introduced as the moving appeal which ought to excite an answering love, and, through love, control the entire conduct. This love was so vast in its range, so exalted and so deep, that, while it was an object of aspiration, drawing men towards the fullness of God, it surpassed human knowledge.<sup>7</sup> In other words, so far as Paul was aware, it was unexampled in human history; it was the revelation of a new life,<sup>8</sup> unsearchable in its wealth and completeness.<sup>9</sup> It was this that gave significance

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 14. <sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. vii. <sup>3</sup> See verses 6, 10-12, 25, 40.

<sup>4</sup> See also 1 Thesa. iv. 2, 15. <sup>5</sup> Gal. ii. 20.

<sup>6</sup> Eph. v. 2; see also 25. <sup>7</sup> Eph. iii. 17-19. <sup>8</sup> 2 Cor. v. 17.

<sup>9</sup> Eph. iii. 16; iv. 13.

to the cross, which, as we have observed, could not in itself be a revelation of love, but, given the love, manifested its depth and power, and, through its tragic pathos, vastly augmented its appealing influence over the hearts of men.<sup>1</sup> It was a love that would not let men go, and made them victorious over all the afflictions of the world.<sup>2</sup> Paul draws an inference which shows in a remarkable way the profound impression which the great Teacher's love had left upon his disciples. Such love was of no human birth: the love of God was in Christ Jesus,<sup>3</sup> and God commended his own love towards us through the anguish of the cross.<sup>4</sup> But indeed even this inference may have been derived from Jesus himself; for he ascribed all his mighty words and deeds to the indwelling Father, whose organ he became through the surrender of his own to the supreme will.

The nature and activity of love are described by Paul in that well-known chapter<sup>5</sup> the beauty of which is acknowledged even by those who have least admiration for the great Apostle. But whence did Paul derive this beauteous picture? Can we doubt, after what we have already learned, that he was depicting the love of Jesus of Nazareth, as it had been reported to him, as he had seen its reflected light in the face of Stephen and the sweet communion of other disciples, and found it dwelling as a new and dependent life in his own heart? As we read, we recognize the portrait of Jesus as he appears before us in the Gospels, and gaze upon that face which was illuminated with the glory of God, and by its look of heavenly grace and com-

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 14. <sup>2</sup> Rom. viii. 35 *seqq.* <sup>3</sup> Rom. viii. 39.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. v. 8. <sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. xiii.

passion drew to him the sinful and the sorrowful, and those who sought for a deeper and diviner life.

Another characteristic is faith. The term 'faith' is used by Paul to denote an inward principle of life in contrast to outward 'works,' or 'works of the law.' It is found repeatedly in his Epistles, and in the vast majority of instances it is used absolutely, without any specified object, thus implying a form of religious character rather than any particular belief.<sup>1</sup> Christ's faith, however, is referred to eight times.<sup>2</sup> Our translators invariably render this expression by 'faith in' Christ, which is allowable in accordance with Greek idiom. But it is not supported by Paul's own practice. There are twenty-four instances of 'faith' with the genitive of persons other than Christ, and it invariably denotes these persons' faith. Even the one instance of 'the faith of God'<sup>3</sup> is no exception; for there it clearly means 'God's good faith' in keeping his promise. Further, in a long passage 'the faith of Jesus' seems evidently treated as parallel to the 'faith of Abraham,' though the parallelism is concealed in our translation.<sup>4</sup> In this passage, moreover, the object of faith is God, who 'justifies the ungodly,'<sup>5</sup> and 'raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.'<sup>6</sup> Elsewhere in the same

<sup>1</sup> 122 times out of 141.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. iii. 22-26; Gal. ii. 16, twice, 20, iii. 22; Eph. iii. 12; Philip. iii. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. iii. 3, translated 'faithfulness.'

<sup>4</sup> See Rom. iii. 26, τὸ ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ, and iv. 16, τῆ ἐκ πίστεως Ἀβραάμ.

<sup>5</sup> Rom. iv. 5.

<sup>6</sup> Rom. iv. 24. See also Eph. i. 17-20; Col. ii. 12; 1 Thess. i. 8, 10.

Epistle the substance of faith is thus described : ' If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead.'<sup>1</sup> In the second Epistle to the Corinthians, writing under strong emotion, the Apostle says, ' Such confidence have we through Christ to God-ward '<sup>2</sup> ; and ' We also believe, and therefore also we speak ; knowing that he who raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also with Jesus.'<sup>3</sup> From his affliction and danger he had learned that ' we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead.'<sup>4</sup> All this seems to imply that the chief object of faith was the life-giving power of God ; but it is not inconsistent with, rather it implies, faith in Christ ; for it was through faith in him that his faith was appropriated by his disciples.<sup>5</sup> But I think we are justified in saying that Jesus was to Paul the man of faith, as he was the man of love ; and that this faith was of such high spiritual quality as to permeate the character, and present a new ideal of religious life.

Some other points in the character of Jesus require only a brief allusion. He was unselfish ; he ' pleased not himself.'<sup>6</sup> He was distinguished by his ' mildness and gentleness '<sup>7</sup> ; by ' peace ' or serenity of mind<sup>8</sup> ; and by ' patience.'<sup>9</sup> He was so graciously forgiving<sup>10</sup> that he made manifest the forgiveness of God.<sup>11</sup> Through his exceeding

<sup>1</sup> Rom. x. 9.   <sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 4.   <sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 13, 14.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. i. 9.

<sup>5</sup> See especially Gal. ii. 16 ; also Col. ii. 5 ; Philip. i. 29. In Philem. 5, ' Love and faith towards the Lord Jesus is extended to ' all the saints.'

<sup>6</sup> Rom. xv. 3.   <sup>7</sup> 2 Cor. x. 1.   <sup>8</sup> Col. iii. 15.

<sup>9</sup> 2 Thess. iii. 5.   <sup>10</sup> Εχαρίστω, Col. iii. 13.   <sup>11</sup> Eph. iv.

love he was a consoler, bringing 'comfort' to the stricken heart, a comfort which, like all other precious gifts that came through him, had its ultimate source in God.<sup>1</sup> A few other qualities, though not directly ascribed to Jesus, are clearly implied. His holiness stood in rebuking contrast to Gentile immorality. In him the disciples were 'sanctified,' or made holy,<sup>2</sup> and all sensuality was inconsistent with membership in him.<sup>3</sup> He had commanding power and heavenly wisdom, not the power and wisdom of the world, but recognized among the perfect as alone Divine and permanent amid the blind ambitions and conceits of men.<sup>4</sup> One other characteristic, seemingly negative, but founded deeply on a positive principle, must be noticed. Though, as we have seen, Jesus himself was confessedly a minister of circumcision, nevertheless in him circumcision and uncircumcision were matters of perfect indifference, and the essential thing was faith working through love.<sup>5</sup> Here, in a sentence, is Paul's Gentile gospel, avowedly based on a principle which is one of the most remarkable features of Christ's teaching as represented in the Gospels. Throughout that teaching Jesus insists upon inward purity and sincerity as contrasted with superficial cleansing of the cup and platter; and he nowhere prescribes any ritual, but, as in his great saying, about the Sabbath,<sup>6</sup> leaves that to be regulated by men's varying needs and experiences. Even the Last Supper furnishes no exception. Jesus assumes that his disciples will continue to keep the Passover,

<sup>1</sup> Philp. ii. 1; <sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. i. 3-5. <sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. i. 2.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 13-20; Eph. iv. 19-21. <sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. i. 24, ii. 6, 14.

<sup>6</sup> Gal. v. 6, vi. 15. <sup>7</sup> Mark ii. 27.

and his injunction is that, when they keep it, they shall do so in remembrance of him.

We come now to the one passage in which Paul deliberately presents his view of one commanding feature in the character of Christ, and of the lesson of his cross. It is contained in the Epistle to the Philippians.<sup>1</sup> This passage sets before us a grand moral ideal, which by the great ones of the world, whether civil or ecclesiastical, is generally treated with contempt, and by the mass of professing Christians is far too little regarded. Attention has been diverted to its supposed theological teaching, while Paul thought only of depicting a great moral example. It does not lie within our purpose to examine here different theological interpretations. I will only say that those which are most common represent greatness as consisting in outward exaltation and glory, and that this is opposed to the obvious lesson of the passage. We turn, then, to the moral impression of certain human facts.

Paul was now in bonds, and depressed by some hostility towards him among the brethren: but he was comforted by an affectionate message and present from the Philippians, by the fact that his bonds encouraged others to speak the word of God without fear, and above all by the 'supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ.' His sense of consolation in Christ, and his desire, through the power of that spirit, to surrender himself utterly to the will of God, whether to live or to die, naturally gave direction to his thoughts in writing his Epistle. The Philippians too seem to have been suffering from adversaries; and they are reminded that it

<sup>1</sup> Philip. ii. 5-11.

was a gracious gift which conferred upon them not only faith in Christ, but suffering on his behalf. Among themselves, too, as among those who surrounded Paul, there seem to have been personal ambitions, jealousies, and alienations, perhaps not very deep-seated, but sufficiently pronounced to cause injurious friction and unpleasantness. It was this spirit of self-assertion, which in all ages has disturbed the unity of the Church, that he particularly wished to bring into subjection to the spirit of Christ; and it was with that purpose, and not with any theological aim, that he wrote the passage under consideration.

Its moral appeal to the Philippians may be thus presented. Here was the one man, whom, in contrast with the Cæsars and the Ptolemies, the Christians believed to be alone the supreme image of God. What, then, was the spirit of this man, so divinely endowed, who came speaking in the name of God, and proclaiming a kingdom of God? It was just the opposite of that which distinguished all the great ones of the world. He did not think that equality with God consisted in selfish rapacity, grasping at fame and wealth and empire; but he cast all this aside, and 'emptied himself.' This pregnant phrase surely does not mean that he discarded for a time some Divine prerogative, or a more than imperial splendour, but that the self-emptying constituted the Divine character, and had its source in his rapt communion with God. To empty oneself is to renounce every selfish claim, and to have the thoughts and aims so fixed upon Divine ends that even the consciousness of self is lost in heavenly contemplation and loving activity. It is in proportion to our self-emptying

that we become godlike; and accordingly this great manifestation of a Divine Humanity came not in imperial or military grandeur or intellectual pride, but in one who outwardly was an ordinary man, a poor carpenter from an obscure village, who in the service of mankind gave himself up to a servile death. This service was distinguished by humility and obedience. He was 'meek and lowly in heart' before God and man, and submissive to the higher Will even up to the extreme sacrifice of self, the death on the cross. Therefore because all this was through the one and only Divine Spirit, God highly exalted him, and gave him the name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus, that undistinguished earthly name, every knee should bow, and every tongue should confess that he was Lord, to the glory of God the Father. This is an amazing vision of the persecuted Apostle; but so it has come to pass. All true worship is in the spirit of that lowly servant of God; and the name of Jesus floats over our sinning and sorrowing world, supreme in the homage and love of men, while the name of many a proud conqueror or imperial oppressor or wealthy grandee forms but a little red blot upon the dark records of criminal ambition.

In all this we can hardly fail to recognize the Jesus of the Gospels; and it is surely no mere coincidence that Paul displays such insight into the character of that unique personality.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### WRESTLING WITH EVIL

WE have seen that the root of Christian morality is 'the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus,' and we have endeavoured to gain some insight into the quality of this Spirit. But an inward principle of life requires outward expression, and is seldom of such controlling power as to manifest itself in all our activity without some effort on our part. Hence Paul's exhortation, 'If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.'<sup>1</sup> There are forces of evil, both outward and inward, against which we have to contend; and therefore we must exert our will to 'take up the panoply of God,' that we 'may be able to withstand in the evil day.' Not yet can we enjoy the rest and peace of the perfected saint, when no evil dares to approach the purified soul; and if we would win the victor's crown, we must, of our own will, stand up in the power of the Lord, and wrestle. This spiritual wrestling calls for more strength and vigilance than that of a competitor in the arena: for it is not 'against flesh and blood' that we contend, but, as Paul says, 'against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against

<sup>1</sup> Gal. v. 25.

the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.<sup>1</sup>

The principalities and powers here referred to are not earthly authorities, but certain orders of wicked spirits, who were supposed to mingle unseen in the affairs of men, to produce physical and moral evils, and especially to hold sway throughout the domain of heathenism. This was by no means an irrational or improbable supposition in ancient times, when science was still in its infancy; for our little world was believed to be the great central body round which the sun and stars pursued their daily course, and the whole spiritual interest of the universe was brought to a focus here, and the soul of man, with the homage which it could render, was the prize for which the powers of good and evil contended. But for those who not only accept as a scientific fact, but have really apprehended the insignificance of our planet even in the solar system, the insignificance of the solar system itself amid the illimitable hosts of stars, this mode of conception has passed away, as out of keeping with the infinite majesty of the Creator and the sublime order of that universe in which we play our little part. But the moral idea which the Apostle's words express in the forms of ancient thought remains as true as ever. The principalities and powers are the forces of moral evil, however we may conceive them, in ourselves and in the world around us; and the obligation of resisting them is enhanced a thousandfold when we rise to the conception, first of physical law which we know, and then to that of moral law which we believe, to extend throughout a universe of inconceivable vastness. Duty

<sup>1</sup> Eph. vi. 12.

is not a provincial ruler of our petty world, but sits enthroned within the Will of God, and, for the sensitive conscience, looks down upon us from the mighty orbs that spangle the midnight sky. Conformity to that supreme Will is the end of our being; but it is a conformity which has to be won, not by lazy acquiescence in the temporary drift of things around us, but by exertion and conflict, by striving always to subordinate the temporal to the eternal, and by resisting those lower powers which tempt us from the upward way.

It was said by an ancient Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, that 'all things arise by way of strife,' and that 'war is father of all and king of all,' but that this strife seemed evil only to men, while 'to God all things are beautiful and good and just.' Without pledging ourselves to the universal truth of this assertion, we must admit that to a very large extent human progress has been the result of conflict. We may take two illustrations. Our advance in the arts and sciences has been due to the severity of nature, contending with the poverty of our merely physical equipment. The elemental forces waged war against man, constantly threatening him with desolation through storm or flood or famine. Hence arose the rude beginnings of clothing and building and agriculture; and tools were invented to supply the deficiencies of human strength. Each new victory on the side of man prepared the way for further acquisitions. With the sense of triumph the higher powers of the mind awoke. The love of beauty stepped in, and added fine proportion and splendour of colouring to the rude fabric of an earlier time. The love of knowledge outstripped the practical needs of life, and

in order to satisfy an intellectual hunger began to explore the secrets of the world, and to construct systems of philosophy and science. We have now obtained such ample success that we are less conscious of the strain than in ancient times; but we know that the battle is not, and never will be over, and that, if human endeavour ceased, wild nature would speedily resume her reign, the proudest trophies of intellect would crumble into dust, and we should gradually sink back into the savagery from which we came.

Still more obviously has political progress been effected by war. In the days when hunger had no law, and might was right, those who were able to combine and act together for a common end, secured a marked advantage both for defence and aggression; and this advantage drove men into communities which were animated by a perpetual desire to enlarge their borders, so that, under stress of superior force, clans grew into tribes, tribes into nations, nations into empires. But the simplest community cannot continue to exist without some common bond, which takes the form of law; and this law must grow with the extent and complicated relations of the community whose life it expresses. And now the higher elements of our nature once more come in. Law, in its highest conception, embodies a moral ideal, which slowly struggles towards a clearer self-consciousness through the unfolding experience of the race; and law, accordingly, is continually challenged to adapt itself to a purer idea of right, and the national conscience is educated through the strife which springs from the demand of nobler moral intuitions. Thus what might seem to be the mere savagery of our nature,

rising but little above the cunning and ferocity of the beasts, prepares the way for its own redemption; and now we can at least dream of the time, though I fear it is still remote, when the law of justice will bind together the nations of the world, and their differences will be settled, not by an unholy combination between the arts of the civilized man and the brutality of the savage, but by the calm and impartial verdict of righteousness.

This necessity for conflict, although our natural indolence and love of comfort may shrink from desiring it, nevertheless appeals to our admiration. Our interest and enthusiasm are not called forth by the voluptuary, who spends his monotonous days in useless ease, but by those who strive and suffer, and consecrate laborious years to the attainment of some great end. This is the reply, deeply fixed in the moral constitution of our minds, to the difficulties which we are apt to feel when we contemplate the severity of nature. Placed in the midst of a hostile world to carve out his own destiny, to grapple with and triumph over difficulties, to pluck success out of the experience of failure, to rise through suffering superior to the assaults of casual ill, to learn through disappointment to seek for ideal and eternal ends, man is an infinitely greater being than if he reposed in a lazy paradise of luxury, where without toil or pain he supplied his animal wants, and with this ignoble and spiritless enjoyment his soul was satisfied.

It is therefore in accordance with the whole analogy of our nature that conflict and effort are necessary for the attainment of the supreme good. We must wrestle with the powers of evil if we are to conquer new realms of righteousness or even to

hold fast what we have already gained. This war must be carried on in two directions, within our own souls and in the world around us.

The contrast between our actual condition and the ideal end which conscience reveals is obvious at an early stage of spiritual experience. Not only the Christian theologian, but the Jewish philosopher and the Stoic moralist, were familiar with the internal war which was waged by duty against desire, and in which the will to do right often retreated from the field baffled and stricken with shame. We cannot pretend to understand all the purposes of God in establishing this contrariety in our nature; and often we must confess ourselves perplexed by the furious excesses of avarice, revenge, cruelty, and lust, which reduce men below the level of wild beasts, and are hard to reconcile with the goodness of him who planted in our breasts the impulses of which these are a diabolical expression. But accepting our nature as it is, and acquiescing in the general law that in every department of life we must start from the most elementary beginnings, we may perceive certain important ends which are fulfilled by the inward strife.

Without the effort which is called forth by opposition we could never attain more than a negative goodness. We might be innocent, as a sheep is innocent; but without a sense of contrast within we should not even be conscious of our innocence, and our goodness would possess no moral quality. Virtue emerges only when we resist temptation, and choose the right by a deliberate act of will. The peace of the saint may come at last in a beauty of character that knows

no doubt or fear ; but this is not like the innocence of Eden ; the true saint bears on his bosom the scars of battle, and his calm brow is marked by a victor's power. But this comes not till we have passed through the desert of temptation, and the soul's earnestness and force have been called out in a death-grapple with the rulers of darkness. It is perhaps for this reason that we are liable to great moral evils. We are so often content to drift along with the multitude, and are quite satisfied if we do not fall much below the conventional standard ; and then some calamitous weakness reveals us to ourselves, and for the first time our moral energy awakes and places itself on the side of the Divine law, striving at last for conformity with its absolute holiness and its imperative claims. It is well if this awakening comes before evil habits have been acquired, and some of the strength and vigour of youth is dedicated to the formation of character. We cultivate the intellect and the body, but neglect the cultivation of the spirit. We wrestle with flesh and blood, and prove our mental equipment in the gymnastic of the examination or the debate ; but do we wrestle with the principalities and powers within the soul, which threaten to usurp the throne of conscience, and to cast us out from our inheritance among the children of God ? Youth, with its noble and generous aspirations, and with its strong and delusive passions, is the time to acquire firmness of character, to exercise the forces of the will, and with independent manliness to choose the right and true, and do battle with temptation like an athlete who looks for the crown of victory, or the warrior who faces undaunted the hosts of his country's enemies.

Yet, as I have intimated, we cannot look upon this inward war as our final condition. We strive in order to put an end to strife; and we would have an inward force of goodness which would flow forth with spontaneous and unobstructed energy. The long struggle of duty is necessary to give firmness and decision to the character; and yet, while duty can never relinquish her Divine authority and must stand ready armed against every foe, she learns at last her own inability to end the strife, and gladly sees her behests fulfilled by a more spiritual power. We have not reached the peace of harmonized desires, and the reconciliation of the heart with the requirements of duty, till we rise into communion with God, and our life is flooded with his life, and our will is lost in his as the supreme and only good. So long as we live for self, however we may control its wayward impulses by the sense of duty, its lower claims will not cease to trouble us. But faith changes the scene of action, and places us on a vantage ground, where the clamorous appeals of earth are silenced, and our whole nature yields itself in simple trust to the moulding influence of Divine love. And thus at last we have peace, peace with God, peace with ourselves, a peace which we do not win by seeking it for ourselves, but which is given in answer to our self-despair and our cry for God. Faith, which works by love, takes us away from self, and fixes the heart, in the pure simplicity of adoration, upon eternal goodness. But this life too follows the law of growth, and we must wait in patience for its fulfilment. It comes as a new principle, and announces itself as the true life of immortal souls; but it comes to a battered and tottering receptacle, which it cannot in an

instant change into a glorious temple of God. We have the earnest of the Spirit ; but we know not yet what we shall be, and we wait for our adoption as sons of God. But while we wait, we know that his Will is good, and, according to our faith, his peace abides in our hearts.

We must now turn from the inward to the outward world. We cannot adore the sovereign Will without longing to see it everywhere triumphant ; and we cannot be touched with the Spirit of universal Love without desiring to redeem the world from the evils which beset it. The prayer 'thy kingdom come' expresses this pervasive desire of Christianity, the desire which has prompted all missionary zeal and been the inspiration of all philanthropic effort. In the world without no less than in ourselves we must wrestle with principalities and powers, and help to establish the reign of justice, mercy, and holiness among men. In regard to the direction and limit of our efforts it is impossible to lay down any rule ; 'there are diversities of operations, but the same Spirit,' and each man must obey the Divine call that comes to himself alone. Except in some great crisis of human affairs, comparatively few are summoned to sacrifice their lives or make any great public renunciation for the kingdom of God's sake ; but all are called to some secret acts of renunciation ; and many a good man bears about with him a life-long offering which is hidden almost from himself in the silence of his heart. We may, however, lay down a few rules which seem of universal obligation :—never, through cowardice, seem to sanction that against which your conscience revolts ; in all your transactions maintain a high and honour-

able tone, and think more of the public welfare than of your private advantage; embrace such opportunities as present themselves, consistently with other duties, of helping by direct gift or effort the cause of righteousness and truth. It is by sacrifice, the wrestling of the wise and good, that the world is being slowly redeemed; and in this great sacrifice of humanity we may all bear our humble part.

In thus wrestling with the powers of darkness in the world around us we might be tempted to despair, were we not assured that no faithful act or word is ever wholly in vain. The very victory of evil turns to its shame, and pricks the conscience of mankind. The Pharisee chuckles over the crucifixion of his defeated foe; and lo! the cross is turned into a throne of glory on which is seated the Judge of the world. The howling mob shouts with satisfied hate as the lion tears or the flames consume the Christian martyr; but 'the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.' Somewhere within the breast of every man is the consciousness of duty, the sense of a fairer and diviner life; and this, in many a waiting and troubled soul, is roused into activity by the testimony of those who are faithful unto death. On our less tragic stage the same law prevails. Great and unpopular causes demand great souls, ready to sacrifice, if need be, friendship, position, reputation, ease, rather than be false to the call of God which has sounded within them. In the simplicity of faith, which counts not worldly things dear to itself, we must take our place on the side of righteousness, doing what in us lies to promote the public weal, and, through humble surrender to God

of the hidden springs of our life, bear witness to the reality of Divine things. Only let us believe that the voice which speaks to ourselves is not far from others, and if we rightly interpret it by word or deed we shall waken somewhere its sleeping echoes. And this should be our aim, to induce men, not to hear us, but to hear the Divine Word in their own reason and conscience, and to drink in life from the eternal Fountain of life.

In entering the world's arena to join in the great struggle of good against evil we are entering a glorious and world-wide fellowship. Those who will be pronounced worthy in the grand assize are of every kindred, tongue, and nation; and, however lowly may be our lot, however modest and obscure our testimony, we clasp brotherly hands with them whenever we help the least among mankind to choose the better way. We cannot give a cup of cold water to a child in the spirit of Christ, and fail of our reward. And our reward is fellowship with Christ; nay, in the words of the Apostle, we are 'labourers together with God,' and are accepted by him as lowly instruments in working out his infinite designs. Oh! the humbling and exalting power of such a faith. That we may not be altogether unworthy of it, we must take up the whole armour of God, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER

**I**N wrestling with evil we have to 'put on the whole armour of God.' In order to do this we must seek in prayer for union with the supreme source of strength. Accordingly, Paul exhorts his Thessalonian converts to 'pray without ceasing.'<sup>1</sup> These words, however, suggest to us a very different idea of prayer from that which is too commonly entertained. Prayer is apt to be regarded as a formal and isolated act, to be observed as a religious duty, and by virtue of its merit obtaining for us some special favour from God. Hence carelessness and haste are often brought to the exercise of this most wonderful of human privileges; for the prescribed words may be easily repeated, and if only the duty be correctly performed, the Divine blessing is sure to follow. Now, clearly we could not engage without ceasing in such formal acts of devotion, unless we retired altogether from the occupations of the world, and lived as though God and ourselves were the only beings in existence. This complete and exclusive absorption in religious meditation and communion is more attractive to the untutored imagination

<sup>1</sup> 1 Thess. v. 17.

than approved by our mature wisdom; and nothing can be more unlike the active life of the Apostle Paul himself. The nearness of our relation to God was surely never designed to sever us from all relations with other beings, but rather to place such relations on their true ground, and assign to them their just proportions. If we would pray without ceasing, it must be in the spirit, and not in words; and if we consider what is the essential spirit of prayer, we may be more disposed to admit the reasonableness of the apostolic precept.

Self-consecration to God is the inmost characteristic of true prayer. It is an offering up of the heart, with all its desires and affections, to him who is its rightful Lord. Without this our imploring words are only a deceitful semblance, and it would be better to keep our tongues for ever silent than to besiege heaven with our shortsighted and selfish petitions. Prayer, indeed, as the expression of a desire, naturally assumes the form of petition; but if it be genuine, every request is accompanied by the condition, either expressed or implied, that it be agreeable to God's wisdom and love to grant it. 'Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,' expresses the substance of all real prayer.

It is important to bear in mind this view; for prayer sometimes appears to be regarded as a special agency for influencing the purposes of God, and gaining for our own narrow plans an undue influence in the government of the world. There are some who would seat their own short-lived folly on the throne of eternal Wisdom, and substitute their own prejudice and selfishness for heaven's impartial justice. Such persons delight

to speak of the efficacy of prayer, not in bringing us into a holier frame of mind and imparting a more filial love and submission, but in obtaining our wishes, and enlisting the force of Omnipotence on the side of our blind desires. In this view, if that may be called a view which is perhaps never consciously and deliberately held, prayer would not be the means of consuming our self-will in a sacrifice lighted by fire from above, but a method of exalting it to a sort of religious supremacy, and reconciling devotion and self-love. This probably is not a theory with anyone; indeed most would indignantly disown it. But that which we do not embrace as an opinion may, nevertheless, leave its trail in our hearts; and whenever we pray with passionate entreaty that our wishes may be gratified, and not that we may be subdued and humbled, and every desire hallowed with the spirit of self-denial, this false view is infecting the holiness of our worship, and we are forgetting the true end of prayer. God alone knows what is really good for us. To be brought into harmony with his wise and gracious purposes is at once our highest goodness and our only abiding blessedness; and if we would offer acceptable prayer, we must not impatiently and vehemently cry 'grant what we implore,' but with folded hands meekly say 'be it unto me according to thy word.'

As soon as this view, that prayer is an act of self-consecration, enters into our feeling, and becomes to us something more than a theory the ordinary objection to prayer disappears. The difficulty is often urged that if our petitions are not granted there is no use in presenting them; and sometimes the religious ground is taken, and it is declared to

be impious to weary the all-righteous Disposer of events with our insignificant requests, as though we could direct him what he ought to do. It is our duty, it is said, simply to accept with gratitude what God appoints, and not obtrude our solicitations upon his august presence. The objection would be valid if our only object in addressing our prayers to God were to have our desires fulfilled, and as soon as they were denied we went petulantly away. But if our object be that every desire may be purified and softened, so that if it be granted we shall be the more grateful, and use more wisely the blessing that is bestowed, and if it be refused we may be trustful and grateful still, then it will be well 'in everything by prayer and supplication to let our requests be made known unto God.'<sup>1</sup> A religious man can have no solitary desires. Every wish is breathed in the Divine ear; for that on which his Father's sympathy does not rest has for him no charm. As a child is not happy till it wins its parents' smile for all its little amusements, so the devout soul brings every thought before God, and cannot bear to cherish any wish in its own lonely darkness. Now, a desire thus breathed in the ear of him who can grant or deny it is a prayer; and if we ought not to pray, neither ought we to desire. The awful sense of guilt is upon us when we shrink from telling God what is in our hearts. That which is wrong ought not to have a place either in our prayers or in our wishes. And in regard to those desires which are not wrong, but of which we know not whether they are conformed to God's purposes, such as our desire for daily bread, and health, and friends,

<sup>1</sup> Philip. iv. 6.

and sympathy, which may be given or denied, it is vain for the harsh moralist to say that we ought not to have these. We *must* have them; and we should not be improved if we became indifferent to such things, and our lives were made so cold and colourless.

But now we may ask, is it better to hide these things in the secrecy of our own bosoms, to gnaw us with anxiety or consume us with passion, or to bring them before God in prayer, where his sympathy touches them with a hallowing power, and without destroying them robs them of their sting? To tell us that these are not fit for prayer, that we may not on bended knee seek in God the satisfaction of our heart's desire, is to take up again the world's old fallacy, most of my time for myself, the seventh or a hundredth part of it for God. The Christian must give his whole life to God. Every want and desire will then bring him nearer to God, and make him more conscious of a Father's love; and the wish which unconsecrated would drag him down to earth will, when converted into prayer, lift him to heaven. God condescends to what man in the pride of his wisdom despises. His Love is deeper than philosophy has dreamed of; and while the cold reasoner sneers at the folly of mankind in offering prayers where all is governed by inevitable law, the Father, with infinite pity, gathers his waiting children to himself, and hears their cry. If our requests are unwise, or opposed to the vast plan of his providence, he mercifully denies them; but the sunshine of his smile rests upon us, and if only self-consecration be the prevailing spirit of our prayer, each petition will bring down a Divine blessing, and every desire

offered in the sanctuary will lose its earthly taint, and return to us with holy calmness and peace.

Again, trust is a characteristic of true prayer. That we offer prayer at all is dependent on our conviction that there is One who is both able and willing to give us what we need. If we were atheists, we could not pray; and each prayer that breaks involuntarily from the lips is a protest of nature against every atheistic scheme. Nor could we approach God with the language of supplication if, while we admitted his existence, we believed that he had no regard for individual welfare, and that our most earnest pleadings would pass unheeded away. Nor again, if we only dreaded God's sovereign power, and sought by our entreaties to secure his favour, could we offer the prayer of self-consecration; for we can consecrate ourselves only to One whom we believe to be infinitely good and holy. Nothing short of the Christian's faith in a heavenly Father can justify the Christian's prayer; and if that faith be feeble and uncertain in our hearts, our words will be cold and languid. The fervent, heartfelt prayer which is acceptable to God is full of childlike trust.

And once more, true prayer is characterized by humility. He only who is conscious of need, and feels his dependence on a higher Power, approaches God in prayer. As long as we are sufficient for ourselves we may use the prescribed form, and draw nigh to God with our lips, but our hearts will be far from him. It is when earth no longer satisfies, when aspiration sighs for an ideal good, or the shame of conscious weakness or guilt enters our souls, that we utter the prayer which pierces to the audience-chamber of God. If we are so vain

and presumptuous as to think that we need him not, but can live by our own light and strength, our pharisaical offering will drop back like lead into our own bosoms. We must feel our dependence upon God, our infinite need of his blessing, and that all wisdom, power, and love are his gifts, before we can address him in the accents of sincere prayer, and present to him all the wealth of a son's devotion.

Here, then, we find something which transcends the formal act of worship. The spirit of self-consecration, of trust, of humility, must rest upon us when we pray. Our hands may be lifted towards heaven, and the passionate cry break from our lips, or we may sit motionless and mute; prayer is the movement of the heart towards God, the meek and trustful surrender of all desires into his keeping. Now, may not this spirit be with us always? May we not in this sense pray without ceasing? Alas! how we banish God, as it were, from the general current of our lives. We seem to think that on our ordinary pursuits the sanctity of prayer need not rest. We fly for refuge to our Father when we are sorely tried, and sorrow breaks up the even flow of our feelings; but how apt we are to forget that in the bright and happy hour, or in the performance of our appointed duties in the world, the soul may be looking upwards, and a voiceless prayer establish a communion between our spirit and God's. But is not this inward prayer always necessary? Ought not its appeal to ascend without ceasing?

We need the control of prayer in the hour of relaxation and pleasure, that nothing may be done in excess, nothing unworthy, but the true end of

pleasure may be secured, the possession of a healthier and gladder mind. How many would be saved from making shipwreck of their character if they sought no pleasure on which the blessing of God was not secretly implored. And let it not be said that thus enjoyment would become stiff and unnatural. On the contrary, it would assume a spontaneous grace, and fill the heart with delight a thousandfold. What mirth so keen and genuine as that of a happy child? And has God no smile for the merry gambols and laughter of childhood? If the thought of God will not blend with our amusements, they are not innocent, and we must flee from them. To pray without ceasing is our only safeguard here.

The same is true of the more serious engagements of our life's business. Here too the prayerful spirit should be ever present. How prone we are to view our profession, whatever it may be, as the means of self-aggrandizement, and not as a trust committed to us by God, to be carried on in strict conformity with his will. Hence arises, even among men otherwise good, a laxity of practice on which they themselves cannot think with complacency, and which they excuse rather than justify. The delicate sense of honour is lost, and self-interest steps into the place of duty. Let our warehouses, our shops, our studies, become temples not indeed for the offering of formal worship, but for that noiseless communion and that trustful self-surrender which alone can impart to life its true dignity and value, and mingle unseen in all our pursuits.

And must we not bring the same spirit into the retirement of our families? Home is not a place

where any human will is to erect itself as supreme, and establish a petty tyranny which it would not dare to attempt in the world's open field; but all should acknowledge the same almighty Will, and be bound to one another by the same Divine Love. And if of necessity it devolves upon one to assume the chief direction of the household, it is all the more necessary that he should pray without ceasing, that he may not abuse his authority, but do that only which God requires, and manifest only that spirit which comes from him.

Nor let our solitary hours be unconsecrated by the spirit of prayer. Let the presence of God be more to us than the presence of a multitude. Away from the cold gaze of our fellow men let us seek him with warm affection and thankful trust. Let every labour be faithfully performed as unto him. Let every thought be holy. Let our rest be in him. Thus may we 'pray without ceasing.' Thus may we give our hearts to God, and a Divine communion sanctify each moment of our lives.

## CHAPTER XX

### ANXIETY AND PEACE

THE great Apostle was no stranger to earth's conflicts and anxieties; and when he wrote to his beloved Philippians to 'be careful for nothing,'<sup>1</sup> and assures them of the peace of God, he is not sending empty words of comfort from a couch of ease, but speaking from the fullness of his own experience. It is a prisoner, bound probably in the barracks of the Praetorian Guards at Rome, and trembling in uncertainty between life and death, who thus tells of a joy and peace surpassing human thought. And his was no hard nature, wholly self-contained, and unacquainted with the feeling of helplessness and need of support which besets inferior minds when the troubles of life hang heavy on them. On the contrary, his letter overflows with feeling. He yearns with affection towards his disciples, longs to see them once more, and seems unable to find due expression for his love. Often he breaks into joy at the success of the gospel; and again he weeps as he speaks of the enemies of the cross. He appears to be saddened by the loneliness of his position, and yet rejoices that even by those who desire

<sup>1</sup> Philip. iv. 6.

to add affliction to his bonds Christ is preached. He owns the mercy of God in sparing his friend's life, lest he should have sorrow upon sorrow; and in one passage, while he is earnest to give joy to others, all he expects for himself is to be 'less sorrowful.' Ennobled by the profound belief that he possessed a truth which must change the history of the world, he found himself a poor, despised prisoner, dependent for his life on the whim of a cruel tyrant, forbidden to utter the truth with which his soul was burning, subjected to the insults of soldiers, and to the false friendship of those who would stab him with a yet deeper pang.

In the Epistle written amid such distressing circumstances we see the heart of this wonderful man laid open; we see him disclosing every feeling with the simplicity of a child; we observe the intimate blending of human weakness and victorious faith; we see him with every earthly support broken down, yet clinging to his God, and able to 'do all things in him who strengthens' him. There is no presumption; yet there is unshaken firmness. There is the tenderness and fondness of a woman, yet the resolve and high-mindedness of a Stoic. There is an overwhelming sorrow, and yet a perpetual joy breaking through, and words of thankfulness gushing from the heart. Surely we may believe such a man when he speaks of spiritual experiences; and if he whose life was in continual danger, and yet on whose life it is not too much to say the religious history of the world largely depended, had learned to vanquish anxiety, to rejoice in the midst of grief, and to hymn the strains of triumph when surrounded by apparent defeat, we may well strive to learn the secret of

his power, and in the might of the same Spirit to overcome the world.

We may, then, endeavour to unfold the thought contained in the words which I have quoted. The subject divides itself into two heads: the course of conduct recommended; the spiritual result of such conduct.

Our English translation, 'Be careful for nothing,' has now become misleading; for the word 'careful' is in modern speech used to denote a valuable quality, the opposite of carelessness. In the original it is the same word which, in the Sermon on the Mount is rendered by the expression 'take thought'—'take no thought for your life.' The term properly refers to a divided, distracted state of mind, and in the passage we are considering might be better translated, as it is in the Revised Version, 'In nothing be anxious.'

We all know by experience the meaning of anxiety; some, it is true, much more fully than others; but even the young are acquainted with that condition of uncertainty and apprehension which the word anxiety implies. Yet this feeling assumes various forms in different minds. Those who are naturally of an anxious temperament seem to create their own evils, and, even when everything is bright around them, are in constant dread of a coming storm. They never surrender themselves to an unrestrained joyousness, and they look sadly on the happy creatures that take no thought for the morrow. There are others who are perpetually anxious, not about unreal things, but about daily trifles, which seem unworthy of such deep concern. A thousand little household or social cares disturb their peace; and every

approaching change weighs as a burden on their spirits. There is a disproportion in their minds which tends to exaggerate small evils, and to forget the superabundant good with which their life is really blessed. There is also a deeper and more wearing anxiety, which belongs to stronger natures, and comes only when the powers of endurance are severely tried. It may be seen when some noble cause is to be won, when a single false step will lead to ruin, and success is wholly dependent on the skill and energy of *one* earnest mind. It may be seen in the chamber of sickness, where hour by hour a beloved life is slowly ebbing, where eyes long sleepless yet detect each faintest change, where a sunny smile is on the lips to cheer the sufferer, while the fond heart is inly pierced by every moan of pain. When there are such real grounds for apprehension, and the whole force of the man's nature is called forth to meet the emergency, there is often outwardly a firm and calm appearance, but inwardly the strength is consumed, and the heart is familiar with an agony which mere lookers on suspect not.

Now, these various forms of anxiety must have been given us for some wise purpose, and cannot have been designed to inflict a useless torment. They must be a part of our education; and we must not sit tamely down, as though we had no control over our fears, but were the helpless slaves of natural temperament. We cannot, we say, help being anxious. Be it so; we cannot help it. But is there no Power which can glorify the natural temperament, and achieve for us what we are unable to achieve by our own strength? Are not our cares designed to lift us to such a Power, that

in his strength we may be conquerors? Is there not a felt incompatibility between anxiety and perfect trust in God? And are not our trials and difficulties calculated to lead us to this trust? Just in proportion to our real faith in the Father of mercies our anxiety disappears, and a holy peacefulness assumes its place. When we banish God from our hearts, we are indeed an easy prey to care and misery; but when he fills them, what tribulation can separate us from the joy of his love? Our future we can leave without one troubled thought in his hands; for, though in ways which now we understand not, he will do more and better for us than we can ask or think; for 'all things work together for good to those who love God.'

This supplies us with the reason of the Apostle's injunction. When sorrows and anxieties threaten, let us lift our souls to God, and not receive unsheltered the coming tempest. Prayer is the source of power, the armour which the shafts of evil cannot pierce. By prayer and supplication to breathe our longings in the ear of infinite Love is a high and solemn privilege, to which man, as the child of God, is admitted. And when, instead of fretting and repining at what God has ordained, we are taught by anxiety our dependence and need of communion with the Father of our spirits, then we shall have derived from the cares of life their true lesson, and converted them into blessed ministers of God.

But, it may be said, this religious trust uttering itself in prayer is applicable only to the great occasions of our lives, and is not to be degraded by being mingled with our daily and trivial cares. Not so thought Paul, who enjoined that '*in everything*'

we should make our requests known unto God. And a greater than Paul suggested that Martha should have brought this spirit to the preparation of a meal.<sup>1</sup> As the sunlight sparkles no less brightly in the dewdrop than in the ocean, so religion may touch with its radiance the meanest cares of earth. It is only in our imperfect apprehension that the everyday life is unimportant. In the sight of God nothing is insignificant that can affect the weal or woe of his children; and even the habitual attitude of our minds in regard to food and clothing may be a matter of almost infinite moment. It was in relation to these that Christ inculcated his lesson of trust. He may have felt, what has been often expressed, that there is a power in the human mind which will awaken in the presence of real danger, and prove itself equal to a grand and startling crisis. But the true spirit of a man is more searchingly tried by the things which we are apt to suppose are unworthy of the notice of God. Many a one who would bear nobly some great trial of his faith will grumble over an ill-cooked meal, or lose a day's enjoyment on account of some oversight in his dress. Every portion of our life ought to be viewed in its relation to God. Only thus can we acquire that reverent moderation which is equally removed from luxury and asceticism, and which neither is slavishly devoted to outward appearance, nor ostentatiously affronts the fashion of the time. And only thus can we preserve an unruffled serenity amid the thousand little cares which, from their insignificance, surprise us unprepared. It is true that in the far future, when we look down from some

<sup>1</sup> There is the same word, *μεμμενῆτι*, Luke x. 41.

spiritual eminence, we may smile at the paltry anxieties that disturb us now ; but while they do disturb us, let us lay our wishes before God, that they may be conformed to his Divine standard.

One other expression requires our notice. Our prayer is to be accompanied by 'thanksgiving.' Our mind is not to linger only with that which has plunged us in distress, but to reflect upon the many blessings which we still enjoy, and the many tokens of God's mercies towards us in the past. The most afflicted soul can find abundant cause for thankfulness, and remember many an experience of God's lovingkindness to lighten its heaviness. And indeed we often see that those who are really afflicted, and whose weariness has been driven to seek repose in God are the most deeply conscious of his mercy. Repining comes most largely from those who have no cause to repine. Half the murmuring and anxiety in the world, from the days when the Israelites murmured in the desert to this proud and enlightened age, betokens an ingratitude deeply planted in hearts insensible to the wonders of Divine goodness. Happy is it for us when we look habitually at the bright side of things, and feel that we have received, and are daily receiving, innumerable blessings of which we are unworthy. If for a moment we could lift the curtain, and see in its full development the purpose of God towards us, we should be smitten with shame for our wilful blindness and discontent. We should see that an infinite Love had enfolded us since first we breathed and that even the trials which seemed to rend our hearts were the ministers of his tender care.

We must now observe the spiritual result of laying our anxieties before God with thankful

remembrance of his mercies. The Apostle does not say that our requests will be granted. He knew full well that such is not always the purpose of God. The cup of suffering had not been taken even from his Saviour's lips; and he himself, in spite of his earnest entreaties, had borne a thorn in the flesh, and his prison wall would not crumble in answer to his prayer.

What, then, is the blessing which Paul, from the fullness of his own spiritual experience, testifies that prayer obtains? It is 'the peace of God, which passes all understanding.' The thought of peace is frequent in Paul's writings; and peace is evidently regarded by him as among the highest attributes of God, and one of the highest blessings that can be bestowed upon man. The prayerful salutation with which he begins his letters includes 'grace and peace from God.' God is himself 'the God of peace,'<sup>1</sup> or of 'love and peace,'<sup>2</sup> and he is a God, 'not of confusion, but of peace.'<sup>3</sup> The pouring of that peace into our restless hearts as the answer to our prayers was, for Paul, a blessing which far transcended any compliance with our ephemeral wishes. Let us endeavour to gain some insight into the nature of this peace.

Most men who have aspired with any earnestness towards a life of perfect righteousness must have been sometimes painfully struck by the contrast between the serene order of nature and the restless passions in themselves. In a world where 'every prospect pleases, and only man is vile,' we cannot altogether escape the feeling that we are sadly out

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xv. 33, xvi. 20. Philip. iv. 9; Col. iii. 15 (according to some authorities); 1 Thess. v. 23.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. xiii. 11.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 33.

of harmony with creation's loveliest aspects, and, while all else moves in gentle submission to the Divine will, we alone introduce the discord of rebellion. While we may constantly find some object in nature, it may be only a star or a passing cloud, which seems to lead us beyond itself into depths of mystic beauty, and to breathe an atmosphere of holy peace, how seldom are we privileged to look into the depths of a pure soul, and see there the very beauty which nature only symbolized, a peace which we vainly attempt to translate into language or even into thought. The heart which ought to be a mirror of the Divine perfections, and luminous with a fairer than earthly love is often clouded with impure and selfish feelings, while the earth, dull matter as we call it, is tremblingly alive with spiritual influence, and reflects a higher than material glory.

The reason of this is sufficiently clear. Nature has no will of its own, and can therefore express none but his who first called it into being, and ever guides it by his love; man, on the other hand, may choose between himself and God, and often manifests a will uncontrolled by the eternal goodness. Nature has no power of its own, and is but the pictured thought of God; man is endowed with an independent power, which may oppose or cooperate with God. The silent and orderly movement of nature is therefore a sign of the peacefulness which dwells in the bosom of God, an expression of the calm and steadfast purpose of his almighty will. And if we take a wide view of nature, how peaceful are its operations. It is following now the same majestic plan which moved the wonder of generations that appear dim in the

dawn of history. Nations have risen and decayed. Empires have run their course, and left their deathly ruins where the fever of human life once madly burned. Ambition, dreaming of eternal dominion, has kindled its desolating flames, and its flush of triumph has long yielded to the chill paleness of the sepulchre. Armies have met in the fierce shock of battle; and the soft verdure has hidden the crimson field, and mould and rust mocked the proud trophy of the conqueror. Systems of philosophy and religion have arisen and claimed all the passionate devotion of the human heart, and have faded away into the cold region of historical speculation. Ceaseless change and restlessness appear to characterize the affairs of men, and that which seemed most permanent has sunk away into a ghostly memory or tradition. But nature has gone on its quiet and beneficent course, bringing day and night, summer and winter, sunshine and rain, age after age; and all that seemed to be eccentric or capricious science has shown to be the result of peaceful and steadfast law. Even those mighty convulsions, the storm or the earthquake, which were once regarded as outbreaks of Divine wrath, the prototype of human anger and vengeance, are the issue of forces which have long been working calmly and imperceptibly. There is no haste in the Divine action; but each phenomenon is the outcome of an infinitely wise and bounteous plan.

So much is this the case that the uniformity of law sometimes becomes almost oppressive, and at the present day threatens to hide from us the free activity of God's love. We speak of physical laws as though they were necessary, given in the

eternal constitution of things, and allowing to God himself only a certain moulding power. Thus they cease to be living expressions of almighty will; and instead of affording us a glimpse into the peace of God, and filling our hearts and minds with that peace, they threaten to crush us under a hard materialism, to rob nature of its ethereal dress, and take away from it that spiritual beauty which reveals to the worshipping soul things that the tongue may not utter. And indeed if we have regard to those events which most deeply stir our emotions, the most reverent must confess that the peace of God is a peace that passes understanding. In presence of the most appalling calamities there is no sign of sympathy from heaven, no turning aside from the predetermined plan. Nature moves on her ordained course, apparently heedless of the bodies which it tears, of the hearts which it rends with grief. The falling tower or the explosive mine, does not select the chief of sinners for destruction, and holy tears repel not the devouring pestilence. The angry waves roll over the ship, and suck it down into their cold embrace, though the prayer for deliverance breaks from agonized lips. With impatient hearts we exclaim, can he care for us who looks on our misery unmoved, and whose peace is never broken by the sounds of human woe? Even we have a tear for suffering humanity; but he seems wrapt in eternal stillness.

Still more impressive is the Divine peace in the midst of human sin. Men blaspheme the most holy name, and devote themselves to the foulest orgies of wickedness. God may be forgotten, and his laws despised. Sensuality may corrupt the heart, or the love of gain twine its idolatry around

the soul. Fierce passions may rage, and cruel hatred light the fires of hell within the bosom. But nature is calm and beautiful as before. The sun rises and the showers fall, and the evening star is radiant with peace. God's bountiful provisions fail not. Its strength does not fly from the arm of the murderer, and poison in the hand of the plotter loses none of its potency. The slanderous tongue is not paralysed, and the worshippers of mammon revel in the riches of Divine mercy. This long-suffering serenity passes the understanding of men. We fret ourselves because of evil-doers. As though God had forsaken the world, and his eye beheld not the ways of sin, we exclaim, 'Oh' that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence,' 'to make thy name known to thine adversaries; that the nations may tremble at thy presence.' What we regard as holiest indignation and righteous zeal meets with no response in God. The fury of sin cannot violate the tranquillity of his action. He works by laws of justice as inflexible and as calm as those of nature. His Spirit is a Spirit of peace; and neither sin nor woe can ruffle its repose.

What, then, is this peace? Is it inaction, a state of passive indifference, of motionless and self-centred bliss? The same world which suggests this dreary thought also repels it. For nature is full of forces. It is not a lifeless solitude; but wherever we turn, we see proofs of the Divine activity. Whether we follow the sweep of stars, or have regard to the lowly labours of an insect, we are equally struck by the manifestations of creative wisdom and power. Everywhere God is

working, and no creature is so mean that it is not marvellously organized for the purposes of its little life. The moth that we heedlessly crush is a fairy palace of beauty, and as much care has been expended on every part as if designed for the residence of a monarch. When we are as much astounded at the all-pervading presence of force as we were before at the monotonous uniformity of its action. And even this oppressive uniformity seems to disappear, and we discover more of the free movement of life, when we leave our scientific formulæ, and worship in the temple of nature itself. Then these changeless laws become flexible and manifest themselves in ever varying forms of beauty. Each wavelet that ripples to our feet has a character of its own. The leaves of the forest are not tame copies of one another, but, while they preserve the same type, they are infinitely diversified. The glories of the sunset sky do not repeat themselves, like exhibitions on the stage, but the clouds are freshly grouped and the colours newly blended in each one. We might almost say that every morning we open our eyes upon a new creation, and see by the changed aspect of things that our Father's living power and love are still with us. The peace of God, then, is not the peace of stagnation or indifference; and he who would share that peace must not endeavour, like some philosophers of old, to cut himself off from all interests, to smother all emotions, and care not what befalls himself or any of his race. This is the resource of despair, which thinks the only escape from a fretful restlessness is in stupor. It takes its noblest elements from life, and is the peace of death, not the peace of God.

The peace of God, then, must consist in the perfect harmony of great forces. Nature is governed by tremendous powers, but all so exquisitely balanced as to produce a universe of order. Destroy this balance, and who could resist their desolating fury? Allow the force of gravitation to act unchecked, and the worlds would instantly rush to mutual destruction; but balanced by an opposing force, suns and planets roll sublimely on their appointed orbits. Here we have a true symbol of the Divine peace, which results not from carelessness, or weakness, or a transcendently selfish beatitude, but from the fullness of power, power which is ever spending itself under the guidance of wisdom and love. Had we more of the Divine strength, we should understand the Divine stillness better and perceive that true peace consists in the loving harmony of intense and over-active forces.

Turning now more particularly to man, do we not see that, if the peace of God is ever to descend into our hearts, it must be preceded, not by a diminution, but by an increase, of power? We must have a greater fullness of life. Is not this confirmed by all experience? There is no peace which we can describe as heavenly that is not accompanied by greater depth and earnestness of character. There are many things which cry 'peace, peace, when there is no peace.' When the craving of passion is gratified, there is a temporary lull in the restless heart, and we exclaim, now we are happy. But we deceive ourselves. Such happiness is but momentary; for unholy passion, partaking of the soul's greatness, is infinite in desire, and, like a tiger that has tasted blood, only

rages the more fiercely through gratification. We have no abiding peace till all our powers combine in harmonious action, and co-operate in love for the fulfilment of a Divine purpose.

If we consider what it is that disturbs our peace, and traces the furrows of care and anxiety on the brow, we shall find that it is not calamities and losses, which often bring to us far more than they take away, and are the disguised harbingers of bliss. It is the disorder of our powers introduced by the love of self that breaks our serenity. We see men fretful and miserable, not because God's will is not fulfilled, the only thing which ought profoundly to grieve us, but because their wills have not been fulfilled, because they have been disappointed in their hopes of advancement, or have failed in their plans for augmenting their wealth, or consider themselves slighted and aggrieved. Do not ambition, pride, jealousy, anger, hatred, all derive their sting from self-worship, and consequent resistance of that which is deepest and holiest within? So long as the flame of these unhallowed passions is fed by our self-love, we are disturbed and miserable; and we increase our misery by charging it on all but ourselves, not choosing to acknowledge that the only return to peace is, renouncing self, to confess ourselves unworthy, and humbly place ourselves in the hand of God. The penitent shall go in peace; but there is no peace to the wicked. There is none for any of us till the love of God supersedes the love of self, and descends into the soul with healing and harmonizing power. Once empty the heart of its idolatry, so that every faculty may own its rightful king, and prayerfully seek

to be a minister of his will, and then the angel of peace will enter and abide with us. For the Divine purpose will reveal itself in the surrendered soul; the love which dwells eternally in the bosom of the Father will shine there with no doubtful ray; and man will become in a far higher sense than nature the obedient servant of God, for he will yield, not the passive submission of insensate matter, but the earnest homage of a son. Nature will still be the pictured expression of God's power and love, the symbol of a glory higher than its own; but man will be the living temple of his Spirit.

Thus, 'the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.' Submission, love, the cross—these it is that lead us to God, and fill us with his peace. Christ has left a legacy of peace and fulness of joy to his disciples; not indeed to those who merely call him Lord, Lord, but to those who truly see in him 'the way, the truth, and the life,' and feel that there is no Christianity worthy of the name but the life of Christ within the heart. If Christ live within us, and his self-sacrificing spirit and yearning love dwell within our hearts, constraining all lower powers into obedience, and exorcizing the demon of self-love, then we shall know a peace which our poor words cannot describe, and the understanding cannot fathom, but which the heart can feel, and feeling be for ever blest.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE LAW OF MUTUAL HELPFULNESS

CHRISTIANITY brings before us a moral ideal, the attainment of which must be the aim of every faithful disciple. Man's life is to be a life in communion with God, an indwelling of Divine grace and power, making him a child of God, and expressing the Spirit of God. This Spirit is Love; for God is Love, and he who loves dwells in God, and God in him. It was through the surging up of this Divine life within the heart that the faith of Christians was assured. It was an experience before which all doubt and fear died away, and the old carnal and selfish life vanished as a phantom of the night. But even in the earliest times amid the splendours of a new spiritual creation, this exaltation of soul was not constant. We read of strange lapses among some of the disciples, and even Paul, notwithstanding the abundance of his revelations, counted not himself to have attained. It was still needful to keep the mind alert, and bring to remembrance what the inward power of love, or the spirit of Christ, required. Now, the life of the Spirit must express itself through many varying forms of activity; and accordingly, when these are reduced to terms

of thought, and distributed along certain lines of conduct, they constitute a law of love, which is always obligatory, but of which we become independent just in proportion to the fullness of the indwelling Spirit. Paul, accordingly, the great opponent of subjection to law, does not hesitate to speak of 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus,'<sup>1</sup> and of 'the law of Christ.'<sup>2</sup> In our present imperfection the Spirit is not always powerful within us, and we need to contemplate the outward standard of conduct which constitutes the Christian law, and brace our wills to the discharge of an acknowledged obligation. It is for this reason that Paul, while he speaks of 'the fruits of the Spirit,' those gracious dispositions which grow from its own inherent power, nevertheless exhorts us to 'walk in the Spirit,' that is, to carry out its behests, and so 'fulfil the law of Christ.'

We may consider the application of these principles in the domain of mutual helpfulness, to which Paul's admonition immediately applies.

Statute law may enforce mutual helpfulness in certain large public measures, as in compelling us to contribute to old age pensions; but such law, far from filling the heart with a divine charity, is apt to make us resentful of its demands, and it can give no direction in the thousand little incidents of our daily life. It is only the might of the Spirit, which is self-legislative, that can direct our line of conduct on every occasion, and call forth a ready response to every appealing claim. Each man has a burden of his own to bear; but how differently this burden affects his conduct according to his prevailing temper. With the selfish man it serves

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 2.   <sup>2</sup> Gal. vi. 2.

only to deepen his selfishness. He is so wrapt up in his own miseries that he is full of complaints, and can see nothing but selfishness in others, who pay, as he thinks, so little attention to his woes. This dwelling upon self may affect the conduct in many things that are generally regarded as trifling, even in the case of men who would govern their larger actions by a higher law; and much unhappiness arises from this inward want. We need not only adherence to the requirements of righteousness in the more comprehensive affairs of life, but a sweet considerateness in those petty details for which no written law can make provision. An exacting and censorious temper adds grievously to the burdens of the world; and though the selfish man is not aware of it, it increases enormously his own load, by concentrating his thoughts upon it, and placing him in a false relation to the society around him. But where there is love in the heart it is quite otherwise. There the burdens of life enlarge the sympathies. Instead of being astonished at the callousness and cruelty of the world towards himself, the sufferer is surprised by the tender consolations that steal into his heart from the Father of all comfort, and by the kindly ministrations which he receives from so many around him. Thus by patience and gentleness he eases the burdens of others, and rejoices to extend to them the comfort wherewith he himself is comforted of God. And here we meet with a paradox of the spiritual life. By bearing the burdens of others he relieves his own; and instead of fretting and chafing at the hardness of his lot he feels a sacred joy and peace abiding even in the midst of his sorrow.

## The Law of Mutual Helpfulness 275

The burdens specially referred to in the passage under consideration are the burdens of conscience. How are we to deal with these? If we are full of self-regard, we shall be vainglorious, setting ourselves boastfully above the offender, and thanking in appearance God, but in reality ourselves, that we are not like one so unworthy; and by provoking him we shall only put him on his defence, and harden him in his guilt. Or if we are of an envious disposition, we shall have a secret satisfaction in observing the faults of one of whom we are jealous. Virtue and wisdom of this kind, cold and scornful and proud, do not spring from the life of the Spirit. They may consist with a conscience which adheres to the letter of the law, and wraps itself in a mantle of self-conscious virtue; but love rejoices not in iniquity, and seeks not its own. It sees with a holy sorrow and compassion the sins and failings of the world, and would bring to others the help and healing which it has itself received from God.

It was thus, through the sacred power of sympathy that Christ took upon himself the burdens of others. In the strong language of Paul, he was made sin for us, though without sin of his own. He knew and felt all the horror and shame of the world's guilt, as men who are themselves more or less deeply involved in it cannot feel and know it. He bore upon his great loving heart the needs and failings of his brethren, and refused not the last sacrifice of self in his endeavour to reconcile men to God, and bring them into perfect harmony with his blessed will. Love identifies itself with society, and instead of loading men with burdens grievous to be borne tries to help them on the

heavenward way; and especially in the case of those with whom we stand in immediate relation it is patient with their faults, and is careful not to impose on them more than they can reasonably bear. While it is deeply pained by moral obliquity, it is nevertheless full of a searching compassion, which may wake the dormant hope, and be the beginning of reformation.

Paul presses home these general considerations by supposing a particular instance. A man is overtaken in a transgression: how should we trust him? It is implied in this supposition that the man has acted against the usual bent of his character. He has been surprised by a sudden temptation, to which in a moment of weakness he has yielded. He is burdened with the anguish of self-reproach, and needs to be restored, so that he may again stand firm in faith and righteousness, and be fortified against the recurrence of the temptation. He cannot be restored by harshness and repulsion. Only love can accomplish this blessed work, love which is by no means blind to the fault which has been committed, but deals tenderly with human frailty, and kindly nurtures every better impulse. A bruised reed will it not break, and smoking flax will it not quench. With the penetrating insight which belongs to it, it will discern the motions of good within the heart, and lead the burdened conscience to the source of strength and peace. 'Saviour' is a word dear to Christendom. The weeping penitent, whom the strict observer of the law despised, and would have driven from him with scorn, was restored by Christ's 'spirit of meekness,' and his appeal to that half smothered faith which was ready, at the touch of love, to leap into flame.

## The Law of Mutual Helpfulness 277

But the case is somewhat different if the transgression is deliberate, and the offender is impenitent. Paul himself severely rebukes the Corinthians for their lenity towards one who had been guilty of revolting conduct, and insists that he should be excommunicated. The lenity in this case had sprung from moral indifference, and not from a loving wish to restore. Lenity may be misplaced, and if the wicked man has no sense of his guilt, and has no shame when he thinks or speaks of it, then the conscience of the community must intervene, and try to bring home to him the criminality of his act. Christ also speaks with unmeasured severity against the sins of those who prided themselves on their righteousness, and, wrapt up in self, were callous and contemptuous towards their less fortunate brethren. Those who, with their pompous display of formal correctness, were selfish and proud and cruel were none of his, and he sought by scathing words to expose their evil example, and their false and mischievous judgments. Love, then, is not inconsistent with a holy terror and indignation at a perverted will. It is not blind to the reality of things, but pierces to the secret sources of conduct, and is tremblingly conscious of the presence or absence of sympathy with its own lofty ideals. But no self-regard taints its judgments; the wickedness of others fills it with a profound sorrow: 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together': and it welcomes with unfeigned pleasure every manifestation of a better spirit.

But there are many other burdens in life in addition to those of conscience. There are burdens of anxiety, from which none can expect to be wholly

exempt. With too many, alas! there is anxiety about the very means of subsistence, and it requires no strong imagination to conceive the utter misery that must beset the mind when every effort has been made in vain, and the cry of hunger pierces the ears of the hopeless bread-winner. Or there is an anxiety which is more universal, when some beloved life is trembling in the balance, and we can only wait, tossed between hope and fear, till the crisis is past. And besides these great occasions there are innumerable little anxieties that beset the daily path, and sometimes prey upon the mind so as to blunt its sense of enjoyment, and even its trust in God.

There is also the burden of pain, with which, in some degree, we are all familiar. With many indeed, it is a very light and passing burden; but, with some it is a prolonged and severe trial, extending far beyond physical ailment, which is hard enough to bear, and defeating many plans of enjoyment and usefulness, which otherwise might have been brought to completion.

And again there is the burden of sorrow. We may believe that sorrow was instituted for some great and wise purpose, and that the dark figure which abides in every home points the way into the holy of holies. But, nevertheless, sorrow is a burden; and though bereavement may by its weight strengthen the muscles and brace the will, and call forth high trust and resolve, yet it is often grievous to be borne. Or the sorrow of parting which is not caused by death may be very grievous. I remember once seeing on a railway platform a very poor woman weeping bitterly as she put her boy into the train, evidently going to some em-

## The Law of Mutual Helpfulness 279

ployment that took him far from her loving care ; and I grieved to observe that the porters did not, owing to her shabby dress and commonplace look, treat that mother's sorrow with due honour. By a kind instead of a rough word they might have helped to bear a more precious burden than the boxes of the wealthy. Yes, sympathy is a great soother ; for it comes down out of heaven, and speaks with Divine voice to our cares and woes. Here, as in the case of sin, the statute-law is powerless. It may command our outward actions, and take our gold to relieve distress ; but it cannot command fellow-feeling, the fusion of heart with heart, which is more precious than gold and jewels, and can be enjoined only by the law of Christ, the indwelling love which has come from the bosom of the Father to make its tabernacle among men.

May this Divine law, then, abide in our hearts, that we may help to bear the burden of the world's grief and sin. We must consider ourselves, lest we also be tempted ; and while we think that we stand we must take heed lest we fall. The pride of virtue and the self-satisfaction of untempted ease are poor substitutes for a pure and tender and loving heart. Sooner or later we shall have our own load to bear ; and whatever trials may press upon us now or may still await us, let us receive them as messengers of God, come to prune away our selfishness, and widen our sympathy towards every form of human ill. May the Spirit abide perennially within us, and bring forth its own precious fruits of love, joy, and peace ; thus shall we learn to bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE FULLNESS OF THE PERFECT MAN

CHRIST, referring to the exercise of love, admonished his disciples to be perfect as their heavenly Father was perfect. Paul, seeing in Christ himself the realization of this precept, offers his prayer that the disciples may 'know the love of Christ,' that they 'may be filled unto all the fullness of God.'<sup>1</sup> Then, giving a wider extension to this exalted aim, he looks forward to the time when we shall have such 'knowledge of the Son of God' that we shall attain 'unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.'<sup>2</sup> In these words he expresses his noblest aspiration. He saw that this fullness of life was needed to raise men above narrow and sectarian aims, and save them from childish drifting of opinion in admiring obedience to men of shallow judgment and loud pretensions.<sup>3</sup>

In Paul's time, as in ours, men were prone to attach an undue importance to their own special gifts, and to depreciate or denounce the no less

<sup>1</sup> Eph. iii. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. iv. 13. Our revisers, by translating 'fullgrown' have concealed the parallelism with Christ's precept.

<sup>3</sup> Eph. iv. 14.

## The Fullness of the Perfect Man 281

valuable endowments of others. He perceived that this disposition not only divided Christians into hostile parties, but made each disciple a dwarfed and one-sided representative of the Christian spirit. Counting not himself to have attained, he longed for a life flowing into him in ever fuller streams, causing every power to expand and assume year by year a more matured beauty. To him religion was no narrow and oppressive enclosure, but the very soul of liberty, the guarantee that justice should be done to every part of our being, and the source of aspirations which have infinity for their field, and eternity for their period. There had been revealed to him in Christ a life so full, so deep, so intense, that his religious convictions were revolutionized. To partake of the Divine fullness now appeared to him the goal of human effort, and questions of mint and anise and cummin, of circumcision and uncircumcision, on which he had once thought salvation depended, sunk instantly into absolute insignificance, lost in the glory that excelled.

We are led, then, to consider in some detail the meaning of the expression, 'the fullness of Christ.' Perhaps its meaning cannot be better suggested than by the remark that it is impossible to find any single epithet which would serve to describe his character, and would not be misleading from its inadequacy. To describe him, for instance, as benevolent or devout or conscientious, would fall far short of the reality, and divert our attention from other qualities no less prominent. In the case of other men who have left their names in history there are commonly a few special powers which they possessed in a remarkable degree, and

with which their fame is invariably associated. Even the comprehensive genius of Julius Cæsar owes its lasting reputation to his military capacity. The cultured Cicero is best known as an orator ; Milton, as a poet ; Locke, as a philosopher. And to come to the sphere of character, which more particularly concerns us, one is noted for his piety, another for his philanthropy, a third for his moral courage ; and we feel that we are doing men thus endowed no injustice when we apply to them a single epithet descriptive of the salient feature.

But in Jesus there is no such salient feature. Vast as must have been the powers wherewith he impressed his personality on the world, we know not where to begin in describing them ; and when we have selected one for our reverent admiration, another, seldom combined with it, instantly starts into view. This absence of striking points, this finely proportioned beauty, may possess for unreflecting minds a serious disadvantage. They are less surprised and captivated by the character of Jesus than by many lower spirits, all whose power was forced into one direction ; for a character so harmoniously balanced does not at once impress their imagination with its real magnitude and compass. Jesus does not appear to them as a living historical person, through communion with whom their own nature may find its noblest development, but as a shadowy theological abstraction, far removed from the beating heart of home and the busy pursuits of the world. I am far from pretending to understand the range of that world-commanding spirit, or to have solved all the difficult problems presented by the Gospels ; but a few particulars which seem especially inter-

## The Fullness of the Perfect Man 283

esting stand out with sufficient clearness to engage our attention.

We may look, first, at the emotional side of his nature. A devout sensitiveness to the Divine presence pervades his whole life. He feels his absolute dependence upon God. Every burning thought, every holy deed, is at once referred to God as its original. To glorify the Father's name by the manifestation of his Spirit is an absorbing impulse. He seeks the lonely and silent midnight hour to pour forth his soul in prayer. He feels an unfailling wisdom and mercy pervading the universe; the tender flowers bloom in answer to the Father's voice, and the little birds nestle in his love. How strong too were other feelings which are most akin to devotion. He looked with the most reverent interest upon human nature. He was charmed with the innocence of childhood. Poverty and vice could not hide from him the immortal powers which might be awakened by an earnest and loving voice. He was deeply affected by the exhibition of an unexpected faith. The love and tears of penitence instantly captivated him, and drew from him the healing word of sympathy. His gentleness, his quick appreciation of all their difficulties, and of all the good points that were left, gathered around him the publicans and sinners, while hypocrisy trembled under his generous and fearless indignation. Then how prompt and overflowing was his compassion, healing pain of body and distress of mind, and pitying those whose ignorant brutality nailed him to the cross. His affection was pure and constant, as we see in the whole intercourse between him and his apostles, and in the few passages where we are permitted to

go with him to the family at Bethany. We may, again, see the fervour of an affectionate nature in those few words—'Will ye also go away?' 'What? could ye not watch with me one hour?' He looked for human support, and it filled him with pain to be deserted. Joy and sorrow also swept over his soul, now elevating, now almost crushing him. He exulted in the glorious revelations he had received, and saw Satan falling like lightning from heaven. He wished his disciples to rejoice, and, when he was gone, and they had to encounter persecution and danger, to retain his joy within them. And, again, his soul was troubled, 'sorrowful even unto death,'<sup>1</sup> and we look with awe, sometimes with perplexity, on the anguish in the garden.

So rich and full were his emotions; tremblingly alive to every circumstance, impelling him to speak in bold, often in startling, figures, and to describe in fervid poetic speech the future glories of his kingdom. He had all that vastness of conception, and that intense conviction that he was to stamp his mind upon the history of the world, which usually characterizes ambitious genius. And yet, with this natural vehemence and grandeur of mind he united the calmest self-possession, and the most absolute rejection of all ambitious projects. He would glorify a higher Name than his own. His glory should be bound up with that of God. His distinction should be that he shone with no light of his own, and impressed not his own purposes upon human history, but reflected the Divine Will, and consecrated mankind afresh to the service of the Most High.

This leads us to consider his conscientiousness,

<sup>1</sup> Matthew xxvi. 38.

that controlling power which reduces to order the rude forces of our nature, and converts even passion into a Divine energy. With what absolute authority conscience ruled him his whole life testifies. His own strong expression, 'My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work,'<sup>1</sup> was no idle or boastful utterance. He left upon his disciples the impression of spotless sanctity. In their judgment he 'was tempted in all points as we are, but without sin,'<sup>2</sup> Though he was put to death as a sinner, he 'knew no sin.'<sup>3</sup> And this judgment of theirs is fully confirmed by the brief records of his life. No temptation could entice, no cross could terrify him from his duty. His fondest hopes might be dashed to the ground, the early promise of extended usefulness be apparently destroyed, the cruel nails tear his flesh, and his enemies wag their heads and taunt him with his pitiful failure, but he would not flinch. He cried in an agony of prayer, 'Not my will, but thine, be done,' and moved on to his death with a dignity which appalled his captors, infuriated the Jewish authorities, and made even Pilate afraid. When we forget for a moment his winning gentleness and the varied play of his emotions, he appears before us clothed in the severity of a Stoic. The only time that he sharply rebuked an apostle was when he heard flattering words that might beguile him from his appointed course—'Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee'; 'Get thee

<sup>1</sup> John iv. 34. Great and original sayings in the Fourth Gospel may, I think, be reasonably accepted as a correct tradition, for such words hold a lifelong place in the memory; but in any case they justly represent the thought of Christ.

<sup>2</sup> Hebrews iv. 15.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. v. 21.

behind me, Satan; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.'<sup>1</sup> And how pointed and decisive are some of his sayings upon the subject of duty, showing unmistakably the bent of his mind—'If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out'; 'If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee'<sup>2</sup>; 'Ye cannot serve God and mammon'<sup>3</sup>; 'Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven.'<sup>4</sup> 'Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.'<sup>5</sup> Conforming in his own person to this teaching, he has handed down to Christendom an image of spotless purity, of unsullied righteousness, of determined consecration to duty, however painful, which, wherever his influence penetrates, awakens the sense of sin, and reveals with a new clearness the holiness and the supremacy of the Divine Will.

There is another aspect of his endowments which, though less generally considered, is no less impressive. He was a profound and original thinker. This may appear from the simple fact that his leading ideas completely superseded ancient opinions, and, in spite of the blindest conservatism and the most bigoted superstition, gradually obtained the acknowledgment of the most advanced races of mankind, and to this day the most civilized portions of the world profess to derive from him their religious philosophy. This circumstance alone indicates an intellect of extraordinary power. It was no weak and thoughtless goodness which

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xvi. 22, 23. <sup>2</sup> Matt. v. 29, 30. <sup>3</sup> Matt. vi. 24.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. vii. 21. <sup>5</sup> Luke xiv. 27.

thus forced its way into the mind of man. He himself spoke of the power of truth; and without truth benevolence itself is disrobed of its influence for good. But our conviction of his intellectual force is strengthened when we examine his teachings. We there find a comprehensiveness of view, a spiritual depth, a richness and clearness of thought, far in advance, I need not say of his own age, but of the present, which boasts to be the ripest fruit of his ministry.

To establish, or even fully to illustrate this position would require a volume rather than the few observations which alone are possible in the present sketch. But we may take as an example some of the ideas contained in the parables of the kingdom of heaven, contained in Matthew xiii. Is there not still something new in these thoughts, though we are becoming gradually familiar with them?—that the highest character in man is formed by a blending of Divine and human elements, of the word sown in the heart and moral faithfulness, either by itself producing a poor result; that the accepted and the rejected of God cannot be distinguished by any arbitrary line, but are so mingled together over the whole world as to be inseparable by human judgment; that the kingdom of God, like the natural creation, is subject to the law of development; and that the progress of mankind depends, not on outward systems, but on inward principles. The Gospel of John too, which on any hypothesis may contain much genuine tradition of Christ's teaching, abounds in the profoundest thought. For instance, how inexhaustible in their bearings on the future of mankind were these few words—'The

true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth.<sup>1</sup> How suggestive the saying, 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.'<sup>2</sup> How deep and far reaching in its meaning is this little sentence, 'The truth shall make you free.'<sup>3</sup> How vast in its consequences this principle conveyed under a figure, 'Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.'<sup>4</sup> And many other passages there are of rich suggestion or more mystic import, whither for the present we forbear to follow.

But turning for a moment to the manner of his teaching, we observe that it is for the most part so exquisitely simple and natural that, till we pause and reflect, it does not occur to us that we are reading the deepest wisdom. It is not indeed such wisdom as Paul deprecates, delighting in technical jargon and rhetorical display. But 'among those that are perfect' it is nevertheless the divinest wisdom, and manifests an intellect which beheld intuitively the highest truth, and moved without effort amid the grandest thoughts. Yet this master of profound meditation and conviction did not shut himself up in philosophic seclusion, or imagine that truth would be profaned by being presented to the multitude; but on the hill-side and the sea-shore he addressed the crowds who thronged together and pressed on one another to catch his words. And by every variety of

<sup>1</sup> John iv. 23.   <sup>2</sup> John v. 17.   <sup>3</sup> John viii. 32.

<sup>4</sup> John xii. 24. The circumstance that the *figure* conforms to the mode of expression of the time, and not to the facts of science, does not, of course, affect the truth of the *thought*.

illustration, by direct appeal and by beautiful parable, he sought to bring home his meaning to the heart. He had in an eminent degree that rare combination of depth and simplicity which marks the highest order of intelligence, and, having probed the hidden meaning of things, he tells the result in such clear and artless speech that we think we always knew it. He seldom seems abstruse. Nature delivers up her secrets at his touch; and he makes the luxuriant tree, the stray lamb, and the falling sparrow, teach his grandest lessons.

This rapid sketch, though very far from furnishing an adequate portrait of the great Head of our Church, may yet serve to illustrate the meaning of the expression 'the fullness of Christ.' It consists in the union of the varied elements of our spiritual nature, all blending harmoniously together into a perfect manhood. In accordance with this view, we may observe that minds, apparently the most opposite in their habits, find satisfaction in him. Those whose religion is made up of the anguish of repentance and the joy of redemption ponder over his passion and his triumph. The panting soul which longs for communion with God finds through him 'access to the Father.'<sup>1</sup> The man of duty confirms his resolve by the contemplation of Christ's faithfulness. The reformer who has to encounter the fury of persecution beholds in him the Prince of martyrs. The philanthropist is animated by the thought of his unwearied beneficence. The poet delights in his sympathy with nature. The studious thinker extracts from his teaching inexhaustible subjects for reflection. The liberal Christian, who is in-

<sup>1</sup> Eph. ii. 18.

different to forms and creeds, listens in rapture to his denunciations of ecclesiastical pretension. And the High-Churchman observes with gladness that he was baptized, and earnestly desired to celebrate the Passover. In all directions he stretches out to our frail and ill-proportioned humanity some link of sympathy, seeking to draw every soul to himself, that he may fill it with the same fullness of life.

It follows that any Church which would worthily represent him must comprise within itself the most diverse elements. The zealous pastor, the affectionate friend, the fervid preacher, the meditative devotee, the cold critic, the rigorous moralist, the earnest instructor, the active worker, all have their respective places, and, if only love, that bond of perfectness, preside, will contribute to the same glorious result, a manhood transfigured into the image of the Son of God. For he who has given gifts unto men has so endowed them in order that each may receive from each some new germ of life, and by a reciprocal action all attain to a higher perfection.

It was, then, the inspiring belief of the great Apostle that, through the variety of gifts by which the completeness of the Church was secured, all should at last attain 'unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.' We are thus led to consider the comprehensive genius of Christianity in relation to the life of man. In addressing the Thessalonians, Paul offers the prayer—'May your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.'<sup>1</sup> The coming of Christ

<sup>1</sup> 1 Thess. v. 23.

## The Fullness of the Perfect Man 291

was to be the grand consummation; but till our destiny has reached its end, we must continually press towards the mark for the prize of our high calling.

In the division of our nature into spirit, soul, and body, the first term corresponds most nearly with our present use of the word 'soul,' while the second, rendered 'soul' in the English version, includes all the conscious life below the spiritual or religious, and therefore represents, in our modern phraseology, the intellect and the passions. Over these, along with the other portions of our nature, Christianity would extend its influence, not to depress or distort, but to preserve each entire and blameless, to accord to each its just rights and unite all in just proportions, and so conduct us to the fullness of a perfect manhood.

It may seem that this view stands in opposition to historical facts. The asceticism which has entered so largely into the ecclesiastical ideal of sanctity, and which displayed itself at so early a period, was surely an interference with the legitimate claims of the body; and all intellectual advancement, except in certain narrow and definite lines, has forced its way against the incessant antagonism of the Church. It would, however, be most unfair to judge of any influential power in human life solely by the mistakes and aberrations of those who profess to be under its control. Christianity did not come as a perfectly developed system of theology and morals to seize upon men bereft of all thought and passion and tendency of their own, and mould them as a passive mass into any likeness that it pleased. It could only introduce a new spiritual force amid the crowd of com-

petitors for human faith and devotion ; and whether by taking up and assimilating these competing forces or by exciting a stern reaction against them, it was inevitable that its apparent products should be largely modified by the previous culture. Men must be wrought upon through the convictions and modes of thought which they already possess ; and however profound in Christian experience may have been the regeneration which passed over the souls of converts, it could not in a moment bring them to 'the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.' Indeed the very word 'rebirth' implies a feeble and infantine beginning of the higher life ; and only through many a childish oddity and youthful indiscretion was it possible for the Church to grow to that rich and mellow wisdom, and that largeness of sympathy and compassionate forbearance, which rightfully belong to the Christian spirit of liberty and love.

The Christian doctrine of the body may be at once most succinctly and most fully expressed in the words of Paul—'Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you.'<sup>1</sup> Asceticism is not the natural outgrowth of this doctrine, but was due in part to the influence of a philosophy which found in matter the abiding source of evil, in part to reaction against the sensual excesses of a decayed heathenism, and in part to the intense power with which Christianity brought the soul, with its consciousness of guilt and misery, into the presence of God, and so for a time made the work of reconciliation the one absorbing interest. The sentiment of the Apostle assigns to the body a most august position, and claims for it all that reverent

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 19.

care which a devotee would bestow on the sanctuary where he worshipped. The temple was the place where God was supposed to give the clearest manifestation of his presence and his will; and in this sense the human body is in truth a temple of the Spirit. Those who confine their studies to the field of nature have indeed to acknowledge the presence of a mysterious power behind its phenomena, but they profess themselves unable to discover in any degree the character of that power; and if, in our devouter moods, there seems to be aspiration in the mountains, holiness in the deep blue of heaven, or the music of a perpetual psalm in the beating of the billows, we are but carrying into nature what we have already found elsewhere. It is not till we come into the presence of those marvellous organs of expression, the human face and the human voice, that there is a true spiritual response, and matter, become pliant to higher influences, begins to thrill and glow with the sanctity, the righteousness, the love of the eternal Spirit.

The view to which we are thus led by Christian sentiment and experience is amply confirmed by scientific research. Whatever may be the permanent relation between mind and matter, one thing is perfectly certain, that in our present life they are bound to one another in the most intimate union, and that it is impossible to abuse the one without injuring the other. It is not merely that all the revelations of the spirit, human and Divine, must be made through the instrumentality of the body, that only the human mouth can utter, and only the human hand can inscribe, the creations of literary genius, and only this once despised

material organization shape the marble block into a thing of life and beauty, or portray upon the canvas the ideal begotten of many prayers, but in the exercise of thought itself, in the exaltation of the most refined emotion, the body plays its part, and yields up a portion of its structure as a contribution to a result which might seem so entirely spiritual. And therefore those who are interested in promoting the highest welfare, the mental and moral progress of man, may no longer treat with contempt this incomparable minister of sovereign mind, but must attend to its health and perfection, that it may supply to the spiritual faculties at once augmented power and an obedient organ of expression.

These considerations are of great importance in the subject of education. The body must not be sacrificed, especially in early years, to the supposed requirements of intellectual culture, but must have its legitimate share of play and frolic, and the growing brain, while receiving the exercise necessary for a healthy development, and carefully trained into steady habits, must be vigilantly protected from every hurtful strain. A vast amount of human life might be saved and of suffering averted, if systematic instruction in our physical constitution and in the laws of health were made an indispensable part of even the most elementary education. The subject is easily rendered attractive to young people, and its general principles do not require a highly trained intelligence for their comprehension. Our sanitary laws would become doubly efficacious in the midst of a people who understood their object and the scientific grounds on which they rested; and individuals would be

better able and more willing to guard themselves and their houses against the approaches of disease who knew in an intelligent fashion the importance of fresh air, cleanliness, and light. At present a large proportion of our population is massacred in infancy and early childhood, massacred not by the swift and merciful destruction of the sword, but by the slow torture of sickness and neglect. Alas ! for the children doomed to be cut off from the buoyancy and hope and golden blessedness of opening life, and to languish pitifully into death, a sacrifice to the ignorance and carelessness, sometimes the cruelty, of a Christian people. Thus 'the temple of the Holy Spirit' is profaned.

Another aspect of our subject needs a few words. Not only does the Christian doctrine claim for the body an honourable rank, it also furnishes that moderating power which has been vainly sought in asceticism. The endeavour to live worthily by mere self-repression has too often ended in inflaming the very evils which it was intended to cure ; and those who have vilified the body as a prison have not always been most successful in resisting its clamorous appeals. But once let us view it as an awful sanctuary of God, and reverence will shield it from abuse, and chaste-eyed temperance will, like a sentinel, guard it from every profane intrusion. From this we may infer the general principle, that our best protection against evil is to be found, not in contempt for the vileness, but in reverence for the holiness of life.

Passing to the domain of the intellect, we may again express the Christian doctrine in the language of Paul—'In understanding be men.'<sup>1</sup> So

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 20. The Greek is 'become perfect,' as in Matthew v. 48.

strong, though, as I think, so artificial an antagonism has grown up in modern times between intellectual and religious culture that it may almost seem paradoxical to represent religion as the emancipator of the intellect. It is unquestionably true that ecclesiastical influences have been strongly opposed to intellectual progress, and this opposition, it must be confessed, has rested in part on a religious basis. Religion, on account of the depth and intensity of its emotions, throws a conservative charm around all objects and modes of thought with which it has become associated; and therefore it does not readily yield to mere denials, however cogently sustained, of any of its accepted doctrines. It can yield only when the religious sentiment of men has outgrown the ancient formulæ, and denial comes as the ambassador of new and higher truth. But the opposition of which scientific men complain is largely due to what might seem an accidental cause. The dominant portion of the Christian Church, reversing the teaching of the Apostle Paul, has sought to make itself an able minister, not of the spirit, but of the letter, and has looked upon every part of the Bible as the infallible utterance of God himself; and since the Bible happens to contain a theory of creation and of the constitution of the universe, based, no doubt, on the science or conjecture of the time, it came into inevitable collision with more modern research. This view of the Bible, however, is not only not the foundation of Christianity, but, as it seems to me, contradicts its inmost spirit; and its adoption was due, not to the strength, but to the weakness of the religious principle, which sought to sustain its infant steps by this miraculous support.

## The Fullness of the Perfect Man 297

But now let us ask, who are they that have emancipated the human intellect from ecclesiastical trammels, and bid it go on as a triumphant conqueror to win the realms of truth? I confidently answer, religious men. If the sceptre of hoary superstition has been broken, and the instrument of torture has been wrested from the hand of the inquisitor, it is due to men who believed in the God of truth, and heard within their own souls a voice mightier than the shout of a fanatical multitude or the anathema of a world-wide Church. The Church, in fact, has offered no very serious opposition to science; but it has combined all its forces to crush theological progress, and it is by theologians, that is by men with deep and clearly formed religious convictions, that the battle of intellectual liberty has been fought and won. When we ask for the martyrs of science, we are referred to Galileo, who, while deservedly honoured for his genius, failed to set a high example of constancy and courage. But religion can unfold a countless roll of martyrs, who, if in the blinding confusion of mortal conflict they only dimly discerned the principles of liberty, at least asserted the rights of their own intellect and conscience against the organized power of the most gigantic despotism that has ever spread its shadow over the world, and, the half-unconscious prophets of a nobler future, have purchased our freedom with their blood. But in this age of ours, so proud of its enlightenment, there must be no relaxation of vigilance, and I believe we must still seek the guardians of our liberty in those who see in Duty the 'stern daughter of the voice of God.'

In another and a higher sense Christianity is the

emancipator of the intellect. By subordinating every personal consideration to the supreme Will it clears away those by-ends which have such a misleading influence on the judgment, and so leaves undefiled that love of truth for its own sake which is the noblest form of intellectual curiosity. By clothing us in humility it saves us from the fundamental fallacy of confounding love of truth with fondness for our own opinions; and thus it raises to the rank of a practical conviction that acknowledgment of our own fallibility which is so apt to be merely verbal, and makes us accessible to new evidence, though it may demand the sacrifice of long-cherished belief. By awakening charity and sympathy towards all it makes us candid in estimating views opposed to our own, and thereby lifts us above those little circles of thought in which men so often enclose themselves, and which, if they create a comfortable feeling of certainty, do so at the cost of reality, and are quite destructive of largeness and comprehensiveness of mind. Christianity, then, would place the intellect in the midst of our powers as a clear-sighted and impartial judge, proof against the clamours of prejudice and the bribes of popularity, and inspired and directed by one pure passion, the desire to know what is true.

Still further, Christianity would not only demand that single eye which is necessary for an undistorted view, it would put in a plea for width and catholicity of intellectual culture. If to love the God of truth is to love truth itself, so also to believe that nature in all its parts, and history in all its developments, are interpenetrated with a Divine Power and Purpose, creates a longing for

truth in its widest ramifications. Thus in the very focus of Christian faith are forged even those iconoclastic weapons so dreaded by the sects, though not by religion, scientific investigation and historical criticism. All space and time belong to God; and as the various lines upon which inquiry may be directed have branched off from the same Divine centre, and are varied expressions of the same Divine power, they are intimately related to one another, and the error of one-sided judgments can be avoided only by a comprehensive survey of the whole. Accordingly, the Christian teacher must insist on the importance of wide intellectual culture, and can join most cordially in the demands of our scientific leaders for a broader curriculum in school and college, and especially for an ample recognition of the claims of physical science. He will demur only when such demands are pressed with a one-sided zeal, and threaten to imperil the interests of literature and art. The Christian theologian would have the minds of men not only blameless, but entire, able to bring to every variety of study its appropriate method and standard of judgment, and as much alive to the sublime imagination and exquisite diction of the poet as acute in following the links of inductive reasoning. Only through this catholicity of culture can we reach the fullness of the perfect man.

To carry this high and extended culture into our primary schools is of course impossible at present, and must perhaps for ever remain so. But this is no reason why we should not set before our endeavours a worthy ideal, and make the instruction as sound and comprehensive as circumstances will allow. To bring the formal part of education

to a close just when the child has learned to read with tolerable accuracy, but has not obtained the most elementary knowledge of that vast mental treasure to which reading is the key, would surely be most deplorable. The mere ability to read and write rises little above the level of a mechanical dexterity, and we ought not to be satisfied without awakening the thirst for knowledge, and imparting the rudiments of information on the most important topics. This is not the place to discuss in detail a scheme of elementary education; I would only plead for the highest standard that our social condition will permit, and for such a training as will tend to call forth and discipline the various faculties, and elevate and refine the tastes. Nothing less than this deserves the name of education; and till this has been secured for every child in the country there must be no diminution of effort on the part of those who desire to raise man to his true position as 'the image and glory of God.'<sup>1</sup>

If we pass now to the spiritual faculties, it is unnecessary to insist that Christianity requires the cultivation of these; for she claims them as her peculiar province. Rather is it incumbent on us at the present day to vindicate their rights against an exclusive intellectualism. It is, however, impossible in the present place to treat this subject except in the most cursory way; but I may indicate in a few words two facts which seem to justify the demand for religious culture.

The first is that the religious element is a constituent part of our nature, just as real and just as distinct as the senses or the intellect. We find within ourselves reverence, devotion, the sense of

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 7.

## The Fullness of the Perfect Man 301

sin, remorse, penitence, the impulse to prayer, the feeling of inward peace, aspiration after holiness, and union of our will with God's. These are states of mind clearly distinguishable from others, such as anger, pity, or self-love; and even if you can persuade yourself that they have grown out of some lower quality, that, for instance, the dross of terror at what is stronger than we, has, through the strange alchemy of evolution, been changed into the pure gold of reverence for what is higher, still in education we must take our nature as we find it; and even if men are fools in opening their souls towards the infinite, and seeking communion with the eternal light, we cannot afford to neglect this wonderful power, which may rise to such heights of saintly heroism or sink into the disease of such fanatical superstition. Nor must we forget, in judging of this matter, that religion is not the peculiarity of a few or the growth of modern times; but as far back as historical research can carry us it has left its traces; wherever man has risen at all above the savage it has become one of the most tremendous of the social forces; it has entered into every variety of civilization, and every degree of culture; it has survived every change in its theology and ritual; and from ages when it has languished under intellectual doubt or a luxurious worldliness it has risen with a new power and grace to claim its own once more. It belongs, then, to our common nature; and he who would be a perfect man will not leave it to a wild spontaneous growth, but nurture it with watchful care.

The other fact, needed to show that the religious element is not to be stamped out and got rid of as a morbid and temporary growth, is that in survey-

ing the various faculties of our nature we cannot but place it at the higher end of the scale. It was not by attending to religious phenomena that Darwin was enabled to trace the natural history of man, and follow him back through the dim ages to one of the lower forms of life. Religion is not the dwindling remnant of the brute in us, but the expanding blossom of our distinct humanity. And it is in accordance with this fact that it always comes to us with the impress of higher authority, and bears its own witness that it is Divine. It speaks as a Word of eternal Truth and Right within the conscience. It dwells as a sanctifying Spirit in the heart. It is a revelation of ideal Holiness and Beauty in the soul. Its cry is still, upward! less of the earthy, more of the heavenly! Upward, in the power of faith, through the dark struggle of passion and doubt and sin. On to a higher truth and purer goodness, till, leaving mortality behind us, we are filled with all the fullness of God.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

THE references to hope are so frequent in the Pauline Epistles, and so rare in other parts of the New Testament,<sup>1</sup> and the emphasis laid upon it is so unique, that we may regard it as characteristic of the Apostle's teaching. He not only classes hope with faith and love as one of the great Christian virtues, but even declares that 'we were saved by hope.'<sup>2</sup> This feature of Paul's thought is especially remarkable because it is entirely wanting in Christ's recorded words. The noun 'hope' does not occur at all in the Gospels, and the verb is attributed to Christ only twice,<sup>3</sup> and then without any moral implications. Perhaps we may account for this curious difference by the suggestion that with Christ hope was dissolved into absolute conviction; for we hope only for that which is not yet in sight,<sup>4</sup> or, in other words, hope, though it may be strong enough to direct our activity, always contains some element of doubt. In view of these facts it is interesting

<sup>1</sup> It occurs four times in Acts, in reports of Paul's speeches, xxiii. 6, xxiv. 15, xxvi. 6, xxviii. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. viii. 24. <sup>3</sup> Luke vi. 34, 35, John v. 45.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. viii. 24, 25.

to observe how the Apostle's ardent soul was to the last sustained by hope. His love was unfailling; and love 'hopeth all things.'<sup>1</sup> In addressing his beloved Philippians he lays his heart open, and, though the word is absent, reveals the nature of his undying hope. He writes—'Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.'<sup>2</sup> These are remarkable words from one whose life was far spent, whose greatest achievements were in the past, and whose prospects in this world were a dreary imprisonment, relentless persecution, and the probability of a violent death. He was able to look back upon years of disinterested service, upon splendid endeavours to enlighten human thought, upon a self-devotion and ability which had left a permanent mark in some of the greatest cities of the world—deeds of which any man might well be proud. Yet in his Roman prison he did not soothe his hours of loneliness by dwelling fondly on the memory of younger days, but his eager and expectant soul still looked forward, still pressed towards a higher perfection; and his golden age was in the future.

Nevertheless, there were times when even Paul fixed his eye upon the past; and while we learn from his example to think chiefly of the duties which lie before us, we may learn also that memory performs a holy office, and gathers from the days that are gone lessons of wisdom to direct our future course. There are pauses on life's journey

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xiii. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Philip. iii. 13, 14.

when it is well to review our position, to bring together the results of our experiences, and to listen humbly to that instruction which life's discipline affords. From the dim chambers of the past voices are borne to our souls upon the magic wing of memory, voices of childish glee and youthful aspiration, voices of parental affection and friendly converse, voices ringing with the merry peal of laughing bliss, voices too choked with the mourner's sob. May they not speak to us some words of counsel, imbue us with a better spirit, and enable us to take a truer survey of the future ?

To remember the past may teach us humility and increase our sense of dependence on God. We see how much he has given, how little we have rendered in return. Mercies more than we can number come crowding on our thought. From childhood's earliest dawn we see that a most tender love has watched over us, boundless in the profusion of its gifts, wonderful in patience, content still to give, though without thanks or even recognition. And we see, alas ! that we have often taken the Divine gifts as though they were rights to which we were justly entitled, and not unmerited offerings of a Father's bounty. We remember that our desires have been many, but our thanksgivings few ; and dark days of murmuring and distrust rise rebukingly before us. We perceive that we have often used as we pleased and without consulting him, what God committed to us as a trust ; and we learn that passionately choosing our own way has ended at last in bitterness, while lowly submission to the Divine Will has invariably been full of blessedness and peace. Such memories must surely chasten our spirits,

and bring our hearts more entirely to God. They most diminish our self-confidence, and increase our trust in him, and lead us, with the blended humility and zeal which spring from a true apprehension of our Father's love, to work that Will which alone is wise and good.

It was thus that the Apostle culled from the past that humility which is the fairest plant in the kingdom of heaven, and brought his fiery spirit into subjection to the love of Christ—'less than the least of all saints,'<sup>1</sup> 'not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.'<sup>2</sup> The revelation that flashed upon his darkened soul on the road to Damascus changed his proud confidence in his own infallibility into a penitent sense of darkness and unworthiness and shame, his reliance upon the dead letter of the law into dependence on the living Father of mankind, and served ever afterwards to show him the difference between the self-willed and vainglorious zeal of a fanatic and the meek self-devotion of one who, at whatever cost of prejudice and passion, would be led by the Divine Spirit. So with us, 'the things that are behind' may teach us our need of the Father's love, and his constant presence to support, to guide, and to console those who are conscious of their need.

Again, a wise and reverent retrospect of our life enables us to adopt precautions and safeguards for the future. Without reflecting sometimes upon our conduct, and in the cool retreats of memory examining the motives which prompted it, we cannot know ourselves; and ignorance of our own hearts is one of the most fruitful sources of failure and sin. While passion is warm we are liable to

<sup>1</sup> Eph. iii. 8.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 9.

see through a delusive medium, and fiends on the side of our self-love appear as angels of light; and it is only after an interval, which has been filled with other interests, that we are able to form a just estimate of our conduct. We may then learn to what temptations we are most exposed, what passions are most likely to carry us away, what form our self-worship is most prone to assume. We can then trace out the beginnings of our sin, and the hazards which we have needlessly incurred, the thoughts which we have too fondly cherished, the sleepiness of soul which has allowed Christ to be snatched with traitorous stealth from our hearts, or the vainglorious timidity which has followed him only to deny him. Knowing these things, we can better prepare ourselves for the conflict which is yet to come; we can diligently guard that side of our character which is defective; we can systematically discipline those passions which are most rudely importunate; and we can fortify our weakest parts by resolution and prayer. Thus we may gather the fruits of an ever ripening experience, and bring to each new period of our lives a more mature wisdom and a more constant devotion.

But, on the other hand, a habit may be acquired of dwelling on the past which is highly prejudicial to the character. The memory of former times may be a vague and profitless sentiment, the offspring of discontent rather than the parent of gratitude; and while we sigh for the 'good old days' we may forget the good present days, with their troop of blessings and their urgent duties. To reflect even on the sins and follies of the past may be wasted labour, and consume in vain regrets for what cannot be undone the energies which are

needed for immediate action. There is a luxury of penitence which leads to no amendment, and self-humiliation may be frequently indulged without any increase of humility. The conscience too is liable to become morbid, when too often exercised in examining the motives for past conduct. Dealing with problems which are no longer present, analysing motives which, being gone, it is impossible to control, it may acquire a subtlety of discernment disproportioned to the vigour of its action, and become accustomed rather to pass sentence upon what has been than to direct what is to be. It may thus forfeit its bold, broad character, and, while careful about trifles, become incapable of taking a large and comprehensive survey of life's duties. The common sense of mankind condemns the scrupulous conscience, not because anything is too small for the rule of right, but because, absorbed in the contemplation of microscopic objects, it fails to apprehend the weightier matters, and spends in establishing nice distinctions the forces which are required for beneficent activity. Nothing can be more perilous to our spiritual health than undue dwelling in this way upon past conditions of the soul, and exhausting our strength in unprofitable fretfulness and self-mortification. Having gleaned from the past the lessons which it has to give, let us then turn with humble, yet with cheerful, hope to the future, and 'forget those things which are behind, and reach forth unto those things which are before.'

The Apostle, in the passage quoted near the beginning of this chapter, compares the Christian life to a race, in which the attention of the racers is entirely fixed upon the goal. The space which

has been traversed is of no consequence, the space which has yet to be gone over is the one thing to be considered. And the forward posture and fixed look of the runner as he darts along the shortest ground well symbolizes the eager expectancy of him who would reach the perfection of Christ. He too must keep his goal, the Christian ideal of the spiritual man, steadily in view. He too must not sit down and weep because he may have stumbled or fallen, but consider only how he may run the remainder of his course. And while his onward gaze is riveted on the glittering prize, he must be attracted by what is before rather than repelled by what is behind.

Aversion to sin is good, but the desire of holiness is better; and our hatred of wrong ought to be only the negative side of our love of right. No high Christian virtue is possible for him who merely shrinks from the contamination of guilt. Our bosoms must glow with generous aspirations; we must burn with desire to do well; and we must be captivated by the fair form of goodness, till we are willing to do all things for her sake. The backward look of him who is always fearful lest he has committed some great mistake is sure to end in the very disaster which he dreads. The terror of Satan may produce the cringing obedience of a fugitive, and narrow-souled persistence in the beaten path of righteousness; but only the love of God can give the freedom and mobility of limb, the fiery enthusiasm, and the truth of vision which the Christian racer needs. Nor, again, will regard for human opinion speed us on our course. It may act as a check on our vagaries, or prevent us from sitting down in sullen indolence; but there is no

prize for him who wastes his time in stealing sidelong glances to see whether the spectators are applauding. We must love the gift of God more than the praise of men; and neither eye nor foot must swerve to right or left while we speed our way towards the crown of life.

He who runs a race not only reaches forth unto those things which are before; he presses towards the mark. He may survey with nicest accuracy the ground before him; but till his body is thrown into vigorous exertion he comes no nearer the goal. And so the Christian racer requires not only steadiness of view, but earnestness of endeavour. We must not abandon ourselves to passive emotions, or suppose that we can win the Christian prize by merely lifting our hot faces to be fanned by the passing gales of the Divine Spirit. Our own exertion is one of the conditions on which God bestows his gifts; and if we do not choose to run for the crown which God in his wonderful love offers to us, he will assuredly not come and place it on our brows. To surrender our wills to God is not to abdicate the action of the will, but to bring its determinations to the side of the Divine purposes, and to endeavour with all the force at our command to execute those purposes. If we would be his, we must learn the blessedness of toil and the sweetness of self-denial, and choose his will with an energy which guarantees the permanence of our resolution, and an effort which rushes with conquering might against every obstacle. Rest, in the sense of abstinence from exertion, is not for the Christian. His rest is the blessed consciousness of peace with God; but the calmest saint is the most intense in the action of his will.

Yet because so much is allowed to depend on our own exertions we must not forget that it is in obedience to the 'high calling of God' that we enter on the race at all, or that success is open to our efforts. It is he who freely offers the prize of sonship; and did he not create within us hearts susceptible of Divine impressions, did he not kindle the fires of faith, and bestow on us strength proportioned to the race which we have to run, we might struggle against our lower destiny in vain. The highest efforts of our wills are but a response to God's entreaty, and a taking up of the conditions which he has mercifully established. We must observe also how the soft accents of a Father's love are ever drawing the soul forward. We are not driven with harsh remonstrance to a weary and disagreeable task, but are called with gentle pleading, and each step brings us nearer to our home. The way may seem long; shadows may darken across our path, and there may be pitfalls and stones of stumbling; but the voice of God is still in front, and still he calls us nearer, nearer to himself.

But what is the prize which we seek? The Apostle speaks of the 'high calling of God in Christ Jesus.' The prize is the Christian Spirit, the Spirit of the Son of God within the soul. All the depth and grandeur and beauty of life which we can mean by communion with God and dependence on his love—this is the prize which our Father offers. We start to see the sombre form of the cross before us; and do we not see above it a crown whose golden lustre defies the rust of ages, and whose entwined leaves cannot wither? Oh! that we might rest our eyes upon that immortal crown till earth's ambitious disappear, and the host of

deceitful passions fly like phantoms of the night. Let the past vanish, and our sins be buried in the tombs of departed years. With faith, and hope, and love let us reach forth unto the things that are before, and ere we enter the dim paths of the uncertain future let us solemnly consecrate ourselves to the perilous, but glorious race. And lest in the pride of our quickened zeal we should be surprised by temptation or overthrown by passion, let us put on the garment of humility, and never cease to implore that strength without which we can do no good, and that light without which we can see no truth. Then our efforts will meet with that success which the Christian longs for; and when we once more pause upon life's journey to look behind us and before, so as to reap from the past a harvest of holy wisdom for the future, we shall be able to thank God that our labour has not been in vain.

And now, in conclusion, we must throw our glance forward into that eternity wherein are the deep things of God, things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart conceived, but which are revealed by the Spirit in radiant, if undefined, images of beauty to the worshipping soul. 'The things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.' To Christian faith and hope death is but the dropping of a veil which hides from us things which are above our earthly experience. 'We know not yet what we shall be'; but we can wait patiently for the great revealing, believing that we shall see more deeply into the Life of God, and that we shall lose the consciousness of self in the rapt contemplation of infinite Goodness, Truth, and Beauty.

---

needed for immediate action. There is a luxury of penitence which leads to no amendment, and self-humiliation may be frequently indulged without any increase of humility. The conscience too is liable to become morbid, when too often exercised in examining the motives for past conduct. Dealing with problems which are no longer present, analysing motives which, being gone, it is impossible to control, it may acquire a subtlety of discernment disproportioned to the vigour of its action, and become accustomed rather to pass sentence upon what has been than to direct what is to be. It may thus forfeit its bold, broad character, and, while careful about trifles, become incapable of taking a large and comprehensive survey of life's duties. The common sense of mankind condemns the scrupulous conscience, not because anything is too small for the rule of right, but because, absorbed in the contemplation of microscopic objects, it fails to apprehend the weightier matters, and spends in establishing nice distinctions the forces which are required for beneficent activity. Nothing can be more perilous to our spiritual health than undue dwelling in this way upon past conditions of the soul, and exhausting our strength in unprofitable fretfulness and self-mortification. Having gleaned from the past the lessons which it has to give, let us then turn with humble, yet with cheerful, hope to the future, and 'forget those things which are behind, and reach forth unto those things which are before.'

The Apostle, in the passage quoted near the beginning of this chapter, compares the Christian life to a race, in which the attention of the racers is entirely fixed upon the goal. The space which

has been traversed is of no consequence, the space which has yet to be gone over is the one thing to be considered. And the forward posture and fixed look of the runner as he darts along the shortest ground well symbolizes the eager expectancy of him who would reach the perfection of Christ. He too must keep his goal, the Christian ideal of the spiritual man, steadily in view. He too must not sit down and weep because he may have stumbled or fallen, but consider only how he may run the remainder of his course. And while his onward gaze is riveted on the glittering prize, he must be attracted by what is before rather than repelled by what is behind.

Aversion to sin is good, but the desire of holiness is better; and our hatred of wrong ought to be only the negative side of our love of right. No high Christian virtue is possible for him who merely shrinks from the contamination of guilt. Our bosoms must glow with generous aspirations; we must burn with desire to do well; and we must be captivated by the fair form of goodness, till we are willing to do all things for her sake. The backward look of him who is always fearful lest he has committed some great mistake is sure to end in the very disaster which he dreads. The terror of Satan may produce the cringing obedience of a fugitive, and narrow-souled persistence in the beaten path of righteousness; but only the love of God can give the freedom and mobility of limb, the fiery enthusiasm, and the truth of vision which the Christian racer needs. Nor, again, will regard for human opinion speed us on our course. It may act as a check on our vagaries, or prevent us from sitting down in sullen indolence; but there is no