

THE TRINITY

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BY

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PREFACE

THESE sermons are not brought together accidentally, but composed in the execution of a single design. The doctrine of the Trinity, as it has been held in the Church from the beginning, is taken; and an attempt is made to show, by constant reference to the original facts of the New Testament revelation, how the doctrine bears vitally on thought and conduct to-day.

There is nothing intentionally controversial in the book, and I crave pardon of any, Unitarian or Catholic, whom it may offend by the eagerness and strength of the conviction which is behind it. I have not ventured directly to address those who differ from me, or to assume that they will read my book; but I have tried to write so that all readers may realise how "the faith once for all delivered to the saints" presents itself to one, who finds more in it every year to satisfy the intellect and to nourish the heart.

I am aware how irritating strong religious convictions appear to those who do not share them. I would do anything in my power to reduce this

irritation, and would gladly modify or repress any paragraph or phrase which does not commend the truth, as I would expound it, to those who are good enough to read my words.

I am sorry that the exigencies of the Series have made it necessary to reduce the bulk of the volume ; and four sermons which in my own mind are needed for the completion of the book must be omitted. I may, however, mention their titles, and leave the reader to work out their contents. They are, *The Practice of the Trinity*, *The Father after whom all Fatherhood is named*, *Fidelity in one's vocation as the expression of the religious life*, and *Perfection*.

ROBERT F. HORTON.

HAMPSTEAD, *July 16th*, 1901.

THE TRINITY

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.—2 *Cor.* xiii. 14.

I

THE TRINITY

IT is evident that the distinctions of Father, Son and Spirit, are established in the usage of the New Testament. The discourses of the Fourth Gospel present the Son speaking of the Father and promising to send the Spirit. And the Apostolic writings reflect, almost unconsciously, the threefold name. In 1 Cor. xii. 4-6, for example, the three names might be the names of a single agent: "There are diversities of gifts, but the same *Spirit*, and there are diversities of administrations, and the same *Lord* (*sc.* Christ); and there are diversities of workings, but the same *God*." Or again in Eph. iv. 4-6, the language insensibly expresses the revealed fact: "There is one body and one *Spirit*, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one *Lord*, one faith, one baptism, one *God* and Father of all." And the familiar benediction of Christendom, taken from 2 Cor. xiii. 14, secures the recognition of the same fact in every Christian assembly, and almost in every act of Christian worship.

It is no less evident that these distinctions did

not, in the mind of speaker or writer, conflict with the unity of God. No one was ever more confident than Jesus, that there is one God, and that God is one. And Paul is most particular, even in the passages quoted, to lay stress on this oneness by adding to the name of God the clause, "who worketh all things in all" (1 Cor. xii. 6), and "who is over all and through all and in all" (Eph. iv. 6).

We may frankly admit that the name Trinity is not derived from the New Testament; we may even be ready to allow that the doctrine of the Trinity is a contribution of Greek Metaphysic to the theology of the Gospel; we may be constrained to withhold our assent from the Athanasian Creed on the simple ground that the terms employed in it are not intelligible to us. But the fact of the Trinity is not only found in the New Testament; it may be said to *be* the New Testament. The Old Testament may be described as the manifold, historical, poetical and prophetic assertion of the one God; the New Testament is the revelation of the Trinity in the one God. And thus the benediction of the Old Testament,

The Lord (*i.e.* Yahwe) bless thee and keep thee,

The Lord (*i.e.* Yahwe) make his face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee,

The Lord (*i.e.* Yahwe) lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace (Num. vi. 24-26),

becomes in the New Testament

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.

The highest reach of Old Testament prophecy was the attainment of the unity of God: "In that day shall the Lord be one, and his name one" (Zech. xiv. 9). Against the countless names of polytheism should stand out the name of the one God. But, that once achieved, the New Testament passed on to search into the depths of the one God, and to reveal that within His being there were three names distinguishable, Father, Son and Spirit. The New Testament does not clash with the Old. On the contrary, it starts from the achievement of the Old, to achieve something greater still. The Old Testament, like a telescope directed to a heavenly body, focussed the one God, shut out the shadowy and delusive names that were claimants to His throne, fixed the eyes of at least one family of the human race, the Jews, upon that central luminary, the maker, upholder, and ruler of the universe, God, and reached its final cause in securing mankind the priceless benefit of monotheism. But the New Testament began to examine the central luminary. Or rather the one Light itself, now clearly recognised, and secured in its undisputed sovereignty, began to reveal itself. Rays issued from it, and penetrating the part of the human race which was prepared, enabled the mind of man to grasp, though only in vague and shadowy ways, as, considering

the nature of the subject, we may see was inevitable, the distinctions in the divine Being, the "abysses of God."

I. First of all it is to be observed that these distinctions established in the essential revelation of the New Testament, are verified in the experience of the Christian life. They are not only reflected in the Christian life, they may be said to produce it. If we may use the word which, we confess, has no place in the New Testament, the Christian life is necessarily Trinitarian. What Ritschl would call the judgment-value on the nature of God becomes Trinitarian, not only because the New Testament recognises the distinction between Father, Son and Spirit, but even more because the Christian experience, as a specific fact in religion, is produced by that distinction. It begins in the recognition of Christ as the Son of God, it proceeds by an inward operation of the Spirit revealing the things of Christ, it passes into an exclamation of the Spirit, *Abba, i.e.* Father, which ripens into a sonship to God; and by these practical steps and factors the Christian experience develops as a new relation to God, a life hidden with Christ in God, a life wrought out by God in the Spirit.

The Christian experience would therefore be quite uninterpreted unless the distinctions in the Godhead were firmly maintained; not only would the theory be gone, but the fact would be impoverished,

and might disappear. Suppose the Son were lost, and in unitarian fashion, Jesus ceased to be the divine Being incarnate, becoming merely a God-filled human soul, the atonement would of course disappear; there would be no act of propitiation which abolishes sin and reconciles sinners to God. But more than this, the incarnation would go, and with it would go the revelation which is involved in incarnation. The saying of Jesus "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" is fundamental. If Jesus is merely a man, it ceases to be true, and therefore in seeing Him men did not see the Father. But if in Him we did not see the Father, the Father has not been seen or known. In losing the Son we lose the Father.

The Christian experience is an ellipse, the two foci of which are the incarnation and propitiation of the Son of God; if the foci are gone the ellipse vanishes into thin air. But the foci cannot be maintained except on the ground of the distinction between Father and Son in the Godhead. No incarnation could take place, and no propitiation could be made, unless the Son could take the flesh of men, and die for the sins of men. The whole Christian experience therefore, an experience of pardon and reconciliation to God, an experience of a life hid with Christ in God, an experience of being partakers of the divine nature, may be shown to rest on this fundamental distinction of

the revelation in the Gospel: "God, having of old time spoken unto the Fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in a Son" (Heb. i. 1).

I will not say that the separate activity of the Holy Spirit is in the Christian experience as obvious as the distinction between Father and Son. It cannot even be maintained that in experience the Spirit is presented as a *person* separated from Christ. When we treat the Spirit as a third person, it is rather on the ground that Christ spoke about another comforter like unto himself, than on the ground of a datum of spiritual experience. It does not appear that any one has had vision or conception of the Spirit in personal form, as some have had of God, and many have had of Christ. But precisely that fundamental distinction between Christ in his historical appearance, and the Spirit in the continuance of his work on earth, which is the obvious burden of the New Testament, is reflected in the experience of the individual and of the Church. There is a preaching, a presentation, a belief, of the Father and of the Son, which remains practically inoperative; something is wanting; the materials are on the altar, but they are cold; there is no fire.

"Have ye received the Holy Ghost?" is a pertinent question dating from apostolic times, and always

repeated in the Church. The answer is in the glow of tongues afire. It is unmistakable.

The demand of the human mind for symmetry has driven theology into the position that the three in one must be three persons in one God; and by a change in the meaning of person,¹ the statement has become somewhat confusing. While in the New Testament the Spirit is a neuter noun, πνεῦμα, and is frequently described in a neuter sense, though the operations of the Spirit are always the work of the personal God; in our experience the distinction between the Spirit and the Father or between the Spirit and the Son, is not established as a distinction between *persons*. The presence of the Spirit is perfectly real and unmistakable: it is the difference between life and anatomy; one might almost say it is the difference between practice and theory; but this presence which we cannot deny or confound with anything else, does not visage itself as a third person, but is rather the quickening revelation of Jesus Christ as the Son, and of God as the Father. The Spirit does not glorify himself, or even reveal himself; He merges his being in that of the Father

¹ The original meaning of *Persona*, as the mask of an actor, implied rather a part or aspect of the being of God, than what we now mean by a separate personality. As soon as the ancient meaning is lost, as it must very generally be in the popular mind, the language of the creeds and the hymns, three persons in one God, may become a stumbling block.

and of the Son, as if He were the relation between the two, and He accomplishes his work in men by bringing them into that relation which exists between the Father and the Son, making them the sons of God.

While then we are compelled in experience to draw the distinction which is drawn in the New Testament between Father, Son and Spirit, we only confuse our own minds when we insist on this distinction as one of persons. If the word person in its modern sense is to be retained at all, and it would perhaps be better to discard it, we are only justified in saying that we have experience of one person, namely, our Lord Jesus Christ, and we infer from Him that there is another, the Father ; but the Spirit is only the exertion of a personal power, which brings us into relation with Jesus Christ, and gives us a share of the relation which He sustains with the Father.

This statement lacks the symmetry and elaboration of the Athanasian Creed, but it has a twofold advantage : it is in harmony with Scripture and it is verified in experience. The Athanasian Creed, on the other hand, is a sheer feat of the intellect, which can command nothing but an intellectual assent.

2. But, as this trinitarian distinction is implied in the New Testament and in Christian experience, is it not also, when we begin to grapple with the facts of God, a necessity of thought? Is not the under-

lying principle of the Athanasian Creed, whatever may be said of its detailed expression, an inevitable result of reflecting on the Being who made the world and us?

Is it even conceivable that God should be an undifferentiated unity? Such a unity, if conceivable, would be without contents. But it is not conceivable; and we only reach such an idea by a process of abstraction which, in the case of God, is quite inadmissible.

You may be tempted to assert that we have experience of such an undifferentiated unity in every personality. But that is far from being the case. A human personality, and that is the kind of personality of which alone we have experience, is not an undifferentiated unity, but rather a complex of manifold relations. Where is the man who was and is or can be in isolation? He is the child of parents. Could you find him on an island alone like Alexander Selkirk, yet he did not get there alone. Some Caliban is dimly conceivable to the imagination, a being divorced from human beings, but such a creature ceases to be a personality in the human sense. A man may be a solitary, but by heredity he has mysterious roots in the human race; the faculties, habits, tendencies, thoughts, passions, within him, though in him are not from him; they betray their origin in relation with other beings. The ordinary human being, as we know him, is so

much the product of his family, his society, his country, he is so compounded of the feelings which unite him with or repel him from others, and of the opinions which he imbibes from his fellows, that so far from being an undifferentiated unity in himself, the difficulty is to distinguish in him that element, called personality, which combines and individualises his manifold of experience.

A personality, existing without all relation to others, would, in thought, cease to be a personality ; it would be a mere *caput mortuum*.

We have then no right to believe that God would be a personality of that kind, an unrelated, isolated, unity. In maintaining such a position we attribute to Him something *less* than personality as we know it. And while we are justified and even compelled to regard God as something more than we, as persons, are, it is an impiety of thought to treat Him as something less.

It may, however, be said that God, Himself a unity, finds His personality in His creation ; that is to say, He completes Himself in making other beings with whom He may enter into relations ; on such a showing the angels and other orders of heavenly beings, and possibly human beings, are that self-expression of God which is essential to His proper being. There is attraction in such a view ; it was by such a process of reasoning that Hegel developed his system of a universe as the

product of thought, and of God coming to His true self-consciousness in the thinking creatures that He has made.

But if it is, at first sight, attractive, it is also intrinsically irreverent. When we maintain that only in our own being, or in the being of creatures like us, God comes properly to be, we have exalted ourselves not only to share the divine nature, but also to complete it, and in a sense hardly distinguishable from Comte's *Grand Être*, we claim to be God.

But the necessity of thought which is here revealed, if it is to avoid the essential impiety of finding those relations which give to God His fulfilment in the creatures that He has made, can only find a solution of the problem in the supposition that God, in His own nature, apart from all creatures, or after-thoughts of creation, is *not* an undifferentiated unity, but a unity of relationships in Himself, a fellowship of love, of communion, of thought, complete in Himself.

That is to say, apart from the revelation of the New Testament, steady and consistent reflection on God, would bring us to the view which is there revealed, that in God there are relations which are as well expressed by the terms Father, Son and Spirit, as by any other which we can suggest. These relations must be primordial; they must antedate all creation; they must constitute God

as a Being absolute, independent, complete, a central, self-sufficing interchange of love, beneficence, wisdom and power, were no other creatures called into existence. From before all time, in the abyss of eternity, God was Father, Son, Spirit.

3. Such considerations enable us to grasp the position of Jews, Mohammedans, and all other Unitarian thinkers. Christians agree with them in maintaining the unity of God. The difference arises on the nature of that unity. It was, as we saw at the beginning, the splendid service of the Jew to vindicate the unity of God against the usurpations of polytheism. But the coming of Christ, the entrance of the Eternal Son into the world, was, as became clear by the operations of the Spirit, *the manifestation of the relationships existing in God*. It was a tremendous truth which the Church found it difficult to understand and to establish. Arianism and Sabellianism had to be combated, because they destroyed this truth. Mahomet came, in complete ignorance of the central truth of Christianity, and asserted the unity of God, exclusive of Christ and the Spirit, in a vast and vehement system, which rests partly on a truth which cannot be denied, and partly on the denial of the truth within that truth which had been revealed.

Unitarianism has from the beginning taken up the same position. It surrenders the revelation of

God in Christianity, to fall back on the revelation of God in Judaism. We grant you, it says, that Christ is the best of men, a son of God, in the sense that we all may become sons of God, but He is not part and parcel of His Eternal being. Let the Spirit, it says, be called what you will, an effluence, an influence, a mental or even a physical force, but He is not a revelation of essential relations in the Godhead; when He witnesses to the Eternal sonship of Jesus, and his proper deity, He may, and must, be ignored.

This, it will be observed, shuts the door of the Christian revelation. We are left where the Jew was, and where the Mohammedan is, with the doubtful addition of the ethics of Jesus; doubtful, I say, because on this hypothesis, they are the ethics of a man, who laboured under the singular hallucination that He, and they to whom He willed to reveal Him, alone knew the Father (Matt. xi. 27). The sublime glimpse into the eternal Being which Christianity affords is lost. A veil was lifted that men might gaze into the depths of God; but it is hastily and finally dropped again.

It is supposed that by this unitarian method simplification is secured; so it is, but at the cost of losing the revelation. The mystical difficulties of ultimate reality are surrendered; and with the suspension of effort may come a certain peace. But the vision has gone. God recedes, and in the

Christian sense, the sense in which Christianity has taught us to know Him, He is lost. He sinks again into that unrelated, undifferentiated unity, which is *less* than personality.

4. But while we must firmly resist the seductive simplicity of Unitarianism, we may insist with all Unitarians, whether Jews, Mohammedans or Socinians, on their central doctrine, the unity of God. There at least we are all agreed, While, in revelation, in Christian experience, and in thought the unity of God is found to be differentiated, it is by that discovery, not lost, but enriched.

On the one hand, God does not cease to be one because we recognise these distinctions in His being, any more than a man ceases to be one because we distinguish in him the very opposite constituents of body and soul, or because, to speak with philosophers, we admit the deepseated division between Thought, Feeling and Will.

To understand a man, it is necessary to study these distinctions; to know him you are content to take him in his unity. And in something of the same way, though it is comparing great things with small, to understand God, it is necessary to contemplate Him as Father, Son and Spirit, but to know Him you approach Him in His unity, reaching the heart of the Father in the Son, finding the reality of the Son in the Spirit.

On the other hand, the Unity of God is by the

revealed truth, not lost but enriched. In practice the Trinitarian knowledge of Him proceeds by what can only be described as a heavenly staircase let down to the feet of humanity. First there is the God-man, Jesus Christ, brought to our level, appealing to us in a thoroughly human way. His life, his passion, his resurrection, his ascension, present themselves to the eye of faith. But in the exercise of faith in Him, the Spirit enters the believing soul. The facts of Jesus, which were merely objective, become inward. You call Jesus Lord, you find Him the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of His countenance. You are convinced of sin, and then of righteousness, and then of judgment. You perceive in Him the propitiation for sin. You believe, you are forgiven. You are reconciled with God, you have found your Father.

By this real and warm and vital experience you are brought into the interior of the Divine being, you begin to climb the heights and search the depths of God. And now all the Divine nature is viewed as from within. And the transformation is of this kind: you see that cathedral on the horizon, distant, indistinct, a beautiful form against the lucent sky, but removed entirely from your approach, an object among many others, in the landscape: but, it is given to you one day to reach it and to enter it, and now it entirely makes your horizon, you are underneath its fretted roof, and

surrounded by its storied panes. Now the light of the day streams in to you through those significant windows ; prophets, apostles, martyrs, and above all the crucified Christ are the medium through which the sun comes, enriched and enriching. What was once a distant object on your horizon has become the central fact from which you look out on all horizons.

The Trinitarian knowledge of God is of this kind. Monotheism recognises a transcendent God ; away on the horizon or beyond it, He wields His august sceptre, to be revered and feared, but hardly to be approached. But Christian Monotheism becomes a revelation of the approach of God to the soul, and of the method by which man is admitted into the being of God. By the inconceivable step of the incarnation God comes from the horizon to our feet ; by the searching presence of the Spirit He enters our hearts. Transcendent He still is, but now He is also immanent. He fills all worlds, but now we who believe are within Him, not outside ; and all worlds and the meaning of all worlds come to our perceptions, and reach our understanding, through the medium of this Divine nature in which we stand.

So true is it that the Trinity is not a theory but a practice ; it is not a creation of the intellect, but an interpretation of a religious experience.

THE DEPTHS OF GOD

But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit : for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.—1 *Cor.* ii. 10.

II

THE DEPTHS OF GOD

“**D**EEP things” is a very imperfect rendering of the Greek word, which is a substantive without an adjective. And if “depths” is a little startling, yet it is better to use the more exact term, for the idea is meant to be startling. We are to think of those abysses in the Divine Being, like the abysses of the sea, or the vaster depths of stellar space; we are to think of God as a deep below deep, which no line can plumb, as an unfathomable mystery before which the finite human mind must stand amazed and helpless.

First. The first suggestion of the passage is that as a man’s own spirit alone knows the depths of his own nature, so the Spirit of God alone can know the depths of God, the mysteries of the Divine Nature. A man also has depths within him; within him deep cries unto deep. It is not necessary to dwell on the unsuspected factors which are constantly surprising us in extraordinary men. The growth of a child is a series of revelations, but the development of life after childhood is hardly less surprising. Sir Walter

Scott was a dull and wandering mind at school. And it would be easy to name several distinguished men now living who showed no promise of distinction in early days. It is no uncommon thing to find an unsuspected faculty emerging even late in life. I knew one gifted man who in a holiday, required by ill-health, when he was near fifty, found that he had an instinctive power of drawing. And we may suspect that, as George Eliot put it,

Life itself does not express us all,
But leaves the best, aye, and the worst too,
Like tunes in mechanism, unexpressed.

It is not necessary to dwell on this familiar series of facts; the point just now is rather the immense region open to self-consciousness in ordinary people which is absolutely closed to another observer. To ordinary acquaintances you show but the surface of your being; or perhaps now and again you give them a brief glimpse into some secret chamber of your thought or feeling. But take your most intimate friend, the one from whom you have no secrets, and with whom you have spent long hours in intimate converse; though you do not willingly keep back anything from him, yet consider how much of your life, how many trains of thought, how many experiences of joy and pain, how many hopes and fears, how many designs and purposes, pass through your consciousness, and are known to you, but are never known to him. What you utter in

speech is only an occasional sample of what is going on within : of all that you know within there is not time in a long life of close intercourse with another to give more than a hint. We are to one another like ships that cross the ocean, and frequently sight each other and interchange signals ; yet, what does the one ship know of the life on board another ? Even supposing they occasionally lie side by side in the dock, which may represent our closest friendships, there can be nothing like an exact knowledge on board the one of the sailing life on board the other. We are ships, for the most part, that pass in the night ; but even when we pass in the day, we know only the shape, the rigging, the cut of the jib, the name and port marked on the stern.

The only personal knowledge of me that is in any sense full and inclusive is the knowledge acquired by my own spirit. That does not know or even suspect all ; there is much illusion and delusion in its analysis ; but no one else can pretend to any knowledge worthy of the name.

In the same way the being of the Infinite is known only by the Spirit of God. When we speak of that Being as a person, we should remember that there is some presumption in applying to Him a category which suggests to us limitations ; limitations which cannot apply to Him. If we say that He is a personality, we only mean that, as personality is the

highest category we know, He is not less but more than personality. He is a person without the limitations which to us seem to define personality. But such a person, wellnigh inconceivable to our minds, such a self-consciousness, vast and inclusive as the universe, can evidently only be really known to Himself. If I alone can know me; much more He alone can know Him. If my spirit or self-consciousness alone can give an account of what is contained in me, His Spirit alone can give an account of what is contained in Him. Just as I speak of my self-consciousness, not wishing to imply that I and my self-consciousness are different, but only wishing to express that curious duality or trinity of consciousness itself, by which I realise myself, and then in a unity of apperception perceive that the I realising, and the I realised, are one, so we may conceive of the Holy Spirit as the Self-consciousness of God; God might say "My Holy Spirit," not so much to distinguish the Spirit from Himself, as to express His own being in the relation between Himself and the consciousness of Himself.

And if I am convinced of the presumption of intruding into the self-consciousness of my fellow-man, and realise that I can by no means know him as his spirit knows him, much more must I be profoundly convinced that I cannot intrude into the being of God, I can never venture to search Him or to know Him in the way that His Spirit

knows Him. The self-consciousness of the Being who made the universe, even as we know it, is as far beyond our thought, as our human self-consciousness must be beyond the thought of the indistinguishable amœba, which floats in the ooze of the sea.

Second. But now it is implied that the Spirit which is the self-consciousness of God can be and is imparted to the Christian, so that in some limited degree that self-consciousness of God, to which His own vast and unfathomable being lies revealed, produces, or reveals, in us a knowledge of His being.

We must be careful here not to lapse into the vagueness and unrealities of Pantheism. And we can avoid the danger only by clinging close to the experience of the spiritual life. St Paul is particular to say that this wisdom is only intelligible to the wise, or the full-grown, *i.e.* to those in whom the Spirit has been at work. Certainly nothing could be more meaningless than the truth with which we are now concerned to a thinker like Haeckel, who, driven by his reason to the conception of Spiritual Monism, is yet a stranger to the visitation of the Holy Spirit. "The rulers of this age, that are coming to nought" (1 Cor. ii. 6), are those leaders of thought, and pioneers of knowledge, who have crucified the Lord of Glory: by their rejection of Christ they have cut themselves off from the illumination which He alone brings.

The appeal then, here, is very definitely, not to the thinker as such, not to the consciousness of men unilluminated by the Holy Spirit, but to those, learned or simple, who by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, have received the Holy Ghost. It is this specific experience of the Spirit which at once separates the truth before us from Pantheism. The Pantheist would ask men as men, mind as mind, to recognise that there is one substance, and that substance is God, and individuals in their self-consciousness are an expression of the consciousness of God ; God comes to His own self-consciousness in the manifold and diversified personalities which constitute the world. This is to identify all the errors, sins, and corruptions of human wills with God ; it is to obliterate moral distinctions ; it is to lose the power of redemption.

But what we have to do with is a specific communication of the Spirit of God which cleanses and transforms the human self-consciousness, and in that transformation illuminates. The Spirit thus communicated, by effecting a renewal of human nature, renders a knowledge of the Divine nature possible.

Suppose we were to take Paul as an example, we should say that his insight into the Being of God, which is the chief value of his writings, is due to the Holy Spirit within him : "we received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God,

that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God" (*v.* 12).

But better still, as Christians let us examine our own consciousness. We are dealing with a fact which is not perhaps more mysterious, and need not be less certain, than the searching of our own being by our own spirit. What is it that occurs when by faith in Christ Jesus we receive the Holy Spirit? We can only say that we are introduced into the being and the life of God. We are conscious of His currents pulsing through us. God is no longer a mere supposition, required by our rational faculty in the explanation of the universe; He is no longer a mere Lawgiver brought in from without to explain and to justify the authority of conscience or of the moral law; God is now an *experience*. Whatever certainty attaches to our own being, now attaches to His.

When we appeal to self-consciousness, we mean, that part of the content of our self-consciousness is God. Whatever may evade our observation—and we are aware all the time that God is not only beyond our senses, but beyond our thought and imagination—; however uncertain, therefore, we may be about the forms and the conditions, the aims and the methods, of the Divine Being, of one thing we are quite certain; viz., that He is, and that we are in Him. That He is light is a fact of precisely the same certitude

as the report which sight gives of the sun ; that He is life is just as sure as the life we now live in the flesh ; that He is Holiness, is the explanation of our thought and desire of holiness ; that He is love is a truth which lies now in the fact that we love. That is to say, making allowance for our finitude, our insignificance, our limitations of knowledge and of existence, we mean by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that the self-consciousness of God has come into us, and is there intermingled with our self-consciousness.

And as the Spirit of God is actively engaged in searching the depths of God, the Spirit of God in us is constantly communicating the results of that research. Our inner spiritual experience is a progressive initiation into the Being of God. We are not instructed in His attributes ; that is what might be done by an ordinary theological discipline ; it is even possible that we may remain quite ignorant of many of these attributes which a rational theology discovers and classifies ; we are rather inducted into His nature, and are led to live His life.

The abysses of God, the vast unfathomable wonders of His personality, become our habitation ; we are engaged in reverently and adoringly exploring them ; there lies our true life, in the depths of God. The things of time, the vanishing shows of the earth, assume their right proportion ; as moments in the evolution of the Divine plan, they have their interest and their reality ; but they are of yesterday

and to-day ; to-morrow they are not. They appear as mere rhythmic beats, or ticks of the clock, in the solemn advance of Eternity. They cannot occupy much thought or desire beside those

Things which eye saw not and ear heard not,
And which entered not into the heart of man,
Whatsoever things God prepared for them that love Him.

For these are the things which God has revealed to us by His Spirit.

Third. These depths of God are searched for us by the Spirit much as Hell, Purgatory and Paradise were searched for Dante by Virgil and Beatrice. That is, we are taken into abysses, and round the spiral ledges of a mountain, and into the circles of Heaven. No poet, not even Dante, could describe the experience. The Bible is the best record we have ; there are passages in the Psalms and the prophets, and still more in the epistles and apocalypse, and most of all in the limpid language of the Gospels, in which we seem to get such glimpses of the depths, that we are tempted to think that an inventory might be made and a guide-book might be written. But what the Bible has not done, the subsequent generations are not likely to do. The searching of the depths will remain in this world, and may even to all eternity remain, an incompleated experience of breathless interest and untiring pursuit. If in this life consciousness never succeeds in exploring itself, *i.e.*, if there is a certain infinite

in every personality which baffles the energy of the human spirit, it is reasonable to suppose that the self-consciousness of God cannot even in an Eternity of progressive evolution be passed through the finite consciousness of a creature.

We shall not venture therefore now to do more than enumerate a few of these unfathomable Depths of God, and even in our fullest investigations later we shall not flatter ourselves that we have fathomed them. The Spirit searches, and reveals to us; but the Spirit continues ever searching and revealing. There is, to begin with, the depth of the Divine nature, which is revealed by the incarnation of the Eternal Son, and the deep beyond the deep which is revealed by His suffering on the cross for us men and for our redemption. In referring to this abyss of Divinity, an apostle says: "Which things angels desire to look into." Can it mean that the incarnation and the cross were a revelation even to the blessed spirits around the throne? It probably does. For it is more than probable that the depth of God unveiled in the life and death of Christ, is of such a kind that men for the most part are hardly sufficiently developed to understand it. A pious fancy imagines the crossbill twisting its beak with an attempt to pull out the nails of the cross. But the birds of the air would fly over it, and the spring flies would buzz and crawl about the dying Saviour and remark nothing exceptional. Many men who

saw it, many who still contemplate it, are equally unreceptive. They have not enough spiritual insight to see anything more than the death of a man, a good man, the best of men, a miscarriage of justice, a human tragedy.

But as the Spirit begins to search and to illuminate, there appears here a wonder which may engage the curiosity of angels, a wonder which has entranced the devout minds of these nineteen centuries, and has by its enlarging influence made these minds the greatest power of their time. For, guided by the Spirit, we discover that the incarnation implies the eternal being of God as Love, a relation between Father and Son, which was before the world began and will be when the world has ended. That God in His very nature, apart from any creation, is a passion of mutual love, paternal love, the most generous love we can conceive, and filial love, the most reverent love we can show, this opens a depth into the Divine nature which we may well wish to explore.

But here is something more than this. The cross implies that the Love which is God, is the love which goes out beyond, creating and redeeming; a love which makes men in His image, a love which will save them even by suffering and death. To this Depth of Love we must return. Surely we should return to it again and again. What instance of human love and sacrifice are comparable to this?

When the Spirit has brought us to the brink of this abyss, and shown us the gleaming distances, the iridescent glories, of this one profound illimitable fact, we might well be left there to gaze and adore for ever.

Is there any more that our frail human hearts can wish to know than the certainty that God is in His nature love, and that His nature goes out in love, the love of suffering and sacrifice, to save us?

This is a great deep, but there are other deeps beyond. In Rom. xi. 33, Paul breaks into an exclamation as the great deeps become for a moment clear to him: "O the depth of wealth and wisdom and knowledge of God!"

Are these not three distinct abysses which the Spirit searches and reveals? Wealth is an idea pitifully defiled by ignoble use. But there is a conception of the wealth of God, which might shame us into the final destruction of Mammon. It needs investigation. Then there is a depth of wisdom, which, searched by the Spirit, might set us on the discovery of a right philosophy, or might at least remind us of the folly, the intrinsic folly, involved in a philosophy without God. And there is a depth of knowledge, the knowledge of God, which might nerve our science to efforts more consistent and more fruitful. Led by the Spirit into that Divine knowledge we might escape the baffling inconclusiveness of scientific conclusions that tell us every-

thing about the universe except what it exists for, and whence it sprung, everything about human affairs, except the goal which makes them intelligible, and everything about man except the things which distinctively make him man.

Into these depths of wealth and wisdom and knowledge, we desire to look. And the Spirit of God within us can conduct us into these circles and unfolding heavenly roses (as Dante would say) of the Divine Being.

Other depths, not mentioned in Scripture as such, reveal themselves to the search of the Spirit.

And now, to conclude, it is by this initiation into the depths of the infinite God, and surely by this alone, that we can escape the terror of the infinite universe. This world is a wilderness to a godless spirit, but what is it compared with the worlds on worlds, the inconceivable spaces which are represented by the stars at night? The boldest spirit may quail while he regards that untraversed universe as a thing without. Where will he be, when the breath goes out of him, where among the thousand million of worlds? This awful desert of the universe can be turned into a home only by an intimacy with God who fills it. The Without of things is appalling; we recover our nerve when we find the Within, and know that we are within it.

A brave little boy of four the other day laughed at people being afraid in the dark, as he entered

a room and searched behind the curtains to find the explanation of a suspicious sound. "Who's afraid of the dark," he said, "there's nothing but God in the dark." That is the height of human discovery, and it is made when the Spirit of God searches within us the depths of God and makes us familiar with them.

Will my tiny spark of being wholly vanish in your deeps and heights?
 Must my day be dark by reason, O ye Heavens, of your boundless nights,
 Rush of suns, and roll of systems, and your fiery clash of meteorites?

That is the anxious question of the human soul when the universe is all a Without. But God's answer comes by His Spirit within :

"Spirit, nearing yon dark portal at the limit of thy human state,
 Fear not thou the hidden purpose of that Power which alone is great,
 Nor the myriad world, His shadow, nor the silent opener of the Gate."

It is a sublime purpose of God, having made us, finite and fragile creatures, in His image, units and atoms in an illimitable world, to make us at home in His vast creation, where He is absolutely at home, by communicating to us His Spirit and initiating us into His Self-Consciousness.

More wonderful still is the way by which He has done it, the homely approach to us in His Son, as

the man of Nazareth, and the gift of His Spirit by faith in Him.

One by one, nation by nation, we poor creatures of the dust, defiled in the grime and mire of sin, arise, see that the light is come ; Christ shines upon us, and the Spirit enters into us ; and we begin to live the life of the self-knowledge of God.

Is it credible that any man should reject this opportunity ; and should pass his days in searching the depths of Satan (Rev. ii. 24) rather than the depths of God ? Or is it even credible that a man should immerse himself in the depths of wealth and wisdom and knowledge of this world, so that, at the opening of the gate, he passes out into a boundless and homeless universe, without God, who alone gives to it the aspect of a home ?

THE MUTUAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE
FATHER AND THE SON

All things are delivered unto me of my Father : and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father ; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.—*Matt.* xi. 27.

No man hath seen God at any time ; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.—*John* i. 18.

III

THE MUTUAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE FATHER AND THE SON

THAT "Depth of God" into which a glimpse is afforded by the Incarnation and the Cross is too frequently obscured and even entirely lost to view by the mists of modern doubt. We are bent on explaining away the supernatural, or at any rate the divine, in Jesus Christ. Never since the beginning was there a greater readiness to appreciate the points of human character in Him; there is even a general consensus that as a man he represents the ideal of what humanity is meant to be. But with this more genial appreciation of the human character has come a more persistent denial of the divine. Whatever in the Gospels suggests the divine in Him we set aside, taking the shifty ground that these elements are due to legend, to the growth of a myth, to the insecurity of MSS., even to a certain element of delusion in Christ Himself, or to anything rather than the fact that they are there because He was the Son of God. It cannot be said that this elimination of

the Lord's Divinity has brought peace or joy; it has brought what the modern world seems to value more, clearness of ideas, and a deliberate withdrawal from the mystical and the transcendental aspect of life; but the clearness of ideas, the Positivism of the position, does not bring peace or joy, because it destroys revelation, and shuts us up again in the prison of the Seen. That is the inevitable result of insisting that our religion shall be kept within the confines of scientific exactness, and of the logical understanding; it ceases really to be a religion. It is consoling for the moment to depend solely on science and reason; but science and reason do not contain within themselves the elements of religion; and presently the starved soul begins to cry out again for the wonder, the mystery, the depth, the unfathomable depth, of God. The dissatisfaction, then, of the modern mind in its sceptical or non-religious attitude is not difficult to explain. We break the telescope, and then we murmur that we cannot penetrate the heavens. We stigmatise the letter of our Father as a forgery, or discredit it on the ground of interpolations, and then we complain that we have not heard from Him.

I am no advocate for a blind faith. If science or reason can disprove revelation, I freely surrender it, and stand, though with a hungry heart, on the solid ground which is indisputable. But I would main-

tain that in judging of a revelation, the only course is to state the facts of the revelation in their entirety, to state them, if you will at first, only *ex hypothesi*, but to state them without diminution or compromise. Let us know exactly what is revealed or said to be revealed. Let us have the whole body of truth, or supposed truth, before us. Let us examine what it implies, what legitimate deductions may be drawn from it, how it would work. Perhaps it may appear that the revelation, in its undiminished glory, carries its own conviction with it. Revelation is, by the nature of the case, a truth which carries us beyond our ordinary means of knowledge. It cannot be reasonable to refuse the glimpse which it affords unto the unknown, because the unknown cannot be, and is not, otherwise known.

We are not now dealing with a truth of science; the truth we are dealing with lies beyond the limits of science; if we are confined to science we shall never reach it. We are not dealing with a truth of reason; for reason cannot explore this transcendental region. But we are dealing with a truth, which science is as powerless to disprove as she is to prove; with a truth which reason, if she cannot discover, may easily recognise.

This then is our course. First we will steadily contemplate that depth of the Divine Nature which is revealed, if we take Christ exactly as He was presented to the first believers, exactly as He

appears in His own self-consciousness, as that is portrayed in the Gospels. Second, we will infer from this revelation the results, whether of comfort or of redemption. And finally, when we have allowed this Divine truth, so far beyond our natural ken, to unfold itself before our eyes; and when we have accustomed ourselves to its immensity and significance; we may estimate its probability. For the truth of a revelation cannot be established, either by facts in the mundane order, or by trains of reasoning, but only by its own light.

And is not this in conformity with our procedure in other and lower spheres? Every great and original artist has to make the atmosphere in which he can be appreciated. The canons based on previous experience are always at fault. The new truth, or the new beauty, stands for a good while in the world crucified; slowly the cross is canonised. To rightly estimate Beethoven, it is useless to cite his predecessors and to test him by them; your only method is to hear his music, and to grow into the appreciation of it by familiarity. Or a writer like George Meredith is for a time unintelligible and neglected: by a gradual process of victory he forms a mind here and there which understands him, and the atmosphere which at last makes him intelligible to all has really been made by him.

If this applies to original work in Art, and to the incursions into the unexplored domains of truth

which lie within reach of the human mind, it cannot be unreasonable to maintain that revelation must be its own interpreter. We waste our time in showing that its truths are supported by other evidences. Our true method is to exhibit the revelation in its fulness, and to leave it to create the atmosphere in which it can convince men of its truth.

1. To begin with, then, what is involved in this exclamation of Jesus to God, in Matt. xi. 25-27, Luke x. 21, 22, followed by the exclamation to men, "Come unto me," Matt. xi. 28, or by the comment "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see"? Sometimes it is loosely said that the divinity of Jesus is established only by the later gospel of St John, and the attempt is made to cast discredit upon it because the earlier sources do not give such clear and detailed exposition of it. But this one passage of the Synoptics goes as far as the fourth gospel goes, and is even more explicit. The mutual knowledge of the Father and the Son is of such a kind that no creature can meddle with it. If any man comes to know the Father it is only by the will of the Son who makes the revelation.

It is impossible that Jesus should express Himself more unequivocally. And the meaning of what He says immediately becomes plain if we venture to conceive what our feeling would be if any *man* made such a claim. If the best and greatest man that ever lived had maintained that he had an

exclusive knowledge of the Father, and that no man could know the Father except by him, he would have exposed himself to the just censure of the world. If Jesus was only a man, though the purest and the wisest of men, we cannot but approve the action of the Jewish authorities, who prosecuted and put Him to death for making Himself equal with God. If a man were to make any such claim to-day we should not put him to death, but we should assuredly watch him with suspicion as a religious maniac. That is the dilemma in which Jesus has always placed us by His language: the alternative is not between His being divine or human, between His being God or the ideal man; but rather between His being Divine or less than human, between His being God, or a monomaniac, suffering from a pitiable hallucination. If that dilemma is rightly stated, no sane person can hesitate between the alternatives. However loth the sceptical world is to acknowledge the divinity of Christ, it is still more unable and unwilling to admit that He was not *compos mentis*.

But this serene joy of Jesus in expressing His own self-consciousness carries conviction with it. He knew well what He was saying; it all comes with ready spontaneity. He had that personal knowledge of the Father, and was aware that the Father had the same intimate knowledge of Him. It was not a knowledge which He had acquired in

this life by a certain course of moral and spiritual discipline, a knowledge, therefore, to which others might attain. It was a knowledge which He had brought with Him into the world, a knowledge, therefore, which no human being could obtain except through Him. It was a unique relation between Him and the Father; as Father and Son they were so related that no human being could lay claim to share the intimacy. Let us grant that the fourth gospel gives an interpretation of this statement. Yet is it not the only interpretation which does justice to it? "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John i. 18).

Here we are face to face with a fact, which, revealed in time, yet lies in eternity. God is Father and Son. The Divine Being is a relation between Father and Son. The Son did not begin to be, but always was. Before all worlds, before any sentient creature was made, God in His absolute self-completeness was Father and Son. Observe that philosophy, that is, any consistent effort of human thought to organise and relate existence, is bound to conceive God essentially in this way. Philo, the Alexandrine Jew, with the Bible and Greek thought before him, apart from any revelation, was driven to the supposition of the Logos existent in God serving as the medium of creation. And no thinker can steadily conceive God existing from all eternity,

without supposing that in His own being are to be found relations, which give to Him self-sufficiency. A philosophy which finds God only for the first time realised in His creation, has ceased to be a philosophy of God, and has become only a philosophy of the Creation. But what thought is necessitated to speculatively posit, the Gospel and the Gospel alone reveals as a fact. With an unfaltering decision the Gospel begins with the philosophical assurance that the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God. But it proceeds with the same lucid certainty, to declare in the light of history, that the Logos was made flesh, and the man Jesus, who appeared in a finite life, and died at the hands of men, for us and for our salvation, was the Logos. And from His own lips it took the interpretation that the relation between the eternal God and the eternal Logos, was best expressed by the terms Father and Son. Jesus was the Son in the bosom of the Father.

It is a curious instance of the indolence of human thought that any thinker should ever declare this doctrine inconsistent with reason. For no thinker can steadily and unflinchingly insist on the idea of God, and seek to form a rational conception of what God is in Himself, without demanding the supposition which here in the Gospel is confirmed. In the

Dark backward and abysm of Time,

if thought is to grasp the conception of a Being who could be the author of a rational and a moral universe, one is bound to see in that Being intrinsic moral relations, and some process of thought which is more than self-contemplation, or an abstract law of Identity ; that is to say, one is bound to see in the Unity of God *more than one*, a subject and an object, and a unity of subject and object, a movement from subject to object, a reciprocal movement to which such terms as obligation, appreciation, love, can be applied. So far from the idea of a Trinity being irrational, we may say that reason demands it ; but reason did not venture to assume it until the historical revelation declared it.

2. But from this revealed truth we may trace some of the results—

First, there are the results Godward. The main result Godwards is that God is now asserted to be Love intrinsically, and a rational meaning is given to that truth. That God first was Love when He created beings to be the objects of His love is a wholly unsatisfying theological conception. In the human and temporal sphere love may be made or evolved ; indeed love in its highest and most refined sense is but slowly developed, with the development of man, from certain primal altruistic instincts of the animal nature. But to maintain that God's nature became love only as the result of a process in time, is really to deny God altogether. A God

that is evolved does not deserve the name of God at all. On the other hand, as we have already seen, a God as an isolated unit, existing in eternity before creation, could not be love, because there would be no object of His love except Himself; and self-love is not so much love as the negation of it. We seek in vain, therefore, and the world sought in vain, for any intelligible notion of God as intrinsic Love, until the incarnation of the Son permitted us to see that relation which existed before all time. Jesus went back in thought to the glory which He had with the Father before the world began. In the essential being of God, quite apart from such created beings as we surmise from our knowledge of ourselves, there was the reciprocity of Love. Not only does Jesus reveal this important fact, but He sheds the clearest light upon it which our minds are capable of receiving by selecting the familiar human analogy of Father and Son. It is, as we can easily perceive, only an analogy; the best illustration within reach. The analogy breaks down if we dwell on the fact that a Father begets a son; or if we press the subordination which our scheme of morals demands of the son begotten. But to the eager question of man, What is God? Jesus has this answer: God, eternal, invisible, dwelling in unapproachable light, is best conceived when you see a perfect earthly relation between a father and a son. Note the strong instinctive tie which circum-

stances cannot break. Note the settled, undeviating relationship, impregnable to criticism. There is on the father's part an anxious, self-forgetful, untiring care; he lives in his son, appropriates his achievements and victories, shares his failures and defeats; finds a joy in his joy which he could not find in his own. There is on the son's part a profound admiration and reverence; he would resent the idea of being better than his father. And yet there is an affection, a familiarity, which, as the son grows to manhood, becomes a respectful equality. The father's self-obliterating devotion finds a devotion equally self-denying in the son. It must be admitted that this relation, where it attains to any perfection, is the purest and most elevating of human ties. And when we are justified by the revelation of Christ in carrying it up into the region of the infinite and eternal, and finding in it an interpretation of the inner being of God, we certainly obtain a conception of what is meant by God being love which no abstraction of philosophy and no bare inference from human experience could have given us.

Second, there are the results manward. For who is this that ventures to say "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"? If it were a man, one of ourselves, though he were the noblest and tenderest of men, that gave an invitation so general and so personal, there would surely be some exaggeration in it, which would rob it

of meaning. There would be a false emphasis on the Me, and the I.¹ When Ugo Bassi went to Sicily to tend the cholera-stricken people, he could call from the prow of the ship as he entered the harbour: "My children, I come to suffer with you, to die with you." That was human; that was the height to which human resolution can go. But "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." That transcends human power, and becomes on a man's lips a boast, a repulsive egotism. For the weary and heavy-laden are not a few, but countless millions, aching, saddened hearts, tortured bodies, uneasy consciences, how are they to get at that man of Nazareth? How can He give them rest? Does He mean simply that he can communicate a certain truth about God? But what a disproportionate mode of speech! Come unto *Me*, and *I* will give! Does He mean that His example, His human example, is the secret of rest for all the world? But what a stupendous self-estimate! Is this to be meek and lowly of heart? A man like ourselves claims the office of universal comforter and rest of our tired and worn humanity.

But in the light of the truth which the preceding words have declared, all this is made clear. If He is the Eternal Son of God, that is, essentially God

¹ Dr Martineau, in his *Seat of Authority in Religion* (pp. 577-585), actually does object to the words *Come unto me*, as involving a self-eulogy inconsistent with the lowly character of Jesus.

Himself, who thus addresses His forlorn creatures, the language in its grand simplicity and universality is natural and inevitable. The Son of God made flesh, can and must invite all flesh to Himself. Speaking in time, and under the limitations of His transitory human life, He yet was speaking out of eternity, and from that spiritual sphere to which these limitations do not apply. As the mouthpiece of God, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, He could bid men of all climes and of all times to come unto Him, and He could make a divine offer of rest. And the general invitation illumines the expression, "he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him." To whom does He will to reveal Him? To all the weary and heavy-laden who will come unto Him.

And if this central and significant invitation only becomes intelligible in view of the revealed truth of the person of Jesus, the crowning act of His human life, the death on the cross, acquires all its value from the same revealed truth. For consider. Jesus, a beautiful human nature, cherishing visionary notions, imagining a unique relation between himself and the unseen God, is brought by the laws of His country to a felon's death. It is an affecting spectacle. It may stir our sympathy, our pity; but it can hardly be the means of our redemption. It is impossible to attach a universal significance to a single human death, however tragical or intrinsically

unmerited. Seeing it is the common lot, and all must die, no man's death can deviate very far in time or circumstance from the appointed doom. This death of Jesus might rank with that of Socrates who died for his searching treatment of ethics, or with that of Damien who laid down his life in ministering to the lepers. No ingenuity could elicit from the crucifixion more than the familiar lessons of innocent suffering and human martyrdom.

But recognise that the sufferer on the cross is the Son in the bosom of the Father, that is to say an essential factor of the Divine Being, and therefore to all intents and purposes God Himself, and nothing can prevent that death from having a universal significance. Of course it is not possible for God to die; but there God has subjected Himself to human hands, to human sin, so that, as far as the intention of men went, He died at their instance. And as that death was made possible by God assuming human flesh and blood, the death of the Divine Man became essentially the offering of devotion and obedience to God, made by that very humanity which in its ignorance and sin put Him to death. That such a death should be a propitiation for the sins of the world; that in it was effected a reconciliation between God and man, is not only in itself conceivable; anything short of this would be inconceivable. Great causes must produce like effects. For the Eternal Son of God to die on a cross,

and in dying to forgive and to proclaim with a loud voice, It is finished! must have a meaning which affects the whole world, and even the universe.

Thus in the light of the revealed truth which is shining before us, the cross is turned from a meaningless tragedy, a subject for pity and fear, into the propitiation for the sins of the world, a subject for praise and rejoicing.

3. But, I ask, as the vast revelation unfolds itself to our contemplation, and as its factors and consequences become clear, does it not evidently carry its own proof with it? How could proof of such a fact come from the field of science, or from the field of history, or from the field of human experience? It is, it must be, a fact of sheer revelation. One of the depths of God is laid bare to our gaze.

We cannot criticise or disprove the astounding facts of stellar astronomy by imposing the limitations of terrestrial measurements; it is no argument against the abysses of the heavens that the only distances or depths of which we have actual experience are comprised within a few thousand miles or a few thousand yards. We cannot apply to ultimate Being the empirical tests which are all we want in dealing with the succession of events in time, with experience as it is limited to life on earth, and history as it subjects itself to the verification of documents and inscriptions.

How much less can we criticise and disprove a truth of revelation by reference to the petty standards and wavering uniformities of our science or our experience! A truth of revelation must be accepted on its own evidence or not at all. If it does not bring with it light enough to illumine itself it must remain in darkness. If God is not His own interpreter He must remain uninterpreted.

But surely this truth verifies itself by the light it sheds. Out of God proceeds the Logos, who was God and is with God. Clothed in our humanity the Logos lives and dies as a man, and returns to the bosom of the Father whence He proceeded. As you gaze into that depth of light, you become enlightened; as you touch that centre of life, your life assumes a new meaning; as you get into the currents of love that course through the Godhead, you begin to love.

Light and Life and Love are their own evidence; they are the evidence of their source; they carry the name of God upon their brows.

The Spirit alone searches this depth; but when the Spirit is within us and conducts us in that intimate search, certainly He "beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." The proof that this is God, very God of very God, emerges in the experience that we are in God, our life is hid with Christ in Him.

THE DEPTH OF GOD'S WEALTH

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out !—*Rom.* xi. 33.

IV

THE DEPTH OF GOD'S WEALTH

I MAY be excused for adopting the reading of the margin, not only because it leads us into a very important truth, but because, looking at the Greek of the original, I cannot bring my eyes to take the words in any other connection. There are no articles in this sentence. If you render it word for word, it runs: "O depth of wealth and wisdom and knowledge of God!" On that significant word *wealth* I pause; and there opens before me the wonderful vision of the Wealth of God.

It is a familiar thought of the Old Testament that it is not possible to give anything to God, because everything is already His. "The silver is mine and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts" (Hag. ii. 8). "Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills" (Ps. l. 10), is urged as a depreciation of the mere offerings of the altar.

But in the text the idea of wealth takes a wider range; it includes all the possessions of God, all the wealth as opposed to the illth, to use Mr Ruskin's

phrase, the resources which furnish out the omnipotence of God.

And while the contemplation of human wealth is apt to provoke envy, covetousness and the evils into which the love of money leads, it is possible that the contemplation of the divine wealth may enlarge our minds and liberate us from all the cramping and paralysing effects of greed.

At the outset, then, we should do well to steadily contemplate the whole sum of terrestrial resources which we denominate wealth, and the similar resources in other planets, and in the whole celestial system, as the property of God. "Of Him, and through Him, and unto Him are all things."

As the wealth of the universe is beyond our computation, it may suffice to confine our thoughts to the wealth of the earth, remembering only that this is but a single coin in the accumulated millions of God.

Whether we look at the solar heat as the source of growth and produce on the earth's surface, of the living creatures, of the universal wealth in the earth's bowels, or at the human labour which is the secondary source of human wealth, it is evident that all is God's indisputable possession. The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, the world and all who dwell therein. The silver and the gold, which are the conventional medium of exchange are all His; but the commodities which they represent, the

crops, the beasts, the manufactures, the buildings, soil itself, are His also. To dispute His claims would be absurd. To put in a plea for creatorship or ultimate ownership, as against Him, is a folly that no man would even contemplate. Riches takes to itself wings and is gone: the busy and successful worker is paralysed, and he can get no more. A prick, a touch, a fall, a poison, and life is at an end; then whose are all these acquired things?

Nothing has a more salutary and sobering effect than to bring forcibly before the mind this universal ownership of God; to pass through the possessions of the world and to mark on each thing in succession the owner's name. The continents are His; the strength of the hills is His. The sea is His, and He made it. The unplumbed depths of the sea and their teeming life are His. The trees, the foliage, the flowers, the eternal snows which clothe the hills are all His. These countries portioned out to the varied states and communities of mankind are His; He allotted to each its boundaries. The territories which pass as the possession of certain kings or governments are all His. China is His, so is British India. The waste Soudan and the Congo valley are His, so is South Africa. Who owns the British Islands? God. Who the United States? The same.

These extensive properties with immemorial titles are all His. It is an accident that they bear certain

familiar and traditional names. He never parted with them. The land on which London stands is God's land. He is the ground landlord, and every building upon it falls to Him at the termination of the lease or before. The river is His and the sea into which it flows. The piled millions in the banks are all His: He could at any moment reclaim the cheque books which seem to give to accidental owners the temporary control. The engines, the looms, the factories, the warehouses, the Royal Exchange, the Stock Exchange, are all His; and the shops, the places of business, down to the stock of the penny-merchant on the kerb. The churches are His; so are the theatres, the public buildings, the Houses of Parliament, and the palaces of the King.

The food of to-day, the clothes I stand in, my savings, my spendings, they are all His. When I say, Give me day by day my daily bread, I acknowledge the ownership by recognising that it is a gift.

"All souls are mine," He says. So are all bodies. The soul of the saint there praying is His, His temple. So is the soul of the sinner there cursing and indulging its passions, a desecrated temple. The body of this innocent little child in his mother's arms is His; so is the body of yonder debauchee, blotched, bloated, unclean, His damaged property.

The organs and the instruments of music are His, and the voices of men and women; that orchestra jingling lascivious music, and the voice screaming a lewd song, as well as the voices acclaiming it with base laughter, are all His.

The minds at work, the newspaper articles, the books, the libraries, the accumulations at the scientific societies, are all His.

The ships crossing the sea, the trains rushing through the land, and under the land, as well as the shipowners and the railway companies, are all His. Though the world and its contents is but a grain of His wealth, it is certain that everything here, without exception, belongs to Him. He has renounced ownership in nothing.

1. Now as this Depth of God begins to be revealed to us, does it not invest with a certain absurdity our strident proprietary claims? The greater part of men seem to be entirely occupied in obtaining what can by no possibility belong to them; clutching at goods which prove to be inalienably another's, and involving themselves in the terrible responsibility of using what is not theirs. There for example was Nero, encouraged by his flatterers to suppose that He was Dominus, or owner of the Roman world, sending men and women, as his property, to death by a word, using the riches of an Empire for his extravagant debaucheries. But what was the result? He drowned

himself in perdition, and stands branded in the eyes of the world as the steward of God who illused his property and his servants, and must for all, and for ever, give account.

Here to-day is a millionaire. What an extraordinary phenomenon this is, a man heaping to himself riches, and knowing not who shall gather it, but assuredly without any possession, or possibility of possession, in all that he gains. That he has thus clutched a disproportionate share of the current wealth of the world simply involves him in overwhelming responsibility to the real owner. How to use it, is a question that might break the strongest. It is not so much that these possessions are ephemeral; it is that they are not real possessions at all. They belong to Another. "What's Mine's Mine," is the title of a noble book of George Macdonald's. The gist of the book is to show that the apparent truism is indeed a fallacy. The truth is exactly the opposite: what's mine is *not* mine, it is God's. Surely there is no more questionable object in the world than a landed proprietor who has forgotten this. He has a vast estate; he takes it for his own. He determines to use it for sport; he therefore dismisses the people from their cottages, the labourers from the soil, the peasantry from the country-side. The few that remain are turned into gillies and caddies, keepers, and poachers, servants, and hangers-on.

The estate is crowded by visitors in the summer, deserted and idle in the winter. The thought that the estate was God's, and that the human beings were set there by Him to till the soil and to grow hardy in that wholesome occupation, the sinews of their country, the health and recuperation of the wasting towns, had not occurred to this proprietor. And yet he never was the proprietor at all; God was, and he has to carry into the owner's Courts the whole course of his use or abuse of His property.

I ask, what social abuse, what suffering of the poor and helpless, what degrading over-pressure on the space of the towns, what lamentable deterioration of the physique and the morale of the people, is there which cannot be traced to this unpardonable mistake; men have forgotten that their property is not their own.

We are eager for property; we wilfully forget that property is stewardship and responsibility; and in heaping up property we heap up condemnation to ourselves.

It thus begins to appear that what the New Testament calls *Philarguria* (Luke xvi. 14), the love of money, or covetousness, is not, as it might first seem, so much a sin against our fellowmen, but rather a sin against God, an appropriation of wealth which is His for purposes which He does not allow.

2. Let us state this truth now emerging into sight a little more carefully. That money is a root of all kinds of evil, and may be designated under a malign personification as Mammon; that covetousness is idolatry; that they who will be rich "fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts such as drown men in destruction and perdition," these are familiar scriptural statements. But the inner meaning of them is not always appreciated, and consequently they are apt to be regarded as hyperbolic, a strong way of stating the danger which certainly attaches to money-making, the almost demoniac power which money seems to exercise over the incautious spirit of man. But in view of the "depth of the wealth of God," these statements are seen to rest upon a rational foundation. They are as exact statements on the subject of wealth as are to be found in Adam Smith or Professor Marshall. The malignant effect of money and the desire of money is immediately explained when it is recognised that all wealth is God's property. For any man to *own* anything without reference to God, the real Owner, involves a spiritual offence, which may easily develop into a spiritual disease; and the disease may soon be mortal.

The effect may be observed any day and every day: we are, under the guidance of the Spirit,

laying our hand on the cause. The effect of the love of money is seen in degradation, bondage, misery, crime, spiritual death.

One of the most famous of American millionaires, the late Mr Armour, took the world into his confidence, and freely exhibited his chains. Up to the end, he was bound like a slave to his business, and worked as hard as any of his clerks. Why did he subject himself to this bondage, he was asked. "Because," he replied, "I have no other interest in life but my business. I do not want any more money; what I do love is the getting of it, the making it. All the years of my life I have put into my work, and now it is my life and I cannot give it up. What other interest can you suggest to me? I do not read; I do not take part in politics. What can I do?" The tragedy of the situation may not be apparent to everyone. But it becomes clear when the spiritual realities are taken into account. "It came to pass the rich man died." Conceive the situation of an immortal spirit that has no other interest in this God-made universe than the making of millions by the slaughter and curing of pigs! Suppose in the spiritual world there is no scope for such an occupation, suppose the making of money has not even any meaning there; you find a spirit launched into the infinite with an insatiable and intolerable craving established in its centre, for

which there is no possible alleviation. "In hell he lifted up his eyes being in torment."

Intrinsically the results of money-loving, miserliness, fraud, crime, spiritual death, are not more pitiable than this reputable atrophy of the spirit in a famous millionaire. They strike the imagination more powerfully, that is all. About the same time that Mr Armour died an unfortunate man, named Parker, shot a fellow-traveller in a railway carriage, and attempted the life of a lady in the same compartment. It appeared that the murder was simply the result of a vague itch to get money. He seemed unable to account for his action: he had no animosity to his victims whom he had never seen before. He did not even know that they had money about them. But on the bare chance of rifling their pockets, he killed one fellow creature, and shot at another. And then, in a letter from his cell to his family, he wrote, "Never crave for money. It is that which has been the ruination of my life. I have gone through hundreds of pounds." Unhappily, the instances of the effects of money-loving could be multiplied indefinitely; every day, every newspaper, supplies a new sheaf of them. We need not dwell on a theme so familiar, but we are anxious to lay our hand on the cause. It is here. All wealth is God's: to use it without reference to Him is an intrinsic dishonesty. Proudhon, the Socialist, declared,

“La propriété c’est le vol,” all private ownership is theft. He meant only that property invades the rights of the community. But his words go far deeper than his thoughts. All property is theft, not from man, but from God. My fellow-man has no ground of complaint that I hold or seem to hold certain possessions, as against him. Is not he doing the same; would not he gladly appropriate even my possessions? But my God has an absolute ground of complaint if I venture to hold anything, as against Him, for it is all His. If I use it for purposes which are not His, it becomes misappropriation, spiritually, theft. The disease eats into my soul; and from that diseased soul every error, and every crime, may easily proceed.

Man, who gave thee thy wealth? God, and it is not a gift, but a loan, an entrusted talent, for thee to occupy till He comes to claim it. It follows therefore that health, order, happiness, can never come to a society or to the world, until men interpret the rights of Property entirely in the light of “the depth of the wealth of God.” When His proprietorship is scrupulously and constantly recognised, the desire of wealth will always be moderated by a sense of its responsibility, and the possession of wealth will always be treated as a stewardship for the purposes of God. All denunciations of greed, avarice, covetousness, and the cruelty and disorder

which result from these passions, fall short of the mark, which do not spring from the truth, so indisputable when the Spirit once illumines this abyss of God, that no man may claim even a penny, or a rag, nay, no man may claim the material which makes his organism, or the substance which constitutes his personality, except in so far as he acknowledges the ultimate and absolute proprietorship of God. All human life is theft, all human activity is sacrilege, unless and until possession is renounced and referred only to the true Possessor. "O the depth of the wealth of God!" "O the depth of the poverty of man!" "O the shame of the theft when this miserable pauper, man, pilfers and misuses the property of God!"

Just after the death of Queen Victoria some ladies had flung violets before her statue in Leeds; a very poor woman picked up the violets and was on the point of carrying them away, when a constable pointed out to her that they were lying on the statue of the Queen. With consternation she replaced them saying, "If I had noticed they were offered to *her*, I would not have touched them for a thousand pounds."

All the wealth of the world is flung at the feet of God. It is at our peril that we touch a grain of it. When the true Owner appears, we handle it all in a new spirit, possess it only with profound humility, and use it only as the Owner directs.

3. But there is also a mystery of love in this depth of the Divine wealth. Christ always laid stress on the thought that we should not be of anxious mind about material things. The Heavenly Father will clothe and feed His children. His treasury cannot be exhausted; there is always bread in His store; His wardrobe is filled with appropriate dress for all. Even when death parts the soul from its material surroundings, the house in the heavens is ready, the new garment is waiting, the food of the spirit is like the fatted calf in the parable, stored up against the return of the wanderer to his home.

What a lamentable illusion is that which custom, the unbelief of the world, and personal sin, have thrown around our eyes! A great part even of Christian people are constantly worried about ways and means, and have no faith in the depth of the wealth of God. Solid property in houses and lands, or a balance at the bank, or gold in the hand, gives them a sense of security; but they have no confidence in the promise of God that the bread shall be given and the water shall be sure, nor in the assurance of Christ that if they seek first the Kingdom of God, all these things shall be added to them. "Ah," cries the troubled soul, "I do not question that all wealth is God's, nor that He intends His children to be duly supplied; but the greed of man disturbs the purposes of God, and I see no way in which the

necessary provision can be made for my needs." How necessary it is for us to be initiated by the Spirit into the being of God, that we may search His storehouses, and compute His wealth! Anxious and worried soul, will you not devote yourself to your true task, and receive the Spirit to illumine and to guide you? For, behold how utterly misplaced is your anxiety, how essentially Godless is your worry! You can not deny that the teeming earth produces bread enough and to spare; the flocks and herds are not limited, and the wool is there for your clothing; there is no want of space or material for your dwelling; does this high-domed and blossoming world seem to you over-crowded? Is there even a sign, except in Godless, greed-ridden cities, that there is any pressure on its capacity? What nightmare is this which possesses you, of a desert in which is no bread, a nakedness for which there is no clothing, a man who cannot find a home? May I tell you where the delusion lies? You have averted your eyes from God: you have turned to men in whom is no help, to the possessors, who are not owners. But look you to Him and enquire into the depth of His wealth. Consider also how He controls its distribution. Looking to men you see only suspicion, the cold shoulder, the greed of the have-nots, the covetousness of the haves. But looking to Him can you see anything of this kind? Is He greedy? Is He un-

willing to give? Is He unable to turn the streams in your direction? No. He waits only for your trust. If you would only depend wholly on Him, and show your dependence by obedience, if you would seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, He would at once visit you, supply your wants, open the way before you, feed, clothe, and shelter you. Nay, even now His stewards hold His goods in their hands, wondering whither He would send them. Even now the windows of heaven are as good as open; the manna rains down on the desert; the water gushes from the rock; the house not made with hands awaits its occupants.

O ye of little faith, wherefore will ye doubt? Look into the depth of the wealth of God, and have faith in Him. Wait patiently for Him, and He shall give you your heart's desire.

THE DEPTHS OF GOD'S WISDOM

“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out.”—*Rom.* xi. 33.

V

THE DEPTH OF GOD'S WISDOM

WISDOM has a two-fold meaning, speculative and practical. On the one hand it stands for the power of thought to understand, explain and formulate the truth of things human and divine, or, to use the most familiar term, for philosophy. On the other hand it stands for that discernment of men and that understanding of life, which is more commonly described as prudence or judgment.

Wisdom in the speculative sense is concerned with ultimate truth, with the final cause of things, with ends. Wisdom in the practical sense is concerned with truth of conduct, with the management of affairs, with the means for achieving ends. In speaking of the Wisdom of God both these related meanings must constantly be borne in mind.

Another preliminary remark may be made. As often as not in the New Testament wisdom is spoken of in terms of depreciation. "All the wisdom of the Egyptians" (Acts vii. 22) is in tacit contrast to the divine revelation which afterwards came to Moses. Paul in the earlier chapters of

1 Cor., writing to persons who highly esteemed Greek wisdom, is particular to show that his preaching was "not in wisdom of words." The "wisdom of the wise," he says, is brought to naught. Where is the wise? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? The world through its wisdom knew not God. The Greek pursuit of wisdom was futile. The wisdom of the world (1 Cor. iii. 19) and the wisdom of men (1 Cor. ii. 5) is not only defective; it is often also misleading; it is "fleshly wisdom" (2 Cor. i. 12); it may even be "earthly, sensual, devilish" (Jas. iii. 15). When therefore Wisdom is praised, and is said to be justified of her children (Mat. xi. 19, Luke vii. 35), it is very definitely connected, or even identified, with God. The "variegated (that is the force of the Greek *πολυποίκιλος*, rendered manifold in R.V.) wisdom of God" (Eph. iii. 10), Christ as the Wisdom of God (1 Cor. i. 24), the heavenly wisdom (Jas. iii. 15) is contrasted with the wisdom of the world and of men, as true with false. Not only is God called wise, but He alone is wise in the full sense; for that is the force of the expression "the only wise God" (Rom. xvi. 27). What might seem the foolish part of God is wiser than anything to be found in men (1 Cor. i. 25), and what is called wisdom in men is so far folly that it is often a positive hindrance to the knowledge and love of God (1 Cor. i. 26).

This usage of the New Testament suggests that

in the depth of the Divine Wisdom, and there alone, we are likely to find the corrective to the wisdom of the world, and that we are only able to become wise by accepting and absorbing the wisdom of God as it is revealed to us. Wisdom is so entirely derivative from God that a Godless wisdom is a contradiction in terms. The wisdom which denies, or even misses, God, is only elaborate folly. While the simplest of human beings, even a fool, in contact with the wisdom of God, may become wise.

Thus the connection between the Spirit and Wisdom which is established by such references as Luke xxi. 15, *cf.* John xvi. 13 or Acts vi. 3 and 10, is not accidental. The Holy Spirit is the agent by whom the human mind is admitted into the mind of God, by whom therefore alone it can become wise.

In humble reliance therefore on the Holy Spirit we proceed to gaze into the depth of the wisdom of God.

First, regarding wisdom in its speculative sense, we cast our eye over the history of Philosophy. The effort of continuous thought, to which is given the dignified name of Philosophy, has always been the attempt to think the thoughts of God after Him. Curiously enough, for a reason which we will notice presently, pre-Christian and heathen philosophy is more theological than the philosophy usually current in Christian times and countries. The philosophy

of the Vedas is frankly theological; so is the philosophy of the Zend-Avesta. The early Ionic thinkers, Thales, Anaximenes, Democritus, Heraclitus; the Pythagoreans, the Eleatics, the Cyrenaics, the Cynics; Plato, Aristotle, and, later, the Peripatetics, Stoics and Epicureans, and most of all the neo-Platonists; all attempted to interpret the world and life in terms of the Divine.¹ At first they found the elemental principle in one or another form of matter, fire or water, or atoms: then in abstractions like numbers; then Anaxagoras propounded, without understanding the significance of his own idea, mind as the origin of all things. Plato reached the conclusion that the Idea of Good, which was practically God, is the unifying principle of the whole creation. The neo-Platonists were essenti-

¹ Cf. the saying of Heraclides Ponticus "that no one was a wise man except God" (Diog. L. i. 12). Thales, says Aristotle (*De Anima*, i. 5), thought πάντα πλήρη θεῶν εἶναι, i.e. that everything is full of divinities. Anaximander referred the origin of things to the Infinite, which, says Aristotle, was the Divine; Anaximenes to Air or Spirit (Plut. de Plac. Phil. i. 3); Heraclitus to Fire, which is, according to Aristotle (*De Anima*, i. 2), the Soul from which things are formed, and which, according to Sextus Empiricus is identical with the Divine Reason. Compare the splendid thought of Heraclitus mentioned by Sextus Empiricus, that while we live our souls are dead and buried in us, but when we die our souls revive and live. And so Democritus, the father of Atomism, and therefore the precursor of modern Materialism, is reported by Stobaeus to have said: "Happiness dwells not in fat herds, nor in gold, but the soul is a dwelling-place of divinity."

ally mystics. Thus Western Philosophy, up to the time of Christ, presented a continuous effort to find the Divine Being who is the interpretation and the unity of things. The severe judgments of St Paul and the early Christians on the wisdom of the time, which set itself against Christ, have prevented us from giving due attention to the theological bearing of Ancient Philosophy. The late Prof. A. B. Bruce in his *Moral Order of the Universe* brought out in a continuous form the religious side of the thinkers and the poets whose names are like stars in the heaven of antiquity. It is true that the world through its wisdom knew not God; but it is also true that the world through its wisdom was feeling after Him, if haply it might find Him.

The wisdom of the world in the first Christian ages, repented by Celsus and Porphyry and the Emperor Julian, rejected Christ, as the prepared people, his own nation, the Jews, rejected Him. During the Ages of Faith, as dogma solidified, and the Church organisation became more tyrannical, Philosophy, regarded as a foe, was excommunicated and driven beyond the pale of the Western Church. In place of Philosophers came the Schoolmen. A Philosopher, like Giordano Bruno, took his life in his hands in the medieval church. To think was to deviate from the dogmatic formulæ, and to deviate from them was to die. It thus happened that Philosophy had to find a home for herself outside the

ungracious borders of the Church. And when the Renaissance cooled, and the Reformation extinguished, the fires of ecclesiastical authority, thinkers followed whither thought led them, undirected by religion, which they had learnt to identify with ignorance and obscurantism.

Nevertheless, Modern Philosophy, lifting up its head in Protestant countries, had not forgotten the ancient guest. Bacon asserted that a little philosophy might incline one to Atheism, but a complete philosophy brought one back to God. Spinoza, notwithstanding his Pantheism, was described by Novalis as a God-intoxicated man. Descartes and Malebranche did not conform to the Catholic religion merely as the compliance of prudence; their thought demanded the idea of God to give it validity. Locke was a Christian, and even Hume was a Theist; Berkeley was a bishop, and so was Butler. The greatest thinker of modern Europe was Immanuel Kant; against the philosophical scepticism of Hume he asserted the Three Regulative Ideas of the World, the Soul and God, as essential to connected knowledge; and he found in the Practical Reason that Divine Authority, direct and categorical, which in pure reason is demanded only as a necessary hypothesis.

It is not needful to enumerate the systems of Philosophy since Kant; for it is not yet certain that the advance in opposite directions has been progress

and not rather retrogression. But the point to grasp is that the human mind is driven by its own impulse to philosophise. At its best and strongest it connects and interprets the whole, and conceives the purpose and the goal. It never wholly succeeds; indeed it may be said generally to fail. The wings of thought flag and droop in the upper air. Their flight is not strong or consistent enough to find out the origin, the purpose, the goal of this complex fact which we call the universe.

But this complete philosophy which is for men an attempt, a perpetually frustrated attempt, is for God a realization. The only perfect Philosophy is the Divine Philosophy. What great thinkers spell out in detached fragments, a letter here, an accent there, now and again a sentence, or even a brief paragraph, is to Him a connected and ordered discourse. The philosophy of things presents no difficulty to Him, who knows the end from the beginning, and contemplates the scattered parts in their relations.

As this truth becomes plain nothing can be more certain than this—that God is the keystone to the arch of Philosophy, and not only so, but the one hope of a complete philosophy for men must lie in the possibility of entering into the mind of God. And if the Christian revelation be true, and God reveals His mind in Christ, Christ must be the interpretation of the mind of God, and a Christian Philosophy can alone render a true account of things.

The prejudice created by the ages of dogma in which the Christian Church set itself against thought has to be corrected. For it is only as thought works in the light of the Christian revelation, and becomes admitted into the wisdom of God, that it can ever succeed in constructing a rational scheme of the world or of life. "Christ is made unto us wisdom" becomes a truth which is of primal importance for thinkers. Christ, the Wisdom of God, has to be considered, not only as the Saviour of the soul, but also as the Saviour of thought, the foundation of a correct Philosophy.

No passage in early Christian literature is more charming than that in which Justin Martyr tells us of his search for philosophical truth, first among the Stoics, then among the Peripatetics, then among the Pythagoreans, and lastly among the Platonists; "and such was my foolishness," he says, "I expected presently to see God, for this is the end of Plato's philosophy." In this elevated expectation he sought solitude by the seashore, and there met an aged Christian who expounded to him the more excellent way. At the end of the conversation, the stranger departed. "I saw him no more," adds Justin. "But straightway a flame was kindled in my soul, and a love of the prophets and of the friends of Christ took possession of me; and revolving his words in my mind I found this philosophy alone to be sound and profitable."

The significance of the conclusion is illustrated by Justin's definition of Philosophy as "the knowledge of what really exists, and a clear perception of the truth; and happiness is the reward of such knowledge and wisdom." A genuine Christian Philosophy, *i.e.* one that starts frankly from the revelation of God in Christ, and builds upon the communications of the Spirit, to which Paul refers in 1 Cor. ii., will be the most perfect explanation of existence and truth, in the objective sense, of which our minds are at present capable. An initiation into the Wisdom of God, through Christ who is made unto us wisdom, is the hope for our future thinking.

Significantly enough modern Philosophy, refusing this way, has run into two utterly blind alleys, and has reached the Pessimism of Schopenhauer on the one hand, and the Agnosticism of Huxley and Spencer on the other hand. But the less imposing names for Pessimism and Agnosticism are Despair and Ignorance. These are not a Philosophy but the negation of it.

It may seem presumptuous to outline that Wisdom of God which is given to us in Christ. But some of the salient features may be mentioned as suggestions for the construction of a true Philosophy. Starting from the Ego, or the Personality as the datum of consciousness and the presupposition of all knowledge, we find in Christ the typical or normal Personality. In Him, know-

ledge is primarily knowledge of God, secondarily knowledge of all things in God. In Him the affections develop in the direction of a holy love, to God and to man. In Him the Will, though free, exerts itself only as a harmony with the Divine Will. That is to say, neither in Thought, nor Feeling, nor Will does the human personality dissociate itself from, or run counter to, the Personality which is the Archetype and Origin of all, "the Power which alone is great." But in thus practically developing the human personality as normal and ideal, Christ has asserted the all-important truth that Philosophy is the product of the personality as a whole, not of the mental or rational part only. The failure to know God is due not to mental error but to moral corruption. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. The hesitating aloofness from God which constitutes the disease of the modern mind is not the result of false mental conceptions, nor even always of moral perversity; it is due to a paralysis of the Will which declines to exert itself in the direction of the Truth conceived, and along the lines of the requirements of a moral conviction.

Christ as the Wisdom of God expounds this mystery of our personality and supplies the remedy for its diseases, the paralysis of doubt, the stains of the moral nature, the defect of will. But in thus revealing and restoring the human personality, He

unveils that Divine Personality, which is its archetype and origin. God as the supreme Will, conceiving and creating the human will for a free but harmonious action with Himself; God as the pulsing Ocean of love, going out to realise Himself in creatures that receive and respond to His love; God as the primal, God as the final, cause; this is the indispensable presupposition of a real Philosophy. No effort of the human mind can explain the human mind, unless it may grasp the Divine mind as its origin and its purpose. But in the light of the Divine Being, who is thought, and love, and will, a force that moves outward in creation but ever only to realise itself in harmony of thought, and in final perfectness of love, the whole of human life, and the complex contents of the human personality can be rationally construed.

Thus the Wisdom of God, revealed in Christ, and apprehended by the Spirit within us, may become a genuine and a satisfying Philosophy. The world through its wisdom knows not God, but the world through its God may know wisdom. That wisdom which is from above, does not descend as an intellectual abstraction, nor is it an emotional excitement, nor is it a blind movement of Will, but it comes as a harmony of thought and feeling and will, conditioned by a moral attitude, "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good works, without variance,

without hypocrisy," expounded in clear lines of thought and realised in the steady action of the purified and illuminated will.

Second. But we are now prepared to turn from wisdom on its speculative side, and to see it on its closely related side of practice.

The depth of the wisdom of God is not merely the rational explanation of existence and the revelation of truth ; but it is also a direction of the Divine Will in a course of action, mysterious indeed to us, but capable of being recognised, at least in occasional glimpses of inspired insight, as a complete embodiment of practical wisdom. Given the great ends of the Divine thought which are to be realised, God works for those ends by means which, however inscrutable, are revealed by the Spirit to be absolutely wise.

The immediate occasion of this exclamation in the text, was a survey of human history treated in the light of a Divine purpose. A nation was selected for a mission to mankind ; it was trained by a course of national experience extending over ages. Its deposit of sacred truth, too tenaciously and exclusively held, could only be dispersed among the Gentiles, for whom also it was intended, by a series of shattering blows. Taught and disciplined by failure, rejected and punished for its sins, it yet, as the suffering servant of God, was found to be subserving the interests of mankind. By its sacrifice

the truth it held was escaping into the world. By the emancipated truth it would eventually be restored to the larger grace which it first received, then refused to share ; and which, finally, compelled to share it with the world at large, the chosen nation would receive with a new fulness. This broad interpretation of history is typical. "We misjudge our lives," said Martensen, "because we are unacquainted with the prologue in heaven." We misread history by taking it in too short reaches. We concern ourselves with a period, a reign, a life. The sweep is not broad enough. We lose ourselves in detail and miss the connecting lines. We pause over Israel in exile, and charge God with failure, not realising the exile as a moment in an expanding and progressive thought.

If we would venture an estimate, as from a commanding elevation of our own national history, as Paul did of his, we should have occasion to exclaim at the "variegated wisdom of God." From Alfred to Victoria there are distinct trends observable. The language, the literature, the religious freedom, the expansion over the world, are not obscurely designed. Without prejudice to the noble part assigned to other nations and races, we can hardly doubt that we have our part assigned. A certain idea of liberty, personal liberty, social liberty, has been committed to us. The Gospel in a special

form has been put into our hands, the Gospel as it is in the New Testament. We become the depositories of the Faith once for all delivered to the saints, commissioned by our world-wide extension to communicate it to the world. Viewed in this light our national history becomes intelligible, and the wisdom of God in its ordering is amazing. Our catastrophes appear as punishments, our deliverances as clearer calls. Ignorance, superstition, coarseness, sensuality, greed, materialism, dogged unbelief, occur with appalling persistence. But the purpose of God works itself out. Whenever we fail in our mission of freedom, disaster overtakes us. And yet whenever tyranny attempts to drag us back into bondage, the Armada is smitten by the storms of Heaven, the head of a king is laid on a block, the dark conspirators against light and truth are exposed and shamed.

To translate, to interpret, to put into practice the Bible, has been our great modern function from the days of Wyclif downwards. To shatter that misunderstanding of Christianity, which turned its free spirit into sacerdotalism, has been the difficult task assigned to our race and tongue. What other people has the courage to attempt such a task? What other task in these three hundred years has been more conspicuously laid upon England?

This broad interpretation of history is needed, in order to understand the practical wisdom of God, in order to see how truly the nations that forget Him perish, while them that honour Him He honours, in order to apprehend that the developments of history are not accidental, but through the vagaries and inconstancies of human freedom God presses steadily to His goal, bent on making an obedient world in which all nations shall freely and fully serve Him.

A modern poet, who has occasional glimpses of this vast Divine work in history, gives a fine image in his L'Envoi of *The Seven Seas*:—

When earth's last picture is painted, and the tubes are twisted
and dried,
When the oldest colours have faded, and the youngest critic
has died,
We shall rest, and faith, we shall need it,—lie down for an
æon or two,
Till the Master of all good workmen shall put us to work
anew.

And those that were good shall be happy ; they shall sit in
a golden chair,
They shall splash at a ten-league canvas with brushes of
comet's hair ;
They shall find real saints to draw from, Magdalen, Peter, and
Paul,
They shall work for an age at a sitting and never be tired
at all.

And only the Master shall praise us, and only the Master
shall blame ;

And no one shall work for money, and no one shall work for
 fame,
 But each for the joy of working, and each in his separate star,
 Shall draw the thing as he sees it for the God of things as
 they are.

This grandiose conception is needed; it is given by the operation of the Spirit. We need to be emancipated from the curious narrowness of our personal experiences and observations. We must see the course of the history of the world; the stream issuing from the mind of God, forcing its way through rocky barriers, deploying into the plain, debouching into the infinite sea. We should occasionally stretch our mind to the computation of millenniums, and think in centuries. We ought to be more familiar with the idea of evolution, the slowness of the process, the certainty of the issue. And when with an imagination kindled and informed by the Spirit,

We can splash at a ten-league canvas with brushes of comet's
 hair,

and when by an exercise of spiritual faculty we are
 able to

Draw the thing as He sees it for the God of things as they are,
 we shall see how sure and steady the purpose of the ages is, how the incident of Sin does not disturb, but heighten, the ultimate end of God, how the Incarnation of the Son of God is the key to the process of

humanity, how His Cross is the centre of the history of man,

All the light of sacred story gathers round its head sublime, and how impossible it is that anything should hinder the accomplishment of the great design, which is to gather together in one the ransomed spirits of men, to form, according to the sublime image, the Bride of Christ in the great marriage supper of the world.

Nor is it possible to contemplate this Divine plan in the process of its realisation, and in the certainty of its fulfilment without a thrilling delight in the depth of the wisdom of God.

THE DEPTH OF THE KNOWLEDGE
OF GOD

“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out !”—*Rom.* xi. 33.

VI

THE DEPTH OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

AS Science proceeds on her unresting march, and one circle after another of what appears to be infinite being is brought within the knowledge of men, there is one thought which forces itself into our minds. All this which is now for the first time known to us must have been always in the knowledge of God. For it would be the height of absurdity to suppose that our intelligence which slowly discovers the marvellous order and beauty of the universe is the first intelligence at work. What we with assiduous toil and indefatigable reasoning discover must have been produced by an Intelligence, not inferior but infinitely superior, to our own. That fine notion of a modern man of science, that, as an investigator, he was thinking God's thoughts after Him, was a conclusion of the reason. Our budding knowledge with uncertain and hesitating growth only follows a knowledge, which must from the nature of the case have preceded ours. In that infinite Mind which originated

the worlds, and which holds the universe together, everything which we know or can know has pre-existed ; and our accumulated knowledge represents but the breaking waves on the shore of the ocean of the limitless and unimaginable knowledge of God.

A Psalmist once, in contemplation of the heavens as the handiwork of God, broke into wonder that God should regard man at all. But that psalmist could view the heavens only as a spangled dome in which the constellations performed their punctual revolutions. The telescope has not only increased the number of the stars from thousands to millions ; it has not only revealed our companion planets, twisting round our sun ; but it has forced us to realise that our whole planetary system, embraced in the vast orbit of Uranus, must appear to our nearest neighbour among the stars as a star of third or fourth magnitude ; while in that little network of stars which we call the Pleiades alone, 150 million solar systems as large as ours could easily subsist. These discoveries of science which tax our faith and fatigue our imagination, come upon us for the first time in this last epoch of history ; but God knew them from the beginning. As the early poet, looking at these stars from the merely earthly standpoint, declared that God called them all by name ; so we, looking at them from the standpoint of the most advanced astronomy, have to widen our conception of God to realise that these inconceivable

and infinite systems which occupy space are known to, were made by, God. For God is the Being that has stamped His own wisdom, order, and power on the material universe; for His pleasure all is, and was created.

A similar extension of our thought is made under the microscope; for awful as are the depths of space which are revealed by the telescope, the infinitesimal world, beneath us, is found to be just as inconceivably vast. We stand midway between those infinite systems in space, and these infinitesimal worlds which by their minuteness evaded our observation.

I am not responsible for the miracles of science which seem to me much more incredible than the miracles of religion. But I learn that the riband-microtome can cut a worm an inch long into 30,000 sections and mount each section on a glass ready for the microscopist's eye. And each of the 30,000 sections enlarged by the microscope is found to be as beautiful in structure and in colour as the mighty sun at the centre of our system.

Into these invisible details which we with astonished eyes now see through the microscope, the knowledge of God must have entered from the beginning. Some of us have seen the world of wonder which Dr Dallinger discloses in a common pond. Vastly magnified the invisible inhabitants of the stagnant water are thrown upon the screen. There is a scene of life as busy as the thoroughfares

of London, as stupendous as the roll and the clash of meteorites. Colour, form, contrivance, fissure, generation, locomotion, the parasite of the infinitesimal organism, itself possessed by a parasite, the pageant passes before the eye. Surely it is an ingenious invention of the lecturer, a fairy tale for our amusement. No, it is an actual revelation of the teeming life which is going on in every drop of water. Dr Dallinger was not the first to know all this. God had been there before him. All must have existed in the Infinite mind.

Or science is now introducing us into the mystery of colour. Her statements baffle the imagination, and remain for most of us merely meaningless numbers; but no one is a serious questioner of these incredibilities. The rays which produce the visible spectrum present varying rates of vibration from 381 billions to the second to 764 billions; but the eye can distinguish them only as they coincide with or approximate to three mean rates. It groups them as red, green, violet, or combinations of these three colours in various proportions. If, for example, the rays vibrate at the rate of 580 billions to the second, the eye says that they partake equally of the characters of red and green, with a very small trace of violet, and the brain gives to this combination the quality of yellow.¹

¹ *An Introduction to Science*, by the Master of Downing, Cambridge. p. 34.

The colour of the daffodil, or of a sovereign, is the result on the retina of vibrations in the rays which proceed from these substances under the action of light. Those vibrations are 580,000,000,000 in a second! But this mystery of the production of colour, searched by the untiring labour of the physicist, is but one of the ideas of Him who is Light and Life and Love. What is so inconceivably difficult for our blunt senses to apprehend, and so impossible for our laggard imagination to picture, is a commonplace to the mind that knew and contrived both the colours and the light and the human eye that sees.

The ancients imagined a music of the spheres which eluded the grossness of our earthly hearing. But the microphone has revealed to us sounds so slight as the footfall of a fly. And we find that there may be a language and a music all around us, as inaccessible to our dull ears, as our language and music are inaccessible to the deaf. Yet all these inaudible sounds are in the hearing of God. He that planted the ear not only hears what that imperfect organ hears, but a whole range of sounds which for it are non-existent.

It is a familiar fact that the extraordinary growth of science has forced scientific men into specialisation. In each department of science the discoveries and the literature are so vast, that it becomes the work of years to master what is already known,

and what has already been said, about that restricted department. To have an adequate knowledge of astronomy, or biology, or physics, is now no longer possible for a human brain. The strongest brain can have but a general knowledge of that branch of science, and must be content if he has an adequate knowledge of a single twig on the branch. God holds in His mind all the sciences, in all their branches, and has an effective knowledge of every detail. And yet in saying this we hardly approach the wonder of the knowledge of God. For our Science is but a point of light in the wide firmament of our Nescience. Behold we know not anything. Each time, in the history of science, a coign of vantage is reached, the explorer finds that it has only shown a wider region that is unexplored. The other day Prof. Ramsay discovered argon in the atmosphere. It had been there since the creation, and was always known to God. For all these ages electricity has been within reach, under our hand, under our eye. At last, after lumbering centuries, we acquire the knowledge to yoke it to our cars, to make it our winged messenger, to pass it through our nerves as a remedy for disease. Yet electricity has been familiar to God from the beginning, and all its unknown potencies are plain to Him. Marconi has seen a possibility of transmitting words without wires, along the allotted channels of the earth's particles. God has

always known how to transmit thoughts and words through space without mechanical contrivances. From remote stars His signals fly. He whispers, and it is heard in systems which are beyond our most searching telescopes.

Röntgen's extraordinary discovery has shown that to light our solid substances are diaphanous. We now see through certain opaque things. God has always seen through them. Things hidden in darkness for us have never been hidden from Him.

We may safely indulge the speculation that knowledge will grow from more to more, and that the rate of progress will be rapidly accelerated. It is quite conceivable that our grandchildren will safely and easily navigate the air.¹ Possibly not only forces like electricity, and substances like argon, will be discovered, but Spiritual agencies for ever invisibly at work will be traced and known. Some venture to believe that intercourse with our neighbour planets may be established; and we may discover intelligent beings, like ourselves, in those bright orbs which the curious eye of the astronomer surveys with affectionate intimacy. He would be an unteachable sceptic, who, in view of the advances made during the past century, would venture to impose any limits to the forward march of Science. But whatever gains knowledge may make, we shall

¹ While this sheet passes through the press (July 15, 1901), the feat is achieved in Paris.

only be covering ground already covered by God; we shall only learn to know what He knows already. And if we could conceive the accumulated knowledge of mankind multiplied a millionfold, and ordered and articulated into a consummate Science of being, it is quite certain that far beyond this multiplied knowledge of man, would still flow out the silent ocean of the knowledge of God,

Immutable and Grand.

We suffer terribly from our shrunk and paltry views of God. The arrogance of some scientific men, who would have us think that they have found out these things for the first time, as if they had made them, has imposed on our imagination. We have even allowed them to urge their fragmentary and tentative knowledge as an argument against God. They would have us think that because they know a very little, God cannot know All.

Our doubt of God arises from our inadequate conception of Him. We have not gazed enough into His depths. The God who is only a larger man, or a local and national deity, or a Being whom priests claim to create by a thaumaturgical word, is very properly superseded in the march of knowledge. But God is not superseded. You have only to restate the terms of the definition, and He comes back in His stupendous majesty. What is God? The Master of those who know, the Supreme

Scientist; that Mind, inconceivably great and inclusive, that planned and made and sustains the whole scheme of things; the Thinker who anticipated all that man has discovered or will discover; the God of the Astronomer, the God of the Physicist, the God of the Biologist, the God of the Chemist. Scientific men sometimes say that they do not believe in God. They cannot be serious. They have not thought it out. Everything they tell us is a fresh argument for Him, a new light upon Him.

But we cannot deny that there is something disturbing in the thought of this Mighty and inconceivable Being. The Psalmist's cry becomes poignant, What is man that thou art mindful of him?

Let us however, guided by the Spirit, push the idea to its logical conclusion. He who knows the stellar distances, and the life of the Infusoria, and whose mind is capacious enough to conceive and to control the infinitely great and the infinitesimally small, is surely capable of knowing, and knowing intimately, each human being, that, in the working of His laws, this planet produces.

"I was 13," writes a friend, "and was sent to the seaside for my August holiday. All day I was on the beach. It was dull in the evening, so I went to my room alone, and read the calf-bound library volumes that I was not allowed to take out of doors. I read the Waverley Novels; but I always shut the book when 11.30 chimed. One night I took up

what I thought was the second volume of Rob Roy, but I found, when too late for changing it, that it was Dr Chalmers' Astronomical discourses. I was much disappointed; I looked into it, to see if it would do for Sunday. But I read and read, and 11.30 chimed, and 12 and 12.30. Then fatigue made me close the book; I put out the light. Then saying to myself: 'Why should I be afraid of the terrors by night; my Father who made the stars is stronger than they,' I leaped up, crossed the large attic room and drew up the blind. The glorious canopy of stars stretched to the sea, and I felt at one with Chalmers in prayer." It was the splendid argument of Chalmers' discourses that the vastness of the universe and the Infinitude of God, so far from alarming and discouraging our personal advances, was the surest guarantee of His particular interest and care. When Christ declared "the very hairs of your head are all numbered," He anticipated the whole of Modern Science, and reconciled it with religion. It is because there is absolutely no limit to the detailed knowledge of God, because all thoughts of a limit are simply impositions of our own infinitesimal minds, that we are justified in believing, nay, we are rationally compelled to believe, that God knows us intimately, and altogether, and not a word of our lips or a thought of our minds escapes Him. "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me," said the Psalmist. It is also far too

wonderful for our enlarged conceptions of the Creative Power and Wisdom. But nevertheless it is certain. Its certainty is established by Reason, its certitude by the Spirit of God.

1. Its certainty, that is its objective reality, follows from the considerations which have been before us. It was clear to Virgil that the Divine mind moved in the commonwealth of bees. The rational order in the lowest creatures, and perhaps still more the cohesion and efficiency of inanimate nature, reveals an actual and present mind at work in every detail small and great. And it is a clear inference of reason, that if God marks the sparrow fall, He must be equally individual in marking the human life, which is obviously so much nearer His own. Do not be deceived by the confusion between the inconceivable and the irrational. Reason compels us to assume much which the mind cannot conceive. And the view that God is directly and personally acquainted with every one of His creatures, and is as much master of them as the chess player is of the pieces, is so far evidenced by reason, that no other theory can be broached which even attempts to explain the familiar facts of life and consciousness. The instinct which makes even godless men cry out to God, and pray, in moments of danger: the instinct which makes religion, of some sort, coterminous with humanity; is a constant witness to the conclusion which reason suggests.

In God we live and move and have our being, is a doctrine not of Christianity, not of revelation, but of the unassisted intellect whenever it exerts itself without moral or dogmatic bias. If men had no interest to deny God, and no will to forget and to repudiate Him, we should have no divergence of opinion on this subject. Wherever God seems distant or unreal, the illusion is due, not to reason, but to prejudice or a moral disorder. Reason is far too closely allied with the infinite Reason, to be able, of itself, to deny its origin.

2. But the certitude, as distinguished from the certainty, that is to say the inward sureness of God's personal knowledge and relation with the individual, is produced by the Holy Spirit. Here we have to pass into a region of experience which "the leaders of this world" are apt to ignore. Yet we are compelled to recognise this region of experience, and while it remains unknown to many it is open to all. Everyone who remains ignorant of it has himself to blame, and must accept the consequences.

Christ as the propitiation for sin reconciles us to God; by the removal of sin out of our consciousness He restores consciousness to its normal condition, in which the witness to God is clear. The whole-hearted faith in Christ and in His redemption, introduces into the heart the Holy Spirit, who is in effect the voice and the power of God operating in human consciousness.

Now, suppose we examine this consciousness in which the Spirit works and dwells, what is the testimony which it gives on the subject of our present investigation?

Enlightened by the Spirit, and approaching God in the personality of the historic Christ, one is assuredly conscious of the personal knowledge of God. "We know God, or rather are known of Him." His eye searches us, His word speaks in us, His will exerts itself over us, His love flows through us like an all-cleansing and all-healing tide. This experience is so real and self-evidencing that it wants nothing of certainty, except the appeal to the senses; and yet it is the absence of the appeal to the senses which gives it its certitude. It is because the knowledge of God approaches us, not by the uncertain channels of the senses, but by a direct interior appeal of spirit to spirit, that we are more sure of it than of the phenomenal world.

In the inflow of this knowledge of God, and in the peace and joy of being thus intimately known to Him, the spirit is entirely undisturbed by what might at first appear an insuperable objection. How, an objector might say, can the Infinite Personality of God, diffused through the universe, carrying on its vast concerns, approaching innumerable minds, be engaged in anything like personal converse with me, an infinitesimal atom of consciousness in the vast sum of things? Or is not an even narrower

objection in itself decisive? There are myriads of human minds which in simple faith believe that they are thus occupied with God, and He with them, at the same time. How is it conceivable that God's particular knowledge is thus active in a personal sense to all at once, to say nothing of the myriad beings in other worlds, or in the spiritual regions, that occupy His personal attention?

I say, the mind, led by the Spirit, is entirely undisturbed by this very obvious and cogent scepticism. If it is bound to entertain such a demur, it yet finds that the force on the positive side is greater than that on the negative. The verdict of this consciousness under the direction of the spirit, is God's warm, personal, and intimate knowledge. Not only is He perceived by, but He also responds to, consciousness. There is a communion, an interchange. There is no voice, no language, no form, no touch; true, but there is spirit with spirit.

That God is thus occupied with me, that He searches and knows me through and through, is so manifestly the foremost verdict of the spiritual consciousness, that the remoter region in which that doubt is raised hardly by comparison comes into consciousness at all. And there is even something more: the spirit witnessing within to God's personal knowledge of me is very definitely a witness to One who is *not* limited, as we are, in faculty, or in space and time. It is indeed the Being who has all

knowledge, the person who enters into relation with all persons, and holds them in Himself, that is in contact with me. It is as such that I recognise Him.

If for a moment I thought He was thus occupied with me to the neglect of others ; if He had to quit His throne and come into an ante-chamber for a brief interview ; if I felt that in grasping I detained Him, or by monopolising restricted Him ; immediately the joy and the power of His knowledge would vanish. It is not only His knowledge of me that brings me rest, salvation, power ; it is also my knowledge that He is what He is, the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, the inconceivable Majesty of mind and thought which embraces all in a particular and detailed knowledge.

Along the lines of this knowledge of God, His knowledge of the Universe, His personal knowledge of us, we might run without ceasing, and never tire. Go out into this spacious and starry house of God, consider its endless mansions, its sublime harmony, its witness of the glory of God. And then come in, through the dear and lowly door of Christ, and say, This God is my Father, who knows me more intimately than my parents do, and loves me even better. Then from such a personal passage, go out again into the sounding corridors of the Universe, and mark how traced in lines of light the legend of His love to you is manifest everywhere.

Let life be made of such journeys to and fro, within the vast abyss of the knowledge of God. Let Christ be your interpreter in the universe as He is in your heart; and do you not see how in knowledge of God, who is your Father, all anxiety and fear are hushed to rest? Death disappears, and you approach the end with a great and glad equanimity. Out of the lower chambers of His knowledge you pass to the higher.

“Spirit, nearing yon dark portal at the limit of thy human state,
Fear not thou the hidden purpose of that Power which alone
is great,
Nor the myriad world, His shadow, nor the silent opener of
the Gate.”

THE POWER OF GOD

“For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.”—*Rom.* i. 20.

VII

THE POWER OF GOD

IT is one of the curiosities of the human mind that it attaches little importance to what is regular, and normal, and undue importance to whatever deviates from the rule. And thus we all have a way of shutting our eyes to the great and constant exhibitions of the divine Power, and of complaining, because there are no irregular or miraculous exertions of it, that God is powerless, or God is not. The Lord's arm is shortened, that it cannot save; that is the conclusion which we immediately reach, if His power is not used in the direction of our desire. This is so obviously a perversion, a blindness, that Paul is following a truly philosophical instinct in explaining it by a moral failure. His idea is, intellect pure and simple could never be so foolish, so irrational; it must be darkened and corrupted by an evil will, and by the mists which sin throws over the mind, before it can fall into so puerile an error.

That corruptions in the moral nature obscure the judgment, will probably be at once admitted; but it requires some reflection to see how vast is the delu-

sion, and therefore how terrible is the corruption, which has led men to Atheism. It is not necessary to fetch remote or unknown facts ; indeed it is better only to insist on facts universally familiar, to awaken in every mind a recognition of the truth : " The invisible things of Him since the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made."

To apprehend the Power of God we need not look at those coincidences, interferences, miracles, judgments, visitations, on which the ignorant and superstitious are prone to insist ; not the violations of law, but the law itself, is the witness to the Divine power. A childish mind, lulled into apathy by familiarity with the uniformity of nature, is greatly impressed with the power of God, if it is told that the " sun stood still," or that the shadow went back on the dial of Ahaz. To a trained mind it is a far greater evidence of power that the sun never does stand still, and that the shadow never does go back.

He the golden-tressed sun
Caused all day his course to run.

That is the true wonder ; the miracle of divine power. The globe, though nearly ninety-three millions of miles away from the sun, is held in its steadfast course, and wheels punctually, at an incredible velocity, around its centre. Allow your mind to

grasp the fact, that the earth spins on its axis, accomplishing its revolution in twenty-four hours ; that at the same time it rushes in its orbit, and circles the sun in twelve months ; that, at the same time, sun and planets are accomplishing an indescribable revolution through space, perhaps wheeling in their turn round some central system. Realise these complicated motions, maintained century after century, millennium after millennium, and you have a notion of the Power of God, which can never be derived from interferences with the established order of nature. When one seeks to assert the divine power on the ground of an arrested order of nature, one seems to dissociate nature from God, and to regard an occasional breach in her order as the exhibition of His power. But it is that order itself, in its stupendous intelligence and invisible force, which is the expression of His power.

Or consider the earth as the habitation of beings like ourselves. The recurrence of the seasons, the nature of the atmosphere, the life-giving power of the sun, the nutritive properties of the fruits of the ground, the arrangements for digestion, the suitability and the abundance of food, the provision of fuel in the bowels of the earth, the supply of water, the oceans which separate and unite continents, the chemical action of the air on rocks, soils, vegetation ; not to mention that arrangement of light and shadow, of colour and contour, of growth and decay, which

gives to nature the charm of great art, and makes the globe a house of light, as well as the homely nursery of our physical frame: in a word, a Cosmos, instead of a chaos, and a Cosmos exactly adapted for us, for our bodies to live in, and for our minds to delight in, is an exhibition of Divine Power which must move the mind that will only think.

When all thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported by the view, I'm lost
In wonder, love, and praise.

To maintain even a single human body in working order, and even a single mind in sanity, is an exertion of power which the sane mind in the sane body will never be able sufficiently to admire. What a delicate balance of forces is implied! The weight of the atmosphere would crush the organism, but that the atmosphere is within as well as without. How slight an alteration or defect would make our bodies as insecure on the revolving surface of the earth as the autumn leaves in Vallombrosa! Bacteriology reveals a conflict in progress, happily invisible, worthy to rank with the war of the worlds. Minute organisms which, on the overthrow of the balance, are our destruction, are in the main our defence. They contend for our tissues, for our blood. Every day, every hour, sees a miracle in each human being that survives. Our equilibrium in the clash of these contending forces is no less wonderful than

the equilibrium of the globe in the rush and the roar of the solar system.

Consider the power which turned the stray grass of the fields into the ears of ripened corn ; which matured the sour fruits of the trees into the rich product of our orchards ; which stocked the seas with fish, the air with birds, the earth with beasts, their flesh adapted for our food, their bones and skins, their plumage, their wool, suited for our dress. Consider that opulence of power, which making provision for all necessaries, had yet a margin of leisure and thought, to throw off miracles of interest, of beauty, of joy, which appeal to the mind with delight and make our sojourn on the earth a fairy tale of never dying charm !

These interminable lines of reflection should be patiently followed out, until the real fact dawns upon our intelligence. Do you wonder that Christ with a few loaves and fishes fed 5000 men? Nay, but surely the wonder is that God with provision equally scant, or even non-existent, feeds 1500 millions every day. "He giveth them all their meat in due season." What a delusion it is that the wonder lies in a miracle, and not in that steady, persistent fact, the unfailing steadiness of which enhances the wonder of its incredible power. To heal a disease, to restore a maniac, fills a crowd with surprise. But to preserve the delicate organisms of millions from succumbing to disease ; to keep the

fine tissues of the brain in order, so that sanity is the rule and insanity the exception; this is what should fill us with daily wonder and gratitude. To raise the dead were evidence of a Divinity. And is it not evidence of a Divinity that out of the dust of the earth the whole world of living things is raised? A breathing sentient world

From froth and drift of the sea ;
 And dust of the labouring earth ;
 And bodies of things to be
 In the houses of death and of birth !

The simple truth is, that the Force, which Agnostics are bound to assume, a vast Unknown, as the real explanation of all the known, is the God whom Christ revealed to us. "To the Agnostic's God" was the inscription which Paul saw at Athens; whom the Athenians ignorantly worshipped, Him Paul declared to them. From beginning to end revelation in the Bible always insists on the fact that the Maker of heaven and earth, the Power that made and upholds all things, is making known His truth and His will in prophets and holy men moved by His Spirit, and in the last days, by His Son.

We should avail ourselves more freely of the discoveries of Science: though Science may only show us parts of His ways, yet they are His ways. Let us take down our huge volumes of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. It would be a good life's

work to read them all conscientiously through. All these sciences, histories, biographies, literatures, are manifestations of the one Power. They all have God behind them. Let us connect all this with our Bibles: let us fill out our Bibles with the fuller and exacter knowledge which also is the work of the Spirit. It is this God who controls the stars; it is this God who shapes and renders habitable the earth; it is this God who conceived and evolved man, the crown of the terrestrial Creator; it is this God who sits regnant over his history and development, the largest, kindest critic of his doings, the sustaining power of his faculties and of his production; it is this God that has revealed Himself, shown His heart in Jesus Christ. One might say that all the Power recorded in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* is not equal to the power manifested in the Son of God made flesh. An evangelist feels that the world could not contain the record of that infinite life revealed in time. Into His death the angels desire to look. Our earthly doings can hardly interest them. But that fact, the sight of Him, by whom also God made the worlds, humbled to a human life, dying on a cross at human hands: that is an exhibition of Power which all intelligences in the Universe may well be eager to examine.

But, since the everlasting power and divinity of God are so manifest, so overwhelmingly convincing,

directly we come to reflect, whence has sprung the delusion that God's power is limited? Let us vigorously push home this question. John Stuart Mill in his posthumous essays, viewing the facts of the world, the suffering, the disorder, the reckless operation of natural law, came to this conclusion: We are on the horns of a dilemma, either God is not omnipotent, or He is not perfectly good. Where such a dilemma is admitted, who can blame the writer for choosing the less evil of the two, and concluding that God is not omnipotent? Mr Schiller in his *Enigma of the Sphinx*, inclines to a similar conclusion. God is the Power that makes for good in the universe; but He is confronted by a strong, let us hope not an equal, power, which makes for evil. The Universe therefore as we view it is a dualism, a sustained conflict between light and darkness, Ormuzd and Ahriman. The good is there, but it is checked, limited, frustrated by the forces of original evil. Philosophers of this kind, would not, like the author of *Evil and Evolution*, or Dr Abbott in his *Kernel and the Husk*, refer the evil to a personal spirit, a Satan, who is God of this world; but their theory implies that over against the power of God, who is good, is the power of a Force that is evil.

This ancient dualism, like a modern Manicheism, presents itself as a plausible account of the facts. If it were accepted, it would force us to a very

modified view of the Power of God, and we should certainly discard the term omnipotence.

But such a reading of the facts is a delusion. It is essentially due to a diseased vision. Like all the illusions of the eye, it is due not to the objective realities in the world, but to a morbid condition of the eye. The mind of the observer is diseased; it reads its own disease into the facts. The fly on the window-pane figures as an ox on the distant field. The mote in the human eye appears as a beam in the eye of God.

To explain this requires an effort indeed, which only the Spirit of Redemption makes possible. For all human eyes share in the disease. The delusion springs from our own minds which are not in a normal and healthy condition. Before we conclude that the universe is all in disorder, let us examine our own organs of observation. Before we allow that "the most ancient heavens" are flecked with patches and deformities, let us be sure that the flaw is not in the lense of our telescope.

Now here is the fact. The human will, led away by one fallen spirit, the god of this world, in the exercise of its freedom, has resisted God. What the conscience reports as evil, revelation has shown to be sin. The malaise of the human heart everywhere is an unwilling witness to the inner disorder. Man is no impartial observer of God and His ways. He has the jaundiced view of a rebel. His judg-

ment is warped by shattering and useless resistance to the omnipotence of God.

Pause for a moment and remember how the perturbations of our own minds affect our interpretation of the facts around us. This clear crisp February day seems to an innocent and tranquil spirit beautiful with the beauty of another world. But to the man who is standing his trial for murder, and whose mind is dark with the knowledge of guilt, the cold sunshine is terrible ; he would prefer the darkness of his cell.

But remember, this perturbed judgment is the organ by which we are attempting to estimate God. Restive in the hand of His omnipotence we rail against Him because we cannot do what we will. It is an argument with us that He is not all-powerful because He does not let us have our way. His omnipotence is really proved by the tight bands in which He restrains our rebel-will, and by the distorted world which presents itself to our diseased eye.

Let us gather the threads of our argument into these two propositions :

1. There is no evil in this universe except the perverted wills (probably confined entirely to this system), which in the exercise of their freedom have resisted the power of God.

2. When the will is reclaimed by Jesus Christ and brought into harmony with God, evil disappears,

except so far as the eye has to contemplate the disorder of the wills which still resist.

The two statements of course are the obverse and the reverse of the same fact. They need not be discussed in detail; they are rather clues to bring to the practice of life, to be tested by their efficacy in solving its problems.

1. The only evil in the world is the will which resists God. Resistance to Him produces unrest, discontent, paralysis. The sins which result from it involve us in perpetual suffering. The similar sins of others constitute the evil order of the world. The horror on the face of nature is simply a reading of our own hearts into the outside world—

Hell is the shadow of a heart on fire.

Our lusts and passions, and the dreary reaction from them, make human life a hell.

Without going into a detailed exposition of this fact, we have to show that to admit its existence is not, as so many think, a contravention of the power of God. That He has made creatures with a free will, that He has endued them with the power of resistance, in order that they may have the correlative power of obedience; that He allows them a field, within narrow limits, in which they may work out their destiny; grants them a span of life in which, if they choose, they can carry out their resistance to the bitter end, and in which also, of course, they may

be reconciled to Him, and work out a course of duty and allegiance; this, though it seems to, does not really, limit the power of God; rather here we have the exhibition of His supreme power, in the ability to make beings free like Himself, to whom He can give scope to work out their designs. The limitation of His power is voluntary and for a moment; it is in view of a great gain, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

To secure only one human will, which in face of temptation, and enjoying perfect freedom, chooses the whole-hearted obedience to God, might conceivably be sufficient reason for the long and chequered history of the world. That God will gather together in one the obedient souls that are the harvest of the world, and that they will be a great company, so that Christ will see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied, is the teaching of Scripture.

At last the brief probation of the world's history will be over—God will be all in all. But we may with certainty maintain that the moral experiment which the Almighty is conducting in this tiny speck of His vast dominion is no limitation of His power. Who hath resisted His will? we may well ask. The whole embattled force of human rebellion with all its miseries and crimes, its stupidities and madness and ruin, is but a bubble on the mighty ocean of existence. It is more than justified, we may safely

conclude, by the heroes, saints, and martyrs, the God-mastered souls which have even already been gleaned from the world. When the final harvest is reaped, the whole universe will admit, "right was the pathway leading to this."

2. But the other statement is needed before the force of the first appears. It sounds a daring assertion to make, that there is no evil in this universe except the perverted wills which resist His Power. But the assertion verifies itself, whenever a will is purged and restored to harmony with God. It is a difficult subject to investigate. Strictly speaking, it can only be understood by one who makes the personal experiment of bringing his will into complete subjection to God. Let anyone attempt this task; the way is open in Christ Jesus; and he will find that his restored human personality, acting now, not in resistance to, but in conformity with, the will of God, contemplates a scene of triumphant wisdom, knowledge and power. Evil, of course, does not disappear, for there are still the multitudinous rebel wills in this terrestrial sphere. But evil appears, as it is, strictly delimited, a blot on creation, not deep and radical, but superficial, terminable, in comparison with eternity brief, in comparison with the whole of things small.

George Fox, for example, who is a good type of the will restored and cleansed by faith in Christ Jesus, and by the powerful inworking of the Holy

Ghost, has described a vision he had of the world as a dark realm, a mere shadow, floating in an ocean of incomparable light.

Henry Vaughan had a vision almost identical :

“ I saw Eternity the other night
 Like a great ring of pure and endless light
 All calm as it was bright ;
 And round beneath it Time, in hours, days, years,
 Driven by the Spheres,
 Like a vast shadow moved, in which the world
 And all her train were hurled.”

William Law, under the guidance of Jacob Behmen, attained to a very similar experience. All phenomena resolved themselves to his contemplation into one vast controlling power, the Spirit of Love.

It is some such illumination that has taken captive many minds in our own time, under the name of Christian Science. Evil is not non-existent, but its range and endurance and power are always exaggerated by the evil will. Satan is a vast egoist, who rears his puny head, and shakes his spear in the face of heaven ; his dull brain is beset with grandiose fancies, because he managed to make war in heaven and the irresistible One overcame him.

“ Him the Almighty power
 Hurled headlong flaming from the ethereal height
 In hideous ruin and combustion down
 To bottomless perdition.”

He fancies, childish as it seems, that he is an equal antagonist with God. It is as if the beetle in the path of the elephant were to plume himself on the honours of a contest, because he ventures to stand in the way of the great creature's march, missing for a moment his tread, but the next moment crushed indistinguishable in the mire.

It is this egotism of evil which gives to it its apparent magnitude. From the nearest fixed star, and the realms of eternal order, it is not even perceptible. No telescope on Jupiter or Mercury could discern the infinitesimal perturbation which we call evil.

But when the will is converted, restored, and in harmony with God, it beholds with unspeakable joy the infinite Ocean of Light and Love ; nor can it for a moment suppose that this dim shadow of human corruption will maintain itself for long in that victorious ocean. The sufferings and sorrows which are incident to this world of disordered wills, to the will now reconciled appear only as occasions of the divine victory : " Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord " (Rom. viii. 37-39).

In the early days of the Neronian persecution

the worldly powers were staggered by the serenity and joy of their victims. With baffled irritation they ascribed it to obstinacy, that slaves, women, boys, were able to face the wild beasts of the arena or to yield their bodies to the flames in the *tunica molesta*, without fear or shrinking. Nero, Poppæa, Tigellinus, miserable in their palaces and feasts, could not comprehend the joy of those who were "stoned, and sawn asunder, tempted, slain with the sword." The secret was in the wonderful truth which we have been considering: to the will, restored and sanctified in Christ Jesus, evil disappears, like the clouds which melt in a summer sky. The reconciled Will, beholding the world through purged eyes, moved by the Spirit, pronounces all, in the word of the Creator, good. What an appeal this constitutes to the rebel. "We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us: we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God."

There is no rebellion in the universe except such as you find there in your own heart. Yield to Him, and so far rebellion ceases. And all that weight of rebellion, alienation, and misunderstanding, which we call Sin, God has in His everlasting power and divinity, laid upon one who is mighty to save: "Him who knew no sin He made to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in him."

It would be obviously absurd to say that you may resist the Power which alone is great and yet prosper, that you may break His laws, defy His government, and despise His redeeming love. I dare not say that; I should as readily propose to a man to fling himself in the way of an express train, or to swallow all the poisons in the pharmacopœia.

But I may say, and am commanded to say, that by faith in Christ Jesus you can put yourself in harmony with His will, you can lay hold of His strength and be at peace. "Without excuse," says St Paul. Surely they are without excuse who set themselves against God, and refuse the mighty plea of His atoning revelation.

THE DEPTH OF LOVE

“ May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth,
and length, and depth, and height.”—*Eph.* iii. 18.

VIII

THE DEPTH OF LOVE

THE love of Christ is the love of God. What we find in the heart of Christ, in His character, in His words and actions, is to be regarded as a revelation of the Invisible God. That indeed is the whole significance of Christ's manifestation: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." This manifestation was made, we may believe, because apart from it we were incapable of gazing into the heart of God. His everlasting power and divinity, his resources, his wisdom and knowledge, might be inferred from the universe as it spreads itself before our eyes. Not so His love. The aspect of things speaks with sufficient clearness of Law, of Intelligence, of Power working to an end; but it can hardly be said to bear on it the legend of Love. In that exquisite book of Henry Drummond's, *The Ascent of Man*, a characteristic argument is maintained. Side by side with the struggle for existence, there is and has been from the beginning a struggle for the life of others. Altruism is as much bound up in the nature of

things as egoism. That was a timely protest against the hysterical cry heard in the early days of modern science :

We trusted God was love indeed,
And love creation's final law ;
But nature red in tooth and claw
With ravine shrieked against our creed.

Drummond's protest, however, came not so much from the scientist in him as from the Christian. He was already so drenched in the thought of "The Greatest thing in the World" that he was apt to find in his reading of earth a fact which he brought with him from another quarter. That "struggle for the life of others," real and beautiful as it is, hardly constitutes an effective reply to the obvious facts of "Nature red in tooth and claw," and of the vast silent and unregardful universe which works out its æonian progress, in spite of men who die and hearts which break.

There are no doubt occasional gleams of nature which irresistibly suggest a smile of unutterable love passing over the earth. Once on the western shore I saw a sunset over the sea and the oncoming of night, like some spirit of peace brooding in the air. The hills were golden, and the clouds fell into rank like vistas of angelic choirs. A silent anthem seemed to steal from "belt to belt of crimson sea." And when the lingering pageant of the sunset reached its close, a full moon rose over the eastern

hill. The long breakers on the shore flashed like a scimitar as they fell in the moonlight. Jupiter, large and liquid, made a faint track on the darkening waters from the horizon to the beach. Mars was setting in the haze of the summer night, Virgo shone faint and languorous in the west; and fiery meteors travelled rather than fell through the azure sky. For a brief rapturous hour Nature seemed to speak only of love. If one had been asked suddenly, What, then, is the maker of all this? one would have answered instinctively, not so much, majesty, or beauty, as Love. But a day after or before, that magical landscape was wrapped in blinding storms: the cruel waves were raging on the beach; old fishermen were drowned in the estuary; the hills stood up dark and frowning to affront the tempestuous sea. That hasty inference of love had to be corrected. A certain fear cast out love.

Sometimes, too, in the passages of life we light on human hearts, or on a circle of kindly and beautiful deeds, which carry home the impression that if the creature can so love and sacrifice, the Creator must have a heart which at least approves. But those favourable moments are rare even for enfranchised spirits. If one ventures to look further afield, to read the daily records of the doings of the world, to realise a great city, or a heathen society, or the heart of the dark continent, the

amiable delusion dies away. There is the fell record of "what man has made of man"; and if the inference is to be drawn from the human to the divine, the image rises before the mind of the mixed Olympus of arbitrary, or indifferent gods, beings who have passions like our own, throbs of anger, jealousy, desire, cruel hatreds, and unholy vengeance. But the face of God as it is mirrored in the stains and rifts of the warped heart of man is assuredly not holy love.

We cannot therefore be too explicit,—for here we join hands with all philosophers and students of nature,—it is impossible from nature or life to draw the conclusion that the Creator and Orderer of all is Love. That hope, that faith, which has shot through the weary heart of the world and regenerated it, can only rest on revelation. It had to be shown by something out of nature, and yet by something brought within the compass and apprehension of human life, that God is Love. God Himself had to show it. We are no judges of the ways in which the truth might have been shown. But we may be judges of the fact that it has been shown in the incarnate Son of God. And we may easily satisfy ourselves that if it has not been shown there it has been shown nowhere else. In the confusion and inconsistency of our popular thought we do not always seem to realise this salient fact. All our hope and faith that God

is love must rest in the last resort on the truth of Christ. If Christ be true, if we correctly understand His person, His message, His working, we know that the Creator of this universe is Love. But if not, we have no sure ground to rest on; our faith and hope cannot be sufficiently established to afford purchase for action. Apart from Christ it is open to any man to maintain that God is an unknown Force, inexorable, indifferent to human suffering, regardless of human life, a concatenation of awful uniformities which move like a car of Juggernaut over prostrate human beings to some unhuman goal.

Remembering, then, this incontestable fact, we shall examine with eager interest the evidences of the Love of Christ, and seek to know it, though it passes knowledge.

The rhapsody in the text is certainly surprising. No chant or song in praise of love has ever, in so small a compass, gone so far. For it extends this concept of the love of Christ in all directions, until it assumes proportions co-extensive with the universe. We sweep out on the right hand and the left, we go backwards and forwards, we rise into the empyrean, we sink into the depths of the earth; we are exploring a vast region; we find no limit. We suppose at first that the love, though vast, may be measured, and though difficult to comprehend, may yet be known. But we find there

is no limit; it "o'er toppeth knowledge." The language is quite calm, and yet it is, from the nature of its contents, rhapsodical. And we may well raise the question, On what is such a pæan of rapture based? What evidences are there of a love of Christ which should occasion this sublime passage?

We have a right to be cautious and even critical; for the assertion is vital, as we have seen. We are dealing with the solitary proof of the vast truth that God is Love. We may well shrink from accepting in conclusive evidence on such a theme, however we may be appalled by the thought of surrendering the wonderful faith, and admitting that "the hope of the world is a lie."

The evidence is threefold; and by omitting one or other of the strains of the cord it has been too frequently weakened. It is the triple cord which resists every attempt to break it.

1. First of all there is the human life of Jesus, as it is recorded in the Gospels. However fragmentary the reports, however difficult the attempt may be to harmonise them into a consistent record of facts, or a harmonious combination of features, there can be no question that the records give us an unexampled impression of a heart of love. The familiar incidents come up to "the session of sweet quiet thought" and deliver their testimony. Here is a love not of the common kind, emotional, impulsive, variable; it is not partial and arbitrary.

Jesus in the Gospels does not seem to love the lovable as such, or to select favourites. True, there is the marked expression, "the disciple whom Jesus loved," but it is corrected by the statement "having loved his own, he loved them to the end." A personal friendship was quite consistent with a general love. True, we are told of one young man, that Jesus looking on him loved him. But we are left to infer that such a love was not exceptional, as it was not effectual. The one He thus particularly loved did not follow with Him. His mother was dear to Him; of that the last thought on the cross was sufficient evidence. But in a significant way He swept His eye over a crowd of listening and eager souls, and claimed them as His mother and brethren. His love was emphasised in His constant concern for the sick, the hungry, the bereaved. It was a love that wept over human suffering as well as over human perversity. It was also emphasised by His feeling towards those whom others despised, towards children, towards women, especially sinful women, and indeed towards wicked people in general.

Not only is the love of Christ indisputable in the Gospel narrative; but it stands out as a passion of a new type. Compare it with the love of which Plato's Symposium treats, that love, not wholly free from sensual passion, and when free from sensual passion, losing itself in a cold intellectual

atmosphere. The love of Christ is absolutely uncontaminated by the earthly passion called, or miscalled, love. We see Him in contact with fallen women, with a woman taken in adultery; He loves them, forgives them, saves them; but there is never a stain of that prurient interest or that defiling desire, which is certainly not absent from the lower conception of love.

How should we delineate the love of Christ as it appears in the Gospels? Though it is intense and burns with a steady flame, it is curiously broad and high and deep, and it looks before and after. It always gives the impression of having begun before men were there to be loved, and being likely to continue when the last man has disappeared from the earth. It seems to move with the certainty and security of a law of nature, never excitable, but never dying down.

One can immediately test its quality by raising this simple question: If the Jesus of the Gospels were here, a man among men again, would any of us hesitate for a moment to draw on His love? Should we not be sure of a sympathetic hearing? Could we even imagine Him sending any one of us away because He did not care, or had not time, or would not take the trouble to help?

2. But the impression of His love, made by the course of His earthly life, is wrought to an extraordinary fulness and intensity by the cross. The

atmosphere around the cross is electric. No one can study our records of the events without being powerfully affected. There is a natural indignation at the injustice of the whole procedure; there is surprise at the ingratitude of the mob and at the enmity of the authorities. The weakness of Pilate stirs one to a sense of shame for human nature and especially for human government. The dignity and self-restraint of the Accused before His judges, the serene assurance of the issue, the splendid denunciation of the coming retribution, work upon the mind more powerfully than any designed tragedy. But in this atmosphere of quickened conscience and kindling emotion the one thing which flashes out at every moment, like lightning out of the dark thunderclouds of a gathering storm, is the love of the sufferer, a love even unto death. He pauses to heal a soldier wounded by the zeal of his own attendants; he turns with tender compassion to the women who are bemoaning His fate; in the mortal agony of the cross He thinks of his surviving friends; He is anxious to save his fellow-sufferer; He prays aloud for those who are carrying out the cruel order of crucifixion.

Let us say, in a word, that the whole story, as it is displayed almost unconsciously in the various records, bears out the clue which He Himself gave beforehand; it is a Good Shepherd giving his life for his sheep, shedding his blood as a ransom, dying for the remission of sins.

Whenever the cross is allowed to give its own witness, undisturbed by imperfect theories and dogmas, whenever Christ is evidently crucified before the eyes of men, a great appeal proceeds from the unique spectacle. That question comes which pierced the heart of Zinzendorff before the picture in the gallery at Düsseldorf :

I did this for thee,
What hast thou done for Me?

3. And yet, when we have made all allowance for the portrait of love, unexampled and affecting in the story of Christ's life and death, can we say that these historic facts fully explain the language of the text? Is it possible that a human life, however unselfish and beneficent, and a brief human death, however redemptive, could awake this extraordinary rapture, and be prolonged beyond the lifetime of contemporaries? Surely not.

This passion which echoes in the language of Paul and re-echoes with undiminished force in the hymns of Bernard, and again, with even increased fulness and feeling in the letters of Samuel Rutherford ; this passion, which is known at the present time, and rises beyond the power of language in millions of Christian hearts, is only to be explained by the interior movements of the Spirit. The love of Christ is not, and never was, a cool inference from the facts of His life and death. It is an experience wrought

in the soul by the spirit of God. This alone accounts for the strong and impassioned language of Paul, Bernard, Rutherford.

While the Gospels are the primary source of our knowledge of Christ, they are fitly described as only "the beginning" (Mark i. 1). They rightly conclude with a reminder that the half has not been told (John xxi. 25). We may do the Gospel an injustice by a misguided bibliolatry. And many theologians, notably Ritschl, have insisted on the Gospel narratives as the exclusive sources of our knowledge, until they have diverted men's minds from that immediate knowledge of Christ which is the express promise of the gospels themselves.

The love of Christ in that fulness which is hinted at by the text is made known to us by the Spirit, who presents Jesus to the individual consciousness in an engaging and overwhelming light as the lover of the soul. He comes, a spiritual presence, real and personal as the Jesus of the gospels was to the first disciples. "Hark, my soul, it is the Lord, 'Tis thy Saviour, hear his word." He presents Himself as the offering and ransom for sin, and as the giver of pardon. He approaches the door of the heart and knocks. He comes in. He crests His inward throne. He again asks the question, Lovest thou Me? and gives the command, Feed My sheep. He again bids the soul cast in its net, and then calls, "Come and break thy fast." Those raptures of

communion, the glowing passages between the soul and the Saviour, could never be explained if they were the product of a reminiscence and of a historical imagination. Some who have experienced them at their highest and best have had but faint knowledge of the gospels, and little opportunity to know them. Paul himself did not know the gospels. The Christ of whom he speaks is the Jesus of the gospels, but it is from another source he knows Him. Francis of Assisi evidently communed with Christ independently of the gospels, and Thomas à Kempis approaches his Lord, and carries on the converse in a manner suggested, but certainly not limited by the gospel story. No, the love of Christ, exhibited in the life and passion, is not confined to that historical fact. It is an actual and operative spiritual power that breaks into the believing soul victorious as the light. It sheds itself abroad within, an atmosphere of life and peace and joy. It acts upon heart and will. It constrains, it impels, it upholds.

It is fatal to omit this witness of the Spirit; which is the seal of all other witnesses. Forget the Spirit, and the gospels themselves lose their power. Forget the Spirit, and the life of love becomes a mere record of certain sinless years once passed beneath the Syrian blue. Forget the Spirit, and the cross is uninterpreted, and the resurrection a mere echo of confused desires :

Now He is dead, far hence He lies
In the lorn Syrian town ;
And on His grave, with shining eyes
The Syrian stars look down.

But as we realise the threefold evidence which convinces us of the love of Christ, we are carried back with a fresh conviction to the starting-point, that in the love of Christ we have really revealed to us the love of God.

The witness of the Spirit, that brings home to us the love of Christ, is, if it is attentively observed, also the witness that this love is the love of God.

As the exhibition of a tender and compassionate human love, which once irradiated the hills of Galilee, the life of Christ could not affect us more than the life of Francis, which twelve centuries later irradiated Monte Subasio and the Umbrian Plain. There is an obvious and inevitable limit to the influence of every human personality. And the love of a human heart at the best is no match for the onset of the ages, and the cruel permutations of calamity and doubt and death.

But when the truth dawns upon us, that this love of Christ is an insight into the authentic nature of God; and indeed that this is God's way of bringing the truth of His love within the reach of our comprehension and knowledge; that here is a miniature which we may lay on our heart of our invisible, and otherwise incomprehensible Father; that, in a word,

we see here on the scale, and within the limits, of human life, the heart of the Infinite God; the impression made upon us is incalculable; the barriers go down, and the tides of the Divine Being flow into us and overflow, the love of God shed abroad in our hearts.

For consider, following the clue, and accepting the truth which is here brought within our reach, we are to believe that the Force which made the worlds, the Force which in ways inconceivable initiated and evolves this spacious universe, is Love, like that love in the heart of Christ. We are to believe that the immense Intelligence which expresses itself in the uniformity of nature, and finds some inadequate interpretation for our minds in the conception of natural law, is love like the love of Christ. We are to believe that the motive in the production, development, and sustentation of Man, is such love as Christ's. The notion, that God first expressed His love to the world in giving His Son to die for it must be enlarged. He first showed His love for the world by making it. The very conception of men, as free, intelligent beings, capable of becoming the children of God, is an imagination of love.

With this clue in our hands, we reverse the popular and superficial arguments. Looking at the disorder and trouble of life, and the mystery of death, men rashly argue that God is not love. Nay, we reply, we have looked into the heart of God, for

“he that hath seen Christ hath seen the Father,” and certainly that is pure, triumphant, changeless love; therefore we know that the love of God is primal, and the mysteries of human life and death must be interpreted in the light of that primordial fact.

The power which upholds all things, creates all things, and will consummate all things, is Love. It is not Duty even, or Good, or Virtue; these are secondary terms; the origin of all is Love. Not Duty even, but Love, deserves that splendid apostrophe:

Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong
And the most ancient heavens by Thee are fresh and strong.

Now, if it is true that the love of Christ in its breadth, and length, and height and depth, passes our knowledge, it must be even more correct to say that the love of God surpasses all the imagination of heart and mind. If the miniature reveals a certain unfathomable infinite, we are prepared for something in the original which is even more beyond the reach of our plummet.

Christ is comparatively, and of set purpose, within our reach. God is beyond it. No man hath seen Him at any time. But this magnitude and majesty which evade us, are—so the revelation shows—love. His other attributes run out into lengths and heights where our feeble powers are unable to follow. So does His love. We cannot labour up the steps of the universe, and make our way to “the flaming

walls of the world"; neither can we explore the love of God, or find those Cherubim and Seraphim that with flashing swords defend the confines of His Being, which is love.

It is well—to grasp the paradox of the text—that the mind should seek to know what all the time it recognises to be beyond knowledge. It is well definitely to conceive that we are trying to conceive the inconceivable.

Behold this vast abyss of the Love of God, higher than the stars in the zenith, deeper than the stars which roll beneath our feet and shine on the antipodes; broader than the East is from the West; which was before the beginning of years, and will be after their end. This vastness is to our eyes, "dark with excess of light." Our eyes are greatly blinded by our lovelessness and other diseases of the perverted will. We cast our own shadows on the glorious mists which float across the enormous gulf. But the truth is dawning on us through Christ, that the whole unimaginable Cosmos is Love. No world is outside it; no galaxy above it; no minute creature below it. Love smote the light out of darkness, love brought life out of death, love made, love continued, love redeemed the whole.

As the floods of light break into the soul, the spirit of love drawing the sluices and permitting us to be filled with the indescribable illumination, we get glimpses of the truth, we cast ourselves fear-

lessly on those everlasting arms, we feel our way confidently to that untiring heart of God. We say, on a scale so much vaster than the poet meant, as God is greater than the best of men, and with a rest proportionate to the object of confidence,

I cannot comprehend, I love.

The depth is unsearchable, the height cannot be scaled. But, as St Paul sees, we may pray for one another to be advanced in this Divine Love. It is more appropriate to ask this boon for one another than for ourselves. When we are seeking to know Love, it must be love, in which self is forgotten that seeks to know. Clearly it will be by loving, and the expansion of nature produced by love, that we may hope to make some progress in this lore.

And the goal of the progress is set before us, O unimaginable goal! "That ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God." This minute point of being, my soul, which in its finitude must never hope to share the wealth, the wisdom, the knowledge of the Eternal, may yet in this royal way of Love, reach a certain fulness of the Divinity. The love of Christ is a gate into the Infinite. When through Him we get within the being of God, when His love constrains, and we begin to love God with all our strength and heart and mind, and the overflowing is to love our neighbour as ourselves, we have become so far initiated into God, so far partakers of the Divine nature, that it is no longer hyperbole,

or at anyrate it is not blasphemy, to think of being
"filled unto all the fulness of God."

When that afflatus falls upon the soul, when that
truth clearly dawns, the rapture becomes inarticu-
late; then has the spirit sat in Merlin's chair,

I lose myself to find myself.

THE DEPTHS OF THE DIVINE JUSTICE

“Wherefore now let the fear of the Lord be upon you; take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.”—*2 Chron.* xix. 7.

IX

THE DEPTHS OF THE DIVINE JUSTICE

THERE is no attitude of mind more common in our time than the inclination to impugn the justice of God. Tried by our standard of justice, and viewed with our limited vision, the facts of the world do not readily support the contention that an absolute justice controls the course of history or the development of the individual life. If we are concerned to bring an indictment against the ordering of the world, there is a crowd of facts to refute the plea of religious optimism that there is no iniquity with God.

In some vague and general way, it may be maintained, things right themselves, and justice in the end is done. Rome falls under the weight of her corruptions; Venice, beautiful in her decay, sits on the sea as the witness that pride and ambition and the lust of greed are visited with national ruin. But, within the compass of human lives there seems no such accuracy of judgment. The righteous perish and the wicked flourish. The witnesses of truth—Lawrence, Sebastian, Catherine and Justina—are

left to suffer as martyrs; the rude usurpers of power are allowed to establish their thrones on successful crime. Theodoric treacherously murders Odoacer, and yet he rules the empire so obtained with wisdom and beneficence. And while the guilty come off with impunity, the sins of the fathers are visited on their children; the innocent are perpetually expiating crimes which they inherit in their blood. Nothing is easier than to dwell on these facts until bewilderment leads to unbelief, and unbelief to cynicism. The cynic is often a tender heart, embittered by the seeming injustice of life, and seeking in a shell of callousness defence from the sharp assault of facts.

And yet with what unfaltering confidence Scripture asserts the absolute justice of God! How severely it rebukes our rash judgment! "Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker?" (Job iv. 17). And, strange to say, our minds in their saner mood assent to this view of Scripture; we are constantly ready to side with it against all appearances.

Now the simple fact seems to be, that the justice of God is established for us, not by experience, but by revelation, not by the world, but by God Himself. It is a truth, not of history, but of the Spirit. We have to bring it, *à priori*, to the interpretation of facts. Our knowledge, always partial, our sense of justice, always empirical, cannot establish the justice

of God from the world as we know it. The conviction, held by the good and true in all ages, that there is no iniquity in God, is derived from a communication made by God to seers and righteous men. It is by the study of this revealed truth that our hearts are established in confidence. And with the truth thus revealed we approach the perplexing facts of life. *The justice of God is a datum of revelation; the world has not given it, nor can the world take it away.*

In Scripture there are three points in which the Divine justice is illustrated: two of these, originally in the Old Testament, are carried forward into the New; the third, in the New, only prefigured in the Old, is the completion and justification of the earlier revelation. These are the three points of the Divine justice:

1. God will accurately visit and punish the iniquities of men.

2. God will save and reward those who put their trust in Him.

3. In the gift of Christ, and in His cross, God is just and the justifier of those who have faith in Jesus.

Now I believe that the proper, and only method, is by the illumination and power of the Holy Spirit to get our minds formed on these strong lines of Divine Truth; and when His word is thus hidden in our hearts, we have a light shining in a dark place, to illuminate the obscurities of experience.

1. The earliest and the most persistent definition of the Divine justice, is that God will by no means spare the guilty; He takes vengeance of men's inventions (Ps. xcix. 8). Is God unrighteous who visiteth with wrath? asks Paul (Rom. iii. 5). We know that the judgment of God is according to truth against them that practise evil (Rom. ii. 2). Never does the sentence waver; there is a judgment-seat, and before it every human being will be brought; the decision will be according to the things which we have done, whether they be good or evil. "God will render to every man according to his works, to them that by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honour and incorruption, eternal life, but unto them that are factious and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, shall be wrath and indignation . . . there is no respect of persons with God" (Rom. ii. 6-11). This uncompromising assertion of an unerring justice is given in the dawn, but it is reasserted in the noontide, of revelation. Here is an inalienable attribute of the Divine nature. The God of all the earth will do justly. He will do it, because He is God. We know that He will do it, not because we can sum up the facts of the world and pass a verdict on them, but because we know that He is God.

It is a truth of revelation, but like all revelation it stands proved in its own light. Our nature is made as the counterpart of Divine truth; and when the

truth is declared, our nature acclaims it. From our own nature we might venture to assert—as many a noble myth and many a burning apophthegm of the wise have asserted—that the Supreme Power in the world must be just. Our hankering after justice, and our delight in it, demand a correspondence in the government of the universe. But from our blurred notions, and inconsistent conduct, we can reach no unfaltering conviction, nor even any clear conception, of this justice in the order of things. Only when from without the great assertion is made, God is just, all the witnesses within us, articulate and inarticulate, assent to the truth.

When the clue is in our hands and we have *à priori* the conviction that God will punish the iniquity of men, we are able to obtain, as through drifting clouds and volumes of rolling smoke, glimpses of facts which justify the conviction.

Justice walks, we say, with a halting foot. But never a day will pass but you may see her overtake some one. Though we may fancy at times that sins are going unpunished, we may see at all times punishment actually alighting. The long iniquity is constantly being exposed; the bad habits, formed in slothful self-indulgence, at length recoil. The judgment proceeds in such a way that no one can at any time see it accomplished, but it is always possible to see it in the course of accomplishment.

Scripture encourages us to study the fulfilment

of this Divine Justice on the large scale of nations. The canvas is larger and more panoramic, and the facts are more open to observation than in the case of individuals.

The ruins of Nineveh and Babylon are an impressive witness of the justice of God, because prophets accurately described what would come. The decay of Tyre, of Egypt, of the Roman Empire, is hardly less impressive, though the results are not so unmistakable, nor were the prophecies so clear. The complete disappearance of Edom, Moab, Philistia, and of the northern kingdom of Israel, is an extraordinary exhibition of the definite judgments of God. But the fate of the Jewish race is startling in its distinctness. By the most singular doom this people carries in its sacred books the precise prophecy of its punishment, and exhibits in its long drawn out history the precise fulfilment of its prophecies.

Their racial doom is stamped upon the face—
 No Time, nor Place, those features can disguise ;
 They bear, within the eyes, the shifty trace
 Of those whom Terror never wholly flies !
 Condemned to find a home 'neath alien skies,
 Wanderers upon the face of God's fair earth,
 And cursed, like Cain, with murder from their birth.

Or Asia-Minor, Constantinople, North Africa, where the corruption of Christianity entailed the vengeance of history, the justice of God is manifest. In the countries which rejected the Reformation,

Italy, Spain and France, some of us think we can see the plain judgments of God at work. And, in view of the dealings of God with nations, we have profound reason to resist in our own country the idolatry and the vices, for which things' sake the wrath of God falls on the children of disobedience.

If we cannot see with a similar clearness the judgment of God on the individual, that is because the individual, unlike the nation, is not entirely realised on the plane of time. To see how accurately and infallibly the justice of God overtakes every human soul, it would be necessary to pierce the veil and look into the world beyond. What we see here of a man's life is merely the beginning; the issues are elsewhere. But in the light of revelation, and in the light also of the facts, on the larger or national scale, we may be sure that the God of all the earth will do right. No deed of wrong will remain unavenged; no crime will be undiscovered; no vice unexposed. The conscious universe has seen, heard, recorded all, and in its time will give evidence. As surely as the planets move in their orbits, as surely as the seasons succeed one another, as surely as the harvest comes from the sowing, the works and ways of men will come to their account. Be not deceived, God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he reap. As every deed of justice and love bears its fruit, so every deed of cruelty and harshness will yield its

thorns and thistles. As every word of truth is caught up into the sum of things, so every lie brings its chastisement back to the lying tongue. As every holy, pious, or unselfish thought works out in the evolution of good, so every dark or selfish thought of the human spirit must meet its just condemnation from Him who reads the hearts of men; not here, or only very partially here, but in the life to which earthly life is a prelude. Sometimes our sense of justice demands such a future for working out this unfinished scheme. But it is our knowledge of God and of His justice which makes this future sure. The God of all the earth *will do right*.

2. The second point in the Scriptural teaching is that God rewards those who put their trust in Him. Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. "I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward," was the response which God made to His trust. "Them that honour me I will honour" (1 Sam. ii. 30), is the fixed principle of the Divine dealings with men. Here it seems as if the justice of God can only be interpreted by His love. Is it possible that the heart of God is hungry, like a human heart, for the love and trust of His creatures? If only He can gain their spontaneous and complete confidence, He can and will forgive everything. This is of course an idea of justice alien to earthly law courts. What has the judge to do with the sentiments of the prisoner towards him-

self? Though the prisoner should offer him the most whole-hearted affection, the law must take its course.

But the earthly analogies are always imperfect. God's administration of justice, God's dealings with men, are of such a kind, are so inexplicably mingled of righteousness and love, that whenever a human heart trusts to Him, turns to Him, appeals to Him, believes in Him, the Divine justice flows out in welcome, in support, in forgiveness, in salvation.

Every narrative of the Old Testament is an illustration of this truth. Jacob, Joshua, Gideon, David, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, even Ahab and Manasseh, Jonah, the prophets, the psalmists—they are all beads on one thread; the burden of all is, that the blessing and salvation of God are imparted to those who trust in Him, and in proportion to their trust.

This amazing principle is in the New Testament carried further, or rather deeper. For the merely temporal and external are subordinated, and a genuine spiritual standard is applied. Just as equity is a finer justice, so this spiritual estimate is at once stronger and more delicate than the estimate formed under the Old Covenant. Here the justice of God is found to be absolute and exact; in the spiritual experience of those who trust in Him, in defiance of all outward circumstances, chance or change, loss or death, God, the very

fountain of justice, communicates Himself, rich and full and sufficient to every man, exactly according to His capacity to receive Him, which is measured by his readiness to trust in Him.

Here, observe, the inequalities of life and lot become quite indifferent. What does it matter that some are rich, some poor; some fortunate, others unfortunate; some beautiful, others plain; some short-lived, others long-lived? The all-important fact is, that God is seen, an atmosphere of Life and Love and Joy, pressing in everywhere, just in proportion to the willingness of human hearts to receive Him. Paul, for example, persecuted, suffering and in bonds, is full, and rich and rejoicing in God, because his will to trust Him is complete. The Emperor Nero is tormented, miserable, on the throne of the world, because he has put from him absolutely the trust in God. Between those extremes all human life grades itself at all times and in all places, and the justice of God is revealed in the accuracy with which the trust of man in Him is rewarded with peace, and joy, and inward power.

Thinking the other morning of this truth, incredible almost for its very grace and goodness, I went out early, and was surprised to find the whole earth testifying to it, as if before my purged eyes. The sunlight of the delayed Spring was over the land; the faint mantle of green was flung over some of the trees; each tree had its bird;

each twig of the chestnuts was golden-tipped with the bud which would presently burst. The tale that was told was distinct as a voice in my ear. I was amazed that we ever fail to hear it, and to see the truth. Just as the sap of Nature runs up from the dark earth and expresses itself in every tree and every bird, breaking into splendour of foliage and rapture of song, whenever the appropriate channel or organism presents itself; so the life of God, the love of God, the personal presence and power of God, breaks into consciousness whenever, and just in proportion as, the soul of man will admit Him and make a channel for His inflowing. "Draw near unto God and He will draw near unto you." "If with all your heart ye truly seek me, ye shall ever surely find me, thus saith your God." And in this lies His finer Justice, the Equity of the Spiritual Order.

3. But the third and finishing touch of the Divine Justice is a mystery into which angels desire to look, and where man may spend his life a-gaze.

The supreme justice of God is found in the Cross. The supernatural blending of law and love, of severity and mercy, of the principle that God will by no means spare the guilty, and of the principle that He will forgive and receive all who put their trust in Him, here stands out in unimaginable beauty and perfection.

With incredible folly men have charged the Cross

with injustice. That the guilt of the offender should be laid on the innocent, has often been cited as a disproof of the justice of the God, revealed in the Bible. But what blindness and perversity is this which would strike out of the world, and out of the idea of justice, love's triumph, vicarious suffering?

If it is true that human justice knows nothing of this principle, that will only show how far human justice falls short of the Divine, or rather, how justice among men is apt to appear in isolation, untempered by other qualities, while justice in God is part of a perfect character, a colour perfectly blended in the white light of His holiness.

Surely we forget sometimes the conditions of the problem: A sinning world, a God who is rejected and neglected by the creatures whose love He craves; a holiness which is bound to punish the guilty, a dignity which cannot for ever stoop to ask love at a creature's hands. We forget how all we, like sheep, have gone astray, how the sentence of death lies against us, how none of us can deliver his brother's soul.

We forget how that trust in God, which is God's great demand, is the one thing withheld: There is none that calleth upon Him; none that stirreth up himself to seek the Lord. Men will hate and fear their God, or forget Him and deny Him. They will seek to propitiate Him with sacrifices and subterfuges, or they will defy Him, and curse Him and die.

But they will not trust Him, believe in His love, or commit themselves to His mercy. And because they sin against Him by their deeds, and sin more deeply by withholding their hearts from Him, the storm of vengeance falls. It is inevitable. The world swept away by the flood; Sodom and Gomorrah overwhelmed with fire; the elements melting with fervent heat, and the nations that forget God turned to destruction; these are the inevitable work of that Divine Justice which holds the ordered universe in awe, and admits no breach of its supreme decrees.

It is in these conditions that the justice of God reconciles itself with His mercy, and love seeks out a way for the reconciliation. First, as if to habituate the human mind to the great and strange conception, the principle of vicarious sacrifice is foreshadowed in the offerings of the altar, and the shedding of the blood of beasts for the remission of sin. Meanwhile human experience, like Abraham on Mount Moriah, is learning that everything good is achieved by a moral and spiritual substitution. Then at last the voice of a great prophet proclaims a world-vision of redemption: All we like sheep have gone astray, and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. And then, when the mind of man was habituated to a great expectation, and to a notion of such a redemption, in the fulness of time, Christ

came. He "suffered for sins once, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (1 Peter iii. 18). The righteousness of God broke out of the heavens, not taking vengeance on sinners, as was due, but exhibiting itself in an amazing light, "that he might himself be just and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus" (Rom. iii. 26).

What a way it is of "passing over the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God!" What a mysterious and moving exhibition it is of the One who can by no means spare the guilty, taking upon Himself the guilt and iniquity of us all! What an appeal it is for that trust and love which, it seems, God above all things desires. As if He said to us, Poor wandering children of men, you will not trust me for myself; if you regard me at all it is as the judge that punishes iniquity, and you fear me, and try to propitiate me; but see, I will yet win your love, for, bating no jot of my demand for righteousness, I will myself make propitiation, I will provide the offering, I will lay upon Him the iniquity of you all. Will not this win your trust—your love? Where justice in its severity might terrify, will not justice, clothing itself in mercy and redemption, break and soften your hearts and bring you to me?

We should not, in times of doubt and disappointment, forget how wonderfully this appeal of God

has succeeded. Through this supreme exhibition of His nature, as the just one and the justifier of him who has faith in Jesus, God has won for Himself a multitude whom no man can number. Every day the number grows. Wherever Christ is preached some soul reaches out the hand of faith, yields to God, and gives the trust for which He asks. This is the power of God unto salvation. The light is breaking over the uttermost parts of the earth. Wherever the truth is made known it commends itself to the conscience of men. Always the ineradicable sense of justice assures men that God, if God there be, must punish them for their sins; and in their sins they know the punishment that they deserve. Always this glad announcement comes as the key to unlock the fast-closed gate; here God is just and the justifier of Him who has faith in Jesus! We should make speed to utter this truth to the whole world; for the whole world needs it, and every year the zone in which it is received and believed extends.

But just in proportion as this approves itself to be the supreme exhibition of the justice of God, a justice higher than man's, as God is higher than man, just in proportion as the Cross appears to be not a mere theory, depending on our acceptance, but a fact as real as the revolution of the globe or the shining of the sun, this truth of Redemption stands out, the Absolute Tribunal, at which the

whole world, knowing or ignorant, guilty or innocent, must be tried. After the Incarnation, the justice of God does not alter its nature, but is yet changed; for it completes and fulfils itself. Still the world-old principle holds, that He will judge men according to their works; still the one thing needful is that the soul should trust in Him. But it has become evident that "this is the work of God, to believe in Him whom God has sent." The trust in Jesus becomes the test, the expression of the trust in God. As faith in Him brings at once the pardon of sin and deliverance from it, and the new creation of the Divine forgiveness and regeneration, so rejection of Him becomes an irreparable condemnation, irreparable because it is God's supreme effort of Love and Wisdom and Power that is rejected. It is the awful necessity of privilege, that it brings with it responsibility, of fuller truth, that to refuse it involves a worse ruin. Hence Jesus said: "If ye were blind ye would have no sin, but now ye say we see, your sin remaineth" (John ix. 41).

And thus the cloud as well as the rainbow is still around the Throne. The justice of God leaves us always in this imperfect world conscious of the double voice: Come ye blessed, and Depart, ye cursed,

THE DEPTHS OF SATAN

“ The deep things of Satan.”—*Rev.* ii. 24.

X

THE DEPTHS OF SATAN

IT is clear that the "depths of Satan" stand in some sort of contrast with the "depths of God" (I Cor. ii. 10). The word is identical in the two cases, and it is sufficiently striking and unusual to make the parallel irresistible. Scripture does not speak of the "depths of a man," though, as we have said, the term would be quite appropriate to describe those unfathomed recesses and convolutions of the human spirit, which defy not only the most curious gaze, but even the searching light of consciousness itself.

The term is not used for that "infinite" in man which is perhaps more familiar to modern than to ancient thought ; but it is reserved for the description of God on the one hand and of Satan on the other.

We must not miss the suggestion of this language ; we cannot miss it if we realise in any degree the breath of the Spirit in the phrases and thoughts of the Biblical writers. There are in God great deeps, vast abysses in which the strongest intellect may search without coming on any limits. There are also in Satan "deeps" ; and they are of such

a kind that the deeps of God are the only reality with which they can be put into comparison. No man presents such deeps; no other being or intelligence can be cited as a parallel. That being known to us as the author of Evil, and known to us really only as such, has depths which we cannot fathom, or even understand.

But before advancing a step further, we must remind ourselves that we should be losing all sense of proportion; we should be judging in the most limited and earthly fashion; if we were to imagine that the depths of Satan in any way balanced the depths of God, if we were to admit for a moment that there was any equality or even colourable pretence to claim an equality.

Those depths of God which we have ventured to survey, the inner relationship of His being; His resources; His wisdom; His knowledge; His power; His love; in a word, the unimaginable recesses of His holiness, are actually infinite. Like the heavens, which open up to our fuller knowledge, and reveal a beyond, no matter to what point we imagine ourselves conveyed, these depths of God are without limit, without beginning or end. It is not only that our feeble minds are incapable of comprehending them, but apart from the incapacities incident to our faculties, we are inwardly assured that the stupendous realities of God are always there, transcending all faculties, a vastness in which thought may ex-

pand and float, for ever exploring, for ever learning, but never closing the search and the discovery. It is the infinitude and inexhaustibleness of God which bring peace, a guarantee against all satiety, an assurance of indefinite expansion, a ravishing conception of a progressive eternity in which perpetually expanding powers will meet with perpetually enlarging material.

The depths of Satan, on the other hand, though too profound for us to fathom, are easily fathomed by God; they lie only in the hollow of His hand. Compared with our small human personalities they are formidable enough; we can lose ourselves in them and be overwhelmed; but compared with God they are quite insignificant. Indeed, to compare the depths of Satan with the depths of God is like comparing a stagnant pool on the shore with the unplumbed ocean, or the fissures and caverns on the surface of the earth with the impenetrable and unimaginable distances of the heavens.

I remember, when looking down from the edge of the crater of Vesuvius, into that hideous and revolting tumult, which seemed like a vast, seething pot throwing up stones, lurid flames and sulphurous stenches, that I had the feeling of gazing into the depths of evil. Once, too, in the Yorkshire dales I visited what is there called a pothole, a cleft in the limestone rock overgrown with bramble and stunted trees, into which an adventurous dalesman

had been lowered, but had found no bottom. That dismal deep haunted the imagination and gave the mind the awe and horror of the unknown. But how superficial on the crust of the earth is such a cleft; how superficial even are those monstrous caverns in the belly of the earth, where the waters gather, boil and explode, and make an eruption of Vesuvius. Compared with the gross volume of this little globe they are hardly more than the indentations on the skin of an orange. Viewed from the nearest planet they are absolutely invisible and insignificant.

The depths of Satan, with all their hideousness and horror, are, in comparison with God, like these surface depressions of the globe in comparison with the infinite heavens.

We have no reason to suppose that Satan is known outside this planet. He is called "the prince of this world" by Jesus (John xii. 31, xiv. 30, xvi. 11), the god of this world by Paul (2 Cor. iv. 4), a power which works here in the children of disobedience. His hosts are identified with certain principles and powers which occupy the air, the world-rulers of this darkness (Eph. vi. 12.) But, so far as we can tell, he has no significance in Mars, and in those happier systems which sparkle on the brow of night that rebel-spirit is probably unknown, or known only for the gracious stooping of the Son of God, who condescended to enter this world that He might destroy the works of the devil.

You see I take the Scriptural language as an interpretation of the facts of life which remain otherwise unintelligible. If to some minds this language savours of the myth, I should urge that the myth has its place in the teaching of truth until science is able to explain the facts of the world better. But I know no science or philosophy which has offered a more reasonable explanation of certain constant phenomena in human life than that which is suggested by the language of Scripture.

There is at work in this world, only for a season and for a definite and divinely ordained object, a strong spirit of evil, who, in his pride and folly and rebellion, has assumed a kind of rivalry with God. With the futility which attaches to all wickedness, he is bound to minister to a higher good. His time is short, his destiny is certain. But for his span of power he affects the depths, he wields formidable thunderbolts, he brags, he hisses, he destroys. With all kinds of deceit and lying wonders he tempts and tries the human race. Using, in all probability, the disembodied spirits of his dupes, just as he uses the embodied spirits of wicked men here, he toils with malignant energy to frustrate the purpose of God in human affairs.

I take this fact of revelation as a clue to the mystery of iniquity; nor dare I underestimate the force or the skill of this spirit of evil that is the cause of all our woe. But it is highly important

to see the situation from the standpoint of the God-ruled universe. Revelation enables us to occupy that standpoint, and it appears that to God and the happy spirits Satan is but a venomous serpent that writhes in the undergrowth of the world, or a roaring lion which seeks what it may destroy. He is a magician working deceptive tricks, a kind of Simon Magus, presenting himself as money, or power, or other discredited lures; but his money and his power shall perish with him.

But that we are foolish like the young man in the Proverbs (Prov. vii. 7, etc.), who admits, if he does not court, the embraces of the strange woman, we should never be taken in by the imposition. It is only the *folly* of sin which makes his depths formidable. "Resist the devil and he shall flee from you," is a truth open to every man's experience. "Give place to the devil" and he masters you, is a truth which we are all forced to observe.

Let us try then to keep the sense of proportion; let us recognise that the depths of Satan are nothing compared with the depths of God. And yet, since men are deluded by them, since centuries of exposure do not seem to break the force of his wiles or to convince succeeding generations of the anguish, ugliness and horror of this intricate and dark spirit of evil, let us seek to turn the light of God upon the depths of Satan, and to make them plain to our own, and if possible other, souls.

It seems to be the fact that when we are without God we are possessed by the "god of this world"; when God is ours, and our life is hid with Christ in Him, we are translated out of that lower kingdom into another realm where the bitter enemy of the soul can have no dominion over us.

If we dwell upon the powers of Satan, it is only that we may turn with a full heart to the Power that has overcome and does overcome him. We may fearlessly expose the shame of the bondage when the Deliverer is known to be at hand.

Now it should be understood at the outset, that in searching those depths of Satan which we call sin, we everywhere come upon the fact that sin is something more than individual guilt. Men are necessarily social; they make and are made by the society in which they live. When, therefore, being without God, they live under the God of this world, they form a strong and subtle society which organises itself against God. Evil actions propagate themselves along hidden social nerves; they course in the unseen veins of a godless society. Men tempt each other; evil inclinations in one become evil acts in another. Evil acts in their turn prompt evil inclinations. Thus the very channels of intercourse between man and man, and the opportunities of influence, become the means of sin. There is formed what Ritschl called "A Kingdom of Sin" opposed to the Kingdom of God. It may be conceived as

an awful tyranny, from which the individual writhes in vain to escape.¹ The good desire struggles, but evil is present and potent; the man held in the bondage of this Society, or kingdom of Satan, is helpless like Laocoon in the grasp of the serpents from the sea.

It is impossible to exaggerate the horror of this truth, which can only be expressed in such imagery as that of the Apocalypse, or in the great poetic descriptions of the Paradise Lost.

In our more recent literature the vision is partly given by Swinburne's terrific thought of "the wave of the world," which is nothing else than the sea of social sin rolling over the depths of Satan:—

Where beyond the extreme sea wall, and between the
 remote sea gates,
 Waste water washes, and tall ships founder, and deep death
 waits ;
 Where, mighty with deepening sides, clad about with the
 seas as with wings,
 And impelled of invisible tides, and fulfilled of unspeakable
 things,
 White-eyed, and poisonous finned, sharp-toothed, and
 serpentine-curved,
 Rolls, under the whitening wind of the future, the wave of
 the world.
 The depths stand naked in sunder behind it, the storms flee
 away ;
 In the hollow before it the thunder is taken and snared as a
 prey ;

¹ See Mr Garvie's *Ritschlian Theology*, p. 304, for the value of this conception of the Kingdom of Sin.

In its sides is the north wind bound ; and its salt is of all
men's tears,
With light of ruin, and sound of changes, and pulse of
years ;
With travail of day after day, and with trouble of hour upon
hour ;
And bitter as blood is the spray ; and the crests are as
fangs that devour ;
And its vapour and storm of its steam as the sighing of
spirits to be ;
And its noise as the noise in a dream ; and its depth as the
roots of the sea :
And the height of its heads as the height of the utmost
stars of the air :
And the ends of the earth at the might thereof tremble, an
time is made bare.

It is only in the thought of this wide-spread, advancing, and overpowering iniquity which submerges individual souls, that we obtain any adequate point of view from which to estimate the depths of Satan. Probably if a man might stand alone against the enemy he might overcome, as Jesus did in the temptation ; but he cannot get disentangled, he is caught in the wave of the world, he is rolled helpless and lost in the abyss.

The power of the enemy is seen in the glamour which he is able to throw over those hideous depths, which in the light of God are so revolting that the human soul, if it saw them in that light, would instantly shrink from them. Satan transforms himself into an angel of light. His depths of Pride, of Despair, of Lust, of Unbelief, are invested with a

kind of visionary glory, like a blood red sunset, or the majestic march of flames; and men are drawn into the depths as by a spurious splendour, and with the magic of a heart-moving music; the veil of illusion is over their faces until they open their eyes in hell, being in torment.

Let us seek to tear the veil aside and look into these four depths of Satan, Pride, Despair, Lust and Unbelief.

1. Milton, as became his Titanic spirit, devoted all his strength to representing the depth of Pride—

Better to rule in hell than serve in heaven,

is Satan's fixed idea. This terrific thought is developed out of the history of the fall in Gen. iii. 5. "God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God knowing good and evil." Satan is the spirit that sets himself up, as against God. Into that depth of moral and spiritual absurdity he sweeps men. Man, too, this finite atom, this insignificant speck of organic consciousness in the infinite world, shuts his eyes to God, assumes the godships himself, walks in his own ways, defies all the laws and powers of God, and in his incredible infatuation charges against the Creator the very evils which he has produced by his own disordered will.

And yet no truth can be plainer than this; that the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose

name is Holy, can only dwell with a contrite and humble spirit (Isa. lvii. 15). The thought of pride is sin, but that egotism which obliterates God, and mistakes itself for God, is a delusion, which to purged eyes seems madness.

There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes ! and their eyelids are lifted up (Prov. xxx. 13).

It is sufficiently absurd to see this generation of Pride brought into the presence of superiors, the upstart before the king of ancient lineage, the braggart before the soldier of approved courage, the smatterer before the competent authority. But these partial exposures are trifling compared with the humiliation of a man who has exalted himself against God, a king for instance like Henry II. who has blasphemously defied the King of kings, a conqueror like Napoleon who has ravaged the earth as if it were his and not God's, a man of science who on the strength of his scrap of ordered knowledge has set up himself or men like himself against the Author and Ruler of all.

When the glamour fades, when the truth is seen, it is hardly possible to conceive the confusion and shame of the human soul that has thus been betrayed by Satan into the capital absurdity of thinking that it could be as God.

2. The depth of Despair. Side by side with the depth of pride lies the depth of despair. In the

book of Job Satan is represented as plunging the patriarch into suffering and disaster, and then suggesting to him, through the lips of his wife: "Dost thou still retain thy integrity? Renounce God, and die." It is as if in the being of Satan there were a depth of fiery heat contiguous to a depth of thick-ribbed ice and intolerable cold. For man, under Satan's rule, is always passing in a violent transition from self-confidence, defiance and pride, to a servile despondency which admits of no comfort. Sometimes he stands with one foot in each depth, and utters his defiance and despair in a breath,

Out of the night which covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

But frequently he sinks unrelieved into the awful gulf where no ray of light or comfort can reach him. That way madness lies. It might seem impossible for even Satan to throw any glamour over this pitchy gulf; but it is an extraordinary fact that the soul takes a certain grim delight in denouncing God and dying; it flatters itself with I know not what sense of dignity and importance in turning away from the eternal light and plunging into the eternal gloom. In its distorted vision, to make humble submission to the holy will of God, and to rest on His bosom, would seem tame; but there is something grand and even sublime in turning the back

on the true life, the life which is life indeed, and the love that made the world, and in deliberately entering the awful Tartarean darkness. Some morbid gleam of self-pity and self-admiration plays upon the deluded soul as it thus chooses destruction. Sometimes a whole society, generally of the wealthy and luxurious, embraces this hideous fate, and dances with hollow laughter down to death.

3. But of all the depths of Satan none is more mysterious or horrible than the one which is referred to in the text under the image of Jezebel (ii. 20). It is difficult to find language even to touch upon it. But Scripture does not shrink ; it speaks with amazing plainness. The enemy of souls seizes the natural functions of the body, the very functions on which the life and continuance of the race depend, and manages to pervert them into instruments of lust. By firing the imagination, by exciting desire, by creating a hideous prurience in the mind, he can lead souls to defile that which is meant to be the temple of God.

Here the fallen become the seducers ; a vast network of evil is established by which the lost drag the innocent to share their destruction. Nowhere does the awful significance of the " Kingdom of Sin " become more apparent.

I received one day a letter from a boy, enclosing certain copies of an illustrated paper, which is sold freely in the streets, and the catalogue of a book-

seller, who carries on his trade in the light of day. It was a pathetic appeal to stop this seductive literature and to save thousands of tempted lads.

The books and papers referred to play, with diabolical skill, upon the dangerous passions in fallen human nature. They seek to excite these passions by every device of art and literature. Everything which can allure and entice is shamelessly employed. The object is of course to make money by ministering to vice. But it is evident that these lovers of shameful gain are only the instruments of the Devil. In this way he carries on his pitiless propaganda, and seeks to ruin the souls of the young. These papers are purposely offered for sale in the neighbourhood of the elementary schools, that the children who are learning to read may immediately be corrupted by the things of shame.

You think of the writers, the printers, the publishers of this ruinous literature, and you exclaim, Is it conceivable that human hearts can be so pitiless? Is there then no mercy? Cannot these men remember their own mothers and sisters? Did they never know purity? Do innocent little children make no appeal to them? Do they not know the horror, the wasting fire, of that nourished sensuality, the callousness, the brutality, the moral and physical death which it produces? How can they trap the unwary, and slaughter the babes?

But of course the answer is, these are the ministers of sin, the instruments of Satan. In hell themselves, they seek to draw others there. They are a strong organised force, because they belong to that kingdom of evil. The prince of this world directs and uses them.

The glamour of drink, and physical beauty, of music, and art of other kinds, is thrown over the abyss. A great capital usually becomes an organised temptation under Satan's hand, a painted, flattering harlot.

With how much fair speech she causeth the young man
void of understanding, to yield.
With the flattering of her lips she forceth him away.
He goeth after her straightway
As an ox goeth to the slaughter.

4. The most seductive depth of Satan, however, in our day is Unbelief. In the early age of the world Satan spoke to man: "God doth know: you shall be as God." But taking advantage of the multiplied knowledge which men have accumulated, his supreme temptation now is to divert them by the knowledge of things seen from the knowledge of God, which is their life.

Great is the glamour of Unbelief. It flatters itself with a superiority of knowledge and of intellect. It laughs at the dreams of the earth's raw youth. And yet it is all illusion. God is not less necessary or certain; Christ is not less plainly the Way, the

Truth, and the Life, because Mephistopheles, the "spirit that denies," has led away many deluded minds into this denial.

I received a letter from a friend who had been involved in this depth of Unbelief, and been delivered. In his recovered life and joy he found that one of his children had gone wrong, and bitterly reproached himself for the folly of what he called his agnostic period, in which he had neglected to train his children in the truth and to forewarn them against error. Such an awakening must surely come for all, "there or here."

When man denies God, all the time he is quite conscious of the authority and claim of God on his own conscience. When he rejects Christ, he knows that it is love and holiness and self-sacrifice that he is rejecting. That early testimony of the fourth gospel does not lose its force with time: the light has come into the world, but men love darkness rather than light because their works are evil (John iii. 19).

Why do men reject Christ, why will they not come unto Him, that He may give them life? The answer, however unpalatable, must be given: "The god of this world hath blinded the eyes of them that believe not, that the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them" (2 Cor. iv. 4).

The depths of Satan are slimy, sulphurous, de-

structive. From them every element of truth, and purity and goodness in us instinctively revolts. But we are blinded and corrupted by sin, and we walk with alacrity down the broad way.

But we cannot leave the subject at this point. Unable as we are to explain the reason why God has allowed the usurping god of this world to hold sway, and to seduce the children of men, we know that in the process of historical evolution, the redemption has been begun. The kingdom of sin is condemned: its sovereign knows that his doom is sealed.

Christ came to destroy the works of the Devil (1 John iii. 8). The destruction has begun and proceeds. The kingdom of God has been introduced into the world, and wins its widening way. It never recedes; the boundaries of darkness give way slowly before it. Christ is proclaimed. Everywhere His apostles go to turn men from darkness unto light, from the power of Satan unto God. The organic influence of the Christian Society are in the world counteracting the influences of evil. You do not apprehend the extent of the victory when you only count heads. There are forces at work, like the leaven in the meal, and like the seed expanding beneath the soil. The depths of Satan are laid bare; the powers of Satan are countermined. Contrast Satan in triumph, let us say in Matabeleland, or in the Marquesas, with a Christian Society like

England, where law and order, mercy and truth, love and self-sacrifice are admitted everywhere as the standard to which we ought to conform.

And remember how near and accessible deliverance is for all who will be saved. From the swelling "wave of the world" there is a sure refuge :

Jesu, refuge of my soul
Let me to Thy bosom fly,
While the nearer waters roll,
While the tempest still is high.

No subtle powers of social evil, no tyranny of heredity ; no appeals of temptation, or suggestions of sin, can touch the soul that has taken refuge in Christ. The most devil-haunted being can be saved by Him. Out of the depths of Satan the hand of Christ can draw even the worst of men ; " they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by the Lord's servant unto the will of God." (2 Tim. ii. 26).

NO OTHER NAME

“Neither is there salvation in any other : for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”
—*Acts* iv. 12.

XI

NO OTHER NAME

THE boldness of Peter and John in making this assertion appears no less amazing to us, after these centuries have passed, than it did to the men of their time. We can only explain it by the statement in *v.* 8, that they were "filled with the Holy Ghost." To venture on the morrow of a criminal's execution, in the city where he was executed, and before the persons who had condemned him, not only to vindicate his memory, and to assert his innocence, but to set him forward as the headstone of the corner, "the one name under heaven whereby we must be saved," argues an inspiration from God. If there had been no truth in the bold attribution, it would have been the raving of hallucination, and the world would have heard no more of it. But, as the claim has been in these nineteen centuries substantiated by many and various evidences, we may be sure that a power and knowledge more than human instructed the minds of the apostles.

The world may possibly still seize on the admis-

sion that they were "unlearned and ignorant men." If they had been instructed, if they had studied comparative religions, if they had been aware of the wisdom of Confucius, of the pathos and power of Buddha, of the moral insight of Plato, they could not have committed the solecism of making an exclusive claim for their loved and murdered Master. We are accustomed to dwell on the other religions of the world, to single out the elements of truth and virtue in them, to exalt the merits of those who profess them, and to use the object lesson as a salutary rebuke for the short-comings of Christians. We are prepared to acknowledge the place of Christ in the religions of the world, we yield Him a supremacy among His peers, but being no longer "unlearned and ignorant men" we tone down the fanaticism of exclusiveness, and read the text "neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we can be more readily or more effectually saved."

But if these men spoke "filled with the Holy Ghost," if this was the declaration of God, the truth which it was needful above all things for the world to know, we may be inflicting an injury on ourselves and one another by bringing the crude knowledge of the religions of the world, a knowledge of yesterday, to discredit the daring utterance of those first apostles. The real question is, Has God spoken from Heaven? Has He set forth

His Son to be the propitiation? Has He witnessed it through His Spirit, by many infallible signs? Has the Maker and Ruler of men, who understands them, as they do not understand themselves, appointed one Name, opened one Way, laid down one method, by which men may be saved? If not, we should hasten to reject the Christian revelation as a narrowing superstition; but if He has, we should give heed to accept and to declare this truth which is delivered to us by the Apostles.

Let us have an open mind to all facts, let us stem the prejudice of ignorance, but, if there is a specific for a disease, let us not, for fear of narrow-mindedness continue to assert that any other medicine will do as well. In proportion as we are ready to receive all truth, we should be firm in grasping and maintaining each truth, clear cut and distinct, as we receive it.

I wish to give reasons, deep and abiding reasons, for believing that the apostles spoke, under the guidance of the Spirit, an eternal truth. Their statement must be lifted out of the region of arbitrary and denunciatory dogma, and settled upon the clear foundations of reason and conscience and the experience of life. The Christian claim is of such a character that intermediate courses are inappropriate. Either there is this one Name by which we may be saved; either the Son of God, the only begotten and omnipotent Son, has come

into the world to save it, and is the Way; or the Christian religion is only one among many others, a mixture of truth and error, of insight and delusion, the indistinct effort of the human spirit to articulate a life in communion with God, rather than God definitely speaking to man.

You mistake if you think that it is easier to accept a modified or an expurgated Christianity, a Christianity adopted to modern discoveries or opinions. Such a Christianity is a lovely phantom, near to grasp, but intangible when it is grasped. It is better to express, on the whole it is easier to accept, Christianity in its splendid and divine superiority to all other religious conceptions. If it is one of the street lamps, a trifle brighter or more convenient than the rest, it is almost a matter of taste whether we accept it or not. In another part of the street, a nearer lamp may be brighter. But it is the Sun in the heavens, above all lamps, the origin, however remote, of all lesser lights that twinkle in the dusk of time. It is as the Sun in the heavens, appearing as an object among many, but in reality supreme above all, that this truth was from the first presented, and has been in all ages accepted. Its exclusiveness is essential, and the condition of all inclusiveness. The name which is above every name must be set in its place before the other names can be set in theirs. And if the Holy Ghost moved those first apostles to make

this amazing claim, let us seek by the same Spirit to understand and to establish it, that we may take it as the centre of our own life, and as the substance of our message to men.

The absoluteness of Christ, that is the point. He is not one among many, the best, the finest, of the prophets and seers of humanity. He is the One. He is not a truth among many; He is the Truth. He is not the consummate flower of human life, blossoming up towards God: He is God come out of Heaven, embracing and enfolding human life, that He may save it. He is the only name, the only conceivable name, under heaven, whereby we may be saved.

It is by understanding the idea of salvation that we see the justice of this exclusive claim. There are four points out of many on which we will dwell just now.

1. Only by Him we know the Father.
2. Only by Him do we understand the will of God that we may do it.
3. Only by Him are we saved from sin and reconciled to our own conscience.
4. Only by Him can we have assurance of pardon, communion with God, certainty of immortality.

That is to say, we break up the idea of being saved into its constituent parts, and we find that in each detail we owe everything to Christ. In each detail the other religions of the world are obscure or

indecisive. In each detail the non-religions of the world leave mankind forlorn and lost.

It is because salvation means to know the Father, to understand His will and to do it, to be saved from sin and to be at peace, to be pardoned, to live in communion with God, to have eternal life, that we are justified in saying that there is no other Name given among men whereby they may be saved. Look attentively and you will observe that no other Name even offers these boons. Listen to the low undertone of the world's need and yearning. These the things which all secretly desire; these are the things which all lack. Then turn to Christ, and behold these are the things which are given through Him, which He gives. He alone can give them, but, on the other hand, He is willing to give them to all.

1. God the Father is only known through the Son. Though it is impossible for man to shake himself free from the Divinity which underlies all things, it seems equally impossible for him to arrive at any consoling knowledge of that Divinity as a personal and loving God.

"Unlovely, nay frightful," says Emerson, "is the solitude of the soul which is without God in the world. To wander all day in the sunlight among the tribes of animals, unrelated to anything better; to behold the horse, cow and bird, and to foresee an equal and speedy end to him and them—no, the

bird as it hurried by with its bold and perfect flight, would disclaim his sympathy and declare him an outcast. To see men pursuing in faith their varied actions, warm hearted, providing for their children, loving their friends, performing their promises, what are they to this chill, houseless, fatherless Cain, the man who hears only the sound of his own footsteps in God's resplendent creation? To him it is no creation; to him these fair creatures are hapless spectres; he knows not what to make of it; to him heaven and earth have lost their beauty. How gloomy is the day, and upon yonder shining pond what melancholy light! I cannot keep the sun in heaven if you take away the purpose that animates him. The ball indeed is there, but his power to cheer, to illuminate the heart, as well as the atmosphere, is gone for ever. It is a lamp-wick for meanest uses. The words, *great, venerable*, have lost their meaning; every thought loses all its depth and has become mere surface."

But, remember, this mournful condition, "without God and without hope in the world," is the common lot of men. I do not speak only of bad or godless men. The startling fact is that before and apart from Christ even good men are in this forlorn and fatherless condition. Plato recognises, but does not know, God. The heart of the stoic emperor, Marcus Aurelius, is brave and resigned, but utterly un comforted. And, as it was in the beginning, so it is

now. You find it in modern literature and in intercourse with men; to be without Christ is one and the same thing as to be forlorn and without personal knowledge of God in the world. For, not only is the Father unknown except through Christ; we may be assured that the Father is unknowable except through Him. Fatherhood implies sonship. Until the Son was seen the Father could not be known. And unless the Son willed to reveal the Father to men they could never know Him. It is small wonder that on one memorable occasion Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and gave thanks to God, which the whole world has been permitted to hear. He realised that into His hands had been committed the glorious task of showing the Father to an orphaned world; and He realised that even babes were capable of knowing the Father through Him, that He could impart that knowledge to plain and humble folk, that the human heart was so adapted to receive it that only the false wisdom and prudence of the world could hinder that supreme instruction.

2. Then consider the confusion in which men are plunged concerning the will of God and how they are to do it! There is a wonderful poem which was written just before the birth of Christ; it expresses the best wisdom and faith of that great Augustan age, which seemed to sum up the greatness of the world, that a greater than the world might succeed. In the *Æneid* Virgil shows what

men thought and knew of the gods before Christ came. How profoundly religious the whole action is. Pious Æneas does nothing without consulting the gods; and faithfully offers to them the sacrifices of thanksgiving. It is at their bidding he seeks to settle in Italy, and under their auspices his enterprise is crowned with success. But what a hopeless bewilderment is thrown like a mist about the eyes of men in this stateliest, wisest, and most religious of the pre-Christian poets! For the gods themselves are at cross-purposes; Juno is frustrating the will of Venus, and even of Jupiter. She is able to send supernatural apparitions to mislead the men whom she dislikes, to stir up enemies against them, and to plunge unhappy mortals in useless conflicts. If there is an oracle it is always ambiguous. If a god favours, a god also opposes. How can the will of God be known or how done in that *schwärmeri* of superstition, fear, passion, false reverence and essential ignorance?

And yet human life, portrayed in Virgil, is not more confused and stumbling than it is to-day, wherever men are living without Christ. What ideal, what consistent purpose, what effectual power to pursue can be set before the mind? Happily in a Christian country the common sentiment of the community is sufficiently Christianised to make the drift and current of things, into which the rudderless fall, not wholly bad. But for one who would not

drift, but live, for one who would conceive an end and work towards it, for one who realises that the will of God must be supreme, and in His will is peace, how is it possible to find and to follow the right way?

Christ the Way is the one clear light and certain strength of mankind. How infinitely unimportant is the minute criticism of the Gospels, and the discovery of variants and contradictions. The Four Gospels are inserted in the spandrils of the dome of heaven, like the mosaics in a Byzantine church. For beyond all question they deliver the will of God concerning human life, and leave no student of them in doubt concerning the way to live it. The legend inscribed on these books is clear, and may be read at a glance. The will of God is that we should love Him, and love one another, that we should live an inward life of purity, of truth, of service, that we should take up our Cross to follow the Ideal, that we should live free from worldliness and care, that our eyes should be on the heavens; and that all should be realised by faith in Christ our Lord.

As the chart and the guide-book of life, and the passport into heaven, Christ in His Gospel saves us.

3. Or consider what is meant by deliverance from Sin. Think of it, if you will, only as the reconciliation of the soul with itself, the quiet conscience, the growth and power possible when the conflict within

is stilled. Nothing is more certain than that this inward reconciliation is not found elsewhere if it is not found in Christ.

Swami Vivekananda, the hero of the Chicago parliament of religions, preaches to his fellow-countrymen the sinlessness of man: "The worst lie that you ever told yourself was that you were a sinner or a wicked man. . . . It is the greatest of all lies that we are men; we are the god of the universe." Meanwhile Krishna, the favourite god of India, is the incarnation of abandoned immorality. When some Hindus were remonstrated with for worshipping a being guilty of these shameless vices, they replied: "These are but his sports, you English have your sports, you have the railway and the steamboat and the telegraph, and no one blames you. Why should you blame Krishna for sporting in *His* way?"

Sin is not only theological, though of course it has its Godward aspect. When all theological reference is removed, there remains a fact which no optimism can conceal; there is the deep unrest of the human spirit, which is conscious of being torn from its proper roots. Particular vices bring their hideous harvest of misery; crimes come home to roost; faults of character work out in loss and misery and discomfort; but underlying all is the fundamental evil of the human heart, the hot passion, the wrath, the hatred, the torment of self, the jaded appetite,

the sick remorse, the self-disgust, the dark isolation from good, from beauty, from God.

Swami Vivekananda in the presence of Krishna denies that men are sinners. He might as well in Bombay deny the existence of the plague. The devotees in his own land making their frantic efforts to deliver themselves from sin are truer to the facts than he. The whole creation groans and travails, and yet by no device can get deliverance from its sin.

But Christ actually does deliver men from sins. Vices are overcome. Ancient deeds of ill are blotted out. Habits are broken. The nature is changed. The conscience is at peace. We do not always notice the meaning of that glad cry, the cry of wonder and gratitude, which rings for the first time in the New Testament: "Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand" (Rom. v. 1, 2).

After all, the deepest meaning of being saved is the nearest and the most practical, and it brings out the most unique and distinctive significance of Christ; it is, that the actual intolerable torment of sin, as a disease, a leprosy, a paralysis, within, is cured!

4. But there are certain inner experiences resulting from the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus

Christ, which seem to be unattainable in any other way; and these experiences give fulness and body to the idea of Salvation. There is the communion with God; there is the assurance of pardon and sonship; there is the certainty of immortality. These are wrought in us by the Spirit, but only it seems by the Spirit in direct connection with the person of Christ. These experiences are intimate and sacred; there is a natural reluctance to lay bare such sanctities of the soul. But the Spirit who has produced them has also given utterance to them; and, first in the writings of the New Testament, and ever since in the words and thoughts of Christian men for all these centuries, these exquisite secrets have been betrayed.

The communion with God in Christ is different in its process and in its results from the absorption and apathy of Eastern mystics. It proceeds in a quickening of personal consciousness; it issues in the activity of service to the world. St Francis was frequently rapt in God for hours together. When he was not in prayer he was ministering to suffering humanity. His famous biographer, Sabatier, was set on the study of his life by the remark of an agnostic doctor at Assisi, that the saint had been the greatest social reformer of his age, and one of the makers of Italy. Johnston of Warriston, we are told, began to pray at six one morning, wishing to spend an hour or two in communion. Presently he

was startled by the bells ringing, which announced that it was eight o'clock in the evening. That communion is a sitting with Christ in heavenly places. In it the soul becomes capable of bearing all things and of doing all things. Christ becomes a realised presence, and in His human form is seen the Father.

The assurance of pardon and sonship is equally real. Inadmissible, I believe, in the Sacramentarian religion, which substitutes the symbols for the spiritual reality, when the trust is placed in the sole name of Jesus, it becomes an unmistakable experience. The pardon is sealed by the Spirit; the heart is cleansed; the love of God is shed abroad; and the cry *Abba, Father*, breaks spontaneously from the enraptured heart.

Then it is the peculiar power of faith in Christ to turn the vague hopes and desires of the human heart for a future life into the certainty of possession. "He that believeth in Him hath everlasting life." The movements and unfoldings of that spiritual life which survives the body begin already in the consciousness which is still identified with the body. "Christ in you, the hope of glory," is a witness of immortality. Death loses its sting, and the grave its victory.

This experience does not depend on the fragmentary reports of the resurrection of Christ with which the Gospels close; it would be more correct

to say that those reports and fragments were collected in deference to this experience. The resurrection of Christ verified itself at once in the consciousness of Paul, and of all who believed. That He was risen, was a fact of the Spirit. The indications of His resurrection were eagerly remembered and put together, that they who knew Him risen within might have an objective fact to offer to those who did not yet know. In any case the certainty of future life which comes with the personal knowledge of Jesus is different in quality and in degree from the faint and wavering hopes, the fine-spun arguments, the petulant demands of human love, on which, apart from this, the faith in immortality depends.

In thus reviewing the unmistakable elements of salvation, which are derived from that Name, and from no other, we purposely confine ourselves to such facts as come within our observation in the present life : the argument acquires a more brilliant lustre if we venture to extend the idea of salvation to the unknown future, and glance at the judgment and the heavenly reward which is given to the believer in Christ ; but it is better to avoid as evidence things for which evidence would be required. It is enough to dwell on these factors of salvation which can be at once tested. The knowledge of the Father, the knowledge of the Divine Will, the deliverance from the power of sin

and the inward schism of conscience, the sense of communion with God, the certitude of pardon and sonship, the assurance of life eternal, these—the constituent elements of salvation—are found only by faith in that Name.

If Peter and John were ignorant and unlearned men, the experience of these centuries shows that they were right; a truth of Divine revelation had broken in upon them, that they might lead the world to taste and see the glorious facts of which they spoke. These inward possessions come from Christ; who can maintain that they are found in their completeness elsewhere? The Christless wise, and the Christless good, in our day, would hardly pretend that these possessions are theirs; rather they would deny that they are ours, and attribute our experience to hallucination. We waive the question of hallucination; we only insist that the Christian salvation, whether a reality or a hallucination, is the unique product of that Name. If it is not found in Christ, it is not found elsewhere. If in Christ it is not a fact, then salvation, in this deep and inward sense, must be surrendered.

But as this Name arises thus in its solitary eminence and grandeur, the name that is above every name; as I see clearly that here is a condition of spiritual health and peace and power, a hope, a joy, a victory, opened to the world by one Door only, but opened by that Door to all the world, do I not

of necessity catch the enthusiasm and earnestness of those unlearned and ignorant men, and yearn to commend that Name by which alone men can be saved to all mankind?

Have you not already a suspicion that this is the name and the fact that you really want? Do you not see that the world is half aware of the same?

Far and wide, though all unknowing,
Pants for Him each human breast.

Some able women, says Archdeacon Wilson, at a woman's college, gave themselves to help the poor men in a neglected suburb. In pure and noble zeal they taught them to read and to write, they delivered lectures, they sang to them, they entertained them. The men were greatly attracted. At length they asked the men to say if there was anything in particular they wished to hear about. There was silence, and then a low inaudible voice. "Yes," said the lady; "what is it you wish to hear about?" "Could you tell us," was the bashful reply, "something about the Lord Jesus Christ?"

That is the low shy murmur of the world.

Ah, this is the answer. It is the one Name given among men whereby they may be saved.

THE BAPTISM OF THE SPIRIT

“Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.”—*Acts* i. 5.

XII

THE BAPTISM OF THE SPIRIT

IT cannot be said that a Trinitarian belief in God is indispensable to the visitation of the Holy Ghost; for "holy men of old spoke as they were moved by the holy Spirit," before the conception of the Trinity had been formulated. Moses and the prophets were moved by the Spirit, no less than the apostles, to divine issues. There are passages in Isaiah and in the Psalms where the throb and glow of the Spirit are as manifest as in the Epistles of St Paul. Or, again, who ever spoke more wonderfully of the Spirit than Heine in his vision on the Brocken, a vision in which the Jew and the satirist became, in the presence of a little child, a Christian and a Trinitarian? Or where will you find that strong breath of moral energy and purity which we take to be a sign of the Spirit, more powerful and beautiful than in the writings of Mazzini, or of Emerson, neither of whom would have admitted the Trinitarian conception?

But while we may, and indeed must, believe that the Spirit is at work far beyond the limits in which He is recognised as a person in the Trinity, just as

Jesus Himself lights every man coming into the world, though there are only some who recognise Him as the eternal Son of God, the point which is brought out in the Acts is that the definite and conscious reception of the Spirit is the new element in the Christian revelation, and therefore necessary for the accomplishment of the specifically Christian ends. These ends are the revelation of the Divine Father, the knowledge of His will, the cleansing from sin, the life hidden with Christ in God, and resulting from these, the power of presenting Christ to men with converting effect as the Saviour of the world. In vain will these results be sought apart from that "promise of the Father." If these results are to be obtained we must "tarry at Jerusalem" for a definite experience. The Spirit, like the wind, bloweth where he listeth; but if we are to reach that defined haven, and accomplish that specific work, we must study the wind, watch for it, trim our sails to receive it, and yield gladly to the divine impulse.

In a word, we may be moved, many are moved, by the Spirit without being Trinitarian. But it is only as Trinitarians in the practical sense, that is, only as we recognise the Holy Spirit as an agent who enters our personality to make Christ real, and to bring us to God in Christ, that we have any power to work out the conception of Christianity, or to bring men to Christ.

We do ill to brush aside the thought of the Trinity as a mere speculation of religious metaphysics. It is the most practical thing in the world. By it is measured, not so much the distance between Christianity and other religions—that might be purely intellectual—but the difference between Christianity as a theory or scheme of thought, and Christianity as a living and potent experience. Have ye received the Holy Ghost? is a question in life rather than in theology.

One summer day some friends and I started in a small yacht to sail down Cardigan Bay to Aberdovey. The morning had been breathless, and we had almost abandoned the thought of the expedition; but at two o'clock a fresh and steady breeze sprang up. We embarked, and ran for two hours at a delicious pace over the summer sea. And then quite abruptly the wind dropped. The sails idly flapped, and then were motionless. We were far out in the bay, and the haze entirely hid the land. Suddenly we realised that we were there beyond the reach of help, powerless to move. No steamer ever came on that track; no sailing boat could come. We had no food to speak of. Hour after hour passed. The great sun sank in a splendid glow, marking his path along the glassy waters. Night came. There was nothing for it but to fit out what berths we could in the fore-cabin and under the half-deck, and to make a shift to go to sleep.

As I lay down the thought possessed me, how exactly this represents our impotence apart from the Breath Divine. Our boat is trim, our sails are set, but we cannot move an inch, we cannot even avoid the reefs on which the sinking tide may throw the helpless barque; we depend absolutely on that motion in the air, which is not in us, nor under our control.

Our skipper sat at the helm, smoking his pipe, uncommunicative, and prepared with no comfort. He had knowledge, but no power over the winds. About half-past ten I started up. There was a ripple and a movement. The moon had risen and lit the wide expanse of darkling waters. The sail was flapping again, and filling. As the heated air of the summer day rose from the sea, the cooler air from the Welsh mountains rushed down to replace it, and made a growing breeze. The yacht began to cut the waters. Presently it was gliding through ruffled waves, hissing, as the cloven seas flew over the deck, straining onward with the energy of a living creature. For two hours and a half the steady wind continued until we were able to cast anchor below the estuary of Aberdovey, and wait for the morning star to guide us up the river.

That mysterious voice of the wind in the night, and the swift triumphant race over the waters, seemed to me a parable of the Spirit. When God wills, and the Spirit comes, difficulties disappear.

We are borne under full sail to the desired haven. How real and present and manifest God becomes ! How vital and personal is Christ ! How consciously sin is forgiven and cleansed ! How distinct is the divine will ! How easy is the fulfilment of the command of Christ ! We speak as the Spirit gives utterance ; men are convinced and converted. All the graces of the Christian life appear in ourselves and in others ! This is the Lord ; we have waited for Him ; He will save us. It is impossible to question that the Spirit is God, or that Christ is God, or that God is in Christ at work upon us and through us by the Spirit He has given.

1. Christianity, as it appears in the New Testament, is identified with the reception of the Spirit. The earliest document in the collection is 1 Thess., and the opening verses of that epistle are, "our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost." The latest document, 2 Peter, sweeps backward to designate the Old Testament in terms of the Spirit ; "men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost."

Or taking the books in the order of our version ; Matthew begins with the Baptist's announcement of Christ, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." And Revelation ends with the cry, "The Spirit and the Bride say come." And all the books which lie between and compose our Testament are burdened with the same truth.

Christ Himself is a man filled with the Spirit ; He died and rose and ascended, to give this gift to men. By this gift of the Spirit we believe in Him and call Him Lord ; by the same Spirit we are born again ; by the Spirit we are cleansed from the works of the flesh. And the life which begins in faith in Christ develops as walking or living in the Spirit.

Christianity itself, once emptied of this meaning and power, is as lifeless as Buddhism, and may become as corrupting. Some of the ancient churches, from which the Spirit is withdrawn, the Syrian Church in India, the Coptic in Egypt, the Nestorian in Persia, are not only powerless, but seem to lie like an incubus on the populations. Let a church once admit some other test than this of the Spirit, and it rapidly decays ; whether it allows a formal sacrament to take the place of the Spirit-birth and the Spirit-life, or proposes an intellectual creed instead of the power of the Spirit. And as with churches, so with individuals. Is there anything more pitiable than a person who has the name to live, but is dead ; who has the form of godliness, but not the power ; who painfully and scrupulously performs the visible requirements of Christianity, but has none of the life and freedom and joy ; who even carries on certain prescribed religious works and duties, but knows that there is no result without, because there is no power within ?

But the Christian life, wherever it is real, means a

freshening tide of life which flows like a river—and the river flows from under the throne of God. There is tenderness and contrition ; there is aspiration and longing ; there is peace and power ; above all there is love ! It is like a garden watered with the rains of spring, sown and set with selected flowers, watched and weeded by a skilful hand ; and the sweet scent of the earth, newly turned, mingles with the breath of flowers ; and the odour is wafted abroad.

It is, on a larger and more lasting scale, like those radiant and impassioned experiences of the dawn-golden days, when a young man's fancy

Lightly turns to thoughts of love.

How can we better describe the life of the Holy Spirit, than to say that it is the life of a lover, in which God occupies the place of the beloved, and the wooing and response of earthly passion have been purified and transmuted into communion with God ?

All that softened and iridescent feeling, that sense of buoyant life, and purpose in life, that overflowing charity to the world, that mystical and rosy hue cast over the commonest things, that impulse, that strength, that brooding joy, those ecstasies and transports, that refinement and exaltation, that rising on stepping-stones of our dead selves to higher things, which come as a brief vision and prophecy to the young in their lover-days, changed into a spiritual key, transferred to the region of the lasting and

developing which we call eternal, make the life of the Spirit.

And this life of the Spirit, as it comes from the experience of salvation, issues in the salvation of others. There are diversities of operation. The charismata are various as characters, and as the opportunities of men; but there is this in common—they all work for salvation. The Spirit-filled life, whether passed in the extended voyages of Paul, or in the solitude of Patmos, in the crowded business of Bernard, or in the cell of Thomas à Kempis, in the world-parish of Wesley, or in the retirement of William Law, issues out into the life of men as the power of salvation.

2. But as we recognise the very definite result, and realise the equally definite cause; as we see that Christianity is a Spirit-filled life, a life which begins, and is continued and ends in the Spirit, we cannot too resolutely set our hearts on that experience which constitutes all the difference between a dead and a living religion.

What is here described or implied in the New Testament; what is offered as the power of the Gospel in its practice and its preaching; what began at Pentecost, and has broken out from age to age in divers men and churches with Pentecostal blessing ever since; that, if it is permitted, if it is open to me, I must attain. Let me understand exactly what it is, its indications, its conditions; let

me know whether and how it is offered to me ; and I mean to seek it, to ask for it, to tarry for it.

Come, let us, like that man of a stout countenance in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, buckle on our armour, and set our face to battle our way through.

Certain very simple and very humble, and very ordinary people have attained this. The apostles themselves, with two exceptions, do not seem to have been distinguished men. The hundred and twenty are not even named. How unnoted were the Herrnhuters who repeated the miracle of Pentecost in their missionary zeal ! We make no claims or pretensions in this resolution. Rather we renounce all ; it is because we are weak and ignorant and despised, because we are utterly unable to effect the salvation of the world, and in ourselves insignificant, that we turn our faces towards that upper chamber and purpose to tarry in Jerusalem until we be endued with power.

Many, I think, have missed this blessing, because they have not set themselves to receive it, have not so much as heard that there was, in this sense, a Holy Spirit. Let me therefore press home this question on you, and especially on myself : Have you received the Holy Ghost ? Has that gracious dew descended ? Has that rushing sound of the wind, accompanied by the tongues of flame, visited you ? Has your heart melted within you in the presence of your God ; has it been broken on the Cross of Christ ; have

mercy and pardon and healing come over it like balm? Have you found the joy and peace of believing? Have you learnt to open your lips with power? Have you made the discovery that the frets and troubles and losses are all the touch of a Father's hand in an infinitely merciful chastisement? Have you got your affections shifted to heaven? Has the heavenly life come down to be lived on earth?

Are you, am I, baptized with the Holy Ghost?

O, if we are, what songs of joy should resound through this house and through our lives? How radiant, how thankful, how diligent, how beneficent, how loving to all the world we should be?

But if not, or if we have only a partial experience of this kind, let us follow on to know the Lord, let us make up our mind, and form a deep resolution. Here is this unspeakable boon offered to us, on certain conditions: we will know the conditions. To receive it may cost much; we will bear the cost. We will not be put aside; we are resolved to seek this one thing, to find it, to know it.

Others have set out to be great scholars: this is the lore we want. Others have resolved to win accomplishments in singing, in speaking, in painting, in acting: this is the one accomplishment for us. Others have traversed seas and continents for gold and precious stones, or have toiled day and night to amass a fortune; this is the treasure for

which we are prepared to dare all things. Others have spent their strength, given their lives, to be crowned with fame: this coronal of fire, this baptism of the Holy Ghost, is the object of our quest.

Now we will find the conditions, and will fulfil them. We are resolved. There is the goal, we will press towards it. There is the mark of the prize of our calling; we will not rest till we grasp it.

O, will you make this resolution? Everything is gained if only you are resolved. Why are men not baptised with the Holy Ghost? Simply because they do not wish to be; and without their wish it is impossible.

3. And now, what are the conditions of this heavenly Baptism?

They are the same conditions as those on which all God's gifts depend, Faith and Obedience. They are the simplest conditions possible, if the will is set on fulfilling them; they appear difficult and even impossible until the will is summoned to undertake them.

"He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, . . . doeth he it by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith?" (Gal. iii. 5). It is certainly by the hearing of faith. The burden of that Gospel which throbs and burns on the lips of the apostles is that "by the hearing of faith" it is received, not bought or earned or gained, but received. And the Spirit is ministered by the hearing of faith. That

Christ came, filled with the Spirit, that Christ came to baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire, that Christ demanded faith in Himself, and made the promise that whosoever believed in Him, out of his belly should flow rivers of living water, that Christ died for our sins, and rose again, and breathed upon believing souls, "receive ye the Holy Ghost," that He ascended to heaven, to pour out this which now ye see; that God is willing to give this gift as a Father gives bread to a child; that believing souls from the beginning have been filled with the Spirit, and the powers of God have worked in them; these are the things announced, the things to be believed. By the hearing of faith they are received. And one other point faith adds. Faith has its realising faculty; it has also its appropriating faculty. When Faith has realised that these things are so, then she puts out her hand, and takes them as her own.

First comes the assurance that this is the truth which is preached to you. Then comes the act of the Spirit: "I take this heavenly gift as mine, I know that I am endued with the Holy Ghost, baptized, filled."

But hand in hand with Faith goes obedience. "The Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him," we read in Acts v. 32. Faith without obedience is illusion; obedience without faith is blindness. Hence we read of the "obedience of

faith" (Rom. xiv. 26). One can hardly say that either precedes ; they go hand in hand. Each act of faith leads to fresh obedience, each obedience to new faith. And what is meant by obedience in this connection? Mind, obedience is an inner act, rather than an outward ; it is the intention rather than the performance ; it is the direction of the currents of conduct and character at the source. What is meant therefore by obedience as a condition of receiving the Spirit, is that inward determination of the will, the settled purpose which says, "I choose the will of God, cost what it may ; I reject whatever is forbidden and embrace whatever is commanded, by His will ; it is my clear and deliberate conviction that God should have His untrammelled way in me."

It is not so much an act as an attitude of obedience. To use an image, it is the soul emerging from the slough of self and planting a foot on the rock of the will of God. As an act of faith leads to this attitude of obedience, so from this vantage ground the soul reaches out its hand to receive the Spirit by faith. There are two wings on which the soul mounts to heaven, says the *Imitatio*, purity and obedience.

Let us get this clear in all its grandeur and simplicity, the twofold act of the soul which constitutes the one and sufficient condition of receiving the Holy Ghost. Stated in the plainest and most in-

clusive way it appears thus: There is Jesus Christ, in His fulness, the perfect and absolute Saviour; you believe in Him; as His example gives the pattern of the God-life, and as His sacrifice puts away sin, your faith in Him brings the will to follow Him, and the conviction that the power and pollution of sin are removed by His Cross. You linger in the upper room with the disciples and hear His promise of the Comforter. You wait with them at Jerusalem, in full faith, in the consecration of obedience. Surely, however quietly, the Holy Spirit enters, pervades and subdues your whole being. There is no real interval. The day of Pentecost is fully come when faith and obedience are concentrated upon the Saviour. Remember it is a gift of God, not earned, but freely bestowed; the conditions are not a price paid, but only the attachment of the conduit to the upper pools of Divine life and power.

Shall I venture to urge you thus to be baptized with the Holy Ghost? Nay, is it needful? Is not the truth itself its own urging? Shall the islands of the Blest be spread before the eyes of weary travellers, and the swift sure passage thither open at their feet, and then will it be necessary to persuade them to take the way across the shining waters? Shall I persuade this young active mind to think, or this lover's soul to love.

I do not think we are ever told to persuade men

to be thus baptized with the Spirit. If they do not desire it, the cause must lie in our imperfect presentation of the truth, or in their deliberate preference of darkness to light. No, I do not urge. But there may be many who thirst for this blessing like travellers in the desert, who are ravished with the thought of the islands of the Blest, but do not see their way to get at them. For their encouragement and help I am permitted to say that the love of God yearns over them, and desires their peace and victory even more than they do themselves. "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come." Can you imagine how the bride desires the bridegroom, counts the weary hours, sends messages of welcome, and sighs always "come"? Even so God desires your soul, would have you in His embrace, would fill and satisfy you, until the exceeding peace of His indwelling and the irresistible power of His purposes are within you, as they are obviously without.

Yes, I do not think I can exaggerate the sweet, austere wooing of God, when the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. Jesus looked on the young man and *loved* him. What a picture! So He looks on you.

I know there are other voices which woo you, other attractions which cast a glamour over your eyes, husband, child, wife, friend, wealth, success and fame, the wonder and the glory of the world, the seductions of art and nature. They say Come!

You hear their voice, you yield, you follow. But none of them, nor all of them together, utter such a plea from the depths of passionate and mastering love, as God does when He spreads before you the full joys of the Spirit, and invites you to draw near. "The Spirit and the bride say come, and let him that heareth say come, and let him that is athirst take of the waters of life freely."

If you heard the voice of God which is sounding in your ears with its irresistible attraction, you would certainly reply :

O Love that will not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in thee ;
I give thee back the life I owe,
That in thine ocean depths its flow
 May richer, fuller be.

THE NEW DOGMA

“If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God.”—*John* vii. 17.

XIII

THE NEW DOGMA

K AFTAN in his little book entitled *Do we need a New Dogma?* marks out the lines on which the new dogma will move. Like the Ritschlian school generally, of which he is a distinguished representative, he feels the need of establishing the Christian religion on grounds which cannot be shaken by the advance of science or discredited by any reasonable philosophy.

He knows that if there is a conflict between religion and science, science must win the day; he sees clearly how science has won the day and shattered the seeming foundations on which religion had inadvertently built; he is persuaded that the Christian religion rests on foundations which science cannot possibly assail; he is therefore anxious to throw the weight of the Christian argument on its own sure and unassailable foundations. In this enterprise, and while the old dogma hangs cracked and crumbling and ready to fall, like a building shaken by earthquake, he singles out four lines of dogmatic reconstruction, which, he is per-

suaded, rest in such a way on truths of the Spirit, and on what are called the judgment-values of the Christian revelation, that faith may grow and work in security, dreading no earthquake shocks from science or criticism.

Suppose we turn our thought to these four suggestions of the new dogma, and without venturing to reproduce or to interpret Kaftan, let me draw as firmly as I can these impregnable lines: (1) The distinctive character of Christian knowledge as *the obedience of faith*. (2) Christian life as is essentially *a life hid with Christ in God*. (3) The true doctrine of holy Scripture, and the sole sufficiency of faith. (4) The answer to the question, *What think ye of Christ?*

Along these lines you may see the Christian dogma rising again from the ruins of medieval, scholastic, and Puritan dogma, a building not built with hands, and yet built of the same stones which were used in the buildings that have crumbled about our ears. And you may observe how the foundations are in that region of spiritual fact and certainty which can no more be affected by the attacks of science than a building in Mars could be shaken by an eruption of Etna. We may, it is true, reconstruct this dogma badly, and inadvertently found it again on the things which can be shaken and may pass away. But as a refuge for weary souls we may well labour to do our building on the sure

foundations, and to realise for ourselves and others this palace of the faith.

Wherefore to whom turn we, but to Thee, the ineffable Name,
Maker and Builder Thou of houses not made with hands?
What! have fear of a change in Thee who art ever the same,
Doubt that Thy power can fill the hearts which Thy power
expands?

For the present, then, we occupy ourselves with this point:—Christian knowledge, as distinct from scientific knowledge, as distinct too from the theologic lore of other religions, is acquired *by the obedience of faith*.

This keynote was struck when our Lord said, If any man willeth to do His will, He shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.

This saying has been the salvation of many souls in troubled times. How often in the last thirty years the keen and eager mind, of young man or young woman, has been loosed from the old moorings and tossed on the waters of change. Science has opened a new universe, and the place of man in the vast scheme has been entirely dislocated. Criticism has subjected the Bible to ruthless enquiries, and there has been no hand of the civil magistrate as of old to restrain the licence of free investigation. Suddenly to the troubled mind, the whole structure of faith and worship has gone down like a hut in the rising floods, and the Church of the fathers has appeared like a dismal old crone mutter-

ing things no longer credible for the sake of peace or for the baser purpose of a morsel of bread. And then this saying of Christ has stood out with a new meaning, as of hope, an olive branch above the swirling waters with a promise of eventual dry ground.

If any man has a will to do the will of God, the teaching of Christ can be tested thereby. Our doubter plucks up heart. "Christ then," he says, "does not rest His position on these crumbling or decayed authorities. He has not bound up His claim with intellectual ideas formed in the infancy of the world. He does not appeal to a church, a hierarchy, or even a book. His claim drives straight at the heart of man, and demands trial in experience."

Here is something which need not wait until interminable questions of criticism are settled, or until the conflict between science and faith is composed. The teaching of Christ is tolerably plain, however exacting it may be. It can be tried. If the will to do the will of God is present, the trial will be effectual. In experience it will establish itself. We can find whether the message sent into the world by Christ is the truth of God, or the irresponsible and arbitrary judgment of a gifted human being.

Many have climbed back to faith by this simple though arduous pathway. Many know the teaching

to be of God, not because the Church says so, nor because it is in the Bible, but because from obedience came faith, and faith led to further obedience, and the truth of things was thus established in that sacred and inexpugnable centre of our being, which on the intellectual side is called consciousness, and on the moral side conscience, and in its fully developed entirety is recognised as the Spirit of God.

The nature of Christian knowledge is curiously misunderstood, and consequently its contents are mistaken. Christian knowledge, as such, has nothing to do with the making of the world, the several orders of life on the globe, the genesis of species, the mysteries of the human frame, the records of human history, the integrity of human literature, the structure and development of human society. All these things are the proper subjects of science, or human knowledge; Christian knowledge assumes or accepts them, takes them just in the stage in which it finds them at any particular period, and never stays to correct or to criticise them. But Christian knowledge is concerned with one subject and one only, viz., the relation between the soul and God, the discovery of the right relation, the way of securing it.

A Christian man may have both Christian knowledge and scientific knowledge, but he will not have acquired them in the same way. A scientific man may be without Christian knowledge, and a

Christian man may be without scientific knowledge. It is greatly to be desired that everyone should have the two kinds of knowledge, harmonised and related in theory and practice. But it is absolutely necessary to distinguish the two kinds and to avoid the errors which result from confusion.

Now just as scientific knowledge is achieved or verified by experiment, so Christian knowledge comes and is established by obedience.

When we attempt to draw out the data of Christian knowledge, the things which are presented to our belief, we find that they are all of such a kind that they have to be considered in the light of the will and of conduct. There is no question of a mere intellectual assent; the whole question is of a practical order. "Son, go work to-day in my vineyard." "Lovest thou me? Feed my sheep." This is the kind of formula which prevails. It is no mere imagery to say that Christ everywhere walks through the world and says to men who are mending their nets or at the receipt of custom "Follow me." If they arise and follow, they know Him and become His disciples; if they refuse, there is no other way by which they can know Him. No report of others, no biography, no sign or wonder, can convince one who has refused to obey.

For the moment I am not so concerned to develop this point in a theoretical completeness, as to bring it out in its practical bearings. The Gospel

can be always reduced, on several different lines, to an extraordinary simplicity. In one aspect it is simply the demand to love God and to love man. In another aspect it is a summons to purity of heart, plucking out the eye that offends, taking up a cross to follow the supreme unselfishness and goodness embodied before the imagination.

Observe what happens. Perhaps now you are perplexed with a number of intricate questions about the church, the bible, the creed, and you would reject Christianity on the ground of these intellectual difficulties ; but look back, and remember ; it was not always so. It was a plain issue ; the two ways opened before you, one of love and sacrifice, of purity, and disinterestedness ; the other of self and greed and passion. Can you not recall how plain it all was, and with what reluctance you surrendered, and followed the easy way ?

Two roads present themselves to every man,
The one the way of Christ, thro' blinding tears,
The other roofed with many a flowery span,
Gay with the pomp and pleasure of the years ;
In each the smoke of sacrifice appears,
Two altars blaze, two victims quiver bare,
The spirit victim here, the body there.

You have forgotten now, but you might easily remember : if you had chosen otherwise, and by a resolute exertion of the better will, had denied yourself and followed Christ, you would now have been a believer.

Doubt is seldom due to intellectual difficulties ; for they do not touch the centre. Christianity is the life of sacrifice and purity and love ; no one questions that such a life is best. It was to be tested ; all its hidden sources were to be discovered by obedience. Men disobey, and then they doubt.

(1) Take that truth which is the arching sky over the New Testament, Christ's great revelation, that God is our Father. Do you note the lowly and simple gate of proof, through which you enter into an assurance of it ? This fact is not established by a method of logic ; it is not an induction from the chequered experiences of life, nor is it a deduction from some abstract principle. It is reached and held as an inner truth only *by obedience*. It is by surrendering to the invisible Father, by casting yourself on that proffered care, by humbly taking the place of the child in the Father's house, and proceeding to live on that assumption, that quietly the certitude grows, and Christ's glorious assertion becomes the settled and demonstrated fact within.

May I try to press home this all important point on myself, and in that way, on you ? Here is not a question of the theological schools ; it is by no means to be determined by an argument ; as such it is open to a thousand puzzling rejoinders ; the sounding vocabulary of doubt can be marshalled irresistibly against it. But if you are to know

this, you must go out into the world among men, as they crowd around you, lovely and unlovely, interesting and uninteresting, good and bad. These, on the hypothesis, are your brothers and sisters; proceed to treat them in that way; see them in an invisible Father's house; acknowledge the claim and act upon it. Deny yourself for your brother's sake; admit the plea, that they are your brothers, and argue, shall my brother suffer and I not suffer with him? Now set to work, and valiantly struggle for your brother's rights, your brother's sensibilities; rejoice in his joys, weep with him in his sorrows. It is a *via dolorosa* is it? There is a cross to take up, a cross to be nailed to?—certainly.

Ah, now and again you wish you had shut yourself from these suffering brothers of yours,—had remained in the sweet wilderness, or in some builded palace of art. You are weary and heart-broken. Their sorrows grow on you—you labour in spirit for all who are desolate and afflicted, you cannot shake off the idea of the hopeless millions, of the dark or tawny races, of the cry which goes up for ever, How long?

But do you note what is happening? The brotherhood is welded in suffering. The Fatherhood emerges from the experience. The same heartleap which makes you love your brother whom you have seen carries you to the love of the Father

whom you have not seen. The Father has become an imperative necessity—what can you make of such a world unless it has a Father? But more, He has become an experience—for if I, a poor human heart, can feel the sorrow, and share the joy of the world, like this, what an inner necessity there is that the Author and Ruler of it all can enter into the same emotions. A great natural logic asserts; if these are my brothers and sisters, One is our Father.

Then read again the Sermon on the Mount. With quickened feeling you find your heart turning to your Father. You go into your closet and shut the door, and speak to your Father, who sees in secret. Doubt stands at the entrance and mocks; perhaps science is prepared with a demonstration to refute prayer. You brush them both aside, an inner impulse carries you to your knees. You pray. Ah, what is this? What inward peace begins to settle on the heart—what trust, as in Power and Love, at work within and around—what certainty that new life has come for you and for the world! You have got into the embrace of your Father. He saw you a long way off, and came out to meet you.

Once a child was lost in a great crowd; crying with distress and terror, the face appealed to the bystanders; they sought, they passed on the word. A man was found who claimed the child; with a

rush, like the swift movement of a homing bird, the child flew to the man's arms. The startled people looking on expressed a doubt. There was no proof that the child belonged to the man. They spoke excitedly. But the child nestled to the man's heart did not mind. The child knew.

How impertinent and irrelevant is doubt, when you have, by obedience, found your Father. Sight or hearing, document, pedigree, proof—what are these compared with the clasp of the soul in the heart of its God?

(2) And in reference to that great and difficult idea which we call Atonement, we are tempted to mistake the knowledge of it in a kind of scientific sense for the knowledge of it in the Christian sense. I no longer deny that there may be a scientific statement of this truth. Possibly it may be exhibited, in a deeper experience of life, and a wiser understanding of Scripture, as a rational process harmonising with our psychology and with our logic, but this scientific knowledge will never take the place of the other knowledge, while the other knowledge is possible without the scientific.

Think of that pathetic picture which Charlotte Brontë drew of her erring brother. "What had made him go ever wrong, tend ever downwards, when he had so many gifts to induce to, and aid in, an upward course?" In the reality of religion and

principle he would never believe till within a few days of the end ; “ and then all at once he seemed to open his heart to a conviction of their existence and worth. . . . I myself, with painful, mournful joy, heard him praying softly in his dying moments. . . . When the last struggle was over, and a marble calm began to succeed the last dread agony, I felt, as I had never felt before, that there was peace and forgiveness for him in Heaven. All his errors—to speak plainly, all his vices—seemed nothing to me at that moment ; every wrong he had done, every pain he had caused vanished. . . . He is at rest, and that comforts us all. In God’s hands we leave him. He sees not as man sees.”

If Bramwell Bronté in those last hours found the reality and power of the Cross, it was not, be sure, by any fresh demonstration of the saving fact that Christ bare our sins in His own body on the tree. But the poor lad brought his broken and wasted life to God, with the deep heart cry, Father I have sinned and done evil in Thy sight. And by an “ obedience of faith ” (Rom. xvi. 26) he accepted the wide mercy of God, as he fled to the arms stretched to him from the Cross.

Do not mistake the meaning of this because you are wearied with the technical terms, Atonement and Faith. Let us put aside the terms, and come to the things. The knowledge of these things, the knowledge which saves, is found in a certain help-

less, humbled, pitiful surrender of the soul, burdened with its own failures, shortcomings, and sins, into the hands of that Divine compassion, power, righteousness and love, which reach out to us from the Cross. I will not deny that a clear understanding of all that is meant or implied might facilitate the surrender. But I venture to assert that neither in Apostolic days nor since has the surrender rested on that scientific basis. The depths of the soul lie far beneath the formal understanding. And here is a transaction, which the Apostles knew was to be understood in those depths. Their confidence has been justified. It can be further verified here, and now,

“What must I do to be saved?” is a cry, not of curious enquiry, but of spiritual anguish. The reply does not move in the regions of abstract discussion, but in those unsearchable depths of the spirit where anguish and its healing are to be found. “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” Do? Is that doing? Yes, in a true sense it is. “This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom God has sent.”

The words “to believe” and “to obey” are curiously blended in the New Testament; so they are in the experience of salvation. To believe is to obey; for belief in Him is what God commands. And, while the diseased conscience, or the spiritual pride of man, would gladly perform or attempt to perform

more difficult tasks—(“if the prophet had commanded thee to do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it, but now he says, Wash and be clean ”)—the actual command enforced on the world, the condition exacted from men, that they may receive the knowledge of forgiveness, is simply this: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” In obedience to this commandment is found the verification of which we are speaking.

The Atonement, as a truth, is established not by the reasonings of theologians, however weighty, but by the experience of myriads of reconciled souls who have discovered it by the obedience of faith.

(3) And if you turn to that ultimate mystery of the Christian life—the walking by the Spirit, the living by the Spirit, being led by the Spirit, in which the Epistle to the Galatians culminates, you observe that this spiritual knowledge is exactly determined by spiritual obedience. The image is the simplest and most lasting of earthly images; you sow to the spirit, and as you sow you reap. For that divine experience of being filled with the Spirit is not achieved along the line of study, or religious metaphysics; nor is it as some think the product of excitement, and emotional imagination; but it comes in a careful and detailed obedience. The lusts of the flesh clamour day and night; life consists in meeting those eager demands, and is determined by the way in which they are met. A man yields to them, indulges them, is

identified with them, not by a single act, but by a succession of more or less resisted surrenders. In the end he becomes a fleshly man. But where Christ and His truth have set up a new ideal, and given a new commandment, the man wars against these lusts; the spiritual life for him consists in a war *à outrance*, a war in detail. There is no decisive victory, even if there is no giving ground. O how comforting and soothing if the Spiritual reality might come like the Holy Grail in the hall at Camelot! If in one blessed moment of ecstasy and vision it might slide down the sunbeam and establish itself for ever in the soul! But that is not the way appointed! No! Knight of God, knight of the Holy Ghost, your knowledge is to be gained—a knowledge as of the keenest and richest poet's vision—in the prosaic and prolonged struggle with these alien things. All that can be said is that the great crises are more easily settled if the habit of right decision has been formed in the smaller crises. A thousand trifling victories have at last prepared the hand to smite bravely and surely; while in the testing time the hand is apt to fail if it has been slack and nerveless in the trifles. But conceive the way of spiritual knowledge! Do not miss it because of its homely and commonplace appearance, or expect it elsewhere, on mountain ridges, or in the heavens, if not here.

I counsel you be armed cap-à-pic, and be

vigilant. Begin early in the morning ; fight all the day ; sleep in your arms.

These alluring and insidious appetites must in manfulness and solitude be vanquished. This sloth which shirks prayer, and prefers a lighter reading than the Bible, must be overcome. Now the conflict presents itself in a mastery of temper, the checking of a hasty word, the recovery from a dull sullenness. An hour later it is a question of giving way to the wishes of another, and bearing patiently with troublesome whims. Then it is a test of honour and integrity and fearless truth-speaking in daily business. Again it is a question of diligence, when pleasure and idleness allure. Now the point is courage, whether you will confess Christ, bear the brunt for Him, speak His word, undertake His work. Presently the wrestle is with pride, social pride, pride of intellect, spiritual pride. I cannot attempt to enumerate the wrestles of even one common day for one ordinary soul. Day succeeds day, and night night, and the conflict shifts but never ceases.

And in this chain of enterprises and endurances which makes up the inward life, as each firm step is taken, and each victory won, the knowledge of the Spirit grows. So unlike ordinary knowledge is the Spiritual, so absolutely does it depend upon obedience.

O, do you will to do His will? Is that a set

purpose with you, that the will of the Highest, of the Best, of the Holiest shall be done, and done by you, and done in all things? Then, if Christ speaks truly, and we know that He speaks truly, you shall know of His doctrine that it is of God, *know*, not guess, or surmise, or hope, but know with just that deep and inward and whole-hearted certitude which attaches to consciousness itself; for it will be part, an essential part, of consciousness itself.

A LIFE HID WITH CHRIST IN GOD

“For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”—*Col.*
iii. 3.

XIV

A LIFE HID WITH CHRIST IN GOD

MARVELLOUS is the hidden life of men! For if you could get down into any human soul you would find that it reaches away in all directions, and has depths unknown even to itself. It may be compared to those mysterious catacombs which run in endless and mazy galleries under the city of Rome. You enter by a simple staircase, perhaps from some desolate vineyard, beyond the walls, and you find yourself at once in the intricacies of subterranean chambers, where you can easily lose your way, and having lost it cannot find it again. There, in the tufa rock are tombs, chapels, oratories, altars, the records of martyrdoms, pictures, symbols, the shepherd with his sheep on his shoulder, the names of the long-forgotten dead. Such is the hidden life of a man. If you could enter it, you would find it interminable. You would immediately lose your way in it. He has never explored it himself. Except when a taper of recollection is taken in, or a chance ray of the sun pierces a stained window at the surface,

it remains there in impenetrable darkness. There are the silent beds on which the dead are laid—how great a part the dead play in every man's life! There are their names, and cryptic memorials. Who would imagine that this name or that was engraved in this man's secret chambers! There are altars too, and chapels, and faded pictures of the Good Shepherd. Who would have thought it? What surprise it would occasion if we saw in how many human hearts, unconfessed and unrevealed, there is the picture of Jesus Christ? Only the Day will reveal it.

God no doubt for wise reasons ordained this vast hidden life, and

Bade through the deep recesses of our breast
 The unregarded river of our life
 Pursue with undiscernible flow its way ;
 And that we should not see
 The buried stream, and seem to be
 Eddying at large in blind uncertainty,
 Though driving on with it eternally.

Sometimes we fruitlessly desire to penetrate the lives of others. More rarely the wish arises to penetrate our own,

From time to time, vague and forlorn,
 From the soul's subterranean depth upborne
 As from an infinitely distant land,
 Come airs and floating echoes, and convey
 A melancholy into all our day.

One of the great blessings in a true friendship, when heart searches heart, is that it has the power

to unlock the untraversed galleries of your own being, and to reveal the wide prospect within.

A bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast
 And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again,
 The eye sinks inward, and the heart lies plain,
 And what we mean we say, and what we would we know.
 A man becomes aware of his life's flow
 And hears its winding murmur ; and he sees
 The meadows where it glides, the sun, the breeze.

The condition of some hidden lives must be terrible enough to contemplate. It is a marvel that God, who alone sees all, has patience to bear with them ; and that He does not sweep them away as with a flood. There are grim catacombs, covered by a quiet exterior, and approached by a vine-clad gateway, reaching away in hideous pollutions and cruelties. The inner life is a deliberate traffic with all that is unclean. Deeds of darkness are devised ; plots are hatched ; everything is sought to excite the prurient passions. All day and all night filthy dreams are cherished. God is deliberately and vigorously excluded. Evil is passionately embraced. Happy for the world, that the growing power of good in society and in the church keeps these catacombs closed and unvisited, until the wretched souls die and are buried with them.

Even to hint at the endless varieties of the hidden lives would take us all our time. The

utterly foul are few. In many lives there are long unexplored galleries of darkness, but there are points of light. There are curious counterparts; over against some closed chambers of admitted sin, there are, as if in compensation, cheerful rooms of benevolence, good spirits, and love. Here is a catacomb where all the intellectual galleries are cleared and passable; but the galleries of feeling are choked and fallen in. Here is one where the religious part is open, the intellectual shut. This is a man whose inner life is an almost unbroken thought of business and success in his enterprises; the rest of him is as good as destroyed. Here is a woman whose thought day and night is of her household and children, and you will hardly find a stray niche or two in which she keeps an idol for worship, to do service for a religion.

But without attempting to classify these endless varieties, let us come to that life which Paul knew to exist in those Colossian Christians, "Your life is hid with Christ in God." We will attempt to go down into a soul, whose hidden depths are of this kind. If we can at all explore it, we may rest content that it will sufficiently commend itself to our judgment. I question if there is anyone who would not desire such a hidden life.

Now consider this life hid with Christ in God. A man has become impressed with the beauty, the moral authority, the divinity of Jesus Christ. He

begins to set Christ before him as his model, or as his master. It becomes a daily thought, What would Christ have me to do? More and more of his meditation turns on the problem, how to carry out the teaching of Christ in modern conditions. He sees in all things, not in furnaces of affliction only, but in the streets and marts, a form like the Son of Man. This interest leads further. Presently the occupation with Christ as an example and teacher brings him on Christ as a personal saviour, as a spiritual presence, as a living power. The character and teaching of Christ have led him to Christ Himself. Faith goes out to the Crucified One as the reconciliation with God, as the propitiation for sin, as the power that keeps. Now a good deal of the hidden life consists in a spiritual identification with Christ. The soul conceives itself as dead and buried and risen with Him. It finds a life not its own, a life of Christ within it. This life is curiously and consciously in God.

But this leads on even further. The discovery of this spiritual, let us say supernatural, life within encourages the man to a vast and far-reaching hope, nothing short of bringing every thought into subjection to Christ. Now a busy daily work goes on in the vast galleries of the soul. We might call it a perpetual procession of the Holy Sacrament through every chamber, passage and cranny of the soul, with demand for bared head and bowed knee. The life

of Christ lives again, the character of Christ glows with soft radiance, the teaching of Christ repeats itself as with the whispered music of the birds in spring; all through the recesses of the soul the music sounds, a cheerful, practical, and partly celestial strain. But there is something far more than this. A Spirit is at work, the Spirit of Christ. The cross, the tomb, the resurrection become a moving and daily repeated drama. Every day some forbidden thing is nailed to the cross, or some act of self-denial, self-repression, self-forgetting celebrates the eternal sacrament of Calvary. Every day a new plunge is taken into that baptistery of the grave, and the ideas, ambitions and desires of the flesh are buried there. Every day there is a kind of divine resurrection, the cold clear morning and the open tomb, the angels, and the word, "He is not dead but risen," as the enfranchised soul realises its new life.

Still, still with Thee ! as to each new-born morning
 A fresh and solemn splendour still is given ;
 So doth this blessed consciousness—awaking—
 Breathe each day nearness unto Thee and Heaven.

For intensity and variety and expansion this life hid with Christ far surpasses every other hidden life. Wonderful is the hidden life of the scheming statesman, who tracks along his soul designs of empire and embraces all countries in his plans. Wonderful also is the hidden life of the philosopher, who by way of introspection discovers the secrets of the

universal mind, and comes upon the traces of that Thought which made him and the world.

But it must be owned that the busiest statesman and the most energetic thinker come short of this hidden life of even a very humble Christian. Until Christ walks the galleries of the soul the windows into the Infinite are not open, or if open they look out

On perilous seas in faery lands forlorn.

But when Christ is there He opens the windows on God, and brings the life of God, like penetrating light, and quickening joy, through the chambers of being. Only the life hid with Christ in God adequately realises the extent and significance of the human soul. Mere thinkers seem to remain in a chill and wistful hesitation whether the soul is immortal, whether personal identity is indestructible. In delusive twilight they agitate the insoluble problem. But the problem is entirely solved in the consciousness of which we speak. Christ has pushed down into those sacrosanct and hidden rooms of our being where in letters of light the legend of immortality is written on every wall.

The busiest of men with the most varied interests, a soldier, a statesman, a large financier or millionaire, notwithstanding his unceasing energy of thought, may in all probability have a contracted inner life. A man of science, from the habit of outward observation, and because his faculties are

all merged in that one act of specialised observation, will often have an inward life which reminds one of a great mansion turned into an astronomical observatory, all the rooms closed, shuttered and neglected, the whole life lived on the roof for star-gazing.

But the life hid with Christ becomes a full opening and penetration of the soul, just because He is the norm, the designer, and the fulfilment of the soul of man. And thus it may be plausibly maintained that he alone *lives* who has a life thus hidden with Christ in God. Others pant out their unrealised existence, like fishes stranded in shallow pools and at last left waterless on the beach. But he whose life is hid with Christ draws in and through his cleansed and renovated and explored being the mighty and eternal life of God. The song of the universe rings down the galleries, and the windows open to that starry infinite, where every point of light is the eye of God, and every breath of wind is His Spirit on the face.

The life hid with Christ in God might be, and is, defined as "life indeed." "I am come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly."

But though this life is hid and cannot be explored the effects of it are often visible. You might not perceive them in chance contact with a person, or at first sight. But if you lived with the person or had an opportunity of examining his life in its

general tendency and outcome you could hardly mistake the fact. The life hid with Christ in God is, in a measure, divine. There is in it some of the goodness, the serenity, the courage, and power of God. If, for instance, you had met Sir Thomas More, as he appears in Holbein's portrait, or David Brainerd as he appears in the Life, or David Livingstone, as Stanley found him, it would not have been difficult to say at once, There is a life of the kind of which we are speaking. But in characters not so eminent the fact may be no less clear. The marks and signs are well known. There is a look of tranquillity, there is a freedom from censoriousness, there is a sunny patience, there is quiet resolution, there is active interest in the welfare of others; these are not things which belong to a temperament or constitution, they are achieved, you feel at once that they have been achieved. They indicate the life hid with Christ in God. Above all things moral courage is the indication, and it is the more striking because it appears in the weak and timid.

Once a young recruit was overheard in his tent praying. The other soldiers resolved to "take the religion out of him." He was slight and pale, and he was only eighteen. For three weeks he was the butt of the camp. Then his patience and kindness softened the heart of some, but not of the ring-leader, who said "wait till we get under fire, you'll see him run." The battle came. The company

had a desperate struggle; the brigade was driven back; and when the line was reformed behind the breastworks, the recruit was missing. He was surrounded by the enemy, and the ringleader of his persecutors was by his side. Both were given up. But they came back, the persecutor carrying the dead body of the boy. "Boys, I couldn't leave him," he said, as he wiped the blood from his own face, "he fought so, I thought he deserved a decent burial." As they buried him, and a comrade cut the name and regiment on a board, he added, "I guess you'd better put the words *Christian Soldier* in somewhere. He deserves the title, it may console him for our abuse." It was done, and there was no dry eye among the men. "Well," said one, "he was a Christian soldier, if ever there was one! And he didn't run, did he, when he smelt gunpowder?" "Run!" said the ringleader, his voice husky, "he didn't budge an inch. But that was nothing to his standing our fire for three weeks!"

Would to God these indications were more frequent, but where the life is hid with Christ in God it has shown from the first, from the days of Ignatius and Polycarp to the days of Mackay and Chalmers.

Once a woman in Burmah was brought to enquire about Christ, and to believe, by the way in which Judson held out his hand to her. Probably a large proportion of those who come to Christ are attracted

by some such influence; just for a moment the glint of that hid life flashes up into the eye, or the soft murmur of those quiet waters is overheard, and a great desire is awakened for that victory which has overcome the world, for that peace which passes understanding.

I refer to facts which we all know. There must be few people in this country who have not now and again come into contact with these convincing evidences of a life hid with Christ in God. It is this observed but unobtrusive reality which, according to Kaftan, should take its place, as a dogma of the Christian religion.

It is indisputable and it is convincing.

Strange to say, it is the dogma which preceded what we call systematic theology; in the earliest Apologies which appeared, one after another in the days of the Antonines, it was to this fact that the Apologists appealed. Here was a definite and surprising condition of soul, or product of character; this sign followed those that believed. Such a person as this was new in human experience. He was not like a Stoic or a Platonist. These philosophers were the product of certain ideas or inward reasonings. Here was a product of another influence, perfectly unmistakable. It was the Christian as a definite character that proved Christianity, the Christian as a visible and a working result of a life hid with Christ in God.

In a sense a few such persons form a hidden centre in the society where they exist. Just as Christ is hid in the hearts of believers, so believers are hidden in the heart of a society, and they are like a leaven or a salt. A Christian society is not one in which all are Christians but one which is leavened by a certain number of such lives lived and working in its midst.

Such lives are not only indisputable, a psychological, an ethical, a spiritual fact, which no one will be concerned to deny—no one would be misguided enough to deny Elizabeth Fry, or Livingstone, or Gordon. But they are convincing. They are the best, far the best the world has known. It is evident that a world of such persons would be redeemed, would be heaven. They convey, as effects reveal their cause, the clearest proof of Christ and of God. The life *hid* with Christ in God becomes, strange as it sounds, the plainest evidence of God and of Christ.

The dogmas which were the outcome of Greek thought playing on the original facts of Christianity, pass away. A time comes when the intellectual presuppositions are all changed. Such dogmas as that of the two natures in Christ, or that of the relation of the Persons in the Trinity, or that of Transubstantiation, rest on modes of thought which are to us antiquarian. Facts conveyed in such forms to the modern mind seem not to be facts but speculations, cobwebs evolved out of the brain.

But a life hid with Christ in God is a dogma which cannot be affected by the changing modes of thought. It is as effective now as it was in the days of the Apostles. It convinces by its own evidence.

As an appeal to the thought of our time it will carry a weight which does not belong to the threadbare apologetics of a former age. Attempt to prove the resurrection of Christ as a historic fact, and you find that you are immediately silenced if the doubter considers that the scrappy reports of the four gospels do not seem to him sufficient evidence. The Apostles as personal witnesses of the resurrection carried weight, but their witness transmitted through literary channels would always be at secondhand, and subject to all the doubts of history.

But the life hid with Christ in God remains always an evidence at first hand. It is always there a fact indisputable and convincing. They who live that life are not thinking of themselves as evidences; they do not offer their lives in that capacity; they advance the ordinary arguments; they appeal to scripture, to authority, to reason; but it is that life all the time which carries conviction, and in the absence of it all their arguments fall to the ground. No one is more unconscious of being the witness than he whose witness is the plainest.

Do we wish then to present the irrefutable dogma of Christianity? Do we hope to convince the sceptic, to convert the heathen, to touch the indifferent? We must proceed with all lowliness and completeness to live the life hid with Christ in God. We must go inward, and discover the secret, and having discovered we must live it.

An epistle is needed which can be known and read of all men. Such an epistle is this hidden life.

A good deal of our argument, and polemic, as well as a good deal of our religious work is a little misplaced, a little thrown away. It is too outward, too designed, too unconvincing. Curiously enough the New Testament does not much insist on the kind of work which we are apt to advocate as typically Christian. The concern of Christ, and in this the Apostles seem absolutely to echo Him, was, that we should live this inward life, that we should be engaged in a humble, scrupulous, prayerful endeavour to abide in Christ and to let Christ abide in us; so should we be His disciples, so should we bring forth much fruit.

O, Christians, you are a city set upon a hill, you are the salt of the earth, you are the light of the world. You have no idea of it; you cannot have an idea of it. All you can ever in this world be conscious of is, a daily surrender of self to Christ, an hourly crucifixion, an hourly resurrection, a warm glow of love to your Saviour, a throbbing of love

and pity to men for His sake, a weary pain at inward uncleanness or conscious failure, a quick and humble resort to Him for deliverance and cleansing. You are occupied with this unceasing business. In the long corridors of your soul there is a great and growing activity; you would have the cross over all portals, and windows all looking out to the heavenlies. That is all. Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom. While such a life as this is being patiently and even toilsomely lived, the truth of God is flashing upon men · the life with Christ in God is being introduced into society and into the world as the salt which saves it from corruption, and as the leaven which must leaven the whole lump.

SCRIPTURE INSPIRED OF GOD

“ All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”
—2 *Tim.* iii. 16.

XV

SCRIPTURE INSPIRED OF GOD

THE new Dogma, with which our times are travailing, must bring to full growth the living germs of the Reformation, the true doctrine of the Holy Scriptures, and the sole sufficiency of faith. These three are one. The Reformation was the retreat from the authority of the Church to that of Holy Scripture, and Holy Scripture is the security for the sole sufficiency of faith.

The Reformation accomplished much ; it heaved into the day, and set in the forefront of progress, the nations that accepted it. It drew all the vitality of the world into itself, and left the unreformed nations to a process of gradual decay. In looking back over the history of Europe, we are at once struck by the fact that "the solitary monk who shook the world" is a pivot on which history turned. With his protest a new era began ; nations struggling to be born came to the light ; the human mind seemed to acquire fresh powers and to strike out in all directions with the primal impulse of creation. Science began ; criticism began ; philosophy was reborn ; modern literature broke into sudden bloom ;

Luther and Erasmus; Calvin, Pascal; Tyndale, Spenser, Shakespeare; Grotius, Spinoza; they were the children of the Reformation and the fathers of modern literature. Political enfranchisement began, and Europe moved towards the goal of freedom, order, intelligence. The Reformation is therefore a noble and salient fact. But so great a birth of time was not immediately comprehended. The followers of Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Knox, accepting the brilliant light of their leaders were willing to abide in their light, and to go no further. As John Robinson, the teacher of the Pilgrim Fathers said: "The Lutherans would not be drawn to go beyond what Luther saw; for whatever part of God's word He had further revealed to Calvin, they had rather die than embrace it; and so," said he, "you see the Calvinists, they stick where he left them, a misery much to be lamented, for though they were precious shining lights in their times, yet God had not revealed His whole will to them, and were they now alive they would be as ready to embrace further light as that they had received. Here also," continues the delightful and familiar record, "he put us in mind of our church covenant, whereby we engage with God and one another, to receive whatever light or truth should be made known to us from His written word; but withal he exhorted us to take heed what we received for truth." He was very confident that the Lord had

more truth and light yet to break out of His Holy Word.

If it is not presumptuous to say so, the Reformation is only now beginning to be understood. Only now, after nearly four centuries of conflict, the germs of truth which it gave to the world strike root. Only now we begin to gain the right point of view ; which is this, that we honour the Reformers best not by following them, but by going beyond them, not by making them our leaders, but by taking their leader, Christ, as ours.

The truths of the Reformation are not Luther's truths or Calvin's, but those to which their truths, in the divine providence of evolution have led. When we formulate these truths now, it is not under the shadow and the fear of that medieval tyranny which threatened to destroy them. From that tyranny we are escaped ; it threatens, it fulminates, and excommunicates, but it is powerless. We may, therefore, and we must, state these truths in relation to the present births of time. No truth which the Reformers gained do we surrender ; but we eagerly embrace the truths which have grown out of the germs they planted.

John Robinson limited his expectation to the light and truth which would break out of the Word. Such new light and truth were destined to come from the growth of knowledge outside the Word. The world has become a different place, and man

occupies a different position in it ; new and surely established facts have greatly changed our view of history, of the origin of man, of his relation to the universe. But the result of this widening knowledge has been, as Robinson saw, that new light and truth have broken out of the Word. Growing knowledge has not superseded it, but elicited new knowledge from it. The advance of science and criticism has brought out the light of Scripture and set it in a more striking pre-eminence. The view of Scripture has been changed but the new view is more appreciative than the old. Scripture comes out as an authority much more commanding and sufficient, as criticism has dissolved the merely mechanical bondage of the letter, and emancipated the Spirit. Verbal inspiration and absolute inerrancy are found to be not only untrue, but a bondage and distortion, not claimed by the Bible itself, nor admissible in view of the facts. But this modification has led us to a more intelligent appreciation of what these writings are. They are the records of a revelation ; and the records of a revelation are themselves a revelation. The revelation is not completed until it is made permanent and universal by means of the Scriptures. The writers must have been qualified for their task by the spirit of revelation ; their writings have been preserved and collected in the Canon by virtue of that quality in them. The Bible is not a chance collection of writings ; the scraps

and survivals of two literatures. It is, however ill arranged the parts, an ordered progress of Divine facts, and of Divine records of them—*Christ is the final cause and the end of all*. Luther's test, that a book must be estimated by what it tells us of Christ, proves to be correct. By a Divine selection these writings have been brought together in such a way that the ritual, prophetic, and historic preparation for Christ, the evangelical testimony regarding Christ, and the apostolic interpretation of Christ constitute a complete and sufficient authority for faith and life. This authority, as criticism is teaching us to understand it, has become more distinct, and more final, than when the Bible was left to the endless vagaries of a private interpretation which took every text as it liked, literally, anagogically, allegorically or spiritually, and exposed the book to the charge that every man could draw from it the dogma that he wished.¹

¹ Mr Garvie in his *Ritschlian Theology*, p. 390, has admirably pointed out this authority of Scripture, as against the Ritschlian school on the one hand and the Critical school on the other.

An illustration of the arbitrariness of interpretation which went along with the belief in verbal inspiration, may be cited from John Owen's work on the Holy Spirit. He gravely contends that in Matt. xxiv. 26, "behold he is in the wilderness," points to the anchorites of the Thebaid; "behold he is in the chambers," since chambers mean the storehouse, refers to Transubstantiation! He therefore finds in these words of our Lord a warning against the two capital offences of the Papal Church, Monasticism and the Mass.

Luther lightly dismissed books from the New Testament, *James* as an epistle of straw, or the Apocalypse as unintelligible. But that freedom of criticism which Luther initiated, working fearlessly, has reached a more conservative result. Criticism now may dispute about the authorship of the books, but it would never dream of dismissing any. It may see in 2 Pet. a late writing of the period 150-160 A.D.; and it may maintain that the Fourth Gospel was composed about 110 A.D. in the school of St John's disciples; but it will scrupulously keep, and supremely value, both writings for their contents. It does not deny, nay, it confirms, the view that these books were selected and kept by a certain intrinsic and spiritual criterion.

Other books have tried to obtain a place in the Canon. The Council of Trent sanctioned the *Apocrypha* as of equal authority with genuine Scripture. Some of the earliest authorities reckoned the Pastor of Hermas, the Epistle of Barnabas, and other sub-apostolic writings in the New Testament. But time and the spiritual sense have unconsciously expurgated and confirmed the Canon. The Old Testament as the Apostles held it, and the New Testament as the second century held it, stand firm in the light of the freest criticism. The more freely these writings are handled, the more surely they crystallise and form the body of Scripture which we call the Bible. The qualities are intrinsic;

there is a certain stamp upon them ; they are inspired. They stand together not by compulsion, not by authority, but by their own character. This book or that might be removed without affecting the whole. The book of *Esther*, or *Ecclesiastes*, or *Nahum*, might be rejected ; Luther might reject *James* ; but it would make no difference to the whole. And as a matter of fact you cannot reject even the least part of the real Scripture ; you may drive out *Esther*, *Ecclesiastes*, *Nahum*, *James*, with a pitchfork, but like Nature, they will always return.

But just as Scripture establishes itself by its intrinsic qualities as an Impregnable Rock, so its cardinal doctrines, which are the lasting germs of the Reformation, contain in them a divine and irrepressible potency. The central theme of Scripture, the point to which all, for many centuries led up, the point which gathered all together in one, and made the Bible the book of the World, is *Christ*. It is the book of Christ, composed to foretell Him, to prepare for Him, to announce Him, to commend Him, to convey Him to mankind. But in this literature of Christ one thing stands out with growing distinctness, and at last becomes the clear point of light, the *articulus stantis aut cadentis ecclesiæ*. It is that Christ is given to Faith and to Faith alone. Faith is not only sufficient, but it is the only way of gaining or enjoying salvation.

We may allow that the earlier stages of the reve-

lation—for it was historically progressive—did not make this clear ; if they had, the Apostle Paul would not have been obliged to contend against the Jewish conceptions of his day. But on the other hand, when the key was found in the completed revelation, Paul had no difficulty in showing that the principle had been latent from the first. “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness.” That may be considered the fine filament of the root from which the whole of the Gospel is developed. “The just shall live by his faith,” is the prophetic oracle which is needed to unravel the others. The Psalter at its highest points of revelation is always clear on this, that it is simple trust in the Lord which secures all blessings for men.

The *Epistle to the Hebrews*, the great key to the older institutions which is offered by the revelation completed in Christ, is also the handbook of Faith. It finds faith in all the records of the past, from the Creation downward, and it sees all the ritual of the Law and the Priesthood fulfilled and ready to vanish away in the clear light of Faith. All these were shadows of good things to come ; the substance, or reality, was Faith.

It is this Faith as the master principle of religion, or the means of all blessing, that, being once for all delivered to the saints, must be maintained and contended for by believing souls. It was this Faith, this central point of the Bible, which in the middle

ages had been lost, overlaid by a system of works and penances and ceremonies; the very record of it was forgotten because the Bible had passed out of the hands of the people as the guarantee and authority of truth. It was this Faith which Luther rediscovered.

It was a pearl lost in the depths of the sea. No one dived for it; no one believed in it. All were content with the drift and the froth on the surface of the waters. Luther, in the strong agony of a soul which longed for peace with God, dived for it, and guided by the Scripture dived and dived again. This pearl of great price, once clutched, he held fast with a passionate tenacity. As he presented it to the world, men were ravished by it: they were content to part with all that they had to gain it.

This chief jewel of the Bible, that Faith in Christ saves, that by faith a man is justified and not by works or sacraments, and that by faith he may live and grow, and enter on eternal life and progression, was the secret of the Reformation. To carry on the Reformation we must carry on this. We do not carry on the Reformation by accepting the doctrine of Faith as the Reformers held it, but by exercising the faith which they exercised. This is the supreme Dogma for the future, the dogma needed to defend us from superstition on the one hand, and from agnosticism on the other, from the

deadening religion of works on the one hand, and from the rude license of sensuality and indulgence on the other. Have Faith in God, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.

If one were asked, Why is the Bible inspired ; by what unfailing test can we recognise its inspiration? we might be content to answer, Its inspiration lies in this, that it teaches, exhibits, and inculcates Faith. It makes religion turn upon Faith. It there strikes the key-note of all religion, and in endless variations and harmonies brings out the full music of Faith. This Bible doctrine of Faith reformed the Church, and made modern Europe. It has converted heathen lands, it has regenerated barbarous and cannibal islands. We ought to be more careful in writing up the sequel of Heb. xi., and recording not only the things which then the time failed the writer to tell, but also the things which have happened since. We should write in this wise :

“By faith Robert Morrison went out to China amid the jeers of the world, when as yet there was no entrance into the country, and was persuaded that though he could not convert China, God could ; by faith he wrought at the translation of the Bible, and died before he had received any of the promises.

By faith Burns offered himself to the Synod in 1845, when the China mission was to be surrendered because no leader appeared ; leaving his fruitful

work of Evangelism at home, he went out to flash from point to point of China like a flame of love and zeal, everywhere gathering converts and founding churches.

By faith Hudson Taylor, dedicated by his father before his birth, gave himself to China, and has been permitted in his lifetime to marshal a force of seven hundred missionaries, and to gather a Chinese Church of seven thousand members.

By faith John Ross gained a knowledge of the Korean language, translated the New Testament, and transmitted it to the Hermit Nation, so that when at last the country was open, the missionaries found whole communities that were acquainted with Christianity, professed Protestantism, and were waiting for teachers.

By faith Robert Bruce settled down in Persia, in 1869, and laboured for souls; the profession of Christianity provoked the persecution of the Mohammedan mullahs: nevertheless there are six hundred baptised converts.

By faith Henry and William Williams landed in New Zealand, when no colonists dared settle there for fear of the cannibals: and they lived to see the Maories converted into Christians and the island settled as a British colony.

By faith Livingstone struck into the Dark Continent, opened it, revealed that world's sore, the slave-trade, summoned the Church to preach the

Gospel to the unknown millions ; and missions have penetrated Africa and almost abolished the slave-trade. The pioneer died in faith, not having seen, but it was given to him to save a continent.

By faith, Samuel Crowther, a captured slave, became a missionary to the Yoruba, and among his first six converts was his own mother, met by chance, from whom he had been torn twenty-seven years before ; he died a bishop of the English Church.

By faith, Alfred Saker, a wheelwright from the Devonport dockyard, went out to live among the degraded people of the Cameroons. After four years he gained his first convert : he was civiliser and preacher ; the arts of life and the faith of the Gospel went hand in hand. When the Spaniards broke up the mission and forbade Protestantism, the converts migrated ; and Saker died in 1884, waiting for his reward in heaven.

By faith, Allen Gardiner projected the mission to the Indians of Terra del Fuego, as to the men in all the world farthest from hope and help. On that cruel and desolate shore he died, the last of the devoted company. But the South African missionary Society sprang out of his grave, and the schooner *Allen Gardiner* was sent out to gain admission to the island. The whole party was massacred ; but by faith the mission has continued and won the day. Christian villages now bear witness to the man who by faith laid down his life to save those forlorn souls.

By faith, John Geddie went to Aneityum, and was able to leave as his epitaph: 'When he landed in 1848, there were no Christians here, and when he died in 1872, there were no heathen.'"

Thank God that chapter of the Faith is now so long that it cannot be read, and the names in it grow more numerous at an accelerated ratio every year.

It behoves us to put to the full test our faith in God, our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not an argument about it, nor even the fullest demonstration of it as a possibility, which must form the new and triumphant dogma. It is the exercise of it. Every man who has faith and who lives by faith, is not only a witness and evidence of it to the world, but he is an actual force, a demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

Let us compose an apologetic to present to the world, one that the world will be very ready to accept. Let us have faith, let us live by faith. It is an overwhelming evidence; nay, it is a direct converting power. Some people are afraid of the higher criticism; they think the Bible is endangered. The Bible can never be endangered so long as a dozen persons have faith in Christ, and show by an honest, loving and spiritual life the fruits which that faith produces. Others are afraid of atheism, agnosticism, unbelief. O foolish fears! Let there be but one poor and simple soul, a woman, a little child, who

has faith in Christ, that little stone hewn without hands can overthrow all the images of idolatry, and can thrash the mountains.

Others of us are afraid of a corrupt church. And that is an awful danger because it hardens the world against religion, and seizing the fountains of faith it seals or poisons them. But be of good cheer, this is the victory which overcomes—even your faith. Dare to believe. Cast your personal salvation on Christ, and claim your position as His ransomed ones; and then cast the salvation of the Church upon Him, and enter into the victory which He has attained.

You are hampered, it may be, not only by these fears for truth, but by the shackles and superstitions of old errors. You are haunted by old beliefs or half beliefs, and you can attain to no clearness and simplicity of view. Come, believe in Christ and in Him alone; not Christ first and the other things after, but Christ first and the other things nowhere. Stake all upon Him, forgiveness, cleansing, power, direction, inspiration, things present, things to come, life and death. Take Christ for all in all. Without merit or claim, accept Him as wisdom, justification, sanctification, and redemption. Why, you and I alone, sallying out to face the whole world on those terms might be more than conquerors. We have no idea of the sufficiency of His name. We have kept it back, we have mixed it up with other things.

Let us fling out the banner, and display the ensign. Let I.H.S. float over this distracted world. We want nothing else, nor does the world. "All power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth, and He is with us always to the end."

One word more. You have put your faith in Him, but it has gradually slipped away. Like some iron band about a building, the rust has eaten it, a few bricks have got displaced, and it has partly fallen off. Ah, you have not noticed the force of the present tense in the use of the word "believe." There is an aorist, which says, "believe! exercise an act of faith in Christ, accept Him as your Saviour once for all." But there is also a present tense which signifies "continue believing, repeat the act from day to day, and from hour to hour." And it is by this present tense we are saved. There is the command, "Believe and live," but there is also the command, "Live by believing."

I could fancy that it is some faint and muffled memory of this which survives in the Catholic doctrine of the daily mass, and in the requirement that the faithful should be present at it. When I go back to the New Testament I see the possible meaning of that usage, though I also see how the usage has obscured the simplicity of the original. For in an inward, actual and spiritual sense, there is a daily mass, a daily feeding on the flesh and the blood of the Son of God. And in this ex-

perience, a personal, free, intelligent, and purposeful experience, the gist of the Reformation lies. I take my Bible; I meditate on it day and night; I start from Genesis and end at Revelation, or I start from Judges and Samuel and end with 2 Peter, it matters little whether the order is the traditional or the critical one. I treat the whole book as a book of Christ, a means by which I may renew my faith in Christ, and get a fuller content to my faith every day. There in my closet, on my knees with my Bible, I repeat day by day my act of faith in Him; it deepens and widens day by day. St Francis was found sometimes in prayer by the hour together, saying nothing but "God, my God." A Christian spends his life in the repetition of one word, "I believe in Christ." Fuller, richer, becomes the meaning every day. To each occasion, to each failure, to each sin, this fact comes as the complete satisfaction. It is renewal and growth, it is grace and strength. "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief." That, rightly understood, and duly practised, practised persistently, understood better with each experience, is the sufficient formula of Christianity.

Thou, O Christ, art all I want,
More than all in Thee I find.

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

“Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is He? They say unto Him, *The son of David.*”—*Matt.* xxii. 42.

XVI

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

THE time is probably at hand when we shall cease to think of Christ along the lines of the formulated creeds, or even within the limits of Scriptural language. And this, not because the creeds are wrong, but because they are inadequate; and not because the Scriptural language is misleading, but because the voice of present facts is always louder than the muffled sounds of distant centuries.

Already in the earliest writings of the New Testament we find Apostles saying that they will henceforth know Christ no more "after the flesh," because the Christ "after the Spirit" was greater. And we may say that we shall know Christ "after the Scriptures or after the creed" no more, because the Christ of history, the Christ of human experience, is greater.

The Christ of the New Testament was as yet an untried power; now He has been tried for nineteen centuries. At that time He was the man from Galilee, crucified, asserted to be risen. As yet he was of a local, or of no, reputation. Now a good part of the world is called by His name, and with-

out exaggeration we may say that the progress and hope of the world lie under His name. When the creeds were formulated the genius and scope of Christ were little understood, and it was thought that everything turned on having exact views of His nature. Hence the struggle to place Him as the coequal, coeternal Person of the blessed Trinity, or the longer struggle to define the two natures blended in His person. Great as was the importance of these contentions, history has dwarfed their significance. What has been well called "the fact of Christ" stands out independently of the metaphysics. In the fourth century it was still felt that to determine the relation of the human and divine in Him was essential. As the twentieth century dawns, it is apparent that His person and His power are too vast for our definitions. While men were comparatively near Him, they had hope of defining Him. As they recede from Him, His majesty and greatness increase; while He is more indisputable, He is more indefinable. There seems something a little petty, and professional, and lifeless in the attempt to balance the two natures. We are rather inclined to surrender to the unique Person, to trace His course in history, to gather up the fruits of His travail; we are more disposed to interpret all things through Him, than to attempt to interpret Him Himself.

The lines on which this new dogma of the Person

of Christ will grow may already be faintly traced. And though we may not be exact in our forecast it may greatly assist our faith to sketch, however imperfectly, "the Christ that is to be." It is probable that, from the old habit of resting in texts and in creeds, many are hardly aware of the indisputableness of Christ. The nervous fear of handling texts or reconsidering creeds shows that to many Christ is still bound up in those swaddling clothes, and is not grown into His fulness.

But we need not have any misgivings. There is no mistaking the *Æonian* record of the centuries. B.C. stands in a perfectly definite contrast to A.D. Nor is there any mistaking the map of the world. Take a map and mark with red paint the quarters of the earth where there is life, progress, hope. It is not disputed that those happen to be the parts that are Christian. So curiously exact is this that, on the one hand, Mohammedanism which came six centuries after Christ, and was presumably an improvement on Christianity, already stands for stagnant, corrupt, or decadent empires; and, on the other hand, by the introduction of Christianity into Japan only a generation ago, that ancient country has started into life and ranks among the Western Powers.

Here we have two facts which are broader and more unmistakable than any book. The point where Christ came is the turning-point of history.

Before Christ, was the old world, after Him, is the new. How impossible it would be to treat as a myth or a legend the one name that has made a decisive change in history. There is obviously something childish in the idea that you can dispose of Christ by discrediting the four Gospels. You cannot tear up the letters B.C. and A.D. and all that they signify, because Strauss finds that the Gospel-records are myths, or Schmiedel assures us that they contain no correct or certain accounts of Him, with the exception of a few unessential details. He is there just the same. He is the person, the power, the name, that turned the old dying order of Antiquity into the progress, the potency, the hope, which we call the modern world.

And the other indisputable fact which confronts us on the map makes the mere criticism of the New Testament a child's play, an irrelevant pastime. It cannot be denied that settled laws, secured civilisation, the idea of education, the practice of it, science, the arts of life, growing literatures, even medicine, the cure of diseases, and music, the delight of the mind, are coterminous with Christianity. Admit that in Christian countries there are millions that have no personal faith in Christ; but you must also admit that in countries where there are none who have a personal faith in Christ, there is no progress, no hope, no life. The term Christian as applied to a country is obviously something over

and above the personal faith in Christ, though that must be the living germ; it implies a certain conception of history, of politics, of freedom, of the worth and the rights of the individual, of the condition of women, of the care of children, of the management of the home, and of many other factors which make up the life of man. A Christian community lives in a certain atmosphere, works on certain suppositions, possesses a certain potency. And all who are born into that Christian atmosphere, are brought up on those tacit suppositions, and share that life which throbs through the whole body. We are apt to forget this subtle and pervasive influence of Christianity. Jews, Turks, infidels living in a Christian country are all to a great extent Christian; they share the life which Christianity has made; they enjoy that liberty, toleration, charity, opportunity, which are found where Christ is implicit Master, and not elsewhere. And this broad fact of Christendom, which dwarfs the minor differences of Catholic and Protestant, of Churchman and Dissenter, and even of believer and unbeliever within the bounds of a Christian society, may be brought out as a startling witness, whenever the condition of non-Christian countries is understood; and there is a witness for Christ more impressive because more widely observed than can be contained in any writings, even those of the New Testament.

These are Epistles and Gospels, known and read of all men.

There is a passage in the *Jewish Antiquities* of Josephus (Bk. xviii., ch. 3, sec. 3) which reads as if it must be an interpolation by a Christian hand. It runs thus: "Now, there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call Him a man, for He was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to Him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was the Christ; and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved Him at the first did not forsake Him; for He appeared to them alive again the third day as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning Him; and the tribe of Christians so named from Him are not extinct at this day." Josephus wrote at the same time as St Mark. This guarded reference of a Jewish historian to Christ is the least that history can say about Him. The closing sentence is still true; not thirty or forty years only have passed but nineteen centuries, and history is obliged to add: "the tribe of Christians are not extinct at this day."

If you could imagine a perfectly impartial historiographer—some man from Mars—alighting on this globe and attempting to record the past and present of this planet, could he mistake this deep-rooted and

all-prevailing cause, this historic fact of Christ? He would at once be driven to the Christian countries as the significant countries of the earth; and there he would at once find by the way of reckoning time that the era started from the year of Our Lord. He could find no town or hamlet in the whole of Christendom without some building dedicated to that name; all charities and activities would acknowledge His influence: and not the least evidence to Him would be the strong and bitter adversaries, the infidel press, the infidel lecturers, the fierceness of the opposition. Why all this sound and fury against one who died nearly twenty centuries ago? Evidently He must have been a power of prodigious import, to excite this extraordinary opposition two thousand years after His death.

But the investigator could not side with the infidel. He would find from examination of the several countries and kinds of men that this Christian influence was the most beneficent power at work in the world. If he took up the literature of the times before Christ, or of the countries where Christ is not known, he would observe several unmistakable distinctions, such as these:—

1. Christ meant an intellectual change from a general attitude of despair to one of hope. Before Him the world was supposed to be lapsing from an age of gold, to a silver, iron, and clay age, with a prospect of ultimate ruin. After Him the golden

age sprang into the future, and men began to move from nothingness to the age of clay, and on to the age of iron, with passionate hopes of the age of gold. Suddenly by Hope the world was saved.

2. Christ meant a moral change equally startling. Before Him the gods were good and bad, like men but stronger. Indeed religion and morality had no real connection. If morality supported itself by edifying legends about the gods, other stories of the gods were absolutely destructive of morality. But after Christ this confusion immediately ceased. God henceforth was identified with good. When God demanded obedience to Himself it was on grounds of goodness, morality, truth, because He was good, holy, true.

3. And above all Christ meant a religious change. As religion forthwith was identical with goodness, and with the highest kind of goodness, an inward and spiritual kind, the example of a sinless life, a life of sacrifice, service, purity and love, was presented as the goal to be realised; a power was given to realise it. A new horizon was opened up, a new thought for the world and mankind was conceived. There seemed to be new heavens as well as a new earth. God was seen, at once immanent and transcendent, holy love, making man and working in man, reconciling man to Himself, providing for him a spiritual home.

Our student from another planet could not fail to

see these facts, frequently as blinded eyes among us ignore or deny them. He could not doubt that this change was the most beneficial that had occurred in the history of the world. He would not make the curious blunder which travellers often make about missions. He would mark so significant an utterance as that of Keshab Chandra Sen, not a Christian, made a generation ago:—

“As regards Christianity and its relation to the future church of India, I have no doubt in my mind that it will exercise great influence on the growth and formation of that church. The spirit of Christianity has already pervaded the whole atmosphere of Indian society, and we breathe, think, feel and move in a Christian atmosphere. Native society is being raised, enlightened and reformed under the influence of Christian education. If it is true that the future of a nation is determined by all the circumstances and agencies which to-day influence its nascent growth, surely the future Church of this country will be the result of the purer elements of the leading creeds of the day, harmonised, developed and shaped under the influence of Christianity.”¹

This student from another planet would find one thing in itself decisive. The name of Christ stands for the most significant change in the position of woman. Before He came that half of the human

¹ Speech of Jan. 23, 1869, quoted by Messrs Thompson & Johnson in “British Foreign Missions,” p. 40.

race which discharges the sacred task of its motherhood had no rights, no recognition. This would strike the impartial observer, though it has ceased to strike modern men, and even modern women. The contempt of the Jews for women was such that a Rabbi was held to be demeaned if he were seen talking to a woman. In China women are bartered and sold like cattle. In India they are left without education: the female who can read and write is branded as the heir of misfortunes. And while education and religion are denied to woman, she is contemned for those failings which are common to human nature apart from educational and religious influences. Manu said that women are always ready to corrupt men, whether wise or foolish. The Nit Shaster says, "To lie, to be impudent, to deceive, to speak bitter words, to be unclean or cruel are all vices inherent in woman's nature, and most of all to find fault with a man if her wishes are not satisfied." The Vedas declare her to be an incarnation of sin; it is therefore favourable perhaps for her peace of mind, that she is forbidden to read these sacred books of the Hindoo religion.

These judgments of the Christless world on women are of course passed by men; they prove not so much the degradation of the women as that of the men who make women what they are and then revile them for their condition. But

they are a startling evidence to what Christ has done for the human race.

What do we in the Western world mean by woman? We strip away all false sentiment and idle gallantry, and we try to speak the absolute truth on the subject. We mean by woman that part of the human family which in a special degree is the guardian of purity, of morality, of religion. She, like the Vestals in Rome, keeps the sacred fire for ever burning on the hearth. We do not flatter when we say that most men owe their clearest notions of virtue and their brightest ideas of religion to a mother, or a sister, or a wife. A large proportion of men never get any practical idea of God, or of worship, or of devotion, until their gross nature has been purged by the pure passion of love. This transformation of woman is entirely the work of Christ, unknown except in Christian countries, the peculiar gift of Christendom to the redemption of the world.¹

¹ Mrs Lewis commenting on the reading of John iv. 27 in the newly found Sinaitic Palimpsest "His disciples came and wondered that with the woman he was *standing* and talking," beautifully says: "The change of attitude may have been prompted by an innate feeling of the chivalry which was eventually to blossom out of His teaching. Standing is not the usual habit of the Jewish Rabbi when he is engaged in teaching, so it is all the more remarkable that our Lord should have shown so much courtesy to our sex in the person of one of its most degraded representatives. The little word *qâem*, standing, has so much significance that we cannot suppose it to be a mere orthographical variant."—*Expository Times*, xii. 8, p. 360.

If, therefore, the question, What think ye of Christ? is ever raised, there is one answer at least which every impartial student is bound to give: It is He who has redeemed woman, and in doing so has made the wife, and the mother, as we understand those terms, the fountain of purity, the leaders in the progress and happiness of mankind.

But from these broad outward testimonies we turn to the inward. If it is impossible to miss the mark of Christ on the ages and on the map, He is just as obvious in Christian lives and Christian communities. We must all have met genuine Christians, and seen the change which Christ has wrought. The character of integrity, and truth, of self-discipline, and love, of service to society and to individuals, of bright testimony to heavenly and eternal things, the witness of Christ in the hearts and on the tongues of His disciples; all this is a fact, more distinct even than the writings of the New Testament. It is a fact so patent that it is constantly making converts; the great proportion of Christians are won simply by the fact of Christ in other Christians.

The habit of resting our religion on Scripture leads us to fall back on cases of conversion, or instances of godliness, mentioned there with the result that many do not observe the proofs which are before our own eyes. I will venture to narrate a fact as striking as those recorded in the New

Testament, because it is the work of the same Saviour, and evidently intended to serve as a witness to us, just as those events were the witness to the first believers. There was a nobleman—there is no harm in mentioning his name, Lord Alfred Paget¹—who commanded a ship, and was a devoted servant of Queen Victoria; he had two daughters who were Christians, but he showed no interest in religion and they did not venture to speak to him on the subject. All they could do was to constantly pray that he might be brought to Christ before he died. Their prayer was answered in this unexpected way: they were all staying in the Highlands, and one day they were watching the collies bring in the sheep from the mountain side. As the sheep entered one by one the door of the fold, one of the daughters involuntarily exclaimed, “How like that is to the way we come to Christ, one by one!” “What did you say?” abruptly said her father. Shame-faced she repeated it. He was strangely impressed. “What!” he exclaimed, “is coming to Christ entering simply at the door one by one like those sheep?” “Yes, father,” said the girl. “Then,”

¹ These facts were told me at first hand by Mrs Brightwen, who had personal knowledge of them; and she told me that there was no objection to giving publicity to them, as the people concerned would be thankful to know that others were helped by them.

he cried aloud, "I believe. Christ, I here and now enter through Thee!" Sir Robert Phayre was holding services at the time in that place. Next Sunday to his surprise he saw Lord Alfred Paget and his two daughters enter the room and take part in the service. At the close Lord Alfred prayed aloud with great fervour and expressed his faith in Christ. He was not slow to confess the change which had taken place. He called one of his officers on board his ship who knew his habits well. "I want to speak to you," he said, "Do you know Christ? I can tell you it's a great thing to know your sins forgiven for His sake." The man thought his commanding officer must be mad. He was not mad, but full of a new power; in his club where he was well known he would speak to members with beautiful courtesy and offer them Bibles. "Excuse me, you may not have given attention to the subject, but I have found Christ, and it has filled me with peace and joy. Would you accept this Bible?" So he continued for two months, and then very suddenly he was taken home.

This is the living Christ at work. These instances accumulate on one's hands. They are not occasional but constant. They occur every Sunday—yes, and every week-day. The facts are accessible but not obtruded. If we were to put together what we in this church know, there would be enough

to convince the world, always supposing the world would attend to them.

What think ye of Christ? He is the one who is always working these miracles of redemption, who is always saving the lost and putting a new song into the mouths of those who have found Him.

But let us be candid, let us have a mind open to the truth: What is this fact of Christ, which is so obvious in history, and on the broad face of things, so obvious also in biography and in the secret movements of the spirit of men? This is the Christ of the Epistles; yes. It is the Christ of the Synoptics; yes. It is the Christ of the Fourth Gospel; yes. But clearly not this alone. Invaluable as these New Testament writings are, Christ is something much more. "Greater works shall ye do, because I go to My Father," He said. The writings very properly recognise that of Him they were able to give only a fragmentary and tentative account. Venture to break away from the merely dogmatic shackles. Come out, look facts in the face; use your eyes for yourself. You cannot mistake this plain and significant truth; Christ is a Power, a Presence, a Person actually at work in the world. Granted we interpret Him, and anticipate Him, and in a way communicate Him, by these documents which narrate His historic appearance. But the chief point about Him is not in the documents; it

is in His Living Power, Presence, Personality. One hesitates to press the idea of Personality, because that seems to be a limitation, and to imply that He is here and not there ; accessible to me now, and therefore not to a man at the other side of the globe. But all the positive significance of Personality is in this Power and Presence, which yet is by no means confined to one place, or limited by the demands of one set of thoughts. Christ is a Power and Presence, brooding over mankind, and in real or potential contact with every human being as such. Inasmuch as you are a human being, Christ is in you. It is nothing that millions of others demand His attention at the same time ; in effect, because you are a man you have at once His undivided attention whenever you appeal to Him.

In that marvellous introduction to "Trooper Peter Halkett," Christ appears at the camp fire, and in the language of a comrade claims the rough, coarse, ignorant soldier. That is what He is always doing. He is just such a Presence, such a Power, so varied, so ubiquitous, that at this moment He can be in those direct personal relations with every member of the human family. He is direct, immediate, personal. He is within reach of all. A trooper on the veldt may speak to Him and find Him there, as much as we in our assembly. His presence is peculiarly vivid in the assembly : it

overawes and astonishes us ; and also where two or three are gathered in His name, He is in the midst. But also each human being, the wild, roving Mongol, the fierce New Guinean, the dwarf savage of Central Africa, might at the same moment claim Him and appropriate Him. He gives His flesh for the life of the world ; there is enough for the whole world. He is present always as the embodiment of a type of human goodness, and that far the best. He is the Power of redemption for the worst. He is a Principle of reinforcement in the life of men and of societies.

There are certain psychological conditions of His manifesting Himself and working. In the absence of faith, trust, love, He stands necessarily aloof. He is there just the same ; in a sense He is working, but He can do no mighty work because of their unbelief. When faith comes by hearing : when men go out to Him with desire, trust, devotion, He is immediately manifest, as He was to the disciples toiling in the stormy sea. In proportion to their faith, *i.e.* their power of insight, He is transfigured before their eyes.

To the question, therefore, What think ye of Christ? a larger and more inclusive answer begins to be given, an answer which neglects nothing of the old, but adds much of the new. Whose Son is He? The reply comes with a certain fulness which the first disciples could not have anticipated

The notes of the answer may be set down : He is the Person foreshadowed in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New ; the personal manifestation of God, human and divine, whom the creeds strove in vain to define in the language of metaphysics ; the Person who has worked as a Spiritual Presence and Power in these centuries, forming a new conception of humanity, leading the world to a new goal, creating Christendom, establishing a new relation between man and God, reconciling the world to God ; the Person who is everywhere present to Him who believes, with immediate pardon and cleansing of sin, with the germs of a new life, with a hope of glory to be planted within : a Person who by His age-long coming and His slow redemptive working, marks Himself out as the goal and the end of human history, so that to gather together all things in Him may be considered the purpose for which the globe exists, and the principal interest, so far as this world is concerned, in the eternal heavens.

Whose Son is such an one? Clearly not merely the son of man. Essentially the facts show that He is the Son of God.