# BUNYAN CHARACTERS (1)

by Alexander Whyte

*Alexander Whyte's additional character studies from Bunyan's works, exploring the spiritual lessons embodied in the memorable figures of Pilgrim's Progress and other allegories.*

112 Chapters

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Chapter 1

# 001. Introductory

I

INTRODUCTORY ‘The express image’ [Gr. ‘the character’].—Hebrews 1:3. The word ‘character’ occurs only once in the New Testament, and that is in the passage in the prologue of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the original word is translated ‘express image’ in our version. Our Lord is the Express Image of the Invisible Father. No man hath seen God at any time. The only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him. The Father hath sealed His divine image upon His Son, so that he that hath seen the Son hath seen the Father. The Son is thus the Father’s character stamped upon and set forth in human nature. The Word was made flesh. This is the highest and best use to which our so expressive word ‘character’ has ever been put, and the use to which it is put when we speak of Bunyan’s Characters partakes of the same high sense and usage. For it is of the outstanding good or evil in a man that we think when we speak of his character. It is really either of his likeness or unlikeness to Jesus Christ we speak, and then, through Him, his likeness or unlikeness to God Himself. And thus it is that the adjective ‘moral’ usually accompanies our word ‘character’—moral or immoral. A man’s character does not have its seat or source in his body; character is not a physical thing: not even in his mind; it is not an intellectual thing. Character comes up out of the will and out of the heart. There are more good minds, as we say, in the world than there are good hearts. There are more clever people than good people; character,—high, spotless, saintly character,—is a far rarer thing in this world than talent or even genius. Character is an infinitely better thing than either of these, and it is of corresponding rarity. And yet so true is it that the world loves its own, that all men worship talent, and even bodily strength and bodily beauty, while only one here and one there either understands or values or pursues moral character, though it is the strength and the beauty and the sweetness of the soul.

We naturally turn to Bishop Butler when we think of moral character. Butler is an author who has drawn no characters of his own. Butler’s genius was not creative like Shakespeare’s or Bunyan’s. Butler had not that splendid imagination which those two masters in character-painting possessed, but he had very great gifts of his own, and he has done us very great service by means of his gifts. Bishop Butler has helped many men in the intelligent formation of their character, and what higher praise could be given to any author? Butler will lie on our table all winter beside Bunyan; the bishop beside the tinker, the philosopher beside the poet, the moralist beside the evangelical minister. In seeking a solid bottom for our subject, then, we naturally turn to Butler. Bunyan will people the house for us once it is built, but Butler lays bare for us the naked rock on which men like Bunyan build and beautify and people the dwelling-place of God and man. What exactly is this thing, character, we hear so much about? we ask the sagacious bishop. And how shall we understand our own character so as to form it well till it stands firm and endures? ‘Character,’answers Butler, in his bald, dry, deep way, ‘by character is meant that temper, taste, disposition, whole frame of mind from whence we act in one way rather than another . . . those principles from which a man acts, when they become fixed and habitual in him we call his

character . . . And consequently there is a far greater variety in men's characters than there is in the features of their faces.' Open Bunyan now, with Butler's keywords in your mind, and see the various tempers, tastes, dispositions, frames of mind from which his various characters act, and which, at bottom, really make them the characters, good or bad, which they are. See the principles which Bunyan has with such inimitable felicity embodied and exhibited in their names, the principles within them from which they have acted till they have become a habit and then a character, that character which they themselves are and will remain. See the variety of John Bunyan's characters, a richer and a more endless variety than are the features of their faces. Christian and Christiana, Obstinate and Pliable, Mr. Fearing and Mr. Feeblemind, Temporary and Talkative, Mr. By-ends and Mr. Facing-both-ways, Simple, Sloth, Presumption, that brisk lad Ignorance, and the genuine Mr. Brisk himself. And then Captain Boasting, Mr. High-mind, Mr. Wet-Eyes, and so on, through a less known (but equally well worth knowing) company of municipal and military characters in the Holy War.

We shall see, as we proceed, how this and that character in Bunyan was formed and deformed. But let us ask in this introductory lecture if we can find out any law or principle upon which all our own characters, good or bad, are formed. Do our characters come to be what they are by chance, or have we anything to do in the formation of our own characters, and if so, in what way? And here, again, Butler steps forward at our call with his key to our own and to all Bunyan's characters in his hand, and in three familiar and fruitful words he answers our question and gives us food for thought and solemn reflection for a lifetime. There are but three steps, says Butler, from earth to heaven, or, if you will, from earth to hell—acts, habits, character. All Butler's prophetic burden is bound up in these three great words—acts, habits, character. Remember and ponder these three words, and you will in due time become a moral philosopher. Ponder and practise them, and you will become what is infinitely better—a moral man. For acts, often repeated, gradually become habits, and habits, long enough continued, settle and harden and solidify into character. And thus it is that the severe and laconic bishop has so often made us shudder as he demonstrated it to us that we are all with our own hands shaping our character not only for this world, but much more for the world to come, by every act we perform, by every word we speak, almost by every breath we draw. Butler is one of the most terrible authors in the world. He stands on our nearest shelf with Dante on one side of him and Pascal on the other. He is indeed terrible, but it is with a terror that purifies the heart and keeps the life in the hour of temptation. Paul sometimes arms himself with the same terror; only he composes in another style than that of Butler, and, with all his vivid intensity, he calls it the terror of the Lord. Paul and Bunyan are of the same school of moralists and stylists; Butler went to school to the Stoics, to Aristotle, and to Plato. Our Lord Himself came to be the express image He was and is by living and acting under this same universal law of human life—acts, habits, character. He was made perfect on this same principle. He learned obedience both by the things that He did, and the things that He suffered. Butler says in one deep place, that benevolence and justice and veracity are the basis of all good character in God and in man, and thus also in the God-man. And those three foundation stones of our Lord's character settled deeper and grew stronger to bear and to suffer as He went on practising acts and speaking words of justice, goodness, and truth. And so of all the other elements of His moral character. Our Lord left Gethsemane a much more submissive and a much more surrendered man than He entered it. His forgiveness of injuries, and thus His splendid benevolence, had not yet come to its climax and crown till He said on the cross, 'Father, forgive them'. And, as He was, so are we in this world. This

world's evil and ill-desert made it but the better arena and theatre for the development and the display of His moral character; and the same instruments that fashioned Him into the perfect and express image He was and is, are still, happily, in full operation. Take that divinest and noblest of all instruments for the carving out and refining of moral character, the will of God. How our Lord made His own unselfish and unsinful will to bow to silence and to praise before the holy will of His Father, till that gave the finishing touch to His always sanctified will and heart! And, happily, that awful and blessed instrument for the formation of moral character is still active and available to those whose ambition rises to moral character, and who are aiming at heaven in all they do and all they suffer upon the earth. Gethsemane has gone out till it has covered all the earth. Its cup, if not in all the depth and strength of its first mixture, still in quite sufficient bitterness, is put many times in life into every man's hand. There is not a day, there is not an hour of the day, that the disciple of the submissive and all-surrendered Son has not the opportunity to say with his Master, If it be possible, let this cup pass: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.

It is not in the great tragedies of life only that character is tested and strengthened and consolidated. No man who is not himself under God's moral and spiritual instruments could believe how often in the quietest, clearest, and least tempestuous day he has the chance and the call to say, Yea, Lord, Thy will be done. And, then, when the confessedly tragic days and nights come, when all men admit that this is Gethsemane indeed, the practised soul is able, with a calmness and a peace that confound and offend the bystanders, to say, to act so that he does not need to say, Not my will, but Thine. And so of all the other forms and features of moral character; so of humility and meekness, so of purity and temperance, so of magnanimity and munificence, so of all self-suppression and self-extinction, and all corresponding exalting and magnifying and benefiting of other men. Whatever other passing uses this present world, so full of trial and temptation and suffering, may have, this surely is the supreme and final use of it—to be a furnace, a graving-house, a refining place for human character. Literally all things in this life and in this world—I challenge you to point out a single exception—work together for this supreme and only good, the purification, the refining, the testing, and the approval of human character. Not only so, but we are all in the very heat of the furnace, and under the very graving iron and in the very refining fire that our prefigured and predestinated character needs. Your life and its trials would not suit the necessities of my moral character, and you would lose your soul beyond redemption if you exchanged lots with me. You do not put a pearl under the potter's wheel; you do not cast clay into a refining fire. Abraham's character was not like David's, nor David's like Christ's, nor Christ's like Paul's. As Butler says, there is 'a providential disposition of things'around every one of us, and it is as exactly suited to the flaws and excrescences, the faults and corruptions of our character as if Providence had had no other life to make a disposition of things for but one, and that one our own. Have you discovered that in your life, or any measure of that? Have you acknowledged to God that you have at last discovered the true key of your life? Have you given Him the satisfaction to know that He is not making His providential dispositions around a stock or a stone, but that He has one under His hand who understands His hand, and responds to it, and rises up to meet and salute it? And we cease to wonder so much at the care God takes of human character, and the cost He lays out upon it, when we think that it is the only work of His hands that shall last for ever. It is fit, surely, that the ephemeral should minister to the eternal, and time to eternity, and all else in this world to the only thing in this world that shall endure and survive this world. All else we possess and pursue shall fade and perish, our moral character shall alone survive. Riches, honours, possessions,

pleasures of all kinds: death, with one stroke of his desolating hand, shall one day strip us bare to a winding-sheet and a coffin of all the things we are so mad to possess. But the last enemy, with all his malice and all his resistless power, cannot touch our moral character—unless it be in some way utterly mysterious to us that he is made under God to refine and perfect it. The Express Image carried up to His Father's House, not only the divine life He had brought hither with Him when He came to obey and submit and suffer among us; He carried back more than He brought, for He carried back a human heart, a human life, a human character, which was and is a new wonder in heaven. He carried up to heaven all the love to God and angels and men He had learned and practised on earth, with all the earthly fruits of it. He carried back His humility, His meekness, His humanity, His approachableness, and His sympathy. And we see to our salvation some of the uses to which those parts of His moral character are at this moment being put in His Father's House; and what we see not now of all the ends and uses and employments of our Lord's glorified humanity we shall, mayhap, see hereafter. And we also shall carry our moral character to heaven; it is the only thing we have worth carrying so far. But, then, moral character is well worth achieving here and then carrying there, for it is nothing else and nothing less than the divine nature itself; it is the divine nature incarnate, incorporate, and made manifest in man. And it is, therefore, immortal with the immortality of God, and blessed for ever with the blessedness of God.

# 002. Evangelist

II

EVANGELIST ‘Do the work of an evangelist.’—Paul to Timothy. On the 1st of June 1648 a very bitter fight was fought at Maidstone, in Kent, between the Parliamentary forces under Fairfax and the Royalists. Till Cromwell rose to all his military and administrative greatness, Fairfax was generalissimo of the Puritan army, and that able soldier never executed a more brilliant exploit than he did that memorable night at Maidstone. In one night the Royalist insurrection was stamped out and extinguished in its own blood. Hundreds of dead bodies filled the streets of the town, hundreds of the enemy were taken prisoners, while hundreds more, who were hiding in the hop-fields and forests around the town, fell into Fairfax’s hands next morning.

Among the prisoners so taken was a Royalist major who had had a deep hand in the Maidstone insurrection, named John Gifford, a man who was destined in the time to come to run a remarkable career. Only, to-day, the day after the battle, he has no prospect before him but the gallows. On the night before his execution, by the courtesy of Fairfax, Gifford’s sister was permitted to visit her brother in his prison. The soldiers were overcome with weariness and sleep after the engagement, and Gifford’s sister so managed it that her brother got past the sentries and escaped out of the town. He lay hid for some days in the ditches and thickets around the town till he was able to escape to London, and thence to the shelter of some friends of his at Bedford. Gifford had studied medicine before he entered the army, and as soon as he thought it safe he began to practise his old art in the town of Bedford. Gifford had been a dissolute man as a soldier, and he became, if possible, a still more scandalously dissolute man as a civilian. Gifford’s life in Bedford was a public disgrace, and his hatred and persecution of the Puritans in that town made his very name an infamy and a fear. He reduced himself to beggary with gambling and drink, but, when near suicide, he came under the power of the truth, till we see him clothed with rags and with a great burden on his back, crying out, ‘What must I do to be saved?’ ‘But at last’—I quote from the session records of his future church at Bedford—‘God did so plentifully discover to him the forgiveness of sins for the sake of Christ, that all his life after he lost not the light of God’s countenance, no, not for an hour, save only about two days before he died.’ Gifford’s conversion had been so conspicuous and notorious that both town and country soon heard of it: and instead of being ashamed of it, and seeking to hide it, Gifford at once, and openly, threw in his lot with the extremest Puritans in the Puritan town of Bedford. Nor could Gifford’s talents be hid; till from one thing to another, we find the former Royalist and dissolute Cavalier actually the parish minister of Bedford in Cromwell’s so evangelical but otherwise so elastic establishment. At this point we open John Bunyan’s Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners, and we read this classical passage:—‘Upon a day the good providence of God did cast me to Bedford to work in my calling: and in one of the streets of that town I came where there were three or four poor women sitting at the door in the sun and talking about the things of God. But I may say I heard, but I understood not, for they were far above and out of my reach . . . About this time I began to break my mind to those poor people in Bedford, and to tell them of my condition, which, when they had heard, they

told Mr. Gifford of me, who himself also took occasion to talk with me, and was willing to be well persuaded of me though I think on too little grounds. But he invited me to his house, where I should hear him confer with others about the dealings of God with their souls, from all which I still received more conviction, and from that time began to see something of the vanity and inner wretchedness of my own heart, for as yet I knew no great matter therein . . . At that time also I sat under the ministry of holy Mr. Gifford, whose doctrine, by the grace of God, was much for my stability.' And so on in that inimitable narrative. The first minister whose words were truly blessed of God for our awakening and conversion has always a place of his own in our hearts. We all have some minister, some revivalist, some faithful friend, or some good book in a warm place in our heart. It may be a great city preacher; it may be a humble American or Irish revivalist; it may be The Pilgrim's Progress, or The Cardiphonia, or the Serious Call—whoever or whatever it was that first arrested and awakened and turned us into the way of life, they all our days stand in a place by themselves in our grateful heart. And John Gifford has been immortalised by John Bunyan, both in his Grace Abounding and in his Pilgrim's Progress. In his Grace Abounding, as we have just seen, and in The Pilgrim, Gifford has his portrait painted in holy oil on the wall of the Interpreter's house, and again in eloquent pen and ink in the person of Evangelist.

John Gifford had himself made a narrow escape out of the City of Destruction, and John Bunyan had, by Gifford's assistance, made the same escape also. The scene, therefore, both within that city and outside the gate of it, was so fixed in Bunyan's mind and memory that no part of his memorable book is more memorably put than just its opening page. Bunyan himself is the man in rags, and Gifford is the evangelist who comes to console and to conduct him. Bunyan's portraits are all taken from the life. Brilliant and well-furnished as Bunyan's imagination was, Bedford was still better furnished with all kinds of men and women, and with all kinds of saints and sinners. And thus, instead of drawing upon his imagination in writing his books, Bunyan drew from life. And thus it is that we see first John Gifford, and then John Bunyan himself at the gateof the city; and then, over the page, Gifford becomes the evangelist who is sent by the four poor women to speak to the awakened tinker.

'Wherefore dost thou so cry?' asks Evangelist. 'Because,' replied the man, 'I am condemned to die.' 'But why are you so unwilling to die, since this life is so full of evils?' And I suppose we must all hear Evangelist putting the same pungent question to ourselves every day, at whatever point of the celestial journey we at present are. Yes; why are we all so unwilling to die? Why do we number our days to put off our death to the last possible period? Why do we so refuse to think of the only thing we are sure soon to come to? We are absolutely sure of nothing else in the future but death. We may not see to-morrow, but we shall certainly see the day of our death. And yet we have all our plans laid for to-morrow, and only one here and one there has any plan laid for the day of his death. And can it be for the same reason that made the man in rags unwilling to die? Is it because of the burden on our back? Is it because we are not fit to go to judgment? And yet the trumpet may sound summoning us hence before the midnight clock strikes. If this be thy condition, why standest thou still? Dost thou see yonder shining light? Keep that light in thine eye. Go up straight to it, knock at the gate, and it shall be told thee there what thou shalt do next. Burdened sinner, son of man in rags and terror: What has burdened thee so? What has torn thy garments into such shameful rags? What is it in thy burden that makes it so heavy? And how long has it lain so heavy upon thee? 'I cannot run,' said the man, 'because of the burden on my back.' And it has been

noticed of you that you do not laugh, or run, or dress, or dance, or walk, or eat, or drink as once you did. All men see that there is some burden on your back; some sore burden on your heart and your mind. Do you see yonder wicket gate? Do you see yonder shining light? There is no light in all the horizon for you but yonder light over the gate. Keep it in your eye; make straight, and make at once for it, and He who keeps the gate and keeps the light burning over it, He will tell you what to do with your burden. He told John Gifford, and He told John Bunyan, till both their burdens rolled off their backs, and they saw them no more. What would you not give to-night to be released like them? Do you not see yonder shining light?

Having set Christian fairly on the way to the wicket gate, Evangelist leaves him in order to seek out and assist some other seeker. But yesterday he had set Faithful's face to the celestial city, and he is off now to look for another pilgrim. We know some of Christian's adventures and episodes after Evangelist left him, but we do not take up these at present. We pass on to the next time that Evangelist finds Christian, and he finds him in a sorry plight. He has listened to bad advice. He has gone off the right road, he has lost sight of the gate, and all the thunders and lightnings of Sinai are rolling and flashing out against him. What doest thou here of all men in the world? asked Evangelist, with a severe and dreadful countenance. Did I not direct thee to His gate, and why art thou here? Christian told him that a fair-spoken man had met him, and had persuaded him to take an easier and shorter way of getting rid of his burden. Read the whole place for yourselves. The end of it was that Evangelist set Christian right again, and gave him two counsels which would be his salvation if he attended to them: Strive to enter in at the strait gate, and, Take up thy cross daily. He would need more counsel afterwards than that; but, meantime, that was enough. Let Christian follow that, and he would before long be rid of his burden. In the introductory lecture Bishop Butler has been commended and praised as a moralist, and certainly not one word beyond his deserts; but an evangelical preacher cannot send any man with the burden of a bad past upon him to Butler for advice and direction about that. While lecturing on and praising the sound philosophical and ethical spirit of the great bishop, Dr. Chalmers complains that he so much lacks the sal evangelicum, the strength and the health and the sweetness of the doctrines of grace. Legality and Civility and Morality are all good and necessary in their own places; but he is a cheat who would send a guilt-burdened and sick-at-heart sinner to any or all of them. The wicket gate first, and then He who keeps that gate will tell us what to do, and where next to go; but any other way out of the City of Destruction but by the wicket gate is sure to land us where it landed Evangelist's quaking and sweating charge. When Bishop Butler lay on his deathbed he called for his chaplain, and said, 'Though I have endeavoured to avoid sin, and to please God to the utmost of my power, yet from the consciousness of my perpetual infirmities I am still afraid to die.' 'My lord,' said his happily evangelical chaplain, 'have you forgotten that Jesus Christ is a Saviour?' 'True,' said the dying philosopher, 'but how shall I know that He is a Saviour for me?' 'My lord, it is written, "Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out."' 'True,' said Butler, 'and I am surprised that though I have read that Scripture a thousand times, I never felt its virtue till this moment, and now I die in peace.' The third and the last time on which the pilgrims meet with their old friend and helper, Evangelist, is when they are just at the gates of the town of Vanity. They have come through many wonderful experiences since last they saw and spoke with him. They have had the gate opened to them by Goodwill. They have been received and entertained in the Interpreter's House, and in the House Beautiful. The burden has fallen off their backs at the cross, and they have had their rags removed and have received change of raiment. They have climbed the Hill

Difficulty, and they have fought their way through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. More than the half of their adventures and sufferings are past; but they are not yet out of gunshot of the devil, and the bones of many a promising pilgrim lie whitening the way between this and the city. Many of our young communicants have made a fair and a promising start for salvation. They have got over the initial difficulties that lay in their way to the Lord's table, and we have entered their names with honest pride in our communion roll. But a year or two passes over, and the critical season arrives when our young communicant 'comes out,' as the word is. Up till now she has been a child, a little maid, a Bible-class student, a young communicant, a Sabbath-school teacher. But she is now a young lady, and she comes out into the world. We soon see that she has so come out, as we begin to miss her from places and from employments her presence used to brighten; and, very unwillingly, we overhear men and women with her name on their lips in a way that makes us fear for her soul, till many, oh, in a single ministry, how many, who promised well at the gate and ran safely past many snares, at last sell all—body and soul and Saviour—in Vanity Fair.

Well, Evangelist remains Evangelist still. Only, without losing any of his sweetness and freeness and fulness of promise, he adds to that some solemn warnings and counsels suitable now, as never before, to these two pilgrims. If one may say so, he would add now such moral treatises as Butler's Sermons and Serious Call to such evangelical books as Grace Abounding and A Jerusalem Sinner Saved.

To-morrow the two pilgrims will come out of the wilderness and will be plunged into a city where they will be offered all kinds of merchandise,—houses, lands, places, honours, preferments, titles, pleasures, delights, wives, children, bodies, souls, and what not. An altogether new world from anything they have yet come through, and a world where many who once began well have gone no further. Such counsels as these, then, Evangelist gave Christian and Faithful as they left the lonely wilderness behind them and came out towards the gate of the seductive city—'Let the Kingdom of Heaven be always before your eyes, and believe steadfastly concerning things that are invisible.' Visible, tangible, sweet, and desirable things will immediately be offered to them, and unless they have a faith in their hearts that is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen, it will soon be all over with them and their pilgrimage. 'Let no man take your crown,' he said also, as he foresaw at how many booths and counters, houses, lands, places, preferments, wives, husbands, and what not, would be offered them and pressed upon them in exchange for their heavenly crown. 'Above all, look well to your own hearts,' he said. Canon Venables laments over the teaching that Bunyan received from John Gifford. 'Its principle, 'he says, 'was constant introspection and scrupulous weighing of every word and deed, and even of every thought, instead of leading the mind off from self to the Saviour.' The canon seems to think that it was specially unfortunate for Bunyan to be told to keep his heart and to weigh well every thought of it; but I must point out to you that Evangelist puts as above all other things the most important for the pilgrims the looking well to their own hearts; and our plain-spoken author has used a very severe word about any minister who should whisper anything to any pilgrim that could be construed or misunderstood into putting Christ in the place of thought and word and deed, and the scrupulous weighing of every one of them. 'Let nothing that is on this side the other world get within you; and above all, look well to your own hearts, and to the lusts thereof.'

'Set your faces like a flint,' Evangelist proceeds. How little like all that you hear in the counsels of the pulpit to young women coming out and to young men entering into business life. I am

convinced that if we ministers were more direct and plain-spoken to such persons at such times; if we, like Bunyan, told them plainly what kind of a world it is they are coming out to buy and sell in, and what its merchandise and its prices are; if our people would let us so preach to their sons and daughters, I feel sure far fewer young communicants would make shipwreck, and far fewer grey heads would go down with sorrow to the grave. ‘Be not afraid,’ said Robert Hall in his charge to a young minister, ‘of devoting whole sermons to particular parts of moral conduct and religious duty. It is impossible to give right views of them unless you dissect characters and describe particular virtues and vices. The works of the flesh and the fruits of the Spirit must be distinctly pointed out. To preach against sin in general without descending to particulars may lead many to complain of the evil of their hearts, while at the same time they are awfully inattentive to the evil of their conduct.’ Take Evangelist’s noble counsels at the gate of Vanity Fair, and then take John Bunyan’s masterly description of the Fair itself, with all that is bought and sold in it, and you will have a lesson in evangelical preaching that the evangelical pulpit needed in Bunyan’s day, in Robert Hall’s day, and not less in our own.

‘My sons, you have heard the truth of the gospel, that you must through many tribulations enter the Kingdom of God. When, therefore, you are come to the Fair and shall find fulfilled what I have here related, then remember your friend; quit yourselves like men, and commit the keeping of your souls to your God in well-doing as unto a faithful Creator.’

Chapter 3

# 003. Obstinate

III

OBSTINATE ‘Be ye not as the mule.’—David.

Little Obstinate was born and brought up in the City of Destruction. His father was old Spare-the-Rod, and his mother’s name was Spoil-the-Child. Little Obstinate was the only child of his parents; he was born when they were no longer young, and they doted on their only child, and gave him his own way in everything. Everything he asked for he got, and if he did not immediately get it you would have heard his screams and his kicks three doors off. His parents were not in themselves bad people, but, if Solomon speaks true, they hated their child, for they gave him all his own way in everything, and nothing would ever make them say no to him, or lift up the rod when he said no to them. When the Scriptures, in their pedagogical parts, speak so often about the rod, they do not necessarily mean a rod of iron or even of wood. There are other ways of teaching an obstinate child than the way that Gideon took with the men of Succoth when he taught them with the thorns of the wilderness and with the briars thereof. George Offor, John Bunyan’s somewhat quaint editor, gives the readers of his edition this personal testimony:—‘After bringing up a very large family, who are a blessing to their parents, I have yet to learn what part of the human body was created to be beaten.’ At the same time the rod must mean something in the word of God; it certainly means something in God’s hand when His obstinate children are under it, and it ought to mean something in a godly parent’s hand also. Little Obstinate’s two parents were far from ungodly people, though they lived in such a city; but they were daily destroying their only son by letting him always have his own way, and by never saying no to his greed, and his lies, and his anger, and his noisy and disorderly ways. Eli in the Old Testament was not a bad man, but he destroyed both the ark of the Lord and himself and his sons also, because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. God’s children are never so soft, and sweet, and good, and happy as just after He restrains them, and has again laid the rod of correction upon them. They then kiss both the rod and Him who appointed it. And earthly fathers learn their craft from God. The meekness, the sweetness, the docility, and the love of a chastised child has gone to all our hearts in a way we can never forget. There is something sometimes almost past description or belief in the way a chastised child clings to and kisses the hand that chastised it. But poor old Spare-the-Rod never had experiences like that. And young Obstinate, having been born like Job’s wild ass’s colt, grew up to be a man like David’s unbitted and unbridled mule, till in after life he became the author of all the evil and mischief that is associated in our minds with his evil name. In old Spare-the-Rod’s child also this true proverb was fulfilled, that the child is the father of the man. For all that little Obstinate had been in the nursery, in the schoolroom, and in the playground—all that, only in an aggravated way—he was as a youth and as a grown-up man. For one thing, Obstinate all his days was a densely ignorant man. He had not got into the way of learning his lessons when he was a child; he had not been made to learn his lessons when he was a child; and the dislike and contempt he had for his books as a boy accompanied him through an ignorant and a narrow-minded life. It was reason enough to this so unreasonable man not to buy

and read a book that you had asked him to buy and read it. And so many of the books about him were either written, or printed, or published, or sold, or read, or praised by people he did not like, that there was little left for this unhappy man to read, even if otherwise he would have read it. And thus, as his mulish obstinacy kept him so ignorant, so his ignorance in turn increased his obstinacy. And then when he came, as life went on, to have anything to do with other men's affairs, either in public or in private life, either in the church, or in the nation, or in the city, or in the family, this unhappy man could only be a drag on all kinds of progress, and in obstacle to every good work. Use and wont, a very good rule on occasion, was a rigid and a universal rule with Obstinate. And to be told that the wont in this case and in that had ceased to be the useful, only made him rail at you as only an ignorant and an obstinate man can rail. He could only rail; he had not knowledge enough, or good temper enough, or good manners enough to reason out a matter; he was too hot-tempered for an argument, and he hated those who had an acquaintance with the subject in hand, and a self-command in connection with it that he had not. 'The obstinate man's understanding is like Pharaoh's heart, and it is proof against all sorts of arguments whatsoever.' Like the demented king of Egypt, the obstinate man has glimpses sometimes both of his bounden duty and of his true interest, but the sinew of iron that is in his neck will not let him perform the one or pursue the other. 'Nothing,' says a penetrating writer, 'is more like firm conviction than simple obstinacy. Plots and parties in the state, and heresies and divisions in the church alike proceed from it.' Let any honest man take that sentence and carry it like a candle down into his own heart and back into his own life, and then with the insight and honesty there learned carry the same candle back through some of the plots and parties, the heresies and schisms of the past as well as of the present day, and he will have learned a lesson that will surely help to cure himself, at any rate, of his own remaining obstinacy. All our firm convictions, as we too easily and too fondly call them, must continually be examined and searched out in the light of more reading of the best authors, in the light of more experience of ourselves and of the world we live in, and in that best of all light, that increasing purity, simplicity, and sincerity of heart alone can kindle. And in not a few instances we shall to a certainty find that what has hitherto been clothing itself with the honourable name and character of a conviction was all the time only an ignorant prejudice, a distaste or a dislike, a too great fondness for ourselves and for our own opinion and our own interest. Many of our firmest convictions, as we now call them, when we shall have let light enough fall upon them, we shall be compelled and enabled to confess to be at bottom mere mulishness and pride of heart. The mulish, obstinate, and proud man never says, I don't know. He never asks anything to be explained to him. He never admits that he has got any new light. He never admits having spoken or acted wrongly. He never takes back what he has said. He was never heard to say, You are right in that line of action, and I have all along been wrong. Had he ever said that, the day he said it would have been a white-stone day both for his mind and his heart. Only, the spoiled son of Spare-the-Rod never said that, or anything like that.

But, most unfortunately, it is in the very best things of life that the true mulishness of the obstinate man most comes out. He shows worst in his home life and in the matters of religion. When our Obstinate was in love he was as sweet as honey and as soft as butter. His old friends that he used so to trample upon scarcely recognised him. They had sometimes seen men converted, but they had never seen such an immediate and such a complete conversion as this. He actually invited correction, and reproof, and advice, and assistance, who had often struck at you with his hands and his feet when you even hinted at such a thing to him. The best upbringing, the best books, the

best preaching, the best and most obedient life, taken all together, had not done for other men what a woman's smile and the touch of her hand had in a moment done for this once so obstinate man. He would read anything now, and especially the best books. He would hear and enjoy any preacher now, and especially the best and most earnest in preaching. His old likes and dislikes, prejudices and prepossessions, self-opinionativeness and self-assertiveness all miraculously melted off him, and he became in a day an open-minded, intelligent, good-mannered, devout-minded gentleman. He who was once such a mule to everybody was now led about by a child in a silken bridle. All old things had passed away, and all things had become new. For a time; for a time. But time passes, and there passes away with it all the humility, meekness, pliability, softness, and sweetness of the obstinate man. Till when long enough time has elapsed you find him all the obstinate and mulish man he ever was. It is not that he has ceased to love his wife and his children. It is not that. But there is this in all genuine and inbred obstinacy, that after a time it often comes out worst beside those we love best. A man will be affable, accessible, entertaining, the best of company, and the soul of it abroad, and, then, instantly he turns the latch-key in his own door he will relapse into silence, and sink back into utter boorishness and bearishness, mulishness and doggedness. He swallows his evening meal at the foot of the table in silence, and then he sits all night at the fireside with a cloud out of nothing on his brow. His sunshine, his smile, and his universal urbanity is all gone now; he is discourteous to nobody but to his own wife. Nothing pleases him; he finds nothing at home to his mind. The furniture, the hours, the habits of the house are all disposed so as to please him; but he was never yet heard to say to wife, or child, or servant that he was pleased. He never says that a meal is to his taste or a seat set so as to shelter and repose him. The obstinate man makes his house a very prison and treadmill to himself and to all those who are condemned to suffer with him. And all the time it is not that he does not love and honour his household; but by an evil law of the obstinate heart its worst obstinacy and mulishness comes out among those it loves best.

But, my brethren, worse than all that, we have all what good Bishop Hall calls 'a stone of obstination' in our hearts against God. With all his own depth and clearness and plain-spokenness, Paul tells us that our hearts are by nature enmity against God. Were we proud and obstinate and malicious against men only it would be bad enough, and it would be difficult enough to cure, but our case is dreadful beyond all description or belief when our obstinacy strikes out against God. We know as well as we know anything, that in doing this and in not doing that we are going every day right in the teeth both of God's law and God's grace; and yet in the sheer obstinacy and perversity of our heart we still go on in what we know quite well to be the suicide of our souls. We are told by our minister to do this and not to do that; to begin to do this at this new year and to break off from doing that; but, partly through obstinacy towards him, reinforced by a deeper and subtler and deadlier obstinacy against God, and against all the deepest and most godly of the things of God, we neither do the one nor cease from doing the other. There is a sullenness in some men's minds, a gloom and a bitter air that rises up from the unploughed, undrained, unweeded, uncultivated fens of their hearts that chills and blasts all the feeble beginnings of a better life. The natural and constitutional obstinacy of the obstinate heart is exasperated when it comes to deal with the things of God. For it is then reinforced with all the guilt and all the fear, all the suspicion and all the aversion of the corrupt and self-condemned heart. There is an obdurateness of obstinacy against all the men, and the books, and the doctrines, and the precepts, and the practices that are in any way connected with spiritual religion that does not

come out even in the obstinate man's family life.

John Bunyan's Obstinate, both by his conduct as well as by the etymology of his name, not only stands in the way of his own salvation, but he does all he can to stand in the way of other men setting out to salvation also. Obstinate set out after Christian to fetch him back by force, and if it had not been that he met his match in Christian, The Pilgrim's Progress would never have been written. 'That can by no means be,' said Christian to his pursuer, and he is first called Christian when he shows that one man can be as obstinate in good as another man can be in evil. 'I never now can go back to my former life.' And then the two obstinate men parted company for ever, Christian in holy obstinacy being determined to have eternal life at any cost, and Obstinate as determined against it. The opening pages of The Pilgrim's Progress set the two men very graphically and very impressively before us. As to the cure of obstinacy, the rod in a firm, watchful, wise, and loving hand will cure it. And in later life a long enough and close enough succession of humble, yielding, docile, submissive, self-chastening and thanksgiving acts will cure it. Reading and obeying the best books on the subjugation and the regulation of the heart will cure it. Descending with Dante to where the obstinate, and the embittered, and the gloomy, and the sullen have made their beds in hell will cure it. And much and most agonising prayer will above all cure it.

'O Lord, if thus so obstinate I,

Choose Thou, before my spirit die,

A piercing pain, a killing sin,

And to my proud heart run them in.

# 004. Pliable

IV

PLIABLE ‘He hath not root in himself.’—Our Lord. With one stroke of His pencil our Lord gives us this Flaxman-like outline of one of his well-known hearers. And then John Bunyan takes up that so expressive profile, and puts flesh and blood into it, till it becomes the well-known Pliable of The Pilgrim’s Progress. We call the text a parable, but our Lord’s parables are all portraits—portraits and groups of portraits, rather than ordinary parables. Our Lord knew this man quite well who had no root in himself. Our Lord had crowds of such men always running after Him, and He threw off this rapid portrait from hundreds of men and women who caused discredit to fall on His name and His work, and burdened His heart continually. And John Bunyan, with all his genius, could never have given us such speaking likenesses as that of Pliable and Temporary and Talkative, unless he had had scores of them in his own congregation. Our Lord’s short preliminary description of Pliable goes, like all His descriptions, to the very bottom of the whole matter. Our Lord in this passage is like one of those masterly artists who begin their portrait-painting with the study of anatomy. All the great artists in this walk build up their best portraits from the inside of their subjects. He hath not root in himself, says our Lord, and we need no more than that to be told us to foresee how all his outside religion will end. ‘Without self-knowledge,’ says one of the greatest students of the human heart that ever lived, ‘you have no real root in yourselves. Real self-knowledge is the root of all real religious knowledge. It is a deceit and a mischief to think that the Christian doctrines can either be understood or aright accepted by any outward means. It is just in proportion as we search our own hearts and understand our own nature that we shall ever feel what a blessing the removal of sin will be; redemption, pardon, sanctification, are all otherwise mere words without meaning or power to us. God speaks to us first in our own hearts.’ Happily for us our Lord has annotated His own text and has told us that an honest heart is the alone root of all true religion. Honest, that is, with itself, and with God and man about itself. As David says in his so honest psalm, ‘Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part Thou shalt make me to know wisdom.’ And, indeed, all the preachers and writers in Scripture, and all Scriptural preachers and writers outside of Scripture, are at one in this: that all true wisdom begins at home, and that it all begins at the heart. And they all teach us that he is the wisest of men who has the worst opinion of his own heart, as he is the foolishest of men who does not know his own heart to be the worst heart that ever any man was cursed with in this world. ‘Here is wisdom’: not to know the number of the beast, but to know his mark, and to read it written so indelibly in our own heart. And where this first and best of all wisdom is not, there, in our Lord’s words, there is no deepness of earth, no root, and no fruit. And any religion that most men have is of this outside, shallow, rootless description. This was all the religion that poor Pliable ever had. This poor creature had a certain slight root of something that looked like religion for a short season, but even that slight root was all outside of himself. His root, what he had of a root, was all in Christian’s companionship and impassioned appeals, and then in those impressive passages of Scripture that Christian read to him. At your first attention to these things you would think that no possible root could be better planted than in the Bible and in

earnest preaching. But even the Bible, and, much more, the best preaching, is all really outside of a man till true religion once gets its piercing roots down into himself. We have perhaps all heard of men, and men of no small eminence, who were brought up to believe the teaching of the Bible and the pulpit, but who, when some of their inherited and external ideas about some things connected with the Bible began to be shaken, straightway felt as if all the grounds of their faith were shaken, and all the roots of their faith pulled up. But where that happened, all that was because such men's religion was all rooted outside of themselves; in the best things outside of themselves, indeed, but because, in our Lord's words, their religion was rooted in something outside of themselves and not inside, they were by and by offended, and threw off their faith. There is another well-known class of men all whose religion is rooted in their church, and in their church not as a member of the body of Christ, but as a social institution set up in this world. They believe in their church. They worship their church. They suffer and make sacrifices for their church. They are proud of the size and the income of their church; her past contendings and sufferings, and present dangers, all endear their church to their heart. But if tribulation and persecution arise, that is to say, if anything arises to vex or thwart or disappoint them with their church, they incontinently pull up their roots and their religion with it, and transplant both to any other church that for the time better pleases them, or to no church at all. Others, again, have all their religiosity rooted in their family life. Their religion is all made up of domestic sentiment. They love their earthly home with that supreme satisfaction and that all-absorbing affection that truly religious men entertain for their heavenly home. And thus it is that when anything happens to disturb or break up their earthly home their rootless religiosity goes with it. Other men's religion, again, and all their interest in it, is rooted in their shop; you can make them anything or nothing in religion, according as you do or do not do business in their shop. Companionship, also, accounts for the fluctuations of many men's, and almost all women's, religious lives. If they happen to fall in with godly lovers and friends, they are sincerely godly with them; but if their companions are indifferent or hostile to true religion, they gradually fall into the same temper and attitude. We sometimes see students destined for the Christian ministry also with all their religion so without root in themselves that a session in an unsympathetic class, a sceptical book, sometimes just a sneer or a scoff, will wither all the promise of their coming service. And so on through the whole of human life. He that hath not the root of the matter in himself dureth for a while, but by and by, for one reason or another, he is sure to be offended. So much, then,—not enough, nor good enough—for our Lord's swift stroke at the heart of His hearers. But let us now pass on to Pliable, as he so soon and so completely discovers himself to us under John Bunyan's so skilful hand. Look well at our author's speaking portrait of a well-known man in Bedford who had no root in himself, and who, as a consequence, was pliable to any influence, good or bad, that happened to come across him. 'Don't revile,' are the first words that come from Pliable's lips, and they are not unpromising words. Pliable is hurt with Obstinate's coarse abuse of the Christian life, till he is downright ashamed to be seen in his company. Pliable, at least, is a gentleman compared with Obstinate, and his gentlemanly feelings and his good manners make him at once take sides with Christian. Obstinate's foul tongue has almost made Pliable a Christian. And this finely-conceived scene on the plain outside the city gate is enacted over again every day among ourselves. Where men are in dead earnest about religion it always arouses the bad passions of bad men; and where earnest preachers and devoted workers are assailed with violence or with bad language, there is always enough love of fair play in the bystanders to compel them to take sides, for the time at least, with those who suffer for the truth. And we are sometimes

too apt to count all that love of common fairness, and that hatred of foul play, as a sure sign of some sympathy with the hated truth itself. When an onlooker says ‘Don’t revile,’ we are too ready to set down that expression of civility as at least the first beginning of true religion. But the religion of Jesus Christ cuts far deeper into the heart of man than to the dividing asunder of justice and injustice, civility and incivility, ribaldry and good manners. And it is always found in the long-run that the cross of Christ and its crucifixion of the human heart goes quite as hard with the gentlemanly-mannered man, the civil and urbane man, as it does with the man of bad behaviour and of brutish manners. ‘Civil men,’ says Thomas Goodwin, ‘are this world’s saints.’ And poor Pliable was one of them. ‘My heart really inclines to go with my neighbour,’ said Pliable next. ‘Yes,’ he said, ‘I begin to come to a point. I really think I will go along with this good man. Yes, I will cast in my lot with him. Come, good neighbour, let us be going.’ The apocalyptic side of some men’s imaginations is very easily worked upon. No kind of book sells better among those of our people who have no root in themselves than just picture-books about heaven. Our missionaries make use of lantern-slides to bring home the scenes in the Gospels to the dull minds of their village hearers, and with good success. And at home a magic-lantern filled with the splendours of the New Jerusalem would carry multitudes of rootless hearts quite captive for a time. ‘Well said; and what else? This is excellent; and what else?’ Christian could not tell Pliable fast enough about the glories of heaven. ‘There we shall be with seraphim and cherubim, creatures that will dazzle your eyes to look on them. There also you shall meet with thousands and ten thousands who have gone before us to that place. Elders with golden crowns, and holy virgins with golden harps, and all clothed with immortality as with a garment.’ ‘The hearing of all this,’ cried Pliable, ‘is enough to ravish one’s heart.’ ‘An overly faith,’ says old Thomas Shepard, ‘is easily wrought.’ As if the text itself was not graphic enough, Bunyan’s racy, humorous, pathetic style overflows the text and enriches the very margins of his pages, as every possessor of a good edition of The Pilgrimknows. ‘Christian and Obstinate pull for Pliable’s soul’ is the eloquent summary set down on the side of the sufficiently eloquent page. As the picture of a man’s soul being pulled for rises before my mind, I can think of no better companion picture to that of Pliable than that of poor, hard-beset Brodie of Brodie, as he lets us see the pull for his soul in the honest pages of his inward diary. Under the head of ‘Pliable’ in my Bunyan note-book I find a crowd of references to Brodie; and if only to illustrate our author’s marginal note, I shall transcribe one or two of them. ‘The writer of this diary desires to be cast down under the facileness and plausibleness of his nature, by which he labours to please men more than God, and whence it comes that the wicked speak good of him . . . The Lord pity the proneness of his heart to comply with the men who have the power . . . Lord, he is unsound and double in his heart, politically crafty, selfish, not savouring nor discerning the things of God . . . Let not self-love, wit, craft, and timorousness corrupt his mind, but indue him with fortitude, patience, steadfastness, tenderness, mortification . . . Shall I expose myself and my family to danger at this time? A grain of sound faith would solve all my questions.’ ‘Die Dom. I stayed at home, partly to decline the ill-will and rage of men and to decline observation.’ Or, take another Sabbath-day entry: ‘Die Dom. I stayed at home, because of the time, and the observation, and the Earl of Moray . . . Came to Cuttiehillock. I am neither cold nor hot. I am not rightly principled as to the time. I suspect that it is not all conscience that makes me conform, but wit, and to avoid suffering; Lord, deliver me from all this unsoundness of heart.’ And after this miserable fashion do heaven and earth, duty and self-interest, the covenant and the crown pull for Lord Brodie’s soul through 422 quarto pages. Brodie’s diary is one of the most humiliating,

heart-searching, and heart-instructing books I ever read. Let all public men tempted and afflicted with a facile, pliable, time-serving heart have honest Brodie at their elbow.

‘Glad I am, my good companion,’ said Pliable, after the passage about the cherubim and the seraphim, and the golden crowns and the golden harps, ‘it ravishes my very heart to hear all this. Come on, let us mend our pace.’ This is delightful, this is perfect. How often have we ourselves heard these very words of challenge and reproof from the pliable frequenters of emotional meetings, and from the emotional members of an emotional but rootless ministry. Come on, let us mend our pace! ‘I am sorry to say, ’replied the man with the burden on his back, ‘that I cannot go so fast as I would.’ ‘Christian,’ says Mr. Kerr Bain, ‘has more to carry than Pliable has, as, indeed, he would still have if he were carrying nothing but himself; and he does have about him, besides, a few sobering thoughts as to the length and labour and some of the unforeseen chances of the way.’ And as Dean Paget says in his profound and powerful sermon on ‘The Disasters of Shallowness’: ‘Yes, but there is something else first; something else without which that inexpensive brightness, that easy hopefulness, is apt to be a frail resourceless growth, withering away when the sun is up and the hot winds of trial are sweeping over it. We must open our hearts to our religion; we must have the inward soil broken up, freely and deeply its roots must penetrate our inner being. We must take to ourselves in silence and in sincerity its words of judgment with its words of hope, its sternness with its encouragement, its denunciations with its promises, its requirements, with its offers, its absolute intolerance of sin with its inconceivable and divine long-suffering towards sinners.’ But preaching like this would have frightened away poor Pliable. He would not have understood it, and what he did understand of it he would have hated with all his shallow heart.

‘Where are we now?’ called Pliable to his companion, as they both went over head and ears into the Slough of Despond. ‘Truly,’ said Christian, ‘I do not know.’—No work of man is perfect, not even the all-but-perfect Pilgrim’s Progress. Christian was bound to fall sooner or later into a slough filled with his own despondency about himself, his past guilt, his present sinfulness, and his anxious future. But Pliable had not knowledge enough of himself to make him ever despond. He was always ready and able to mend his pace. He had no burden on his back, and therefore no doubt in his heart. But Christian had enough of both for any ten men, and it was Christian’s overflowing despondency and doubt at this point of the road that suddenly filled his own slough, and, I suppose, overflowed into a slough for Pliable also. Had Pliable only had a genuine and original slough of his own to so sink and be bedaubed in, he would have got out of it at the right side of it, and been a tender-stepping pilgrim all his days.—‘Is this the happiness you have told me all this while of? May I get out of this with my life, you may possess the brave country alone for me.’ And with that he gave a desperate struggle or two, and got out of the mire on that side of the slough which was next his own house; so he went away, and Christian saw him no more. ‘The side of the slough which was next his own house.’ Let us close with that. Let us go home thinking about that. And in this trial of faith and patience, and in that, in this temptation to sin, and in that, in this actual transgression, and in that, let us always ask ourselves which is the side of the slough that is farthest away from our own house, and let us still struggle to that side of the slough, and it will all be well with us at the last.

# 005. Help

V

HELP ‘I was brought low, and He helped me.’—David. The Slough of Despond is one of John Bunyan’s masterpieces. In his description of the slough, Bunyan touches his highest water-mark for humour, and pathos, and power, and beauty of language. If we did not have the English Bible in our own hands we would have to ask, as Lord Jeffrey asked Lord Macaulay, where the brazier of Bedford got his inimitable style. Bunyan confesses to us that he got all his Latin from the prescription papers of his doctors, and we know that he got all his perfect English from his English Bible. And then he got his humour and his pathos out of his own deep and tender heart. The God of all grace gave a great gift to the English-speaking world and to the Church of Christ in all lands when He created and converted John Bunyan, and put it into his head and his heart to compose The Pilgrim’s Progress. His heart-affecting page on the slough has been wetted with the tears of thousands of its readers, and their tears have been mingled with smiles as they read their own sin and misery, and the never-to-be-forgotten time and place where their sin and misery first found them out, all told so recognisably, so pathetically, and so amusingly almost to laughableness in the passage upon the slough. We see the ocean of scum and filth pouring down into the slough through the subterranean sewers of the City of Destruction and of the Town of Stupidity, which lies four degrees beyond the City of Destruction, and from many other of the houses and haunts of men. We see His Majesty’s sappers and miners at their wits’ end how to cope with the deluges of pollution that pour into this slough that they have been ordained to drain and dry up. For ages and ages the royal surveyors have been laying out all their skill on this slough. More cartloads than you could count of the best material for filling up a slough have been shot into it, and yet you would never know that so much as a single labourer had emptied his barrow here. True, excellent stepping-stones have been laid across the slough by skilful engineers, but they are always so slippery with the scum and slime of the slough, that it is only now and then that a traveller can keep his feet upon them. Altogether, our author’s picture of the Slough of Despond is such a picture that no one who has seen it can ever forget it. But better than reading the best description of the slough is to see certain well-known pilgrims trying to cross it. Mr. Fearing at the Slough of Despond was a tale often told at the tavern suppers of that country. Never pilgrim attempted the perilous journey with such a chicken-heart in his bosom as this Mr. Fearing. He lay above a month on the bank of the slough, and would not even attempt the steps. Some kind Pilgrims, though they had enough to do to keep the steps themselves, offered him a hand; but no. And after they were safely over it made them almost weep to hear the man still roaring in his horror at the other side. Some bade him go home if he would not take the steps, but he said that he would rather make his grave in the slough than go back one hairsbreadth. Till, one sunshiny morning,—no one knew how, and he never knew how himself—the steps were so high and dry, and the scum and slime were so low, that this hare-hearted man made a venture, and so got over. But, then, as an unkind friend of his said, this pitiful pilgrim had a slough of despond in his own mind which he carried always and everywhere about with him, and made him the proverb of despondency that he was

and is. Only, that sunshiny morning he got over both the slough inside of him and outside of him, and was heard by Help and his family singing this song on the hither side of the slough: ‘He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.’ Our pilgrim did not have such a good crossing as Mr. Fearing. Whether it was that the discharge from the city was deeper and fouler, or that the day was darker, or what, we are not told, but both Christian and Pliable were in a moment out of sight in the slough. They both wallowed, says their plain-spoken historian, in the slough, only the one of the two who had the burden on his back at every wallow went deeper into the mire; when his neighbour, who had no such burden, instead of coming to his assistance, got out of the slough at the same side as he had entered it, and made with all his might for his own house. But the man called Christian made what way he could, and still tumbled on to the side of the slough that was farthest from his own house, till a man called Help gave him his hand and set him upon sound ground. Christiana, again, and Mercy and the boys found the slough in a far worse condition than it had ever been found before. And the reason was not that the country that drained into the slough was worse, but that those who had the mending of the slough and the keeping in repair of the steps had so bungled their work that they had marred the way instead of mending it. At the same time, by the tact and good sense of Mercy, the whole party got over, Mercy remarking to the mother of the boys, that if she had as good ground to hope for a loving reception at the gate as Christiana had, no slough of despond would discourage her, she said. To which the older woman made the characteristic reply: ‘You know your sore and I know mine, and we shall both have enough evil to face before we come to our journey’s end.’

Now, I do not for a moment suppose that there is any one here who can need to be told what the Slough of Despond in reality is. Indeed, its very name sufficiently declares it. But if any one should still be at a loss to understand this terrible experience of all the pilgrims, the explanation offered by the good man who gave Christian his hand may here be repeated. ‘This miry slough, ’he said, ‘is such a place as cannot be mended. This slough is the descent whither the scum and filth that attends conviction of sin doth continually run, and therefore it is called by the name of Despond, for still as the sinner is awakened about his lost condition there ariseth in his soul many fears and doubts and discouraging apprehensions, which all of them get together, and settle in this place, and this is the reason of the badness of the ground.’ That is the parable, with its interpretation; but there is a passage in Grace Abounding which is no parable, and which may even better than this so pictorial slough describe some men’s condition here. ‘My original and inward pollution,’ says Bunyan himself in his autobiography, ‘that, that was my plague and my affliction; that, I say, at a dreadful rate was always putting itself forth within me; that I had the guilt of to amazement; by reason of that I was more loathsome in my own eyes than a toad; and I thought I was so in God’s eyes also. Sin and corruption would bubble up out of my heart as naturally as water bubbles up out of a fountain. I thought now that every one had a better heart than I had. I could have changed heart with anybody. I thought none but the devil himself could equalise me for inward wickedness and pollution of mind. I fell, therefore, at the sight of my own vileness, deeply into despair, for I concluded that this condition in which I was in could not stand with a life of grace. Sure, thought I, I am forsaken of God; sure I am given up to the devil, and to a reprobate mind.’

‘Let no man, then, count me a fable maker,

Nor made my name and credit a partaker

Of their derision: what is here in view,

Of mine own knowledge I dare say is true.'

Sometimes, as with Christian at the slough, a man's way in life is all slashed up into sudden ditches and pitfalls out of the sins of his youth. His sins, by God's grace, find him out, and under their arrest and overthrow he begins to seek his way to a better life and a better world; and then both the burden and the slough have their explanation and fulfilment in his own life every day. But it is even more dreadful than a slough in a man's way to have a slough in his mind, as both Bunyan himself and Mr. Fearing, his exquisite creation, had. After the awful-enough slough, filled with the guilt and fear of actual sin, had been bridged and crossed and left behind, a still worse slough of inward corruption and pollution rose up in John Bunyan's soul and threatened to engulf him altogether. So terrible to Bunyan was this experience, that he has not thought it possible to make a parable of it, and so put it into the Pilgrim; he has kept it rather for the plain, direct, unpictured, personal testimony of the Grace Abounding. I do not know another passage anywhere to compare with the eighty-fourth paragraph of Grace Abounding for hope and encouragement to a great inward sinner under a great inward sanctification. I commend that powerful passage to the appropriation of any man here who may have stuck fast in the Slough of Despond to-day, and who could not on that account come to the Lord's Table. Let him still struggle out at the side of the slough farthest from his own house, and to-night, who can tell, Help may come and give that man his hand. When the Slough of Despond is drained, and its bottom laid bare, what a find of all kinds of precious treasures shall be laid bare! Will you be able to lay claim to any of it when the long-lost treasure-trove is distributed by command of the King to its rightful owners?

'What are you doing there?' the man whose name was Help demanded of Christian, as he still wallowed and plunged to the hither side of the slough, 'and why did you not look for the steps?' And so saying he set Christian's feet upon sound ground again, and showed him the nearest way to the gate. Help is one of the King's officers who are planted all along the way to the Celestial City, in order to assist and counsel all pilgrims. Evangelist was one of those officers; this Help is another; Goodwill will be another, unless, indeed, he is more than a mere officer; Interpreter will be another, and Greatheart, and so on. All these are preachers and pastors and evangelists who correspond to all those names and all their offices. Only some unhappy preachers are better at pushing poor pilgrims into the slough, and pushing them down to the bottom of it, than they are at helping a sinking pilgrim out; while some other more happy preachers and pastors have their manses built at the hither side of the slough and do nothing else all their days but help pilgrims out of their slough and direct them to the gate. And then there are multitudes of so-called ministers who eat the King's bread who can neither push a proud sinner into the slough nor help a prostrate sinner out of it; no, nor point him the way when he has himself wallowed out. And then, there are men called ministers, too, who also eat the King's bread, whose voice you never hear in connection with such matters, unless it be to revile both the pilgrims and their helpers, and all who run with fear and trembling up the heavenly road. But our pilgrim was happy enough to meet with a minister to whom he could look back all his remaining pilgrimage and say: 'He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise to our God.'

Now, as might have been expected, there is a great deal said about all kinds of help in the Bible. After the help of God, of which the Bible and especially the more experimental Psalms are full, this fine name is then applied to many Scriptural persons, and on many Scriptural occasions. The first woman whom God Almighty made bore from her Maker to her husband this noble name. Her Father, so to speak, gave her away under this noble name. And of all the sweet and noble names that a woman bears, there is none so rich, so sweet, so lasting, and so fruitful as just her first Divine name of a helpmeet. And how favoured of God is that man to be accounted whose life still continues to draw meet help out of his wife's fulness of help, till all her and his days together he is able to say, I have of God a helpmeet indeed! For in how many sloughs do many men lie till this daughter of Help gives them her hand, and out of how many more sloughs are they all their days by her delivered and kept! Sweet, maidenly, and most sensible Mercy was a great help to widow Christiana at the slough, and to her and her sons all the way up to the river—a very present help in many a need to her future mother-in-law and her pilgrim sons. Let every young man seek his future wife of God, and let him seek her of her Divine Father under that fine, homely, divine name. For God, who knoweth what we have need of before we ask Him, likes nothing better than to make a helpmeet for those who so ask Him, and still to bring the woman to the man under that so spouse-like name.

'What next I bring shall please thee, be assured,

Thy likeness, thy fit help, thy other self,

Thy wish exactly to thy heart's desire.' And then when the apostle is making an enumeration of the various offices and agencies in the New Testament church of his day, after apostles and teachers and gifts of healing, he says, 'helps,'—assistants, that is, succourers, especially of the sick and the aged and the poor. And we do not read that either election or ordination was needed to make any given member of the apostolic church a helper. But we do read of helpers being found by the apostle among all classes and conditions of that rich and living church; both sexes, all ages, and all descriptions of church members bore this fine apostolic name. 'Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ . . . Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ.' And both Paul and John and all the apostles were forward to confess in their epistles how much they owed of their apostolic success, as well as of their personal comfort and joy, to the helpers, both men and women, their Lord had blessed them with.

Now, the most part of us here to-night have been at the Lord's Table to-day. We kept our feet firm on the steps as we skirted or crossed the slough that self-examination always fills and defiles for us before every new communion. And before our Lord let us rise from His Table this morning. He again said to us: 'Ye call Me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am. If I then have given you My hand, and have helped you, ye ought also to help one another.' Who, then, any more will withhold such help as it is in his power to give to a sinking brother? And you do not need to go far afield seeking the slough of desponding, despairing, drowning men. This whole world is full of such sloughs. There is scarce sound ground enough in this world on which to build a slough-watcher's tower. And after it is built, the very tower itself is soon stained and blinded with the scudding slime. Where are your eyes, and full of what? Do you not see sloughs full of sinking men at your very door; ay, and inside of your best built and best kept house? Your very next neighbour; nay, your own flesh and blood, if they have nothing else of Greatheart's most troublesome pilgrim about

them, have at least this, that they carry about a slough with them in their own mind and in their own heart. Have you only henceforth a heart and a hand to help, and see if hundreds of sinking hearts do not cry out your name, and hundreds of slimy hands grasp at your stretched-out arm. Sloughs of all kinds of vice, open and secret; sloughs of poverty, sloughs of youthful ignorance, temptation, and transgression; sloughs of inward gloom, family disquiet and dispute; lonely grief; all manner of sloughs, deep and miry, where no man would suspect them. And how good, how like Christ Himself, and how well-pleasing to Him to lay down steps for such sliding feet, and to lift out another and another human soul upon sound and solid ground. ‘Know ye what I have done to you? For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.’

Chapter 6

# 006. Mr. Worldly Wiseman

VI MR. WORLDLY-WISEMAN ‘Wise in this world.’—Paul.

Mr. Worldly-Wiseman has a long history behind him on which we cannot now enter at any length. As a child, the little worldling, it was observed, took much after his secular father, but much more after his scheming mother. He was already a self-seeking, self-satisfied youth; and when he became a man and began business for himself, no man’s business flourished like his. ‘Nothing of news,’ says his biographer in another place, ‘nothing of doctrine, nothing of alteration or talk of alteration could at any time be set on foot in the town but be sure Mr. Worldly-Wiseman would be at the head or tail of it. But, to be sure, he would always decline those he deemed to be the weakest, and stood always with those, in his way of thinking, that he supposed were the strongest side.’ He was a man, it was often remarked, of but one book also. Sunday and Saturday he was to be found deep in The Architect of Fortune; or, Advancement in Life, a book written by its author so as to ‘come home to all men’s business and bosoms.’ He drove over scrupulously once a Sunday to the State church, of which he was one of the most determined pillars. He had set his mind on being Lord Mayor of the town before long, and he was determined that his eldest son should be called Sir Worldly-Wiseman after him, and he chose his church accordingly. Another of his biographers in this connection wrote of him thus: ‘Our Lord Mayor parted his religion betwixt his conscience and his purse, and he went to church not to serve God, but to please the king. The face of the law made him wear the mask of the Gospel, which he used not as a means to save his soul, but his charges.’ Such, in a short word, was this ‘sottish man’ who crossed over the field to meet with our pilgrim when he was walking solitary by himself after his escape from the slough.

‘How now, good fellow? Whither away after this burdened manner?’ What a contrast those two men were to one another in the midst of that plain that day! Our pilgrim was full of the most laborious going; sighs and groans rose out of his heart at every step; and then his burden on his back, and his filthy, slimy rags all made him a picture such that it was to any man’s credit and praise that he should stop to speak to him. And then, when our pilgrim looked up, he saw a gentleman standing beside him to whom he was ashamed to speak. For the gentleman had no burden on his back, and he did not go over the plain laboriously. There was not a spot or a speck, a rent or a wrinkle on all his fine raiment. He could not have been better appointed if he had just stepped out of the gate at the head of the way; they can wear no cleaner garments than his in the Celestial City itself. ‘How now, good fellow? Whither away after this burdened manner?’ ‘A burdened manner, indeed, as ever I think poor creature had. And whereas you ask me whither away, I tell you, sir, I am going to yonder wicket gate before me; for there, as I am informed, I shall be put into a way to be rid of my heavy burden.’ ‘Hast thou a wife and children?’ Yes; he is ashamed to say that he has. But he confesses that he cannot to-day take the pleasure in them that he used to do. Since his sin so came upon him, he is sometimes as if he had neither wife nor child nor a house over his head. John Bunyan was of Samuel Rutherford’s terrible experience,—that our sins and our sinfulness poison all our best enjoyments. We do not hear much of Rutherford’s wife and children, and that, no doubt, for the sufficient reason that he gives us in his so

open-minded letter. But Bunyan laments over his blind child with a lament worthy to stand beside the lament of David over Absalom, and again over Saul and Jonathan at Mount Gilboa. At the same time, John Bunyan often felt sore and sad at heart that he could not love and give all his heart to his wife and children as they deserved to be loved and to have all his heart. He often felt guilty as he looked on them and knew in himself that they did not have in him such a father as, God knew, he wished he was, or ever in this world could hope to be. ‘Yes,’ he said, ‘but I cannot take the pleasure in them that I would. I am sometimes as if I had none. My sin sometimes drives me like a man bereft of his reason and clean demented.’ ‘Who bid thee go this way to be rid of thy burden? I beshrew him for his counsel. There is not a more troublesome and dangerous way in the world than this is to which he hath directed thee. And besides, though I used to have some of the same burden when I was young, not since I settled in that town,’ pointing to the town of Carnal-Policy over the plain, ‘have I been at any time troubled in that way.’ And then he went on to describe and denounce the way to the Celestial City, and he did it like a man who had been all over it, and had come back again. His alarming description of the upward way reads to us like a page out of Job, or Jeremiah, or David, or Paul. ‘Hear me,’ he says, ‘for I am older than thou. Thou art like to meet with in the way which thou goest wearisomeness, painfulness, hunger, perils, nakedness, sword, lions, dragons, darkness, and in a word, death, and what not.’ You would think that you were reading the eighth of the Romans at the thirty-fifth verse; only Mr. Worldly-Wiseman does not go on to finish the chapter. He does not go on to add, ‘I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Jesus Christ our Lord.’ No; Worldly-Wiseman never reads the Romans, and he never hears a sermon on that chapter when he goes to church.

Mr. Worldly-Wiseman became positively eloquent and impressive and all but convincing as he went so graphically and cumulatively over all the sorrows that attended on the way to which this pilgrim was now setting his face. But, staggering as it all was, the man in rags and slime only smiled a sad and sobbing smile in answer, and said: ‘Why, sir, this burden upon my back is far more terrible to me than all the things which you have mentioned; nay, methinks I care not what I meet with in the way, so be I can also meet with deliverance from my burden.’ This is what our Lord calls a pilgrim having the root of the matter in himself. This poor soul had by this time so much wearisomeness, painfulness, hunger, perils, nakedness, sword, lions, dragons, darkness, death, and what not in himself, that all these threatened things outside of himself were but so many bugbears and hobgoblins wherewith to terrify children; they were but things to be laughed at by every man who is in ernest in the way. ‘I care not what else I meet with if only I also meet with deliverance.’ There speaks the true pilgrim. There speaks the man who drew down the Son of God to the cross for that man’s deliverance. There speaks the man, who, mire, and rags, and burdens and all, will yet be found in the heaven of heavens where the chief of sinners shall see their Deliverer face to face, and shall at last and for ever be like Him. Peter examined Dante in heaven on faith, James examined him on hope, and John took him through his catechism on love, and the seer came out of the tent with a laurel crown on his brow. I do not know who the examiner on sin will be, but, speaking for myself on this matter, I would rather take my degree in that subject than in all the other subjects set for a sinner’s examination on earth or in heaven. For to know myself, and especially, as the wise man says, to know the plague of my own heart, is the true and the only key to all other true knowledge: God and man; the Redeemer and the devil; heaven and hell; faith,

hope, and charity; unbelief, despair, and malignity, and all things of that kind else, all knowledge will come to that man who knows himself, and to that man alone, and to that man in the exact measure in which he does really know himself. Listen again to this slough-stained, sin-burdened, sighing and sobbing pilgrim, who, in spite of all these things—nay, in virtue of all these things—is as sure of heaven and of the far end of heaven as if he were already enthroned there. 'Wearisomeness,' he protests, 'painfulness, hunger, perils, nakedness, sword, lions, dragons, darkness, death, and what not—why, sir, this burden on my back is far more terrible to me than all these things which you have mentioned; nay, methinks I care not what I meet with in the way, so be I can also meet with deliverance from my burden.' O God! let this same mind be found in me and in all the men and women for whose souls I shall have to answer at the day of judgment, and I shall be content and safe before Thee. That strong outburst from this so forfoughten man for a moment quite overawed Worldly-Wiseman. He could not reply to an earnestness like this. He did not understand it, and could not account for it. The only thing he ever was in such earnestness as that about was his success in business and his title that he and his wife were scheming for. But still, though silenced by this unaccountable outburst of our pilgrim, Worldly-Wiseman's enmity against the upward way, and especially against all the men and all the books that made pilgrims take to that way, was not silenced. 'How camest thou by thy burden at first?' By reading this Book in my hand.' Worldly-Wiseman did not fall foul of the Book indeed, but he fell all the more foul of those who meddled with matters they had not a head for. 'Leave these high and deep things for the ministers who are paid to understand and explain them, and attend to matters more within thy scope.' And then he went on to tell of a far better way to get rid of the burden that meddlesome men brought on themselves by reading that book too much—a far better and swifter way than attempting the wicket-gate. 'Thou wilt never be settled in thy mind till thou art rid of that burden, nor canst thou enjoy the blessings of wife and child as long as that burden lies so heavy upon thee.' That was so true that it made the pilgrim look up. A gentleman who can speak in that true style must know more than he says about such burdens as this of mine; and, after all, he may be able, who knows, to give me some good advice in my great straits. 'Pray, sir, open this secret to me, for I sorely stand in need of good counsel.' Let him here who has no such burden as this poor pilgrim had cast the first stone at Christian; I cannot. If one who looked like a gentleman came to me to-night and told me how I would on the spot get to a peace of conscience never to be lost again, and how I would get a heart to-night that would never any more plague and pollute me, I would be mightily tempted to forget what all my former teachers had told me and try this new Gospel. And especially if the gentleman said that the remedy was just at hand. 'Pray, sir,' said the breathless and spiritless man, 'wilt thou, then, open this secret to me?' The wit and the humour and the satire of the rest of the scene must be fully enjoyed over the great book itself. The village named Morality, hard by the hill; that judicious man Legality, who dwells in the first house you come at after you have turned the hill; Civility, the pretty young man that Legality hath to his son; the hospitality of the village; the low rents and the cheap provisions, and all the charities and amenities of the place,—all together make up such a picture as you cannot get anywhere out of John Bunyan. And then the pilgrim's stark folly in entering into Worldly-Wiseman's secret; his horror as the hill began to thunder and lighten and threaten to fall upon him; the sudden descent of Evangelist; and then the plain-spoken words that passed between the preacher and the pilgrim,—don't say again that the poorest of the Puritans were without letters, or that they had not their own esoteric writings full of fun and frolic; don't say that again till you are a pilgrim yourself,

and have our John Bunyan for one of your classics by heart.

We are near an end, but before you depart, stand still a little, as Evangelist said to Christian, that I may show you the words of God. And first, watch yourselves well, for you all have a large piece of this worldly-wise man in yourselves. You all take something of some ancestor, remote or immediate, who was wise only for this world. Yes, to be sure, for you still decline as they did, and desert as they did, those you deem to be the weakest, and stand with those that you suppose to be the strongest side. The Architect of Fortune is perhaps too strong meat for your stomach; but still, if you ever light upon its powerful pages, you will surely blush in secret to see yourself turned so completely inside out. You may not have chosen your church wholly with an eye to your shop; but you must admit that you see as good and better men than you are doing that every day. And it is a sure sign to you that you do not yet know the plague of your own heart, unless you know yourself to be a man more set upon the position and the praise that this world gives than you yet are on the position and the praise that come from God only. Set a watch on your own worldly heart. Watch and pray, lest you also enter into all Worldly-Wiseman's temptation. This is one of the words of God to you.

Another word of God is this. The way of the cross, said severe Evangelist, is odious to every worldly-wise man; while, all the time, it is the only way there is, and there never will be any other way to eternal life. The only way to life is the way of the cross. There are two crosses, indeed, on the way to the Celestial City; there is, first, the Cross of Christ, once for you, and then there is your cross daily for Christ, and it takes both crosses to secure and to assure any man that he is on the right road, and that he will come at last to the right end. 'The Christian's great conquest over the world,' says William Law, 'is all contained in the mystery of Christ upon the cross. And true Christianity is nothing else but an entire and absolute conformity to that spirit which Christ showed in the mysterious sacrifice of Himself upon the cross. Every man is only so far a Christian as he partakes of this same spirit of Christ—the same suffering spirit, the same sacrifice of himself, the same renunciation of the world, the same humility and meekness, the same patient bearing of injuries, reproaches, and contempts, the same dying to all the greatness, honours, and happiness of this world that Christ showed on the cross. We also are to suffer, to be crucified, to die, to rise with Christ, or else His crucifixion, His death, and His resurrection will profit us nothing. 'This is the second word of God unto thee. And the third thing to-night is this, that though thy sin be very great, though thou hast a past life round thy neck enough to sink thee for ever out of the sight of God and all good men; a youth of sensuality now long and closely cloaked over with an after life of worldly prosperity, worldly decency, and worldly religion, all which only makes thee that whited sepulchre that Christ has in His eye when He speaks of thee with such a severe and dreadful countenance; yet if thou confess thyself to be all the whited sepulchre He sees thee to be, and yet knock at His gate in all thy rags and slime, He will immediately lay aside that severe countenance and will show thee all His goodwill. Notwithstanding all that thou hast done, and all thou still art, He will not deny His own words, or do otherwise than at once fulfil them all to thee. Ask, then, and it shall be given thee; seek, and thou shalt find; knock, and it shall be opened unto thee. And with a great goodwill, He will say to those that stand by Him, Take away the filthy garments from him. And to thee He will say, Behold, I have caused all thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.

Chapter 7

# 007. Goodwill, the Gatekeeper

VII GOODWILL, THE GATEKEEPER ‘Goodwill.’—Luke 2:14.

‘So in process of time Christian got up to the gate. Now there was written over the gate, Knock, and it shall be opened unto you. He knocked, therefore, more than once or twice, saying, May I now enter here? when at last there came a grave person to the gate, named Goodwill, who asked him who was there?’ The gravity of the gatekeeper was the first thing that struck the pilgrim. And it was the same thing that so struck some of the men who saw most of our Lord that they handed down to their children the true tradition that He was often seen in tears, but that no one had ever seen or heard Him laugh. The prophecy in the prophet concerning our Lord was fulfilled to the letter. He was indeed a man of sorrows, and He early and all His life long had a close acquaintance with grief. Our Lord had come into this world on a very sad errand. We are so stupefied and besotted with sin, that we have no conception how sad an errand our Lord had been sent on, and how sad a task He soon discovered it to be. To be a man without sin, a man hating sin, and hating nothing else but sin, and yet to have to spend all His days in a world lying in sin, and in the end to have all that world of sin laid upon Him till He was Himself made sin,—how sad a task was that! Great, no doubt, as was the joy that was set before our Lord, and sure as He was of one day entering on that joy, yet the daily sight of so much sin in all men around Him, and the cross and the shame that lay right before Him, made Him, in spite of the future joy, all the Man of Sorrow Isaiah had said He would be, and made light-mindedness and laughter impossible to our Lord,—as it is, indeed, to all men among ourselves who have anything of His mind about this present world and the sin of this world, they also are men of sorrow, and of His sorrow. They, too, are acquainted with grief. Their tears, like His, will never be wiped off in this world. They will not laugh with all their heart till they laugh where He now laughs. Then it will be said of them, too, that they began to be merry. ‘What was the matter with you that you did laugh in your sleep last night? asked Christiana of Mercy in the morning. I suppose you were in a dream. So I was, said Mercy, but are you sure that I laughed? Yes, you laughed heartily; but, prithee, Mercy, tell me thy dream. Well, I dreamed that I was in a solitary place and all alone, and was there bemoaning the hardness of my heart, when methought I saw one coming with wings towards me. So he came directly to me, and said, Mercy, what aileth thee? Now, when he heard my complaint, he said, Peace be to thee. He also wiped mine eyes with his handkerchief, and clad me in silver and gold; he put a chain about my neck also, and earrings in mine ears, and a beautiful crown upon my head. So he went up. I followed him till we came to a golden gate; and I thought I saw your husband there. But did I laugh? Laugh! ay, and well you might, to see yourself so well.’ But to return and begin again. Goodwill, who opened the gate, was, as we saw, a person of a very grave and commanding aspect; so much so, that in his sudden joy our pilgrim was a good deal overawed as he looked on the countenance of the man who stood in the gate, and it was some time afterwards before he understood why he wore such a grave and almost sad aspect. But afterwards, as he went up the way, and sometimes returned in thought to the wicket-gate, he came to see very good reason why the keeper of that gate looked as he did look. The site and situation of the gate, for one thing, was

of itself enough to banish all light-mindedness from the man who was stationed there. For the gatehouse stood just above the Slough of Despond, and that itself filled the air of the place with a dampness and a depression that could be felt. And then out of the downward windows of the gate, the watcher's eye always fell on the City of Destruction in the distance, and on her sister cities sitting like her daughters round about her. And that also made mirth and hilarity impossible at that gate. And then the kind of characters who came knocking all hours of the day and the night at that gate. Goodwill never saw a happy face or heard a cheerful voice from one year's end to the other. And when any one so far forgot himself as to put on an untimely confidence and self-satisfaction, the gatekeeper would soon put him through such questions as quickly sobered him if he had anything at all of the root of the matter in him. Terror, horror, despair, remorse, chased men and women up to that gate. They would often fall before his threshold more dead than alive. And then, after the gate was opened and the pilgrims pulled in, the gate had only opened on a path of such painfulness, toil, and terrible risk, that at whatever window Goodwill looked out, he always saw enough to make him and keep him a grave, if not a sad, man. It was, as he sometimes said, his meat and his drink to keep the gate open for pilgrims; but the class of men who came calling themselves pilgrims; the condition they came in; the past, that in spite of all both he and they could do, still came in through his gate after them, and went up all the way with them; their ignorance of the way, on which he could only start them; the multitudes who started, and the handfuls who held on; the many who for a time ran well, but afterwards left their bones to bleach by the wayside; and all the impossible-to-be-told troubles, dangers, sorrows, shipwrecks that certainly lay before the most steadfast and single-hearted pilgrim—all that was more than enough to give the man at the gate his grave and anxious aspect. Not that his great gravity, with all the causes of it, ever made him a melancholy, a morose, a despairing, or even a desponding man. Far from that. The man of sorrows Himself sometimes rejoiced in spirit. Not sometimes only, but often He lifted up His heart and thanked His Father for the work His Father had given Him to do, and for the success that had been granted to Him in the doing of it. And as often as He looked forward to the time when he should finish His work and receive His discharge, and return to His Father's house, at the thought of that He straightway forgot all His present sorrows. And somewhat so was it with Goodwill at his gate. No man could be but at bottom happy, and even joyful, who had a post like his to occupy, a gate like his to keep, and, altogether, a work like his to do. No man with his name and his nature can ever in any circumstances be really unhappy. 'Happiness is the bloom that always lies on a life of true goodness,' and this gatehouse was full of the happiness that follows on and always dwells with true goodness. Goodwill cannot have more happiness till he shuts in his last pilgrim into the Celestial City, and then himself enters in after him as a shepherd after a lost sheep. The happy, heavenly, divine disposition of the gatekeeper was such, that it overflowed from the pilgrim who stood beside him and descended upon his wife and children who remained behind him in the doomed city. So full of love was the gatekeeper's heart, that it ran out upon Obstinate and Pliable also. His heart was so large and so hospitable, that he was not satisfied with one pilgrim received and assisted that day. How is it, he asked, that you have come here alone? Did any of your neighbours know of your coming? And why did he who came so far not come through? Alas, poor man, said Goodwill, is the celestial glory of so little esteem with him that he counteth it not worth running the hazards of a few difficulties to obtain it? Our pilgrim got a lifelong lesson in goodwill to all men at that gate that day. The gatekeeper showed such deep and patient and genuine interest in all the pilgrim's past history, and in all his family and personal affairs, that Christian all his days

could never show impatience, or haste, or lack of interest in the most long-winded and egotistical pilgrim he ever met. He always remembered, when he was becoming impatient, how much of his precious time and of his loving attention his old friend Goodwill had given to him. Our pilgrim got tired of talking about himself long before Goodwill had ceased to ask questions and to listen to the answers. So much was Christian taken with the courtesy and the kindness of Goodwill, that had it not been for his crushing burden, he would have offered to remain in Goodwill's house to run his errands, to light his fires, and to sweep his floors. So much was he taken captive with Goodwill's extraordinary kindness and unwearied attention. And since he could not remain at the gate, but must go on to the city of all goodwill itself, our pilgrim set himself all his days to copy this gatekeeper when he met with any fellow-pilgrim who had any story that he wished to tell. And many were the lonely and forgotten souls that Christian cheered and helped on, not by his gold or his silver, nor by anything else, but just by his open ear. To listen with patience and with attention to a fellow-pilgrim's wrongs and sorrows, and even his smallest interests, said this Christian to himself, is just what Goodwill so winningly did to me. With all his goodwill the grave gatekeeper could not say that the way to the Celestial City was other than a narrow, a stringent, and a heart-searching way. 'Come,' he said, 'and I will tell thee the way thou must go.' There are many wide ways to hell, and many there be who crowd them, but there is only one way to heaven, and you will sometimes think you must have gone off it, there are so few companions; sometimes there will be only one footprint, with here and there a stream of blood, and always as you proceed, it becomes more and more narrow, till it strips a man bare, and sometimes threatens to close upon him and crush him to the earth altogether. Our Lord in as many words tells us all that. Strive, He says, strive every day. For many shall seek to enter into the way of salvation, but because they do not early enough, and long enough, and painfully enough strive, they come short, and are shut out. Have you, then, anything in your religious life that Christ will at last accept as the striving He intended and demanded? Does your religion cause you any real effort—Christ calls it agony? Have you ever had, do you ever have, anything that He would so describe? What cross do you every day take up? In what thing do you every day deny yourself? Name it. Put your finger on it. Write it in cipher on the margin of your Bible. Would the most liberal judgment be able to say of you that you have any fear and trembling in the work of your salvation? If not, I am afraid there must be some mistake somewhere. There must be great guilt somewhere. At your parents' door, or at your minister's, or, if their hands are clean, then at your own. Christ has made it plain to a proverb, and John Bunyan has made it a nursery and a schoolboy story, that the way to heaven is steep and narrow and lonely and perilous. And that, remember, not a few of the first miles of the way, but all the way, and even through the dark valley itself. 'Almost all that is said in the New Testament of men's watching, giving earnest heed to themselves, running the race that is set before them, striving and agonising, fighting, putting on the whole armour of God, pressing forward, reaching forth, crying to God day and night; I say, almost all that we have in the New Testament on these subjects is spoken and directed to the saints. Where those things are applied to sinners seeking salvation once, they are spoken of the saints' prosecution of their salvation ten times' (Jonathan Edwards). If you have a life at all like that, you will be sorely tempted to think that such suffering and struggle, increasing rather than diminishing as life goes on, is a sign that you are so bad as not to be a true Christian at all. You will be tempted to think and say so. But all the time the truth is, that he who has not that labouring, striving, agonising, fearing, and trembling in himself, knows nothing at all about the religion of Christ and the way to heaven; and if he thinks he

does, then that but proves him a hypocrite, a self-deceived, self-satisfied hypocrite; there is not an ounce of a true Christian in him. Says Samuel Rutherford on this matter: ‘Christ commandeth His hearers to a strict and narrow way, in mortifying heart-lusts, in loving our enemy, in feeding him when he is hungry, in suffering for Christ’s sake and the gospel’s, in bearing His cross, in denying ourselves, in becoming humble as children, in being to all men and at all times meek and lowly in heart.’ Let any man lay all that intelligently and imaginatively alongside of his own daily life. Let him name some such heart-lust. Let him name also some enemy, and ask himself what it is to love that man, and to feed him in his hunger; what it is in which he is called to suffer for Christ’s sake and the gospel’s, in his reputation, in his property, in his business, in his feelings. Let him put his finger on something in which he is every day to deny himself, and to be humble and teachable, and to keep himself out of sight like a little child; and if that man does not find out how narrow and heart-searching the way to heaven is, he will be the first who has so found his way thither. No, no; be not deceived. Deceive not yourself, and let no man deceive you. God is not mocked, neither are His true saints. ‘Would to God I were back in my pulpit but for one Sabbath,’ said a dying minister in Aberdeen. ‘What would you do?’ asked a brother minister at his bedside. ‘I would preach to the people the difficulty of salvation, ’he said. All which things are told, not for purposes of debate or defiance, but to comfort and instruct God’s true people who are finding salvation far more difficult than anybody had ever told them it would be. Comfort My people, saith your God. Speak comfortably to My people. Come, said Goodwill, and I will teach thee about the way thou must go. Look before thee, dost thou see that narrow way? That is the way thou must go. And then thou mayest always distinguish the right way from the wrong. The wrong is crooked and wide, and the right is straight as a rule can make it,—straight and narrow.

Goodwill said all that in order to direct and to comfort the pilgrim; but that was not all that this good man said with that end. For, when Christian asked him if he could not help him off with his burden that was upon his back, he told him: ‘As to thy burden, be content to bear it until thou comest to the place of deliverance, for there it will fall from thy back of itself.’ Get you into the straight and narrow way, says Goodwill, with his much experience of the ways and fortunes of true pilgrims; get you sure into the right way, and leave your burden to God. He appoints the place of deliverance, and it lies before thee. The place of thy deliverance cannot be behind thee, and it is not in my house, else thy burden would have been already off. But it is before thee. Be earnest, therefore, in the way. Look not behind thee. Go not into any crooked way; and one day, before you know, and when you are not pulling at it, your burden will fall off of itself. Be content to bear it till then, says bold and honest Goodwill, speaking so true to pilgrim experience. Yes; be content, O ye people of God, crying with this pilgrim for release from your burden of guilt, and no less those of you who are calling with Paul for release from the still more bitter and crushing burden made up of combined guilt and corruption. Be content till the place and the time of deliverance; nay, even under your burden and your bonds be glad, as Paul was, and go up the narrow way, still chanting to yourself, I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. It is only becoming that a great sinner should tarry the Lord’s leisure; all the more that the greatest sinner may be sure the Lord will come, and will not tarry. The time is long, but the thing is sure. And now two lessons from Goodwill’s gate:—

1. The gate was shut when Christian came up to it, and no one was visible anywhere about it. The only thing visible was the writing over the gate which told all pilgrims to knock. Now, when we come up to the same gate we are disappointed and discouraged that the gatekeeper is not

standing already upon his doorstep and his arms round our neck. We knelt to-day in secret prayer, and there was only our bed or our chair visible before us. There was no human being, much less to all appearance any Divine Presence, in the place. And we prayed a short, indeed, but a not unearnest prayer, and then we rose up and came away disappointed because no one appeared. But look at him who is now inheriting the promises. He knocked, says his history, more than once or twice. That is to say, he did not content himself with praying one or two seconds and then giving over, but he continued in prayer till the gatekeeper came. And as he knocked, he said, so loud and so impatient that all those in the gatehouse could hear him,

‘May I now enter here? Will he within

Open to sorry me, though I have been

A wandering rebel? Then shall I

Not fail to sing his lasting praise on high.’

2. ‘We make no objections against any,’ said Goodwill; ‘notwithstanding all that they have done before they come hither, they are in no wise cast out.’ He told me all things that ever I did, said the woman of Samaria, telling her neighbours about our Lord’s conversation with her. And, somehow, there was something in the gatekeeper’s words that called back to Christian, if not all the things he had ever done, yet from among them the worst things he had ever done. They all rose up black as hell before his eyes as the gatekeeper did not name them at all, but only said ‘notwithstanding all that thou hast done.’ Christian never felt his past life so black, or his burden so heavy, or his heart so broken, as when Goodwill just said that one word ‘notwithstanding.’ ‘We make no objections against any; notwithstanding all that they have done before they come hither, they are in no wise cast out.’

# 008. The Interpreter

VIII THE INTERPRETER ‘An interpreter, one among a thousand.’—Elihu.

We come to-night to the Interpreter’s House. And since every minister of the gospel is an interpreter, and every evangelical church is an interpreter’s house, let us gather up some of the precious lessons to ministers and to people with which this passage of the Pilgrim’s Progress so much abounds.

1. In the first place, then, I observe that the House of the Interpreter stands just beyond the Wicket Gate. In the whole topography of the Pilgrim’s Progress there lies many a deep lesson. The church that Mr. Worldly-Wiseman supported, and on the communion roll of which he was so determined to have our pilgrim’s so unprepared name, stood far down on the other side of Goodwill’s gate. It was a fine building, and it had an eloquent man for its minister, and the whole service was an attraction and an enjoyment to all the people of the place; but our Interpreter was never asked to show any of his significant things there; and, indeed, neither minister nor people would have understood him had he ever done so. And had any of the parishioners from below the gate ever by any chance stumbled into the Interpreter’s house, his most significant rooms would have had no significance to them. Both he and his house would have been a mystery and an offence to Worldly-Wiseman, his minister, and his fellow-worshippers. John Bunyan has the clear warrant both of Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul for the place on which he has planted the Interpreter’s house. ‘It is given to you, ’said our Lord to His disciples, ‘to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to them it is not given.’ And Paul tells us that ‘the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.’ And, accordingly, no reader of the Pilgrim’s Progress will really understand what he sees in the Interpreter’s House, unless he is already a man of a spiritual mind. Intelligent children enjoy the pictures and the people that are set before them in this illustrated house, but they must become the children of God, and must be well on in the life of God, before they will be able to say that the house next the gate has been a profitable and a helpful house to them. All that is displayed here—all the furniture and all the vessels, all the ornaments and all the employments and all the people of the Interpreter’s House—is fitted and intended to be profitable as well as interesting to pilgrims only. No man has any real interest in the things of this house, or will take any abiding profit out of it, till he is fairly started on the upward road. In his former life, and while still on the other side of the gate, our pilgrim had no interest in such things as he is now to see and hear; and if he had seen and heard them in his former life, he would not, with all the Interpreter’s explanation, have understood them. As here among ourselves to-night, they who will understand and delight in the things they hear in this house to-night are those only who have really begun to live a religious life. The realities of true religion are now the most real things in life—to them; they love divine things now; and since they began to love divine things, you cannot entertain them better than by exhibiting and explaining divine things to them. There is no house in all the earth, after the gate itself, that is more dear to the true pilgrim heart than just the Interpreter’s House. ‘I was glad when it was said to me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Peace be within thy walls,

and prosperity within thy palaces.'

2. And besides being built on the very best spot in all the land for its owner's purposes, every several room in that great house was furnished and fitted up for the entertainment and instruction of pilgrims. Every inch of that capacious and many-chambered house was given up to the delectation of pilgrims. The public rooms were thrown open for their convenience and use at all hours of the day and night, and the private rooms were kept retired and secluded for such as sought retirement and seclusion. There were dark rooms also with iron cages in them, till Christian and his companions came out of those terrible places, bringing with them an everlasting caution to watchfulness and a sober mind. There were rooms also given up to vile and sordid uses. One room there was full of straws and sticks and dust, with an old man who did nothing else day nor night but wade about among the straws and sticks and dust, and rake it all into little heaps, and then sit watching lest any one should overturn them. And then, strange to tell it, and not easy to get to the full significance of it, the bravest room in all the house had absolutely nothing in it but a huge, ugly, poisonous spider hanging to the wall with her hands. 'Is there but one spider in all this spacious room?' asked the Interpreter. And the water stood in Christiana's eyes; she had come by this time thus far on her journey also. She was a woman of a quick apprehension, and the water stood in her eyes at the Interpreter's question, and she said: 'Yes, Lord, there is here more than one. Yea, and spiders whose venom is far more destructive than that which is in her.' The Interpreter then looked pleasantly on her, and said: 'Thou hast said the truth.' This made Mercy blush, and the boys to cover their faces, for they all began now to understand the riddle. 'This is to show you,' said the Interpreter, 'that however full of the venom of sin you may be, yet you may, by the hand of faith, lay hold of, and dwell in the best room that belongs to the King's House above.' Then they all seemed to be glad, but the water stood in their eyes. A wall also stood apart on the grounds of the house with an always dying fire on one side of it, while a man on the other side of the wall continually fed the fire through hidden openings in the wall. A whole palace stood also on the grounds, the inspection of which so kindled our pilgrim's heart, that he refused to stay here any longer, or to see any more sights—so much had he already seen of the evil of sin and of the blessedness of salvation. Not that he had seen as yet the half of what that house held for the instruction of pilgrims. Only, time would fail us to visit the hen and her chickens; the butcher killing a sheep and pulling her skin over her ears, and she lying still under his hands and taking her death patiently; also the garden with the flowers all diverse in stature, and quality, and colour, and smell, and virtue, and some better than some, and all where the gardener had set them, there they stand, and quarrel not with one another. The robin-red-breast also, so pretty of note and colour and carriage, but instead of bread and crumbs, and such like harmless matter, with a great spider in his mouth. A tree also, whose inside was rotten, and yet it grew and had leaves. So they went on their way and sang:

'This place hath been our second stage,

Here have we heard and seen

Those good things that from age to age

To others hid have been.

The butcher, garden, and the field,

The robin and his bait,

Also the rotten tree, doth yield

Me argument of weight;

To move me for to watch and pray,

To strive to be sincere,

To take my cross up day by day,

And serve the Lord with few.' The significant rooms of that divine house instruct us also that all the lessons requisite for our salvation are not to be found in any one scripture or in any one sermon, but that all that is required by any pilgrim or any company of pilgrims should all be found in every minister's ministry as he leads his flock on from one Sabbath-day to another, rightly dividing the word of truth. Our ministers should have something in their successive sermons for everybody. Something for the children, something for the slow-witted and the dull of understanding, and something specially suited for those who are of a quick apprehension; something at one time to make the people smile, at another time to make them blush, and at another time to make the water stand in their eyes.

3. And, then, the Interpreter's life was as full of work as his house was of entertainment and instruction. Not only so, but his life, it was well known, had been quite as full of work before he had a house to work for as ever it had been since. The Interpreter did nothing else but continually preside over his house and all that was in it and around it, and it was all gone over and seen to with his own eyes and hands every day. He had been present at the laying of every stone and beam of that solid and spacious house of his. There was not a pin nor a loop of its furniture, there was not a picture on its walls, nor a bird nor a beast in its woods and gardens, that he did not know all about and could not hold discourse about. And then, after he had taken you all over his house, with its significant rooms and woods and gardens, he was full all supper-time of all wise saws and witty proverbs. 'One leak will sink a ship, 'he said that night, 'and one sin will destroy a sinner.' And all their days the pilgrims remembered that word from the Interpreter's lips, and they often said it to themselves as they thought of their own besetting sin. Now, if it is indeed so, that every gospel minister is an interpreter, and every evangelical church an interpreter's house, what an important passage this is for all those who are proposing and preparing to be ministers. Let them reflect upon it: what a house this is that the Interpreter dwells in; how early and how long ago he began to lay out his grounds and to build his house upon them; how complete in all its parts it is, and how he still watches and labours to have it more complete. Understandest thou what thou here readest? it is asked of all ministers, young and old, as they turn over John Bunyan's pungent pages. And every new room, every new bird, and beast, and herb, and flower makes us blush for shame as we contrast our own insignificant and ill-furnished house with the noble house of the Interpreter. Let all our students who have not yet fatally destroyed themselves and lost their opportunity lay the Interpreter's House well to heart. Let them be students not in idle name only, as so many are, but in intense reality, as so few are. Let them read everything that bears upon the Bible, and let them read nothing that does not. They have not the time nor the permission. Let them be content to be men of one book. Let them give themselves wholly to the interpretation of divine truth as its riddles are set in nature and in man, in scripture, in providence, and in spiritual

experience. Let them store their memories at college with all sacred truth, and with all secular truth that can be made sacred. And if their memories are weak and treacherous, let them be quiet under God's will in that, and all the more labour to make up in other ways for that defect, so that they may have always something to say to the purpose when their future people come up to church hungry for instruction and comfort and encouragement. Let them look around and see the sin that sinks the ship of so many ministers; and let them begin while yet their ship is in the yard and see that she is fitted up and furnished, stored and stocked, so that she shall in spite of sure storms and sunken rocks deliver her freight in the appointed haven. When they are lying in bed of a Sabbath morning, let them forecast the day when they shall have to give a strict account of their eight years of golden opportunity among the churches, and the classes, and the societies, and the libraries of our university seats. Let them be able to name some great book, ay, more than one great book, they mastered, for every year of their priceless and irredeemable student life. Let them all their days have old treasure-houses that they filled full with scholarship and with literature and with all that will minister to a congregation's many desires and necessities, collected and kept ready from their student days. 'Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly up to them, that thy profiting may appear unto all.'

4. And then with a sly stroke at us old ministers, our significant author points out to us how much better furnished the Interpreter's House was by the time Christiana and the boys visited it compared with that early time when Christian was entertained in it. Our pilgrim got far more in the Interpreter's House of delight and instruction than he could carry out of it, but that did not tempt the Interpreter to sit down and content himself with taking all his future pilgrims into the same room, and showing them the same pictures, and repeating to them the same explanations. No, for he reflected that each coming pilgrim would need some new significant room to himself, and therefore, as soon as he got one pilgrim off his hands, he straightway set about building and furnishing new rooms, putting up new pictures, and replenishing his woods and his waters with new beasts and birds and fishes. I am ashamed, he said, that I had so little to show when I first opened my gates to receive pilgrims, and I do not know why they came to me as they did. I was only a beginner in these things when my first visitor came to my gates. Let every long-settled, middle-aged, and even grey-headed minister read the life of the Interpreter at this point and take courage and have hope. Let it teach us all to break some new ground in the field of divine truth with every new year. Let it teach us all to be students all our days. Let us buy, somehow, the poorest and the oldest of us, some new and first-rate book every year. Let us not indeed shut up altogether our old rooms if they ever had anything significant in them, but let us add now a new wing to our spiritual house, now a new picture to its walls, and now a new herb to its gardens. 'Resolved, 'wrote Jonathan Edwards, 'that as old men have seldom any advantage of new discoveries, because these are beside a way of thinking they have been long used to; resolved, therefore, if ever I live to years, that I will be impartial to hear the reasons of all pretended discoveries, and receive them, if rational, how long soever I have been used to another way of thinking.'

5. The fickle, frivolous, volatile character of so many divinity students is excellently hit off by Bunyan in our pilgrim's impatience to be out of the Interpreter's House. No sooner had he seen one or two of the significant rooms than this easily satisfied student was as eager to get out of that house as he had been to get in. Twice over the wise and learned Interpreter had to beg and

beseech this ignorant and impulsive pilgrim to stop and get another lesson in the religious life before he left the great school-house. All our professors of divinity and all our ministers understand the parable at this point only too well. Their students are eager to get into their classes; like our pilgrim, they have heard the fame of this and that teacher, and there is not standing-room in the class for the first weeks of the session. But before Christmas there is room enough for strangers, and long before the session closes, half the students are counting the weeks and plotting to petition the Assembly against the length and labour of the curriculum. Was there ever a class that was as full and attentive at the end of the session as it was at the beginning? Never since our poor human nature was so stricken with laziness and shallowness and self-sufficiency. But what is the chaff to the wheat? It is the wheat that deserves and repays the husbandman's love and labour. When Plato looked up from his desk in the Academy, after reading and expounding one of his greatest Dialogues, he found only one student left in the class-room, but then, that student was Aristotle. 'Now let me go,' said Christian. 'Nay, stay,' said the Interpreter, 'till I have showed thee a little more.' 'Sir, is it not time for me to go?' 'Do tarry till I show thee just one thing more.'

6. 'Here have I seen things rare and profitable, . . . Then let me be Thankful, O good Interpreter, to thee.'

Sydney Smith, with his usual sagacity, says that the last vice of the pulpit is to be uninteresting. Now, the Interpreter's House had this prime virtue in it, that it was all interesting. Do not our children beg of us on Sabbath nights to let them see the Interpreter's show once more; it is so inexhaustibly and unfailingly interesting? It is only stupid men and women who ever weary of it. But, 'profitable' was the one and universal word with which all the pilgrims left the Interpreter's House. 'Rare and pleasant,' they said, and sometimes 'dreadful; 'but it was always 'profitable.' Now, how seldom do we hear our people at the church door step down into the street saying, 'profitable'? If they said that oftener their ministers would study profit more than they do. The people say 'able,' or 'not at all able'; 'eloquent,' or 'stammering and stumbling'; 'excellent' in style and manner and accent, or the opposite of all that; and their ministers, to please the people and to earn their approval, labour after these approved things. But if the people only said that the prayers and the preaching were profitable and helpful, even when they too seldom are, then our preachers would set the profit of the people far more before them both in selecting and treating and delivering their Sabbath-day subjects. A lady on one occasion said to her minister, 'Sir, your preaching does my soul good.' And her minister never forgot the grave and loving look with which that was said. Not only did he never forget it, but often when selecting his subject, and treating it, and delivering it, the question would rise in his heart and conscience, Will that do my friend's soul any good? 'Rare and profitable, 'said the pilgrim as he left the gate; and hearing that sent the Interpreter back with new spirit and new invention to fill his house of still more significant, rare, and profitable things than ever before. 'Meditate on these things,' said Paul to Timothy his son in the gospel, 'that thy profiting may appear unto all.' 'Thou art a minister of the word,' wrote the learned William Perkins beside his name on all his books, 'mind thy business.'

# 009. Passion

IX

PASSION ‘A man subject to like passions as we are.’—James 5:17. That was a very significant room in the Interpreter’s House where our pilgrim saw Passion and Patience sitting each one in his chair. Passion was a young lad who seemed to our pilgrim to be much discontented. He was never satisfied. He would have all his good things now. His governor would have him wait for his best things till the beginning of next year; but no, he will have them all now. And then, when he had got all his good things, he soon lavished and wasted them all till he had nothing left but rags. Then said Christian to the Interpreter, ‘Expound this matter more fully to me.’ So he said, ‘Those two lads are figures; Passion, of the men of this world; and Patience of the men of that which is to come.’ ‘Then I perceive,’ said Christian, ‘’tis not best to covet things that are now, but to wait for things to come.’ ‘You say truth,’ replied the Interpreter, ‘for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal.’

Now from the texts that I have taken out of James and out of this so significant room in the Interpreter’s House, let me try to tell you something profitable, if so it may be, about passion; the nature of it, the place it holds, and the part it performs both in human nature and in the life and the character of a Christian man. The name of Passion has already told us his nature, his past life, and his present character. The whole nomenclature of The Pilgrim’s Progress and of The Holy War is composed on the divine, original, and natural principle of embodying the nature of a man in his name. God takes His own names to Himself on that principle. The Creator gave Adam his name also on that same principle; and then Adam gave their names to all cattle, to the fowls of the air, and to every beast of the field on the same principle on which he had got his own name. And so it was at first with all the Bible names of men and of nations of men. Their name contained their nature. And John Bunyan was such a student of the Bible, and of no other book but the Bible, that all his best books are all full, like the Bible, of the most descriptive and suggestive names. As soon as Bunyan tells us the name of some new acquaintance or fellow-traveller, we already know him, so exactly is his nature put into his name. And thus it is that when we stop for a moment at the door of this little significant room in the Interpreter’s House and ask ourselves the meaning of the name Passion, we see at once where we are and what we have here before us. For a ‘passion’ is just some excitement or agitation of the mind caused by some outward thing acting on the mind. The inward world of the mind and heart of man, and this outward world down into which God has placed man, instantly and continually respond to one another. And what are called, with so much correctness and propriety, our passions, are just those inward responses, excitements, and agitations that the outward world causes in the inward world when those two worlds meet together. ‘Passion’ and ‘perturbation’ are the old classical names that the ancient philosophers and moralists gave to what they felt in themselves as their minds and their hearts were affected by the world of men and things around them. And they used to illustrate their teaching on the subject of the passions by the figure of a storm at sea. They said that it was because God had made the sea sensitive and responsive to the winds that blew over it that a storm at sea ever arose. The storm

did not arise and the ships were not wrecked by anything from within the sea itself; it was the outward world of the winds striking against the quiet and inward world of the waters that roused the storms and sank the ships. And with that illustration well printed in the minds and imaginations of their scholars the old moralists felt their work among their scholars was already all but done. For, so full of adaptation and appeal is the whole outward world to the mind and heart of man, and so sensitive and instantly responsive is the mind and heart of man to all the approaches of the outward world, that the mind and heart of man are constantly full of all kinds of passions, both bad and good. And, then, this is our present life of probation and opportunity, that all our passions are placed within us and are committed and entrusted to us as so many first elements and so much unformed material out of which we are summoned to build up our life and to shape and complete our character. The springs of all our actions are in our passions. All our activities in life, trace them all up to their source, and they will all be found to run up into the wellhead of our passions. All our virtues are cut as with a chisel out of our passions, and all our vices are just the disorders and rebellions of our passions. Our several passions, as they lie still asleep in our hearts, have as yet no moral character; they are only the raw material so to speak, of moral character. Our passions are the life and the riches and the ornaments of human nature, and it is only because human nature in its present estate is so corrupt and disordered and degraded, that the otherwise so honourable name of passion has such a sinister sound to us. And the full regeneration and restitution of human nature will be accomplished when every several passion is in its right place, and when reason and conscience and the Spirit of God shall inspire and rule and regulate all that is within us.

‘On life’s vast ocean diversely we sail,

Reason the card, but passion is the gale.’ And not Elijah only, as James says, and not Paul and Barnabas only, as they themselves said, were men of like passions with ourselves, but our Lord Himself was a man of like passions with us also. He took to Himself a true body, full of all the appetites of the body, and a reasonable soul, full of all the affections, passions, and emotions of the soul. Only, in Him reason and conscience and the law and the Spirit of God were the card and the compass according to which He steered His life. We have all our ruling passion, and our Lord also had His. As His disciples saw His ruling passion kindled in His heart and coming out in His life, they remembered that it was written of Him in an old Messianic psalm: ‘The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up.’ They were all eaten up of their ruling passions also. One of ambition, one of emulation, one of avarice, and so on,—each several disciple was eaten up of his own besetting sin. But they all saw that it was not so with their Master. He was eaten up always and wholly of the zeal of His Father’s house, and of absolute surrender and devotion to His Father’s service, till His ruling passion was seen to be as strong in His death as it had been in His life. The Laird of Brodie’s Diary has repeatedly been of great use to us in these inward matters, and his words on this subject are well worth repeating. ‘We poor creatures,’ he says, ‘are commanded by our affections and passions. They are not at our command. But the Holy One doth exercise all His attributes at His own will; they are at His command; they are not passions nor perturbations in His mind, though they transport us. When I would hate, I cannot. When I would love, I cannot. When I would grieve, I cannot. When I would desire, I cannot. But it is the better for us that all is as He wills it to be.’ And now, to come still closer home, let us look for a moment or two at some of our own ruling and tyrannising passions. And let us look first at self-love—that master-passion in every

human heart. Let us give self-love the first place in the inventory and catalogue of our passions, because it has the largest place in all our hearts and lives. Nay, not only has self-love the largest place of any of the passions of our hearts, but it is out of self-love that all our other evil passions spring. It is out of this parent passion that all the poisonous brood of our other evil passions are born. The whole fall and ruin and misery of our present human nature lies in this, that in every human being self-love has taken, in addition to its own place, the place of the love of God and of the love of man also. We naturally now love nothing and no one but ourselves. And as long as self-love is in the ascendant in our hearts, all the passions that are awakened in us by our self-love will be selfish with its selfishness, inhumane with its inhumanity, and ungodly with its ungodliness. And it is to kill and extirpate our so passionate self-love that is the end and aim of all God's dealings with us in this world. All that God is doing with us and for us in providence and in grace, in the world and in the church,—it is all to cure us of this deadly disease of self-love. We may never have had that told us before, and we may not like it, and we may not believe it; but there can be no better proof of the truth of what is now said than just this, that we do not like it and will not have it. Self-love will not let us listen to the truth about ourselves; it puts us in a passion both against the truth and against him who tells the truth, as the history of the truth abundantly testifies. Yes, your indignant protest is quite true. Self-love has her divine rights,—no doubt she has. But you are not commanded to attend to them. Your self-love will look after herself. She will manage to have her full share of what is right and proper for any passion to possess even after she cries out that she is trampled upon and despoiled. My brethren, till you begin to crucify yourselves and to pluck up your self-love by the roots, you will never know what a cruel and hopeless task the Christian life is—I do not say the Christian profession. Nor, on the other hand, will you ever discover what a noble task it is—what a divine task and how divinely assisted and divinely recompensed. You will not know what a kennel of hell-hounds your own heart is till you have long sought to enter it and cleanse it out. And after you have done your utmost, and your best, death will hurry you away from your but half-accomplished task. Only, in that case you will be able to die in the hope that what is impossible with man is possible with God, as promised by Him, and that He will not leave your soul in hell, but will perfect that good thing which alone concerneth you, even your everlasting deliverance from all sinful self-love. And if self-love is the fruitful mother of all our passions, then sensuality is surely her eldest son. Indeed, so shallow are we, and so shallow are our words, that when we speak of sinful passion most men instantly think of sensuality. There are so many seductive things that appeal to our appetites, and our appetites are so easily awakened, and are so imperious when they are awakened, that when passion is spoken about, few men think of the soul, all men think instantly of the body. And no wonder. For, stupid and besotted as we are, we must all at some time of our life have felt the bondage and degradation of the senses. Passion in the Interpreter's House had soon nothing left but rags. And in this house to-night there are many men whose consciences and hearts and characters are all in such rags from sensual sin, that when the Scriptures speak of uncleanness, or rags, or corruption, their thoughts flee at once to sensual sin and its conscience-rending results. Cease from sensuality, said Cicero, for if once you give your minds up to sensuality, you will never be able to think of anything else.

Ambition, emulation, and envy are the leading members of a whole prolific family of satanic passions in the human heart. Indeed, these passions, taken along with their kindred passions of hatred and ill-will, are, in our Lord's words, the very lusts of the devil himself. The Jews hated our Lord the more for what He said about these detestable passions, but His own disciples love Him

only the more that He so well knows the evil affections of their hearts, and so well describes and denounces them. Anybody can denounce sensual sin,and everybody will understand and approve. But spiritual sin,—ambition and emulation and envy and ill-will—these things are more easy to denounce than they are to detect and describe, and more easy to detect and describe than they are to cast out. These sins seem rather to multiply and to strike a deeper root when you begin to cast them out. What an utterly and abominably evil passion is envy which is awakened not by bad things but by the best things! That another man's talents, attainments, praises, rewards should kindle it, and that the blame, the depreciation, the hurt that another man suffers should satisfy it,—what a piece of very hell must that be in the human heart! What more do we need than just a little envy in our hearts to make us prostrate penitents before God and man all our days? What more doctrine, argument, proof, authority, persuasion should a sane man need beyond a little envy in his heart at his best friend to make him an evangelical believer and an evangelical preacher? How, in the name of wonder, is it that men can be so ignorant of the plague of their own hearts as to remain indifferent, and, much more, hostile, to the gospel of love and holiness? Pride, also,—what a hateful and intolerable passion is that! How stone-blind to his own state must that sinner be whose heart is filled with pride, and how impossible it is for that man to make any real progress in any kind of truth or goodness! And resentment,—what a deep-seated, long-lived, and suicidal passion is that! How it hunts down him it hates, and how surely it shuts the door of salvation against him who harbours it! Forgive us our debts, the resentful man says in his prayer, as we forgive our debtors. And detraction,—how some men's ink-horns are filled with detraction for ink, and how it drops from their tongue like poison! At their every word a reputation dies. Life and all its opportunities of doing good and having good done to us is laid like a bag of treasure at our feet, but, like the prodigal son in the Interpreter's House, with all those passions raging in our own hearts at other men, and in other men's hearts at us, we have soon nothing left us but rags. God be thanked for every man here who sees and feels that he has nothing left him but rags; and, still more, thanks for all those who see and feel how, by their bad passions, sensual and spiritual, they have left on other people nothing but rags.

Now, from all this let us lay it to heart that our sanctification and salvation lie in our mastery over all these and over many other passions that have not even been named. He is an accepted saint of God, who, taking his and other people's rags to God's mercy every day, every day also in God's strength grapples with, bridles, and tames his own wild and ungodly passions. Be not deceived, my friends; he alone is a saint of God who is a sanctified man; and his passions,—as they are the spring of his actions, so they are the sphere and seat of his sanctification. Be not deceived; that man, and no other manner of man, is, or ever will be, a partaker of God's salvation. You often hear me recommending those students who have first to subdue their own passions and then the passions of those who hear them to study Jonathan Edwards' ethical and spiritual writings. Well, just at this present point, to show you how well that great man practised what he preached, let me read to you a few lines from his biographer: 'Few men,' says Henry Rogers, 'ever attained a more complete mastery over their passions than Jonathan Edwards did. This was partly owing to the ascendency of his intellect; partly, and in a still greater degree, to the elevation of his piety. For the subjugation of his passions he was no doubt very greatly indebted to the prodigious superiority of his reason. Such was the commanding attitude his reason assumed, and such the tremendous power with which it controlled the whole man, that any insurrection among his senses was hopeless; they had their tenure only by doing fealty and homage to his intellect. Those other and

more dangerous enemies, because more subtle and more spiritual, such as pride, vanity, wrath, and envy, which lurk in the inmost recesses of our nature, and some of which have such affinities for a genius like that of Edwards, yield not to such exorcism. Such more powerful kind of demons go not forth but by prayer and fasting; to their complete mortification, therefore, Edwards brought incessant watchfulness and devotion; and seldom, assuredly, have they been more nearly expelled from the bosom of a depraved intelligence.' We shall be in the best company, both intellectually and spiritually, if we work out our own salvation among the sinful passions of our depraved hearts. And then, as life goes on, and we continue in well-doing, we shall be able to measure and register our growth in grace best by watching the effect of outward temptations upon our still sinful and but half-sanctified hearts. And among much to be humbled for, and much to make us fear and tremble for the issue, we shall, from time to time, have a good conscience and a holy and humble joy that this passion and that is at last showing some signs of crucifixion and mortification. And thus that death to sin shall gradually set in which shall issue at last in an everlasting life unto holiness.

'Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you . . . Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness . . . Bring forth the best robe and put it upon him, for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found . . . What are these that are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they? These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'

Chapter 10

# 010. Patience

X

PATIENCE ‘In your patience possess ye your souls.’ (Revised Version:

‘In your patience ye shall win your souls.’)—Our Lord.

‘I saw moreover in my dream that the Interpreter took the pilgrim by the hand, and had him into a little room, where sate two little children, each one in his chair. The name of the eldest was Passion and of the other Patience. Passion seemed to be much discontent, but Patience was very quiet. Then Christian asked, What is the reason of the discontent of Passion? The interpreter answered, The governor of them would have him stay for his best things till the beginning of the next year; but he will have all now. But Patience is willing to wait.’

Passion and Patience, like Esau and Jacob, are twin-brothers. And their names, like their natures, spring up from the same root. ‘Patience,’ says Crabb in his English Synonyms, ‘comes from the active participle to suffer; while passion comes from the passive participle of the same verb; and hence the difference between the two names. Patience signifies suffering from an active principle, a determination to suffer; while passion signifies what is suffered from want of power to prevent the suffering. Patience, therefore, is always taken in a good sense, and Passion always in a bad sense.’ So far this excellent etymologist. This is, therefore, another case of blessing and cursing proceeding out of the same mouth, and of the same fountain sending forth at the same place both sweet water and bitter. Our Lord tells us in this striking text that our very souls by reason of sin are not our own. He tells us that we have lost hold of our souls before we have as yet come to know that we have souls. We only discover that we have souls after we have lost them. And our Lord,—our best, indeed our only, authority in the things of the soul,—here tells us that it is only by patience that we shall ever win back our lost souls. More, far more, is needed to the winning back of a lost soul than its owner’s patience, and our Lord knew that to His cost. But that is not His point with us to-night. His sole point with each one of us to-night is our personal part in the conquest and redemption of our sin-enslaved souls. He who has redeemed our souls with His own blood tells us with all plainness of speech, that His blood will be shed in vain, as far as we are concerned, unless we add to His atoning death our own patient life. Every human life, as our Lord looks at it, and would have us look at it, is a vast field of battle in which a soul is lost or won; little as we think of it or will believe it, in His sight every trial, temptation, provocation, insult, injury, and all kinds and all degrees of pain and suffering, are all so many divinely appointed opportunities afforded us for the reconquest and recovery of our souls. Sometimes faith is summoned into the battle-field, sometimes hope, sometimes self-denial, sometimes prayer, sometimes one grace and sometimes another; but as with the sound of a trumpet the Captain of our salvation here summons Patience to the forefront of the fight.

1. To begin with, how much impatience we are all from time to time guilty of in our family life. Among the very foundations of our family life how much impatience the husband often exhibits

toward the wife, and the wife toward her husband. Patience is the very last grace they look forward to having any need of when they are still dreaming about their married life; but, in too many cases, they have not well entered on that life, when they find that they need no grace of God so much as just patience, if the yoke of their new life is not to gall them beyond endurance. However many good qualities of mind and heart and character any husband or wife may have, no human being is perfect, and most of us are very far from being perfect. When therefore, we are closely and indissolubly joined to another life and another will, it is no wonder that sometimes the ill-fitting yoke eats into a lifelong sore. We have all many defects in our manners, in our habits, and in our constitutional ways of thinking and speaking and acting,—defects that tempt those who live nearest us to fall into annoyances with us that sometimes deepen into dislike, and even positive disgust, till it has been seen, in some extreme cases, that home-life has become a very prison-house, in which the impatient prisoner chafes and jibs and strikes out as he does nowhere else. Now, when any unhappy man or woman wakens up to discover how different life is now to be from what it once promised to become, let them know that all their past blindness, and precipitancy, and all the painful results of all that, may yet be made to work together for good. In your patience with one another, says our Lord, you will make a conquest of your adverse lot, and of your souls to the bargain. Say to yourselves, therefore, that perfection, faultlessness, and absolute satisfaction are not to be found in this world. And say also that since you have not brought perfection to your side of the house any more than your partner has to his side, you are not so foolish as to expect perfection in return for such imperfection. You have your own share of what causes fireside silence, aversion, disappointment, and dislike; and, with God's help, say that you will patiently submit to what may not now be mended. And then, the sterner the battle the nobler will the victory be; and the lonelier the fight, the more honour to him who flinches not from it. In your patience possess ye your souls.

What a beautiful, instructive, and even impressive sight it is to see a nurse patiently cherishing her children! How she has her eye and her heart at all their times upon them, till she never has any need to lay her hand upon them! Passion has no place in her little household, because patience fills all its own place and the place of passion too. What a genius she displays in her talks to her children! How she cheats their little hours of temptation, and tides them over the rough places that her eye sees lying like sunken rocks before her little ship! How skilfully she stills and heals their impulsive little passions by her sudden and absorbing surprise at some miracle in a picture-book, or some astonishing sight under her window! She has a thousand occupations also for her children, and each of them with a touch of enterprise and adventure and benevolence in it. She is so full of patience herself, that the little gusts of passion are soon over in her presence, and the sunshine is soon back brighter than ever in her little paradise. And, over and above her children rising up and calling her blessed, what wounds she escapes in her own heart and memory by keeping her patient hands from ever wounding her children! What peace she keeps in the house, just by having peace always within herself! Paul can find no better figure wherewith to set forth God's marvellous patience with Israel during her fretful childhood in the wilderness, than just that of such a nurse among her provoking children. And we see the deep hold that same touching and instructive sight had taken of the apostle's heart as he returns to it again to the Thessalonians: 'We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children. So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.' What a school of divine patience is every man's own family

at home if he only were teachable, observant, and obedient!

2. Clever, quick-witted, and, themselves, much-gifted men, are terribly intolerant of slow and stupid men, as they call them. But the many-talented man makes a great mistake here, and falls into a great sin. In his fulness of all kinds of intellectual gifts, he quite forgets from Whom he has his many gifts, and why it is that his despised neighbour has so few gifts. If you have ten or twenty talents, and I have only two, who is to be praised and who is to be blamed for that allotment? Your cleverness has misled you and has hitherto done you far more evil than good. You bear yourself among ordinary men, among less men than yourself, as if you had added all these cubits to your own stature. You ride over us as if you had already given in your account, and had heard it said, Take the one talent from them and give it to this my ten-talented servant. You seem to have set it down to your side of the great account, that you had such a good start in talent, and that your fine mind had so many tutors and governors all devoting themselves to your advancement. And you conduct yourself to us as if the Righteous Judge had cast us away from His presence, because we were not found among the wise and mighty of this world. The truth is, that the whole world is on a wholly wrong tack in its praise and in its blame. We praise the man of great gifts, and we blame the man of small gifts, completely forgetful that in so doing we give men the praise that belongs to God, and lay on men the blame, which, if there is any blame in the matter, ought to be laid elsewhere. Learn and lay to heart, my richly-gifted brethren, to be patient with all men, but especially to be patient with all stupid, slow-witted, ungifted, God-impoverished men. Do not add your insults and your ill-usage to the low estate of those on whom, in the meantime, God's hand lies so cold and so straitened. For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it? Call that to mind the next time you are tempted to cry out that you have no patience with your slow-witted servant.

3. 'Is patient with the bad' is one of the tributes of praise that is paid in the fine paraphrase to that heart that is full of the same love that is in God. A patient love to the unjust and the evil is one of the attributes and manifestations of the divine nature, as that nature is seen both in God and in all genuinely godly men. And, indeed, in no other thing is the divine nature so surely seen in any man as just in his love to and his patience with bad men. He schools and exercises himself every day to be patient and good to other men as God has been to him. He remembers when tempted to resentment how God did not resent his evil, but, while he was yet an enemy to God and to godliness, reconciled him to Himself by the death of His Son. And ever since the godly man saw that, he has tried to reconcile his worst enemies to himself by the death of his impatience and passion toward them, and has more pitied than blamed them, even when their evil was done against himself. Let God judge, and if it must be, condemn that bad man. But I am too bad myself to cast a stone at the worst and most injurious of men. If we so much pity ourselves for our sinful lot, if we have so much compassion on ourselves because of our inherited and unavoidable estate of sin and misery, why do we not share our pity and our compassion with those miserable men who are in an even worse estate than our own? At any rate, I must not judge them lest I be judged. I must take care when I say, Forgive me my trespasses, as I forgive them that trespass against me. Not to seven times must I grudgingly forgive, but ungrudgingly to seventy times seven. For with what judgment I judge, I shall be judged; and with what measure I mete, it shall be measured to me again.

‘Love harbours no suspicious thought,

Is patient to the bad:

Grieved when she hears of sins and crimes,

And in the truth is glad.’

4. And then, most difficult and most dangerous, but most necessary of all patience, we must learn how to be patient with ourselves. Every day we hear of miserable men rushing upon death because they can no longer endure themselves and the things they have brought on themselves. And there are moral suicides who cast off the faith and the hope and the endurance of a Christian man because they are so evil and have lived such an evil life. We speak of patience with bad men, but there is no man so bad, there is no man among all our enemies who has at all hurt us like that man who is within ourselves. And to bear patiently what we have brought upon ourselves,—to endure the inward shame, the self-reproof, the self-contempt bitterer to drink than blood, the lifelong injuries, impoverishment, and disgrace,—to bear all these patiently and uncomplainingly,—to acquiesce humbly in the discovery that all this was always in our hearts, and still is in our hearts—whathumility, what patience, what compassion and pity for ourselves must all that call forth! The wise nurse is patient with her passionate, greedy, untidy, disobedient child. She does not cast it out of doors, she does not run and leave it, she does not kill it because all these things have been and still are in its sad little heart. Her power for good with such a child lies just in her pity, in her compassion, and in her patience with her child. And the child that is in all of us is to be treated in the same patient, hopeful, believing, forgiving, divine way. We should all be with ourselves as God is with us. He knoweth our frame. He remembereth that we are dust. He shows all patience toward us. He does not look for great things from us. He does not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. He shall not fail nor be discouraged till He have set judgment in the earth. And so shall not we.

5. And, then,—it is a sufficiently startling thing to say, but—we must learn to be patient with God also. All our patience, and all the exercises of it, if we think aright about it, all run up in the long-run into patience with God. But there are some exercises of patience that have to do directly and immediately with God and with God alone. When any man’s heart has become fully alive to God and to the things of God; when he begins to see and feel that he lives and moves and has his being in God; then everything that in any way affects him is looked on by him as come to him from God. Absolutely, all things. The very weather that everybody is so atheistic about, the climate, the soil he labours, the rain, the winter’s cold and the summer’s heat,—true piety sees all these things as God’s things, and sees God’s immediate will in the disposition and dispensation of them all. He feels the untameableness of his tongue in the indecent talk that goes on everlastingly about the weather. All these things may be without God to other men, as they once were to him also, but you will find that the truly and the intelligently devout man no longer allows himself in such unbecoming speech. For, though he cannot trace God’s hand in all the changes of the seasons, in heat and cold, in sunshine and snow, yet he is as sure that God’s wisdom and will are there as that Scripture is true and the Scripture-taught heart. ‘Great is our Lord, and His understanding is infinite. Who covereth the heavens with clouds, and prepareth rain for the earth, and maketh the grass to grow upon the mountains. He giveth snow like wool; He scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes; He casteth forth His ice like morsels. Who can stand before his cold?’ Here is the patience

and the faith of the saints. Here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus Christ.

And, then, when through rain or frost or fire, when out of any terror by night or arrow that flieth by day, any calamity comes on the man who is thus pointed and practised in his patience, he is able with Job to say, ‘This is the Lord. What, shall we receive good at the hand of God and not also receive evil?’ By far the best thing I have ever read on this subject, and I have read it a thousand times since I first read it as a student, is Dr. Thomas Goodwin’sPatience and its Perfect Work. That noble treatise had its origin in the great fire of London in 1666. The learned President of Magdalen College lost the half of his library, five hundred pounds worth of the best books, in that terrible fire. And his son tells us he had often heard his father say that in the loss of his not-to-be-replaced books, God had struck him in a very sensible place. To lose his Augustine, and his Calvin, and his Musculus, and his Zanchius, and his Amesius, and his Suarez, and his Estius was a sore stroke to such a man. I loved my books too well, said the great preacher, and God rebuked me by this affliction. Let the students here read Goodwin’s costly treatise, and they will be the better prepared to meet such calamities as the burning of their manse and their library, as also to counsel and comfort their people when they shall lose their shops or their stockyards by fire.

‘Blind unbelief is sure to err,

And scan His work in vain;

God is His own interpreter,

And He will make it plain.’

And, then, in a multitude of New Testament scriptures, we are summoned to great exercise of patience with the God of our salvation, because it is His purpose and plan that we shall have to wait long for our salvation. God has not seen it good to carry us to heaven on the day of our conversion. He does not glorify us on the same day that He justifies us. We are appointed to salvation indeed, but it is also appointed us to wait long for it. This is not our rest. We are called to be pilgrims and strangers for a season with God upon the earth. We are told to endure to the end. It is to be through faith and patience that we, with our fathers, shall at last inherit the promises. Holiness is not a Jonah’s gourd. It does not come up in a night, and it does not perish in a night. Holiness is the Divine nature, and it takes a lifetime to make us partakers of it. But, then, if the time is long the thing is sure. Let us, then, with a holy and a submissive patience wait for it.

‘I saw moreover in my dream that Passion seemed to be much discontent, but Patience was very quiet. Then Christian asked, What is the reason of the discontent of Passion? The Interpreter answered, The governor of them would have him stay for his best things till the beginning of the next year; but he will have them all now. But Patience is willing to wait.’

Chapter 11

# 011. Simple, Sloth, and Presumption

XI SIMPLE, SLOTH, AND PRESUMPTION ‘Ye did run well, who did hinder you?’—Paul.

It startles us not a little to come suddenly upon three pilgrims fast asleep with fetters on their heels on the upward side of the Interpreter’s House, and even on the upward side of the cross and the sepulchre. We would have looked for those three miserable men somewhere in the City of Destruction or in the Town of Stupidity, or, at best, somewhere still outside of the wicket-gate. But John Bunyan did not lay down his Pilgrim’s Progress on any abstract theory, or on any easy and pleasant presupposition, of the Christian life. He constructed his so lifelike book out of his own experiences as a Christian man, as well as out of all he had learned as a Christian minister. And in nothing is Bunyan’s power of observation, deep insight, and firm hold of fact better seen than just in the way he names and places the various people of the pilgrimage. Long after he had been at the Cross of Christ himself, and had seen with his own eyes all the significant rooms in the Interpreter’s House, Bunyan had often to confess that the fetters of evil habit, unholy affection, and a hard heart were still firmly riveted on his own heels. And his pastoral work had led him to see only too well that he was not alone in the temptations and the dangers and the still-abiding bondage to sin that had so surprised himself after he was so far on in the Christian life. It was the greatest sorrow of his heart, he tells us in a powerful passage in his Grace Abounding, that so many of his spiritual children broke down and came short in the arduous and perilous way in which he had so hopefully started them. ‘If any of those who were awakened by my ministry did after that fall back, as sometimes too many did, I can truly say that their loss hath been more to me than if one of my own children, begotten of my body, had been going to its grave. I think, verily, I may speak it without an offence to the Lord, nothing hath gone so near me as that, unless it was the fear of the salvation of my own soul. I have counted as if I had goodly buildings and lordships in those places where my children were born; my heart has been so wrapped up in this excellent work that I counted myself more blessed and honoured of God by this than if He had made me the emperor of the Christian world, or the lord of all the glory of the earth without it.’ And I have no doubt that we have here the three things that above everything else bereft Bunyan of so many of his spiritual children personified and then laid down by the heels in Simple, Sloth, and Presumption.

SIMPLE

Let us shake up Simple first and ask him what it was that laid him so soon and in such a plight and in such company in this bottom. It was not that which from his name we might at first think it was. It was not the weakness of his intellects, nor his youth, nor his inexperience. There is danger enough, no doubt, in all these things if they are not carefully attended to, but none of all these things in themselves, nor all of them taken together, will lay any pilgrim by the heels. There must be more than mere and pure simplicity. No blame attaches to a simple mind, much less to an artless and an open heart. We do not blame such a man even when we pity him. We take him, if he will let us, under our care, or we put him under better care, but we do not anticipate any

immediate ill to him so long as he remains simple in mind, untainted in heart, and willing to learn. But, then, unless he is better watched over than any young man or young woman can well be in this world, that simplicity and child-likeness and inexperience of his may soon become a fatal snare to him. There is so much that is not simple and sincere in this world; there is so much falsehood and duplicity; there are so many men abroad whose endeavour is to waylay, mislead, entrap, and corrupt the simple-minded and the inexperienced, that it is next to impossible that any youth or maiden shall long remain in this world both simple and safe also. My son, says the Wise Man, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee. For at the window of my house I looked through my casement, and beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding;—and so on,—till a dart strike through his liver, and he goeth as an ox to the slaughter. And so, too often in our own land, the maiden in her simplicity also opens her ear to the promises and vows and oaths of the flatterer, till she loses both her simplicity and her soul, and lies buried in that same bottom beside Sloth and Presumption.

It is not so much his small mind and his weak understanding that is the fatal danger of their possessor, it is his imbecile way of treating his small mind. In our experience of him we cannot get him, all we can do, to read an instructive book. We cannot get him to attend our young men's class with all the baits and traps we can set for him. Where does he spend his Sabbath-day and week-day evenings? We cannot find out until we hear some distressing thing about him, that, ten to one, he would have escaped had he been a reader of good books, or a student with us, say, of Dante and Bunyan and Rutherford, and a companion of those young men and young women who talk about and follow such intellectual tastes and pursuits. Now, if you are such a young man or young woman as that, or such an old man or old woman, you will not be able to understand what in the world Bunyan can mean by saying that he saw you in his dream fast asleep in a bottom with irons on your heels. No; for to understand the Pilgrim's Progress, beyond a nursery and five-year-old understanding of it, you must have worked and studied and suffered your way out of your mental and spiritual imbecility. You must have for years attended to what is taught from the pulpit and the desk, and, alongside of that, you must have made a sobering and solemnising application of it all to your own heart. And then you would have seen and felt that the heels of your mind and of your heart are only too firmly fettered with the irons of ignorance and inexperience and self-complacency. But as it is, if you would tell the truth, you would say to us what Simple said to Christian, I see no danger. The next time that John Bunyan passed that bottom, the chains had been taken off the heels of this sleeping fool and had been put round his neck.

SLOTH

Sloth had a far better head than Simple had; but what of that when he made no better use of it? There are many able men who lie all their days in a sad bottom with the irons of indolence and inefficiency on their heels. We often envy them their abilities, and say about them, What might they not have done for themselves and for us had they only worked hard? Just as we are surprised to see other men away above us on the mountain top, not because they have better abilities than we have, but because they tore the fetters of sloth out of their soft flesh and set themselves down doggedly to their work. And the same sloth that starves and fetters the mind at the same time casts the conscience and the heart into a deep sleep. I often wonder as I go on working among you, if you ever attach any meaning or make any application to yourselves of all those commands and counsels of which the Scriptures are full,—to be up and doing, to watch and pray, to watch

and be sober, to fight the good fight of faith, to hold the fort, to rise early, and even by night, and to endure unto death, and never for one moment to be found off your guard. Do you attach any real meaning to these examples of the psalmists, to these continual commands and examples of Christ, and to these urgent counsels of his apostles? Do you? Against whom and against what do you thus campaign and fight? For fear of whom or of what do you thus watch? What fort do you hold? What occupies your thoughts in night-watches, and what inspires and compels your early prayers? It is your stupefying life of spiritual sloth that makes it impossible for you to answer these simple and superficial questions. Sloth is not the word for it. Let them give the right word to insanity like that who sleep and soak in sinful sloth no longer.

We have all enemies in our own souls that never sleep, whatever we may do. There are no irons on their heels. They never procrastinate. They never say to their master, A little more slumber. Now, could you name any hateful enemy entrenched in your own heart, of which you have of yourself said far more than that? And, if so, what have you done, what are you at this moment doing, to cast that enemy out? Have you any armour on, any weapons of offence and precision, against that enemy? And what success and what defeat have you had in unearthing and casting out that enemy? What fort do you hold? On what virtue, on what grace are you posted by your Lord to keep for yourself and for Him? And with what cost of meat and drink and sleep and amusement do you lose it or keep it for Him? Alexander used to leave his tent at midnight and go round the camp, and spear to his post the sentinel he found sleeping.

There is nothing we are all so slothful in as secret, particular, importunate prayer. We have an almighty instrument in our hand in secret and exact prayer if we would only importunately and perseveringly employ it. But there is an utterly unaccountable restraint of secret and particularising prayer in all of us. There is a soaking, stupefying sloth, that so fills our hearts that we forget and neglect the immense concession and privilege we have afforded us in secret prayer. Our sloth and stupidity in prayer is surely the last proof of our fall and of the misery of our fallen state. Our sloth with a gold mine open at our feet; a little more sleep on the top of a mast with a gulf under us that hath no bottom,—no language of this life can adequately describe the besottedness of that man who lies with irons on his heels between Simple and Presumption.

PRESUMPTION The greatest theologian of the Roman Catholic Church has made an induction and classification of sins that has often been borrowed by our Protestant and Puritan divines. His classification is made, as will be seen, on an ascending scale of guilt and aggravation. In the world of sin, he says, there are, first, sins of ignorance; next, there are sins of infirmity; and then, at the top, there are sins of presumption. And this, it will be remembered, was the Psalmist’s inventory and estimate of sins also. His last and his most earnest prayer was, that he might be kept back from all presumptuous sin. Now you know quite well, without any explanation, what presumption is. Don’t presume, you say, with rising and scarce controlled anger. Don’t presume too far. Take care, you say, with your heart beating so high that you can scarcely command it, take care lest you go too far. And the word of God feels and speaks about presumptuous sin very much as you do yourself. Now, what gave this third man who lay in fetters a little beyond the cross the name of Presumption was just this, that he had been at the cross with his past sin, and had left the cross to commit the same sin at the first opportunity. Presumption presumed upon his pardon. He presumed upon the abounding grace of God. He presumed upon the blood of Christ. He was so high on the Atonement, that he held that the gospel was not sufficiently preached to him, unless

not past sin only and present, but also all future sin was atoned for on the tree before it was committed. There is a reprobate in Dante, who, all the time he was repenting, had his eye on his next opportunity. Now, our Presumption was like that. He presumed on his youth, on his temptations, on his opportunities, and especially on his future reformation and the permanence and the freeness of the gospel offer. When he was in the Interpreter's House he did not hear what the Interpreter was saying, the blood was roaring so through his veins. His eyes were so full of other images that he did not see the man in the iron cage, nor the spider on the wall, nor the fire fed secretly. He had no more intention of keeping always to the way that was as straight as a rule could make it, than he had of cutting off both his hands and plucking out both his eyes. When the three shining ones stripped him of his rags and clothed him with change of raiment, he had no more intention of keeping his garments clean than he had of flying straight up to heaven on the spot. Now, let each man name to himself what that is in which he intentionally, deliberately, and by foresight and forethought sins. Have you named it? Well, it was for that that this reprobate was laid by the heels on the immediately hither side of the cross and the sepulchre. Not that the iron might not have been taken off his heels again on certain conditions, even after it was on; but, even so, he would never have been the same man again that he was before his presumptuous sin. You will easily know a man who has committed much presumptuous sin,—that is to say, if you have any eye for a sinner. I think I would find him out if I heard him pray once, or preach once, or even select a psalm for public or for family worship; even if I heard him say grace at a dinner-table, or reprove his son, or scold his servant. Presumptuous sin has so much of the venom and essence of sin in it that, forgiven or unforgiven, even a little of it never leaves the sinner as it found him. Even if his fetters are knocked off, there is always a piece of the poisonous iron left in his flesh; there is always a fang of his fetters left in the broken bone. The presumptuous saint will always be detected by the way he halts on his heels all his after days. Keep back Thy servant, O God, from presumptuous sin. Let him be innocent of the great transgression.

Dr. Thomas Goodwin says somewhere that the worm that dieth not only comes to its sharpest sting and to its deadliest venom when it is hatched up under gospel light. The very light of nature itself greatly aggravates some of our sins. The light of our early education greatly aggravates others of our sins. But nothing wounds our conscience and then exasperates the wound like a past experience of the same sin, and, especially, an experience of the grace of God in forgiving that sin. Had we found young Presumption in his irons before his conversion, we would have been afraid enough at the sight. Had we found him laid by the heels after his first uncleanness, it would have made us shudder for ourselves. But we are horrified and speechless as we see him apprehended and laid in irons on the very night of his first communion, and with the wine scarcely dry on his unclean lips. Augustine postponed his baptism till he should have his fill of sin, and till he should no longer return to sin like a dog to his vomit. Now, next Sabbath is our communion day in this congregation. Let us therefore this week examine ourselves. And if we must sin as long as we are in this world, let it henceforth be the sin of ignorance and of infirmity. So the three reprobates lay down to sleep again, and Christian as he left that bottom went on in the narrow way singing:

'O to grace how great a debtor

Daily I'm constrained to be

Let that grace, Lord, like a fetter,

Bind my wandering heart to Thee.’

Chapter 12

# 012. The Three Shining Ones at the Cross

XII THE THREE SHINING ONES AT THE CROSS ‘Salvation shall God appoint for walls.’—Isaiah.

John Bunyan’s autobiography, Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners, is the best of all our commentaries on The Pilgrim’s Progress, and again to-night I shall have to fall back on that incomparable book. ‘Now, I saw in my dream that the highway up which Christian was to go was fenced on either side with a wall, and that wall is called Salvation. Up this way, therefore, did burdened Christian run, but not without great difficulty, because of the load on his back.’ In the corresponding paragraph in Grace Abounding, our author says, speaking about himself: ‘But forasmuch as the passage was wonderful narrow, even so narrow that I could not but with great difficulty enter in thereat, it showed me that none could enter into life but those that were in downright earnest, and unless also they left this wicked world behind them; for here was only room for body and soul, but not for body and soul and sin.’ ‘He ran thus till he came to a place somewhat ascending, and upon that place stood a cross, and a little below in the bottom a sepulchre. So I saw in my dream, that just as Christian came up with this cross, his burden loosed from off his shoulders and fell from off his back, and began to tumble, and so continued to do till it came to the mouth of the sepulchre, where it fell in, and I saw it no more.’ Turning again to the Grace Abounding, we read in the 115th paragraph:‘I remember that one day as I was travelling into the country and musing on the wickedness and blasphemy of my heart, and considering of the enmity that was in me to God, that scripture came into my mind, He hath made peace by the blood of His Cross. By which I was made to see both again and again and again that day that God and my soul were friends by that blood: yea, I saw that the justice of God and my sinful soul could embrace and kiss each other through that blood. That was a good day to me; I hope I shall not forget it. I thought I could have spoken of His love and of His mercy to me that day to the very crows that sat upon the ploughed lands before me had they been capable to have understood me. Wherefore I said in my soul with much gladness, Well, I would I had a pen and ink here and I would write this down before I go any farther, for surely I will not forget this forty years hence.’ From all this we learn that the way to the Celestial City lies within high and close fencing walls. There is not room for many pilgrims to walk abreast in that way; indeed, there is seldom room for two. There are some parts of the way where two or even three pilgrims can for a time walk and converse together, but for the most part the path is distressingly lonely. The way is so fenced up also that a pilgrim cannot so much as look either to the right hand or the left. Indeed, it is one of the laws of that road that no man is to attempt to look except straight on before him. But then there is this compensation for the solitude and stringency of the way that the wall that so encloses it is Salvation. And Salvation is such a wall that it is companionship and prospect enough of itself. Dante saw a long reach of this same wall running round the bottom of the mount that cleanses him who climbs it,—a long stretch of such sculptured beauty, that it arrested him and instructed him and delighted him beyond his power sufficiently to praise it. And thus, that being so, burdened and bowed down to the earth as our pilgrim was, he was on the sure way, sooner or later, to deliverance. Somewhere and sometime and somehow on that steep and high fenced way deliverance was sure to come. And,

then, as to the burdened man himself. His name was once Graceless, but his name is Graceless no longer. No graceless man runs long between these close and cramping-up walls; and, especially, no graceless man has that burden long on his back. That is not Graceless any longer who is leaving the Interpreter's House for the fenced way; that is Christian, and as long as he remains Christian, the closeness of the fence and the weight of his burden are a small matter. But long-looked-for comes at last. And so, still carrying his burden and keeping close within the fenced-up way, our pilgrim came at last to a cross. And a perfect miracle immediately took place in that somewhat ascending ground. For scarcely had Christian set his eyes on the cross, when, without his pulling at it, or pushing it, or even at that moment thinking of it, ere ever he was aware, he saw his burden begin to tumble, and so it continued to do till it fell fairly out of his sight into an open sepulchre. The application of all that is surely self-evident. For our way in a holy life is always closely fenced up. It is far oftener a lonely way than otherwise. And the steepness, sternness, and loneliness of our way are all aggravated by the remembrance of our past sins and follies. They still, and more and more, lie upon our hearts a heart-crushing burden. But if we, like Christian, know how to keep our back to our former house and our face to heaven, sooner or later we too shall surely come to the cross. And then, either suddenly, or after a long agony, our burden also shall be taken off our back and shut down into Christ's sepulchre. And I saw it no more, says the dreamer. He does not say that its owner saw it no more. He was too wise and too true a dreamer to say that.

It will be remembered that the first time we saw this man, with whose progress to the Celestial City we are at present occupied, he was standing in a certain place clothed with rags and with a burden on his back. After a long journey with him, we have just seen his burden taken off his back, and it is only after his burden is off and a Shining One has said to him, Thy sins be forgiven, that a second Shining One comes and strips him of his rags and clothes him with change of raiment. Now, why, it may be asked, has Christian had to carry his burden so long, and why is he still kept so ragged and so miserable and he so far on in the pilgrim's path? Surely, it will be said, John Bunyan was dreaming indeed when he kept a truly converted man, a confessedly true and sincere Christian, so long in bonds and in rags. Well, as to his rags: filthy rags are only once spoken of in the Bible, and it is the prophet Isaiah, whose experience and whose language John Bunyan had so entirely by heart, who puts them on. And that evangelist among the prophets not only calls his own and Israel's sins filthy rags, but Isaiah is very bold, and calls their very righteousnesses by that opprobrious name. Had that bold prophet said that all his and all his people's unrighteousnesses were filthy rags, all Israel would have subscribed to that. There was no man so brutish as not to admit that. But as long as they had any sense of truth and any self-respect, multitudes of Isaiah's first hearers and readers would resent what he so rudely said of their righteousnesses. On the other hand, the prophet's terrible discovery and comparison, just like our dreamer's dramatic distribution of Christian experience, was, to a certainty, an immense consolation to many men in Israel in his day. They gathered round Isaiah because, but for him and his evangelical ministry, they would have been alone in their despair. To them Isaiah's ministry was a house of refuge, and the prophet himself a veritable tower of strength. They felt they were not alone so long as Isaiah dwelt in the same city with them. And thus, whatever he might be to others, he was God's very prophet to them as his daily prayers in the temple both cast them down and lifted them up. 'Oh that Thou wouldst rend the heavens and come down . . . But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and our iniquities like the wind

have taken us away.' Thousands in Israel found in these terrible words a door of hope, a sense of fellowship, and a call to trust and thanksgiving. And tens of thousands have found the same help and consolation out of what have seemed to others the very darkest and most perplexing pages of the Pilgrim's Progress and the Grace Abounding. 'It made me greatly ashamed,' says Hopeful, 'of the vileness of my former life, and confounded me with the sense of mine own ignorance, for there never came into mine heart before now that showed me so by contrast the beauty of the Lord Jesus. My own vileness and nakedness made me love a holy life. Yea, I thought that had I now a thousand gallons of blood in my body, I could spill it all for the sake of the Lord Jesus.' And if you, my brother, far on in the way of Salvation, still think sometimes that, after all, you must be a reprobate because of your filthy rags, read what David Brainerd wrote with his half-dead hand on the last page of his seraphic journal: 'How sweet it is to love God and to have a heart all for God! Yes; but a voice answered me, You are not all for God, you are not an angel. To which my whole soul replied, I as sincerely desire to love and glorify God as any angel in heaven. But you are filthy, and not fit for heaven. When hereupon there instantly appeared above me and spread over me the blessed robes of Christ's righteousness which I could not but exult and triumph in. And then I knew that I should be as active as an angel in heaven, and should then be for ever stripped of my filthy garments and clothed with spotless raiment.' Let me die the death of David Brainerd, and let my latter end be like his! The third Shining One then came forward and set a mark on the forehead of this happy man. And it was a most ancient and a most honourable mark. For it was the same redeeming mark that was set by Moses upon the foreheads of the children of Israel when the Lord took them into covenant with Himself at the Passover in the wilderness. It was the same distinguishing mark also that the man with the slaughter-weapon in his hand first set upon the foreheads of the men who sighed and cried for the abominations that were done in the midst of Jerusalem. And it was the same glorious mark that John saw in the foreheads of the hundred and forty and four thousand who stood upon Mount Zion and sang a song that no man knew but those men who had been redeemed from the earth by the blood of the Lamb. The mark was set for propriety and for ornament and for beauty. It was set upon his forehead so that all who looked on him ever after might thus know to what company and what country he belonged, and that this was not his rest, but that he had been called and chosen to a heavenly inheritance. And, besides, it was no sooner set upon his forehead than it greatly added to his dignity and his comeliness. He had now the gravity and beauty of an angel; nay, the beauty in his measure and the gravity of Goodwill at the gate himself. And, then, as if that were not enough, the third Shining One also gave him a roll with a seal upon it, which he was bidden look on as he ran, and which he was to give in when he arrived at the Celestial Gate. Now, what was that sealed roll but just the inward memory and record of all this pilgrim's experiences of the grace of God from the day he set out on pilgrimage down to that day when he stood unburdened of his guilt, unclothed of his rags, and clothed upon with change of raiment? The roll contained his own secret life, all sealed and shone in upon by the light of God's countenance. The secret of the Lord with this pilgrim was written within that roll, a secret that no man could read but he himself alone. It was the same roll that this same Shining One gave to Abraham, the first pilgrim and the father of all true pilgrims, after Melchizedek, the priest of the Most High God, had brought forth bread and wine and had blessed that great believer. 'Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.' And, again, after Abram had lost his roll, like our pilgrim in the arbour, when he recovered it he read thus in it: 'I am the Almighty God: walk before Me, and be thou perfect. And I will make My covenant between

Me and thee.' And Abram fell on his face for joy. It was the same roll out of which the Psalmist proposed to read a passage to all those in his day who feared God. 'Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul.' It was the same roll also that God sent to Israel in his sore captivity. 'Fear not, O Israel, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name, thou art Mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee.' The high priest Joshua also had the same roll put into his hand, and that not only for his own comfort, but to make him the comforter of God's afflicted people. For after the Lord had plucked Joshua as a brand out of the fire, and had made his iniquity to pass from him, and had clothed him with change of raiment, and had set a fair mitre on his head, the Lord gave to Joshua a sealed roll, the contents of which may be read to this day in the book of the prophet Zechariah. Nay, more: 'Will you have me to speak plainly?' says great Goodwin on this matter. 'Then, though our Lord had the assurance of faith that He was the Son of God, for He knew it out of the Scriptures by reading all the prophets, yet, to have it sealed to Him with joy unspeakable and glorious,—this was deferred to the time of His baptism. He was then anointed with the oil of assurance and gladness in a more peculiar and transcendent manner.' 'In His baptism,'says Bengel, 'our Lord was magnificently enlightened. He was previously the Son of God, and yet the power of the Divine testimony to His Sonship at His baptism long affected Him in a lively manner.' And we see our Lord reading His roll to assure and sustain His heart when all outward acceptance and sustenance failed Him. 'There is One who beareth witness of Me, and His witness is true. I receive not witness from men. I have a greater witness than even that of John. For the Father Himself that hath sent Me, He beareth witness of Me.' No wonder that our heavy-laden pilgrim of yesterday gave three leaps for joy and went on singing with such a roll as that in his bosom. For, at that supreme moment he had that inward illumination and assurance sealed on his heart that had so gladdened and sustained so many prophets and psalmists and apostles and saints before his day. And though, like Abraham and all the other saints who ever had that noble roll put into their keeping, except Jesus Christ, he often lost it, yet as often as he again recovered it, it brought back again with it all his first joy and gladness.

But, as was said at the beginning, the Grace Abounding is the best of all our commentaries on The Pilgrim's Progress. As thus here also: 'Now had I an evidence, as I thought, of my salvation from heaven, with many golden seals thereon, all hanging in my sight. Now could I remember this manifestation and that other discovery of grace with comfort, and should often long and desire that the last day were come, that I might be for ever inflamed with the sight and joy of Him and communion with Him whose head was crowned with thorns, whose face was spit on, and body broken, and soul made an offering for my sins. For whereas, before, I lay continually trembling at the mouth of hell, now, methought, I was got so far therefrom that I could not, when I looked back, scarce discern it. And oh! thought I, that I were fourscore years old now, that I might die quickly, that my soul might be gone to rest.'

Then Christian gave three leaps for joy and went on singing:

'Thus far did I come laden with my sin,

Nor could ought ease the grief that I was in

Till I came hither: . . .

Blest Cross! blest Sepulchre! blest rather be

The Man that there was put to shame for me.’

# 013. Formalist and Hypocrisy

XIII FORMALIST AND HYPOCRISY ‘A form of godliness.’—Paul.

We all began our religious life by being formalists. And we were not altogether to blame for that. Our parents were first to blame for that, and then our teachers, and then our ministers. They made us say our psalm and our catechism to them, and if we only said our sacred lesson without stumbling, we were straightway rewarded with their highest praise. They seldom took the trouble to make us understand the things we said to them. They were more than content with our correct repetition of the words. We were never taught either to read or repeat with our eyes on the object. And we had come to our manhood before we knew how to seek for the visual image that lies at the root of all our words. And thus the ill-taught schoolboy became in us the father of the confirmed formalist. The mischief of this neglect still spreads through the whole of our life, but it is absolutely disastrous in our religious life. Look at the religious formalist at family worship with his household gathered round him all in his own image. He would not on any account let his family break up any night without the habitual duty. He has a severe method in his religious duties that nothing is ever allowed to disarrange or in any way to interfere with. As the hour strikes, the big Bible is brought out. He opens where he left off last night, he reads the regulation chapter, he leads the singing in the regulation psalm, and then, as from a book, he repeats his regulation prayer. But he never says a word to show that he either sees or feels what he reads, and his household break up without an idea in their heads or an affection in their hearts. He comes to church and goes through public worship in the same wooden way, and he sits through the Lord’s Table in the same formal and ceremonious manner. He has eyes of glass and hands of wood, and a heart without either blood or motion in it. His mind and his heart were destroyed in his youth, and all his religion is a religion of rites and ceremonies without sense or substance. ‘Because I knew no better,’ says Bunyan, ‘I fell in very eagerly with the religion of the times: to wit, to go to church twice a day, and that, too, with the foremost. And there should I sing and say as others did. Withal, I was so overrun with the spirit of superstition that I adored, and that with great devotion, even all things, both the high place, priest, clerk, vestment, service, and what else belonged to the church: counting all things holy that were therein contained. But all this time I was not sensible of the danger and evil of sin. I was kept from considering that sin would damn me, what religion soever I followed, unless I was found in Christ. Nay, I never thought of Christ, nor whether there was one or no.’ A formalist is not yet a hypocrite exactly, but he is ready now and well on the way at any moment to become a hypocrite. As soon now as some temptation shall come to him to make appear another and a better man than he really is: when in some way it becomes his advantage to seem to other people to be a spiritual man: when he thinks he sees his way to some profit or praise by saying things and doing things that are not true and natural to him,—then he will pass on from being a bare and simple formalist, and will henceforth become a hypocrite. He has never had any real possession or experience of spiritual things amid all his formal observances of religious duties, and he has little or no difficulty, therefore, in adding another formality or two to his former life of unreality. And thus the transition is easily made from a comparatively innocent and unconscious formalist to a

conscious and studied hypocrite. ‘An hypocrite,’ says Samuel Rutherford, ‘is he who on the stage represents a king when he is none, a beggar, an old man, a husband, when he is really no such thing. To the Hebrews, they were faciales, face-men; colorati, dyed men, red men, birds of many colours. You may paint a man, you may paint a rose, you may paint a fire burning, but you cannot paint a soul, or the smell of a rose, or the heat of a fire. And it is hard to counterfeit spiritual graces, such as love to Christ, sincere intending of the glory of God, and such like spiritual things.’ Yes, indeed; it is hard to put on and to go through with a truly spiritual grace even to the best and most spiritually-minded of men; and as for the true hypocrite, he never honestly attempts it. If he ever did honestly and resolutely attempt it, he would at once in that pass out of the ranks of the hypocrites altogether and pass over into a very different category. Bunyan lets us see how a formalist and a hypocrite and a Christian all respectively do when they come to a real difficulty. The three pilgrims were all walking in the same path, and with their faces for the time in the same direction. They had not held much conference together since their first conversation, and as time goes on, Christian has no more talk but with himself, and that sometimes sighingly, and sometimes more comfortably. When, all at once, the three men come on the hill Difficulty. A severe act of self-denial has to be done at this point of their pilgrimage. A proud heart has to be humbled to the dust. A second, a third, a tenth place has to be taken in the praise of men. An outbreak of anger and wrath has to be kept under for hours and days. A great injury, a scandalous case of ingratitude, has to be forgiven and forgotten; in short, as Rutherford says, an impossible-to-be-counterfeited spiritual grace has to be put into its severest and sorest exercise; and the result was—what we know. Our pilgrim went and drank of the spring that always runs at the bottom of the hill Difficulty, and thus refreshed himself against that hill; while Formalist took the one low road, and Hypocrisy the other, which led him into a wide field full of dark mountains, where he stumbled and fell and rose no more. When, after his visit to the spring, Christian began to go up the hill, saying:

‘This hill, though high, I covet to ascend;

The difficulty will not me offend;

For I perceive the way to life lies here;

Come, pluck up heart; let’s neither faint nor fear;

Better, though difficult, the right way to go,

Than wrong, though easy, where the end is woe.’

Now, all this brings us to the last step in the evolution of a perfect hypocrite out of a simple formalist. The perfect and finished hypocrite is not your commonplace and vulgar scoundrel of the playwright and the penny-novelist type; the finest hypocrite is a character their art cannot touch. ‘The worst of hypocrites,’ Rutherford goes on to say, ‘is he who whitens himself till he deceives himself. It is strange that a man hath such power over himself. But a man’s heart may deceive his heart, and he may persuade himself that he is godly and righteous when he knows nothing about it.’ ‘Preaching in a certain place,’ says Boston, ‘after supper the mistress of the house told me how I had terrified God’s people. This was by my doctrine of self-love, self-righteousness, self-ends, and such like. She restricted hypocrites to that sort that do all things to be seen of men, and harped much on this—how can one be a hypocrite who hates hypocrisy in other people? how can

one be a hypocrite and not know it? All this led me to see the need of such doctrine.' And if only to show you that this is not the dismal doctrine of antediluvian Presbyterians only, Canon Mozley says: 'The Pharisee did not know that he was a Pharisee; if he had known it he would not have been a Pharisee. He does not know that he is a hypocrite. The vulgar hypocrite knows that he is a hypocrite because he deceives others, but the true Scripture hypocrite deceives himself.' And the most subtle teacher of our century, or of any century, has said: 'What is a hypocrite? We are apt to understand by a hypocrite one who makes a profession of religion for secret ends without practising what he professes; who is malevolent, covetous, or profligate, while he assumes an outward sanctity in his words and conduct, and who does so deliberately, deceiving others, and not at all self-deceived. But this is not what our Saviour seems to have meant by a hypocrite; nor were the Pharisees such. The Pharisees deceived themselves as well as others. Indeed, it is not in human nature to deceive others for any long time without in a measure deceiving ourselves also. When they began, each in his turn, to deceive the people, they were not at the moment self-deceived. But by degrees they forgot that outward ceremonies avail nothing without inward purity. They did not know themselves, and they unawares deceived themselves as well as the people.' What a terrible light, as of the last day itself, does all that cast upon the formalisms and the hypocrisies of which our own religious life is full! And what a terrible light it casts on those miserable men who are complete and finished in their self-deception! For the complete and finished hypocrite is not he who thinks that he is better than all other men; that is hopeless enough; but the paragon of hypocrisy is he who does not know that he is worse than all other men. And in his stone-blindness to himself, and consequently to all reality and inwardness and spirituality in religion, you see him intensely interested in, and day and night occupied with, the outside things of religion, till nothing short of a miracle will open his eyes. See him in the ministry, for instance, sweating at his sermons and in his visiting, till you would almost think that he is the minister of whom Paul prophesied, who should spend and be spent for the salvation of men's souls. But all the time, such is the hypocrisy that haunts the ministerial calling, he is really and at bottom animated with ambition for the praise of men only, and for the increase of his congregation. See him, again, now assailing or now defending a church's secular privileges, and he knowing no more, all the time, what a church has been set up for on earth than the man in the moon. What a penalty his defence is and his support to a church of Christ, and what an incubus his membership must be! Or, see him, again, making long speeches and many prayers for the extension of the kingdom of Christ, and all the time spending ten times more on wine or whisky or tobacco, or on books or pictures or foreign travel, than he gives to the cause of home or foreign missions. And so on, all through our hypocritical and self-blinded life. Through such stages, and to such a finish, does the formalist pass from his thoughtless and neglected youth to his hardened, blinded, self-seeking life, spent in the ostensible service of the church of Christ. If the light that is in such men be darkness, how great is that darkness! We may all well shudder as we hear our Lord saying to ministers and members and church defenders and church supporters, like ourselves: 'Now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.'

Now, the first step to the cure of all such hypocrisy, and to the salvation of our souls, is to know that we are hypocrites, and to know also what that is in which we are most hypocritical. Well, there are two absolutely infallible tests of a true hypocrite,—tests warranted to unmask, expose, and condemn the most finished, refined, and even evangelical hypocrite in this house to-night, or in all the world. By far and away the best and swiftest is prayer. True prayer, that is. For here again our

inexpugnable hypocrisy comes in and leads us down to perdition even in our prayers. There is nothing our Lord more bitterly and more contemptuously assails the Pharisees for than just the length, the loudness, the number, and the publicity of their prayers. The truth is, public prayer, for the most part, is no true prayer at all. It is at best an open homage paid to secret prayer. We make such shipwrecks of devotion in public prayer, that if we have a shred of true religion about us, we are glad to get home and to shut our door. We preach in our public prayers. We make speeches on public men and on public events in our public prayers. We see the reporters all the time in our public prayers. We do everything but pray in our public prayers. And to get away alone,—what an escape that is from the temptations and defeats of public prayer! No; public prayer is no test whatever of a hypocrite. A hypocrite revels in public prayer. It is secret prayer that finds him out. And even secret prayer will sometimes deceive us. We are crushed down on our secret knees sometimes, by sheer shame and the strength of conscience. Fear of exposure, fear of death and hell, will sometimes make us shut our door. A flood of passing feeling will sometimes make us pray for a season in secret. Job had all that before him when he said, 'Will the hypocrite delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?' No, he will not. And it is just here that the hypocrite and the true Christian best discover themselves both to God and to themselves. The true Christian will, as Job again says, pray in secret till God slays him. He will pray in his dreams; he will pray till death; he will pray after he is dead. Are you in earnest, then, not to be any more a hypocrite and to know the infallible marks of such? Ask the key of your closet door. Ask the chair at your bedside. Ask the watchman what you were doing and why your light was in so long. Ask the birds of the air and the beasts of the field and the crows on the ploughed lands after your solitary walk.

Almost a better test of true and false religion than even secret prayer, but a test that is far more difficult to handle, is our opinion of ourselves. In His last analysis of the truly justified man and the truly reprobate, our Lord made the deepest test to be their opinion of themselves. 'God, I thank Thee that I am not as this publican,' said the hypocrite. 'God be merciful to me a sinner,' said the true penitent. And then this fine principle comes in here—not only to speed the sure sanctification of a true Christian, but also, if he has skill and courage to use it, for his assurance and comfort,—that the saintlier he becomes and the riper for glory, the more he will beat his breast over what yet abides within his breast. Yes; a man's secret opinion of himself is almost a better test of his true spiritual state than even secret prayer. But, then, these two are not competing and exclusive tests; they always go together and are never found apart. And at the mouth of these two witnesses every true hypocrite shall be condemned and every true Christian justified.

Dr. Pusey says somewhere that the perfect hypocrite is the man who has the truth of God in his mind, but is without the love of God in his heart. 'Truth without love,' says that saintly scholar, 'makes a finished Pharisee.' Now we Scottish and Free Church people believe we have the truth, if any people on the face of the earth have it; and if we have not love mixed with it, you see where and what we are. We are called to display a banner because of the truth, but let love always be our flag-staff. Let us be jealous for the truth, but let it be a godly, that is to say, a loving jealousy. When we contend for purity of doctrine and for purity of worship, when we protest against popery and priestcraft, when we resist rationalism and infidelity, when we do battle now for national religion, as we call it, and now for the freedom of the church, let us do it all in love to all men, else we had better not do it at all. If we cannot do it with clean and all-men-loving hearts, let us leave all debate and contention to stronger and better men than we are. The truth will never be advanced or

guarded by us, nor will the Lord of truth and love accept our service or bless our souls, till we put on the divine nature, and have our hearts and our mouths still more full of love than our minds and our mouths are full of truth. Let us watch ourselves, lest with all our so-called love of truth we be found reprobates at last because we loved the truth for some selfish or party end, and hated and despised our brother, and believed all evil and disbelieved all good concerning our brother. Truth without love makes a hypocrite, says Dr. Pusey; and evangelical truth without evangelical love makes an evangelical hypocrite, says Thomas Shepard. Only where the whole truth is united to a heart full of love have we the perfect New Testament Christian.

# 014. Timorous and Mistrust

XIV TIMOROUS AND MISTRUST ‘There is a lion in the way.’—The Slothful Man.

‘I must venture.’—Christian.

‘I at any rate must venture,’ said Christian to Timorous and Mistrust. ‘Whatever you may do I must venture, even if the lions you speak of should pull me to pieces. I, for one, shall never go back. To go back is nothing but death; to go forward is fear of death and everlasting life beyond it. I will yet go forward.’ So Mistrust and Timorous ran down the hill, and Christian went on his way. George Offor says, in his notes on this passage, that civil despotism and ecclesiastical tyranny so terrified many young converts in John Bunyan’s day, that multitudes turned back like Mistrust and Timorous; while at the same time, many like Bunyan himself went forward and for a time fell into the lion’s mouth. Civil despotism and ecclesiastical tyranny do not stand in our way as they stood in Bunyan’s way—at least, not in the same shape: but every age has its own lions, and every Christian man has his own lions that neither civil despots nor ecclesiastical tyrants know anything about.

Now, who or what is the lion in your way? Who or what is it that fills you with such timorousness and mistrust, that you are almost turning back from the way to life altogether? The fiercest of all our lions is our own sin. When a man’s own sin not only finds him out and comes roaring after him, but when it dashes past him and gets into the woods and thickets before him, and stands pawing and foaming on the side of his way, that is a trial of faith and love and trust indeed. Sometimes a man’s past sins will fill all his future life with sleepless apprehensions. He is never sure at what turn in his upward way he may not suddenly run against some of them standing ready to rush out upon him. And it needs no little quiet trust and humble-minded resignation to carry a man through this slough and that bottom, up this hill and down that valley, all the time with his life in his hand; and yet at every turn, at every rumour that there are lions in the way, to say, Come lion, come lamb, come death, come life, I must venture, I will yet go forward. As Job also, that wonderful saint of God, said, ‘Hold your peace, let me alone that I may speak, and let come on me what will. Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth and put my life in my hand? Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him. He also shall be my salvation; for an hypocrite shall not come before Him.’

One false step, one stumble in life, one error in judgment, one outbreak of an unbridled temperament, one small sin, if it is even so much as a sin, of ignorance or of infirmity, will sometimes not only greatly injure us at the time, but, in some cases, will fill all our future life with trials and difficulties and dangers. Many of us shall have all our days to face a future of defeat, humiliation, impoverishment, and many hardships, that has not come on us on account of any presumptuous transgression of God’s law so much as simply out of some combination of unfortunate circumstances in which we may have only done our duty, but have not done it in the most serpent-like way. And when we are made to suffer unjustly or disproportionately all our days for our error of judgment or our want of the wisdom of this world, or what not, we are sorely tempted to be bitter and proud and resentful and unforgiving, and to go back from duty and

endurance and danger altogether. But we must not. We must rather say to ourselves, Now and here, if not in the past, I must play the man, and, by God's help, the wise man. I must pluck safety henceforth out of the heart of the nettle danger. Yes, I made a mistake. I did what I would not do now, and I must not be too proud to say so. I acted, I see now, precipitately, inconsiderately, imprudently. And I must not gloom and rebel and run away from the cross and the lion. I must not insist or expect that the always wise and prudent man's reward is to come to me. The lion in my way is a lion of my own rearing; and I must not turn my back on him, even if he should be let loose to leap on me and rend me. I must pass under his paw and through his teeth, if need be, to a life with him and beyond him of humility and duty and quiet-hearted submission to his God and mine.

Then, again, our salvation itself sometimes, our true sanctification, puts on a lion's skin and not unsuccessfully imitates an angry lion's roar. Some saving grace that up till now we have been fatally lacking in lies under the very lip of that lion we see standing straight in our way. God in His wisdom so orders our salvation, that we must work out the best part of it with fear and trembling. Right before us, just beside us, standing over us with his heavy paw upon us, is a lion, from under whose paw and from between whose teeth we must pluck and put on that grace in which our salvation lies. Repentance and reformation lie in the way of that lion; resignation also and humility; the crucifixion of our own will; the sacrifice of our own heart; in short, everything that is still lacking but is indispensable to our salvation lies through that den of lions. One man here is homeless and loveless; another is childless; another has a home and children, and much envies the man who has neither; one has talents there is no scope for; another has the scope, but not the sufficient talent; another must now spend all his remaining life in a place where he sees that anger and envy and jealousy and malevolence will be his roaring lions daily seeking to devour his soul. There is not a Christian man or woman in this house whose salvation, worth being called a salvation, does not lie through such a lion's thicket as that. Our Lord Himself was a roaring lion to John the Baptist. For the Baptist's salvation lay not in his powerful preaching, but in his being laid aside from all preaching; not in his crowds increasing, but in his Successor's crowds increasing and his decreasing. The Baptist was the greatest born of woman in that day, not because he was a thundering preacher—any ordinary mother in Israel might have been his mother in that: but to decrease sweetly and to steal down quietly to perfect humility and self-oblivion,—that salvation was reserved for the son of Elisabeth alone. I would not like to say Who that is champing and pawing for your blood right in your present way. Reverence will not let me say Who it is. Only, you venture on Him.

'Yes, I shall venture!' said Christian to the two terrified and retreating men. Now, every true venture is made against risk and uncertainty, against anxiety and danger and fear. And it is just this that constitutes the nobleness and blessedness of faith. Faith sells all for Christ. Faith risks all for eternal life. Faith faces all for salvation. When it is at the worst, faith still says, Very well; even if there is no Celestial City anywhere in the world, it is better to die still seeking it than to live on in the City of Destruction. Even if there is no Jesus Christ,—I have read about Him and heard about Him and pictured Him to myself, till, say what you will, I shall die kissing and embracing that Divine Image I have in my heart. Even if there is neither mercy-seat nor intercession in heaven, I shall henceforth pray without ceasing. Far far better for me all the rest of my sinful life to be clothed with sackcloth and ashes, even if there is no fountain opened in Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness, and no change of raiment. Christian protested that, as for him, lions and all, he had no choice left.

And no more have we. He must away somewhere, anywhere, from his past life. And so must we. If all the lions that ever drank blood are to collect upon his way, let them do so; they shall not all make him turn back. Why should they? What is a whole forest full of lions to a heart and a life full of sin? Lions are like lambs compared with sin. ‘Good morning! I for one must venture. I shall yet go forward.’ So Mistrust and Timorous ran down the hill, and Christian went on his way. So I saw in my dream that he made haste and went forward, that if possible he might get lodging in the house called Beautiful that stood by the highway side. Now, before he had gone far he entered into a very narrow passage which was about a furlong off from the porter’s lodge, and looking very narrowly before him as he went, he espied two lions in the way. Then was he afraid, and thought also to go back, for he thought that nothing but death was before him. But the porter at the lodge, whose name was Watchful, perceiving that Christian made a halt, as if he would go back, cried unto him, saying, ‘Is thy strength so small? Fear not the lions, for they are chained, and are only placed there for the trial of faith where it is, and for the discovery of those who have none. Keep the midst of the path and no hurt shall come to thee.’ Yes, that is all we have to do. Whatever our past life may have been, whatever our past sins, past errors of judgment, past mistakes and mishaps, whatever of punishment or chastisement or correction or instruction or sanctification and growth in grace may be under those lions’ skins and between their teeth for us, all we have got to do at present is to leave the lions to Him who set them there, and to go on, up to them and past them, keeping always to the midst of the path. The lions may roar at us till they have roared us deaf and blind, but we are far safer in the midst of that path than we would be in our own bed. Only let us keep in the midst of the path. When their breath is hot and full of blood on our cheek; when they paw up the blinding earth; when we feel as if their teeth had closed round our heart,—still, all the more, let us keep in the midst of the path. We must sometimes walk on a razor-edge of fear and straightforwardness; that is the only way left for us now. But, then, we have the Divine assurance that on that perilous edge no hurt shall come to us. ‘Temptations,’says our author in another place, ‘when we meet them at first, are as the lion that roared upon Samson; but if we overcome them, the next time we see them we shall find a nest of honey in them.’ O God, for grace and sense and imagination to see and understand and apply all that to our own daily life! O to be able to take all that home to-night and see it all there; lions and runaways, venturesome souls, narrow paths, palaces of beauty, everlasting life and all! Open Thou our eyes that we may see the wonderful things that await us in our own house at home!

‘Things out of hope are compassed oft with venturing.’ So they are; and so they were that day with our terrified pilgrim. He made a venture at the supreme moment of his danger, and things that were quite out of all hope but an hour before were then compassed and ever after possessed by him. Make the same venture, then, yourselves to-night. Naught venture, naught have. Your lost soul is not much to venture, but it is all that Christ at this moment asks of you—that you leave your lost soul in His hand, and then go straight on from this moment in the middle of the path: the path, that is, as your case may be, of purity, humility, submission, resignation, and self-denial. Keep your mind and your heart, your eyes and your feet, in the very middle of that path, and you shall have compassed the House Beautiful before you know. The lions shall soon be behind you, and the grave and graceful damsels of the House—Discretion and Prudence and Piety and Charity—shall all be waiting upon you.

# 015. Prudence

XV

PRUDENCE ‘Let a man examine himself.’—Paul.

Let a man examine himself, says the apostle to the Corinthians, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. And thus it was, that before the pilgrim was invited to sit down at the supper table in the House Beautiful, quite a number of most pointed and penetrating questions were put to him by those who had charge of that house and its supper table. And thus the time was excellently improved till the table was spread, while the short delay and the successive exercises whetted to an extraordinary sharpness the pilgrim’s hunger for the supper. Piety and Charity, who had joint charge of the house from the Master of the house, held each a characteristic conversation with Christian, but it was left to Prudence to hold the most particular discourse with him until supper was ready, and it is to that so particular discourse that I much wish to turn your attention to-night. With great tenderness, but at the same time with the greatest possible gravity, Prudence asked the pilgrim whether he did not still think sometimes of the country from whence he had come out. Yes, he replied; how could I help thinking continually of that unhappy country and of my sad and miserable life in it; but, believe me,—or, rather, you cannot believe me,—with what shame and detestation I always think of my past life. My face burns as I now speak of my past life to you, and as I think what my old companions know and must often say about me. I detest, as you cannot possibly understand, every remembrance of my past life, and I hate and never can forgive myself, who, with mine own hands, so filled all my past life with shame and self-contempt. Gently stopping the remorseful pilgrim’s self-accusations about his past life, Prudence asked him if he had not still with him, and, indeed, within him, some of the very things that had so destroyed both him and all his past life. ‘Yes,’ he honestly and humbly said. ‘Yes, but greatly against my will: especially my inward and sinful cogitations.’ At this Prudence looked on him with all her deep and soft eyes, for it was to this that she had been leading the conversation up all the time. Prudence had a great look of satisfaction, mingled with love and pity, at the way the pilgrim said ‘especially my inward and sinful cogitations.’ Those who stood by and observed Prudence wondered at her delight in the sad discourse on which the pilgrim now entered. But she had her own reasons for her delight in this particular kind of discourse, and it was seldom that she lighted on a pilgrim who both understood her questions and responded to them as did this man now sitting beside her. Now, my brethren, all parable apart, is that your religious experience? Are you full of shame and detestation at your inward cogitations? Are you tormented, enslaved, and downright cursed with your own evil thoughts? I do not ask whether or no you have such thoughts always within you. I do not ask, because I know. But I ask, because I would like to make sure that you know what, and the true nature of what, goes on incessantly in your mind and in your heart. Do you, or do you not, spit out your most inward thoughts ten times a day like poison? If you do, you are a truly religious man, and if you do not, you do not yet know the very ABC of true religion, and your dog has a better errand at the Lord’s table than you have. And if your minister lets you sit down at the Lord’s table without holding from time to time some particular discourse with you about your sinful thoughts, he

is deceiving and misleading you, besides laying up for himself an awakening at last to shame and everlasting contempt. What a mill-stone his communion roll will be round such a minister's neck! And how his congregation will gnash their teeth at him when they see to what his miserable ministry has brought them!

Let a man examine himself, said Paul. What about your inward and sinful cogitations? asked Prudence. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee? demanded the bold prophet. Now, my brethren, what have you to say to that particular accusation? Do you know what vain thoughts are? Are you at all aware what multitudes of such thoughts lodge within you? Do they drive you every day to your knees, and do you blush with shame when you are alone before God at the fountain of folly that fills your mind and your heart continually? The Apostle speaks of vain hopes that make us ashamed that we ever entertained them. You have been often so ashamed, and yet do not such hopes still too easily arise in your heart? What castles of idiotic folly you still build! Were a sane man or a modest woman even to dream such dreams of folly overnight, they would blush and hide their heads all day at the thought. Out of a word, out of a look, out of what was neither a word nor a look intended for you, what a world of vanity will you build out of it! The question of Prudence is not whether or no you are still a born fool at heart, she does not put unnecessary questions: hers to you is the more pertinent and particular question, whether, since you left your former life and became a Christian, you feel every day increasing shame and detestation at yourself, on account of the vanity of your inward cogitations. My brethren, can you satisfy her who is set by her Master to hold particular discourse with all true Christians before supper? Can you say with the Psalmist,—could you tell Prudence where the Psalmist says,—I hate vain thoughts, but Thy law do I love? And can you silence her by telling her that her Master alone knows with what shame you think that He has such a fool as you are among His people?

Anger, also, sudden and even long-entertained anger, was one of the'many failings' of which Christian was so conscious to himself. His outbursts of anger at home, he bitterly felt, might well be one of the causes why his wife and children did not accompany him on his pilgrimage. And though he knew his failing in this respect, and was very wary of it, yet he often failed even when he was most wary. Now, while anger is largely a result of our blood and temperament, yet few of us are so well-balanced and equable in our temperament and so pure and cool in our blood, as altogether to escape frequent outbursts of anger. The most happily constituted and the best governed of us have too much cause to be ashamed and penitent both before God and our neighbours for our outbursts of angry passion. But Prudence is so particular in her discourse before supper, that she goes far deeper into our anger than our wives and our children, our servants and our neighbours, can go. She not only asks if we stamp out the rising anger of our heart as we would stamp out sparks of fire in a house full of gunpowder; but she insists on being told what we think of ourselves when the house of our heart is still so full of such fire and such gunpowder. Any man, to call a man, would be humbled in his own eyes and in his walk before his house at home after an explosion of anger among them; but he who would satisfy Prudence and sit beside her at supper, must not only never let his anger kindle, but the simple secret heat of it, that fire of hell that is hid from all men but himself in the flint of his own hard and proud heart,—what, asks Prudence, do you think of that, and of yourself on account of that? Does that keep you not only watchful and prayerful, but, what is the best ground in you of all true watchfulness and prayerfulness, full of secret shame, self-fear, and self-detestation? One

forenoon table would easily hold all our communicants if Prudence had the distribution of the tokens.

And, then, we who are true pilgrims, are of all men the most miserable, on account of that ‘failing,’ that rankling sting in our hearts, when any of our friends has more of this world’s possessions, honours, and praises than we have, that pain at our neighbour’s pleasure, that sickness at his health, that hunger for what we see him eat, that thirst for what we see him drink, that imprisonment of our spirits when we see him set at liberty, that depression at his exaltation, that sorrow at his joy, and joy at his sorrow, that evil heart that would have all things to itself. Yes, said Christian, I am only too conversant with all these sinful cogitations, but they are all greatly against my will, and might I but choose mine own thoughts, do you suppose that I would ever think these things any more? ‘The cause is in my will,’ said Cæsar, on a great occasion. But the true Christian, unhappily, cannot say that. If he could say that, he would soon say also that the snare is broken and that his soul has escaped. And then the cause of all his evil cogitations, his vain thoughts, his angry feelings, his envious feelings, his ineradicable covetousness, his hell-rooted and heaven-towering pride, and his whole evil heart of unbelief would soon be at an end. ‘I cannot be free of sin,’ said Thomas Boston, ‘but God knows that He would be welcome to make havoc of my lusts to-night and to make me henceforth a holy man. I know no lust that I would not be content to part with. My will bound hand and foot I desire to lay at His feet.’ Yes: such is the mystery and depth of sin in the hearts of all God’s saints, that far deeper than their will, far back behind their will, the whole substance and very core of their hearts is wholly corrupt and enslaved to sin. And thus it is that while their renewed and delivered will works out, so far, their salvation in their walk and conversation among men, the helplessness of their will in the cleansing and the keeping of their hearts is to the end the sorrow and the mystery of their sanctification. To will was present with Paul, and with Bunyan, and with Boston; but their heart—they could not with all their keeping keep their heart. No man can; no man who has at all tried it can. ‘Might I but choose mine own thoughts, I would choose never to think of these things more: but when I would be doing of that which is best, that which is worst is with me.’ We can choose almost all things. Our will and choice have almost all things at their disposal. We can choose our God. We can choose life or death. We can choose heaven or hell. We can choose our church, our minister, our books, our companions, our words, our works, and, to some extent, our inward thoughts, but only to some extent. We can encourage this or that thought; we can entertain it and dwell upon it; or we can detect it, detest it, and cast it out. But that secret place in our heart where our thoughts hide and harbour, and out of which they spring so suddenly upon the mind and the heart, the imagination and the conscience,—of that secretest of all secret places, God alone is able to say, I search the heart. ‘As for secret thoughts,’ says our author, speaking of his own former religious life, ‘I took no notice of them, neither did I understand what Satan’s temptations were, nor how they were to be withstood and resisted.’ But now all these things are his deepest grief, as they are ours,—as many of us as have been truly turned in our deepest hearts to God.

‘But,’ replied Prudence, ‘do you not find sometimes as if those things were vanquished which at other times are your perplexity?’ ‘Yes, but that is but seldom; but they are to me golden hours in which such things happen to me.’ ‘Can you remember by what means you find your annoyances at times as if they were vanquished?’ ‘Yes, when I think what I saw at the cross, that will do it; and when I look upon my broidered coat, that will do it; also, when I look into the roll that I carry in my

bosom, that will do it; and when my thoughts wax warm about whither I am going, that will do it.' Yes; and these same things have many a time done it to ourselves also. We also, my brethren—let me tell you your own undeniable experience—we also have such golden hours sometimes, when we feel as if we should never again have such an evil heart within us. The Cross of Christ to us also has done it. It is of such golden hours that Isaac Watts sings in his noble hymn:

'When I survey the wondrous Cross;' and as often as we sing that hymn with our eyes upon the object, that will for a time vanquish our worst cogitations. Also, when we read the roll that we too carry in our bosom—that is to say, when we go back into our past life till we see it and feel it all, and till we can think and speak of nothing else but the sin that abounded in it and the grace that much more abounded, that has a thousand times given us also golden hours, even rest from our own evil hearts. And we also have often made our hearts too hot for sin to show itself, when we read our hearts deep into such books as The Paradiso, The Pilgrim's Progress, The Saint's Rest, The Serious Call, The Religious Affections, and such like. These books have often vanquished our annoyances, and given us golden hours on the earth. Yes, but that is but seldom.

'Now, what is it,' asked Prudence, as she wound up this so particular colloquy, 'that makes you so desirous to go to Mount Zion?'

'Why,' replied the pilgrim, and the water stood in his eyes, 'why, there I hope to see Him alive that did hang dead on the cross; and there I hope to be rid of all those things that to this day are an annoyance to me; there they say is no death, and there shall I dwell with such company as I love best. For, to tell you truth, I love Him, because by Him I was eased of my burden, and I am weary of my inward sickness; and I would fain be where I shall die no more, and for ever with that company that shall continually cry, Holy, holy, holy.'

# 016. Charity

XVI

CHARITY ‘I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.’—David.

There can be nobody here to-night so stark stupid as to suppose that the pilgrim had run away from home and left his wife and children to the work-house. There have been wiseacres who have found severe fault with John Bunyan because he made his Puritan pilgrim such a bad husband and such an unnatural father. But nobody possessed of a spark of common sense, not to say religion or literature, would ever commit himself to such an utter imbecility as that. John Bunyan’s pilgrim, whatever he may have been before he became a pilgrim, all the time he was a pilgrim, was the most faithful, affectionate, and solicitous husband in all the country round about, and the tenderest, the most watchful, and the wisest of fathers. This pilgrim stayed all the more at home that he went so far away from home; he accomplished his whole wonderful pilgrimage beside his own forge and at his own fireside; and he entered the Celestial City amid trumpets and bells and harps and psalms, while all the time sleeping in his own humble bed. The House Beautiful, therefore, to which we have now come in his company, is not some remote and romantic mansion away up among the mountains a great many days’ journey distant from this poor man’s everyday home. The House Beautiful was nothing else,—what else better, what else so good could it be?—than just this Christian man’s first communion Sabbath and his first communion table (first, that is, after his true conversion from sin to God and his confessed entrance into a new life), while the country from whence he had come out, and concerning which both Piety and Prudence catechised him so closely, was just his former life of open ungodliness and all his evil walk and conversation while he was as yet living without God and without hope in the world. The country on which he confessed that he now looked back with so much shame and detestation was not England or Bedfordshire, but the wicked life he had lived in that land and in that shire. And when Charity asked him as to whether he was a married man and had a family, she knew quite well that he was, only she made a pretence of asking him those domestic questions in order thereby to start the touching conversation.

Beginning, then, at home, as she always began, Charity said to Christian, ‘Have you a family? Are you a married man?’ ‘I have a wife and four small children,’ answered Christian. ‘And why did you not bring them with you?’ Then Christian wept and said, ‘Oh, how willingly would I have done so, but they were all of them utterly averse to my going on pilgrimage.’ ‘But you should have talked to them and have shown them their danger.’ ‘So I did,’ he replied, ‘but I seemed to them as one that mocked.’ Now, this of talking, and, especially, of talking about religious things to children, is one of the most difficult things in the world,—that is, to do it well. Some people have the happy knack of talking to their own and to other people’s children so as always to interest and impress them. But such happy people are few. Most people talk at their children whenever they begin to talk to them, and thus, without knowing it, they nauseate their children with their conversation altogether. To respect a little child, to stand in some awe of a little child, to choose your topics, your opportunities,

your neighbourhood, your moods and his as well as all your words, and always to speak your sincerest, simplest, most straightforward and absolutely wisest is indispensable with a child. Take your mannerisms, your condescensions, your affectations, your moralisings, and all your insincerities to your debauched equals, but bring your truest and your best to your child. Unless you do so, you will be sure to lay yourself open to a look that will suddenly go through you, and that will swiftly convey to you that your child sees through you and despises you and your conversation too. ‘You should not only have talked to your children of their danger,’ said Charity, ‘but you should have shown them their danger.’ Yes, Charity; but a man must himself see his own and his children’s danger too, before he can show it to them, as well as see it clearly at the time he is trying to show it to them. And how many fathers, do you suppose, have the eyes to see such danger, and how then can they shew such danger to their children, of all people? Once get fathers to see dangers or anything else aright, and then you will not need to tell them how they are to instruct and impress their children. Nature herself will then tell them how to talk to their children, and when Nature teaches, all our children will immediately and unweariedly listen.

But, especially, said Charity, as your boys grew up—I think you said that you had four boys and no girls?—well, then, all the more, as they grew up, you should have taken occasion to talk to them about yourself. Did your little boy never petition you for a story about yourself; and as he grew up did you never confide to him what you have never confided to his mother? Something, as I was saying, that made you sad when you were a boy and a rising man, with a sadness your son can still see in you as you talk to him. In conversations like that a boy finds out what a friend he has in his father, and his father from that day has his best friend in his son. And then as Matthew grew up and began to out-grow his brothers and to form friendships out of doors, did you study to talk at the proper time to him, and on subjects on which you never venture to talk about to any other boy or man? You men, Charity went on to say, live in a world of your own, and though we women are well out of it, yet we cannot be wholly ignorant that it is there. And, we may well be wrong, but we cannot but think that fathers, if not mothers, might safely tell their men-children at least more than they do tell them of the sure dangers that lie straight in their way, of the sorrow that men and women bring on one another, and of what is the destruction of so many cities. We may well be wrong, for we are only women, but I have told you what we all think who keep this house and hear the reports and repentances of pilgrims, both Piety and Prudence and I myself. And I, for one, largely agree with the three women. It is easier said than done. But the simple saying of it may perhaps lead some fathers and mothers to think about it, and to ask whether or no it is desirable and advisable to do it, which of them is to attempt it, on what occasion, and to what extent. Christian by this time had the Slough of Despond with all its history and all that it contained to tell his eldest son about; he had the wicket gate also just above the slough, the hill Difficulty, the Interpreter’s House, the place somewhat ascending with a cross standing upon it, and a little below, in the bottom, a sepulchre, not to speak of her who assaulted Faithful, whose name was Wanton, and who at one time was like to have done even that trusty pilgrim a lifelong mischief. Christian rather boasted to Charity of his wariness, especially in the matter of his children’s amusements, but Charity seemed to think that he had carried his wariness into other matters besides amusements, without the best possible results there either. I have sometimes thought with her that among our multitude of congresses and conferences of all kinds of people and upon all manner of subjects, room and membership might have been found for a conference of fathers and mothers. Fathers to give and take counsel about how to talk to their sons, and mothers to their

daughters. I am much of Charity's mind, that, if more were done at home, and done with some frankness, for our sons and daughters, there would be fewer fathers and mothers found sitting at the Lord's table alone. 'You should have talked to them,' said Charity, with some severity in her tones, 'and, especially, you should have told them of your own sorrow.' And then, coming still closer up to Christian, Charity asked him whether he prayed, both before and after he so spoke to his children, that God would bless what he said to them. Charity believeth all things, hopeth all things, but when she saw this man about to sit down all alone at the supper table, it took Charity all her might to believe that he had both spoken to his children and at the same time prayed to God for them as he ought to have done. Our old ministers used to lay this vow on all fathers and mothers at the time of baptism, that they were to pray both with and for their children. Now, that is a fine formula; it is a most comprehensive, and, indeed, exhaustive formula. Both with and for. And especially with. With, at such and such times, on such and such occasions, and in such and such places. At those times, say, when your boy has told a lie, or struck his little brother, or stolen something, or destroyed something. To pray with him at such times, and to pray with him properly, and, if you feel able to do it, and are led to do it, to tell him something after the prayer about yourself, and your own not-yet-forgotten boyhood, and your father; it makes a fine time to mix talk and prayer together in that way. Charity is not easily provoked, but the longer she lives and keeps the table in the House Beautiful the more she is provoked to think that there is far too little prayer among pilgrims; far too little of all kinds of prayer, but especially prayer with and for their children. But hard as it was to tell all the truth at that moment about Christian's past walk in his house at home, yet he was able with the simple truth to say that he had indeed prayed both with and for his children, and that, as they knew and could not but remember, not seldom. Yes, he said, I did sometimes so pray with my boys, and that too, as you may believe, with much affection, for you must think that my four boys were all very dear to me. And it is my firm belief that all that good man's boys will come right yet: Matthew and Joseph and James and Samuel and all. 'With much affection.' I like that. I have unbounded faith in those prayers, both for and with, in which there is much affection. It is want of affection, and want of imagination, that shipwrecks so many of our prayers. But this man's prayers had both these elements of sure success in them, and they must come at last to harbour. At that one word 'with much affection,' this man's closet door flies open and I see the old pilgrim first alone, and then with his arms round his eldest son's neck, and both father and son weeping together till they are ashamed to appear at supper till they have washed their faces and got their most smiling and everyday looks put on again. You just wait and see if Matthew and all the four boys down to the last do not escape into the Celestial City before the gate is shut. And when it is asked, Who are these and whence came they? listen to their song and you will hear those four happy children saying that their father, when they were yet boys, both talked with them and prayed for and with them with so much affection that therefore they are before the throne.

Why, then, with such a father and with such makable boys, why was this household brought so near everlasting shipwreck? It was the mother that did it. In one word, it was the wife and the mother that did it. It was the mistress of the house who wrought the mischief here. She was a poor woman, she was a poor man's wife, and one would have thought that she had little enough temptation to harm upon this present world. But there it was, she did hang upon it as much as if she had been the mother of the finest daughters and the most promising boys in all the town. Things like this were from time to time reported to her by her neighbours. One fine lady had been

heard to say that she would never have for her tradesman any man who frequented conventicles, who was not content with the religion of his betters, and who must needs scorn the parish church and do despite to the saints' days. Another gossip asked her what she expected to make of her great family of boys when it was well known that all the gentry in the neighbourhood but two or three had sworn that they would never have a hulking Puritan to brush their boots or run their errands. And it almost made her husband burn his book and swear that he would never be seen at another prayer-meeting when his wife so often said to him that he should never have had children, that he should never have made her his wife, and that he was not like this when they were first man and wife. And in her bitterness she would name this wife or that maid, and would say, You should have married her. She would have gone to the meeting-house with you as often as you wished. Her sons are far enough from good service to please you. 'My wife,' he softly said, 'was afraid of losing the world. And then, after that, my growing sons were soon given over, all I could do, to the foolish delights of youth, so that, what by one thing and what by another, they left me to wander in this manner alone.' And I suppose there is scarcely a household among ourselves where there have not been serious and damaging misunderstandings between old-fashioned fathers and their young people about what the old people called the 'foolish delights'of their sons and daughters. And in thinking this matter over, I have often been struck with how Job did when his sons and his daughters were bent upon feasting and dancing in their eldest brother's house. The old man did not lay an interdict upon the entertainment. He did not take part in it, but neither did he absolutely forbid it. If it must be it must be, said the wise patriarch. And since I do not know whom they may meet there, or what they may be tempted to do, I will sanctify them all. I will not go up into my bed till I have prayed for all my seven sons and three daughters, each one of them by their names; and till they come home safely I will rise every morning and offer burnt-offerings according to the number of them all. And do you think that those burnt-offerings and accompanying intercessions would go for nothing when the great wind came from the wilderness and smote the four corners of the banqueting-house? If you cannot banish the love of foolish delights out the hearts of your sons and daughters, then do not quarrel with them over such things; a family quarrel in a Christian man's house is surely far worse than a feast or a dance. Only, if they must feast and dance and such like, be you all the more diligent in your exercises at home on their behalf till they are back again, where, after all, they like best to be, in their good, kind, liberal, and loving father's house. Have you a family? Are you a married man? Or, if not, do you hope one day to be? Then attend betimes to what Charity says to Christian in the House Beautiful, and not less to what he says back again to her.

# 017. Shame

XVII

SHAME

‘Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me, and of My words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father’s, and of the holy angels.’—Our Lord.

Shame has not got the attention that it deserves either from our moral philosophers or from our practical and experimental divines. And yet it would well repay both classes of students to attend far more to shame. For, what really is shame? Shame is an original instinct planted in our souls by our Maker, and intended by Him to act as a powerful and pungent check to our doing of any act that is mean or dishonourable in the eyes of our fellow-men. Shame is a kind of social conscience. Shame is a secondary sense of sin. In shame, our imagination becomes a kind of moral sense. Shame sets up in our bosom a not undivine tribunal, which judges us and sentences us in the absence or the silence of nobler and more awful sanctions and sentences. But then, as things now are with us, like all the rest of the machinery of the soul, shame has gone sadly astray both in its objects and in its operations, till it demands a long, a severe, and a very noble discipline over himself before any man can keep shame in its proper place and directed in upon its proper objects. In the present disorder of our souls, we are all acutely ashamed of many things that are not the proper objects of shame at all; while, on the other hand, we feel no shame at all at multitudes of things that are really most blameworthy, dishonourable, and contemptible. We are ashamed of things in our lot and in our circumstances that, if we only knew it, are our opportunity and our honour; we are ashamed of things that are the clear will and the immediate dispensation of Almighty God. And, then, we feel no shame at all at the most dishonourable things, and that simply because the men around us are too coarse in their morals and too dull in their sensibilities to see any shame in such things. And thus it comes about that, in the very best of men, their still perverted sense of shame remains in them a constant snare and a source of temptation. A man of a fine nature feels keenly the temptation to shrink from those paths of truth and duty that expose him to the cruel judgments and the coarse and scandalising attacks of public and private enemies. It was in the Valley of Humiliation that Shame set upon Faithful, and it is a real humiliation to any man of anything of this pilgrim’s fine character and feeling to be attacked, scoffed at, and held up to blame and opprobrium. And the finer and the more affectionate any man’s heart and character are, the more he feels and shrinks from the coarse treatment this world gives to those whom it has its own reasons to hate and assail. They had the stocks and the pillory and the shears in Bunyan’s rude and uncivilised day, by means of which many of the best men of that day were exposed to the insults and brutalities of the mob. The newspapers would be the pillory of our day, were it not that, on the whole, the newspaper press is conducted with such scrupulous fairness and with a love of truth and justice such that no man need shrink from the path of duty through fear of insult and injury. But it is time to come to the encounter between Shame and Faithful in the Valley of Humiliation. Shame, properly speaking, is not one of our Bunyan gallery of portraits at all. Shame,

at best, is but a kind of secondary character in this dramatic book. We do not meet with Shame directly; we only hear about him through the report of Faithful. That first-class pilgrim was almost overcome of Shame, so hot was their encounter; and it is the extraordinarily feeling, graphic, and realistic account of their encounter that Faithful gives us that has led me to take up Shame for our reproof and correction to-night.

Religion altogether, but especially all personal religion, said Shame to Faithful, is an unmanly business. There is a certain touch of smallness and pitifulness, he said, in all religion, but especially in experimental religion. It brings a man into junctures and into companionships, and it puts offices and endurances upon one such as try a man if he has any greatness of spirit about him at all. This life on which you are entering, said Shame, will cost you many a blush before you are done with it. You will lay yourself open to many a scoff. The Puritan religion, and all the ways of that religious fraternity, are peculiarly open to the shafts of ridicule. Now, all that was quite true. There was no denying the truth of what Shame said. And Faithful felt the truth of it all, and felt it most keenly, as he confessed to Christian. The blood came into my face as the fellow spake, and what he said for a time almost beat me out of the upward way altogether. But in this dilemma also all true Christians can fall back, as Faithful fell back, upon the example of their Master. In this as in every other experience of temptation and endurance, our Lord is the forerunner and the example of His people. Our Lord was in all points tempted like as we are, and among all His other temptations He was tempted to be ashamed of His work on earth and of the life and the death His work led Him into. He must have often felt ashamed at the treatment He received during His life of humiliation, as it is well called; and He must often have felt ashamed of His disciples: but all that is blotted out by the crowning shame of the cross. We hang our worst criminals rather than behead or shoot them, in order to heap up the utmost possible shame and disgrace upon them, as well as to execute justice upon them. And what the hangman's rope is in our day, all that the cross was in our Lord's day. And, then, as if the cross itself was not shame enough, all the circumstances connected with His cross were planned and carried out so as to heap the utmost possible shame and humiliation upon His head. Our prison warders have to watch the murderers in their cells night and day, lest they should take their own life in order to escape the hangman's rope; but our Lord, keenly as He felt His coming shame, said to His horrified disciples, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, when the Son of Man shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on; and they shall scourge Him and put Him to death. Do you ever think of your Lord in His shame? How they made a fool of Him, as we say. How they took off His own clothes and put on Him now a red cloak and now a white; how they put a sword of lath in His hand, and a crown of thorns on His head; how they bowed the knee before Him, and asked royal favours from Him; and then how they spat in His face, and struck Him on the cheek, while the whole house rang with shouts of laughter. And, then, the last indignity of man, how they stripped Him naked and lashed His naked and bleeding body to a whipping-post. And how they wagged their heads and put out their tongues at Him when He was on the tree, and invited Him to come down and preach to them now, and they would all become His disciples. Did not Shame say the simple truth when he warned Faithful that religion had always and from the beginning made its followers the ridicule of their times?

If you are really going to be a religious man, Shame went on, you will have to carry about with you a very tender conscience, and a more unmanly and miserable thing than a tender conscience I cannot conceive. A tender conscience will cost you something, let me tell you, to keep it. If nothing

else, a tender conscience will all your life long expose you to the mockery and the contempt of all the brave spirits of the time. That also is true. At any rate, a tender conscience will undoubtedly compel its possessor to face the brave spirits of the time. There is a good story told to this present point about Sir Robert Peel, a Prime Minister of our Queen. When a young man, Peel was one of the guests at a select dinner-party in the West-end of London. And after the ladies had left the table the conversation of the gentlemen took a turn such that it could not have taken as long as the ladies were present. Peel took no share in the stories or the merriment that went on, and, at last, he rose up and ordered his carriage, and, with a burning face, left the room. When he was challenged as to why he had broken up the pleasant party so soon, he could only reply that his conscience would not let him stay any longer. No doubt Peel felt the mocking laughter that he left behind him, but, as Shame said to Faithful, the tenderness of the young statesman's conscience compelled him to do as he did. But we are not all Peels. And there are plenty of workshops and offices and dinner-tables in our own city, where young men who would walk up to the cannon's mouth without flinching have not had Peel's courage to protest against indecency or to confess that they belonged to an evangelical church. If a church is only sufficiently unevangelical there is no trial of conscience or of courage in confessing that you belong to it. But as Shame so ably and honestly said, that type of religion that creates a tender conscience in its followers, and sets them to watch their words and their ways, and makes them tie themselves up from all hectoring liberty—to choose that religion, and to cleave to it to the end, will make a young man the ridicule still of all the brave spirits round about him. Ambitious young men get promotion and reward every day among us for desertions and apostasies in religion, for which, if they had been guilty of the like in war, they would have been shot. 'And so you are a Free Churchman, I am told.' That was all that was said. But the sharp youth understood without any more words, and he made his choice accordingly; till it is becoming a positive surprise to find the rising members of certain professions in certain churches. The Quakers have a proverb in England that a family carriage never drives for two generations past the parish church door. Of which state of matters Shame showed himself a shrewd prophet two hundred years ago when he said that but few of the rich and the mighty and the wise remained long of Faithful's Puritan opinion unless they were first persuaded to be fools, and to be of a voluntary fondness to venture the loss of all. And I will tell you two other things, said sharp-sighted and plain-spoken Shame, that your present religion will compel you to do if you adhere to it. It will compel you from time to time to ask your neighbour's forgiveness even for petty faults, and it will insist with you that you make restitution when you have done the weak and the friendless any hurt or any wrong. And every manly mind will tell you that life is not worth having on such humbling terms as those are. Whatever may be thought about Shame in other respects, it cannot be denied that he had a sharp eye for the facts of life, and a shrewd tongue in setting those facts forth. He has hit the blot exactly in the matter of our first duty to our neighbour; he has put his finger on one of the matters where so many of us, through a false shame, come short. It costs us a tremendous struggle with our pride to go to our neighbour and to ask his forgiveness for a fault, petty fault or other. Did you ever do it? When did you do it last, to whom, and for what? One Sabbath morning, now many years ago, I had occasion to urge this elementary evangelical duty on my people here, and I did it as plainly as I could. Next day one of my young men, who is now a devoted and honoured elder, came to me and told me that he had done that morning what his conscience yesterday told him in the church to do. He had gone to a neighbour's place of business, had asked for an interview, and had begged his neighbour's pardon. I am sure neither of

those two men have forgotten that moment, and the thought of it has often since nerved me to speak plainly about some of their most unwelcome duties to my people. Shame, no doubt, pulled back my noble friend's hand when it was on the office bell, but, like Faithful in the text, he shook him out of his company and went in. I spoke of the remarkable justice of the newspaper press in the opening of these remarks. And it so happens that, as I lay down my pen to rest my hand after writing this sentence and lift a London evening paper, I read this editorial note, set within the well-known brackets at the end of an indignant and expostulatory letter: ['Our correspondent's complaint is just. The paragraph imputing bad motives should not have been admitted.'] I have no doubt that editor felt some shame as he handed that apologetic note to the printer. But not to speak of any other recognition and recompense, he has the recompense of the recognition of all honourable-minded men who have read that honourable admission and apology.

Shame was quite right in his scoff about restitution also. For restitution rings like a trumpet tone through the whole of the law of Moses, and then the New Testament republishes that law if only in the exquisite story of Zaccheus. And, indeed, take it altogether, I do not know where to find in the same space a finer vindication of Puritan pulpit ethics than just in this taunting and terrifying attack on Faithful. There is no better test of true religion both as it is preached and practised than just to ask for and to grant forgiveness, and to offer and accept restitution. Now, does your public and private life defend and adorn your minister's pulpit in these two so practical matters? Could your minister point to you as a proof of the ethics of evangelical teaching? Can any one in this city speak up in defence of your church and thus protest: 'Say what you like about that church and its ministers, all I can say is, that its members know how to make an apology; as, also, how to pay back with interest what they at one time damaged or defrauded'? Can any old creditor's widow or orphan stand up for our doctrine and defend our discipline pointing to you? If you go on to be a Puritan, said Shame to Faithful, you will have to ask your neighbour's forgiveness even for petty faults, and you will have to make restitution with usury where you have taken anything from any one, and how will you like that? And what did you say to all this, my brother? Say? I could not tell what to say at the first. I felt my blood coming up into my face at some of the things that Shame said and threatened. But, at last, I began to consider that that which is highly esteemed among men is often had in abomination with God. And I said to myself again, Shame tells me what men do and what men think, but he has told me nothing about what He thinks with Whom I shall soon have alone to do. Therefore, thought I, what God thinks and says is wisest and best, let all the men of the world say what they will. Let all false shame, then, depart from my heart, for how else shall I look upon my Lord, and how shall He look upon me at His coming?

# 018. Talkative

XVIII

TALKATIVE ‘A man full of talk.’—Zophar.

‘Let thy words be few.’—The Preacher.

‘The soul of religion is the practick part.’—Christian.

Since we all have a tongue, and since so much of our time is taken up with talk, a simple catalogue of the sins of the tongue is enough to terrify us. The sins of the tongue take up a much larger space in the Bible than we would believe till we have begun to suffer from other men’s tongues and especially from our own. The Bible speaks a great deal more and a great deal plainer about the sins of the tongue than any of our pulpits dare to do. In the Psalms alone you would think that the psalmists scarcely suffer from anything else worth speaking about but the evil tongues of their friends and of their enemies. The Book of Proverbs also is full of the same lashing scourge. And James the Just, in a passage of terrible truth and power, tells us that we are already as good as perfect men if we can bridle our tongue; and that, on the other hand, if we do not bridle our tongue, all our seeming to be religious is a sham and a self-deception,—that man’s religion is vain. With many men and many women great talkativeness is a matter of simple temperament and mental constitution. And a talkative habit would be a childlike and an innocent habit if the heart of talker and the hearts of those to whom he talks so much were only full of truth and love. But our hearts and our neighbours’ hearts being what they are, in the multitude of words there wanteth not sin. So much of our talk is about our absent neighbours, and there are so many misunderstandings, prejudices, ambitions, competitions, oppositions, and all kinds of cross-interests between us and our absent neighbours, that we cannot long talk about them till our hearts have run our tongues into all manner of trespass. Bishop Butler discourses on the great dangers that beset a talkative temperament with almost more than all his usual sagacity, seriousness, and depth. And those who care to see how the greatest of our modern moralists deals with their besetting sin should lose no time in possessing and mastering Butler’s great discourse. It is a truly golden discourse, and it ought to be read at least once a month by all the men and all the women who have tongues in their heads. Bishop Butler points out to his offending readers, in a way they can never forget, the certain mischief they do to themselves and to other people just by talking too much. But there are far worse sins that our tongues fall into than the bad enough sins that spring out of impertinent and unrestrained loquacity. There are many times when our talk, long or short, is already simple and downright evil. It is ten to one, it is a hundred to one, that you do not know and would not believe how much you fall every day and in every conversation into one or other of the sins of the tongue. If you would only begin to see and accept this, that every time you speak or hear about your absent neighbour what you would not like him to speak or hear about you, you are in that a talebearer, a slanderer, a backbiter, or a liar,—when you begin to see and admit that about yourself, you will not wonder at what the Bible says with such bitter indignation about the diabolical sins of the tongue. If you would just begin to-night to

watch yourselves—on the way home from church, at home after the day is over, to-morrow morning when the letters and the papers are opened, and so on,—how instinctively, incessantly, irrepressibly you speak about the absent in a way you would be astounded and horrified to be told they were at that moment speaking about you, then you would soon be wiser than all your teachers in the sins and in the government of the tongue. And you would seven times every day pluck out your tongue before God till He gives it back to you clean and kind in that land where all men shall love their neighbours, present and absent, as themselves.

Take detraction for an example, one of the commonest, and, surely, one of the most detestable of the sins of the tongue. And the etymology here, as in this whole region, is most instructive and most impressive. In detraction you draw away something from your neighbour that is most precious and most dear to him. In detraction you are a thief, and a thief of the falsest and wickedest kind. For your neighbour's purse is trash, while his good name is far more precious to him than all his gold. Some one praises your neighbour in your hearing, his talents, his performances, his character, his motives, or something else that belongs to your neighbour. Some one does that in your hearing who either does not know you, or who wishes to torture and expose you, and you fall straight into the snare thus set for you, and begin at once to belittle, depreciate, detract from, and run down your neighbour, who has been too much praised for your peace of mind and your self-control. You insinuate something to his disadvantage and dishonour. You quote some authority you have heard to his hurt. And so on past all our power to picture you. For detraction has a thousand devices taught to it by the master of all such devices, wherewith to drag down and defile the great and the good. But with all you can say or do, you cannot for many days get out of your mind the heart-poisoning praise you heard spoken of your envied neighbour. Never praise any potter's pots in the hearing of another potter, said the author of the Nicomachean Ethics. Aristotle said potter's pots, but he really all the time was thinking of a philosopher's books; only he said potter's pots to draw off his readers' attention from himself. Now, always remember that ancient and wise advice. Take care how you praise a potter's pots, a philosopher's books, a woman's beauty, a speaker's speech, a preacher's sermon to another potter, philosopher, woman, speaker, or preacher; unless, indeed, you maliciously wish secretly to torture them, or publicly to expose them, or, if their sanctification is begun, to sanctify them to their most inward and spiritual sanctification.

Backbiting, again, would seem at first sight to be a sin of the teeth rather than of the tongue, only, no sharpest tooth can tear you when your back is turned like your neighbour's evil tongue. Pascal has many dreadful things about the corruption and misery of man, but he has nothing that strikes its terrible barb deeper into all our consciences than this, that if all our friends only knew what we have said about them behind their back, we would not have four friends in all the world. Neither we would. I know I would not have one. How many would you have? And who would they be? You cannot name them. I defy you to name them. They do not exist. The tongue can no man tame.

'Giving of characters' also takes up a large part of our everyday conversation. We cannot well help characterising, describing, and estimating one another. But, as far as possible, when we see the conversation again approaching that dangerous subject, we should call to mind our past remorse; we should suppose our absent neighbour present; we should imagine him in our place and ourselves in his place, and so turn the rising talk into another channel. For, the truth is, few of us are able to do justice to our neighbour when we begin to discuss and describe him. Generosity in

our talk is far easier for us than justice. It was this incessant giving of characters that our Lord had in His eye when He said in His Sermon on the Mount, Judge not. But our Lord might as well never have uttered that warning word for all the attention we give it. For we go on judging one another and sentencing one another as if we were entirely and in all things blameless ourselves, and as if God had set us up in our blamelessness in His seat of judgment over all our fellows. How seldom do we hear any one say in a public debate or in a private conversation, I don't know; or, It is no matter of mine; or, I feel that I am not in possession of all the facts; or, It may be so, but I must not judge. We never hear such things as these said. No one pays the least attention to the Preacher on the Mount. And if any one says to us, I must not judge, we never forgive him, because his humility and his obedience so condemn all our ill-formed, prejudiced, rash, and ill-natured judgments of our neighbour. Since, therefore, so Butler sums up, it is so hard for us to enter on our neighbour's character without offending the law of Christ, we should learn to decline that kind of conversation altogether, and determine to get over that strong inclination most of us have, to be continually talking about the concerns, the behaviour, and the deserts of our neighbours.

Now, it was all those vices of the tongue in full outbreak in the day of James the Just that made that apostle, half in sorrow, half in anger, demand of all his readers that they should henceforth begin to bridle their tongues. And, like all that most practical apostle's counsels, that is a most impressive and memorable commandment. For, it is well known that all sane men who either ride on or drive unruly horses, take good care to bridle their horses well before they bring them out of their stable door. And then they keep their bridle-hand firm closed on the bridle-rein till their horses are back in the stable again. Especially and particularly they keep a close eye and a firm hand on their horse's bridle on all steep inclines and at all sharp angles and sudden turns in the road; when sudden trains are passing and when stray dogs are barking. If the rider or the driver of a horse did not look at nothing else but the bridle of his horse, both he and his horse under him would soon be in the ditch,—as so many of us are at the present moment because we have an untamed tongue in our mouth on which we have not yet begun to put the bridle of truth and justice and brotherly love. Indeed, such woe and misery has an untamed tongue wrought in other churches and in other and more serious ages than ours, that special religious brotherhoods have been banded together just on the special and strict engagement that they would above all things put a bridle on their tongues. 'What are the chief cares of a young convert?' asked such a convert at an aged Carthusian. 'I said I will take heed to my ways that I trespass not with my tongue,' replied the saintly father. 'Say no more for the present,' interrupted the youthful beginner; 'I will go home and practise that, and will come again when I have performed it.'

Now, whatever faults that tall man had who took up so much of Faithful's time and attention, he was a saint compared with the men and the women who have just passed before us. Talkative, as John Bunyan so scornfully names that tall man, though he undoubtedly takes up too much time and too much space in Bunyan's book, was not a busybody in other men's matters at any rate. Nobody could call him a detractor or a backbiter or a talebearer or a liar. Christian knew him well, and had known him long, but Christian was not afraid to leave him alone with Faithful. We all know men we feel it unsafe to leave long alone with our friends. We feel sure that they will be talking about us, and that to our hurt, as soon as our backs are about. But to give that tall man his due, he was not given with all his talk to tale-bearing or scandal or detraction. Had he been guilty of any of these things, Faithful would soon have found him out, and would have left him to go to the

Celestial City by himself. But, after talking for half a day with Talkative, instead of finding out anything wrong in the tall man's talk, Faithful was so taken and so struck with it, that he stepped across to Christian and said, 'What a brave companion we have got! Surely this man will make a most excellent pilgrim!' 'So I once thought too,' said Christian, 'till I went to live beside him, and have to do with him in the business of daily life.' Yes, it is near neighbourhood and the business of everyday life that try a talking man. If you go to a meeting for prayer, and hear some men praying and speaking on religious subjects, you would say to yourself, What a good man that is, and how happy must his wife and children and servants and neighbours be with such an example always before them, and with such an intercessor for them always with God! But if you were to go home with that so devotional man, and try to do business with him, and were compelled to cross him and go against him, you would find out why Christian smiled so when Faithful was so full of Talkative's praises. But of all the religiously-loquacious men of our day, your ministers are the chief. For your ministers must talk in public, and that often and at great length, whether they are truly religious men at home or no. It is their calling to talk to you unceasingly about religious matters. You chose them to be your ministers because they could talk well. You would not put up with a minister who could not talk well on religious things. You estimate them by their talk. You praise and pay them by their talk. And if they are to live, talk incessantly to you about religion they must, and they do. If any other man among us is not a religious man, well, then, he can at least hold his tongue. There is no necessity laid on him to speak in public about things that he does not practise at home. But we hard-bested ministers must go on speaking continually about the most solemn things. And if we are not extraordinarily watchful over ourselves, and extraordinarily and increasingly conscientious, if we are not steadily growing in inwardness and insight and depth and real spirituality of mind and life ourselves, we cannot escape,—our calling in life will not let us escape,—becoming as sounding brass. There is an awful sentence in Butler that should be written in letters of fire in every minister's conscience, to the effect that continually going over religion in talk and making fine pictures of it in the pulpit, creates a professional insensibility to personal religion that is the everlasting ruin of multitudes of eloquent ministers. That is true. We ministers all feel that to be true. Our miserable experience tells us that is only too true of ourselves. What a flood of demoralising talk has been poured out from the pulpits of this one city to-day!—demoralising to preachers and to hearers both, because not intended to be put in practice. How few of those who have talked and heard talk all this day about divine truth and human duty, have made the least beginning or the least resolve to live as they have spoken and heard! And, yet, all will in words again admit that the soul of religion is the practick part, and that the tongue without the heart and the life is but death and corruption.

Let us, then, this very night begin to do something practical after all this talk about talk. And let us all begin to do something in the direct line of our present talk. What a noble congregation of evangelical Carthusians that would make us if we all put a bridle on our tongue to-night before we left this house. For we all have neighbours, friends, enemies, against whom we every day sin with our unbridled tongue. We all have acquaintances we are ashamed to meet, we have been so unkind and so unjust to them with our tongue. We hang down our head when they shake our hand. Yes, we know the men quite well of whom Pascal speaks. We know many men who would never speak to us again if they only knew how, and how often, we have spoken about them behind their back. Well, let us sin against them, and against ourselves, and against our Master's command and example no more. Let this night and this lecture on Talkative and his kindred see the last of our sin

against our ill-used neighbour. Let us promise God and our own consciences to-night, that we shall all this week put on a bridle about that man, and about that subject, and in that place, and in that company. Let us say, God helping me, I shall for all this week not speak about that man at all, anything either good or bad, nor on that subject, nor will I let the conversation turn into that channel at all if I can help it. And God will surely help us, till, after weeks and years of such prayer and such practice, we shall by slow degrees, and after many defeats, be able to say with the Psalmist, ‘I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue. I will keep my mouth with a bridle. I will be dumb with silence. I will hold my peace even from good.’

Chapter 19

# 019. Judge Hate-Good

XIX

JUDGE HATE-GOOD ‘Hear, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel . . . who hate the good and love the evil.’—Micah. The portrait of Judge Hate-good in The Pilgrim’s Progressis but a poor replica, as our artists say, of the portrait of Judge Jeffreys in our English history books. I am sure you have often read, with astonishment at Bunyan’s literary power, his wonderful account of the trial of Faithful, when, as Bunyan says, he was brought forth to his trial in order to his condemnation. We have the whole ecclesiastical jurisprudence of Charles and James Stuart put before us in that single satirical sentence. But, powerful as Bunyan’s whole picture of Judge Hate-good’s court is, it is a tame and a poor picture compared with what all the historians tell us of the injustice and cruelty of the court of Judge Jeffreys. Macaulay’s portrait of the Lord Chief Justice of England for ferocity and fiendishness beats out of sight Bunyan’s picture of that judge who keeps Satan’s own seal in Bunyan’s Book. Jeffreys was bred for his future work at the bar of the Old Bailey, a bar already proverbial for the licence of its tongue and for the coarseness of its cases. Jeffreys served his apprenticeship for the service that our two last Stuarts had in reserve for him so well, that he soon became, so his beggared biographer describes him, the most consummate bully that ever disgraced an English bench. The boldest impudence when he was a young advocate, and the most brutal ferocity when he was an old judge, sat equally secure on the brazen forehead of George Jeffreys. The real and undoubted ability and scholarship of Jeffreys only made his wickedness the more awful, and his whole career the greater curse both to those whose tool he was, and to those whose blood he drank daily. Jeffreys drank brandy and sang lewd songs all night, and he drank blood and cursed and swore on the bench all day. Just imagine the state of our English courts when a judge could thus assail a poor wretch of a woman after passing a cruel sentence upon her. ‘Hangman,’shouted the ermined brute, ‘Hangman, pay particular attention to this lady. Scourge her soundly, man. Scourge her till the blood runs. It is the Christmas season; a cold season for madam to strip in. See, therefore, man, that you warm her shoulders thoroughly.’ And you all know who Richard Baxter was. You have all read his seraphic book, The Saints’ Rest. Well, besides being the Richard Baxter so well known to our saintly fathers and mothers, he was also, and he was emphatically, the peace-maker of the Puritan party. Baxter’s political principles were of the most temperate and conciliatory, and indeed, almost royalist kind. He was a man of strong passions, indeed, but all the strength and heat of his passions ran out into his hatred of sin and his love of holiness, and an unsparing and consuming care for the souls of his people. Very Faithful himself stood before the bar of Judge Jeffreys in the person of Richard Baxter. It took all the barefaced falsehood and scandalous injustice of the crown prosecutors to draw out the sham indictment that was read out in court against inoffensive Richard Baxter. But what was lacking in the charge of the crown was soon made up by the abominable scurrility of the judge. ‘You are a schismatical knave,’ roared out Jeffreys, as soon as Baxter was brought into court. ‘You are an old hypocritical villain.’ And then, clasping his hands and turning up his eyes, he sang through his nose: ‘O Lord, we are Thy peculiar people: we are Thy dear and only people.’

‘You old blockhead,’ he again roared out, ‘I will have you whipped through the city at the tail of the cart. By the grace of God I will look after you, Richard.’ And the tiger would have been as good as his word had not an overpowering sense of shame compelled the other judges to protest and get Baxter’s inhuman sentence commuted to fine and imprisonment. And so on, and so on. But it was Jeffreys’ ‘Western Circuit,’ as it was called, that filled up the cup of his infamy—an infamy, say the historians, that will last as long as the language and the history of England last. The only parallel to it is the infamy of a royal house and a royal court that could welcome home and promote to honour such a detestable miscreant as Jeffreys was. But the slaughter in Somerset was only over in order that a similar slaughter in London might begin. Let those who have a stomach for more blood and tears follow out the hell upon earth that James Stuart and George Jeffreys together let loose on the best life of England in their now fast-shortening day. Was Judge Jeffreys, some of you will ask me, born and bred in hell? Was the devil his father, and original sin his mother? Or, was he not the very devil himself come to earth for a season in English flesh? No, my brethren, not so. Judge Jeffreys was one of ourselves. Little George Jeffreys was born and brought up in a happy English home. He was baptised and confirmed in an English church. He took honours in an English university. He ate dinners, was called to the bar, conducted cases, and took silk in an English court of justice. And in the ripeness of his years and of his services, he wore the honourable ermine and sat upon the envied wool-sack of an English sovereign. It would have been far less awful and far less alarming to think of, had Judge Jeffreys been, as you supposed, a pure devil let loose on the Church of Christ and the awakening liberty of England. But some innocent soul will ask me next whether there has ever been any other monster on the face of the earth like Judge Jeffreys; and whether by any possibility there are any such monsters anywhere in our own day. Yes, truth compels me to reply. Yes, there are, plenty, too many. Only their environment, nowadays, as our naturalists say, does not permit them to grow to such strength and dimensions as those of James Stuart, and George Jeffreys, his favourite judge. At the same time, be not deceived by your own deceitful heart, nor by any other deceiver’s smooth speeches. Judge Jeffreys is in yourself, only circumstances have not yet let him fully show himself in you. Still, if you look close enough and deep enough into your own hearts, you will see the same wicked light glancing sometimes there that used so to terrify Judge Jeffreys’ prisoners when they saw it in his wicked eyes. If you lay your ear close enough to your own heart, you will sometimes hear something of that same hiss with which that human serpent sentenced to torture and to death the men and the women who would not submit to his command. The same savage laughter also will sometimes all but escape your lips as you think of how your enemy has been made to suffer in body and in estate. O yes, the very same hell-broth that ran for blood in Judge Jeffreys’ heart is in all our hearts also; and those who have the least of its poison left in their hearts will be the foremost to confess its presence, and to hate and condemn and bewail themselves on account of its terrible dregs.

HATE-GOOD is an awful enough name for any human being to bear. Those who really know what goodness is, and then, what hatred is,—they will feel how awful a thing it is for any man to hate goodness. But there is something among us sinful men far more awful than even that, and that is to hate God. The carnal mind, writes the apostle Paul to the Romans—and it is surely the most terrible sentence that often terrible enough apostle ever wrote—the carnal mind is enmity against God. And Dr. John Owen annotating on that sentence is equally terrible. The carnal mind, he says, has ‘chosen a great enemy indeed.’ And having mentioned John Owen, will you let me once more

beseech all students of divinity, that is, all students, amongst other things, of the desperate depravity of the human heart, to read John Owen's sixth volume till they have it by heart,—by a broken, believing heart. Owen On Indwelling Sin is one of the greatest works of the great Puritan period. It is a really great, and as we nowadays say, a truly scientific work to the bargain. But all that by the way. Yes, this carnal heart that is still left in every one of us has chosen a great enemy, and it would need both strong and faithful allies in order to fight him. The hatred that His Son also met with when He was in this world is one of the most hateful pages of this hateful world's hateful history. He knew His own heart towards His enemies, and thus He was able to say to the Searcher of Hearts with His dying breath, They hated Me without a cause. Truly our hatred is hottest when it is most unjust.

'Look to yourselves,' wrote the apostle John to the elect lady and her children. Yes; let us all look sharply and suspiciously to ourselves in this matter now in hand, and we shall not need John Owen nor anybody else to discover to us the hatred and the hatefulness of our own hearts. Look to yourselves, and the work of the law will soon be fulfilled in you. Homo homini lupus, taught an old philosopher who had studied moral philosophy not in books so much as in his own heart. 'Is no man naturally good?' asked innocent Lady Macleod of Dunvegan Castle at her guest, Dr. Samuel Johnson. 'No, madam, no more than a wolf.' That is quite past all question with all those who either in natural morals or in revealed religion look to and know and characterise themselves. We have all an inborn propensity to dislike one another, and a very small provocation will suddenly blow that banked-up furnace into a flame. It is ever present with me, says self-examining Paul, and hence its so sudden and so destructive outbreaks. So the written or the printed name of our enemy, his image in our mind, his passing step, his figure out of the window; his wife, his child, his carriage, his cart in the street, anything, everything will stir up our heart at the man we do not like. And the whole of our so honest Bible, our present text, and the illustrations of our text in Judge Jeffreys' and Judge Hate-good's courts, all go to show that the better a man is the more sometimes will we hate him. Good men, better men than we are, men who in public life and in private life pursue great and good ends, of necessity cross and go counter to us in our pursuit of small, selfish, evil ends, and of necessity we hate them. For, cross a selfish sinner sufficiently and you have a very devil—as many good men, if they knew it, have in us. Again, good men who come into contact with us cannot help seeing our bad lives, our tempers, our selfishness, our public and private vices; and we see that they see us, and we cannot love those whose averted eye so goes to our conscience. And not only in the hatred of good men, but if you know of God how to watch yourselves, you will find yourselves out every day also in the hatred of good movements, good causes, good institutions, and good works. There are doctors who would far rather hear of their rival's patient expiring in his hands than hear their rival's success trumpeted through all the town. There are ministers, also, who would rather that the masses of the city and the country sank yet deeper into improvidence and drink and neglect of ordinances than that they were rescued by any other church than their own. They hate to hear of the successes of another church. There are party politicians who would rather that the ship of the state ran on the rocks both in her home and her foreign policy than that the opposite party should steer her amid a nation's cheers into harbour. And so of good news. I will stake the divine truth of this evening's Scriptures, and of their historical and imaginative illustrations, on the feelings, if you know how to observe, detect, characterise, and confess them,—the feelings, I say, that will rise in your heart to-morrow morning when you read what is good news to other men, even to good men, and to the families and family interests of

good men. It does not matter one atom into what profession, office, occupation, interest you track the corrupt heart of man, as sure as a substance casts a shadow, so sure will you find your own selfish heart hating goodness when the goodness does not serve or flatter you.

Now, though they will never be many, yet there must be some men among us, one here and another there, who have so looked at and found out themselves. I can well believe that some men here came up to this house to-night trembling in their heart all the way. They felt the very advertisement go through them like a knife: they felt that they were summoned up hither almost by name as to judgment. For they feel every day, though they have never told their feelings to any, that they have this horrible heart deep-seated within them to love evil and to hate good. They gnash their teeth at themselves as they catch themselves rejoicing in iniquity. They feel their hearts expanding, and they know that their faces shine, when you tell them evil tidings. They sicken and lose heart and sit solitary when you carry to them a good report. They feel as John Bunyan felt, that no one but the devil can equal them in pollution of heart. And their wonder sometimes is that the Searcher of Hearts does not drive them down where devils dwell and hate God and man and one another. They look around them when the penitential psalm is being sung, and they smile bitterly to themselves. O people of God, they say, you do not know what you are saying. Leave that psalm to me. I can sing it. I can tell to God what He knows about sin, and about sin in the heart. Stand away back from me, that man says, for I am a leper. The chief of sinners is beside you. A whited sepulchre stands open beside you.—Stop now, O hating and hateful man, and let me speak for a single moment before we separate. Before you say any more about yourself, and before you leave the house of God, lift up your broken heart and with all your might bless God that He has opened your eyes and taught you how to look at yourself and how to hate yourself. There are hundreds of honest Christian men and women in this house at this moment to whom God has not done as, in His free grace, He has done to you. For He has not only begun a good work in you, but He has begun that special and peculiar work which, when it goes on to perfection, makes a great and an eminent saint of God. To know your own heart as you evidently know it, and to hate it as you say you hate it, and to hunger after a clean heart as, with every breath, you hunger,—all that, if you would only believe it, sets you, or will yet set you, high up among the people of God. Be comforted; it is your bounden duty to be comforted. God deserves it at your hands that you be more than comforted amid such unmistakable signs of His eminent grace to you. And be patient under your exceptional sanctification. Rome was not built in a day. You cannot reverse the awful law of your sanctification. You cannot be saved by Jesus Christ and His Holy Spirit without seeing yourself, and you cannot see yourself without hating yourself, and you cannot begin to hate yourself without all your hatred henceforth turning against yourself. You are deep in the red-hot bosom of the refiner’s fire. And when you are once sufficiently tried by the Divine Refiner of Souls, He will in His own good time and way bring you out as gold. Be patient, therefore, till the coming of the Lord. And say continually amid all your increasing knowledge of yourself, and amid all your increasing hatred of yourself, ‘As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness.’

# 020. Faithful in Vanity Fair

XX FAITHFUL IN VANITY FAIR ‘Be thou faithful.’—Revelation 2:10. The breadth of John Bunyan’s mind, the largeness of his heart, and the tolerance of his temper all come excellently out in his fine portrait of Faithful. New beginners in personal religion, when they first take up The Pilgrim’s Progress in earnest, always try to find out something in themselves that shall somewhat correspond to the recorded experience of Christian, the chief pilgrim. And they are afraid that all is not right with them unless they, like him, have had, to begin with, a heavy burden on their back. They look for something in their religious life that shall answer to the Slough of Despond also, to the Hill Difficulty, to the House Beautiful, and, especially and indispensably, to the place somewhat ascending with a cross upon it and an open sepulchre beneath it. And because they cannot always find all these things in themselves in the exact order and in the full power in which they are told of Christian in Bunyan’s book, they begin to have doubts about themselves as to whether they are true pilgrims at all. But here is Faithful, with whom Christian held such sweet and confidential discourse, and yet he had come through not a single one of all these things. The two pilgrims had come from the same City of Destruction indeed, and they had met at the gate of Vanity and passed through Vanity Fair together, but, till they embraced one another again in the Celestial City, that was absolutely all the experience they had in common. Faithful had never had any such burden on his back as that was which had for so long crushed Christian to the earth. And the all but complete absence of such a burden may have helped to let Faithful get over the Slough of Despond dry shod. He had the good lot to escape Sinai also and the Hill Difficulty, and his passing by the House Beautiful and not making the acquaintance of Discretion and Prudence and Charity may have had something to do with the fact that one named Wanton had like to have done him such a mischief. His remarkable experiences, however, with Adam the First, with Moses, and then with the Man with holes in His hands, all that makes up a page in Faithful’s autobiography we could ill have spared. His encounter with Shame also, and soon afterwards with Talkative, are classical passages in his so individual history. Altogether, it would be almost impossible for us to imagine two pilgrims talking so heartily together, and yet so completely unlike one another. A very important lesson surely as to how we should abstain from measuring other men by ourselves, as well as ourselves by other men; an excellent lesson also as to how we should learn to allow for all possible varieties among good men, both in their opinions, their experiences, and their attainments. True Puritan as the author of The Pilgrim’s Progress is, he is no Procrustes. He does not cut down all his pilgrims to one size, nor does he clip them all into one pattern. They are all thinking men, but they are not all men of one way of thinking. John Bunyan is as fresh as Nature herself, and as free and full as Holy Scripture herself in the variety, in the individuality, and even in the idiosyncrasy of his spiritual portrait gallery.

Vanity Fair is one of John Bunyan’s universally-admitted masterpieces. The very name of the fair is one of his happiest strokes. Thackeray’s famous book owes half its popularity to the happy name he borrowed from John Bunyan. Thackeray’s author’s heart must have leaped in his bosom when Vanity Fair struck him as a title for his great satire. ‘Then I saw in my dream that when they

were got out of the wilderness they presently saw a town before them, and the name of that town is Vanity, and at that town there is a fair kept called Vanity Fair. The fair is kept all the year long, and it beareth the name of Vanity Fair, because the town where it is kept is lighter than Vanity. And, also, because all that is sold there is vanity. As is the saying of the wise, All that cometh is vanity. The fair is no new erected business, but a thing of ancient standing: I will show you the original of it. About five thousand years ago there were pilgrims walking to the Celestial City, as these two honest persons now are, and Beelzebub, Apollyon, and Legion, with their companions, perceiving that by the path that the pilgrims made, that their way to the city lay through this town of Vanity, they contrived there to set up a fair: a fair wherein should be sold all sorts of vanity, and that it should last all the year long. Therefore at this fair are all such merchandise sold as houses, lands, trades, places, honours, preferments, titles, countries, kingdoms, pleasures, and delights of all sorts, as wives, husbands, children, masters, servants, lives, blood, bodies, souls, silver, gold, precious stones, and what not. And, moreover, at this fair at all times there is to be seen juggling, cheats, games, plays, fools, apes, knaves, and rogues, and that of every kind.' And then our author goes on to tell us the names of the various streets and rows where such and such wares are vended. And from that again he goes on to tell how the Prince of princes Himself went at one time through this same fair, and that upon a fair day too, and how the lord of the fair himself came and took Him from street to street to try to get Him induced to cheapen and buy some of the vain merchandise. But as it turned out He had no mind to the merchandise in question, and He therefore passed through the town without laying out so much as one farthing upon its vanities. The fair, therefore, you will see, is of long standing and a very great fair. Now, our two pilgrims had heard of all that, they remembered also what Evangelist had told them about the fair, and so they buttoned up their pockets and pushed through the booths in the hope of getting out at the upper gate before any one had time to speak to them. But that was not possible, for they were soon set upon by the men of the fair, who cried after them: 'Hail, strangers, look here, what will you buy?' 'We buy the truth only,' said Faithful, 'and we do not see any of that article of merchandise set out on any of your stalls.' And from that began a hubbub that ended in a riot, and the riot in the apprehension and shutting up in a public cage of the two innocent pilgrims. Lord Hate-good was the judge on the bench of Vanity in the day of their trial, and the three witnesses who appeared in the witness-box against the two prisoners were Envy, Superstition, and Pickthank. The twelve jurymen who sat on their case were Mr. Blindman, Mr. No-good, Mr. Malice, Mr. Love-lust, Mr. Live-loose, Mr. Heady, Mr. High-mind, Mr. Enmity, Mr. Liar, Mr. Cruelty, Mr. Hate-light, and Mr. Implacable,—Mr. Blindman to be the foreman. And it was before these men that Faithful was brought forth to his trial in order to his condemnation. And very soon after his trial Faithful came to his end. 'Now I saw that there stood behind the multitude a chariot and a couple of horses waiting for Faithful, who (so soon as his adversaries had despatched him) was taken up into it, and straightway was carried up through the clouds, with sound of trumpet, the nearest way to the Celestial gate.'

Now, I cannot tell you how it was, I cannot account for it to myself, but it is nevertheless absolutely true that as I was reading my author last week and was meditating my present exposition, it came somehow into my mind, and I could not get it out of my mind, that there is a great and a close similarity between John Bunyan's Vanity Fair and a general election. And, all I could do to keep the whole thing out of my mind, one similarity after another would leap up into my mind and would not be put out of it. I protest that I did not go out to seek for such similarities, but the more I

frowned on them the thicker they came. And then the further question arose as to whether I should write them down or no; and then much more, as to whether I should set them out before my people or no. As you will easily believe, I was immediately in a real strait as to what I should do. I saw on the one side what would be sure to be said by ill-natured people and people of a hasty judgment. And I saw with much more anxiety what would be felt even when they restrained themselves from saying it by timid and cautious and scrupulous people. I had the full fear of all such judges before my eyes; but, somehow, something kept this before my eyes also, that, as Evangelist met the two pilgrims just as they were entering the fair, so, for anything I knew to the contrary, it might be of God, that I also, in my own way, should warn my people of the real and special danger that their souls will be in for the next fortnight. And as I thought of it a procession of people passed before me all bearing to this day the stains and scars they had taken on their hearts and their lives and their characters at former general elections. And, like Evangelist, I felt a divine desire taking possession of me to do all I could to pull my people out of gunshot of the devil at this election. And, then, when I read again how both the pilgrims thanked Evangelist for his exhortation, and told him withal that they would have him speak further to them about the dangers of the way, I said at last to myself, that the thanks of one true Christian saved in anything and in any measure from the gun of the devil are far more to be attended to by a minister than the blame and the neglect of a hundred who do not know their hour of temptation and will not be told it. And so I took my pen and set down some similarities between Vanity Fair and the approaching election, with some lessons to those who are not altogether beyond being taught.

Well, then, in the first place, the only way to the Celestial City ran through Vanity Fair; by no possibility could the advancing pilgrims escape the temptations and the dangers of the fatal fair. He that will go to the Celestial City and yet not go through Vanity Fair must needs go out of the world. And so it is with the temptations and trials of the next ten days. We cannot get past them. They are laid down right across our way. And to many men now in this house the next ten days will be a time of simply terrible temptation. If I had been quite sure that all my people saw that and felt that, I would not have introduced here to-night what some of them, judging too hastily, will certainly call this so secular and unseemly subject. But I am so afraid that many not untrue, and in other things most earnest men amongst us, do not yet know sufficiently the weakness and the evil of their own hearts, that I wish much, if they will allow me, to put them on their guard. ‘’Tis hard,’ said Contrite, who was a householder and had a vote in the town of Vanity, ‘’tis hard keeping our hearts and our spirits in any good order when we are in a cumbered condition. And you may be sure that we are full of hurry at fair-time. He that lives in such a place as this is, and that has to do with such as we have to do with, has need of an item to caution him to take heed every hour of the day.’ Now, if all my people, and all this day’s communicants, were only contrite enough, I would leave them to the hurry of the approaching election with much more comfort. But as it is, I wish to give them such an item as I am able to caution them for the next ten days. Let them know, then, that their way for the next fortnight lies, I will not say through a fair of jugglings and cheatings, carried on by apes and knaves, but, to speak without figure, their way certainly lies through what will be to many of them a season of the greatest temptation to the very worst of all possible sins—to anger and bitterness and ill-will; to no end of evil-thinking and evil-speaking; to the breaking up of lifelong friendships; and to widespread and lasting damage to the cause of Christ, which is the cause of truth and love, meekness and a heavenly mind. Now, amid all that, as Evangelist said to the two pilgrims, look well to your own hearts. Let none of all these evil things enter your heart from the

outside, and let none of all these evil things come out of your hearts from the inside. Set your faces like a flint from the beginning against all evil-speaking and evil-thinking. Let your own election to the kingdom of heaven be always before you, and walk worthy of it; and amid all the hurry of things seen and temporal, believe steadfastly concerning the things that are eternal, and walk worthy of them.

‘We buy the truth and we sell it not again for anything,’was the reply of the two pilgrims to every stall-keeper as they passed up the fair, and this it was that made them to be so hated and hunted down by the men of the fair. And, in like manner, there is nothing more difficult to get hold of at an election time than just the very truth. All the truth on any question is not very likely to be found put forward in the programme of any man or any party, and, even if it were, a general election is not the best time for you to find it out. ‘I design the search after truth to be the one business of my life,’ wrote the future Bishop Butler at the age of twenty-one. And whether you are to be a member of Parliament or a silent voter for a member of Parliament, you, too, must love truth and search for her as for hid treasure from your youth up. You must search for all kinds of truth,—historical, political, scientific, and religious,—with much reading, much observation, and much reflection. And those who have searched longest and dug deepest will always be found to be the most temperate, patient, and forbearing with those who have not yet found the truth. I do not know who first said it, but he was a true disciple of Socrates and Plato who first said it. ‘Plato,’he said, ‘is my friend, and Socrates is my friend, but the truth is much more my friend.’ There is a thrill of enthusiasm, admiration and hope that goes through the whole country and comes down out of history as often as we hear or read of some public man parting with all his own past, as well as with all his leaders and patrons and allies and colleagues in the present, and taking his solitary way out after the truth. Many may call that man Quixotic, visionary, unpractical, imprudent, and he may be all that and more, but to follow conscience and the love of truth even when they are for the time leading him wrong is noble, and is every way far better both for himself and for the cause he serves, than if he were always found following his leaders loyally and even walking in the way of righteousness with the love of self and the love of party at bottom ruling his heart. How healthful and how refreshing at an election time it is to hear a speech replete with the love of the truth, full knowledge of the subject, and with the dignity, the good temper, the respect for opponents, and the love of fair play that full knowledge of the whole subject is so well fitted to bring with it! And next to hearing such a speaker is the pleasure of meeting such a hearer or such a reader at such a time. Now, I want such readers and such hearers, if not such speakers, to be found all the next fortnight among my office-bearers and my people. Be sure you say to some of your political opponents something like this:—‘I do not profess to read all the speeches that fill the papers at present. I do not read all the utterances made even on my own side, and much less all the utterances made on your side. But there is one of your speakers I always read, and I almost always find him instructive and impressive, a gentleman, if not a Christian. He is fair, temperate, frank, bold, and independent; and, to my mind at least, he always throws light on these so perplexing questions.’ Now, if you have the intelligence and the integrity and the fair-mindedness to say something like that to a member of the opposite party you have poured oil on the waters of party; nay, you are in that a wily politician, for you have almost, just in saying that, won over your friend to your own side. So noble is the love of truth, and so potent is the high-principled pursuit and the fearless proclamation of the truth. A general election is a trying time to all kinds of public men, but it is perhaps most trying of all to Christian ministers. Unless they are to disfranchise themselves and are to detach

and shut themselves in from all interest in public affairs altogether, an election time is to our ministers, beyond any other class of citizens perhaps, a peculiarly trying time. How they are to escape the Scylla of cowardice and the contempt of all free and true men on the one hand, and the Charybdis of pride and self-will and scorn of other men's opinions and wishes on the other, is no easy dilemma to our ministers. Some happily constituted and happily circumstanced ministers manage to get through life, and even through political life, without taking or giving a wound in all their way. They are so wise and so watchful; they are so inoffensive, unprovoking, and conciliatory; and even where they are not always all that, they have around them sometimes a people who are so patient and tolerant and full of the old-fashioned respect for their minister that they do not attempt to interfere with him. Then, again, some ministers preach so well, and perform all their pastoral work so well, that they make it unsafe and impossible for the most censorious and intolerant of their people to find fault with them. But all our ministers are not like that. And all our congregations are not like that. And those of our ministers who are not like that must just be left to bear that which their past unwisdom or misfortune has brought upon them. Only, if they have profited by their past mistakes or misfortunes, a means of grace, and an opportunity of better playing the man is again at their doors. I am sure you will all join with me in the prayer that all our ministers, as well as all their people, may come well out of the approaching election.

There is yet one other class of public men, if I may call them so, many of whom come almost worse out of an election time than even our ministers, and that class is composed of those, who, to continue the language of Vanity Fair, keep the cages of the fair. I wish I had to-night, what I have not, the ear of the conductors of our public journals. For, what an omnipotence in God's providence to this generation for good or evil is theirs! If they would only all consider well at election times, and at all times, who they put into their cages and for what reason; if they would only all ask what can that man's motives be for throwing such dirt at his neighbour; if they would only all set aside all the letters they will get during the next fortnight that are avowedly composed on the old principle of calumniating boldly in the certainty that some of it will stick, what a service they would do to the cause of love and truth and justice, which is, surely, after all, their own cause also! The very best papers sin sadly in this respect when their conductors are full for the time of party passion. And it is inexpressibly sad when a reader sees great journals to which he owes a lifelong debt of gratitude absolutely poisoned under his very eyes with the malignant spirit of untruthful partisanship. But so long as our public cages are so kept, let those who are exposed in them resolve to imitate Christian and Faithful, who behaved themselves amid all their ill-usage yet more wisely, and received all the ignominy and shame that was cast upon them with so much meekness and patience that it actually won to their side several of the men of the fair. My brethren, this is the last time this season that I shall be able to speak to you from this pulpit; and, perhaps, the last time altogether. But, if it so turns out, I shall not repent that the last time I spoke to you, and that, too, immediately after the communion table, the burden of my message was the burden of my Master's message after the first communion table. 'If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them. A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another. Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be My disciples. These things have I spoken unto you that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. Know ye what I have done unto you? Ye call Me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am.'

# 021. By-Ends

XXI

BY-ENDS ‘Ye seek Me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves.’—Our Lord. In no part of John Bunyan’s ingenious book is his strong sense and his sarcastic and humorous vein better displayed than just in his description of By-ends, and in the full and particular account he gives of the kinsfolk and affinity of By-ends. Is there another single stroke in all sacred literature better fitted at once to teach the gayest and to make the gravest smile than just John Bunyan’s sketch of By-ends’ great-grandfather, the founder of the egoistical family of Fairspeech, who was, to begin with, but a waterman who always looked one way and rowed another? By-ends’ wife also is a true helpmate to her husband. She was my Lady Feigning’s favourite daughter, under whose nurture and example the young lady had early come to a quite extraordinary pitch of good breeding; and now that she was a married woman, she and her husband had, so their biographer tells us, two firm points of family religion in which they were always agreed and according to which they brought up all their children, namely, never to strive too much against wind and tide, and always to watch when Religion was walking on the sunny side of the street in his silver slippers, and then at once to cross over and take his arm. But abundantly amusing and entertaining as John Bunyan is at the expense of By-ends and his family and friends, he has far other aims in view than the amusement and entertainment of his readers. Bunyan uses all his great gifts of insight and sense and humour and scorn so as to mark unmistakably the road and to guide the progress of his reader’s soul to God, his chiefest end and his everlasting portion.

It was no small part of our Lord’s life of humiliation on the earth,—much more so than His being born in a low condition and being made under the law,—to have to go about all His days among men, knowing in every case and on every occasion what was in man. It was a real humiliation to our Lord to see those watermen of the sea of Tiberias sweating at their oars as they rowed round and round the lake after Him; and His humiliation came still more home to Him as often as He saw His own disciples disputing and pressing who should get closest to Him while for a short season He walked in the sunshine; just as it was His estate of exaltation already begun, when He could enter into Himself and see to the bottom of His own heart, till He was able to say that it was His very meat and drink to do His father’s will, and to finish the work His Father had given Him to do. The men of Capernaum went out after our Lord in their boats because they had eaten of the multiplied loaves and hoped to do so again. Zebedee’s children had forsaken all and followed our Lord, because they counted to sit the one on His right hand and the other on His left hand in His soon-coming kingdom. The pain and the shame all that cost our Lord, we can only remotely imagine. But as for Himself, our Lord never once had to blush in secret at His own motives. He never once had to hang down His head at the discovery of His own selfish aims and by-ends. Happy man! The thought of what He should eat or what He should drink or wherewithal He should be clothed never troubled His head. The thought of success, as His poor-spirited disciples counted success, the thought of honour and power and praise, never once rose in His heart. All these

things, and all things like them, had no attraction for Him; they awoke nothing but indifference and contempt in him. But to please His Father and to hear from time to time His Father's voice saying that He was well pleased with His beloved Son,—that was better than life to our Lord. To find out and follow every new day His Father's mind and will, and to finish every night another part of His Father's appointed work,—that was more than His necessary food to our Lord. The great schoolmen, as they meditated on these deep matters, had a saying to the effect that all created things take their true goodness or their true evil from the end they aim at. And thus it was that our Lord, aiming only at His Father's ends and never at His own, both manifested and attained to a Divine goodness, just as the greedy crowds of Galilee and the disputatious disciples, as long and as far as they made their belly or their honour their end and aim, to that extent fell short of all true goodness, all true satisfaction, and all true acceptance.

By-ends was so called because he was full of low, mean, selfish motives, and of nothing else. All that this wretched creature did, he did with a single eye to himself. The best things that he did became bad things in his self-seeking hands. His very religion stank in those men's nostrils who knew what was in his heart. By-ends was one of our Lord's whited sepulchres. And so deep, so pervading, and so abiding is this corrupt taint in human nature, that long after a man has had his attention called to it, and is far on to a clean escape from it, he still—nay, he all the more—languishes and faints and is ready to die under it. Just hear what two great servants of God have said on this humiliating and degrading matter. Writing on this subject with all his wonted depth and solemnity, Hooker says, 'Even in the good things that we do, how many defects are there intermingled! For God in that which is done, respecteth especially the mind and intention of the doer. Cut off, then, all those things wherein we have regarded our own glory, those things which we do to please men, or to satisfy our own liking, those things which we do with any by-respect, and not sincerely and purely for the love of God, and a small score will serve for the number of our righteous deeds. Let the holiest and best things we do be considered. We are never better affected to God than when we pray; yet, when we pray, how are our affections many times distracted! How little reverence do we show to that God unto whom we speak! How little remorse of our own miseries! How little taste of the sweet influence of His tender mercy do we feel! The little fruit we have in holiness, it is, God knoweth, corrupt and unsound; we put no confidence at all in it, we challenge nothing in the world for it, we dare not call God to a reckoning as if we had Him in our debt-books; our continued suit to Him is, and must be, to bear with our infirmities, and to pardon our offences.' And Thomas Shepard, a divine of a very different school, as we say, but a saint and a scholar equal to the best, and indeed with few to equal him, thus writes in his Spiritual Experiences:—'On Sabbath morning I saw that I had a secret eye to my own name in all that I did, for which I judged myself worthy of death. On another Sabbath, when I came home, I saw the deep hypocrisy of my heart, that in my ministry I sought to comfort and quicken others, that the glory might reflect on me as well as on God. On the evening before the sacrament I saw that mine own ends were to procure honour, pleasure, gain to myself, and not to the Lord, and I saw how impossible it was for me to seek the Lord for Himself, and to lay up all my honour and all my pleasures in Him. On Sabbath-day, when the Lord had given me some comfortable enlargements, I searched my heart and found my sin. I saw that though I did to some extent seek Christ's glory, yet I sought it not alone, but my own glory too. After my Wednesday sermon I saw the pride of my heart acting thus, that presently my heart would look out and ask whether I had done well or ill. Hereupon I saw my vileness to make men's opinions my rule. The Lord thus gave me some

glimpse of myself and a good day that was to me.' One would think that this was By-ends himself climbed up into the ministry. And so it was. And yet David Brainerd could write on his deathbed about Thomas Shepard in this way. 'He valued nothing in religion that was not done to the glory of God, and, oh! that others would lay the stress of religion here also. His method of examining his ends and aims and the temper of his mind both before and after preaching, is an excellent example for all who bear the sacred character. By this means they are like to gain a large acquaintance with their own hearts, as it is evident he had with his.' But it is not those who bear the sacred character of the ministry alone who are full of by-ends. We all are. You all are. And there is not one all-reaching, all-exposing, and all-humbling way of salvation appointed for ministers, and another, a more external, superficial, easy, and self-satisfied way for their people. No. Not only must the ambitious and disputing disciples enter into themselves and become witnesses and judges and executioners within themselves before they can be saved or be of any use in the salvation of others—not only they, but the fishermen of the Lake of Tiberias, they also must open their hearts to these stabbing words of Christ, and see how true it is that they had followed Him for loaves and fishes, and not for His grace and His truth. And only when they had seen and submitted to that humiliating self-discovery would their true acquaintance with Christ and their true search after Him begin. Come, then, all my brethren, and not ministers only, waken up to the tremendous importance of that which you have utterly neglected, it may be ostentatiously neglected, up to this hour,—the true nature, the true character, of your motives and your ends. Enter into yourselves. Be not strangers and foreigners to yourselves. Let not the day of judgment be any surprise to you. Witness against, judge, and execute yourselves, and that especially because of your by-aims and by-ends. Take up the touchstone of truth and lay it upon your most secret heart. Do not be afraid to discover how double-minded and deceitful your heart is. Hunt your heart down. Track it to its most secret lair. Put its true name, and continue to put its true name, upon the main motive of your life. Extort an answer by boot and by wheel, only extort an answer from the inner man of the heart, to the torturing question as to what is his treasure, his hope, his deepest wish, his daily dream. Watch not against any outward enemy, keep all your eyes and all your ears to your own thoughts. God keeps His awful eye on your thoughts. His eye goes at every glance to that great depth in you. Even His all-seeing eye can go no deeper into you than to your secret thoughts. Go you as deep as God goes, and you will be a wise man; go as deep and as often as He does, and then you will soon come to see eye to eye with God, not only about your own thoughts, but about His thoughts too, and about everything else. Till you begin to watch your own thoughts, and to watch them especially in their aims and their ends, you will have no idea what that moral and spiritual life is that all God's saints live; that life that Christ lived, and which He this night summons you all to enter henceforth upon.

It is such a happy fact that it cannot be too often told, that in the things of the soul really and truly to know and feel the disease is to have already entered on the remedy. You will not feel, indeed, that you have entered on the remedy; but that does not much matter so long as you really have. And there is nothing more certain among all the certainties of divine things than that he who feels himself to be in death and hell with his heart so full of by-ends is all the time as far from death and hell as any one can be who is still on this side of heaven. When a man's whole will and desire is set on God, as is now and then the case, that man is perilously near a sudden and an abundant entrance into that life and that presence where his heart has for so long been. When a man is half mad with his own heart, as Thomas Shepard for one was, that stranger on the earth is at last

within a step of that happy coast where all wishes end. Watch that man. Take a last look at that man. He will soon be taken out of your sight. Ere ever he is himself aware, he will be rapt up into that life where saints and angels seek not their own will, labour not for their own profit or promotion, listen not for their own praises, but find their blessedness, the half of which had not here been told them, in glorifying God and in enjoying Him for ever.

You must all have heard the name of a book that has helped many a saint now in glory to the examination and the keeping of his own heart. I refer to Jeremy Taylor's Holy Living and Dying. Take two or three of Taylor's excellent rules with you as you go down from God's house to-night. 'If you would really live a holy life and die a holy death,' says Taylor, 'learn to reflect in your every action on your secret end in it; consider with yourself why you do it, and what you propound to yourself for your reward. Pray importunately that all your purposes and all your motives may be sanctified. Renew and rekindle your purest purposes by such ejaculations as these: "Not unto us, O God, not unto us, but to Thy name be all the praise. I am in this Thy servant; let all the gain be Thine." In great and eminent actions let there be a special and peculiar act of resignation or oblation made to God; and in smaller and more frequent actions fail not to secure a pious habitual intention.' And so on. And above all, I will add, labour and pray till you feel in your heart that you love God with a supreme and an ever-growing love. And, far as that may be above you as yet, impress your heart with the assurance that such a love is possible to you also, and that you can never be safe or happy till you attain to that love. Other men once as far from the supreme love of God as you are have afterwards attained to it; and so will you if you continue to set it before yourself. Think often on God; read the best books about God; call continually upon God; hold an intimate communion with God, till you feel that you also actually and certainly love God. And though you begin with loving God because He first loved you, you will, beginning with that, rise far above that till you come to love Him for what He is in Himself as well as for what He has done for you. 'I have done this in order to have a seat in the Academy,' said a young man, handing the solution of a problem to an old philosopher. 'Sir,'was the reply, 'with such dispositions you will never earn a seat there. Science must be loved for its own sake, and not for any advantage to be derived from it.' And much more is that true of the highest of all the sciences, the knowledge and the love of God. Love Him, then, till you arrive at loving Him for Himself, and then you shall be for ever delivered from all self-love and by-ends, and shall both glorify and enjoy God for ever. As all they now do who engaged their hearts on earth to the service and the love and the enjoyment of God is such psalms and prayers as these: 'Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is no one on earth that I desire beside Thee. How excellent is Thy loving-kindness, O God! The children of men shall put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings. For with Thee is the fountain of life, and in Thy light shall we see light. As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness. Thou wilt show me the path of life; in Thy presence is fullness of joy, and at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.'

Chapter 22

# 022. Giant Despair

XXII

GIANT DESPAIR ‘A wounded spirit who can bear?’—Solomon.

Every schoolboy has Giant Despair by heart. The rough road after the meadow of lilies, the stile into By-Path-Meadow, the night coming on, the thunder and the lightning and the waters rising amain, Giant Despair’s apprehension of Christian and Hopeful, their dreadful bed in his dungeon from Wednesday morning till Saturday night, how they were famished with hunger and beaten with a grievous crab-tree cudgel till they were not able to turn, with many other sufferings too many and too terrible to be told which they endured till Saturday about midnight, when they began to pray, and continued in prayer till almost break of day;—John Bunyan is surely the best story-teller in all the world. And, then, over and above that, as often as a boy reads Giant Despair and his dungeon to his father and mother, the two hearers are like Christian and Hopeful when the Delectable shepherds showed them what had happened to some who once went in at By-Path stile: the two pilgrims looked one upon another with tears gushing out, but yet said nothing to the shepherds.

John Bunyan’s own experience enters deeply into these terrible pages. In composing these terrible pages, Bunyan writes straight and bold out of his own heart and conscience. The black and bitter essence of a whole black and bitter volume is crushed into these four or five bitter pages. Last week I went over Grace Aboundingagain, and marked the passages in which its author describes his own experiences of doubt, diffidence, and despair, till I gave over counting the passages, they are so many. I had intended to illustrate the passage before us to-night out of the kindred materials that I knew were so abundant in Bunyan’s terrible autobiography, but I had to give up that idea. It would have taken two or three lectures to itself to tell all that Bunyan suffered all his life long from an easily-wounded spirit. The whole book is just Giant Despair and his dungeon, with a gleam here and there of that sunshiny weather that threw the giant into one of his fits, in which he always lost for the time the use of his limbs. Return often, my brethren, to that masterpiece, Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners. I have read it a hundred times, but last week it was as fresh and powerful and consoling as ever to my sin-wounded spirit.

Let me select some of the incidents that offer occasion for a comment or two.

1. And, in the first place, take notice, and lay well to heart, how sudden, and almost instantaneous, is the fall of Christian and Hopeful from the very gate of heaven to the very gate of hell. All the Sabbath and the Monday and the Tuesday before that fatal Wednesday, the two pilgrims had walked with great delight on the banks of a very pleasant river; that river, in fact, which David the King called the river of God, and John, the river of the water of life. They drank also of the water of the river, which was pleasant and enlivening to their weary spirits. On either side of the river was there a meadow curiously beautified with lilies, and it was green all the year long. In this meadow they lay down and slept, for here they might lie down and sleep safely. When they awoke they gathered again of the fruits of the trees, and drank again of the water of the river, and then lay

down again to sleep. Thus they did several days and nights. Now, could you have believed it that two such men as our pilgrims were could be in the enjoyment of all that the first half of the week, and then by their own doing should be in Giant Despair's deepest dungeon before the end of the same week? And yet so it was. And all that is written for the solemn warning of those who are at any time in great enlargement and refreshment and joy in their spiritual life. It is intended for all those who are at any time revelling in a season of revival: those, for example, who are just come home from Keswick or Dunblane, as well as for all those who at home have just made the discovery of some great master of the spiritual life, and who are almost beside themselves with their delight in their divine author. If they are new beginners they will not take this warning well, nor will even all old pilgrims lay it aright to heart; but there it is as plain as the plainest, simplest, and most practical writer in our language could put it.

Behold ye how these crystal streams do glide

To comfort pilgrims by the highway side;

The meadows green, besides their fragrant smell,

Yield dainties for them: And he that can tell

What pleasant fruits, yea leaves, these trees do yield,

Will soon sell all that he may buy this field.

Thus the two pilgrims sang: only, adds our author in a parenthesis, they were not, as yet, at their journey's end.

2. 'Now, I beheld in my dream that they had not journeyed far when the river and the way for a time parted. At which the two pilgrims were not a little sorry.' The two pilgrims could not perhaps be expected to break forth into dancing and singing at the parting of the river and the way, even though they had recollected at that moment what the brother of the Lord says about our counting it all joy when we fall into divers temptations. But it would not have been too much to expect from such experienced pilgrims as they by this time were, that they should have suspected and checked and commanded their sorrow. They should have said something like this to one another: Well, it would have been very pleasant had it been our King's will and way with us that we should have finished the rest of our pilgrimage among the apples and the lilies and on the soft and fragrant bank of the river; but we believe that it must in some as yet hidden way be better for us that the river and our road should part from one another at least for a season. Come, brother, and let us go on till we find out our Master's deep and loving mind. But, instead of saying that, Christian and Hopeful soon became like the children of Israel as they journeyed from Mount Hor, their soul was much discouraged because of the way. And always as they went on they wished for a softer and a better way. And it was so that they very soon came to the very thing they so much wished for. For, what is that on the left hand of the hard road but a stile, and over the stile a meadow as soft to the feet as the meadow of lilies itself? ''Tis just according to my wish,' said Christian; 'here is the easiest going. Come, good Hopeful, and let us go over.' Hopeful: 'But how if the path should lead us out of the way?' 'That's not like,' said the other; 'look, doth it not go along by the wayside?' So Hopeful, being persuaded by his fellow, went after him over the stile.

Call to mind, all you who are delivered and restored pilgrims, that same stile that once seduced you. To keep that stile ever before you is at once a safe and a seemly occupation of mind for any one who has made your mistakes and come through your chastisements. Christian's eyes all his after-days filled with tears, and he turned away his face and blushed scarlet, as often as he suddenly came upon any opening in a wall at all like that opening he here persuaded Hopeful to climb through. It is too much to expect that those who are just mounting the stile, and have just caught sight of the smooth path beyond it, will let themselves be pulled back into the hard and narrow way by any persuasion of ours. Christian put down Hopeful's objection till Hopeful broke out bitterly when the thunder was roaring over his head and he was wading about among the dark waters: 'Oh that I had kept myself in my way!' Are you a little sorry to-night that the river and the way are parting in your life? Is your soul discouraged in you because of the soreness of the way? And as you go do you still wish for some better way than the strait way? And have you just espied a stile on the left hand of your narrow and flinty path, and on looking over it is there a pleasant meadow? And does your companion point out to your satisfaction, and, almost to your good conscience, that the soft road runs right along the hard road, only over the stile and outside the fence? Then, good-bye. For it is all over with you. We shall meet you again, please God; but when we meet you again, your mind and memory will be full of shame and remorse and suffering enough to keep you in songs of repentance for all the rest of your life on earth. Farewell! The Pilgrims now, to gratify the flesh,

Will seek its ease; but oh! how they afresh

Do thereby plunge themselves new grieves into:

Who seek to please the flesh themselves undo.

3. The two transgressors had not gone far on their own way when night came on and with the night a very great darkness. But what soon added to the horror of their condition was that they heard a man fall into a deep pit right before them, and it sounded to them as if he was dashed to pieces by his fall. So they called to know the matter, but there was none to answer, only they heard a groaning. Then said Hopeful: Where are we now? Then was his fellow silent, as mistrusting that he had led Hopeful out of the way. Now, all that also is true to the very life, and has been taken down by Bunyan from the very life. We have all heard men falling and heard them groaning just a little before us after we had left the strait road. They had just gone a little farther wrong than we had as yet gone,—just a very little farther; in some cases, indeed, not so far, when they fell and were dashed to pieces with their fall. It was well for us at that dreadful moment that we heard the same voice saying to us for our encouragement as said to the two trembling transgressors: 'Let thine heart be toward the highway, even the way that thou wentest; turn again.' Now, what is it in which you are at this moment going off the right road? What is that life of disobedience or self-indulgence that you are just entering on? Keep your ears open and you will hear hundreds of men and women falling and being dashed to pieces before you and all around you. Are you falling of late too much under the power of your bodily appetites? It is not one man, nor two, well known to you, who have fallen never to rise again out of that horrible pit. Are you well enough aware that you are being led into bad company? Or, is your companion, who is not a bad man in anything else, leading you, in this and in that, into what at any rate is bad for you? You will soon, unless you cut off your companion like a right hand, be found saying with misguided and overruled Hopeful:

Oh that I had kept me to my right way! And so on in all manner of sin and trespass. Those who have ears to hear such things hear every day one man after another falling through lust or pride or malice or idleness or infidelity, till there is none to answer.

4. ‘All hope abandon’ was the writing that Dante read over the door of hell. And the two prisoners all but abandoned all hope when they found themselves in Giant Despair’s dungeon. Only, Christian, the elder man, had the most distress because their being where they now were lay mostly at his door. All this part of the history also is written in Bunyan’s very heart’s blood. ‘I found it hard work,’ he tells us of himself,‘to pray to God because despair was swallowing me up. I thought I was as with a tempest driven away from God. About this time I did light on that dreadful story of that miserable mortal, Francis Spira, a book that was to my troubled spirit as salt when rubbed into a fresh wound; every groan of that man with all the rest of his actions in his dolours, as his tears, his prayers, his gnashing of teeth, his wringing of hands, was as knives and daggers in my soul, especially that sentence of his was frightful to me: “Man knows the beginning of sin, but who bounds the issues thereof?”’ We never read anything like Spira’s experience and Grace Aboundingand Giant Despair’s dungeon in the books of our day. And why not, do you think? Is there less sin among us modern men, or did such writers as John Bunyan overdraw and exaggerate the sinfulness of sin? Were they wrong in holding so fast as they did hold that death and hell are the sure wages of sin? Has divine justice become less fearful than it used to be to those who rush against it, or is it that we are so much better men? Is our faith stronger and more victorious over doubt and fear? Is it that our hope is better anchored? Whatever the reason is, there can be no question but that we walk in a liberty that our fathers did not always walk in. Whether or no our liberty is not recklessness and licentiousness is another matter. Whether or no it would be a better sign of us if we were better acquainted with doubt and dejection and diffidence, and even despair, is a question it would only do us good to put to ourselves. When we properly attend to these matters we shall find out that, the holier a man is, the more liable he is to the assaults of doubt and fear and even despair. We have whole psalms of despair, so deep was David’s sense of sin, so high were his views of God’s holiness and justice, and so full of diffidence was his wounded heart. And David’s Son, when our sin was laid upon Him, felt the curse and the horror of His state so much that His sweat was in drops of blood, and His cry in the darkness was that His God had forsaken Him. And when our spirits are wounded with our sins, as the spirits of all God’s great saints have always been wounded, we too shall feel ourselves more at home with David and with Asaph, with Spira even, and with Bunyan. Despair is not good, but it is infinitely better than indifference. ‘It is a common saying,’ says South,‘and an observation in divinity, that where despair has slain its thousands, presumption has slain its ten thousands. The agonies of the former are indeed more terrible, but the securities of the latter are far more fatal.’

5. ‘I will,’ says Paul to Timothy, ‘that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without doubting.’And, just as Paul would have it, Christian and Hopeful began to lift up their hands even in the dungeon of Doubting Castle. ‘Well,’we read, ‘on Saturday night about midnight they began to pray, and continued in prayer till almost break of day. Now, before it was day, good Christian, as one half amazed, broke out in this passionate speech: “What a fool,” quoth he, “am I thus to lie in a stinking dungeon when I may as well walk at liberty; I have a key in my bosom, called Promise, that will, I am persuaded, open any lock in all Doubting Castle.” Then said Hopeful: “That’s good news, good brother; pluck it out of thy bosom and try.”’ Then Christian pulled the key out of his

bosom and the bolt gave back, and Christian and Hopeful both came out, and you may be sure they were soon out of the giant's jurisdiction.

Now, I do not know that I can do better at this point, and in closing, than just to tell you about some of that bunch of keys that John Bunyan found from time to time in his own bosom, and which made all his prison doors one after another fly open at their touch. 'About ten o'clock one day, as I was walking under a hedge, full of sorrow and guilt, God knows, and bemoaning myself for my hard hap, suddenly this sentence bolted in upon me: The blood of Christ remits all guilt. Again, when I was fleeing from the face of God, for I did flee from His face, that is, my mind and spirit fled before Him; for by reason of His highness I could not endure; then would the text cry: Return unto Me; it would cry with a very great voice: Return unto me, for I have redeemed thee. And this would make me look over my shoulder behind me to see if I could discern that this God of grace did follow me with a pardon in His hand. Again, the next day, at evening, being under many fears, I went to seek the Lord, and as I prayed, I cried, with strong cries: O Lord, I beseech Thee, show me that Thou hast loved me with an everlasting love. I had no sooner said it but, with sweetness, this returned upon me as an echo or sounding-again, I have loved thee with an everlasting love. Now, I went to bed at quiet; also, when I awaked the next morning it was fresh upon my soul and I believed it . . . Again, as I was then before the Lord, that Scripture fastened on my heart: O man, great is thy faith, even as if one had clapped me on the back as I was on my knees before God . . . At another time I remember I was again much under this question: Whether the blood of Christ was sufficient to save my soul? In which doubt I continued from morning till about seven or eight at night, and at last, when I was, as it were, quite worn out with fear, these words did sound suddenly within my heart: He is able. Methought this word able was spoke so loud unto me and gave such a justle to my fear and doubt as I never had all my life either before that or after . . . Again, one morning, when I was at prayer and trembling under fear, that piece of a sentence dashed in upon me: My grace is sufficient. At this, methought: Oh, how good a thing it is for God to send His word! . . . Again, one day as I was in a meeting of God's people, full of sadness and terror, for my fears were again strong upon me, and as I was thinking that my soul was never the better, these words did with great power suddenly break in upon me: My grace is sufficient for thee, My grace is sufficient for thee, three times together; and, oh! methought that every word was a mighty word unto me; as My, and grace, and sufficient, and for thee. These words were then, and sometimes still are, far bigger words than others are. Again, one day as I was passing in the field, and that, too, with some dashes in my conscience, suddenly this sentence fell upon my soul: Thy righteousness is in heaven. And methought withal I saw, with the eyes of my soul, Jesus Christ at God's right hand. I saw also, moreover, that it was not my good frame of heart that made my righteousness better, nor my bad frame that made my righteousness worse, for my righteousness was Jesus Christ Himself, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever . . . Again, oh, what did I see in that blessed sixth of John: Him that cometh to Me I will in nowise cast out. I should in those days often flounce toward that promise as horses do toward sound ground that yet stick in the mire. Oh! many a pull hath my heart had with Satan for this blessed sixth of John . . . And, again, as I was thus in a muse, that Scripture also came with great power upon my spirit: Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us. Now was I got on high: I saw my self within the arms of Grace and Mercy, and though I was before afraid to think of a dying hour, yet now I cried: Let me die. Now death was lovely and beautiful in my sight; for I saw that we shall never live indeed till we be gone to the other world. Heirs of God, methought, heirs of God! God

himself is the portion of His saints. This did sweetly revive my spirit, and help me to hope in God; which when I had with comfort mused on a while, that word fell with great weight upon my mind: Oh Death, where is thy sting? Oh Grave, where is thy victory? At this I became both well in body and mind at once, for my sickness did presently vanish, and I walked comfortably in my work for God again.'

Such were some of the many keys by the use of which God let John Bunyan so often out of despair into full assurance and out of darkness into light. Which of the promises have been of such help to you? Over what Scriptures have you ever cried out: Oh, how good a thing it is for God to send me His word! Which are the biggest words in all the Bible to you? To what promise did you ever flounce as a horse flounces when he is sticking in the mire? And has any word of God so made God your God that even death itself, since it alone separates you from His presence, is lovely and beautiful in your eyes? Have you a cluster of such keys in your bosom? If you have, take them all out to-night and go over them again with thanksgiving before you sleep.

# 023. Knowledge

XXIII

KNOWLEDGE ‘I will give you pastors after Mine own heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.’ The Delectable Mountains rise out of the heart of Immanuel’s Land. This fine range of far-rolling hills falls away on the one side toward the plain of Destruction, and on the other side toward the land of Beulah and the Celestial City, and the way to the Celestial City runs like a bee-line over these well-watered pastures. Standing on a clear day on the highest peak of the Delectable Mountains, if you have good eyes you can see the hill Difficulty in the far-back distance with a perpetual mist clinging to its base and climbing up its sides, which mist the shepherds say to you rises all the year round off the Slough of Despond, while, beyond that again the heavy smoke of the city of Destruction and the town of Stupidity shuts in the whole horizon. And then, when you turn your back on all that, in favourable states of the weather you can see here and there the shimmer of that river over which there is no bridge; and, then again, so high above the river that it seems to be a city standing in heaven rather than upon the earth, you will see the high towers and shining palace roofs and broad battlements of the New Jerusalem itself. The two travellers should have spent the past three days among the sights of the Delectable Mountains; and they would have done so had not the elder traveller misled the younger. But now that they were set free and fairly on the right road again, the way they had spent the past three days and three nights made the gardens and the orchards and the pastures that ran round the bottom and climbed up the sides of the Delectable Mountains delectable beyond all description to them.

Now, there were on the tops of those mountains certain shepherds feeding their flocks, and they stood by the highway side. The two travellers therefore went up to the shepherds, and leaning upon their staves (as is common with weary travellers when they stand to talk with any by the way), they asked: Whose delectable mountains are these? and whose be the sheep that feed upon them? These mountains, replied the shepherds, are Immanuel’s Land, and they are within sight of the city; the sheep also are His, and He laid down His life for them. After some more talk like this by the wayside, the shepherds, being pleased with the pilgrims, looked very lovingly upon them and said: Welcome to the Delectable Mountains. The shepherds then, whose names were Knowledge, Experience, Watchful, and Sincere, took them by the hand to lead them to their tents, and made them partake of what was ready at present. They said, moreover: We would that you should stay with us a while to be acquainted with us, and yet more to solace yourselves with the cheer of these Delectable Mountains. Then the travellers told them they were content to stay; and so they went to rest that night because it was now very late. The four shepherds lived all summer-time in a lodge of tents well up among their sheep, while their wives and families had their homes all the year round in the land of Beulah. The four men formed a happy fraternity, and they worked among and watched over their Master’s sheep with one united mind. What one of those shepherds could not so well do in the tent or in the fold or out on the hillside, some of the others better did. And what one of them could do to any perfection all the others by one consent left that to him to do. You would have thought that they were made by a perfect miracle to fit into one

another, so harmoniously did they live and work together, and such was the bond of brotherly love that held them together. At the same time, there was one of the happy quaternity who, from his years on the hills, and his services in times of trial and danger, and one thing and another, fell always, and with the finest humility too, into the foremost place, and his name, as you have already heard, was Knowledge. Old Mr. Know-all the children in the villages below ran after him and named him as they clustered round his staff and hid in the great folds of his shepherd's coat.

Now, in all this John Bunyan speaks as a child to children; but, of such children as John Bunyan and his readers is the kingdom of heaven. My very youngest hearer here to-night knows quite well, or, at any rate, shrewdly suspects, that Knowledge was not a shepherd going about with his staff among woolly sheep; nor would the simplest-minded reader of John Bunyan's book go to seek the Delectable Mountains and Immanuel's Land in any geographer's atlas, or on any schoolroom map. Oh, no. I do not need to stop to tell the most guileless of my hearers that old Knowledge was not a shepherd whose sheep were four-footed creatures, but a minister of the gospel, whose sheep are men, women, and children. Nor are the Delectable Mountains any range of hills and valleys of grass and herbs in England or Scotland. The prophet Ezekiel calls them the mountains of Israel; but by that you all know that he had in his mind something far better than any earthly mountain. That prophet of Israel had in his mind the church of God with its synagogues and its sacraments, with all the grace and truth that all these things conveyed from God to the children of Israel. As David also sang in the twenty-third Psalm: 'The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters.'

Knowledge, then, is a minister; but every congregation has not such a minister set over it as Knowledge is. All our college-bred and ordained men are not ministers like Knowledge. This excellent minister takes his excellent name from his great talents and his great attainments. And while all his great talents are his Master's gift to him, his great attainments are all his own to lay out in his Master's service. To begin with, his Master had given His highly-favoured servant a good understanding and a good memory, and many good and suitable opportunities. Now, a good understanding is a grand endowment for a minister, and his ministerial office will all his days afford him opportunity for the best understanding he can bring to it. The Christian ministry, first and last, has had a noble roll of men of a strong understanding. The author of the book now open before us was a man of a strong understanding. John Bunyan had a fine imagination, with great gifts of eloquent, tender, and most heart-winning utterance, but in his case also all that was bottomed in a strong English understanding. Then, again, a good memory is indispensable to a minister of knowledge. You must be content to take a second, a third, or even a lower place still if your Master has withheld from you a good memory. Dr. Goodwin has a passage on this point that I have often turned up when I had again forgotten it. 'Thou mayest have a weak memory, perhaps, yet if it can and doth remember good things as well and better than other things, then it is a sanctified memory, and the defilement of thy memory is healed though the imperfection of it is not; and, though thou art to be humbled for it as a misery, yet thou art not to be discouraged; for God doth not hate thee for it, but pities thee; and the like holds good and may be said as to the want of other like gifts.' You cannot be a man of a commanding knowledge anywhere, and you must be content to take a very subordinate and second place, even in the ministry, unless you have both a good understanding and a good memory; but then, at the last day your Master will not call you and your congregation to an account for what He has not committed to your stewardship. And on that day

that will be something. But not only must ministers of knowledge have a good mind and a good memory; they must also be the most industrious of men. Other men may squander and kill their time as they please, but a minister had as good kill himself at once out of the way of better men unless he is to hoard his hours like gold and jewels. He must read only the best books, and he must read them with the 'pain of attention.' He must read nothing that is not the best. He has not the time. And if he is poor and remote and has not many books, he will have Butler, and let him read Butler's Preface to his Sermons till he has it by heart. The best books are always few, and they must be read over and over again when other men are reading the 'great number of books and papers of amusement that come daily in their way, and which most perfectly fall in with their idle way of reading and considering things.' And, then, such a minister must store up what he reads, if not in a good memory, then in some other pigeon-hole that he has made for himself outside of himself, since his Master has not seen fit to furnish him with such a repository within himself. And, then, after all that,—for a good minister is not made yet,—understanding and memory and industry must all be sanctified by secret prayer many times every day, and then laid out every day in the instruction, impression, and comfort of his people. And, then, that privileged people will be as happy in possessing that man for their minister as the sheep of Immanuel's Land were in having Knowledge set over them for their shepherd. They will never look up without being fed. They will every Sabbath-day be led by green pastures and still waters. And when they sing of the mercies of the Lord to them and to their children, and forget not all His benefits, among the best of their benefits they will not forget to hold up and bless their minister.

But, then, there is, nowadays, so much sound knowledge to be gained, not to speak of so many books and papers of mere pastime and amusement, that it may well be asked by a young man who is to be a minister whether he is indeed called to be like that great student who took all knowledge for his province. Yes, indeed, he is. For, if the minister and interpreter of nature is to lay all possible knowledge under contribution, what must not the minister of Jesus Christ and the interpreter of Scripture and providence and experience and the human heart be able to make the sanctified use of? Yes, all kinds and all degrees of knowledge, to be called knowledge, belong by right and obligation to his office who is the minister and interpreter of Him Who made all things, Who is the Heir of all things, and by Whom all things consist. At the same time, since the human mind has its limits, and since human life has its limits, a minister of all men must make up his mind to limit himself to the best knowledge; the knowledge, that is, that chiefly concerns him,—the knowledge of God so far as God has made Himself known, and the knowledge of Christ. He must be a student of his Bible night and day and all his days. If he has not the strength of understanding and memory to read his Bible easily in the original Hebrew and Greek, let him all the more make up for that by reading it the oftener and the deeper in English. Let him not only read his Bible deeply for his sermons and prayers, lectures and addresses, let him do that all day every day of the week, and then read it all night, and every night of the week, for his own soul. Let every minister know his Bible down to the bottom, and with his Bible his own heart. He who so knows his Bible and with it his own heart has almost books enough. All else is but ostentatious apparatus. When a minister has neither understanding nor memory wherewith to feed his flock, let him look deep enough into his Bible and into his own heart, and then begin out of them to write and speak. And, then, for the outside knowledge of the passing day he will read the newspapers, and though he gives up all the morning to the newspapers, and returns to them again in the evening, his conscience will not upbraid him if he reads as Jonathan Edwards read the newsletters of his

day,—to see how the kingdom of heaven is prospering in the earth, and to pray for its prosperity. And, then, by that time, and when he has got that length, all other kinds of knowledge will have fallen into its own place, and will have taken its own proper proportion of his time and his thought. He was a man of a great understanding and a great memory and great industry who said that he had taken all knowledge for his province. But he was a far wiser man who said that knowledge is not our proper happiness. Our province, he went on to say, is virtue and religion, life and manners: the science of improving the temper and making the heart better. This is the field assigned us to cultivate: how much it has lain neglected is indeed astonishing.

Now, my brethren, two dangers, two simply terrible dangers, arise to every one of you out of all this matter of your ministers and their knowledge. 1. The first danger is,—to be frank with you on this subject,—that you are yourselves so ignorant on all the matters that a minister has to do with, that you do not know one minister from another, a good minister from one who is really no minister at all. Now, I will put it to you, on what principle and for what reason did you choose your present minister, if, indeed, you did choose him? Was it because you were assured by people you could trust that he was a minister of knowledge and knew his own business? Or was it that when you went to worship with him for yourself you have not been able ever since to tear yourself away from him, nor has any one else been able to tear you away, though some have tried? When you first came to the city, did you give, can you remember, some real anxiety, rising sometimes into prayer, as to who your minister among so many ministers was to be? Or did you choose him and your present seat in his church because of some real or supposed worldly interest of yours you thought you could further by taking your letter of introduction to him? Had you heard while yet at home, had your father and mother talked of such things to you, that rich men, and men of place and power, political men and men high in society, sat in that church and took notice of who attended it and who did not? Do you, down to this day, know one church from another so far as spiritual and soul-saving knowledge is concerned? Do you know that two big buildings, called churches, may stand in the same street, and have men, called ministers, carrying on certain services in them from week to week, and yet, for all the purposes for which Christ came and died and rose again and gave ministers to His church, these two churches and their ministers are farther asunder than the two poles? Do you understand what I am saying? Do you understand what I have been saying all night, or are you one of those of whom the prophet speaks in blame and in pity as being destroyed for lack of knowledge? Well, that is your first danger, that you are so ignorant, and as a consequence, so careless, as not to know one minister from another.

2. And your second danger in connection with your minister is, that you have, and may have long had, a good minister, but that you still remain yourself a bad man. My brethren, be you all sure of it, there is a special and a fearful danger in having a specially good minister. Think twice, and make up your mind well, before you call a specially good minister, or become a communicant, or even an adherent under a specially good minister. If two bad men go down together to the pit, and the one has had a good minister, as, God have mercy on us, sometimes happens, and the other has only had one who had the name of a minister, the evangelised reprobate will lie in a deeper bed in hell, and will spend a more remorseful eternity on it than will the other. No man among you, minister or no minister, good minister or bad, will be able to sin with impunity. But he who sins on and on after good preaching will be beaten with many stripes. ‘Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon,

they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you.' 'Thou that hast knowledge,' says a powerful old preacher, 'canst not sin so cheap as another that is ignorant. Places of much knowledge'—he was preaching in the university pulpit of Oxford—'and plentiful in the means of grace are dear places for a man to sin in. To be drunken or unclean after a powerful sermon, and after the Holy Ghost has enlightened thee, is more than to have so sinned twenty times before. Thou mightest have sinned ten times more and been damned less. For does not Jesus Christ the Judge say to thee, This is thy condemnation, that so much light has come to thee?' And, taking the then way of execution as a sufficiently awful illustration, the old Oxford Puritan goes on to say that to sin against light is the highest step of the ladder before turning off. And, again, that if there are worms in hell that die not, it is surely gospel light that breeds them.

# 024. Experience

XXIV

EXPERIENCE ‘My heart had great experience.’—The Preacher.

‘I will give them pastors after Mine own heart.’

Experience, the excellent shepherd of the Delectable Mountains, had a brother in the army, and he was an equally excellent soldier. The two brothers—they were twin-brothers—had been brought up together till they were grown-up men in the same town of Mansoul. All the Experience family, indeed, had from time immemorial hailed from that populous and important town, and their family tree ran away back beyond the oldest extant history. The two brothers, while in all other things as like as two twin-brothers could be, at the same time very early in life began to exhibit very different talents and tastes and dispositions; till, when we meet with them in their full manhood, the one is a soldier in the army and the other a shepherd on the Delectable Mountains. The soldier-brother is thus described in one of the military histories of his day: ‘A man of conduct and of valour, and a person prudent in matters. A comely person, moreover, well-spoken in negotiations, and very successful in undertakings. His colours were the white colours of Mansoul and his scutcheon was the dead lion and the dead bear.’ The shepherd-brother, on the other hand, is thus pictured out to us by one who has seen him. A traveller who has visited the Delectable Mountains, and has met and talked with the shepherds, thus describes Experience in his excellent itinerary: ‘Knowledge,’ he says,‘I found to be the sage of the company, spare in build, high of forehead, worn in age, and his tranquil gait touched with abstractedness. While Experience was more firmly knit in form and face, with a shrewd kindly eye and a happy readiness in his bearing, and all his hard-earned wisdom evidently on foot within him as a capability for work and for control.’ This, then, was the second of the four shepherds, who fed Immanuel’s sheep on the Delectable Mountains. But here again to-night, and in the case of Experience, just as last Sabbath night and in the case of Knowledge, in all this John Bunyan speaks to children,—only the children here are the children of the kingdom of heaven. The veriest child who reads the Delectable Mountains begins to suspect before he is done that Knowledge and Experience are not after all two real and true shepherds going their rounds with their staves and their wallets and their wheeling dogs. Yes, though the little fellow cannot put his suspicions into proper words for you, all the same he has his suspicions that he is being deceived by you and your Sabbath book; and, ten to one, from that sceptical day he will not read much more of John Bunyan till in after-life he takes up John Bunyan never for a single Sabbath again to lay him down. Yes, let the truth be told at once, Experience is simply a minister, and not a real shepherd at all; a minister of the gospel, a preacher, and a pastor; but, then, he is a preacher and a pastor of no ordinary kind, but of the selectest and very best kind.

1. Now, my brethren, to plunge at once out of the parable and into the interpretation, I observe, in the first place, that pastors who are indeed to be pastors after God’s own heart have all to pass into their pastorate through the school of experience. Preaching after God’s own heart, and pastoral work of the same divine pattern, cannot be taught in any other school than the school of

experience. Poets may be born and not made, but not pastors nor preachers. Nay, do not all our best poets first learn in their sufferings what afterwards they teach us in their songs? At any rate, that is certainly the case with preachers and pastors. As my own old minister once said to me in a conversation on this very subject, ‘Even God Himself cannot inspire an experience.’ No. For if He could He would surely have done so in the case of His own Son, to Whom in the gift of the Holy Ghost He gave all that He could give and all that His Son could receive. But an experience cannot in the very nature of things be either bestowed on the one hand or received and appropriated on the other. An experience in the unalterable nature of the thing itself must be undergone. The Holy Ghost Himself after He has been bestowed and received has to be experimented upon, and taken into this and that need, trial, cross, and care of life. He is not sent to spare us our experiences, but to carry us through them. And thus it is (to keep for a moment in sight of the highest illustration we have of this law of experience), thus it is, I say, that the apostle has it in his Epistle to the Hebrews that though Christ Himself were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things that He suffered. And being by experience made perfect He then went on to do such and such things for us. Why, for instance, for one thing, why do you think was our Lord able to speak with such extraordinary point, impressiveness, and assurance about prayer; about the absolute necessity and certainty of secret, importunate, persevering prayer having, sooner or later, in one shape or other, and in the best possible shape, its answer? Why but because of His own experience? Why but because His own closet, hilltop, all-night, and up-before-the-day prayers had all been at last heard and better heard than He had been able to ask? We can quite well read between the lines in all our Lord’s parables and in all the passages of His sermons about prayer. The unmistakable traces of otherwise untold enterprises and successes, agonies and victories of prayer, are to be seen in every such sermon of His. And so, in like manner, in all that He says to His disciples about the sweetness of submission, resignation, and self-denial, as also about the nourishment for His soul that He got out of every hard act of obedience,—and so on. There is running through all our Lord’s doctrinal and homiletical teaching that note of reality and of certitude that can only come to any teaching out of the long and deep and intense experience of the teacher. And as the Master was, so are all His ministers. When I read, for instance, what William Law says about the heart-searching and heart-cleansing efficacy of intercessory prayer in the case of him who continues all his life so to pray, and carries such prayer through all the experiences and all the relationships of life, I do not need you to tell me where that great man of God made that great discovery. I know that he made it in his own closet, and on his own knees, and in his own evil heart. And so, also, when I come nearer home. Whenever I hear a single unconventional, immediate, penetrating, overawing petition or confession in a minister’s pulpit prayer or in his family worship, I do not need to be told out of what prayer-book he took that. I know without his telling me that my minister has been, all unknown to me till now, at that same school of prayer to which his Master was put in the days of His flesh, and out of which He brought the experiences that He afterwards put into the Friend at midnight, and the Importunate widow, as also into the Egg and the scorpion, the Bread and the stone, the Knocking and the opening, the Seeking and the finding. His children thus most dear to Him,

Their heavenly Father trains,

Through all the hard experience led

Of sorrows and of pains. And if His children, then ten times more the tutors and governors of His children,—the pastors and the preachers He prepares for His people.

2. Again, though I will not put those two collegiate shepherds against one another, yet, in order to bring out the whole truth on this matter, I will risk so far as to say that where we cannot have both Knowledge and Experience, by all means let us have Experience. Yes, I declare to you that if I were choosing a minister for myself, and could not have both the book-knowledge and the experience of the Christian life in one and the same man; and could not have two ministers, one with all the talents and another with all the experiences; I would say that, much as I like an able and learned sermon from an able and learned man, I would rather have less learning and more experience. And, then, no wonder that such pastors and preachers are few. For how costly must a thoroughly good minister's experience be to him! What a quantity and what a quality of experience is needed to take a raw, light-minded, ignorant, and self-satisfied youth and transform him into the pastor, the tried and trusted friend of the tempted, the sorrow-laden, and the shipwrecked hearts and lives in his congregation! What years and years of the selectest experiences are needed to teach the average divinity student to know himself, to track out and run to earth his own heart, and thus to lay open and read other men's hearts to their self-deceived owners in the light of his own. A matter, moreover, that he gets not one word of help toward in all his college curriculum. David was able to say in his old age that he fed the flock of God in Israel according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands. But what years and years of shortcoming and failure in private and in public life lie behind that fine word 'integrity'! as also what stumbles and what blunders behind that other fine word 'skilfulness'! But, then, how a lightest touch of a preacher's own dear-bought experience skilfully let fall brightens up an obscure scripture! How it sends a thrill through a prayer! How it wings an arrow to the conscience! How it sheds abroad balm upon the heart! Let no minister, then, lose heart when he is sent back to the school of experience. He knows in theory that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, but it is not theory, but experience, that makes a minister after God's own heart. I sometimes wish that I may live to see a chair of Experimental Religion set up in all our colleges. I fear it is a dream, and that it must have been pronounced impracticable long ago by our wisest heads. Still, all the same, that does not prevent me from again and again indulging my dream. I indulge my fond dream again as often as I look back on my own tremendous mistakes in the management of my own personal and ministerial life, as well as sometimes see some signs of the same mistakes in some other ministers. In my dream for the Church of the future I see the programme of lectures in the Experimental Class and the accompanying examinations. I see the class library, and I envy the students. I am present at the weekly book-day, and at the periodical addresses delivered to the class by those town and country ministers who have been most skilful in their pastorate and most successful in the conversion and in the character of their people. And, unless I wholly deceive myself, I see, not all the class—that will never be till the millennium—but here and there twos and threes, and more men than that, who will throw their whole hearts into the work of such a class till they come out of the hall in experimental religion like Sir Proteus in the play: Their years but young, but their experience old,

Their heads unmellowed, but their judgment ripe.

It is quite true, that, as my old minister shrewdly said to me, even the Holy Ghost cannot inspire an experience. No. But a class of genuine experimental divinity would surely help to foster and

develop an experience. And, till the class is established, any student who has the heart for it may lay in the best of the class library for a few shillings. Mr. Thin will tell you that there is no literature that is such a drug in the market as the best books of Experimental Divinity. No wonder, then, that we make such slow and short way in the skilfulness, success, and acceptance of our preaching and our pastorate.

3. But, at the same time, my brethren, all your ministers'experience of personal religion will be lost upon you unless you are yourselves attending the same school. The salvation of the soul, you must understand, is not offered to ministers only. Ministers are not the only men who are, to begin with, dead in trespasses and sins. The Son of God did not die for ministers only. The Holy Ghost is not offered to ministers only. A clean, humble, holy heart is not to be the pursuit of ministers only. It is not to His ministers only that our Lord says, Take up My yoke and learn of Me. The daily cross is not the opportunity of ministers only. It is not to ministers only that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope. It was to all who had obtained like precious faith with their ministers that Peter issued this exhortation that they were to give all diligence to add to their faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience,—and so on. Now, my brethren, unless all that is on foot in yourselves, as well as in your ministers, then their progress in Christian experience will only every new Sabbath-day separate you and your ministers further and further away from one another. When a minister is really making progress himself in the life of religion that progress must come out, and ought to come out, both in his preaching and in his prayers. And, then, two results of all that will immediately begin to manifest themselves among his people. Some of his people will visibly, and still more will invisibly, make corresponding progress with their minister; while some others, alas! will fall off in interest, in understanding, and in sympathy till at last they drop off from his ministry altogether. That is an old law in the Church of God:'like people like priest,' and 'like priest like people.' And while there are various influences at work retarding and perplexing the immediate operation of that law, at the same time, he who has eyes to see such things in a congregation and in a community will easily see Hosea's great law of congregational selection in operation every day. Like people gradually gravitate to like preachers. You will see, if you have the eyes, congregations gradually dissolving and gradually being consolidated again under that great law. You will see friendships and families even breaking up and flying into pieces; and, again, new families and new friendships being built up on that very same law. If you were to study the session books of our city congregations in the light of that law, you would get instruction. If you just studied who lifted their lines, and why; and, again, what other people came and left their lines, and why, you would get instruction. The shepherds in Israel did not need to hunt up and herd their flocks like the shepherds in Scotland. A shepherd on the mountains of Israel had nothing more to do than himself pass up into the pasture lands and then begin to sing a psalm or offer a prayer, when, in an instant, his proper sheep were all round about him. The sheep knew their own shepherd's voice, and they fled from the voice of a stranger. And so it is with a true preacher,—a preacher of experience, that is. His own people know no voice like his voice. He does not need to bribe and flatter and run after his people. He may have, he usually has, but few people as people go in our day, and the better the preacher sometimes the smaller the flock. It was so in our Master's case. The multitude followed after the loaves but they fled from the feeding doctrines, till He first tasted that dejection and that sense of defeat which so many of His best servants are fed on in this world. Still, as our Lord did not tune His pulpit to the taste of the loungers of Galilee, no more will a minister worth the name do

anything else but press deeper and deeper into the depths of truth and life, till, as was the case with his Master, his followers, though few, will be all the more worth having. The Delectable Mountains are wide and roomy. They roll far away both before and behind. Immanuel's Land is a large place, and there are many other shepherds among those hills and valleys besides Knowledge and Experience and Watchful and Sincere. And each several shepherd has, on the whole, his own sheep. Knowledge has his; Experience has his; Watchful has his; and Sincere has his; and all the other here unnamed shepherds have all theirs also. For, always, like shepherd like sheep. Yes. Hosea must have been something in Israel somewhat analogous to a session-clerk among ourselves. 'Like priest like people' is certainly a digest of some such experience. Let some inquisitive beginner in Hebrew this winter search out the prophet upon that matter, consulting Mr. Hutcheson and Dr. Pusey, and he will let me hear the result.

4. Now, my brethren, in closing, we must all keep it clearly before our minds, and that too every day we live, that God orders and overrules this whole world, and, indeed, keeps it going very much just that He may by means of it make unceasing experiment upon His people. Experiment, you know, results in experience. There is no other way by which any man can attain to a religious experience but by undergoing temptation, trial, tribulation:—experiment. And it gives a divine dignity to all things, great and small, good and bad, when we see them all taken up into God's hand, in order that by means of them He may make for Himself an experienced people. Human life on this earth, when viewed under this aspect, is one vast workshop. And all the shafts and wheels and pulleys; all the crushing hammers, and all the whirling knives; all the furnaces and smelting-pots; all the graving tools and smoothing irons, are all so many divinely-designed and divinely-worked instruments all directed in upon this one result,—our being deeply experienced in the ways of God till we are for ever fashioned into His nature and likeness. Our faith in the unseen world and in our unseen God and Saviour is at one time put to the experiment. At another time it is our love to Him; the reality of it, and the strength of it. At another time it is our submission and our resignation to His will. At another time it is our humility, or our meekness, or our capacity for self-denial, or our will and ability to forgive an injury, or our perseverance in still unanswered prayer; and so on the ever-shifting but never-ceasing experiment goes. I do beseech you, my brethren, take that true view of life home with you again this night. This true view of life, namely, that experience in the divine life can only come to you through your being much experimented upon. Meet all your trials and tribulations and temptations, then, under this assurance, that all things will work together for good to you also if you are only rightly exercised by means of them. Nothing else but this growing experience and this settling assurance will be able to support you under the sudden ills of life; but this will do it. This, when you begin by experience to see that all this life, and all the good and all the ill of this life, are all under this splendid divine law,—that your tribulations also are indeed working within you a patience, and your patience an experience, and your experience a hope that maketh not ashamed.

# 025. Watchful

XXV

WATCHFUL ‘Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel.’—The word of the Lord to Ezekiel.

‘They watch for your souls.’—The Apostle to the Hebrews.

There were four shepherds who had the care of Immanuel’s sheep on the Delectable Mountains, and their names were Knowledge, Experience, Watchful, and Sincere. Now, in that very beautiful episode of his great allegory, John Bunyan is doing his very utmost to impress upon all his ministerial readers how much there is that goes to the making of a good minister, and how much every good minister has to do. Each several minister must do all that in him lies, from the day of his ordination to the day of his death, to be all to his people that those four shepherds were to Immanuel’s sheep. He is to labour, in season and out of season, to be a minister of the ripest possible knowledge, the deepest and widest possible experience, the most sleepless watchfulness, and the most absolute and scrupulous sincerity. Now, enough has perhaps been said already about a minister’s knowledge and his experience; enough, certainly, and more than enough for some of us to hope half to carry out; and, therefore, I shall at once go on to take up Watchful, and to supply, so far as I am able, the plainest possible interpretation of this part of Bunyan’s parable.

1. Every true minister, then, watches, in the words of the apostle, for the souls of his people. An ordinary minister’s everyday work embraces many duties and offers many opportunities, but through all his duties and through all his opportunities there runs this high and distinctive duty of watching for the souls of his people. A minister may be a great scholar, he may have taken all sacred learning for his province, he may be a profound and a scientific theologian, he may be an able church leader, he may be a universally consulted authority on ecclesiastical law, he may be a skilful and successful debater in church courts, he may even be a great pulpit orator, holding thousands entranced by his impassioned eloquence; but a true successor of the prophets of the Old Testament and of the apostles of the New Testament he is not, unless he watches for the souls of men. All these endowments, and all these occupations, right and necessary as, in their own places, they all are,—great talents, great learning, great publicity, great popularity,—all tend, unless they are taken great care of, to lead their possessors away from all time for, and from all sympathy with, the watchfulness of the New Testament minister. Watching over a flock brings to you none of the exhilaration of authority and influence, none of the intoxication of publicity and applause. Your experiences are the quite opposite of all these things when you are watching over your flock. Your work among your flock is all done in distant and lonely places, on hillsides, among woods and thickets, and in cloudy and dark days. You spend your strength among sick and dying and wandering sheep, among wolves and weasels, and what not, of that verminous kind. At the same time, all good pastors are not so obscure and forgotten as all that. Some exceptionally able and exceptionally devoted and self-forgetful men manage to combine both extremes of a

minister's duties and opportunities in themselves. Our own Sir Henry Moncreiff was a pattern pastor. There was no better pastor in Edinburgh in his day than dear Sir Henry was; and yet, at the same time, everybody knows what an incomparable ecclesiastical casuist Sir Henry was. Mr. Moody, again, is a great preacher, preaching to tens of thousands of hearers at a time; but, at the same time, Mr. Moody is one of the most skilful and attentive pastors that ever took individual souls in hand and kept them over many years in mind. But these are completely exceptional men, and what I want to say to commonplace and limited and everyday men like myself is this, that watching for the souls of our people, one by one, day in and day out,—that, above everything else, that, and nothing else,—makes any man a pastor of the apostolic type. An able man may know all about the history, the habitat, the various species, the breeds, the diseases, and the prices of sheep, and yet be nothing at all of a true shepherd. And so may a minister.

2. Pastoral visitation, combined with personal dealing, is by far the best way of watching for souls. I well remember when I first began my ministry in this congregation, how much I was impressed with what one of the ablest and best of our then ministers was reported to have testified on his deathbed. Calling back to his bedside a young minister who had come to see him, the dying man said: 'Prepare for the pulpit; above everything else you do, prepare for the pulpit. Let me again repeat it, should it at any time stand with you between visiting a deathbed and preparing for the pulpit, prepare for the pulpit.' I was immensely impressed with that dying injunction when it was repeated to me, but I have lived,—I do not say to put my preparation for the pulpit, such as it is, second to my more pastoral work in my week's thoughts, but—to put my visiting in the very front rank and beside my pulpit. 'We never were accustomed to much visiting,'said my elders to me in their solicitude for their young minister when he was first left alone with this whole charge; 'only appear in your own pulpit twice on Sabbath: keep as much at home as possible: we were never used to much visiting, and we do not look for it.' Well, that was most kindly intended; but it was much more kind than wise. For I have lived to learn that no congregation will continue to prosper, or, if other more consolidated and less exacting congregations, at any rate not this congregation, without constant pastoral attention. And remember, I do not complain of that. Far, far from that. For I am as sure as I am of anything connected with a minister's life, that a minister's own soul will prosper largely in the measure that the souls of his people prosper through his pastoral work. No preaching, even if it were as good preaching as the apostle's itself, can be left to make up for the neglect of pastoral visitation and personal intercourse. 'I taught you from house to house,'says Paul himself, when he was resigning the charge of the church of Ephesus into the hands of the elders of Ephesus. What would we ministers not give for a descriptive report of an afternoon's house-to-house visitation by the Apostle Paul! Now in a workshop, now at a sickbed, now with a Greek, now with a Jew, and, in every case, not discussing politics and cursing the weather, not living his holidays over again and hearing of all the approaching marriages, but testifying to all men in his own incomparably winning and commanding way repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ. We city ministers call out and complain that we have no time to visit our people in their own houses; but that is all subterfuge. If the whole truth were told about the busiest of us, it is not so much want of time as want of intention; it is want of set and indomitable purpose to do it; it is want of method and of regularity such as all business men must have; and it is want, above all, of laying out every hour of every day under the Great Taskmaster's eye. Many country ministers again,—we, miserable men that we are, are never happy or well placed,—complain continually that their people are so few, and so scattered, and so ignorant, and so uninteresting,

and so unresponsive, that it is not worth their toil to go up and down in remote places seeking after them. It takes a whole day among bad roads and wet bogs to visit a shepherd's wife and children, and two or three bothies and pauper's hovels on the way home. 'On the morrow,' so runs many an entry in Thomas Boston's Memoirs, 'I visited the sick, and spent the afternoon in visiting others, and found gross ignorance prevailing. Nothing but stupidity prevailed; till I saw that I had enough to do among my handful. I had another diet of catechising on Wednesday afternoon, and the discovery I made of the ignorance of God and of themselves made me the more satisfied with the smallness of my charge . . . Twice a year I catechised the parish, and once a year I visited their families. My method of visitation was this. I made a particular application of my doctrine in the pulpit to the family, exhorted them all to lay all these things to heart, exhorted them also to secret prayer, supposing they kept family worship, urged their relative duties upon them,' etc. etc. And then at his leaving Ettrick, he writes: 'Thus I parted with a people whose hearts were knit to me and mine to them. The last three or four years had been much blessed, and had been made very comfortable to me, not in respect of my own handful only, but others of the countryside also.' Jonathan Edwards called Thomas Boston 'that truly great divine.' I am not such a judge of divinity as Jonathan Edwards was, but I always call Boston to myself that truly great pastor. But my lazy and deceitful heart says to me: No praise to Boston, for he lived and did his work in the quiet Forest of Ettrick. True, so he did. Well, then, look at the populous and busy town of Kidderminster. And let me keep continually before my abashed conscience that hard-working corpse Richard Baxter. Absolutely on the same page on which that dying man enters diseases and medicines enough to fill a doctor's diary after a whole day in an incurable hospital, that noble soul goes on to say: 'I preached before the wars twice each Lord's Day, but after the wars but once, and once every Thursday, besides occasional sermons. Every Thursday evening my neighbours that were most desirous, and had opportunity, met at my house. Two days every week my assistant and I myself took fourteen families between us for private catechising and conference; he going through the parish, and the town coming to me. I first heard them recite the words of the Catechism, and then examined them about the sense, and lastly urged them, with all possible engaging reason and vehemency, to answerable affection and practice. If any of them were stalled through ignorance or bashfulness, I forbore to press them, but made them hearers, and turned all into instruction and exhortation. I spent about an hour with a family, and admitted no others to be present, lest bashfulness should make it burdensome, or any should talk of the weakness of others.' And then he tells how his people's necessity made him practise physic among them, till he would have twenty at his door at once. 'All these my employments were but my recreations, and, as it were, the work of my spare hours. For my writings were my chiefest daily labour. And blessed be the God of mercies that brought me from the grave and gave me, after wars and sickness, fourteen years' liberty in such sweet employment!' Let all ministers who would sit at home over a pipe and a newspaper with a quiet conscience keep Boston's Memoirs and Baxter'sReliquiae at arm's-length.

3. Our young communicants' classes, and still more, those private interviews that precede and finish up our young communicants'classes, are by far our best opportunities as pastors. I remember Dr. Moody Stuart telling me long ago that he had found his young communicants'classes to be the most fruitful opportunities of all his ministry; as, also, next to them, times of baptism in families. And every minister who tries to be a minister at all after Dr. Moody Stuart's pattern, will tell you something of the same thing. They get at the opening history of their

young people's hearts before their first communion. They make shorthand entries and secret memoranda at such a season like this: 'A. a rebuke to me. He had for long been astonished at me that I did not speak to him about his soul. B. traced his conversion to the singing of 'The sands of time are sinking'in this church last summer. C. was spoken to by a room-mate. D. was to be married, and she died. Of E. I have great hope. F., were she anywhere but at home, I would have great hopes of her,'—and so on. But, then, when a minister takes boldness to turn over the pages of his young communicants' roll for half a lifetime—ah me, ah me! What was I doing to let that so promising communicant go so far astray, and I never to go after him? And that other. And that other. And that other. Till we can read no more. O God of mercy, when Thou inquirest after blood, let me be hidden in the cleft of that Rock so deeply cleft for unwatchful ministers!

4. And then, as Dr. Joseph Parker says, who says everything so plainly and so powerfully: 'There is pastoral preaching as well as pastoral visitation. There is pastoral preaching; rich revelation of divine truth; high, elevating treatment of the Christian mysteries; and he is the pastor to me who does not come to my house to drink and smoke and gossip and show his littleness, but who, out of a rich experience, meets me with God's word at every turn of my life, and speaks the something to me that I just at that moment want.' Let us not have less pastoral visitation in the time to come, but let us have more and more of such pastoral preaching.

5. But, my brethren, it is time for you, as John said to the elect lady and her children, to look to yourselves. The salvation of your soul is precious, and its salvation is such a task, such a battle, such a danger, and such a risk, that it will take all that your most watchful minister can do, and all that you can do yourself, and all that God can do for you, and yet your soul will scarcely be saved after all. You do not know what salvation is nor what it costs. You will not be saved in your sleep. You will not waken up at the last day and find yourself saved by the grace of God and you not know it. You will know it to your bitter cost before your soul is saved from sin and death. You and your minister too. And therefore it is that He Who is to judge your soul at last says to you, as much as He says it to any of His ministers, Watch! What I say unto one I say unto all, Watch. Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. Look to yourself, then, sinner. In Christ's name, look to yourself and watch yourself. You have no enemy to fear but yourself. No one can hurt a hair of your head but yourself. Have you found that out? Have you found yourself out? Do you ever look in the direction of your own heart? Have you begun to watch what goes on in your own heart? What is it to you what goes on in the world around you compared with what goes on in the world within you? Look, then, to yourself. Watch, above all watching, yourself. Watch what it is that moves you to do this or that. Stop sometimes and ask yourself why you do such and such a thing. Did you ever hear of such a thing as a motive in a human heart? And did your minister, watching for your soul, ever tell you that your soul will be lost or saved, condemned or justified at the last day according to your motives? You never knew that! You were never told that by your minister! Miserable pair! What does he take up his Sabbaths with? And what leads you to waste your Sabbaths and your soul on such a stupid minister? But, shepherd or no shepherd, minister or no minister, look to yourself. Look to yourself when you lie down and when you rise up; when you go out and when you come in; when you are in the society of men and when you are alone with your own heart. Look to yourself when men praise you, and look to yourself when men blame you. Look to yourself when you sit down to eat and drink, and still more when you sit and speak about your absent brother. Look to yourself when you meet your enemy or your rival in the street, when you

pass his house, or hear or read his name. Yes, you may well say so. At that rate a man's life would be all watching. So it would. And so it must. And more than that, so it is with some men not far from you who never told you how much you have made them watch. Did you never know all that till now? Were you never told that every Christian man, I do not mean every communicant, but every truly and sincerely and genuinely Christian man watches himself in that way? For as the one essential and distinguishing mark of a New Testament minister is not that he is an able man, or a studious man, or an eloquent man, but that he is a pastor and watches for souls, so it is the chiefest and the best mark, and to himself the only safe and infallible mark, that any man is a sincere and true Christian man, that he watches himself always and in all things looks first and last to himself.

# 026. Sincere

XXVI

SINCERE ‘In all things showing sincerity.’—Paul to Titus.

Charles Bennett has a delightful drawing of Sincere in Charles Kingsley’s beautiful edition of The Pilgrim’s Progress. You feel that you could look all day into those clear eyes. Your eyes would begin to quail before you had looked long into the fourth shepherd’s deep eyes; but those eyes of his have no cause to quail under yours. This man has nothing to hide from you. He never had. He loves you, and his love to you is wholly without dissimulation. He absolutely and unreservedly means and intends by you and yours all that he has ever said to you and yours, and much more than he has ever been able to say. The owner of those deep blue eyes is as true to you when he is among your enemies as he is true to the truth itself when he is among your friends. Mark also the unobtrusive strength of his mouth, all suffused over as it is with a most winning and reassuring sweetness. The fourth shepherd of the Delectable Mountains is one of the very best of Bennett’s excellent portraits. But Mr. Kerr Bain’s pen-and-ink portrait of Sincere in his People of the Pilgrimage is even better than Bennett’s excellent drawing. ‘Sincere is softer in outline and feature than Watchful. His eye is full-open and lucid, with a face of mingled expressiveness and strength—a lovable, lowly, pure-spirited man—candid, considerate, willing, cheerful—not speaking many words, and never any but true words.’ Happy sheep that have such a shepherd! Happy people! if only any people in the Church of Christ could have such a pastor.

It is surely too late, too late or too early, to begin to put tests to a minister’s sincerity after he has been licensed and called and is now standing in the presence of his presbytery and surrounded with his congregation. It is a tremendous enough question to put to any man at any time: ‘Are not zeal for the honour of God, love to Jesus Christ, and desire of saving souls your great motives and chief inducement to enter into the function of the holy ministry?’ A man who does not understand what it is you are saying to him will just make the same bow to these awful words that he makes to all your other conventional questions. But the older he grows in his ministry, and the more he comes to discover the incurable plague of his own heart, and with that the whole meaning and full weight of your overwhelming words, the more will he shrink back from having such questions addressed to him. Fools will rush in where Moses and Isaiah and Jeremiah and Peter and Paul feared to set their foot. Paul was to be satisfied if only he was let do the work of a minister all his days and then was not at the end made a castaway. And yet, writing to the same church, Paul says that his sincerity among them had been such that he could hold up his ministerial life like spotless linen between the eye of his conscience and the sun. But all that was written and is to be read and understood as Paul’s ideal that he had honestly laboured after, rather than as an actual attainment he had arrived at. Great as Paul’s attainments were in humility, in purity of intention, and in simplicity and sincerity of heart, yet the mind of Christ was not so given even to His most gifted apostle, that he could seriously say that he had attained to such utter ingenuity, simplicity, disengagement from himself, and surrender to Christ, as to be able to face the sun with a spotless

ministry. All he ever says at his boldest and best on that great matter is to be read in the light of his universal law of personal and apostolic imperfection—Not that I have attained, either am already perfect; but I follow after. And blessed be God that this is all that He looks for in any of His ministers, that they follow all their days after a more and more godly sincerity. It was the apostle's love of absolute sincerity,—and, especially, it was his bitter hatred of all the remaining dregs of insincerity that he from time to time detected in his own heart,—it was this that gave him his good conscience before a God of pity and compassion, truth and grace. And with something of the same love of perfect sincerity, accompanied with something of the same hatred of insincerity and of ourselves on account of it, we, too, toward this same God of pity and compassion, will hold up a conscience that would fain be a good conscience. And till it is a good conscience we shall hold up with it a broken heart. And that genuine love of all sincerity, and that equally genuine hatred of all remaining insincerity, will make all our ministerial work, as it made all Paul's apostolic work, not only acceptable, but will also make its very defects and defeats both acceptable and fruitful in the estimation and result of God. It so happens that I am reading for my own private purposes at this moment an old book of 1641, DrexiliusOn a Right Intention, and I cannot do better at this point than share with you the page I am just reading. 'Not to be too much troubled or daunted at any cross event,' he says, 'is the happy state of his mind who has entered on any enterprise with a pure and pious intention. That great apostle James gained no more than eight persons in all Spain when he was called to lay down his head under Herod's sword. And was not God ready to give the same reward to James as to those who converted kings and whole kingdoms? Surely He was. For God does not give His ministers a charge as to what they shall effect, but only as to what they shall intend to effect. Wherefore, when his art faileth a servant of God, when nothing goes forward, when everything turneth to his ruin, even when his hope is utterly void, he is scarce one whit troubled; for this, saith he to himself, is not in my power, but in God's power alone. I have done what I could. I have done what was fit for me to do. Fair and foul is all of God's disposing.'

And, then, this simplicity and purity of intention gives a minister that fine combination of candour and considerateness which we saw to exist together so harmoniously in the character of Sincere. Such a minister is not tongue-tied with sinister and selfish intentions. His sincerity toward God gives him a masterful position among his people. His words of rebuke and warning go straight to his people's consciences because they come straight out of his own conscience. His words are their own witness that he is neither fearing his people nor fawning upon his people in speaking to them. And, then, such candour prepares the way for the utmost considerateness when the proper time comes for considerateness. Such a minister is patient with the stupid, and even with the wicked and the injurious, because in all their stupidity and wickedness and injuriousness they have only injured and impoverished themselves. And if God is full of patience and pity for the ignorant and the evil and the out of the way, then His sincere-hearted minister is of all men the very man to carry the divine message of forgiveness and instruction to such sinners. Yes, Mr. Bain must have seen Sincere closely and in a clear light when he took down this fine feature of his character, that he is at once candid and considerate—with a whole face of mingled expressiveness and strength.

Writing about sincerity and a right intention in young ministers, old Drexilius says: 'When I turn to clergymen, I would have sighs and groans to speak for me. For, alas! I am afraid that there be found some which come into the ministry, not that they may obtain a holy office in which to spend their life, but for worse ends. To enter the ministry with a naughty intention is to come straight to

destruction. Let no minister think at any time of a better living, but only at all times of a holier life. Wherefore, O ministers and spiritual men, consider and take heed. There can be no safe guide to your office but a right, sincere, pure intention. Whosoever cometh to it with any other conduct or companion must either return to his former state of life, or here he shall certainly perish . . . What is more commendable in a religious man than to be always in action and to be exercised one while in teaching the ignorant, another while in comforting such as are troubled in mind, sometimes in making sermons, and sometimes in admonishing the sick? But with what secret malignity doth a wrong intention insinuate itself into these very actions that are the most religious! For ofttimes we desire nothing else but to be doing. We desire to become public, not that we may profit many, but because we have not learned how to be private. We seek for divers employments, not that we may avoid idleness, but that we may come into people's knowledge. We despise a small number of hearers, and such as are poor, simple, and rustical, and let fly our endeavours at more eminent chairs, though not in apparent pursuit; all which is the plain argument of a corrupt intention. O ye that wait upon religion, O ministers of God, this is to sell most transcendent wares at a very low rate—nay, this is to cast them, and yourselves too, into the fire.'

There are some outstanding temptations to insincerity in some ministers that must be pointed out here. (1) Ministers with a warm rhetorical temperament are beset continually with the temptation to pile up false fire on the altar; to dilate, that is, both in their prayers and in their sermons, upon certain topics in a style that is full of insincerity. Ministers who have no real hold of divine things in themselves will yet fill their pulpit hour with the most florid and affecting pictures of sacred and even of evangelical things. This is what our shrewd and satirical people mean when they say of us that So-and-so has a greatsough of the gospel in his preaching, but the sough only. (2) Another kindred temptation to even the best and truest of ministers is to make pulpit appeals about the evil of sin and the necessity of a holy life that they themselves do not feel and do not attempt to live up to. Butler has a terrible passage on the heart-hardening effects of making pictures of virtue and never trying to put those pictures into practice. And readers of Newman will remember his powerful application of this same temptation to literary men in his fine sermon on Unreal Words. (3) Another temptation is to affect an interest in our people and a sympathy with them that we do not in reality feel. All human life is full of this temptation to double-dealing and hypocrisy; but, then, it is large part of a minister's office to feel with and for his people, and to give the tenderest and the most sacred expression to that feeling. And, unless he is a man of a scrupulously sincere, true, and tender heart, his daily duties will soon develop him into a solemn hypocrite. And if he feels only for his own people, and for them only when they become and as long as they remain his own people, then his insincerity and imposture is only the more abominable in the sight of God. (4) Archbishop Whately, with that strong English common sense and that cultivated clear-headedness that almost make him a writer of genius, points out a view of sincerity that it behoves ministers especially to cultivate in themselves. He tells us not only to act always according to our convictions, but also to see that our convictions are true and unbiassed convictions. It is a very superficial sincerity even when we actually believe what we profess to believe. But that is a far deeper and a far nobler sincerity which watches with a strict and severe jealousy over the formation of our beliefs and convictions. Ministers must, first for themselves and then for their people, live far deeper down than other men. They must be at home among the roots, not of actions only, but much more of convictions. We may act honestly enough out of our present convictions and principles, while, all the time, our convictions and our principles are vitiated at bottom by the selfish ground they

ultimately stand in. Let ministers, then, to begin with, live deep down among the roots of their opinions and their beliefs. Let them not only flee from being consciously insincere and hypocritical men; let them keep their eye like the eye of God continually on that deep ground of the soul where so many men unknown to themselves deceive themselves. And, thus exercised, they shall be able out of a deep and clean heart to rise far above that trimming and hedging and self-seeking and self-sheltering in disputed and unpopular questions which is such a temptation to all men, and is such a shame and scandal in a minister.

Now, my good friends, we have kept all this time to the fourth shepherd and to his noble name, but let us look in closing at some of his sheep,—that is to say, at ourselves. For is it not said in the prophet: Ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord God. All, therefore, that has been said about the sincerity and insincerity of ministers is to be said equally of their people also in all their special and peculiar walks of life. Sincerity is as noble a virtue, and insincerity is as detestable a vice, in a doctor, or a lawyer, or a schoolmaster, or a merchant,—almost, if not altogether, as much so as in a minister. Your insincerity and hypocrisy in your daily intercourse with your friends and neighbours is a miserable enough state of mind, but at the root of all that there lies your radical insincerity toward God and your own soul. In his Christian Perfection William Law introduces his readers to a character called Julius, who goes regularly to prayers, and there confesses himself to be a miserable sinner who has no health in him; and yet that same Julius cannot bear to be informed of any imperfection or suspected to be wanting in any kind or degree of virtue. Now, Law asks, can there be a stronger proof that Julius is wanting in the sincerity of his devotions? Is it not as plain as anything can be that that man's confessions of sin are only words of course, a certain civility of sacred speech in which his heart has not a single atom of share? Julius confesses himself to be in great weakness, corruption, disorder, and infirmity, and yet he is mortally angry with you if at any time you remotely and tenderly hint that he may be just a shade wrong in his opinions, or one hair's-breadth off what is square and correct in his actions. Look to yourself, Julius, and to your insincere heart. Look to yourself at all times, but above all other times at the times and in the places of your devotions. Ten to one, my hearer of to-night, you may never have thought of that before. And what would you think if you were told that this Sincere shepherd was appointed us for this evening's discourse, and that you were led up to this house, just that you might have your attention turned to your many miserable insincerities of all kinds, but especially to your so Julius-like devotions? 'And Nathan said unto David, Thou art the man. And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord.'

What, then, my truly miserable fellow-sinner and fellow-worshipper, what are we to do? Am I to give up preaching altogether because I am continually carried on under the impulse of the pulpit far beyond both my attainments and my intentions? Am I to cease from public prayer altogether because when engaged in it I am compelled to utter words of contrition and confession and supplication that little agree with the everyday temper and sensibility of my soul? And am I wholly to eschew pastoral work because my heart is not so absolutely clean and simple and sincere toward all my own people and toward other ministers' people as it ought to be? No! Never! Never! Let me rather keep my heart of such earth and slag in the hottest place of temptation, and then, such humiliating discoveries as are there continually being made to me of myself will surely at last empty me of all self-righteousness and self-sufficiency, and make me at the end of my ministry, if not till then, the penitent pastor of a penitent people. And when thus penitent, then surely, also

somewhat more sincere in my designs and intentions, if not even then in my attainments and performances.

‘O Eternal God, Who hast made all things for man, and man for Thy glory, sanctify my body and my soul, my thoughts and my intentions, my words and my actions, that whatsoever I shall think or speak or do may be by me designed to the glory of Thy name. O God, turn my necessities into virtue, and the works of nature into the works of grace, by making them orderly, regular, temperate, subordinate, and profitable to ends beyond their own proper efficacy. And let no pride or self-seeking, no covetousness or revenge, no impure mixtures or unhandsome purposes, no little ends and low imaginations, pollute my spirit or unhallow any of my words or actions. But let my body be the servant of my spirit, and both soul and body servants of my Lord, that, doing all things for Thy glory here, I may be made a partaker of Thy glory hereafter; through Jesus Christ, my Lord. Amen.’

# 027. Ignorance

XXVII

IGNORANCE “I was alive without the law once.”—Paul.

“I was now a brisk talker also myself in the matter of religion.”—Bunyan. This is a new kind of pilgrim. There are not many pilgrims like this bright brisk youth. A few more young gentlemen like this, and the pilgrimage way would positively soon become fashionable and popular, and be the thing to do. Had you met with this young gentleman in society, had you noticed him beginning to come about your church, you would have lost no time in finding out who he was. I can well believe it, you would have replied. Indeed, I felt sure of it. I must ask him to the house. I was quite struck with his appearance and his manners. Yes; ask him at once to your house; show him some pointed attentions and you will never regret it. For if he goes to the bar and works even decently at his cases, he will be first a sheriff and then a judge in no time. If he should take to politics, he will be an under-secretary before his first parliament is out. And if he takes to the church, which is not at all unlikely, our West-end congregations will all be competing for him as their junior colleague; and, if he elects either of our Established churches to exercise his profession in it, he will have dined with Her Majesty while half of his class-fellows are still half-starved probationers. Society fathers will point him out with anger to their unsuccessful sons, and society mothers will smile under their eyelids as they see him hanging over their daughters.

Well, as this handsome and well-appointed youth stepped out of his own neat little lane into the rough road on which our two pilgrims were staggering upward, he felt somewhat ashamed to be seen in their company. And I do not wonder. For a greater contrast you would not have seen on any road in all that country that day. He was at your very first sight of him a gentleman and the son of a gentleman. A little over-dressed perhaps; as, also, a little lofty to the two rather battered but otherwise decent enough men who, being so much older than he, took the liberty of first accosting him. “Brisk” is his biographer’s description of him. Feather-headed, flippant, and almost impudent, you might have been tempted to say of him had you joined the little party at that moment. But those two tumbled, broken-winded, and, indeed, broken-hearted old men had been, as an old author says, so emptied from vessel to vessel—they had had a life of such sloughs and stiff climbs—they had been in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness so often—that it was no wonder that their dandiacal companion walked on a little ahead of them. ‘Gentlemen,’ his fine clothes and his cane and his head in the air all said to his two somewhat disreputable-looking fellow-travellers,—“Gentlemen, you be utter strangers to me: I know you not. And, besides, I take my pleasure in walking alone, even more a great deal than in company, unless I like it better.” But all his society manners, and all his costly and well-kept clothes, and all his easy and self-confident airs did not impose upon the two wary old pilgrims. They had seen too much of the world, and had been too long mixing among all kinds of pilgrims, young and old, true and false, to be easily imposed upon. Besides, as one could see from their weather-beaten faces, and their threadbare garments, they had found the upward way so dreadfully difficult that they both felt a real

apprehension as to the future of this light-hearted and light-headed youth. “You may find some difficulty at the gate,” somewhat bluntly broke in the oldest of the two pilgrims on their young comrade. “I shall, no doubt, do at the gate as other good people do,” replied the young gentleman briskly. “But what have you to show at the gate that may cause that the gate be opened to you?” “Why, I know my Lord’s will, and I have been a good liver all my days, and I pay every man his own. I pray, moreover, and I fast. I pay tithes, and give alms, and have left my country for whither I am going.” Now, before we go further: Do all you young gentlemen do as much as that? Have you always been good livers? Have you paid every man and woman their due? Do you pray to be called prayer? And, if so, when, and where, and what for, and how long at a time? I do not ask if your private prayer-book is like Bishop Andrewes’ Devotions, which was so reduced to pulp with tears and sweat and the clenching of his agonising hands that his literary executors were with difficulty able to decipher it. Clito in the Christian Perfection was so expeditious with his prayers that he used to boast that he could both dress and do his devotions in a quarter of an hour. What was the longest time you ever took to dress or undress and say your prayers? Then, again, there is another Anglican young gentleman in the same High Church book who always fasts on Good Friday and the Thirtieth of January. Did you ever deny yourself a glass of wine or a cigar or an opera ticket for the church or the poor? Could you honestly say that you know what tithes are? And is there a poor man or woman or child in this whole city who will by any chance put your name into their prayers and praises at bedtime to-night? I am afraid there are not many young gentlemen in this house to-night who could cast a stone at that brisk lad Ignorance, Vain-Hope, door in the side of the hill, and all. He was not far from the kingdom of heaven; indeed, he got up to the very gate of it. How many of you will get half as far?

Now (what think you?), was it not a very bold thing in John Bunyan, whose own descent was of such a low and inconsiderable generation, his father’s house being of that rank that is meanest and most despised of all the families in the land—was it not almost too bold in such a clown to take such a gentleman-scholar as Saul of Tarsus, the future Apostle of the Lord, and put him into the Pilgrim’s Progress, and there go on to describe him as a very brisk lad and nickname him with the nickname of Ignorance? For, in knowledge of all kinds to be called knowledge, Gamaliel’s gold medallist could have bought the unlettered tinker of Elstow in one end of the market and sold him in the other. And nobody knew that better than Bunyan did. And yet such a lion was he for the truth, such a disciple of Luther was he, and such a defender and preacher of the one doctrine of a standing or falling church, that he fills page after page with the crass ignorance of the otherwise most learned of all the New Testament men. Bunyan does not accuse the rising hope of the Pharisees of school or of synagogue ignorance. That young Hebrew Rabbi knew every jot and tittle of the law of Moses, and all the accumulated traditions of the fathers to boot. But Bunyan has Paul himself with him when he accuses and convicts Saul of an absolutely brutish ignorance of his own heart and hidden nature. That so very brisk lad was always boasting in himself of the day on which he was circumcised, and of the old stock of which he had come; of his tribe, of his zeal, of his blamelessness, and of the profit he had made of his educational and ecclesiastical opportunities. Whereas Bunyan is fain to say of himself in his Grace Abounding that he is “not able to boast of noble blood or of a high-born state according to the flesh. Though, all things considered, I magnify the Heavenly Majesty for that by this door He brought me into this world to partake of the grace and life that is in Christ by the Gospel.” As we listen to the conversation that goes on between the two old pilgrims and this smartly appointed youth, we find them striving hard,

but without any sign of success, to convince him of some of the things from which he gets his somewhat severe name. For one thing, they at last bluntly told him that he evidently did not know the very A B C about himself. Till, when too hard pressed by the more ruthless of the two old men, the exasperated youth at last frankly burst out: “I will never believe that my heart is thus bad!” There is a warm touch of Bunyan’s own experience here, mixed up with his so dramatic development of Paul’s morsels of autobiography that he lets drop in his Epistles to the Philippians and to the Galatians. “Now was I become godly; now I was become a right honest man. Though as yet I was nothing but a poor painted hypocrite, yet I was proud of my godliness. I read my Bible, but as for Paul’s Epistles, and such like Scriptures, I could not away with them; being, as yet, but ignorant both of the corruptions of my nature and of the want and worth of Jesus Christ to save me. The new birth did never enter my mind, neither knew I the deceitfulness and treachery of my own wicked heart. And as for secret thoughts, I took no notice of them.” My brethren, old and young, what do you think of all that? What have you to say to all that? Does all that not open a window and let a flood of daylight into your own breast? I am sure it does. That is the best portrait of you that ever was painted. Do you not see yourself there as in a glass? And do you not turn with disgust and loathing from the stupid and foolish face? You complain and tell stories about how impostors and cheats and liars have come to your door and have impudently thrust themselves into your innermost rooms; but your own heart, if you only knew it, is deceitful far above them all. Not the human heart as it stands in confessions, and in catechisms, and in deep religious books, but your own heart that beats out its blood-poison of self-deceit, and darkness, and death day and night continually. “My heart is a good heart,” said that poor ill-brought-up boy, who was already destroyed by his father and his mother for lack of self-knowledge. I entirely grant you that those two old sinners by this time were taking very pessimistic and very melancholy views of human nature, and, therefore, of every human being, young and old. They knew that no language had ever been coined in any scripture, or creed, or catechism, or secret diary of the deepest penitent, that even half uttered their own evil hearts; and they had lived long enough to see that we are all cut out of one web, are all dyed in one vat, and are all corrupted beyond all accusation or confession in Adam’s corruption. But how was that poor, mishandled lad to know or believe all that? He could not. It was impossible. “You go so fast, gentlemen, that I cannot keep pace with you. Go you on before and I will stay a while behind.” Then said Christian to his companion: “It pities me much for this poor lad, for it will certainly go ill with him at last.” “Alas!” said Hopeful, “there are abundance in our town in his condition: whole families, yea, whole streets, and that of pilgrims too.” Is your family such a family as this? And are you yourself just such a pilgrim as Ignorance was, and are you hastening on to just such an end? And then, as a consequence, being wholly ignorant of his own corruption and condemnation in the sight of God, this miserable man must remain ignorant and outside of all that God has done in Christ for corrupt and condemned men. “I believe that Christ died for sinners and that I shall be justified before God from the curse through His gracious acceptance of my obedience to His law. Or, then, to take it this way, Christ makes my duties that are religious acceptable to His Father by virtue of His merits, and so shall I be justified.” Now, I verify believe that nine out of ten of the young men who are here to-night would subscribe that statement and never suspect there was anything wrong with it or with themselves. And yet, what does Christian, who, in this matter, is just John Bunyan, who again is just the word of God—what does the old pilgrim say to this confession of this young pilgrim’s faith? “Ignorance is thy name,” he says, “and as thy name is, so art thou: even this thy answer

demonstrateth what I say. Ignorant thou art of what justifying righteousness is, and as ignorant how to secure thy soul through the faith of it from the heavy wrath of God. Yea, thou also art ignorant of the true effect of saving faith in this righteousness of Christ's, which is to bow and win over the heart to God in Christ, to love His name, His word, His ways, and His people." Paul sums up all his own early life in this one word, "ignorant of God's righteousness." "Going about," he says also, "to establish our own righteousness, not submitting ourselves to be justified by the righteousness that God has provided with such wisdom and grace, and at such a cost in His Son Jesus Christ." Now, young men, I defy you to be better born, better brought up, or to have better prospects than Saul of Tarsus had. I defy you to have profited more by all your opportunities and advantages than he had done. I defy you to be more blameless in your opening manhood than he was. And yet it all went like smoke when he got a true sight of himself, and, with that, a true sight of Christ and His justifying righteousness. Read at home to-night, and read when alone, what that great man of God says about all that in his classical epistle to the Philippians, and refuse to sleep till you have made the same submission. And, to-night, and all your days, let submission, Paul's splendid submission, be the soul and spirit of all your religious life. Submission to be searched by God's holy law as by a lighted candle: submission to be justified from all that that candle discovers: submission to take Christ as your life and righteousness, sanctification and redemption: and submission of your mind and your will and your heart to Him at all times and in all things. Nay, stay still, and say where you sit, Lord, I submit. I submit on the spot to be pardoned. I submit now to be saved. I submit in all things from this very hour and house of God not any longer to be mine own, but to be Thine, O God, Thine, Thine, for ever, in Jesus Christ Thy Son and my Saviour!

"But, one day, as I was passing in the field, and that, too, with some dashes in my conscience, fearing lest all was not right, suddenly this sentence fell upon my soul, Thy Righteousness is in heaven! And, methought, I saw with the eyes of my soul Jesus Christ at God's right hand. There, I saw, was my Righteousness. I also saw, moreover, that it was not my good frame of heart that made my Righteousness better, nor my bad frame of heart that made my Righteousness worse: for my Righteousness was Jesus Christ Himself, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. 'Twas glorious to me to see His exaltation, and the worth and prevalency of His benefits. And that because I could now look from myself to Him and should reckon that all those graces of God that were now green in me were yet but like those crack-groats and four-pence halfpennies that rich men carry in their purses when their gold is in their trunks at home! Oh, I saw that day that my gold was all in my trunk at home! Even in Christ, my Lord and Saviour! Now, Christ was all to me: all my wisdom, all my righteousness, all my sanctification and all my redemption."

"Methinks in this God speaks,

No tinker hath such power."

# 028. Little-Faith

XXVIII

LITTLE-FAITH “O thou of little faith.”—Our Lord.

Little-Faith, let it never be forgotten, was, all the time, a good man. With all his mistakes about himself, with his sad misadventure, with all his loss of blood and of money, and with his whole after-lifetime of doleful and bitter complaints,—all the time, Little-Faith was all through, in a way, a good man. To keep us right on this all-important point, and to prevent our being prematurely prejudiced against this pilgrim because of his somewhat prejudicial name—because give a dog a bad name, you know, and you had better hang him out of hand at once—because, I say, of this pilgrim’s somewhat suspicious name, his scrupulously just, and, indeed, kindly affected biographer says of him, and says it of him not once nor twice, but over and over and over again, that this Little-Faith was really all the time a truly good man. And, more than that, this good man’s goodness was not a new thing with him it was not a thing of yesterday. This man had, happily to begin with, a good father and a good mother. And if there was a good town in all those parts for a boy to be born and brought up in it was surely the town of Sincere. “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” Well, Little-Faith had been so trained up both by his father and his mother and his schoolmaster and his minister, and he never cost either of them a sore heart or even an hour’s sleep. One who knew him well, as well, indeed, as only one young man knows another, has been fain to testify, when suspicions have been cast on the purity and integrity of his youth, that nothing will describe this pilgrim so well in the days of his youth as just those beautiful words out of the New Testament—“an example to all young men in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith even, and in purity”—and that, if there was one young man in all that town of Sincere who kept his garments unspotted it was just our pilgrim of to-night. Yes, said one who had known him all his days, if the child is the father of the man, then Little-Faith, as you so unaccountably to me call him, must have been all along a good man.

It was said long ago in Vanity Fair about our present Premier that if he were a worse man he would be a better statesman. Now, I do not repeat that in this place because I agree with it, but because it helps to illustrate, as sometimes a violent paradox will help to illustrate, a truth that does not lie all at once on the surface. But it is no paradox or extravagance or anything but the simple truth to say that if Little-Faith had had more and earlier discoveries made to him of the innate evil of his own heart, even if it had been by that innate evil bursting out of his heart and laying waste his good life, he would either have been driven out of his little faith altogether or driven into a far deeper faith. Had the commandment come to him in the manner it came to Paul; had it come so as that the sinfulness of his inward nature had revived, as Paul says, under its entrance; then, either his great goodness or his little faith must have there and then died. God’s truth and man’s goodness cannot dwell together in the same heart. Either the truth will kill the goodness, or the goodness will kill the truth. Little-Faith, in short, was such a good man, and had always been such a good man, and had led such an easy life in consequence, that his faith had not been much exercised, and

therefore had not grown, as it must have been exercised and must have grown, had he not been such a good man. In short, and to put it bluntly, had Little-Faith been a worse sinner, he would have been a better saint. “O felix culpa!” exclaimed a church father; “O happy fault, which found for us sinners such a Redeemer.” An apostrophe which Bishop Ken has put into these four bold lines—

“What Adam did amiss,

Turned to our endless bliss;

O happy sin, which to atone,

Drew Filial God to leave His throne.” And John Calvin, the soberest of men, supports Augustine, the most impulsive of men, in saying the same thing. All things which happen to the saints are so overruled by God that what the world regards as evil the issue shows to be good. For what Augustine says is true, that even the sins of saints are, through the guiding providence of God, so far from doing harm to them, that, on the contrary, they serve to advance their salvation. And Richard Hooker, a theologian, if possible, still more judicious than even John Calvin, says on this same subject and in support of the same great father, “I am not afraid to affirm it boldly with St. Augustine that men puffed up through a proud opinion of their own sanctity and holiness receive a benefit at the hands of God, and are assisted with His grace, when with His grace they are not assisted, but permitted, and that grievously, to transgress. Ask the very soul of Peter, and it shall undoubtedly make you itself this answer: My eager protestations, made in the glory of my ghostly strength, I am ashamed of; but those crystal tears, wherewith my sin and weakness were bewailed, have procured my endless joy: my strength hath been my ruin, and my fall my stay.” And our own Samuel Rutherford is not likely to be left far behind by the best of them when the grace of God is to be magnified. “Had sin never been we should have wanted the mysterious Emmanuel, the Beloved, the Chief among ten thousand, Christ, God-man, the Saviour of sinners. For, no sick sinners, no soul-physician of sinners; no captive, no Redeemer; no slave of hell, no lovely ransom-payer of heaven. Mary Magdalene with her seven devils, Paul with his hands smoking with the blood of the saints, and with his heart sick with malice and blasphemy against Christ and His Church, and all the rest of the washen ones whose robes are made fair in the blood of the Lamb, and all the multitude that no man can number in that best of lands, are all but bits of free grace. O what a depth of unsearchable wisdom to contrive that lovely plot of free grace. Come, all intellectual capacities, and warm your hearts at this fire. Come, all ye created faculties, and smell the precious ointment of Christ. Oh come, sit down under His shadow and eat the apples of life. Oh that angels would come, and generations of men, and wonder, and admire, and fall down before the unsearchable wisdom of this gospel-art of the unsearchable riches of Christ!” And always pungent Thomas Shepard of New England: “You shall find this, that there is not any carriage or passage of the Lord’s providence toward thee but He will get a name to Himself, first and last, by it. Hence you shall find that those very sins that dishonour His name He will even by them get Himself a better name; for so far will they be from casting you out of His love that He will actually do thee good by them. Look and see if it is not so with thee? Doth not thy weakness strengthen thee like Paul? Doth not thy blindness make thee cry for light? And hath not God out of darkness oftentimes brought light? Thou hast felt venom against Christ and thy brother, and thou hast on that account loathed thyself the more. Thy falls into sin make thee weary of it, watchful

against it, long to be rid of it. And thus He makes thy poison thy food, thy death thy life, thy damnation thy salvation, and thy very greatest enemies thy very best friends. And hence Mr. Fox said that he thanked God more for his sins than for his good works. And the reason is, God will have His name." And, last, but not least, listen to our old acquaintance, James Fraser of Brea: "I find advantages by my sins: 'Peccare nocet, peccavisse vero juvat.' I may say, as Mr. Fox said, my sins have, in a manner, done me more good than my graces. Grace and mercy have more abounded where sin had much abounded. I am by my sins made much more humble, watchful, revengeful against myself. I am made to see a greater need to depend more upon Him and to love Him the more. I find that true which Shepard says, 'sin loses strength by every new fall.'" Have you followed all that, my brethren? Or have you stumbled at it? Do you not understand it? Does your superficial gin-horse mind incline to shake its empty head over all this? I know that great names, and especially the great names of your own party, go much farther with you than the truth goes, and therefore I have sheltered this deep truth under a shield of great names. For their sakes let this sure truth of God's best saints lie in peace and undisputed beside you till you arrive to understand it.

But, to proceed,—the thing was this. At this passage there comes down from Broadway-gate a lane called Dead-Man's-lane, so called because of the murders that are commonly done there. And this Little-Faith going on pilgrimage, as we now do, chanced to sit down there and fell fast asleep. Yes; the thing was this: This good man had never been what one would call really awake. He was not a bad man, as men went in the town of Sincere, but he always had a half-slept half-awakened look about his eyes, till now, at this most unfortunate spot, he fell stone-dead asleep. You all know, I shall suppose, what the apostle Paul and John Bunyan mean by sleep, do you not? You all know, at any rate, to begin with, what sleep means in the accident column of the morning papers. You all know what sleep meant and what it involved and cost in the Thirsk signal-box the other night. When a man is asleep, he is as good as dead, and other people are as good as dead to him. He is dead to duty, to danger, to other people's lives, as well as to his own. He may be having pleasant dreams, and may even be laughing aloud in his sleep, but that may only make his awaking all the more hideous. He may awake just in time, or he may awake just too late. Only, he is asleep and he neither knows nor cares. Now, there is a sleep of the soul as well as of the body. And as the soul is in worth, as the soul is in its life and in its death to the body, so is its sleep. Many of you sitting there are quite as dead to heaven and hell, to death and judgment, and to what a stake other people as well as yourselves have in your sleep as that poor sleeper in the signal-box was dead to what was coming rushing on him through the black night. And as all his gnashing of teeth at himself, and all his sobs before his judge and before the laid-out dead, and before distracted widows and half-mad husbands did not bring back that fatal moment when he fell asleep so sweetly, so will it be with you. Lazarus! come forth! Wise and foolish virgins both: Behold the Bridegroom cometh! Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light!

And, with that, Guilt with a great club that was in his hand struck Little-Faith on the head, and with that blow felled him to the earth, where he lay bleeding as one that would soon bleed to death. Yes, yes, all true to the very life. A man may be the boast and the example of all the town, and yet, unknown to them all, and all but unknown to himself till he is struck down, he may have had guilt enough on his track all the time to lay him half dead at the mouth of Dead-Man's-lane. Good as

was the certificate that all men in their honesty gave to Little-Faith, yet even he had some bad enough memories behind him and within him had he only kept them ever present with him. But, then, it was just this that all along was the matter with Little-Faith. Till, somehow, after that sad and yet not wholly evil sleep, all his past sins leapt out into the light and suddenly became and remained all the rest of his life like scarlet. So loaded, indeed, was the club of Guilt with the nails and studs and clamps of secret aggravation, that every nail and stud left its own bleeding bruise in the prostrate man's head. I have myself, says the narrator of Little-Faith's story, I have myself been engaged as he was, and I found it to be a terrible thing. I would, as the saying is, have sold my life at that moment for a penny; but that, as God would have it, I was clothed with armour of proof: ay, and yet though I was thus harnessed, I found it hard work to quit myself like a man. No man can tell what in that combat attends us but he that hath been in the battle himself. Great-Grace himself,—whoso looks well upon his face shall see those cuts and scars that shall easily give demonstration of what I say.

Most unfortunately there was no good Samaritan with his beast on the road that day to take the half-dead man to an inn. And thus it was that Little-Faith was left to lie in his blood till there was almost no more blood left in him. Till at last, coming a little to himself, he made a shift to scrabble on his way. When he was able to look a little to himself, besides all his wounds and loss of blood, he found that all his spending money was gone, and what was he to do, a stranger in such a plight on a strange road? There was nothing for it but he must just beg his way with many a hungry belly for the remainder of his way. You all understand the parable at this point? Our knowledge of gospel truth; our personal experience of the life of God in our own soul; our sensible attainments in this grace of the Spirit and in that; in secret prayer, in love to God, in forgiveness of injuries, in goodwill to all men, and in self-denial that no one knows of,—in things like these we possess what may be called the pocket-money of the spiritual life. All these things, at their best, are not the true jewel that no thief can break through nor steal; but though they are not our best and truest riches, yet they have their place and play their part in sending us up the pilgrim way. By our long and close study of the word of God, if that is indeed our case; by divine truth dwelling richly and experimentally in our hearts; and by a hidden life that is its own witness, and which always has the Holy Spirit's seal set upon it that we are the children of God,—all that keeps, and is designed by God to keep our hearts up amid the labours and the faintings, the hopes and the fears of the spiritual life. All that keeps us at the least and the worst above famine and beggary. Now, the whole pity with Little-Faith was, that though he was not a bad man, yet he never, even at his best days, had much of those things that make a good and well-furnished pilgrim; and what little he had he had now clean lost. He had never been much a reader of his Bible; he had never sat over it as other men sat over their news-letters and their romances. He had never had much taste or talent for spiritual books of any kind. He was a good sort of man, but he was not exactly the manner of man on whose broken heart the Holy Ghost sets the broad seal of heaven. But for his dreadful misadventure, he might have plodded on, a decent, humdrum, commonplace, everyday kind of pilgrim; but when that catastrophe fell on him he had nothing to fall back upon. The secret ways of faith and love and hope were wholly unknown to him. He had no practice in importunate prayer. He had never prayed a whole night all his life. He had never needed to do so. For were we not told when we first met him what a blameless and pure and true and good man he had always been? He did not know how to find his way about in his Bible; and as for the maps and guide-books that some pilgrims never let out of their hand, even when he had some spending money about him, he

never laid it out that way. And a more helpless pilgrim than Little-Faith was all the rest of the way you never saw. He was forced to beg as he went, says his historian. That is to say, he had to lean upon and look to wiser and better-furnished men than himself. He had to share their meals, look to them to pay his bills, keep close to their company, walk in their foot-prints, and at night borrow their oil, and it was only in this poor dependent way that Little-Faith managed to struggle on to the end of his dim and joyless journey.

It would have been far more becoming and far more profitable if Christian and Hopeful, instead of falling out of temper and calling one another bad names over the sad case of Little-Faith, had tried to tell one another why that unhappy pilgrim's faith was so small, and how both their own faith and his might from that day have been made more. Hopeful, for some reason or other, was in a rude and boastful mood of mind that day, and Christian was more tart and snappish than we have ever before seen him; and, altogether, the opportunity of learning something useful out of Little-Faith's story has been all but lost to us. But, now, since there are so many of Little-Faith's kindred among ourselves—so many good men who are either half asleep in their religious life or are begging their way from door to door—let them be told, in closing, one or two out of many other ways in which their too little faith may possibly be made stronger and more fruitful.

Well, then, faith, like everything else, once we have it, grows greater by our continual exercise of it. Exercise, then, intentionally and seriously and on system your faith every day. And exercise it habitually and increasingly on your Bible, on heaven, and on Jesus Christ. And let your faith on all these things, and places, and persons, work by love,—by love and by imagination. Our love is cold and our faith is small and weak for lack of imagination. Read your Psalm, your Gospel, your Epistle every morning and every night with your eye upon the object. Think you see the Psalmist amid all his deep and divine experiences. Think you see Jesus Christ speaking His parables, saying His prayers, and doing His good works. Walk up and down with Him, observing His manner, His look, His gait, His divinity in your humanity, till Galilee and Jerusalem become Scotland and Edinburgh; that is, till He is as much with you, and more, than He was with Peter and James and John. Never close your eye a single night till you have again laid your hand on the very head of the Lamb of God, and till you feel that your sin and guilt have all passed off your hand and on upon His head. And never rise without, like William Law, saluting the rising sun in the name of God, as if he had just been created and sent up into your sky to let you see to serve God and your neighbour for another day. And be often out of this world and up in heaven. Beat all about you at building castles in the air; you have more material and more reason. For is not faith the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen? Walk often in heaven's friendly streets. Pass often into heaven's many mansions filled with happy families. Imagine this unhappy life at an end, and imagine yourself sent back to this probationary world to play the man for a few short years before heaven finally calls you home. Little-Faith was a good man, but there was no speculation in his eyes and no secrets of love in his heart. And if your faith also is little, and your spending money also is run low, try this way of love and imagination. If you have a better way, then go on with it and be happy yourself and helpful to others; but if your faith is at a standstill and is stricken with barrenness, try my counsel of putting more heart and more inward eye, more holy love and more heavenly joy, into your frigid and sterile religion.

# 029. The Flatterer

XXIX THE FLATTERER “A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet.”—The Wise Man.

Both Ignorance and Little-Faith would have had their revenge and satisfaction upon Christian and Hopeful had they seen those two so Pharisaical old men taken in the Flatterer’s net. For it was nothing else but the swaggering pride of Hopeful over the pitiful case of Little-Faith, taken along with the hard and hasty ways of Christian with that unhappy youth Ignorance, that so soon laid them both down under the small cords of the Shining One. This word of the wise man, that pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall, was fulfilled to the very letter in Christian and Hopeful that high-minded day. At the same time, it must be admitted that Christian and Hopeful would have been more than human if they had not both felt and let fall some superiority, some scorn, and some impatience in the presence of such a silly and upsetting stripling as Ignorance was; as, also, over the story of such a poor-spirited and spunging creature as Little-Faith was. Christian and Hopeful had just come down from their delightful time among the Delectable Mountains, and they were as full as they could hold of all kinds of knowledge, and faith, and hope, and assurance; when, most unfortunately, as it turned out, they first came across Ignorance, and then, after quarrelling with him, they fell out between themselves over the case of Little-Faith. Their superior knowledge of the truth, and their superior strength of faith, ought to have made them more able to bear with the infirmities of the weak, and with the passing moods, however provoking, of one another. But no. And their impatience and contempt and bad temper all came at this crisis to such a head with them that they could only be cured by the small cords and the stinging words of the Shining One. The true key to this so painful part of the parable hangs at our own girdle. We who have been born and brought up in an evangelical church are thrown from time to time into the company of men—ministers and people—who have not had our advantages and opportunities. They have been born, baptized, and brought up in communities and churches the clean opposite of ours; and they are as ignorant of all New Testament religion as Ignorance himself was; or, on the other hand, they are as full of superstition and terror and spiritual starvation as Little-Faith was. And then, instead of recollecting and laying to heart Who made us to differ from such ignorance and such unbelief, and thus putting on love and humility and patience toward our neighbours, we speak scornfully and roughly to them, and boast ourselves over them, and as good as say to them, Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am wiser, wider-minded, stronger, and better every way than thou. And then, ere ever we are aware of what we are doing, we have let the arch-flatterer of religious superiority and of spiritual pride seduce us aside out of the lowly and heavenly way of love and humility till we are again brought back to it with rebukes of conscience and with other chastisements. You all understand, my brethren, that the man black of flesh but covered with a white robe was no wayside seducer who met Christian and Hopeful at that dangerous part of the road only and only on that high-minded day. You know from yourselves surely that both Christian and Hopeful carried that black but smooth-spoken man within themselves. The Flatterer who led the two pilgrims so fatally wrong that day was just their own

heart taken out of their own bosom and personified and dramatised by Bunyan's dramatic genius, and so made to walk and talk and flatter and puff up outside of themselves till they came again to see who in reality he was and whence he came,—that is to say, till they were brought to see what they themselves still were, and would always be, when they were left to themselves. "Where did you lie last night? asked the Shining One with the whip. With the Shepherds on the Delectable Mountains, they answered. He asked them then if they had not of those shepherds a note of direction for the way? They answered, Yes. But did you not, said he, when you were at a stand pluck out and read your note? They answered, No. He asked them why? They said they forgot. He asked, moreover if the shepherds did not bid them beware of the Flatterer? They answered, Yes; but we did not imagine, said they, that this fine-spoken man had been he."

All good literature, both sacred and profane, both ancient and modern, is full of the Flatterer. Let me not, protests Elihu in his powerful speech in the book of Job, let me not accept any man's person; neither let me give flattering titles unto man, lest in so doing my Maker should soon take me away. And the Psalmist in his powerful description of the wicked men of his day: There is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue. And again: They speak with flattering lips, and with a double heart do they speak. But the Lord shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things. "The perpetual hyperbole" of pure love becomes in the lips of impure love the impure bait that leads the simple ones astray on the streets of the city as seen and heard by the wise man out of his casement. My son, say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister, and call understanding thy kinswoman; that they may keep thee from the strange woman, from the stranger which flattereth thee with her words, which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God. And then in the same book of Hebrew aphorisms we find this text which Bunyan puts on the margin of the page: "A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet." And now, before we leave the ancient world, if you would not think it beneath the dignity of the place we are in, I would like to read to you a passage out of a round-about paper written by a satirist of Greece about the time of Ezra and Nehemiah in Jerusalem. You will easily remark the difference of tone between the seriousness and pathos of the Hebrew prophet and the light and chaffing touch of Theophrastus. "The Flatterer is a person," says that satirist of Greek society, "who will say to you as he walks with you, 'Do you observe how people are looking at you? This happens to no man in Athens but to you. A fine compliment was paid you yesterday in the Porch. More than thirty persons were sitting there when the question was started, Who is our foremost man? Every one mentioned you first, and ended by coming back to your name.' The Flatterer will laugh also at your stalest joke, and will stuff his cloak into his mouth as if he could not repress his amusement when you again tell it. He will buy apples and pears and will give to your children when you are by, and will kiss them all and will say, 'Chicks of a good father.' Also, when he assists at the purchase of slippers he will declare that the foot is more shapely than the shoe. He is the first of the guests to praise the wine and to say as he reclines next the host, 'How delicate your fare always is'; and taking up something from the table, 'Now, how excellent that is!'" And so on. Yes, we have heard it all over and over again in Modern Athens also. The Greek fable also of the fox and the crow and the piece of cheese is only another illustration of the truth that the God of truth and integrity never left Himself without a witness. Our own literature also is scattered full of the Flatterer and his too willing dupes. "Of praise a mere glutton," says Goldsmith of David Garrick, "he swallowed what came. The puff of a dunce he mistook it for fame." "Delicious essence," exclaims Sterne, "how

refreshing thou art to poor human nature! How sweetly dost thou mix with the blood, and help it through the most difficult and tortuous passages to the heart." "He that slanders me," says Cowper, "paints me blacker than I am, and he that flatters me whiter. They both daub me, and when I look in the glass of conscience, I see myself disguised by both." And then he sings:

"The worth of these three kingdoms I defy

To lure me to the baseness of a lie;

And of all lies (be that one poet's boast),

The lie that flatters I abhor the most."

Now, praise, which is one of the best and sweetest things in human life, so soon passes over into flattery, which is one of the worst things, that something must here be said and laid to heart about praise also. But, to begin with, praise itself must first be praised. There is nothing nobler than true praise in him who speaks it, and there is nothing dearer and sweeter to him who hears it. God Himself inhabits the praises of Israel. All God's works praise Him. Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me. Praise waiteth for Thee, O God, in Zion. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. And such also is all true praise between man and man. How deliciously sweet is praise! How we labour after it! how we look for it and wait for it! and how we languish and die if we do not get it! Again, when it comes to us, how it cheers us up and makes our face to shine! For a long time after it our step is so swift on the street and our face beams so that all men can quite well see what has come to us. Praise is like wine in our blood; it is new life to our fainting heart. So much is this the case that a salutation of praise is to be our first taste of heaven itself. It will wipe all tears off our eyes when we hear our Lord saying to us, "Well done!" when all our good works that we have done in the body shall be found unto praise and honour and glory in the great day of Jesus Christ. At the same time, this same love of praise is one of our most besetting and fatal temptations as long as we are in this false and double and deceptive world. Sin, God curse it! has corrupted and poisoned everything, the very best things of this life, and when the best things are corrupted and poisoned they become the worst things. And praise does not escape this universal and fatal law. Weak, evil, and self-seeking men are near us, and we lean upon them, look to them, and listen to them. We make them our strength and support, and seek repose and refreshment from them. They cannot be all or any of these things to us; but we are far on in life, we are done with life, before we have discovered that and will admit that. Most men never discover and admit that till they are out of this life altogether. Christ's praise and the applause of His saints and angels are so future and so far away from us, and man's praise and the applause of this world, hollow and false as it is, is so near us, that we feed our souls on offal and garbage, when, already, in the witness of a good conscience, we might be feasting our souls on the finest of the wheat, and satisfying them with honey out of the rock. And, then, this insatiable appetite of our hearts, being so degraded and perverted, like all degraded and perverted appetites, becomes an iron-fast slave to what it feeds upon. What miserable slaves we all are to the approval and the praise of men! How they hold us in their bondage! How we lick their hands and sit up on our haunches and go through our postures for a crumb! How we crawl on our belly and lick their feet for a stroke and a smile! What a hound's life does that man lead who lives upon the approval and the praise and the patronage of men! What

meanness fills his mind; what baseness fills his heart! What a shameful leash he is led about the world in! How kicked about and spat upon he is; while not half so much as he knows all the time that he deserves to be! Better far be a dog at once and bay the moon than be a man and fawn upon the praises of men.

If you would be a man at all, not to speak of a Christian man, starve this appetite till you have quite extirpated it. You will never be safe from it as long as it stirs within you. Extirpate it! Extirpate it! You will never know true self-respect and you will never deserve to know it, till you have wholly extirpated your appetite for praise. Put your foot upon it, put it out of your heart. Stop fishing for it, and when you see it coming, turn away and stop your ears against it. And should it still insinuate itself, at any rate do not repeat to others what has already so flattered and humbled and weakened you. Telling it to others will only humble and weaken you more. By repeating the praise that you have heard or read about yourself you only expose yourself and purchase well-deserved contempt for yourself. And, more than that, by fishing for praise you lay yourself open to all sorts of flatterers. Honest men, men who truly respect and admire you, will show you their dignified regard and appreciation of you and your work by their silence; while your leaky slaves will crowd around you with floods of praise that they know well will please and purchase you. And when you cannot with all your arts squeeze a drop out of those who love and honour you, gallons will be poured upon you by those who have respect neither for themselves nor for you. Faugh! Flee from flatterers, and take up only with sternly true and faithful men. “I am much less regardful,” says Richard Baxter, “of the approbation of men, and set much lighter store by their praise and their blame, than I once did. All worldly things appear most vain and unsatisfying to those who have tried them most. But while I feel that this has had some hand in my distaste for man’s praise, yet it is the increasing impression on my heart of man’s nothingness and God’s transcendent greatness; it is the brevity and vanity of all earthly things, taken along with the nearness of eternity;—it is all this that has at last lifted me above the blame and the praise of men.” To conclude; let us make up our mind and determine to pass on to God on the spot every syllable of praise that ever comes to our eyes or our ears—if, in this cold, selfish, envious, and grudging world, any syllable of praise ever should come to us. Even if pure and generous and well-deserved praise should at any time come to us, all that does not make it ours. The best earned usury is not the steward’s own money to do with it what he likes. The principal and the interest, and the trader too, are all his master’s. And, more than that, after the wisest and the best trader has done his best, he will remain, to himself at least, a most unprofitable servant. Pass on then immediately, dutifully, and to its very last syllable, to God all the praise that comes to you. Wash your hands of it and say, Not unto us, O God, not unto us, but unto Thy name. And then, to take the most selfish and hungry-hearted view of this whole matter, what you thus pass on to God as not your own but His, He will soon, and in a better and safer world, return again to the full with usury to you, and you again to God, and He again to you, and so on, all down the pure and true and sweet and blessed life of heaven.

# 030. Atheist

XXX

ATHEIST " . . . without God [literally, atheists] in the world."—Paul.

"Yonder is a man with his back toward Zion, and he is coming to meet us. So he drew nearer and nearer, and at last came up to them. His name was Atheist, and he asked them whither they were going? We are going to the Mount Zion, they answered. Then Atheist fell into a very great laughter. What is the meaning of your laughter? they asked. I laugh to see what ignorant persons you are to take upon you so tedious a journey, and yet are like to have nothing but your travel for your pains. Why, man? Do you think we shall not be received? they said. Received! There is no such place as you dream of in all this world. But there is in the world to come, replied Christian. When I was at home, Atheist went on, in mine own country I heard as you now affirm, and, from that hearing, I went out to see, and have been seeking this city you speak of this twenty years, but find no more of it than I did the first day I set out. And, still laughing, he went his way."

Having begun to tell us about Atheist, why did Bunyan not tell us more? We would have thanked him warmly to-night for a little more about this unhappy man. Why did the dreamer not take another eight or ten pages in order to tell us, as only he could have told us, how this man that is now Atheist had spent his past twenty years seeking Mount Zion? Those precious unwritten pages are now buried in John Strudwick's vault in Bunhill Fields, and no other man has arisen able to handle Bunyan's biographic pen. Had Bunyan but put off the entrance of Christian and Hopeful into the city till he had told us something more about the twenty years it had taken this once earnest pilgrim to become an atheist, how valuable an interpolation that would have been! What was it that made this man to set out so long ago for the Celestial City? What was it that so stoutly determined him to leave off all his old companions and turn his back on the sweet refreshments of his youth? How did he do at the Slough of Despond? Did he come that way? What about the Wicket Gate, and the House Beautiful, and the Interpreter's House, and the Delectable Mountains? What men, and especially what women, did he meet and converse with on his way? What were his fortunes, and what his misfortunes? How much did he lay out at Vanity Fair, and on what? At what point of his twenty years' way did his youthful faith begin to shake, and his youthful love begin to become lukewarm? And what was it that at last made him quite turn round his back on Zion and his face to his own country? I cannot forgive Bunyan to-night for not telling us the story of Atheist's conversion, his pilgrimage, and his apostasy in full. At the same time, though it cannot be denied that Bunyan has lost at this point a great opportunity for his genius and for our advantage,—at the same time, he undoubtedly did a very courageous thing in introducing Atheist at all; and, especially, in introducing him to us and making him laugh so loudly at us when we are on the very borders of the land of Beulah. A less courageous writer, and a writer less sure of his ground, would have left out Atheist altogether; or, if he had felt constrained to introduce him, would have introduced him at any other period of our history rather than at this period. Under other hands than Bunyan's we would have met with this mocking reprobate just outside the City of Destruction;

or, perhaps, among the booths of Vanity Fair; or, indeed, anywhere but where we now meet him. And, that our greater-minded author does not let loose the laughter of Atheist upon us till we are almost out of the body is a stroke of skill and truth and boldness that makes us glad indeed that we possess such a sketch at Bunyan's hand at all, all too abrupt and all too short as that sketch is. In the absence, then, of a full-length and finished portrait of Atheist, we must be content to fall back on some of the reflections and lessons that the mere mention of his name, the spot he passes us on, and the ridicule of his laughter, all taken together, awaken in our minds. One rapid stroke of such a brush as that of John Bunyan conveys more to us than a full-length likeness, with all the strongest colours, of any other artist would be able to do.

1. One thing the life-long admiration of John Bunyan's books has helped to kindle and burn into my mind and my imagination is this: What a universe of things is the heart of man! Were there nothing else in the heart of man but all the places and all the persons and all the adventures that John Bunyan saw in his sleep, what a world that would open up in all our bosoms! All the pilgrims, good and bad—they, or the seed and possibility of them all, are all in your heart and in mine. All the cities, all the roads that lead from one city to another, with all the paths and all the by-paths,—all the adventures, experiences, endurances, conflicts, overthrows, victories,—all are within us and never are to be seen anywhere else. Heaven and hell, God and the devil, life and death, salvation and damnation, time and eternity, all are within us. "There is no Mount Zion in all this world," bellowed out this blinded fool. "No; I know that quite well," quickly responded Christian; "but there is in the world to come." He would have said the whole truth, and he would have been entirely right, had he taken time to add, "and in the world within." "And more, "he should have said to Atheist, "much more in the world within than in any possible world to come." The Celestial City, every Sabbath-school child begins gradually to understand, is not up among the stars; till, as he grows older, he takes in the whole of the New Testament truth that the kingdom of heaven is wholly within him. You all understand, my brethren, that were we swept in a moment up to the furthest star, by all that infinite flight we would not be one hair's-breadth nearer the heavenly city. That is not the right direction to that city. The city whose builder and maker is God lies in quite a different direction from that altogether; not by ascending up beyond sun and moon and stars to all eternity would we ever get one hand's-breadth nearer God. But if you deny yourself sleep to-night till you have read His book and bowed your knees in His closet; if, for His sake, you deny yourself to-morrow when you are eating and drinking; as often as you say, "Not my will, but Thine be done"; as often as you humble yourself when others exalt themselves; as often as you refuse praise and despise blame for His sake; as often as you forgive before God your enemy, and rejoice with your friend,—Behold! the kingdom of heaven, with its King and all His shining court of angels and saints is around you;—is, indeed, within you. No; there is no such place. Heaven is not in any place: heaven is in a person where it is at all; and you are that person as often as you put off an earthly and put on a heavenly mind. That mocking reprobate, with his secret heart all through those twenty years hungering after the lusts of his youth,—he was wholly right in what he so unintentionally said; there is no such place in all this world. And, even if there were, it would spue him and all who are like him out of its mouth.

2. And, then, in all that universe of things that fills that bottomless pit and shoreless sea the human heart, there is nothing deeper down in it than just its deep and unsearchable atheism. The very deepest thing, and the most absolutely inexpugnable thing, in every human heart is its theism; its

original and inextinguishable convictions about itself and about God. But, all but as deep as that—for all around that, and all over that, and soaking all through that—there lies a superincumbent mass of sullen, brutish, malignant atheism. Nay, so deep down is the atheism of all our hearts, that it is only one here and another there of the holiest and the ripest of God's saints who ever get down to it, or even get at their deepest within sight of it. Robert Fleming tells us about Robert Bruce, that he was a man that had much inward exercise about his own personal case, and had been often assaulted anent that great foundation truth, if there was a God. And often, when he had come up to the pulpit, after being some time silent, which was his usual way, he would say, "I think it is a great matter to believe there is a God"; telling the people that it was another thing to believe that than they judged. But it was also known to his friends what extraordinary confirmations he had from the Lord therein, and what near familiarity he did attain to in his heart-converse with God: Yea, truly, adds Fleming, some things I have had thereanent that seem so strange and marvellous that I forbear to set them down. And in Halyburton's priceless Memoirs we read: "Hereby I was brought into a doubt about the truths of religion, the being of God, and things eternal. Whenever I was in dangers or straits and would build upon these things, a suspicion secretly haunted me, what if the things are not? This perplexity was somewhat eased while one day I was reading how Robert Bruce was shaken about the being of God, and how at length he came to the fullest satisfaction." And in another place: "Some days ago reading Ex. ix. and x., and finding this, 'That ye may know that I am God' frequently repeated, and elsewhere in passages innumerable, as the end of God's manifesting Himself in His word and works; I observe from it that atheism is deeply rooted even in the Lord's people, seeing they need to be taught this so much. The great difficulty that the whole of revelation has to grapple with is atheism; its whole struggle is to recover man to his first impressions of a God. This one point comprehends the whole of man's recovery, just as atheism is the whole of man's apostasy." And, again, in another part of the same great book, Halyburton says: "I must observe, also, the wise providence of God, that the greatest difficulties that lie against religion are hid from atheists. All the objections I meet with in their writings are not nearly so subtle as those which are often suggested to myself. The reason of this is obvious from the very nature of the thing—such persons take not a near-hand view of religion, and while persons stand at a distance neither are the advantages nor the difficulties of religion discerned." And now listen to Bunyan, that arch-atheist: "Whole floods of blasphemies both against God, Christ, and the Scriptures were poured upon my spirit, to my great confusion and astonishment. Against the very being of God and of His only beloved Son; or, whether there were, in truth, a God and a Christ, or no. Of all the temptations that ever I met with in my life, to question the being of God and the truth of the Gospel is the worst, and the worst to be borne. When this temptation comes it takes away my girdle from me, and removeth the foundation from under me."

"Fool, said my Muse to me, look in thy heart and write." And John Bunyan looked into his own deep and holy heart, and out of it he composed this incident of Atheist.

3. It may not be out of place at this point to look for a moment at some of the things that agitate, stir up, and make the secret atheism of our hearts to fluctuate and overflow. Butler has a fine passage in which he points out that it is only the higher class of minds that are tempted with speculative difficulties such as those were that assaulted Christian and Hopeful after they were so near the end of their journey. Coarse, commonplace, and mean-minded men have their probation appointed them among coarse, mean, and commonplace things; whereas enlightened, enlarged,

and elevated men are exercised after the manner of Robert Bruce, Thomas Halyburton, John Bunyan, and Butler himself. “The chief temptations of the generality of the world are the ordinary motives to injustice or unrestrained pleasure; but there are other persons without this shallowness of temper; persons of a deeper sense as to what is invisible and future. Now, these persons have their moral discipline set them in that high region.” The profound bishop means that while their appetites and their tempers are the stumbling-stones of the most of men, the difficult problems of natural and revealed and experimental religion are the test and the triumph of other men. As we have just seen in the men mentioned above. Students, whose temptations lie fully as much in their intellects as in their senses, should buy (for a few pence) Halyburton’s Memoirs. “With Halyburton,” says Dr. John Duncan, “I feel great intellectual congruity. Halyburton was naturally a sceptic, but God gave that sceptic great faith.”

Then again, what Atheist calls the “tediousness” of the journey has undoubtedly a great hand in making some half-in-earnest men sceptics, if not scoffers. Many of us here to-night who can never now take this miserable man’s way out of the tedium of the Christian life, yet most bitterly feel it. Whether that tedium is inherent in that life, and inevitable to such men as we are who are attempting that life; how far that feature belongs to the very essence of the pilgrim life, and how far we import our own tedium into the pilgrimage; the fact remains as Atheist puts it. As Atheist in this book says, so the Atheist who is in our hearts often says: We are like to have nothing for all our pains but a lifetime of tedious travel. Yes, wherever the blame lies, there can be no doubt about it, that what this hilarious scoffer calls the tediousness of the way is but a too common experience among many of those who, tediousness and all, will still cleave fast to it and will never leave it.

Then, again, great trials in life, great straits, dark and too-long-continued providences, prayer unanswered, or not yet answered in the way we dictate, bad men and bad causes growing like a green bay tree, and good men and good work languishing and dying; these things, and many more things such as these, of which this world of faith and patience is full, prove quite too much for some men till they give themselves up to a state of mind that is nothing better than atheism. “My evidences and my certainty,” says Halyburton, “were not answerable to the weight I was compelled to lay upon them.” A figure which Goodwin in his own tender and graphic way takes up thus: “Set pins in a wall and fix them in ever so loosely, yet, if you hang nothing upon them they will seem to stand firm; but hang a heavy weight upon them, or even give them the least jog as you pass, and the whole thing will suddenly come down. The wall is God’s word, the slack pin is our faith, and the weight and the jog are the heavy burdens and the sudden shocks of life, and down our hearts go, wall and pin and suspended vessel and all.” When the church and her ministers, when the Scriptures and their anomalies, and when the faults and failings of Christian men are made the subject of mockery and laughter, the reverence, the fear, the awe, the respect that all enter so largely into religion, and especially into the religion of young people, is too easily destroyed; and not seldom the first seeds of practical and sometimes of speculative atheism are thus sown. The mischief that has been done by mockery and laughter to the souls, especially of the young and the inexperienced, only the great day will fully disclose. And then, two men of great weight and authority with us, tell us what we who are ministers would have found out without them: this, namely, that the greatest atheists are they who are ever handling holy things without feeling them.

“Is it true,” said Christian to Hopeful, his fellow, “is it true what this man hath said?” “Take heed,” said Hopeful, “remember what it hath cost us already for hearkening to such kind of fellows. What! No Mount Zion! Did we not see from the Delectable Mountains the gate of the City? And, besides, are we not to walk by faith? Let us go on lest the man with the whip overtakes us again.” Christian: “My brother, I said that but to prove thee, and to fetch from thee a fruit of the honesty of thy heart.” Many a deep and powerful passage has Butler composed on that thesis which Hopeful here supplies him with; and many a brilliant sermon has Newman preached on that same text till he has made our “predispositions to faith” a fruitful and an ever fresh commonplace to hundreds of preachers. Yes; the best bulwark of faith is a good and honest heart. To such a happy heart the truth is its own unshaken evidence. To whom can we go but to Thee?—they who have such a heart protest. The whole bent of such men’s minds is toward the truth of the gospel. Their instincts keep them on the right way even when their reason and their observation are both confounded. As Newman keeps on saying, they are “easy of belief.” They cannot keep away from Christ and His church. They cannot turn back. They must go on. Though He slay them they will die yearning after Him. They often fall into great error and into great guilt, but their seed remaineth in them, and they cannot continue in error or in guilt, because they are born of God. They are they in whom “Persuasion and belief

Have ripened into faith; and faith become

A passionate intuition.”

# 031. Hopeful

XXXI

HOPEFUL “We are saved by hope.”—Paul

Up till the time when Christian and Faithful passed through Vanity Fair on their way to the Celestial City, Hopeful was one of the most light-minded men in all that light-minded town. By his birth, and both on his father’s and his mother’s side, Hopeful was, to begin with, a youth of an unusually shallow and silly mind. In the jargon of our day he was a man of a peculiarly optimistic temperament. No one ever blamed him for being too subjective and introspective. It took many sharp trials and many bitter disappointments to take the inborn frivolity and superficiality out of this young man’s heart. He was far on in his life, he was far on even in his religious life, before you would have ever thought of calling him a serious-minded man. Hopeful had been born and brought up to early manhood in the town of Vanity, and he knew nothing better and desired nothing better than to lay out his whole life and to rest all his hopes on the things of the fair; on such things, that is, as houses, lands, places, honours, preferments, titles, pleasures, and delights of all sorts. And that vain and empty life went on with him, till, as he told his companion afterwards, it had all ended with him in revelling, and drinking, and uncleanness, and Sabbath-breaking, and all such things as destroyed his soul. But in Hopeful’s happy case also the blood of the martyrs became the seed of the church. Hopeful, as he was afterwards called, had suffered so many bitter disappointments and shipwrecks of expectation from the things of the fair, that is to say, from the houses, the places, the preferments, the pleasures and what not, of the fair, that even his heart was ripe for something better than any of those things, when, as God would have it, Christian and Faithful came to the town. Hopeful was still hanging about the booths of the fair; he was just fingering his last sixpence over a commodity that he knew quite well would be like gall in his belly as soon as he had bought it; when,—what is that hubbub that rolls down the street? Hopeful was always the first to see and to hear every new thing that came to the town, and thus it was that he was soon in the thick of the tumult that rose around Christian and Faithful. Had those two pilgrims come to the town at any former time, Hopeful would have been among the foremost to mock at and smite the two men; but, to-day, Hopeful’s heart is so empty, and his purse also, that he is already won to their side by the loving looks and the wise and sweet words of the two ill-used men. Some of the men of the town said that the two pilgrims were outlandish and bedlamite men, but Hopeful took courage to reprove some of the foremost of the mob. Till, at last, when Faithful was at the stake, it was all that his companions could do to keep back Hopeful from leaping up on the burning pile and embracing the expiring man. And then, when He who overrules all things so brought it about that Christian escaped out of their hands, who should come forth and join him at the upward gate of the city but just Hopeful, who not only joined himself to the lonely pilgrim, but told him also that there were many more of the men of the city who would take their time and follow after. And thus, adds his biographer, when one died to make his testimony to the truth, another rose up out of his ashes to be a companion to Christian. When Madame Krudener was getting her foot measured by a pietist shoemaker, she was so struck with the repose and the sweetness and the heavenly joy of

the poor man's look and manner that she could not help but ask him what had happened to him that he had such a look on his countenance and such a light in his eye. She was miserable, though she had all that heart could wish. She had all that made her one of the most envied women in Europe; she had birth, talents, riches, rank, and the friendship of princes and princesses, and yet she was of all women the most miserable. And here was a poor chance shoemaker whose whole heart was running over with a joy such that all her wealth could not purchase to her heart one single drop of it. The simple soul soon told her his secret; it was no secret: it was just Jesus Christ who had done it all. And thus her poor shoemaker's happy face was the means of this great lady's conversion. And, in like manner, it was the beholding of Christian and Faithful in their words and in their behaviour at the fair that decided Hopeful to join himself to Christian and henceforth to be his companion.

What were the things, asked Christian of his young companion, that first led you to leave off the vanities of the fair and to think to be a pilgrim? Many things, replied Hopeful. Sometimes if I did but meet a good man in the street. Or if mine head began unaccountably, or mine heart, to ache. Or if some one of my companions became suddenly sick. Or if I heard the bell toll that some one was dead. But, especially, when I thought of myself that I must quickly come to judgment. And then it is told in the best style of the book how peace and rest and the beginning of true satisfaction came to poor Hopeful's heart at last. But you must promise me to read the passage for yourselves before you sleep to-night; and to read it again and again till, like Hopeful's, your heart also is full of joy, and your eyes full of tears, and your affections running over with love to the name and to the people and to all the ways of Jesus Christ. And then, it is very encouraging and reassuring to us to see how Hopeful's true conversion so deepened and sobered and strengthened his whole character. He remained to the end in his mental constitution and whole temperament, as we say, the same man he had always been; but, while remaining the same man, at the same time a most wonderful change gradually began to come over him, till, by slow but sure degrees, he became the Hopeful we know and look to and lean upon. To use his own autobiographic words about himself, it was "by hearing and considering of things that are Divine" that his natural levity was so completely whipped out of his soul till he was made at last an indispensable companion to Christian, strong-minded and serious-minded man as he was. "Conversion to God," says William Law,"is often very sudden and instantaneous, unexpectedly raised from variety of occasions. Thus, one by seeing only a withered tree, another by reading the lives and deaths of the antediluvian fathers, one by hearing of heaven, another of hell, one by reading of the love or wrath of God, another of the sufferings of Christ, may find himself, as it were, melted into penitence all of a sudden. It may be granted also that the greatest sinner may in a moment be converted to God, and may feel himself wounded in such a degree as perhaps those never were who have been turning to God all their lives. But, then, it is to be observed that this suddenness of change or flash of conviction is by no means of the essence of true conversion. This stroke of conversion is not to be considered as signifying our high state of a new birth in Christ, or a proof that we are on a sudden made new creatures, but that we are thus suddenly called upon and stirred up to look after a newness of nature. The renewal of our first birth and state is something entirely distinct from our first sudden conversion and call to repentance. That is not a thing done in an instant, but is a certain process, a gradual release from our captivity and disorder, consisting of several stages and degrees, both of life and death, which the soul must go through before it can have thoroughly put off the old man. It is well worth observing that our Saviour's greatest trials were near the end of His

life. This might sufficiently show us that our first awakenings have carried us but a little way; that we should not then begin to be self-assured of our own salvation, but should remember that we stand at a great distance from, and are in great ignorance of, our severest trials." Such was the way that Christian in his experience and in his wisdom talked to his young companion till his outward trials and the consequent discoveries he made of his own weakness and corruption made even Hopeful himself a sober-minded and a thoughtful man. "Where pain ends, gain ends too."

Then, again, no one can read Hopeful's remarkable history without discovering this about him, that he showed best in adversity and distress, just as he showed worst in deliverance and prosperity. It is a fine lesson in Christian hope to descend into Giant Despair's dungeon and hear the older pilgrim groaning and the younger pilgrim consoling him, and, again, to stand on the bank of the last river and hear Hopeful holding up Christian's drowning head. "Be of good cheer, my brother, for I feel the bottom, and it is good!" Bless Hopeful for that, all you whose deathbeds are still before you. For never was more true and fit word spoken for a dying hour than that. Read, till you have it by heart and in the dark, Hopeful's whole history, but especially his triumphant end. And have some one bespoken beforehand to read Hopeful in the River to you when you have in a great measure lost your senses, and when a great horror has taken hold of your mind. "I sink in deep waters," cried Christian, as his sins came to his mind, even the sins which he had committed both since and before he came to be a pilgrim. "But I see the gate," said Hopeful, "and men standing at it ready to receive us." "Read to me where I first cast my anchor," said John Knox to his weeping wife. The Enchanted Ground, on the other hand, threatened to throw Hopeful back again into his former light-minded state. And there is no saying what shipwreck he might have made there had the older man not been with him to steady and reprove and instruct him. As it was, a touch now and then of his old vain temper returned to him till it took all his companion's watchfulness and wariness to carry them both out of that second Vanity Fair. "I acknowledge myself in a fault," said Hopeful to Christian, "and had I been here alone I had run in danger of death. Hitherto, thy company hath been my mercy, and thou shalt have a good reward for all thy labour."

Now, my brethren, in my opinion we owe a great debt of gratitude to John Bunyan for the large and the displayed place he has given to Hopeful in the Pilgrim's Progress. The fulness and balance and proportion of the Pilgrim's Progress are features of that wonderful book far too much overlooked. So far as my reading goes I do not know any other author who has at all done the justice to the saving grace of hope that John Bunyan has done both in his doctrinal and in his allegorical works. Bunyan stands alone and supreme not only for the insight, and the power with which he has constructed the character and the career of Hopeful, but even for having given him the space at all adequate to his merits and his services. In those eighty-seven so suggestive pages that form the index to Dr. Thomas Goodwin's works I find some hundred and twenty-four references to "faith," while there are only two references to "hope." And that same oversight and neglect runs through all our religious literature, and I suppose, as a consequence, through all our preaching too. Now that is not the treatment the Bible gives to this so essential Christian grace, as any one may see at a glance who takes the trouble to turn up his Cruden. Hope has a great place alongside of faith and love in the Holy Scriptures, and it has a correspondingly large and eloquent place in Bunyan. Now, that being so, why is it that this so great and so blessed grace has so fallen out of our sermons and out of our hearts? May God grant that our reading of Hopeful's autobiography and his subsequent history to-night may do something to restore the blessed grace

of hope to its proper place both in our pulpit and in all our hearts. To kindle then, to quicken, and to anchor your hope, my brethren, may I have God's help to speak for a little longer to your hearts concerning this neglected grace! For, what is hope? Hope is a passion of the soul, wise or foolish, to be ashamed of or to be proud of, just according to the thing hoped for, and just according to the grounds of the hope. Hope is made up of these two ingredients—desire and expectation. What we greatly desire we take no rest till we find good grounds on which to build up our expectations of it; and when we have found good grounds for our expectations, then a glad hope takes possession of our hearts. Now, to begin with, how is it with your desires? You are afraid to say much about your expectations and your hopes. Well; let us come to your hearts' desires.—Men of God, I will enter into your hearts and I will tell you your hearts' desires better than you know them yourselves; for the heart is deceitful above all things. The time was, when, like this young pilgrim before he became a pilgrim, your desires were all set on houses, and lands, and places, and honours, and preferments, and wives, and children, and silver, and gold, and what not. These things at one time were the utmost limit of your desires. But that has all been changed. For now you have begun to desire a better city, that is, an heavenly. What is your chief desire for this New Year? Is it not a new heart? Is it not a clean heart? Is it not a holy heart? Is it not that the Holy Ghost would write the golden rule on the tables of your heart? Does not God know that it is the deepest desire of your heart to be able to love your neighbour as yourself? To be able to rejoice with him in his joy as well as to weep with him in his sorrow? What would you not give never again to feel envy in your heart at your brother, or straitness and pining at his prosperity? One thing do I desire, said the Psalmist, that mine ear may be nailed to the doorpost of my God: that I may always be His servant, and may never wander from His service. Now, that is your desire too. I am sure it is. You would not say it of yourself, but I defy you to deny it when it is said about you. Well, then, such things being found among your desires, what grounds have you for expecting the fulfilment of such desires? What grounds? The best of grounds and every ground. For you have the sure ground of God's word. And you have more than His word: you have His very nature, and the very nature of things. For shall God create such desires in any man's heart only to starve and torture that man? Impossible! It were blasphemy to suspect it. No. Where God has made any man to be so far a partaker of the Divine nature as to change all that man's deepest desires, and to turn them from vanity to wisdom, from earth to heaven, and from the creature to the Creator, doubt not, wherever He has begun such a work, that He will hasten to finish it. Yes; lift up your heavy hearts, all ye who desire such things, for God hath sent His Son to say to you, Blessed are ye that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for ye shall be filled. Only, keep desiring. Desire every day with a stronger and a more inconsolable desire. Desire, and ground your desire on God's word, and then heave your hope like an anchor within the veil whither the Forerunner is for you entered. May I so hope? you say. May I venture to hope? Yes; not only may you hope, but you must hope. You are commanded to hope. It is as much your bounden duty to hope always, and to hope for the greatest and best things, as it is to repent of your sins, to love God and your neighbour, to keep yourself pure, and to set a watch on the door of your lips. You have been destroyed, I confess and lament it, for lack of knowledge about the nature, the grounds, and the duty of hope. But make up now for past neglect. Hope steadfastly, hope constantly, hope boldly; hope for the best things, the greatest things, the most divine and the most blessed things. If you forget to-night all else you have heard to-day, I implore you not any longer to forget and neglect this, that hope is your immediate, constant, imperative duty. No sin, no depth of corruption in your heart, no assault on your heart from your

conscience, can justify you in ceasing to hope. Even when trouble “comes tumbling over the neck of all your reformations” as it came tumbling on Hopeful, let that only drive you the more deeply down into the true grounds of hope; even against hope rejoice in hope. Remember the Psalmist in the hundred-and-thirtieth Psalm,—down in the deeps, if ever a fallen sinner was. Yet hear him when you cannot see him saying: I hope in Thy word! And—for it is worthy to stand beside even that splendid psalm,—I beseech you to read and lay to heart what Hopeful says about himself in his conversion despair. And then, as if to justify that hope, there always come with it such sanctifying influences and such sure results. The hope that you are one day to awaken in the Divine likeness will make you lie down on your bed every night in self-examination, repentance, prayer, and praise. The hope that your eyes are one day to see Christ as He is will make you purify yourself as nothing else will. The hope that you are to walk with Christ in white will make you keep your garments clean; it will make you wash them many times every day in the blood of the Lamb. The hope that you are to cast your crown at His feet will make you watch that no man takes your crown from you. The hope that you are to drink wine with Him in His Father’s kingdom will reconcile you meanwhile to water, lest with your wine you stumble any of His little ones. The hope of hearing Him say, Well done!—how that will make you labour and endure and not faint! And the hope that you shall one day enter in through the gates into the city, and have a right to the tree of life,—how scrupulous that will make you to keep all His commandments! And this is one of His commandments, that you gird up the loins of your mind, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

# 032. Temporary

XXXII

TEMPORARY “They are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.”—Our Lord.

“Well, then, did you not know about ten years ago one Temporary in your parts who was a forward man in religion? Know him! replied the other. Yes. For my house not being above three miles from his house he would ofttimes come to me, and that with many tears. Truly I pitied the man, and was not altogether without hope of him; but one may see that it is not every one who cries Lord, Lord. And now, since we are talking about him, let us a little inquire into the reason of the sudden backsliding of him and such others. It may be very profitable, said Christian, but do you begin. Well, then, there are in my judgment several reasons for it.” And then, with the older man’s entire approval, Hopeful sets forth several reasons, taken from his own observation of backsliders, why so many men’s religion is such a temporary thing; why so many run well for a time, and then stand still, and then turn back.

1. The fear of man bringeth a snare, said Hopeful, moralising over his old acquaintance Temporary. And how true that observation is every evangelical minister knows to his deep disappointment. A young man comes to his minister at some time of distress in his life, or at some time of revival of religion in the community, or at an ordinary communion season, and gives every sign that he is early and fairly embarked on an honourable Christian life. He takes his place in the Church of Christ, and he puts out his hand to her work, till we begin to look forward with boastfulness to a life of great stability and great attainment for that man. Our Lord, as we see from so many of His parables, must have had many such cases among His first followers. Our Lord might be speaking prophetically, as well as out of His own experience, so well do His regretful and lamenting words fit into so many of our own cases to-day. For, look at that young business man. He has been born and brought up in the Church of Christ. He has gladdened more hearts than he knows by the noble promise of his early days. Many admiring and loving eyes have been turned on him as he took so hopefully the upward way. But a sifting-time soon comes. A time of temptation comes. A time comes when sides must be taken in some moral, religious, ecclesiastical controversy. This young man is at that moment a candidate for a post that will bring distinction, wealth, and social influence to him who holds it. And the candidate we are so much interested in is admittedly a man of such outstanding talents that he would at once get the post were it not that the holder of that post must not have his name so much associated with such and such a church, such and such political and religious opinions, and such and such public men. He is told that. Indeed, he is not so dull as to need to be told that. He has seen that all along. And at first it is a dreadful wrench to him. He feels how far he is falling from his high ideals in life; and, at first, and for a long time, it is a dreadful humiliation to him. But, then, there are splendid compensations. And, better than that, there are some good, and indeed compelling, reasons that begin to rise up in our minds when we need them and begin to look for them, till what at first

seemed so mean and so contemptible, and so ungrateful, and so dishonourable, as well as so spiritually perilous, comes to be faced and gone through with positively on a ground of high principle, and, indeed, of stern moral necessity. So deceitful is the human heart that you could not believe what compelling reasons such a mean-spirited man will face you with as to why he should leave all the ways he once so delighted in for a piece of bread, and for the smile of the open enemies of his church, and his faith, not to say his Saviour. You will meet with several such men any afternoon coming home from their business. Sometimes they have still some honest shame on their faces when they meet you; but still oftener they pass you with a sullen hatred and a fierce defiance. This is he who heard the word, and anon with joy received it. Yet had he not root in himself, but dured for a while; for when tribulation or persecution arose because of the word by and by he was offended. They went out from us, says John, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

2. Guilt, again, Hopeful went on, and to meditate terror, are so grievous to most men, that they rather choose such ways as will but harden their hearts still more and more. You all know what it is to meditate terror? “Thine heart shall meditate terror,” says the prophet, “when thou sayest to thyself, who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?” The fifty-first Psalm is perhaps the best meditation both of guilt and of terror that we have in the whole Bible. But there are many other psalms and passages of psalms only second to the fifty-first Psalm, such as the twenty-second, the thirty-eighth, the sixty-ninth, and the hundred-and-thirtieth. Our Lord Himself also was meditating terror in the garden of Gethsemane, and Paul both guilt and terror when he imagined himself both an apostate preacher and a castaway soul. And John’s meditations of terror in the Revelation rose into those magnificent pictures of the Last Judgment with which he has to all time covered the walls of the Seven Churches. In his own Grace Abounding there are meditations of terror quite worthy to stand beside the most terrible things of that kind that ever were written, as also in many others of our author’s dramatical and homiletical books. I read to you the other Sabbath morning a meditation of terror that was found among Bishop Andrewes’ private papers after his death. You will not all have forgotten that meditation, but I will read it to you to-night again. “How fearful,” says Andrewes, in his terror, “will Thy judgment be, O Lord, when the thrones are set, and the angels stand around, and men are brought in, and the books are opened, and all our works are inquired into, and all our thoughts are examined, and all the hidden things of darkness! What, O God, shall Thy judgment that day be upon me? Who shall quench my flame, who shall lighten my darkness, if Thou pity me not? Lord, as Thou art loving, give me tears, give me floods of tears, and give me all that this day, before it be too late. For then will be the incorruptible Judge, the horrible judgment-seat, the answer without excuse, the inevitable charge, the shameful punishment, the endless Gehenna, the pitiless angels, the yawning hell, the roaring stream of fire, the unquenchable flame, the dark prison, the rayless darkness, the bed of live coals, the unwearied worm, the indissoluble chains, the bottomless chaos, the impassable wall, the inconsolable cry. And none to stand by me; none to plead for me; none to snatch me out.” Now, no Temporary ever possessed anything like that in his own handwriting among his private papers. A meditation like that, written out with his own hand, and hidden away under lock and key, will secure any man from it, even if he had been appointed to backsliding and reprobation. Bishop Andrewes, as any one will see who reads his Private Devotions, was the chief of sinners; but his discovered and deciphered papers will all

speak for him when they are spread out before the great white throne,“ glorious in their deformity, being slubbered,” as his editors say, “with his pious hands, and watered with his penitential tears.”

Thomas Shepard’s Ten Virgins is the most terrible book upon Temporaries that ever was written. Temporaries never once saw their true vileness, he keeps on saying. Temporaries are, no doubt, wounded for sin sometimes, but never in the right place nor to the right depth. And again, sin, and especially heart-sin, is never really bitter to Temporaries. In an “exhortation to all new beginners, and so to all others,” “Be sure,” Shepard says, “your wound for sin at first is deep enough. For all the error in a man’s faith and sanctification springs from his first error in his humiliation. If a man’s humiliation be false, or even weak or little, then his faith and his hold of Christ are weak and little, and his sanctification counterfeit. But if a man’s wound be right, and his humiliation deep enough, that man’s faith will be right and his sanctification will be glorious. The esteem of Christ is always little where sin lies light.” And Hopeful himself says a thing at this point that is quite worthy of Shepard himself, such is its depth and insight. He speaks of the righteous actually loving the sight of their misery. He does not explain what he means by that startling language because he is talking all the time, as he knows quite well, to one who understood all that before he was born. Nor will I attempt to explain or to vindicate what he says. Those of you who love the sight of your own misery as sinners will understand what Hopeful says without any explanation; while those who do not understand him would only be the more stumbled by any explanation of him. The love of the sight of their misery, and the unearthly sweetness of their sorrow for sin, are only another two of those provoking paradoxes of which the lives of God’s true saints are full—paradoxes and impossibilities and incoherencies that make the literature of experimental religion to be positively hateful and unbearable to Temporary and to all his self-seeking and apostate kindred.

3. But even where the consciences of such men are occasionally awakened, proceeds Hopeful, in his so searching discovery of Temporaries, yet their minds are not changed. There you are pretty near the business, replied his fellow; for the bottom of all is, for want of a change of their mind and will. Now, one would have been afraid and ashamed for one moment to suspect that Temporary’s mind was not completely changed, so “forward” was he at first in his religion. But, no: forward before all his neighbours as Temporary was, to begin with, yet all the time his mind was not really changed. His forwardness did not properly spring out of his true mind at all, but only out of his momentarily awakened conscience and his momentarily excited heart. A sinner with a truly changed mind is never forward. His mind is so changed that forwardness in anything is utterly alien to it, and especially all forwardness in the profession of religion. The change that had taken place in Temporary, whatever was the seat of it, only led him to bully men like Christian and Hopeful, who would not go fast enough for him. “Come,” said Pliable, in the beginning of the book, “come on and let us mend our pace.” “I cannot go so fast as I would,” humbly replied Christian,“ because of this burden on my back.” It is a common observation among mountaineers that he who takes the hill at the greatest spurt is the last climber to come to the top, and that many who so ostentatiously make spurts at the bottom of the hill never come within sight of the top at all. And this is one of the constant dangers that wait on all revivals, religious retreats, conferences, and even communion seasons. Our hot fits, the hotter they are, are only the more likely, unless we take the greatest care, to cast us down into all the more deadly a chill. It is this danger that our Lord points out so plainly in His parable of apostasy. The same is he, says our Lord, that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while. In

Hopeful's words, his mind and will were never changed with all his joy, only his passing moods and his momentary emotions.

Multitudes of men who are as forward at first as Pliable and Temporary were turn out at last to have no root in themselves; but here and there you will discover a man who is all root together. There are some men whose whole mind and heart and will, whose whole inward man, has gone to root. All the strength and all the fatness of their religious life retreat into its root. They have no leaves at all, and they have too little fruit as yet; but you should see their roots. Only, no eye but the eye of God can see sorrow for sin—secret and sore humiliation on account of secret sin—the incessant agony that goes on within between the flesh and the spirit, between sin and grace, between very hell and heaven itself. To know your own evil hearts, my brethren, say to you on that subject what any Temporary will, is the very root of the whole matter to you. Whatever Dr. Newman's mistakes as to outward churches may have been, he was a master of the human heart, the most difficult of all matters to master. Listen, then, to what he says on the matter now in hand. "Now, unless we have some just idea of our hearts and of sin, we can have no right idea of a Moral Governor, a Saviour, or a Sanctifier; that is, in professing to believe in them we shall be using words without attaching any distinct meaning to them. Thus self-knowledge is at the root of all real religious knowledge; and it is vain,—it is worse than vain,—it is a deceit and a mischief, to think to understand the Christian doctrines as a matter of course, merely by being taught by books, or by attending sermons, or by any outward means, however excellent, taken by themselves. For it is in proportion as we search our hearts and understand our own nature that we understand what is meant by an Infinite Governor and Judge; it is in proportion as we comprehend the nature of disobedience and our actual sinfulness that we feel what is the blessing of the removal of sin, redemption, pardon, sanctification, which otherwise are mere words. God speaks to us primarily in our hearts. Self-knowledge is the key to the precepts and doctrines of Scripture. The very utmost that any outward notices of religion can do is to startle us and make us turn inward and search our hearts; and then, when we have experienced what it is to read ourselves, we shall profit by the doctrine of the Church and the Bible." My brethren, the temper in which you receive that passage, and receive it from its author, may be safely taken by you as a sure presage whether you are to turn out a Temporary and a Castaway or no.

Now, to conclude with a word of admission, and, bound up with it, a word of encouragement. After all that has been said, I fully admit that we are all Temporaries to begin with. We all cool down from our first heat in religion. We all halt from our first spurt. We all turn back from faith and from duty and from privilege through our fear of men, or through our corrupt love of ourselves, or through our coarse-minded love of this present world. Only, those who are appointed to perseverance, and through that to eternal life, always kindle again; they are kindled again, and they love the return of their lost warmth. They recover themselves and address themselves again and again to the race that is still set before them. They prove themselves not to be of those who draw back unto perdition, but of those that believe to the saving of the soul. Now, if you have only too good ground to suspect that you are but a temporary believer, what are you to do to make your sure escape out of that perilous state? What, but to keep on believing? You must cry constantly, Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief! When at any time you are under any temptation or corruption, and you feel that your faith and your love are letting slip their hold of Christ and of eternal life, then knot your weak heart all the faster to the throne of grace, to the cross of Christ,

and to the gate of heaven. Give up all your mind and heart, and all that is within you, to the one thing needful. Labour night and day in your own heart at believing on Christ, at loving your neighbour, and at discovering, denying, and crucifying yourself. It will all pay you in the long run. For if you do all these things, and persistently do them, then, though you are at this moment all but dead to all divine things, and all but a reprobate, it will be found at last that all the time your name was written among the elect in heaven. The perseverance of the saints, the “five points” notwithstanding, is not a foregone conclusion. The final perseverance of the ripest and surest saint is all made up of ever-new beginnings in repentance, in faith, in love, and in obedience. Begin, then, every new day to repent anew, to return anew, to believe and to love anew. And if all your New-Year repentances and returnings and reformations are all already proved to be but temporary—even if they lie all around you already a bitter mockery of all your professions—still, begin again. Begin to-night, and begin again to-morrow morning. Spend all the remainder of your days on earth beginning. And, ere ever you are aware, the final perseverance of another predestinated saint will be found accomplished in you.

# 033. Secret

XXXIII

SECRET “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.”—David. A truly religious life is always a secret life: it is a life hid, as Paul has it, with Christ in God. The secret of the Lord, says the Psalmist, is with them that fear Him. And thus it is that when men begin to fear God, both their hearts and their lives are henceforth full of all kinds of secrets that are known to themselves and to God only. It was when Christiana’s fearful thoughts began to work in her mind about her husband whom she had lost—it was when all her unkind, unnatural, and ungodly carriages to her dear friend came into her mind in swarms, clogged her conscience, and loaded her with guilt—it was then that Secret knocked at her door. “Next morning,” so her opening history runs, “when she was up, and had prayed to God, and talked with her children awhile, one knocked hard at the door to whom she spake out, saying, If thou comest in God’s name, come in. So he who was at the door said, Amen, and opened the door, and saluted her with, Peace be to this house. The which when he had done, he said, Christiana, knowest thou wherefore I am come? Then she blushed and trembled, also her heart began to wax warm with desires to know whence he came, and what was his errand to her. So he said unto her, My name is Secret, I dwell with those that are high. It is talked of where I dwell as if thou hadst a desire to go thither; also, there is a report that thou art aware now of the evil thou formerly didst to thy husband in hardening of thy heart against his way, and in keeping of thy babes in their ignorance. Christiana, the Merciful One has sent me to tell thee that He is a God ready to forgive, and that He taketh delight to multiply to pardon offences. He would also have thee know that He inviteth thee to come into His presence, even to His table, and that He will there feed thee with the fat of His house, and with the heritage of Jacob thy father. Christiana at all this was greatly abashed in herself, and she bowed her head to the ground, while her visitor proceeded and said, Christiana, here is a letter for thee which I have brought from thy husband’s King. So she took it and opened it, and, as she opened it, it smelt after the manner of the best perfume; also it was written in lettering of gold. The contents of the letter was to this effect, that the King would have her do as did Christian her husband, for that was the way to come to the city and to dwell in His presence with joy for ever. At this the good woman was completely overcome. So she said to her visitor, Sir, will you carry me and my children with you that we may go and worship this King? Then said the heavenly visitor, Christiana, the bitter is before the sweet. Thou must through troubles, as did he that went before thee, enter this celestial city.” And so on.

1. Now, to begin with, you will have noticed the way in which Christiana was prepared for the entrance of Secret into her house. She was a widow. She sat alone in that loneliness which only widows know and understand. More than lonely, she was very miserable. “Mark this,” says the author on the margin, “you that are churls to your godly relations.” For this widow felt sure that her husband had been taken from her because of her cruel behaviour to him. Her past unnatural carriages toward her husband now rent the very caul of her heart in sunder. And, again and again, about that same time strange dreams would sometimes visit her. Dreams such as this. She would see her husband in a place of bliss with a harp in his hand, standing and playing upon it before

One that sat on a throne with a rainbow round His head. She saw also as if he bowed his head with his face to the paved work that was under the Prince's feet, saying, I heartily thank my Lord and King for bringing me to this place. You will easily see how ready this lone woman was with all that for his entrance who knocked and said, Peace be to this house, and handed her a letter of perfume from her husband's King. Then you will have remarked also some of the things this visitor from on high said to her of the place whence he had come. He told her, to begin with, how they sometimes talked about her in his country. She thought that she was a lonely and forgotten widow, and that no one cared what became of her. But her visitor assured her she was quite wrong in thinking that. He had often himself heard her name mentioned in conversation above; and the most hopeful reports, he told her, were circulated from door to door that she was actually all but started on the upward way. Yes, he said, and we have a place prepared for you on the strength of these reports, a place among the immortals close beside your husband. And all that, as you will not wonder, was the beginning of Christiana's secret life. After that morning she never again felt alone or forgotten. I am not alone, she would after that say, when any of her old neighbours knocked at her door. No, I am not alone, but if thou comest in God's name, come in.

2. And from that day a long succession of secret providences began to enter Christiana's life, till, as time went on, her whole life was filled full of secret providences. And not her present life only, but her discoveries of God's secret providences towards her and hers became retrospective also, till both her own parentage and birth, her husband's parentage and birth also, the day she first saw him, the day of their espousals, the day of their marriage, and the day of his death, all shone out now as so many secret and special providences of God toward her. Bishop Martensen has a fine passage on the fragmentariness of our knowledge, not only of divine providence as a whole, but even of those divine providences that fill up our own lives. And he warns us that, till we have heard the "Prologue in Heaven," many a riddle in our lives must of necessity remain unsolved. Christiana could not have told her inquiring children what a prologue was, nor an epilogue either, but many were the wise and winning discourses she held with her boys about their father now in heaven, about her happiness in having had such a father for her children, and about their happiness that the road was open before them to go to where he now is. And there are many poor widows among ourselves who are wiser than all their teachers, because they are in that school of experience into which God takes His afflicted people and opens to them His deepest secrets. They remember, with Job, when the secret of the Lord was first upon their tabernacle. Their widowed hearts are full of holy household memories. They remember the days when the candle of the Lord shone upon their head when they washed their steps with butter, and the rock poured them out rivers of oil. And still, when, like Job also, they sit solitary among the ashes, the secret of the Lord is only the more secretly and intimately with them. John Bunyan was well fitted to be Christiana's biographer, because his own life was as full as it could hold of these same secret and special providences. One day he was walking—so he tells us—in a good man's shop, bemoaning himself of his sad and doleful state—when a mighty rushing wind came in through the window and seemed to carry words of Scripture on its wings to Bunyan's disconsolate soul. He candidly tells us that he does not know, after twenty years'reflection, what to make of that strange dispensation. That it took place, and that it left the most blessed results behind it, he is sure; but as to how God did it, by what means, by what instruments, both the rushing wind itself and the salutation that accompanied it, he is fain to let lie till the day of judgment. And many of ourselves have had strange dispensations too that we must leave alone, and seek no other explanation of them for the present but the blessed

results of them. We have had divine descents into our lives that we can never attempt to describe. Interpositions as plain to us as if we had both seen and spoken with the angel who executed them. Miraculous deliverances that throw many Old and New Testament miracles into the shade. Providential adaptations and readjustments also, as if all things were actually and openly and without a veil being made to work together for our good. Extrications also; nets broken, snares snapped, and such pavilions of safety and solace opened to us that we can find no psalm secret and special enough in which to utter our life-long astonishment. Importunate prayers anticipated, postponed, denied, translated, transmuted, and then answered till our cup was too full; sweet changed to bitter, and bitter changed to sweet, so wonderfully, so graciously, and so often, that words fail us, and we can only now laugh and now weep over it all. Poor Cowper knew something about it—

“God moves in a mysterious way

His wonders to perform;

He plants His footsteps in the sea,

And rides upon the storm.

“Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,

The clouds ye so much dread

Are big with mercy, and shall break

In blessings on your head.

“Blind unbelief is sure to err,

And scan his work in vain;

God is His own interpreter,

And He will make it plain.”

3. Secret scriptures also—from that enlightening day Christiana’s Bible became full of them. Peter says that no prophecy is of any private interpretation; and, whatever he means by that, what he says must be true. But Christiana would have understood the apostle better if he had said the exact opposite of that,—if not about the prophecies, at least about the psalms. Leave the prophecies in this connection alone; but of the psalms it may safely be said that it is neither the literal nor the historical nor the mystical interpretation that gets at the heart of those supreme scriptures. It is the private, personal, and, indeed, secret interpretation that gets best at the deepest heart of the psalms. An old Bible came into my hands the other day—a Bible that had seen service—and it opened of its own accord at the Book of Psalms. On turning over the yellow leaves I found a date and a deep indentation opposite these words: “Commit thy way unto the Lord: trust also in Him: and He will bring it to pass.” And as I looked at the figures on the margin, and at the underscored text, I felt as if I were on the brink of an old-world secret. “Create in me a clean heart” had a significant initial also; as had this: “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit.” The whole of the hundred-and-third psalm was bracketed off from all public interpretation; while

the tenth, the cardinal verse of that secret psalm, had a special seal set upon it. Judging from its stains and scars and other accidents, the whole of the hundred-and-nineteenth psalm had been a special favourite; while the hundred-and-forty-third also was all broidered round with shorthand symbols. But the secret key of all those symbols and dates and enigmatical marks was no longer to be found; it had been carried away in the owner's own heart. But, my head being full of Christiana at the time, I felt as if I held her own old Bible in my hand as I turned over those ancient leaves.

4. Our Lord so practised secrecy Himself in His fasting, in His praying, and in His almsgiving, and He makes so much of that same secrecy in all His teaching, as almost to make the essence of all true religion to stand in its secrecy. "When thou prayest,"says our Lord, "shut thy door and pray in secret." As much as to say that we are scarcely praying at all when we are praying in public. Praying in public is so difficult that new beginners, like His disciples, have to practise that so difficult art for a long time in secret. Public prayer has so many besetting sins, it is open to so many temptations, distractions, and corruptions, that it is almost impossible to preserve the real essence of prayer in public prayer. But in secret all those temptations and distractions are happily absent. We have no temptation to be too long in secret prayer, or too loud, or too eloquent. Stately old English goes for nothing in secret prayer. We never need to go to our knees in secret trembling, lest we lose the thread of our prayer, or forget that so fit and so fine expression. The longer we are the better in secret prayer. Much speaking is really a virtue in secret prayer; much speaking and many repetitions. Also, we can put things into our secret prayers that we dare not come within a thousand miles of in the pulpit, or the prayer-meeting, or the family. We can enter into the most plain-spoken particulars about ourselves in secret. We can put our proper name upon ourselves, and upon our actions, and especially upon our thoughts when our door is shut. Then, again, we can pray for other people by name in secret; we can enter, so far as we know them, into all their circumstances in a way it is impossible to do anywhere but in the utmost secrecy. We can, in short, be ourselves in secret; and, unless it is to please or to impress men, we had better not pray at all unless we are ourselves when we are engaged in it. You can be yourself, your very worst self; nay, you must be, else you will not long pray in secret, and even if you did you would not be heard. I do not remember that very much is said in so many words in her after-history about Christiana's habits of closet-prayer. But that Secret taught her the way, and waited till she had tasted the sweetness and the strength of being a good while on her knees alone, I am safe to say; indeed, I read it between the lines in all her after-life. She was rewarded openly in a way that testifies to much secret prayer; that is to say, in the early conversion of her children, in the way they settled in life, and such like things. Pray much for those things in secret that you wish to possess openly.

5. But perhaps the best and most infallible evidence we can have of the truth of our religion in this life is in the steady increase of our secret sinfulness. Christiana had no trouble with her own wicked heart so long as she was a woman of a wicked life. But directly she became a new creature, her heart began to swarm, such is her own expression, with sinful memories, sinful thoughts, and sinful feelings; till she had need of some one ever near her, like Greatheart, constantly to assure her that those cruel and deadly swarms, instead of being a bad sign of her salvation, were the very best signs possible of her good estate. Humility is the foundation of all our graces, and there is no humility so deep and so ever-deepening as that evangelical humility which

in its turn rises out of and rests upon secret sinfulness. Not upon acts of secret sin. Do not mistake me. Acts of secret sin harden the heart and debauch the conscience. But I speak of that secret, original, unexplored, and inexpugnable sinfulness out of which all a sinner's actual sins, both open sins and secret, spring; and out of which a like life of open and actual sins would spring in God's very best saints, if only both He and they did not watch night and day against them. Sensibility to sin, or rather to sinfulness, is far and away the best evidence of sanctification that is possible to us in this life. It is this keen and bitter sensibility that secures, amid all oppositions and obstructions, the true saint's onward and upward progress. Were it not for the misery of their own hearts, God's best saints would fall asleep and go back like other men. A sinful heart is the misery of all miseries. It is the deepest and darkest of all dungeons. It is the most painful and the most loathsome of all diseases. And the secrecy of it all adds to the bitterness and the gall of it all. We may know that other men's hearts are as sinful as our own, but we do not feel their sinfulness. We cannot sensibly feel humiliation, bondage, sickness, and self-loathing on account of another man's envy, or ill-will, or resentment, or cruelty, or falsehood, or impurity. All these things must be our own before we can enter into the pain and the shame of them; but, when we do, then we taste what death and hell are indeed. As I write these feeble words about it, a devil's shaft of envy that was shot all against my will into my heart this morning, still, after a whole day, rankles and festers there. I have been on my knees with it again and again; I have stood and looked into an open grave to-day; but there it is sucking at my heart's blood still, like a leech of hell. Who can understand his errors? Cleanse Thou me from secret faults. Create in me a clean heart, O God, O wretched man that I am! "Let a man," says William Law when he is enforcing humility, "but consider that if the world knew all that of him which he knows of himself: if they saw what vanity and what passions govern his inside, and what secret tempers sully and corrupt his best actions, he would have no more pretence to be honoured and admired for his goodness and wisdom than a rotten and distempered body to be loved and admired for its beauty and comeliness. This is so true, and so known to the hearts of almost all people, that nothing would appear more dreadful to them than to have their hearts fully discovered to the eyes of all beholders. And, perhaps, there are very few people in the world who would not rather choose to die than to have all their secret follies, the errors of their judgments, the vanity of their minds, the falseness of their pretences, the frequency of their vain and disorderly passions, their uneasinesses, hatreds, envies, and vexations made known to all the world." Where did William Law get that terrible passage? Where could he get it but in the secret heart of the miserable author of the Serious Call?

6. The half cannot be told of the guilt and the corruption, the pain and the shame and the manifold misery of secret sin; but all that will be told, believed, and understood by all men long before the full magnificence of their sanctification, and the superb transcendence of their blessedness, will even begin to be described to God's secret saints. For, all that sleepless, cruel, and soul-killing pain, and all that shameful and humbling corruption,—all that means, all that is, so much holiness, so much heaven, working itself out in the soul. All that is so much immortal life, spotless beauty, and incorruptible joy already begun in the soul. Every such pang in a holy heart is a death-pang of another sin and a birth-pang of another grace. Brotherly love is at last being born never to die in that heart where envy and malice and resentment and revenge are causing inward agony. And humility and meekness and the whole mind of Christ are there where pride and anger and ill-will are felt to be very hell itself. And holiness, even as God is holy, will soon be there for ever where the sinfulness of sin is a sinner's acutest sorrow. "As for me," said one whose sin was ever before

him, “I will behold Thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I wake with Thy likeness.”

# 034. Mrs. Timorous

XXXIV

MRS. TIMOROUS “But the fearful [literally, the timid and the cowardly] shall have their part in the second death.”—Revelation xxi. No sooner had Secret bidden Christiana farewell than she began with all her might to make ready for her great journey. “Come, my children, let us pack up and be gone to the gate that leads to the Celestial City, that we may see your father and be with him, and with his companions, in peace, according to the laws of that land.” And then: “Come in, if you come in God’s name!” Christiana called out, as two of her neighbours knocked at her door. “Having little to do at home this morning,” said the elder of the two women, “I have come across to kill a little time with you. I spent last night with Mrs. Light-mind, and I have some good news for you this morning.” “I am just preparing for a journey this morning,” said Christiana, packing up all the time, “and I have not so much as one moment to spare.” You know yourselves what Christiana’s nervousness and almost impatience were. You know how it upsets your good temper and all your civility when you are packing up for a long absence from home, and some one comes in, and will talk, and will not see how behindhand and how busy you are. “For what journey, I pray you?” asked Mrs. Timorous, for that was her visitor’s name. “Even to go after my good husband,” the busy woman said, and with that she fell a-weeping. But you must read the whole account of that eventful morning in Christiana’s memoirs for yourselves till you have it, as Secret said, by root-of-heart. On the understanding that you are not total strangers to that so excellently-written passage I shall now venture a few observations upon it.

1. Well, to begin with, Mrs. Timorous was not a bad woman, as women went in that town and in that day. Her companions,—her gossips, as she would have called them,—were far worse women than she was; and, had it not been for her family infirmity, had it not been for that timid, hesitating, lukewarm, and half-and-half habit of mind which she had inherited from her father, there is no saying what part she might have played in the famous expedition of Christiana and Mercy and the boys. Her father had been a pilgrim himself at one time; but he had now for a long time been known in the town as a turncoat and a temporary, and all his children had unhappily taken after their father in that. Had her father held on as he at one time had begun—had he held on in the face of all fear and all danger as Christiana’s noble husband had done—to a certainty his daughter would have started that morning with Christiana and her company, and would have been, if a timid, easily scared, and troublesome pilgrim, yet as true a pilgrim, and made as welcome at last, as, say, Miss Much-afraid, Mr. Fearing, and Mr. Ready-to-halt were made. But her father’s superficiality and shakiness, and at bottom his warm love of this world and his lukewarm love of the world to come, had unfortunately all descended to his daughter, till we find her actually reviling Christiana on that decisive morning, and returning to her dish of tea and tittle-tattle with Mrs. Bats-eyes, Mrs. Inconsiderate, Mrs. Light-mind, and Mrs. Know-nothing.

2. The thing that positively terrified Mrs. Timorous at the very thought of setting out with Christiana that morning was that intolerable way in which Christiana had begun to go back upon her past life

as a wife and a mother. Christiana could not hide her deep distress, and, indeed, she did not much try. Such were the swarms of painful memories that her husband's late death, the visit of Secret, and one thing and another had let loose upon Christiana's mind, that she could take pleasure in nothing but in how she was to escape away from her past life, and how she could in any way mend it and make up for it where she could not escape from it. "You may judge yourself," said Mrs. Timorous to Mrs. Light-mind, "whether I was likely to find much entertainment with a woman like that!" For, Mrs. Timorous too, you must know, had a past life of her own; and it was that past life of hers all brought back by Christiana's words that morning that made Mrs. Timorous so revile her old friend and return to the society we so soon see her with. Now, is not this the case, that we all have swarms of evil memories that we dare not face? There is no single relationship in life that we can boldly look back upon and fully face. As son or as daughter, as brother or as sister, as friend or as lover, as husband or as wife, as minister or as member, as master or as servant—what swarms of hornet-memories darken our hearts as we so look back! Let any grown-up man, with some imagination, tenderness of heart, and integrity of conscience, go back step by step, taking some time to it,—at a new year, say, or a birthday, or on some such suitable occasion: let him go over his past life back to his youth and childhood—and what an intolerable burden will be laid on his heart before he is done! What a panorama of scarlet pictures will pass before his inward eye! What a forest of accusing fingers will be pointed at him! What hissing curses will be spat at him both by the lips of the living and the dead! What untold pains he will see that he has caused to the innocent and the helpless! What desolating disappointments, what shipwrecks of hope to this man and to that woman! What a stone of stumbling he has been to many who on that stone have been for ever broken and lost! What a rock of offence even his mere innocent existence, all unknown to himself till afterwards, has been! Swarms, said Christiana. Swarms of hornets armed, said Samson. And many of us understand what that bitter word means better than any commentator on Bunyan or on Milton can tell us. One of the holiest men the Church of England ever produced, and one of her best devotional writers, used to shut his door on the night of every first day of the week, and on his knees spread out a prayer which always contained this passage: "I worship Thee, O God, on my face. I smite my breast and say with the publican, God be merciful to me a sinner; the chief of sinners; a sinner far above the publican. Despise me not—an unclean worm, a dead dog, a putrid corpse. Despise me not, despise me not, O Lord. But look upon me with those eyes with which Thou didst look upon Magdalene at the feast, Peter in the hall, and the thief on the cross. O that mine eyes were a fountain of tears that I might weep night and day before Thee! I despise and bruise myself that my penitence is not deeper, is not fuller. Help Thou mine impenitence, and more and more pierce, rend, and crush my heart. My sins are more in number than the sand. My iniquities are multiplied, and I have no relief." Perish your Puritanism, and your prayer-books too! I hear some high-minded and indignant man saying. Perish your Celestial City and all my desire after it, before I say the like of that about myself! Brave words, my brother; brave words! But there have been men as blameless as you are, and as brave-hearted over it, who, when the scales fell off their eyes, were heard crying out ever after: O wretched man that I am! And: Have mercy on me, the chief of sinners! And so, if it so please God, will it yet be with you.

3. "Having had little to do this morning," said Mrs. Timorous to Mrs. Light-mind, "I went to give Christiana a visit." "Law," I read in his most impressive Life, "by this time was well turned fifty, but he rose as early and was as soon at his desk as when he was still a new, enthusiastic, and scrupulously methodical student at Cambridge." Summer and winter Law rose to his devotions and

his studies at five o'clock, not because he had imperative sermons to prepare, but because, in his own words, it is more reasonable to suppose a person up early because he is a Christian than because he is a labourer or a tradesman or a servant. I have a great deal of business to do, he would say. I have a hardened heart to change; I have still the whole spirit of religion to get. When Law at any time felt a temptation to relax his rule of early devotion, he again reminded himself how fast he was becoming an old man, and how far back his sanctification still was, till he flung himself out of bed and began to make himself a new heart before the servants had lighted their fires or the farmers had yoked their horses. Shame on you, he said to himself, to lie folded up in a bed when you might be pouring out your heart in prayer and in praise, and thus be preparing yourself for a place among those blessed beings who rest not day and night saying, Holy, Holy, Holy. "I have little to do this morning," said Mrs. Timorous. "But I am preparing for a journey," said Christiana. "I have now a price put into my hand to get gain, and I should be a fool of the greatest size if I should have no heart to strike in with the opportunity."

4. Another thing that completely threw out Christiana's idle visitor and made her downright angry was the way she would finger and kiss and read pieces out of the fragrant letter she held in her hand. You will remember how Christiana came by that letter she was now so fond of. "Here," said Secret, "is a letter I have brought thee from thy husband's King." So she took it and opened it, and it smelt after the manner of the best perfume; also it was written in letters of gold. "I advise thee," said Secret, "that thou put this letter in thy bosom, that thou read therein to thy children until you have all got it by root-of-heart." "His messenger was here," said Christiana to Mrs. Timorous, "and has brought me a letter which invites me to come." And with that she plucked out the letter and read to her out of it, and said: "What now do you say to all that?" That, again, is so true to our own life. For there is nothing that more distastes and disrelishes many people among us than just that we should name to them our favourite books, and read a passage out of them, and ask them to say what they think of such wonderful words. Samuel Rutherford's Letters, for instance; a book that smells to some nostrils with the same heavenly perfume as Secret's own letter did. A book, moreover, that is written in the same ink of gold. Ask at afternoon tea to-morrow, even in so-called Christian homes, when any of the ladies round the table last read, and how often they have read, Grace Abounding, The Saint's Rest, The Religious Affections, Jeremy Taylor, Law, à Kempis, Fénelon, or such like, and they will smile to one another and remark after you are gone on your strange taste for old-fashioned and long-winded and introspective books. "Julia has buried her husband and married her daughters, and since that she spends her time in reading. She is always reading foolish and unedifying books. She tells you every time she sees you that she is almost at the end of the silliest book that ever she read in her life. But the best of it is that it serves to dispose of a good deal of her spare time. She tells you all romances are sad stuff, yet she is very impatient till she can get all she can hear of. Histories of intrigue and scandal are the books that Julia thinks are always too short. The truth is, she lives upon folly and scandal and impertinence. These things are the support of her dull hours. And yet she does not see that in all this she is plainly telling you that she is in a miserable, disordered, reprobate state of mind. Now, whether you read her books or no, you perhaps think with her that it is a dull task to read only religious and especially spiritual books. But when you have the spirit of true religion, when you can think of God as your only happiness, when you are not afraid of the joys of eternity, you will think it a dull task to read any other books. When it is the care of your soul to be humble, holy, pure, and heavenly-minded; when you know anything of the guilt and misery of sin, or feel a real need of

salvation, then you will find religious and truly spiritual books to be the greatest feast and joy of your mind and heart." Yes. And then we shall thank God every day we live that He raised us up such helpers in our salvation as the gifted and gracious authors we have been speaking of.

5. "The further I go the more danger I meet with, "said old Timorous, the father, to Christian, when Christian asked him on the Hill Difficulty why he was running the wrong way. "I, too, was going to the City of Zion," he said; "but the further on I go the more danger I meet with." And, in saying that, the old runaway gave our persevering pilgrim something to think about for all his days. For, again and again, and times without number, Christian would have gone back too if only he had known where to go. Go on, therefore, he must. To go back to him was simply impossible. Every day he lived he felt the bitter truth of what that old apostate had so unwittingly said. But, with all that he kept himself in his onward way till, dangers and difficulties, death and hell and all, he came to the blessed end of it. And that same has been the universal experience of all the true and out-and-out saints of God in all time. If poor old Timorous had only known it, if he had only had some one beside him to remind him of it, the very thing that so fatally turned him back was the best proof possible that he was on the right and the only right way; ay, and fast coming, poor old castaway, to the very city he had at one time set out to seek. Now, it is only too likely that there are some of my hearers at this with it to-night, that they are on the point of giving up the life of faith, and hope, and love, and holy living; because the deeper they carry that life into their own hearts the more impossible they find it to live that life there. The more they aim their hearts at God's law the more they despair of ever coming within sight of it. My supremely miserable brother! if this is any consolation to you, if you can take any crumb of consolation out of it, let this be told you, that, as a matter of fact, all truly holy men have in their heart of hearts had your very experience. That is no strange and unheard-of thing which is passing within you. And, indeed, if you could but believe it, that is one of the surest signs and seals of a true and genuine child of God. Dante, one of the bravest, but hardest bestead of God's saints, was, just like you, well-nigh giving up the mountain altogether when his Greatheart, who was always at his side, divining what was going on within him, said to him—

"Those scars

That when they pain thee most then kindliest heal."

"The more I do," complained one of Thomas Shepard's best friends to him, "the worse I am." "The best saints are the most sensible of sin," wrote Samuel Rutherford. And, again he wrote, "Sin rages far more in the godly than ever it does in the ungodly." And you dare not deny but that Samuel Rutherford was one of the holiest men that ever lived, or that in saying all that he was speaking of himself. And Newman: "Every one who tries to do God's will"—and that also is Newman himself—"will feel himself to be full of all imperfection and sin; and the more he succeeds in regulating his heart, the more will he discern its original bitterness and guilt." As our own hymn has it:

"They who fain would serve Thee best

Are conscious most of wrong within."

Without knowing it, Mrs. Timorous's runaway father was speaking the same language as the chief of the saints. Only he said, "Therefore I have turned back," whereas, first Christian, and then

Christiana his widow, said, “Yet I must venture!” And so say you. Say, I must and I will venture! Say it; clench your teeth and your hands and say it. Say that you are determined to go on towards heaven where the holy are—absolutely determined, though you are quite well aware that you are carrying up with you the blackest, the wickedest, the most corrupt, and the most abominable heart either out of hell or in it. Say that, say all that, and still venture. Say all that and all the more venture. Venture upon God of whom such reassuring things are said. Venture upon the Son of God of whom His Father is represented as saying such inviting things. Venture upon the cross. Survey the wondrous cross and then make a bold venture upon it. Think who that is who is bleeding to death upon the cross, and why? Look at Him till you never afterwards can see anything else. Look at God’s Eternal, Divine, Well-pleasing Son with all the wages of sin dealt out to Him, body and soul, on that tree to the uttermost farthing. And, devil incarnate though you indeed are, yet, say, if that spectacle does not satisfy you, and encourage you, and carry your cowardice captive. Venture! I say, venture! And if you find at last that you have ventured too far—if you have sinned and corrupted yourself beyond redemption—then it will be some consolation and distinction to you in hell that you had out-sinned the infinite grace of God, and had seen the end of the unsearchable riches of Christ. Timid sinner, I but mock thee, therefore venture! Fearful sinner, venture! Cowardly sinner, venture. Venture thyself upon thy God, upon Christ thy Saviour, and upon His cross. Venture all thy guilt and all thy corruption taken together upon Christ hanging upon His cross, and make that tremendous venture now!

# 035. Mercy

XXXV

MERCY “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.”—Our Lord. The first time that we see Mercy she is standing one sunshine morning knocking along with another at Christiana’s door. And all that we afterwards hear of Mercy might be described as, A morning call and all that came of it; or, How a godly matron led on a poor maid to fall in love with her own salvation. John Bunyan, her biographer, in all his devotion to Mercy, does not make it at all clear to us why such a sweet and good girl as Mercy was could be on such intimate terms with Mrs. Timorous and all her so questionable circle. Could it be that Mercy’s mother was one of that unhappy set? And had this dear little woman-child been brought up so as to know no better than to figure in their assemblies, and go out on their morning rounds with Mrs. Light-mind and Mrs. Know-nothing? Or, was poor Mercy an orphan with no one to watch over her, and had her sweet face, her handsome figure, and her winning manners made her one of the attractions of old Madam Wanton’s midnight routs? However it came about, there was Mercy out on a series of morning calls with a woman twice her age, but a woman whose many years had taught her neither womanliness nor wisdom. “If you come in God’s name, come in,”a voice from the inside answered the knocking of Mrs. Timorous and Mercy, her companion, at Christiana’s door. In all their rounds that morning the two women had not been met with another salutation like that; and that strange salutation so disconcerted and so confounded them that they did not know whether to lift the latch and go in, or to run away and leave those to go in who could take their delight in such outlandish language. “If you come in God’s name, come in.” At this the women were stunned, for this kind of language they used not to hear or to perceive to drop from the lips of Christiana. Yet they came in; but, behold, they found the good woman preparing to be gone from her house. The conversation that ensued was all carried on by the two elder women. For it was often remarked about Mercy all her after-days that her voice was ever soft, and low, and, especially, seldom heard. But her ears were not idle. For all the time the debate went on—because by this time the conversation had risen to be a debate—Mercy was taking silent sides with Christiana and her distress and her intended enterprise, till, when Mrs. Timorous reviled Christiana and said, “Come away, Mercy, and leave her in her own hands,” Mercy by that time was brought to a standstill. For, like a rose among thorns, Mercy was thoughtful and wise and womanly far beyond her years. So much so, that already she had made up her mind to offer herself as a maidservant to help the widow with her work and to see her so far on her way, and, indeed, though she kept that to herself, to go all the way with her, if the way should prove open to her. First, her heart yearned over Christiana; so she said within herself, If my neighbour will needs be gone, I will go a little way with her to help her. Secondly, her heart yearned over her own soul’s salvation, for what Christiana had said had taken some hold upon Mercy’s mind. Wherefore she said within herself, I will yet have more talk with this Christiana, and if I find truth and life in what she shall say, myself with all my heart shall also go with her. “Neighbour,” spoke out Mercy to Mrs. Timorous, “I did indeed come with you to see Christiana this morning, and since she is, as you see, a-taking of her last farewell of her country, I

think to walk this sunshine morning a little way with her to help her on the way." But she told her not of her second reason, but kept that to herself. I would fain go on with Mercy's memoirs all night. But you will take up that inviting thread for yourselves. And meantime I shall stop here and gather up under two or three heads some of the more memorable results and lessons of that sunshine-morning call.

1. Well, then, to begin with, there was something quite queen-like, something absolutely commanding, about Christiana's look and manner, as well as about all she said and did that morning. Mercy's morning companion had all the advantages that dress and equipage could give her; while Christiana stood in the middle of the floor in her housewife's clothes, covered with dust and surrounded with all her dismantled house; but, with all that, there was something about Christiana that took Mercy's heart completely captive. All that Christiana had by this time come through had blanched her cheek and whitened her hair: but all that only the more commanded Mercy's sensitive and noble soul. To be open to impressions of that kind is one of the finest endowments of a finely endowed nature; and, all through, the attentive reader of her history will be sure to remark and imitate Mercy's exquisite and tenacious sensibility to all that is true and good, upright and honourable and noble. And then, what a blessing it is to a girl of Mercy's mould to meet at opening womanhood with another woman, be it a mother, a mistress, or a neighbour, whose character then, and as life goes on, can supply the part of the supporting and sheltering oak to the springing and clinging vine. Christiana being now the new woman she was, as well as a woman of great natural wisdom, dignity, and stability of character, the safety, the salvation of poor motherless Mercy was as good as sure. Indeed, all Mercy's subsequent history is only one long and growing tribute to the worth, the constant love, and the sleepless solicitude of this true mother in Israel.

2. Now, it was so, that, wholly unknown to all her companions, young and old, in her own very remarkable words, Mercy had for a long time been hungering with all her heart to meet with some genuinely good people,—with some people, as she said herself,—"of truth and of life." These are remarkable words to hear drop from the lips of a young girl, and especially a girl of Mercy's environment. Now, had there been anything hollow, had there been one atom of insincerity or exaggeration about Christiana that morning, had she talked too much, had all her actions not far more than borne out all her words, had there not been in the broken-hearted woman a depth of mind and a warmth of heart far beyond all her words, Mercy would never have become a pilgrim. But the natural dignity of Christiana's character; her capable, commanding, resolute ways; the reality, even to agony, of her sorrow for her past life—all taken together with her iron-fast determination to enter at once on a new life—all that carried Mercy's heart completely captive. Mercy felt that there was a solemnity, an awesomeness, and a mystery about her new friend's experiences and memories that it was not for a child like herself to attempt to intrude into. But, all the more because of that, a spell of love and fear and reverence lay on Mercy's heart and mind all her after-days from that so solemn and so eventful morning when she first saw Christiana's haggard countenance and heard her remorseful cries. My so churlish carriages to him! Now, such carriages between man and wife had often pained and made ashamed Mercy's maidenly heart beyond all expression. Till she had sometimes said to herself, blushing with shame before herself as she said it, that if ever she was a wife—may my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth before I say one churlish word to him who is my husband! And thus it was that nothing that Christiana said

that morning in the uprush of her remorse moved Mercy more with pity and with love than just what Christiana beat her breast about as concerning her lost husband. Mercy used to say that she saw truth and life enough in one hour that morning to sober and to solemnise and to warn her to set a watch on the door of her lips for all her after-days.

3. Before Mrs. Timorous was well out of the door, Mercy had already plucked off her gloves, and hung up her morning bonnet on a nail in the wall, so much did her heart heave to help the cumbered widow and her fatherless children. “If thou wilt, I will hire thee,” said Christiana, “and thou shalt go with me as my servant. Yet we will have all things common betwixt thee and me; only, now thou art here, go along with me.” At this Mercy fell on Christiana’s neck and kissed her mother; for after that morning Christiana had always a daughter of her own, and Mercy a mother. And you may be sure, with two such women working with all their might, all things were soon ready for their happy departure.

Mr. Kerr Bain invites his readers to compare John Bunyan’s Mercy at this point with William Law’s Miranda. I shall not tarry to draw out the full comparison here, but shall content myself with simply repeating Mr. Bain’s happy reference. Only, I shall not content myself till all to whom my voice can reach, and who are able to enjoy only a first-rate book, have Mr. Bain’s book beside their Pilgrim’s Progress. That morning, then, on which Mrs. Timorous, having nothing to do at home, set out with Mercy on a round of calls—that was Mercy’s last idle morning for all her days. For her mind was, ever after that, to be always busying of herself in doing, for when she had nothing to do for herself she would be making of hosen and garments for others, and would bestow them upon those that had need. I will warrant her a good housewife, quoth Mr. Brisk to himself. So much so that at any place they stopped on the way, even for a day and a night to rest and refresh themselves, Mercy would seek out all the poor and all the old people, and ere ever she was aware what she was doing, already a good report had spread abroad concerning the pilgrims and their pilgrimage. At the same time, it must be told that poor Mercy’s heart was more heavy for the souls of the poor people than for their naked bodies and hungry bellies. So much was this so that when the shepherds, Knowledge, Experience, Watchful, and Sincere, took her to a place where she saw one Fool and one Want-wit washing of an Ethiopian with intention to make him white, but the more they washed him the blacker he was, Mercy blushed and felt guilty before the shepherds,—she so took home to her charitable heart the bootless work of Fool and Want-wit. Mercy put on the Salvationist bonnet at her first outset to the Celestial City, and she never put it off till she came to that land where there are no more poor to make hosen and hats for, and no more Ethiopians to take to the fountain.

4. There are not a few young communicants here to-night, as well as not a few who are afraid as yet to offer themselves for the Lord’s table; and, as it so falls out to-night, Mercy’s case contains both an encouragement and an example to all such. For never surely had a young communicant less to go upon than Mercy had that best morning of all her life. For she had nothing to go upon but a great desire to help Christiana with her work; some desire for truth and for life; and some first and feeble yearnings over her own soul,—yearnings, however, that she kept entirely to herself. That was all. She had no remorses like those which had ploughed up Christiana’s cheeks into such channels of tears. She had no dark past out of which swarms of hornets stung her guilty conscience. Nor on the other hand, had she any such sweet dreams and inviting visions as those that were sent to cheer and encourage the disconsolate widow. She will have her own sweet

dreams yet, that will make her laugh loud out in her sleep. But that will be long after this, when she has discovered how hard her heart is and how great God's grace is. "How shall I be ascertained," she put it to Christiana," that I also shall be entertained? Had I but this hope, from one that can tell, I would make no stick at all, but would go, being helped by Him that can help, though the way was never so tedious. Had I as good hope for a loving reception as you have, I think no Slough of Despond would discourage me." "Well," said the other, "you know your sore, and I know mine; and, good friend, we shall all have enough evil before we come to our journey's end." And soon after that, of all places on the upward way, Mercy's evil began at the Wicket Gate. "I have a companion," said Christiana, "that stands without. One that is much dejected in her mind, for that she comes, as she thinks, without sending for; whereas I was sent to by my husband's King." So the porter opened the gate and looked out; but Mercy was fallen down in a swoon, for she fainted and was afraid that the gate would not be opened to her. "O sir," she said, "I am faint; there is scarce life left in me." But he answered her that one once said, "When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came in into Thee, into Thy holy temple. Fear not, but stand up upon thy feet, and tell me wherefore thou art come." "I am come, sir, into that for which I never was invited, as my friend Christiana was. Her invitation was from the Lord, and mine was but from her. Wherefore, I fear that I presume." Then said he to those that stood by, "Fetch something and give it to Mercy to smell on, thereby to stay her fainting." So they fetched her a bundle of myrrh, and a while after she revived.—Let young communicants be content with Mercy's invitation. She started for the City just because she liked to be beside a good woman who was starting thither. She wished to help a good woman who was going thither; and just a little desire began at first to awaken in her heart to go to the city too. Till, having once set her face to go up, one thing after another worked together to lead her up till she, too, had her life full of those invitations and experiences and interests and occupations and enjoyments that make Mercy's name so memorable, and her happy case such an example and such an inspiration, to all God-fearing young women especially.

5. John Bunyan must be held responsible for the strong dash of romance that he so boldly throws into Mercy's memoirs. But I shall postpone Mr. Brisk and his love-making and his answer to another lecture. I shall not enter on Mercy's love matters here at all, but shall leave them to be read at home by those who like to read romances. Only, since we have seen so much of Mercy as a maiden, one longs to see how she turned out as a wife. I can only imagine how Mercy turned out as a wife; but there is a picture of a Scottish Covenanting girl as a married wife which always rises up before my mind when I think of Mercy's matronly days. That picture might hang in Bunyan's own peculiar gallery, so beautiful is the drawing, and so warm and so eloquent the colouring. Take, then, this portrait of one of the daughters of the Scottish Covenant. "She was a woman of great worth, whom I therefore passionately loved and inwardly honoured. A stately, beautiful, and comely personage; truly pious and fearing the Lord. Of an evenly temper, patient in our common tribulations and under her personal distresses. A woman of bright natural parts, and of an uncommon stock of prudence; of a quick and lively apprehension in things she applied herself to, and of great presence of mind in surprising incidents. Sagacious and acute in discerning the qualities of persons, and therefore not easily imposed upon. [See Mr. Brisk's interviews with Mercy.] Modest and grave in her deportment, but naturally cheerful; wise and affable in conversation, also having a good faculty at speaking and expressing herself with assurance. Being a pattern of frugality and wise management in household affairs, all such were therefore entirely

committed to her; well fitted for and careful of the virtuous education of her children; remarkably useful in the countryside, both in the Merse and in the Forest, through her skill in physic and surgery, which in many instances a peculiar blessing appeared to be commanded upon from heaven. And, finally, a crown to me in my public station and pulpit appearances. During the time we have lived together we have passed through a sea of trouble, as yet not seeing the shore but afar off."

"The words of King Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him. What, my son? and what, the son of my womb? and what, the son of my vows? Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. Her children arise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised."

# 036. Mr. Brisk

XXXVI

MR. BRISK “Be ye not unequally yoked.”—Paul.

There were some severe precisians in John Bunyan’s day who took the objection to the author of the Pilgrim’s Progress that he sometimes laughed too loud.

“One may (I think) say, both he laughs and cries,

May well be guessed at by his watery eyes.

Some things are of that nature as to make

One’s fancy chuckle while his heart doth ake.

When Jacob saw his Rachel with the sheep,

At the same time he did both laugh and weep.” And even Dr. Cheever, in his excellent lectures on the Pilgrim’s Progress, confesses that though the Second Part never ceases for a moment to tell the serious story of the Pilgrimage, at the same time, it sometimes becomes so merry as almost to pass over into absolute comedy. “There is one passage,” says Cheever, “which for exquisite humour, quiet satire, and naturalness in the development of character is scarcely surpassed in the language. It is the account of the courtship between Mr. Brisk and Mercy which took place at the House Beautiful.”

Now, the insertion of such an episode as that of Mr. Brisk into such a book as the Pilgrim’s Progress is only yet another proof of the health, the strength, and the truth to nature of John Bunyan’s mind. His was eminently an honest, straightforward, manly, English understanding. A smaller man would not have ventured on Mr. Brisk in such a book as the Pilgrim’s Progress. But there is no affectation, there is no prudery, there is no superiority to nature in John Bunyan. He knew quite well that of the thousands of men and women who were reading his Pilgrim there was no subject, not even religion itself, that was taking up half so much of their thoughts as just love-making and marriage. And, like the wise man and the true teacher he was, he here points out to all his readers how well true religion and the fullest satisfaction of the warmest and the most universal of human affections can be both harmonised and made mutually helpful. In Bunyan’s day love was too much left to the playwrights, just as in our day it is too much left to the poets and the novelists. And thus it is that in too many instances affection and passion have taken full possession of the hearts and the lives of our young people before any moral or religious lesson on these all-important subjects has been given to them: any lesson such as John Bunyan so winningly and so beautifully gives here. “This incident,” says Thomas Scott, “is very properly introduced, and it is replete with instruction.”

Now, Mr. Brisk, to begin with, was, so we are told, a young man of some breeding,—that is to say, he was a young man of some social position, some education, and of a certain good manner, at

least on the surface. In David Scott's Illustrations Mr. Brisk stands before us a handsome and well-dressed young man of the period, with his well-belted doublet, his voluminous ruffles, his heavily-studded cuffs, his small cane, his divided hair, and his delicate hand,—altogether answering excellently to his name, were it not for the dashed look of surprise with which he gets his answer, and, with what jauntiness he can at the moment command, takes his departure. "Mr. Brisk was a man of some breeding," says Bunyan, "and that pretended to religion; but a man that stuck very close to the world." That Mr. Brisk made any pretence to religion at any other time and in any other place is not said; only that he put on that pretence with his best clothes when he came once or twice or more to Mercy and offered love to her at the House Beautiful. The man with the least religion at other times, even the man with no pretence to religion at other times at all, will pretend to some religion when he is in love with a young woman of Mercy's mind. And yet it would not be fair to say that it is all pretence even in such a man at such a time. Grant that a man is really in love; then, since all love is of the nature of religion, for the time, the true lover is really on the borders of a truly religious life. It may with perfect truth be said of all men when they first fall in love that they are, for the time, not very far away from the kingdom of heaven. For all love is good, so far as it goes. God is Love; and all love, in the long-run, has a touch of the divine nature in it. And for once, if never again, every man who is deeply in love has a far-off glimpse of the beauty of holiness, and a far-off taste of that ineffable sweetness of which the satisfied saints of God sing so ecstatically. But, in too many instances, a young man's love having been kindled only by the creature, and, never rising from her to his and her Creator, as a rule, it sooner or later burns low and at last burns out, and leaves nothing but embers and ashes in his once so ardent heart. Mr. Brisk's love-making might have ended in his becoming a pilgrim but for this fatal flaw in his heart, that even in his love-making he stuck so fast to the world. It is almost incredible: you may well refuse to believe it—that any young man in love, and especially a young gentleman of Mr. Brisk's breeding, would approach his mistress with the question how much she could earn a day. As Mr. Brisk looks at Mercy's lap so full of hats and hosen and says it, I can see his natty cane beginning to lengthen itself out in his soft-skinned hand and to send out teeth like a muck-rake. Give Mr. Brisk another thirty years or so and he will be an ancient churl, raking to himself the sticks and the straws and the dust of the earth, neither looking up to nor regarding the celestial crown that is still offered to him in exchange for his instrument.

"Now, Mercy was of a fair countenance, and, therefore, all the more alluring." But her fair countenance was really no temptation to her. "Sit still, my daughter," said Naomi to Ruth in the Old Testament. And it was entirely Mercy's maidenly nature to sit still. Even before she had come to her full womanhood under Christiana's motherly care she would have been an example to Ruth. Long ago, while Mercy was still a mere girl, when Mrs. Light-mind said something to her one day that made her blush, Mercy at last looked up in real anger and said, We women should be wooed; we were not made to woo. And thus it was that all their time at the House Beautiful Mercy stayed close at home and worked with her needle and thread just as if she had been the plainest girl in all the town. "I might have had husbands afore now," she said, with a cast of her head over the coat that lay on her lap, "though I spake not of it to any. But they were such as did not like my conditions, though never did any of them find fault with my person. So they and I could not agree." Once Mercy's mouth was opened on the subject of possible husbands it is a miracle that she did not go on in confidence to name some of the husbands she might have had. Mercy was too truthful and too honourable a maiden to have said even on that subject what she did say if it had

not been true. No doubt she believed it true. And the belief so long as she mentioned no names, did not break any man's bones and did not spoil any man's market. Don't set up too prudishly and say that it is a pity that Mercy so far forgot herself as to make her little confidential boast. We would not have had her without that little boast. Keep-at-home, sit-still, hats and hosen and all—her little boast only proves Mercy to have been at heart a true daughter of Eve after all.

There is an old-fashioned word that comes up again and again in the account of Mr. Brisk's courtship,—a word that contains far more interest and instruction for us than might on the surface appear. When Mr. Brisk was rallied upon his ill-success with Mercy, he was wont to say that undoubtedly Mistress Mercy was a very pretty lass, only she was troubled with ill conditions. And then, when Mercy was confiding to Prudence all about her possible husbands, she said that they were all such as did not like her conditions. To which Prudence, keeping her countenance, replied, that the men were but few in their day that could abide the practice that was set forth by such conditions as those of Mercy. Well, tossed out Mercy, if nobody will have me I will die a maid, or my conditions shall be to me as a husband! As I came again and again across that old seventeenth-century word "conditions, "I said to myself, I feel sure that Dr. Murray of the Oxford Scriptorium will have noted this striking passage. And on turning up the Sixth Part of the New English Dictionary, there, to be sure, was the old word standing in this present setting. Five long, rich, closely packed columns stood under the head of "Condition"; and amid a thousand illustrations of its use, the text: "1684, Bunyan, Pilgr., ii. 84. He said that Mercy was a pretty lass, but troubled with ill conditions." Poor illiterate John Bunyan stood in the centre of a group of learned and famous men, composed of Chaucer, Wyclif, Skelton, Palsgrave, Raleigh, Featly, Richard Steel, and Walter Scott—all agreeing in their use of our word, and all supplying examples of its use in the best English books. By Mercy's conditions, then, is just meant her cast of mind, her moral nature, her temper and her temperament, her dispositions and her inclinations, her habits of thought, habits of heart, habits of life, and so on.

"Well," said Mercy proudly, "if nobody will have me, I will die a maid, or my conditions shall be to me as a husband. For I cannot change my nature, and to have one that lies cross to me in this,—that I purpose never to admit of as long as I live." By this time, though she is still little more than a girl, Mercy had her habits formed, her character cast, and, more than all, her whole heart irrevocably set on her soul's salvation. And everything—husband and children and all—must condition themselves to that, else she will have none of them. She had sought first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and she will seek nothing, she will accept nothing—no, not even a husband—who crosses her choice in that. She has chosen her life, and her husband with it. Not the man as yet, but the whole manner of the man. The conditions of the man, as she said about herself; else she will boldly and bravely die a maid. And there are multitudes of married women who, when they read this page about Mercy, will gnash their teeth at the madness of their youth, and will wildly wish that they only were maids again; and, then, like Mercy, they would take good care to make for themselves husbands of their own conditions too—of their own means, their own dispositions, inclinations, tastes, and pursuits. For, according as our conditions to one another are or are not in our marriages, "They locally contain or heaven or hell;

There is no third place in them."

What untold good, then, may all our young women not get out of the loving study of Mercy's sweet, steadfast, noble character! And what untold misery may they not escape! From first to last—and we are not yet come to her last—I most affectionately recommend Mercy to the hearts and minds of all young women here. Single and married; setting out on pilgrimage and steadfastly persevering in it; sitting still till the husband with the right conditions comes, and then rising up with her warm, well-kept heart to meet him—if any maiden here has no mother, or no elder sister, or no wise and prudent friend like Prudence or Christiana to take counsel of—and even if she has—let Mercy be her meditation and her model through all her maidenly days.

"Nay, then," said Mercy, "I will look no more on him, for I purpose never to have a clog to my soul." A pungent resolve for every husband to read and to think to himself about, who has married a wife with a soul. Let all husbands who have such wives halt here and ask themselves with some imagination as to what may sometimes go on, at communion times, say, in the souls of their wives. It is not every wife, it is true, who has a soul to clog; but some of our wives have. Well, now, let us ask ourselves: How do we stand related to their souls? Do our wives, when examining the state of their souls since they married us, have to say that at one time they had hoped to be further on in the life of the soul than they yet are? And are they compelled before God to admit that the marriage they have made, and would make, has terribly hindered them? Would they have been better women, would they have been living a better life, and doing far more good in the world, if they had taken their maidenly ideals, like Mercy, for a husband? Let us sometimes imagine ourselves into the secrets of our wives' souls, and ask if they ever feel that they are unequally and injuriously yoked in their deepest and best life. Do we ever see a tear falling in secret, or hear a stolen sigh heaved, or stumble on them at a stealthy prayer? A Roman lady on being asked why she sometimes let a sob escape her and a tear fall, when she had such a gentleman of breeding and rank and riches to her husband, touched her slipper with her finger and said:"Is not that a well-made, a neat, and a costly shoe? And yet you would not believe how it pinches and pains me sometimes." But some every whit as good women as Mercy was have purposed as nobly and as firmly as Mercy did, and yet have wakened up, when it was too late, to find that, with all their high ideals, and with all their prudence, their husband is not in himself, and is not to them, what they at one time felt sure he would be. Mercy had a sister named Bountiful, who made that mistake and that dreadful discovery; and what Mercy had seen of married life in her sister's house almost absolutely turned her against marriage altogether. "The one thing certain,"says Thomas Mozley in his chapter on Ideal Wife and Husband, "is that both wife and husband are different in the result from the expectation. Age, illness, an increasing family, no family at all, household cares, want of means, isolation, incompatible prejudices, quarrels, social difficulties, and such like, all tell on married people, and make them far other than they once promised to be." When that awakening comes there is only one solace, and women take to that supreme solace much more often than men. And that solace, as you all know, is true, if too late, religion. And even where true religion has already been, there is still a deeper and a more inward religion suited to the new experiences and the new needs of life. And if both husband and wife in such a crisis truly betake themselves to Him who gathereth the solitary into families, the result will be such a remarriage of depth and tenderness, loyalty and mutual help, as their early dreams never came within sight of. Not early love, not children, not plenty of means, not all the best amenities of married life taken together, will repair a marriage and keep a marriage in repair for one moment like a living and an intense faith in God; a living and an intense love to God; and then that faith in and love for one another that spring

out of God and out of His love alone.

“The tree

Sucks kindlier nurture from a soil enriched

By its own fallen leaves; and man is made,

In heart and spirit, from deciduous hopes

And things that seem to perish.”

# 037. Mr. Skill

XXXVII

MR. SKILL “The vine of Sodom.”—Moses. With infinite delicacy John Bunyan here tells us the sad story of Matthew’s sore sickness at the House Beautiful. The cause of the sore sickness, its symptoms, its serious nature, and its complete cures are all told with the utmost plainness; but, at the same time, with the most exquisite delicacy. Bunyan calls the ancient physician who is summoned in and who effects the cure, Mr. Skill, but you must believe that Bunyan himself is Mr. Skill; and I question if this skilful writer ever wrote a more skilful page than just this page that now lies open before him who has the eyes to read it.

Matthew, it must always be remembered, was by this time a young man. He was the eldest son of Christiana his mother, and for some time now she had been a sorely burdened widow. Matthew’s father was no longer near his son to watch over him and to warn him against the temptations and the dangers that wait on opening manhood. And thus his mother, with all her other cares, had to be both father and mother to her eldest son; and, with all her good sense and all her long and close acquaintance with the world, she was too fond a mother to suspect any evil of her eldest son. And thus it was that Christiana had nearly lost her eldest son before her eyes were open to the terrible dangers he had for a long time been running. For it was so, that the upward way that this household without a head had to travel lay through a land full of all kinds of dangers both to the bodies and to the souls of such travellers as they were. And what well-nigh proved a fatal danger to Matthew lay right in his way. It was Beelzebub’s orchard. Not that this young man’s way lay through that orchard exactly; yet, walled up as was that orchard with all its forbidden fruit, that evil fruit would hang over the wall so that if any lusty youth wished to taste it, he had only to reach up to the over-hanging branches and plash down on himself some of the forbidden bunches. Now, that was just what Matthew had done. Till we have him lying at the House Beautiful, not only not able to enjoy the delights of the House and of the season, but so pained in his bowels and so pulled together with inward pains, that he sometimes cried out as if he were being torn to pieces. At that moment Mr. Skill, the ancient physician, entered the sick-room, when, having a little observed Matthew’s intense agony, with a certain mixture of goodness and severity he recited these professional verses over the trembling bed:

“O conscience, who can stand against thy power?

Endure thy gripes and agonies one hour?

Stone, gout, strappado, racks, whatever is

Dreadful to sense, are only toys to this—

No pleasures, riches, honours, friends can tell

How to give ease to this, ’tis like to hell.” And then, turning to the sick man’s mother, who stood at the bed’s head wringing her hands, the ancient leech said to her: “This boy of yours has been

tampering with the forbidden fruit!" At which the angry mother turned on the well-approved physician as if he had caused all the trouble that he had come to cure. But the ancient man knew both the son and the mother too, and therefore he addressed her with some asperity: "I tell you both that strong measures must be taken instantly, else he will die." When Mr. Skill had seen that the first purge was too weak, he made him one to the purpose; and it was made, as he so learnedly said, ex carne et sanguine Christi. The pills were to be taken three at a time, fasting, in half a quarter of a pint of the tears of repentance. After some coaxing, such as mothers know best how to use, Matthew took the medicine and was soon walking about again with a staff, and was able to go from room to room of the hospitable and happy house. Understandest thou what thou readest? said Philip the deacon to Queen Candace's treasurer as he sat down beside him in the chariot and opened up to him the fifty-third of the prophet Isaiah. And, understandest thou what thou here readest in Matthew and Mr. Skill?

1. Now, on this almost too closely veiled case I shall venture to remark, in the first place, that multitudes of boys grow up into young men, and go out of our most godly homes and into a whole world of temptation without due warning being given them as to where they are going. "I do marvel that none did warn him of it," said Mr. Skill, with some anger. What Matthew's father might have done in this matter had he been still in this world when his son became a man in it we can only guess. As it was, it never entered his mother's too fond mind to take her fatherless boy by himself when she saw Beelzebub's orchard before him, and tell him what Solomon told his son, and to point out to him the prophecy that King Lemuel's mother prophesied to her son. Poor Matthew was a young man before his mother was aware of it. And, poor woman, she only found that out when Mr. Skill was in the sick-room and was looking at her with eyes that seemed to say to her that she had murdered her child. She had loved too long to look on her first-born as still a child. When he went at any time for a season out of her sight, she had never followed him with her knowledge of the world; she had never prevented him with an awakened and an anxious imagination; till now she had got him home with no rest in his bones because of his sin. And then she began to cry too late, O naughty boy, and, O careless mother, what shall I do for my son!

2. "That food, to wit, that fruit," said Mr. Skill, "is even the most hurtful of all. It is the fruit of Beelzebub's orchard." So it is. There is no fruit that hurts at all like that fruit. How it hurts at the time, we see in Matthew's sick-room; and how it hurts all a man's after days we see in Jacob, and in Job, and in David, and in a thousand sin-sick souls of whose psalms of remorse and repentance the world cannot contain all the books that should be written. "And yet I marvel," said the indignant physician, "that none did warn him of it; many have died thereof." Oh if I could but get the ears of all the sons of godly fathers and mothers who are beginning to tamper with Beelzebub's orchard-trees, I feel as if I could warn them to-night, and out of this text, of what they are doing! I have known so many who have died thereof. Oh if I could but save them in time from those gripes of conscience that will pull them to pieces on the softest and the most fragrant bed that shall ever be made for them on earth! It will be well with them if they do not lie down torn to pieces on their bed in hell, and curse the day they first plashed down into their youthful hands the vine of Sodom. Both the way to hell and the way to heaven are full of many kinds of hurtful fruits; but that species of fruit that poor misguided Matthew plucked and ate after he had well passed the gate that is at the head of the way is, by all men's testimony, by far the most hurtful of all forbidden fruits.

3. The whole scene in Matthew's sick-room reads, after all, less like a skilful invention than a real occurrence. Inventive and realistic as John Bunyan is, there is surely something here that goes beyond even his genius. After making all allowance for Bunyan's unparalleled powers of creation and narration, I am inclined to think, the oftener I read it, that, after all, we have not so much John Bunyan here as very Nature herself. Yes; John Gifford surely was Mr. Skill. Sister Bosworth surely was Matthew's mother. And Matthew himself was Sister Bosworth's eldest son, while one John Bunyan, a travelling tinker, was busy with his furnaces and his soldering-irons in Dame Bosworth's kitchen. Young Bunyan, with all his blackguardism, had never plashed down Beelzebub's orchard. He swears he never did, and we are bound to believe him. But young Bosworth had been tampering with the forbidden fruit, and Gifford saw at a glance what was wrong. John Gifford was first an officer in the Royalist army, then a doctor in Bedford, and now a Baptist Puritan pastor; and the young tinker looked up to Gifford as the most wonderful man for learning in books and in bodies and souls of men in all the world. And when Gifford talked over young Bosworth's bed half to himself and half to them about a medicine made ex carne et sanguine Christi, the future author of the Pilgrim's Progress never forgot the phrase. At a glance Gifford saw what was the whole matter with the sick man. And painful as the truth was to the sick man's mother, and humiliating with a life-long humiliation to the sick man himself, Gifford was not the man or the minister to beat about the bush at such a solemn moment. "This boy has been tampering with that which will kill him unless he gets it taken off his conscience and out of his heart immediately." Now, this same divination into our pastoral cases is by far and away the most difficult part of a minister's work. It is easy and pleasant with a fluent tongue to get through our pulpit work; but to descend the pulpit stairs and deal with life, and with this and that sin in the lives of our people,—that is another matter. "We must labour," says Richard Baxter in his Reformed Pastor, "to be acquainted with the state of all our people as fully as we can; both to know the persons and their inclinations and conversation; to know what sins they are most in danger of, what duties they neglect, and what temptations they are most liable to. For, if we know not their temperament or their disease, we are likely to prove but unsuccessful physicians." But when we begin to reform our pastorate to that pattern, we are soon compelled to set down such entries in our secret diary as that of Thomas Shepard of Harvard University: "Sabbath, 5th April 1641. Nothing I do, nay, none under my shadow prosper. I so want wisdom for my place, and to guide others." Yes; for what wisdom is needed for the place of a minister like John Gifford, John Bunyan, Richard Baxter, and Thomas Shepard! What wisdom, what divine genius, to dive into and divine the secret history of a soul from a twinge of conscience, even from a drop of the eye, a tone of the voice, or a gesture of the hand or of the head! And yet, with some natural taste for the holy work, with study, with experience, and with life-long expert reading, even a plain minister with no genius, but with some grace and truth, may come to great eminence in the matters of the soul. And then, with what an interest, solemn and awful, with what a sleepless interest such a pastor goes about among his diseased, sin-torn, and scattered flock! All their souls are naked and open under his divining eye. They need not to tell him where they ail, and of what sickness they are nigh unto death. That food, he says, with some sternness over their sick-bed, I warned you of it; I told you with all plainness that many have died of eating that fruit! "We must be ready, "Baxter continues, "to give advice to those that come to us with cases of conscience. A minister is not only for public preaching, but to be a known counsellor for his people's souls as the lawyer is for their estates, and the physician is for their bodies. And because the people are grown unacquainted with this office of the ministry, and their own

necessity and duty herein, it belongeth to us to acquaint them herewith, and to press them publicly to come to us for advice concerning their souls. We must not only be willing of the trouble, but draw it upon ourselves by inviting them hereto. To this end it is very necessary to be acquainted with practical cases and able to assist them in trying their states. One word of seasonable and prudent advice hath done that good that many sermons would not have done."

4. As he went on pounding and preparing his well-approved pill, the (at the bottom of his heart) kind old leech talked encouragingly to the mother and to her sick son, and said: "Come, come; after all, do not he too much cast down. Had we lived in the days of the old medicine, I would have been compounding a purge out of the blood of a goat, and the ashes of an heifer, and the juice of hyssop. But I have a far better medicine under my hands here. This moment I will make you a purge to the purpose." And then the learned man, half-doctor, half-divine, chanted again the sacred incantation as he bent over his pestle and mortar, saying: Ex carne et sanguine Christi! Those shrewd old eyes soon saw that, in spite of all their defences and all their denials, damage had been done to the conscience and the heart that nothing would set right but a frank admission of the evil that had been done, and a prompt submission to the regimen appointed and the medicine prepared. And how often we ministers puddle and peddle with goat's blood and heifer's ashes and hyssop juice when we should instantly prescribe stern fasting and secret prayer and long spaces of repentance, and then the body and the blood of Christ. How often our people cheat us into healing their hurt slightly! How often they succeed in putting us off, after we are called in, with their own account of their cases, and set us out on a wild-goose chase! I myself have more than once presented young men in their trouble with apologetic books, University sermons, and watered-down explanations of the Confession and the Catechism, when, had I known all I came afterwards to know, I would have sent them Bunyan's Sighs from Hell. I have sent soul-sick women also The Bruised Reed, and The Mission of the Comforter with sympathising inscriptions, and sweet scriptures written inside, when, had I had Mr. Skill's keen eyes in my stupid head, I would have gone to them with the total abstinence pledge in my one hand, and Jeremy Taylor's Holy Living and Dying in my other. "No diet but that which is wholesome!" almost in anger answered the sick man's mother. "I tell you," the honest leech replied, in more anger, "this boy has been tampering with Beelzebub's orchard. And many have died of it!"

5. It was while all the rest of the House Beautiful were supping on lamb and wine, and while there was such music in the House that made Mercy exclaim over it with wonder—it was at the smell of the supper and at the sound of the psalmody that Matthew's gripes seized upon him worse than ever. All the time the others sat late into the night Matthew lay on the rack pulled to pieces. After William Law's death at King's Cliffe, his executors found among his most secret papers a prayer he had composed for his own alone use on a certain communion day when he was self-debarred from the Lord's table. I do not know for certain just what fruit the young non-juror had stolen out of Beelzebub's orchard before that communion season; but I can see that he was in poor Matthew's exact experience that communion night,—literally torn to pieces with agonies of conscience while all his fellow-worshippers were at the table of the Lord. While the psalms and hymns are being sung at the supper-table, lay your ear to Law's closet door. "Whilst all Thy faithful servants are on this day offering to Thee the comfortable sacrifice of the body and the blood of Christ, and feasting at that holy table which Thou hast ordained for the refreshment, joy, and comfort of their souls, I, unhappy wretch, full of guilt, am justly denied any share of these comforts that are common to the

Christian world. O my God, I am an unclean worm, a dead dog, a stinking carcass, justly removed from that society of saints who this day kneel about Thine altar. But, oh! suffer me to look toward Thy holy Sanctuary; suffer my soul again to be in the place where Thine honour dwelleth. Reject not the sacrifice of a broken heart, and do Thou be with me in secret, though I am not fit to appear in Thy public worship. Lord, if Thou wilt Thou canst make me clean. Lord, speak but the word, and Thy servant shall be healed." It is the fruit of Beelzebub's orchard. Many have died thereof.

6. "Pray, sir, make me up twelve boxes of them; for if I can get these, I will never take other physic." "These same pills," he replied, "are good also to prevent diseases as well as to cure when one is sick. But, good woman, thou must take these pills no other way but as I have prescribed; for if you do, they will do no good." I have taken one illustration from William Law's life; I shall take another from that world of such illustrations and so close. "O God, let me never see such another day as this. Let the dreadful punishment of this day never be out of my mind." And it never was. For, after that day in hell, Law never laid down his head on his pillow that he did not seem to remember that dreadful day. William Law would have satisfied Dr. Skill for a convalescent. For he never felt that he had any right to touch the body and blood of Christ, either at communion times, or a thousand times every day, till he had again got ready his heart of true repentance. My brethren, self-destroyed out of Beelzebub's orchard, and all my brethren, live a life henceforth of true repentance. Not out of the sins of your youth only, but out of the best, the most watchful, and the most blameless day you ever live, distil your half-pint of repentance every night before you sleep. For, as dear old Skill said, unless you do, neither flesh nor blood of Christ, nor anything else, will do you any genuine good.

# 038. The Shepherd Boy

XXXVIII THE SHEPHERD BOY “He humbled Himself.”—Paul.

“Now as they were going along and talking, they espied a boy feeding his father’s sheep. The boy was in very mean clothes, but of a very fresh and well-favoured countenance, and as he sat by himself he sang. Hark, said Mr. Greatheart, to what the shepherd boy saith. So they hearkened and he said:

He that is down, needs fear no fall;

He that is low no pride:

He that is humble, ever shall

Have God to be his guide.

I am content with what I have,

Little be it or much:

And, Lord, contentment still I crave,

Because thou savest such.

Fulness to such a burden is

That go on pilgrimage:

Here little, and hereafter bliss,

Is best from age to age.

Then said their guide, Do you hear him? I will dare say that this boy lives a merrier life and wears more of that herb called Heart’s-ease in his bosom than he that is clad in silk and velvet.”

Now, notwithstanding all that, nobody knew better than John Bunyan knew, that no shepherd boy that ever lived on the face of the earth ever sang that song; only one Boy ever sang that song, and He was not the son of a shepherd at all, but the son of a carpenter. And, saying that leads me on to say this before I begin, that I look for a man of John Bunyan’s inventive and sanctified genius to arise some day, and armed also to boot with all our latest and best New Testament studies. When that sorely-needed man so arises he will take us back to Nazareth where that carpenter’s Boy was brought up, and he will let us see Him with our own eyes being brought up. He will lead us into Mary’s house on Sabbath days, and into Joseph’s workshop on week days, and he will show us the child Jesus, not so much learning His letters and then putting on His carpenter’s clothes, as learning obedience by the things that He every day suffered. That choice author will show us our Lord, both before He had discovered Himself to be our Lord, as well as after He had made that great discovery, always clothing Himself with humility as with a garment; taking up His yoke of

meekness and lowly-mindedness every day, and never for one moment laying it down. When some writer with as holy an imagination as that of John Bunyan, and with as sweet an English style, and with a New Testament scholarship of the first order so arises, and so addresses himself to the inward life of our Lord, what a blessing to our children that writer will be! For he will make them see and feel just what all that was in which our Lord's perfect humility consisted, and how His perfect humility fulfilled itself in Him from day to day; up through all His childhood days, school and synagogue days, workshop and holy days, early manhood and mature manhood days; till He was so meek in all His heart and so humble in all His mind that all men were sent to Him to learn their meekness and their humility of Him. I envy that gifted man the deep delight he will have in his work, and the splendid reward he will have in the love and the debt of all coming generations. Only, may he be really sent to us, and that soon! Theodor Keim comes nearest a far-off glimpse of that eminent service of any New Testament scholar I know. Jeremy Taylor and Thomas Goodwin also, in their own time and in their own way, had occasional inspirations toward this still-waiting treatment of the master-subject of all learning and all genius—the inward sanctification, the growth in grace, and then the self-discovery of the incarnate Son of God. But, so let it please God, some contemporary scholar will arise some day soon, combining in himself Goodwin's incomparable Christology, and Taylor's incomparable eloquence, and Keim's incomparably digested learning, with John Bunyan's incomparable imagination and incomparable English style, and the waiting work will be done, and theology for this life will take on its copestone. In his absence, and till he comes, let us attempt a few annotations to-night on this so-called shepherd boy's song in the Valley of Humiliation.

He that is down, needs fear no fall. The whole scenery of the surrounding valley is set before us in that single eloquent stanza. The sweet-voiced boy sits well off the wayside as he sings his song to himself. He looks up to the hill-tops that hang over his valley, and every shining tooth of those many hill-tops has for him its own evil legend. He thinks he sees a little heap of bleaching bones just under where that eagle hangs and wheels and screams. Not one traveller through these perilous parts in a thousand gets down those cruel rocks unhurt; and many travellers have been irrecoverably lost among those deadly rocks, and have never received Christian burial. All the shepherds' cottages and all the hostel supper-tables for many miles round are full of terrible stories of the Hill Difficulty and the Descent Dangerous. And thus it is that this shepherd boy looks up with such fear at those sharp peaks and shining precipices, and lifts his fresh and well-favoured countenance to heaven and sings again: "He that is down, needs fear no fall." Down in his own esteem, that is. For this is a song of the heart rather than of the highway. Down—safe, that is, from the steep and slippery places of self-estimation, self-exaltation, self-satisfaction. Down—so as to be delivered from all ambition and emulation and envy. Down, and safe, thank God, from all pride, all high-mindedness, and all stout-heartedness. Down from the hard and cruel hills, and buried deep out of sight among those meadows where that herb grows which is called Heart's-ease. Down, where the green pastures grow and the quiet waters flow. No, indeed; he that is down into this sweet bottom needs fear no fall. For there is nowhere here for a man to fall from. And, even if he did fall, he would only fall upon a fragrance-breathing bed of lilies. The very herbs and flowers here would conspire to hold him up. Many a day, as He grew up, the carpenter's son sat in that same valley and sang that same song to His own humble and happy heart. He loved much to be here. He loved also to walk these meadows, for He found the air was pleasant. Methinks, He often said with Mercy, I am as well in this valley as I have been anywhere else in My journey. The place,

methinks, suits with My spirit. I love to be in such places where there is no rattling with coaches nor rumbling with wheels. Methinks, also, here one may without much molestation be thinking what he is, whence he came, and to what his King has called him.

He that is low, no pride.

Low in his own eyes, that is. For pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. Yes; but he who is low enough already—none of the sure destructions that pride always works shall ever come near to him. “The proud man,” says Sir Henry Taylor, “is of all men the most vulnerable. ‘Who calls?’ asks the old shepherd in As You Like It. ‘Your betters,’ is the insolent answer. And what is the shepherd’s rejoinder? ‘Else are they very wretched.’ By what retort, reprisal, or repartee could it have been made half so manifest that the insult had lighted upon armour of proof? Such is the invincible independence and invulnerability of humility.”

He that is humble ever shall

Have God to be his guide. For thus saith the high and holy One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the heart of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones . . . All those things hath Mine hand made, but to this man will I look, saith the Lord, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembleth at My word . . . Though the Lord be high, yet hath He respect unto the lowly; but the proud He knoweth afar off . . . Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble . . . Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty, neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child . . . Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.

I am content with what I have,

Little be it, or much:

And, Lord, contentment still I crave,

Because thou savest such. The only thing this sweet singer is discontented with is his own contentment. He will not be content as long as he has a shadow of discontent left in his heart. And how blessed is such holy discontent! For, would you know, asks Law, who is the greatest saint in all the world? Well, it is not he who prays most or fasts most; it is not he who gives most alms or is most eminent for temperance, chastity, or justice. But it is he who is always thankful to God, who wills everything that God willeth, who receives everything as an instance of God’s goodness, and has a heart always ready to praise God for it. “Perhaps the shepherd’s boy,” says Thomas Scott, “may refer to the obscure and quiet stations of some pastors over small congregations, who live almost unknown to their brethren, but are in a measure useful and very comfortable.” Perhaps he does. And, whether he does or no, at any rate such a song will suit some of our brethren very well as they go about among their few and far-off flocks. They are not church leaders or popular preachers. There is not much rattling with coaches or rumbling with wheels at their church door. But, then, methinks, they have their compensation. They are without much molestation. They can

be all the more thinking what they are, whence they came, and to what their King has called them. Let them be happy in their shut-in valleys. For I will dare to say that they wear more of that herb called Heart's-ease in their bosom than those ministers do they are sometimes tempted to emulate. I will add in this place that to the men who live and trace these grounds the Lord hath left a yearly revenue to be faithfully paid them at certain seasons for their maintenance by the way, and for their further encouragement to go on in their pilgrimage.

Here little, and hereafter bliss,

Is best from age to age.

But, now, from the shepherd boy and from his valley and his song, let us go on without any more poetry or parable to look our own selves full in the face and to ask our own hearts whether they are the hearts of really humble-minded and New Testament men or no. Dr. Newman,"that subtle, devout man," as Dr. Duncan calls him, says that "humility is one of the most difficult of virtues both to attain and to ascertain. It lies," he says, "close upon the heart itself, and its tests are exceedingly delicate and subtle. Its counterfeits abound." Most true. And yet humility is not intended for experts in morals only, or for men of a rare religious genius only. The plainest of men, the least skilled and the most unlettered of men, may not only excel in humility, but may also be permitted to know that they are indeed planted, and are growing slowly but surely in that grace of all graces. No doubt our Lord had, so to describe it, the most delicate and the most subtle of human minds; and, no doubt whatever, He had the most practised skill in reading off what lay closest to His own heart. And, then, it was just His attainment of the most perfect humility, and then His absolute ascertainment of the same, that enabled Him to say: Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me. At the same time, divine as the grace is, and divine as the insight is that is able to trace it out in all its exquisite refinements of thought and feeling in the sanctified soul, yet humility is a human virtue after all, and it is open to all men to attain to it and intelligently and lovingly to exercise it. The simplest and the least philosophical soul now in this house may apply to himself some of the subtlest and most sensitive tests of humility, as much as if he were Dr. Duncan or Dr. Newman themselves; and may thus with all assurance of hope know whether he is a counterfeit and a castaway or no.

Take this test for one, then. Explain this text to me: Phil. ii. 3—"In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than himself." Explain and illustrate that. Not from a commentary, but straight out from your own heart. What does your heart make of that scripture? Does your heart turn away from that scripture almost in anger at it? Do you say you are certain that there must be some other explanation of it than that? Do you hold that this is just another of Paul's perpetual hyperboles, and that the New Testament is the last book in the world to be taken as it reads? Yes; both bold and subtle father that he is: counterfeits abound!

Another much blunter test, but, perhaps, a sufficiently sharp test, is this: How do you receive correction and instruction? Does your heart meekly and spontaneously and naturally take to correction and instruction as the most natural and proper thing possible to you? And do you immediately, and before all men, show forth and exhibit the correction and the instruction? Or, does this rather take place? Does your heart beat, and swell, and boil, and boil over at him who dares to correct or counsel you? If this is a fair test to put our humility to, how little humility there is among us! How few men any of us could name among our friends to whom we would risk telling all the things that behind their backs we point out continually to others? We are terrified to face their

pride. We once did it, and we are not to do it again, if we can help it! Let a man not have too many irons in the fire; let him examine himself just by these two tests for the time—what he thinks of himself, and what he thinks of those who attempt, and especially before other people, to set him right. And after these two tests have been satisfied, others will no doubt be supplied till that so humble man is made very humility itself. And now, in the hope that there may be one or two men here who are really and not counterfeitly in earnest to clothe themselves with humility before God and man, let them take these two looms to themselves out of which whole webs of such garments will be delivered to them every day—their past life, and their present heart. With a past life like ours, my brethren—and everyman knows his own—pride is surely the maddest state of mind that any of us can allow ourselves in. The first king of Bohemia kept his clouted old shoes ever in his sight, that he might never forget that he had once been a ploughman. And another wise king used to drink out of a coarse cup at table, and excused himself to his guests that he had made the rude thing in his rude potter days. Look with Primislaus and Agathocles at the hole of the pit out of which you also have been dug; look often enough, deep enough, and long enough, and you will be found passing up through the Valley of Humiliation singing:

“With us He dealt not as we sinn’d,

Nor did requite our ill!”

Another excellent use of the past is, if you are equal to it, to call yourself aloud sometimes, or in writing, some of the names that other people who know your past are certainly calling you. It is a terrible discipline, but it is the terror of the Lord, and He will not let it hurt you too much. I was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious, says Paul. And, to show Titus, his gospel-son, the way, he said to him: We ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. And John Bunyan calls himself a blackguard, and many other worse names; only he swears that neither with his soldiering nor with his tinkering hands did he ever plash down Beelzebub’s orchard. But if you have done that, or anything like that, call yourself aloud by your true name on your knees to-night. William Law testifies, after five-and-twenty years’ experience of it, that he never heard of any harm that he had done to any in his house by his habit of singing his secret psalms aloud, and sometimes, ere ever he was aware, bursting out in his penitential prayers.

And, then, how any man with a man’s heart in his bosom for a single day can escape being the chief of sinners, and consequently the humblest of men for all the rest of his life on earth, passes my comprehension! How a spark of pride can live in such a hell as every human heart is would be past belief, did we not know that God avenges sin by more sin; avenges Himself on a wicked and a false heart by more wickedness and more falsehood, all ending in Satanic pride.

Too long as I have kept you in this valley to-night, I dare not let you out of it till I have shared with you a few sentences on evangelical humiliation out of that other so subtle and devout man, Jonathan Edwards. But what special kind of humiliation is evangelical humiliation? you will ask. Hear, then, what this master in Israel says. “Evangelical humiliation is the sense that a Christian man has of his own utter insufficiency, utter despicableness, and utter odiousness; with an always answerable frame of heart. This humiliation is peculiar to the true saints. It arises from the special influence of the Spirit of God implanting and exercising supernatural and divine principles; and it is accompanied with a sense of the transcendent beauty of divine things. And, thus, God’s true

saints all more or less see their own odiousness on account of sin, and the exceedingly hateful nature of all sin. The very essence of evangelical humiliation consists in such humility as becomes a man in himself exceeding sinful but now under a dispensation of grace. It consists in a mean esteem of himself, as in himself nothing, and altogether contemptible and odious. This, indeed, is the greatest and the most essential thing in true religion." And so on through a whole chapter of beaten gold. To which noble chapter I shall only add that such teaching is as sweet, as strengthening, and as reassuring to the truly Christian heart as it is bitter and hateful to the counterfeit heart.

# 039. Old Honest

XXXIX

OLD HONEST “An honest heart.”—Our Lord.

Next tell them of Old Honest, who you found

With his white hairs treading the pilgrim’s ground;

Yea, tell them how plain-hearted this man was,

How after his good Lord he bare his cross:

Perhaps with some grey head this may prevail,

With Christ to fall in love, and sin bewail.

You would have said that no pilgrim to the Celestial City could possibly have come from a worse place, or a more unlikely place, than was that place from which Christian and Christiana and Matthew and Mercy had come. And yet so it was. For Old Honest, this most excellent and every way most delightful old saint, hailed from a far less likely place than even the City of Destruction. For he came, this rare old soul, of all places in the world, from the Town of Stupidity. So he tells us himself. And, partly to explain to us the humiliating name of his native town, and partly to exhibit himself as a wonder to many, the frank old gentleman goes on to tell us that his birthplace actually lies four degrees further away from the sun than does the far-enough away City of Destruction itself. So that you see this grey-haired saint is all that he always said he was—a living witness to the fact that his Lord is able to save to the uttermost, and to gather in His Father’s elect from the utmost corner of the land. Men are mountains of ice in my country, said Old Honest. I was one of the biggest of those icebergs myself, he said. No man was ever more cold and senseless to divine things than I was, and still sometimes am. It takes the Sun of Righteousness all His might to melt the men of my country. But that He can do it when He rises to do it, and when He puts out His full strength to do it—Look at me! said the genial old soul.

We have to construct this pilgrim’s birth and boyhood and youth from his after-character and conversation; and we have no difficulty at all in doing that. For, if the child is the father of the man, then the man must be the outcome of the child, and we can have no hesitation in picturing to ourselves what kind of child and boy and young man dear Old Honest must always have been. He never was a bright child, bright and beaming old man as he is. He was always slow and heavy at his lessons; indeed, I would not like to repeat to you all the bad names that his schoolmasters sometimes in their impatience called the stupid child. Only, this was to be said of him, that dulness of uptake and disappointment of his teachers were the worst things about this poor boy; he was not so ill-behaved as many were who were made more of. When his wits began to waken up after he had come some length he had no little leeway to make up in his learning; but that was the chief drawback to Old Honest’s pilgrimage. For one thing, no young man had a cleaner record behind

him than our Honest had; his youthful garments were as unspotted as ever any pilgrim's garments were. Even as a young man he had had the good sense to keep company with one Good-conscience; and that friend of his youth kept true to Old Honest all his days, and even lent him his hand and helped him over the river at last. In his own manly, hearty, blunt, breezy, cheery, and genial way Old Honest is a pilgrim we could ill have spared. Old Honest has a warm place all for himself in every good and honest heart.

"Now, a little before the pilgrims stood an oak, and under it when they came up to it they found an old pilgrim fast asleep; they knew that he was a pilgrim by his clothes and his staff and his girdle. So the guide, Mr. Greatheart, awaked him, and the old gentleman, as he lifted up his eyes, cried out: What's the matter? Who are you? And what is your business here? Come, man, said the guide, be not so hot; here is none but friends! Yet the old man gets up and stands upon his guard, and will know of them what they are." That weather-beaten oak-tree under which we first meet with Old Honest is an excellent emblem of the man. When he sat down to rest his old bones that day he did not look out for a bank of soft moss or for a bed of fragrant roses; that knotted oak-tree alone had power to draw down under its sturdy trunk this heart of human oak. It was a sight to see those thin grey haffets making a soft pillow of that jutting knee of gnarled and knotty oak, and with his well-worn quarterstaff held close in a hand all wrinkled skin and scraggy bone. And from that day till he waved his quarterstaff when half over the river and shouted, Grace reigns! there is no pilgrim of them all that affords us half the good humour, sagacity, continual entertainment, and brave encouragement we enjoy through this same old Christian gentleman.

1. Now, let us try to learn two or three lessons to-night from Old Honest, his history, his character, and his conversation. And, to begin with, let all those attend to Old Honest who are slow in the uptake in the things of religion. O fools and slow of heart! exclaimed our Lord at the two travellers to Emmaus. And this was Old Honest to the letter when he first entered on the pilgrimage life; he was slow as sloth itself in the things of the soul. I have often wondered, said Greatheart, that any should come from your place; for your town is worse than is the City of Destruction itself. Yes, answered Honest, we lie more off from the sun, and so are more cold and senseless. And his biographer here annotates on the margin this reflection: "Stupefied ones are worse than merely carnal." So they are; though it takes some insight to see that, and some courage to carry that through. Now, to be downright stupid in a man's natural intellects is sad enough, but to be stupid in the intellects of the soul and of the spirit is far more sad. You will often see this if you have any eyes in your head, and are not one of the stupid people yourself. You will see very clever people in the intellects of the head who are yet as stupid as the beasts in the stall in the far nobler intellects of the heart. You will meet every day with men and women who have received the best college education this city can give them, who are yet stark stupid in everything that belongs to true religion. They are quick to find out the inefficiency of a university chair, or a schoolmaster's desk, but they know no more of what a New Testament pulpit has been set up for than the stupidest sot in the city. The Divine Nature, human nature, sin, grace, redemption, salvation, holiness, heart-corruption, spiritual life, prayer, communion with God, a conversation and a treasure in heaven,—to all these noblest of studies and divinest of exercises they are as a beast before God. When you come upon a man who is a sot in his senses and in his understanding, you expect him to be the same in his spiritual life. But to meet with an expert in science, a classical scholar, an author or a critic in letters, a leader in political or ecclesiastical or municipal life, and yet to discover

that he is as stupid as any sot in the things of his own soul, is one of the saddest and most disheartening sights you can see. Much sadder and much more disheartening than to see stairs and streets of people who can neither read nor write. And yet our city is full of such stupid people. You will find as utter spiritual stupidity among the rich and the lettered and the refined of this city as you will find among the ignorant and the vicious and the criminal classes. Is stupidity a sin? asks Thomas in his Forty-Sixth Question. And the great schoolman answers himself, “Stupidity may come of natural incapacity, in which case it is not a sin. But it may come, on the other hand, of a man immersing his soul in the things of this world so as to shut out all the things of God and of the world to come, in which case stupidity is a deadly sin.” Now, from all that, you must already see what you are to do in order to escape from your inborn and superinduced stupidity. You are, like Old Honest, to open your gross, cold, senseless heart to the Sun of Righteousness, and you are to take care every day to walk abroad under His beams. You are to emigrate south for your life, as our well-to-do invalids do, to where the sun shines in his strength all the day. You are to choose such a minister, buy and read such a literature, cultivate such an acquaintanceship, and follow out such a new life of habits and practices as shall bring you into the full sunshine, till your heart of ice is melted, and your stupefied soul is filled with spiritual sensibility. For, “were a man a mountain of ice,” said Old Honest, “yet if the Sun of Righteousness will arise upon him his frozen heart shall feel a thaw; and thus hath it been with me.” Your poets and your philosophers have no resource against the stupidity that opposes them. “Even the gods,” they complain, “fight unvictorious against stupidity.” But your divines and your preachers have hope beside the dullest and the stupidest and even the most imbruted. They point themselves and their slowest and dullest-witted hearers to Old Honest, this rare old saint; and they set up their pulpit with hope and boldness on the very causeway of the town of Stupidity itself.

2. In the second place,—on this fine old pilgrim’s birth and boyhood and youth. The apostle says that there is no real difference between one of us and another; and what he says on that subject must be true. No; there is really no difference compared with the Celestial City whether a pilgrim is born in Stupidity, in Destruction, in Vanity, or in Darkland. At the same time, nature, as well as grace, is of God, and He maketh, when it pleaseth Him, one man to differ in some most important respects from another. You see such differences every day. Some children are naturally, and from their very infancy, false and cruel, mean and greedy; while their brothers and sisters are open and frank and generous. One son in a house is born a vulgar snob, and one daughter a shallow-hearted and shameless little flirt; while another brother is a born gentleman, and another sister a born saint. Some children are tender-hearted, easily melted, and easily moulded; while others in the same family are hard as stone and cold as ice. Sometimes a noble and a truly Christian father will have all his days to weep and pray over a son who is his shame; and then, in the next generation, a grandson will be born to him who will more than recover the lost image of his father’s father. And so is it sometimes with father Adam’s family. Here and there, in Darkland, in Destruction, and in Stupidity, a child will be born with a surprising likeness to the first Adam in his first estate. That happy child at his best is but the relics and ruins of his first father; at the same time, in him the relics are more abundant and the ruins more easy to trace out. And little Honest was such a well-born child. For, Stupidity and all, there was a real inborn and inbred integrity, uprightness, straightforwardness, and nobleness about this little and not over-clever man-child. And, on the principle of “to him that hath shall be given,” there was something like a special providence that hedged this boy about from the beginning. “I girded thee though thou hast not

known Me" was never out of Old Honest's mouth as often as he remembered the days of his own youth and heard other pilgrims mourning over theirs. "I have surnamed thee though thou hast not known Me," he would say to himself in his sleep. Slow-witted as he was, no one had been able to cheat young Honest out of his youthful integrity. He had not been led, and he had led no one else, into the paths of the destroyer. He could say about himself all that John Bunyan so boldly and so bluntly said about himself when his enemies charged him with youthful immorality. He left the town in nobody's debt. He left the print of his heels on no man or woman or child when he took his staff in his hand to be a pilgrim. The upward walk of too many pilgrims is less a walk than an escape and a flight. The avenger of men's blood and women's honour has hunted many men deep into heaven's innermost gate. But Old Honest took his time. He walked, if ever pilgrim walked, all the way with an easy mind. He lay down to sleep under the oaks on the wayside, and smiled like a child in his sleep. And, when he was suddenly awaked, instead of crying out for mercy and starting to his heels, he grasped his staff and demanded even of an armed man what business he had to break in on an honest pilgrim's midday repose! The King of the Celestial City had a few names even in Stupidity which had not defiled their garments, and Old Honest was one of them. And all his days his strength was as the strength of ten, because his heart was pure.

3. At the same time, honesty is not holiness; and no one knew that better than did this honest old saint. When any one spoke to Old Honest about his blameless youth, the look in his eye made them keep at arm's-length as he growled out that without holiness no man shall see God! Writing from Aberdeen to John Bell of Hentoun, Samuel Rutherford says: "I beseech you, in the Lord Jesus, to mind your country above; and now, when old age is come upon you, advise with Christ before you put your foot into the last ship and turn your back on this life. Many are beguiled with this that they are free of scandalous sins. But common honesty will not take men to heaven. Alas! that men should think that ever they met with Christ who had never a sick night or a sore heart for sin. I have known a man turn a key in a door and lock it by." "I can," says John Owen, "and I do, commend moral virtues and honesty as much as any man ought to do, and I am sure there is no grace where they are not. Yet to make anything to be our holiness that is not derived from Jesus Christ,—I know not what I do more abhor." "Are morally honest and sober men qualified for the Lord's Supper?" asks John Flavel. "No; civility and morality do not make a man a worthy communicant. They are not the wedding garment; but regenerating grace and faith in the smallest measure are." "My outside may be honest," said this honest old pilgrim,"while all the time my heart is most unholy. My life is open to all men, but I must hide my heart with Christ in God."

4. And then this racy-hearted old bachelor was as full of delight in children, and in children's parties, with all their sweetmeats and nuts and games and riddles,—quite as much so—as if he had been their very grandfather himself. Nay, this rosy-hearted old rogue was as inveterate a matchmaker as if he had been a mother of the world with a houseful of daughters on her hands and with the sons of the nobility dangling around. It would make you wish you could kiss the two dear old souls, Gaius the innkeeper and Old Honest his guest, if you would only read how they laid their grey heads together to help forward the love-making of Matthew and Mercy. Yes, it would be a great pity, said Old Honest,—thinking with a sigh of his own childless old age,—it would be a great pity if this excellent family of our sainted brother should fail for want of children, and die out like mine. And the two old plotters went together to the mother of the bridegroom, and told her with an aspect of authority that she must put no obstacle in her son's way, but take Mercy as soon as

convenient into a closer relation to herself. And Gaius said that he for his part would give the marriage supper. And I shall make no will, said Honest, but hand all I have over to Matthew my son. This is the way, said Old Honest; and he skipped and smiled and kissed the cheek of the aged mother and said, Then thy two children shall preserve thee and thy husband a posterity in the earth! Then he turned to the boys and he said, Matthew, be thou like Matthew the publican, not in vice, but in virtue. Samuel, he said, be thou like Samuel the prophet, a man of faith and of prayer. Joseph, said he, be thou like Joseph in Potiphar's house, chaste, and one that flees from temptation. And James, be thou like James the Just, and like James the brother of our Lord. Mercy, he said, is thy name, and by mercy shalt thou be sustained and carried through all thy difficulties that shall assault thee in the way, till thou shalt come thither where thou shalt look the Fountain of Mercy in the face with comfort. And all this while the guide, Mr. Greatheart, was very much pleased, and smiled upon the nimble old gentleman.

5. "Then it came to pass a while after that there was a post in the town that inquired for Mr. Honest. So he came to his house where he was, and delivered to his hands these lines, Thou art commanded to be ready against this day seven night, to present thyself before thy Lord at His Father's house. And for a token that my message is true, all thy daughters of music shall be brought low. Then Mr. Honest called for his friends and said unto them, I die, but shall make no will. As for my honesty, it shall go with me: let him that comes after me be told of this. When the day that he was to be gone was come he addressed himself to go over the river. Now, the river at that time overflowed the banks at some places. But Mr. Honest in his lifetime had spoken to one Good-conscience to meet him there, the which he also did, and lent him his hand, and so helped him over. The last words of Mr. Honest were, Grace reigns! So he left the world." Look at that picture and now look at this: "They then addressed themselves to the water, and, entering, Christian began to sink, and crying out to his good friend Hopeful, he said, I sink in deep waves, the billows go over my head, all His waters go over me. Then said the other, Be of good cheer, my brother, I feel the bottom, and it is good. Then said Christian, Ah, my friend, the sorrows of death have compassed me about; I shall not see the land that flows with milk and honey. And with that a great horror and darkness fell upon Christian, so that he could not see before him; and all the words that he spoke still tended to discover that he had horror of mind lest he should die in that river and never obtain entrance in at the gate. Here also, as they that stood by perceived, he was much in the troublesome thoughts of the sins that he had committed, both since and before he began to be a pilgrim. 'Twas also observed that he was troubled with apparitions of hobgoblins and evil spirits. Hopeful, therefore, had much ado to keep his brother's head above water. Yea, sometimes he would be quite gone down, and then ere a while he would rise up again half dead." My brethren, all my brethren, be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. Thou, O God, wast a God that forgavest them, but Thou tookest vengeance on their inventions.

# 040. Mr. Fearing

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MR. FEARING “Happy is the man that feareth alway.”—Solomon For humour, for pathos, for tenderness, for acute and sympathetic insight at once into nature and grace, for absolutely artless literary skill, and for the sweetest, most musical, and most exquisite English, show me another passage in our whole literature to compare with John Bunyan’s portrait of Mr. Fearing. You cannot do it. I defy you to do it. Spenser, who, like John Bunyan, wrote an elaborate allegory, says: It is not in me. Take all Mr. Fearing’s features together, and even Shakespeare himself has no such heart-touching and heart-comforting character. Addison may have some of the humour and Lamb some of the tenderness; but, then, they have not the religion. Scott has the insight into nature, but he has no eye at all for grace; while Thackeray, who, in some respects, comes nearest to John Bunyan of them all, would be the foremost to confess that he is not worthy to touch the shoe-latchet of the Bedford tinker. As Dr. Duncan said in his class one day when telling us to read Augustine’s Autobiography and Halyburton’s:—“But,” he said,“ be prepared for this, that the tinker beats them all!” “Methinks,” says Browning, “in this God speaks, no tinker hath such powers.”

Now, as they walked along together, the guide asked the old gentleman if he knew one Mr. Fearing that came on pilgrimage out of his parts. “Yes,” said Mr. Honest, “very well. He was a man that had the root of the matter in him; but he was one of the most troublesome pilgrims that ever I met with in all my days.” “I perceive you knew him,” said the guide, “for you have given a very right character of him.” “Knew him!” exclaimed Honest, “I was a great companion of his; I was with him most an end. When he first began to think of what would come upon us hereafter, I was with him.” “And I was his guide,” said Greatheart, “from my Master’s house to the gates of the Celestial City.” “Then,” said Mr. Honest, “it seems he was well at last.” “Yes, yes,” answered the guide, “I never had any doubt about him; he was a man of a choice spirit, only he was always kept very low, and that made his life so burdensome to himself and so troublesome to others. He was, above many, tender of sin; he was so afraid of doing injuries to others that he would often deny himself of that which was lawful because he would not offend.” “But what,” asked Honest, “should be the reason that such a good man should be all his days so much in the dark?” “There are two sorts of reasons for it,” said the guide; “one is, the wise God will have it so: some must pipe and some must weep. Now, Mr. Fearing was one that played upon this base. He and his fellows sound the sackbut, whose notes are more doleful than the notes of other music are. Though, indeed, some say that the base is the ground of music. And, for my part, I care not at all for that profession that begins not with heaviness of mind. The first string that the musician usually touches is the base when he intends to put all in tune. God also plays upon this string first when He sets the soul in tune for Himself. Only, here was the imperfection of Mr. Fearing, that he could play upon no other music but this till toward his latter end.”

1. Take Mr. Fearing, then, to begin with, at the Slough of Despond. Christian and Pliable, they being heedless, did both fall into that bog. But Mr. Fearing, whatever faults you may think he

had—and faults, too, that you think you could mend in him—at any rate, he was never heedless. Everybody has his fault to find with poor Mr. Fearing. Everybody blames poor Mr. Fearing. Everybody can improve upon poor Mr. Fearing. But I will say again for Mr. Fearing that he was never heedless. Had Peter been on the road at that period he would have stood up for Mr. Fearing, and would have taken his judges and would have said to them, with some scorn—Go to, and pass the time of your sojourning here with something of the same silence and the same fear! Christian's excuse for falling into the Slough was that fear so followed him that he fled the next way, and so fell in. But Mr. Fearing had no such fear behind him in his city as Christian had in his. All Mr. Fearing's fears were within himself. If you can take up the distinction between actual and indwelling sin, between guilt and corruption, you have already in that the whole key to Mr. Fearing. He was blamed and counselled and corrected and pitied and patronised by every morning-cloud and early-dew neophyte, while all the time he lived far down from the strife of tongues where the root of the matter strikes its deep roots still deeper every day. "It took him a whole month," tells Greatheart," to face the Slough. But he would not go back neither. Till, one sunshiny morning, nobody ever knew how, he ventured, and so got over. But the fact of the matter is," said the shrewd-headed guide, "Mr. Fearing had, I think, a slough of despond in his own mind; and a slough that he carried everywhere with him." Yes, that was it. Greatheart in that has hit the nail on the head. With one happy stroke he has given us the whole secret of poor Mr. Fearing's life-long trouble. Just so; it was the slough in himself that so kept poor Mr. Fearing back. This poor pilgrim, who had so little to fear in his past life, had yet so much scum and filth, spume and mire in his present heart, that how to get on the other side of that cost him not a month's roaring only, but all the months and all the years till he went over the River not much above wet-shod. And, till then, not twenty million cart-loads of wholesome instructions, nor any number of good and substantial steps, would lift poor Mr. Fearing over the ditch that ran so deep and so foul continually within himself. "Yes, he had, I think, a slough of despond in his mind, a slough that he carried everywhere with him, or else he never could have been the man he was." I, for one, thank the great-hearted guide for that fine sentence.

2. It was a sight to see poor Mr. Fearing at the wicket gate. "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." He read the inscription over the gate a thousand times, but every time he read it his slough-filled heart said to him, Yes, but that is not for such as you. Pilgrim after pilgrim came up the way, read the writing, knocked, and was taken in; but still Mr. Fearing stood back, shaking and shrinking. At last he ventured to take hold of the hammer that hung on the gate and gave with it a small rap such as a mouse might make. But small as the sound was, the Gatekeeper had had his eye on his man all the time out of his watch-window; and before Mr. Fearing had time to turn and run, Goodwill had him by the collar. But that sudden assault only made Mr. Fearing sink to the earth, faint and half-dead. "Peace be to thee, O trembling man!" said Goodwill. "Come in, and welcome!" When he did venture in, Mr. Fearing's face was as white as a sheet. You would have said that an officer had caught a thief if you had seen poor Mr. Fearing hiding his face, and the Gatekeeper hauling him in. And not all the entertainment for which the Gate was famous, nor all the encouragement that Goodwill was able to speak, could make terrified Mr. Fearing for once to smile. A more hard-to-entertain pilgrim, all the Gate declared when he had gone, they had never had in their hospitable house.

3. “So he came,” said the guide, “till he came to our House; but as he behaved himself at the Gate, so he did at my Master the Interpreter’s door. He lay about in the cold a good while before he would adventure to call. Yet he would not go back neither. And the nights were cold and long then. At last I think I looked out of the window, and perceiving a man to be up and down about the door, I went out to him, and asked what he was; but, poor man, the water stood in his eyes. So I perceived what he wanted. I went in, therefore, and told it in the house, and we showed the thing to our Lord. So He sent me out again to entreat him to come in, but I dare say I had hard work to do it. At last he came in, and I will say that for my Lord, He carried it wonderful lovingly to Mr. Fearing. There were but a few good bits at the table, but some of it was laid upon his trencher.” In this way the guide tells us his first introduction to Mr. Fearing, and how Mr. Fearing behaved himself in the Interpreter’s House. For instance, in the parlour full of dust, when the Interpreter said that the dust is original sin and inward corruption, you would have thought that the Interpreter had stabbed poor Mr. Fearing to the heart, so did he break out and weep. Before the damsel could come with the pitcher, Mr. Fearing’s eyes alone would have laid the dust, they were such a fountain of tears. When he saw Passion and Patience, each one in his chair—“I am that child in rags,” said Mr. Fearing; “I have already received all my good things!” Also, at the wall where the fire burned because oil was poured into it from the other side, he perversely turned that fire also against himself. And when they came to the man in the iron cage, you could not have told whether the miserable man inside the cage or the miserable man outside of it sighed the loudest. And so on, through all the significant rooms. The spider-room overwhelmed him altogether, till his sobs and the beating of his breast were heard all over the house. The robin also when gobbling up spiders he made an emblem of himself, and the tree that was rotten at the heart,—till the Interpreter’s patience with this so perverse pilgrim was fairly worn out. So the Interpreter shut up his significant rooms, and had this so troublesome pilgrim into his own chamber, and there carried it so tenderly to Mr. Fearing that at last he did seem to have taken some little heart of grace. “And then we,” said Greatheart,“ set forward, and I went before him; but the man was of few words, only he would often sigh aloud.”

4. “Dumpish at the House Beautiful” is his biographer’s not very respectful comment on the margin of the history. There were too many merry-hearted damsels running up and down that house for Mr. Fearing. He could not lift his eyes but one of those too-tripping maidens was looking at him. He could not stir a foot but he suddenly ran against a talking and laughing bevy of them. There was one thing he loved above everything, and that was to overhear the talk that went on at that season in that house about the City above, and about the King of that City, and about His wonderful ways with pilgrims, and the entertainment they all got who entered that City. But to get a word out of Mr. Fearing upon any of these subjects,—all the king’s horses could not have dragged it out of him. Only, the screen was always seen to move during such conversations, till it soon came to be known to all the house who was behind the screen. And the talkers only talked a little louder as the screen moved, and took up, with a smile to one another, another and a yet more comforting topic. The Rarity Rooms also were more to Mr. Fearing than his necessary food. He would be up in the morning and waiting at the doors of those rooms before the keepers had come with their keys. And they had to tell him that the candles were to be put out at night before he would go away. He was always reading, as if he had never read it before, the pedigree of the Lord of the Hill. Moses’ rod, Shamgar’s goad, David’s sling and stone, and what not—he laughed and danced and sang like a child around these ancient tables. The armoury-room also held him, where were the swords, and

shields, and helmets, and breast-plates, and shoes that would not wear out. You would have thought you had your man all right as long as you had him alone among these old relics; but, let supper be ready, and the house gathered, and Mr. Fearing was as dumpish as ever. Eat he would not, drink he would not, nor would he sit at the same table with those who ate and drank with such gladness. I remembered Mr. Fearing at the House Beautiful when I was present at a communion season some time back in Ross-shire. The church was half full of Mr. Fearing's close kindred that communion morning. For, all that the minister himself could do, and all that the assisting minister could do—no! to the table those self-examined, self-condemned, fear-filled souls would not come. The two ministers, like Mr. Greatheart's Master, carried it wonderful lovingly with those poor saints that day; but those who are in deed, and not in name only, passing the time of their sojourning here in fear—they cannot all at once be lifted above all their fears, even by the ablest action sermons, or by the most wise and tender table-addresses. And, truth to tell, though you will rebuke me all the way home to-night for saying it, my heart sat somewhat nearer to those old people who were perhaps a little too dumpish in their repentance and their faith and their hope that morning, than it did to those who took to the table with a light heart. I know all your flippant cant about gospel liberty and against Highland introspection, as you call it—as well as all your habitual neglect of a close and deep self-examination, as Paul called it; but I tell you all to-night that it would be the salvation of your soul if you too worked your way up to every returning Lord's table with much more fear and much more trembling. Let a man examine himself, Saxon as well as Celt, in Edinburgh as well as in Ross-shire, and so let him eat of that flesh and drink of that blood. "These pills," said Mr. Skill, "are to be taken three at a time fasting in half a quarter of a pint of the tears of repentance; these pills are good to prevent diseases, as well as to cure when one is sick. Yea, I dare say it, and stand to it, that if a man will but use this physic as he should, it will make him live for ever. But thou must give these pills no other way but as I have prescribed; for, if you do, they will do no good." "Then he and I set forward," said the guide, "and I went before; but my man was of but few words, only he would often sigh aloud."

5. As to the Hill Difficulty, that was no stick at all to Mr. Fearing; and as for the lions, he pulled their whiskers and snapped his fingers in their dumfoundered faces. For you must know that Mr. Fearing's trouble was not about such things as these at all; his only fear was about his acceptance at last. He beat Mr. Greatheart himself at getting down into the Valley of Humiliation, till the guide was fain to confess that he went down as well as he ever saw man go down in all his life. This pilgrim cared not how mean he was, so he might be but happy at last. That is the reason why so many of God's best saints take so kindly and so quietly to things that drive other men mad. You wonder sometimes when you see an innocent man sit down quietly under accusations and insults and injuries that you spend all the rest of your life resenting and repaying. And that is the reason also that so many of God's best saints in other ages and other communions used to pursue evangelical humility and ascetic poverty and seclusion till they obliterated themselves out of all human remembrance, and buried themselves in retreats of silence and of prayer. Yes, you are quite right. A garment of sackcloth may cover an unsanctified heart; and the fathers of the desert did not all escape the depths of Satan and the plague of their own heart. Quite true. A contrite heart may be carried about an applauding city in a coach and six; and a crucified heart may be clothed in purple and fine linen, and may fare sumptuously every day. A saint of God will sometimes sit on a throne with a more weaned mind than that with which Elijah or the Baptist will macerate themselves in the wilderness. Every man who is really set on heaven must find his own

way thither; and he who is really intent on his own way thither will neither have the time nor the heart to throw stones at his brother who thinks he has discovered his own best way. All the pilgrims who got to the City at last did not get down Difficulty and through Humiliation so well as Mr. Fearing did; nor was it absolutely necessary that they should. It was not to lay down an iron-fast rule for others, but it was only to amuse the way with his account of Mr. Fearing, that the guide went on to say: “Yes, I think there was a kind of sympathy betwixt that valley and my man. For I never saw him better in all his pilgrimage than when he was in that valley. For here he would lie down, embrace the ground, and kiss the very flowers that grew in this valley. He would now be up every morning by break of day, tracing and walking to and fro in that valley.”

6. Now, do you think you could guess how Mr. Fearing conducted himself in Vanity Fair? Your guess is important to us and to you to-night; for it will show whether or no John Bunyan and Mr. Greatheart have spent their strength for nought and in vain on you. It will show whether or no you have got inside of Mr. Fearing with all that has been said; and thus, inside of yourself. Guess, then. How did Mr. Fearing do in Vanity Fair, do you think? To give you a clue, recollect that he was the timidest of souls. And remember how you have often been afraid to look at things in a shop window lest the shopkeeper should come out and hold you to the thing you were looking at. Remember also that you are the life-long owners of some things just because they were thrown at your head. Remember how you sauntered into a sale on one occasion, and, out of sheer idleness and pure fun, made a bid, and to your consternation the encumbrance was knocked down to your name; and it fills up your house to-day till you would give ten times its value to some one to take it away for ever out of your sight. Well, what was it that those who were so shamelessly and so pesteringly cadging about places, and titles, and preferments, and wives, and gold, and silver, and such like—what was it they prevailed on this poor stupid countryman to cheapen and buy? Do you guess, or do you give it up? Well, Greatheart himself was again and again almost taken in; and would have been had not Mr. Fearing been beside him. But Mr. Fearing looked at all the jugglers, and cheats, and knaves, and apes, and fools as if he would have bitten a firebrand. “I thought he would have fought with all the men of the fair; I feared there we should have both been knock’d o’ th’head, so hot was he against their fooleries.” And then—for Greatheart was a bit of a philosopher, and liked to entertain and while the away with tracing things up to their causes—“it was all,” he said, “because Mr. Fearing was so tender of sin. He was above many tender of sin. He was so afraid, not for himself only, but of doing injury to others, that he would deny himself the purchase and possession and enjoyment even of that which was lawful, because he would not offend.” “All this while,” says Bunyan himself, in the eighty-second paragraph of Grace Abounding, “as to the act of sinning I was never more tender than now. I durst not take a pin or a stick, though but so big as a straw, for my conscience now was sore and would smart at every touch. I could not now tell how to speak my words for fear I should misplace them.” “The highest flames,” says Jeremy Taylor in his Life of Christ, “are the most tremulous.”

7. “But when he was come at the river where was no bridge, there, again, Mr. Fearing was in a heavy case. Now, he said, he should be drowned for ever, and so never see that Face with comfort that he had come so many miles to behold. And here also I took notice of what was very remarkable; the water of that river was lower at this time than ever I saw it in all my life, so he went over at last not much above wet-shod.” Then said Christiana, “This relation of Mr. Fearing has done me good. I thought nobody had been like me, but I see there was some semblance betwixt

this good man and I, only we differed in two things. His troubles were so great that they broke out, but mine I kept within. His also lay so hard upon him that he could not knock at the houses provided for entertainment, but my trouble was always such that it made me knock the louder." "If I might also speak my heart," said Mercy, "I must say that something of him has also dwelt in me. For I have ever been more afraid of the lake, and the loss of a place in Paradise, than I have been of the loss of other things. Oh! thought I, may I have the happiness to have a habitation there: 'tis enough though I part with all the world to win it." Then said Matthew,"Fear was one thing that made me think that I was far from having that within me that accompanies salvation; but if it was so with such a good man as he, why may it not also go well with me?" "No fears, no grace," said James. "Though there is not always grace where there is fear of hell; yet, to be sure, there is no grace where there is no fear of God." "Well said, James," said Greatheart; "thou hast hit the mark, for the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom; and, to be sure, they that want the beginning have neither middle nor end." But we shall here conclude our discourse of Mr. Fearing after we have sent after him this farewell:—

"It is because

Then thou didst fear, that now thou dost not fear.

Thou hast forestalled the agony, and so

For thee the bitterness of death is past.

Also, because already in thy soul

The judgment is begun. That day of doom,

One and the same for this collected world—

That solemn consummation for all flesh,

Is, in the case of each, anticipate

Upon his death; and, as the last great day

In the particular judgment is rehearsed,

So now, too, ere thou comest to the Throne,

A presage falls upon thee, as a ray

Straight from the Judge, expressive of thy lot.

That calm and joy uprising in thy soul

Is first-fruit to thy recompense,

And heaven begun."

# 041. Feeble Mind

XLI

FEEBLE-MIND “Comfort the feeble-minded.”—Paul.

Feeble-mind shall first tell you his own story in his own words, and then I shall perhaps venture a few observations upon his history and his character.

“I am but a sickly man, as you see,” said Feeble-mind to Greatheart, “and because Death did usually knock once a day at my door, I thought I should never be well at home. So I betook myself to a pilgrim’s life, and have travelled hither from the town of Uncertain, where I and my father were born. I am a man of no strength at all of body, nor yet of mind; but would, if I could, though I can but crawl, spend my life in the pilgrim’s way. When I came at the gate that is at the head of the way, the Lord of that place did entertain me freely. Neither objected he against my weakly looks, nor against my feeble mind; but gave me such things as were necessary for my journey, and bade me hope to the end. When I came to the house of the Interpreter I received much kindness there; and, because the Hill Difficulty was judged too hard for me, I was carried up that hill by one of his servants. Indeed I have found much relief from pilgrims, though none were willing to go so softly as I am forced to do. Yet, still, as they came on, they bid me be of good cheer, and said that it was the will of their Lord that comfort should be given to the feeble-minded, and so went on their own pace. I look for brunts by the way; but this I have resolved on, to wit, to run when I can, to go when I cannot run, and to creep when I cannot go. As to the main, I thank Him that loves me, I am fixed. My way is before me, my mind is beyond the river that has no bridge, though I am, as you see, but of a feeble mind.”

Then said old Mr. Honest, “Have you not some time ago been acquainted with one Mr. Fearing, a pilgrim?” “Acquainted with him! yes. He came from the town of Stupidity, which lies four degrees to the northward of the City of Destruction, and as many off where I was born. Yet we were well acquainted; for, indeed, he was mine uncle, my father’s brother. He and I have been much of a temper; he was a little shorter than I, but yet we were much of a complexion.” “I perceive that you know him,” said Mr. Honest, “and I am apt to believe also that you were related one to another; for you have his whitely look, a cast like his with your eye, and your speech is much alike.”

“Alas!” Feeble-mind went on, “I want a suitable companion. You are all lusty and strong, but I, as you see, am weak. I choose therefore rather to come behind, lest, by reason of my many infirmities, I should be both a burden to myself and to you. I am, as I said, a man of a weak and feeble mind, and shall be offended and made weak at that which others can bear. I shall like no laughing; I shall like no gay attire; I shall like no unprofitable questions. Nay, I am so weak a man as to be offended with what others have a liberty to do. I do not yet know all the truth. I am a very ignorant Christian man. Sometimes, if I hear some rejoice in the Lord, it troubles me because I cannot do so too. It is with me as with a weak man among the strong, or as with a sickly man among the healthy, or as a lamp despised.” “But, brother,” said Greatheart, “I have it in

commission to comfort the feeble-minded and to support the weak." Thus therefore, they went on—Mr. Greatheart and Mr. Honest went before; Christiana and her children went next; and Mr. Feeble-mind and Mr. Ready-to-halt came behind with his crutches.

1. In the first place, a single word as to Feeble-mind's family tree.

Thackeray says that The Peerage is the Family Bible of every true-born Englishman. Every genuine Englishman, he tells us, teaches that sacred book diligently to his children. He talks out of it to them when he sits in the house and when he walks by the way. He binds it upon his children's hands, and it is as a frontlet between their eyes. He writes its names upon the doorposts of his house, and makes pictures out of it upon his gates. Now, John Bunyan was a born Englishman in his liking for a family tree. He had no such tree himself—scarcely so much as a bramble bush; but, all the same, let the tinker take his pen in hand, and the pedigrees and genealogies of all his pilgrims are sure to be set forth as much as if they were to form the certificates that those pilgrims were to hand in at the gate.

Feeble-mind, then, was of an old, a well-rooted and a wide-spread race. The county of Indecision was full of that ancient stock. They had intermarried in-and-in also till their small stature, their whitely look, the droop of their eye, and their weak leaky speech all made them to be easily recognised wherever they went. It was Feeble-mind's salvation that Death had knocked at his door every day from his youth up. He was feeble in body as well as in mind; only the feebleness of his body had put a certain strength into his mind; the only strength he ever showed, indeed, was the strength that had its roots in a weak constitution at which sickness and death struck their dissolving blows every day. To escape death, both the first and the second death, any man with a particle of strength left would run with all his might; and Feeble-mind had strength enough somewhere among his weak joints to make him say, "But this I have resolved on, to wit, to run when I can, to go when I cannot run, and to creep when I cannot go. As to the main, I am fixed!"

2. At the Wicket Gate pilgrim Feeble-mind met with nothing but the kindest and the most condescending entertainment. It was the gatekeepers way to become all things to all men. The gatekeeper's nature was all in his name; for he was all Goodwill together. No kind of pilgrim ever came wrong to Goodwill. He never found fault with any. Only let them knock and come in and he will see to all the rest. The way is full of all the gatekeeper's kind words and still kinder actions. Every several pilgrim has his wager with all the rest that no one ever got such kindness at the gate as he got. And even Feeble-mind gave the gatekeeper this praise—"The Lord of the place," he said, "did entertain me freely. Neither objected he against my weakly looks nor against my feeble mind. But he gave me such things as were necessary for my journey, and bade me hope to the end." All things considered, that is perhaps the best praise that Goodwill and his house ever earned. For, to receive and to secure Feeble-mind as a pilgrim—to make it impossible for Feeble-mind to entertain a scruple or a suspicion that was not removed beforehand—to make it impossible for Feeble-mind to find in all the house and in all its grounds so much as a straw over which he could stumble—that was extraordinary attention, kindness, and condescension in Goodwill and all his good-willed house. "Go on, go on, dear Mr. Feeble mind," said Goodwill giving his hand to Mr. Fearing's nephew," go on: keep your feeble mind open to the truth, and still hope to the end!"

3. “As to the Interpreter’s House, I received much kindness there.” That is all. But in that short speech I think there must he hid no little shame and remorse. No words could possibly be a severer condemnation of Feeble-mind than his own two or three so irrelevant words about the Interpreter’s house. No doubt at all, Feeble-mind received kindness there; but that is not the point. That noble house was not built at such cost, and fitted up, and kept open all the year round, and filled with fresh furniture from year to year, merely that those who passed through its significant rooms might report that they had received no rudeness at the hands of the Interpreter. “‘Come,’ said the Interpreter to Feeble-mind, ‘and I will show thee what will be profitable to thee.’ So he commanded his man to light the candle and bid Feeble-mind follow him. But it was all to no use. Feeble-mind had neither the taste nor the capacity for the significant rooms. Nay, as one after another of those rich rooms was opened to him, Feeble-mind took a positive dislike to them. Nothing interested him; nothing instructed him. But many things stumbled and angered him. The parlour full of dust, and how the dust was raised and laid; Passion and Patience; the man in the iron cage; the spider-room; the muck-rake room; the robin with its red breast and its pretty note, and yet with its coarse food; the tree, green outside but rotten at the heart,—all the thanks the Interpreter took that day for all that from Feeble-mind was in such speeches as these: You make me lose my head. I do not know where I am. I did not leave the town of Uncertain to be confused and perplexed in my mind with sights and sounds like these. Let me out at the door I came in at, and I shall go back to the gate. Goodwill had none of these unhappy rooms in his sweet house!” Nothing could exceed the kindness of the Interpreter himself; but his house was full of annoyances and offences and obstructions to Mr. Feeble-mind. He did not like the Interpreter’s house, and he got out of it as fast as he could, with his mind as feeble as when he entered it; and, what was worse, with his temper not a little ruffled. And we see this very same intellectual laziness, this very same downright dislike at divine truth, in our own people every day. There are in every congregation people who take up their lodgings at the gate and refuse to go one step farther on the way. A visit to the Interpreter’s House always upsets them. It turns their empty head. They do not know where they are. They will not give what mind they have to divine truth, all you can do to draw them on to it, till they die as feeble-minded, as ignorant, and as inexperienced as they were born. They never read a religious book that has any brain or heart in it. The feeble Lives of feeble-minded Christians, written by feeble-minded authors, and published by feeble-minded publishers,—we all know the spoon-meat that multitudes of our people go down to their second childhood upon. Jonathan Edwards—a name they never hear at home, but one of the most masculine and seraphic of interpreters—has a noble discourse on The Importance and Advantage of a thorough Knowledge of Divine Truth. “Consider yourselves,” he says, “as scholars or disciples put into the school of Christ, and therefore be diligent to make proficiency in Christian knowledge. Content not yourselves with this, that you have been taught your Catechism in your childhood, and that you know as much of the principles of religion as is necessary to salvation. Let not your teachers have cause to complain that while they spend and are spent to impart knowledge to you, you take little pains to learn. Be assiduous in reading the Holy Scriptures. And when you read, observe what you read. Observe how things come in. Compare one scripture with another. Procure and diligently use other books which may help you to grow in this knowledge. There are many excellent books extant which might greatly forward you in this knowledge. There is a great defect in many, that through a lothness to be at a little expense, they provide themselves with no more helps of this nature.” Weighty, wise, and lamentably true words.

“Mundanus,” says William Law, “is a man of excellent parts, and clear apprehension. He is well advanced in age, and has made a great figure in business. He has aimed at the greatest perfection in everything. The only thing which has not fallen under his improvement, nor received any benefit from his judicious mind, is his devotion; this is just in the same poor state it was when he was six years of age, and the old man prays now in that little form of words which his mother used to hear him repeat night and morning. This Mundanus that hardly ever saw the poorest utensil without considering how it might be made or used to better advantage, has gone on all his life long praying in the same manner as when he was a child; without ever considering how much better or oftener he might pray; without considering how improvable the spirit of devotion is, how many helps a wise and reasonable man may call to his assistance, and how necessary it is that our prayers should be enlarged, varied, and suited to the particular state and condition of our lives. How poor and pitiable is the conduct of this man of sense, who has so much judgment and understanding in everything but that which is the whole wisdom of man!” How true to every syllable is that! How simple-looking, and yet how manly, and able, and noble! We close our young men’s session with Law and Butler to-night, and I cannot believe that our session with those two giants has left one feeble mind in the two classes; they were all weeded out after the first fortnight of the session; though, after all is done, there are still plenty left both among old and young in the congregation. Even Homer sometimes nods; and I cannot but think that John Bunyan has made a slip in saying that Feeble-mind enjoyed the Interpreter’s House. At any rate, I wish I could say as much about all the feeble minds known to me.

4. The Hill Difficulty, which might have helped to make a man of Feeble-mind, saw a laughable, if it had not been such a lamentable, spectacle. For it saw this poor creature hanging as limp as wet linen on the back of one of the Interpreter’s sweating servants. Your little boy will explain the parable to you. Shall I do this? or, shall I rather do that? asks Feeble-mind at every stop. Would it be right? or, would it be wrong? Shall I read that book? Shall I go to that ball? Shall I marry that man? Tell me what to do. Give me your hand. Take me up upon your back, and carry me over this difficult hill. “I was carried up that,” says poor Feeble-mind, “by one of his servants.”

5. “The one calamity of Mr. Feeble-mind’s history,” says our ablest commentator on Bunyan, “was the finest mercy of his history.” That one calamity was his falling into Giant Slay-good’s hands, and his finest mercy was his rescue by Greatheart, and his consequent companionship with his deliverer, with Mr. Honest, and with Christiana and her party till they came to the river. You constantly see the same thing in the life of the Church and of the Christian Family. Some calamity throws a weak, ignorant, and immoral creature into close contact with a minister or an elder or a Christian visitor, who not only relieves him from his present distress, but continues to keep his eye upon his new acquaintance, introduces him to wise and good friends, invites him to his house, gives him books to read, and keeps him under good influences, till, of a weak, feeble, and sometimes vicious character, he is made a Christian man, till he is able for himself to say, It was good for me to be afflicted; the one calamity of my history has been my best mercy!

6. Feeble-mind, I am ashamed to have to admit, behaved himself in a perfectly scandalous manner at the house of Gaius mine host. He went beyond all bounds during those eventful weeks. Those weeks were one long temptation to Feeble-mind—and he went down in a pitiful way before his temptation. Two marriages and two honeymoons, with suppers and dances every night, made the old hostelry like very Pandemonium itself to poor Feeble-mind. He would have had Matthew’s

and James's marriages conducted next door to a funeral. Because he would not eat flesh himself, he protested against Gaius killing a sheep. "Man," said old Honest, almost laying his quarterstaff over Feeble-mind's shoulders—"Man, dost thou think because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?" "I shall like no laughing," said Feeble-mind; "I shall like no gay attire; I shall like no unprofitable questions." I think it took some self-conceit to refuse to sit at table beside Christiana because of her gay attire. And I hope Mercy did not give up dressing well, even after she was married, to please that weak-minded old churl. And as to unprofitable questions—we are all tempted to think that question unprofitable which our incapacity or our ignorance keeps us silent upon at table. We think that topic both ill-timed and impertinent and unsafe to which we are not invited to contribute anything. "I am a very ignorant man," he went on to say; and, if that was said in any humility, Feeble-mind never said a truer word. "It is with me as it is with a weak man among the strong, or as with a sick man among the healthy, or as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease." All which only brought Greatheart out in his very best colours. "But, brother," said the guide, "I have it in commission to comfort the feeble-minded, and to support the weak. You must needs go along with us; we will wait for you, we will lend you our help, we will deny ourselves of some things, both opinionative and practical, for your sake; we will not enter into doubtful disputations before you; we will be made all things to you rather than that you shall be left behind."

7. The first thing that did Mr. Feeble-mind any real good was his being made military guard over the women and the children while the men went out to demolish Doubting Castle. Quis custodiet? you will smile and say when you hear that. Who shall protect the protector? you will say. But wait a little. Greatheart knew his business. For not only did Feeble-mind rise to the occasion, when he was put to it; but, more than that, he was the soul of good company at supper-time that night. "Jocund and merry" are the very words. Yes; give your feeble and fault-finding folk something to do. Send them to teach a class. Send them down into a mission district. Lay a sense of responsibility upon them. Leave them to deal with this and that emergency themselves. Cease carrying them on your back, and lay weak and evil and self-willed people on their back. Let them feel that they are of some real use. As Matthew Arnold says, Let the critic but try practice, and you will make a new man of him. As Greatheart made of Feeble-mind by making him mount guard over the Celestial caravan while the fighting men were all up at Doubting Castle.

8. "Mark this," says Mr. Feeble-mind's biographer on the early margin of his history, lest we should be tempted to forget the good parts of this troublesome and provoking pilgrim—"Mark this." This, namely, which Feeble-mind says to his guide. "As to the main, I thank Him that loves me, I am fixed. My way is before me, my mind is beyond the river that has no bridge, though I am, as you see, but of a feeble mind." And that leads us with returning regard and love to turn to the end of his history, where we read: "After this Mr. Feeble-mind had tidings brought him that the post sounded his horn at his chamber door. Then he came in and told him, saying, I am come to tell thee that thy Master hath need of thee, and that in very little time thou must behold His face in brightness. Then Mr. Feeble-mind called for his friends, and told them what errand had been brought to him, and what token he had received of the truth of the message. As for my feeble mind he said, that I shall leave behind me, for I shall have no need of that in the place whither I go. Nor is it worth bestowing upon the poorest pilgrim. Wherefore, when I am gone, I desire that you would bury it in a dung-hill. This done, and the day being come in which he was about to depart, he entered the river as the rest. His last words were, Hold out, faith and patience! So he went over to the other side."

# 042. Great-Heart

XLII

GREAT-HEART "—when thou shalt enlarge my heart."—David. On Sabbath, the 12th December 1886, I heard the late Canon Liddon preach a sermon in St. Paul's Cathedral, in which he classed Oliver Cromwell with Alexander the Sixth and with Richard the Third. I had taken my estimate of the great Protector's character largely from Carlyle's famous book, and you can judge with what feelings I heard the canon's comparison. And, besides, I had been wont to think of the Protector as having entered largely into John Bunyan's portrait of Greatheart, the pilgrim guide. And the researches and the judgments of Dr. Gardiner have only gone to convince me, the eloquent canon notwithstanding, that Bunyan could not have chosen a better contemporary groundwork for his Greatheart than just the great Puritan soldier. Cromwell's "mental struggles before his conversion," his life-long "searchings of heart," his "utter absence of vindictiveness," his unequalled capacity for "seeing into the heart of a situation," and his own "all-embracing hospitality of heart"—all have gone to reassure me that my first guess as to Bunyan's employment of the Protector's matchless personality and services had not been so far astray. And the oftener I read the noble history of Greatheart, the better I seem to hear, beating behind his fine figure, by far the greatest heart that ever ruled over the realm of England.

1. The first time that we catch a glimpse of Greatheart's weather-beaten and sword-seamed face is when he is taking a stolen look out of the window at Mr. Fearing, who is conducting himself more like a chicken than a man around the Interpreter's door. And from that moment till Mr. Fearing shouted "Grace reigns!" as he cleared the last river, never sportsman surely stalked a startled deer so patiently and so skilfully and so successfully as Greatheart circumvented that chicken-hearted pilgrim. "At last I looked out of the window, and perceiving a man to be up and down about the door, I went out to him and asked him what he was; but, poor man, the water stood ill his eyes. So I perceived what he wanted. I went in, therefore, and told it in the house, and we showed the thing to our Lord. So He sent me out again to entreat him to come in; but I dare say I had hard work to do it." Greatheart's whole account of Mr. Fearing always brings the water to my eyes also. It is indeed a delicious piece of English prose. If I were a professor of belles lettres instead of what I am, I would compel all my students, under pain of rustication, to get those three or four classical pages by heart till they could neither perpetrate nor tolerate bad English any more. This camp-fire tale, told by an old soldier, about a troublesome young recruit and all his adventures, touches, surely, the high-water mark of sweet and undefiled English. Greatheart was not the first soldier who could handle both the sword and the pen, and he has not been the last. But not Cæsar and not Napier themselves ever handled those two instruments better.

2. Greatheart had just returned to his Master's house from having seen Mr. Fearing safely through all his troubles and well over the river, when, behold, another caravan of pilgrims is ready for his convoy. For Greatheart, you must know, was the Interpreter's armed servant. When at any time Greatheart was off duty, which in those days was but seldom, he took up his quarters again in the

Interpreter's house. As he says himself, he came back from the river-side only to look out of the Interpreter's window to see if there was any more work on the way for him to do. And, as good luck would have it, as has been said, the guide was just come back from his adventures with Mr. Fearing when a pilgrim party, than which he had never seen one more to his mind, was introduced to him by his Master, the Interpreter. "The Interpreter," so we read at this point, "then called for a man-servant of his, one Greatheart, and bid him take sword, and helmet, and shield, and take these, my daughters," said he, "and conduct them to the house called Beautiful, at which place they will rest next. So he took his weapons and went before them, and the Interpreter said, God-speed."

3. Now I saw in my dream that they went on, and Greatheart went before them, so they came to the place where Christian's burden fell off his back and tumbled into a sepulchre. Here, then, they made a pause, and here also they blessed God. "Now," said Christiana, "it comes to my mind what was said to us at the gate; to wit, that we should have pardon by word and by deed. What it is to have pardon by deed, Mr. Greatheart, I suppose you know; wherefore, if you please, let us hear your discourse thereof." "So then, to speak to the question," said Greatheart. You have all heard about the "question-day" at Highland communions. That day is so called because questions that have arisen in the minds of "the men" in connection with doctrine and with experience are on that day set forth, debated out, and solved by much meditation and prayer; age, saintliness, doctrinal and experimental reading, and personal experience all making their contribution to the solution of the question in hand. Just such a question, then, and handled in such a manner, was that question which whiled the way and cheated the toil till the pilgrims came to the House Beautiful. The great doctrinal and experimental Puritans, with Hooker at their head, put forth their full strength and laid out their finest work just on this same question that Christiana gave out at the place, somewhat ascending, upon which stood a cross, and a little below, in the bottom, a sepulchre. But not the great Comment on The Galatians itself, next to the Holy Bible as it is, as most fit for a wounded conscience; no, nor that perfect mass of purest gold, The Learned Discourse of Justification, nor anything else of that kind known to me, is for one moment, to compare in beauty, in tenderness, in eloquence, in scriptural depth, and in scriptural simplicity with Greatheart's noble resolution of Christiana's question which he made on the way from the Interpreter's house to the House Beautiful. "This is brave!" exclaimed that mother in Israel, when the guide had come to an end. "Methinks it makes my heart to bleed to think that He should bleed for me. O Thou loving One! O Thou blessed One! Thou deservest to have me, for Thou hast bought me. No marvel that this made the water to stand in my husband's eyes, and that it made him trudge so nimbly on. O Mercy, that thy father and thy mother were here; yea, and Mrs. Timorous too! Nay, I wish now with all my heart that here was Madam Wanton too. Surely, surely their hearts would be affected here!" Promise me to read at home Greatheart's discourse on the Righteousness of Christ, and you will thank me for having exacted the promise. The incongruity of a soldier handling such questions, and especially in such a style, has stumbled some of John Bunyan's fault-finding readers. The same incongruity stumbled "the Honourable Colonel Hacker, at Peebles or elsewhere," to whom Cromwell sent these from Edinburgh on the 25th December 1650—"But indeed I was not satisfied with your last speech to me about Empson, that he was a better preacher than fighter or soldier—or words to that effect. Truly, I think that he that prays and preaches best will fight best. I know nothing that will give like courage and confidence as the knowledge of God in Christ will; and I bless God to see any in this army able and willing to impart the knowledge they have for the good

of others. I pray you receive Captain Empson lovingly: I dare assure you he is a good man and a good officer; I would we had no worse."

4. "Will you not go in and stay till morning?" said the porter to Greatheart, at the gate of the House Beautiful. "No," said the guide; "I will return to my lord to-night." "O sir!" cried Christiana and Mercy, "we know not how to be willing you should leave us in our pilgrimage. Oh that we might have your company till our journey's end." Then said James, the youngest of the boys, "Pray be persuaded to go with us and help us, because we are so weak and the way so dangerous as it is." "I am at my lord's commandment," said Greatheart. "If he shall allow me to be your guide quite through, I shall willingly wait upon you. But here you failed at first; for when he bid me come thus far with you, then you should have begged me of him to have gone quite through with you, and he would have granted your request. However, at present, I must withdraw, and so, good Christiana, Mercy, and my brave children, adieu!" "Help lost for want of asking for," is our author's condemnatory comment on the margin at this point in the history. And there is not a single page in my history, or in yours, my brethren, on which the same marginal lament is not written. What help we would have had on our Lord's promise if we had but taken the trouble to ask for it! And what help we once had, and have now lost, just because when we had it we did not ask for a continuance of it! "No," said Greatheart to the porter, and to the two women, and to James—"No. I will return to my lord to-night. I am at my lord's commandment; only, if he shall still allot me I shall willingly wait upon you."

Now, what with the House Beautiful, so full of the most delightful company; what with music in the house and music in the heart; what with Mr. Brisk's courtship of Mercy, Matthew's illness, Mr. Skill's cure of the sick man, and what not—a whole month passed by like a day in that so happy house. But at last Christiana and Mercy signified it to those of the house that it was time for them to be up and going. Then said Joseph to his mother, "It is convenient that you send back to the house of Mr. Interpreter to pray him to grant that Mr. Greatheart should be sent to us that he may be our conductor the rest of our way." "Good boy," said she,"I had almost forgot." So she drew up a petition and prayed Mr. Watchful the porter to send it by some fit man to her good friend, Mr. Interpreter; who, when it was come and he had seen the contents of the petition, said to the messenger, "Go, tell them that I will send him." . . . Now, about this time one knocked at the door. So the porter opened, and, behold, Mr. Greatheart was there! But when he came in, what joy was there! Then said Mr. Greatheart to the two women, "My lord has sent each of you a bottle of wine, and also some parched corn, together with a couple of pomegranates. He has also sent the boys some figs and raisins to refresh you on your way." "The weak may sometimes call the strong to prayers,"I read again in the margin opposite the mention of Joseph's name. Not that I am strong, and not that she is weak, but one of my people I spent an hour with last afternoon whom you would to a certainty have called weak had you seen her and her surrounding,—she so called me to prayer that I had to hurry home and go straight to it. And all last night and all this morning I have had as many pomegranates as I could eat and as much wine as I could drink. Yes; you attend to what the weakest will sometimes say to you, and they will often put you on the way to get Greatheart back again with a load of wines and fruits and corn on his shoulder to refresh you on your journey. "Good boy!" said Christiana to Joseph her youngest son,"Good boy! I had almost forgot!"

5. When old Mr. Honest began to nod after the good supper that Gaius mine host gave to the pilgrims, “What, sir,” cried Greatheart, “you begin to be drowsy; come, rub up; now here’s a riddle for you.” Then said Mr. Honest, “Let’s hear it.” Then said Mr. Greatheart, “He that will kill, must first be overcome;

Who live abroad would, first must die at home.”

“Hah!” said Mr. Honest, “it is a hard one; hard to expound, and harder still to practise.” Yes; this after-supper riddle of Mr. Greatheart is a hard one in both respects; and for this reason, because the learned and much experienced guide—learned with all that his life-long quarters in the Interpreter’s House could teach him, and experienced with a lifetime’s accumulated experience of the pilgrim life—has put all his learning and all his life into these two mysterious lines. But old Honest, once he had sufficiently rubbed up his eyes and his intellects, gave the answer:

“He first by grace must conquered be

That sin would mortify.

And who, that lives, would convince me,

Unto himself must die.”

Exactly; shrewd old Honest; you have hit off both Greatheart and his riddle too. You have dived into the deepest heart of the Interpreter’s man-servant. “The magnanimous man” was Aristotle’s masterpiece. That great teacher of mind and morals created for the Greek world their Greatheart. But, “thou must understand,” says Bunyan to his readers, “that I never went to school to Aristotle or Plato. No; but to Paul, who taught Bunyan that what Aristotle calls magnanimity is really pride—taught him that, till there is far more of the Christian religion in those two doggerel lines at Gaius’s supper-table than there is in all The Ethics taken together. And it is only from a personal experience of the same life as that which the guide puts here into his riddle that any man’s proud heart will become really humble and thus really great, really enlarged, and of an all-embracing hospitality like Cromwell’s and Greatheart’s and John Bunyan’s own. Would you, then, become a Greatheart too? And would you be employed in your day as they were employed in their day? Then expound to yourself, and practise, and follow out that deep riddle with which Greatheart so woke up old Honest:

“He that will kill, must first be overcome;

Who live abroad would, first must die at home.

6. Greatheart again and again at the river-side, Greatheart sending pilgrim after pilgrim over the river with rapture, and he himself still summoned to turn his back on the Celestial City, and to retrace his steps through the land of Beulah, through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and through the Valley of Humiliation, and back to the Interpreter’s house to take on another and another and another convoy of fresh pilgrims, and his own abundant entrance still put off and never to come,—our hearts bleed for poor Greatheart. Back and forward, back and forward, year after year, this noble soul uncomplainingly goes. And, ever as he waves his hand to another pilgrim entering with trumpets within the gates, he salutes his next pilgrim charge with the brave words:“Yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two: having a desire to depart

and to be with Christ. Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you, for your furtherance and joy of faith by my coming to you again." If Greatheart could not "usher himself out of this life"along with Christiana, and Mercy, and Mr. Honest, and Standfast, and Valiant-for-truth—if he had still to toil back and bleed his way up again at the head of another happy band of pilgrims—well, after all is said, what had the Celestial City itself to give to Greatheart better than such blessed work? With every such returning journey he got a more and more enlarged, detached, hospitable, and Christ-like heart, and the King's palace in very glory itself had nothing better in store for this soldier-guide than that. A nobler heaven Greatheart could not taste than he had already in himself, as he championed another and another pilgrim company from his Master's earthly gate to his Master's heavenly gate. Like Paul, his apostolic prototype, Greatheart sometimes vacillated just for a moment when he came a little too near heaven, and felt its magnificent and almost dissolving attractions full in his soul. You will see Greatheart's mind staggering for a moment between rest and labour, between war and peace, between "Christ" on earth and "Christ" in heaven—you will see all that set forth with great sympathy and great ability in Principal Rainy's new book on Paul's Epistle to the Philippians, and in the chapter entitled, The Apostle's Choice between Living and Dying.

Then there came a summons for Mr. Standfast. At which he called to him Mr. Greatheart, and said unto him, "Sir, although it was not my hap to be much in your good company in the days of my pilgrimage, yet, since the time I knew you, you have been profitable to me. When I came from home I left behind me a wife and five small children. Let me entreat you, at your return (for I know that you will go and return to your master's house in hopes that you may be a conductor to more of the holy pilgrims), that you send to my family and let them be acquainted with all that hath and shall happen to me. Tell them, moreover, of my happy arrival to this place, and of the present late blessed condition I am in, and so on for many other messages and charges." Yes, Mr. Standfast; very good. But I would have liked you on your deathbed much better if you had had a word to spare from yourself and your wife and your children for poor Greatheart himself, who had neither wife nor children, nor near hope of heaven, but only your trust and charge and many suchlike trusts and charges to carry out when you are at home and free of all trust and all charge and all care. But yours is the way of all the pilgrims—so long, at least, as they are in this selfish life. Let them and their children only be well looked after, and they have not many thoughts or many words left for those who sweat and bleed to death for them and theirs. They lean on this and that Greatheart all their own way up, and then they leave their widows and children to lean on whatever Greatheart is sent to meet them; but it is not one pilgrim in ten who takes the thought or has the heart to send a message to Mr. Greatheart himself for his own consolation and support. I read that Mr. Ready-to-halt alone, good soul, had the good feeling to do it. He thanked Mr. Greatheart for his conduct and for his kindness, and so addressed himself to his journey. All the same, noble Greatheart! go on in thy magnanimous work. Take back all their errands. Seek out at any trouble all their wives and children. Embark again and again on all thy former battles and hardships for the good of other men. But be assured that all this thy labour is not in vain in thy Lord. Be well assured that not one drop of thy blood or thy sweat or thy tears shall fall to the ground on that day when they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. Go back, then, from thy well-earned rest, O brave Greatheart! go back to thy waiting task. Put on again thy whole armour. Receive again, and again fulfil, thy Master's commission, till He has no more commissions left for thy brave heart and thy

bold hand to execute. And, one glorious day, while thou art still returning to thy task, it shall suddenly sound in thy dutiful ears:—“Well done! good and faithful servant!” And then thou too “Shalt hang thy trumpet in the hall

And study war no more.”

# 043. Mr. Ready-to-Halt

XLIII MR. READY-TO-HALT “For I am ready to halt.”—David.

Mr. Ready-to-halt is the Mephibosheth of the pilgrimage. While Mephibosheth was still a child in arms, his nurse let the young prince fall, and from that day to the day of his death he was lame in both his feet. Mephibosheth’s life-long lameness, and then David’s extraordinary grace to the disinherited cripple in commanding him to eat continually at the king’s table; in those two points we have all that we know about Mr. Ready-to-halt also. We have no proper portrait, as we say, of Mr. Ready-to-halt. Mr. Ready-to-halt is but a name on John Bunyan’s pages—a name set upon two crutches; but, then, his simple name is so suggestive and his two crutches are so eloquent, that I feel as if we might venture to take this life-long lameter and his so serviceable crutches for our character-lecture to-night.

John Bunyan, who could so easily and so delightfully have done it, has given us no information at all about Mr. Ready-to-halt’s early days. For once his English passion for a pedigree has not compelled our author’s pen. We would have liked immensely to have been told the name, and to have seen displayed the whole family tree of young Ready-to-halt’s father; and, especially, of his mother. Who was his nurse also? And did she ever forgive herself for the terrible injury she had done her young master? What were his occupations and amusements as a little cripple boy? Who made him his first crutch? Of what wood was it made? And at what age, and under whose kind and tender directions did he begin to use it? And, then, with such an infirmity, what ever put it into Mr. Ready-to-halt’s head to attempt the pilgrimage? For the pilgrimage was a task and a toil that took all the limbs and all the lungs and all the labours and all the endurances that the strongest and the bravest of men could bring to bear upon it. How did this complete cripple ever get through the Slough, and first up and then down the Hill Difficulty, and past all the lions, and over a thousand other obstacles and stumbling-blocks, till he arrived at mine host’s so hospitable door? The first surprised sight we get of this so handicapped pilgrim is when Greatheart and Feeble-mind are in the heat of their discourse at the hostelry door. At that moment Mr. Ready-to-halt came by with his crutches in his hand, and he also was going on pilgrimage. Thus, therefore, they went on. Mr. Greatheart and Mr. Honest went on before, Christiana and her children went next, and Mr. Feeble-mind and Mr. Ready-to-halt came behind with his crutches.

“Put by the curtains, look within my veil,

Turn up my metaphors, and do not fail,

There, if thou seekest them, such things to find,

As will be helpful to an honest mind.”

1. Well, then, when we put by the curtains and turn up the metaphors, what do we find? What, but just this, that poor Mr. Ready-to-halt was, after all, the greatest and the best believer, as the New Testament would have called him, in all the pilgrimage. We have not found so great faith as that of

Mr. Ready-to-halt, no, not in the very best of the pilgrim bands. Each several pilgrim had, no doubt, his own good qualities; but, at pure and downright believing—at taking God at His bare and simple word—Mr. Ready-to-halt beat them all. All that flashes in upon us from one shining word that stands on the margin of our so metaphorical author. This single word, the “promises,” hangs like a key of gold beside the first mention of Mr. Ready-to-halt’s crutches—a key such that in a moment it throws open the whole of Mr. Ready-to-halt’s otherwise lockfast and secret and inexplicable life. There it all is, as plain as a pike-staff now! Yes; Mr. Ready-to-halt’s crutches are just the divine promises. I wonder I did not see that all the time. Why, I could compose all his past life myself now. I have his father and his mother and his nurse at my finger-ends now. This poor pilgrim—unless it would be impertinence to call him poor any more—had no limbs to be called limbs. Such limbs as he had were only an encumbrance to this unique pedestrian. All the limbs he had were in his crutches. He had not one atom of strength to lean upon apart from his crutches. A bone, a muscle, a tendon, a sinew, may be ill-nourished, undeveloped, green, and unknit, but, at the worst, they are inside of a man and they are his own. But a crutch, of however good wood it may be made, and however good a lame man may be at using it—still, a crutch at its best is but an outside additament; it is not really and originally a part of a man’s very self at all. And yet a lame man is not himself without his crutch. Other men do not need to give a moment’s forethought when they wish to rise up to walk, or to run, or to leap, or to dance. But the lame man has to wait till his crutches are brought to him; and then, after slowly and painfully hoisting himself up upon his crutches, with great labour, he at last takes the road. Mr. Ready-to-halt, then, is a man of God; but he is one of those men of God who have no godliness within themselves. He has no inward graces. He has no past experiences. He has no attainments that he can for one safe moment take his stand upon, or even partly lean upon. Mr. Ready-to-halt is absolutely and always dependent upon the promises. The promises of God in Holy Scripture are this man’s very life. All his religion stands in the promises. Take away the promises, and Mr. Ready-to-halt is a heap of heaving rags on the roadside. He cannot take a single step unless upon a promise. But, at the same time, give Mr. Ready-to-halt a promise in his hand and he will wade the Slough upon it, and scale up and slide down the Hill Difficulty upon it, and fight a lion, and even brain Beelzebub with it, till he will with a grudge and a doubt exchange it even for the chariots and the horses that wait him at the river. What a delight our Lord would have taken in Mr. Ready-to-halt had He come across him on His way to the passover! How He would have given Mr. Ready-to-halt His arm; how He would have made Himself late by walking with him, and would still have waited for him! Nay, had that been a day of chap-books in carpenters’ shops and on the village stalls, how He would have had Mr. Ready-to-halt’s story by heart had any brass-worker in Galilee told the history! Our Lord was within an inch of telling that story Himself, when He showed Thomas His hands and His side. And at another time and in another place we might well have had Mr. Ready-to-halt as one more of our Lord’s parables for the common people. Only, He left the delight and the reward of drawing out this parable to one He already saw and dearly loved in a far-off island of the sea, the Puritan tinker of Evangelical England.

2. And now, after all that, would you think it going too far if I were to say that in making Himself like unto all His brethren, our Lord made Himself like Mr. Ready-to-halt too? Indeed He did. And it was because his Lord did this, that Mr. Ready-to-halt so loved his Lord as to follow Him upon crutches. It would not be thought seemly, perhaps, to carry the figure too close to our Lord. But, figure apart, it is only orthodox and scriptural to say that our Lord accomplished His pilgrimage and finished His

work leaning all along upon His Father's promises. Esaias is very bold about this also, for he tells his readers again and again that their Messiah, when He comes, will have to be held up. He will have to be encouraged, comforted, and carried through by Jehovah. And in one remarkable passage he lets us see Jehovah hooping Messiah's staff first with brass, and then with silver, and then with gold. Let Thomas Goodwin's genius set the heavenly scene full before us. "You have it dialoguewise set forth," says that great preacher. "First Christ shows His commission, telling God how He had called Him and fitted Him for the work of redemption, and He would know what reward He should receive of Him for so great an undertaking. God at first offers low; only the elect of Israel. Christ thinks these too few, and not worth so great a labour and work, because few of the Jews would come in; and therefore He says that He would labour in vain if this were all His recompense; and yet withal He tells God that seeing His heart is so much set on saving sinners, to satisfy Him, He will do it even for those few. Upon this God comes off more freely, and openeth His heart more largely to Him, as meaning more amply to content Him for His pains in dying. 'It is a light thing,' says God to Him, 'that Thou shouldest be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob—that is not worth Thy dying for. I value Thy sufferings more than so. I will give Thee for a salvation to the ends of the earth.' Upon this He made a promise to Christ, a promise which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began. God cannot lie, and, most of all, not to His Son."

And, then, more even than that. This same deep divine tells us that it is a certain rule in divinity that, whatsoever we receive from Christ, that He Himself first receives in Himself for us. All the promises of God's word are made and fulfilled to Christ first, and so to us in and after Him. In other words, our Lord's life was so planned for Him in heaven and was so followed out and fulfilled by Him on earth, that, to take up the metaphor again, He actually tried every crutch and every staff with His own hands and with His own armpits; He actually leaned again and again His own whole weight upon every several one of them. Every single promise, the most unlikely for Him to lean upon and to plead, yet, be sure of it, He somehow made experiment upon them all, and made sure that there was sufficient and serviceable grace within and under every one of them. So that, Mr. Ready-to-halt, there is no possible staff you can take into your hand that has not already been in the hand of your Lord. Think of that, O Mr. Ready-to-halt! Reverence, then, and almost worship thy staff! Throw all thy weight upon thy staff. Confide all thy weakness to it. Talk to it as thou walkest with it. Make it talk to thee. Worm out of it all its secrets about its first Owner. And let it instruct thee about how He walked with it and how He handled it. The Bible is very bold with its Master. It calls Him by the most startling names sometimes. There is no name that a penitent and a returning sinner goes by that the Bible does not put somewhere upon the sinner's Saviour. And in one place it as good as calls Him Ready-to-halt in as many words. Nay, it lets us see Him halting altogether for a time; ay, oftener than once; and only taking the road again, when a still stronger staff was put into his trembling hand. And if John had but had room in his crowded gospel he would have given us the very identical psalm with which our Lord took to the upward way again, strong in His new staff. "For I am ready to halt,"was His psalm in the house of His pilgrimage, "and My sorrow is continually before Me. Mine enemies are lively, and they are strong; and they that hate Me wrongfully are multiplied. They also that render evil for good are Mine adversaries; because I follow the thing that good is. Forsake Me not, O Lord; O My God, be not far from Me. Make haste to help Me, O Lord My salvation."

3. Among all the devout and beautiful fables of the “dispensation of paganism,” there is nothing finer than the fable of blind Tiresias and his staff. By some sad calamity this old prophet had lost the sight of his eyes, and to compensate their servant for that great loss the gods endowed him with a staff with eyes. As Aaron’s rod budded before the testimony and bloomed blossoms and yielded almonds, so Tiresias’ staff budded eyes, and divine eyes too, for the blind prophet’s guidance and direction. Tiresias had but to take his heaven-given staff in his hand, when, straightway, such a divinity entered into the staff that it both saw for him with divine eyes, and heard for him with divine ears, and then led him and directed him, and never once in all his after journeys let him go off the right way. All other men about him, prophets and priests both, often lost their way, but Tiresias after his blindness, never, till Tiresias and his staff became a proverb and a parable in the land. And just such a staff, just such a crutch, just such a pair of crutches, were the crutches of our own so homely Mr. Ready-to-halt. With all their lusty limbs, all the other pilgrims often stumbled and went out of their way till they had to be helped up, led back, and their faces set right again. But, last as Mr. Ready-to-halt always came in the procession—behind even the women and the children as his crutches always kept him—you will seek in vain for the dot of those crutches on any by-path or on any wrong road. No; the fact is, if you wish to go to the same city, and are afraid you lose the way; as Evangelist said, “Do you see yon shining light?” so I would say to you to-night, “Do you see these crutch-marks on the road?” Well, keep your feet in the prints of these crutches, and as sure as you do that they will lead you straight to a chariot and horses, which, again, will carry you inside the city gates. For Mr. Ready-to-halt’s crutches have not only eyes like Tiresias’ staff, they have ears also, and hands and feet. A lamp also burns on those crutches; and wine and oil distil from their wonderful wood. Happy blindness that brings such a staff! Happy exchange! eyes full of earth and sin for eyes full of heaven and holiness!

4. “They began to be merry,” says our Lord, telling the story of the heart-broken father who had got back his younger son from a far country. And even Feeble-mind and Ready-to-halt begin to be merry on the green that day after Doubting Castle has fallen to Greatheart’s arms. Now, Christiana, if need was, could play upon the viol, and her daughter Mercy upon the lute; and, since they were so merry disposed, she played them a lesson, and Mr. Ready-to-halt would dance. So he paid a boy a penny to hold one of his crutches, and, taking Miss Much-afraid by the hand, to dancing they went. And, I promise you he footed it well; the lame man leaped as an hart; also the girl was to be commended, for she answered the music handsomely. In spite of his life-long infirmity, there was deep down in Mr. Ready-to-halt an unsuspected fund of good-humour. There was no heartier merriment on the green that day than was the merriment that Mr. Ready-to-halt knocked out of his nimble crutch. “True, he could not dance without one crutch in his hand.” True, dear and noble Bunyan, thou canst not write a single page at any time or on any subject without thy genius and thy tenderness and thy divine grace marking the page as thine own alone!

5. The next time we see Mr. Ready-to-halt he is coming in on his crutches to see Christiana, for she has sent for him to see him. So she said to him, “Thy travel hither hath been with difficulty, but that will make thy rest the sweeter.” And then in process of time there came a post to the town and his business this time was with Mr. Ready-to-halt. “I am come to thee in the name of Him whom thou hast loved and followed, though upon crutches. And my message is to tell thee that He expects thee at His table to sup with Him in His kingdom the next day after Easter.” “I am sent for,” said Mr. Ready-to-halt to his fellow-pilgrims, “and God shall surely visit you also. These crutches,”

he said, “I bequeath to my son that shall tread in my steps, with an hundred warm wishes that he may prove better than I have done.” Isaac was a child of promise, and Mr. Ready-to-halt had an Isaac also on whom his last thoughts turned. Isaac had been born to Abraham by a special and extraordinary and supernatural interposition of the grace and the power of God; and Mr. Ready-to-halt had always looked on himself as a second Abraham in that respect. A second Abraham, and more. True, his son was not yet a pilgrim; perhaps he was too young to be so called; but Greatheart will take back the old man’s crutches—Greatheart was both man-of-war and beast-of-burden to the pilgrims and their wives and children—and will in spare hours teach young Ready-to-halt the use of the crutch, till the son can use with the same effect as his father his father’s instrument. Is your child a child of promise? Is he to you a product of nature, or of grace? Did you receive him and his brothers and sisters from God after you were as good as dead? Did you ever steal in when his nurse was at supper and say over his young cradle, He hath not dealt with me after my sins, nor rewarded me according to my iniquities? Is it in your will laid up with Christ in God about your crutches and your son what Mr. Ready-to-halt dictated on his deathbed? And does God know that there is no wish in your old heart a hundred times so warm for your son as is this wish,—that he may prove better at handling God’s promises than you have been? Then, happy son, who has old Mr. Ready-to-halt for his father!

6. “He whom thou hast loved and followed, though upon crutches, expects thee at His table the next day after Easter.” Take comfort, cripples! Had it been said that the King so expects Greatheart, or Standfast, or Valiant-for-truth, that would have been after the manner of the kings of this world. But to insist on having Mr. Ready-to-halt beside Him by such and such a day; to send such a post to a pilgrim who has not a single sound bone in all his body; to a sinner without a single trustworthy grace in all his heart; to a poor and simple believer who has nothing in his hand but one of God’s own promises—Who is a king like unto our King? Surely King David was never a better type of Christ than when he said to Mephibosheth, lame in both his feet from his nurse’s arms: “Fear not, Mephibosheth, for I will surely show thee kindness, and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually.” And Mephibosheth shall always be our spokesman when he bows himself and says in return: “What is thy servant, that thou shouldst look upon such a dead dog as I am?”

# 044. Valiant-for-Truth

XLIV VALIANT-FOR-TRUTH “—They are not valiant for the truth.”—Jeremiah “—Ye should contend earnestly for the faith.”—Jude.

“Forget not Master Valiant-for-the-Truth,

That man of courage, tho’ a very youth.

Tell every one his spirit was so stout,

No man could ever make him face about.”

Bunyan.

“I am of Dark-land, for there was I born, and there my father and mother are still.” “Dark-land,” said the guide; “doth not that lie upon the same coast as the City of Destruction?” “Yes, it doth,” replied Valiant-for-truth. “And had I not found incommodity there, I had not forsaken it at all; but finding it altogether unsuitable to me, and very unprofitable for me, I forsook it for this way. Now, that which caused me to come on pilgrimage was this. We had one Mr. Tell-true came into our parts, and he told it about what Christian had done, that went from the City of Destruction. That man so told the story of Christian and his travels that my heart fell into a burning haste to be gone after him, nor could my father and mother stay me, so I got from them, and am come thus far on my way.”

1. A very plain and practical lesson is already read to us all in Valiant-for-truth’s explanation of his own pilgrimage. He tells the guide that he was made a pilgrim just by having the story of The Pilgrim told to him. All that Tell-true did was just to recite the story of the pilgrim, when young Valiant’s heart fell into a burning haste to be a pilgrim too. My brethren, could any lesson be plainer? Read the Pilgrim’s Progress with your children. And, after a time, read it again till they call it beautiful, and till you see the same burning haste in their hearts that young Valiant felt in his heart. Circulate the Pilgrim’s Progress. Make opportunities to give the Pilgrim’s Progress to the telegraph boys and errand boys at your door. Never go on a holiday without taking a dozen cheap and tasteful copies of The Pilgrim to give to boys and girls in the country. Make sure that no one, old or young, of your acquaintance, in town or country, is without a good copy of The Pilgrim. And the darker their house is, make all the more sure that John Bunyan is in it.

“Now may this little book a blessing be,

To those that love this little book and me

And may its buyer have no cause to say

His money is but lost or thrown away.”

2. But the great lesson of Valiant’s so impressive life lies in the tremendous fight he had with three ruffians who all set upon him at once and well-nigh made an end of him. For, when we put by the

curtains here again, and turn up the metaphors, what do we find? What, but a lesson of first-rate importance for many men among ourselves; for many public men, many ministers, and many other much-in-earnest men. For Valiant, as his name tells us, was set to contend for the truth. He had the truth. The truth was put into his keeping, and he was bound to defend it. He was thrown into a life of controversy, and thus into all the terrible temptations—worse than the temptations to whoredom or wine—that accompany a life of controversy. The three scoundrels that fell upon Valiant at the mouth of the lane were Wildhead, Inconsiderate, and Pragmatic. In other words, the besetting temptations of many men who are set as defenders of the truth in religion, as well as in other matters, is to be wild-headed, inconsiderate, self-conceited, and intolerably arrogant. The bloody battle that Valiant fought, you must know, was not fought at the mouth of any dark lane in the midnight city, nor on the side of any lonely road in the moonless country. This terrible fight was fought in Valiant's own heart. For Valiant was none of your calculating and cold-blooded friends of the truth. He did not wait till he saw the truth walking in silver slippers. Let any man lay a finger on the truth, or wag a tongue against the truth, and he will have to settle it with Valiant. His love for the truth was a passion. There was a fierceness in his love for the truth that frightened ordinary men even when they were on his own side. Valiant would have died for the truth without a murmur. But, with all that, Valiant had to learn a hard and a cruel lesson. He had to learn that he, the best friend of truth as he thought he was, was at the same time, as a matter of fact, the greatest enemy that the truth had. He had to take home the terrible discovery that no man had hurt the truth so much as he had done. Save me from my friend! the truth was heard to say, as often as she saw him taking up his weapons in her behalf. We see all that every day. We see Wildhead at his disservice of the truth every day. Sometimes above his own name, and sometimes with grace enough to be ashamed to give his name, in the newspapers. Sometimes on the platform; sometimes in the pulpit; and sometimes at the dinner-table. But always to the detriment of the truth. In blind fury he rushes at the character and the good name of men who were servants of the truth before he was born, and whose shield he is not worthy to bear. How shall Wildhead be got to see that he and the like of him are really the worst friends the truth can possibly have? Will he never learn that in his wild-bull gorings at men and at movements, he is both hurting himself and hurting the truth as no sworn enemy of his and of the truth can do? Will he never see what an insolent fool he is to go on imputing bad motives to other men, when he ought to be prostrate before God on account of his own? More than one wild-headed student of William Law has told me what a blessing they have got from that great man's teaching on the subject of controversy. Will the Wildheads here to-night take a line or two out of that peace-making author and lay them to heart? "My dear L-, take notice of this, that no truths, however solid and well-grounded, will help you to any divine life, but only so far as they are taught, nourished, and strengthened by an unction from above; and that nothing more dries and extinguishes this heavenly unction than a talkative reasoning temper that is always catching at every opportunity of hearing or telling some religious matters. Stop your ears and shut your eyes to all religious tales . . . I would no more bring a false charge against a deist than I would bear false witness against an apostle. And if I knew how to do the deists more justice in debate I would gladly do it . . . And as the gospel requires me to be as glad to see piety, equity, strict sobriety, and extensive charity in a Jew or a Gentile as in a Christian; as it obliges me to look with pleasure upon their virtues, and to be thankful to God that such persons have so much of true and sound Christianity in them; so it cannot be an unchristian spirit to be as glad to see truths in one party of Christians as in another, and to look with pleasure

upon any good doctrines that are held by any sect of Christian people, and to be thankful to God that they have so much of the genuine saving truths of the gospel among them . . . Selfishness and partiality are very inhuman and base qualities even in the things of this world, but in the doctrines of religion they are of a far baser nature. In the present divided state of the Church, truth itself is torn and divided asunder; and, therefore, he is the only true Catholic who has more of truth and less of error than is hedged in by any divided part. To see this will enable us to live in a divided part unhurt by its division, and keep us in a true liberty and fitness to be edified and assisted by all the good that we hear or see in any other part of the Church. And thus, uniting in heart and spirit with all that is holy and good in all Churches, we enter into the true communion of saints, and become real members of the Holy Catholic Church, though we are confined to the outward worship of only one particular part of it. And thus we will like no truth the less because Ignatius Loyola or John Bunyan were very jealous for it, nor have the less aversion to any error because Dr. Trapp or George Fox had brought it forth." If Wildhead would take a winter of William Law, it would sweeten his temper, and civilise his manners, and renew his heart.

3. Inconsiderate, again, is the shallow creature he is, and does the endless mischief that he does, largely for lack of imagination. He never thinks—neither before he speaks nor after he has spoken. He never put himself in another man's place all his days. He is incapable of doing that. He has neither the head nor the heart to do that. He never once said, How would I like that said about me? or, How would I like that done to me? or, How would that look and taste and feel to me if I were in So-and-so's place? It needs genius to change places with other men; it needs a grace beyond all genius; and this poor headless and heartless creature does not know what genius is. It needs imagination, the noblest gift of the mind, and it needs love, the noblest grace of the heart, to consider the case of other people, and to see, as Butler says, that we differ as much from other people as they differ from us. And it is by far the noblest use of the imagination, far nobler than carving a Laocoon, or painting a Last Judgment, or writing a "Paradiso" or a "Paradise Lost," to put ourselves into the places of other men so as to see with their eyes, and feel with their hearts, and sympathise with their principles, and even with their prejudices. Now, the inconsiderate man has so little imagination and so little love that he is sitting here and does not know what I am saying; and what suspicion he has of what I am saying is just enough to make him dislike both me and what I am saying too. But his dull suspicion and his blind dislike are more than made up for by the love and appreciation of those lovers and defenders of the truth who painfully feel how wild and inconsiderate, how hot-headed, how thoughtless, and how reckless their past service even of God's truth has been.

"The King is full of grace and fair regard.

Consideration, like an angel, came

And whipp'd the offending Adam out of him."

4. And as to Pragmatic, I would not call you a stupid person even though you confided to me that you had never heard this footpad's name till to-night. John Bunyan has been borrowing Latin again, and not to the improvement of his style, or to the advantage of his readers. It would be insufferably pragmatic in me to begin to set John Bunyan right in his English; but I had rather offend the shades of a hundred John Bunyans than leave my most unlettered hearer without his full and proper Sabbath-night lesson. The third armed thief, then, that fell upon Valiant was, under

other names, Impertinence, Meddlesomeness, Officiousness, Over-Interference. Pragmatic,—by whatever name he calls himself, there is no mistaking him. He is never satisfied. He is never pleased. He is never thankful. He is always setting his superiors right. He is like the Psalmist in one thing, he has more understanding than all his teachers. And he enjoys nothing more than in letting them know that. There is nothing he will not correct you in—from cutting for the stone to commanding the Channel Fleet. Now, if all that has put any visual image of Pragmatic into your mind, you will see at once what an enemy he too is fitted to be to the truth. For the truth does not stand in points, but in principles. The truth does not dwell in the letter but in the spirit. The truth is not served by setting other people right, but by seeing every day and in every thing how far wrong we are ourselves. The truth is like charity in this, that it begins at home. It is like charity in this also, that it never behaves itself unseemly. A pragmatical man, taken along with an inconsiderate man, and then a wild-headed man added on to them, are three about as fatal hands as any truth could fall into. The worst enemy of the truth must pity the truth, and feel his hatred at the truth relenting, when he sees her under the championship of Wildhead, Inconsiderate, and Pragmatic.

5. The first time we see Valiant-for-truth he is standing at the mouth of Dead-man's-lane with his sword in his hand and with his face all bloody. "They have left upon me, as you see," said the bleeding man, "some of the marks of their valour, and have also carried away with them some of mine." And, in like manner, we see Paul with the blood of Barnabas still upon him when he is writing the thirteenth of First Corinthians; and John with the blood of the Samaritans still upon him down to his old age when he is writing his First Epistle; and John Bunyan with the blood of the Quakers upon him when he is covertly writing this page of his autobiography under the veil of Valiant-for-truth; and William Law with the blood of Bishop Hoadly and John Wesley dropping on the paper as he pens that golden passage which ends with Dr. Trapp and George Fox. Where did you think Paul got that splendid passage about charity? Where did you think William Law got that companion passage about Church divisions, and about the Church Catholic? Where are such passages ever got by inspired apostles, or by any other men, but out of their own bloody battles with their own wild-headedness, intolerance, dislike, and resentment? Where do you suppose I got the true key to the veiled metaphor of Valiant-for-truth? It does not exactly hang on the doorpost of his history. Where, then, could I get it but off the inside wall of my own place of repentance? Just as you understand what I am now labouring to say, not from my success in saying it, but from your own trespasses against humility and love, your unadvised speeches, and your wild and whirling words. Without shame and remorse, without self-condemnation and self-contempt, none of those great passages of Paul, or John, or Bunyan, or Law were ever written; and without a like shame, remorse, self-condemnation, and self-contempt they are not rightly read.

"Oh! who shall dare in this frail scene

On holiest, happiest thoughts to lean,

On Friendship, Kindred, or on Love?

Since not Apostles' hands can clasp

Each other in so firm a grasp,

But they shall change and variance prove.

“But sometimes even beneath the moon

The Saviour gives a gracious boon,

When reconciled Christians meet,

And face to face, and heart to heart,

High thoughts of Holy love impart

In silence meek, or converse sweet.

“Oh then the glory and the bliss

When all that pained or seemed amiss

Shall melt with earth and sin away!

When saints beneath their Saviour’s eye,

Filled with each other’s company,

Shall spend in love the eternal day!”

6. Then said Greatheart to Mr. Valiant-for-truth, “Thou hast worthily behaved thyself; let me see thy sword.” So he showed it him. When he had taken it in his hand and had looked thereon a while, the guide said: “Ha! it is a right Jerusalem blade!” “It is so,” replied its owner. “Let a man have one of these blades with a hand to wield it, and skill to use it, and he may venture upon an angel with it. Its edges will never blunt. It will cut flesh, and bones, and soul, and spirit, and all.” Both Damascus and Toledo blades were famous in former days for their tenacity and flexibility, and for the beauty and the edge of their steel. But even a Damascus blade would be worthless in a weak, cowardly, or unskilled hand; while even a poor sword in the hand of a good swordsman will do excellent execution. And much more so when you have both a first-rate sword and a first-rate swordsman, such as both Valiant and his Jerusalem blade were. Ha! yes. This is a right wonderful blade we have now in our hand. For this sword was forged in no earthly fire; and it was whetted to its unapproachable sharpness on no earthly whetstone. But, best of all for us, when a good soldier of Jesus Christ has this sword girt on his thigh he is able then to go forth against himself with it; against his own only and worst enemy—that is, against himself. As here, against his own wildness of head and pride of heart. Against his own want of consideration also. “My people do not consider.” As also against himself as a lawless invader of other men’s freedom of judgment, following of truth, public honour, and good name. As the Arabian warriors see themselves and dress themselves in their swords as in a glass, so did Valiant-for-truth see the thoughts and intents, the joints and the marrow of his own disordered soul in his Jerusalem blade. In the sheen of it he could see himself even when the darkness covered him; and with its two edges all his after-life he slew both all real error in other men and all real evil in himself. “Thou hast done well,” said Greatheart the guide. “Thou hast resisted unto blood, striving against sin. Thou shalt abide by us, come in and go out with us, for we are thy companions.”

7. “Sir,” said the widow indeed to Valiant-for-truth, “sir, you have in all places shown yourself true-hearted.” The first time she ever saw this man that she is now seeing for the last time on this

side the river, his own mother would not have known him, he was so hacked to pieces with the swords of his three assailants. But as she washed the blood off the mangled man's head and face and hands, she soon saw beneath all his bloody wounds a true, a brave, and a generous-hearted soldier of the Cross. The heart is always the man. And this woman had lived long enough with men to have discovered that. And with all his sears she saw that it was at bottom the truth of his heart that had cast him into so many bloody encounters. There were men in that company, and men near the river too, with far fewer marks of battle, and even of defeat, upon them, who did not get this noble certificate and its accompanying charge and trust from this clear-eyed widow. And, then, she had never forgot—how could she?—his exclamation, and almost embrace of her as of his own mother, when he burst out with his eyes full of blood, "Why, is this Christian's wife? What! and going on pilgrimage too? It glads my heart! Good man! How joyful will he be when he shall see her and her children enter after him in at the gates into the city!" He would have been hacked a hundred times worse than he was before the widow of Christian, and the mother of his children, would have seen anything but the manliest beauty in a young soldier who could salute an old woman in that way. It gladdened her heart to hear him, you may be sure, as much as it gladdened his heart to see her. And that was the reason that she actually set Greatheart himself aside, and left her children under this young man's sword and shield. "I would also entreat you to have an eye to my children," she said. Young men, has any dying mother committed her children, if you at any time see them faint, to you? Have you ever spoken so comfortably to any poor widow about her sainted husband that she has passed by some of our foremost citizens, and has astonished and offended her lawyers by putting a stripling like you into the trusteeship? Did ever any dying mother say to you that she had seen you to be so true-hearted at all times that she entreated you to have an eye to her children? Speaking at this point for myself, I would rather see my son so trusted at such an hour by such a woman than I would see him the Chancellor of Her Majesty's Exchequer, or the Governor of the Bank of England. And so to-night would you.

# 045. Standfast

XLV

STANDFAST “So stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.”—Paul. In his supplementary picture of Standfast John Bunyan is seen at his very best, both as a religious teacher and as an English author. On the Enchanted Ground Standfast is set before us with extraordinary insight, sagacity, and wisdom; and then in the terrible river he is set before us with an equally extraordinary rapture and transport; while, in all that, Bunyan composes in English of a strength and a beauty and a music in which he positively surpasses himself. Just before he closes his great book John Bunyan rises up and once more puts forth his very fullest strength, both as a minister of religion and as a classical writer, when he takes Standfast down into that river which that pilgrim tells us has been such a terror to so many, and the thought of which has so often affrighted himself. When Greatheart and his charge were almost at the end of the Enchanted Ground, so we read, they perceived that a little before them was a solemn noise as of one that was much concerned. So they went on and looked before them. And behold, they saw, as they thought, a man upon his knees, with hands and eyes lift up, and speaking, as they thought, earnestly to one that was above. They drew nigh, but could not tell what he said; so they went softly till he had done. When he had done, he got up and began to run towards the Celestial City. “So-ho, friend, let us have your company,” called out the guide. At that the man stopped, and they came up to him. “I know this man,” said Mr. Honest; “his name, I know, is Standfast, and he is certainly a right good pilgrim.” Then follows a conversation between Mr. Honest and Mr. Standfast, in which some compliments and courtesies are exchanged, such as are worthy of such men, met at such a time and in such a place. “Well, but, brother,” said Valiant-for-truth, “tell us, I pray thee, what was it that was the cause of thy being upon thy knees even now? Was it for that some special mercy laid obligations upon thee, or how?” And then Standfast tells how as he was coming along musing with himself, Madam Bubble presented herself to him and offered him three things. “I was both aweary and sleepy and also as poor as a howlet, and all that the wicked witch knew. And still she followed me with her enticements. Then I betook me, as you saw, to my knees, and with hands lift up and cries, I prayed to Him who had said that He would help. So just as you came up the gentlewoman went her way. Then I continued to give thanks for my great deliverance; for I verify believe she intended me no good, but rather sought to make stop of me in my journey. What a mercy is it that I did resist her, for whither might she not have drawn me?” And then, after all this discourse, there was a mixture of joy and trembling among the pilgrims, but at last they broke out and sang:

“What danger is the pilgrim in,

How many are his foes,

How many ways there are to sin,

No living mortal knows!”

1. “Well, as I was coming along I was musing with myself,” said Standfast. You understand what it is to come along musing with yourself, do you not, my brethren? “I will muse on the work of Thy hands,” says the Psalmist. And again, “While I was musing the fire burned.” Well, Standfast was much given to musing, just as David was. Each several pilgrim has his own way of occupying himself on the road; but Standfast could never get his fill just of musing. Standfast loved solitude. Standfast liked nothing better than to walk long stretches at a time all by himself alone. Standfast was like the apostle when he preferred to take the twenty miles from Troas to Assos on foot and alone, rather than to round the cape on shipboard in a crowd. “Minding himself to go afoot,” says the apostle’s companion. It would have made a precious chapter in the Acts of the Apostles had the author of that book been able to give his readers some of Paul’s musings as he crossed the Troad on foot that day. But in the absence of Paul’s musings we have here the musings of a man whom Paul would not have shaken off had he foregathered with him on that lonely road. For Standfast was in a deep and serious muse mile after mile, when, who should step into the middle of his path right before him but Madam Bubble with her body and her purse and her bed? Now, had this hungry howlet of a pilgrim been at that moment in any other but a musing mood of mind, he had to a certainty sold himself, soul and body, Celestial City and all, to that impudent slut. But, as He would have it who overrules Madam Bubble’s descents, and all things, Standfast was at that moment in one of his most musing moods, and all her smiles and all her offers fell flat and poor upon him. Cultivate Standfast’s mood of mind, my brethren. Walk a good deal alone. Strike across country from time to time alone and have good long walks and talks with yourself. And when you know that you are passing places of temptation see that your thoughts, and even your imaginations, are well occupied with solemn considerations about the certain issue of such and such temptations; and then, to you, as to Standfast, “The arrow seen beforehand slacks its flight.”

2. But, musing alone, the arrow seen beforehand, and all, Standfast would have been a lost man on that lonely road that day had he not instantly betaken himself to his knees. And it was while Standfast was still on his knees that the ascending pilgrims heard that concerned and solemn noise a little ahead of them. Did you ever suddenly come across a man on his knees? Did you ever surprise a man at prayer as Greatheart and his companions surprised Standfast? I do not ask, Did you ever enter a room and find a family around their morning or evening altar? We have all done that. And it left its own impression upon us. But did you ever spring a surprise upon a man on his knees alone and in broad daylight? I did the other day. It was between eleven and twelve o’clock in the forenoon when I asked a clerk if his master was in. Yes, he said, and opened his master’s door. When, before I was aware, I had almost fallen over a man on his knees and with his face in his hands. “I pray thee,” said Valiant-for-truth, “tell us what it was that drew thee to thy knees even now. Was it that some special mercy laid its obligations on thee, or how?” I did not say that exactly to my kneeling friend, though it was on the point of my tongue to say it. My dear friend, I knew, had his own difficulties, though he was not exactly as poor as a howlet. And it might have been about some of his investments that had gone out of joint that he went that forenoon to Him who had said that He would help. Or, like the author of the Christian Perfection and The Spirit of Prayer, it was the sixth hour of the day, and he may have gone to his knees for his clerks, or for his boys at school, or for himself and for the man in the same business with himself right across the street. I knew that my friend had the charming book at home in which such counsels as these occur: “If masters were thus to remember their servants, beseeching God to bless them, letting no day pass without a full performance of this devotion, the benefit would be as great to themselves

as to their servants." And perhaps my friend, after setting his clerks their several tasks for the day, was now asking grace of God for each one of them that they might not be eye-servants and men-pleasers, but the servants of Christ doing the will of God from the heart. Or, again, he may have read in that noble book this passage: "If a father were daily to make some particular prayer to God that He would please to inspire his children with true piety, great humility, and strict temperance, what could be more likely to make the father himself become exemplary in these virtues?" Now, my friend (who can tell?) may just that morning have lost his temper with his son; or he may last night have indulged himself too much in eating, or in drinking, or in debate, or in detraction; and that may have made it impossible for him to fix his whole mind on his office work that morning. Or, just to make another guess, when he opened the book I had asked him to buy and read, he may have lighted on this heavenly passage: "Lastly, if all people when they feel the first approaches of resentment or envy or contempt towards others; or if in all little disagreements and misunderstandings whatever they should have recourse at such times to a more particular and extraordinary intercession with God for such persons as had roused their envy, resentment, or discontent—this would be a certain way to prevent the growth of all uncharitable tempers." You may think that I am taking a roundabout way of accounting for my friend's so concerned attitude at twelve o'clock that business day; but the whole thing seemed to me so unusual at such a time and in such a place that I was led to such guesses as these to account for it. In so guessing I see now that I was intruding myself into matters I had no business with; but all that day I could not keep my mind off my blushing friend. For, like Mr. Standfast, my dear friend blushed as he stood up and offered me the chair he had been kneeling at. "But, why, did you see me?" said Mr. Standfast. "Yes, I did," quoth the other, "and with all my heart I was glad at the sight." "And what did you think?" said Mr. Standfast.

3. "Was it," asked Valiant-for-truth, in a holy curiosity, "was it some special mercy that brought thee to thy knees even now?" Yes; Valiant-for-truth had exactly hit it. Gracious wits, like great wits, jump together. "Yes," confessed Standfast, "I continue to give thanks for my great deliverance." My brethren, you all pray importunately in your time of sore trouble. Everybody does that. But do you feel an obligation, like Standfast, to abide still on your knees long after your trouble is past? Nature herself will teach us to pray; but it needs grace, and great grace continually renewed, to teach us to praise, and to continue all our days to praise. How we once prayed, ay, as earnestly, and as concernedly, and as careless as to who should see or hear us as Standfast himself! How some of us here to-night used to walk across a whole country all the time praying! How we hoodwinked people in order to get away from them to pray for twenty miles at a time all by ourselves! Under that bush—it still stands to mark the spot; in that wood, long since cut down into ploughed land—we could show our children the spot to this day where we prayed, till a miracle was wrought in our behalf. Yes, till God sent from above and took us as He never took a psalmist, and set our feet upon a still more wonderful rock. How He, yes, HE, with His own hand cut the cords, broke the net, and set us free! Come, all ye that fear God! we then said, and said it with all sincerity too. And yet, how have we forgotten what He did for our soul? We start like a guilty thing surprised when we think how long it is since we had a spell of thanksgiving. Shame on us! What treacherous hearts we have! What short memories we have! How soon we forgive ourselves, and so forget the forgiveness of our God! Brethren, let us still lay plans for praise as we used to do for prayer. If our friends will go out with us, let us at least insist on walking home alone. Let us say with Paul that we get sick at sea; and, besides, that we have some calls to make and some small accounts to settle

before we leave the country. Tell them not to wait dinner for us. And then let us take plenty of time. Let us stop at all our old stations and call back all our old terrors; let us repeat aloud our old psalms—the twenty-fifth, the fifty-first, the hundred and third, and the hundred and thirtieth. We used to terrify people with our prayers as Standfast terrified the young pilgrims that day; let us surprise and delight them now with our psalms of thanksgiving. For, with all our disgraceful ingratitude in the past, if William Law is right, we are even yet not far from being great saints, if he is not wrong when he asks: “Would you know who is the greatest saint in the world? It is not he who prays most or fasts most; it is not he who gives most alms, or is most eminent for temperance, chastity, or justice. But it is he who is most thankful to God, and who has a heart always ready to praise God. This is the perfection of all virtues. Joy in God and thankfulness to God is the highest perfection of a divine and holy life.” Well, then, what an endless cause of joy and thankfulness have we! Let us acknowledge it, and henceforth employ it; and we shall, please God, even yet be counted as not low down but high up among the saints and the servants of God.

4. Christiana said many kind and wise and beautiful things to all the other pilgrims before she entered the river, but it was observed that though she sent for Mr. Standfast, she said not one word to him when he came; she just gave him her ring. “The touch is human and affecting,” says Mr. Louis Stevenson, in his delightful paper on Bagster’s “Bunyan,” in the Magazine of Art. By the way, do you who are lovers of Bunyan literature know that remarkable and delicious paper? The Messrs. Bagster should secure that paper and should issue an edition de luxeof their neglected “Bunyan,” with Mr. Stevenson’s paper for a preface and introduction. Bagster’s “Illustrated Bunyan,” with an introduction on the illustrations by Mr. Louis Stevenson, if I am not much mistaken, would sell by the thousand.

5. Lord Rosebery knows books and loves books, and he has called attention to the surpassing beauty of the English in the deathbed scenes of the Pilgrim’s Progress. And every lover of pure, tender, and noble English must, like the Foreign Secretary, have all those precious pages by heart. Were it not that we all have a cowardly fear at death ourselves, and think it wicked and cruel even to hint at his approaching death even to a fast-dying man, we would never let any of our friends lie down on his sick-bed without having a reassuring and victorious page of the Pilgrim read to him every day. If the doctors would allow me, I would have these heavenly pages reprinted in sick-bed type for all my people. But I am afraid at the doctors. And thus one after another of my people passes away without the fortification and the foretaste that the deathbeds of Christian, and Christiana, and Hopeful, and Mr. Fearing, and Mr. Feeble-mind, and Mr. Honest, and Mr. Standfast would most surely have given to them. Especially the deathbed, if I must so call it, of Mr. Standfast. But as Christiana said nothing that could be heard to Mr. Standfast about his or her latter end, but just looked into his eyes and gave him her ring, so I may not be able to say all that is in my heart when your doctor is standing close by. But you will understand what I would fain say, will you not? You will remember, and will have this heavenly book read to you alternately with your Bible, will you not? Even the most godless doctor will give way to you when you tell him that you know as well as he does just how it is with you, and that you are to have your own way for the last time. I know a doctor who first forbade her minister and her family to tell his patient that she was dying, and at the same time told them to take away from her bedside all such alarming books as the Pilgrim’s Progress and the Saint’s Rest, and to read to her a reassuring chapter out of Old Mortality and Pickwick.

It will, no doubt, put the best-prepared of us into a deep muse, as it put Standfast, when we are first told that we must at once prepare ourselves for a change of life. But I for one would not for worlds miss that solemn warning, and that last musing-time. It will all be just as my Master pleases; but if it is within His will I shall till then continue to petition Him that I may have a passage over the river like the passage of Standfast. Or, if that may not now be, then, at least, a musing-time like his. The post from the Celestial City brought Mr. Standfast's summons "open" in his hand. And thus it was that Standfast's translation did not take him by surprise. Standfast was not plunged suddenly and without warning into the terrible river. He took the open summons into big own hand and read it out like a man. After which he went, as his manner was, for a good while into a deep and undisturbed muse. As soon as he came out of his muse he would have Greatheart to be sent for. And then their last conversation together proceeded. And no one interfered with the two brave-hearted men. No one interposed, or said that Greatheart would exhaust or alarm Standfast, or would injuriously hasten his end. Not only so, but all the way till he was half over the river, Standfast kept up his own side of the noble conversation. And it is his side of that half-earthly, whole-heavenly conversation that I would like to have put into suitable type and scattered broadcast over all our sick-beds.

6. "Tell me," says Valdes to Julia in his Christian Alphabet, "have you ever crossed a deep river by a ford?" "Yes," says Julia, "I have, many times." "And have you remarked how that by looking upon the water it seemed as though your head swam, so that, if you had not assisted yourself, either by closing your eyes, or by fixing them on the opposite shore, you would have fallen into the water in great danger of drowning?" "Yes, I have noticed that." "And have you seen how by keeping always for your object the view of the land that lies on the other side, you have not felt that swimming of the head, and so have suffered no danger of drowning?" "I have noticed that too," replied Julia. Now, it was exactly this same way of looking, not at the black and swirling river, but at the angelic conduct waiting for him at the further bank, and then at the open gate of the Celestial City,—it was this that kept Standfast's head so steady and his heart like a glowing coal while he stood and talked in the middle of the giddy stream. You would have thought it was Paul himself talking to himself on the road to Assos. For I defy even the apostle himself to have talked better or more boldly to himself even on the solid midday road than Standfast talked to himself in the bridgeless river. "I see myself," he said,"at the end of my journey now. My toilsome days are all ended. I am going now to see that head that was crowned with thorns, and that face that was spat upon for me. I loved to hear my Lord spoken of, and wherever I have seen the print of His shoe in the earth I have coveted to set my foot also. His name has been to me as a civet-box; yea, sweeter than all perfumes. His word I did use to gather for my food, and for antidotes against my faintings. He has held me, and I have kept me from my iniquities. Yea, my steps He has strengthened in my way." Now, while Standfast was thus in discourse his countenance changed, his strong man bowed down under him, and after he had said "Take me!" he ceased to be seen of them. But how glorious it was to see how the open region was now filled with horses and chariots, with trumpeters and pipers, and with singers and players on stringed instruments, all to welcome the pilgrims as they went up and followed one another in at the beautiful gate of the city!

# 046. Madam Bubble

XLVI

MADAM BUBBLE “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.”—Solomon.

“I have overcome the world.”—Our Lord.

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof.”—John.

“This bubble world.”—Quarles.

Madam Bubble’s portrait was first painted by the Preacher. And he painted her portrait with extraordinary insight, boldness, and truthfulness. There is that in the Preacher’s portrait of Madam Bubble which only comes of the artist having mixed his colours, as Milman says that Tacitus mixed his ink, with resentment and with remorse. Out of His reading of Solomon and Moses and the Prophets on this same subject, as well as out of His own observation and experience, conflict and conquest, our Lord added some strong and deep and inward touches of His own to that well-known picture, and then named it by the New Testament name of the World. And then, after Him, His longest-lived disciple set forth the same mother and her three daughters under the three names that still stick to them to this day,—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. But it was reserved for John Bunyan to fill up and to finish those outlines of Scripture and to pour over the whole work his own depth and strength of colour, till, altogether, Madam Bubble stands out as yet another masterpiece of our dreamer’s astonishing genius. Let us take our stand before this heaving canvas, then, till we have taken attentive note of some of John Bunyan’s inimitable touches and strokes and triumphs of truth and art. “One in very pleasant attire, but old . . . This woman is a witch . . . I am the mistress of the world, she said, and men are made happy by me . . . A tall, comely dame, something of a swarthy complexion.” In the newly discovered portrait of a woman, by Albert Dürer, one of the marks of its genuineness is the way that the great artist’s initials A. D. are pencilled in on the embroidery of the lady’s bodice. And you will note in this gentlewoman’s open dress also how J. B. is inextricably woven in. “She wears a great purse by her side also, and her hand is often in her purse fingering her money. Yea, this is she that has bought off many a man from a pilgrim’s life after he had fairly begun it. She is a bold and an impudent slut also, for she will talk with any man. If there be one cunning to make money in any place, she will speak well of him from house to house . . . She has given it out in some places also that she is a goddess, and therefore some do actually worship her . . . She has her times and open places of cheating, and she will say and avow it that none can show a good comparable to hers. And thus she has brought many to the halter, and ten thousand times more to hell. None can tell of the mischief that she does. She makes variance betwixt rulers and subjects, betwixt parents and children, ’twixt neighbour and neighbour, ’twixt a man and his wife, ’twixt a man and himself, ’twixt the flesh and the heart.” And so on in the great original. “Had she stood by all this while,” said

Standfast, whose eyes were still full of her, “you could not have set Madam Bubble more amply before me, nor have better described her features.” “He that drew her picture was a good limner,” said Mr. Honest, “and he that so wrote of her said true”.

1. “I am the mistress of this world,” says Madam Bubble. And though all the time she is a bold and impudent slut, yet it is the simple truth that she does sit as a queen over this world and over the men of this world. For Madam Bubble has a royal family like all other sovereigns. She has a court of her own, too, with its ball-room presentations and its birthday honours. She has a cabinet council also, and a bar and a bench with their pleadings and their decisions. Far more than all that, she has a church which she has established and of which she is the head; and a faith also of which she is the defender. She has a standing army also for the extension and the protection of her dominions. She levies taxes, too, and sends out ambassadors, and makes treaties, and forms offensive and defensive alliances. But what a bubble all this World is to him whose eyes have at last been opened to see the hollowness and the heartlessness of it all! For all its pursuits and all its possessions, from a child’s rattle to a king’s sceptre, all is one great bubble. Wealth, fame, place, power; art, science, letters; politics, churches, sacraments, and scriptures—all are so many bubbles in Madam Bubble’s World. This wicked enchantress, if she does not find all these things bubbles already, by one touch of her evil wand she makes them so. She turns gold into dross, God into an idle name, and His Word into words only; unless when in her malice she turns it into a fruitful ground of debate and contention; a ground of malice and hatred and ill-will. Vanity of vanities; all is vanity and vexation of spirit. Still, she sits a queen and a goddess to a great multitude: to all men, to begin with. And, like a goddess, she sheds abroad her spirit in her people’s hearts and lifts up upon them for a time the light of her countenance.

2. “I am the mistress of the world,” she says,“ and men are made happy by me.”—I would like to see one of them. I have seen many men to whom Madam Bubble had said that if they would be ruled by her she would make them great and happy. But though I have seen not a few who have believed her and let themselves be ruled by her, I have never yet seen one happy man among them.—The truth is, Madam Bubble is not able to make men happy even if she wished to do it. She is not happy herself, and she cannot dispense to others what she does not possess. And, yet, such are her sorceries that, while her old dupes die in thousands every day, new dupes are born to her every day in still greater numbers. New dupes who run to the same excess of folly with her that their fathers ran; new dupes led in the same mad dance after Madam Bubble and her three daughters. But, always, and to all men, what a bubble both the mother and all her daughters are! How they all make promises like their lying mother, and how, like her, they all lead men, if not to the halter and to hell, as Greatheart said, yet to a life of vanity and to a death of disappointment and despair! What bubbles of empty hopes both she and her three children blow up in the brains of men! What pictures of untold happiness they paint in the imaginations of men! What pleasures, what successes in life, what honours and what rewards she pledges herself to see bestowed! “She has her times and open places of cheating, ”said one who knew her and all her ways well. And when men and women are still young and inexperienced, that is one of her great cheating times. At some seasons of the year, and in some waters, to the fisherman’s surprise and confusion, the fish will sometimes take his bare hook; a bit of a red rag is a deadly bait. And Madam Bubble’s poorest and most perfunctory busking is quite enough for the foolish fish she angles for. And not in our salad days only, when we are still green in judgment, but even to grey hairs, this wicked witch

continues to entrap us to our ruin. Love, in all its phases and in all its mixtures, first deludes the very young; and then place, and power, and fame, and money are the bait she busks for the middle-aged and the old; and always with the same bubble end. The whole truth is that without God, the living and ever-present God, in all ages of it and in all parts and experiences of it, our human life is one huge bubble. A far-shining, high-soaring bubble; but sooner or later seen and tasted to be a bubble—a deceit-filled, poison-filled bubble.—Happy by her! All men happy by her! The impudent slut!

3. Another thing about this slut is this, that "she will talk with any man." She makes up to us and makes eyes at us just as if we were free to accept and return her three offers. And still she talks to us and offers us the same things she offered to Standfast till, to escape her and her offers, he betook himself to his knees. Nay, truth to tell, after she had deceived us and ensnared us till we lay in her net cursing both her and ourselves, so bold and so impudent and so persistent is this temptress slut, and such fools and idiots are we, that we soon lay our eyes on her painted beauty again and our heads in her loathsome lap; our heads on that block over which the axe hangs by an angry hair. "She will talk with any man." No doubt; but, then, it takes two to make a talk, and the sad thing is that there are few men among us so wise, so steadfast, and so experienced in her ways that they will not on occasion let Madam Bubble talk her talk to them, and talk back again to her. The oldest saint, the oftenest sold and most dearly redeemed sinner, needs to suspect himself to the end, till he is clear out of Madam Bubble's enchanted ground and for ever over that river of deliverance which shall sweep Madam Bubble and all her daughters into the dead sea for ever.

"The grey-haired saint may fail at last,

The surest guide a wanderer prove;

Death only binds us fast

To the bright shore of love."

4. "She highly commends the rich," the guide goes on about Madam Bubble, "and if there be one cunning to get money in any place she will speak well of him from house to house." "The world," says Faber, "is not altogether matter, nor yet altogether spirit. It is not man only, nor Satan only, nor is it exactly sin. It is an infection, an inspiration, an atmosphere, a life, a colouring matter, a pageantry, a fashion, a taste, a witchery. None of all these names suit it, and all of them suit it. Meanwhile its power over the human creation is terrific, its presence ubiquitous, its deceitfulness incredible. It can find a home under every heart beneath the poles. It is wider than the catholic church, and it is masterful, lawless, and intrusive within it. We are all living in it, breathing it, acting under its influence, being cheated by its appearances, and unwarily admitting its principles." Let young ministers who wish to preach to their people on the World—after studying what the Preacher, and the Saviour, and John, and John Bunyan say about the World,—still read Faber's powerful chapter in his Creator and Creature. Yes; Madam Bubble finds a home for herself in every heart beneath the poles. The truth is Madam Bubble has no home, as she has no existence, but in human hearts. And all that Solomon, and our Saviour, and John, and John Bunyan, and Frederick Faber say about the world and about Madam Bubble they really say about the heart of man. It is we, you and I, my brethren, who so highly commend the rich. It is we ourselves here who

speak well from house to house of him whose father or whose self has been cunning to get money. We either speak well or ill of them. We either are sick with envy at them, or we fawn upon them and fall down before them. How men rise in our esteem in the degree that their money increases! With what reverence and holy awe we look up at them as if they were gods and the sons of gods! They become more than mortal men to our reverent imaginations. How happy, how all but blessed they must be! we say to ourselves. Within those park gates, under those high towers, in that silver-mounted carriage, surrounded with all those liveried servants, and loved and honoured by all those arriving and leaving guests—what happiness that rich man must have! We are either eaten up of lean-eyed envy of this and that rich man, or we positively worship them as other men worship God and His saints. Yes; Madam Bubble is our very mother. She conceived us and she suckled us. We were brought up in her nurture and admonition. We learned her Catechism, and her shrine is in our heart to-night. Like her, if only a pilgrim is poor, we scorn him. We will not know him. But if there be any one, pilgrim or no, cunning to get money, we honour him, and we claim him as our kindred and relation, our acquaintance and our friend. We will speak often of him as such from house to house. Just see if we will not. There is room in our hearts, Madam Bubble, there is room in our hearts for thee!

5. “She loves them most that think best of her.” But, surely, surely, the guide goes quite too far in blaming and being hard upon poor Madam Bubble for that? For, to give her fair play, she is not at all alone in that. Is the guide himself wholly above that? Do we not all do that? Is there one in ten, is there one in a thousand, who hates and humiliates himself because his love of men and women goes up or down just as they think of him? Yes; Greatheart is true to his great name in his whole portrait of Madam Bubble also, and nowhere more true than in this present feature. For when any man comes to have any true greatness in his heart—how he despises and detests himself as he finds himself out in not only claiming kindred and acquaintance with the rich and despising and denying the poor; but, still more, in loving or hating other men just as they love or hate him! The world loves her own. Yes; but he who has been taken out of the world, and who has had the world taken out of him, he loves—he strives to love, he goes to his knees every day he lives to love—those who not only do not think well of him, but who both think ill of him and speak ill of him. “Humility,” says William Law, “does not consist in having a worse opinion of ourselves than we deserve, or in abasing ourselves lower than we really are. But as all virtue is founded in truth, so humility is founded in a true and just sense of our weakness, misery, and sin. He who rightly feels and lives in this sense of his condition lives in humility. And, it may be added, when our hearts are wholly clothed with humility we shall be prompt to approve the judgment and to endorse the sentence of those who think and speak the least good of us and the most evil.”

6. “’Twas she,” so the guide at last wound up, “that set Absalom against his father, and Jeroboam against his master. ’Twas she that persuaded Judas to sell his Lord, and that prevailed with Demas to forsake the godly pilgrim’s life. None can tell all the mischief that Madam Bubble does. She makes variance between rulers and subjects, between parents and children, ’twixt neighbour and neighbour, ’twixt a man and his wife, ’twixt a man and himself, ’twixt the flesh and the heart.” Now, I shall leave that last indictment and its lessons and its applications to yourselves, my brethren. You will get far more good out of this accumulated count against Madam Bubble if you explain it, and open it up, and prove it, and illustrate it to yourselves. Explain, then, in what way this sorceress set Absalom against his father and Jeroboam against his master. Point out in what

way she makes variance between a ruler and his subjects, and give illustrations. Put your finger on a parent and on a child between whom there is variance at this moment on her account. And, if you are that parent or that child, what have you done to remove that variance? Name two neighbours that to your knowledge Madam Bubble has come between; and say what you have done to be a peacemaker there. Set down what you would say to a man and his wife so as to put them on their guard against Madam Bubble ever coming in between them. And, last and best of all, point out to yourself at what times and in what ways this wicked witch tries to make variance between God's Holy Spirit striving within you and your own evil heart still strong within you. When you are weary and sleepy and hungry as a howlet, and, Madam Bubble and her three daughters make a ring round you, what do you do? Do you ever take to your knees? Really and honestly, do you? When you find yourself out looking with holy fear on a rich and lofty relation, and with insufferable contempt on a poor and intrusive relation, by what name do you call yourself? Write it down. And when she would fain put variance between you and those who do not think well of you, what steps do you take to foil her? Where and how do you get strength at that supreme moment to think of others as you would have them think of you? "Oh," said Standfast, "what a mercy it is that I did resist her! for to what might she not have drawn me?"

# 047. Gaius

XLVII

GAIUS “Gaius, mine host.”—Paul.

Goodman Gaius was the head of a hostel that stood on the side of the highway well on to the Celestial City. The hostess of the hostel was no more, and the old hostel-keeper did all her once well-done work and his own proper work into the bargain. Every day he inspected the whole house with his own eyes, down even to the kitchen and the scullery. The good woman had left our host an only daughter; but, “Keep her as much out of sight as is possible,” she said, and so fell asleep. And Gaius remembered his wife’s last testament every day, till none of the hostel customers knew that there was so much as a young hostess in all the house. “Yes, gentlemen,” replied the old innkeeper. “Yes, come in. It is late, but I take you for true men, for you must know that my house is kept open only for such.” So he took the large pilgrim party to their several apartments with his own eyes, and then set about a supper for those so late arrivals. Stamping with his foot, he brought up the cook with the euphonious and eupeptic name, and that quick-witted domestic soon had a supper on the table that would have made a full man’s mouth water. “The sight of all this,” said Matthew, as the under-cook laid the cloth and the trenchers, and set the salt and the bread in order—“the sight of this cloth and of this forerunner of a supper begetteth in me a greater appetite to my food than I thought I had before.” So supper came up; and first a heave-shoulder and a wave-breast were set on the table before them, in order to show that they must begin their meal with prayer and praise to God. These two dishes were very fresh and good, and all the travellers did eat heartily well thereof. The next was a bottle of wine red as blood. So Gaius said to them, “Drink freely; this is the juice of the true vine that makes glad the heart of God and man.” And they did drink and were very merry. The next was a dish of milk well crumbed. At the sight of which Gaius said, “Let the boys have that, that they may grow thereby.” And so on, dish after dish, till the nuts came with the recitations and the riddles and the saws and the stories over the nuts. Thus the happy party sat talking till the break of day.

1. Now, it is natural to remark that the first thing about a host is his hospitality. And that, too, whether our host is but the head of a hostel like Goodman Gaius, or the head of a well-appointed private house like Gaius’s neighbour, Mr. Mnason. The first and the last thing about a host is his hospitality. “Say little and do much” is the example and the injunction to all our housekeepers that Rabban Shammai draws out of the eighteenth of Genesis. “Be like your father Abraham,” he says, “on the plains of Mamre, who only promised bread and water, but straightway set Sarah to knead three measures of her finest meal, while he ran to the herd and fetched a calf tender and good, and stood by the three men while they did eat butter and milk under the tree. Make thy Thorah an ordinance: say little and do much: and receive every man with a pleasant expression of countenance.” Now, this was exactly what Gaius our goodman did that night, with one exception, which we shall be constrained to attend to afterwards. “It is late,” he said, “so we cannot conveniently go out to seek food; but such as we have you shall be welcome to, if that will

content.” At the same time Taste-that-which-is-good soon had a supper sent up to the table fit for a prince: a supper of six courses at that time in the morning, so that the sun was already in the sky when Old Honest closed his casement.

“Dining in company is a divine institution,” says Mr. Edward White, in his delightful Minor Moralities of Life. “Let Soyer’s art be honoured among all men,” he goes on. “Cookery distinguishes mankind from the beasts that perish. Happy is the woman whose daily table is the result of forethought. Her husband shall rise up and call her blessed. It is piteous when the culinary art is neglected in our young women’s education. Let them, as St. Peter says, imitate Sarah. Let them see how that venerable princess went quickly to her kneading-trough and oven and prepared an extempore collation of cakes and pilau for the angels. How few ladies, whether Gentiles or Jewesses, could do the like in the present day!”

2. The wistful and punctilious attention that Goodman Gaius paid to each individual guest of his was a fine feature in his munificent hospitality. He made every one who crossed his doorstep, down even to Mr. Fearing, feel at once at home, such was his exquisite as well as his munificent hospitality. “Come, sir,” he said, clapping that white-faced and trembling pilgrim on the shoulder, “come, sir, be of good cheer, you are welcome to me and to my house; and what thou hast a mind to, that call for freely: for what thou wouldst have my servants will do for thee, and they will do it for thee with a ready mind.” All the same, for a long time Mr. Fearing was mortally afraid of the servants. He would as soon have thought of stamping his foot for a duchess to come up as for any of Gaius’s serving-maids. He was afraid to make any noise in his room lest all the house should hear it. He was afraid to touch anything in the room lest it should fall and be broken. We ourselves, with all our assumed ease and elaborate abandon, are often afraid to ring our bell even in an inn. Mr. Fearing would as soon have pulled the tail of a rattlesnake. But before their sojourn was over, the Guide was amazed at Mr. Fearing, for that hare-hearted pilgrim would be doing things in the house that he himself would scarcely do who had been in the house a thousand times. It was Gaius’s exuberant heartiness that had demoralised Mr. Fearing and made him almost too forward even for a wayside inn. In little things also Gaius, mine host, showed his sensitive and solicitous hospitality. We all know housekeepers, not to say innkeepers, and not otherwise ungenerous housekeepers either who will grudge us a sixpennyworth of sticks and coals in a cold night, and that, too, in a room furnished to overflowing by Morton Brothers or the Messrs. Maple. We take a candlestick and a dozen candles with us in the boot of the carriage when we wish to read or write late into the night in that great house. Another housekeeper, who would give you her only daughter with her wealthy dowry, will sometimes be seen by all in her house to grudge you a fresh cup of afternoon tea when you drop in to see her and her daughter. She says to herself that it is to spare the servants the stairs; but, all the time, under the stairs, the servants are blushing for the sometimes unaccountable stinginess of their unusually munificent mistress. I shall give you “line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little” of Aristotle upon munificence in little things till you come up to his pagan standard. “There is a real greatness,” he says, “even in the way that some men will buy a toy to a child. Even in the smallest matters the munificent man will act munificently!” As Gaius, mine host, munificently did.

3. Speaking of children, what a night of entertainment good old Gaius gave the children of the pilgrim party! “Let the boys have the crumbed milk,” he gave orders. “Butter and honey shall they eat,” he exclaimed over them as that brimming dish came up. “This was our Lord’s dish when He

was a child," he said to the mother of the boys, "that He might know to refuse the evil and to choose the good." Then they brought up a dish of apples, and they were very good-tasted fruit. Then said Matthew, "May we eat apples, since they were such by and with which the serpent beguiled our first mother?" Then said Gaius,

"Apples were they by which we were beguiled,

Yet sin, not apples, hath our souls defiled.

Apples forbid, if eat, corrupt the blood.

To eat such, when commanded, does us good.

Drink of His flagons then, thou Church, His Dove,

And eat His apples who are sick of love."

Then said Matthew, "I make the scruple because I awhile since was sick with eating of fruit." "Forbidden fruit," said the host, "will make you sick, but not what our Lord hath tolerated." While they were thus talking they were presented with another dish, and it was a dish of nuts. Then said some at the table, "Nuts spoil tender teeth, especially the teeth of children," which when Gaius heard, he said,

"Hard texts are nuts (I will not call them cheaters)

Whose shells do keep their kernels from the eaters;

Open then the shells and you shall have the meat;

They here are brought for you to crack and eat."

Then Samuel whispered to his mother and said, "Mother, this is a very good man's house; let us stay here a good while before we go any farther." The which Gaius the host overhearing, said, "With a very good will, my child."

4. Widower as old Gaius was, and never for a single hour forgot that he was, there was a certain sweet and stately gallantry awakened in his withered old heart at the sight of Christiana and Mercy, and especially at the sight of Matthew and Mercy when they were seen together. He seems to have fallen almost in love with that aged matron, as he called her, and the days of his youth came back to him as he studied the young damsel, who was to her as a daughter. And this set the loquacious old innkeeper upon that famous oration about women which every man who has a mother, or a wife, or a sister, or a daughter has by heart. And from that he went on to discourse on the great advantages of an early marriage. He was not the man, nor was he speaking to a mother who was the woman, ever to become a vulgar and coarse-minded matchmaker; at the same time, he liked to see Matthew and Mercy sent out on a message together, leaving it to nature and to grace to do the rest. The pros and cons of early marriage were often up at his hearty table, but he always debated, and Gaius was a great debater, that true hospitality largely consisted in throwing open the family circle to let young people get well acquainted with one another in its peace and sweetness. And Gaius both practised what he preached, and at the same time endorsed his watchful wife's last testament, when he gave his daughter Phebe to James, Christiana's second

son, and thus was left alone, poor old Gaius, when the happy honeymoon party started upward from his hostel door.

5. Their next host was one Mr. Mnason, a Cyprusian by nation, and an old disciple. “How far have you come to-day?” he asked. “From the house of Gaius our friend,” they said. “I promise you,” said he, “you have gone a good stitch; you may well be weary; sit down.” So they sat down. “Our great want a while since,” said Old Honest, “was harbour and good company, and now I hope we have both.” “For harbour,” said the host, “you see what it is, but for good company that will appear in the trial.” After they were a little rested Old Honest again asked his host if there were any store of good people in that town; and, “How,” he said, “shall we do to see some of them? For the sight of good men to them that are going on pilgrimage is like to the appearing of the moon and stars to them that are sailing upon the seas.” Then Mr. Mnason stamped with his foot and his daughter Grace came up, when he sent her out for five of his friends in the town, saying that he had a guest or two in his house at present to whom he would like to introduce them.

Now, this is another of the good qualities of a good host, to know the best and the most suitable people in the town, and to be on such terms with them that on short notice they will step across to help to entertain such travellers as had come to Mr. Mnason’s table. And it is an excellent thing to be sure that when we are so invited we shall not only get a good dinner, but also, as good “kitchen” with our dinner, good company and good conversation. It is nothing short of a fine art to gather together and to seat suitably beside one another good and suitable people as Mr. and Miss Mnason did in their hospitable house that afternoon. And then, as to the talk: let the host and the hostess introduce the guests, and then let the guests introduce their own topics. And as far as possible, in a city and a day like this, let our topics be books rather than people. And let the books be the books that the guests have read rather than those that the host and the hostess have read. Books are a fine subject for a talk at table. Only, let great readers order their learned and literary talk so as not to lead the less learned into temptation. There is no finer exercise of fine feeling than to be able to carry on a conversation about matters that other people present are ignorant of, and at the same time to interest them, to set them at ease, and to make them forget both you and themselves. I had a letter the other day from an English Church clergyman, in which he tells me that his bishop is coming this month to his vicarage for a kind of visitation and retreat, and that they are to have William Law’s Characters and Characteristics read aloud to them when the bishop and the assembled clergy are at their meals. For my part, I would rather hear a good all-round talk on that book by the bishop and his clergy after they had all read the book over and over again at home. But such readings at assembled meals have all along been a feature of the best fraternal life in the Church of England and in some of the sister churches.

6. Now, after dining and supping repeatedly with garrulous old Gaius, and with the all-but-silent Mr. Mnason, I have come home ruminating again and again on this—that a good host, the best host, lets his guests talk while he attends to the table. If the truth may even be whispered to one’s-self about a table that one has just left, Gaius did his best to spoil his good supper by his own over-garrulity. It was good talk that he entertained his waiting guests with, but we may have too much of a good thing. His oration in praise of women was an excellent oration, had it been delivered in another house than his own; and, say, when he was asked to give the health of Christiana, or of Matthew the bridegroom and Mercy the bride, it would then have been perfect; but not in his own house, and not when his guests were waiting for their supper. On the other hand,

you should have seen that perfect gentleman, Mr. Mnason. For that true old Christian and old English gentleman never once opened his mouth after he had set his guests a-talking. He was too busy watching when any man's dish was again empty. He was too much delighted to see that every one of his guests was having his punctual share of the supper, and at the same time his full share of the talk. Mr. Fearing's small voice was far more pleasant to Mr. Mnason than his own voice was in his own best story. As I opened my own door the other night after supping with Mr. and Miss Mnason, I said to myself—One thing I have again seen and learned to-night, and that is, that a host, and still more a hostess, should talk less at their own table than their most silent, most bashful, and most backward guest. "Make this an ordinance for thee," said Rabban Shammai to his sons in the law; "receive all thy guests with a pleasant expression of countenance, and then say little and do much."

# 048. Christian

XLVIII

CHRISTIAN “The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.”—Luke.

“Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.”—King Agrippa.

“Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”—Paul.

All the other personages in the Pilgrim’s Progress come and go; they all ascend the stage for a longer or shorter time, and then pass off the stage and so pass out of our sight; but Christian in the First Part, and Christiana in the Second Part, are never for a single moment out of our sight. And, accordingly, we have had repeated occasion and opportunity to learn many excellent lessons from the chief pilgrim’s upward walk and heavenly conversation. But so full and so rich are his life and his character, that some very important things still remain to be collected before we finally close his history. “Gather up the fragments that nothing be lost,” said our Lord, after His miraculous meal of multiplied loaves and fishes with His disciples. And in like manner I shall now proceed to gather up some of the remaining fragments of Christian’s life and character and experience. And I shall collect these fragments into the three baskets of his book, his burden, and his sealed roll and certificate.

1. And first, a few things as to his book. “As I slept I dreamed, and behold I saw a man clothed in rags standing in a certain place, with his face from his own house, a book in his hand, and a great burden upon his back. I looked and saw him open the book and read therein; and as he read he wept and trembled; and not being able longer to contain he broke out with a lamentable cry, saying, What shall I do?” We hear a great deal in these advertising days, and not one word too much, about the books that have influenced and gone largely to the making of our great men; but Graceless, like John Bunyan, his biographer, was a man of but one book. But, then, that book was the most influential of all books; it was the Book of books; it was God’s very own and peculiar Book. And those of us who, like this man, have passed out of a graceless into a gracious state will for ever remember how that same Book at that time influenced us till it made us what we are and shall yet be. We read many other good books at that epoch in our life, but it was the pure Bible that we read and prayed over out of sight the most. We needed no commentators or exegetes on our simple Bible in those days. The great texts stood out to our eyes in those days as if they had been written with a sunbeam; while all other books (and we read nothing but the best books in those days) looked like twilight and rushlight beside our Bible. In those immediate, direct, and intense days we would have satisfied Wordsworth and Matthew Arnold themselves in the way we read our Bible with our eye never off the object. The Four Last Things were ever before us—death and judgment, heaven and hell. “O my dear wife,” said Graceless, “and you the children of my bowels, I your dear friend am in myself undone by reason of a burden that lieth hard upon me; moreover, I am for certain informed that this our city will be burned with fire from heaven, in which fearful overthrow both myself, with thee my wife, and you my sweet babes, shall miserably come to ruin,

except (the which yet I see not) some way of escape can be found whereby we may be delivered." He would walk also solitarily in the fields, sometimes reading and sometimes praying; and thus for some days he spent his time. Graceless at that time and at that stage would have satisfied the exigent author of the Practical Treatise upon Christian Perfection where he says that "we are too apt also to think that we have sufficiently read a book when we have so read it as to know what it contains. This reading may be quite sufficient as to many books; but as to the Bible we are not to think that we have read it enough because we have often read and heard what it teaches. We must read our Bible, not to know what it contains, but to fill our hearts with the spirit of it." And, again, and on this same point, "There is this unerring key to the right use of the Bible. The Bible has only one intent, and that is to make a man know, resist, and abhor the working of his fallen earthly nature, and to turn the faith, hope, and longing desire of his heart to God; and therefore we are only to read our Bibles with this view and to learn this one lesson from it . . . The critic looks into his books to see how Latin and Greek authors have used the words 'stranger' and 'pilgrim,' but the Christian, who knows that man lives in labour and toil, in sickness and pain, in hunger and thirst, in heat and cold among the beasts of the field, where evil spirits like roaring lions seek to devour him—he only knows in what truth and reality man is a poor stranger and a distressed pilgrim upon the earth." John Bunyan read neither Plato nor Aristotle, but he read David and Paul till he was the chief of sinners, and till he was first the Graceless and then the Christian of his own next-to-the-Bible book.

2. In the second place, and as to his burden. We are supplied with no particulars as to the first beginnings, the gradual make-up, and at last the terrible size of Christian's burden. What this pilgrim's youthful life must have been in such a city as his native city was, and while he was still a young man of such a name and such a character in such a city, we are left to ourselves to think and consider. Graceless was his name by nature, and his life was as his name and his nature were. Still, as I have said, we have no detailed and particular account of his early life when his burden was still day and night in the making up. How long into your life were you graceless, my brother? And what kind of life did you lead day and night before you were persuaded or alarmed, as the case may have been with you, into being a Christian? What burdens do you carry on your broken back to this day that were made up in the daylight or in the darkness by your own hands in your early days? Were you early or were you too late in your conversion? Or are you truly converted to God and to salvation even yet? And are you at this moment still binding a burden on your back that you shall never lay down on this side your grave—it may be, not on this side your burning bed in hell? Ask yourselves all that before God and before your own conscience, and make yourselves absolutely sure that God at any rate is not mocked; and, therefore that you, too, shall in the end reap exactly as you from the beginning have sown. "How camest thou by thy burden at first?" asked Mr. Worldly-Wiseman at the trembling pilgrim. "By reading this book in my hand," he answered. And, in the long run, it is always the Bible that best creates a sinner's burden, binds it on his back, and makes it so terribly heavy to bear. Fear of death and judgment will sometimes make up and bind on a sinner's burden; and sometimes the fear of man's judgment on this side of death will do it. Fear of being found out in some cases will make a man's secret sin far too heavy for him to bear. The throne of public opinion is not a very white throne; at the same time, it is a coarse forecast and a rough foretaste of the last judgment; and the fear of it not seldom makes a man's burden simply intolerable to him. Sometimes a great sinner's burden leads him to flight and outlawry; sometimes to madness and self-murder; and sometimes, by the timeous and

sufficient grace of God, to the way of escape that our pilgrim took. Tenderness of conscience, also, simple softness of heart and conscience, will sometimes make a terrible burden out of what other men would call a very light matter. Bind a burden on that iron pillar standing there, and it will feel nothing and say nothing. But, bind the same burden on that man in whose seat that dead pillar takes up a sitter's room, and he will make all that are in the house hear his sighs and his groans. And lay an act of sin—an evil word or evil work or evil thought—on one man among us, and he will walk about the streets with as erect a head and as smiling a countenance and as light a step as if he were an innocent child; while, lay half as much on his neighbour, and it will so bruise him to the earth that all men will take knowledge of him that he is a miserable man. Our Lord could no doubt have carried His cross from the hall of judgment to the hill-top without help had His back not been wet with blood. What with a whole and an unwealed body, a well-rested and well-nourished body, He could easily have carried, with His broken body and broken heart He quite sank under. And so it is with His people. One of His heart-broken, heart-bleeding people will sink down to death and hell under a burden of sin and corruption that another of them will scarcely feel or know or believe that it is there. Some sins again in themselves, and by reason of several aggravations, are far more heavy to bear than others, and by some sinners than others. I was reading Bishop Andrewes to myself last night and came upon this pertinent passage. "Sin: its measure, its harm, its scandal. Its quality: how often—how long. The person by whom: his age, condition, state, enlightenment. Its manner, motive, time, and place. The folly of it, the ingratitude of it, the hardness of it, the presumptuousness of it. By heart, by mouth, by deed. Against God, my neighbours, my own body. By knowledge, by ignorance. Willingly and unwillingly. Of old and of late. In boyhood and youth, in mature and old age. Things done once, repeated often, hidden and open. Things done in anger, and from the lust of the flesh and of the world. Before and after my call. Asleep by night and awake by day. Things remembered and things forgotten. Through the fiery darts of the enemy, through the unclean desires of the flesh—I have sinned against Thee. Have mercy on me, O God, and forgive me!" That is the way some men's burdens are made up to such gigantic proportions and then bound on by such acute cords. That is the way that Lancelot Andrewes and John Bunyan walked solitarily in the fields, sometimes reading and sometimes praying, till the one of them put himself into his immortal Devotions, and the other into his immortal Grace Abounding and Pilgrim's Progress.

"Then I saw in my dream that Christian asked the Gatekeeper further if he could not help him off with his burden that was upon his back, for as yet he had not got rid of it, nor could he by any means get it off without help. He told him, 'As to thy burden, be content to bear it until thou comest to the place of deliverance, for there it will fall from off thy back itself.' Now I saw in my dream that the highway up which Christian was to go was fenced on either side with a wall, and that wall is Salvation. Up this way, therefore, did burdened Christian run, but not without great difficulty, because of the load on his back. He ran thus till he came to a place somewhat ascending, and upon that place stood a cross, and a little below in the bottom a sepulchre. So I saw in my dream that just as Christian came up with the cross his burden loosed from off his back, and began to tumble and so continued to do till it came to the mouth of the sepulchre, where it fell in and I saw it no more. Then was Christian glad and lightsome, and said with a merry heart, 'He hath given me rest by His sorrow, and life by His death!'"

"Blest Cross! blest Sepulchre! Blest rather be

The Man that there was put to shame for me."

But, then, how it could be that this so happy man was scarcely a stone-cast past the cross when he had begun again to burden himself with fresh sin, and thus to disinter all his former sin? How a true pilgrim comes to have so many burdens to bear, and that till he ceases to be any longer a pilgrim,—a burden of guilt, a burden of corruption, and a burden of bare creaturehood,—I must leave all that, and all the questions connected with all that, for you all to think out and work out for yourselves; and you will not say any morning on this earth, like Mrs. Timorous, that you have little to do.

3. The third of the three Shining Ones who saluted Christian at the cross set a mark on his forehead, and put a roll with a seal set upon it into his hand. A roll and a seal which he bid him look on as he ran, and that he should give that roll in at the Celestial Gate. Bunyan does not in all places come up to his usual clearness in what he says about the sealed roll. We must believe that he understood his own meaning and intention in all that he says, first and last, about the roll, but he has not always made his meaning clear, at least to one of his readers. Theological students, and, indeed, all thoughtful Christian men, are invited to read Dr. Cunningham's powerful paper on Assurance in his Reformers. The whole literature of Assurance is there taken up and weighed and sifted with all that great writer's incomparable learning and power and judgment. Our Larger Catechism, also, is excellent on this subject; and this subject is a favourite commonplace with all our best Calvinistic, Puritan, and Evangelical authors. Let us take two or three passages out of those authors just as a specimen, and so close.

"Can true believers"—Larger Catechism, Question 80—"Can true believers be infallibly assured that they are in an estate of grace, and that they shall persevere therein to the end? Answer: Such as truly believe in Christ, and endeavour to walk in all good conscience before Him may, without extraordinary revelation, by faith grounded upon the truth of God's promise, and by the Spirit enabling them to discern in themselves those graces to which the promises of eternal life are made, and bearing witness with their spirits that they are the children of God, they may be infallibly assured that they are in the estate of grace, and shall persevere therein unto salvation." Question 81: "Are all true believers at all times assured of their present being in a state of grace, and that they shall be saved? Answer: Assurance of grace and salvation not being of the essence of faith, true believers may wait long before they obtain it, and, after the enjoyment thereof, may have it weakened and intermitted through manifold distempers, sins, temptations, and desertions; yet are they never left without such a presence and support of the Spirit of God as keeps them from sinking into utter despair." "A Christian's assurance," says Fraser of Brea, "though it does not firstly flow from his holiness, yet is ever after proportionable to his holy walking. Faith is kept in a pure conscience. Sin is like a blot of ink fallen upon our evidence. This I found to be a truth." "It was the speech of one to me," says Thomas Shepard of New England, "next to the donation of Christ, no mercy like this, to deny assurance long; and why? For if the Lord had not, I should have given way to a loose heart and life. And this is a rule I have long held—long denial of assurance is like fire to burn out some sin and then the Lord will speak peace." "Serve your God day and night faithfully," says Dr. Goodwin. "Walk humbly; and there is a promise of the Holy Ghost to come and fill your hearts with joy unspeakable and glorious to rear you up to the day of redemption. Sue this promise out, wait for it, rest not in believing only, rest not in assurance by graces only; there is a further assurance to be had." "I would not give a straw for that assurance," says John Newton, "which sin

will not damp. If David had come from his adultery and still have talked of his assurance, I should have despised his speech." "When we want the faith of assurance," says Matthew Henry, "let us live by the faith of adherence." And then the whole truth is in a nutshell in Isaiah and in John: "The effect of righteousness shall be quietness and assurance for ever," and "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And hereby we shall know that we are of the truth, and so shall assure our hearts before Him."

# 049. Christiana

XLIX

CHRISTIANA “Honour widows that are widows indeed.”—Paul.

We know next to nothing of Christiana till after she is a widow indeed. The names of her parents, and what kind of parents they were, the schools and the boarding-schools to which they sent their daughter, her school companions, the books she read, if she ever read any books at all, the amusements she was indulged in and indulged herself in—on all that her otherwise full and minute biographer is wholly silent. He does not go back beyond her married life; he does not even go back to the beginning of that. The only thing we are sure of about Christiana’s early days is that she was an utterly ungodly woman and that she married an utterly ungodly man. “Have you a family? Are you a married man?” asked Charity of Christian in the House Beautiful. “I have a wife and four small children,” he replied. “And why did you not bring them along with you?” Then Christian wept, and said: “Oh, how willingly would I have done it; but they were all utterly averse to my going on pilgrimage.” “But you should have talked to them,” said Charity, “and have endeavoured to have shown them the danger of being behind.” “So I did,” answered Christian. “And did you pray to God that He would bless your counsel to them?” “Yes, and with much affection; for you must think that my wife and poor children were very dear unto me.” “But what could they say for themselves why they came not?” “Why, my wife was afraid of losing the world, and my children were given over to the foolish delights of youth; so what with one thing and what with another, they left me to wander in this manner alone.” But what her husband’s conversion, good example, and most earnest entreaties could not all do for his worldly wife, that his sudden death speedily did. And thus it is that both Christiana’s best life, all our interest in her, and all our information about her, dates, sad to say, not from her espousal, nor from her marriage day, nor from any part of her married life, but from her husband’s death. Her maidenhood has no interest for us; all our interest is fixed on her widowhood. This work of fiction now in our hands begins where all other works of fiction end; for in the life of religion, you must know, our best is always before us. Well, scarcely was her husband dead when Christiana began to accuse herself of having killed him. To take her own bitter words for it, the most agonising and remorseful thoughts about her conduct to her husband stung her heart like so many wasps. Ah yes! A wasp’s sting is but a blade of innocent grass compared with the thoughts that have stung us all as we recalled what we said and did to those who are now no more. There are graves in the churchyard we dare not go near. “I have sinned away your father!” she cried, as she threw herself on the earth at the feet of her astounded children. “I have sinned away your father and he is gone!” And yet there was no mark of a bullet and no gash of a knife on his dead body, and no chemistry could have extracted one grain of arsenic or of strychnine out of his blood. But there are many ways of taking a man’s life besides those of poison or a knife or a gunshot. Constant fault-finding, constant correction and studied contempt before strangers, total want of sympathy and encouragement, gloomy looks, rough remarks, all blame and never a word of praise, things like these between man and wife will kill as silently and as surely as poison or suffocation. Look at home, my brethren, and

ask yourselves what you will think of much of your present conduct when it has borne its proper fruit. “Upon this came into her mind by swarms all her unkind, unnatural, and ungodly carriages to her dear friend, which also clogged her conscience and did load her with guilt. It all returned upon her like a flash of lightning, and rent the caul of her heart asunder.” “That which troubleth me most,” she would cry out, “is my churlish carriages to him when he was under distress. I am that woman,” she would cry out and would not be appeased—“I am that woman that was so hardhearted as to slight my husband’s troubles, and that left him to go on his journey alone. How like a churl I carried myself to him in all that! And so guilt took hold of my mind, ”she said to the Interpreter, “and would have drawn me to the pond!” A minister’s widow once told me that she had gone home after hearing a sermon of mine on the text, “What profit is there in my blood?” and had destroyed a paper of poison she had purchased in her despair on the previous Saturday night. It was not a sermon from her unconscious minister, but it was far better; it was a conversation that Christiana held with her four boys that fairly and for ever put all thought of the pond out of their mother’s remorseful mind. “So Christiana,” as we read in the opening of her history—“so Christiana called her sons together and began thus to address herself unto them: My sons, I have, as you may perceive, been of late under much exercise in my soul about the death of your father. My carriages to your father in his distress are a great load on my conscience. Come, my children, let us pack up and be gone to the gate, that we may see your father and be with him, according to the laws of that land.” I like that passage, I think, the best in all Christiana’s delightful history—that passage which begins with these words: “So she called her children together.” For when she called her children together she opened to them both her heart and her conscience; and from that day there was but one heart and one conscience in all that happy house. I was walking alone on a country road the other day, and as I was walking I was thinking about my pastoral work and about my people and their children, when all at once I met one of my people. My second sentence to him was: “This very moment I was thinking about your sons. How are they getting on?” He quite well understood me. He knew that I was not indifferent as to how they were getting on in business, but he knew that I was alluding more to the life of godliness and virtue in their hearts and in their characters. “O sir,” he said, “you may give your sons the skin off your back, but they will not give you their confidence!” So had it been with Christian and his sons. He had never managed, even in his religion, to get into the confidence of his sons; but when their mother took them into her agonised confidence, from that day she was in all their confidences, good and bad. You who are in your children’s confidences will pray in secret for my lonely friend with the skin off his back, will you not? that he may soon be able to call his sons together so as to start together on a new life of family love, and family trust, and family religion. That was a fine sight. Who will make a picture of it? This widow indeed at the head of her family council-table, and Matthew at the foot, and James and Joseph and Samuel all in their places. “Come, my children, let us pack up that we may see your father!” Then did her children burst into tears for joy that the heart of their mother was so inclined. From that first family council let us pass on to Christiana’s last interview with her family and her other friends. Her biographer introduces her triumphant translation with this happy comment on the margin: “How welcome is death to them that have nothing to do but die!” Well, that was exactly Christiana’s case. She had so packed up at the beginning of her journey; she had so got and had so kept the confidences of all her sons; she had seen them all so married in the Lord, and thus so settled in a life of godliness and virtue; she had, in short, lived the life of a widow indeed, till, when the post came for her, she had nothing left to do but just to rise up and follow

him. His token to her was an arrow with a point sharpened with love, let easily into her heart, which by degrees wrought so effectually with her that at the time appointed she must be gone. We have read of arrows of death sharpened sometimes with steel and sometimes with poison; but this arrow, shot from heaven, was sharpened to a point with love. Indeed, that arrow, or the very fellow of it, had been shot into Christiana's heart long ago when she stood at that spot somewhat ascending where was a cross and a sepulchre; and, especially, ever since the close of Greatheart's great discourse on pardon by deed. For the hearing of that famous discourse had made her exclaim: "Oh! Thou loving One, it makes my heart bleed to think that Thou shouldest bleed for me! Oh! Thou blessed One, Thou deservest to have me, for Thou hast bought me! Thou deservest to have me all, for Thou hast paid for me ten thousand times more than I am worth!" Now it was with all that love working effectually in her heart that Christiana called for her children to give them her blessing. And what a comfort it was to her to see them all around her with the mark of the kingdom on their foreheads, and with their garments white. "My sons and my daughters," she said, "be you all ready against the time His post calls for you." Then she called for Mr. Valiant-for-truth, and entreated him to have an eye on her children, and to speak comfortably to them if at any time he saw them faint. And then she gave Mr. Standfast her ring. "Behold," she said, as Mr. Honest came in—"Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" Then Mr. Ready-to-halt came in, and then Mr. Despondency and his daughter Much-afraid, and then Mr. Feeble-mind. Now the day drew on that Christiana must be gone. So the road was full of people to see her take her journey. But, behold! all the banks beyond the river were full of horses and chariots which were come down from above to accompany her to the City gates, so she came forth and entered the river with a beckon of farewell to those that followed her to the river-side. The last word she was heard to say here was, "I come, Lord, to be with Thee, and to bless Thee." But with all this, you must not suppose that this good woman, this mother in Israel, had forgotten her grandchildren. She would sooner have forgotten her own children. But she was too good a woman to forget either. For long ago, away back at the river on this side the Delectable Mountains, she had said to her four daughters—I must tell you exactly what she has said: "Here," she said, "in this meadow there are cotes and folds for sheep, and an house is built here also for the nourishing and bringing up of those lambs, even the babes of those women that go on pilgrimage. Also there is One here who can have compassion and that can gather these lambs with His arm and carry them in His bosom. This Man, she said, will house and harbour and succour the little ones, so that none of them shall be lacking in time to come. This Man, if any of them go astray or be lost, He will bring them again, He will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen them that are sick. So they were content to commit their little ones to that Man, and all this was to be at the charge of the King, and so it was as a hospital to young children and orphans." And now I shall sum up my chief impressions of Christiana under the three heads of her mind, her heart, and her widowhood indeed.

1. The mother of Christian's four sons was a woman of real mind, as so many of the maidens, and wives, and widows of Puritan England and Covenanting Scotland were. You gradually gather that impression just from being beside her as the journey goes on. She does not speak much; but, then, there is always something individual, remarkable, and memorable in what she says. I have a notion of my own that Christiana must have been a reader of that princely Puritan, John Milton. And if that was so, that of itself would be certificate enough as to her possession of mind. There is always a dignity and a strength about her utterances that make us feel sure that she had always

had a mind far above her neighbours, Mrs. Bat's-eyes, Mrs. Light-mind, and Mrs. Know-nothing. The first time she opens her mouth in our hearing she lets fall an expression that Milton had just made famous in his Samson—

"Ease to the body some, none to the mind

From restless thoughts, that like a deadly swarm

Of hornets armed no sooner found alone,

But rush upon me thronging, and present

Times past, what once I was, and what am now." Nor can I leave this point without asserting it to you that no church and no school of theology has ever developed the mind as well as sanctified the heart of the common people like the preaching of the Puritan pulpit. Matthew Arnold was not likely to over-estimate the good that Puritanism had done to England. Indeed, in his earlier writings he sometimes went out of his way to lament the hurt that the Puritan spirit had done to liberality of life and mind in his native land. But in his riper years we find him saying: "Certainly," he says, "I am not blind to the faults of the Puritan discipline, but it has been an invaluable discipline for that poor, inattentive, and immoral creature, man. And the more I read history and the more I see of mankind, the more I recognise the value of the Puritan discipline." And in that same Address he "founded his best hopes for that so enviable and unbounded country in which he was speaking, America, on the fact that so many of its millions had passed through the Puritan discipline." John Milton was a product of that discipline on the one hand, as John Bunyan was on the other. Christiana was another of its products in the sphere of the family, just as Matthew Arnold himself had some of his best qualities out of the same fruitful school.

2. Her heart, her deep, strong, tender heart, is present on every page of Christiana's noble history. Her heart keeps her often silent when the water in her eyes becomes all the more eloquent. When she does let her heart utter itself in words, her words are fine and memorable. As, for one instance, after Greatheart's discourse on redemption. "O Mercy, that thy father and mother were here; yea, and Mrs. Timorous also. Nay, I wish with all my heart now that here was Madam Wanton, too. Surely, surely, their hearts would be affected, nor could the fear of the one, nor the powerful lusts of the other, prevail with them to go home again, and to refuse to become good pilgrims." But it was not so much what she said herself that brought out the depth and tenderness of Christiana's heart, it was rather the way her heart loosened other people's tongues. You must all have felt how some people's presence straitens your heart and sews up your mouth. While there are other people, again, whose simple presence unseals your heart and makes you eloquent. We ministers keenly feel that both in our public and in our private ministrations. There are people in whose hard and chilling presence we cannot even say grace as we should say it. Whereas, we all know other people, people of a heart, that is, whose presence somehow so touches our lips that we always when near them rise far above ourselves. Christiana did not speak much to her guides and instructors and companions, but they always spoke their best to her, and it was her heart that did it.

3. And then a widow indeed is just a true and genuine widow; a widow not in her name and in her weeds only, but still more in her deep heart, in her whole life, and in her garnered experience. "Honour widows that are widows indeed. Now, she that is a widow indeed and desolate, trusteth in

God, and continueth in supplications and in prayers night and day. Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work." These are the true marks and seals and occupations of a widow indeed. And if she has had unparalleled trials and irreparable losses, she has her corresponding consolations and compensations. For she has a freedom to go about and do good, a liberty and an experience that neither the unmarried maiden nor the married wife can possibly have. She can do multitudes of things that in the nature of things neither of them can attempt to do. Things that would be both unseemly and impossible for other women to say or to do are both perfectly seemly and wholly open for her to say and to do. Her widowhood is a sacred shield to her. Her sorrow is a crown of honour and a sceptre of authority to her. She is consulted by the young and the inexperienced, by the forsaken and by the forlorn, as no other human being ever is. She has come through this life, and by a long experience she knows this world and the hearts that fill it and make it what it is. A widow indeed can show a sympathy, and give a counsel, and speak with a weight of wisdom that one's own mother cannot always do. All you who by God's sad dispensation are now clothed in the "white and wimpled folds" of widowhood, let your prayer and your endeavour day and night be that God would guide and enable you to be widows indeed. And, if you do, you shall want neither your occupation nor your honour.

Chapter 50

# 050. The Enchanted Ground

L THE ENCHANTED GROUND “Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel.”—Balaam.

“I saw then in my dream that they went till they came into a certain country whose air naturally tended to make one drowsy if he came a stranger to it. And here Hopeful began to be very dull and heavy of sleep, wherefore he said unto Christian, I do now begin to grow so drowsy that I can scarcely hold up mine eyes; let us lie down here and take one nap.” And then when we turn to the same place in the Second Part we read thus: “By this time they were got to the Enchanted Ground, where the air naturally tended to make one drowsy. And that place was all grown over with briars and thorns, excepting here and there, where was an enchanted arbour, upon which, if a man sits, or in which if a man sleeps, ’tis a question, say some, whether they shall ever rise or wake again in this world. Now, they had not gone far, but a great mist and darkness fell upon them all, so that they could scarce, for a great while, see the one the other. Wherefore they were forced for some time to feel for one another by words, for they walked not by sight. Nor was there on all this ground so much as one inn or victualling-house wherein to refresh the feebler sort. Then they came to an arbour, warm, and promising much refreshing to the pilgrims, for it was finely wrought above head, beautified with greens, and furnished with couches and settles. It also had a soft couch on which the weary might lean. This arbour was called The Slothful Man’s Friend, on purpose to allure, if it might be, some of the pilgrims there to take up their rest when weary. This, you must think, all things considered, was tempting. I saw in my dream also that they went on in this their solitary way till they came to a place at which a man is very apt to lose his way. Now, though when it was light, their guide could well enough tell how to miss those ways that led wrong, yet in the dark he was put to a stand. But he had in his pocket a map of all ways leading to or from the Celestial City, wherefore he struck a light (for he never goes also without his tinder-box), and takes a view of his book or map, which bids him be careful in that place to turn to the right-hand way. Then I thought with myself, who that goeth on pilgrimage but would have one of those maps about him, that he may look when he is at a stand, which is the way to take?”

1. “But what is the meaning of all this?” asked Christiana of the guide. “This Enchanted Ground,”—her able and experienced friend answered her, “this is one of the last refuges that the enemy to pilgrims has; wherefore it is, as you see, placed almost at the end of the way, and so it standeth against us with the more advantage. For when, thinks the enemy, will these fools be so desirous to sit down as when they are weary, and when so like to be weary as when almost at their journey’s end? Therefore it is, I say, that the Enchanted Ground is placed so nigh to the land Beulah and so near the end of their race; wherefore let pilgrims look to themselves lest they fall asleep till none can waken them.” “That masterpiece of Bunyan’s insight into life, the Enchanted Ground,” says Mr. Louis Stevenson, “where his allegory cuts so deep to people looking seriously on life.” Yes, indeed, Bunyan’s insight into life! And his allegory that cuts so deep! For a neophyte, and one with little insight into life, or into himself, would go to look for this land of darkness and thorns and pitfalls, alternated with arbours and settles and soft couches—one new to life and to

himself, I say, would naturally expect to see all that confined to the region between the City of Destruction and the Slough of Despond; or, at the worst, long before, and never after, the House Beautiful. But Bunyan looked too straight at life and too unflinchingly into his own heart to lay down his sub-Celestial lands in that way; and when we begin to look with a like seriousness on the religious life, and especially when we begin to look bold enough and deep enough into our own heart, then we too shall freely acknowledge the splendid master-stroke of Bunyan in the Enchanted Ground. That this so terrible experience is laid down almost at the end of the Celestial way—the blaze of light that pours upon our heads fairly startles us, while at the same time it comforts us and assures us. That this Enchanted Ground, which has proved so fatal to so many false pilgrims, and so all but fatal to so many true pilgrims, should lie around the very borders of Beulah, and should be within all but eye-shot of the Celestial City itself,—that is something to be thankful for, and something to lay up in the deepest and the most secret place in our heart. That these pilgrims, after all their feastings and entertainments—after the Delectable Mountains and the House Beautiful—should all be plunged upon a land where there was not so much as a roadside inn, where the ways were so dark and so long that the pilgrims had to shout aloud in order to keep together, where, instead of moon or stars, they had to walk in the spark of a small tinder-box—what an encouragement and assurance to us is all that! That is no strange thing, then, that is now happening to us, when, after our fine communion season, we have suddenly fallen back into this deep darkness, and are cast into these terrible temptations, and feel as if all our past experiences and attainments and enjoyments had been but a self-delusion and a snare. That we should all but have fallen fast asleep, and all but have ceased both from watching against sin and from waiting upon God—well, that is nothing more than Hopeful himself would have done had he not had a wary old companion to watch over him, and to hold his eyes open. Let all God's people present who feel that they are nothing better of all they have enjoyed of Scriptures and sacraments, but rather worse; let all those who feel sure that they have wandered into a castaway land, so dark, so thorny, so miry, and so lonely is their life—let them read this masterpiece of John Bunyan again and again and take heart of hope.

"When Saints do sleepy grow, let them come hither

And hear how these two pilgrims talk together;

Yea, let them hear of them, in any wise,

Thus to keep ope their drowsy slumb'ring eyes;

Saints' fellowship, if it be managed well,

Keeps them awake, and that in spite of hell."

2. But far worse than all its briars and thorns, far more fatal than all its ditches and pitfalls, were the enchanted arbours they came on here and there planted up and down that evil land. For those arbours are all of this fatal nature, that if a man falls asleep in any of them it arises a question whether he shall ever come to himself again in this world. Now, where there are no inns nor victualling-houses, no Gaius and no Mr. Mnason, what a danger all those ill-intended arbours scattered all up and down that country become! Well, then, the first enchanted arbour that the pilgrims came to was built just inside the borders of the land, and it was called The Stranger's Arbour—so many new-comers had lain down in it never to rise again. The young and the

inexperienced, with those who were naturally of a believing, buoyant, easy mind, lay down in hundreds here. Hopeful's mind was naturally a mind of a soft and easy and self-indulgent cast; and had he been alone that day, or had he had for a companion a man of a less wary, less anxious, and less urgent mind than Christian was, Hopeful had taken a nap, as he so confidingly called it—a fatal nap in that arbour built by the enemy of pilgrims, just on purpose for the young and the ignorant, the inexperienced and the self-indulgent.

3. The Slothful Man's Arbour has been already described. It was a warm arbour, and it promised much refreshing to the pilgrims. It also had in it a soft couch on which the weary might lean. "Let us lie down here and take just one nap; we shall be refreshed if we take a nap!" "Do you not remember," said the other, "that one of the shepherds bid us beware of the Enchanted Ground? And he meant by that that we should beware of sleeping; wherefore let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober." Now, what is a nap? And what is it to take a nap in our religion? The New Testament is full of warnings to those who read it and go by it—most solemn and most fearful warnings—against sleep. Now, have you any clear idea in your minds as to what this divinely denounced sleep is? Sleep is good and necessary in our bodily life. We would not live long if we did not sleep; we would soon go out of our mind; we would soon lose our senses if we did not sleep. Insomnia is one of the worst symptoms of our eager, restless, over-worked age. "He giveth His beloved sleep"; and while they sleep their corn grows they know not how. But sleep in the great exhortation-passages of the Holy Scriptures does not mean rest and restoration; it means in all those passages insensibility, stupidity, danger, and death. In our nightly sleep, and in the measure of its soundness, we are utterly dead to the world around us. Men may come into our house and rob us of our most precious possessions; they may even come up to our bed and murder us; our whole house may be in a blaze about us; we may only awaken to leap out of sleep into eternity. Now, we are all in a sleep like that in our souls. There is above us, and around us, and beneath us, and within us the eternal world, and we are all sound asleep; we are all stone-dead in the midst of it. Devils and wicked men are stealing our treasures for eternity, and we are sound asleep; hell is already kindling our bed beneath us, but we smell not its flames, or we only catch the first gasp of them before we make our everlasting bed among them. Therefore let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober. What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise and call upon thy God! When the guide shook Heedless and Too-bold off their settles in that slothful arbour, the one of them said with his eyes still shut, "I will pay you when I take my money," and the other said, "I will fight so long as I can hold my sword in my hand." At that one of the children laughed. "What is the meaning of that?" asked Christiana. The guide said: "They talk in their sleep." So they did, and so do all men. For this whole world is full of settles on which men sleep and talk in their sleep. The newspapers to-morrow morning will all be full to overflowing of what men have said and written to-day and yesterday in their sleep. The shops and the banks and the exchanges will all be full of men making promises and settling accounts in their sleep. They will finger their purses, and grasp their swords, and all in their sleep. And not children but devils will laugh as they hear the folly that falls from men's lips who are besotted with spiritual sleep and drugged with spiritual and fleshly sin. A dream cometh through the multitude of business. I had just got this length in this lecture the other night when I went to sleep. And in my sleep one of my people came to me and asked me if I could make it quite clear and plain to him what it would be for a man like him after a communion-time to begin to walk with God. And I just wish I could make the things of the Enchanted Ground as plain to myself and to you to-night as I was able to make a

walk with God plain to myself and to my visitor that night in my ministerial dream. I often wish that my business mind worked as well in my study chair and in my pulpit as it sometimes does in my bed and in my sleep. “Now, I beheld in my dream that they talked more in their sleep at this time than ever they did in all their journey. And being in a muse thereabout, the gardener said even to me: Wherefore musest thou at the matter? It is the nature of the fruit of the grapes of those vineyards to go down so sweetly as to cause the lips of them that are asleep to speak.” The reason my poor lips spake so sweetly about a walk with God that night most have been because I spent all the summer evening before walking with God and with you in the vineyards of Beulah.

4. Listen to Samson, shorn of his locks, as he shakes himself off a soft and sweetly-worked couch in The Sensual Man’s Arbour:

“No, no;

It fits not; thou and I long since are twain;

Nor think me so unwary or accurst

To bring my feet again into the snare

Where once I have been caught; I know thy trains,

Though dearly to my cost, thy gins, and toils;

Thy fair enchanted cup and warbling charms

No more on me have power, their force is null’d;

So much of adder’s wisdom have I learnt

To fence my ear against thy sorceries.

If in my flower of youth and strength, when all men

Loved, honour’d, fear’d me, thou alone couldst hate me,

Thy husband, slight me, sell me, and forego me;

How wouldst thou use me now, blind, and thereby

Deceivable, in most things as a child,

Helpless, thence easily contemn’d, and scorn’d,

And last neglected? How wouldst thou insult,

When I must live uxorious to thy will

In perfect thraldom! How again betray me,

Bearing my words and doings to the lords

To gloss upon, and censuring, frown or smile!

This jail I count the house of liberty

To thine, whose doors my feet shall never enter."

5. The love of money to some men is the root of all evil. There came once a youth to St. Philip Neri and, flushed with joy, told him that his parents after much entreaty had at length allowed him to study law. St. Philip was not a man of many words. "What then?" the saint simply asked the shining youth. "Then I shall become a lawyer!" "And then?" pursued Philip. "Then," said the young man, "I shall earn a nice sum of money, and I shall purchase a fine country house, procure a carriage and horses, marry a handsome and rich wife, and lead a delightful life!" "And then?" "Then,"—the youth reflected as death and eternity arose before his eyes, and from that day he began to take care of his immortal soul. Philip with one word snatched that young man's soul off The Rich Man's Settle.

6. The Vain Man's Settle draws down many men to shame and everlasting contempt. Praise a vain man or a vain woman aright and enough and you will get them to do anything you like. Give a vain man sufficient publicity in your paper or on your platform and he will become a spy, a traitor, and cut-throat in your service. The sorcerer's cup of praise—keep it full enough in a vain man's hand, and he will sleep in the arbour of vanity till he wakens in hell. Madam Bubble, the arch-enchantress, knows her own, and she has, with her purse, her promotion, and her praise, bought off many a promising pilgrim.

7. And then she, by virtue of whose sorceries this whole land is drugged and enchanted, is such a bold slut that she will build a Sacred Arbour even, and will fill it full of religious enchantment for you rather than lose hold of you. She will consecrate places and persons and periods for you if your taste lies that way; she will build costly and stately churches for you; she will weave rich vestments and carve rich vessels; she will employ all the arts; she will even sanctify and set apart and seat aloft her holy men—what will she not do to please you, to take you, to intoxicate and enchant you? She will juggle for your soul equally well whether you are a country clown in a feeing-market or a fine lady of æsthetic tastes and religious sensibilities in the capital and the court. But I shall let Father Faber speak, who can speak on this subject both with authority and with attraction. "She can open churches, and light candles on the altar, and intone Te Deums to the Majesty on high. She can pass into the beauty of art, into the splendour of dress, and into the magnificence of furniture. She can sit with high principles on her lips discussing a religious vocation and praising God and sanctity. On the benches of bishops and in the pages of good books you will find her, and yet she is all the while the same huge evil creature." Yes; she is all the time the same Madam Bubble who offered to Standfast her body, her purse, and her bed.

Now, would you know for yourself, like the communicant who came to me in my sleep, how you are ever to get past all those arbours, and settles, and seats, and couches, with all their sweet sorceries and intoxicating enchantments—would you in earnest know that? Then study well the case of one Standfast. Especially the time when she who enchants this whole ground hereabouts set so upon that pilgrim. In one word, it was this: he remembered his Lord; and, like his Lord, he fell on his face; and as his Lord would have it, His servant's lips as they touched the ground touched also the healing plant harmony and he was saved.

"A small unsightly root,

But of divine effect.

Unknown, and like esteem’d, and the dull swain

Treads on it daily with his clouted shoon;

And yet more med’cinal is it than that moly

That Hermes once to wise Ulysses gave;

He call’d it haemony, and gave it me,

And bade me keep it as of sovran use

’Gainst all enchantments, mildew, blast, or damp,

Or ghastly furies’ apparition.

And now I find it true; for by this means

I knew the foul enchantress, though disguised,

Enter’d the very lime-twigs of her spells,

And yet came off. If you have this about you

(As I will give you when you go) you may

Boldly assault the necromancer’s hall:

Where if she be, with dauntless hardihood,

And brandished blade, rush on her, break her glass,

And shed her luscious liquor on the ground,

And seize her wand.”

Prayer, my sin-beset brethren, standfast prayer, is the otherwise unidentified haemony whose best habitat was the Garden of Gethsemane; and with that holy root in your heart and in your mouth, there is “no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel.”

Chapter 51

# 051. The Land of Beulah

LI THE LAND OF BEULAH “Thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah.”—Isaiah. The first thing that John Bunyan tells us about the land of Beulah is this—that the shortest and the best way to the Celestial City lies directly through that land. The land of Beulah has its own indigenous inhabitants indeed. Old men dwell in the streets of Beulah, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. The streets of the city also are full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof. The land of Beulah has its frequent visitors also, and its welcome guests from the regions above. Some of the shining ones come down from time to time and make a short sojourn in Beulah. The angels in heaven have such a desire to see the lands from which God’s saints come up that at certain seasons all the suburbs of the Celestial City are full of those shining servants of God and of the Lamb. But what made the dreamer to smile and to talk so in his sleep was when he saw that all the upward ways to the Celestial City ran through the land of Beulah. He saw also in his dream how all the pilgrims blamed themselves so bitterly now because they had misspent so much of their time and strength in the ways below, and so had not come sooner to see and to taste this blessed land. But, at the same time, as it was, they all rejoiced with a great joy because that, after all their delays and all their wanderings, their way still led them through the borders of Beulah. Now, my dear fellow-communicants, how shall we find our way at once, and without any more wanderings, into that so desirable land? How shall we attain to walk its streets all the rest of our days with our staff in our hand? How shall we hope to see our boys and our girls playing in the streets of Beulah, and eating all their days of its sweet and its healing fruits? How shall we and our children with us henceforth escape the Slough of Despond, and Giant Despair’s dungeon, and the Valley of the Shadow of Death? The word, my brethren, the answer to all that, is nigh unto us, even in our mouth and in our heart. For faith, simple faith, will do all that both for us and for our children beside us. A heart-feeding faith in God, in the word of God, and in the Son of God, will do it. Faith, and then obedience. For obedience, my brethren, is Beulah. All obedience is already Beulah. Holy obedience will bring the whole of Beulah into your heart and into mine at any moment. It is disobedience that makes so many of those who otherwise are true pilgrims to miss so much of the land of Beulah. Ask any affable old man with his staff in his hand for very age, and he will tell you that it was his disobedience that kept him so long out of the land of Beulah. While, let any man, and above all, let any young man, begin early to live a life of believing obedience, and he will grow up and grow old and see his children’s children playing around his staff in the streets of Beulah. Let any young man make the experiment for himself upon obedience and upon Beulah. Let him not too easily believe any dreamer or even any seer about obedience and about the land of Beulah. It is his own matter and not theirs; and let him make experiment upon it all for his own satisfaction and assurance. Let any young man, then, try prayer as his first step into obedience, and especially secret prayer. Let him shut his door to-night, and let him see if he is not already inside one of the gates of Beulah. Let him deny himself every day also, if it is only in a very little thing. Let him say sternly to his own heart every hour of temptation, No! never! and on the spot a sweet waft of Beulah’s finest spices will fall upon his face. “The ineffable joy of renouncing joy” will every day make the lonely wilderness of this world a constant Beulah to such a man. For, to live at

all times, in all places, and in all things for other men, and never and in nothing for yourself—that is the deepest secret of Beulah. To say it, if need be, three times to-night on your face and in a sweat of blood, “Not my will, but Thine be done!”—that will to-night turn the garden of Gethsemane itself into the very garden of Glory. Do you doubt it? Are you not yet able to believe it? Then hear about it from One who has Himself come through it. Hear His word upon the whole matter who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. “Come unto Me,” says the King of Beulah, “all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” So after He had washed their feet, and had taken His garments and was set down again, He said unto them,“ Know ye what I have done to you? For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them. If ye love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever. If a man love Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him and will make Our abode with him. Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. These things have I spoken unto you that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. Hitherto ye have asked nothing in My name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am.” And thus I saw in my dream that their way lay right through the land of Beulah, in which land they solaced themselves for a season.

2. “They solaced themselves.” Now, solace is just the Latin solatium, which, again, is just a soothing, an assuaging, a compensation, an indemnification. Well, that land into which the pilgrims had now come was very soothing to their ruffled spirits and to their weary hearts. It assuaged their many and sore griefs also. It more than compensated them for all their labours and all their afflictions. And it was a full indemnification to them for all that they had forsaken and lost both in beginning to be pilgrims and in enduring to the end. The children of Israel had their first solace in their pilgrimage at Elim, where there were twelve wells of water and threescore and ten palm-trees; and they encamped there by the waters. And then they had their last and crowning solace when the spies came back from Eshcol with a cluster of grapes that they bare between two upon a staff, with pomegranates and figs. And Moses kept solacing his charge all the way through the weary wilderness with such strong consolations as these: “For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig-trees; a land of oil-olive and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack anything in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass.” Our Lord spake solace to His doubting and fainting disciples also in many such words as these: “Verily, I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children for the kingdom of God’s sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.” The Mount of Transfiguration also was His own Beulah-solace; and the Last Supper and the prayer with which it wound up were given to our Lord and to His disciples as a very Eshcol-cluster from the Paradise above. Now, I saw in my dream that they solaced themselves in the land of Beulah for a season. Yea, here they heard continually the singing of birds. (The Latin poets called the birds solatia ruris, because they refreshed and cheered the rustic labourers with their sweet singing.) And every day the flowers appeared in the earth, and the voice of the turtle was heard in the land. In this country the sun shineth night and day, for there is no night there.

3. “In this country the sun shineth night and day.” How much Standfast must have enjoyed that land of light you may guess when you recollect that he came from Darkland, which lies in the hemisphere right opposite to the land of Beulah. In Darkland the sun never shines to be called sunshine at all. All the days of his youth, Standfast told his companions, he had sat beside his father and his mother in that obscure land where to his sorrow his father and his mother still sat. But in Beulah “the rose of evening becomes silently and suddenly the rose of dawn.” This land lies beyond the Valley of the Shadow of Death, neither could they from this place so much as see Doubting Castle. Now, Doubting Castle is a dismal place for any soul of man to be shut up into. And in that dark hold there are dungeons dug for all kinds of doubting souls. There are dungeons dug for the souls of men whose doubts are in their intellects, as well as for those also whose doubts arise out of their hearts. Some men read themselves into Doubting Castle, and some men sin and sell themselves to its giant. God casts some of His own children all their days into those dungeons as a punishment for their life of disobedience; He casts others down into chains of darkness because of their idleness and unfruitfulness. But Beulah is far away from Doubting Castle. Beulah is a splendid spot for a studious man to lodge in. For what a clear light shines night and day in Beulah! To what far horizons a man’s eye will carry him in Beulah! What large speculations rise before him who walks abroad in Beulah! How clear the air is in Beulah, how clean the heart and how unclouded the eye of its inhabitants! The King’s walks are in Beulah, and the arbours where He delighteth to be. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall be admitted to see God in the land of Beulah. In the land of Beulah the sun shall no more be thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and thy God thy glory!

4. “In this land also the contract between the bride and the bridegroom is renewed.” Now, there is no other day so bitter in any man’s life as that day is on which his bridal contract is broken off. And it is the very perfection and last extremity of bitterness when his contract is broken off because of his own past life. Let all those, then, who would fain enter into that sweet contract think well about it beforehand. Let them look back into all their past life. For all their past life will be sure to find them out on the day of their espousals. If they have their enemies—as all espoused men have—this is the hour and the power of their enemies. The day on which any man’s espousals are published is a small and local judgment-day to him. For all the men, and, especially, all the women, who have ever been injured by him, or who have injured themselves upon him; all the men and all the women who for any reason, and for no reason, hate both him and his happiness,—their tongues and their pens will take no sleep till they have got his contract if they can, broken off. And even when the bridegroom is too innocent, or the bride too true, or God too good to let the contract continue long to be broken off, that great goodness of God and that great trust of his contracted bride will only make the bridegroom walk henceforth more softly and rejoice with more trembling. And that is a most excellent mind. I know no better mind in which any man, guilty or innocent, can enter on a married life. I sometimes tell the bridegrooms that I can take a liberty with to keep saying to themselves all the way up to the marriage altar the tenth verse of the 103rd psalm; as well as when they come up afterwards to the baptismal font: “He hath not dealt with us after our sins nor rewarded us after our iniquities.” And it is surely Beulah itself, at its very best, it is surely Beulah above itself, when a happy bridegroom is full of that humble and happy mind, and when he is in one and the same moment reconciled both to his bride on earth and to his God and Father in heaven. In this land, therefore, in the land of Beulah, the contract between the

bride and the bridegroom is renewed; yea, as the bridegroom rejoiceth over his bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.

5. The salaams and salutations also that they were met with as often as they went out to walk in the streets thereof were a constant surprise, satisfaction, and sweetness to the fearful pilgrims. No passer-by ever once frowned or scowled upon them because their faces were Zionward, as they do in our cities. No one ever treated them with scorn or contempt because they were poor or unlettered. No man's face either turned dark at them or was turned away from them as they passed up the street. They never, all the time they abode in Beulah, took to the lanes of the city to escape the unkind looks of any of its citizens. Greatheart's hand was never away from his helmet. His helmet was never well on his head. His always bare and unhelmeted head said to all the men of Beulah, I love and honour and trust you. You would not hurt a hair of my head. And so on, till all the streets of Beulah were one buzz of salutation, congratulation, and benediction. Here they heard voices from out of the city, loud voices, saying, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him. Here all the inhabitants of the country called them the holy people, the redeemed of the Lord, sought out, a city not forsaken.

6. Now, as they walked in this land they had more rejoicing than in parts more remote from the kingdom to which they were bound. And still drawing nigh to that city they had yet a more perfect view thereof. It was builded of pearls and precious stones, also the street thereof was paved with gold, so that by reason of the natural glory of the city and the reflection of the sunbeams upon it, Christian with desire fell sick. Hopeful also had a fit or two of the same disease. Wherefore here they lay by it awhile, crying out because of their pangs, If you see my beloved, tell him that I am sick of love. There are in all good cases of recovery three successive stages of soul-sickness. True, soul-sickness always runs its own course, and it always runs its own course in its own order. This special sickness first shows itself when the soul becomes sick with sin. We have that sickness set forth in many a psalm, notably in the thirty-eighth psalm; and in a multitude of other scriptures, both old and new, this evil disease is dealt with if we had only the eyes and the heart to read such scriptures. The second stage of this sickness is when a sinner is not so much sick with the sin that dwelleth in him as sick of himself. Sinfulness in its second stage becomes so incorporate with the sinner's whole life—sin so becomes the sinner's very nature, and, indeed, himself,—that all his former loathing of sin passes over henceforth into loathing of himself. This is the most desperate stage in any man's sickness; but, bad as it is, incurable as it is, it must be passed into before the third stage of the healing process can either be experienced or understood. In the case in hand, by the time the pilgrims had come to Beulah they had all had their full share of sin and of themselves till they here entered on an altogether new experience. "Christian with desire fell sick," we read, "and Hopeful also had a fit or two of the same disease. Wherefore here they lay by it a while, crying out because of their pangs, If you see my beloved, tell him that I am sick of love." David, Paul, Bernard, Bunyan himself, Rutherford, Brainerd, M'Cheyne, and many others crowd in upon the mind. I shall but instance John Flavel and Mrs. Jonathan Edwards, and so close. John Flavel being once on a journey set himself to improve the time by meditation, when his mind grew intent, till at length he had such ravishing tastes of heavenly joys, and such a full assurance of his interest therein, that he utterly lost the sight and sense of this world and all its concerns, so that for hours he knew not where he was. At last, perceiving himself to be faint, he sat down at a spring, where he refreshed himself, earnestly desiring, if it were the will of God, that

he might there leave the world. His spirit reviving, he finished his journey in the same delightful frame, and all that night the joy of the Lord still overflowed him so that he seemed an inhabitant of the other world. The only other case of love-sickness I shall touch on to-night I take from under the pen of a sin-sick and love-sick author, who has been truthfully described as “one of the first, if not the very first, of the masters of human reason,” and, again, as “one of the greatest of the sons of men.” “There is a young lady in New-haven,” says Edwards, “who is so loved of that Great Being who made and rules the world, that there are certain seasons in which this Great Being in some way or other invisible comes to her and fills her mind with exceeding sweet delight, so that she hardly cares for anything but to meditate upon Him. She looks soon to dwell wholly with Him, and to be ravished with His love and delight for ever. Therefore, if you present all this world before her, with the richest of its treasures, she disregards it and cares not for it, and is unmindful of any pain or affliction. She has a strange sweetness in her mind, and a singular piety in her affections; is most just and conscientious in all her conduct; and you could not persuade her to do anything wrong or sinful, if you would give her the whole world. She loves to be alone, walking in the fields and groves, and seems to have some one invisible always communing with her.” And so on, all through her seraphic history. “Now, if such things are too enthusiastic,” says the author of A Careful and a Strict Enquiry into the Freedom of the Will, “if such things are the offspring of a distempered brain, let my brain be possessed evermore of that blessed distemper! If this be distraction, I pray God that the whole world of mankind may all be seized with this benign, meek, beneficent, beatific, glorious distraction! The peace of God that passeth all understanding; rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory; God shining in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ; with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of God, and being changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord; being called out of darkness into marvellous light, and having the day-star arise in our hearts! What a sweet distraction is that! And out of what a heavenly distemper and out of what a sane enthusiasm has all that come to us!”

“More I would speak: but all my words are faint;

Celestial Love, what eloquence can paint?

No more, by mortal words, can be expressed,

But all Eternity shall tell the rest.”

# 052. The Swelling of Jordan

LII THE SWELLING OF JORDAN “The swelling of Jordan.”—Jeremiah.

“Fore-fancy your deathbed,” says Samuel Rutherford. “Take an essay,” he says in his greatest book, that perfect mine of gold and jewels, Christ Dying and Drawing Sinners to Himself—“Take an essay and a lift at your death, and look at it before it actually comes to your door.” And so we shall. Since it is appointed to all men once to die, and after death the judgment; and since our death and our judgment are the only two things that we are absolutely sure about in our whole future, we shall henceforth fore-fancy those two events much more than we have done in the past. And to assist us in that; to quicken our fancy, to kindle it, to captivate it, and to turn our fancy wholly to our salvation, we have all the entrancing river-scenes in the Pilgrim’s Progress set before us; a succession of scenes in which Bunyan positively revels in his exquisite fancies, clothing them as he does, all the time, in language of the utmost beauty, tenderness, pathos, power, and dignity. Let us take our stand, then, on the bank of the river and watch how pilgrim after pilgrim behaves himself in those terrible waters. We are all voluntary spectators to-night, but we shall all be compulsory performers before we know where we are.

1. On entering the river even Christian suddenly began to sink. Fore-fancy that. All the words he spake still tended to discover that he had great horror of mind and hearty fears that he would die in that river; here also he was much in the troublesome thoughts of the sins he had committed both since and before he began to be a pilgrim. Fore-fancy that also, all you converted young men. Hopeful, therefore, had much to do to keep his brother’s head above water; yea, sometimes he would be quite gone down, and then in a while he would rise up again half-dead. Then I saw in my dream that Christian was in a muse a while; to whom also Hopeful added this word, “Be of good cheer; Jesus Christ maketh thee whole.” And with that Christian broke out with a loud voice, “When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee.” Then they both took courage and the enemy was after that as still as a stone till they were gone over. Fore-fancy that also. There is one other thing out of that crossing that I hope I shall remember when I am in the river: “Be of good cheer,” said Hopeful to his sinking fellow—“Be of good cheer, my brother, I feel the bottom, and it is good.” “Hold His hand fast,” wrote Samuel Rutherford to Lady Kenmure. “He knows all the fords. You may be ducked in His company but never drowned. Put in your foot, then, and wade after Him. And be sure you set your feet always upon the stepping-stones.” Yes; fore-fancy those stepping-stones, and often practise your feet upon them before the time.

2. “Good woman,” said the post to Christiana, the wife of Christian the pilgrim; “Hail, good woman, I bring thee tidings that the Master calleth for thee, and expecteth thee to stand in His presence in clothes of immortality within this ten days.” Fore-fancy that also. Now the day was come that she must be gone. And so the road was full of people to see her take her journey. But, behold, all the banks beyond the river were full of horses and chariots which were come down from above to accompany her to the city gate. So she came forth and entered the river with a beckon of farewell

to those that followed her to the river-side. And thus she went and entered in at the gate with all the ceremonies of joy that her husband had done before her. Fore-fancy, if you can, some of those ceremonies of joy.

3. When Mr. Fearing came to the river where was no bridge, there again he was in a heavy case. Now, he said, he should be drowned for ever and never see that Face with comfort he had come so many miles to behold. And here also I took notice of what was very remarkable; the water of that river was lower at this time than ever I saw it in all my life. So he went over at last not much above wet-shod. Fore-fancy and fore-arrange, if it be possible, for a passage like that. When he was going tip to the gate Mr. Greatheart began to take his leave of him, and to wish him a good reception above. “I shall,” he said, “I shall.” Be fore-assured, also, of a reception like that.

4. In process of time there came a post to the town again, and his business was this time with Mr. Ready-to-halt. So he inquired him out and said to him, “I am come to thee in the name of Him whom thou hast loved and followed, though upon crutches. And my message is to tell thee that He expects thee at His table to sup with Him in His kingdom the next day after Easter.” After this Mr. Ready-to-halt called for his fellow-pilgrims and told them, saying,“I am sent for, and God shall surely visit you also. These crutches,” he said, “I bequeath to my son that he may tread in my steps, with a hundred warm wishes that he may prove better than I have done.” When he came to the brink of the river, he said, “Now I shall have no more need of these crutches, since yonder are horses and chariots for me to ride on.” The last words he was heard to say were, “Welcome life!” Let all ready-to-halt hearts fore-fancy all that.

5. Then Mr. Feeble-mind called for his friends and told them what errand had been brought to him, and what token he had received of the truth of the message. “As for my feeble mind,” he said, “that I shall leave behind me, for I shall have no need of that in the place whither I go. When I am gone, Mr. Valiant, I desire that you would bury it in a dung-hill.” This done, and the day being come in which he was to depart, he entered the river as the rest. His last words were, “Hold out faith and patience.” Fore-fancy such an end as that to your feeble mind also.

6. Did you ever know a family, or, rather, the relics of a family, where there was just a decrepit old father and a lone daughter left to nurse him through his second childhood? All his other children are either married or dead; but both marriage and death have spared Miss Much-afraid to watch over the dotage-days of Mr. Despondency; till one summer afternoon the old man fell asleep in his chair to waken where old men are for ever young. And in a day or two there were two new graves side by side in the old churchyard. Even death could not divide this old father and his trusty child. And so when the time was come for them to depart, they went down together to the brink of the river. The last words of Mr. Despondency were,“Farewell night and welcome day.” His daughter went through the river singing, but none could understand what it was she said. Fore-fancy that, all you godly old men, with a daughter who has made a husband and children to herself of her old father.

7. As I hear Old Honest shouting “Grace reigns!” I always remember what a lady told me about a saying of her poor Irish scullery-girl. The mistress and the servant were reading George Eliot’s Life together in the kitchen, and when they came to her deathbed, on the pillow of which Thomas A’ Kempis lay open, “Mem,”said the girl, “I used to read that old book in the convent; but it is a better book to live upon than to die upon.” Now, that was exactly Old Honest’s mind. He lived upon one

book, and then he died upon another. He lived according to the commandments of God, but he died according to the comforts of the Gospel. Now, we read in his history how that the river at that time overflowed its banks in some places. But Mr. Honest had in his lifetime spoken to one Good-conscience to meet him at the river, the which he also did, and lent him his hand, and so helped him over. All the same, the last words of Mr. Honest still were, “Grace reigns!” And so he left the world. Fore-fancy whether or no you are making, as one has said, “an assignation with terror” at that same river-side.

8. Standfast was the last of the pilgrims to go over the river. Standfast was left longest on this side the river because his Master could best trust him here. His Master had to take away many of His other servants from the evil to come, but He could trust Standfast. You can safely trust a man who takes to his knees in every hour of temptation, as Standfast was wont to do. “This river,” he said,“has been a terror to many. Yea, the thoughts of it have often frighted me also. The waters, indeed, are to the palate bitter, and to the stomach cold; yet the thoughts of what I am going to, and of the conduct that awaits me on the other side, doth lie as a glowing coal at my heart. I see myself now at the end of my journey, and my toilsome days are all ended. I am going now to see that head that was crowned with thorns, and that face that was spit upon for me. His name has been to me as a civet-box, yea, sweeter than all perfumes. His word I did use to gather for my food, and for antidotes against my faintings. He has held me up, and I have kept myself from mine iniquities. Yea, my steps hath He strengthened in the way.” Now, while he was thus in discourse his countenance changed, his strong man bowed down under him, and after he had said, “Take me, for I come to Thee,” he ceased to be seen of them. Fore-fancy, if you have the face, an end like that for yourself.

This, then, is how Christian and Hopeful and Christiana and Old Honest and all the rest did in the swelling river. But the important point is, HOW WILL YOU DO? Have you ever fore-fancied how you will do? Have you ever, among all your many imaginings, imagined yourself on your deathbed? Have you ever thought you heard the doctor whisper, “To-night”? Have you ever lain low in your bed and listened to the death-rattle in your own throat? And have you still listened to the awful silence in the house after all was over? Have you ever shot in imagination the dreadful gulf that stands fixed between life and death, and between time and eternity? Have you ever tried to get a glimpse beforehand of your own place where you will be an hour after your death, when they are putting the grave-clothes on your still warm body, and when they are measuring your corpse for your coffin? Where will you be by that time? Have you any idea? Can you fancy it? Did you ever try? And if not, why not? “My lord,” wrote Jeremy Taylor to the Earl of Carbery, when sending him the first copy of the Holy Dying,—“My lord, it is a great art to die well, and that art is to be learnt by men in health; for he that prepares not for death before his last sickness is like him that begins to study philosophy when he is going to dispute publicly in the faculty. The precepts of dying well must be part of the studies of them that live in health, because in other notices an imperfect study may be supplied by a frequent exercise and a renewed experience; but here, if we practise imperfectly once, we shall never recover the error, for we die but once; and therefore it is necessary that our skill be more exact since it cannot be mended by another trial.” How wise, then, how far-seeing, how practical, and how urgent is the prophet’s challenge and demand. “How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?”

1. Well, then, let us be practical before we close, and let us descend to particulars. Let us take the prophet's question and run it through some parts and some practices of our daily life as already dying men. And, to begin with, I have such a great faith in good books, whether we are to live or die, that I am impelled to ask you all at this point, and under shelter of this plain-spoken prophet, What books have you laid in for your deathbed, and for the weeks and months and even years before your death bed? What do you look forward to be reading when Jordan is beginning to swell and roll for you and to leap up toward your doorstep? If you get good from good books—everybody does not—but supposing you are one of those who do, what books can you absolutely count upon, without fail, to put you in the best possible frame for the river, and for the convoy across, and for the ceremonies of joy on the other side? What special Scriptures will you have read every day to you? "Read," said John Knox to his weeping wife, "read where I first cast my anchor." An old lady I once knew used to say to me at every visit, "The Fifty-first Psalm." She was the daughter of a Highland minister, and the wife of a Highland minister, and the mother of a Highland minister, and of an elder to boot. "The Fifty-first Psalm," she said, and sometimes, "One of Hart's hymns also." What is your favourite psalm and hymn? Mr. James Taylor of Castle Street has several large-type libraries in his catalogue. Mr. Taylor might start a much worse paying speculation than a large-type library for the river-side; or, some select booklets for deathbeds. The series might well open with "The Ninetieth Psalm" in letters an inch deep. Scholars die as well as illiterates, and there might be provided for them, among other things, The Phædo in two languages, Plato's and Jowett's. Then The Seven Sayings from the Cross. Bellarmine's Art of Dying Well would stand well beside John Bunyan's Dying Sayings. And, were I the editor, I would put in Bishop Andrewes' Private Devotions, if only for my own last use. Then Richard Baxter's Saint's Rest, and John Howe's Platonico-Puritan book, Blessedness of the Righteous. Then Bernard's "New Jerusalem," "The Sands of Time are sinking," "Rock of Ages," and such like. These are some of the little books I have within reach of my bed against the hour when the post blows his first horn for me. You might tell me some of your deathbed favourites.

2. Who will be your most welcome minister during your last days on earth? For whom would you send to-night if the post were suddenly to sound his horn at your side on your way home from church? I can well believe it would not be your own minister. I have known fathers and mothers in this congregation to send for other ministers than their own minister when terrible trouble came upon them, and both my conscience and my common sense absolutely approved of the step they took. Five students were once sitting and talking together in a city in which there was to be an execution to-morrow morning. They were talking about the murderer who was to be executed in the morning, and about the minister he had sent for to come to see him. And, like students, they began to put it to one another—Suppose you were to be executed to-morrow, for what minister in the city, or even in the whole land, would you send? And, like students again, they said—Let each one write down on a piece of paper the name of the minister he would choose to be beside him at the last, and we shall see each man's last choice. They did so, when to their astonishment it was discovered that they had all written the same minister's name! I do not know that they all went to his church every Sabbath while they were young and, well, and not yet under sentence of death. I do not think they did. For when I was in his church there was only a handful of old and decayed-looking people in it. The chief part of the congregation seemed to me to be a charity school. And I gathered from all that a lesson—several lessons, and this among the rest—that crowded passages do not always wait upon the best pastors; and this also, that a waft of death

soon discovers to us a true minister from an incompetent and a counterfeit minister.

3. Writing to one of his correspondents about his correspondent's long-drawn-out deathbed, Samuel Rutherford said to him, "It is long-drawn-out that you may have ample time to go over all your old letters and all your still unsettled accounts before you take ship." Have you any such old letters lying still unanswered? Have you any such old accounts lying still unsettled? Have you made full reparation and restitution for all that you and yours have done amiss? Fore-fancy that you will soon be summoned into His presence who has said: "herefore, if thou bring thy gift before the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him." You know all about Zacchaeus. I need not tell his story over again. But as I write these lines I take up a London newspaper and my eyes light on these lines: "William Avary was a man of remarkable gifts, both of mind and character. He dedicated the residue of his strength wholly to works of piety. In middle age he failed in business, and in his old age, when better days came, he looked up such of his old creditors as could be found and divided among them a sum of several thousand pounds." Look up such of your old creditors as you can find, and that not in matters of money alone. And, be sure you begin to do it now, before the horn blows. For, as sure as you take your keys and open your old repositories, you will come on things you had completely forgotten that will take more time and more strength, ay, and more resources, than will then be at your disposal. Even after you have begun at once and done all that you can do, you will have to do at last as Samuel Rutherford told George Gillespie to do: "Hand over all your bills, paid and unpaid, to your Surety. Give Him the keys of the drawer, and let Him clear it out for Himself after you are gone."

4. And then, pray often to God for a clear mind between Him and you, and for a quick, warm, and heaven-hungry heart at the last. And take a promise from those who watch beside your bed that they will not drug and stupefy you even though you should ask for it. Whatever your pain, and it is all in God's hand, make up your mind, if it be possible, to bear it. It cannot be greater than the pain of the cross, and your Saviour would not touch their drugs, however well-intended. He determined to face the swelling of Jordan and to enter His Father's house with an unclouded mind. Try your very uttermost to do the same. I cannot believe that the thief even would have let the gall so much as touch his lips after Christ had said to him, "To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise!" Well, if your mind was ever clear and keen, let it be at its clearest and its keenest at the last. Let your mind and your heart be full of repentance, and faith, and love, and hope, and all such saying graces, and let them all be at their fullest and brightest exercise, at that moment. Be on the very tip-toe of expectation as the end draws near. Another pang, another gasp, one more unutterable sinking of heart and flesh as if you were going down into the dreadful pit—and then the abundant entrance, and the beatific vision! What wilt thou do then? What wilt thou say then? Hast thou thy salutation and thy song ready? And what will it be?

Chapter 53

# 053. Holy War - The Book

LIII THE BOOK '—the book of the wars of the Lord.'—Moses.

John Bunyan's Holy War was first published in 1682, six years before its illustrious author's death. Bunyan wrote this great book when he was still in all the fulness of his intellectual power and in all the ripeness of his spiritual experience. TheHoly War is not the Pilgrim's Progress—there is only one Pilgrim's Progress. At the same time, we have Lord Macaulay's word for it that if the Pilgrim's Progress did not exist the Holy War would be the best allegory that ever was written: and even Mr. Froude admits that the Holy Waralone would have entitled its author to rank high up among the acknowledged masters of English literature. The intellectual rank of the Holy War has been fixed before that tribunal over which our accomplished and competent critics preside; but for a full appreciation of its religious rank and value we would need to hear the glad testimonies of tens of thousands of God's saints, whose hard-beset faith and obedience have been kindled and sustained by the study of this noble book. The Pilgrim's Progress sets forth the spiritual life under the scriptural figure of a long and an uphill journey. The Holy War, on the other hand, is a military history; it is full of soldiers and battles, defeats and victories. And its devout author had much more scriptural suggestion and support in the composition of theHoly War than he had even in the composition of the Pilgrim's Progress. For Holy Scripture is full of wars and rumours of wars: the wars of the Lord; the wars of Joshua and the Judges; the wars of David, with his and many other magnificent battle-songs; till the best known name of the God of Israel in the Old Testament is the Lord of Hosts; and then in the New Testament we have Jesus Christ described as the Captain of our salvation. Paul's powerful use of armour and of armed men is familiar to every student of his epistles; and then the whole Bible is crowned with a book all sounding with the battle-cries, the shouts, and the songs of soldiers, till it ends with that city of peace where they hang the trumpet in the hall and study war no more. Military metaphors had taken a powerful hold of our author's imagination even in the Pilgrim's Progress, as his portraits of Greatheart and Valiant-for-truth and other soldiers sufficiently show; while the conflict with Apollyon and the destruction of Doubting Castle are so many sure preludes of the coming Holy War. Bunyan's early experiences in the great Civil War had taught him many memorable things about the military art; memorable and suggestive things that he afterwards put to the most splendid use in the siege, the capture, and the subjugation of Mansoul. The Divine Comedy is beyond dispute the greatest book of personal and experimental religion the world has ever seen. The consuming intensity of its author's feelings about sin and holiness, the keenness and the bitterness of his remorse, and the rigour and the severity of his revenge, his superb intellect and his universal learning, all set ablaze by his splendid imagination—all that combines to make the Divine Comedy the unapproachable masterpiece it is. John Bunyan, on the other hand, had no learning to be called learning, but he had a strong and a healthy English understanding, a conscience and a heart wholly given up to the life of the best religion of his religious day, and then, by sheer dint of his sanctified and soaring imagination and his exquisite style, he stands forth the peer of the foremost men in the intellectual world. And thus it is that the great unlettered religious world possesses in John Bunyan all but all

that the select and scholarly world possesses in Dante. Both Dante and Bunyan devoted their splendid gifts to the noblest of services—the service of spiritual, and especially of personal religion; but for one appreciative reader that Dante has had Bunyan has had a hundred. Happy in being so like his Master in so many things, Bunyan is happy in being like his unlettered Master in this also, that the common people hear him gladly and never weary of hearing him.

It gives by far its noblest interest to Dante's noble book that we have Dante himself in every page of his book. Dante is taken down into Hell, he is then led up through Purgatory, and after that still up and up into the very Paradise of God. But that hell all the time is the hell that Dante had dug and darkened and kindled for himself. In the Purgatory, again, we see Dante working out his own salvation with fear and trembling, God all the time working in Dante to will and to do of His good pleasure. And then the Paradise, with all its sevenfold glory, is just that place and that life which God hath prepared for them that love Him and serve Him as Dante did. And so it is in the Holy War. John Bunyan is in the Pilgrim's Progress, but there are more men and other men than its author in that rich and populous book, and other experiences and other attainments than his. But in the Holy War we have Bunyan himself as fully and as exclusively as we have Dante in the Divine Comedy. In the first edition of theHoly War there is a frontispiece conceived and executed after the anatomical and symbolical manner which was so common in that day, and which is to be seen at its perfection in the English edition of Jacob Behmen. The frontispiece is a full-length likeness of the author of the Holy War, with his whole soul laid open and his hidden heart 'anatomised.' Why, asked Wordsworth, and Matthew Arnold in our day has echoed the question—why does Homer still so live and rule without a rival in the world of letters? And they answer that it is because he always sang with his eye so fixed upon its object. 'Homer, to thee I turn.' And so it was with Dante. And so it was with Bunyan. Bunyan'sHoly War has its great and abiding and commanding power over us just because he composed it with his eye fixed on his own heart. My readers, I have somewhat else to do,

Than with vain stories thus to trouble you;

What here I say some men do know so well

They can with tears and joy the story tell . . .

Then lend thine ear to what I do relate,

Touching the town of Mansoul and her state:

For my part, I (myself) was in the town,

Both when 'twas set up and when pulling down.

Let no man then count me a fable-maker,

Nor make my name or credit a partaker

Of their derision: what is here in view

Of mine own knowledge, I dare say is true. The characters in the Holy War are not as a rule nearly so clear-cut or so full of dramatic life and movement as their fellows are in the Pilgrim's Progress, and Bunyan seems to have felt that to be the case. He shows all an author's fondness for the

children of his imagination in the Pilgrim's Progress. He returns to and he lingers on their doings and their sayings and their very names with all a foolish father's fond delight. While, on the other hand, when we look to see him in his confidential addresses to his readers returning upon some of the military and municipal characters in the Holy War, to our disappointment he does not so much as name a single one of them, though he dwells with all an author's self-delectation on the outstanding scenes, situations, and episodes of his remarkable book.

What, then, are some of the more outstanding scenes, situations, and episodes, as well as military and municipal characters, in the book now before us? And what are we to promise ourselves, and to expect, from the study and the exposition of the Holy War in these lectures? Well, to begin with, we shall do our best to enter with mind, and heart, and conscience, and imagination into Bunyan's great conception of the human soul as a city, a fair and a delicate city and corporation, with its situation, surroundings, privileges and fortunes. We shall then enter under his guidance into the famous and stately palace of this metropolitan city; a palace which for strength might be called a castle, for pleasantness a paradise, and for largeness a place so copious as to contain all the world. The walls and the gates of the city will then occupy and instruct us for several Sabbath evenings, after which we shall enter on the record of the wars and battles that rolled time after time round those city walls, and surged up through its captured gates till they quite overwhelmed the very palace of the king itself. Then we shall spend, God willing, one Sabbath evening with Loth-to-stoop, and another with old Ill-pause, the devil's orator, and another with Captain Anything, and another with Lord Willbewill, and another with that notorious villain Clip-promise, by whose doings so much of the king's coin had been abused, and another with that so angry and so ill-conditioned churl old Mr. Prejudice, with his sixty deaf men under him. Dear Mr. Wet-eyes, with his rope upon his head, will have a fit congregation one winter night, and Captain Self-denial another. We shall have another painful but profitable evening before a communion season with Mr. Prywell, and so we shall eat of that bread and drink of that cup. Emmanuel's livery will occupy us one evening, Mansoul's Magna Charta another, and her annual Feast-day another. Her Established Church and her beneficed clergy will take up one evening, some Skulkers in Mansoul another, the devil's last prank another, and then, to wind up with, Emmanuel's last speech and charge to Mansoul from his chariot-step till He comes again to accomplish her rapture. All that we shall see and take part in; unless, indeed, our Captain comes in anger before the time, and spears us to the earth when He finds us asleep at our post or in the act of sin at it, which may His abounding mercy forbid! And now take these three forewarnings and precautions.

1. First:—All who come here on these coming Sabbath evenings will not understand the Holy War all at once, and many will not understand it at all. And little blame to them, and no wonder. For, fully to understand this deep and intricate book demands far more mind, far more experience, and far more specialised knowledge than the mass of men, as men are, can possibly bring to it. This so exacting book demands of us, to begin with, some little acquaintance with military engineering and architecture; with the theory of, and if possible with some practice in, attack and defence in sieges and storms, winter campaigns and long drawn-out wars. And then, impossible as it sounds and is, along with all that we would need to have a really profound, practical, and at first-hand acquaintance with the anatomy of the human subject, and especially with cardiac anatomy, as well as with all the conditions, diseases, regimen and discipline of the corrupt heart of man. And then it is enough to terrify any one to open this book or to enter this church when he is told that if he

comes here he must be ready and willing to have the whole of this terrible and exacting book fulfilled and experienced in himself, in his own body and in his own soul.

2. And, then, you will not all like the Holy War. The mass of men could not be expected to like any such book. How could the vain and blind citizen of a vain and blind city like to be wakened up, as Paris was wakened up within our own remembrance, to find all her gates in the hands of an iron-hearted enemy? And how could her sons like to be reminded, as they sit in their wine gardens, that they are thereby fast preparing their city for that threatened day when she is to be hung up on her own walls and bled to the white? Who would not hate and revile the book or the preacher who prophesied such rough things as that? Who could love the author or the preacher who told him to his face that his eyes and his ears and all the passes to his heart were already in the hands of a cruel, ruthless, and masterful enemy? No wonder that you never read the Holy War. No wonder that the bulk of men have never once opened it. The Downfall is not a favourite book in the night-gardens of Paris.

3. And then, few, very few, it is to be feared, will be any better of the Holy War. For, to be any better of such a terrible book as this is, we must at all costs lay it, and lay it all, and lay it all at once, to heart. We must submit ourselves to see ourselves continually in its blazing glass. We must stoop to be told that it is all, in all its terrors and in all its horrors, literally true of ourselves. We must deliberately and resolutely set open every gate that opens in on our heart—Ear-gate and Eye-gate and all the gates of sense and intellect, day and night, to Jesus Christ to enter in; and we must shut and bolt and bar every such gate in the devil's very face, and in the face of all his scouts and orators, day and night also. But who that thinks, and that knows by experience what all that means, will feel himself sufficient for all that? No man: no sinful man. But, among many other noble and blessed things, the Holy War will show us that our sufficiency in this impossibility also is all of God. Who, then, will enlist? Who will risk all and enlist? Who will matriculate in the military school of Mansoul? Who will submit himself to all the severity of its divine discipline? Who will be made willing to throw open and to keep open his whole soul, with all the gates and doors thereof, to all the sieges, assaults, capitulations, submissions, occupations, and such like of the war of gospel holiness? And who will enlist under that banner now?

'Set down my name, sir,' said a man of a very stout countenance to him who had the inkhorn at the outer gate. At which those who walked upon the top of the palace broke out in a very pleasant voice, 'Come in, come in;

Eternal glory thou shalt win.'

We have no longer, after what we have come through, any such stoutness in our countenance, yet will we say to-night with him who had it, Set down my name also, sir!

# 054. The City of Mansoul and its Cinque Ports

LIV THE CITY OF MANSOUL AND ITS CINQUE PORTS '—a besieged city.'—Isaiah. Our greatest historians have been wont to leave their books behind them and to make long journeys in order to see with their own eyes the ruined sites of ancient cities and the famous fields where the great battles of the world were lost and won. We all remember how Macaulay made a long winter journey to see the Pass of Killiecrankie before he sat down to write upon it; and Carlyle's magnificent battle-pieces are not all imagination; even that wonderful writer had to see Frederick's battlefields with his own eyes before he could trust himself to describe them. And he tells us himself how Cromwell's splendid generalship all came up before him as he looked down on the town of Dunbar and out upon the ever-memorable country round about it. John Bunyan was not a great historian; he was only a common soldier in the great Civil War of the seventeenth century; but what would we not give for a description from his vivid pen of the famous fields and the great sieges in which he took part? What a find John Bunyan's 'Journals'and 'Letters Home from the Seat of War' would be to our historians and to their readers! But, alas! such journals and letters do not exist. Bunyan's complete silence in all his books about the battles and the sieges he took his part in is very remarkable, and his silence is full of significance. The Puritan soldier keeps all his military experiences to work them all up into his Holy War, the one and only war that ever kindled all his passions and filled his every waking thought. But since John Bunyan was a man of genius, equal in his own way to Cromwell and Milton themselves, if I were a soldier I would keep ever before me the great book in which Bunyan's experiences and observations and reflections as a soldier are all worked up. I would set that classical book on the same shelf with Cæsar'sCommentaries and Napier's Peninsula, and Carlyle's glorious battle-pieces. Even Cæsar has been accused of too great dryness and coldness in his Commentaries, but there is neither dryness nor coldness in John Bunyan's Holy War. To read Bunyan kindles our cold civilian blood like the waving of a banner and like the sound of a trumpet. The situation of the city of Mansoul occupies one of the most beautiful pages of this whole book. The opening of the Holy War, simply as a piece of English, is worthy to stand beside the best page of the Pilgrim's Progress itself, and what more can I say than that? Now, the situation of a city is a matter of the very first importance. Indeed, the insight and the foresight of the great statesmen and the great soldiers of past ages are seen in nothing more than in the sites they chose for their citadels and for their defenced cities. Well, then, as to the situation of Mansoul, 'it lieth,' says our military author, 'just between the two worlds.' That is to say: very much as Germany in our day lies between France and Russia, and very much as Palestine in her day lay between Egypt and Assyria, so does Mansoul lie between two immense empires also. And, surely, I do not need to explain to any man here who has a man's soul in his bosom that the two armed empires that besiege his soul are Heaven above and Hell beneath, and that both Heaven and Hell would give their best blood and their best treasure to subdue and to possess his soul. We do not value our souls at all as Heaven and Hell value them. There are savage tribes in Africa and in Asia who inhabit territories that are sleeplessly envied by the expanding and extending nations of Europe. Ancient and mighty empires in Europe raise armies, and build navies, and levy taxes, and spill the blood of their bravest sons like water in

order to possess the harbours, and the rivers, and the mountains, and the woods amid which their besotted owners roam in utter ignorance of all the plots and preparations of the Western world. And Heaven and Hell are not unlike those ancient and over-peopled nations of Europe whose teeming millions must have an outlet to other lands. Their life and their activity are too large and too rich for their original territories, and thus they are compelled to seek out colonies and dependencies, so that their surplus population may have a home. And, in like manner, Heaven is too full of love and of blessedness to have all that for ever shut up within itself, and Hell is too full of envy and ill-will, and thus there continually come about those contentions and collisions of which the Holy War is full. And, besides, it is with Mansoul and her neighbour states of Heaven and Hell just as it is with some of our great European empires in this also. There is no neutral zone, no buffer state, no silver streak between Mansoul and her immediate and military neighbours. And thus it is that her statesmen, and her soldiers, and even her very common-soldier sentries must be for ever on the watch; they must never say peace, peace; they must never leave for one moment their appointed post. And then, as for the wall of the city, hear our excellent historian's own words about that. 'The wall of the town was well built,' so he says. 'Yea, so fast and firm was it knit and compact together that, had it not been for the townsmen themselves, it could not have been shaken or broken down for ever. For here lay the excellent wisdom of Him that builded Mansoul, that the walls could never be broken down nor hurt by the most mighty adverse potentate unless the townsmen gave their consent thereto.' Now, what would the military engineers of Chatham and Paris and Berlin, who are now at their wits' end, not give for a secret like that! A wall impregnable and insurmountable and not to be sapped or mined from the outside: a wall that could only suffer hurt from the inside! And then that wonderful wall was pierced from within with five magnificently answerable gates. That is to say, the gates could neither be burst in nor any way forced from without. 'This famous town of Mansoul had five gates, in at which to come, out of which to go; and these were made likewise answerable to the walls; to wit, impregnable, and such as could never be opened or forced but by the will and leave of those within. The names of the gates were these: Ear-gate, Eye-gate, Mouth-gate; in short, 'the five senses,' as we say. In the south of England, in the time of Edward the Confessor and after the battle of Hastings, there were five cities which had special immunities and peculiar privileges bestowed upon them, in recognition of the special dangers to which they were exposed and the eminent services they performed as facing the hostile shores of France. Owing to their privileges and their position, the 'Cinque Ports' came to be cities of great strength, till, as time went on, they became a positive weakness rather than a strength to the land that lay behind them. Privilege bred pride, and in their pride the Cinque Ports proclaimed wars and formed alliances on their own account: piracies by sea and robberies by land were hatched within their walls; and it took centuries to reduce those pampered and arrogant ports to the safe and peaceful rank of ordinary English cities. The Revolution of 1688 did something, and the Reform Bill of 1832 did more to make Dover and her insolent sisters like the other free and equal cities of England; but to this day there are remnants of public shows and pageantries left in those old towns sufficient to witness to the former privileges, power, and pride of the famous Cinque Ports. Now, Mansoul, in like manner, has her cinque ports. And the whole of the Holy War is one long and detailed history of how the five senses are clothed with such power as they possess; how they abuse and misuse their power; what disloyalty and despite they show to their sovereign; what conspiracies and depredations they enter into; what untold miseries they let in upon themselves and upon the land that lies behind them; what years and years of siege,

legislation, and rule it takes to reduce our bodily senses, those proud and licentious gates, to their true and proper allegiance, and to make their possessors a people loyal and contented, law-abiding and happy. The Apostle has a terrible passage to the Corinthians, in which he treats of the soul and the senses with tremendous and overwhelming power. ‘Your bodies and your bodily members,’ he argues, with crushing indignation, ‘are not your own to do with them as you like. Your bodies and your souls are both Christ’s. He has bought your body and your soul at an incalculable cost. What! know ye not that your body is nothing less than the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, and ye are not any more your own? know ye not that your bodies are the very members of Christ?’ And then he says a thing so terrible that I tremble to transcribe it. For a more terrible thing was never written. ‘Shall I then,’filled with shame he demands, ‘take the members of Christ and make them the members of an harlot?’ O God, have mercy on me! I knew all the time that I was abusing and polluting myself, but I did not know, I did not think, I was never told that I was abusing and polluting Thy Son, Jesus Christ. Oh, too awful thought. And yet, stupid sinner that I am, I had often read that if any man defile the temple of God and the members of Christ, him shall God destroy. O God, destroy me not as I see now that I deserve. Spare me that I may cleanse and sanctify myself and the members of Christ in me, which I have so often embruted and defiled. Assist me to summon up my imagination henceforth to my sanctification as Thine apostle has here taught me the way. Let me henceforth look at my whole body in all its senses and in all its members, the most open and the most secret, as in reality no more my own. Let me henceforth look at myself with Paul’s deep and holy eyes. Let me henceforth seat Christ, my Redeemer and my King, in the very throne of my heart, and then keep every gate of my body and every avenue of my mind as all not any more mine own but His. Let me open my eye, and my ear, and my mouth, as if in all that I were opening Christ’s eye and Christ’s ear and Christ’s mouth; and let me thrust in nothing on Him as He dwells within me that will make Him ashamed or angry, or that will defile and pollute Him. That thought, O God, I feel that it will often arrest me in time to come in the very act of sin. It will make me start back before I make Christ cruel or false, a wine-bibber, a glutton, or unclean. I feel at this moment as if I shall yet come to ask Him at every meal, and at every other opportunity and temptation of every kind, what He would have and what He would do before I go on to take or to do anything myself. What a check, what a restraint, what an awful scrupulosity that will henceforth work in me! But, through that, what a pure, blameless, noble, holy and heavenly life I shall then lead! What bodily pains, diseases, premature decays; what mental remorses, what shames and scandals, what self-loathings and what self-disgusts, what cups bitterer to drink than blood, I shall then escape! Yes, O Paul, I shall henceforth hold with thee that my body is the temple of Christ, and that I am not my own, but that I am bought with a transporting price, and can, therefore, do nothing less than glorify God in my body and in my spirit which are God’s. ‘This place,’ says the Pauline author of the Holy War—‘This place the King intended but for Himself alone, and not for another with Him.’

But, my brethren, lay this well, and as never before, to heart—this, namely, that when you thus begin to keep any gate for Christ, your King and Captain and Better-self,—Ear-gate, or Eye-gate, or Mouth-gate, or any other gate—you will have taken up a task that shall have no end with you in this life. Till you begin in dead earnest to watch your heart, and all the doors of your heart, as if you were watching Christ’s heart for Him and all the doors of His heart, you will have no idea of the arduousness and the endurance, the sleeplessness and the self-denial, of the undertaking.

‘Mansoul! Her wars seemed endless in her eyes;

She’s lost by one, becomes another’s prize.

Mansoul! Her mighty wars, they did portend

Her weal or woe and that world without end.

Wherefore she must be more concern’d than they

Whose fears begin and end the self-same day.’

‘We all thought one battle would decide it,’ says Richard Baxter, writing about the Civil War. ‘But we were all very much mistaken,’ sardonically adds Carlyle. Yes; and you will be very much mistaken too if you enter on the war with sin in your soul, in your senses and in your members, with powder and shot for one engagement only. When you enlist here, lay well to heart that it is for life. There is no discharge in this war. There are no ornamental old pensioners here. It is a warfare for eternal life, and nothing will end it but the end of your evil days on earth.

# 055. Ear-Gate

LV

EAR-GATE ‘Take heed what ye hear.’—Our Lord in Mark.

‘Take heed how you hear.’—Our Lord in Luke. This famous town of Mansoul had five gates, in at which to come, out at which to go, and these were made likewise answerable to the walls—to wit, impregnable, and such as could never be opened nor forced but by the will and leave of those within. ‘The names of the gates were these, Ear-gate, Eye-gate,’ and so on. Dr. George Wilson, who was once Professor of Technology in our University, took this suggestive passage out of the Holy War and made it the text of his famous lecture in the Philosophical Institution, and then he printed the passage on the fly-leaf of his delightful book The Five Gateways of Knowledge. That is a book to read sometime, but this evening is to be spent with the master.

For, after all, no one can write at once so beautifully, so quaintly, so suggestively, and so evangelically as John Bunyan. ‘The Lord Willbewill,’ says John Bunyan, ‘took special care that the gates should be secured with double guards, double bolts, and double locks and bars; and that Ear-gate especially might the better be looked to, for that was the gate in at which the King’s forces sought most to enter. The Lord Willbewill therefore made old Mr. Prejudice, an angry and ill-conditioned fellow, captain of the ward at that gate, and put under his power sixty men, called Deafmen; men advantageous for that service, forasmuch as they mattered no words of the captain nor of the soldiers. And first the King’s officers made their force more formidable against Ear-gate: for they knew that unless they could penetrate that no good could be done upon the town. This done, they put the rest of their men in their places; after which they gave out the word, which was, Ye must be born again! And so the battle began. Now, they in the town had planted upon the tower over Ear-gate two great guns, the one called High-mind and the other Heady. Unto these two guns they trusted much; they were cast in the castle by Diabolus’s ironfounder, whose name was Mr. Puff-up, and mischievous pieces they were. They in the camp also did stoutly, for they saw that unless they could open Ear-gate it would be in vain to batter the wall.’ And so on, through many allegorical, and, if sometimes somewhat laboured, yet always eloquent, pungent, and heart-exposing pages. With these for our text let us now take a rapid glance at what some of the more Bunyan-like passages in the prophets and the psalms say about the ear; how it is kept and how it is lost; how it is used and how it is abused.

1. The Psalmist uses a very striking expression in the 94th Psalm when he is calling for justice, and is teaching God’s providence over men. ‘He that planted the ear,’ the Psalmist exclaims, ‘shall he not hear?’ And, considering his church and his day, that is not a bad remark of Cardinal Bellarmine on that psalm,—‘the Psalmist’s word planted,’ says that able churchman, ‘implies design, in that the ear was not spontaneously evolved by an act of vital force, but was independently created by God for a certain object, just as a tree, not of indigenous growth, is of set purpose planted in some new place by the hand of man.’ The same thing is said in Genesis, you remember, about the Garden of Eden,—the Lord planted it and put the man and the woman,

whose ears he had just planted also, into the garden to dress it and keep it. How they dressed the garden and kept it, and how they held the gate of their ear against him who squatted down before it with his innuendoes and his lies, we all know to our as yet unrepaired, though not always irreparable, cost.

2. One would almost think that the scornful apostle had the Garden of Eden in his eye when he speaks so bitterly to Timothy of a class of people who are cursed with ‘itching ears.’ Eve’s ears itched unappeasably for the devil’s promised secret; and we have all inherited our first mother’s miserable curiosity. How eager, how restless, how importunate, we all are to hear that new thing that does not at all concern us; or only concerns us to our loss and our shame. And the more forbidden that secret is to us, and the more full of inward evil to us—insane sinners that we are—the more determined we are to get at it. Let any forbidden secret be in the keeping of some one within earshot of us and we will give him no rest till he has shared the evil thing with us. Let any specially evil page be published in a newspaper, and we will take good care that that day’s paper is not thrown into the waste-basket; we will hide it away, like a dog with a stolen bone, till we are able to dig it up and chew it dry in secret. The devil has no need to blockade or besiege the gate of our ear if he has any of his good things to offer us. The gate that can only be opened from within will open at once of itself if he or any of his newsmongers but squat down for a moment before it. Shame on us, and on all of us, for our itching ears.

3. Isaiah speaks of some men in his day whose ears were ‘heavy’ and whose hearts were fat, and the Psalmist speaks of some men in his day whose ears were ‘stopped’ up altogether. And there is not a better thing in Bunyan at his very best than that surly old churl called Prejudice, so ill-conditioned and so always on the edge of anger. By the devil’s plan of battle old Prejudice was appointed to be warder of Ear-gate, and to enable him to keep that gate for his master he had sixty deaf men put under him, men most advantageous for that post, forasmuch as it mattered not to them what Emmanuel and His officers said. There could be no manner of doubt who composed that inimitable passage. There is all the truth and all the humour and all the satire in Old Prejudice that our author has accustomed us to in his best pieces. The common people always get the best literature along with the best religion in John Bunyan. ‘They are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear, and which will not hearken to the voice of charmers charming never so wisely,’ says the Psalmist, speaking about some bad men in his day. Now, I will not stand upon David’s natural history here, but his moral and religious meaning is evident enough. David is not concerned about adders and their ears, he is wholly taken up with us and our adder-like animosity against the truth. Against what teacher, then; against what preacher; against what writer; against what doctrine, reproof, correction, has your churlish prejudice adder-like shut your ear? Against what truth, human or divine, have you hitherto stopped up your ear like the Psalmist’s serpent? To ask that boldly, honestly, and in the sight of God, at yourself to-night, would end in making you the lifelong friend of some preacher, some teacher, some soul-saving truth you have up till to-night been prejudiced against with the rooted prejudice and the sullen obstinacy of sixty deaf men. O God, help us to lay aside all this adder-like antipathy at men and things, both in public and in private life. Help us to give all men and all causes a fair field and no favour, but the field and the favour of an open and an honest mind, and a simple and a sincere heart. He that hath ears, let him hear!

4. As we work our way through the various developments and vicissitudes of the Holy War we shall find Ear-gate in it and in ourselves passing through many unexpected experiences; now held

by one side and now by another. And we find the same succession of vicissitudes set forth in Holy Scripture. If you pay any attention to what you read and hear, and then begin to ask yourselves fair in the face as to your own prejudices, prepossessions, animosities, and antipathies,—you will at once begin to reap your reward in having put into your possession what the Scriptures so often call an ‘inclined’ ear. That is to say, an ear not only unstopped, not only unloaded, but actually prepared and predisposed to all manner of truth and goodness. Around our city there are the remains, the still visible tracks, of roads that at one time took the country people into our city, but which are now stopped up and made wholly impassable. There is no longer any road into Edinburgh that way. There are other roads still open, but they are very roundabout, and at best very uphill. And then there are other roads so smooth, and level, and broad, and well kept, that they are full of all kinds of traffic; in the centre carts and carriages crowd them, on the one side horses and their riders delight to display themselves, and on the other side pedestrians and perambulators enjoy the sun. And then there are still other roads with such a sweet and gentle incline upon them that it is a positive pleasure both to man and beast to set their foot upon them. And so it is with the minds and the hearts of the men and the women who crowd these roads. Just as the various roads are, so are the ears and the understandings, the affections and the inclinations of those who walk and ride and drive upon them. Some of those men’s ears are impassably stopped up by self-love, self-interest, party-spirit, anger, envy, and ill-will,—impenetrably stopped up against all the men and all the truths of earth and of heaven that would instruct, enlighten, convict or correct them. Some men’s minds, again, are not so much shut up as they are crooked, and warped, and narrow, and full of obstruction and opposition. Whereas here and there, sometimes on horseback and sometimes on foot; sometimes a learned man walking out of the city to take the air, and sometimes an unlettered countryman coming into the city to make his market, will have his ear hospitably open to every good man he meets, to every good book he reads, to every good paper he buys at the street corner, and to every good speech, and report, and letter, and article he reads in it. And how happy that man is, how happy his house is at home, and how happy he makes all those he but smiles to on his afternoon walk, and in all his walk along the roads of this life. Never see an I incline’ on a railway or on a driving or a walking road without saying on it before you leave it, ‘I waited patiently for the Lord, and He inclined His ear unto me and heard my cry. Because He hath inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live. Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practise wicked works with them that work iniquity. Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies, and not to covetousness. I have inclined mine heart to perform Thy statutes alway, even unto the end.’

5. Shakespeare speaks in Richard the Second of ‘the open ear of youth,’ and it is a beautiful truth in a beautiful passage. Young men, who are still young men, keep your ears open to all truth and to all duty and to all goodness, and shut your ears with an adder’s determination against all that which ruined Richard—flattering sounds, reports of fashions, and lascivious metres. ‘Our souls would only be gainers by the perfection of our bodies were they wisely dealt with,’ says Professor Wilson in his Five Gateways. ‘And for every human being we should aim at securing, so far as they can be attained, an eye as keen and piercing as that of the eagle; an ear as sensitive to the faintest sound as that of the hare; a nostril as far-scenting as that of the wild deer; a tongue as delicate as that of the butterfly; and a touch as acute as that of the spider. No man ever was so endowed, and no man ever will be; but all men come infinitely short of what they should achieve were they to make their senses what they might be made. The old have outlived their opportunity,

and the diseased never had it; but the young, who have still an undimmed eye, an undulled ear, and a soft hand; an unblunted nostril, and a tongue which tastes with relish the plainest fare—the young can so cultivate their senses as to make the narrow ring, which for the old and the infirm encircles things sensible, widen for them into an almost limitless horizon.'

Take heed what you hear, and take heed how you hear.

# 056. Eye-Gate

LVI

EYE-GATE ‘Mine eye affecteth mine heart.’—Jeremiah.

‘Think, in the first place,’ says the eloquent author of the Five Gateways of Knowledge, ‘how beautiful the human eye is. The eyes of many of the lower animals are, doubtless, very beautiful. You must all have admired the bold, fierce, bright eye of the eagle; the large, gentle, brown eye of the ox; the treacherous, green eye of the cat, waxing and waning like the moon; the pert eye of the sparrow; the sly eye of the fox; the peering little bead of black enamel in the mouse’s head; the gem-like eye that redeems the toad from ugliness, and the intelligent, affectionate expression which looks out of the human-like eye of the horse and dog. There are many other animals whose eyes are full of beauty, but there is a glory that excelleth in the eye of a man. We realise this best when we gaze into the eyes of those we love. It is their eyes we look at when we are near them, and it is their eyes we recall when we are far away from them. The face is all but a blank without the eye; the eye seems to concentrate every feature in itself. It is the eye that smiles, not the lips; it is the eye that listens, not the ear; it is the eye that frowns, not the brow; it is the eye that mourns, not the voice. The eye sees what it brings the power to see. How true is this! The sailor on the look-out can see a ship where the landsman can see nothing. The Esquimaux can distinguish a white fox among the white snow. The astronomer can see a star in the sky where to others the blue expanse is unbroken. The shepherd can distinguish the face of every single sheep in his flock,’ so Professor Wilson. And then Dr. Gould tells us in his mystico-evolutionary, Behmen-and-Darwin book, The Meaning and the Method of Life—a book which those will read who can and ought—that the eye is the most psychical, the most spiritual, the most useful, and the most valued and cherished of all the senses; after which he adds this wonderful and heart-affecting scientific fact, that in death by starvation, every particle of fat in the body is auto-digested except the cream-cushion of the eye-ball! So true is it that the eye is the mistress, the queen, and the most precious, to Creator and creature alike, of all the five senses.

Now, in the Holy War John Bunyan says a thing about the ear, as distinguished from the eye, that I cannot subscribe to in my own experience at any rate. In describing the terrible war that raged round Ear-gate, and finally swept up through that gate and into the streets of the city, he says that the ear is the shortest and the surest road to the heart. I confess I cannot think that to be the actual case. I am certain that it is not so in my own case. My eye is very much nearer my heart than my ear is. My eye much sooner affects, and much more powerfully affects, my heart than my ear ever does. Not only is my eye by very much the shortest road to my heart, but, like all other short roads, it is cram-full of all kinds of traffic when my ear stands altogether empty. My eye is constantly crowded and choked with all kinds of commerce; whole hordes of immigrants and invaders trample one another down on the congested street that leads from my eye to my heart. Speaking for myself, for one assault that is made on my heart through my ear there are a thousand assaults successfully made through my eye. Indeed, were my eye but stopped up; had I but obedience and

courage and self-mortification enough to pluck both my eyes out, that would be half the cleansing and healing and holiness of my evil heart; or at least, the half of its corruption, rebellion, and abominable wickedness would henceforth be hidden from me. I think I can see what led John Bunyan in his day and in this book to make that too strong statement about the ear as against the eye; but it is not like him to have let such an over-statement stand and continue in his corrected and carefully finished work. The prophet Jeremiah, I feel satisfied, would not have subscribed to what is said in the Holy War in extenuation of the eye. That heart-broken prophet does not say that it has been his ear that has made his head waters. It is his eye, he says, that has so affected his heart. The Prophet of the Captivity had all the Holy Warpotentially in his imagination when he penned that so suggestive sentence. And the Latin poet of experience, the grown-up man's own poet, says somewhere that the things that enter by his eye seize and hold his heart much more swiftly and much more surely than those things that but enter by his ear. I shall continue, then, to hold by my text, 'Mine eye affecteth mine heart.'

1. Turning then, to the prophets and proverb-makers of Israel, and then to the New Testament for the true teaching on the eye, I come, in the first place, on that so pungent saying of Solomon that 'the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth.' Look at that born fool, says Solomon, who has his eyes and his heart committed to him to keep. See him how he gapes and stares after everything that does not concern him, and lets the door of his own heart stand open to every entering thief. London is a city of three million inhabitants, and they are mostly fools, Carlyle once said. And let him in this city whose eyes keep at home cast the first stone at those foreign fools. I will wager on their side that many of you here to-night know better what went on in Mashonaland last week than what went on in your own kitchen downstairs, or in your own nursery or schoolroom upstairs. Some of you are ten times more taken up with the prospects of Her Majesty's Government this session, and with the plots of Her Majesty's Opposition, than you are with the prospects of the good and the evil, and the plots of God and the devil, all this winter in your own hearts. You rise early, and make a fight to get the first of the newspaper; but when the minister comes in in the afternoon you blush because the housemaid has mislaid the Bible. Did you ever read of the stargazer who fell into an open well at the street corner? Like him, you may be a great astronomer, a great politician, a great theologian, a great defender of the faith even, and yet may be a stark fool just in keeping the doors and the windows of your own heart. 'You shall see a poor soul,' says Dr. Goodwin, 'mean in abilities of wit, or accomplishments of learning, who knows not how the world goes, nor upon what wheels its states turn, who yet knows more clearly and experimentally his own heart than all the learned men in the world know theirs. And though the other may better discourse philosophically of the acts of the soul, yet this poor man sees more into the corruption of it than they all.' And in another excellent place he says: 'Many who have leisure and parts to read much, instead of ballasting their hearts with divine truth, and building up their souls with its precious words, are much more versed in play-books, jeering pasquils, romances, and feigned staves, which are but apes and peacocks' feathers instead of pearls and precious stones. Foreign and foolish discourses please their eyes and their ears; they are more chameleons than men, for they live on the east wind.'

2. 'If thine eye offend thee'—our Lord lays down this law to all those who would enter into life—'pluck it out and cast it from thee; for it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell-fire.' Does your eye offend you, my brethren? Does your

eye cause you to stumble and fall, as it is in the etymology? The right use of the eye is to keep you from stumbling and falling; but so perverted are the eye and the heart of every sinner that the city watchman has become a partaker with thieves, and our trusted guide and guardian a traitor and a knave. If thine eye, therefore, offends thee; if it places a stone or a tree in thy way in a dark night; if it digs a deep ditch right across thy way home; if it in any way leads thee astray, or lets in upon thee thine enemies—then, surely, thou wert better to be without that eye altogether. Pluck it out, then; or, what is still harder to go on all your days doing, pluck the evil thing out of it. Shut up that book and put it away. Throw that paper and that picture into the fire. Cut off that companion, even if he were an adoring lover. Refuse that entertainment and that amusement, though all the world were crowding up to it. And soon, and soon, till you have plucked your eye as clean of temptations and snares as it is possible to be in this life. For this life is full of that terrible but blessed law of our Lord. The life of all His people, that is; and you are one of them, are you not? You will know whether or no you are one of them just by the number of the beautiful things, and the sweet things, and the things to be desired, that you have plucked out of your eye at His advice and demand. True religion, my brethren, on some sides of it, and at some stages of it, is a terribly severe and sore business; and unless it is proving a terribly severe and sore business to you, look out! lest, with your two hands and your two feet and your two eyes, you be cast, with all that your hands and feet and eyes have feasted on, into the everlasting fires! Woe unto the world because of offences, but woe much more to that member and entrance-gate of the body by which the offence cometh! Wherefore, if thine eye offend thee—!

3. ‘Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.’ Now, if you wish both to preserve your eyes, and to escape the everlasting fires at the same time, attend to this text. For this is almost as good as plucking out your two eyes; indeed, it is almost the very same thing. Solomon shall speak to the man in this house to-night who has the most inflammable, the most ungovernable, and the most desperately wicked heart. You, man, with that heart, you know that you cannot pass up the street without your eye becoming a perfect hell-gate of lust, of hate, of ill-will, of resentment and of revenge. Your eye falls on a man, on a woman, on a house, on a shop, on a school, on a church, on a carriage, on a cart, on an innocent child’s perambulator even; and, devil let loose that you are, your eye fills your heart on the spot with absolute hell-fire. Your presence and your progress poison the very streets of the city. And that, not as the short-sighted and the vulgar will read Solomon’s plain-spoken Scripture, with the poison of lewdness and uncleanness, but with the still more malignant, stealthy, and deadly poison of social, professional, political, and ecclesiastical hatred, resentment, and ill-will. Whoredom and wine openly slay their thousands on all our streets; but envy and spite, dislike and hatred their ten thousands. The fact is, we would never know how malignantly wicked our hearts are but for our eyes. But a sudden spark, a single flash through the eye falling on the gunpowder that fills our hearts, that lets us know a hundred times every day what at heart we are made of. ‘Of a verity, O Lord, I am made of sin, and that my life maketh manifest,’ prays Bishop Andrewes every day. Why, sir, not to go to the street, the direction in which your eyes turn in this house this evening will make this house a very ‘den,’ as our Lord said—yes, a very den to you of temptation and transgression. My son, let thine eyes look right on. Ponder the path of thy feet, turn not to the right hand nor to the left—remove thy foot from all evil!

4. There is still another eye that is almost as good as an eye out altogether, and that is a Job's eye. Job was the first author of that eye and all we who have that excellent eye take it of him. 'I have made a covenant with mine eyes,' said that extraordinary man—that extraordinarily able, honest, exposed and exercised man. Now, you must all know what a covenant is. A covenant is a compact, a contract, an agreement, an engagement. In a covenant two parties come to terms with one another. The two covenanters strike hands, and solemnly engage themselves to one another: I will do this for you if you will do that for me. It is a bargain, says the other; let us have it sealed with wax and signed with pen and ink before two witnesses. As, for instance, at the Lord's Table. I swear, you say, over the Body and the Blood of the Son of God, I swear to make a covenant with mine eyes. I will never let them read again that idle, infidel, scoffing, unclean sheet. I will not let them look on any of my former images or imaginations of forbidden pleasures. I swear, O Thou to whom the night shineth as the day, that I will never again say, Surely the darkness shall cover me! See if I do not henceforth by Thy grace keep my feet off every slippery street. That, and many other things like that, was the way that Job made his so noble covenant with his eyes in his day and in his land. And it was because he so made and so kept his covenant that God so boasted over him and said, Hast thou considered my servant Job? And then, every covenant has its two sides. The other side of Job's covenant, of which God Himself was the surety, you can read and think over in your solitary lodgings to-night. Read Job xxxi. 1, and then Job xl. to the end, and then be sure you take covenant paper and ink to God before you sleep. And let all fashionable young ladies hear what Miss Rossetti expects for herself, and for all of her sex with her who shall subscribe her covenant. 'True,' she admits, 'all our life long we shall be bound to refrain our soul, and keep it low; but what then? For the books we now refrain to read we shall one day be endowed with wisdom and knowledge. For the music we will not listen to we shall join in the song of the redeemed. For the pictures from which we turn we shall gaze unabashed on the Beatific Vision. For the companionship we shun we shall be welcomed into angelic society and the communion of triumphant saints. For the amusements we avoid we shall keep the supreme jubilee. For all the pleasures we miss we shall abide, and for evermore abide, in the rapture of heaven.'

5. And then there is the Pauline eye. An eye, however, that Job would have shared with Paul and with the Corinthian Church had the patriarch been privileged to live in our New Testament day. Ever since the Holy Ghost with His anointing oil fell on us at Pentecost, says the apostle, we have had an eye by means of which we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen. Now, he who has an eye like that is above both plucking out his eyes or making a covenant with them either. It is like what Paul says about the law also. The law is not made for a righteous man. A righteous man is above the law and independent of it. The law does not reach to him and he is not hampered with it. And so it is with the man who has got Paul's splendid eyes for the unseen. He does not need to touch so much as one of his eye-lashes to pluck them out. For his eyes are blind, and his ears are deaf, and his whole body is dead to the things that are temporal. His eyes are inwardly ablaze with the things that are eternal. He whose eyes have been opened to the truth and the love of his Bible, he will gloat no more over your books and your papers filled with lies, and slander, and spite, and lewdness! He who has his conversation in heaven does not need to set a watch on his lips lest he take up an ill report about his neighbour. He who walks every day on the streets of gold will step as swiftly as may be, with girt loins, and with a preoccupied eye, out of the slippery and unsavoury streets of this forsaken earth. He who has fast working out for him

an exceeding and eternal weight of glory will easily count all his cups and all his crosses, and all the crooks in his lot but as so many light afflictions and but for a moment. My Lord Understanding had his palace built with high perspective towers on it, and the site of it was near to Eye-gate, from the top of which his lordship every day looked not at the things which are temporal, but at the things which are eternal, and down from his palace towers he every day descended to administer his heavenly office in the city. Your eye, then, is the shortest way into your heart. Watch it well, therefore; suspect and challenge all outsiders who come near it. Keep the passes that lead to your heart with all diligence. Let nothing contraband, let nothing that even looks suspicious, ever enter your hearts; for, if it once enters, and turns out to be evil, you will never get it all out again as long as you live. ‘Death is come up into our windows,’ says our prophet in another place,‘and is entered into our palaces, to cut off our children in our houses and our young men in our streets.’ Make a covenant, then, with your eyes. Take an oath of your eyes as to which way they are henceforth to look. For, let them look this way, and your heart is immediately full of lust, and hate, and envy, and ill-will. On the other hand, lead them to look that way and your heart is as immediately full of truth and beauty, brotherly kindness and charity. The light of the body is the eye; if, therefore, thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light; but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body is full of darkness. If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

# 057. The King's Palace

LVII THE KING’S PALACE ‘The palace is not for man, but for the Lord God.’—David.

‘Now, there is in this gallant country a fair and delicate town, a corporation, called Mansoul: a town for its building so curious, for its situation so commodious, for its privileges so advantageous, that I may say of it, there is not its equal under the whole heaven. Also, there was reared up in the midst of this town a most famous and stately palace: for strength, it might be called a castle; for pleasantness, a paradise; and for largeness, a place so copious as to contain all the world. This place the King intended for Himself alone, and not for another with Him, so great was His delight in it.’ Thus far, our excellent allegorical author. But there are other authors that treat of this great matter now in hand besides the allegorical authors. You will hear tell sometimes about a class of authors called the Mystics. Well, listen at this stage to one of them, and one of the best of them, on this present matter—the human heart, that is. ‘Our heart,’ he says, ‘is our manner of existence, or the state in which we feel ourselves to be; it is an inward life, a vital sensibility, which contains our manner of feeling what and how we are; it is the state of our desires and tendencies, of inwardly seeing, tasting, relishing, and feeling that which passes within us; our heart is that to us inwardly with regard to ourselves which our senses of seeing, hearing, feeling, and such like are with regard to things that are without or external to us. Your heart is the best and greatest gift of God to you. It is the highest, greatest, strongest, and noblest power of your nature. It forms your whole life, be it what it will. All evil and all good come from your heart. Your heart alone has the key of life and death for you.’ I was just about to ask you at this point which of our two authors, our allegorical or our mystical author upon the heart, you like best. But that would be a stupid and a wayward question since you have them both before you, and both at their best, to possess and to enjoy. To go back then to John Bunyan, and to his allegory of the human heart.

1. To begin with, then, there was reared up in the midst of this town of Mansoul a most famous and stately palace. And that palace and the town immediately around it were the mirror and the glory of all that its founder and maker had ever made. His palace was his very top-piece. It was the metropolitan of the whole world round about it; and it had positive commission and power to demand service and support of all around. Yes. And all that is literally, evidently, and actually true of the human heart. For all other earthly things are created and upheld, are ordered and administered, with an eye to the human heart. The human heart is the final cause, as our scholars would say, of absolutely all other earthly things. Earth, air, water; light and heat; all the successively existing worlds, mineral, vegetable, animal, spiritual; grass, herbs, corn, fruit-trees, cattle and sheep, and all other living creatures; all are upheld for the use and the support of man. And, then, all that is in man himself is in him for the end and the use of his heart. All his bodily senses; all his bodily members; every fearfully and wonderfully made part of his body and of his mind; all administer to his heart. She is the sovereign and sits supreme. And she is worthy and is fully entitled so to sit. For there is nothing on the earth greater or better than the heart, unless it is the Creator Himself, who planned and executed the heart for Himself and not for another with Him. ‘The body exists,’ says a philosophical biologist of our day, ‘to furnish the cerebral centres with

prepared food, just as the vegetable world, viewed biologically, exists to furnish the animal world with similar food. The higher is the last formed, the most difficult, and the most complex; but it is just this that is most precious and significant—all of which shows His unrolling purpose. It is the last that alone explains all that went before, and it is the coming that will alone explain the present. God before all, through all, foreseeing all, and still preparing all; God in all is profoundly evident.' Yes, profoundly evident to profound minds, and experimentally and sweetly evident to religious minds, and to renewed and loving and holy hearts.

2. For fame and for state a palace, while for strength it might be called a castle. In sufficiently ancient times the king's palace was always a castle also. David's palace on Mount Zion was as much a military fortress as a royal residence; and King Priam's palace was the protection both of itself and of the whole of the country around. In those wild times great men built their houses on high places, and then the weak and endangered people gathered around the strongholds of the powerful, as we see in our own city. Our own steep and towering rock invited to its top the castle-builder of a remote age, and then the exposed country around began to gather itself together under the shelter of the bourg. And thus it is that the military engineering of the Holy War makes that old allegorical book most excellent to read, not only for common men like you and me, who are bent on the fortification and the defence of our own hearts, but for the military historians of those old times also, for the experts of to-day also, and for all good students of fortification. And the New Testament of the Divine peace itself, as well as the Old Testament so full of the wars of the Lord—they both support and serve as an encouragement and an example to our spiritual author in the elaboration of his military allegory. Every good soldier of Jesus Christ has by heart the noble paradox of Paul to the Philippians—that the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep their hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Let God's peace, he says, be your man of war. Let His surpassing peace do both the work of war and the work of peace also in your hearts and in your minds. Let that peace both fortify with walls, and garrison with soldiers, and watch every gate, and hold every street and lane of your hearts and of your minds all around your hearts. And all through the Prince of Peace, the Captain of all Holy War, Jesus Christ Himself. No wonder, then, that in a strength—in a kind and in a degree of strength—that passeth all understanding, this stately palace of the heart is also here called a well-garrisoned castle.

3. And then for pleasantness the human heart is a perfect paradise. For pleasantness the human heart is like those famous royal parks of Nineveh and Babylon that sprang up in after days as if to recover and restore the Garden of Eden that had been lost to those eastern lands. But even Adam's own paradise was but a poor outside imitation in earth and water, in flowers and fruits, of the far better paradise God had planted within him. Take another Mystic at this point upon paradise. 'My dear man,' exclaims Jacob Behmen, 'the Garden of Eden is not paradise, neither does Moses say so. Paradise is the divine joy, and that was in their own hearts so long as they stood in the love of God. Paradise is the divine and angelical joy, pure love, pure joy, pure gladness, in which there is no fear, no misery, and no death. Which paradise neither death nor the devil can touch. And yet it has no stone wall around it; only a great gulf which no man or angel can cross but by that new birth of which Christ spoke to Nicodemus. Reason asks, Where is paradise to be found? Is it far off or near? Is it in this world or is it above the stars? Where is that desirable native country where there is no death? Beloved, there is nothing nearer you at this moment than paradise, if you incline that way. God beckons you back into paradise at this moment, and calls

you by name to come. Come, He says, and be one of My paradise children. In paradise,' the Teutonic Philosopher goes on, 'there is nothing but hearty love, a meek and a gentle love; a most friendly and most courteous discourse: a gracious, amiable, and blessed society, where the one is always glad to see the other, and to honour the other. They know of no malice in paradise, no cunning, no subtlety, and no sly deceit. But the fruits of the Spirit of God are common among them in paradise, and one may make use of all the good things of paradise without causing disfavour, or hatred, or envy, for there is no contrary affection there, but all hearts there are knit together in love. In paradise they love one another, and rejoice in the beauty, loveliness, and gladness of one another. No one esteems or accounts himself more excellent than another in paradise; but every one has great joy in another, and rejoices in another's fair beauty, whence their love to one another continually increases, so that they lead one another by the hand, and so friendly kiss one another.' Thus the blessed Behmen saw paradise and had it in his heart as he sat over his hammer and lapstone in his solitary stall. For of such as Jacob Behmen and John Bunyan is the kingdom of heaven, and all such saintly souls have paradise restored again and improved upon in their own hearts.

4. And for largeness a place so copious as to contain all the world. Over against the word 'copious' Bunyan hangs for a key, Ecclesiastes third and eleventh; and under it Miss Peacock adds this as a note—'Copious, spacious. Old French, copieux; Latin, copiosus, plentiful.' The human heart, as we have already read to-night, is the highest, greatest, strongest, and noblest part of human nature. And so it is. Fearfully and wonderfully made as is the whole of human nature, that fear and that wonder surpass themselves in the spaciousness and the copiousness of the human heart. For what is it that the human heart has not space for, and to spare? After the whole world is received home into a human heart, there is room, and, indeed, hunger, for another world, and after that for still another. The sun is—I forget how many times bigger than our whole world, and yet we can open our heart and take down the sun into it, and shut him out again and restore him to his immeasurable distances in the heavens, and all in the twinkling of an eye. As for instance. As I wrote these lines I read a report of a lecture by Sir Robert Ball in which that distinguished astronomer discoursed on recent solar discoveries. A globe of coal, Sir Robert said, as big as our earth, and all set ablaze at the same moment, would not give out so much heat to the worlds around as the sun gives out in a thousandth part of a second. Well, as I read that, and ere ever I was aware what was going on, my heart had opened over my newspaper, and the sun had swept down from the sky, and had rushed into my heart, and before I knew where I was the cry had escaped my lips, 'Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty! Who shall not fear Thee and glorify thy name?' And then this reflection as suddenly came to me: How good it is to be at peace with God, and to be able and willing to say, My Father! That the whole of the surging and flaming sun was actually down in my straitened and hampered heart at that idle moment over my paper is scientifically demonstrable; for only that which is in the heart of a man can kindle the passions that are in the heart of that man; and nothing is more sure to me than that the great passions of fear and love, wonder and rapture were at that moment at a burning point within me. There is a passage well on in the Holy War, which for terror and for horror, and at the same time for truth and for power, equals anything either in Dante or in Milton. Lucifer has stood up at the council board to second the scheme of Beelzebub. 'Yes,' he said, amid the plaudits of his fellow-princes—'Yes, I swear it. Let us fill Mansoul full with our abundance. Let us make of this castle, as they vainly call it, a warehouse, as the name is in some of their cities above. For if we

can only get Mansoul to fill herself full with much goods she is henceforth ours. My peers,' he said, 'you all know His parable of how unblessed riches choke the word; and, again, we know what happens when the hearts of men are overcharged with surfeiting and with drunkenness. Let us give them all that, then, to their heart's desire.' This advice of Lucifer, our history tells us, was highly applauded in hell, and ever since it has proved their masterpiece to choke Mansoul with the fulness of this world, and to surfeit the heart with the good things thereof. But, my brethren, you will outwit hell herself and all her counsellors and all her machinations, if, out of all the riches, pleasures, cares, and possessions, that both heaven and earth and hell can heap into your heart, those riches, pleasures, cares, and possessions but produce corresponding passions and affections towards God and man. Only let fear, and love, and thankfulness, and helpfulness be kindled and fed to all their fulness in your heart, and all the world and all that it contains will only leave the more room in your boundless heart for God and for your brother. All that God has made, or could make with all His counsel and all His power laid out, will not fill your boundless and bottomless heart. He must come down and come into your boundless and bottomless heart Himself. Himself: your Father, your Redeemer, and your Sanctifier and Comforter also. Let the whole universe try to fill your heart, O man of God, and after it all we shall hear you singing in famine and in loneliness the doleful ditty:

'O come to my heart, Lord Jesus,

There is room in my heart for Thee.

5. 'Madame,' said a holy solitary to Madame Guyon in her misery—'Madame, you are disappointed and perplexed because you seek without what you have within. Accustom yourself to seek for God in your own heart and you will always find Him there.' From that hour that gifted woman was a Mystic. The secret of the interior life flashed upon her in a moment. She had been starving in the midst of fulness; God was near and not far off; the kingdom of heaven was within her. The love of God from that hour took possession of her soul with an inexpressible happiness. Prayer, which had before been so difficult, was now delightful and indispensable; hours passed away like moments: she could scarcely cease from praying. Her domestic trials seemed great to her no longer; her inward joy consumed like a fire the reluctance, the murmur, and the sorrow, which all had their birth in herself. A spirit of comforting peace, a sense of rejoicing possession, pervaded all her days. God was continually with her, and she seemed continually yielded up to God. 'Madame,' said the solitary, 'you seek without for what you have within.' Where do you seek for God when you pray, my brethren? To what place do you direct your eyes? Is it to the roof of your closet? Is it to the east end of your consecrated chapel? Is it to that wooden table in the east end of your chapel? Or, passing out of all houses made with hands and consecrated with holy oil, do you lift up your eyes to the skies where the sun and the moon and the stars dwell alone? 'What a folly!' exclaims Theophilus, in the golden dialogue, 'for no way is the true way to God but by the way of our own heart. God is nowhere else to be found. And the heart itself cannot find Him but by its own love of Him, faith in Him, dependence upon Him, resignation to Him, and expectation of all from Him.' 'You have quite carried your point with me,' answered Theogenes after he had heard all that Theophilus had to say. 'The God of meekness, of patience, and of love is henceforth the one God of my heart. It is now the one bent and desire of my soul to seek for all my salvation in and through the merits and mediation of the meek, humble, patient, resigned, suffering Lamb of God, who alone has power to bring forth the blessed birth of those heavenly virtues in my soul. What a

comfort it is to think that this Lamb of God, Son of the Father, Light of the World; this Glory of heaven and this Joy of angels is as near to us, is as truly in the midst of us, as He is in the midst of heaven. And that not a thought, look, or desire of our heart that presses toward Him, longing to catch one small spark of His heavenly nature, but is as sure a way of finding Him, as the woman's way was who was healed of her deadly disease by longing to touch but the border of His garment.' To sum up. 'There is reared up in the midst of Mansoul a most famous and stately palace: for strength, it may be called a castle; for pleasantness, a paradise; and for largeness, a place so copious as to contain all the world. This palace the King intends but for Himself alone, and not another with Him, and He commits the keeping of that palace day and night to the men of the town.'

# 058. My Lord Willbewill

LVIII MY LORD WILLBEWILL —‘to will is present with me.’—Paul

There is a large and a learned literature on the subject of the will. There is a philosophical and a theological, and there is a religious and an experimental literature on the will. Jonathan Edwards’s well-known work stands out conspicuously at the head of the philosophical and theological literature on the will, while our own Thomas Boston’s Fourfold State is a very able and impressive treatise on the more practical and experimental side of the same subject. The Westminster Confession of Faith devotes one of its very best chapters to the teaching of the word of God on the will of man, and the Shorter Catechism touches on the same subject in Effectual Calling. Outstanding philosophical and theological schools have been formed around the will, and both able and learned and earnest men have taken opposite sides on the subject of the will under the party names of Necessitarians and Libertarians. This is not the time, nor am I the man, to discuss such abstruse subjects; but those students who wish to master this great matter of the will, so far as it can be mastered in books, are recommended to begin with Dr. William Cunningham’s works, and then to go on from them to a treatise that will reward all their talent and all their enterprise, Jonathan Edwards’s perfect masterpiece.

1. But, to come to my Lord Willbewill, one of the gentry of the famous town of Mansoul:—well, this Lord Willbewill was as high-born as any man in Mansoul, and was as much a freeholder as any of them were, if not more. Besides, if I remember my tale aright, he had some privileges peculiar to himself in that famous town. Now, together with these, he was a man of great strength, resolution, and courage; nor in his occasion could any turn him away. But whether he was too proud of his high estate, privileges, and strength, or what (but sure it was through pride of something), he scorns now to be a slave in Mansoul, as his own proud word is, so that now, next to Diabolus himself, who but my Lord Willbewill in all that town? Nor could anything now be done but at his beck and good pleasure throughout that town. Indeed, it will not out of my thoughts what a desperate fellow this Willbewill was when full power was put into his hand. All which—how this apostate prince lost power and got it again, and lost it and got it again—the interested and curious reader will find set forth with great fulness and clearness in many powerful pages of the Holy War.

John Bunyan was as hard put to it to get the right name for this head of the gentry of Mansoul as Paul was to get the right name for sin in the seventh of the Romans. In that profoundest and intensest of all his profound and intense passages, the apostle has occasion to seek about for some expression, some epithet, some adjective, as we say, to apply to sin so as to help him to bring out to his Roman readers something of the malignity, deadliness, and unspeakable evil of sin as he had sin living and working in himself. But all the resources of the Greek language, that most resourceful of languages, utterly failed Paul for his pressing purpose. And thus it is that, as if in scorn of the feebleness and futility of that boasted tongue, he tramples its grammars and its dictionaries under his feet, and makes new and unheard-of words and combinations of words on the spot for himself and for his subject. He heaps up a hyperbole the like of which no orator or

rhetorician of Greece or Rome had ever needed or had ever imagined before. He takes sin, and he makes a name for sin out of itself. The only way to describe sin, he feels, the only way to characterise sin, the only way to aggravate sin, is just to call it sin; sinful sin; 'sin by the commandment became exceeding sinful.' And, in like manner, John Bunyan, who has only his own mother tongue to work with, in his straits to get a proper name for this terrible fellow who was next to Diabolus himself, cannot find a proud enough name for him but just by giving him his own name, and then doubling it. Add will to will, multiply will by will, and multiply it again, and after you have done all you are no nearer to a proper name for that apostate, who, for pride, and insolence, and headstrongness, in one word, for wilfulness, is next to Diabolus himself. But as Willbewill, if he is to be named and described at all, is best named and described by his own naked name; so Bunyan is always best illustrated out of his own works. And I turn accordingly to the Heavenly Footman for an excellent illustration of the wilfulness of the will both in a good man and in a bad; as, thus: 'Your self-willed people, nobody knows what to do with them. We use to say, He will have his own will, do all we can. If a man be willing, then any argument shall be matter of encouragement; but if unwilling, then any argument shall give discouragement. The saints of old, they being willing and resolved for heaven, what could stop them? Could fire and fagot, sword or halter, dungeons, whips, bears, bulls, lions, cruel rackings, stonings, starvings, nakedness? So willing had they been made in the day of His power. And see, on the other side, the children of the devil, because they are not willing, how many shifts and starting-holes they will have! I have married a wife; I have a farm; I shall offend my landlord; I shall lose my trade; I shall be mocked and scoffed at, and therefore I cannot come. But, alas! the thing is, they are not willing. For, were they once soundly willing, these, and a thousand things such as these, would hold them no faster than the cords held Samson when he broke them like flax. I tell you the will is all. The Lord give thee a will, then, and courage of heart.'

2. Let that, then, suffice for this man's name and nature, and let us look at him now when his name and his nature have both become evil; that is to say, when Willbewill has become Illwill. You can imagine; no, you cannot imagine unless you already know, how evil, and how set upon evil, Illwill was. His whole mind, we are told, now stood bending itself to evil. Nay, so set was he now upon sheer evil that he would act it of his own accord, and without any instigation at all from Diabolus. And that went on till he was looked on in the city as next in wickedness to very Diabolus himself. Parable apart, my ill-willed brethren, our ill-will has made us very fiends in human shape. What a fall, what a fate, what a curse it is to be possessed of a devil of ill-will! Who can put proper words on it after Paul had to confess himself silent before it? Who can utter the diabolical nature, the depth and the secrecy, the subtlety and the spirituality, the range and the reach-out of an ill-will? Our hearts are full of ill-will at those we meet and shake hands with every day. At men also we have never seen, and who are totally ignorant even of our existence. Over a thousand miles we dart our viperous hearts at innocent men. At great statesmen we have ill-will, and at small; at great churchmen and at small; at great authors and at small; at great, and famous, and successful men in all lines of life; for it is enough for ill-will that another man be praised, and well-paid, and prosperous, and then placed in our eye. No amount of suffering will satiate ill-will; the very grave has no seal against it. And, now and then, you have it thrust upon you that other men have the same devil in them as deeply and as actively as he is in you. You will suddenly run across a man on the street. His face was shining with some praise he had just had spoken to him, or with some recognition he had just received from some great one; or with some good news for himself he had

just heard, before he caught sight of you. But the light suddenly dies on his face, and darkness comes up out of his heart at his sudden glimpse of you. What is the matter? you ask yourself as he scowls past you. What have you done so to darken any man's heart to you? And as you stumble on in the sickening cloud he has left behind him, you suddenly recollect that you were once compelled to vote against that man on a public question: on some question of home franchise, or foreign war, or church government, or city business; or perchance, a family has left his shop to do business in yours, or his church to worship God in yours, or such like. It will be a certain relief to you to recollect such things. But with it all there will be a shame and a humiliation and a deep inward pain that will escape into a cry of prayer for him and for yourself and for all such sinners on the same street. If you do not find an escape from your sharp resentment in ejaculatory prayer and in a heart-cleansing great good-will, your heart, before you are a hundred steps on, will be as black with ill-will as his is. But that must not again be. Would you hate or strike back at a blind man who stumbled and fell against you on the street? Would you retaliate at a maniac who gnashed his teeth and shook his fist at you on his way past you to the madhouse? Or at a corpse being carried past you that had been too long without burial? And shall you retaliate on a miserable man driven mad with diabolical passion? Or at a poor sinner whose heart is as rotten as the grave? Ill-will is abroad in our learned and religious city at all hours of the day and night. He glares at us under the sun by day, and under the street lamps at night. We suddenly feel his baleful eye on us as we thoughtlessly pass under his overlooking windows: it will be a side street and an unfrequented, where you will not be ashamed and shocked and pained at heart to meet him. Public men; much purchased and much praised men; rich and prosperous men; men high in talent and in place; and, indeed, all manner of men,—walk abroad in this life softly. Keep out of sight. Take the side streets, and return home quickly. You have no idea what an offence and what a snare you are to men you know, and to men you do not know. If you are a public man, and if your name is much in men's mouths, then the place you hold, the prices and the praises you get, do not give you one-tenth of the pleasure that they give a thousand other men pain. Men you never heard of, and who would not know you if they met you, gnaw their hearts at the mere mention of your name. Desire, then, to be unknown, as À Kempis says. O teach me to love to be concealed, prays Jeremy Taylor. Be ambitious to be unknown, Archbishop Leighton also instructs us. And the great Fénelon took Ama nesciri for his crest and for his motto. No wonder that an apostle cried out under the agony and the shame of ill-will. No wonder that to kill it in the hearts of men the Son of God died under it on the cross. And no wonder that all the gates of hell are wide open, day and night, for there is no day there, to receive home all those who will entertain ill-will in their hearts, and all the gates of heaven shut close to keep all ill-will for ever out.

3. But, bad enough as all that is, the half has not been told, and never will be told in this life. Butler has a passage that has long stumbled me, and it stumbles me the more the longer I live and study him and observe myself. 'Resentment,' he says, in a very deep and a very serious passage—'Resentment being out of the case, there is not, properly speaking, any such thing as direct ill-will in one man towards another.' Well, great and undisputed as Butler's authority is in all these matters, at the same time he would be the first to admit and to assert that a man's inward experience transcends all outward authority. Well, I am filled with shame and pain and repentance and remorse to have to say it, but my experience carries me right in the teeth of Butler's doctrine. I have dutifully tried to look at Butler's inviting and exonerating doctrine in all possible lights, and from all possible points of view, in the anxious wish to prove it true; but I dare not say that I have

succeeded. The truth for thee—my heart would continually call to me—the best truth for thee is in me, and not in any Butler! And when looking as closely as I can at my own heart in the matter of ill-will, what do I find—and what will you find? You will find that after subtracting all that can in any proper sense come under the head of real resentment, and in cases where real resentment is out of the question; in cases where you have received no injury, no neglect, no contempt, no anything whatsoever of that kind, you will find that there are men innocent of all that to you, yet men to whom you entertain feelings, animosities, antipathies, that can be called by no other name than that of ill-will. Look within and see. Watch within and see. And I am sure you will come to subscribe with me to the humbling and heart-breaking truth, that, even where there is no resentment, and no other explanation, excuse, or palliation of that kind, yet that festering, secret, malignant ill-will is working in the bottom of your heart. If you doubt that, if you deny that, if all that kind of self-observation and self-sentencing is new to you, then observe yourself, say, for one week, and report at the end of it whether or no you have had feelings and thoughts and wishes in your secret heart toward men who never in any way hurt you, which can only be truthfully described as pure ill-will; that is to say, you have not felt and thought and wished toward them as you would have them, and all men, feel and think and wish toward you.

4. ‘To will is present with me, but how to perform I find not,’ says the apostle; and again, ‘Ye cannot do the things that ye would.’ Or, as Dante has it,

‘The power which wills

Bears not supreme control; laughter and tears

Follow so closely on the passion prompts them,

They wait not for the motion of the will

In natures most sincere.’

Now, just here lies a deep distinction that has not been enough taken account of by our popular, or even by our more profound, spiritual writers. The will is often regenerate and right; the will often bends, as Bunyan has it, to that which is good; but behind the will and beneath the will the heart is still full of passions, affections, inclinations, dispositions that are evil; instinctively, impulsively, involuntarily evil, even ‘in natures most sincere.’ And hence arises a conflict, a combat, a death-grip, an agony, a hell on earth, that every regenerate and advancing soul of man is full of His will is right. If his will is wrong; if he chooses evil; then there is no mystery in the matter so far as he is concerned. He is a bad man, and he is so intentionally and deliberately and of set purpose; and it is a rule in divine truth that ‘wilfulness in sinning is the measure of our sinfulness.’ But his will is right. To will is present with him. He is every day like Thomas Boston one Sabbath-day: ‘Though I cannot be free of sin, God Himself knows that He would be welcome to make havoc of my sins and to make me holy. I know no lust that I would not be content to part with to-night. My will, bound hand and foot, I desire to lay at His feet.’ Now, is it not as clear as noonday that in the case of such a man as Boston his mind is one thing and his heart another? Is it not plain that he has both a good-will and an ill-will within him? A will that immediately and resolutely chooses for God, and for truth, and for righteousness, and for love; and another law in his members warring against that law of his mind? ‘Before conversion,’ says Thomas Shepard, ‘the main wound of a man is in his will. And then, after conversion, though his will is changed, yet, ex

infirmitate, there are many things that he cannot do, so strong is the remnant of malignity that is still in his heart. Let him get Christ to help him here.' In all that ye see your calling, my brethren.

5. 'Now, if I do that I would not,' adds the apostle, extricating himself and giving himself fair-play and his simple due among all his misery and self-accusation—'Now, if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.' Or, again, as William Law has it: 'All our natural evil ceases to be our own evil as soon as our will turns away from it. Our natural evil then changes its nature and loses all its poison and death, and becomes an holy cross on which we die to self and this life and enter the kingdom of heaven.' My dear brethren, tell me, is your sin your cross? Is your sinfulness your cross? Is the evil that is ever present with you your holy cross? For, every other cross beside sin is a cross of straw, a cross of feathers, a paste-board and a painted cross, and not a real and genuine cross at all. The wood and the nails and the spear all taken together were not our Lord's real cross. His real cross was sin; our sin laid on His hands, and on His heart, and on His imagination, and on His conscience, till it was all but His very own sin. Our sin was so fearfully and wonderfully laid upon Christ that He was as good as a sinner Himself under it. So much so that all the nails and all the spears, all the thirst and all the darkness that His body and His soul could hold were as nothing beside the sin that was laid upon Him. And so it is with us; with as many of us as are His true disciples. Our sin is our cross; not our actual transgressions, any more than His; but our inward sinfulness. And not the sinfulness of our will; that is no real cross to any man; but the sinfulness of our hearts against our will, and beneath our will, and behind our will. And this is such a cross that if Christ had something in His cross that we have not, then we have something in ours that He had not. He made many sad and sore Psalms His own; but even if He had lived on earth to read the seventh of the Romans, He could not have made it His own. His true people are beyond Him here. The disciple is above his Master here. The Master had His own cross, and it was a sufficient cross; but we can challenge Him to come down and look and say if He ever saw a cross like our cross. He was made a curse. He was hanged on the tree. He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. But his people are beyond Him in the real agony and crucifixion of sin. For He never in Gethsemane or on Calvary either cried as Paul once cried, and as you and I cry every day—To will is present with me! But the good that I would I do not! And, oh! the body of this death!

6. Now, if any total stranger to all that shall ask me: What good there is in all that? and, Why I so labour in such a world of unaccustomed and unpleasant things as that? I have many answers to his censure. For example, and first, I labour and will continue to labour more and more in this world of things, and less and less in any other world, because here we begin to see things as they are—the deepest things of God and of man, that is. Also, because I have the precept, and the example, and the experience of God's greatest and best saints before me here. Because, also, our full and true salvation begins here, goes on here, and ends here. Because, also, teaching these things and learning these things will infallibly make us the humblest of men, the most contrite, the most self-despising, the most prayerful, and the most patient, meek, and loving of men. And, students, I labour in this because this is science; because this is the first in order and the most fruitful of all the sciences, if not the noblest and the most glorious of all the sciences. There is all that good for us in this subject of the will and the heart, and whole worlds of good lie away out beyond this subject that eye hath not seen nor ear heard.

# 059. Self-Love

LIX

SELF-LOVE

‘This know, that men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, unthankful, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, traitors, heady, high-minded: from all such turn away.’—Paul.

‘Pray, sir, said Academicus, tell me more plainly just what this self of ours actually is. Self, replied Theophilus, is hell, it is the devil, it is darkness, pain, and disquiet. It is the one and only enemy of Christ. It is the great antichrist. It is the scarlet whore, it is the fiery dragon, it is the old serpent that is mentioned in the Revelation of St John. You rather terrify me than instruct me by this description, said Academicus. It is indeed a very frightful matter, returned Theophilus; for it contains everything that man has to dread and to hate, to resist and to avoid. Yet be assured, my friend, that, careless and merry as this world is, every man that is born into this world has all those enemies to overcome within himself; and every man, till he is in the way of regeneration, is more or less governed by those enemies. No hell in any remote place, no devil that is separate from you, no darkness or pain that is not within you, no antichrist either at Rome or in England, no furious beast, no fiery dragon, without you or apart from you, can do you any real hurt. It is your own hell, your own devil, your own beast, your own antichrist, your own dragon that lives in your own heart’s blood that alone can hurt you. Die to this self, to this inward nature, and then all outward enemies are overcome. Live to this self, and then, when this life is out, all that is within you, and all that is without you, will be nothing else but a mere seeing and feeling this hell, serpent, beast, and fiery dragon. But, said Theogenes, a third party who stood by, I would, if I could, more perfectly understand the precise nature of self, or what it is that makes it to be so full of evil and misery. To whom Theophilus turned and replied: Covetousness, envy, pride, and wrath are the four elements of self. And hence it is that the whole life of self can be nothing else but a plague and torment of covetousness, envy, pride, and wrath, all of which is precisely sinful nature, self, or hell. Whilst man lives, indeed, among the vanities of time, his covetousness, his envy, his pride, and his wrath, may be in a tolerable state, and may help him to a mixture of peace and trouble; they may have their gratifications as well as their torments. But when death has put an end to the vanity of all earthly cheats, the soul that is not born again of the supernatural Word and Spirit of God must find itself unavoidably devoured by itself, shut up in its own insatiable, unchangeable, self-tormenting covetousness, envy, pride, and wrath. O Theogenes! that I had power from God to take those dreadful scales off men’s eyes that hinder them from seeing and feeling the infinite importance of this most certain truth! God give a blessing, Theophilus, to your good prayer. And then let me tell you that you have quite satisfied my question about the nature of self. I shall never forget it, nor can I ever possibly after this have any doubt about the truth of it.’

1. ‘All my theology,’ said an old friend of mine to me not long ago—‘all my theology is out of Thomas Goodwin to the Ephesians.’ Well, I find Thomas Goodwin saying in that great book that

self is the very quintessence of original sin; and, again, he says, study self-love for a thousand years and it is the top and the bottom of original sin; self is the sin that dwelleth in us and that doth most easily beset us. Now, that is just what Academicus and Theophilus and Theogenes have been saying to us in their own powerful way in their incomparable dialogue. All sin and all misery; all covetousness, envy, pride, and wrath,—trace it all back to its roots, travel it all up to its source, and, as sure as you do that, self and self-love are that source, that root, and that black bottom. I do not forget that Butler has said in some stately pages of his that self-love is morally good; that self-love is coincident with the principle of virtue and part of the idea; and that it is a proper motive for man. But the deep bishop, in saying all that, is away back at the creation-scheme and Eden-state of human nature. He has not as yet come down to human nature in its present state of overthrow, dismemberment, and self-destruction. But when he does condescend and comes close to the mind and the heart of man as they now are in all men, even Butler becomes as outspoken, and as eloquent, and as full of passion and pathos as if he were an evangelical Puritan. Self-love, Butler startles his sober-minded reader as he bursts out—self-love rends and distorts the mind of man! Now, you are a man. Well, then, do you feel and confess that rending and distorting to have taken place in you? Butler is a philosopher, and Goodwin is a preacher, but you are more: you are a man. You are the owner of a human heart, and you can say whether or no it is a rent and a distorted heart. Is your mind warped and wrenched by self-love, and is your heart rent and torn by the same wicked hands? Do you really feel that it needs nothing more to take you back again to paradise but that your heart be delivered from self-love? Do you now understand that the foundations of heaven itself must be laid in a heart healed and cleansed and delivered from self-love? If you do, then your knowledge of your own heart has set you abreast of the greatest of philosophers and theologians and preachers. Nay, before multitudes of men who are called such. It is my meditation all the day, you say. I have more understanding now than all my teachers; for Thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients; because now I keep Thy precepts.

2. ‘Self-love has made us all malicious,’ says John Calvin. We are Calvinists, were we to call any man master. But we are to call no man master, and least of all in the matters of the heart. Every man must be his own philosopher, his own moralist, and his own theologian in the matters of the heart. He who has a heart in his bosom and an eye in his head can need no Calvin, no Butler, no Goodwin, and no Law to tell him what goes on in his own heart. And, on the other hand, his own heart will soon tell him whether or no Calvin, and Butler, and Goodwin, and Law know anything about those matters on which some men would set them up as our masters. Well, come away all of you who own a human heart. Come and say whether or no your heart, and the self-love of which it is full, have made you a malicious man. I do not ask if you are always and to everybody full of maliciousness. No; I know quite well that you are sometimes as sweet as honey and as soft as butter. For, has not even Theophilus said that whilst a man still lives among the vanities of time, his covetousness, his envy, his pride, and his wrath may be in a tolerable state, and may help him to a mixture of peace and trouble; these vices may have their gratifications as well as their torments. No; I do not trifle with you and with this serious matter so as to ask if you are full of malice at all times and to all men. No. For, let a man be fortunate enough to be on your side; let him pass over to your party; let him become profitable to you; let him be clever enough and mean enough to praise and to flatter you up to the top of your appetite for praise and flattery, and, no doubt, you will love that man. Or, if that is not exactly love, at least it is no longer hate. But let that

man unfortunately be led to leave your party; let him cease being profitable to you; let him weary of flattering you with his praise; let him forget you, neglect you, despise you, and go against you, and then look at your own heart. Do you care now to know what malice is? Well, that is malice that distorts and rends your heart as often as you meet that man on the street or even pass by his door. That is malice that dances in your eyes when you see his name in print. That is malice with which you always break out when his name is mentioned in conversation. That is malice that heats your heart when you suddenly recollect him in the multitude of your thoughts within you. And you are in good company all the time. 'We, ourselves,' says Paul to Titus, 'we also at one time lived in malice and in envy. We were hateful and we hated one another.' 'Hateful,' Goodwin goes on in his great book, 'every man is to another man more or less; he is hated of another and he hateth another more or less; and if his nature were let out to the full, there is that in him, "every man is against every man," as is said of Ishmael. Homo homini lupus,' adds our brave preacher. And Abbé Grou speaks out with the same challenge from the opposite church pole, and says: 'Yes; self-love makes us touchy, ready to take offence, ill-tempered, suspicious, severe, exacting, easily offended; it keeps alive in our hearts a certain malignity, a secret joy at the mortifications which befall our neighbour; it nourishes our readiness to criticise, our dislike at certain persons, our ill-feeling, our bitterness, and a thousand other things prejudicial to charity.'

3. 'Myself is my own worst enemy,' says Abbé Grou. That is to say, we may have enemies who hate us more than we hate ourselves, and enemies who would hurt us, if they could, as much as we hurt ourselves; but the Abbé's point is that they cannot. And he is right. No man has ever hurt me as I have hurt myself. There are men who hate me so much that they would poison my life of all its peace and happiness if they could. But they cannot. They cannot; but let them not be cast down on that account, for there is one who can do, and who will do as long as he lives, what they cannot do. A man's foes, to be called foes, are in his own house: they are in his own heart. Let our enemies attend to their own peace and happiness, and our self-love will do all, and more than all, that they would fain do. At the most, they and their ill-will can only give occasion to our self-love; but it is our self-love that seizes upon the occasion, and through it rends and distorts our own hearts. And were our hearts only pure of self-love, were our hearts only clothed with meekness and humility, we could laugh at all the ill-will of our enemies as leviathan laughs at the shaking of a spear. 'Know thou,' says À Kempis to his son, 'that the love of thyself doth do thee more hurt than anything in the whole world.' Yes; but we shall never know that by merely reading The Imitation. We must read ourselves. We must study, as we study nothing else, our own rent and distorted hearts. Our own hearts must be our daily discovery. We must watch the wounds our hearts take every day; and we must give all our powers of mind to tracing all our wounds back to their true causes. We must say: 'that sore blow came on my mind and on my heart from such and such a quarter, from such and such a hand, from such and such a weapon; but this pain, this rankling, poisoned, and ever-festering wound, this sleepless, gnawing, cancerous sore, comes from the covetousness, the pride, the envy, and the wrath of my own heart.' When we begin to say that, we shall then begin to understand and to love Thomas; we shall sit daily at his feet and shall be numbered among his sons.

4. And this suffering at our own hands goes on till at last the tables are completely turned against self-love, and till what was once to us the dearest thing in the whole world becomes, as Pascal says, the most hateful. We begin life by hating the men, and the things, who hurt us. We hate the

men who oppose us and hinder us; the men who speak, and write, and act, and go in any way against us. We bitterly hate all who humble us, despise us, trample upon us, and in any way ill-use us. But afterwards, when we have become men, men in experience of this life, and, especially, of ourselves in this life; after we gain some real insight and attain to some real skill in the life of the heart, we come round to forgive those we once hated. We have come now to see why they did it. We see now exactly how much they hurt us after all, and how little. And, especially, we have come to see,—what at one time we could not have believed,—that all our hurt, to be called hurt, has come to us from ourselves. And thus that great revolution of mind and that great revulsion of feeling and of passion has taken place, after which we are left with no one henceforth to hate, to be called hating, but ourselves. We may still continue to avoid our enemies, and we may do that too long and too much; we may continue to fear them and be on the watch against them far too much; but to deliberately hate them is henceforth impossible. All our hatred,—all our deliberate, steady, rooted, active hatred,—is now at ourselves; at ourselves, that is, so far and so long as we remain under the malignant and hateful dominion of self-love. When Butler gets our self-love restored to reasonableness, and made coincident with virtue and part of the idea; when our self-love becomes uniformly coincident with the principle of obedience to God's commands, then we shall love ourselves as our neighbour, and our neighbour as ourselves, and both in God. But, till then, there is nothing and no one on earth or in hell so hateful to us as ourselves and our own hateful hearts. And if in that we are treading the winepress alone as far as our fellow-men are concerned, all the more we have Him with us in all our agony who wept over the heart of man because He knew what was in it, and what must always come out of it. Evil thoughts, He said, and fornications, and murders, and thefts, and covetousness, and wickedness, and deceit, and an evil eye, and pride, and folly, and what not. And Paul has the mind of Christ with him in the text. I do not need to repeat again the hateful words. Now, what do you say? was Pascal beyond the truth, was he deeper than the truth or more deadly than the truth when he said with a stab that self is hateful? I think not.

5. 'Oh that I were free, then, of myself,' wrote Samuel Rutherford from Aberdeen in 1637 to John Ferguson of Ochiltree. 'What need we all have to be ransomed and redeemed from that master-tyrant, that cruel and lawless lord, ourself! Even when I am most out of myself, and am best serving Christ, I have a squint eye on myself.' And to the Laird of Cally in the same year and from the same place: 'Myself is the master idol we all bow down to. Every man blameth the devil for his sins, but the house devil of every man that eateth with him and lieth in his bosom is himself. Oh blessed are they who can deny themselves!' And to the Irish ministers the year after: 'Except men martyr and slay the body of sin in sanctified self-denial, they shall never be Christ's. Oh, if I could but be master of myself, my own mind, my own will, my own credit, my own love, how blessed were I! But alas! I shall die only minting and aiming at being a Christian.'

Chapter 60

# 060. Old Mr. Prejudice, the Keeper of Ear-Gate, With His Sixty Deaf Men Under Him

LX OLD MR. PREJUDICE, THE KEEPER OF EAR-GATE, WITH HIS SIXTY DEAF MEN UNDER HIM ‘Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?’—Naaman.

‘Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?’—Nathanael.

‘ . . observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing by partiality.’—Paul.

Old Mr. Prejudice was well known in the wars of Mansoul as an angry, unhappy, and ill-conditioned old churl. Old Mr. Prejudice was placed by Diabolus, his master, as keeper of the ward at the post of Ear-gate, and for that fatal service he had sixty completely deaf men put under him as his company. Men eminently advantageous for that fatal service. Eminently advantageous,—inasmuch as it mattered not one atom to them what was spoken in their ear either by God or by man.

1. Now, to begin with, this churlish old man had already earned for himself a very evil name. For what name could well be more full of evil memories and of evil omens than just this name of Prejudice? Just consider what prejudice is. Prejudice, when we stop over it and take it to pieces and look well at it,—prejudice is so bad and so abominable that you would not believe it could be so bad till you had looked at it and at how it acts in your own case. For prejudice gives judgment on your case and gives orders for your execution before your defence has been heard, before your witnesses have been called, before your summons has been served, ay, and even before your indictment has been drawn out. What a scandal and what an uproar a malfeasance of justice like that would cause if it were to take place in any of our courts of law! Only, the thing is impossible; you cannot even imagine it. We shall have Magna Charta up before us in the course of these lectures. Well, ever since Magna Charta was extorted from King John, such a scandal as I have supposed has been impossible either in England or in Scotland. And that such cases should still be possible in Russia and in Turkey places those two old despotisms outside the pale of the civilised world. And yet, loudly as we all denounce the Czar and the Sultan, eloquently as we boast over Magna Charta, Habeas Corpus, and what not, every day you and I are doing what would cost an English king his crown, and an English judge his head. We all do it every day, and it never enters one mind out of a hundred that we are trampling down truth, and righteousness, and fair-play, and brotherly love. We do not know what a diabolical wickedness we are perpetrating every day. The best men among us are guilty of that iniquity every day, and they never confess it to themselves; no one ever accuses them of it; and they go down to death and judgment unsuspicious of the discovery that they will soon make there. You would not steal a stick or a straw that belonged to me; but you steal from me every day what all your gold and mine can never redeem; you murder me every day in my best and my noblest life. You me, and I you.

2. Old Mr. Prejudice. Now, there is a golden passage in Jonathan Edwards's Diary that all old men should lay well to heart and conscience. 'I observe,' Edwards enters, 'that old men seldom have any advantage of new discoveries, because these discoveries are beside a way of thinking they have been long used to. Resolved, therefore, that, if ever I live to years, I will be impartial to hear the reasons of all pretended discoveries, and receive them, if rational, how long soever I have been used to another way of thinking. I am too dogmatical; I have too much of egotism; my disposition is always to be telling of my dislike and my scorn.' What a fine, fresh, fruitful, progressive, and peaceful world we should soon have if all our old and all our fast-ageing men would enter that extract into their diary! How the young would then love and honour and lean upon the old; and how all the fathers would always abide young and full of youthful life like their children! Then the righteous should flourish like the palm-tree; he should grow like a cedar in Lebanon. They that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing. What a free scope would then be given to all God's unfolding providences, and what a warm welcome to all His advancing truths! What sore and spreading wounds would then be salved, what health and what vigour would fill all the body political, as well as all the body mystical! May the Lord turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest the earth be smitten with a curse!

3. Mr. Prejudice was an old man; and this also has been handed down about him, that he was almost always angry. And if you keep your eyes open you will soon see how true to the life that feature of old Mr. Prejudice still is. In every conversation, discussion, debate, correspondence, the angry man is invariably the prejudiced man; and, according to the age and the depth, the rootedness and the intensity of his prejudices, so is the ferocity and the savagery of his anger. He has already settled this case that you are irritating and wronging him so much by your still insisting on bringing up. It is a reproach to his understanding for you to think that there is anything to be said in that matter that he has not long ago heard said and fully answered. Has he not denounced that bad man and that bad cause for years? You insult me, sir, by again opening up that matter in my presence. He will have none of you or of your arguments either. You are as bad yourself as that bad man is whose advocate you are. Weall know men whose hearts are full of coals of juniper, burning coals of hate and rage, just by reason of their ferocious prejudices. Hate is too feeble a word for their gnashing rage against this man and that cause, this movement and that institution. There is an absolutely murderous light in their eye as they work themselves up against the men and the things they hate. Charity rejoices not in iniquity; but you will see otherwise Christian and charitable men so jockeyed by the devil that they actually rejoice in iniquity and do not know what they are doing, or who it is that is egging them on to do it. You will see otherwise and at other times good men so full of the rage and madness of prejudice and partiality that they will storm at every report of goodness and truth and prosperity in the man, or in the cause, or in the church, or in the party, they are so demented against. Jockey is not the word. There is the last triumph of pure devilry in the way that the prince of the devils turns old Prejudice's very best things—his love of his fathers, his love of the past, his love of order, his love of loyalty, his love of the old paths, and his very truest and best religion itself—into so much fat fuel for the fires of hate and rage that are consuming his proud heart to red-hot ashes. If the light that is in us be darkness, how great is that darkness; and if the life that is in us be death, how deadly is that death!

4. Old, angry, and ill-conditioned. Ill-conditioned is an old-fashioned word almost gone out of date. But, all the same, it is a very expressive, and to us to-night a quite indispensable word. An ill-conditioned man is a man of an in-bred, cherished, and confirmed ill-nature. His heart, which was a sufficiently bad heart to begin with, is now so exercised in evil and so accustomed to evil, that,—how can he be born again when he is so old and so ill-natured? All the qualities, all the passions, all the emotions of his heart are out of joint; their bent is bad; they run out naturally to mischief. Now, what could possibly be more ill-conditioned than to judge and sentence, denounce and execute a man before you have heard his case? What could be more ill-conditioned than positively to be afraid lest you should be led to forgive, and redress, and love, and act with another man? To be determined not to hear one word that you can help in his defence, in his favour, and in his praise? Could a human heart be in a worse state on this side hell itself than that? Nay, that is hell itself in your evil heart already. Let prejudice and partiality have their full scope among the wicked passions of your ill-conditioned heart, and lo! the kingdom of darkness is already within you. Not, lo, here! or, lo, there! but within you. Look to yourselves, says John to us all, full as we all are of our own ill-conditions. Look to yourselves. But we have no eyes left with which to see ourselves; we look so much at the faults and the blames of our neighbour. ‘Publius goes to church sometimes, and reads the Scriptures; but he knows not what he reads or prays, his head is so full of politics. He is so angry at kings and ministers of state that he has no time nor disposition to call himself to account. He has the history of all parliaments, elections, prosecutions, and impeachments by heart, and he dies with little or no religion, through a constant fear of Popery.’ Poor, old, ill-conditioned Publius!

5. And, then, his sixty deaf men under old, angry, ill-conditioned Prejudice. We read of engines of sixty-horse power. And here is a man with the power of resisting and shutting out the truth equal to that of sixty men like himself. We all know such men; we would as soon think of speaking to those iron pillars about a change of mind as we would to them. If you preach to their prejudices and their prepossessions and their partialities, they are all ears to hear you, and all tongues to trumpet your praise. But do not expect them to sit still with ordinary decency under what they are so prejudiced against; do not expect them to read a book or buy a passing paper on the other side. Sixty deaf men hold their ears; sixty ill-conditioned men hold their hearts. Habit with them is all the test of truth; it must be right, they’ve done it from their youth. And thus they go on to the end of their term of life, full of their own fixed ideas, with their eyes full of beams and jaundices and darkness and death. Some people think that we take up too much of our time with newspapers in our day, and that, if things go on as they are going, we shall soon have neither time nor taste for anything else but half a dozen papers a day. But all that depends on the conditions with which we read. If we would read as Jonathan Edwards read the weekly news-letters of his day; if we read all our papers to see if the kingdom of God was coming in reply to our prayer; if we read, observing all things, like Timothy, without prejudice or partiality, then I know no better reading for an ill-conditioned heart begun to look to itself than just a good, out-and-out party newspaper. And if it is a church paper all the better for your purpose. If you read with your fingers in your ears; if you read with a beam in your eye, you had better confine yourself in your reading; if you feel that your prejudices are inflamed and your partiality is intensified, then take care what paper you take in. But if you read all you read for the love of the truth, for justice, for fair-play, and for brotherly love, and all that in yourself; if you read all the time with your eyes on your own ill-conditioned heart, then, as James says, count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations. Take up your political and ecclesiastical

paper every morning, saying to yourself, Go to, O my heart, and get thy daily lesson. Go to, and enter thy cleansing and refining furnace. Go to, and come well out of thy daily temptation.—A nobler school you will not find anywhere for a prejudiced, partial, angry, and ill-conditioned heart than just the party journals of the day. For the abating of prejudice; for seeing the odiousness of partiality, and for putting on every day a fair, open, catholic, Christian mind, commend me to the public life and the public journals of our living day. And it is not that this man may be up and that man down; this cause victorious and that cause defeated; this truth vindicated and that untruth defeated, that public life rolls on and that its revolutions are reported to us. Our own minds and our own hearts are the final cause, the ultimate drift, and the far-off end and aim of it all. We are not made for party and for the partialities and prosperities of party; party and all its passions and all its successes and all its defeats are made, and are permitted to be made for us; for our opportunity of purging ourselves free of all our ill-conditions, of all our prejudices, of all our partialities, and of all the sin and misery that come to us of all these things.

6. ‘It is the work of a philosopher,’ says Addison in one of his best Spectators, ‘to be every day subduing his passions and laying aside his prejudices.’ We are not philosophers, but we shall be enrolled in the foremost ranks of philosophy if we imitate such philosophers in their daily work, as we must do and shall do. Well, are we begun to do it? Are we engaged in that work of theirs and ours every day? Is God our witness and our judge that we are? Are we so engaged upon that inward work, and so succeeding in it, that we can read our most prejudiced newspaper with the same mind and spirit, with the same profit and progress, with which we read our Bible? A good man, a humble man, a man acutely sensible of his ill-conditions, will look on every day as lost or won according as he has lost or won in this inward war. If his partialities are dropping off his mind; if his prejudices are melting; if he can read books and papers with pleasure and instruction that once filled him with dark passions and angry outbursts; if his Calvinism lets him read Thomas À Kempis and Jeremy Taylor and William Law; if his High-Churchism lets him delight to worship God in an Independent or a Presbyterian church; if his Free-Churchism permits him to see the Establishment reviving, and his State-Churchism admits that the Free Churches have more to say to him than he had at one time thought; if his Toryism lets him take in a Radical paper, and his Radicalism a Unionist paper—then let him thank God, for God is in all that though he knew it not. And when he counts up his incalculable benefits at each return of the Lord’s table, let him count up as not the least of them an open mind and a well-conditioned heart, an unprejudiced mind, and an impartial heart.

7. And now, to conclude: Take old, angry, ill-conditioned Prejudice, his daily prayer: ‘My Adorable God and Creator! Thy Holy Church is by the wickedness of men divided into various communions, all hating, condemning, and endeavouring to destroy one another. I made none of these divisions, nor am I any longer a defender of them. I wish everything removed out of every communion that hinders the Common Unity. The wranglings and disputings of whole churches and nations have so confounded all things that I have no ability to make a true and just judgment of the matters between them. If I knew that any one of these communions was alone acceptable to Thee, I would do or suffer anything to make myself a member of it. For, my Good God, I desire nothing so much as to know and to love Thee, and to worship Thee in the most acceptable manner. And as I humbly presume that Thou wouldst not suffer Thy Church to be thus universally divided, if no divided portion could offer any worship acceptable unto Thee; and as I have no knowledge of what

is absolutely best in these divided parts, nor any ability to put an end to them; so I fully trust in Thy goodness, that Thou wilt not suffer these divisions to separate me from Thy mercy in Christ Jesus; and that, if there be any better ways of serving Thee than those I already enjoy, Thou wilt, according to Thine infinite mercy, lead me into them, O God of my peace and my love.' After this manner old, angry, ill-conditioned Prejudice prayed every day till he died, a little child, in charity with all men, and in acceptance with Almighty God.

# 061. Captain Anything

LXI CAPTAIN ANYTHING ‘I am made all things to all men . . . I please all men in all things.’—Paul Captain Anything came originally from the ancient town of Fair-speech.

Fair-speech had many royal bounties and many special privileges bestowed upon it, and Captain Anything and his family had come to many titles and to great riches in that ancient, loyal, and honourable borough. My Lord Turn-about, my Lord Time-server, my Lord Fair-speech (from whose ancestors that town first took its name), as also such well-known commoners as Mr. Smooth-man, Mr. Facing-both-ways, and Mr. Two-tongues were all sprung with Captain Anything from the same ancient and long-established ancestry. As to his religion, from a child young Anything had sat under the parson of the parish, the same Reverend Two-tongues as has been mentioned above. And our budding soldier followed the example of his minister in that he never strove too long against wind or tide, or was ever to be seen on the same side of the street with Religion when she was banished from court or had lost her silver slippers. The crest of the Anythings was a delicately poised weather-cock; and the motto engraved around the gyrating bird ran thus: ‘Our judgment always jumps according to the occasion.’ As a military man, Captain Anything is described in military books as a proper man, and a man of courage and skill—to appearance. He and his company under him were a sort of Swiss guard in Mansoul. They held themselves open and ready for any master. They lived not so much by religion or by loyalty as by the fates of worldly fortune. In his secret despatches Diabolus was wont to address Captain Anything as My Darling; and be sure you recruit your Switzers well, Diabolus would say; but when the real stress of the war came, even Diabolus cast Captain Anything off. And thus it came about that when both sides were against this despised creature he had to throw down his arms and flee into a safe skulking place for his life.

1. In that half-papist, half-atheistic country called France there is a class of politicians known by the name of Opportunists. They are a kind of public men that, we are thankful to say, are not known in Protestant and Evangelical England, but they may be pictured out and described to you in this homely way: An Opportunist stands well out of the sparks of the fire, and well in behind the stone wall, till the fanatics for liberty, equality, and fraternity have snatched the chestnuts out of the fire, and then the Opportunist steps out from his safe place and blandly divides the well-roasted tid-bits among his family and his friends. As long as there is any jeopardy, the Jacobins are denounced and held up to opprobrium; but when the jeopardy and the risk are well past, the sober-minded, cautious, conservative, and responsible statesmen walk off with the portfolios of place and privilege and pay under their honest arms. But these are the unprincipled papists and infidels of a mushroom republic; and, thank God, such spurious patriotism, and such sham and selfish statesmanship, have not yet shown their miserable heads among faithful, fearless, straightforward, and uncalculating Englishmen. At the same time, if ever that continental vice should attack our national character, we have two well-known essays in our ethical and casuistical literature that may with perfect safety be pitted against anything that either France or Italy has produced. Even if they are but a master’s irony, let all ambitious men keep Of Cunning and Of

Wisdom for a Man's Self under their pillow. Let all young men who would toady a great man; let all young ministers who would tune their pulpit to king, or court, or society; let all tradesmen and merchants who prefer their profits to their principles—if they have literature enough, let them soak their honest minds in our great Chancellor's sage counsels; and he who promoted Anything and dubbed him his Darling, he will, no doubt, publish both a post and a title on his birthday for you also.

2. 'What religion is he of?' asks Dean Swift. 'He is an Anythingarian,' is the answer, 'for he makes his self-interest the sole standard of his life and doctrine.' And Archbishop Leighton, a very different churchman from the bitter author of the Polite Conversations, is equally contemptuous toward the self-seeker in divine things. 'Your boasted peaceableness often proceeds from a superficial temper; and, not seldom, from a supercilious disdain of whatever has no marketable use or value, and from your utter indifference to true religion. Toleration is an herb of spontaneous growth in the soil of indifference. Much of our union of minds proceeds from want of knowledge and from want of affection to religion. Many who boast of their church conformity, and that no one hears of their noise, may thank the ignorance of their minds for that kind of quietness.' But by far the most powerful assault that ever was made upon lukewarmness in religion and upon self-seeking in the Church was delivered by Dante in the tremendous third canto of his Inferno:—

Various tongues,

Horrible languages, outcries of woe,

Accents of anger, voices deep and hoarse,

With hands together smote that swelled the sounds,

Made up a tumult that for ever whirls

Round through that air with solid darkness stain'd,

Like to the sand that in the whirlwind flies.

I then, with error yet encompass'd, cried,

'O master! What is this I hear? What race

Are these, who seem so overcome with woe?'

He then to me: 'This miserable fate

Suffer the wretched souls of those who lived

Without or praise or blame, with that ill band

Of angels mixed, who nor rebellious proved,

Nor yet were true to God, but for themselves

Were only. Mercy and Justice scorn them both.

Speak not of them, but look and pass them by.'

Forthwith, I understood for certain this the tribe

Of those ill spirits both to God displeasing

And to His foes. Those wretches who ne'er lived,

Went on in nakedness, and sorely stung

By wasps and hornets, which bedewed their cheeks

With blood, that mix'd with tears dropp'd to their feet,

And by disgustful worms was gathered there.

3. Now, we must all lay it continually and with uttermost humiliation to heart that we all have Captain Anything's opportunism, his self-interest, his insincerity, his instability, and his secret deceitfulness in ourselves. That man knows little of himself who does not despise and hate himself for his secret self-seeking even in the service of God. For, how the love of praise will seduce and corrupt this man, and the love of gain that man! How easy it is to flatter and adulate this man out of all his former opinions and his deepest principles, and how an expected advantage will make that other man forget now an old alliance and now a deep antipathy! How often the side we take even in the most momentous matters is decided by the most unworthy motives and the most contemptible considerations! Unstable as water, Reuben shall not excel. Double-minded men, we, like Jacob's first-born, are unstable in all our ways. We have no anchor, or, what anchor we sometimes have soon slips. We have no fixed pole-star by which to steer our life. Any will-o'-the-wisp of pleasure, or advantage, or praise will run us on the rocks. The searchers of Mansoul, after long search, at last lighted on Anything, and soon made an end of him. Seek him out in your own soul also. Be you sure he is somewhere there. He is skulking somewhere there. And, having found him, if you cannot on the spot make an end of him, keep your eye on him, and never say that you are safe from him and his company as long as you are in this soul-deceiving life. And, that Anything will not be let enter the gates of the city you are set on seeking, that will go largely to make that sweet and clean and truthful city your very heaven to you.

4. 'I am made all things to all men, and I please all men in all things.' One would almost think that was Captain Anything himself, in a frank, cynical, and self-censorious moment. But if you will look it up you will see that it was a very different man. The words are the words of Anything, but the heart behind the words is the heart of Paul. And this, again, teaches us that we should be like the Messiah in this also, not to judge after the sight of our eyes, nor to reprove after the hearing of our ears. Miserable Anything! outcast alike of heaven and hell! But, O noble and blessed Apostle! the man, says Thomas Goodwin, who shall be found seated next to Jesus Christ Himself in the kingdom of God. Happy Paul: happy even on this earth, since he could say, and in the measure he could say with truth and with sincerity, such self-revelations as these: 'Unto the Jews I am become as a Jew that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law. To them that are without law, as without law, that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. Giving none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God. Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.' Noble words, and

inspiring to read. Yes: but look within, and think what Paul must have passed through; think what he must have been put through before he,—a man of like selfish passions as we are, a man of like selfish passions as Anything was,—could say all that. Let his crosses and his thorns; his raptures up to the third heaven, and his body of death that he bore about with him all his days; let his magnificent spiritual gifts, and his still more magnificent spiritual graces tell how they all worked together to make the chief of sinners out of the blameless Pharisee, and, at the same time, Christ's own chosen vessel and the apostle of all the churches. Boasting about his patron apostle, St. Augustine says: 'Far be it from so great an apostle, a vessel elect of God, an organ of the Holy Ghost, to be one man when he preached and another when he wrote; one man in private and another in public. He was made all things to all men, not by the craft of a deceiver, but from the affection of a sympathiser, succouring the diverse diseases of souls with the diverse emotions of compassion; to the little ones dispensing the lesser doctrines, not false ones, but the higher mysteries to the perfect—all of them, however, true, harmonious, and divine.' The exquisite irony of Socrates comes into my mind in this connection, and will not be kept out of my mind. By instinct as well as by art Socrates mixed up the profoundest seriousness with the humorous affectation of qualities of mind and even of character the exact opposite of what all who loved him knew to be the real Socrates. 'Intellectually,' says Dr. Thomson, 'the acutest man of his age, Socrates represents himself in all companies as the dullest person present. Morally the purest, he affects to be the slave of passion and borrows the language even of the lewd to describe a love and a good-will far too exalted for the comprehension of his contemporaries. This irony of his disarmed ridicule by anticipating it; it allayed jealousy and propitiated envy; and it possibly procured him admission into gay circles from which a more solemn teacher would have been excluded. But all the time it had for its basis a real greatness of soul, a hearty and an unaffected disregard of public opinion, a perfect disinterestedness, and an entire abnegation of self. He made himself a fool in order that fools by his folly might be made wise; he humbled himself to the level of those among whom his work lay that he might raise some few among them to his own level; he was all things to all men, if by any means he might save some. Till Alcibiades ends the splendid eloge that Plato puts into his mouth with these words, "All my master's vice and stupidity and worship of wealthy and great men is counterfeit. It is all but the Silenus-mask which conceals the features of the god within; for if you remove the covering, how shall I describe to you, my friends and boon companions, the excellence of the beauty you will find within! Whether any of you have seen Socrates in his serious mood, when he has thrown aside the mask and disclosed the divine features beneath it, is more than I know. But I have seen them, and I can tell you that they seemed to me glorious and marvellous, and, truly, godlike in their beauty."'

Well, now, I gather out of all that this great lesson: that it is, to begin with, a mere matter of temperament, or what William Law would call a mere matter of complexion and sensibility, whether, to begin with, a man is hard, and dry, and narrow, and stiff, and proud, and scornful, and cruel; or again, whether he is soft and tender, broad and open, and full of sympathy and of the milk of human kindness. At first, and to begin with, there is neither praise nor blame as yet in the matter. A man is hard just as a stone is hard; it is his nature. Or he is soft as clay is soft; it is again his nature. But, inheriting such a nature, and his inherited nature beginning to appear, then is the time when the true man really begins to be made. The bad man dwells in contentment, and, indeed, by preference, at home in his own hard, proud, scornful, resentful heart; or, again, in his facile, fawning, tide-waiting, time-serving heart; and thus he chooses, accepts, and prefers his evil

fate, and never seeks the help either of God or man to enable him to rise above it. Paul was not, when we meet him first, the sweet, humble, affable, placable, makeable man that he made himself and came to be after a lifetime of gospel-preaching and of adorning the gospel he preached. And all the assistances and all the opportunities that came to Paul are still coming to you and to me; till, whether naturally pliable and affectionate or the opposite, we at last shall come to the temperament, the complexion, and the exquisite sensibility of Paul himself. Are you, then, a hard, stiff, severe, censorious, proud, angry, scornful man? Or are you a too-easy, too-facile man-pleaser and self-seeker, being all things to all men that you may make use of all men? Are you? Then say so. Confess it to be so. Admit that you have found yourself out. And reflect every day what you have got to do in life. Consider what a new birth you need and must have. Number your days that are left you in which to make you a new heart, and a new nature, and a new character. Consider well how you are to set about that divine work. You have a minister, and your minister is called a divine because by courtesy he is supposed to understand that divine work, and to be engaged on it night and day in himself, and in season and out of season among his people. He will tell you how you are to make you a new heart. Or, if he does not and cannot do that; if he preaches about everything but that to a people who will listen to anything but that, then your soul is not in his hands but in your own. You may not be able to choose your minister, but you can choose what books you are to buy, or borrow, and read. And if there is not a minister within a hundred miles of you who knows his right hand from his left, then there are surely some booksellers who will advise you about the classical books of the soul till you can order them for yourselves. And thus, if it is your curse and your shame to be as spongy, and soapy, and oily, and slippery as Anything himself; if you choose your church and your reading with any originality, sense, and insight, you need not fear but that you will be let live till you die an honest, upright, honourable, fearless gentleman: no timid friend to unfashionable truth, as you are to-night, but a man like Thomas Boston’s Ettrick elder, who lies waiting the last trump under a gravestone engraven with this legend: Here lies a man who had a brow for every good cause. Only, if you would have that written and read on your headstone, you have no time to lose. If I were you I would not sit another Sabbath under a minister whose preaching was not changing my nature, making my heart new, and transforming my character; no, not though the Queen herself sat in the same loft. And I would leave the church even of my fathers, and become anything as far as churches go, if I could get a minister who held my face close and ever closer up to my own heart. Nor would I spend a shilling or an hour that I could help on any impertinent book,—any book that did not powerfully help me in the one remaining interest of my one remaining life: a new nature and a new heart. No, not I. No, not I any more.

# 062. Clip-Promise

LXII

CLIP-PROMISE ‘ . . . the promise made of none effect.’—Paul

Toward the end of the thirteenth century Edward the First, the English Justinian, brought a select colony of artists from Italy to England and gave them a commission to execute their best coinage for the English Mint. Deft and skilful as those artists were, the work they turned out was but rude and clumsy compared with some of the gold and silver and copper coins of our day. The Florentine artists took a sheet of gold or of silver and divided the sheet up with great scissors, and then they hammered the cut-out pieces as only a Florentine hammerman could hammer them. But, working with such tools, and working on such methods, those goldsmiths and silversmiths, with all their art, found it impossible to give an absolutely equal weight and worth to every piece of money that they turned out. For one thing, their cut and hammered coins had no carved rims round their edges as all our gold and silver and even copper coinage now has. And, accordingly, the clever rogues of that day soon discovered that it was far easier for them to take up a pair of shears and to clip a sliver of silver off the rough rim of a shilling, or a shaving of gold off a sovereign, than it was to take of their coats and work a hard day’s work. Till to clip the coin of the realm soon became one of the easiest and most profitable kinds of crime. In the time of Elizabeth a great improvement was made in the way of coining the public money; but it was soon found that this had only made matters worse. For now, side by side with a pure and unimpaired and full-valued currency, and mingled up everywhere with it, there was the old, clipped, debased, and far too light gold and silver money; till troubles arose in connection with the coinage and circulation of the country that can only be told by Macaulay’s extraordinarily graphic pen. ‘It may well be doubted,’ Macaulay says, in the twenty-first chapter of his History of England, ‘whether all the misery which has been inflicted on the English nation in a quarter of a century by bad Kings, bad Ministers, bad Parliaments, and bad Judges was equal to the misery caused in a single year by bad crowns and bad shillings. Whether Whigs or Tories, Protestants or Papists were uppermost, the grazier drove his beasts to market, the grocer weighed out his currants, the draper measured out his broadcloth, the hum of buyers and sellers was as loud as ever in the towns; the cream overflowed the pails of Cheshire; the apple juice foamed in the presses of Herefordshire; the piles of crockery glowed in the furnaces of the Trent, and the barrows of coal rolled fast along the timber railways of the Tyne. But when the great instrument of exchange became thoroughly deranged all trade and all industry were smitten as with a palsy. Nothing could be purchased without a dispute. Over every counter there was wrangling from morning to night. The employer and his workmen had a quarrel as regularly as Saturday night came round. On a fair day or a market day the clamours, the disputes, the reproaches, the taunts, the curses, were incessant. No merchant would contract to deliver goods without making some stipulation about the quality of the coin in which he was to be paid. The price of the necessaries of life, of shoes, of ale, of oatmeal, rose fast. The bit of metal called a shilling the labourer found would not go so far as sixpence. One day Tonson sends forty brass shillings to Dryden, to say nothing of clipped money. The great poet

sends them all back and demands in their place good guineas. “I expect,” he says, “good silver, not such as I had formerly.” Meanwhile, at every session of the Old Bailey the most terrible example of coiners and clippers was made. Hurdles, with four, five, six wretches convicted of counterfeiting or mutilating the money of the realm, were dragged month after month up Holborn Hill.’ But I cannot copy the whole chapter, wonderful as the writing is. Suffice it to say that before the clippers could be rooted out, and confidence restored between buyer and seller, the greatest statesmen, the greatest financiers, and the greatest philosophers were all at their wits’ end. Kings’ speeches, cabinet councils, bills of Parliament, and showers of pamphlets were all full in those days of the clipper and the coiner. All John Locke’s great intellect came short of grappling successfully with the terrible crisis the clipper of the coin had brought upon England. Carry all that, then, over into the life of personal religion, after the manner of our Lord’s parables, and after the manner of the Pilgrim’s Progressand the Holy War, and you will see what an able and impressive use John Bunyan will make of the shears of the coin-clippers of his day. Macaulay has but made us ready to open and understand Bunyan. ‘After this, my Lord apprehended Clip-Promise. Now, because he was a notorious villain, for by his doings much of the king’s coin was abused, therefore he was made a public example. He was arraigned and judged to be set first in the pillory, then to be whipped by all the children and servants in Mansoul, and then to be hanged till he was dead. Some may wonder at the severity of this man’s punishment, but those that are honest traders in Mansoul they are sensible of the great abuse that one clipper of promises in little time may do in the town of Mansoul; and, truly, my judgment is that all those of his name and life should be served out even as he.’ The grace of God is like a bullion mass of purest gold, and then Jesus Christ is the great ingot of that gold, and then Moses, and David, and Isaiah, and Hosea, and Paul, and Peter, and John are the inspired artists who have commission to take both bullion and ingot, and out of them to cut, and beat, and smelt, and shape, and stamp, and superscribe the promises, and then to issue the promises to pass current in the market of salvation like so many shekels, and pounds, and pence, and farthings, and mites, as the case may be. And it was just these royal coins, imaged and superscribed so richly and so beautifully, that Clip-Promise so mutilated, abused, and debased, till for doing so he was hanged by the neck till he was dead.

1. The very house of Israel herself, the very Mint-house, Tower Hill, and Lombard Street of Israel herself, was full of false coiners and clippers of the promises; as full as ever England was at her very worst. Israel clipped her Messianic promises and lived upon the clippings instead of upon the coin. Her coming Christ, and His salvation already begun, were the true spiritual currency of Old Testament times; while round that central Image of her great promise there ran an outside rim of lesser promises that all took their true and their only value from Him whose image and superscription stood within. But those besotted and infatuated men of Israel, instead of entering into and living by the great spiritual promises given to them in their Messiah, made lands, and houses, and meat, and drink, all the Messiah they cared for. Matthew Henry says that when we go to the merchant to buy goods, he gives us the paper and the pack-thread to the bargain. Well, those children and fools in Israel actually threw away the goods and hoarded and boasted over the paper and the pack-thread. Our old Scottish lawyers have made us familiar with the distinction in the church between spiritualia and temporalia. Well, the Jews let the spiritualia go to those who cared to take such things, while they held fast to the temporalia. And all that went on till His disciples had the effrontery to clip and coin under our Lord’s very eyes, and even to ask Him to hold the coin while they sharpened their shears. ‘O faithless and perverse generation! How long

shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? Have I been so long with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! And beginning at Moses and all the prophets He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.'

2. But those who live in glass houses must take care not to throw stones. And thus the greatest fool in Israel is safe from you and me. For, like them, and just as if we had never read one word about them, we bend our hearts and our children's hearts to things seen and temporal, and then, after things seen and temporal have all cast us off, we begin to ask if there is any solace or sweetness for a cast-off heart in things unseen and eternal. There are great gaps clipt out of our Bibles that not God Himself can ever print or paste in again. Look and see if half the Book of Proverbs, for instance, with all its noble promises to a godly youth, is not clipt clean out of your dismembered Bible. That fine leaf also, 'My son, give Me thine heart,' is clean gone out of the twenty-third chapter of the Proverbs years and years ago. As is the best part of the noble Book of Daniel, and almost the whole of Second Timothy. 'Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and meat and drink, and wife and child shall be added unto you.' Your suicidal shears have cut that golden promise for ever out of your Sermon on the Mount. So much so that if any or all of these temporal mercies ever come to you, they will come of pure and undeserved mercy, for the time has long passed when you could plead any promise for them. Still, there are two most excellent uses left to which you can even yet put your mangled and dismembered Bible. You can make a splendid use of its gaps and of its gashes, and of those waste places where great promises at one time stood. You can make a grand use even of those gaps if you will descend into them and draw out of them humiliation and repentance, compunction, contrition, and resignation. And this use also: When you are moved to take some man who is still young into your confidence, ask him to let you see his Bible and then let him see yours, and point out to him the rents and wounds and wilderness places in yours. And thus, by these two uses of a clipped-up and half-empty Bible, you may make gains that shall yet set you above those whose Bibles of promises are still as fresh as when they came from God's own hand. And Samson said, I will now put forth a riddle unto you: Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.

3. 'Go out,' said the Lord of Mansoul, 'and apprehend Clip-Promise and bring him before me.' And they did so. 'Go down to Edinburgh to-night, and go to the door of such and such a church, and, as he comes out arrest Clip-the-Commandments, for he has heard My word all this day again but will not do it.' Where would you be by midnight if God rose up in anger and swore at this moment that your disobedient time should be no longer? You would be speechless before such a charge, for the shears are in your pocket at this moment with which you have clipped to pieces this Sabbath-day: shears red with the blood of the Fourth Commandment. For, when did you rise off your bed this resurrection morning? And what did you do when you did rise? What has your reading and your conversation been this whole Lord's day? How full your heart would have been of faith and love and holiness by this time of night had you not despised the Lord of the Sabbath, and cast all His commandments and opportunities to you behind your back? What private exercise have you had all day with your Father who sees in secret? How often have you been on your knees, and where, and how long, and for what, and for whom? What work of mercy have you done to-day, or determined to do to-morrow? And so with all the divine commandments: Mosaic and Christian, legal and evangelical. Such as: A tenth of all I have given to thee; a covenant with a

wandering eye; a mouth once speaking evil, is it now well watched? not one vessel only, but all the vessels of thy body sanctified till every thought and imagination is well under the obedience of Christ. Lest His anger for all that begin to burn to-night, make your bed with Eli and Samuel in His sanctuary to-night, lest the avenger of the blood of the commandments leap out on you in your sleep!

4. The Old Serpent took with him the great shears of hell, and clipped ‘Thou shalt surely die’ out of the second chapter of Genesis. And the same enemy of mankind will clip all the terror of the Lord out of your heart to-night again, if he can. And he will do it in this way, if he can. He will have some one at the church door ready and waiting for you. As soon as the blessing is pronounced, some one will take you by the arm and will entertain you with the talk you love, or that you once loved, till you will be ashamed to confess that there is any terror or turning to God in your heart. No! Thou shalt not surely die, says the serpent still. Why, hast thou not trampled Sabbaths and sermons past counting under thy feet? What commandment, laid on body or soul, hast thou not broken, and thou art still adding drunkenness to thirst, and God doth not know! ‘The woman said unto the serpent, We may not eat of it, neither may we touch it, lest we die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die.’

5. You must all have heard of Clito, who used to say that he desired no more time for rising and dressing and saying his prayers than about a quarter of an hour. Well, that was clipping the thing pretty close, wasn’t it? At the same time it must be admitted that a good deal of prayer may be got through in a quarter of an hour if you do not lose any moment of it. Especially in the first quarter of the day, if you are expeditious enough to begin to pray before you even begin to dress. And prayer is really a very strange experience. There are things about prayer that no man has yet fully found out or told to any. For one thing, once well began it grows upon a man in a most extraordinary and unheard-of way. This same Clito for instance, some time after we find him at his prayers before his eyes are open; and then he keeps all morning making his bath, his soap, his towels, his brushes, and his clothes all one long artifice of prayer. And that till there is not a single piece of his dressing-room furniture that is not ready to swear at the last day that its master long before he died had become a man full of secret prayer. There is a fountain filled with blood! he exclaims, as he throws himself into his bath; and Jeremiah second and twenty-second he uses regularly to repeat to himself half a dozen times a day as he washes the smoke and dust of the city off his hands and face. And then Revelation third and eighteenth till his toilet is completed. Nay, this same Clito has come to be such a devotee to that he had at one time been so expeditious with, that I have seen him forget himself on the street and think that his door was shut. But there is really no use telling you all that about Clito. For, till you try closet-prayer for yourself, all that God or man can say to you on that subject will be water spilt on the ground. All we can say is, Try it. Begin it. Some desperate day try it. Stop when you are on the way to the pond and try it. Stop when you are fastening up the rope and try it. When the poison is moving in the cup, stop, shut your door first. Try God first. See if He is still waiting. And, always after, when the steel shears of a too early, too crowded, and far too exacting day are clipping you out of all time for prayer, then what should you do? What do you do when you simply cannot get your proper fresh air and exercise everyday? Do you not fall back on the plasticity and pliability of nature and take your air and exercise in large parcels? You take a ride into the country two or three times a week. Or, two afternoons a week you have ten miles alone if you cannot get a godly friend. And then two or three times a year, if you

can afford it, you climb an Alp or a Grampian every day for a week or a month; and, so gracious and so adaptable is human nature, that, what others get daily, you get weekly, or monthly, or quarterly, or yearly. And, though a soul is not to be too much presumed upon, Clito came to tell his friends that his soul could on occasion take in prayer and praise enough for a week in a single morning or afternoon, and, almost, for a whole year in a good holiday. As Christ Himself did when He said: Come away apart into a desert place and rest a while; for there are so many people coming and going here that we have no time so much as to eat.

6. But I see I must clip off my last point with you, which was to tell you what you already know only too well, and that is, what terrible shears a bad conscience is armed with, and what havoc she makes at all ages of a poor sinner's Bible. But you can spare that head. You can preach on that text to yourselves far better than all your ministers. Only, take home with you these two lines I have clipped out of Fraser of Brea for you. Nothing in man, he says to us, is to be a ground of despair, since the whole ground of all our hope is in Christ alone. Christ's relation is always to men as they are sinners and not as they are righteous. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. 'Tis with sinners, then, Christ has to do. Nothing damns but unbelief; and unbelief is just holding back from pressing God with this promise, that Christ came to save sinners. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, and it is still to be found standing in the most clipped-up Bible, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

# 063. Stiff Mr. Loth-to-Stoop

LXIII STIFF MR. LOTH-TO-STOOP ‘Thy neck is an iron sinew.’—Jehovah to the house of Jacob.

‘King Zedekiah humbled not himself, but stiffened his neck.’—The Chronicles.

‘He humbled himself.’—Paul on our Lord.

All John Bunyan’s Characters, Situations, and Episodes are collected into this house to-night. Obstinate and Pliable are here; Passion and Patience; Simple, Sloth, and Presumption; Madame Bubble and Mr. Worldly-wiseman; Talkative and By-ends; Deaf Mr. Prejudice is here also, and, sitting close beside him, stiff Mr. Loth-to-stoop; while good old Mr. Wet-eyes and young Captain Self-denial are not wholly wanting. It gives this house an immense and an ever-green interest to me to see character after character coming trooping in, Sabbath evening after Sabbath evening, each man to see himself and his neighbour in John Bunyan’s so truthful and so fearless glass. But it stabs me to the heart with a mortal stab to see how few of us out of this weekly congregation are any better men after all we come to see and to hear. At the same time, such a constant dropping will surely in time wear away the hardest rock. Let that so stiff old man, then, stiff old Mr. Loth-to-stoop, came forward and behold his natural face in John Bunyan’s glass again to-night. ‘Lord, is it I?’ was a very good question, though put by a very bad man. Let us, one and all, then, put the traitor’s question to ourselves to-night. Am I stiff old Loth-to-stoop?—let every man in this house say to himself all through this service, and then at home when reviewing the day, and then all to-morrow when to stoop will be so loathsome and so impossible to us all.

1. To begin, then, at the very bottom of this whole matter, take stiff old Loth-to-stoop as a guilty sinner in the sight of God. Let us take this stiff old man in this dreadful character to begin with, because it is in this deepest and most dreadful aspect of his nature and his character that he is introduced to us in the Holy War. And I shall stand aside and let John Bunyan himself describe Loth-to-stoop in the matter of his justification before God. ‘That is a great stoop for a sinner to have to take,’ says our apostolic author in another classical place, ‘a too great stoop to have to suffer the total loss of all his own righteousness, and, actually, to have to look to another for absolutely everything of that kind. That is no easy matter for any man to do. I assure you it stretches every vein in his heart before he will be brought to yield to that. What! for a man to deny, reject, abhor, and throw away all his prayers, tears, alms, keeping of Sabbaths, hearing, reading, and all the rest, and to admit both himself and them to be abominable and accursed, and to be willing in the very midst of his sins to throw himself wholly upon the righteousness and obedience of another man! I say to do that in deed and in truth is the biggest piece of the cross, and therefore it is that Paul calls it a suffering. “I have suffered the loss of all things that I might win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness.”’ That is John Bunyan’s characteristic comment on stiff old Loth-to-stoop as a guilty sinner, with the offer of a full forgiveness set before him.

2. And then our so truthful and so fertile author goes on to give us Loth-to-stoop as a half-saved sinner; a sinner, that is, trying to make his own terms with God about his full salvation. Through

three most powerful pages we see stiff old Loth-to-stoop engaged in beating down God's unalterable terms of salvation, and in bidding for his full salvation upon his own reduced and easy terms. It was the tremendous stoop of the Son of God from the throne of God to the cradle and the carpenter's shop; and then, as if that were not enough, it was that other tremendous stoop of His down to the Garden and the Cross,—it was these two so tremendous stoops of Jesus Christ that made stiff old Loth-to-stoop's salvation even possible. But, with all that, his true salvation was not possible without stoop after stoop of his own; stoop after stoop which, if not so tremendous as those of Christ, were yet tremendous enough, and too tremendous, for him. Old Loth-to-stoop carries on a long and a bold debate with Emmanuel in order to lessen the stoop that Emmanuel demands of him; and your own life and mine, my brethren, at their deepest and at their closest to our own heart, are really at bottom, like Loth-to-stoop's life, one long roup of salvation, in which God tries to get us up to His terms and in which we try to get Him down to our terms. His terms are, that we shall sell absolutely all that we have for the salvation of our souls; and our terms are, salvation or no salvation, to keep all that we have and to seek every day for more. God absolutely demands that we shall stoop to the very dust every day, till we become the poorest, the meanest, the most despicable, and the most hopeless of men; whereas we meet that divine demand with the proud reply—Is Thy servant a dog? It was with this offended mind that stiff old Loth-to-stoop at last left off from Emmanuel's presence; he would die rather than come down to such degrading terms. And as Loth-to-stoop went away, Emmanuel looked after him, well remembering the terrible night when He Himself was, not indeed like Loth-to-stoop, nor near like him, but when His own last stoop was so deep that it made Him cry out, Father, save Me from this hour! and again, If it be possible let this so tremendous stoop pass from Me. For a moment Emmanuel Himself was loth to stoop, but only for a moment. For He soon rose from off His face in a bath of blood, saying, Not My will, but Thine be done! When Thomas À Kempis is negotiating with the Loth-to-stoops of his unevangelical day, we hear him saying to them things like this: 'Jesus Christ was despised of men, forsaken of His friends and lovers, and in the midst of slanders. He was willing, under His Father's will, to suffer and to be despised, and darest thou to complain of any man's usage of thee? Christ, thy Master, had enemies and back-biters, and dost thou expect to have all men to be thy friends and benefactors? Whence shall thy patience attain her promised crown if no adversity befall thee? Suffer thou with Jesus Christ, and for His sake, if thou wouldst reign with Him. Set thyself, therefore, to bear manfully the cross of thy Lord, who, out of love, was crucified for thee. Know for certain that thou must lead a daily dying life. And the more that thou diest to thyself all that the more shalt thou live unto God.' With many such words as these did Thomas teach the saints of his day to stoop to their daily cross; a daily cross then, which has now been for long to him and to them an everlasting crown.

3. And speaking of À Kempis, and having lately read some of his most apposite chapters, such as that on the Holy Fathers and that on Obedience and Subjection, leads me on to look at Loth-to-stoop when he enters the sacred ministry, as he sometimes does. When a half-converted, half-subdued, half-saved sinner gets himself called to the sacred ministry his office will either greatly hasten on his salvation, or else it will greatly hinder and endanger it. He will either stoop down every day to deeper and ever deeper depths of humility, or he will tower up in pride of office and in pride of heart past all hope of humility, and thus of salvation. The holy ministry is a great nursing-house of pride as we see in a long line of popes, and prelates, and priests, and other lords over God's heritage. And our own Presbyterian polity, while it hands down to us the simplicity, the

unity, the brotherhood, and the humility of the apostolic age, at the same time leaves plenty of temptation and plenty of opportunity for the pride of the human heart. Our preaching and pastoral office, when it is aright laid to our hearts, will always make us the meekest and the humblest of men, even when we carry the most magnificent of messages. But when our own hearts are not right the very magnificence of our message, and the very authority of our Master, become all so many subtle temptations to pride, pique, self-importance, and lothness-to-stoop. With so much still to learn, how slow we ministers are to stoop to learn! How still we stand, and even go back, when all other men are going forward! How few of us have made the noble resolution of Jonathan Edwards: 'Resolved,' he wrote, 'that, as old men have seldom any advantage of new discoveries because these are beside a way of thinking they have been long used to: resolved, therefore, if ever I live to years, that I shall be impartial to hear the reasons of all pretended discoveries, and to receive them, if rational how long soever I have been used to another way of thinking.' Let all ministers, then, young and old, resolve to stoop with Jonathan Edwards, who shines, in his life and in his works, like the cherubim with knowledge, and burns like the seraphim with love. And then, when, not having so resolved, our thin vein of youthful knowledge and experience has been worked to the rock; when grey hairs are here and there upon us, how slow we are to stoop to that! How unwilling we are to let it light on our hearts that our time is past; that we are no longer able to understand, or interest, or attract the young; and, besides, that that is not all their blame, no, nor ours either, but simply the order and method of Divine Providence. How slow we are to see that Divine Providence has other men standing ready to take up our work if we would only humbly lay it down;—how loth we are to stoop to see all that! How unwilling we are to make up our minds, we old and ageing ministers, and to humble our hearts to accept an assistant or to submit to a colleague to stand alongside of us in our unaccomplished work!

4. In public life also, as we call it, what disasters to the state, to the services, and to society, are constantly caused by this same Loth-to-stoop! When he holds any public office; when he becomes the leader of a party; when he is promoted to be an adviser of the Crown; when he is put at the head of a fleet of ships, or of an army of men, what untold evils does Loth-to-stoop bring both on himself and on the nation! An old statesman will have committed himself to some line of legislation or of administration; a great captain will have committed himself to some manoeuvre of a squadron or of a division, or to some plan of battle, and some subordinate will have discovered the error his leader has made, and will be bold to point it out to him. But stiff old Loth-to-stoop has taken his line and has passed his word. His honour, as he holds it, is committed to this announced line of action; and, if the Crown itself should perish before his policy, he will not stoop to change it. How often you see that in great affairs as well as in small. How seldom you see a public man openly confessing that he has hitherto all along been wrong, and that he has at last and by others been set right. Not once in a generation. But even that once redeems public life; it ennobles public life; and it saves the nation and the sovereign who possess such a true patriot. Consistency and courage, independence and dignity, are high-sounding words; but openness of mind, teachableness, diffidence, and humility always go with true nobility as well as with ultimate success and lasting honour.

# 064. That Varlet Ill-Pause, the Devil's Orator

LXIV THAT VARLET ILL-PAUSE, THE DEVIL'S ORATOR 'I made haste and delayed not.'—David.

John Bunyan shall himself introduce, describe, and characterise this varlet, this devil's ally and accomplice, this ancient enemy of Mansoul, whose name is Ill-pause. Well, this same Ill-pause, says our author, was the orator of Diabolus on all difficult occasions, nor took Diabolus any other one with him on difficult occasions, but just Ill-pause alone. And always when Diabolus had any special plot a-foot against Mansoul, and when the thing went as Diabolus would have it go, then would Ill-pause stand up, for he was Diabolus his orator. When Mansoul was under siege of Emmanuel his four noble captains sent a message to the men of the town that if they would only throw Ill-pause over the wall to them, that they might reward him according to his works, then they would hold a parley with the city; but if this varlet was to be let live in the city, then, why, the city must see to the consequences. At which Diabolus, who was there present, was loth to lose his orator, because, had the four captains once laid their fingers on Ill-pause, be sure his master had lost his orator. And, then, in the last assault, we read that Ill-pause, the orator that came along with Diabolus, he also received a grievous wound in the head, some say that his brain-pan was cracked. This, at any rate, I have taken notice of, that never after this was he able to do that mischief to Mansoul as he had done in times past. And then there was also at Eye-gate that Ill-pause of whom you have heard before. The same was he that was orator to Diabolus. He did much mischief to the town of Mansoul, till at last he fell by the hand of the Captain Good-hope.

1. Well, to begin with, this Ill-pause was a filthy Diabolonian varlet; a treacherous and a villainous old varlet, the author of the Holy War calls him. Now, what is a varlet? Well, a varlet is just a broken-down old valet. A varlet is a valet who has come down, and down, and down, and down again in the world, till, from once having been the servant and the trusty friend of the very best of masters, he has come to be the ally and accomplice of the very worst of masters. His first name, the name of his first office, still sticks to him, indeed; but, like himself, and with himself, his name has become depraved and corrupted till you would not know it. A varlet, then, is just short and sharp for a scoundrel who is ready for anything; and the worse the thing is the more ready he is for it. There are riff-raff and refuse always about who are ready to volunteer for any filibustering expedition; and that full as much for the sheer devilry of the enterprise as for any real profit it is to be to themselves. Wherever mischief is to be done, there your true varlet is sure to turn up. Well, just such a land-shark was this Ill-pause, who was such an ally and accomplice to Diabolus that he had need for no other. What possible certificate in evil could exceed this—that the devil took not any with him when he went out on his worst errand but this same Ill-pause, who was his orator on all his most difficult occasions?

2. Ill-pause was a varlet, then, and he was also an orator. Now, an orator, as you know, is a great speaker. An orator is a man who has the excellent and influential gift of public speech. And on great occasions in public life when people are to be instructed, and impressed, and moved, and

won over, then the great orator sets up his platform. Quintilian teaches us in his Institutes that it is only a good man who can be a really great orator. What would that fine writer have said had he lived to read the Holy War, and seen the most successful of all orators that ever opened a mouth, and who was all the time a diabolical old varlet? What would the author of The Education of an Orator have said to that? Diabolus did not on every occasion bring up his great orator Ill-pause. He did not always come up himself, and he did not always send up Ill-pause. It was only on difficult occasions that both Diabolus and his orator also came up. You do not hear your great preachers every Sabbath. They would not long remain great preachers, and you would soon cease to pay any attention to them, if they were always in the pulpit. Neither do you have your great orators at every street corner. Their masters only build theatres for them when some great occasion arises in the land, and when the best wisdom must straightway be spoken to the people and in the best way. Then you bring up Quintilian's orator if you have him at your call. As Diabolus has done from time to time with his great and almost always successful orator Ill-pause. On difficult occasions he came himself on the scene and Ill-pause with him. On such difficult occasions as in the Garden of Eden; as when Noah was told to make haste and build an ark; as also when Abraham was told to make haste and leave his father's house; when Jacob was bid remember and pay the vow he had made when his trouble was upon him; as also when Joseph had to flee for what was better than life; and on that memorable occasion when David sent Joab out against Rabbah, but David tarried still at Jerusalem. On all these essential, first-class, and difficult occasions the old serpent brought up Ill-pause. As also when our Lord was in the wilderness; when He set His face to go up to Jerusalem; when He saw certain Greeks among them that came up to the passover; as also again and again in the Garden. As also on crucial occasions in your own life. As when you had been told not to eat, not to touch, and not even to look at the forbidden fruit, then Ill-pause, the devil's orator, came to you and said that it was a tree to be desired. And, you shall not surely die. As also when you were moved to terror and to tears under a Sabbath, or under a sermon, or at some death-bed, or on your own sick-bed—Ill-pause got you to put off till a more convenient season your admitted need of repentance and reformation and peace with God. On such difficult occasions as these the devil took Ill-pause to help him with you, and the result, from the devil's point of view, has justified his confidence in his orator. When Ill-pause gets his new honours paid him in hell; when there is a new joy in hell over another sinner that has not yet repented, your name will be heard sounding among the infernal cheers. Just think of your baptismal name and your pet name at home giving them joy to-night at their supper in hell! And yet one would not at first sight think that such triumphs and such toasts, such medals, and clasps, and garters were to be won on earth or in hell just by saying such simple-sounding and such commonplace things as those are for which Ill-pause receives his decorations. 'Take time,' he says. 'Yes,' he admits,' but there is no such hurry; to-morrow will do; next year will do; after you are old will do quite as well. The darkness shall cover you, and your sin will not find you out. Christ died for sin, and it is a faithful saying that His blood will cleanse you later on from all this sin.' Everyday and well-known words, indeed, but a true orator is seen in nothing more than in this, that he can take up what everybody knows and says, and put it so as to carry everybody captive. One of Quintilian's own orators has said that a great speaker only gives back to his hearers in flood what they have already given to him in vapour.

3. 'I was always pleased,' says Calvin, 'with that saying of Chrysostom, "The foundation of our philosophy is humility"; and yet more pleased with that of Augustine: "As," says he, "the rhetorician being asked, What was the first thing in the rules of eloquence? he answered, Pronunciation; what

was the second? Pronunciation; what was the third? and still he answered, Pronunciation. So if you would ask me concerning the precepts of the Christian religion, I would answer, firstly, secondly, thirdly, and for ever, Humility.”’ And when Ill-pause opened his elocutionary school for the young orators of hell, he is reported to have said this to them in his opening address, ‘There are only three things in my school,’ he said; ‘three rules, and no more to be called rules. The first is Delay, the second is Delay, and the third is Delay. Study the art of delay, my sons; make all your studies to tell on how to make the fools delay. Only get those to whom your master sends you to delay, and you will not need to envy me my laurels; you will soon have a shining crown of your own. Get the father to delay teaching his little boy how to pray. Get him on any pretext you can invent to put off speaking in private to his son about his soul. Get him to delegate all that to the minister. And then by hook or by crook get that son as he grows up to put off the Lord’s Supper. And after that you will easily get him to put off purity and prayer till he is a married man and at the head of a house. Only get the idea of a more convenient season well into their heads, and their game is up, and your spurs are won. Take their arm in yours, as I used to do, at their church door, if you are posted there, and say to them as they come out that to-morrow will be time enough to give what they had thought of giving while they were still in their pew and the minister or missionary was still in the pulpit. Only, as you value your master’s praises and the applause of all this place, keep them, at any cost, from striking while the iron is hot. Let them fill their hearts, and their mouths too, if it gives them any comfort, with the best intentions; only, my scholars, remember that the beginning and middle and end of your office is by hook or by crook to secure delay.’ And a great crop of young orators sprang up ready for their work under that teaching and out of the persuasionary school of Ill-pause. In fine, Mansoul desired some time in which to prepare its answer.’

There are many men among ourselves who have been bedevilled out of their best life, out of the salvation of their souls, and out of all that constitutes and accompanies salvation now for many years. And still their sin-deceived hearts are saying to them to-night, Take time! For many years, every new year, every birthday, and, for a long time, every Communion-day, they were just about to be done with their besetting sin; and now all the years lie behind them, one long downward road all paved, down to this Sabbath night, with the best intentions. And, still, as if that were not enough, that same varlet is squat at their ear. Well, my very miserable brother, you have long talked about the end of an old year and the beginning of a new year as being your set time for repentance and for reformation. Let all the weight of those so many remorseful years fall on your heart at the close of this year, and at last compel you to take the step that should have been taken, oh! so many unhappy years ago! Go straight home then, to-night, shut your door, and, after so many desecrated Sabbath nights, God will still meet you in your secret chamber. As soon as you shut your door God will be with you, and you will be with God. With GOD! Think of it, my brother, and the thing is done. With GOD! And then tell Him all. And if any one knocks at your door, say that there is Some One with you to-night, and that you cannot come down. And continue till you have told it all to God. He knows it all already; but that is one of Ill-pause’s sophistries still in your heart. Tell your Father it all. Tell Him how many years it is. Tell Him all that you so well remember over all those wild, miserable, mad, remorseful years. Tell Him that you have not had one really happy, one really satisfied day all those years, and tell Him that you have spent all, and are now no longer a young man; youth and health and self-respect and self-command are all gone, till you are a shipwreck rather than a man. And tell Him that if He will take you back that you are to-night

at His feet.

4. ‘We seldom overcome any one vice perfectly, ’complains À Kempis. And, again, ‘If only every new year we would root out but one vice.’ Well, now, what do you say to that, my true and very brethren? What do you say to that? Here we are, by God’s grace and long-suffering to usward, near the end of another year, another vicious year; and why have we been borne with through so many vicious years but that we should now cease from vice and begin to learn virtue? Why are we here over Ill-pause this Sabbath night? Why, but that we should shake off that varlet liar before another new year. That is the whole reason why we have been spared to see this Sabbath night. God decreed it for us that we should have this text and this discourse here to-night, and that is the reason why you and I have been so unaccountably spared so long. Let us select one vice for the axe then to-night, and give God in heaven the satisfaction of seeing that His long-suffering with us has not been wholly in vain. Let us lay the axe at one vice from this night. And what one from among so many shall it be? What is the mockery of preaching if a preacher does not practise? And, accordingly, I have selected one vice out of my thicket for next year. Will you do the same? The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. Just make your selection and keep it to yourself, at least till you are able this time next year to say to us—Come, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what He hath done for my soul. Yes, come on, and from this day all your days on earth, and all the days of eternity, you will thank God for John Bunyan and his Holy War and his Ill-pause. Make your selection, then, for your new axe. Attack some one sin at this so auspicious season. Swear before God, and unknown to all men—swear sure death, and that without any more delay, to that selected sin. Never once, all your days, do that sin again. Determine never once to do it again. Determine that by prayer, by secret, and at the same time outspoken, prayer on your knees. Determine it by faith in the cleansing blood and renewing spirit of Jesus Christ. Determine it by fear of instant death, and by sure hope of everlasting life. Determine it by reasons, and motives, and arguments, and encouragements known to no-one but yourself, and to be suspected by no human being. Name the doomed sin. Denounce it. Execrate it. Execute it. Draw a line across your short and uncertain life, and say to that besetting and presumptuous sin, Hitherto, and no further! Do not say you cannot do it. You can if you only will. You can if you only choose. And smiting down that one sin will loosen and shake down the whole evil fabric of sin. Breaking but that one link will break the whole of Satan’s snare and evil fetter. Here is À Kempis’s forest of vices out of which he hewed down one every year. Restless lust, outward senses, empty phantoms, always longing to get, always sparing to give, careless as to talk, unwilling to sit silent, eager for food, wakeful for news, weary of a good book, quick to anger, easy of offence at my neighbour, and too ready to judge him, too merry over prosperity, and too gloomy, fretful, and peevish in adversity; so often making good rules for my future life, and coming so little speed with them all, and so on. And, in facing even such a terrible thicket as that, let not even an old man absolutely despair. At forty, at sixty, at threescore and ten, let not an old penitent despair. Only take axe in hand and see if the sun does not stand still upon Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon till you have avenged yourself on your enemies. And always when you stop to wipe your brow, and to whet the edge of your axe, and to wet your lips with water, keep on saying things like those of another great sinner deep in his thicket of vice, say this: O God, he said, Thou hast not cut off as a weaver my life, nor from day even to night hast Thou made an end of me. But Thou hast vouchsafed to me life and breath even to this hour from childhood, youth, and hitherto even unto old age. He holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to slide, rescuing me from perils, sicknesses, poverty, bondage,

public shame, evil chances; keeping me from perishing in my sins, and waiting patiently for my full conversion. Glory be to Thee, O Lord, glory to Thee, for Thine incomprehensible and unimaginable goodness toward me of all sinners far and away the most unworthy. The voices and the concert of voices of angels and men be to Thee; the concert of all thy saints in heaven and of all Thy creatures in heaven and on earth; and of me, beneath their feet an unworthy and wretched sinner, Thy abject creature; my praise also, now, in this day and hour, and every day till my last breath, and till the end of this world, and then to all eternity, where they cease not saying, To Him who loved us, Amen!

# 065. Mr. Penny-Wise-and-Pound-Foolish, and Mr. Get-I'-The-Hundred-and-Lose-I'-The-Shire

LXV MR. PENNY-WISE-AND-POUND-FOOLISH, AND MR. GET-I'-THE-HUNDRED-AND-LOSE-I'-THE-SHIRE 'For, what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?'—Our Lord. This whole world is the penny, and our own souls are the pound. This whole world is the hundred, while heaven itself is the shire. And the question this evening is, Are we wise in the penny and foolish in the pound? And, are we getting in the hundred and losing in the shire?

1. Well, then, to begin at the beginning, we are already begun to be penny-wise and pound-foolish with our children when we are so particular with them about their saying their little prayers night and morning, while all the time we are so inattentive and so indolent to explain to them how they are to pray, what they are to pray for, and how they are to wait and how long they are to wait for the things they pray for. Then, again, we are penny-wise and pound-foolish with our children when we train them up into all the proprieties and etiquettes of family and social life, and at the same time pay so little attention to their inward life of opening thought and quickening desire and awakening passion. When we are so eager also for our children to be great with great people, without much regard to the moral and religious character of those great people, then again we are like a man who may be wise for a penny, but is certainly a fool for a pound. When we prefer the gay and the fashionable world to the intellectual, the religious, and the philanthropical world for our children, then we lose both the penny and the pound as well. Almost as much as we do when we accept the penny of wealth and station and so-called connection for a son or a daughter, in room of the pound of character, and intelligence, and personal religion.

Then, again, even in our own religious life we are ourselves often and notoriously wise in the penny and foolish in the pound. As, for instance, when we are so scrupulous and so conscientious about forms and ceremonies, about times and places, and so on. In short, the whole ritual that has risen up around spiritual religion in all our churches, from that of the Pope himself out to that of George Fox—it is all the penny rather than the pound. This rite and that ceremony; this habit and that tradition; this ancient and long-established usage, as well as that new departure and that threatened innovation;—it is all, at its best, always the penny and never the pound. Satan busied me about the lesser matters of religion, says James Fraser of Brea, and made me neglect the more substantial points. He made me tithe to God my mint, and my anise and my cummin, and many other of my herbs, to my all but complete neglect of justice and mercy and faith and love. Whether there are any of the things that Brea would call mint and anise and cummin that are taking up too much of the time of our controversially-minded men in all our churches, highland and lowland, to-day is a matter for humbling thought. Labour, my brethren, for yourselves, at any rate, to get yourselves into that sane and sober habit of mind that instantly and instinctively puts all mint and all cummin of all kinds into the second place, and all the weightier matters, both of law and of gospel, into the first place. I wasted myself on too nice points, laments Brea in his deep, honest,

clear-eyed autobiography. I did not proportion my religious things aright. The laird of Brea does not say in as many words that he was wise in the penny and foolish in the pound, but that is exactly what he means.

Then, again, the narrowness, the partiality, the sickliness, and the squeamishness of our consciences,—all that makes us to be too often penny-wise and pound-foolish in our religious life. A well-instructed, thoroughly wise, and well-balanced conscience is an immense blessing to that man who has purchased such a conscience for himself. There is an immense and a criminal waste of conscience that goes on among some of our best Christian people through the want of light and space, room, and breadth, and balance in their consciences. We are all pestered with people every day who are full of all manner of childish scrupulosity and sickly squeamishness in their ill-nourished, ill-exercised consciences. As long as a man's conscience is ignorant and weak and sickly it will, it must, spend and waste itself on the pennyworths of religion and' morals instead of the pounds. It will occupy and torture itself with points and punctilios, jots and tittles, to the all but total oblivion, and to the all but complete neglect, of the substance and the essence of the Christian mind, the Christian heart, and the Christian character. The washing of hands, of cups, and of pots, was all the conscience that multitudes had in our Lord's day; and multitudes in our day scatter and waste their consciences on the same things. A good man, an otherwise good and admirable man, will absolutely ruin and destroy his conscience by points and scruples and traditions of men as fatally as another will by a life of debauchery. Some old and decayed ecclesiastical rubric; some absolutely indifferent form in public worship; some small casuistical question about a creed or a catechism; some too nice point of confessional interpretation; the mint and anise and cummin of such matters will fill and inflame and poison a man's mind and heart and conscience for months and for years, to the total destruction of all that for which churches and creeds exist; to the total suspense, if not the total and lasting destruction, of sobriety of mind, balance and breadth of judgment, humility, charity, and a hidden and a holy life. The penny of a perverted, partial, and fanaticised conscience has swallowed up the pound of instruction, and truth, and justice, and brotherly love.

2. 'Nor is the man with the long name at all inferior to the other,' said Lucifer, in laying his infernal plot against the peace and prosperity of Mansoul. Now, the man with the long name was just Mr. Get-i'-the-hundred-and-lose-i'-the-shire. A hundred in the old county geography of England was a political subdivision of a shire, in which five score freemen lived with their freeborn families. A county or a shire was described and enumerated by the poll-sheriff of that day as containing so many enfranchised hundreds; and the total number of hundreds made up the political unity of the shire. To this day we still hear from time to time of the 'Chiltern Hundreds,'which is a division of Buckinghamshire that belongs, along with its political franchise, to the Crown, and which is utilised for Crown purposes at certain political emergencies. This proverb, then, to get i 'the hundred and lose i' the shire, is now quite plain to us. You might canvass so as to get a hundred, several hundreds, many hundreds on your side, and yet you might lose when it came to counting up the whole shire. You might possess yourself of a hundred or two and yet be poor compared with him who possessed the whole shire. And then the proverb has been preserved out of the old political life of England, and has been moralised and spiritualised to us in the Holy War. And thus after to-night we shall always call this shrewd proverb to mind when we are tempted to take a part at the risk of the whole; to receive this world at the loss of the next world; or, as our Lord has it, to gain

the whole world and to lose our own soul. Lot's choice of Sodom and Gomorrah, and Esau's purchase of the mess of pottage in the Old Testament; and then Judas's thirty pieces of silver, and Ananias and Sapphira's part of the price in the New Testament, are all so many well-known instances of getting in the hundred and losing in the shire. And not Esau's and Lot's only, but our own lives also have been full up to to-day of the same fatal transaction. This house, as our Lord again has it, this farm, this merchandise, this shop, this office, this salary, this honour, this home—all this on the one hand, and then our Lord Himself, His call, His cause, His Church, with everlasting life in the other—when it is set down before us in black and white in that way, the transaction, the proposal, the choice is preposterous, is insane, is absolutely impossible. But preposterous, insane, absolutely impossible, and all, there it is, in our own lives, in the lives of our sons and daughters, and in the lives of multitudes of other men and other men's sons and daughters besides ours. Every day you will be taken in, and you will stand by and see other men taken in with the present penny for the future pound: and with the poor pelting hundred under your eye for the full, far-extending, and ever-enriching shire. Lucifer is always abroad pressing on us in his malice the penny on the spot, for the pound which he keeps out of sight; he dazzles our eyes with the gain of the hundred till we gnash our teeth at the loss of the shire.

'He hath in sooth good cause for endless grief,

Who, for the love of thing that lasteth not,

Despoils himself for ever of THAT LOVE.'

3. 'What also if we join with those two another two of ours, Mr. Sweet-world and Mr. Present-good, namely, for they are two men full of civility and cunning. Let these engage in this business for us, and let Mansoul be taken up with much business, and if possible with much pleasure, and this is the way to get ground of them. Let us but cumber and occupy and amuse Mansoul sufficiently, and they will make their castle a warehouse for goods instead of a garrison for men of war.' This diabolical advice was highly applauded all through hell till all the lesser devils, while setting themselves to carry it out, gnashed their teeth with envy and malice at Lucifer for having thought of this masterpiece and for having had it received with such loud acclamation. 'Only get them,' so went on that so able, so well-envied, and so well-hated devil, 'let us only get those fribble sinners for a night at a time to forget their misery. And it will not cost us much to do that. Only let us offer them in one another's houses a supper, a dance, a pipe, a newspaper full of their own shame, a tale full of their own folly, a silly song, and He who loved them with an everlasting love will soon see of the travail of His soul in them!' Yes, my fellow-sinners, Lucifer and his infernal crew know us and despise us and entrap us at very little trouble, till He who travailed for us on the tree covers His face in heaven and weeps over us. As long as we remember our misery, all the mind, and all the malice, and all the sleeplessness in hell cannot touch a hair of our head. But when by any emissary and opportunity either from earth around us or from hell beneath us we for another night forget our misery, it is all over with us. And yet, to tell the truth, we never can quite forget our misery. We are too miserable ever to forget our misery. In the full steam of Lucifer's best-spread supper, amid the shouts of laughter and the clapping of hands, and all the outward appearance of a complete forgetfulness of our misery, yet it is not so. It is far from being so. Our misery is far too deep-seated for all the devil's drugs. Only, to give Lucifer his due, we do sometimes, under him, so get out of touch with the true consolation for our misery that, night after night, through cumber,

through pursuit of pleasure, through the time being taken up with these and other like things, we do so far forget our misery as to lie down without dealing with it; but only to have it awaken us, and take our arm as its own for another miserable day. Yes; though never completely successful, yet this masterpiece of hell is sufficiently successful for Satan's subtlest purposes; which are, not to make us forget our misery, but to make us put it away from us at the natural and proper hour for facing it and for dealing with it in the only proper and successful way. But, wholly, any night, or even partially for a few nights at a time, to forget our misery—no, with all thy subtlety of intellect and with all thy hell-filled heart, O Lucifer, that is to us impossible! Forget our misery! O devil of devils, no! Bless God, that can never be with us! Our misery is too deep, too dreadful, too acute, too all-consuming ever to be forgotten by us even for an hour. Our misery is too terrible for thee, with all thy overthrown intellect and all thy malice-filled heart, ever to understand! Didst thou for one midnight hour taste it, and so understand it, then there would be the same hope for thee that, I bless God, there still is for me!

Let us bend all our strength and all our wit to this, went on Lucifer, to make their castle a warehouse instead of a garrison. Let us set ourselves and all our allies, he explained to the duller-witted among the devils, to make their hearts a shop,—some of them, you know, are shopkeepers; a bank,—some of them are bankers; a farm,—some of them are farmers; a study,—some of them are students; a pulpit,—some of them like to preach; a table,—some of them are gluttons; a drawing-room,—some of them are busybodies who forget their own misery in retailing other people's misery from house to house. Be wise as serpents, said the old serpent; attend, each several fallen angel of you, to his own special charge. Study your man. Get to the bottom of your man. Follow him about; never let him out of your sight; be sure before you begin, be sure you have the joint in his harness, the spot in his heel, the chink in his wall full in your eye. I do not surely need to tell you not to scatter our snares for souls at random, he went on. Give the minister his study Bible, the student his classic, the merchant his ledger, the glutton his well-dressed dish and his elect year of wine, the gossip her sweet secret, and the flirt her fool. Study them till they are all naked and open to your sharp eyes. Find out what best makes them forget even for one night their misery and ply them with that. If I ever see that soul I have set thee over on his knees on account of his misery I shall fling thee on the spot into the bottomless pit. And if any of you shall anywhere discover a man—and there are such men—a man who forgets his misery through always thinking and speaking about it, only keep him in his pulpit, and off his knees, and no man so safe for hell as he. There are fools, and there are double-dyed fools, and that man is the chief of them. Give him his fill of sin and misery; let him luxuriate himself in sin and misery; only, keep him there, and I will not forget thy most excellent service to me.

Make all their hearts, so Lucifer summed up, as he dismissed his obsequious devils, make all their several hearts each a warehouse, a shop, a farm, a pulpit, a library, a nursery, a supper-table, a chamber of wantonness—let it be to each man just after his own heart. Only, keep—as you shall answer for it,—keep faith and hope and charity and innocence and patience and especially prayerfulness out of their hearts. And when this my counsel is fulfilled, and when the pit closes over thy charge, I shall pay thee thy wages, and promote thee to honour. And before he was well done they were all at their posts.

Chapter 66

# 066. The Devil's Last Card

LXVI THE DEVIL’S LAST CARD ‘Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light’—Paul.

Wodrow has an anecdote in his delightful Analecta which shall introduce us into our subject to-night. Mr. John Menzies was a very pious and devoted pastor; he was a learned man also, and well seen in the Popish and in the Arminian controversies. And to the end of his life he was much esteemed of the people of Aberdeen as a foremost preacher of the gospel. And yet, ‘Oh to have one more Sabbath in my pulpit!’ he cried out on his death-bed. ‘What would you then do?’ asked some one who sat at his bedside. ‘I would preach to my people on the tremendous difficulty of salvation!’ exclaimed the dying man.

1. Now, the first difficulty that stands in the way of our salvation is the stupendous mass of guilt that has accumulated upon all of us. Our guilt is so great that we dare not think of it. It is too horrible to believe that we shall ever be called to account for one in a thousand of it. It crushes our minds with a perfect stupor of horror, when for a moment we try to imagine a day of judgment when we shall be judged for all the deeds that we have done in the body. Heart-beat after heart-beat, breath after breath, hour after hour, day after day, year after year, and all full of sin; all nothing but sin from our mother’s womb to our grave. Sometimes one outstanding act of sin has quite overwhelmed us. But before long that awful sin fell out of sight and out of mind. Other sins of the same kind succeeded it. Our sense of sin, our sense of guilt was soon extinguished by a life of sin, till, at the present moment the accumulated and tremendous load of our sin and guilt is no more felt by us than we feel the tremendous load of the atmosphere. But, all the time, does not our great guilt lie sealed down upon us? Because we are too seared and too stupefied to feel it, is it therefore not there? Because we never think of it, does that prove that both God and man have forgiven and forgotten it? Shall the Judge of all the earth do right in the matter of all men’s guilt but ours? Does the apostle’s warning not hold in our case?—his awful warning that we shall all stand before the judgment-seat? And is it only a strong figure of speech that the books shall be opened till we shall cry to the mountains to fall on us and to the rocks to cover us? Oh no! the truth is, the half has not been told us of the speechless stupefaction that shall fall on us when the trumpet shall sound and when Alp upon Alp of aggravated guilt shall rise up high as heaven between us and our salvation. Difficulty is not the name for guilt like ours. Impossibility is the better name we should always know it by.

2. Another difficulty or impossibility to our salvation rises out of the awful corruption and pollution of our hearts. But is there any use entering on that subject? Is there one man in a hundred who even knows the rudiments of the language I must now speak in? Is there one man in a hundred in whose mind any idea arises, and in whose heart any emotion or passion is kindled, as I proceed to speak of corruption of nature and pollution of heart? I do not suppose it. I do not presume upon it. I do not believe it. That most miserable man who is let down of God’s Holy Spirit into the pit of corruption that is in his own heart,—to him his corruption, added to his guilt, causes a sadness that nothing in this world can really relieve; it causes a deep and an increasing melancholy, such as the

ninety and nine who need no repentance and feel no pollution know nothing of. All living men flee from the corruption of an unburied corpse. The living at once set about to bury their dead. ‘I am a stranger and a sojourner among you,’ said Abraham to the children of Heth; ‘give me a possession of a burying-place among you that I may bury my dead out of my sight.’ But Paul could find no grave in the whole world in which to bury out of his sight the body of death to which he was chained fast; that body of sin and death which always makes the holiest of men the most wretched of men,—till the loathing and the disgust and the misery that filled the apostle’s heart are to be understood by but one in a thousand even of the people of God.

3. And then, as if to make our salvation a very hyperbole of impossibility, the all but almighty power of indwelling sin comes in. Have you ever tried to break loose from the old fetter of an evil habit? Have you ever said on a New Year’s Day with Thomas À Kempis that this year you would root that appetite,—naming it,—out of your body, and that vice,—naming it,—out of your heart? Have you ever sworn at the Communion table that you would watch and pray, and set a watch on your evil heart against that envy, and that revenge, and that ill-will, and that distaste, dislike, and antipathy? Then your minister will not need to come back from his death-bed to preach to you on the difficulty of salvation.

4. And yet such is the grace of God, such is the work of Christ, and such is the power and the patience of the Holy Ghost that, if we had only an adequate ministry in our pulpits, and an assisting literature in our homes, even this three-fold impossibility would be overcome and we would be saved. But if the ministry that is set over us is an ignorant, indolent, incompetent, self-deceived ministry; if our own chosen, set-up, and maintained minister is himself an uninstructed, unspiritual, unsanctified man; and if the books we buy and borrow and read are all secular, unspiritual, superficial, ephemeral, silly, stupid, impertinent books, then the impossibility of our salvation is absolute, and we are as good as in hell already with all our guilt and all our corruption for ever on our heads. Now, that was the exact case of Mansoul in the allegory of the Holy War at one of the last and acutest stages of that war. Or, rather, that would have been her exact case had Diabolus got his own deep, diabolical way with her. For what did her ancient enemy do but sound a parley till he had played his last card in these glozing and deceitful words;—‘I myself, ’he had the face to say to Emmanuel, ‘if Thou wilt raise Thy siege and leave the town to me, I will, at my own proper cost and charge, set up and maintain a sufficient ministry, besides lecturers, in Mansoul, who shall show to Mansoul that transgression stands in the way of life; the ministers I shall set up shall also press the necessity of reformation according to Thy holy law.’ And even now, with the two pulpits, God’s and the devil’s, and the two preachers, and the two pastors, in our own city,—how many of you see any difference, or think that the one is any worse or any better than the other? Or, indeed, that the ministry of the last card is not the better of the two to your interest and to your taste, to the state of your mind and to the need of your heart? Let us proceed, then, to look at Mansoul’s two pulpits and her two lectureships as they stand portrayed on the devil’s last card and in Emmanuel’s crowning commission; that is, if our eyes are sharp enough to see any difference.

5. The first thing, then, on the devil’s last card was this, ‘A sufficient ministry, besides lecturers, in Mansoul.’ Now, a sufficient ministry has never been seen in the true Church of Christ since her ministry began. And yet she has had great ministers in her time. After Christ Himself, Paul was the greatest and the best minister the Church of Christ has ever had. But such was the transcendent

greatness of his office, such were its tremendous responsibilities, such were its magnificent opportunities and its incessant demands, such were its ceaseless calls to consecration, to cross-bearing, to crucifixion, to more and more inwardness of holiness, and to higher and higher heights of heavenly-mindedness, that the apostle was fain to cry out continually, Who is sufficient for these things! But so well did Paul learn that gospel which he preached to others that amid all his insufficiency he was able to hear his Master saying to him every day, My grace is sufficient for thee, and, My strength is made perfect in thy weakness! And to come down to the truly Pauline succession of ministers in our own lands and in our own churches, what preachers and what pastors Christ gave to Kidderminster, and to Bedford, and to Down and Connor, and to Sodor and Man, and to Anwoth, and to Ettrick, and to New England, and to St. Andrews, and places too many to mention. With all its infirmity and all its inefficiency, what a truly heavenly power the pulpit is when it is filled by a man of God who gives his whole mind and heart, his whole time and thought to it, and to the pastorate that lies around it. His mind may be small, and his heart may be full of corruption; his time may be full of manifold interruptions, and his best study may yield but a poor result; but if Heaven ever helps those who honestly help themselves, then that is certainly the case in the Christian ministry. Let the choicest of our children, then, be sought out and consecrated to that service; let our most gifted and most gracious-minded sons be sent to where they shall be best prepared for the pulpit and the pastorate,—till by the blessing of her Head all the congregations and all the parishes, all the pulpits and all the lectureships in the Church, shall be one garden of the Lord. And then we shall escape that last curse of a ministry such as John Bunyan saw all around him in the England of his day, and which, had he been alive in the England and Scotland of our day, he would have painted again in colours we have neither the boldness nor the skill to mix nor to put on the canvas. But let all ministers put it every day to themselves to what descent and succession they belong. Let those even who believe that they have within themselves the best seal and evidence attainable here that they have been ordained of Emmanuel, let them all the more look well every day and every Sabbath day how much of another master’s doctrine and discipline, motives, and manners still mixes up with their best ministry. And the surest seal that, with all our insufficiency, we are still the ministers of Christ will be set on us by this, that the harder we work and the more in secret we pray, the more and ever the more shall we discover and confess our shameful insufficiency, and the more shall we, till the day of our death, every day still begin our ministry of labour and of prayer anew. Let us do that, for the devil, with all his boldness and all his subtilty, never threw a card first or last like that.

6. After offering a sufficient ministry to Mansoul, and that, too, at his own proper cost and charge, Diabolus undertook also to see that the absolute necessity of a reformation should be preached and pressed from the pulpit he set up. Now, reformation is all good and necessary, in its own time and place and order, but God sent His Son not to be a Reformer but to be a Redeemer. John came to preach reformation, but Jesus came to preach regeneration. Except a man be born again, Jesus persistently preached to Nicodemus. ‘Did it begin with regeneration?’ was Dr. Duncan’s reply when a sermon on sanctification was praised in his hearing. And like so much else that the learned and profound Dr. John Duncan said on theology and philosophy, that question went at once to the root of the matter. For sanctification, that is to say, salvation, is no mere reformation of morals or refinement of manners. It is a maxim in sound morals that the morality of the man must precede the morality of his actions. And much more is it the evangelical law of Jesus Christ. Make the tree good, our Lawgiver aphoristically said. Reformation and sanctification differ, says Dr.

Hodge, as clean clothes differ from a clean heart. Now, Diabolus was all for clean clothes when he saw that Mansoul was slipping out of his hands. He would have all the drunkards to become moderate drinkers, if not total abstainers; and all the sensualists to become, if need be, ascetics; and all those who had sowed out their wild oats to settle down as heads of houses, and members, if not ministers and elders, in his set-up church. But we are too well taught, surely; we have gone too long to another church than that which Diabolus ever sets up, to be satisfied with his superficial doctrine and his skin-deep discipline. We know, do we not, that we may do all that his last card asks us to do, and yet be as far, ay, and far farther from salvation than the heathen are who never heard the name. A hundred Scriptures tell us that; and our hearts know too much of their own plague and corruption ever now to be satisfied short of a full regeneration and a complete sanctification. 'Create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly. And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.' The last card has many Scriptures cunningly copied upon it; but not these. Its pulpit orators handle many Scripture texts, but never these.

7. Yes, the devil comes in even here with that so late, so subtle, and so contradicting card of his. Where is it in this world that he does not come in with some of his cards? And he comes in here as a very angel of evangelical light. He puts on the gown of Geneva here, and he ascends Emmanuel's own maintained pulpit here, and from that pulpit he preaches, and where he so preaches he preaches nothing else but the very highest articles of the Reformed faith. Carnal-security was strong on assurance, no other man in Mansoul was so strong; and the devil will let us preachers be as strong and as often on election, and justification, and indefectible grace, and the perseverance of the saints as we and our people like, if we but keep in season and out of season on these transcendent subjects and keep off morals and manners, walk and conversation, conduct and character. In Hooker's and Travers' day, Thomas Fuller tells us, the Temple pulpit preached pure Canterbury in the morning and pure Geneva in the afternoon. And you will get the highest Calvinism off the last card in one pulpit, and the strictest and most urgent morality off the same card in another; but never, if the devil can help it, never both in one and the same pulpit; never both in one and the same sermon; and never both in one and the same minister. You have all heard of the difficulty the voyager had in steering between Scylla and Charybdis in the Latin adage. Well, the true preacher's difficulty is just like that. Indeed, it is beyond the wit of man, and it takes all the wit of God, aright to unite the doctrine of our utter inability with the companion doctrine of our strict responsibility; free grace with a full reward; the cross of Christ once for all, with the saint's continual crucifixion; the Saviour's blood with the sinner's; and atonement with attainment; in short, salvation without works with no salvation without works. Deft steersman as the devil is, he never yet took his ship clear through those Charybdic passages.

One thing there is that I must have preached continually in all my pulpits and expounded and illustrated and enforced in all my lectureships, said Emmanuel, and that is, my new example and my new law of motive. My own motives always made me in all I said and did to be well-pleasing in My Father's eyes, and at any cost I must have preachers and lecturers set up in Mansoul who shall assist Me in making Mansoul as well-pleasing in My Father's sight as I was Myself.

'For I am ware it is the seed of act

God holds appraising in His hollow palm,

Not act grown great thence as the world believes,

Leafage and branchage vulgar eyes admire.'

Motives! gnashed Diabolus. And he tore his last card into a thousand shreds and cast the shreds under his feet in his rage and exasperation. Motives! New motives! Truly Thou art the threatened Seed of the woman! Truly Thou art the threatened Son of God!—Let all our preachers, then, preach much on motive to their people. The commonplace crowd of their people will not all like that preaching any more than Diabolus did; but their best people will all afterwards rise up in their salvation and bless them for it. On reformation also, let them every Sabbath preach, but only on the reformation that rises out of a reformed motive, and that again out of a reformed heart. And if a reformed motive, a reformed heart, and a reformed life are found both by preacher and hearer to be impossible; if all that only brings out the hopelessness of their salvation by reason of the guilt and the pollution and power of sin; then all that will only be to them that same ever deeper entering of the law into their hearts which led Paul to an ever deeper faith and trust in Jesus Christ. With a guilt, and a pollution, and a slavery to sin like ours, salvation from sin would be absolutely impossible. Absolutely impossible, that is, but for our Saviour, Jesus Christ. But with His atoning blood and His Holy Spirit all things are possible—even our salvation.

Let us choose, then, a minister like Mr. John Menzies. Let us read the great books that make salvation difficult. Let us work out our own salvation, day and night, with fear and trembling, and when Wisdom is justified in her children, we shall be found justified among them. We shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity.

# 067. Mr. Prywell

LXVII

MR. PRYWELL ‘Search me, O God, and know my heart.’—David.

‘Let a man examine himself.’—Paul.

‘Look to yourselves.’—John.

‘Know thyself.’—Apollo. The year 1668 saw the publication of one of the deepest books in the whole world, Dr. John Owen’s Remainders of Indwelling Sin in Believers. The heart-searching depth; the clear, fearless, humbling truth, the intense spirituality, and the massive and masculine strength of John Owen’s book have all combined to make it one of the acknowledged masterpieces of the great Puritan school. Had John Owen’s style been at all equal to his great learning, to the depth and the grasp of his mind, and to the lofty holiness of his life, John Owen would have stood in the very foremost and selectest rank of apostolical and evangelical theologians. But in all his books Owen labours under the fatal drawback of a bad style. A fine style, a style like that of Hooker, or Taylor, or Bunyan, or Howe, or Leighton, or Law, is such a winning introduction to their works and such an abiding charm and spell. The full title of Dr. Owen’s great work runs thus: The Nature, Power, Deceit, and Prevalency of the Remainders of Indwelling Sin in Believers—a title that will tell all true students what awaits them when they have courage and enterprise enough to address themselves to this supreme and all-essential subject. Fourteen years after the publication of Dr. Owen’s epoch-making book, John Bunyan’s Holy War first saw the light. Equal in scriptural and in experimental depth, as also in their spiritual loftiness and intensity, those two books are as different as any two books, written in the same language, and written on the same subject, could by any possibility be. John Owen’s book is the book of a great scholar who has read the Fathers and the Schoolmen and the Reformers till he knows them by heart, and till he has been able to digest all that is true to Scripture and to experience in them into his rich and ripe book. A powerful reasoner, a severe, bald, muscular writer, John Owen in all these respects stands at the very opposite pole to that of John Bunyan. The author of the Holy War had no learning, but he had a mind of immense natural sagacity, combined with a habit of close and deep observation of human life, and especially of religious life, and he had now a lifetime of most fruitful experience as a Christian man and as a Christian minister behind him; and, all that, taken up into Bunyan’s splendid imagination, enabled him to produce this extraordinarily able and impressive book. A model of English style as the Holy War is, at the same time it does not attain at all to the rank of the Pilgrim’s Progress; but then, to be second to the Pilgrim’s Progress is reward and honour enough for any book. Let all genuine students, then, who would know the best that has been written on experimental religion, and who would preach to the deepest and divinest experience of their best people, let them keep continually within their reach John Owen’s Temptation, his Mortification of Sin in Believers, his Nature and Power of Indwelling Sin, and John Bunyan’s Holy War made for the Regaining of the Metropolis of this World.

Well, then, as He who dwells on high would have it, there was one whose name was Mr. Prywell, a great lover of Mansoul. And he, as his manner was, did go listening up and down in Mansoul to see and hear, if at any time he might, whether there was any design against it or no. For he was always a jealous man, and feared some mischief would befall it, either from within or from some power without. Mr. Prywell was always a lover of Mansoul, a sober and a judicious man, a man that was no tattler, nor a raiser of false reports, but one that loves to look into the very bottom of matters, and talks nothing of news but by very solid arguments. And then, after our historian has told us some of the eminent services that Mr. Prywell was able to perform both for the King and for the city, he goes on to tell us how the captains determined that public thanks should be given by the town of Mansoul to Mr. Prywell for his so diligent seeking of the welfare of the town; and, further, that, forasmuch as he was so naturally inclined to seek their good, and also to undermine their foes, they gave him the commission of Scoutmaster-general for the good of Mansoul. And Mr. Prywell managed his charge and the trust that Mansoul had put into his hands with great conscience and good fidelity; for he gave himself wholly up to his employ, and that not only within the town, but he also went outside of the town to pry, to see, and to hear. Now, that being so, it may interest and perhaps instruct you to-night to look for a little at some of the features and at some of the feats of the Scoutmaster-general of the Holy War, Mr. Prywell, of the town of Mansoul.

1. ‘Well, now, as He who dwells on high would have it, there was one whose name was Mr. Prywell, a great lover of the town of Mansoul.’ In other words: self-observation, self-examination, strict, jealous, sleepless self-examination, is of God. Our God who searches our hearts and tries our reins would have it so. And if He does not have it so in us, our souls are not as our God would have them to be. ‘Bunyan employs pry,’ says Miss Peacock in her excellent notes, ‘in a more favourable sense than it now bears. As, for instance, it is said in another part of this same book that the men of Mansoul were allowed to pryinto the words of the Holy Ghost and to expound them to their best advantage. Honest anxiety for the welfare of his fellow-townsmen was Mr. Prywell’s chief characteristic. Pry is another form of peer—to look narrowly, to look closely.’ And God, says John Bunyan, would have it so.

2. ‘A great lover of Mansoul,’ ‘always a lover of Mansoul’; again and again that is testified concerning Mr. Prywell. It was not love for the work that led Mr. Prywell to give up his days and his nights as his history tells us he did. Mr. Prywell ran himself into many dangerous situations both within and without the city, and he lost himself far more friends than he made by his devotion to his thankless task. But necessity was laid upon him. And what held him up was the sure and certain knowledge that his King would have that service at his hands. That, and his love for the city, for the safety and the deliverance of the city,—all that kept Mr. Prywell’s heart fixed. Am I therefore your enemy? he would say to some who would have had it otherwise than the King would have it. But it is a good thing to be zealously affected in a work like mine, he would say, in self-defence and in self-encouragement. And then, though not many, there were always some in the city who said, Let him smite me and it shall be a kindness; let him reprove me and it shall be an excellent oil which shall not break my head. It was in Mansoul with Mr. Prywell as it was in Kidderminster with Richard Baxter, when some of his people said to one another, ‘We will take all things well from one that we know doth entirely love us.’ ‘Love them,’ said Augustine, ‘and then say anything you like to them.’ Now, that was Mr. Prywell’s way. He loved Mansoul, and then he said many things to her that a false lover and a flatterer would never have dared to say.

3. Then, as the saying is, it goes without saying that ‘Mr. Prywell was always a jealous man.’ Great lovers are always jealous men, and Mr. Prywell showed himself to be a great lover by the great heat of his jealousy also. ‘Vigilant,’ says the excellent editress again; ‘cautious against dishonour, reasonably mistrustful—low Latin zelosus, full of zeal. “And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts.”’ Now, it so happened that some of Mr. Prywell’s most private and not at all professional papers—papers evidently, and on the face of them, connected with the state of the spy’s own soul—came into my hands as good lot would have it just the other night. The moth-eaten chest was full of his old papers, but the pieces that took my heart most were, as it looked to me, actually gnashed through with his remorseful teeth, and soaked and sodden past recognition with his sweat and his tears and his agonising hands. But after some late hours over those remnants I managed to make some sense to myself out of them. There are some parts of the parchments that pass me; but, if only to show you that this arch-spy’s so vigilant jealousy was not all directed against other people’s bad hearts and bad habits, I shall copy some lines out of the old box. ‘Have I penitence?’ he begins without any preface. ‘Have I grief, shame, pain, horror, weariness for my sin? Do I pray and repent, if not seven times a day as David did, yet at least three times, as Daniel? If not as Solomon, at length, yet shortly as the publican? If not like Christ, the whole night, at least for one hour? If not on the ground and in ashes, at least not in my bed? If not in sackcloth, at least not in purple and fine linen? If not altogether freed from all, at least from immoderate desires? Do I give, if not as Zaccheus did, fourfold, as the law commands, with the fifth part added? If not as the rich, yet as the widow? If not the half, yet the thirtieth part? If not above my power, yet up to my power?’ And then over the page there are some illegible pencillings from old authors of his such as this from Augustine:‘A good man would rather know his own infirmity than the foundations of the earth or the heights of the heavens.’ And this from Cicero: ‘There are many hiding-places and recesses in the mind.’ And this from Seneca: ‘You must know yourself before you can amend yourself. An unknown sin grows worse and worse and is deprived of cure.’ And this from Cicero again: ‘Cato exacted from himself an account of every day’s business at night’;and also Pythagoras, ‘Nor let sweet sleep upon thine eyes descend

Till thou hast judged its deeds at each day’s end.’ And this from Seneca again: ‘When the light is removed out of sight, and my wife, who is by this time aware of my practice, is now silent, I pass the whole of my day under examination, and I review my deeds and my words. I hide nothing from myself: I pass over nothing.’ And then in Mr. Prywell’s boldest and least trembling hand: ‘O yes! many shall come from the east and the west and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, when many of the children of the kingdom shall be cast out. O yes.’ Now, this ‘O yes!’ Miss Peacock tells us, is the Anglicised form of a French word for our Lord’s words, Take heed how ye hear!

4. ‘A sober and a judicious man’ it is said of Mr. Prywell also. To a certainty that. It could not be otherwise than that. For Mr. Prywell’s office, its discoveries and its experiences, would sober any man. ‘I am sprung from a country,’ says Abelard, ‘of which the soil is light, and the temper of the inhabitants is light.’ So was it with Mr. Prywell to begin with. But even Abelard was sobered in time, and so was Mr. Prywell. Life sobered Abelard, and Mr. Prywell too; life’s crooks and life’s crosses, life’s duties and life’s disappointments, especially Mr. Prywell. ‘The more narrowly a man looks into himself,’ says À Kempis, ‘the more he sorroweth.’ Not sober-mindedness alone comes to him who looks narrowly into himself, but great sorrow of heart also. And if you are not both sobered in your

mind and full of an unquenchable sorrow in your heart, O yes! attend to it, for you are not yet begun to be what God would have you to be. Dr. Newman, with all his mistakes and all his faults, was a master in two things: his own heart and the English language. And in writing home to his mother a confidential letter from college on his birthday, he confides to her that he often ‘shudders at himself.’ ‘No,’he answered to his mother’s fears and advices about food and air and exercise: ‘No, I am neither nervous, nor in ill-health, nor do I study too much. I am neither melancholy, nor morose, nor austere, nor distant, nor reserved, nor sullen. I am always cheerful, ready and eager to join in any merriment. I am not clouded with sadness, nor absent in mind, nor deficient in action. No; take me when I am most foolish at home and extend mirth into childishness; yet all the time I am shuddering at myself.’ There spake the future author of the immortal sermons. There spake a mind and a heart that have deepened the minds and the hearts of Christian men more than any other influence of the century; a mind and a heart, moreover, that will shine and beat in our best literature and in our deepest devotion for centuries to come. You must all know by this time another classical passage from the pen of another spiritual genius in the Church of England, that greatly gifted church. Let me repeat it to illustrate how sober-mindedness and great sorrow of heart always come to the best of men. ‘Let any man consider that if the world knew all that of him which he knows of himself; if they saw what vanity and what passions govern his inside, and what secret tempers sully and corrupt his best actions; and he would have no more pretence to be honoured and admired for his goodness and wisdom than a rotten and distempered body is to be loved and admired for its beauty and comeliness. And, perhaps, there are very few people in the world who would not rather choose to die than to have all their secret follies, the errors of their judgments, the vanity of their minds, the falseness of their pretences, the frequency of their vain and disorderly passions, their uneasinesses, hatreds, envies, and vexations made known to the world. And shall pride be entertained in a heart thus conscious of its own miserable behaviour?’ No wonder that Mr. Prywell was sober-minded! No wonder that Dr. Newman shuddered at himself! And no wonder that William Law chose strangling and the pond rather than that any other man should see what went on in his heart!

5. And as if all that were not enough, and more than enough, to commend Mr. Prywell to us—to our trust, to our confidence, and to our imitation—his royal certificate continues, ‘One that looks into the very bottom of matters, and talks nothing of news, but by very solid arguments.’ The very bottom of matters—that is, the very bottom of his own and other men’s hearts. Mr. Prywell counts nothing else worth a wise man’s looking at. Let fools and children look at the painted and deceitful surface of things, but let men, men of matters, and especially men of divine matters, look only at their own and other men’s hearts. The very bottom of all matters is there. All wars, all policies, all debates, all disputes, all good and all evil counsels, all the much weal and all the multitudinous woe of Mansoul—all have their bottom in the heart; in the heart of God, or in the heart of man, or in the heart of the devil. The heart is the root of absolutely every matter to Mr. Prywell. He would not waste one hour of any day, or one watch of any night, on anything else. And it was this that made him both the extraordinarily successful scout he was, and the extraordinarily sober and thoughtful and judicious man he was. O yes, my brethren, the bottom of matters, when you take to it, will work the same change in you. ‘Two things,’ says one who had long looked at his own matters with Mr. Prywell’s eyes—‘two things, O Lord, I recognise in myself: nature, which Thou hast made, and sin, which I have added.’ My brethren, that recognition, that discovery in yourselves, when it comes to you, will sober you as it has sobered so many men before you: when it comes to you,

that is, about yourselves. That discovery made in yourselves will make you deep-thinking men. It will make common men and unlearned men among you to be philosophers and theologians and saints. It will work in you a thoughtfulness, a seriousness, a depth, an awe, a holy fear, and a great desire that will already have made you new creatures. When, in examining yourselves and in characterising yourselves, you come on what some clear-eyed men have come on in themselves, and what one of them has described as 'the diabolical animus of the human mind'—when you make that discovery in yourselves, that will sober you, that will humble you and fill you full of remorse and compunction. And if in God's grace to you, that were to begin to be wrought in you this week, there would be one, at any rate, eating of that bread next Lord's day, and drinking of that cup as God would have it.

6. 'A man that is no tattler, nor raiser of false reports, and that talks nothing of news, but by very solid arguments.' Mr. Prywell was more taken up with his own matters at home, far more than the greatest busybodies are with other men's matters abroad. His name, I fear, will still sound somewhat ill in your ears, but I can assure you all the ill for you lies in the sound. Mr. Prywell would not hurt a hair of your head: the truth is, he does not know whether there is a hair on your head or no. This man's name comes to him and sticks to him, not because he pries into your affairs, for he does not, and never did, but because he is so drawn down into his own. Mr. Prywell has no eye for your windows and he has no ear for your doors. If your servant is a leaky slave, Prywell, of all your neighbours, has no ear for his idle tales. This man is no eavesdropper; your evil secrets have only a sobering and a saddening and a silencing effect upon him. Your house might be full of skeletons for anything he would ever discover or remember. The beam in his own eye is so big that he cannot see past it to speak about your small mote. 'The inward Christian,' says À Kempis, 'preferreth the care of himself before all other cares. He that diligently attendeth to himself can easily keep silence concerning other men. If thou attendest unto God and unto thyself, thou wilt be but little moved with what thou seest abroad.' At the same time, Mr. Prywell was no fool, and no coward, and no hoodwinked witness. He could tell his tale, when it was demanded of him, with such truth, and with such punctuality, and on such ample grounds, that a conviction of the truth instantly fell on all who heard him. 'Sirs,' said those who heard him break silence, 'it is not irrational for us to believe it,' with such solid arguments and with such an absence of mere suspicion and of all idle tales did he speak. On one occasion, on a mere 'inkling,' he woke up the guard; only, it was so true an inkling that it saved the city. But I cannot follow Mr. Prywell any further to-night. How he went up and down Mansoul listening; how he kept his eyes and his ears both shut and open; what splendid services he performed in the progress, and specially toward the end, of the war; how the thanks of the city were voted to him; how he was made Scoutmaster-general for the good of the town of Mansoul, and the great conscience and good fidelity with which he managed that great trust—all that you will read for yourselves under this marginal index, 'The story of Mr. Prywell.'

Now, my brethren, as the outcome of all that, we must all examine ourselves as before God all this week. We must wait on His word and on His providences while they examine us all this week. We must pry well into ourselves all this week. Come, let us compel ourselves to do it. Let us search and try our ways all this week as we shall give an account. Let us ask ourselves how many Communion tables we have sat at, and at how many more we are likely to sit. Let us ask why it is that we have got so little good out of all our Communions. Let us ask who is to blame for that, and where the blame lies. Let us go to the bottom of matters with ourselves, and compel ourselves to

say just what it is that is the cause of God's controversy with us. What vow, what solemn promise, made when trouble was upon us, have we completely cast behind our back? What about secret prayer? At what times, for what things, and for what people do we in secret pray? What about secret sin? What is its name, and what does it deserve, and what fruit are we already reaping out of it? What is our besetting sin, and what steps do we take, as God knows, to crucify it? Do we love money too much? Do we love praise too much? Do we love eating and drinking too much? Does envy make our heart a very hell? Let us name the man we envy, and let us keep our Communion eye upon him. Let us mix his name with all the psalms and prayers and sermons of this Communion season. Or is it diabolical ill-will? Or is it a wicked tongue against an unsuspecting friend? Let us examine ourselves as Paul did, as Prywell did, and as God would have us do it, and we shall discover things in ourselves so bad that if I were to put words on them to-night, you would stop your ears in horror and flee out of the church. Let a man see himself at least as others see him; and then he will be led on from that to see himself as God sees him; and then he will judge himself so severely as that he shall not need to be judged at the Judgment Day, and will condemn himself so sufficiently as that he shall not be condemned with a condemned world at the last.

# 068. Young Captain Self-Deniel

LXVIII YOUNG CAPTAIN SELF-DENIAL

‘If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me.’—Our Lord.

‘Now the siege was long, and many a fierce attempt did the enemy make upon the town, and many a shrewd brush did some of the townsmen meet with from the enemy, especially Captain Self-denial, to whose care both Ear-gate and Eye-gate had been intrusted. This Captain Self-denial was a young man, but stout, and a townsman in Mansoul. This young captain, therefore, being a hardy man, and a man of great courage to boot, and willing to venture himself for the good of the town, he would now and then sally out upon the enemy; but you must think this could not easily be done, but he must meet with some sharp brushes himself, and, indeed, he carried several of such marks on his face, yea, and some on some other parts of his body.’ Thus, Bunyan. I shall now go on to-night to offer you some annotations and some reflections on this short but excellent history of young Captain Self-denial.

1. Well, to begin with, this Captain Self-denial was still a young man. ‘And, now, it comes into my mind, said Goodman Gains after supper, I will tell you a story well worth the hearing, as I think. There were two men once upon a time that went on pilgrimage; the one began when he was young and the other began when he was old. The young man had strong corruptions to grapple with, whereas the old man’s corruptions were decayed with the decays of nature. The young man trod his steps as even as did the old one, and was every way as light as he; who, now, or which of them, had their graces shining clearest, since both seemed to be alike? Why, the young man’s, doubtless, answered Mr. Honest. For that which heads against the greatest opposition gives best demonstration that it is strongest. A young man, therefore, has the advantage of the fairest discovery of a work of grace within him. And thus they sat talking till the break of day.’

Now, I have taken up Captain Self-denial to-night because the young men and I are to begin a study to-night to which I was first attracted because it taught me lessons about myself, and about self-denial, and thus about both a young man’s and an old man’s deepest and most persistent corruptions—lessons such as I have never been taught in any other school. In all my philosophical, theological, moral, and experimental reading, so to describe it, I have never met with any school of authors for one moment to be compared with the great evangelical mystics, especially when they treat of self, self-love, self-denial, the daily cross, and all suchlike lessons. Take the great doctrinal and experimental Puritans, such as John Owen, Thomas Goodwin, Richard Baxter, John Howe, and Jonathan Edwards, and add on to them the greatest and best mystics, such as Jacob Behmen, Thomas À Kempis, Francis Fénelon, Jeremy Taylor, Samuel Rutherford, Robert Leighton, and William Law, and you will have the profoundest, the most complete, the most perfect, and, I will add, the most fascinating and enthralling of spiritual teaching in all the world. And I will be bold enough to promise you that if you will but join our Young Men’s Class to-night, and will buy and read our mystical books, and will resolve to put in practice what

you hear and read in the class, I will promise you, I say, that by the end of our short session you will not only be ten times more open and hospitably-minded men, but also ten times more spiritually-minded men, ten times more Christ-like men, and with your joy in Christ and His joy in you all but full.

2. The Captain Self-denial was a young man, and he was also a townsman in Mansoul. Young Self-denial and one other were all of Emmanuel's captains who were townsmen in Mansoul. All his other captains Emmanuel had brought with him; but the Captains Self-denial and Experience were both born and reared to their full manhood in that besieged city. 'A townsman.' How much there is for us all in that one word! How much instruction! How much encouragement! How much caution and correction! Our greatest grace; our most essential and indispensable grace; our most experimental and evidential grace; that grace, indeed, without which all our other graces are but specious shows and painted surfaces of graces; that grace into which our Lord here gathers up all our other graces;—that greatest of graces cannot be imputed, imported, or introduced; it must be born, bred, exercised, reared up to its full maturity, and sent forth to fight and to conquer, and all within the walls of its own native town; in short, our self-denial must have its beginning and middle and end in our own heart. Antinomians there were, as our Puritan fathers nicknamed all those persons who glorified Christ by letting Him do all things for them, both His own things and their things too, both their justification and their sanctification too. And there are many good but ill-instructed men among ourselves who have just this taint of that old heresy cleaving to them still—this taint, namely, that they are tempted to carry over the suretyship and substitutionary work of Christ into such regions, and to carry it to such lengths in those regions, as, practically, to make Christ to minister to their soft and sinful living, and to their excuse and indulgence of themselves. I will put it squarely and plainly to some of my very best friends here to-night. Is it not the case, now, that you do not like this direction into which this text, and the truth of this text, are now travelling? Is it not so that you shift back in your seat from the approaching cross? Is it not the very and actual fact that you have secret ways of sin, secret habits of self-indulgence in your body and in your soul, in your mind and in your heart, secret sins that you mantle over with the robe of Christ's righteousness? His spotless and imputed righteousness? In your present temper you would have disliked deeply the Sermon on the Mount had you heard it; and I see you shaking your head over your Sabbath-day dinner at this text when it was first spoken. Lay this down for a law, all my brethren,—a New Testament and a never-to-be-abrogated law,—that the best and the safest religion for you is that way of religion that is hardest on your pride, on your self-importance, on your self-esteem, as well as on your purse and on your belly. You are not likely to err by practising too much of the cross. You may very well have too much of the cross of Christ preached to you, and too little of your own. Why! did not Christ die for me? you indignantly say. Yes; so He did. But only that you might die too. He was crucified, and so must you be crucified every day before one single drop of His sin-atoning blood shall ever be wasted on You. Be not deceived: the cross is not mocked; for only as a man nails himself, body and soul, to the cross every day shall he ever be saved from sin and death and hell by means of it. And, exactly as a man denies himself—no more and no less—his appetites, his passions, his thoughts and words and deeds, every day and every hour of every day, just so much shall He who searches our hearts and sees us in secret, acknowledge us, both every day now, and at the last day of all.

3. This same Captain Self-denial, his history goes on, was stout, he was an hardy man also, and a man of great courage. Stout and hardy and of great courage at home, that is; in his own mind and heart, soul and body, that is. Young Captain Self-denial was a perfect hero at saying No! and at saying No! to himself. It is a proverb that there is nothing so difficult as to say that monosyllable. And the proverb is Scripture truth if you try to say No! to yourself. It takes the very stoutest of hearts, the most noble, the most manly, the most soldierly, and the most saintly of hearts to say No! to itself, and to keep on saying No! to itself to the bitter end of every trial and temptation and opportunity. I remember reading long ago a page or two of a medical man's diary. And in it he made a confession and an appeal I have never forgot; though, to my loss, I have not always acted upon it. He said that for many years he had never been entirely well. He had constant headaches and depressions, and it was seldom that he was not to some extent out of sorts. But, all the time, he had a shrewd guess within himself as to what was the matter with him. He felt ashamed to confess it even to himself that he over-ate himself every day at table; till, at last, summoning up all divine and human help, he determined that, however hungry he was, and however savoury the dish was, and however excellent the wine was, he would never either ask for or accept a second helping. And this was his testimony, that from that stout and hardy day he grew better in health daily; 'my head became clear, my eye bright, my complexion pure, my mind and feelings were redeemed from all clouds and depressions. And to-day I am a younger man at fifty than I was at thirty.' Now, if just saying No! to himself and to the waiter at table did work such a new birth in a confirmed gourmand of middle life, what would it not have wrought for him had he carried his answer stoutly and courageously through all the other parts of his body and soul?—as perhaps he did. Perhaps, having tasted the sweet beginnings of salvation, he carried his short and sure regimen through. If he has done so, let him give us his full autobiography. What a blessed, what a priceless book it would be!

4. Stout Captain Self-denial was commanded to begin his life as an officer in Emmanuel's army by taking especial watch over Ear-gate and Eye-gate; and at our last accounts of our abstemious doctor he had only got the length of Mouth-gate. But having begun so well with those three great outposts of the soul, if those two trusty officers only held on, and played the man courageously enough, they would soon be promoted to still more important, still more central, and, if more difficult and dangerous, then also much more honourable and remunerative posts. Appetite, deep and deadly as its evils are, is, after all, only an outwork of the soul; and the same sharp knife that the epicure and the sot in all their stages must put to their throat, that same knife must be made to draw blood in all parts of their mind and their heart, in their will and in their imagination, till a perfect chorus of self-denials rings like noblest martial music through all the gates, and streets, and fortresses, and strongholds, and very palaces and temples of the soul. I shall here stand aside and let the greatest of the English mystics speak to you on this present point. 'When we speak of self-denial,' he says, in his Christian Perfection, 'we are apt to confine it to eating and drinking: but we ought to consider that, though a strict temperance be necessary in these things, yet that these are the easiest and the smallest instances of self-denial. Pride, vanity, self-love, covetousness, envy, and other inclinations of the like nature call for a more constant and a more watchful self-denial than the appetites of hunger and thirst. And till we enter into this course of universal self-denial we shall make no progress in real piety, but our lives will be a ridiculous mixture of I know not what; sober and covetous, proud and devout, temperate and vain, regular in our forms of devotion and irregular in all our passions, circumspect in little modes of behaviour and careless

and negligent of tempers the most essential to piety. And thus it will necessarily be with us till we lay the axe to the root of the tree, till we deny and renounce the whole corruption of our nature, and resign ourselves up entirely to the Spirit of God, to think and speak and act by the wisdom and the purity of religion.'

5. Stout as Captain Self-denial was, and notable alarms and some brisk execution as he did upon the enemy, yet he must meet with some brushes himself; indeed, he carried several of the marks of such brushes on his face as well as on some other parts of his body. If I had read in his history that Young Captain Self-denial had left his mark upon his enemies, I would have said, Well done, and I would have added that I always expected as much. But it is far more to my purpose to read that he had not always got himself off without wounds that left lasting scars both where they were seen of all, and where they were seen and felt only by Self-denial himself. And not Self-denial only, but even Paul, in our flesh, and with like passions with us, had the same experience and has left us the same record. 'I keep my body under': so our emasculated English version makes us read it. But the visual image in the masterly original Greek is not so mealy-mouthed. I box and buffet myself day and night, says Paul. I play the truculent tyrant over a lewd and lazy slave. I hit myself blinding blows on my tenderest part. I am ashamed to look at myself in the glass, for all under my eyes I am black and blue. If David, after the matter of Uriah, had done that to himself, and even more than that, we would not have wondered; we would have expected it, and we would have said, It is no more than we would have done ourselves. But that a spotless, gentle, noble soul like Paul should so have mangled himself,—that quite dumfounders us. If Paul, then, who, touching the righteousness which is in the law, was blameless, had to handle himself in that manner in order to keep himself blameless, shall any young man here hope to escape temptation without such blows at himself as shall leave their mark on him all his days? Nay, not only so, but after Self-denial had thus exercised himself and subdued himself, still his enemy sometimes got such an advantage over him as left him as his history here describes him. All which is surely full of the most excellent heartening to all who read, in earnest and for an example, his fine history.

6. The last and crowning exploit of our matchless captain was to capture, and execute, and quarter, and hang up on a gallows at the market-cross, the head and the hands and the feet of his oldest, most sworn, and most deadly enemy, one Self-love. So stout and so insufferable was our captain in the matter of Self-love that when it was proposed by some of his many influential friends and high-in-place relations in the city that the judgment of the court-martial on Self-love should be deferred, our stout soldier with the cuts on his face and in some other parts of his body stood up, and said that the city and the army must make up their mind either to relieve him of his sword, hacked and broken off as it was, or else to execute the law upon Self-love on the spot. I will lay down my commission this very day, he said, with an extraordinary indignation. Many rich men in the city, and many men deep in the King's service, muttered mutinous things when their near relative was hurried to the open cause-way, but by that time the soldiers of Self-denial's company had brained Self-love with the butts of their muskets. And it was the stand that our captain made in the matter of Self-love that at last lifted the young soldier where many had felt he should have been lifted long ago. From that day he was made a lord, a military peer, and an adviser of the crown and the crown officers in all the deepest counsels concerning Mansoul. Only, with the cloak and the coronet of Self-denial the present history all but comes to an end. For, before the outcast remains of Self-love had mouldered to their dust on the city gate, the King's chariot had

descended into the street, had ascended up to the palace at the head of the street, and a new age of the city life had begun, the full history of which has yet to be told.

Remain behind, then, and begin with us to-night, all you young men. You cannot begin this lifelong study and this lifelong pursuit of self-denial too early. For, even if you begin to read our books and to practise our discipline in your very boyhood, when you are old men and very saints of God you will feel that your self-love is still so full of life and power, that your self-denial has scarcely begun. Ah, me! men: both old and young men. Ah, me! what a life's task set us of God it is to make us a new heart, to cleanse out an unclean heart, to lay in the dust a proud heart, and to keep a heart at all times, and in all places, and toward all people, with all diligence! Who is sufficient for these things?

'Now was Christian somewhat in a maze. But at last, when every man started back for fear, Christian saw a man of a very stout countenance come up to him that sat there with the inkhorn to write, saying, Set down my name, sir! At which there was a pleasant voice heard from those that were within, even of those who walked upon the top of that place, saying, "Come in, come in:

Eternal glory thou shalt win."

Then Christian smiled, and said: I think, verily, that I know the meaning of all this now.'

# 069. Five Pickt Men

LXIX

FIVE PICKT MEN ‘I took wise men and known and made them captains.’—Moses.

John Bunyan never lost his early love for a soldier’s life any more than he ever forgot the rare delights of his bell-ringing days. John Bunyan, all his days, never saw a bell-rope that his fingers did not tingle, and he never saw a soldier in uniform without instinctively shouldering his youthful musket. Bunyan was one of those rare men who are of imagination all compact; and consequently it is that all his books are full of the scenes, the occupations, and the experiences of his early days. Not that he says very much, in as many words, about what happened to him in the days when he was a soldier; it is only once in all his many books that he says that when he was a soldier such and such a thing happened to him. At the same time, all his books bear the impress of his early days upon them; and as for this special book of Bunyan’s now open before us, it is full from board to board of the strife and the din of his early battles. The Holy War is just John Bunyan’s soldierly life spiritualised—spiritualised and so worked up into this fine English Classic.

Well, then, after Mansoul was taken and reduced, the victorious Prince determined so to occupy the town with His soldiers that it should never again either be taken by force from without, or ever again revolt by weakness or by fear from within. And with this view He chose out five of His best captains—My five pickt men, He always called them—and placed those five captains and their thousands under them in the strongholds of the town. On the margin of this page our versatile author speaks of that step of Emmanuel’s in the language of a philosopher, a moralist, and a divine. ‘Five graces,’ he says, ‘pickt out of an abundance of common virtues.’ This summing-up sentence stands on his stiff and dry margin. But in the rich and living flow of the text itself our author goes on writing like the man of genius he is. With all the warmth and colour and dramatic movement of which this whole book is full, this great writer goes on to set those five choice captains of our salvation before us in a way that we shall never forget.

1. ‘The first was that famous captain, the noble Captain Credence. His were the red colours, and Mr. Promise bare them. And for a scutcheon he had the Holy Lamb and the golden shield; and he had ten thousand men at his feet.’ Now, this same Captain Credence from first to last of the war always led the van both within and around Mansoul. In ordinary and peaceful days; in days of truce and parley; when the opposite armies were laid up in their winter quarters, or were, for any cause, drawn off from one another, some of the other captains might be more in evidence. But in every exploit to be called an exploit; in every single enterprise of danger; when any new position was to be taken up, or any forlorn hope was to be led, there, in the very van of labour and of danger, was sure to be seen Captain Credence with his blood-red colours in his own hand. You understand your Bunyan by this time, my brethren? Captain Credence, your little boy at school will tell you, is just the soldier-like faith of your sanctification. Credo, he will tell you, is ‘I believe’; it is to have faith in God and in the word of God. You will borrow your Latin from your little boy, and then you will pay him back by telling him how Captain Credence has always led the van in your soul.

You will tell him and show him what a wonderful writer on the things of the soul John Bunyan is, till you make John Bunyan one of your son's choicest authors for all his days. You will do this if you will tell him how and when this same Captain Credence with his crimson colours first led the van in your salvation. You will tell him this with more and more depth and more and more plainness as year after year he reads his Holy War, and better and better understands it, till he has had it all fulfilled in himself as a pickt captain and good soldier of Jesus Christ. You will tell him about yourself, till, at this forlorn hope in his own life, and at that sounded advance, in some new providence and in some new duty; in this commanded attack on an inwardly entrenched enemy, and in that resolute assault on some battlement of evil habit, he recollects his noble, confiding, and loving father and plays the man again, and that all the more if only for his father's sake. Ask your son what he knows and what you do not know, and then as long as his heart and his ear are open tell him what you know and what you have by faith come through, and that will be a priceless possession to him, especially when he is put in possession of it by you.

Well on toward the end of the war, the Captain Credence had so acquitted himself that he was summoned one day to the Prince's quarters, when the following colloquy ensued: 'What hath my Lord to say to His servant?' And then, after a sign or two of favour, it was said to him: 'I have made thee lieutenant over all the forces in Mansoul; so that, from this day forward, all men in Mansoul shall be at thy word; and thou shalt be he that shall lead in and that shall lead out Mansoul. And at thy command shall all the rest of the captains be.' My brethren, you will have the whole key to all that in yourselves if this same war has gone this length in you. Faith, your faith in God, and in the word of God, will, as this inward war goes on, not only lead the van in your heart and in your life, but just because your faith so leads in all things, and is so fitted to lead in all things, it will at last be lifted up and set over your soul, and all the things of your soul, till nothing shall be done in any of the streets, or gates, or walls thereof that faith in God and in His word does not first allow and admit. And then, when it has come to that within you, that is the best mind, that is the safest, the happiest, and the most heavenly mind that you can attain to in this present life; and when faith shall thus lead and rule over all things in thy soul, be thou always ready, for thy speedy translation to a still better life is just at the door.

2. 'The second was that famous captain, Good-hope. His were the blue colours. His standard-bearer was Mr. Expectation, and for a scutcheon he had three golden anchors; and he had ten thousand men at his feet.' The time was, my brethren, when all your hopes and mine were as yet anchored without the veil. But all that is now changed. We still hope, in a mild kind of way, for this thing and for that in this present life; but only in a mild kind of way. It would not be right in us not to look forward, say, from spring-time to summer, and from summer to harvest. If the husbandman had not hope in the former and in the latter rain he would not sow; and as it is with the husbandman so it is with us all: so ought it to be, and so it must be. But we say God willing! all the time that we plot and plan and hope. And we say God willing! no longer with a sigh, but, now, always with a smile. In His will is our tranquillity, we say, and we know that if it is not His will that this and that slightly anchored hope should be fulfilled, then that only means that all our hopes, to be called hopes, are soon to be realised. Our green and salad days in the matter of hope are for ever past. If we had it all absolutely secured to us that this world is still promising to its salad dupes, it would not come within a thousand miles of satisfying our hearts. Whether the hopes of our hearts are to be fulfilled within the veil or no, that remains to be seen; but all the things without

the veil taken together do not any longer even pretend to promise a hope to hearts like ours. Our Forerunner has carried away our hearts with Him. We have no heart left for any one but Him, or for anything without or within the veil that He is not and is not in. And till that hope also has made us ashamed,—till He and His promises have failed us like all the rest,—we are going to anchor our hearts on that, and on that only, which we believe is with Him within the veil. If our Forerunner also disappoints us; if we enter where He is, only to find that He is not there; or that, though there, He is not able to satisfy our hope in Him, and make us like Himself, then we shall be of all men the most miserable. But not till then. No; not till then. And thus it is that Captain Good-hope has his billet in our heart; thus it is that his blue colours float over our house; and thus it is that his three golden anchors are blazing out in all their beauty on the best wall of our earthly house.

3. ‘The third was that valiant captain, the Captain Charity. His standard-bearer was Mr. Pitiful, and for his scutcheon he had three naked orphans embraced in his bosom; and he also had ten thousand men at his feet.’ O Charity! O valiant and pitiful Charity! Divine-natured and heavenly-minded Charity! When wilt thou come and dwell in my heart? When, by thine indwelling, shall I be able to love my neighbour, and all my neighbours, as myself? When, in thy strength, shall I cease from repining at my neighbour’s good; and when shall I cease secretly rejoicing over his evil? When shall I by thee renewing me, be made able to cease in everything from seeking first my own will and my own way; my own praise and my own glory? When shall it be as much my new nature to love my neighbour as it is now my old nature to hate him? When shall I cease to be so soon angry, and hard, and bitter, and scornful, and unrelenting, and unforgiving? When shall my neighbour’s presence, his image, and his name always call up only love and honour, good-will and affectionate delight? When and where shall I, under thee, feel for the last time any evil of any kind in my heart against my brother? Oh! to see the day when I shall suffer long and be kind! When I shall never again vaunt myself or be puffed up! When I shall bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, endure all things! O blessed, blessed Charity! with thy divine heart, with thy dove-like eyes, and with thy bosom full of pity, when wilt thou come into my sinful heart and bring all heaven in with thee! O Charity! till thou so comest I shall wait for thee. And, till thou comest, thy standard-bearer shall be my door porter, and thy scutcheon shall hang night and day at my door-post!

4. ‘The fourth captain was that gallant commander, the Captain Innocent. His standard-bearer was Mr. Harmless; his were the white colours, and for his scutcheon he had three golden doves.’ My brethren, how well it would have been with us to-day if we had always lived innocently! Had we only been innocent of that man’s, and that man’s, and that man’s, and that man’s hurt! (Let us name all the men to ourselves.) How many men have we, first and last, hurt! Some intentionally, and some unintentionally; some deliberately, and some only by accident; some of malice, and some only of misfortune; some innocently and unknowingly, and whom we never properly hurt. Some, also, by our mere existence; some by our best actions; some because we have helped and not hurt others; and some out of nothing else but the pure original devilry of their own evil hearts. And then, when we take all these men home to our hearts, what hearts all these men give us! Who, then, is the man here who has done to other men the most hurt? Who has caused or been the occasion of most hurt? Let that so unhappy man just think that the gallant commander, the Captain Innocent himself, with his white colours and with his golden doves, is standing and knocking at your evil door. O unhappy man! By all the hurt and harm you have ever done—by all

that you can never now undo—by those spotless colours that are still snow and not yet scarlet as they wave over you—by those three golden doves that are an emblem of the life that still lies open before you, as well as an invitation to you to enter on that life—why will you die of remorse and despair? Open the door of your heart and admit Captain Innocent. He knows that of all hurtful men on the face of the earth you are the most hurtful, but he is not on that account afraid at you; indeed, it is on that account that he has come so near to you. By admitting him, by enlisting under him, by serving under him, some of the most hurtful and injurious men that ever lived have lived after to be the most innocent and the most harmless of men, with their hands washed every day in innocency, and with three golden doves as the scutcheon of their new nature and their Christian character. Oh come into my heart, Captain Innocent; there is room in my heart for thee!

5. ‘And then the fifth was that truly royal and well-beloved captain, the Captain Patience. His standard-bearer was Mr. Suffer-long, and for a scutcheon he had three arrows through a golden heart.’ Three arrows through a golden heart! Most eloquent, most impressive, and most instructive of emblems! First, a heart of gold, and then that heart of gold pierced, and pierced, and then pierced again with arrow after arrow. Patience was the last of Emmanuel’s pickt graces. Captain Patience with his pierced heart always brought up the rear when the army marched. But when Captain Patience and Mr. Suffer-long did enter and take up their quarters in any house in Mansoul,—then was there no house more safe, more protected, more peaceful, more quietly, sweetly, divinely happy than just that house where this loyal and well-beloved captain bore in his heart. Entertain patience, my brethren. Practise patience, my brethren. Make your house at home a daily school to you in which to learn patience. Be sure that you well understand the times, the occasions, the opportunities, and the invitations of patience, and take profit out of them; and thus both your profit and that of others also will be great. Tribulation worketh patience. Endure tribulation, then, for the sake of its so excellent work. Nothing worketh patience like tribulation, and therefore it is that tribulation so abounds in the lives of God’s people. So much does tribulation abound in the lives of God’s people that they are actually known in heaven and described there by their experience of tribulation. ‘These are they which came out of great tribulation, and therefore are they before the throne.’ These are they with the three sharp arrows shot through and through their hearts of gold.

# 070. Mr. Desires-Awake

LXX MR. DESIRES-AWAKE ‘One thing have I desired.’—David.

Mr. Desires-awake dwelt in a very mean cottage in Mansoul. There were two very mean cottages in Mansoul, and those two cottages stood beside one another and leaned upon one another and held one another up. Mr. Desires-awake dwelt in the one of those cottages and Mr. Wet-eyes in the other. And those two mendicant men were wont to meet together for secret prayer, when Mr. Desires-awake would put a rope upon his head, while Mr. Wet-eyes would not be able to speak for wringing his hands in tears all the time. Many a time did those two meanest and most despised of men deliver that city, according to the proverb of the Preacher: Wisdom is better than strength, and the words of wisdom are to be heard in secret places, where wisdom is far better than weapons of war. Why should I not do all for them and the best I can? said Mr. Desires-awake when the men of Mansoul came to him in their extremity. I will even venture my life again for them at the pavilion of the Prince. And accordingly this mean man put his rope upon his head, as was his wont, and went out to the Prince’s tent and asked the reformades if he might see their Master. Then the Prince, coming to the place where the petitioner lay on the ground, demanded what his name was and of what esteem he was in Mansoul, and why he, of all the multitudes of Mansoul, was sent out to His Royal tent on such an errand. Then said the man to the Prince standing over him, he said: Oh let not my Lord be angry; and why inquirest Thou after the name of such a dead dog as I am? Pass by, I pray Thee, and take not notice of who I am, because there is, as Thou very well knowest, so great a disproportion between Thee and me. For my part, I am out of charity with myself; who, then, should be in love with me? Yet live I would, and so would I that my townsmen should; and because both they and myself are guilty of great transgressions, therefore they have sent me, and I have come in their names to beg of my Lord for mercy. Let it please Thee, therefore, to incline to mercy; but ask not who Thy servant is. All this, and how Mr. Desires-awake and Mr. Wet-eyes sped in their petition, is to be read at length in the Holy History. And now let us take down the key that hangs in our author’s window and go to work with it on the sweet mystery of Mr. Desires-awake.

1. Well, then, to begin with, this poor man’s name need not delay us long seeking it out. In shorter time, and with surer success than I could give you the dictionary root of his name, if you will look within you will all see the visual image of this poor man’s name in your own heart. For our hearts are all as full as they can hold of all kinds of desires; some good and some bad, some asleep and some awake, some alive and some dead, some raging like a hundred hungry lions, and some satisfied as a sleeping child. Well, then, this mean man was called Mr. Desires-awake, and what his desires were awake after and set upon we have already seen in his head-dress and heard in his prayer. His house, on the other hand, will not be so well known. For it was less a house than a hut—a hut hidden away out of sight and back behind Mr. Wet-eyes’ hut. Mr. Desires-awake’s cottage was so mean and meagre that no one ever came to visit him unless it was his next-door neighbour. They never left their cottages, those two poor men, unless it was to see one another; or, strange to tell, unless it was to go out at the city gate to see and to speak with their Prince. And

at such times their venturesomeness both astonished themselves and amused their Prince. Sometimes he laughed to see them back at his door again; but more often he wept to see and hear them; all which made the guards of his pavilion to wonder who those two strange men might be. And thus it was that if at any long interval of time any of the men of the city desired to see Mr. Desires-awake, he was sure to be found at the pavilion door of his Prince, or else in his neighbour's cottage, or else at home in his own. From year's end to year's end you might look in vain for either of those two poor men in the public resorts of Mansoul. When all the town was abroad on holidays and fair-days and feast-days, those two mean men were then closest at home. And when the booths of the town were full of all kinds of wares and merchandise, and all the greens in the town were full of games, and plays, and cheats, and fools, and apes, and knaves, only those two penniless men would abide shut up at home. At home; or else together they would go to a market-stance set up by their Prince outside the walls where one was stationed to stand and to cry: 'Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Incline your ear and come to me; hear, and your soul shall live.' And sometimes the Prince would go out in person to meet the two men with nothing to pay, and would Himself say to them, I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, and white raiment, and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, till the two men, Mr. Desires-awake and Mr. Wet-eyes, would go home to their huts laden with their Prince's free gifts and royal bounties.

2. But, with all that, Mr. Desires-awake never went out to his Prince's pavilion till he had again put his rope upon his head. And, however laden with royal presents he ever returned to his mean cottage, he never laid aside his rope. He ate in his rope, he slept in his rope, he visited his next-door neighbour in his rope, till the only instruction he left behind him was to bury him in a ditch, and be sure to put his rope upon his head. The men and the boys of the town jeered at Mr. Desires-awake as he passed up their streets in his rope, and the very mothers in Mansoul taught their children in arms to run after him and to cry, Go up, thou roped head! Go up, thou roped head! We be free men, the men of the town called after him; and we never were in bondage to any man'. Out with him; out with him! He is beside himself. Much repentance hath made him mad! But through all that Mr. Desires-awake was as one that heard them not. For Mr. Desires-awake was full of louder voices within. The voices within his bosom quite drowned the babel around him. The voices within called him far worse names than the streets of the city ever called him; till all he could do was to draw his rope down upon his head and press on again to the Prince's pavilion. You understand about that rope, my brethren, do you not? Mr. Desires-awake's continual rope? In old days when a guilty man came of his own accord to the judge to confess himself deserving of death, he would put a rope upon his head. And that rope as much as said to the judge and to all men—the miserable man as good as said: This is my desert. This is the wages of my sin. I justify my judge. I judge myself. I hereby do myself to death. And it was this that so angered the happy holiday-makers of Mansoul. For they forgave themselves. They justified themselves. They put a high price upon themselves. Humiliation and sorrow for sin was not in all their thoughts; and they hated and hunted back into his hut the humble man whose gait and garb always reminded them of their past life and of their latter end. But for all they could do, Mr. Desires-awake would wear his rope. My soul chooseth strangling rather than sin, he would say. My sin hath found me out, he would say; I hate myself, he would say, because of my sin. I condemn and denounce myself. I hang myself up with this rope on the accursed tree. And thus it was that while other men were

crucifying their Prince afresh, Mr. Desires-awake was crucifying himself with and after his Prince. And thus it was that while the men and the women of the town so hated and so mocked Mr. Desires-awake, his Prince so loved and so honoured him.

3. ‘Oh let not my Lord be angry; and why inquirest Thou after the name of such a dead dog as I am?’ said Desires-awake to his Prince. ‘Behold, now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord which am but dust and ashes,’ said Abraham. ‘If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt thou plunge me into the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me,’ said Job. ‘My wounds stink and are corrupt; my loins are filled with a loathsome disease, and there is no soundness in my flesh,’ said David. ‘But we are all as an unclean thing,’ said Isaiah, ‘and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.’ ‘I am the chief of sinners,’said the apostle. ‘Hold your peace; I am a devil and not a man,’ said Philip Neri to his sons. ‘I am a sinner, and worse than the chief of sinners, yea, a guilty devil,’ said Samuel Rutherford. ‘I hated the light; I was a chief—the chief of sinners,’ said Oliver Cromwell. ‘I was more loathsome in my own eyes than a toad,’ said John Bunyan. ‘Sin and corruption would as naturally bubble out of my heart as water would bubble out of a fountain. I could have changed hearts with anybody. I thought none but the devil himself could equal me for wickedness and pollution of mind.’ ‘O Despise me not,’ said Bishop Andrewes, ‘an unclean worm, a dead dog, a putrid corpse. The just falleth seven times a day; and I, an exceeding sinner, seventy times seven. Me, O Lord, of sinners chief, chiefest, and greatest.’ And William Law,‘An unclean worm, a dead dog, a stinking carcass. Drive, I beseech Thee, the serpent and the beast out of me. O Lord, I detest and abhor myself for all these my sins, and for all my abuse of Thine infinite mercy.’ From all this, then, you will see that this dead dog of ours with the rope upon his head was no strange sight at Emmanuel’s pavilion. And you and I shall still be in the same saintly succession if we go continually with his words in our mouth, and with his instrument in our hands and on our heads.

4. ‘The Prince to whom I went,’ said Mr. Desires-awake,‘is such a one for beauty and for glory that whoso sees Him must ever after both love and fear Him. I, for my part,’ he said,‘can do no less; but I know not what the end will be of all these things.’ What made Mr. Desires-awake say that last thing was that when he was prostrate in his prayer the Prince turned His head away, as if He was out of humour and out of patience with His petitioner; while, all the time, the overcome Prince was weeping with love and with pity for Desires-awake. Only that poor man did not see that, and would not have believed that even if he had seen it. ‘I cannot tell what the end will be,’ said Desires-awake; ‘but one thing I know, I shall never be able to cease from both loving and fearing that Prince. I shall always love Him for His beauty and fear Him for His glory.’ Can you say anything like that, my brethren? Have you been at His seat with sackcloth, and a rope, and ashes, and tears, and prayers, like Abraham, and David, and Isaiah, and Paul, and John Bunyan, and Bishop Andrewes? And, whatever may be the end, do you say that henceforth and for ever you must both love and fear that Prince? ‘Though He slay me,’ said Job, ‘yet I shall both love and trust Him.’ Well, the Prince is the Prince, and He will take both His own time and His own way of taking off your rope and putting a chain of gold round your neck, and a new song in your mouth, as He did to Job. There may be more weeping yet, both on your side and on His before He does that; but He will do it, and He will not delay an hour that He can help in doing it. Only, do you continue and increase to love His beauty, and to fear His glory. And that of itself will be reward and blessing enough to you. Nay, once you have seen both His beauty and His glory, then to lie a dog under

His table, and to beg at His door with a rope on your head to all eternity would be a glorious eternity to you. Samuel Rutherford said that to see Christ through the keyhole once in a thousand years would be heaven enough for him. Christ wept in heaven as Rutherford wrote that letter in Aberdeen, and if you make Him weep in the same way He will soon make you to laugh too. He will soon make you to laugh as Samuel Rutherford and Mr. Desires-awake are laughing now. Only, my brethren, answer this—Are your desires awakened indeed after Jesus Christ? You know what a desire is. Your hearts are full to the brim of desires. Well, is there one desire in a day in your heart for Christ? In the multitude of your desires within you, what share and what proportion go out and up to Christ? You know what beauty is. You know and you love the beauty of a child, of a woman, of a man, of nature, of art, and so on. Do you know, have you ever seen, the ineffable beauty of Christ? Is there one saint of God here,—and He has many saints here—is there one of you who can say with David in the text, One thing do I desire? There should be many so desiring saints here; for Christ's beauty is far better and far fairer, far more captivating, far more enthralling, and far more satisfying to us than it could be to David. Shall we call you Desires-awake, then, after this? Can you say—do you say, One thing do I desire, and that is no thing and no person, no created beauty and no earthly sweetness, but my one desire is for God: to be His, and to be like Him, and to be for ever with Him? Then, it shall soon all be. For, what you truly desire,—all that you already are; and what you already are,—all that you shall soon completely and for ever be. Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.

'As for me,' says the great-hearted, the hungry-hearted Psalmist, 'I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness.' One would have said that David had all that heart could desire even before he fell asleep. For he had a throne, the throne of Israel, and a son, a son like Solomon to sit upon it. A long life also, full to the brim of all kinds of temporal and spiritual blessings. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's. All that, and yet not satisfied! O David! David! surely Desires-awake is thy new name! One of our own poets has said:—

'All thoughts, all passions, all delights,

Whatever stirs this mortal frame,

All are but ministers of Love,

And feed His sacred flame.'

Now, if that is true, as it is true, even of earthly and ephemeral love, how much more true is it of the love that is in the immortal soul of man for the everlasting God? And what a blessed life that already is when all things that come to us—joy and sorrow, good and evil, nature and grace, all thoughts, all passions, all delights—are all but so many ministers to our soul's desire after God, after the Divine Likeness and for the Beatific Vision.

'Oh! Christ, He is the Fountain,

The deep sweet Well of Love!

The streams on earth I’ve tasted,

More deep I’ll drink above;

There, to an ocean fulness,

His mercy doth expand;

And glory—glory dwelleth

In Emmanuel’s land.’

# 071. Mr. Wet-Eyes

LXXI

MR. WET-EYES ‘Oh that my head were waters!’—Jeremiah.

‘Tears gain everything.’—Teresa.

Now Mr. Desires-awake, when he saw that he must go on this errand, besought that they would grant that Mr. Wet-eyes might go with him. Now this Mr. Wet-eyes was a near neighbour of Mr. Desires-awake, a poor man, and a man of a broken spirit, yet one that could speak well to a petition; so they granted that he should go with him. Wherefore the two men at once addressed themselves to their serious business. Mr. Desires-awake put his rope upon his head, and Mr. Wet-eyes went with his hands wringing together. Then said the Prince, And what is he that is become thy companion in this so weighty a matter? So Mr. Desires-awake told Emmanuel that this was a poor neighbour of his, and one of his most intimate associates. And his name, said he, may it please your most excellent Majesty, is Wet-eyes, of the town of Mansoul. I know that there are many of that name that are naught, said he; but I hope it will be no offence to my Lord that I have brought my poor neighbour with me. Then Mr. Wet-eyes fell on his faceto the ground, and made this apology for his coming with his neighbour to his Lord:—

‘Oh, my Lord,’ quoth he, ‘what I am I know not myself, nor whether my name be feigned or true, especially when I begin to think what some have said, and that is that this name was given me because Mr. Repentance was my father. But good men have sometimes bad children, and the sincere do sometimes beget hypocrites. My mother also called me by this name of mine from my cradle; but whether she said so because of the moistness of my brain, or because of the softness of my heart, I cannot tell. I see dirt in mine own tears, and filthiness in the bottom of my prayers. But I pray Thee (and all this while the gentleman wept) that Thou wouldst not remember against us our transgressions, nor take offence at the unqualifiedness of Thy servants, but mercifully pass by the sin of Mansoul, and refrain from the magnifying of Thy grace no longer.’ So at His bidding they arose, and both stood trembling before Him.

1. ‘His name, may it please your Majesty, is Wet-eyes, of the town of Mansoul. I know, at the same time, that there are many of that name that are naught.’ Naught, that is, for this great enterprise now in hand. And thus it was that Mr. Desires-awake in setting out for the Prince’s pavilion besought that Mr. Wet-eyes might go with him. Mr. Desires-awake felt keenly how much might turn on who his companion was that day, and therefore he took Mr. Wet-eyes with him. David would have made a most excellent associate for Mr. Desires-awake that day. ‘I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears.’ And again, ‘Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not Thy law.’ This, then, was the only manner of man that Mr. Desires-awake would stake his life alongside of that day. ‘I have seen some persons weep for the loss of sixpence,’said Mr. Desires-awake, ‘or for the breaking of a glass, or at some trifling accident. And they cannot pretend to have their tears valued at a bigger rate than

they will confess their passion to be when they weep. Some are vexed for the dirtying of their linen, or some such trifle, for which the least passion is too big an expense. And thus it is that a man cannot tell his own heart simply by his tears, or the truth of his repentance by those short gusts of sorrow.' Well, then, my brethren, tell me, Do you think that Mr. Desires-awake would have taken you that day to the pavilion door? Would his head have been safe with you for his associate? Your associates see many gusts in your heart. Do they ever see your eyes red because of your sin? Did you ever weep so much as one good tear-drop for pure sin? One true tear: not because your sins have found you out, but for secret sins that you know can never find you out in this world? And, still better, do you ever weep in secret places not for sin, but for sinfulness—which is a very different matter? Do you ever weep to yourself and to God alone over your incurably wicked heart? If not, then weep for that with all your might, night and day. No mortal man has so much cause to weep as you have. Go to God on the spot, on every spot, and say with Bishop Andrewes, who is both Mr. Desires-awake and Mr. Wet-eyes in one, say with that deep man in his Private Devotions, say: 'I need more grief, O God; I plainly need it. I can sin much, but I cannot correspondingly repent. O Lord, give me a molten heart. Give me tears; give me a fountain of tears. Give me the grace of tears. Drop down, ye heavens, and bedew the dryness of my heart. Give me, O Lord, this saving grace. No grace of all the graces were more welcome to me. If I may not water my couch with my tears, nor wash Thy feet with my tears, at least give me one or two little tears that Thou mayest put into Thy bottle and write in Thy book!' If your heart is hard, and your eyes dry, make something like that your continual prayer.

2. 'A poor-man,' said Mr. Desires-awake, about his associate. 'Mr. Wet-eyes is a poor man, and a man of a broken spirit.' 'Let Oliver take comfort in his dark sorrows and melancholies. The quantity of sorrow he has, does it not mean withal the quantity of sympathy he has, and the quantity of faculty and of victory he shall yet have? Our sorrow is the inverted image of our nobleness. The depth of our despair measures what capability and height of claim we have to hope. Black smoke, as of Tophet, filling all your universe, it can yet by true heart-energy become flame, and the brilliancy of heaven. Courage!'

'This is the angel of the earth,

And she is always weeping.'

3. 'A poor man, and a man of a broken spirit, and yet one that can speak well to a petition.' Yes; and you will see how true that eulogy of Mr. Wet-eyes is if you will run over in your mind the outstanding instances of successful petitioners in the Scriptures. As you come down the Old and the New Testaments you will be astonished and encouraged to find how prevailing a fountain of tears always is with God. David with his swimming bed; Jeremiah with his head waters; Mary Magdalene over His feet with her welling eyes; Peter's bitter cry all his life long as often as he heard a cock crow, and so on. So on through a multitude whose names are written in heaven, and who went up to heaven all the way with inconsolable sorrow because of their sins. They took words and turned to the Lord; but,—better than the best words,—they took tears, or rather, their tears took them. The best words, the words that the Holy Ghost Himself teacheth, if they are without tears, will avail nothing. Even inspired words will not pass through; while, all the time, tears, mere tears, without words, are omnipotent with God. Words weary Him, while tears overcome and command Him. He inhabits the tears of Israel. Therefore, also, now, saith the Lord,

turn ye unto Me with all your heart, and with weeping and with mourning. And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil. It is the same with ourselves. Tears move us. Tears melt us. We cannot resist tears. Even counterfeit tears, we cannot be sure that they are not true. And that is the main reason why our Lord is so good at speaking to a petition. It is because His whole heart, and all the moving passions of His heart, are in His intercessory office. It is because He still remembers in the skies His tears, His agonies, and cries. It is because He is entered into the holiest with His own tears as well as with His own blood. And it is because He will remain and abide before the Father the Man of Sorrows till our last petition is answered, and till God has wiped the last tear from our eyes. When He was in the coasts of Cæsarea-Philippi, our Lord felt a great curiosity to find out who the people thereabouts took Him to be. And it must have touched His heart to be told that some men had insight enough to insist that He was the prophet Jeremiah come back again to weep over Jerusalem. He is Elias, said some. No; He is John the Baptist risen from the dead, said others. No, no; said some men who saw deeper than their neighbours. His head is waters, and His eyes are a fountain of tears. Do you not see that He so often escapes into a lodge in the wilderness to weep for our sins? No; He is neither John nor Elijah; He is Jeremiah come back again to weep over Jerusalem! And even an apostle, looking back at the beginning of our Lord's priesthood on earth, says that He was prepared for His office by prayers and supplications, and with strong crying and tears. From all that, then, let us learn and lay to heart that if we would have one to speak well to our petitions, the Man of Sorrows is that one. And then, as His remembrancers on our behalf, let us engage all those among our friends who have the same grace of tears. But, above all, let us be men of tears ourselves. For all the tears and all the intercessions of our great High Priest, and all the importunings of our best friends to boot, will avail us nothing if our own eyes are dry. Let us, then, turn back to Bishop Andrewes's prayer for the grace of tears, and offer it every night with him till our head, like his, is holy waters, and till, like him, we get beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

4. 'Clear as tears' is a Persian proverb when they would praise their purest spring water. But Mr. Wet-eyes has from henceforth spoiled the point of that proverb for us. 'I see,' he said, 'dirt in mine own tears, and filthiness in the bottom of my prayers.' Mr. Wet-eyes is hopeless. Mr. Wet-eyes is intolerable. Mr. Wet-eyes would weary out the patience of a saint. There is no satisfying or pacifying or ever pleasing this morbose Mr. Wet-eyes. The man is absolutely insufferable. Why, prayers and tears that the most and best of God's people cannot attain to are spurned and spat upon by Mr. Wet-eyes. The man is beside himself with his tears. For, tears that would console and assure us for a long season after them, he will weep over them as we scarce weep over our worst sins. His closet always turns all his comeliness to corruption. He comes out of his closet after all night in it with his psalm-book wrung to pulp, and with all his righteousnesses torn to filthy rags; till all men escape Mr. Wet-eyes'society—all men except Mr. Desires-awake. I will go out on your errand now, said Mr. Desires-awake, if you will send Mr. Wet-eyes with me. And thus the two twin sons of sorrow for sin and hunger after holiness went out arm in arm to the great pavilion together, Mr. Desires-awake with his rope upon his head, and Mr. Wet-eyes with his hands wringing together. Thus they went to the Prince's pavilion. I gave you a specimen of one of Mr. Wet-eyes'prayers in the introduction to this discourse, and you did not discover much the matter with it, did you? You did not discover much filthiness in the bottom of that prayer, did you? I am

sure you did not. Ah! but that is because you have not yet got Mr. Wet-eyes' eyes. When you get his eyes; when you turn and employ upon yourselves and upon your tears and upon your prayers his always-wet eyes,—then you will begin to understand and love and take sides with this inconsolable soul, and will choose his society rather than that of any other man—as often, at any rate, as you go out to the Prince's pavilion door.

5. 'Mr. Repentance was my father, but good men sometimes have bad children, and the most sincere do sometimes beget great hypocrites. But, I pray Thee, take not offence at the unqualifiedness of Thy servant.' Take good note of that uncommon expression, 'unqualifiedness,'in Mr. Wet-eyes' confession, all of you who are attending to what is being said. Lay 'unqualifiedness' to heart. Learn how to qualify yourselves before you begin to pray. In his fine comment on the 137th Psalm, Matthew Henry discourses delightfully on what he calls 'deliberate tears.' Look up that raciest of commentators, and see what he there says about the deliberate tears of the captives in Babylon. It was the lack of sufficient deliberation in his tears that condemned and alarmed Mr. Wet-eyes that day. He felt now that he had not deliberated and qualified himself properly before coming to the Prince's pavilion. Do not take up your time or your thoughts with mere curiosities, either in your Bible or in any other good book, says À Kempis. Read such things rather as may yield compunction to your heart. And again, give thyself to compunction, and thou shalt gain much devotion thereby. Mr. Wet-eyes, good and true soul, was afraid that he had not qualified himself enough by compunctious reading and self-recollection. The sincere, he sobbed out, do often beget hypocrites! 'Our hearts are so deceitful in the matter of repentance,' says Jeremy Taylor, 'that the masters of the spiritual life are fain to invent suppletory arts and stratagems to secure the duty.' Take not offence at the lack of all such suppletory arts and stratagems in thy servant, said poor Wet-eyes. All which would mean in the most of us: Take not offence at my rawness and ignorance in the spiritual life, and especially in the life of inward devotion. Do not count up against me the names and the numbers and the prices of my poems, and plays, and novels, and newspapers, and then the number of my devotional books. Compare not my outlay on my body and on this life with my outlay on my soul and on the life to come. Oh, take not mortal offence at the shameful and scandalous unqualifiedness of Thy miserable servant. My father and my mother read the books of the soul, but they have left behind them a dry-eyed reprobate in me! Say that to-night as you look around on the grievous famine of the suppletory arts and stratagems of repentance and reformation in your heathenish bedroom.

Spiritual preaching; real face to face, inward, verifiable, experimental, spiritual preaching; preaching to a heart in the agony of its sanctification; preaching to men whose whole life is given over to making them a new heart—that kind of preaching is scarcely ever heard in our day. There is great intellectual ability in the pulpit of our day, great scholarship, great eloquence, and great earnestness, but spiritual preaching, preaching to the spirit—'wet-eyed' preaching—is a lost art. At the same time, if that living art is for the present overlaid and lost, the literature of a deeper spiritual day abides to us, and our spiritually-minded people are not confined to us, they are not dependent on us. Well, this is the Communion week with us yet once more. Will you not, then, make it the beginning of some of the suppletory arts and stratagems of the spiritual life with yourselves? I cannot preach as I would like on such subjects, but I can tell you who could, and who, though dead, yet speak by their immortal books. You have the wet-eyed psalms; but they are beyond the depth of most people. Their meaning seems to us on the surface, and we all read and

sing them, but let us not therefore think that we understand them. I cannot compel you to read the books, and to read little else but the books, that would in time, and by God's blessing, lead you into the depths of the psalms; but I can wash my hands so far in making their names so many household words among my people. The Way to Christ, the Imitation of Christ, the Theologia Germanica, Tauler'sSermons, the Mortification of Sin, and Indwelling Sin in Believers, the Saint's Rest, the Holy Living and Dying, the Privata Sacra, the Private Devotions, the Serious Call, the Christian Perfection, the Religious Affections, and such like. All that, and you still unqualified! All that, and your eyes still dry!

# 072. Mr. Humble the Juryman, and Miss Humble-mind the Servant-Maid

LXXII MR. HUMBLE THE JURYMAN, AND MISS HUMBLE-MIND THE SERVANT-MAID ‘Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.’—Our Lord.

‘Be clothed with humility.’—Peter.

‘God’s chiefest saints are the least in their own eyes.’—À Kempis.

‘Without humility all our other virtues are but vices.’—Pascal.

‘Humility does not consist in having a worse opinion of ourselves than we deserve.’—Law.

‘Humility lies close upon the heart, and its tests are exceedingly delicate and subtle.’—Newman. Our familiar English word ‘humility’ comes down to us from the Latin root humus, which means the earth or the ground. Humility, therefore, is that in the mind and in the heart of a man which is low down even to the very earth. A humble-minded man may not have learning enough to know the etymology of the name which best describes his character, but the divine nature which is in him teaches him to look down, to walk meekly and softly, and to speak seldom, and always in love. For humility, while it takes its lowly name from earth, all the time has its true nature from heaven. Humility is full of all meekness, modesty, submissiveness, teachableness, sense of inability, sense of unworthiness, sense of ill-desert. Till, with that new depth and new intensity that the Scriptures and religious experience have given to this word, as to so many other words, humility, in the vocabulary of the spiritual life, has come to be applied to that low estimate of ourselves which we come to form and to entertain as we are more and more enlightened about God and about ourselves; about the majesty, glory, holiness, beauty, and blessedness of the divine nature, and about our own unspeakable evil, vileness, and misery as sinners. And, till humility has come to rank in Holy Scripture, and in the lives and devotions of all God’s saints, as at once the deepest root and the ripest fruit of all the divine graces that enter into, and, indeed, constitute the life of God in the heart of man. Humility, evangelical humility, sings Edwards in his superb and seraphic poem the Religious Affections,—evangelical humility is the sense that the true Christian has of his own utter insufficiency, despicableness, and odiousness, a sense which is peculiar to the true saint. But to compensate the true saint for this sight and sense of himself, he has revealed to him an accompanying sense of the absolutely transcendent beauty of the divine nature and of all divine things; a sight and a sense that quite overcome the heart and change to holiness all the dispositions and inclinations and affections of the heart. The essence of evangelical humility, says Edwards, consists in such humility as becomes a creature in himself exceeding sinful, but at the same time, under a dispensation of grace, and this is the greatest and most essential thing in all true religion.

1. Well, then, our Mr. Humble was a juryman in Mansoul, and his name and his nature eminently fitted him for his office. I never was a juryman; but, if I were, I feel sure I would come home from

the court a far humbler man than I went up to it. I cannot imagine how a judge can remain a proud man, or an advocate, or a witness, or a juryman, or a spectator, or even a policeman. I am never in a criminal court that I do not tremble with terror all the time. I say to myself all the time,—there stands John Newton but for the preventing grace of God. 'I will not sit as a judge to try General Boulanger, because I hate him,' said M. Renault in the French Senate. Mr. Humble himself could not have made a better speech to the bench than that when his name was called to be sworn. Let us all remember John Newton and M. Renault when we would begin to write or to speak about any arrested, accused, found-out man. Let other men's arrests, humiliations, accusations, and sentences only make us search well our own past, and that will make us ever humbler and ever humbler men ourselves; ever more penitent men, and ever more prayerful men.

2. And then Miss Humble-mind, his only daughter, was a servant-maid. There is no office so humble but that a humble mind will not put on still more humility in it. What a lesson in humility, not Peter only got that night in the upper room, but that happy servant-maid also who brought in the bason and the towel. Would she ever after that night grumble and give up her place in a passion because she had been asked to do what was beneath her to do? Would she ever leave that house for any wages? Would she ever see that bason without kissing it? Would that towel not be a holy thing ever after in her proud eyes? How happy that house would ever after that night be, not so much because the Lord's Supper had been instituted in it, as because a servant was in it who had learned humility as she went about the house that night. Let all our servants hold up their heads and magnify their office. Their Master was once a servant, and He left us all, and all servants especially, an example that they should follow in His steps. Peter, whose feet were washed that night, never forgot that night, and his warm heart always warmed to a servant when he saw her with her bason and her towels, till he gave her half a chapter to herself in his splendid First Epistle. 'Servants, be subject,' he said, till his argument rose to a height above which not even Paul himself ever rose. Servant-maids, you must all have your own half-chapter out of First Peter by heart.

3. But I have as many students of one kind or other here to-night as I have maid-servants, and they will remember where a great student has said that knowledge without love but puffeth a student up. Now, the best knowledge for us all, and especially so for a student, is to know himself: his own ignorance, his own foolishness, his blindness of mind, and, especially, his corruption of heart. For that knowledge will both keep him from being puffed up with what he already knows, and it will also put him and keep him in the way of knowing more. Self-knowledge will increase humility, and all the past masters both of science and of religion will tell him that humility is the certain note of the true student. You who are students all know The Advancement of Learning, just as the servants sitting beside you all know the second chapter of First Peter. Well, your master Verulam there tells you, and indeed on every page of his, that it is only to a humble, waiting, childlike temper that nature, like grace, will ever reveal up her secrets. 'There is small chance of truth at the goal when there is not a childlike humility at the starting-post.' Well, then, all you students who would fain get to the goal of science, make the Church of Christ your starting-post. Come first and come continually to the Christian school to learn humility, and then, as long as your talents, your years, and your opportunities hold out, both truth and goodness will open up to you at every step. Every step will be a goal, and at every goal a new step will open up. And God's smile and God's blessing, and all good men's love and honour and applause will support and reward you

in your race. And, humble-minded to the truth herself, be, at the same time, humble-minded toward all who like yourself are seeking to know and to do the truth. A lately deceased student of nature was a pattern to all students as long as he waited on truth in his laboratory; and even as long as he remained at his desk to tell the world what he and other students had discovered in their search. But when any other student in his search after truth was compelled to cross that hitherto so exemplary student, he immediately became as insolent as if he had been the greatest boor in the country. Till, as he spat out scorn at all who differed from him we always remembered this in À Kempis—'Surely, an humble husbandman that serveth God is better than a proud philosopher that, neglecting himself, laboureth to understand the course of the heavens. It is great wisdom and perfection to esteem nothing of ourselves, and to think always well and highly of others.' Students of arts, students of philosophy, students of law, students of medicine, and especially, students of divinity, be humble men. Labour in humility even more than in your special science. Humility will advance you in your special science; while, all the time, and at the end of time, she will be more to you than all the other sciences taken together. And since I have spoken of À Kempis, take this motto for all your life out of À Kempis, as the great and good Fénelon did, and it will guide you to the goal: Ama nescia et pro nihilo reputari.

4. But of all the men in the whole world it is ministers who should simply, as Peter says, be clothed with humility, and that from head to foot. And, first as divinity students, and then as pastors and preachers, we who are ministers have advantages and opportunities in this respect quite peculiar and private to ourselves. For, while other students are spending their days and their nights on the ancient classics of Greece and Rome, the student who is to be a minister is buried in the Psalms, in the Gospels, and in the Epistles. While the student of law is deep in his commentaries and his cases, the student of divinity is deep in the study of experimental religion. And while the medical student is full of the diseases of animals and of men, the theological student is absorbed in the holiness of the divine nature, and in the plague of the human heart, and, especially, he is drowned deeper every day in his own. And he who has begun a curriculum like that and is not already putting on a humility beyond all other men had better lose no more time, but turn himself at once to some other way of making his bread. The word of God and his own heart,—yes; what a sure school of evangelical humility to every evangelically-minded student is that! And, then, after that, and all his days, his congregational communion-roll and his visiting-book. Let no minister who would be found of God clothed and canopied over with humility ever lose sight of his communion-roll and pastoral visitation-book. I defy any minister to keep those records always open before him and yet remain a proud man, a self-respecting, self-satisfied, self-righteous man. For, what secret histories of his own folly, neglect, rashness, offensiveness, hot-headedness, self-seeking, self-pleasing vanity, now puffed up over one man, now cast down and full of gloom over another, what self-flattery here, and what resentment and retaliation there; and so on, as only his own eyes and his Divine Master's eye can read between every diary line. What shame will cover that minister as with a mantle when he thinks what the Christian ministry might be made, and then takes home to himself what he has made it! Let any minister shut himself in with his communion-roll and his visiting-book before each returning communion season, and there will be one worthy communicant at least in the congregation: one who will have little appetite all that week for any other food but the broken Body and the shed Blood of his Redeemer. But these are professional matters that the outside world has nothing to do with and would not understand. Only, let all young men who would have evangelical humility absolutely secured and sealed to

them,—let them come and be ministers. Just as all young men who would have any satisfaction in life, any sense of work well done and worthy of reward, any taste of a goal attained and an old age earned, let them take to anything in all this world but the evangelical pulpit and its accompanying pastorate.

5. But humility is not a grace of the pulpit and the pastorate only. It is not those who are separated by the Holy Ghost to study the word of God and their own hearts all their life long only, who are called to put on humility. All men are called to that grace. There is no acceptance with God for any man without that grace. There is no approach to God for any man without it. All salvation begins and ends in it. Would you, then, fain possess it? Would you, then, fain attain to it? Then let there be no mystery and no mistake made about it. Would any man here fain get down to that deep valley where God's saints walk in the sweet shade and lie down in green pastures? Well, I warrant him that just before him, and already under his eye, there is a flight of steps cut in the hill, which steps, if he will take them, will, step after step, take him also down to that bottom. The whole face of this steep and slippery world is sculptured deep with such submissive steps. Indeed, when a man's eyes are once turned down to that valley, there is nothing to be seen anywhere in all this world but downward steps. Look whichever way you will, there gleams out upon you yet another descending stair. Look back at the way you came up. But take care lest the sight turns you dizzy. Look at any spot you once crossed on your way up, and, lo! every foot-print of yours has become a descending step. You sink down as you look, broken down with shame and with horror and with remorse. There are people, some still left in this world, and some gone to the other world, people whom you dare not think of lest you should turn sick and lose hold and hope. There are places you dare not visit: there are scenes you dare not recall. Lucifer himself would be a humble angel with his wings over his face if he had a past like yours, and would often enough return to look at it. And, then, not the past only, but at this present moment there are people and things placed close beside you, and kept close beside you, and you close beside them, on divine purpose just to give you continual occasion and offered opportunity to practise humility. They are kept close beside you just on purpose to humiliate you, to cut out your descending steps, to lend you their hand, and to say to you: Keep near us. Only keep your eye on us, and we will see you down! And then, if you are resolute enough to look within, if you are able to keep your eye on what goes on in your own heart like heart—beats, then, already, I know where you are. You are under all men's feet. You are ashamed to lift up your eyes to meet other men's eyes. You dare not take their honest hands. You could tell Edwards himself things about humiliation now that would make his terribly searching and humbling book quite tame and tasteless.

Come, then, O high-minded man, be sane, be wise. If you were up on a giddy height, and began to see that certain death was straight and soon before you, what would you do? You know what you would do. You would look with all your eyes for such steps as would take you safest down to the solid ground. You would welcome any hand stretched out to help you. You would be most attentive and most obedient and most thankful to any one who would assure you that this is the right way down. And you would keep on saying to yourself—Once I were well down, no man shall see me up here again. Well, my brethren, humiliation, humility, is to be learned just in the same way, and it is to be learned in no other way. He who would be down must just come down. That is all. A step down, and another step down, and another, and another, and already you are well down. A humble act done to-day, a humble word spoken to-morrow; humiliation after humiliation accepted

every day that you would at one time have spurned from you with passion; and then your own vile, hateful, unbearable heart-all that is ordained of God to bring you down, down to the dust; and this last, your own heart, will bring you down to the very depths of hell. And thus, after all your other opportunities and ordinances of humility are embraced and exhausted, then the plunges, the depths, the abysses of humility that God will open up in your own heart will all work in you a meetness for heaven and a ripeness for its glory, that shall for ever reward you for all that degradation and shame and self-despair which have been to you the sure way and the only way to everlasting life.

Chapter 73

# 073. Master Think-Well, the Late and Only Son of Old Mr. Meditation

LXXIII MASTER THINK-WELL, THE LATE AND ONLY SON OF OLD MR. MEDITATION ‘As he thinketh in his heart, so is he.’—A Proverb.

It was a truly delightful sight to see old Mr. Meditation and his only son, our little Think-well, out among the woods and hedgerows of a summer afternoon. Little Think-well was the son of his father’s old age. That dry tree used to say to himself that if ever he was intrusted with a son of his own, he would make his son his most constant and his most confidential companion all his days. And so he did. The eleventh of Deuteronomy had become a greater and greater text to that childless man as he passed the mid-time of his days. ‘Therefore,’ he used to say to himself, as he walked abroad alone, and as other men passed him with their children at their side—‘Therefore ye shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down and when thou risest up. And thou shalt write them upon the doorposts of thine house and upon thy gates.’ And thus it was that, as the little lad grew up, there was no day of all the seven that he so much numbered and waited for as was that sacred day on which his father was free to take little Think-well by the hand and lead him out to talk to him. ‘No,’said an Edinburgh boy to his mother the other day—‘No, mother,’he said, ‘I have no liking for these Sunday papers with their poor stories and their pictures. I am to read the Bible stories and the Bible biographies first.’ He is not my boy. I wish my boys were all like him. ‘And Plutarch on week-days for such a boy,’ I said to his mother. How to keep a decent shred of the old sanctification on the modern Sabbath-day is the anxious inquiry of many fathers and mothers among us. My friend with her manly-minded boy, and Mr. Meditation with little Think-well had no trouble in that matter.

‘And once I said,

As I remember, looking round upon those rocks

And hills on which we all of us were born,

That God who made the Great Book of the world

Would bless such piety;—

Never did worthier lads break English bread:

The finest Sunday that the autumn saw,

With all its mealy clusters of ripe nuts,

Could never keep those boys away from church,

Or tempt them to an hour of Sabbath breach,

Leonard and James!’

Think-well and that mother's son.

Old Mr. Meditation, the father, was sprung of a poor but honest and industrious stock in the city. He had not had many talents or opportunities to begin with, but he had made the very best of the two he had. And then, when the two estates of Mr. Fritter-day and Mr. Let-good-slip were sequestered to the crown, the advisers of the crown handed over those two neglected estates to Mr. Meditation to improve them for the common good, and after him to his son, whose name we know. The steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord, and He delighteth in his way. I have been young and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.

Now, this Think-well old Mr. Meditation had by Mrs. Piety, and she was the daughter of the old Recorder. 'I am Thy servant,'said Mrs. Piety's son on occasion all his days—'I am Thy servant and the son of Thine handmaid.' And at that so dutiful acknowledgment of his a long procession of the servants of God pass up before our eyes with their sainted mothers leaning on the arms of their great sons. The Psalmist and his mother, the Baptist and his mother, our Lord and His mother, the author of the Fourth Gospel and his mother, Paul's son and successor in the gospel and his mother and grandmother, the author of The Confessions and his mother; and, in this noble connection, I always think of Halyburton and his good mother. And in this ennobling connection you will all think of your own mother also, and before we go any further you will all say, I also, O Lord, am Thy servant and the son of Thine handmaid. 'Fathers and mothers handle children differently,' says Jeremy Taylor. And then that princely teacher of the Church of Christ Catholic goes on to tell us how Mrs. Piety handled her little Think-well which she had borne to Mr. Meditation. After other things, she said this every night before she took sleep to her tired eyelids, this: 'Oh give me grace to bring him up. Oh may I always instruct him with diligence and meekness; govern him with prudence and holiness; lead him in the paths of religion and justice; never provoking him to wrath, never indulging him in folly, and never conniving at an unworthy action. Oh sanctify him in his body, soul, and spirit. Let all his thoughts be pure and holy to the Searcher of hearts; let his words be true and prudent before men; and may he have the portion of the meek and the humble in the world to come, and all through Jesus Christ our Lord!' How could a son get past a father and a mother like that? Even if, for a season, he had got past them, he would be sure to come back. Only, their young Think-well never did get past his father and his mother.

There was not so much word of heredity in his day; but without so much of the word young Think-well had the whole of the thing. And as time went on, and the child became more and more the father of the man, it was seen and spoken of by all the neighbours who knew the house, how that their only child had inherited all his father's head, and all his mother's heart, and then that he had reverted to his maternal grandfather in his so keen and quick sense of right and wrong. All which, under whatever name it was held, was a most excellent outfit for our young gentleman. His old father, good natural head and all, had next to no book-learning. He had only two or three books that he read a hundred times over till he had them by heart. And as he sighed over his unlettered lot he always consoled himself with a saying he had once got out of one of his old books. The saying of some great authority was to this effect, that 'an old and simple woman, if she loves Jesus, may be greater than our great brother Bonaventure.' He did not know who Bonaventure was, but he always got a reproof again out of his name. Think-well, to his father's immense delight, was a very methodical little fellow, and his father and he had orderly little secrets that they told to

none. Little secret plans as to what they were to read about, and think about, and pray about on certain days of the week and at certain hours of the day and the night. You must not call the father an old pedant, for the fact is, it was the son who was the pedant if there was one in that happy house. The two intimate friends had a word between them they called agenda. And nobody but themselves knew where they had borrowed that uncouth word, what language it was, or what it meant. Only in the old man's tattered pocket-book there were things like this found by his minister after his death. Indeed, in a museum of such relics this is still to be read under a glass case, and in old Mr. Meditation's ramshackle hand: 'Monday, death; Tuesday, judgment; Wednesday, heaven; Thursday, hell; Friday, my past life back to my youth; Saturday, the passion of my Saviour; Lord's day, creation, salvation, and my own.—M.' And then, on an utterly illegible page, this: 'Jesus, Thy life and Thy words are a perpetual sermon to me. I meditate on Thee all the day. Make my memory a vessel of election. Let all my thoughts be plain, honest, pious, simple, prudent, and charitable, till Thou art pleased to draw the curtain and let me see Thyself, O Eternal Jesu!' If I had time I could tell you more about Think-well's quaint old father. But the above may be better than nothing about the rare old gentleman. A great authority has said—two great authorities have said in their enigmatic way, that a 'dry light is ever the best.' That may be so in some cases and to some uses, but nothing can be more sure than this, that the light that little Think-well got from his father's head was excellently drenched in his mother's heart. The sweet moisture of his mother's heart mixed up beautifully with his father's drier head and made a fine combination in their one boy as it turned out. Her minister, preaching on one occasion on my text for to-night, had said—and she had such a memory for a sermon that she had never forgotten it, but had laid it up in her heart on the spot—'As the philosopher's stone,'the old-fashioned preacher had said, 'turns all metals into gold, as the bee sucks honey out of every flower, and as the good stomach sucks out some sweet and wholesome nourishment out of whatever it takes into itself, so doth a holy heart, so far as sanctified, convert and digest all things into spiritual and useful thoughts. This you may see in Psalm cvii. 43.' And in her plain, silent, hidden, motherly way Mistress Piety adorned her old minister's doctrine of the holy heart that he was always preaching about, till she shared her soft and holy heart with her son, as his father had shared his clear and deep, if too unlearned, head.

We have one grandmother at least signalised in the Bible; but no grandfather, so far as I remember. But amends are made for that in the Holy War. For Think-well would never have been the man he became had it not been for the old Recorder, his grandfather on his mother's side. Some superficial people said that there was too much severity in the old Recorder; but his grandson who knew him best, never said that. He was the best of men, his grandson used to stand up for him, and say, I shall never forget the debt I owe him. It was he who taught me first to make conscience of my thoughts. Indeed, as for my secret thoughts, I had taken no notice of them till that summer afternoon walk home from church, when we sat down among the bushes and he showed me on the spot the way. And I can say to his memory that scarce for one waking hour have I any day forgotten the lesson. The lesson how to make a conscience, as he said, of all my thoughts about myself and about all my neighbours. Such, then, were Think-well's more immediate ancestors, and such was the inheritance that they all taken together had left him.

Think-well! Think-well! My brethren, what do you think, what do you say, as you hear that fine name? I will tell you what I think and say. If I overcome, and have that white stone given to me, and in that stone a new name written which no man shall know saving he that receiveth it; and if it

were asked me here to-night what I would like my new name to be, I would say on the spot, Let it be THINK-WELL! Let my new name among the saved and the sanctified before the throne be THINK-WELL! As, O God, it will be the bottomless pit to me, if I am forsaken of Thee for ever to my evil thoughts. Send down and prevent it. Stir up all Thy strength and give commandment to prevent it. Do Thou prevent it. For, after I have done all,—after I have made all my overt acts blameless, after I have tamed my tongue which no man can tame—all that only the more throws my thoughts into a very devil's garden, a thicket of hell, a secret swamp of sin to the uttermost. How, then, am I ever to attain to that white stone and that shining name? And that in a world of such truth that every man's name and title there shall be a strict and true and entirely accurate and adequate description and exposition of the very thoughts and intents and imaginations of his heart? How shall I, how shall you, my brethren, ever have 'Think-well'written on our forehead?—Well, with God all things are possible. With God, with a much meditating mind, and a true and humble and tender heart, and a pure conscience, a conscience void of offence, working together with Him—He, with all these inheritances and all these environments working together with Him, will at last enable us, you and me, to lift up such a clear and transparent forehead. But not without our constant working together. We must ourselves make head, and heart, and, especially, conscience of all our thoughts—for a long lifetime we must do that. The Ductor Dubitantiumhas a deep chapter on 'The Thinking Conscience.' And what a reproof to many of us lies in the mere name! For how much evil-thinking and evil-speaking we have all been guilty of through our unthinking conscience and through a zeal for God, but a zeal without knowledge. Look back at the history of the Church and see; look back at your own history in the Church and see. Yes, make conscience of your thoughts: but let it first be an instructed conscience, a thinking conscience, a conscience full of the best and the clearest light. And then let us also make ourselves a new heart and a new spirit, as Ezekiel has it. For our hearts are continually perverting and polluting and poisoning our thoughts. That is a fearful thing that is said about the men on whom the flood soon came. You remember what is said about them, and in explanation and justification of the flood. God saw, it is said, that every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts was evil, and only evil continually. Fearful! Far more fearful than ten floods! O God, Thou seest us. And Thou seest all the imaginations of the thoughts of our hearts. Oh give us all a mind and a heart and a conscience to think of nothing, to fear nothing, to watch and to pray about nothing compared with our thoughts. 'As for my secret thoughts,' says the author of the Holy War and the creator of Master Think-well—'As for my secret thoughts, I paid no attention to them. I never knew I had them. I had no pain, or shame, or guilt, or horror, or despair on account of them till John Gifford took me and showed me the way.' And then when John Bunyan, being the man of genius he was,—as soon as he began to attend to his own secret thoughts, then the first faint outline of this fine portrait of Think-well began to shine out on the screen of this great artist's imagination, and from that sanctified screen this fine portrait of Think-well and his family has shined into our hearts to-night.

Chapter 74

# 074. Mr. God's-Peace, a Goodly Person, and a Sweet-Natured Gentleman

LXXIV MR. GOD’S-PEACE, A GOODLY PERSON, AND A SWEET-NATURED GENTLEMAN

‘Let the peace of God rule in your hearts,—the peace of God that passeth all understanding.’—Paul.

John Bunyan is always at his very best in allegory. In some other departments of work John Bunyan has had many superiors; but when he lays down his head on his hand and begins to dream, as we see him in some of the old woodcuts, then he is alone; there is no one near him. We have not a few greater divines in pure divinity than John Bunyan. We have some far better expositors of Scripture than John Bunyan, and we have some far better preachers. John Bunyan at his best cannot open up a deep Scripture like that prince of expositors, Thomas Goodwin. John Bunyan in all his books has nothing to compare for intellectual strength and for theological grasp with Goodwin’s chapter on the peace of God, in his sixth book in The Work of the Holy Ghost. John Bunyan cannot set forth divine truth in an orderly method and in a built-up body like John Owen. He cannot Platonize divine truth like his Puritan contemporary, John Howe. He cannot soar high as heaven in the beauty and the sweetness of gospel holiness like Jonathan Edwards. He has nothing of the philosophical depth of Richard Hooker, and he has nothing of the vast learning of Jeremy Taylor. But when John Bunyan’s mind and heart begin to work through his imagination, then—

‘His language is not ours.

’Tis my belief God speaks; no tinker hath such powers.’

1. In the beginning of his chapter on ‘Speaking peace, ’Thomas Goodwin tells his reader that he is going to fully couch all his intendments under a metaphor and an allegory. But Goodwin’s reader has read and re-read the great chapter, and has not yet discovered where the metaphor and the allegory came in and where they went out. But Bunyan does not need to advertise his reader that he is going to couch his teaching in his imagination.

‘But having now my method by the end,

Still, as I pulled it came: and so I penned

It down; until at last it came to be

For length and breadth the bigness that you see.’ The Blessed Prince, he begins, did also ordain a new officer in the town, and a goodly person he was. His name was Mr. God’s-peace. This man was set over my Lord Will-be-will, my Lord Mayor, Mr. Recorder, the subordinate preacher, Mr. Mind, and over all the natives of the town of Mansoul. Himself was not a native of the town, but came with the Prince from the court above. He was a great acquaintance of Captain Credence and Captain Good-hope; some say they were kin, and I am of that opinion too. This man, as I said, was

made governor of the town in general, especially over the castle, and Captain Credence was to help him there. And I made great observation of it, that so long as all things went in the town as this sweet-natured gentleman would have them go, the town was in a most happy condition. Now there were no jars, no chiding, no interferings, no unfaithful doings in all the town; every man in Mansoul kept close to his own employment. The gentry, the officers, the soldiers, and all in place, observed their order. And as for the women and the children of the town, they followed their business joyfully. They would work and sing, work and sing, from morning till night; so that quite through the town of Mansoul now nothing was to be found but harmony, quietness, joy, and health. And this lasted all the summer. I shall step aside at this point and shall let Jonathan Edwards comment on this sweet-natured gentleman and his heavenly name. ‘God’s peace has an exquisite sweetness,’ says Edwards. ‘It is exquisitely sweet because it has so firm a foundation on the everlasting rock. It is sweet also because it is so perfectly agreeable to reason. It is sweet also because it riseth from holy and divine principles, which, as they are the virtue, so are they the proper happiness of man. This peace is exquisitely sweet also because of the greatness of the good that the saints enjoy, being no other than the infinite bounty and fulness of that God who is the Fountain of all good. It is sweet also because it shall be enjoyed to perfection hereafter.’ An enthusiastic student has counted up the number of times that this divine word ‘sweetness’ occurs in Edwards, and has proved that no other word of the kind occurs so often in the author of True Virtue and The Religious Affections. And I can well believe it; unless the ‘beauty of holiness’ runs it close. Still, this sweet-natured gentleman will continue to live for us in his government and jurisdiction in Mansoul and in John Bunyan even more than in Jonathan Edwards.

2. ‘Now Mr. God’s-peace, the new Governor of Mansoul, was not a native of the town; he came down with his Prince from the court above.’ ‘He was not a native’—let that attribute of his be written in letters of gold on every gate and door and wall within his jurisdiction. When you need the governor and would seek him at any time or in any place in all the town and cannot find him, recollect yourself where he came from: he may have returned thither again. John Bunyan has couched his deepest instruction to you in that single sentence in which he says, ‘Mr. God’s-peace was not a native of the town.’ John Bunyan has gathered up many gospel Scriptures into that single allegorical sentence. He has made many old and familiar passages fresh and full of life again in that one metaphorical sentence. It is the work of genius to set forth the wont and the well known in a clear, simple, and at the same time surprising, light like that. There is a peace that is native and natural to the town of Mansoul, and to understand that peace, its nature, its grounds, its extent, and its range, is most important to the theologian and to the saint. But to understand the peace of God, that supreme peace, the peace that passeth all understanding,—that is the highest triumph of the theologian and the highest wisdom of the saint. The prophets and the psalmists of the Old Testament are all full of the peace that God gave to His people Israel. My peace I give unto you, says our Lord also. Paul also has taken up that peace that comes to us through the blood of Christ, and has made it his grand message to us and to all sinful and sin-disquieted men. And John Bunyan has shown how sure and true a successor of the apostles of Christ he is, just in his portrait of this sweet-natured gentleman who was not a native of Mansoul, but who came from that same court from which Emmanuel Himself came. And it is just this outlandishness of this sweet-natured gentleman; it is just this heavenly origin and divine extraction of his that makes him sometimes and in some things to surpass all earthly understanding. ‘I am coming some day soon,’ said a divinity student to me the other Sabbath night, ‘to have you explain and clear up the

atonement to me.' 'I shall be glad to see you,' I said, 'but not on that errand.' No. Paul himself could not do it. Paul said that the atonement and the peace of it passed all his understanding. And John Bunyan says here that not the Prince only, but his officer Mr. God's-peace also, was not native to the town of Mansoul, but came straight down from heaven into that town—and what can the man do who cometh after two kings like Paul and Bunyan? I have not forgotten my Edwards where he says that the exquisite sweetness of this peace is perfectly agreeable to reason. As, indeed, so it is. And yet, if reason will have a clear and finished and all-round answer to all her difficulties and objections and fault-findings, I fear she cannot have it here. The time may come when our reason also shall be so enlarged, and so sanctified, and so exalted, that she shall be able with all saints to see the full mystery of that which in this present dispensation passeth all understanding. But till then, only let God's peace enter our hearts with God's Son, and then let our hearts say if that peace must not in some high and deep way be according to the highest and the deepest reason, since its coming into our hearts has produced in our hearts and in our lives such reasonable, and right, and harmonious, and peaceful, and every way joyful results.

3. Governor God's-peace had not many in the town of Mansoul to whom he could confide all his thoughts and with whom he could consult. But there were two officer friends of his stationed in the town with whom he was every day in close correspondence, viz., the Captain Credence and the Captain Good-hope. Their so close intimacy will not be wondered at when it is known that those three officers had all come in together with Emmanuel the Conqueror. Those three young captains had done splendid service, each at the head of his own battalion, in the days of the invasion and the conquest of Mansoul, and they had all had their present titles, and privileges, and lands, and offices, patented to them on the strength of their past services. The Captain Credence had all along been the confidential aide-de-camp and secretary of the Prince. Indeed, the Prince never called Captain Credence a servant at all, but always a friend. The Prince had always conveyed his mind about all Mansoul's matters first to Captain Credence, and then that confidential captain conveyed whatever specially concerned God's-peace and Good-hope to those excellent and trusty soldiers. Credence first told all matters to God's-peace and then the two soon talked over Good-hope to their mind and heart. Some say that the three officers, Credence, God's-peace, and Good-hope, were kin, adds our historian, and I, he adds, am of that opinion too. And to back up his opinion he takes an extract out of the Herald's College books which runs thus: 'Romans, fifteenth and thirteenth: Now, the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.' Some say the three officers were of kin, and I am of that opinion too.

4. On account both of his eminent services and his great abilities, the Prince saw it good to set Mr. God's-peace over the whole town. And thus it was that the governor's jurisdiction extended and held not only over the people of the town, but also over all the magistrates and all the other officers of the town, such as my Lord Will-be-will, my Lord Mayor, Mr. Recorder, Mr. Mind, and all. It needed all the governor's authority and ability to keep his feet in his office over all the other rulers of the town, but by far his greatest trouble always was with the Recorder. Old Mr. Conscience, the Town Recorder, had a very difficult post to hold and a very difficult part to play in that still so divided and still so unsettled town. What with all those murderers and man-slayers, thieves and prostitutes, skulkers and secret rebels, on the one hand, and with Governor God's-peace and his so unaccountable and so autocratic ways, on the other hand, the Recorder's office was no

sinecure. All the misdemeanours and malpractices of the town,—and they were happening every day and every night,—were all reported to the Recorder; they were all, so to say, charged home upon the Recorder, and he was held responsible for them all; till his office was a perfect laystall and cesspool of all the scum and corruption of the town. And yet, in would come Governor God's-peace, without either warning or explanation, and would demand all the Recorder's papers, and proofs, and affidavits, and what not, it had cost him so much trouble to get collected and indorsed, and would burn them all before the Recorder's face, and to his utter confusion, humiliation, and silence. So autocratic, so despotic, so absolute, and not-to-be-questioned was Governor God's-peace. The Recorder could not understand it, and could barely submit to it; my Lord Mayor could not understand it, and his clerk, Mr. Mind, would often oppose it; but there it was: Mr. Governor God's-peace was set over them all.

5. But the thing that always in the long-run justified the governorship of Mr. God's-peace, and reconciled all the other officers to his supremacy, was the way that the city settled down and prospered under his benignant rule. All the other officers admitted that, somehow, his promotion and power had been the salvation of Mansoul. They all extolled their Prince's far-seeing wisdom in the selection, advancement, and absolute seat of Mr. God's-peace. And it would ill have become them to have said anything else; for they had little else to do but bask in the sun and enjoy the honours and the emoluments of their respective offices as long as Governor God's-peace held sway, and had all things in the city to his own mind. Now, it was on all hands admitted, as we read again with renewed delight, that there were no jars, no chiding, no interferings, no unfaithful doings in the town of Mansoul; but every man kept close to his own employment. The gentry, the officers, the soldiers, and all in place, observed their orders. And as for the women and children, they all followed their business joyfully. They would work and sing, work and sing, from morning till night, so that quite through the town of Mansoul now nothing was to be found but harmony, quietness, joy, and health. What more could be said of any governorship of any town than that? The Heavenly Court itself, out of which Governor God's-peace had come down, was not better governed than that. Harmony, quietness, joy, and health. No; the New Jerusalem itself will not surpass that. 'And this lasted all that summer.'

Chapter 75

# 075. The Established Church of Mansoul, and Mr. Conscience One of Her Parish Ministers

LXXV THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH OF MANSOUL, AND MR. CONSCIENCE ONE OF HER PARISH MINISTERS ‘The Highest Himself shall establish her.’—David. The princes of this world establish churches sometimes out of piety and sometimes out of policy. Sometimes their motive is the good of their people and the glory of God, and sometimes their sole motive is to buttress up their own Royal House, and to have a clergy around them on whom they can count. Prince Emmanuel had His motive, too, in setting up an establishment in Mansoul. As thus: When this was over, the Prince sent again for the elders of the town and communed with them about the ministry that He intended to establish in Mansoul. Such a ministry as might open to them and might instruct them in the things that did concern their present and their future state. For, said He to them, of yourselves, unless you have teachers and guides, you will not be able to know, and if you do not know, then you cannot do the will of My Father. At this news, when the elders of Mansoul brought it to the people, the whole town came running together, and all with one consent implored His Majesty that He would forthwith establish such a ministry among them as might teach them both law and judgment, statute and commandment, so that they might be documented in all good and wholesome things. So He told them that He would graciously grant their requests and would straightway establish such a ministry among them.

Now, I will not enter to-night on the abstract benefits of such an Establishment. I will rather take one of the ministers who was presented to one of the parishes of Mansoul, and shall thus let you see how that State Church worked out practically in one of its ministers at any rate. And the preacher and pastor I shall so take up was neither the best minister in the town nor the worst; but, while a long way subordinate to the best, he was also by no means the least. The Reverend Mr. Conscience was our parish minister’s name; his people sometimes called him The Recorder.

1. Well, then, to begin with, the Rev. Mr. Conscience was a native of the same town in which his parish church now stood. I am not going to challenge the wisdom of the patron who appointed his protégé to this particular living; only, I have known very good ministers who never got over the misfortune of having been settled in the same town in which they had been born and brought up. Or, rather, their people never got over it. One excellent minister, especially, I once knew, whose father had been a working man in the town, and his son had sometimes assisted his father before he went to college, and even between his college sessions, and the people he afterwards came to teach could never get over that. It was not wise in my friend to accept that presentation in the circumstances, as the event abundantly proved. For, whenever he had to take his stand in his pulpit or in his pastorate against any of their evil ways, his people defended themselves and retaliated on him by reminding him that they knew his father and his mother, and had not forgotten his own early days. No doubt, in the case of Emmanuel and Mansoul and its minister, there were counterbalancing considerations and advantages both to minister and people; but it is not always so; and it was not so in the case of my unfortunate friend.

Forasmuch, so ran the Prince's presentation paper, as he is a native of the town of Mansoul, and thus has personal knowledge of all the laws and customs of the corporation, therefore he, the Prince, presented Mr. Conscience. That is to say, every man who is to be the minister of a parish should make his own heart and his own life his first parish. His own vineyard should be his first knowledge and his first care. And then out of that and after that he will be able to speak to his people, and to correct, and counsel, and take care of them. In Thomas Boston's Memoirs we continually come on entries like this: 'Preached on Ps. xlii. 5, and mostly on my own account.' And, again, we read in the same invaluable book for parish ministers, that its author did not wonder to hear that good had been done by last Sabbath's sermon, because he had preached it to himself and had got good to himself out of it before he took it to the pulpit. Boston kept his eye on himself in a way that the minister of Mansoul himself could not have excelled. Till, not in his pulpit work only, but in such conventional, commonplace, and monotonous exercises as his family worship, he so read the Scriptures and so sang the psalms that his family worship was continually yielding him fruit as well as his public ministry. As our family worship and our public ministry will do, too, when we have the eye and the heart and the conscience that Thomas Boston had. 'I went to hear a preacher,' said Pascal, 'and I found a man in the pulpit.' Well, the parish minister of Mansoul was a man, and so was the parish minister of Ettrick. And that was the reason that the people of Simprin and Ettrick so often thought that Boston had them in his eye. Good pastor as he was, he could not have everybody in his eye. But he had himself in his eye, and that let him into the hearts and the homes of all his people. He was a true man, and thus a true minister.

2. Both Boston and the minister of Mansoul were well-read men also; so, indeed, in as many words, their fine biographies assure us. But that is just another way of saying what has been said about those two ministers over and over again already. William Law never was a parish minister. The English Crown of that day would not trust him with a parish. But what was the everlasting loss of some parish in England has become the everlasting gain of the whole Church of Christ. Law's enforced seclusion from outward ministerial activity only set him the more free to that inward activity which has been such a blessing to so many, and to so many ministers especially. And as to this of every minister being well read, that master in Israel says: 'Above all, let me tell you that the book of books to you is your own heart, in which are written and engraven the deepest lessons of divine instruction. Learn, therefore, to be deeply attentive to the presence of God in your own hearts, who is always speaking, always instructing, always illuminating the heart that is attentive to Him.' Jonathan Edwards called the poor parish minister of Ettrick 'a truly great divine.' But Law goes on to say, 'A great divine is but a cant expression unless it signifies a man greatly advanced in the divine life. A great divine is one whose own experience and example are a demonstration of the reality of all the graces and virtues of the gospel. No divine has any more of the gospel in him than that which proves itself by the spirit, the actions, and the form of his life: the rest is but hypocrisy, not divinity.' Let all our parish ministers, then, give themselves to this kind of reading. Let them all aim at a doctor's degree in the divinity of their own hearts.

3. We are done at last, and we are done for ever, in Scotland, with patrons and with presenters; but I daresay our most Free Church people would be quite willing to surrender their dear-bought franchise if the old plan could even yet be made to work in all their parishes as it worked in Mansoul. For not only was the presented minister in this case a well-read man; he was also, what the best of the Scottish people have always loved and honoured, a man, as this history testifies,

with a tongue as bravely hung as he had a head filled with judgment. In Scotland we like our minister to have a tongue bravely hung, even when that is proved to our own despite. When any minister, parish minister or other, is seen to tune his pulpit, our respect for him is gone. The Presbyterian pulpit has been proverbially hard to tune, and it will be an ill day when it becomes easy. ‘Here lies a man who had a brow for every good cause.’ So it was engraven over one of Boston’s elders. And so is it always: like priest, like people in the matter of the hang of the minister’s tongue and in the boldness of the elder’s brow.

‘Bravely hung’ is an ancient and excellent expression which has several shades of meaning in Bunyan. But in the present instance its meaning is modified and fixed by judgment. A bravely hung tongue; at the same time the parish minister of Mansoul’s tongue was not a loosely-hung tongue. It was not a blustering, headlong, scolding, untamed tongue. The pulpit of Mansoul was tuned with judgment. He who filled that pulpit had a head filled with judgment. The ground of judgment is knowledge, and the minister of Mansoul was a man of knowledge. It was his early and ever-increasing knowledge of himself, and thus of other men; and then it was his excellent judgment as to the use he was to make of that knowledge; it was his sound knowledge what to say, when to say it, and how to say it,—it was all this that decided his Prince to make him the minister of Mansoul. How excellent and how rare a gift is judgment—judgment in counsel, judgment in speech, and judgment in action! ‘I am very little serviceable with reference to public management,’ writes the parish minister of Ettrick, ‘being exceedingly defective in ecclesiastical prudence; but the Lord has given me a pulpit gift, not unacceptable: and who knows what He may do with me in that way?’ Who knows, indeed! Now, there are many parish ministers who have a not unacceptable pulpit gift, and yet who are not content with that, but are always burying that gift in the earth and running away from it to attempt a public management in which they are exceedingly and conspicuously defective. Now, why do they do that? Is their pulpit and their parish not sphere and opportunity enough for them? Mine is a small parish, said Boston, but then it is mine. And a small parish may both rear and occupy a truly great divine. Let those ministers, then, who are defective in ecclesiastical prudence not be too much cast down. Ecclesiastical prudence is not in every case the highest kind of prudence. The presbytery, the synod, and the assembly are not any minister’s first or best sphere. Every minister’s first and best sphere is his parish. And the presbytery is not the end of the parish. The parish, the pastorate, and the pulpit are the end of both presbytery and synod and assembly. As for the minister of Mansoul, he was a well-read man, and also a man of courage to speak out the truth at every occasion, and he had a tongue as bravely hung as he had a head filled with judgment.

4. But there was one thing about the parish pulpit of Mansoul that always overpowered the people. They could not always explain it even to themselves what it was that sometimes so terrified them, and, sometimes, again, so enthralled them. They would say sometimes that their minister was more than a mere man; that he was a prophet and a seer, and that his Master seemed sometimes to stand and speak again in His servant. And ‘seer’ was not at all an inappropriate name for their minister, so far as I can collect out of some remains of his that I have seen and some testimonies that I have heard. There was something awful and overawing, something seer-like and supernatural, in the pulpit of Mansoul. Sometimes the iron chains in which the preacher climbed up into the pulpit, and in which he both prayed and preached, struck a chill to every heart; and sometimes the garment of salvation in which he shone carried all their hearts captive. Some

Sabbath mornings they saw it in his face and heard it in his voice that he had been on his bed in hell all last night; and then, next Sabbath, those who came back saw him descending into his pulpit from his throne in heaven.

‘Yea, this man’s brow, like to a title-page

Foretells the nature of a tragic volume.

Thou tremblest, and the whiteness in thy cheek

Is apter than thy tongue to tell thine errand.’

If you think that I am exaggerating and magnifying the parish pulpit of Mansoul, take this out of the parish records for yourselves. ‘And now,’ you will read in one place, ‘it was a day gloomy and dark, a day of clouds and thick darkness with Mansoul. Well, when the Sabbath-day was come he took for his text that in the prophet Jonah, “They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.” And then there was such power and authority in that sermon, and such dejection seen in the countenances of the people that day that the like had seldom been heard or seen. The people, when the sermon was done, were scarce able to go to their homes, or to betake themselves to their employments the whole week after. They were so sermon-smitten that they knew not what to do. For not only did their preacher show to Mansoul its sin, but he did tremble before them under the sense of his own, still crying out as he preached, Unhappy man that I am! that I, a preacher, should have lived so senselessly and so sottishly in my parish, and be one of the foremost in its transgressions! With these things he also charged all the lords and gentry of Mansoul to the almost distracting of them.’ It was Sabbaths like that that made the people of Mansoul call their minister a seer.

5. And, then, there was another thing that I do not know how better to describe than by calling it the true catholicity, the true humility, and the true hospitality of the man. It is true he had no choice in the matter, for in setting up a standing ministry in Mansoul Emmanuel had done so with this reservation and addition. We have His very words. ‘Not that you are to have your ministers alone,’ He said. ‘For my four captains, they can, if need be, and if they be required, not only privately inform, but publicly preach both good and wholesome doctrine, that, if heeded, will do thee good in the end.’ Which, again, reminds me of what Oliver Cromwell wrote to the Honourable Colonel Hacker at Peebles. ‘These: I was not satisfied with your last speech to me about Empson, that he was a better preacher than fighter—or words to that effect. Truly, I think that he that prays and preaches best will fight best. I know nothing that will give like courage and confidence as the knowledge of God in Christ will. I pray you to receive Captain Empson lovingly.’

6. The standing ministry in Mansoul was endowed also; but I cannot imagine what the court of teinds would make of the instrument of endowment. As it has been handed down to us, that old ecclesiastical instrument reads more like a lesson in the parish minister’s class for the study of Mysticism than a writing for a learned lord to adjudicate upon. Here is the Order of Council: ‘Therefore I, thy Prince, give thee, My servant, leave and licence to go when thou wilt to My fountain, My conduit, and there to drink freely of the blood of My grape, for My conduit doth always run wine. Thus doing, thou shalt drive from thine heart all foul, gross, and hurtful humours. It will also lighten thine eyes, and it will strengthen thy memory for the reception and the keeping of all that My Father’s noble secretary will teach thee.’ Thus the Prince did put Mr. Conscience into the

place and office of a minister to Mansoul, and the chosen and presented man did thankfully accept thereof.

(1) Now, there are at least three lessons taught us here. There is, to begin with, a lesson to all those congregations who are about to choose a minister. Let all those congregations, then, who have had devolved on them the powers of the old patrons,—let them make their election on the same principles that the Prince of Mansoul patronised. Let them choose a probationer who, young though he must be, has the making of a seer in him. Let them listen for the future seer in his most stammering prayers. Somewhere, even in one service, his conscience will make itself heard, if he has a conscience. Rather remain ten years vacant than call a minister who has no conscience. The parish minister of Mansoul sometimes seemed to be all conscience, and it was this that made his head so full of judgment, his tongue so full of a brave boldness, and his heart so full of holy love. Your minister may be an anointed bishop, he may be a gowned and hooded doctor, he may be a king's chaplain, he may be the minister of the largest and the richest and the most learned parish in the city, but, unless he strikes terror and pain into your conscience every Sabbath, unless he makes you tremble every Sabbath under the eye and the hand of God, he is no true minister to you. As Goodwin says, he is a wooden cannon. As Leighton says, he is a mountebank for a minister.

(2) The second lesson is to all those who are politically enfranchised, and who hold a vote for a member of Parliament. Now, crowds of candidates and their canvassers will before long be at your door besieging it and begging you for your vote for or against an Established church. Well, before Parliament is dissolved, and the canvass commences, look you well into your own heart and ask yourself whether or no the Church of Christ has yet been established there. Ask if Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, has yet set up His throne there, in your heart. Ask your conscience if His laws are recognised and obeyed there. Ask also if His blood has been sprinkled there, and since when. And, if not, then it needs no seer to tell you what sacrilege, what profanity it is for you to touch the ark of God: to speak, or to vote, or to lift a finger either for or against any church whatsoever. Intrude your wilful ignorance and your wicked passions anywhere else. March up boldly and vote defiantly on questions of State that you never read a sober line about, and are as ignorant about as you are of Hebrew; but beware of touching by a thousand miles the things for which the Son of God laid down His life. Thrust yourself in, if you must, anywhere else, but do not thrust yourself and your brutish stupidity and your fiendish tempers into the things of the house of God. Let all parish ministers take for their text that day 2 Samuel vi. 6, 7:—And when they came to Nachon's threshing-floor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God.

(3) There is a third lesson here, but it is a lesson for ministers, and I shall take it home to myself.

# 076. A Fast Day in Mansoul

LXXVI A FAST-DAY IN MANSOUL

‘Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the Lord your God.’—Joel. In our soft and self-indulgent day the very word ‘to fast’has become an out-of-date and an obsolete word. We never have occasion to employ that word in the living language of the present day. The men of the next generation will need to have it explained to them what the Fast-days of their fathers were: when they were instituted, how they were observed, and why they were abrogated and given up. If your son should ever ask you just what the Fast-days of your youth were like, you will do him a great service, and he may live to recover them, if you will answer him in this way. Show him how to take his Cruden and how to make a picture to his opening mind of the Fast-days of Scripture. And tell him plainly for what things in fathers and in sons those fasts were ordained of God. And then for the Fast-days of the Puritan period let him read aloud to you this powerful passage in the Holy War. Public preaching and public prayer entered largely into the fasting of the Prophetical and the Puritan periods; and John Bunyan, after Joel, has told us some things about the Fast-day preaching of his day that it will be well for us, both preachers and people, to begin with, and to lay well to heart.

1. In the first place, the preaching of that Fast-day was ‘pertinent’and to the point. William Law, that divine writer for ministers, warns ministers against going off upon Euroclydon and the shipwrecks of Paul when Christ’s sheep are looking up to them for their proper food. What, he asks, is the nature, the direction, and the strength of that Mediterranean wind to him who has come up to church under the plague of his own heart and under the heavy hand of God? You may be sure that Boanerges did not lecture that Fast-day forenoon in Mansoul on Acts xxvii. 14. We would know that, even if we were not told what his text that forenoon was. His text that never-to-be-forgotten Fast-day forenoon was in Luke xiii. 7—‘Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?’ And a very smart sermon he made upon the place. First, he showed what was the occasion of the words, namely, because the fig-tree was barren. Then he showed what was contained in the sentence, to wit, repentance or utter desolation. He then showed also by whose authority this sentence was pronounced. And, lastly, he showed the reasons of the point, and then concluded his sermon. But he was very pertinent in the application, insomuch that he made all the elders and all their people in Mansoul to tremble. Sidney Smith says that whatever else a sermon may be or may not be, it must be interesting if it is to do any good. Now, pertinent preaching is always interesting preaching. Nothing interests men like themselves. And pertinent preaching is just preaching to men about themselves,—about their interests, their losses and their gains, their hopes and their fears, their trials and their tribulations. Boanerges took both his text and his treatment of his text from his Master, and we know how pertinently The Master preached. His preaching was with such pertinence that the one half of His hearers went home saying, Never man spake like this man, while the other half gnashed at Him with their teeth. Our Lord never lectured on Euroclydon. He knew what was in man and He lectured and preached accordingly. And if we wish to have praise of our best people, and of Him whose people they are, let us look into our own

hearts and preach. That will be pertinent to our people which is first pertinent to ourselves. Weep yourself, said an old poet to a new beginner; weep yourself if you would make me weep. ‘For my own part,’ said Thomas Shepard to some ministers from his death-bed, ‘I never preached a sermon which, in the composing, did not cost me prayers, with strong cries and tears. I never preached a sermon from which I had not first got some good to my own soul.’

‘His office and his name agree;

A shepherd that and Shepard he.’ And many such entries as these occur in Thomas Boston’s golden journal: ‘I preached in Ps. xlii. 5, and mostly on my own account.’ Again: ‘Meditating my sermon next day, I found advantage to my own soul, as also in delivering it on the Sabbath.’ And again: ‘What good this preaching has done to others I know not, yet I think myself will not the worse of it.’

2. The preaching of that Fast-day was with great authority also. ‘There was such power and authority in that sermon, ’reports one who was present, ‘that the like had seldom been seen or heard.’ Authority also was one of the well-remembered marks of our Lord’s preaching. And no wonder, considering who He was. But His ministers, if they are indeed His ministers, will be clothed by Him with something even of His supreme authority. ‘Conscience is an authority,’ says one of the most authoritative preachers that ever lived. ‘The Bible is an authority; such is the Church; such is antiquity; such are the words of the wise; such are hereditary lessons; such are ethical truths; such are historical memories; such are legal saws and state maxims; such are proverbs; such are sentiments, presages, and prepossessions.’ Now, the well-equipped preacher will from time to time plant his pulpit on all those kinds of authority, as this kind is now pertinent and then that, and will, with such a variety and accumulation of authority, preach to his people. Thomas Boston preached at a certain place with such pertinence and with such authority that it was complained of him by one of themselves that he ‘terrified even the godly.’ Let all our young preachers who would to old age continue to preach with interest, with pertinence, and with terrifying authority, among other things have by heart The Memoirs of Thomas Boston, ‘that truly great divine.’

3. A third thing, and, as some of the people who heard it said of it, the best thing about that sermon was that—‘He did not only show us our sin, but he did visibly tremble before us under the sense of his own.’ Now I know this to be a great difficulty with some young ministers who have got no help in it at the Divinity Hall. Are they, they ask, to be themselves in the pulpit? How far may they be themselves, and how far may they be not themselves? How far are they to be seen to tremble before their people because of their own sins, and how far are they to bear themselves as if they had no sin? Must they keep back the passions that are tearing their own hearts, and fill the forenoon with Euroclydon and other suchlike sea-winds? How far are they to be all gown and bands in the pulpit, and how far sackcloth and ashes? One half of their people are like Pascal in this, that they like to see and hear a man in his pulpit; but, then, the other half like only to see and hear a proper preacher. ‘He did not only show the men of Mansoul their sin, but he did tremble before them under the sense of his own. Still crying out as he preached to them, Unhappy man that I am! that I should have done so wicked a thing! That I, a preacher, should be one of the first in the transgression!’ This you will remember was the Fast-day. And so truly had this preacher kept the Fast-day that the Communion-day was down upon him before he was ready for it. He was

still deep among his sins when all his people were fast putting on their beautiful garments. He was ready with the letter of his action-sermon, but he was not equal to the delivery of it. His colleague, accordingly, whose sense of sin was less acute that day, took the public worship, while the Fast-day preacher still lay sick in his closet at home and wrote thus on the ground: ‘I am no more worthy to be called Thy son,’ he wrote. ‘Behold me here, Lord, a poor, miserable sinner, weary of myself, and afraid to look up to Thee. Wilt Thou heal my sores? Wilt Thou take out the stains? Wilt Thou deliver me from the shame? Wilt Thou rescue me from this chain of sin? Cut me not off in the midst of my sins. Let me have liberty once again to be among Thy redeemed ones, eating and drinking at Thy table. But, O my God, to-day I am an unclean worm, a dead dog, a dead carcass, deservedly cast out from the society of Thy saints. But oh, suffer me so much as to look to the place where Thy people meet and where Thine honour dwelleth. Reject not the sacrifice of a broken heart, but come and speak to me in my secret place. O God, let me never see such another day as this is. Let me never be again so full of guilt as to have to run away from Thy presence and to flee from before Thy people.’ He printed more than that, in blood and in tears, before God that Communion-morning, but that is enough for my purpose. Now, would you choose a dead dog like that to be your minister? To baptize and admit your children and to marry them when they grow up? To mount your pulpits every Sabbath-day, and to come to your houses every week-day? Not, I feel sure, if you could help it! Not if you knew it! Not if there was a minister of proper pulpit manners and a well-ordered mind within a Sabbath-day’s journey! ‘Like priest like people,’ says Hosea. ‘The congregation and the minister are one,’ says Dr. Parker. ‘There are men we could not sit still and hear; they are not the proper ministers for us. There are other men we could hear always, because they are our kith and our kin from before the foundation of the world.’ Happy the hearer who has hit on a minister like the minister of Mansoul, and who has discovered in him his everlasting kith and kin. And happy the minister who, owning kith and kin with Boanerges, has two or three or even one member in his congregation who likes his minister best when he likes himself worst. But what about the fasting all this time? Was it all preaching, and was there no fasting? Well, we do not know much about the fasting of the prophets and the apostles, but the Puritans sometimes made their people almost forget about fasting, and about eating and drinking too, they so took possession of their people with their incomparable preaching. I read, for instance, in Calamy’s Life of John Howe that on the public Fast-days, it was Howe’s common way to begin about nine in the morning and to continue reading, preaching, and praying till about four in the afternoon. Henry Rogers almost worships John Howe, but John Howe’s Fast-days pass his modern biographers patience; till, if you would see a nineteenth-century case made out against a seventeenth-century Fast-day, you have only to turn to the author of The Eclipse of Faith on the author of Delighting in God. And, no doubt, when we get back our Fast-days, we shall leave more of the time to reading pertinent books at home and to secret fasting and to secret prayer, and shall enjoin our preachers, while they are pertinent and authoritative in their sermons, not to take up the whole day with their sermons even at their best. And then, as to fasting, discredited and discarded as it is in our day, there are yet some very good reasons for desiring its return and reinstatement among us. Very good reasons, both for health and for holiness. But it is only of the latter class of reasons that I would fain for a few words at present speak. Well, then, let it be frankly said that there is nothing holy, nothing saintly, nothing at all meritorious in fasting from our proper food. It is the motive alone that sanctifies the means. It is the end alone that sanctifies the exercise. If I fast to chastise myself for my sin; if I fast to reduce the fuel of my sin; if I fast to keep my flesh low; if I

fast to make me more free for my best books, for my most inward, spiritual, mystical books—for my Kempis, and my Behmen, and my Law, and my Leighton, and my Goodwin, and my Bunyan, and my Rutherford, and my Jeremy Taylor, and my Shepard, and my Edwards, and suchlike; if I fast for the ends of meditation and prayer; if I fast out of sympathy with my Bible, and my Saviour, and my latter end, and my Father's house in heaven—then, no doubt, my fasting will be acceptable with God, as it will certainly be an immediate means of grace to my sinful soul. These altars will sanctify many such gifts. For, who that knows anything at all about himself, about his own soul, and about the hindrances and helps to its salvation from sin; who that ever read a page of Scripture properly, or spent half an hour in that life which is hidden in God—who of such will deny or doubt that fasting is superseded or neglected to the sure loss of the spiritual life, to the sensible lowering of the religious tone and temper, and to the increase both of the lusts of the flesh and of the mind? It may perhaps be that the institution of fasting as a church ordinance has been permitted to be set aside in order to make it more than ever a part of each earnest man's own private life. Perhaps it was in some ways full time that it should be again said to us, 'Thou, when thou fastest, appear not unto men to fast.' As also, 'Is not this the fast that I have chosen: to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the outcast to thy house?' Let us believe that the form of the Fast-day has been removed out of the way that the spirit may return and fashion a new form for itself. And in the belief that that is so, let us, while parting with our fathers' Fast-days with real regret—as with their pertinent and pungent preaching—let us meantime lay in a stock of their pertinent and pungent books, and set apart particular and peculiar seasons for their sin-subduing and grace-strengthening study. The short is this. The one real substance and true essence of all fasting is self-denial. And we can never get past either the supreme and absolute duty of that, or the daily and hourly call to that, as long as we continue to read the New Testament, to live in this life, and to listen to the voice of conscience, and to the voice of God speaking to us in the voice of conscience. Without strict and constant self-denial, no man, whatever his experiences or his pretensions, is a disciple of Jesus Christ, and secret fasting is one of the first, the easiest, and the most elementary exercises of New Testament self-denial. And, besides, the lusts of our flesh and the lusts of our minds are so linked and locked and riveted together that if one link is loosened, or broken, or even struck at, the whole thrall is not yet thrown off indeed, but it is all shaken; it has all received a staggering blow. So much is this the case that one single act of self-denial in the region of the body will be felt for freedom throughout the whole prison-house of the soul. And a victory really won over a sensual sin is already a challenge sounded to our most spiritual sin. And it is this discovery that has given to fasting the place it has held in all the original, resolute, and aggressive ages of the Church. With little or nothing in their Lord's literal teaching to make His people fast, they have been so bent on their own spiritual deliverance, and they have heard and read so much about the deliverances both of body and of soul that have been attained by fasting and its accompaniments, that they have taken to it in their despair, and with results that have filled them in some instances with rapture, and in all instances with a good conscience and with a good hope. You would wonder, even in these degenerate days,—you would be amazed could you be told how many of your own best friends in their stealthy, smiling, head-anointing, hypocritical way deny themselves this and that sweetness, this and that fatness, this and that softness, and are thus attaining to a strength, a courage, and a self-conquest that you are getting the benefit of in many ways without your ever guessing the price at which it has all been purchased. Now, would you

yourself fain be found among those who are in this way being made strong and victorious inwardly and spiritually? Would you? Then wash your face and anoint your head; and, then, not denying it before others, deny it in secret to yourself—this and that sweet morsel, this and that sweet meat, this and that glass of such divine wine. Unostentatiously, ungrudgingly, generous-heartedly, and not ascetically or morosely, day after day deny yourself even in little unthought-of things, and one of the very noblest laws of your noblest life shall immediately claim you as its own. That stealthy and shamefaced act of self-denial for Christ's sake and for His cross's sake will lay the foundation of a habit of self-denial; ere ever you are aware of what you are doing the habit will consolidate into a character; and what you begin little by little in the body will be made perfect in the soul; till what you did, almost against His command and altogether without His example, yet because you did it for His sake and in His service, will have placed you far up among those who have forsaken all, and themselves also, to follow Jesus Christ, Son of Man and Son of God. Only, let this always be admitted, and never for a moment forgotten, that all this is said by permission and not of commandment. Our Lord never fasted as we fast. He had no need. And He never commanded His disciples to fast. He left it to themselves to find out each man his own case and his own cure. Let no man, therefore, take fasting in any of its degrees, or times, or occasions, on his conscience who does not first find it in his heart. At the same time this may be said with perfect safety, that he who finds it in his heart and then lays it on his conscience to deny himself anything, great or small, for Christ's sake, and for the sake of his own salvation,—he will never repent it. No, he will never repent it.

# 077. A Feast Day in Mansoul

LXXVII A FEAST-DAY IN MANSOUL ‘He brought me into his banqueting house.’—The Song.

Emmanuel’s feast-day in the Holy War excels in beauty and in eloquence everything I know in any other author on the Lord’s Supper. The Song of Solomon stands alone when we sing that song mystically—that is to say, when we pour into it all the love of God to His Church in Israel and all Israel’s love to God, and then all our Lord’s love to us and all our love back again to Him in return. But outside of Holy Scripture I know nothing to compare for beauty, and for sweetness, and for quaintness, and for tenderness, and for rapture, with John Bunyan’s account of the feast that Prince Emmanuel made for the town of Mansoul. With his very best pen John Bunyan tells us how upon a time Emmanuel made a feast in Mansoul, and how the townsfolk came to the castle to partake of His banquet, and how He feasted them on all manner of outlandish food—food that grew not in the fields of Mansoul; it was food that came down from heaven and from His Father’s house. They drank also of the water that was made wine, and, altogether, they were very merry and at home with their Prince. There was music also all the time at the table, and man did eat angels’ food, and had honey given him out of the rock. And then the table was entertained with some curious and delightful riddles that were made upon the King Himself, upon Emmanuel His Son, and upon His wars and doings with Mansoul; till, altogether, the state of transportation the people were in with their entertainment cannot be told by the very best of pens. Nor did He, when they returned to their places, send them empty away; for either they must have a ring, or a gold chain, or a bracelet, or a white stone or something; so dear was Mansoul to Him now, so lovely was Mansoul in His eyes. And, going and coming to the feast, O how graciously, how lovingly, how courteously, and how tenderly did this blessed Prince now carry it to the town of Mansoul! In all the streets, gardens, orchards, and other places where He came, to be sure the poor should have His blessing and benediction; yea, He would kiss them; and if they were ill, He would lay His hands on them and make them well. And was it not now something amazing to behold that in that very place where Diabolus had had his abode, the Prince of princes should now sit eating and drinking with all His mighty captains, and men of war, and trumpeters, and with the singing men and the singing women of His Father’s court! Now did Mansoul’s cup run over; now did her conduits run sweet wine; now did she eat the finest of the wheat, and now drink milk and honey out of the rock! Now she said, How great is His goodness, for ever since I found favour in His eyes, how honourable have I ever been!

1. Now, the beginning of it all was, and the best of it all was, that Emmanuel Himself made the feast. Mansoul did not feast her Deliverer; it was her Deliverer who feasted her. Mansoul, in good sooth, had nothing that she had not first and last received, and it was far more true and seemly and fit in every way that her Prince Himself should in His own way and at His own expense seal and celebrate the deliverance, the freedom, the life, the peace, and the joy of Mansoul. And, besides, what had Mansoul to set before her Prince; or, for the matter of that, before herself? Mansoul had nothing of herself. Mansoul was not sufficient of herself for a single day. And how, then, should she propose to feast a Prince? No, no! the thing was impossible. It was Emmanuel’s

feast from first to last. Just as it was at the Lord's table in this house this morning. You did not spread the table this morning for your Lord. You did not make ready for your Saviour and then invite Him in. He invited you. He said, This is My Body broken for you, and This is My Blood shed for you; drink ye all of it. And had any one challenged you at the fence door and asked you how one who could not pay his own debts or provide himself a proper meal even for a single day, could dare to sit down with such a company at such a feast as that, you would have told him that he had not seen half your hunger and your nakedness; but that it was just your very hunger and nakedness and homelessness that had brought you here; or, rather, it was all that that had moved the Master of the feast to send for you and to compel you to come here. There was nothing in your mind and in your mouth more all this day than just that this is the Lord's Supper, and that He had sent for you and had invited you, and had constrained and compelled you to come and partake of it. It was the Lord's Table to-day, and it will be still and still more His table on that great Communion-Day when all our earthly communions shall be accomplished and consummated in heaven.

2. All that Mansoul did in connection with that great feast was to prepare the place where Diabolus at one time had held his orgies and carried on his excesses. Her Prince, Emmanuel, did all the rest; but He left it to Mansoul to make the banqueting-room ready. When our Lord would keep His last passover with His disciples, He said to Peter and John, Go into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water, and he will show you a large upper room furnished and prepared. There is some reason to believe that that happy man had been expecting that message and had done his best to be ready for it. And now he was putting the last touch to his preparations by filling the water-pots of his house with fresh water; little thinking, happy man, that as long as the world lasts that water will be holy water in all men's eyes, and shall teach humility to all men's hearts. And, my brethren, you know that all you did all last week against to-day was just to prepare the room. For the room all last week and all this day was your own heart, and not and never this house of stone and lime made with men's hands. You swept the inner and upper room of your own heart. You swept it and garnished its walls and its floors as much as in you lay. He, whose the supper really was, told you that He would bring with Him what was to be eaten and drunken to-day, while you were to prepare the place. And, next to the very actual feast itself, and, sometimes, not next to it but equal to it, and even before it and better than it, were those busy household hours you spent, like the man with the pitcher, making the room ready. In plain English, you had a communion before the Communion as you prepared your hearts for the Communion. I shall not intrude into your secret places and secret seasons with Christ before His open reception of you to-day. But it is sure and certain that, just as you in secret entertained Him in your mother's house and in the chambers of her that bare you, just in that measure did He say to you openly before all the watchmen that go about the city and before all the daughters of Jerusalem, Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved. Yes; do you not think that the man with the pitcher had his reward? He had his own thoughts as he furnished, till it was quite ready, his best upper room and carried in those pitchers of water, and handed down to his children in after days the perquisite-skin of the paschal lamb that had been supped on by our Lord and His disciples in his honoured house that night. Yes; was it not amazing to behold that in that very place where sometimes Diabolus had his abode, and had entertained his Diabolonians, the Prince of princes should sit eating and drinking with His friends? Was it not truly amazing?

3. Now, upon the feasting-day He feasted them with all manner of outlandish food—food that grew not in all the fields of Mansoul; it was food that came down with His Father's court. The fields of Mansoul yielded their own proper fruits, and fruits that were not to be despised. But they were not the proper fruits for that day, neither could they be placed upon that table. They are good enough fruits for their purpose, and as far as they go, and for so long as they last and are in their season. But our souls are such that they outlive their own best fruits; their hunger and their thirst outlast all that can be harvested in from their own fields. And thus it is that He who made Mansoul at first, and who has since redeemed her, has out of His own great goodness provided food convenient for her. He knows with what an outlandish life He has quickened Mansoul, and it is only the part of a faithful Creator to provide for His creature her proper nourishment. What is it? asked the children of Israel at one another when they saw a small round thing, as small as hoarfrost, upon the ground. For they wist not what it was. And Moses said, Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man, according to the number of your persons. And the house of Israel called the name thereof Manna, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey. He gave them of the corn of heaven to eat, and man did eat in the wilderness angels' food. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead; but this is the bread of which if any man eat he shall not die. And the bread that I will give is My Flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. And so outlandish, so supernatural, and so full of heavenly wonder and heavenly mystery was that bread, that the Jews strove among themselves over it, and could not understand it. But, by His goodness and His truth to us this day, we have again, to our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace, eaten the Flesh and drunk the Blood of the Son of God; a meat that, as He who Himself is that meat has said of it, is meat indeed and drink indeed—as, indeed, we have the witness in ourselves this day that it is. They drank also of the water that was made wine, and were very merry with Him all that day at His table. And all their mirth was the high mirth of heaven; it was a mirth and a gladness without sin, without satiety, and without remorse.

4. There was music also all the while at the table, and the musicians were not those of the country of Mansoul, but they were the masters of song come down from the court of the King. 'I love the Lord,' they sang in the supper room over the paschal lamb—'I love the Lord because He hath heard my voice and my supplication. Because He hath inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live. What shall I render to the Lord,' they challenged one another, 'for all His benefits towards me? I will take the cup of salvation, and will call upon the name of the Lord.' 'Sometimes imagine,'says a great devotional writer with a great imagination—'Sometimes imagine that you had been one of those that joined with our blessed Saviour as He sang an hymn. Strive to imagine to yourself with what majesty He looked. Fancy that you had stood by Him surrounded with His glory. Think how your heart would have been inflamed, and what ecstasies of joy you would have then felt when singing with the Son of God! Think again and again with what joy and devotion you would have then sung had this really been your happy state; and what a punishment you would have thought it to have then been silent. And let that teach you how to be affected with psalms and hymns of thanksgiving.' Yes; and it is no imagination; it was our own experience only this morning and afternoon to join in a music that was never made in this world, but which was as outlandish as was the meat which we ate while the music was being made.

'Bless, O my soul, the Lord thy God,

And not forgetful be

Of all His gracious benefits

He hath bestow'd on thee. Who with abundance of good things

Doth satisfy thy mouth;

So that, ev'n as the eagle's age,

Renewed is thy youth.' The 103rd Psalm was never made in this world. Musicians far other than those native to Mansoul made for us our Lord's-Table Psalm.

5. And then, the riddles that were made upon the King Himself, and upon Emmanuel His Son, and upon Emmanuel's wars and all His other doings with Mansoul. And when Emmanuel would expound some of those riddles Himself, oh! how they were lightened! They saw what they never saw! They could not have thought that such rarities could have been couched in so few and such ordinary words. Yea, they did gather that the things themselves were a kind of portraiture, and that, too, of Emmanuel Himself. This, they would say, this is the Lamb! this is the Sacrifice! this is the Rock! this is the Door! and this is the Way! with a great many other things. At Gaius's supper-table they sat up over their riddles and nuts and sweetmeats till the sun was in the sky. And it would be midnight and morning if I were to show you the answers to the half of the riddles. Take one, for an example, and let it be one of the best for the communion-day. 'In one rare quality of the orator,' says Hugh Miller, writing about his adored minister, Alexander Stewart of Cromarty, 'Mr. Stewart stood alone. Pope refers in his satires to a strange power of creating love and admiration by just "touching the brink of all we hate." Now, into this perilous, but singularly elective department, Mr. Stewart could enter with safety and at will. We heard him, scarce a twelvemonth since, deliver a discourse of singular power on the sin-offering as minutely described by the divine penman in Leviticus. He described the slaughtered animal—foul with dust and blood, its throat gashed across, its entrails laid open and steaming in its impurity to the sun—a vile and horrid thing, which no one could look on without disgust, nor touch without defilement. The picture appeared too vivid; its introduction too little in accordance with a just taste. But this pulpit-master knew what he was all the time doing. "And that," he said, as he pointed to the terrible picture, "that is SIN!" By one stroke the intended effect was produced, and the rising disgust and horror transferred from the revolting, material image to the great moral evil.' And, in like manner, This is the LAMB! we all said over the mystical riddle of the bread and the wine this morning. This is the SACRIFICE! This is the DOOR! This is EMMANUEL, GOD WITH US, and made sin for us!

6. In one of his finest chapters, Thomas À Kempis tells us in what way we are to communicate mystically: that is to say, how we are to keep on communicating at all times, and in all places, without the intervention of the consecrated sacramental elements. And John Bunyan, the sweetest and most spiritual of mystics, has all that, too, in this same supreme passage. Every day was a feast-day now, he tells us. So much so that when the elders and the townsmen did not come to Emmanuel, He would send in much plenty of provisions to them. Yea, such delicates would He send them, and therewith would so cover their tables, that whosoever saw it confessed that the like could not be seen in any other kingdom. That is to say, my fellow-communicants, there is nothing that we experienced and enjoyed in this house this day that we may not experience and enjoy again to-morrow and every day in our own house at home. All the mystics worth the noble name will tell you that all true communicating is always performed and experienced in the

prepared heart, and never in any upper room, or church, or chapel, or new heaven, or new earth. The prepared heart of every worthy communicant is the true upper room; it is the true banqueting chamber; it is the true and the only house of wine. Our Father's House itself, with its supper-table covered with the new wine of the Kingdom—the best of it all will still be within you. Prepare yourselves within yourselves, then, O departing and dispersing communicants. Prepare, and keep yourselves always prepared. And as often as you so prepare yourselves your Prince will come to you every day, and will cat and drink with you, till He makes every day on earth a day of heaven already to you. See if He will not; for, again and again, He who keeps all His promises says that He will.

# 078. Emmanuel's Livery

LXXVIII EMMANUEL’S LIVERY

‘And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.’—John. The Plantagenet kings of ancient England had white and scarlet for their livery; white and green was the livery of the Tudors; the Stuarts wore red and yellow; while blue and scarlet colours adorn to-day the House of Hanover. And the Prince of the kings of the earth, He has his royal colours also, and His servants have their badge of honour and their blazon also. Then He commanded that those who waited upon Him should go and bring forth out of His treasury those white and glittering robes, that I, He said, have provided and laid up in store for my Mansoul. So the white garments were fetched out of the treasury and laid forth to the eyes of the people. Moreover, it was granted to them that they should take them and put them on, according, said He, to your size and your stature. So the people were all put into white—into fine linen, clean and white. Then said the Prince, This, O Mansoul, is My livery, and this is the badge by which Mine are known from the servants of others. Yea, this livery is that which I grant to all them that are Mine, and without which no man is permitted to see My face. Wear this livery, therefore, for My sake, and, also, if you would be known by the world to be Mine. But now can you think how Mansoul shone! For Mansoul was fair as the sun, clear as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners.

White, then, and whiter than snow, is the very livery of heaven. A hundred shining Scriptures could be quoted to establish that. In the first year of Belshazzar, King of Babylon, Daniel had a dream, and visions of his head came to Daniel upon his bed. And, behold, the Ancient of Days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool. My beloved, sings the spouse in the Song, is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. Then, again, David in his penitence sings, Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. And what is it that sets Isaiah at the head of all the prophets? What but this, that he is the mouth-piece of such decrees in heaven as this: Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. The angel, also, who rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulchre was clothed in a long white garment. Another evangelist says that his countenance was like lightning and his raiment white as snow, and for fear of him the keepers did quake, and became as dead men. But before that we read that Jesus was transfigured before Peter and James and John on the Mount, and that His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light. And, then, the whole Book of Revelation is written with a pen dipped in heavenly light. The whole book is glistening with the whitest light till we cannot read it for the brightness thereof. And the multitude that no man can number all display themselves before our eyes, clothed with white robes and with palms in their hands, so much so that we sink down under the greatness of the glory, till One with His head and His hairs white like wool, as white as snow, lays His hand upon us, and says to us, Fear not, for, behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.

‘I also saw Mansoul clad all in white,

And heard her Prince call her His heart’s delight,

I saw Him put upon her chains of gold,

And rings and bracelets goodly to behold.

What shall I say? I heard the people’s cries,

And saw the Prince wipe tears from Mansoul’s eyes,

I heard the groans and saw the joy of many;

Tell you of all, I neither will nor can I.

But by what here I say you well may see

That Mansoul’s matchless wars no fable be.’

‘And to her it was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.’ We need no exegesis of that beautiful Scripture beyond that exegesis which our own hearts supply. And if we did need that shining text to be explained to us, to whom could we better go for its explanation than just to John Bunyan? Well, then, in our author’s No Way to Heaven but by Jesus Christ, he says: ‘This fine linen, in my judgment, is the works of godly men; their works that spring from faith. But how came they clean? How came they white? Not simply because they were the works of faith. But, mark, they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. And therefore they are before the throne of God. Yea, therefore it is that their good works stand in such a place.’ ‘Nor must we think it strange,’ says John Howe, in his Blessedness of the Righteous, ‘that all the requisites to our salvation are not found together in one text of Scripture. I conceive that imputed righteousness is not here meant, but that righteousness which is truly subjected in a child of God and descriptive of him. The righteousness of Him whom we adore as made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him, that righteousness has a much higher sphere peculiar and appropriate to itself. Though this of which we now speak is necessary also to be both had and understood.’ Emmanuel’s livery, then, is the righteousness of the saints. Emmanuel puts that righteousness upon all His saints; while, at the same time, they put it on themselves; they work it out for themselves, and for themselves they keep it clean. They work it out, put it on, and keep it clean, and yet, all the time, it is not they that do it, but it is Emmanuel that doeth it all in them. The truth is, you must all become mystics before you will admit all the strange truth that is told about Emmanuel’s livery. For both heaven and earth unite in this wonderful livery. Nature and grace unite in it. It is woven by the gospel on the loom of the law—till, to tell you all that is true about it, I neither can nor will I. Albert Bengel tells us that the court of heaven has its own jealous and scrupulous etiquette; and our court journalist and historian, John Bunyan, has supplied his favoured readers with the very card of etiquette that was issued along with Mansoul’s coat of livery, and it is more than time that we had attended to that card.

1. The first item then in that etiquette-card ran in these set terms: ‘First, wear these white robes daily, day by day, lest you should at some time appear to others as if you were none of

Mine.—Signed, EMMANUEL.'

Now, we put on anew every morning the garments that we are to wear every new day. We have certain pieces of clothing that we wear in the morning; we have certain pieces that we wear when we are at our work; and, again, we have certain other pieces that we put on when we go abroad in the afternoon; and, yet again, certain other pieces that we array ourselves in when we go out into society in the evening. After a night in which Mercy could not sleep for blessing and praising God, they all rose in the morning with the sun; but the Interpreter would have them tarry a while, for, said he, you must orderly go from hence. Then said he to the damsel, Take them, and have them into the garden to the bath. Then Innocent the damsel took them, and had them into the garden, and brought them to the bath. Then they went in and washed, yea, they and the boys and all, and they came out of that bath, not only clean and sweet, but also much enlivened and much strengthened in their joints. So when they came in they looked fairer a deal than when they went out. Then said the Interpreter to the damsel that waited upon those women, Go into the vestry, and fetch out garments for these people. So she went and fetched out white raiment and laid it down before him. And then he commanded them to put it on. It was fine linen, white and clean. Now, therefore, they began to esteem each other better than themselves. For, You are fairer than I am, said one; and, You are more comely than I am, said another. The children also stood amazed to see into what fashion they had been brought. William Law—I thank God, I think, every day I live for that good day to me on which He introduced me to His gifted and saintly servant—well, William Law used every morning after his bath in the morning to put on his livery, piece by piece, in order, and with special prayer. The first piece that he put on, and he put it on every new morning next his heart to wear it all the day next his heart, was gratitude to God. And it was a real, feeling, active, and operative gratitude that he so put on. On each new morning as it came, that good man was full of new gratitude to God. For the sun new from his Almighty Maker's hands he had gratitude. For his house over his head he had gratitude. For his Bible and his spiritual books he had gratitude. For his opportunities of reading and study, as also for ten o'clock in the morning when the widows and orphans of King's Cliffe came to his window, and so on. A grateful heart feeds itself to a still greater gratitude on everything that comes to it. So it was with William Law, till he wakened the maids in the rooms below with his psalms and his hymns as he went into his vestry and put on his singing robes so early every morning. And then, after his morning hours of study and devotion, Law had a piece of livery that he always put on and never came downstairs to breakfast without it. Other men might put on other pieces; he always clothed himself next to gratitude with humility. Men differ, good men differ, and Emmanuel's livery-men differ in what they put on, at what time, and in what order. But that was William Law's way. You will learn more of his way, and you will be helped to find out a like way for yourselves, if you will become students of his incomparable books. You will find how he put on charity, 1 Cor. thirteenth chapter; and then how, over all, he put on the will of God; till, thus equipped and thus accoutred, he was able to say, as it has seldom been said since it was first said, 'I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my judgment was to me as a robe and as a diadem. The Almighty was then with me, and my children were about me. When I washed my steps with butter, and when the rock poured me out rivers of oil!' So much for that livery-man of Emmanuel, the author of the Christian Perfection and the Spirit of Love. As for the women's vestry in the Interpreter's House, Matthew Henry saw the thirty-first chapter of the Proverbs hung up on that vestry wall, and Christiana making her morning toilet before it with Mercy beside her. Who would find a virtuous woman, let him look before that looking-glass for her, and

he will be sure to find her and her daughters and her daughters-in-law putting on their white raiment there.

2. ‘Secondly, keep your garments always white; for if they be soiled, it is a dishonour to Me. I have a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.’ Even in Sardis, with every street and every house full of soil and dishonour to the name of Christ, even in Sardis Emmanuel had some of whom He could boast Himself. Would you not immensely like at the last day to be one of those some in Sardis? Shall it not be splendid when Sardis comes up for judgment to be among those few names that Emmanuel shall then read out of His book, and when, at their few names, two or three men shall step out into the light in His livery? Some of you are in Sardis at this moment. Some of you are in a city, or in a house in a city, where it is impossible to keep your garments clean. And yet, no; nothing is impossible to Emmanuel and His true livery-men. Even in that house where you are, Emmanuel will say over you, I have one there who is thankful to My Father and to Me; thankful to singing every morning where there is little, as men see, to sing for. There is one in that house humble, where humility itself would almost become high-minded. And meek, where Moses himself would have lost his temper. And submissive, where rebelliousness would not have been without excuse. Mark these few men for Mine, says Emmanuel. Mark them with the inkhorn for Mine. For they shall surely be Mine in that day, and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.

3. ‘Wherefore gird your garments well up from the ground.’ A well-dressed man, a well-dressed woman, is a beautiful sight. Not over-dressed; not dressed so as to call everybody’s attention to their dress; but dressed decorously, becomingly, tastefully. Each several piece well fitted on, and all of a piece, till it all looks as if it had grown by nature itself upon the well-dressed wearer. Be like him—be like her—so runs the third head of the etiquette-card. Be not slovenly and disorderly and unseemly in your livery. Let not your livery be always falling off, and catching on every bush and briar, and dropping into every pool and ditch. Hold yourselves in hand, the instruction goes on. Brace yourselves up. Have your temper, your tongue, your eyes, your ears, and all your members in control. And then you will escape many a rent and many a rag; many a seam and many a patch; many a soil and many a stain. And then also you will be found walking abroad in comeliness and at liberty, while others, less careful, are at home mending and washing and ironing because they went without a girdle when you girt up your garments well off the ground. Wherefore always gird well up the loins of your mind.

4. ‘And, fourthly, lose not your robes, lest you walk naked and men see your shame’; that is to say, the supreme shame of your soul. For there is no other shame. There is nothing else in body or soul to be ashamed about. There is a nakedness, indeed, that our children are taught to cover; but the Bible is a book for men. And the only nakedness that the Bible knows about or cares about is the nakedness of the soul. It was their sudden soul-nakedness that chased Adam and Eve in among the trees of the garden. And it is God’s pity for soul-naked sinners that has made Him send His Son to cry to us: ‘I counsel thee,’ He cries, ‘to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear. Behold!’ He cries in absolute terror, ‘Behold! I come as a thief! Blessed is he that walketh and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.’ Were your soul to be stripped naked to all its shame to-morrow; were all your past to be laid out absolutely naked and bare, with all the utter nakedness of your inward life this day; were all your secret thoughts, and all

your stealthy schemes, and all your mad imaginations, and all your detestable motives, and all your hatreds like hell, and all your follies like Bedlam to be laid naked—I suppose the horror of it would make you cry to the rocks and the mountains to cover you this Sabbath night, or the weeds of the nearest sea to wrap you down into its depths. It would be hell before the time to you if your soul were suddenly to be stripped absolutely bare of its ragged body, and naked of all the thin integuments of time, and were for a single day to stand naked to its everlasting shame. And it is just because Jesus Christ sees all that as sure as the judgment-day coming to you, that He stands here to-night and calls to you: I counsel thee! I counsel thee! Before it be too late, I again counsel thee!

5. But the Prince Emmanuel is persuaded better things of all His livery-men, though He thus speaks to them to put them on their guard. Yes, sternly and severely and threateningly as He sometimes speaks, yet, in spite of Himself, His real grace always breaks through at the last. And, accordingly, his fifth command runs thus: But, it runs, if you should sully them, if you should defile them, the which I am greatly unwilling that you should, then speed you to that which is written in My law, that yet you may stand, and not fall before Me and before My throne. Always know this, that I have provided for thee an open fountain to wash thy garments in. Look, therefore, that you wash often in that fountain, and go not for an hour in defiled garments. Let not, therefore, My garments, your garments, the garments that I gave thee be ever spotted by the flesh. Keep thy garments always white, and let thy head lack no ointment.—Signed in heaven, EMMANUEL.

# 079. Mansoul's Magna Charta

LXXIX MANSOUL'S MAGNA CHARTA 'A better covenant.'—Paul.

Magna Charta is a name very dear to the hearts of the English people. For, ever since that memorable day on which that noble instrument was extorted from King John at the point of the sword, England has been the pioneer to all the other nations of the earth in personal freedom, in public righteousness, in domestic stability, and in foreign influence and enterprise. Runnymede is a red-letter spot, and 1215 is a red-letter year, not only in the history of England, but in the history of the whole modern world. The keystone of all sound constitutional government was laid at that place on that date, and by that great bridge not England only, but after England the whole civilised world has passed over from ages of bondage and oppression and injustice into a new world of personal liberty and security, public equity and good faith, loyalty and peace. All that has since been obtained, whether on the battle-field or on the floor of Parliament, has been little more than a confirmation of Magna Charta or an authoritative comment upon Magna Charta. And if every subsequent law were to be blotted out, yet in Magna Charta the foundations would still remain of a great state and a free people. 'Here commences,' says Macaulay, 'the history of the English nation.'

Now, after the Prince of Peace had subjugated the rebellious city of Mansoul, He promulgated a proclamation and appointed a day wherein He would renew their Charter. Yea, a day wherein he would renew and enlarge their Charter, mending several faults in it, so that the yoke of Mansoul might be made yet more easy to bear. And this He did without any desire of theirs, even of His own frankness and nobleness of mind. So when He had sent for and seen their old Charter, He laid it by and said, Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away. An epitome, therefore, of that new, and better, and more firm and steady Charter take as follows: I do grant of Mine own clemency, free, full, and everlasting forgiveness of all their wrongs, injuries, and offences done against My Father, against Me, against their neighbours and themselves. I do give them also My Testament, with all that is therein contained, for their everlasting comfort and consolation. Thirdly, I do also give them a portion of the self-same grace and goodness that dwells in My Father's heart and Mine. Fourthly, I do give, grant, and bestow upon them freely, the world and all that is therein for their true good; yea, all the benefits of life and death, of things present and things to come. Free leave and full access also at all seasons to Me in My palace, there to make known all their wants to Me; and I give them, moreover, a promise that I shall hear and redress all their grievances. To them and to their right seed after them, I hereby bestow all these grants, privileges, and royal immunities. All this is but a lean epitome of what was that day laid down in letters of gold and engraven on their doors and their castle gates. And what joy, what comfort, what consolation, think you, did now possess every heart in Mansoul! The bells rang out, the minstrels played, the people danced, the captains shouted, the colours waved in the wind, and the silver trumpets sounded, till every enemy inside and outside of Mansoul was now glad to hide his head. Our constitutional authors and commentators are wont to take Magna Charta clause by clause, and word by word, and letter by letter. They linger lovingly and proudly over every jot and

tittle of that splendid instrument. And you will indulge me this Communion night of all nights of the year if I expatiate still more lovingly and proudly on that great Covenant which our Lord has sealed to us again to-day, and has written again to-day on the walls of our hearts. Moses made haste as soon as the old Charter was read over to him, and nothing shall delay us till we have feasted our eyes, and our ears, and our hearts to-night on the contents of this our new and better covenant.

1. The first article of our Magna Charta is free, full, and everlasting forgiveness of all the wrongs, injuries, and offences we have ever done against God, against our Saviour, against our neighbour, and against ourselves. The English nobles extorted their Charter from their tyrannical king with their sword at his throat, and after he had signed it, he cast himself on the ground and gnawed sticks and stones in his fury, so mad was he at the men who had so humiliated him. 'They have set four-and-twenty kings over my head,' he gnashed out. How different was it with our Charter! For when we were yet enemies it was already drawn out in our name. And after we had been subdued it would never have entered our fearful hearts to ask for such an instrument. And, even now, after we have entered into its liberty, how slow we are to believe all that is written in our great Charter, and read to us every day out of it. And who shall cast a stone at us for not easily believing all that is so written and read? It is not so easy as you would think to believe in free forgiveness for all the wrongs, injuries, and offences we have ever done. When you try to believe it about yourselves, you will find how hard it is to accept that covenant and always to keep your feet firm upon it. That the forgiveness is absolutely free is its first great difficulty. If it had cost us all we could ever do or suffer, both in this world and in the world to come, then we could have come to terms with our Prince far more easily; but that our forgiveness should be absolutely free, it is that that so staggers us. When I was a little boy I was once wandering through the streets of a large city seeing the strange sights. I had even less Latin in my head that day than I had money in my pocket. But I was hungry for knowledge and eager to see rare and wonderful things. Over the door of a public institution, containing a museum and other interesting things, I tried to read a Latin scroll. I could not make out the whole of the writing; I could only make out one word, and not even that, as the event soon showed. The word was gratia, or some modification of gratia, with some still deeper words engraven round about it. But on the strength of that one word I mounted the steps and rang the bell, and asked the porter if I could see the museum. He told me that the cost of admission was such and such. Little as it was, it was too much for me, and I came down the steps feeling that the Latin writing above the door had entirely deceived me. It has not been the last time that my bad Latin has brought me to shame and confusion of face. But Latin, or Greek, or only English, or not even English, there is no deception and no confusion here. Forgiveness is really of free grace. It costs absolutely nothing, the door is open; or, if it is not open, then knock, and it shall be opened, without money and without price.

'Free and full.' I could imagine a free forgiveness which was not also full. I could imagine a charter that would have run somehow thus: Free forgiveness and full, up to a firmly fixed limit. Free and full forgiveness for sins of ignorance and even of infirmity and frailty; for small sins and for great sins, too, up to a certain age of life and stage of guilt. Free and full forgiveness up to a certain line, and then, that black line of reprobation, as Samuel Rutherford says. Indeed, it is no imagination. I have felt oftener than once that I was at last across that black line, and gone and lost for ever. But no—

'While the lamp holds on to burn,

The greatest sinner may return.'

'Free, full, and everlasting.' Pope Innocent the Third came to the rescue of King John and issued a Papal bull revoking and annulling Magna Charta. But neither king, nor pope, nor devil can revoke or annul our new Covenant. It is free, full, and everlasting. If God be for us, who can be against us? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2. 'Free, full, and everlasting forgiveness of all the wrongs, the injuries, and the offences you have done against My Father, Me, your neighbours, and yourselves.' Now, out of all that let us fix upon this—the wrongs and the injuries we have done to our neighbours. For, as Calvin says somewhere, though our sins against the first table of the law are our worst sins, yet our sins against the second table, that is, against our neighbours, are far better for beginning a scrutiny with. So they are. For our wrongs against our neighbours, when they awaken within us at all, awaken with a terrible fury. Our wrongs against our neighbours wound, and burden, and exasperate an awakened conscience in a fearful way. We come afterwards to say, Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned! But at the first beginning of our repentances it is the wrongs we have done to our neighbours that drive us beside ourselves. What neighbour of yours, then, have you so wronged? Name him; name her. You avoid that name like poison, but it is not poison—it is life and peace. More depends on your often recollecting and often pronouncing that hateful name than you would believe. More depends upon it than your minister has ever told you. And, then, in what did you so wrong him? Name the wrong also. Give it its Bible name, its newspaper name, its brutal, vulgar, ill-mannered name. Do not be too soft, do not be too courtly with yourself. Keep your own evil name ever before you. When you hear any other man outlawed and ostracised by that same name, say to yourself: Thou, sir, art the man! Put out a secret and a painful skill upon yourself. Have times and places and ways that nobody knows anything about—not even those you have wronged; have times and places and ways they would laugh to be told of, and would not believe it; times, I say, and places and ways for bringing all those old wrongs you once did ever and ever back to mind; as often back and as keen to your mind as they come back to that other mind, which is still so full of the wrong. Even if your victim has forgiven and forgotten you, never you forget him, and never you forgive yourself when you again think of him. Welcome back every sudden and sharp recollection of your wrong-doing. And make haste at every such sudden recollection and fall down on the spot in a deeper compunction than ever before. Do that as you would be a forgiven and full-chartered soul. For, free and full and everlasting as God's forgiveness is, you have no assurance that it is yours if you ever forget your sin, or ever forgive yourself for having done it. 'Forgive yourself,' says Augustine,'and God will condemn you. But continually arraign and condemn yourself, and God will forgive and acquit and justify you.'

3. 'I give also My holy law and testament, and all that therein is contained, for their everlasting comfort and consolation.' This is not the manner of men, O my God. Kind-hearted men comfort and console those who have suffered injuries and wrongs at our hands, but the kindest-hearted of men harden their hearts and set their faces like a flint against us who have done the wrong. All Syria sympathised with Esau for the loss of his birthright, but I do not read that any one came to whisper one kind word to Jacob on his hard pillow. All the army mourned over Uriah, but all the time David's moisture was dried up like the drought of summer, and not even Nathan came to the

King till he could not help coming. All Jericho cried, Avenge us of our adversary! But it was Jesus who looked up and saw Zaccheus and said: Zaccheus, come down; make haste and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house. ‘The injuries they have done themselves also,’ so runs the very first head of our forgiveness covenant. Ah! yes; O my Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest my heart. Thou knowest that irremediably as I have injured other men, yet in injuring them I have injured myself much more. And much as other men need restitution, reparation, and consolation on my account, my God, Thou knowest that I need all that much more—ten thousand times more. Oh, how my broken heart within me leaps up and thanks Thee for that Covenant. Let me repeat it again to Thy praise: ‘Full, free, and everlasting forgiveness of all wrongs, injuries, and offences done by him against his neighbours and against himself.’ Who, who is a God, O my God, who is a God like unto Thee!

4. ‘I do also give them a portion of the self-same grace and goodness that dwells in My Father’s heart and Mine.’ The self-same grace and goodness, that is, that My Father and I have shown to them. That is to say, we shall be made both willing and able to grant to all those men who have wronged us the very same charter of forgiveness that we have had granted to us of God. So that at all those times when we stand praying for forgiveness we shall suspend that prayer till we have first forgiven all our enemies, and all who have at any time and in any way wronged or injured us. Even when we had the Communion cup at our lips to-day, you would have seen us setting it down till we had first gone and been reconciled to our brother. Yes, my brethren, you are His witnesses that He has done it. He has taken you into His covenant till He has made you both able and willing, both willing and able, to grant and to bequeath to others, all that free, full, and everlasting forgiveness and love that He has bequeathed to you. Till under the very last and supreme wrong that your worst enemy can do to you and to yours, you are able and forward to say: Father, forgive him, for he knows not what he has done. Forgive me my debts, you will say, as I forgive my debtors. And always, as you again say and do that, you will on the spot be made a partaker of the Divine Nature, according to the heavenly Charter, ‘I do also give them a portion of the self-same grace and goodness that dwells in My Father’s heart and in Mine.’

5. ‘I do also,’ so Mansoul’s Magna Charta travels on, ‘I do also give, grant, and bestow upon them freely the world and all that is therein for their good; yea, I grant them all the benefits of life and of death, and of things present and things to come.’ What a magnificent Charter is that! ‘All things are yours: whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours.’ What a superb Charter! Only, it is too high for us; we cannot attain to it. Has any human being ever risen to anything like the full faith, full assurance, and full victory of all that in this life? No; the thing is impossible! Reason would fall off her throne. The heart of a man would break with too much joy if he tried to enter into the full belief of all that. No; it hath not entered into the heart of a still sinful man what God hath chartered to them whom He loves. This world, and all that therein is, and then all the coming benefits of life and of death. What benefits do believers receive from Christ at their death? We all drank in the answer to that with our mother’s milk, but what is behind the words of that answer no mortal tongue can yet tell. All are yours, and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s. Till, what joy, what comfort, what consolation, think you, did now possess the hearts of the men of Mansoul! The bells rang, the minstrels played, the people danced, the captains shouted, the colours waved in the wind, and the silver trumpets sounded.

6. ‘And till the glory breaks suddenly upon you, and as long as you yet live in this life of free grace I shall give and grant you leave and free access to Me in My palace at all seasons, there to make known all your wants to Me; and I give you, moreover, a promise that I will hear and redress all your grievances.’ At all seasons; in season and out of season. There to make known all your wants to Me. And all your grievances. All that still grieves and vexes you. All your wrongs. All your injuries. All that men can do to you. Let them do their worst to you. My grace is sufficient for all your grievances. My goodness in you shall make you more than a conqueror. I undertake to give you before you have asked for it a heart full of free, full, and everlasting forgiveness and forgetfulness of all that has begun to grieve you. No word or deed, written or spoken, of any man shall be able to vex or grieve the spirit that I shall put within you. You will immediately avenge yourselves of your adversaries. You will instantly repay them all an hundredfold. For, when thine enemy hungers, thou shalt feed him; when he is athirst, thou shalt give him drink. For thou shalt not be overcome of evil, but thou shalt overcome evil with good.

7. ‘All these grants, privileges, and immunities I bestow upon thee; upon thee, I say, and upon thy right seed after thee.’ O Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, give us such a seed! Give us a seed right with Thee! Smite us and our house with everlasting barrenness rather than that our seed should not be right with Thee. O God, give us our children. Give us our children. A second time, and by a far better birth, give us our children to be beside us in Thy holy Covenant. For it had been better we had never been born; it had been better we had never been betrothed; it had been better we had sat all our days solitary unless all our children are to be right with Thee. Let the day perish, and the night wherein it was said, There is a man-child conceived. Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above; neither let the light shine upon it, unless all our house is yet to be right with God. O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son! But thou, O God, art Thyself a Father, and thus hast in Thyself a Father’s heart. Hear us, then, for our children, O our Father, for such of our children as are not yet right with Thee! In season and out of season; we shall not go up into our bed; we shall not give sleep to our eyes nor slumber to our eyelids till we and all our seed are right with Thee. And then how we and all our saved seed beside us shall praise Thee and bless Thee above all the families on earth or in heaven, and shall say: Unto Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath bestowed upon us a free, full, and everlasting forgiveness, and hath made us partakers of His Divine Nature, to Him be our love and praise and service to all eternity. Amen and Amen!

Chapter 80

# 080. Emmanuel's Last Charge to Mansoul - Concerning the Remainders of Sin in the Regenerate

LXXX EMMANUEL'S LAST CHARGE TO MANSOUL: CONCERNING THE REMAINDERS OF SIN IN THE REGENERATE 'Hold fast till I come.'—Our Lord.

There are many fine things in Emmanuel's last charge to Mansoul, but by far the best thing is the answer that He Himself there supplies to this deep and difficult question,—to this question, namely, Why original sin is still left to rage in the truly regenerate? Why does our Lord not wholly extirpate sin in our regeneration? What can His reason be for leaving their original sin to dwell in His best saints till the day of their death? For, to use His own sad words about sin in His last charge, nothing hurts us but sin. Nothing defiles and debases us but sin. Why, then, does He not take our sin clean out of us at once? He could speak the word of complete deliverance if He only would. Why, then, does He not speak that word? That has been a mystery and a grief to all God's saints ever since sanctification began to be. And the great interest and the great value of Emmanuel's last charge to Mansoul stands in this, that He here tells us, if not all, then at least some of His reasons for the policy He pursues with us in our sanctification. Dost thou know, He asks, as He stands on His chariot steps, surrounded with His captains on the right hand and the left—Dost thou know why I at first did, and do still, suffer sin to live and dwell and harbour in thy heart? And then, after an O yes! for silence, the Prince began and thus proceeded:

1. Dost thou ask at Me why I and My Father have seen it good to allow the dregs of thy sinfulness still to corrupt and to rot in thine heart? Dost thou ask why, amid so much in thee that is regenerate, there is still so much more that is unregenerate? Why, while thou art, without controversy, under grace, indwelling sin still so festers and so breaks out in thee? Dost thou ask that? Then, attend, and before I go away to come again I will try to tell thee, if, indeed, thou art able and willing to bear it. Well, then, be silent while I tell thee that I have left all that of thy original sin in thee to tempt thee, to try thee, to humble thee, and to thrust, day and night, upon thee, what is still in thine heart. To humble thee, take knowledge, take warning, and take forethought. To make thee humble, and to keep thee humble. To hide pride from thee, and to lay thee all thy days on earth in the dust of death. I tell thee this day that in all thy past life I have ordered and administered all My providences toward thee to humble thee and to prove thee, and to make thee dust and ashes in thine own eyes. And I go away to carry on from heaven this same intention of My Father's and Mine toward thee. We shall try thee as silver is tried. We shall sift thee as wheat is sifted. We shall search thee as Jerusalem is searched with lighted candles. I tell thee the truth, I shall bend from heaven all My power which My Father has given Me, and all My wisdom, and all My love, and all My grace. What to do, dost thou think? What to do but to make thee to know and to acknowledge the plague of thine own heart. The deceitfulness, that is, the depth of wickedness, and the abominableness, past all words, of thine own heart. I do not ascend to My Father, with all things in My hand, to make thy seat soft, and thy cup sweet, and thy name great, and thy seed multiplied. I have far other predestinations before Me for thee. I have loved thee with an

everlasting love, and it is to everlasting life that I am leading thee. And thou must let Me lead thee through fire and through water if I am to lead thee to heaven at last. I shall have to utterly kill all self-love out of thy heart, and to plant all humility in its place. Many and dreadful discoveries shall I have to make to thee of thy profane and inhuman self-love and selfishness. Words will fail thee to confess all thy selfishness in thy most penitent prayer. Thy towering pride of heart also, and thy so contemptible vanity. As for thy vanity, I shall so overrule it that double-minded men about thee shall make thee and thy vanity their sport, their jest, and their prey. And I shall not leave thee, nor discharge Myself of My work within thee, till I see thee loathing thyself and hating thyself and gnashing thy teeth at thyself for thy envy of thy brother, thy envy concerning his house, his wife and his man-servant, and his maid-servant, and his ox, and his ass, and everything that is his. Thou shalt find something in thee that shall allow thee to see thine enemy prosper, but not thy friend. Something that shall keep thee from thy sleep because of his talents, his name, his income, and his place which I have given him above thee, beside thee, and always in thy sight. It will be something also that shall make his sickness, his decay, his defamation, and his death sweet to thee, and his prosperity and return to life bitter to thee. Thou shalt have to confess something in thyself—whatever its nature and whatever its name—something that shall make thee miserable at good news, and glad and enlarged and full of life at evil tidings. It will be something also that shall give a long life in thy evil heart to anger, and to resentment, and to retaliation, and to revenge. For after years and years thou shalt still have it in thine heart to hate and to hurt that man and his house, because long ago he left thy side, thy booth in the market, thy party in the state, and thy church in religion. As I live, swore Emmanuel, standing up on the step of His ascending chariot, I shall show thee thyself. I shall show thee what an unclean heart is and a wicked. I shall teach to thee what all true saints shudder at when they are let see the plague of their own hearts. I shall show thee, as I live, how full of pride, and hate, and envy, and ill-will a regenerate heart can be; and how a true-born man of God may still love evil and hate good; may still rejoice in iniquity and pine under the truth. I shall show thee, also, what thou wilt not as yet believe, how thy best friend cannot trust his good name with thee; such a sweet morsel to thee shall be the mote in his eye and the spot on his praise. Yes, I shall show thee that I did not die on the cross for nothing when I died for thee; when I went out to Calvary a shame and a spitting, an outcast and a curse for thee! Thou shalt yet arise up and fall down in thy sin and shalt justify all my thorns, and nails, and spears, and the last drop of My blood for thee! Yea, thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, and to know what was in thine heart, and whether thou wouldest keep His commandments or no.

2. It is also, the still tarrying Prince proceeded—it is also to keep thee wakeful and to make thee watchful. Now, what conceivable estate could any man be put into even by his Maker and Redeemer more calculated to call forth wakefulness and watchfulness than to have one half of his heart new and the other half old? To have one half of his heart garrisoned by the captains of Emmanuel, and the other half still full of the spies and the scouts and the emissaries of hell? Nay, to have the great bulk of his heart still full of sin and but a small part of his heart here and there under grace and truth? Here is material for fightings without and fears within with a vengeance! If it somehow suits and answers God’s deep purposes with His people to teach them watchfulness in this life, then here is a field for watchfulness, a field of divine depth and scope and opportunity. There used to be a divinity question set in the schools in these terms: Where, in the regenerate, hath sin its lodging-place? For that sin does still lodge in the regenerate is too abundantly evident

both from Scripture and from experience. But where it so lodges is the question. The Dominican monks, and some others, were of opinion that original sin is to be found only in the inferior part of the soul, but not in the mind or the will. Which, I suppose, we shall soon find contrary both to Scripture and reason and experience. Old Andrew Gray speaks feelingly and no less truly concerning the heart, when he says, 'I think,' he says, 'that if all the saints since Adam's day, and who shall be to the end of the world, had but one deceitful heart to guide they would misguide it.' What a plot of God, then, it is to seat grace, a little saving grace, in the midst of such a sea of corruption as a human heart is, and then to set a sinful man to watch over that spark and to keep the boiling pollutions of his own heart from extinguishing that spark! Well may Paul exclaim: Yea, what carefulness it calls forth in us; yea, what indignation; yea, what fear; yea, what vehement desire; yea, what zeal; yea, what revenge! And, knowing to what He has left our hearts, well may Emmanuel say to us from His ascending steps, 'Watch ye, therefore; and what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch!'

3. It is to keep thee watchful and to teach thee war also, the Prince went on. Bishop Butler is about the last author that we would think of going to for light on any deep and intricate question in the evangelical and experimental life. But Butler is so deeply seen into much of the heart of man, as also into many of the ways of God, that even here he has something to say to the point. 'It is vain to object,' he says in his sober and sobering way, 'that all this trouble and danger might have been saved us by our being made at once the creatures and the characters which we were to be. For we experience that what we are to be is to be the effect of what we shall do. And that the conduct of nature is not to save us trouble and danger, but to make us capable of going through trouble and danger, and to put it upon us to do it.' The Apostle Peter has the same teaching in a passage too little attended to, in which he tells us that we are set here to work out our own salvation, and that our salvation will just be what, with fear and trembling, or, as Butler says, with trouble and danger, we work out. No man, let all men understand, is to have his salvation thrust upon him. No man need expect to waken up at the end of an idle, indifferent, inattentive life and find his salvation superinduced upon all that. No man shall wear the crown of everlasting life who has not for himself won it. As every man soweth to the Spirit so also shall he reap. As a soldier warreth, so shall he hear it said to him, Well done. And as a sinner keeps his heart with all diligence, and holds it fast till his King comes, so shall he hear it said to him, Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things. If thy sins, then, are left in thee to teach thee war, O poor saint of God, then take to thee the whole armour of God; thou knowest the pieces of it, and where the armoury is, and, having done all, stand!

4. And dost thou know, O Mansoul, that it is all to try thy love also? Now, how, just how, do the remainders of sin in the regenerate try their love? Why, surely, in this way. If we really loved sin at the deepest bottom of our hearts, and only loved holiness on the surface, would we not in our deepest hearts close with sin, give ourselves up to it, and make no stand at all against it? Would we not in our deepest and most secret hearts welcome it, and embrace it, look out for it with desire and delight, and part with it with regret? But if, as a matter of fact, we at our deepest and most hidden heart turn from sin, flee from it, fight against it, rejoice when we are rid of it, and have horror at the return of it,—what better proof than that could Christ and His angels have that at bottom we are His and not the devil's? And that grace, at bottom, has our hearts, and not sin; heaven, and not hell? The apostle's protesting cry is our cry also; we also delight in the law of God after our most

inward man. For, after our saddest surprises into sin, after its worst outbreaks and overthrows, such all the time were our reluctances, recalcitrations, and resistances, that, swept away as we were, yet all the time, and after it was again over, it was with some good conscience that we said to Christ that He knew all things, and that He knew that we loved Him.

‘O benefit of ill! now I find true

That better is by evil still made better;

And ruined love, when it is built anew,

Grows fairer than at first, more strong, far greater,

So I return rebuked to my content,

And gain by ill thrice more than I have spent.’

Yes; it is a sure and certain proof how truly we love our dearest friend, that, after all our envy and ill-will, yet it is as true as that God is in heaven that, all the time, maugre the devil of self that remains in our heart,—after he has done his worst—we would still pluck out our eyes for our friend and shed our blood. I have no better proof to myself of the depth and the divineness of my love to my friend than just this, that I still love him and love him more tenderly and loyally, after having so treacherously hurt him. And my heavenly friends and my earthly friends, if they will still have me, must both be content to go into the same bundle both of my remaining enmity and my increasing love; my remainders of sin, and my slow growth in regeneration. So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me? Peter was grieved because He said unto him the third time, Lovest thou Me? And he said unto Him, Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee!

5. And, to sum up all—more than your humility, more than your watchfulness, more than your prayerfulness, more than to teach you war, and more than to try your love, the dregs and remainders of sin have been left in your regenerate heart to exalt and to extol the grace of God. In Emmanuel’s very words, it has all been to make you a monument of God’s mercy. I put it to yourselves, then, ye people of God: does that not satisfy you for a reason, and for an explanation, and for a justification of all your shame and pain, and of all your bondage and misery and wretchedness since you knew the Lord? Is there not a heart in you that says, Yes! it was worth all my corruption and pollution and misery to help to manifest forth and to magnify the glory of the grace of God? You seize on Emmanuel’s word that you are a monument of mercy. Somehow that word pleases and reposes you. Yes, that is what out of all these post-regeneration years you are. You would have been a monument to God’s mercy had you, like the thief on the cross, been glorified on the same day on which you were first justified. But it will neither be the day of your justification nor the day of your glorification that will make you the greatest of all the monuments that shall ever be raised to the praise of God’s grace; it will be the days of your sanctification that will do that. Paul was a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious at his conversion, but he had to be a lifetime in grace and an apostle above all the twelve before he became the chiefest of sinners

and the most wretched of saints. And though your first forgiveness was, no doubt, a great proof of the grace of God, yet it was nothing, nothing at all, to your forgiveness to-day. You had no words for the wonder and the praise of your forgiveness to-day. You just took to your lips the cup of salvation and let that silent action speak aloud your monumental praise. You were a sinner at your regeneration, else you would not have been regenerated. But you were not then the chief of sinners. But now. Ah, now! Those words, the chief of sinners, were but idle words in Paul's mouth. He did not know what he was saying. For, what has horrified and offended other men when it has been spoken with bated breath to them about envy, and hate, and malice, and revenge, and suchlike remainders of hell, all that has been a breath of life and hope to you. It has been to you as when Christian, in the Valley of the Shadow of Death, heard a voice in the darkness which proved to him that there was another sinner at the mouth of hell besides himself. There is no text that comes oftener to your mind than this, that whoso hateth his brother is a murderer; and, communicant as you are, you feel and you know and you are sure that there are many men lying in lime waiting the day of judgment to whom it would be more tolerable than for you were it not that you are to be at that day the highest monument in heaven or earth to the redeeming, pardoning, and saving grace of God. Yes, this is the name that shall be written on you; this is the name that shall be read on you of all who shall see you in heaven; this name that Emmanuel pronounced over Mansoul that day from His ascending chariot-steps, a very Spectacle of wonder, and a very Monument of the mercy and the grace of God.

# 081. I Never Went To School To Plato Or Aristotle.

LXXXI ‘I NEVER WENT TO SCHOOL TO PLATO OR ARISTOTLE.’

JOHN BUNYAN begins his Grace Abounding in this way:

‘Notwithstanding the meanness and inconsiderableness of my parents, it pleased God to put it into their hearts to put me to school, to learn both to read and write; the which I also attained according to the rate of other poor men’s children; though to my shame, I confess I did soon lose that little I learnt, even almost utterly, and that long before the Lord did work His gracious work of conversion upon my soul.’ And in another place: ‘I am no poet, nor poet’s son, but a mechanic.’ And again: ‘I never went to school to Plato or Aristotle.’ And then when he comes to speak of his married life he says:

‘This woman and I, though we came together as poor as poor might be (not having so much household stuff as a dish or spoon betwixt us both), yet this she had for her part, The Plain Man’s Pathway to Heaven and The Practice of Piety, which her father had left her when he died. In these two books I should sometimes read with her, but all this time I met with no conviction.’

Now, with such an unlettered and ignorant and unconvicted beginning as that how are we to account for all that John Bunyan afterwards became and accomplished? How did a man with no book-learning at all come to write by far the best-written religious book in the English language?

Well, to begin with, John Bunyan’s first step toward the unique place he now holds was taken in his heart-searching and thoroughgoing conversion. No two cases of conversion have ever been altogether alike. Take the greatest of all recorded conversions; take Paul’s conversion, and Augustine’s, and Luther’s, and in our own land take the conversions of Thomas Halyburton, and James Fraser of Brea, and Thomas Boston, and Thomas Chalmers, and it is very remarkable how they all differ in every possible way from one another. And Bunyan’s conversion, as he describes it in such pungent detail in his Autobiography, is all his own and is like that of no one else in all the world. There is no subject of study in all the world of study that is so interesting and so important and so urgent to us all as the study of conversion. And when we once address ourselves in right earnest to that supreme study, John Bunyan’s Grace Abounding will always be found lying on our table beside those masterly writers already named. The second thing that went to the making and the fitting out of our great author was his absolutely agonising experience of the lifelong pains of sanctification. The life of sanctification follows on conversion, and both of those experiences have a kindred character in every man who truly undergoes them. An easy conversion is usually followed by an easy sanctification, and a fierce and a soul-crushing conversion is usually followed by a fierce and a soul-crushing sanctification. In all my reading I have only come upon three cases of sanctification of a fierceness and a crushingness worthy to be set beside that of John Bunyan. And they are all three fellow-countrymen and fellow-churchmen of our own — Thomas Halyburton, Alexander Brodie of Brodie, and James Fraser of Brea. The sword of truth and love and holiness was driven through and through the sinful hearts of those four elect men, and that divine sword

turned every way in their sinful hearts till it laid them down dead men every day all their days on earth. In the divine preparation of the author of the Pilgrim's Progress, both in his great conversion, and alongside of his great life of sanctification, his wonderful imagination was always working. John Bunyan's imagination was of the very highest order, and it was all taken up into the hand of the Holy Ghost and was turned continually in upon the terrible battle between sin and grace that went on incessantly in Bunyan's mind and heart and life. Bunyan's whole soul lay naked and opened to the eyes of his sanctified imagination till his spiritual life within him was far more real to him than was the social and the political and the military life of Bedford and of England all round about him. And till, as Halyburton says about himself, his own sin and then the grace of God were such real things to him, that compared with them nothing else in the world had any reality at all. Dean Church says somewhere that the original and unique and characteristic power of Dr. Newman's preaching lay largely in his extraordinary realisation of that spiritual world of which he spoke. That is to say, that great preacher's imagination, like the imagination of

Halyburton, and like the imagination of Bunyan, made those things to be absolutely and supremely real and actual to him which are only words and names and the fleeting shadows of things to ordinary men. And then there was Bunyan's exquisite style. I have named three men above whose conversion first, and then their after sanctification, stand out beside those of Bunyan in their intense interest to me, and in their deep and continually increasing power over me. But their books are not known outside a very small and a fast-decreasing circle of readers. And that, partly, because of the poor and stumbling and repelling style in which they are written. Whereas John Bunyan's Grace Abounding will be read as long as the English language lasts, if only for its incomparably pure, and clear, and strong, and sweet, and winning English style.

Now, if I mistake not, there are some lessons of the very first importance and of the very first value to us all to be taken out of all that. All that was written by John Bunyan, not for his own sake alone, but for us also if we will attend and will take his offered lessons to heart.

1. Dr. Denney has a very remarkable paper in the London Quarterly for April 1904, on 'The Education of a Minister.' It is a very remarkable paper in itself, and it is doubly remarkable to be written by a man who has gone to school to Plato and Aristotle as few men in our day have done. Dr. Denney is all for a learned and a scholarly class among our ministers, but his strong and unanswerable contention is that the door of the evangelical pulpit ought to be set wide open to men who have had no opportunity for laying in themselves the foundations of either classical or philosophical scholarship. And indeed who may have no natural aptitude for such studies, but who may have a great compensation in their conversion, and in their character, and in their experience, and in their practical knowledge of the men and the things among whom they are to live and work, even if they have but little direct knowledge of the men and the things of ancient Greece and Rome. And I am wholly with my able and learned friend in his generous argument. Where it can be got, like him, I would like to see a deep and a broad and a firm foundation of classical and philosophical learning laid in every minister's mind. At the same time, I would like to see our foremost pulpits open and inviting to all men who have had a conversion, and are having a sanctification, and a knowledge of their English Bible, and a passion for fruitful preaching, like all that of John Bunyan.

2. At the same time, like Dr. Denney, I would have every precaution and every guarantee taken that the lack of scholarship in any given student or minister is not due to his own laziness. I would have laziness held to be the one unpardonable sin in all our students and in all our ministers. I would have all lazy students drummed out of the college, and all lazy ministers out of the Assembly. And all the churches will have to take steps to do that soon, if they are to live and thrive in this hard-working world of ours. Genius and grace, like John Bunyan's genius and grace, are the sovereign gift of Almighty God; but incessant industry, and the most conscientious preparation for the pulpit and the prayer-meeting and the Bible-class, and daily and hourly pastoral and sickbed visitation, are all things of which every minister will have to give an account, and that by day and date, to Him who did not redeem us in His sleep.

3. We have a fine lesson as to John Bunyan's ideal of what a Christian minister ought to be in his seven ministerial portraits of Evangelist, and the Interpreter, and Greatheart, and the four Shepherds on the Delectable Mountains, whose fine names are Knowledge, and Experience, and Watchful, and Sincere. They are all portraits so beautiful and so heart-winning that they must have been the salvation of a multitude of ministers. Let all ministers look till they see themselves as in a glass in Evangelist and in Greatheart. And let every manse, and every minister's study, and every pulpit, and every Bible-class be an Interpreter's House, with its inexhaustibly significant rooms. And let every minister seek to have the four portraits of the Delectable Shepherds realised and fulfilled in himself. All our congregations cannot have four ministers like the Delectable Mountains. They cannot all have one minister with the knowledge, and another with the experience, and another with the watchfulness, and another with the sincerity. But at the same time, happy that delectable mountain where its very poverty and its other limitations all compel its one pastor to have all the knowledge needful, and all the experience, and all the watchfulness, and all the sincerity in his single self. As they all so conspicuously met in unlettered John Bunyan.

4. It may look like it at first sight, but it is not at all to come down from a high level to a low to say a word or two at this point about a minister's written and spoken style. Let all our students be sure to read and lay to heart all that Dr. Denney says on that subject also. And if they have not already learned to distinguish in their own work, and in other men's work, a good from a bad style, their divinity professors should take them and teach them some elementary lessons in that fine subject. Dear old David White of Airlie was wont to take me in my teens and teach me just what a good style is, taking now Hugh Miller's leading articles in the Witness newspaper, and now young Mr. Spurgeon's early sermons in the Park Street Pulpit. Till, though I cannot to this day write a style to my own satisfaction, at the same time a good style, and especially in sacred composition, is one of the purest delectations of my daily life. And it is surely an immense encouragement to us all to see a man able to write a style which is one of the high water-marks of the English language, though he never went to school to Plato, or to Aristotle, or to Tully, or to Quintilian. 'In the name of wonder, Macaulay, where did you pick up that astonishing style of yours?' demanded Lord Jeffrey of his young contributor. Macaulay we know had picked up his astonishing style out of all Greek and Latin and English literature, and out of many other such sources. But John Bunyan, who beats Macaulay at English out of all sight, picked up all his astonishing style out of his English Bible and out of Foxe's Book of Martyrs alone. 'Give your days and nights to Addison for style,' advised Dr. Samuel Johnson. But I will rather say to all our students — Give your days and nights to your English Bible and to John Bunyan if you would write and speak a perfect English style for your

purpose.

5. Then, again, let no student nor minister be downcast about doing good pulpit work and good class work because he has so few books. Jacob Behmen, Luther's greatest disciple, and the greatest mind in all greatminded Germany, had no books; but then, in his own words, he had himself. And John Bunyan was quite as badly off as Jacob Behmen, for he had only his English Bible and Foxe's Book of Martyrs. He had none of our long shelves of prosy commentaries and Bible dictionaries and encyclopaedias and rows upon rows of ephemeral sermons gathering dust in his significant rooms. 'Look in thy heart and write,' it was said to Behmen and Bunyan. And Bunyan looked into nothing else but into his English Bible and his own heart till he wrote the Grace Abounding and the Pilgrim's Progress and the Holy War, and in all these set a standard for English composition.

6. Now, with all these lessons out of John Bunyan for your future ministers, there is still this great lesson left for yourselves: this great lesson: English is the key to everything, even to Plato and Aristotle. For Plato himself is now to be read in the finest Oxford English, and with all that has been learned in Christendom since his day added to him. But better far for you than all Plato and all Aristotle taken together, like Mr. Spurgeon, read the Pilgrim's Progress a hundred times. And I promise you that you will lay the book down many a sweetened and sanctified midnight saying with Ned Bratts in Robert Browning — His language was not ours:

'Tis my belief, God spake: No tinker has such powers.

Chapter 82

# 082. I Was Overrun With The Spirit Of Superstition.

LXXXII ‘I WAS OVERRUN WITH THE SPIRIT OF SUPERSTITION.’

‘BECAUSE I knew no better I fell in eagerly with the religion of the times; to wit to go to church twice a day, and that, too, with the foremost. And there should, very devoutly, both say and sing as others did; yet retaining my wicked life. But withal, I was so overrun with the spirit of superstition, that I adored, and that with great devotion, even all things; both the High Place, Priest, Clerk, vestment, service, and what else, belonging to the Church: counting all things holy that were therein contained. And especially, the Priest and the Clerk most happy, and without doubt, greatly blessed, because they were the servants of God, as I then thought, and were Principal in His holy temple to do His work therein. But all this time I was not sensible of the danger and evil of sin. All this time I never thought of Christ nor whether there was one or no.’

Now you must all see from that truly Bunyan-passage just what this thing superstition is and just what it is not. Superstition always sticks fast on the surface of things. Superstition never goes down through the outside skin of things. Superstition never enters into the deep and living heart of things. Superstition always builds both its own house and the house of its god upon the sand. And it fills the house of its god with high places, and with priests, and with clerks, and with vestments, and with services of its own. At any rate it did so in Bunyan’s day. But all the time this so scrupulous worshipper still retained all his former wicked life. All the time he remained utterly insensible of the danger and the evil of his sin. All the time, in his own words, he never thought of Christ nor whether there was one or no.

Now you will all expect me to launch out at this point against the superstitions of other Churches than our own, and against the superstitions of other people than ourselves, but I am not going to do that to-night. I am not so much as to name the papists, nor the ritualists, nor any of our own too superstitious fellow-countrymen. A discourse of that kind would do you no good, and it would do me no honour; no honour that I covet after. But to discover to you some of your own overrunning superstitions and to help you to cast them off — what a successful and what an honourable discourse that would be! And now to take John Bunyan for our forerunner and for our guide into this not very easy subject. Well his chief superstition in those early days of his, and before he had one atom of true religion, was to go to church twice every Sabbath, and that too with the foremost. In those unconvicted and unconverted days of his, Bunyan would not stay away from church in the very worst of wintry weather; no not even when he was threatened with a consumption. No not for a single diet from year’s end to year’s end. Bunyan was always the first to arrive at the church, and he was always the last to leave it. But all the time — would you believe it? — he led the same wicked life as soon as he went home, and all the week again till the next Sabbath came round. The thought of sin, or of salvation from sin, never once entered his tinker head from Sabbath to Saturday. He left all these things to the priest and to the clerk to manage for him. Now there are multitudes among ourselves who are exactly like poor Bunyan in all that. We, many of ourselves, go to church twice a day. We will not on any account stay away from church, no not for a single

diet, if we can crawl on our staff or can get a Sabbath cab. But the cab delivers us at our own door again exactly the same men that we were when it took us up. We still retain our old life, as the people at home know to their cost. We are nothing better after a long lifetime of such church-going but rather worse. Well, that is superstition, and rank superstition too. It is the rankest superstition to think that such going to church as that has anything to do with true religion. Just hear what God Himself has to say about such church-going as that.

'When ye come to appear before Me, who hath required this at your hands to tread My courts? The new moons, and the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with them: it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. I am weary to bear them. Cease to do evil. Learn to do well. Seek judgment. Relieve the oppressed,' — you know one — 'Judge the fatherless,' — you surely know one — 'Plead for the widow,' — you must know more widows than one.

'All this while,' says Bunyan, 'I met with no conviction. I did both sing, and say, as others did; yet retaining my wicked life. All this while I was not sensible of the danger and evil of sin. I was kept from considering that my sin would damn me, what religion soever I followed, unless I was found in Christ. Nay, I never thought of Him, nor whether there was one or no.'

God does not mean for one moment, neither does Isaiah mean, nor does John Bunyan mean, that we are to stay away from church because of our sinful hearts and lives. Far from that. Come to church, they all three say, twice a day as long as you are able. And twice a day put away some wickedness out of your heart and out of your life before you go home. Twice every Sabbath day become more and more sensible of the danger and the evil of sin. And be you sure, it will take you twice a day all the days that are now left to you on earth to learn the simple a b c of the full danger and the full evil of sin. Yes, come till instead of never thinking whether there is a Christ or no, you come to think and to see that there is nothing and no one else to be much thought about but Christ in all the world. And then the priest and the clerk and their vestments at that time entirely took the place of God, and of Christ, and of the Holy Ghost, in Bunyan's Sabbath-day devotions. The scales fell off his eyes afterwards till he came to see that there are no such priests and no such vestments in the Church of Christ at all, as he at one time so superstitiously thought there were. By the time he was himself anointed of God to be one of the chief priests of the Church of Christ in England, Bunyan came to see, as clearly as Paul himself saw, just in what the true spiritual priesthood really consists, and what a multitude of redeemed men there are in that holy office on earth, with their one High Priest in heaven. 'You have no bishops in Scotland, I understand,' said an English Churchman, with some superiority, on one occasion, to old Dr. Rainy, Dr. Roxburgh's elder, at Cardwell's table at Oxford. 'Oh yes, sir,' said the somewhat irate old doctor,

'I would not like to say on the spot how many real bishops there are in Scotland: and, more than that, your humble servant is one of them himself.'

Happily you have not been suckled into any superstition about bishops and priests and clerks and vestments, and there is no fear of your adoring your plain and unpretentious presbyterian minister with a too superstitious devotion. You know him too well for that. And thus it is that your danger lies all the other way. Indeed, you cannot give your minister a too high place, or a too frequent place, in your most holy thoughts. Short of adoring him with Bunyan, all your way up to church, twice every Sabbath, keep thinking of your minister, and keep saying things like this concerning him:

‘Cast him not away from Thy presence this day, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from him. Restore to him, and to me, and to mine, the joy of Thy salvation this day, and uphold us all with Thy free Spirit.’ And when he gives out his text in the church, say you all the time, ‘I will hear what God the Lord will speak to me and mine.’ And now and then all through the week when you are near God mention confidentially to Him the name of your minister. Let a heavenly spirit like that absolutely overrun your spirit, and that will extinguish all overrunning superstition out of your spirit. A spirit of love and of prayer like that will fill your mind and your heart and your life, Sabbath day and every day, with a true and a spiritual worship.

Bunyan’s superstitions even went the length of regular family worship in those early days of his married life. Partly to please his young wife who had been better brought up than her husband, partly to soothe her conscience for marrying such a man, he held a sort of family worship with her, especially on Sabbath nights. But all the time, his Sabbath night readings in his wife’s good books, and his saying a prayer with her, all that was no better than so much hanging up of some of his father’s old horseshoes at the door so as to keep away all approaching ghosts during the night. Bunyan would have been uneasy and unhappy and would have been alarmed at the surrounding noises of the night if he had not nailed up that old iron over his threshold. And something like that is the same with ourselves. If our dinner party runs too late into the night, or if some of our guests stay talking too long, or if we know that some of our more honoured guests are not accustomed to it at home, we forego our family worship for that night, out of respect to them and out of regard for their feelings. But we are not quite easy about God all that night till we fall asleep, and then our customary family worship in the morning sets matters all right between us and Him. Not that it makes much real difference in our house any night whether we have family worship or no. The chapter is read, and the psalm is sung, and after we have prayed a word or two on one knee, as that indecent custom is coming in, we rise up light and alert and plunge into the interrupted talk again. The superstition of family worship has enough hold of our habits and of our consciences to make us go through it. But when once it has been gone through, well, Bunyan tells us that for his part he immediately returned to his former evil life.

There is another family superstition that we all go through three times a day and which we call saying grace. This is how they said their graces in William Law’s day.

‘In one house you may perhaps see the head of the family just pulling off his hat; in another, half getting up from his seat; another shall, it may be, proceed so far as to make as if he said something; we can hardly bear with him that seems to say grace with any degree of seriousness, and we look upon it as a sign of a fanatical temper if a man has not done as soon as he begins.’ But worse than even that, I once dined at a nobleman’s table where we all fell to like so many famished wolves. Only, I had been so suckled into this superstition of saying grace that I remember to this day how I could scarcely swallow my dinner that evening. I had never eaten a meal all my days till that day, without shutting my eyes and saying something or other to myself before I began to eat. In this connection I remember a young minister once coming to consult with me as to whether he should stay on and finish his intended holiday in the house where he was, because there was neither grace at meals there nor family worship at any time, and he was afraid something evil would happen to him. All the same, it is not so easy to say grace aright as you would think it is before you begin to try it. For one thing, you might try the freshening-up experience of varying your grace from meal to meal and from day to day. You might say a well

selected verse of Scripture at one time. And then two or three words straight out of your own warm feelings at another time. At one time ask some devout-minded guest, if there is one at table, to sanctify your meal, and at another time invite your little boy to say one of his nursery verses or schoolroom Scriptures. And when you say grace yourself, sometimes look up in the twinkling of an eye, beyond all interposing persons and things, and make your own immediate acknowledgment and say: ‘My table Thou hast furnished, and my cup overflows.’ Say at another time that you sit down at this full table of yours well remembering Him who had not where to lay His head. And now to wind up with a word of hope. We evangelical Protestants of Scotland look upon the Church of Rome as being a perfect hotbed of all manner of superstition in the public worship of God and in the private Christian life. And just because that is our standing protest against her I was the more arrested by what a dignitary of that Church said the other day at a Catholic congress in England. They had rites and ceremonies in their Church, he said, not because they thought these things to be of any real value, but they encouraged many of these things in order to safeguard their people against slovenliness and vulgarity and irreverence and bad taste in the house of God. Now when a Catholic of position is permitted to say such things as these there is surely hope for that Church. At any rate, on the apostolic principle of thinking no evil, but believing all things, and hoping all things, I for one will hail the utterance of such things as these on this so separating subject. At one time that teaching, allowed and practised, would have satisfied John Calvin, and John Knox, and James Melville, and Samuel Rutherford, as to Church ceremonies. As much enriching and good taste and refinement and beauty as is possible and fitting in the house of God, they would have said, so long as it is all sanctified into the beauty of holiness, so long as it is all confessed and taught to be of no superstitious or unspiritual effect. For, —

‘The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.’ Amen.

# 083. Before I Had Dined I Shook the Sermon Out of my Mind.

LXXXIII 'BEFORE I HAD WELL DINED, I SHOOK THE SERMON OUT OF MY MIND.'

'ONE day, among all the sermons our parson made, his subject was to treat of the Sabbath day, and of the evil of breaking that, either with labour or with sports, or otherwise. Wherefore, I fell in my conscience under his sermon, thinking and believing that he made that sermon on purpose to show me my evil-doings; and so I went home, when the sermon was ended, with a great burden upon my spirit. But, behold, it lasted not. For before I had well dined, the trouble began to go off my mind. Wherefore, when I had satisfied nature with my food, I shook the sermon out of my mind; and to my old custom of sports and gaming I returned with great delight. But all that day I felt what guilt was, though never before, that I can remember.' The Apostle Paul, next to Jesus Christ, is our greatest possession, and we owe the Apostle to a sermon on the tenth commandment. And we owe St. Augustine, our next possession after St. Paul, to a sermon on the seventh commandment. And we owe John Bunyan — and you all know what a possession he is — to a sermon on the fourth commandment. And Samuel Johnson to a sermon on that same commandment and to another sermon on the fifth commandment. Humanly speaking, we would never have heard the name of John Bunyan but for that sermon on the sanctification of the Lord's Day. It is to that sermon that we owe Grace Abounding and The Pilgrim's Progress and The Holy War. After he had well dined on beef and greens that afternoon, and after he had revived his spirits with a large tankard of stout English ale, the young tinker set off to the village green in most willing obedience to the Sabbath day commandment of Archbishop Laud. But all the time Moses had been beforehand with Laud. And Moses' Sabbath sting was in Bunyan's conscience all that afternoon in spite of his good dinner and his game of cat. Dr. Newman in too many things is a disciple of Laud, but he cannot stomach the Archbishop's Book of Sports. 'Satan's first attempt when he would ruin a man's soul,' says Newman, 'is to prevail on him to desecrate the Lord's Day.' And let all men listen to Dr. Samuel Johnson's sermon on this same subject:

'Having lived to my forty-sixth year, not without an habitual reverence for the Sabbath, yet I resolve henceforth to attend to it as Christianity requires; I resolve henceforth —

(1) To rise early, and, in order to that, to go to sleep early on Saturday.

(2) To use some extraordinary devotion in the morning.

(3) To examine the tenor of my life and particularly the last week, and to mark my advances in religion or recessions from it.

(4) To read the scriptures methodically, with such helps as are at hand.

(5) To go to church twice.

(6) To read books of divinity, either speculative or practical.

(7) To instruct my family.

(8) To wear off by meditation any worldly soil contracted in the week.'

Bunyan had heard many sermons from parish ministers and from army chaplains, but the preacher's sermon entered the tinker's conscience that day as no sermon had ever done before. 'All that day I felt what guilt was, though never before, that I can remember.' There should be far more preaching to the conscience than there is in our mealy-mouthed and toothless day. Sometimes the sermon should be on one commandment and sometimes on another. But there should be no sermon, whatever the text, that does not leave some sting driven deep down into somebody's conscience. There should be much more preaching than there is on the first table of the law, and still more frequent preaching on the second table. For as Calvin says, 'The second table is better fitted for making a scrutiny into such as we are.' A bee dies, so I am told, when it leaves its sting behind it, but not so a sermon. A sermon only begins to live when its hearer goes home 'sermon-sick,' as Bunyan went home that Sabbath forenoon; only, it is by far the most difficult of duties to preach a sermon right home into the conscience of the hearer. To make guilty men feel that the sermon was made on purpose to show them their sin and to say to them, Thou art the man, is no easy task. At the same time, 'a sufficiently close word,' says Halyburton, 'will bring even a Judas to ask, Master, is it I?' Now, a sermon like that is nothing less than the very sword of the Spirit; only it is not every hand that can send home that sword so as to discern the thoughts and the intents of the heart. As a contemporary of Bunyan has it,

'Here it may truly be said that of all sermons they are by far the most difficult that are made concerning the hearts and the consciences of men. For as no study is more hard on the student than anatomy, unless the student has first seen some corpse cut up; so also is it in an anatomy lecture on the heart and the conscience. To do this,' he continues, 'will be a work impossible to those who have never made acquaintance with themselves: who have never had their eyes turned inwards upon themselves, and who, consequently, do not know the first elements of their own hearts.' At the same time our preachers must not despair of the success of their sermons, even though they see them having the same fate that the preacher's forenoon sermon seemed to have that Sabbath in Bedford. Even our Lord Himself had to humble Himself to see His divine sermons shaken out of His hearer's minds and hearts Sabbath after Sabbath. Till He determined to put His experience and His observation and His indignation into His bitter parable of the sower and his seed, with the wicked one continually catching away that which was sown in the hearer's heart.

'But, behold, it lasted not, for when I had satisfied nature with my food, I shook the sermon out of my mind.' That was wellnigh a fatal dinner to John Bunyan; for, by the meat he ate, and by the ale he drank, and by the talk he poured out, as far as in him lay he quenched the awakening work of God's Holy Spirit that had been begun in his heart that forenoon. And the last Day alone will declare how many soul-saving sermons have been shaken out of men's minds, and how many men have sold their souls for a good dinner and for a good supper on the Sabbath day. Though dead, John Bunyan yet speaks to us in hisGrace Abounding, and asks this question at us all:

'Does your minister's very best sermon long survive your Sabbath day dinner and Sabbath night supper?'

I have told you an anecdote before now that I think is never absent from my conscience a single Sabbath night after sermon and supper. I was once spending a Sabbath long ago with dear old John Mackenzie of Glenisla. The old saint's memory still sanctifies the glen and draws visitors of a

kindred spirit up to the glen every summer. Well, that Sabbath night after supper I asked my friend to read to me out of the manuscript volume of notes he had taken of John Duncan's sermons long ago when the future professor was still a probationer in the neighbourhood, and he was still reading in his rich manuscript when the bell rang for family worship. After the worship was offered I turned to my friend and said to him, 'Let us have some more of the Rabbi's remarkable sermons.' 'Pardon me,' said the wise old priest, 'but we always take our candles after family prayers.' He did not intend that to be a sting in my conscience I feel sure, all the same it was a real sting all that night, and after thirty years it still rankles in my heart and conscience many a Sabbath night and many a week night after supper and worship. If we all took our candles immediately after family worship every week night, and if we could carry to our own room the full impression of the public worship every Sabbath night, it would be the salvation of countless souls, who as it is simply squander the whole grace and truth of the public and private ordinances of God's grace by the frivolous and dissipating talk even of a godly household. I am not to be taken as preaching salvation by asceticism. I am not to be understood to be denouncing Sabbath dinners and Sabbath suppers and the reading of sermon notes of genius after family worship. Not at all; I am simply stating facts. I am simply remarking on what I have seen and felt for a long lifetime. I am simply mourning over what my Master mourned over as He made, for the instruction of all His ministers, His most painful parable of the thirteenth of Matthew.

There are many other things besides dinners and suppers and readings of sermons of genius that catch away that which has been sown in our hearts in the house of God on the Sabbath day. God has appointed the preaching of the gospel of His Son to be the one and the only complete cure for all the ills of the human heart, and for all the ills of the family, and of the city. But there are mountebanks abroad in our day who thrust upon us their patent pills for the earthquake. Are we full of the pains of a bad conscience like Bunyan? Are we like Bunyan sick to death every day we live with an evil heart? Then are there not botanic gardens in which to walk off our sickness? and picture galleries to amuse us and make us forget our sickness? and bands on the green, and tipcat, and Sunday clubs, and Sunday newspapers? Ah, no! Ah, no! Canst thou draw out leviathan with a hook? or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest down? Canst thou put a hook into his nose? or bore his jaw through with a thorn? Wilt thou play with him as with a bird? or wilt thou bind him for thy maidens? Shall the companions make a banquet of him? Shall they part him among the merchants? Ah, no! Ah, no! But we preach Christ crucified. As my method has been from the beginning of these Bunyan discourses, and as my method will be to their end, I come back to the divinity students before I close. For even one divinity student impressed and directed is worth a thousand of our ordinary hearers. Well then, gentlemen, you have your compensations meantime; you have your compensations for the want of a manse and for the want of family worship. For you have your own rooms standing open and waiting your return to-night, with their tables all covered with the best books in the world, and with your whole time and thought to give to them to-night, and to your own soul, and to your forthcoming work. I often go back to the Sabbath mornings and the Sabbath nights when I was at your present stage. You have no Sabbaths and no sermons such as I had; but such as you have may be used by you and owned by God for your personal salvation and for your pulpit and pastoral equipment. I had the scholarly and saintly Dr. Moody Stuart on the one diet of public worship, and I had the incomparable Dr. Candlish on the other diet, and his sermons still sound in my heart over half a century. But better than that I had such books on my table that I still go back to the same books to draw out of them for my own salvation and

yours. I have no books to this day better than those books of my student Sabbath mornings and Sabbath nights. And I will plead with you to let no visitor, the best, and no call of duty even, short of the very best, steal from you your solitary Sabbath nights with the sermons of the day still holding your heart, and with the great books of your calling supporting and sealing the sermons of the day. And your present Sabbath morning and Sabbath night habits, both intellectual and devotional, will abide with you all your after days and will help to protect you among the countless interruptions and distractions and temptations of your ministerial life. And while you study to be a pattern of all civility and affability and hospitality to your people on the Sabbath day, you will all the time have a holy fear lest you and they both fall into Bunyan's temptation to shake the sermon out of your mind. He was a shrewd king, and he knew the hearts of ministers, who invited the angry prophet home to dine with him at his royal table after sermon, for many an otherwise angry prophet has been turned into a dumb dog by being made trencher-chaplain to a king. And many an angry conscience has been soothed to sleep, as the preacher who awakened it has eaten and drunken and talked and laughed till a late hour on a Sabbath night.

Among the many conflicts of duties and of dangers that you will meet with when you are ministers, this will be one of the most difficult to deal with aright. You will have to take home students, and clerks, and tradesmen, and ploughmen, and apprentices with you on Sabbath nights, if only to make their acquaintance aright, and to make them to feel at home with you and with the manse. But with all your wisdom and with all your tact the impression of the day will wholly pass off from both your mind and theirs as you sit and eat and drink and talk late into the night. You will see the impression gradually passing off under your very eyes, till you will be at your wits' end between your clear duty, and the as clear danger that always accompanies that duty. The thing I now speak of will be one of the clearest of your pastoral duties and opportunities; and, in some cases, it will be one of the most fruitful. At the same time, in some other cases, you will have to confess that it has been the death of the Lord's Day, and the burial of all its divine instructions and divine impressions. But all the same do not doubt but that wisdom, and tact, and direction, and discretion, and a rich blessing, will be given you from above as you work your way, Sabbath day and week day, through the manifold duties and the manifold dangers of your ministerial life. God bless you, gentlemen, with His richest and His most effectual blessing! For when you are so blessed multitudes of other men will be blessed in you and with you. Amen.

Chapter 84

# 084. Nay, I Never Thought of Christ, Nor Whether There Was One, Or No.

LXXXIV ‘Nay, I Never Thought Of Christ, Nor Whether There Was One, Or No.’

‘BECAUSE I knew no better I fell in, very eagerly, with the religion of the times; to wit, to go to church twice a day, and that, too, with the foremost. And there should very devoutly, both sing and say as others did; yet all the time retaining my wicked life. Thus I continued about a year; all which time our neighbours did take me to be a very godly man: a new and a religious man. Though, as yet, I knew not Christ, nor grace, nor faith, nor hope. Nay, all this time I never thought of Christ, nor whether there was one, or no.’

Now with Bunyan before us to warn us in this matter it is quite possible that you and I may be coming to this very church twice a day, and may be saying and singing with the foremost, and yet all the time may be, like Bunyan, so insensible to spiritual things as never once all the day really to think that there is a Christ to hear us say and sing and to save us. If that stupidity was so gross with a man of John Bunyan’s genius and sensibility it is not at all impossible that it may be the same with some of ourselves. Come away then, and let us all examine ourselves as to this great matter: this by far the greatest of all matters: our thoughts, yes or no, about Christ, And let us begin like Bunyan with the Sabbath morning. Bunyan rose off his bed every Sabbath morning in good time for church, but he never once said, ‘This is the day that Christ hath made for me, by His arising again this day for my justification.’ The time came when he said that the very first thing every Sabbath morning. One Sabbath morning, long afterwards, he was so in the spirit of Christ’s resurrection and of his own justification, that he says he saw Christ leaping round His empty grave for very joy that He had at last finished the work that His Father had given Him to do. And then before his Sabbath morning breakfast Bunyan was always scrupulous to say a special Sabbath morning grace, but that was all, he never once looked above the bare words of the superstitious grace. And then he rested, according to the commandment, from his six days’ work with his hammer and his anvil, but his weary soul had not yet found its Lord’s Day rest in the Risen Christ. And then when the Sabbath morning bells rang he went up to church and sang the psalms and sounded out the responses till he honestly thought that he stood as well with God as any man in all England.

Now, honestly, what do you think about the first thing on the morning of the Lord’s Day? If it is indeed His day, should He not have your first thought in the morning? That is to say, if He was indeed delivered for your offences, and was raised again that morning for your justification. And to go no farther back did you think of Him, aye or no, the first thingthis morning? What did you say to yourself all the time you were washing your hands and your face this morning? ‘This fine linen,’ said one as he put it on, ‘is to me a parable and a sacrament of the righteousness of Christ.’ ‘I put on His righteousness and it clothed me,’ said another; ‘it was to me for a robe and for a diadem.’ Do you ever say anything like that on a Sabbath morning? And then in after days when the Gospels were read at family worship and in the church,

‘Methought,’ says Bunyan, ‘I was as if I had seen Him born, as if I had seen Him grow up, as if I had seen Him walk through this world from His cradle to His cross; to which also, when He came, I saw how gently He gave Himself to be hanged and nailed upon it for my sins and wicked doings. Also, as I was musing upon this His progress, that dropped on my spirit — He was ordained for the slaughter.’

Now has anything like that dropped on your spirit all this day? It was a large part of John Bunyan’s genius and grace; it was a large part of his extraordinary success both in literature and in religion, that he always as good as saw everything he read about in his Bible, and everything he sang about, and everything he prayed about, both at home and in the church. And it will make you and me to be men of something of the same genius and the same grace if we also see Christ every time we pronounce His name and hear it pronounced. But Bunyan, at that early time, was still a far way from all that. For he quotes, as describing himself at that time, this text out of the Preacher: ‘Thus man, while blind, doth wander, and wearieth himself with vanity, for he knoweth not the way to the city of God.’ But all that was not yet the worst with poor Bunyan. Not only did he never once think of Christ on the Sabbath or all the week; far worse than that, the thought of Christ was ‘grievous’ to him when at any time a sermon or a book or something else pressed Christ home upon his attention. He could not himself endure the thought of Christ, nor could he endure the company of any man whom he suspected to be much given to that thought. That house, he tells us, was like a prison to him, where he saw lying open on the table a book about Christ. Now the houses of the Baptists in Bedford were full of books about Christ in those Puritan days, as full as our houses are of newspapers and novels, till there was scarcely a house in all the town that Bunyan could enter with comfort and remain in with peace of mind. And there will be some of you exactly like that. The circulating library people never send you a book about Christ. What would you think and what would you say to them if they did? And a text like this and a sermon like this are both grievous to you. There are some kinds of sermons you greatly like and go talking about all the week, but not sermons on the Person of Christ, or on the work of Christ, or on the glory of Christ. You never all your days sat down to read a whole Epistle of Paul about Christ, no not even on a communion week; at any rate, not since you were in your first earnestness as a young communicant.

‘As for Paul’s Epistles,’ says Bunyan, ‘I could not away with them. Being as yet but ignorant, either of the corruptions of my own nature, or of the want and worth of Jesus Christ to save me.’ But as we read on towards the middle and the end of Grace Abounding, we come on continual exclamations like this: ‘O Blessed Paul! O, yes, thou Blessed Paul!’ And we come again and again on other exclamations like this:

‘O methought Christ! Christ! there was nothing but Christ now before my eyes. To speak as then I thought, had I had a thousand gallons of blood in my veins, I could freely have spilt it all before His feet.’ And who knows but that He who made John Bunyan so to differ from his former self, may yet in His abounding grace work the same miracle of grace and truth in you. I hope to live to see books on Christ lying open on your table and you will not hide them away as if you were ashamed of them.

Men and women! Grown-up men and women! Take pity on your poor stunted minds and starved hearts! For what a mind and heart to be pitied is that which does not constantly think about Christ!

I do not care how great a name any man may bear among men if he does not constantly think about Christ. Even were his name the name of a Shakespeare, or a Goethe, or a Newton, the humblest believer may well pity him if he has not yet begun to think about Christ. For, O what splendid, what soul-saving thinking Christ makes to a man! Christ Himself, and then all other things in heaven and on earth, in God and in man; what thinking they all make when they are all seen and thought of in Christ! What seraphic minds those Colossian believers must have had if they indeed understood and enjoyed the Epistle that bears down to us their honoured and beloved names. For, what intellectual and what spiritual heights and depths are there! What theology! What Christology! What philosophy, and for once not falsely so called! And with it all, and as the true riches of it all, what a Gospel! What pardon! What peace with God! What present grace, and what coming glory! Did you ever sit down and read at a down-sitting the Epistle to the Colossians? When you do, write me and tell me what you think and feel as you close the divine book. I will tell you beforehand one thing you will think and feel and say. You will say with some in the Church of Colosse,

‘What a man was Paul — if he was a mere man, and not the very Holy Ghost Himself come to us in the flesh to talk of the things of Christ, and to show them to us!’ And now to bring all this to this point. Intending communicants! You of all men are to think of little else but of Christ all this week. For just thinking of Christ — that will make you worthy communicants as nothing else will. The more you think all this week of His Son the better pleased the Father will be with you when He comes in to see the guests. On the other hand, do not come near His table unless you are prepared to think of Christ and of little else all your after days. For no one can possibly sit at His table, and eat and drink the things of Christ that are there provided, without being so possessed with Christ as to think of Him above and before all else as long as they live in this world. If you spend this week wisely, and then if you communicate worthily next Lord’s Day, you will both understand and will for ever make your own what Bunyan says about a communion day of his long afterwards:

‘Both again, and again, and again,’ he says, ‘I was made to see that day that God and my soul were made friends by the Blood of Christ. Yea, I saw that the justice of God, and my sinful soul, could embrace and kiss each other through that blood. Now was my heart full of comfort and hope. Now I could believe that my sins should be all forgiven. Yea I was now so taken with the love and the mercy of God to me that I could not contain it all till I got home. I thought I could have spoken of His love and of His mercy to me, even to the very crows that sat upon the ploughed lands before me.’ And now after the intending communicants, if the divinity students here present will listen to me let them do this. Let them borrow from their library the index volume of Dr. Thomas Goodwin’s immortal works. And next Sabbath morning and evening let them open that splendid index under ‘Christ.’ Let them ponder those five glorious pages slowly and thoughtfully and believingly and appropriatingly; and, if they do not leap in their rooms at the glorious prospect of their soon being preachers of Christ there must be something far wrong with them. They are surely too far off their right road in life already. Let them forthwith choose some other calling. Let them go to the bar, or to medicine, or to the army, or to the civil service; but it is only common sense that they should not go to the Church of Christ. They may make passable advocates, or doctors, or soldiers, but not preachers of Christ to please Him and to edify His people and to earn His reward. And yet, no! That is not good advice, and I will take it all back. Rather than that, let them look well down into

their own sinful hearts; and back, and forward, into their own sinful lives; and all around at the world of sinful men round about them. And then let them read with all their scholarship and with all their philosophy and with all their personal experience say, the prologue to John's Gospel and his seventeenth chapter, and then the Epistle to the Colossians, and then Goodwin's index again under 'Christ.' And I am as sure as I am standing in this pulpit that neither the army, nor the bar, nor anything else in this world will ever get those men. It is because so few of our able young men ever think about Christ that there is everywhere such a dearth of first-class divinity students. It is not the falling Sustentation Fund, nor is it the Higher Criticism, nor is it the many openings into wealth and honour at home and abroad that steals from the Church her choicest sons. No, no. It is simply this: It is simply because, like John Bunyan in his blinded youth, they are not yet sensible of the danger and the disaster of all sin and of their own sin. And then, as the result of that, it is because they never think of the Divine Redeemer from sin, or whether there is one, or no. O come, all you youths of genius and of learning and of the beginnings of grace! For here is the proper scope for you! Your proper field in all this world is the Evangelical pulpit and pastorate. Here is the one sphere in this whole world in which to lay out and to multiply your talents so that both you and they may be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. 'God,' says Goodwin, 'had only one Son, and He made Him a minister.'

# 085. As For Paul's Epistles, I Could Not Away With Them.

LXXXV ‘As For Paul’s Epistles, I Could Not Away With Them.’ THE time had been when Paul would have hated his own Epistles with a far more deadly hatred than ever John Bunyan hated them. The time had been with the Apostle himself when he was far more ignorant of the corruptions of his heart than ever John Bunyan was, and when he hated the very mention of the name of Jesus Christ far more than ever John Bunyan hated it. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. Till, when the scales fell from off Paul’s eyes, and when God revealed His Son in Paul, there then began a series of Epistles to the very Churches that Paul had persecuted to prison and to death: a series of Epistles the like of which the world has never seen, nor will ever see, to the end of time. What a man was Paul — ‘if he was a man!’ as was said in the early Church concerning him. And what a work was Paul given of God to do! Humanly speaking, but for Paul and his Epistles, both the Son of God, and His redeeming work, would have remained to this day an all but hidden mystery to us and to all the world. But as God would have it, when Jesus Christ was elected and predestinated to His redeeming work, Paul also was elected and predestinated to his apostolic work, after and alongside of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was elected and predestinated to do a work that He alone could do; and at the same time Paul was elected and predestinated to preach Jesus Christ and His work of salvation from sin as no other man could have preached it. ‘Sun, and moon, and stars, and passages of Shakespeare, and the last greater than the first’ — that has been given as a supreme example of the rhetorical figure called hyperbole. But there is no hyperbole in this: Sun, and moon, and stars, and passages of Paul, and the last out of all sight greater than the first. Such passages as this: — ‘The Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood.’ And this, ‘Being justified freely by His grace.’ And this: ‘To him that worketh not, but believeth.’ And this: ‘Who was delivered for our offences.’ And this: ‘Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus.’ And this: ‘I am crucified with Christ.’ And this: ‘In whom we have redemption through His blood.’ And this: ‘For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell.’ And this: ‘And ye are complete in Him.’ And this: ‘This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.’ But the truth is, as Hazlitt says of Burke, the only adequate examples of Paul are all that he ever wrote. Read therefore, all that Paul ever wrote; and like Luther you will read him sixty times, and every time with new wonder and new praise, and you will read less and less every other writer. The true glory of Paul’s Epistles stands in this: He takes of the deepest things of God and of Christ and reveals them to us as no one else has ever revealed them. ‘The Gospels,’ says an Egyptian Father, ‘supply the wool, but the Epistles weave the dress.’ That is to say, it is Paul’s Epistles that set forth in all its fullness the complete and the final purpose of God in all that we see taking place in Matthew, and in Mark, and in Luke, and in John. In the four Gospels we see Jesus Christ born, and baptized, and tempted; we hear Him preaching also, so far as His hearers were able to bear it; and then we see Him taken by His enemies, and bound, and tried, and condemned and crucified. But it is Paul alone who comes and takes us down into the divine heart of all that. It is Paul alone who fully preaches out of all that the pardon of all our sin, our peace with God, our holiness of heart and life, and the life everlasting. That was all wrapped up in the four Gospels but was not as

yet aright revealed. Yes: the four Evangelists supply him abundantly with the wool, but it is Paul alone who places the warp and the woof in his apostolic loom till both he and all his believing readers can say, 'I put on His righteousness and it clothed me: it was to me for a robe and for a diadem.' Matthew has his Gospel, says Paul, and Mark has his Gospel, and both Luke and John have their Gospels, but better than them all and above them all I have 'my Gospel.' In his holy pride, and rising up to the full height of his holy calling, the Apostle says to us:

'For I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which I preached to you is not after men. For I neither received it of men, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. For it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen: immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them that were apostles before me.'

Now, with all that, listen to John Bunyan's deliberate and true testimony concerning himself at one time.

'Wherefore, falling into some love and liking for religion, I betook me to my Bible, and began to take great pleasure in reading it; but especially the historical parts thereof. For, as for Paul's Epistles, and suchlike Scriptures, I could not away with them: being as yet but ignorant, either of the corruptions of my nature, or of the want and worth of Jesus Christ to save me.' But what exactly is this 'want and worth of Jesus Christ,' of which John Bunyan was still so ignorant? I do wish that Bunyan had gone to the bottom of all that 'want and worth' himself. For, how impressively and how memorably he could have set forth the want and worth of Jesus Christ, first to God, and then to us. But perhaps Bunyan said to himself, Who can come after the King? Who can add one word to that which Paul has written so fully in every Epistle of his? And that is true. For all up and down, in every Epistle of his, Paul exhibits to us what a want Jesus Christ supplied; first to God, and then to us. First to God, when He came to make a full and an everlasting atonement for sin, and thus to set God's hands free, so to say, to do all that for us which it was in His heart to do. God wanted some one to come to earth to be a propitiation through our faith in His blood, so that He might be just, and at the same time the justifier of him which believeth. I suppose God could have got the worlds created by some other servant of His than His Son; but His Son alone could be an allsufficient sacrifice for sin. God's want, therefore, was that His Son should do all that He did, in order that He, the Father, might be free and safe to justify the ungodly, which He was determined to do. 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' 'Here am I,' said His Son, 'send Me. Lo, I come, in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will; yea, Thy law is within My heart.' God's great want of Jesus Christ is past all words of the human mind to contain and to convey. Words fail the Holy Ghost Himself to set that want of the Father fully forth. And, then, there is our want of Jesus Christ to come to save us. Who shall sufficiently put words upon our want? Who shall count up the want and the worth of Jesus Christ to save us who are as full as we can hold of all corruption and abomination? The Son of God puts that to us in His own incomparable way when He demands of us in one place: 'What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?' And we reply to that out of the depths of our sin and say to Him, 'Save me from going down to the pit, for I have found a Ransom. And my Ransom is Thyself, O Thou priceless Son of God!' And, thus, when it is all finished, both God and man, both angels and saints, shall all unite in this great doxology of indebtedness to Jesus Christ, and shall say: 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and

blessing.' And we who are the saved from among men, and by that time the saved from all our corruptions and all our abominations, we will add this, and will say for ourselves:

'Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.'

Students of divinity! Happiest and most enviable of all our young men! Paul's Epistles are the true divinity for you. They contain God's finest wheat for you. They are full of honey and the honeycomb out of His Rock for you. 'Study down,' therefore, Paul's Epistles, as we are told Thomas Goodwin studied them down. And your love for Paul's Epistles, and for such expositions of Paul's Epistles as Luther on the Galatians, and Goodwin on the Ephesians, will be a sure prophecy to you of the power and the fruitfulness of your future preaching. Be you — if you will take a word of advice from me — be you sleepless students day and night of Paul's Epistles, and of his only true successors: the first Reformers, and the Puritans of England, and the Covenanted Presbyterians of Scotland. Take the deep substance of Paul's Epistles and put all that deep substance into Newman's English, or at least into Spurgeon's English, and that will make you perfect preachers to the best of your future people. For do not doubt but that God who watches what books you read in your student days, and what divinity you delight in, will both own and bless the provision you are already beginning to make for His poor in Zion. At the same time, make up your mind that there will be people in all your congregations who will not away with your preaching of Paul's gospel. They can make nothing of Paul. Like John Bunyan at one time, they greatly enjoy well-written and well-delivered lectures on the historical parts of the Bible. They praise the preachers whom William Law denounces — the preachers who preach on Euroclydon and on the times when the gospels were writ. And they will let you explore and preach anything you like but the corruptions of their own hearts, and the want and worth of Jesus Christ to save them. But never you mind. Go you on, going deeper and deeper both into Paul and into yourself every returning Sabbath day, and those deserters of your ministry will all return to it when the scales fall off their eyes. Aye, like Paul himself they will return to support and to defend and perchance some of them to occupy the pulpit that at one time they so hated and persecuted and fled from. If they are ordained to eternal life, they will yet be heard repeating Bunyan's great apostrophe and saying, O blessed Paul! O ever dear and ever blessed Paul! Aye, and to your amazement they will add this: O dear and blessed minister who first taught us to read Paul's Epistles, and to understand them, and to enjoy them, and to enjoy nothing else like them in all the world. Amen.

# 086. Another Thing Was My Dancing.

LXXXVI ‘Another Thing Was My Dancing.’ BUT it must always be remembered that there is dancing and dancing. There is a great deal of dancing even in the Bible. And the dancing in the Bible is nearly always good dancing. On the shore of the Red Sea Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Moses and Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And David was so full of holy joy at the homebringing of the Ark that he leaped and danced on the very street to the terrible scandal of his coldhearted queen. And then in the New Testament the return of the prodigal son was celebrated with such an outburst of jubilation that the whole house was filled with feasting and with music and with dancing. As much as to say that there will be feasting and music and dancing in heaven, or something far better, when we return home to our Father’s house to go no more out. And then Bunyan boldly declares that in vision one Sabbath morning he saw our Lord actually leaping and dancing around His empty grave, because He had gotten the victory for us over sin, and death, and hell. There is no doubt some very bad dancing recorded in the Bible, but by far the most part of it is good, as good as the worship of God is good, as good as the overpowering joyfulness of the saints of God is good. And then there is both good and bad dancing in the Pilgrim’s Progressalso.

‘Come,’ said Mrs. Lightmind, ‘put this kind of talk away. I was yesterday at Madam Wanton’s where we were all as merry as the maids. For who do you think should be there but I and Mrs. Love-the-flesh and three or four more, with Mr. Lechery, Mrs. Filth, and some others. So we had music and dancing, and what else was meet to fill up the pleasure. And I dare say, my Lady herself is an admirably-bred gentlewoman, and Mr. Lechery is as pretty a fellow.’ And then we have this other dancing-party further on in the same book.

‘Now Christiana, if need was, could play upon the viol, and her daughter Mercy upon the lute. So since they were so merry disposed, she played them a lesson, and Mr. Ready-to-halt would dance. So he took Mr. Despondency’s daughter, named Miss Much-afraid, by the hand, and to dancing they went on the road. True, he could not dance without one crutch in his hand; but, I promise you, he footed it well; also the girl was to be commended, for she answered the music handsomely. As for Mr. Despondency, the music was too much for him; he was for feeding rather than dancing, for that he was almost starved. So Christiana gave him some of her bottle of spirits for his present relief, and then prepared him something to eat, and in a little the old gentleman came to himself, and began to be finely revived.’ So that, you see, there are more kinds of dancing than one. It all depends on whose house it is in which you dance, and in whose company, and to what music, and especially who is your partner.

Another thing of Bunyan’s at that time of his life was his bellringing. I must give you his bell-ringing at length and in his own words. For it wholly spoils John Bunyan to put him into any other man’s words but his own.

‘Now, you must know, that before this I had taken much delight in bellringing, but my conscience beginning to be tender, I thought such practice was but vain, and therefore forced myself to leave

it, yet my mind hankered. Wherefore, I should go to the steeple door and look on, though I durst not ring. But I thought this did not become religion neither, yet I forced myself, and would look on still. But quickly after, I began to think — How if one of the bells should fall! Then I chose to stand under a main beam that lay overthwart the steeple, thinking there I might stand sure. But then I should think again, should the bell fall with a swing it might first hit the wall, and then rebounding upon me, might kill me for all that beam. This made me stand in the steeple door; and now, thought I, I am safe enough, for if a bell should then fall, I can slip out behind these thick walls, and so be preserved notwithstanding. So after this I would go to see them ring, but would not go further than the steeple door. But, then, it came into my heart — How if the steeple itself should fall! And this thought — it may fall for ought I know, when I stood and looked on, did continually so shake my mind that I durst not stand at the steeple door any longer, but was forced to flee, for fear the steeple should fall on my head.'

Now from all that it comes out as clear as day that it was neither his bellringing nor his dancing in themselves that so tortured and terrified Bunyan. It was his old and evil associations with these amusements that so greatly distressed him now. It was the cruel way that his conscience took him by the throat as often as he returned to these now condemned indulgences. Bunyan's conscience was now so scrupulous that she would not allow him so much as to touch one of his former bell-ropes, nor to lift so much as a foot in one of his former dances. And thus it is that our proper lesson out of Bunyan to-night is neither concerning bell-ringing, nor dancing, nor anything of that kind. Our proper lesson to-night is our own consciences; and the things, be they bells or dances, or what else, that lacerate and exasperate our consciences, and turn them into our fiercest accusers, and into our most relentless judges, and into our most cruel jailors.

'We are fearfully and wonderfully made,' says the Psalmist. And in nothing are we more fearfully and more wonderfully made than just in the matter of our conscience. For our conscience is set supreme and sovereign over all that is within us, and over all that we do without us. Our conscience is more than our conscience; our conscience may almost be said to be our God. So much so, that whatever our conscience commands us to do or not to do we must instantly obey her voice on pain of her heavy hand falling upon us and the still heavier hand of God Himself. So absolutely is our conscience the true and very voice of God to us that even when for any reason her voice is in anything dubious or doubtful, as it sometimes is, even to go against the dubiety and the doubt is to go against the clear command of God Himself. 'He that doubteth is damned if he eat.' Our conscience and God and our own immortal souls must always have the benefit of the doubt, and never once our supposed interests or our affections or our appetites. All Hebrew and Greek and Latin and English, both ethic and religion, are full of that. I could fill the whole of this discourse with the proofs and the illustrations of that. There may be no wrong to you in bell-ringing or in dancing, but there would have been mortal wrong to Bunyan had he gone on with these condemned indulgences after his conscience had once said No! For to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. And how terrible the voice and the hand of conscience can be when she has been outraged and exasperated — of that the whole Bible and the whole of our best literature in all languages is full. And no literature is more full of that than our own Shakespeare, And a plain evangelical preacher has this:

O conscience! who can stand against thy power!

Endure thy stripes or agonies one hour!

Stone, gout, strappado, racks, whatever is Dreadful to sense are only toys to this. No pleasures, riches, honour, friends, can tell How to give ease to this: ‘tis like to hell. And then when the day of grace comes, as to the part that conscience performs in conversion, Dr. Newman sings:

Thus the Apostles tamed the pagan breast, They argued not, but preach’d, and conscience did the rest.

Bunyan began life with what Paul describes as a conscience seared with a red-hot iron. Now this would sometimes happen to Bunyan in his tinker days and in his father’s workshop. By some accident he would let fall a piece of red-hot iron on his hand or on his arm. And after a time of great agony the soft and tender flesh would be burned and seared into a hard and an unfeeling scar. And it would abide a hard and an unfeeling scar all his after days. Till afterwards he would often strike the scar with a sharp knife or with a red-hot rod, and would say like our Lord, So is the kingdom of heaven. The whole world was full of parables to Bunyan: his father’s workshop and all. He never opened his eyes that he did not, like our Lord, see the kingdom of heaven. So is it with sin, he would say. Sin turns the tender side of the soul into a seared scar. Till the sinner goes on in his sin without so much as a single twinge of conscience. So it was with Bunyan himself, all through his early days in the army and in the tinker’s stall. Till that never-to-be-forgotten Sabbath when the time of his merciful visitation had come at last. And then by the hand of the Holy Ghost Himself, the seared scar fell off Bunyan’s conscience, and the dark scales fell off his eyes. And ever after that day of salvation to Bunyan his conscience entered on her rightful office in Bunyan’s bosom, and she performed her office better and better down to the end of his obedient life. The first time you commit a certain sin your conscience will seize you by the throat and will hale you to judgment. But if you go on committing that sin in spite of your conscience her protest and her warning will grow weaker and weaker till you will take your fill of your sin without much remonstrance from your conscience. The time was when you could not sleep, such was the accusation of your conscience, but now she lies quietly on your pillow beside you and takes your sin as a matter of course. And when it comes to that — unless God visits you and your conscience as He visited Bunyan — you are a lost man. You will die in your sin; and then your conscience will awaken from her sleep and will be in your bosom and on your bed in hell, the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched. But as God would have it with Bunyan and as we read on in his masterly narrative we come to this remarkable and remarkably expressed paragraph:

‘But all this time, as to the act of sinning, I never was so tender as now. I durst not take a pin or a stick, though but so big as a straw, for my conscience now was sore, and would smart at every touch. I could not now tell how to speak my words for fear I should misplace them. Oh! how gingerly did I then go in all I said and did! I found myself as on a miry bog that shook if I did but stir; and I was as if I were there left of God, and man, and all good things.’ Have you ever had any experience of a tenderness of conscience like that? Let me take a case in illustration. And that not in bellringing, nor in dancing, but if only for a variety let me take say novel-reading. The time was with myself when I could not so much as open certain romances without my conscience becoming like John Bunyan’s 82nd paragraph. I was brought up to love and honour the Covenanters. I had early drunk in all I could lay my hands upon about those true makers of Scotland and of much more than Scotland. And I had gathered somehow and somewhere that a certain famous man in

Edinburgh had laughed at the Covenanters in his novels, and had led the people of Edinburgh to laugh at them. And even when the time came that I could read those romances for myself, my conscience would not let me do that with entire comfort. And today I confess that I have a more tender heart than ever toward the Covenanters; and over against that I have a certain scrupulosity and a certain severity of conscience toward Sir Walter Scott that I cannot wholly get over. So much so that I never pass his monument in Princes Street that I do not wish that I could take off my hat with a more complete reverence and gratitude and love than I have ever attained to. I am quite well aware that I have lost not a little through my life-long grudge of conscience and heart against the great novelist. But then this is to be said in balance and in compensation of that: I get out of the Covenanters for my deepest needs more and more of what that wizard with all his genius cannot give me because he does not have it himself. I know what a master Sir Walter Scott is in some great departments of life and literature, and it is my daily lament that the great Covenanters did not take time to write English like his. But bad English and all, they are beyond all price to me. And you will agree with me when you have read, say, Rutherford, and Guthrie, and Durham, and Fraser, as often as I have read them. I have been led into that line of reflection through the truth, and the force, and the English of John Bunyan's 33rd and 82nd paragraphs.

Take another illustration from another side of our daily life. Many men among us have an uneasy conscience, aye, many among us have a very angry conscience, over their self-condemned habit of taking intoxicating drink in these days. The awful ravages that intoxicating drink is making among our Scottish people, the fearful state of our Edinburgh slums, and all owing to intoxicating drink — these things come home to the consciences of many men who still resist and silence their consciences. 'I thought it did not become religion,' says Bunyan. And, again, 'I was a full year before I could give it up.' And, again, 'Now, all the time my conscience would smart at every touch.' Yes; there are thousands of men in Scotland to-day who feel exactly like Bunyan. They feel in their consciences that, in the present distress, they ought at once to give up all consumption of intoxicating drink at their tables, and all indulgence in it themselves. But, then, they like it and their guests like it; and interest and habit and fashion and appetite are so strong that they browbeat and silence conscience.

'All our lives long,' says Christina Rossetti, 'we shall be bound to refrain our soul, and to keep it low; but what then? For the books we now forbear to read, we shall one day be endued with wisdom and knowledge. For the music we will not listen to, we shall join in the song of the redeemed. For the pictures from which we turn away, we shall gaze unabashed on the Beatific vision. For the companionships we shun, we shall be welcomed into angelic society, and into the communion of triumphant saints. For all the amusements we avoid, we shall keep the supreme jubilee. And for all the pleasures we miss, we shall abide, and shall for evermore abide, in the rapture of heaven.'

Chapter 87

# 087. I Came Where There Were Three or Four Poor Women, Sitting At A Door In The Sun, And Talking...

LXXXVII ‘I Came Where There Were Three Or Four Poor Women, Sitting At A Door In The Sun, And Talking About The Things Of God.’

‘BUT upon a day the good providence of God did cast me to Bedford, to work on my calling; and, in one of the streets of that town, I came where there were three or four poor women, sitting at a door in the sun, and talking about the things of God; and being now willing to hear them discourse, I drew near to hear what they said. But I may say, I heard, but I understood not; for they were far above, out of my reach. Methought they spake as if joy did make them speak; they spake with such pleasantness of Scripture language, and with such appearance of grace in all they said, that they were to me as if they had found a new world, as if they were a people that dwelt alone, and were not to be reckoned amongst their neighbours.’

What is that wonderful thing we call genius? And what is that other wonderful thing we call style? For when John Bunyan touches any subject whatsoever with his genius and with his style, the thing he so touches is at once made both classical and immortal. As here. We read these few simple-looking lines about those three or four poor women, and we at once know them far better than if we had lived next door to them all our days. We overhear and we understand every syllable of their godly conversation far better than if we had sat on the same doorstep beside them. We see down into the very bottom of their hearts, and we honour and love them from the very bottom of our hearts. What a gift is genius! And what a talent is style! The husbands of those four poor women were away at their work, their children were off to school, their beds were all made, and their floors were all swept, and they all came out as if one spirit had moved them, and they met and sat down on a doorstep together to enjoy for a little the forenoon sun. And they plunged immediately into their inexhaustible and ever-fresh subject: God and their own souls. And even when the young tinker came along with his satchel of tools on his shoulder and stopped and leaned against the doorpost beside them they did not much mind him, but went on with the things of God that so possessed them. I have been thinking a great deal about that great night in the third of John, said one; and she went on to tell some of her thoughts to the other three. And as she went on, the young tinker standing beside her had never before heard that there was a third of John. Not one syllable did he understand more than if she had been speaking in Hebrew. Another said that all the time she was doing up the house that morning her Scripture had been a passage out of Paul, and at the name of Paul she kissed her hand to him as if he had been standing beside her.

‘But God,’ she repeated out of Paul, ‘who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.’ And then one who had a sweet trembling voice made her contribution to the conversation in a few selected verses out of the 51st Psalm.

‘Therefore I should often make it my business to be going again and again into the company of these poor people, for I could not stay away. And the more I went amongst them the more I did question my condition.’

Another day as he was again passing by, behold the same poor women were still occupied with the same things of God. ‘Since last we met,’ said one ‘my constant song has been that faith is the gift of God.’ And another answered her with the man who said, ‘Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief.’ And then the third woman took her New Testament out of her pocket, it also was so old that it was ready to fall piece from piece if she did but turn it over. But she soon found the Epistle she was looking for, and she read it till the Apostle himself could not have read it better, so did she contemn and slight and abhor her own righteousness as filthy and insufficient to do her any good.

‘By these things,’ adds Bunyan, ‘my mind was now so turned that it lay like a horse-leech at the vein, and was still crying give, give. Yea, my mind was now so fixed on Eternity, and on the things of the kingdom of heaven, that neither pleasures, nor profits, nor persuasions, nor threats could loosen it, or make it let go its hold.’

Now for an illustration and a parallel to all that, take this which was going forward in the Highlands of Scotland at the same moment and that in a man of great spiritual genius and great spiritual sensibility.

‘Being in T. H. his house, a godly man, his conversation did me much good. As likewise his prayers did me much good. As likewise the marvellous light he threw on Scripture at family worship, manifesting an order and a depth in the Scriptures that I had never seen before. Which did so astonish me as to make me see somewhat of a Godhead in the Scriptures. Lastly, his cheerful demeanour and that, as I saw, from a deep inward joy. Before that I had sometimes thought that a true saint was but a fancy. But truly I thought mine eyes now saw a true saint here and a man of a true New Testament spirit till I was persuaded that there was a holiness attainable by man. Surely I received much good from the conversation and the example of Mr. T. H.’ And just as I am penning these lines a friend who has come in has occasion to tell me something similar about himself. Like John Bunyan, he tells me, he was a brisk talker about religion. Till one day a woman, like one of those women whose talk was so blessed to Bunyan, took him somehow into her confidence, and began to tell him some of the things that God had done for her soul. But as she went on his conscience spoke out till he was compelled to say to her that she wholly mistook him, for he was not a Christian like her. When his own words about himself so startled and alarmed him that he took no rest till he was a Christian like her. And now he is nothing short of a John Bunyan in his own way, as he works night and day among the poorest and the neediest people of our poor and needy city.

Now from all these cases, and from many more that will come to every thinking mind, we learn this impressive lesson, that it is one of God’s most frequent ways to make use of godly conversation to the awakening and to the undeceiving of those who have hitherto had nothing but a name to live. And more than that; He makes use of godly and close-coming conversation, not only for the awakening and the undeceiving of others, but for the deeper awakening and the deeper undeceiving of those who are His own people already.

‘I would be very glad,’ writes Teresa, ‘that we five should meet together from time to time for the undeceiving of one another, and to confer together how we are to reform ourselves so as to give His Majesty some satisfaction in us. For,’ she continues, ‘no man knows himself so well as other men know him. And no man is so frank and so true toward himself as a wise and a firm friend is, or ought to be. Our preachers,’ she continues, ‘ought to do all that for us. But as a matter of fact, everybody knows that they do not much help their hearers to the knowledge of themselves. They do not come close enough to us. They do not tell us plainly enough what we are. They do not call a spade a spade. They preach, but it is so as not to alarm us too much, or to offend us in any way. Just look around you and see,’ she continue; ‘do you know any man whose life has been much amended by the preaching he has heard? Yes; let us five friends meet together regularly with this one determination, to speak plainly to one another before it is too late.’ So far Santa Teresa. And I have sometimes had her idea in my own mind. I have sometimes thought myself of trying to start a secret clerical club of five or six men who were in dead earnest about their own souls. Not a club for questions of theological science, or for questions of Old or New Testament criticism, or even for pulpit and pastoral efficiency. But for questions that are arising within us all every day concerning our own corrupt hearts. A club for deep and searching and self-undeceiving and God-pleasing work within ourselves; work exactly like that which that great saint and great genius tried in vain to start in Spain. But I am afraid that I have postponed my proposal till it is too late. At any rate the club has lost Dr. Laidlaw who would have been our convener and our chairman. He is taking the chair now where an altogether other kind of questions are being discussed, and where in God’s light he is now seeing light. But perhaps some of his former students, or some of yourselves, will take up and will carry out my too-late intention, and will start in your own presbytery some such club of the soul. From this page of John Bunyan we learn this also, what and where is the true Church of Christ on the earth. The true test of a true Church as of a true tree is its fruit. Those three or four poor women were the true tests and the true seals of the true Church of Christ in Bedford. It is of next to no consequence how the Church of Christ is governed, whether by popes, or by cardinals, or by bishops, or by presbyters, or by managers: a true Church is known not by its form of government but by its fruits; by the walk and the conversation of its members. It is of no consequence at all where a Church hails from, or by what name it likes to be known among men; whether Rome, or Moscow, or Geneva, or Canterbury, or Edinburgh. The one thing of any real consequence for a Church is this: What do her people, and especially what do her poor women talk about when they meet and sit down in the sun? ‘Have you forgot the close, and the milk-house, and the stable, and the barn, where God did visit your souls?’ asks Bunyan of his first readers. That is the true communion roll which has a people upon it like that. Depend upon it, in God’s sight that is the true Church of Rome, and of England, and of Scotland, and He knows no other Church. That is the true Church of Christ and He will acknowledge no other. Do you have any such poor women in your Church? How many such do you know in your Church? Do you know one? What is her name and what is her address? In what street is her doorstep? Send me her name, for I fear she is very lonely. And I would like to introduce her to one or two women like herself whom I have discovered, and with whom she could hold a conversation now and then about the deep things of God. And then there is this. A woman is known by her companions as well as a man. But then a woman is not so able to go far afield to choose her companions, as a man is able to do. No. But she can always choose her books. And the best books are in our day within the reach of our poorest women, if they only knew the names of the best books and in what

bookseller's shop to find them. John Bunyan's immortal books especially are to be had for next to nothing. Grace Abounding is to be had by anybody for three or four pence. I remember when it was not to be had in all our town for love or money. I was told to my great delight the other day that a Glasgow gentleman had given the Tract Society a generous gift of money to enable them to offer a 5000 edition of the Pilgrim's Progressto the poor men and women of Scotland — a beautiful edition to be sold at four-pence each copy. The poorest godly woman in Scotland can thus have the best of companionships, even John Bunyan himself, to talk to her as she sits in the sun. To come back to where we began and so close. 'Upon a day the good providence of God did cast me to Bedford, to work on my calling.' Now, have you any such providential day in your autobiography? When was it? Where was it? How did it come about? And how did it end? Was it your overhearing a godly conversation like Bunyan, or was it your being in a godly man's house like Brea? Or was it hearing a sermon like one of the sermons the London merchant heard during his tour in Scotland? Was it on the majesty of God, like Robert Blair's sermon in St. Andrews? Or was it on the loveliness of Christ, like the sermon of that little fair man Samuel Rutherford? Or was it like the sermon of that proper old man at Irvine; who showed that London merchant his own heart? That was a good providence indeed to Bunyan. That was one of the very best providences that was ever cast upon him. What was your very best providence? And how has it ended? Has it ended by uniting you for ever to that blessed companionship so celebrated by the Hebrew prophet? —

'Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name. And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.'

Chapter 88

# 088. I Found That Ancient Christian to be a Good Man, but a Stranger to Much Combat with the Devil.

LXXXVIII ‘I Found That Ancient Christian To Be A Good Man, But A Stranger To Much Combat With The Devil.’

YOUNG Bunyan was far more fortunate with the ancient women of his acquaintance than he was with the ancient men. The three or four ancient women who sat one day at a door in the sun and talked together in young Bunyan’s hearing about the things of God were nothing less than so many mothers in Israel to this fatherless and motherless lad. But this ancient Christian man gave young Bunyan but cold comfort when he told him all his anxious and sorrowful story. He was a good man, Bunyan admits, but he had not gone very deep into his own heart, nor had the tempter troubled him very much either about his heart or his life. For some reason or other the enemy of human souls did not give much attention to this ancient Christian. And thus it was that the old man had no understanding whatever of young Bunyan’s much-tried and much-tempted case. When he was consulted the stupid old creature gave it as his decided opinion that the young tinker had already committed the unpardonable sin, and so was past hope. Bunyan does not say it in as many words, but I feel sure that he knocked at the door of some of those ancient and much-experienced women on his weary way home that dark day.

Compared with those three or four ancient women, and compared even with this young inquirer, that ancient Christian man had lived a sheltered, a peaceful, and an easy life. Ancient, as by this time he was; and neophyte, as Bunyan still was; Bunyan’s depreciatory description of himself at that period does not need to be much altered to make it exactly applicable to his old friend. For if this ancient Christian had indeed been born again, the thought of that did not much occupy the old man’s mind. Neither knew he aught of the treachery and the deceitfulness of his own heart. And as for his secret thoughts, he took no notice of them at all. The truth is, born again as he undoubtedly was, and old man as he now was, the shell was still on his ancient head, he was still but a babe at the breast.

Now you will stop me at this point and will say to me that such a stupid old creature as that could not surely be a really Christian man at all. But don’t be so severe. Don’t be so exacting in your demands on old Christian men. Don’t be so ready to excommunicate and to reprobate old men or young men either who may not have had all the length and breadth and height and depth of your spiritual experience. Young Bunyan was not so harsh in his judgments as you are. It is true that this ancient Christian man was as blind as any Bedfordshire mole to all Bunyan’s extraordinary experiences. But Bunyan never so much as once suggests that the innocent old man was other than a true Christian according to his type and according to his attainments. At the same time, he feels bound to admit that this ancient and not untrue Christian was a total stranger to anything that could be called a combat with the devil and with the sin of his own heart. Now, how are we to account for the existence of that man, and of so many men like him among ourselves also? Especially when we see that some other men’s hearts and lives among us are all combat together.

All combat together, and without a single day's discharge all their life from this fearful inward war.

Well to begin with, the commander of an army selects and allots and places his soldiers as pleases himself. He appoints his men their duties, and their dangers, and their opportunities, as seems good, and wise, and safe, in his own eyes. And thus it is that some soldiers are always set in the hottest front of the hottest battle, while some other soldiers are always to be found in the rear, till they are rather so many camp-followers than real soldiers. Some so-called soldiers never rise above being raw recruits all their days, while some others are always at the head of some forlorn hope or other, somewhere or other. Some so-called soldiers are so many drawing-room ornaments rather than real soldiers: they are always to be seen on a street parade before a crowd of admiring boys; while some other soldiers are not fit to be seen with their torn uniforms, and their gaping wounds, and their clotted blood, and their broken swords. And so is it in the army of Jesus Christ the Captain of our salvation. Let some of His good soldiers be described in one sentence of a fine book about them:

'Who through faith subdued kingdoms,' we read, 'wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens; others were tortured not accepting deliverance, they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy.'

John Bunyan was always far more at home with such torn and dismembered heroes as these, than he was with that ancient Christian in Bedford who had never been half a mile away from his own chimney corner.

Many country clowns and city loungers have taken the King's shilling who will never all their days really earn it. They have just passed the standard for height and weight and scarcely that; their eyes and their ears and their teeth and the beating of their hearts have barely got their certificate. You will sometimes see an undersized, ill-knit, narrowchested, wax-complexioned stripling wearing the King's uniform, till you cannot help wondering how he ever passed his examination, and what the King's army is to make of him. And the sight of him calls to mind many so-called soldiers of Jesus Christ among us. They will, no doubt be of some use, sometime and somewhere; but it will not be in much combat with the devil and with their own hearts that they will ever win their spurs. The old enemy altogether ignores them. He absolutely despises them. He leaves them all their days in an unbroken peace, while he sets on some other men with all his hellish fury, and that too without ceasing. 'Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the King of Israel,' said the King of Syria. And these are sometimes the devil's exact orders to his soldiers also. 'Fight you to the death with that dangerous young tinker,' said the devil, pointing to young John Bunyan. 'Bring me his head in a charger, and I will give you an increase of rations, and a red-ribbon for your shoulder-knot.' Now, after hearing that, if any of you have the curiosity to know how that combat went on and how it ended in the case of John Bunyan, you may read all that in his fine chapters on Greatheart and Standfast, as also in his Grace Abounding and in his Holy War. Alexander the Great had always under his pillow, both in the palace and in the field, a small silver casket which contained nothing but his lifelong copy of Homer. And all of you who are always in the high places of the field have, I warrant you, the Psalms, and the Romans, and the Revelation, and the Grace Abounding always within reach of your camp-bed. But on the other hand, there are many ancient

Christians among us who never once slept with their clothes on and their sword beside them all their days. And when you speak to them about having their Homers within reach they do not know what you are saying: they never spent a shilling on a Homer all their days. ‘Add to this,’ says M. Bremond in his masterly and most delightful book, The Mystery of Newman,

‘add to this, a multitude of good people resign themselves to a life without any combat in it at all. They are not bad Christians; but they are satisfied with a cold and dry religion. The spiritual battles of the soul do not trouble them.’ And then he quotes this passage from the great preacher himself:

‘They are most excellent men, in their way, but they do not walk in a lofty path. There is nothing at all unearthly about them. They do not take time to contemplate, and to prepare for, the world to come. They do not wait on God all the day. They weary of watching for Him. They do not feel that they are in a world with a height above it, and with a depth beneath it. They have no difficulties in their religion; they think everything plain and easy.’ In short, they are total strangers, as John Bunyan would say, to much combat with the devil, and with the sinfulness of their own hearts.

Now, the deepest of the Apostles gives us the whole explanation of all that superficiality and shallowness in one word of his, when he says that the law of God had never once really entered the minds and the hearts and the imaginations and the consciences of those self-complacent men. With the greatest of the Apostles everything turns on the entrance or the nonentrance of God’s holy law. Speaking for himself, the whole difference between Saul the Pharisee, and Paul the greatest of God’s saints, was simply this, that the holy law of God had now pierced to the dividing asunder of his soul and his spirit, and of his joints and his marrow: the holy law of God, in every commandment of it, was now a discerner of every thought and every intent of Paul’s half-sanctified heart. And the whole difference between this stupid old man and the future author of the Grace Abounding was the same thing, the law had entered the young man’s heart to all its depth, whereas it had scarcely so much as grazed the surface of the old man’s skin. As our great Highland preachers were wont to say, there had never been any real ‘law-work’ in that ancient man’s heart; while, on the other hand, every paragraph of poor Bunyan’s autobiography brings out some new combat of his with the devil and with his own inward evil. Some new combat about sin and about the forgiveness of sin. Some new combat about faith, both as it justifies the ungodly and as it sanctifies the godly. Some new combat about the Bible, and about the Apocrypha; everlasting combats indeed. Bunyan, all his days, was the King of Israel over again. You would have thought that the prince of darkness had no man in all England in his evil eye in those days but the future author of the Pilgrim’s Progress, and the Holy War, and the Grace Abounding. Whereas Bunyan’s ancient friend was as innocent of all those combats as any of yourselves. I say yourselves: for there are crowds of this ancient Christian’s spiritual offspring among yourselves. Speak to them about the entrance of the law, and they will go about saying that you do not preach the Gospel. Speak to them about the exceeding sinfulness of heart-sin, and you might as well speak to them in Hebrew. Speak in their hearing about the depth and the difficulty of this or that divine truth; or speak in their hearing about the discoveries made by the Scripture scholarship of our day, and they will advertise you far and near for an infidel.

‘Here, therefore, I had but cold comfort; but, talking a little more with him, I found him, though a good man, a stranger to much combat of any kind.’ In Paul’s all-explaining words, the law of truth and love and holiness had got little or no entrance into his ancient head and heart.

Now, young Bunyan's great mistake, which he here writes out for our warning was this, that he took his intricate case to the wrong counsellor. He should have sought out some of those ancient women of Bedford into whose sinful hearts the holy law of God was entering deeper and deeper every day, and they would soon have resolved his whole case for him. 'A soldier who has been in the wars can best tell another soldier how to fight,' says Jacob Behmen in his Way to Christ. Now if any of you have like John Bunyan been early chosen and enlisted and appointed to enter on a life-long combat with the devil and with your own heart, take good care what counsellor you consult about that matter. And especially take good care what preachers you sit under and what authors you read. There are plenty of good men and able men and learned men in our pulpits to-day; but you will get but cold comfort from the best and the ablest of them unless, like John Bunyan and you, they are in a constant and an increasing combat themselves with John Bunyan's enemy and yours. But even if your combat is appointed you in a place where you have no choice of preachers, you can always choose your authors. Luther would be a firstrate author for you, if you could lay your hands on him, and Jacob Behmen, Luther's great disciple. But thank God you do not need to go outside your own tongue to read abundantly the same wonderful workings of the Spirit of God. For in your own richest of tongues, you have the immortal and inexhaustible Bunyan himself, and you have his great contemporaries — such as Baxter, and Owen, and Goodwin, and Sibbs in England; and Rutherford, and Brea, and Halyburton in Scotland; and after them Boston, and Chalmers, and M'Cheyne, and many more. 'O, but we have heard to weariness all these old-fashioned names and obsolete men!' you will say to me. 'Are you never to recommend to us some of the up-todate authors!' you will say to me. So the slovens, and the camp-followers, and the cowards, and the deserters no doubt said to the great soldier who had never anything newer than Homer under his pillow. But our Homeric books are not run upon in Mudie's or in the Times bookshop. Only things called books, that sell by their thousands to-day, and line our trunks tomorrow. And hence our ignorance, and our cowardice, and our continual desertions from the great combats of the soul.

Take a closing word to the point out of Luther, that great combatant of the devil. He is speaking to the young preachers of his day.

'No,' he says, 'I did not learn to preach Christ all at once. It was my temptations and my corruptions that best prepared me for my pulpit. The devil has been my best professor of exegetical and experimental divinity. Before that great schoolmaster took me in hand, I was a sucking child and not a grown man. It was my combats with sin and with Satan that made me a true minister of the New Testament. It is always a great grace to me, and to my people, for me to be able to say to them: I know this text to be true! I know it for certain to be true! Without incessant combat, and pain, and sweat, and blood, no ignorant stripling of a student ever yet became a powerful preacher.' So says one of the most powerful preachers that ever entered the Pauline pulpit.

Chapter 89

# 089. As For Secret Thoughts, I Took No Notice Of Them.

LXXXIX ‘As For Secret Thoughts, I Took No Notice Of Them.’

MR. EDISON, that eminent American man of science, was once asked whether he ever expected with all his inventiveness to be able to advertise an instrument to enable a man to see down into his neighbour’s secret thoughts. And the answer of that most original man was to this effect:

‘Even if I could construct such a terrible instrument, God forbid that I should ever publish it to the world. For,’ he said, ‘did we all see down into the secret thoughts of one another about one another, human life would no longer be bearable on the earth. There would not be two friends left to trust one another, and to love one another, in the whole world. Family life itself would instantly fly into pieces. Human society, in all its combinations, would at once become dissolved. For all men would flee to the rocks, and to the mountains, and would cry to them, “Fall on us and hide us and all our secret thoughts from before the faces of all men.”’

Now though our Almighty Maker, the Great Inventor, has not intrusted us with an instrument wherewith to see down into our neighbour’s secret thoughts about us, He has done far better than that. For He has committed to our keeping and to our constant use an infallible instrument for seeing down into our own secret thoughts about ourselves, and about our neighbours, and about everything else. And that secret window is so wonderfully constructed, and is so filled in all its frames with such wonderful glass, that every pane of it is as dark as midnight to every eye but the Eye of the Great Inventor and our own eye. And thus it is that my God and Saviour and I myself are the sole spectators of all that goes on in my mind and in my heart and down among my secret thoughts.

‘O Lord, Thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising. Thou understandest my thoughts afar off.’

Well then that being so, to go back to that little company of four poor women and one poor tinker on that eventful forenoon in Bedford, they all had that same secret window in themselves, and they all had it opening down into their own secret thoughts. Only, up till now, there had been this great difference between them. Those four wise women scarce ever gave a glance into any other window but their own. Whereas that born fool of a tinker never looked into his own inward window at all. In his own ashamed and remorseful words written long afterwards he says:

‘As for my secret thoughts, I had taken no notice of them at all. Neither had I the very least understanding of Satan’s suggestions and temptations, nor how those suggestions and temptations were to be withstood and resisted.’

Now, this large congregation in Edinburgh this evening is exactly like that little company in Bedford that forenoon. There are some people here who are exactly like those four poor women. There are those here whose inward eyes are so occupied with their own secret thoughts that they have neither time nor taste to think much about anything else in this world. But on the other hand, it is

much to be feared that there are not a few people among us who are exactly like that blind and besotted tinker. They think about everybody but themselves. They watch everybody but themselves. They suspect injury from everybody but themselves. Their ears are open to the faults of everybody but themselves. Their eyes wander over the whole city looking into everybody's window but their own. John Bunyan describes them in this exact description of himself, 'As for my secret thoughts, I took no notice of them at all.'

Now, my brethren, in the measure that we take notice of our secret thoughts some most important results will most certainly follow to us as well as to those four poor and pious women. And first, a great and a growing contrition of heart will follow, a great and a growing humiliation of heart will follow, and a great and a growing horror of heart will follow. 'If thou hast thought evil in thine heart,' says a wise man, 'then lay thy hand upon thy mouth.' And thus it was that the hands of those four wise women were never off their mouths night nor day. Now what do you say to that? Who among you will join with Agur and with those four wise women in laying your hands on your mouths? And that because of the indescribable evil of so many of your secret thoughts? Because of the indescribable vanity and folly and lawlessness and disorderliness of your secret thoughts, even when they are not so absolutely evil. Yes, Mr. Edison, stand to your resolution. Keep that terrible instrument of yours to yourself. Over here we do not need it. For our great Inventor has been beforehand with you. He has long ere now produced and perfected a secret instrument for our own exclusive use. And as often as we honestly make use of that secret instrument upon ourselves we have no wish left to see down into any man's secret thoughts but our own. If our neighbour's secret thoughts toward us are ever as selfish, and as mean, and as treacherous, and as envious, and as malicious, and as murderous as our secret thoughts so often are toward him, — No, sir, we do not need your fearful invention. For to us every hour of the day and every watch of the night the word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. When Thomas Fuller was under examination by Oliver Cromwell's Puritan triers, they proposed this test to him: Whether he had ever had any experience of a work of grace in his own heart? To which question Fuller was able to answer that he could appeal to the Searcher of hearts that he had for long made conscience toward God of his very thoughts. 'With that answer, 'says Calamy, 'the triers were quite satisfied,' as, indeed, they might well be. Now can you take an appeal to the Great Trier and say as much as honest Thomas Fuller said? For if so then your conscience holds no sinecure amid the multitude of your secret thoughts within you. And a second result of your taking notice of your secret thoughts will be this: Obsta principiis. That is to say, you will learn to strangle your sins in their very birth. You will learn to detect and to detest and to denounce and to deliver over to instant death your most secret thoughts as soon as they show the least taint of original sin. Luther, like Paul his master, was a great noticer of his own sinful thoughts. Preaching one of his plain-spoken sermons he said that he was not always able to keep unclean birds from circling and screaming round his head. But, God helping him, they should not alight and roost and breed and bring forth their abominable young ones under his hat. And Thomas A'Kempis has this classical passage to the very same effect: Cogitatio, imagin-atio, delectatio, assentio. That is to say, there is first the bare thought of the sin. Then there is an imaginative anticipation of it. Then with that the sinner's heart enters into the speculative enjoyment of it. And then immediately after that the stupid sinner has sold himself for nought. Resist therefore the very first beginnings of sin, even in thought. But comfort my people, saith your

God. Well, in fulfilment of that command, one of John Bunyan's ablest and best and most heartcomforting contemporaries has this comforting passage.

'The bulk,' he says, 'of the unregenerate part in the most of Christian men, is far greater than the bulk of the truly regenerate and sanctified part. So much is this the case that if a Christian man were to go to measure himself by the bulk of sin in his secret thoughts he might well despair of himself. But he is to make a careful measurement of himself, not by the multitude, or the frequency, or the urgency, of his sinful thoughts, but, rather, by the entertainment they receive at his hands when they arise within him. If his sinful thoughts are welcomed, and are encouraged, and are hospitably entertained, he may well despair. But, on the other hand, if his sinful thoughts, as they arise, are instantly hated, and are instantly repudiated, and are instantly cast out of his mind and his heart, then that man may honestly take comfort and say with another of God's people, Now, then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man.'

Watch, then, what manner of thoughts arise incessantly in your most inward mind and heart. And at the same time watch with all your inward eyes what reception, and what entertainment, they receive at the hands of your inward man. And then God's people are to be comforted in this way also. Let them watch well the good thoughts that arise in their hearts from time to time. As also watch well the reception and the welcome and the kind of entertainment those good thoughts get when they so arise. Such good thoughts as these: their kind thoughts towards other people; their tenderhearted and charitable thoughts towards other people; their sympathising and friendly thoughts towards other people; their forgiving and their forgetting thoughts towards their enemies; their meek and lowly-minded thoughts about themselves, and their generous and magnanimous thoughts about their neighbours, and especially about their rivals, and those in the same line of life with themselves. But above all let them watch and acknowledge and cherish all their secret and spontaneous and loving and adoring thoughts about Jesus Christ. For, far above all else, it is as a man thinks about Jesus Christ in his secret thoughts so is that man in the sight of God. The time was when John Bunyan never thought whether there was a Jesus Christ or no. But that dreadful time is for ever past with many of you. Nowadays some days you scarcely think about anything else; at least not with your whole mind and heart. For instance is not this the simple truth? You never waken in the morning nowadays that your first thought is not of Jesus Christ. 'When I awake,' you say, 'I am still with Thee.'

'Dark and cheerless is the morn,' — you sing —

'Unaccompanied by Thee;

Joyless is the day's return Till Thy mercy's beams I see.' And you put on Christ all the time you are putting on your morning clothes. Before you venture to open your letters or your newspapers you first fill your hearts with strengthening and with supporting and with calming thoughts of Jesus Christ. And so on all the day, till those who sit beside you all the day and those who lie beside you all the night would be amazed to be told who they have had all the time in the same house with them. And then before closing there is this: It was not of their neighbour's things nor was it of their own things that those three or four poor women talked that day as they sat in the sun; it was all the time of 'the things of God.' That is to say, their own miserable state by nature, the suggestions and the temptations of Satan, the wretchedness of their own hearts, the filthiness and the raggedness

of their own righteousness, these things and such things as these were among the things of God of which they talked that day. All these things; and then the new birth, and God's visitation of their souls with His love in the Lord Jesus, with all His comforts and all His promises in Christ. All these things were among the things of God talked about on that doorstep in Bedford that day. Take a great comfort out of that also, all you sin-harassed and sick-hearted people of God. For your God is such a God that all your secret sinfulness, and all your untold pain and shame on account of your secret sinfulness, all that is actually counted up among the things of God. It is something not unlike this. All the diseases and all the pains and all the pollutions of his patient are the things of his physician. All the guilt and all the condemnation of the accused man are the things of his advocate. All the debts and all the imprisonments of his client are the things of his surety. And much more all the sin and all the misery of the people of God are the things of their God and of His Christ. In the covenant of grace all these things are now much more God's things than they are your things. Take this home with you then as your crowning comfort this evening of comfort; this crowning comfort, that it was nothing less than the very things of God of which those four wise and well-taught women spake when they went so far below and then so far above the tinker's reach as yet.

'Thus, therefore, when I had heard and considered what they said, I left them, and went about my employment again. But their talk and discourse went with me. Also my heart would tarry with them; for I was greatly affected with their words; both because, by these words of theirs, I was convinced that I wanted the true tokens of a truly godly man; and, also, because by their words I was convinced of the happy and blessed condition of him that was such an one as they were, who thus sat in the sun and talked together of the things of God.'

'Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.'

Chapter 90

# 090. At This Time I Sat Under The Ministry Of Holy Mr. Gifford, Whose Doctrine, By Gods Grace, W...

XC ‘At This Time I Sat Under The Ministry Of Holy Mr. Gifford, Whose Doctrine, By God’s Grace, Was Much For My Stability.’

I MUST first tell you something about holy Mr. Gifford himself. Well, John Gifford was the very minister for John Bunyan; for in everything but literary genius John Gifford had been a John Bunyan himself, only unspeakably worse. John Gifford had at one time been a Royalist officer in the great Civil War; and like so many officers and men on that bad side he was a man of a very bad life. In the course of the conflict he fell into the hands of his enemies, and for some transgression of the laws of war he was condemned to death. But by the devotion and the determination of his sister he managed to outwit his jailor and to escape from his prison. After some hairbreadth escapes Gifford was enabled somehow to set up as a doctor in the town of Bedford, where he continued his old life of debauchery and was notorious far and near for his hatred and ill-usage of the Puritan people. But one night after losing all his money at cards — ‘as God would have it,’ as Bunyan was wont to say — Gifford was led to open a book of the famous Puritan Robert Bolton, when something that he read in that book took such a hold of him that he lay in agony of conscience for several weeks afterwards. ‘At last,’ as his old kirk-session record still extant has it,

‘God did so plentifully discover to him the forgiveness of his sins for the sake of Christ that all his life after he lost not the light of God’s countenance, save only about two days before he died.’ No sooner did John Gifford become a changed man than, like Saul of Tarsus, he openly joined himself to those whom he had hitherto persecuted, and ultimately he became their beloved pastor. The three or four poor women whom Bunyan one day saw sitting at a door in the sun and talking about the things of God were all members of John Gifford’s Free Church congregation. And in long after days John Bunyan immortalised John Gifford as his Evangelist in the Pilgrim’s Progress. Such then was holy Mr. Gifford, whose doctrine, by God’s grace, was so much for John Bunyan’s stability. The first thing that John Bunyan tells us about John Gifford was the way he conducted his young communicants’ class. Not that young Bunyan was actually an enrolled member of that class as yet. But Mr. Gifford did as your ministers sometimes do in imitation of him. He invited all the young people of his congregation to attend his class for young communicants, even though they were not intending to sit down at the approaching table. You hear your ministers making that same intimation and giving that same invitation before every communion, and there are always some wise and foreseeing parents and guardians who send their young people to such great opportunities. I cannot tell you to a certainty how Mr. Gifford succeeded with his other young people, but his success with young Bunyan was almost too terrible. Either Gifford must have been a terrible teacher, or else his tinker-student must have made terrible conscience of all that he heard in the class, as well as of all that went on in his own heart during those pre-communion days and nights; for he tells his experience of those days and nights in a narrative far too terrible for me

to repeat to you to-night. You will find it for yourselves, if you are interested in such things, in paragraphs 77 to 88 of his Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners. In a conversation he once held with me about his ministry, Dr. Moody Stuart said to me that if he had ever had any success to speak of in his long pastorate, it had mostly been with young communicants, and with fathers when they came to speak to him about baptism for their children. Dr. Moody Stuart was the most pungent man I ever knew, but I doubt if any even of his young communicants ever came through those eleven paragraphs in Grace Abounding. It takes two to make an experience like that. It takes a Gifford or a Moody Stuart and it takes a young John Bunyan. Are our young communicants' classes conducted nowadays with anything of the labour and the earnestness of John Gifford's classes and Dr. Moody Stuart's? If there were a young John Bunyan in our classes would he put our names into his autobiography with anything of the love and the honour and the everlasting gratitude that John Bunyan puts John Gifford into his Grace Abounding? And yet the most faithful of ministers may do their very best in their classes, and with too little lasting result. A minister may be a very Gifford in his class, and yet he may have to weep over crowds of his young communicants in after days. I suppose after John Bunyan succeeded John Gifford as pastor of that little Puritan congregation he was not one whit behind Gifford himself in his fidelity to the souls of his young communicants. And yet I find him making this sad entry in his Grace Abounding toward the end of his life.

'If any of those who were awakened by my ministry did after fall back, as sometimes too many did, I can truly say their loss hath been more to me than if one of my own children, begotten of my body, had been going to its grave. I think, verily, I may speak it without an offence to my Lord, nothing hath gone so near me as that, unless it was the fear of the loss of my own soul. I have counted as if I had goodly buildings and lordships in those places where my spiritual children were born. My heart hath been so wrapped up in the glory of this excellent work that I counted myself more blessed and honoured of God than if He had made me Emperor of the Christian world, or the Lord of all the glory of the earth.'

John Gifford's pulpit was quite as much blessed to young Bunyan as was his communicants' class. And Bunyan long afterwards went back upon and signalised these four features of John Gifford's pulpit-work — its Scriptural character, its doctrinal character, its experimental character, and its evangelical character. I was not bold enough to give you the terrible paragraphs in which John Bunyan tells the terrible results that John Gifford's classes had upon him. But I have no hesitation in reading his hundred and twentieth paragraph to you, in which he tells us in his own inimitable way how his minister taught him to read his New Testament; and, especially, how he taught him to employ his eyes upon Jesus Christ in his New Testament. Both in his class and in his pulpit John Gifford was very happy to have such a great hand in the opening of John Bunyan's splendid eyes. We do not all have eyes like John Bunyan's eyes. But we all have our own eyes for our employment of which on our New Testament and on Jesus Christ and on everything else we shall all one day have to give an account. And we are happy in having a specimen of John Bunyan's account in his hundred and twentieth paragraph.

'Under the ministry of holy Mr. Gifford, O how my soul was led on from truth to truth! Even from the birth and cradle of the Son of God, to His ascension and second coming from heaven to judge the world. There was not one part of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus but I was orderly led into it. Methought I was as if I had seen Him born, as if I had seen Him grow up, as if I had seen Him walk

through this world from His cradle to His cross; to which also, when He came, I saw how gently He gave Himself to be hanged and nailed upon it for my sins and my wicked doings. Also, as I mused on this His progress, that Scripture dropped on my spirit, He was ordained for the slaughter.'

What a contrast to the time when young Bunyan could not away with the Scriptures. And when he said,

'What is the Bible? Give me a ballad, a newsbook, George on horsebackor Bevis of Southampton. Give me some book that teaches curious arts, or that tells old fables; but for the Holy Scriptures I cared not,' what a happy service John Gifford did to John Bunyan, and to us, and to all the world! What a happy class, and what a happy pulpit!

And, then, all his after days, John Bunyan — tinker, preacher, great writer, and great saint of God — went back upon John Gifford's doctrinal preaching with an ever-increasing gratitude. A great preacher and a great writer of the last generation has this in his famous autobiography:

'When I was fifteen, a great change of thought took place in me. I fell under the influences of a definite creed, and received into my intellect impressions of dogma, which, through God's mercy, have never been effaced or obscured.'

Now, John Bunyan, our great preacher and great writer, had the very same experience in his early days.

'At this time, also, I sat under the ministry of holy Mr. Gifford, whose doctrine, by God's grace, was much for my stability. His doctrine was as seasonable to my soul as the former and the latter rain in their season. Wherefore I found my soul, through grace, very apt to drink in his doctrine.'

Both John Gifford's day and John Bunyan's day were the greatest days of doctrinal preaching the Church of Christ has seen since Paul's day. Whereas your day and mine is the weakest in doctrine that the Church of Christ has ever had to come through. But the day of sound and deep doctrine in religion must come back again. All real knowledge takes the form of doctrine. A doctrine is a truth that is so sure that it can be taught and can be trusted to. Every branch of human knowledge, to be called knowledge, takes the form and takes the name of doctrine. Take any branch of human knowledge you choose: medicine, law, commerce, statesmanship, war; all the great sciences, and all the great arts, have their stability deep down in their respective doctrines. And our statesmen, and our business men, and our scientific men, and our artistic men are all trusted and are all honoured and are all rewarded just in the measure that they master the foundation doctrines of their several professions and services, and then go on to put those doctrines into practice. And it cannot surely continue to be, that the one thing needful for all men to know should be left to stand without a foundation in men's understandings, as well as without a hold over their hearts and their lives. The real truth is that the doctrines of the evangelical pulpit are the only sure and stable and unchangeable and everlasting doctrines on which the mind and the heart and the conscience of mortal man can ever rest. All other doctrines, whether of philosophy, or of science, or of art, have been the slow and the gradual discovery of human observation and experiment. But the doctrines of grace are of another kind, and they come from another world. Unless they are the greatest delusion and the greatest snare the doctrines of grace are the very wisdom of God, and the very power of God, to the salvation of sinful and suffering men. And in the Word of God those doctrines stand revealed from heaven in all their fullness and in all their assurance of grace and truth, and in

a fullness to which no man is ever to add or is ever to take away. When the Son of God finished His redeeming work on earth, and when God the Father so revealed His Son in Paul as to enable the greatest of the Apostles to cast Christ and His life and His work into evangelical doctrine, that canon of divine truth was closed for all time. And thus it was that the men of the first century, the Romans, and the Corinthians, and the Galatians, and the Ephesians, and the Colossians had as developed and as rich and as sure a word of doctrine as we have. And we have just what they had and we need no more. We, like them, are complete in Christ. So much so that, as a matter of indisputable fact, every real reformation of the Christian religion, all down the centuries, as well as every individual conversion and sanctification, has come about, not by any new discovery of doctrine, but by a believing return and an entire surrender to the doctrines and the precepts and the counsels and the comforts of the New Testament. Paul was the greatest of Christian preachers and he was also the humblest of men, and this is how he writes to the Galatians and to us about his doctrine of Christ:

‘I marvel that you are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another. [He means that there is nothing else on the face of the earth for one moment to be called a gospel.] For I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which is preached by me is not after men. For I neither received it of men, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.’

‘Progress in Christianity,’ says Bishop Gore, ‘is always reversion to an original and a perfect type.’ So it is. And Paul is that original and perfect type in doctrine, just as Jesus Christ is that perfect and original type in life, and in character, and in walk, and in conversation.

Chapter 91

# 091. And Now I Began to Look in the Bible with New Eyes and, Especially, The Epistles of the Apo...

XCI ‘And Now I Began to Look into the Bible with New Eyes: and, Especially, The Epistles of the Apostle Paul Were Sweet and Pleasant to Me.’ THE true derivation of the English word ‘religion’ has long been a disputed question among learned men. But the best scholars of our day are fast coming round to Cicero’s root. That great genius in language held that the Latin word religio originally meant the continual reading and rereading of the sacred books. To Tully, as to David, the truly religious man is he whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season: his leaf also shall not wither; and all that he doeth shall prosper. That is to say, true religion, even in its etymology, stands firm and fruitful in the continual reading of the word of God, till that word dwells richly in the assiduous reader’s mind and heart. Cicero’s etymology continually comes to my mind as often as I open Bunyan’s impressive paragraphs on the Bible. And that true etymology comes even more to my mind as often as I open Halyburton’s autobiography everywhere. But it is with Bunyan and his new eyes and his new Bible that we have specially to do to-night. From the beginning to the end of his Grace Abounding, Bunyan describes to us the successive eyes with which he read his Bible from first to last. When Bunyan began first to read his Bible it was with the eyes of a child. As a child he greatly delighted in the enthralling stories of the Bible. The garden of Eden, Cain and Abel, Noah and his ark, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Joseph, and all their adventures, Moses and his floating cradle among the bulrushes of the Nile, the gigantic labours of Samson, and the pious prowess of David, and so on. Then, through the native strength and the native originality of his mind, though he never went to school to the Fathers or to the early Councils, he began to look into his Bible with the eyes of a student. All our well-read divinity students know those most interesting passages in Grace Abounding on the Apocrypha and on the Canon, and such like. And then after that the eyes of a sinner intent on seeking his own salvation were given of God to Bunyan. And it is most helpful to ourselves when we are intent on seeking our own salvation, to see what special parts of the Bible brought salvation to John Bunyan, who writes himself down on his title-page as the chief of sinners. And then long afterwards we see him employing his eyes on his Bible as a Puritan preacher. All true preachers are greatly interested in watching what texts Bunyan chose to preach upon as he went deeper and deeper into his texts, and as he became more and more spiritual, and more and more evangelical, and more and more experimental, in his preaching. And, as we go on through his wonderful book we rejoice to trace how the eyes of a true saint are more and more given him of God; the eyes of his understanding being enlightened that he might know the hope of God’s calling, and what the riches of His inheritance in the saints.

After Bunyan had once got his new eyes, this was the way he immediately began to read his Bible and especially his New Testament.

‘Me-thought I was as if I had seen Him born; as if I had seen Him grow up; as if I had seen Him walk through this world from His cradle to His cross; to which, also, when He came, I saw how gently He gave Himself to be hanged and nailed upon it, for my sins and wicked doings. Also, as I mused upon this His progress, that scripture dropped upon my spirit, He was ordained for the slaughter.’

Let us all learn to read our New Testament in that way. For reading in that way is not only a sure evidence to us that we have got new eyes from God, but as we go on to read in that way our eyes will become more and more new every day. Scale after scale will fall from off our eyes till we shall see deeper and deeper into the word of God every time we open it. This is what has been called reading with ‘the eye on the object,’ which is the only true and fruitful way of reading the Bible and everything else.

‘Especially the Epistles of the Apostle Paul were sweet and pleasant to me.’ If Dr. Thomas Goodwin is right when he says that reconciliation is the main argument of the Bible, then that argument comes to its consummation and its crown in Paul’s Epistles. And that was Paul’s own conviction and assurance about his Epistles and about his whole apostleship. For he claims in every Epistle of his that to him above all other men had been committed the word of reconciliation. Now if that is so, then Bunyan is entirely right in his immense indebtedness to Paul, and in his immense enjoyment of Paul. And we also are right if Paul’s reconciliation-Epistles are immensely sweet and pleasant to us. And in the pulpit they only are the true successors of Paul who say more and more with Paul every new Sabbath day.

‘Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.’ But you are not preachers of reconciliation like Paul and Bunyan. You are only retired and private readers of Paul’s Epistles of reconciliation. Only, are you even that? Have you got your new eyes from God even yet? When you sit down at night for a little heart-sweetening reading after another heart-embittering day to what part of your Bible do you turn your eyes? Luther said that since he was always sinning so he was always reading the Romans and the Galatians. Now since you are always sinning what are you always reading? We are all confiding friends here, and I will not ask you such homecoming questions as that, without answering for myself. Well, for myself, I often sweeten my heart, at the end of the day, with this passage out of Paul:

‘Being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood.’

Now, if you know anything in all the world more sweet to the sin embittered heart than that, I would like you to tell me where I can find it. Many of your new eyes have been fastened, like mine, upon this also: ‘To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.’ And on this: ‘Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.’ And on this:‘Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.’ And then, what consolation and what sweetness there is in the seventh and eighth chapters of the Romans, especially when we read those two chapters together at the same down-sitting. Only, do you ever do that? Speak out, and say.

‘Indeed, I was then never out of the Bible.’ Just so. When once any man has really got his new eyes from God, and when once he has fairly gone into his Bible with his new eyes, that man will never again be long out of his Bible. His daily life will not let him be long out of his Bible. And especially his evil heart will not let him be long out of his Bible. His house may be full of books, and not bad books either; but his Bible is the only book of them all that wholly answers to his life around him and especially to his life within him. But let me throw in this parenthetically at this point. Rich and full as John Bunyan is, on the splendid service his Bible did him, our own Halyburton is richer and fuller far. And Jacob Behmen tells an anxious inquirer to cast himself once every hour into the depths of his Bible: aye every half-hour; and he will find himself to be straightway penetrated with the divine glory, and will taste a sweetness that no tongue can express. ‘Thou wouldst then love thy cross more than all the goods and all the joys of this world’ — so Jacob Behmen assures his disciple.

‘I was then never out of the Bible.’ Have you ever had a time in your whole life of which you could so speak? When was it? Was it when you first got your new eyes from God? And when it seemed to you as if your new eyes were far too new and far too good for you to throw them away upon anything but your Bible? Or was it when some great sin of yours threatened to find you out? Or again, was it in some great shipwreck of desire and hope when all your other books on which you had fed your desire and your hope had suddenly become so much dust and ashes in your mouth? Was it then that you began to find such a sweetness and such a solace in your Bible, that like Bunyan you were never out of it? And when, like Jacob Behmen’s obedient disciple, you plunged yourself back into your Bible every half-hour? A time of a great bereavement also sends some people back in a hurry to their deserted Bible. When their life was full of all manner of prosperity, when their days and nights were full of family affections and family interests, when their head was anointed every day with fresh oil, and when their cup was always running over, in those days they could not away with Paul’s Epistles or anything else of that so heavenly kind. But when they sat solitary, and when no man cared for their soul, then their Bible began to come to its own again in their broken hearts. Then like Bunyan

‘it was marvellous to them to find the fitness of God’s word to their case. The wonderful Tightness of the timing of it, the power, the sweetness, the light, and the glory that all come with it.’ And then the forsaken soul rose up out of the dust of death, and said:

‘I will go, and will return to my first Husband, for then it was better with me than now.’

‘And, now, I began to look into the Bible with new eyes, and read as I never did before. And, especially, the Epistles of the Apostle Paul were sweet and pleasant to me. And, indeed, I was then never out of the Bible, either by reading or meditation.’

Delightful! Delightful! But what is this? For I turn the leaf, and I find this:

‘I am convinced that I am an ignorant sot; and that I want those blessed gifts that other good people have: the blessed gifts of spiritual knowledge and spiritual understanding. For I am tossed continually between the devil and my own ignorance, and am so perplexed, especially at some times, that I cannot tell what to do.’

Now, are you not — some of you — secretly glad to hear that? Does that not immensely comfort you? I am sure it does. At any rate, it immensely comforts me. To know that John Bunyan with all

his new eyes and with all his rapturous love for Paul's Epistles, yet at some times felt himself to be a sot of a man; and to be tossed about by the devil and by his own ignorance of divine things — does that not comfort you? At any rate, I say, I for one get great comfort and great hope out of all that, as well as out of such corresponding Scriptures as these: 'I am dust and ashes,' said Abraham; 'I am a worm, and no man,' said a psalmist; 'I am a beast before God,' said another psalmist; 'I was shapen in iniquity,' said the greatest and best of all the psalmists; 'I am a man of unclean lips, and all my righteousnesses are but so many filthy rags,' said the most evangelical of all the prophets; 'I am more brutish than any man,' said one of the wisest of men; 'I abhor myself,' said Job; 'I am sold under sin,' said Paul;'None but the devil could equal me in pollution of mind and heart,' said Bunyan. And, again, 'I am an ignorant sot, tossed about by the devil at his will.' And so on — in every sincere and genuine saint of God who is undergoing a great sanctification for a great service on earth and in heaven. Dear, sin-tormented people of God! Do not be too much cast down! You are in good company. You are in the best of company. Angels envy you and your company, They would exchange all their glory for such an experience and for such a prospect as yours. Meantime, take these sweet and pleasant passages out of Paul, and take them home with you:

'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. And if children, then heirs: heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us. 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.'

Wherefore, comfort your hearts with these words, and with a thousand more words like these, in Paul's so sweet and so pleasant Epistles.

# 092. Now Began I To Labour To Call Again Time That Was Past.

XCII ‘Now Began I To Labour To Call Again Time That Was Past.’ AND now began I to labour to call again time that was past, wishing a thousand times, twice told, that the day was yet to come when I should be tempted to such and such a sin! Concluding with great indignation how I would rather have been torn in pieces than have been found a consenter thereto. But, alas! these thoughts, and wishings, and resolvings, were now too late to help me. Oh! thought I, that it was with me as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me! Upon another time I was somewhat inclining to a consumption, insomuch that I thought I could not live. Now began I afresh to give myself to a serious consideration after my state and condition for the future. But I had no sooner begun to do that, than there came flocking into my mind an innumerable company of my sins and transgressions; amongst which these were at this time most to my affliction, namely, my deadness, my dullness, and my coldness in holy duties; my wanderings of heart, my wearisomeness in all good things, my want of love to God, to His ways, and to His people. At the apprehension of these things my sickness was doubled upon me; for, now, I was sick in my inward man, and my soul was clogged with guilt. Now was I very greatly pinched between these two considerations: — Live I may not. Die I dare not. Now I sunk and fell in my spirit, and was about giving up all for lost. But, as I was walking up and down the house, as a man in a most woful state, that word of God took hold of my heart — Ye are justified freely by His Grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. And, O, what a turn that made upon me! Now was I as one awakened out of a troublesome dream; and, listening to this heavenly sentence, I was as if I heard it thus expounded to me: Sinner, thou thinkest that, because of thy sins and infirmities, I cannot save thy soul; but, behold My Son is by Me; and upon Him I look, and not on thee; and I will deal with thee according as I am pleased with Him.

‘At this I was greatly lightened in my mind, and was made to understand that God could justify a sinner at any time. It was but His looking upon Christ, and then imputing His benefits to us, and the work was forthwith done. Now was I got on high; now I saw myself within the arms of grace and mercy; and, though I was before afraid to think of a dying hour, yet now I cried, Let me die! Now death was lovely and beautiful in my eyes; for I saw that we shall never live indeed till we be gone to the other world. At this time I saw more in these words — Heirs of God, than ever I shall be able to express while I live in this world. Heirs of God! God Himself the Inheritance and the Portion of His saints!’ So far John Bunyan in his Grace Abounding. And now for some of the lessons to ourselves out of all that. As we see in a thousand Scripture cases, and as we see in John Bunyan’s case, and as too many of us see only too well in our own case, a very bitter remorse is the first result of our going back on our past life of sin. I do not need to labour to prove that for it is written on every page of Holy Scripture. Grace Abounding is full of it, and our own awakened consciences are equally full of it. But blessed be God both Holy Scripture, and Bunyan’s autobiography, and our own experience, all have this testimony also to give on this subject; this blessed testimony that by the grace of God, and by our own godly sincerity in calling to mind and in keeping in mind our past sins, some most blessed fruits are to be reaped even out of our past

life. Speaking of the sinful past of the Church of Israel, God said in never-to-be-forgotten words:

‘I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope. And I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people, and they shall say, Thou art my God.’ And all that is there said of the awakened and returning Church is said of every awakened and returning sinner, as I shall now proceed to show. In whatever way and from whatever quarter it comes to us there is no more becoming and no more blessed mind in any man in this world than a penitential mind. Every several and individual man among us has his own special reasons for possessing a penitential mind. But no mortal man can look down into his own heart and back into his own life without immediately and henceforth having his head made waters and his eyes a fountain of tears. No mortal man, with his eyes opened can set his past life before his present face without having all John Bunyan’s remorses and repentances awakened within him. Aye and many men among us will have many very bitter remorses, and many very black despairs awakened within them that the young tinker miraculously escaped. On such a matter as this I like to fortify myself and to gratify you with the words of some of the great Puritan divines when I can find the appropriate words in any of those unequalled masters in these matters. ‘God,’ says one of those experts in the matters of God and the soul,

‘God gives a penitential mind not only presently after the sins are committed, but He continues and increases that mind long after those sins have for many years been confessed and pardoned, both in our own consciences and in heaven. In the secret experience of the soul the old guilt with a new contrition on account of it will return again and again. Thus Job for the sins of his youth, for which, questionless, he had often humbled himself, and of which he had every assurance of pardon; yet God did, from time to time, write bitter things against His servant, many years after, and made him still to possess his old sins, as himself speaks. In our presumption and stupidity we think that the lapse of years somehow wears out both the guilt of our long past sins, as well as weakens God’s demand for a broken heart on account of them. But that is not so. That is very far from being so. Great sins forgiven must never be for a single day forgotten.’ And this way of God’s working gives us some of the most golden passages of our whole golden Bibles; as every penitent reader of the Bible knows in his happy experience. As thus:

‘I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord; that thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.’ And again, in the same prophet:

‘Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you… Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves, in your own sight, for your iniquities and for your abominations.’ And thus it is brought about that an always-remembered past is a perfect storehouse of penitential and evangelical graces to every forgiven and accepted sinner. Every such sinner goes back continually and brings up out of his past the one sacrifice that best pleases God; that is to say, an ever-broken and an ever-contrite heart. In paragraph after paragraph of this profoundly spiritual and thrillingly experimental book, John Bunyan testifies to us how he ‘laboured’ to call again time that was past, and then in his most rapturous words he tells us also how great was his reward for all that labour. Like Israel of old, he got his vineyards from thence, and the

valley of Achor for a door of hope.

Then again, though you would not think it at first sight, an often-visited past, as a matter of fact, comes to be a great impulse and a great assistance to justifying faith. Before faith begins its work in the soul a bad past causes an absolutely paralysing terror in the soul. But after God's gift of faith to the soul and after faith has begun its divine work in the soul nothing helps faith forward like self-despair and a great and a growing and a godly sorrow. Faith thrives best in a heart wholly empty and for ever empty of all self-righteousness and all self-defence and all self-help and all self-hope. And nothing so prostrates the sinner before the cross of Christ and before the throne of grace as an oft-visited past; oft visited and always taken again to heart. Look at the great experimental psalms; look at the great experimental hymns; look at the great experimental autobiographies, with Grace Abounding standing at their head, and they will all tell you that nothing so casts the soul upon Christ alone for salvation as a sinful and an oft-visited past. The great experimental divine to whom I have already referred, tells us that he always preached his best sermon after a turn on the Sabbath morning up and down among the sins of his past life. And I, for one, wholly believe him.

Again, evangelical humility is by far the most becoming, as it is by far the most Christ-like, of all our evangelical and spiritual graces. And the most inward and the most spiritual and the most exquisitely beautiful humility comes up into the sinner's heart and life out of his evil past, aggravated as his evil past is by his still evil present. It was his ever-present remembrance of his past life that made the Apostle Paul such a pattern of Christian humility. Paul bore in his deepest soul the painful scars of his past life down to his dying day. And it was that, far more than the thorn in his flesh, that made him so like his Master in his Master's favourite grace of humility and meekness of heart. And even after he was Paul the aged he came back on the sins of his youth with a deeper pain and with a more burning shame than ever before. His past life sank into his spirit more and more the older he became and the holier and the more heavenly-minded he became. And wherever you find a proud and a puffed-up man, a man jealous of his good name and his high place among his fellows; wherever you find a noisy, disputatious, self-asserting, egotistical man, that temper of his does not prove that he has not a bad past, but it proves to demonstration that he never visits his bad past. And on the other hand, wherever you find a man whose mouth is in the dust, however you praise him, or however you blame him, you may be quite sure where the loom works that weaves the garment of humility with which he is always found to be clothed.

Then again such are the enriching vineyards that God gives us from thence that from our own past lives we learn this also: to be sympathetic, and patient, and kind, and hopeful toward the sinners who are sinning all around us to-day, as we ourselves at one time sinned. We recollect the strength of our own temptations, as also the feeble fight we made against them. Like John Bunyan we wish a thousand times twice told that the days of our temptations were yet to come. And the poignancy of that too late wish makes us watch over and warn and help in every possible way, those men around us whose hour and power of temptation are so strong upon them at the present moment. Our Lord Himself was made the merciful and faithful High Priest that He is by being tempted in all points like as we are. And, He still remembers in the skies His tears and agonies and cries. And his best servants are like their merciful Master in that. In the skies of their pardon and their peace they still remember the days of their temptations and their transgressions. And having

been forgiven their ten thousand talents they take their fellow-sinner by the hand and tell him what God has done to redeem and to deliver their own lost souls. And thus it is that when you see a hard man, and an implacable man, and a cruel man, and a man without sympathy and fellow-feeling, and a man who takes his fellow-sinner by the throat, depend upon it that man's ten thousand talents are still standing against him and the tormentors' scourging hands are still awaiting him. The great experimental divine that I have drawn upon twice to-night already has this also:

'Our Master,' he says, 'gives His servants a lady's hand for binding up burdened consciences and broken hearts, by the way He unburdens their own consciences, and binds up their own broken hearts.'

Till they are able to open and to hold out doors of hope to all other men, even as Christ opened and held out a door of hope to them.

Now this is the last Sabbath night of an old and an evil year. And therefore it is the best night in all the year in which to labour to call again the past year and all the years that are past. Every man and every woman here tonight, aye, and every child, has their own past known to God and to themselves alone. And God, to whom we all belong, and to whom all our past and all our present and all our future belongs — He comes to us tonight requiring of us that which is past between Him and us. He demands that we shall go over and tell both to Him and to ourselves just what our past life has been. What our childhood was and our youth; what were the many doors of His goodness and His grace that He opened to us as our lives opened: our home life, our school life, our college life, our office life, our workshop life. What company we chose and frequented, and what marks for good or for evil our company made upon us; the first good book we remember reading, and the good effect it had upon us; our first bad book, and the bad effect it had upon us; the first corrupting word that fell on our young heart, and the first remorse we felt for our first sin. John Bunyan was brought up to curse and to swear, even as a child; to break the Sabbath day; and to rise in the morning and to lie down at night, without God in the world. But as soon as he came to himself he laboured all his after days, to call again those times that were past; wishing a thousand times, twice told, that those days of temptation were yet to come. Take an hour or two of the same godly labour to-night. For this is fit and fruitful labour for the evening of the Lord's own day. And He will come Himself and will help you with that labour and will reward you with great wages for it. O all men and women with such a past! Will you cast all this of Holy Scripture and of Grace Abounding behind your back? Will you go on into another year risking and defying all God's anger when He offers you to-night all His grace? Surely you will not so destroy yourselves! Would this not be for ever a grand night to you to look back upon if the handwriting that stands so black against you was to-night for ever blotted out, and all your past life of sin cast to-night into the depths of the sea? Why should not this be said over you also before you sleep to-night; even this;

'I will sprinkle clean water upon you also, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And, from this night, you shall be my people, and I will be your God'?

O! labour to-night before you sleep that all that may be true of you, and that it may all belong to you from this night forward and for ever. And, then, this will be a night to be remembered by John

Bunyan, and by you, and by me, both on earth and in heaven. Amen.

# 093. Especially This Word Faith Put Me To It.

XCIII ‘Especially This Word Faith Put Me To It.’

ESPECIALLY this word Faith put me to it. For I could not help it, but I sometimes must question, whether I had any Faith or no. But I was loth to conclude that I had no Faith; for, if I do so, thought I, then I shall count myself a castaway indeed. Now, who can tell but there may be some people here this evening who are just at John Bunyan’s stage in their salvation? They, like him, are never out of their Bibles. But, as they read Paul’s Epistles, they are greatly put to it by this word Faith, which rises up and meets them at every turn. Now if there are any such here I shall do my best to speak to them and to their case for a little to-night.

Well then what exactly is this thing faith, of which the whole New Testament speaks so often and says so much? What is this thing faith, which nonplussed John Bunyan so often and which non-plusses ourselves so often? Take it, to begin with, as the Shorter Catechism so scripturally and so succinctly has it:

‘Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation, as He is offered to us in the Gospel.’

Keep that fine Catechism answer well in mind, and take occasion from time to time to turn that answer over word by word in your mind and in your heart, and every time you so turn it over act upon it immediately, perform it immediately, practise it immediately, make it your own immediately; that is to say, every hour of every day receive and rest upon Jesus Christ as He is every hour of every day offered to you in the Gospel.

Ever since my student days Bishop O’Brien’s answer to the question as to what faith is has remained with me and has often been very helpful to me:

‘They who know what is meant by faith in a promise, know what is meant by faith in the Gospel; they who know what is meant by faith in a remedy, know what is meant by faith in the blood of the Redeemer; they who know what is meant by faith in a physician, faith in an advocate, faith in a friend, know, too, what the Scriptures mean to express when they speak of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.’ The Bishop of Ossory’s Nature and Effects of Faith was a classic with us in our day both for its rich evangelical substance and for its fine English style. And then just to keep in mind some of the Scripture synonyms and equivalents for faith, that is a great help both to the young inquirer and to the advanced believer. As thus: Faith is just believing; it is just assenting and consenting; it is just confiding and relying, and staying oneself upon. Again, it is rising up; it is coming; it is walking; it is running; it is fleeing; it is laying hold on; it is receiving, and it is resting on. Again, it is seeing; it is hearing; it is understanding, and it is meditating on. Again, it is tasting; it is eating; it is drinking, and drinking abundantly. Again, it is washing in a fountain; it is putting on fine linen; it is putting on Christ to justification of life; and so on, all through the Scriptures. The Old Testament saints were eminent believers and they were always saying and singing their wonderful faith in language like this:

‘The Lord, He is my God, and He is become my salvation. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my high tower, and my deliverer: in Him will I trust. Behold, God is my salvation: I will trust, and I will not be afraid what man can do to me. O my soul, hope thou in God; who is the health of my countenance, and my God.’ And then when like Bunyan we open Paul’s Epistles, faith is the gift of God. Faith is the fruit of the Spirit. It is a shield. It is a breastplate. It is a battle, which always ends in a victory. Without faith it is impossible to please God. The just shall live by faith. The sinner is justified by faith, and the saint is sanctified by faith. We have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, we stand fast by faith, and having done all, we stand. And, to crown all, Christ dwells in our hearts by faith. But the only adequate specimen of Paul upon faith is all the Epistles we have from the Apostle’s pen. Indeed you must never be out of Paul’s Epistles if you would know all the things that faith performs in the salvation of sinners, and in the sanctification of saints, and in the glory of God And then a Latin father and a preacher of the school of Paul has this:

‘Give me a passionate man, a hot-headed man, and one that is headstrong and unmanageable; and with faith as a grain of mustard seed, I will, by degrees, make that man as quiet as a lamb. Then give me a covetous man, an avaricious man, a miserly man; and with a little faith working like leaven in his heart, I will yet make him a perfect spendthrift for the Church of Christ and for the poor. Then give me one who is mortally afraid of pain; and one who all his days is in bondage through fear of death; and let the spirit of faith once enter and take its seat in his heart and in his imagination, and he shall, in a short time, despise all your crosses and flames and even the bull of Phalaris itself. Then show me a man with an unclean heart and I will undertake, by his faith in Christ, to make him whiter than the snow, till he will not know himself to be the same man.’ The grand difficulty, said Bunyan, in the way of my faith is just myself. Myself to me, he said, as a fallen and an unsanctified man, is more than all things else. Myself is more to me than God Himself, and Christ Himself, and the Holy Ghost Himself. Put myself in one scale, and all the Godhead in another scale, and it is all as nothing, over against myself. And it is because the nature and the operations of faith reverse all that for me for ever, that, to the day of my death, I so resist the approaches of faith to me and its full dominion in me. It is because faith so humbles me and so slays me and so utterly annihilates me that I find it so impossible for me to live the life of faith. It is because faith every day of my life and in every part of my life makes me nothing and far less than nothing, while it makes Another everything and far more than everything. That was the rub with Halyburton also, who when he was in any spiritual strait, ‘betook himself to any shift but Christ. Anything,’ he said, ‘rather than faith and Christ.’ And that was the same rub with Bunyan. That was the reason why he was so put to it both with the word Faith and with the thing. It was because he had to go wholly and for ever out of himself for his salvation. It was because he had to depend wholly and for ever on Another; and, to add to his difficulty, that Other was one he had never seen, but by that faith which all through so put him to it. And he had to depend on that unseen Another for hourly pardon, for hourly peace, and for everything else worth having, on earth and in heaven, in time and in eternity. He had to count all his best things to be but dung compared with Christ, and all his best deeds to be but filthy rags, beside the robe of Christ’s righteousness. And worst of all he had to take all his sins and all his sinfulness; all the vilest and all the wickedest things he had ever done, or had ever desired to do, and he had to lay them all on the substituted head of the Son of God. He had to go to Calvary every day and every hour and immediately after every sinful thought and word and deed, and he had to lay them all on the Son of God, nailed to the Cross, and there made a curse for him and for his sin. No wonder that that word Faith so terribly put Bunyan

to it! And no wonder that we so revolt from that same word ourselves! No wonder it is so hard for us who are so proud and so unbroken men, simply and like little children to receive the atonement! But when Bunyan humbled himself to receive that substitution of Another in his room: or, rather, when he was humbled of God to receive it: no wonder that being the passionate and eloquent man he was he broke forth in this rapturous strain:

'Oh, methinks it makes my heart to bleed to think that the very Son of God bled to death for me, and for my wicked doings! O, Thou Loving One! O, Thou Blessed One! How much I owe Thee! Now was my heart filled with comfort and with hope. Yea, I was so taken that day with the love and the mercy of God to me, that I could not contain it all till I went home. I could have spoken of God's mercy to me to the very crows that sat upon the ploughed lands before me, had they been capable to have understood me. To speak as then I thought, had I had a thousand gallons of blood within my veins, I could freely have spilt it all at the feet of my Lord and Saviour.'

After all that I am prepared to receive this so apposite paragraph in Walter Marshall's Bunyan-like life: Upon consulting several eminent divines, and giving one of them an account of the state of his soul, and particularising his sins which lay upon his conscience, the divine told him that he had forgotten to mention the greatest of all his sins, namely, the master sin of unbelief, in not believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, for the remission of all his sins, and for the sanctification of his heart and his life. Hereupon Marshall set himself to studying and preaching Christ, till he attained to eminent holiness, and to great peace of conscience. His last words on his death-bed were these words out of his favourite Apostle: 'The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' And now that we have seen something of what true faith is, let us ask before we close who and what a true believer is. Well, a true believer, says a master in these high matters, is one 'who has given over all other lives but that of faith.' Ever since I first came on that stroke of experimental and spiritual insight it has dwelt in my mind in a most illuminating and suggestive way. But true and good and most suggestive as that definition of a true believer is, at the same time, standing on my own experience and observation, I will take the liberty of turning that definition round the other way, and will state it to you in this way: A true believer is one who has been given over by all other lives but the life of faith. For all the true believers I know or have ever heard of clung to all their other lives as long as they could. And it was only after all their other lives had shaken them off that they betook themselves to the life of faith. Take some of the greatest believers in the Bible. Take that saint and psalmist of such wonderful spiritual genius, Asaph. In his priceless seventy-third psalm Asaph tells us his own painful experience in this matter of all his lives giving him over. He frankly tells us, for one thing, how consumed he was with envy at the men who were in greater prosperity than he was himself. Their great prosperity was his continual torment. He felt as if he had nothing left to live for, so torn with envy was he and so miserable. And all that went on till he took all that up to the sanctuary where faith in God was preached and sung and celebrated continually. And it was when he was standing one day in the heavenly light of the sanctuary, that the spirit of faith came down upon him till, like Bunyan, he could not contain himself till he went home, but sang this psalm on the spot till all the other worshippers heard him:

Nevertheless, continually, O Lord, I am with Thee:

Thou dost me hold by my right hand, And still upholdest me. My flesh and heart doth faint and fail, But God doth fail me never: For of my heart God is the strength And portion for ever. And so it was

with the prophet Habakkuk. You all have his noble song by heart:

‘Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines: the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.’ And in this also as in everything else of an experimental kind Paul comes in to crown them all. And then ourselves. Many of us now here are true believers, just in the measure that this life and that other life of ours have given us over. God would never get us at all unless He made first this life of ours and then that to give us over. I would tell out all your spiritual life as well as all my own were I to enter into those particular lives of ours that He has made to cast us off and to give us over to the life of faith. God makes all manner of losses and crosses and disappointments and bereavements to come to us in order to shut us up to the life of faith and to Himself. Till He makes this song to be sung over us as well as over all the desolate and downcast in Israel: On eagles’ wings they mount, they soar, Their wings are faith and love, Till past the cloudy regions here, They rise to heav’n above. The true believer then, the truest and the best and the most blessed believer, is just the man who has absolutely no other life left him to live but the life of faith. Christ and his faith in Christ: that, now, sums up his whole life. Till to him also to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Properly speaking, he has no book now left him but his Bible; and he is scarce ever out of his Bible, either by reading or by meditation, day nor night. And that goes on with him till his faith is to him nothing less than the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen as yet.

One moment more: for I find this among my notes on this word faith; and I will give it, not to the congregation but to the divinity students present. I find this among my notes, after I think my sixth or seventh reading, and that pencil in hand, of Dr. Thomas Goodwin’s golden volume on The Object and Acts of Justifying Faith. This is my note:

‘Let any divinity student or young preacher master Goodwin’s eighth volume by repeated and by student-like readings, and he will be set up in his own soul and in his pulpit on that word faith for the rest of his life.’

God bless the divinity students with this great gift of saving faith. Till they preach faith to their believing people with that full assurance and that full authority which a personal experience of it alone can give.

# 094. The Guilt Of Sin Did Help Me Much.

XCIV ‘The Guilt Of Sin Did Help Me Much.’ WHEN we set ourselves to study John Bunyan scripturally and experimentally and sympathetically, and to study in the same way some other men of his spiritual insight and spiritual depth and spiritual power, we find that they all agree in this: that their great sinfulness greatly helped them; first, to their own salvation, and then to their efficiency and their success as preachers of the Gospel. Let us do our best then to look into this somewhat deep matter to-night: that is to say, into some of the clearly ascertained ways in which their great sin and their great guilt did so much help Bunyan and some other Bunyan-like men. And to begin with, John Bunyan tells us that his great guilt immensely helped him to read his Bible aright. The Bible was written for the salvation of guilty sinners alone; and no man, learned nor simple, has ever read the Bible aright, or ever will read it aright, unless he always comes to it as a guilty sinner. And John Bunyan himself was all his days the very man for whom the Bible was written. For all his days and down to the end of his days he became more and more the chief of sinners. No man in the whole of England in that day was better fitted to read the Bible and to understand it and to appreciate it than was that ungodly tinker of Bedford, that man of untutored genius called John Bunyan. And the deeper and the more spiritual his experience of his sinfulness became the better a reader of the Bible he became. Till he became as sure that the Bible was the very word of God to him as he was sure of his own existence. Indeed in his own believing and bold way, Bunyan held that both David and Paul had been specially raised up, and had been specially tempted and tried and brought low, in order to pen their psalms and their epistles for his sake; far less for their own sakes than for his sake. For he saw himself as in a divine glass every time he opened a penitential psalm or returned to study an experimental epistle. Till as time went on he felt absolutely sure that He who had made him had had the Bible specially written for him in all its message of salvation by the blood of the Son of God. ‘I was driven by those fomentations of error that were abroad in my day,’ he says, ‘to a far deeper search of the Scriptures; and was, through their testimony, not only enlightened, but greatly confirmed and comforted. And, besides that, the guilt of my sin did help me much, both to understand the Scriptures, and continually to close with Christ.’ And from that John Bunyan’s sin and guilt went on to help him much both in his prayers and in his praises. No man ever prayed without ceasing, as Paul tells all men to do, who did not also sin without ceasing, as Paul did himself. Luther, who was Paul’s best successor, was wont to say that since he was always sinning so he was always confessing sin and was always praying for its pardon. Many men have prayed without ceasing for this thing and for that thing at certain seasons in their lives, but their sinfulness makes some men pray at every season, and day and night, and more and more the longer they live. And so it was with Bunyan’s singing of God’s praises also both in the church and at family worship, and in the way he filled up his time when he was walking to and fro in pursuit of his calling. And let God be most warmly thanked that He has so bountifully provided both prayers and psalms and hymns for the chief of sinners. As for instance, the penitential and the Pauline Psalms, the Olney Hymns, the Wesley Hymns, the Bonar Hymns, and many more hymns of that most excellent sort for the chief of sinners. And then most happily for his people John Bunyan’s abiding and increasing sinfulness greatly helped him to preach the Gospel in all its

freeness and in all its fullness when he became a minister. Vanity Fairlong ago had a caricature of Mr. Gladstone, under which these words were written: ‘If he were a worse man he would be a better statesman. ‘I hae nae doot,’ said an old woman in Glasgow to her elder who was canvassing his district for signatures to a call which was being subscribed to a young minister: ‘I hae nae doot but that the lad is all you say he is, but it’s clear to me that he disna ken that he’s fallen yet, an’ he’s no the minister for me.’ The radiant youth had preached an eloquent college discourse on ‘The Dignity of Human Nature,’ which had captivated the raw elder but had exasperated the old saint. You are not unfamiliar in this house with the great name of Thomas Halyburton, Professor of Divinity in the University of St. Andrews. To some ministers standing beside his deathbed, Halyburton raised himself up and said:

‘I am in circumstances now that justify me in suggesting to you all this word of advice. Be diligent in composing your sermons. But above all be diligent in scanning your own evil hearts. And then make use of the discoveries you get there to enable you to dive down into the consciences of your people, to unmask the hypocrites among them, and to separate the precious from the vile. I loved to preach in that way,’ he added, ‘and since I lay down here I have not changed my mind about my preaching.’

And, as is the influence of sinfulness on preaching, so is it in the matter of hearing preaching and understanding it and valuing it. Many of yourselves now hearing me have — I will not say too little sin — but I will say far too little conscience of sin to make you good hearers of good preaching. Your minister is your very best friend when in his despair of you he prays and waits for something to happen to you that will come both to his help and to your help in the matter of your salvation. I will not be bold enough to put into plain words what I sometimes ask for some of you. But when your sin and your guilt do at last come to help forward your salvation, then you will understand and will defend and will justify me for asking for you what I dare not now name. Up till now the holy law of God has not entered your heart. And till that all-essential experience conies home to you no preacher worth calling a preacher will have any acceptance or any success with some of you. It is a terrible truth, but it is as true as the Gospel is true, that it is only through his great sin that any sinner will ever come to his great salvation. It is only in the measure of the burden and the bitterness and the curse of his sin that any sinner will ever repent and believe to everlasting life. ‘I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick,’ said the Saviour and the Healer of sinners. And then Bunyan’s great sin and great guilt greatly helped him to understand and to console the great sinners who crowded round his pulpit. They crowded round his pulpit till he had sometimes to be carried shoulder high into his pulpit. And it was largely his terrible sense of sin that made him so popular. How far away some of our most popular modern preachers are from us when our hearts are sick and our consciences are laden with sin! How far away we are from them! They seem to know nothing of the disease, and how then can they apply the proper remedy? They cannot. They never felt this awful kind of pain, and no wonder they are no hands at administering the right alleviation of such pain. They never ran up between the walls called salvation with a great burden on their back, and how can they guide us up to the place where stands a cross? They cannot. They never needed to wash in the Fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, and how can they be expected to be good at giving a sinner a hand to help him down into that Fountain? Did you ever read John Bunyan’s exquisite Preface to his Grace Abounding? If you have the book at home you might read

the preface to-night in support and in supplement of what I am now saying, if your interest in what I am now saying lasts till you get home. When you read and understand and love that remarkable piece, the great writer of it will tell you what a heavy price he had to pay before he was fully taught of God how to unburden loaded consciences, and how to bind up broken hearts, and how to cheer the sin-sad children of God. As John Bunyan's friend Thomas Goodwin says, 'His own sinfulness, and his own suffering, combine to give a minister a lady's hand for the binding up of broken hearts.'

Now in all that of the guilt of his sin helping him so much, John Bunyan is neither so original, nor is he so exceptional, as you might think he is. By no means. He is only one among many if you know where to find them, and if you have any interest and any pleasure in finding them. I have found some of them for you, and I will not wind up to-night till I have introduced you to some of them. Some of them are old authorities and old favourites with some of you. And you will not weary to hear them again on this great matter of how sin and guilt are sometimes employed for a sinner's great help in entering on and in living out the divine life. And first, hear Hooker himself on Peter's great fall, In his Learned Sermon of the Nature of Pride that great father of the English Church says this:

'I am not afraid to affirm it boldly, with St. Augustine, that puffed up men receive a benefit at the hands of God, and are assisted by His grace, when with His grace they are not assisted, but are permitted, and that grievously, to transgress. Ask the very soul of Peter, and it shall undoubtedly make you this answer: My eager protestations, made in the glory of my ghostly strength, I am ashamed of; but those crystal tears, wherewith my sin and weakness were bewailed, have procured my endless joy: my strength hath been my ruin, and my fall hath been my stay.' And hear Hooker's still greater contemporary, —

O benefit of ill! now I find true That better is by evil still made better; And ruin'd love, when it is built anew, Grows fairer than at first, more strong, far greater. So I return rebuk'd to my content, And gain by ill thrice more than I have spent. Or as our own fellow-townsman almost too boldly has it, —

O Lord, if too obdurate I, Choose Thou before my spirit die, A piercing pain, a killing sin, And to my dead heart run them in. And hear Halyburton again on his death-bed;

'I was fond enough of books, but I must say that what the Lord let me see of my own ill heart, and what was necessary against it, that was more steadable to me than all my books.' And again:

'The Lord did humble me, and did prove me, and did let me see what all was in my heart, even a great deal more of wickedness than I had suspected. And the Lord hereby instructed me that this is not my rest, and made me value heaven far more than otherwise I would have done. Thus was I made a gainer by my losses, and a more upright man by my falls, to the praise of His glorious grace.' And our old Highland friend Fraser, that truly great theologian and truly great saint, has this which I have had by heart ever since I first read it some forty years ago:

'I find advantages by my sins,' he says. '"Peccare nocet, peccavisse vero juvat." I may say, as Mr. Fox said (not George; George as a preacher was like Mr. Gladstone as a statesman): As Mr. Fox said, My sins, in a manner, have done me more good than my graces. For, by my sins I am made more humble, more watchful, and more revengeful against myself. I am made to see a greater

need to depend upon God, and to love Him the more who continues such kindness to me, notwithstanding my manifold provocations. I find that true also which Thomas Shepard saith, My sin loses some of its strength by every new fall of mine.' My brethren, know and honour and love the names of those great men of God. They are the only true theologians, and they are the very princes of preachers. But none of them all can beat Bunyan.

'Oh, the remembrance of my great sins! They bring afresh into my mind the remembrance of my great help, and my great support from heaven, and the great grace that God extended to such a wretch as I. Great sins do draw out great grace. And where guilt is most terrible and fierce, there the mercy of God in Christ appears most high and mighty.'

And, after enumerating the 'seven abominations' that he still finds in his heart, he bears this experimental witness:

'Yet,' he says, 'the wisdom of God doth order them for my good. For (1) they make me abhor myself;

(2) they keep me from trusting my heart;

(3) they convince me of the insufficiency of all inherent righteousness;

(4) they show me the necessity of fleeing to Jesus;

(5) they press me to pray unto God;

(6) they show me the need I have to watch and be sober;

(7) they provoke me to look to God, through Christ, to help me, and to carry me through this world.'

Dr. Du Bose, in some of his books, is about the best writer of the present day to my taste. Dr. Du Bose is one of the most up-to-date, as you would say, of all our living divines. And as to the subject in hand, namely, the serviceableness of sin in the work of salvation, this is a specimen of what the divinity students are taught in the University of the South.

'The distinction,' says Dr. Du Bose, 'which our Lord and the New Testament consistently make, is not that some men are sinners, and some are not. But that some men are so content to be sinners that they know not that they are sinners. While other men are so convinced and convicted of their own unholiness that they are conscious of nothing else in themselves but their sin. Blessed are we, even that we are sinners, if we know our sin; if through knowledge of the curse of sin we have been brought to know the blessedness of holiness. For beings like ourselves, the consummate joy of holiness would be incomprehensible and impossible save through a corresponding and an equal sense of sin, and sorrow for sin. All our true joy, in what we are to be, is born of our true sorrow for what we now are.' But all the greatest authorities in the world, ancient and modern, apostolical and evangelical, Anglican and Puritan, will not convince the man who is not, by his own experience, absolutely convinced of all that already. And the man who is absolutely convinced of all that already, he does not need the men of authority whom I have now laid before him. He does not need them: no, but he immensely enjoys them; and makes them, more and more, his favourite authors. Who are your favourite authors?

Since I finished the writing of these lines I stumbled last night upon this in Jonathan Edwards that prince in our Puritan Israel: ‘Our sin and our misery, by this divine contrivance of redemption, are made the occasion of our greater blessedness. By our sin we had deserved everlasting misery; but, by the divine wisdom and grace, our sin and our misery are made the occasion of our being everlastingly blessed. The saved sinner shall be far more holy and far more blessed than he would have been if he had never sinned at all. His great sin is made the occasion of his far greater salvation. For, where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. That, as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.’

Chapter 95

# 095. The Right Way To Take Off Guilt.

XCV ‘The Right Way To Take Off Guilt.’

JOHN BUNYAN tells us that he came to see that the very worst way to take off his guilt was to let it die away of itself: to let it die away of itself till at last it died out of his heart and conscience altogether. We all know that fatal way of taking off guilt, and indeed the most of us take that fatal way. But there are other fatal ways that we sometimes take with our guilt besides that so fatal way of the mere lapse of time. Jacob thought to take off his guilt by heaping up presents of reparation upon Esau. David in his silence and in his guile toward God made the redress of marriage to Bathsheba. And Zacchaeus restored fourfold to the impoverished widows and orphans of Jericho. Codes of penance also and systems of self-punishment have been invented and vows have been sworn of the most stringent self-denials and self-crucifixions. We ourselves, some of us, have fallen on our faces in a sweat of blood. We have watered our couches with our tears. And we have thought to quiet our consciences with the most solemnly sworn covenants of future obedience. But that so promising method of pacification broke down also till it left us far more miserable men than we were before. Amendment for the future we took to be sufficient atonement for the past. But the hours of temptation soon tore our most solemn covenants into rags, till we came to the prophet’s discovery that our hearts are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. But let us all attend to this out of Bunyan’s autobiography and let us all remember it:

‘Though I was thus troubled, and tossed, and afflicted, with the sight, and the sense, and the terror of my sin; yet, I was afraid to let this sight and sense of my sin go quite oft my mind. For I found that, unless guilt of conscience was taken off the right way, that is to say, by the blood of Christ, a man grew rather worse, than better, for the loss of his trouble of mind. Wherefore if my guilt lay hard upon me, then I should cry that the blood of Christ should take it off. And, if my guilt was going off, without the blood of Christ, then I should also strive to bring my guilt back again upon my heart and my conscience.’ The blood of Christ: the sin-atoning and peace-speaking blood of Christ. I do not know, my Brethren, how it may be with you in this awful matter of the blood of Christ. There may be some of you who are not without some difficulty in receiving and in holding by the fact and the doctrine of the Atonement. But for my part, my insurmountable difficulty would be if there were no absolute fact, and no sure and certain doctrine, of the Atonement. Whether or no God could at once and for ever forgive my sin without the Atonement I cannot tell. I am not one of His counsellors. But one thing I do know and can tell. When I take counsel with my own soul about my sin, I both see and know that, to all eternity, I never could forgive myself, or endure myself, but for the all-satisfying and allobliterating atonement for all my sin that has been made by the Son of God. Neither lapse of time, nor attempts at redress and reparation, nor penances, nor self-denials, nor floods of tears, nor sweats of blood, nor solemnly sworn covenants, no, nor all these things taken together, could ever take away the awful load of my sin. But when Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is ‘made sin’ by my sin: when both the fault and the stain and the guilt of my sin are all taken away from me by His blood, then a peace that simply passes all my understanding, as a matter of fact and of sure experience, takes possession of my heart and my conscience. And

when I again fall into fresh sin and fresh guilt, and that is with every breath I draw, and when I again receive the Atonement, that great peace again returns to me. I quite willingly allow you that I cannot fully understand all the divine mysteries that enter into the Atonement. I frankly admit to you that I cannot wade out into all the unfathomable depths of the Atonement. Enough for me that Almighty God fully understands and fully approves of the Atonement, and that both He and His Son and His Spirit, all Three together go down to the very bottom of it. Enough for me that the Judge of all the earth has proclaimed Himself to be well pleased with His Son's finished work, and with any and every sinner who receives and rests upon His crucified Son for his salvation. This, then, be you sure is the right way, and the only right way, to take off your guilt and mine. And till you can show me a better way,

I for my part am to take Paul's way, and Luther's way, and John Bunyan's way, and William Cowper's way, and I am to sing with him in this way:

Dear dying Lamb! Thy precious blood Shall never lose its power Till all the ransomed Church of God Be saved to sin no more.

E'er since by faith I saw the stream Thy flowing wounds supply, Redeeming love has been my theme, And shall be till I die. So right, and so alone right, is this redemption-way of taking off guilt, and so absolutely convinced of this is John Bunyan that according to thePilgrim's Progress even Christ Himself cannot take away a sinner's guilt short of His cross and His sepulchre. Spurgeon somewhere blames Bunyan for making Christian carry his burden of guilt so far and so long. For even after Goodwill had admitted Christian into the Strait Gate, and had pointed him into the Narrow Way, he still sent that pilgrim on his upward way with his burden on his back. As thus:

'Then I saw in my dream that Christian asked the keeper of the gate if he could not help him off with his burden that was upon his back. For as yet he had not got rid thereof, nor could he by any means get it off without help. But Goodwill told him: As to thy burden, be content to bear it until thou comest to the place of deliverance. For, there, it will fall off thy back of itself.'

Then, still with his burden on his back, Christian comes to the House of the Interpreter, and is entertained by the Interpreter in a way we will never forget:

'Then I saw in my dream that the highway up which Christian was to go was fenced on either side with a wall, and that wall is called Salvation. Up this way, then, did burdened Christian run. But not without great difficulty, because of the load that was upon his back. He ran thus till he came to a place somewhat ascending. And upon that place stood a cross, and a little below, in the bottom, a sepulchre. So I saw in my dream that just as Christian came up with the cross, his burden loosed off his shoulder, and fell from off his back, and began to tumble, and so continued to do till it came to the mouth of the sepulchre, where it fell in, and I saw it no more. Then was Christian glad, and lightsome, and said with a merry heart, He hath given me rest by His sorrow, and life by His death. He looked at the cross therefore, and looked again, even till the springs that were in his head sent the waters down his cheeks. And then he went on singing:

Blest cross! Blest sepulchre! Blest rather be The Man that there was put to shame for me.' That is the Gospel of our Salvation in a puritan allegory. And we have the same Gospel in apostolical doctrine in that greatest of the Epistles where it is written:

‘Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood.’

Now, we must have faith in absolutely everything connected with Christ. We must have faith in his Godhead, and in His Manhood, in His coming in our flesh, in His whole life on our earth, in His death, in His rising from the dead, and in His ascension home to heaven again, and we must have faith in all His heavenly offices both toward God and toward man. But always as we are guilty and condemned sinners, it is to faith in His blood that we are invited and commanded. We are justified, not by our faith in His being made flesh, but by our faith in His being made sin. Not by His being made our example, but by His being made our propitiation. We are justified, and we are accepted, not by anything in the Father, or in the Son, or in the Holy Ghost, but by our faith alone, and that in the blood of Christ alone. If the Apostle Paul had any insight given him into the mystery of Christ, that is it. The greatest of Christ’s apostles has nothing to preach to us compared with the sin-atoning blood of Christ. That is Paul’s one Gospel, first and last, both to himself and to us. The bare thought of any other Gospel being preached to sinners puts Paul beside himself with scorn and with contempt and with indignation.

Now, having I hope seen somewhat clearly the right way to take off guilt, let us also see the right way to keep it off. John Bunyan, like all other great authors, is his own best annotator and interpreter. And when we raise this question with him; this question as to how he kept off both his old guilt and his new guilt, this is his clear answer made both to Prudence and to ourselves:

‘When I think of what I saw and came through at the cross, that will do it. And when I look upon my broidered coat, that will do it. And when my thoughts wax warm about the place to which I am going, that will do it. Things and thoughts like these will keep off sin, and will thus keep guilt off my conscience.’

And, then, this was our own Halyburton’s way.

‘Here,’ he says, ‘in my opinion, is one of the greatest secrets of practical godliness, and one of the highest attainments in a close walk with God. That is to say, to know how to come, daily and hourly, to the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. Never to be for long; or, indeed, ever at all, away for a moment from that fountain: that is the only sure way to keep off guilt.’

Now to these two masters I will only venture to add this, — singing and saying to yourselves, day and night, the great evangelical and experimental psalms and hymns will greatly help to keep off returning and recurring guilt. Especially the hymns in the hymn-book collected under the heads of Faith and Penitence, Love and Gratitude, Joy and Peace.

Another good and indeed indispensable lesson is to get your new guilt taken off immediately. Even before it is well on get it taken off on the spot. If it is a sinful word that you have spoken, before that sinful word has lighted on your neighbour’s ear, before it has had time to enter your neighbour’s heart, and before the recording angel has had time to get his pen into his inkhorn, be you beforehand with him. Be you back at the cross in the twinkling of an eye. Be you prostrate in soul before the mercy-seat. And so with all your other sins that so easily beset you, and that so continually load your conscience with new guilt. God is said greatly to love certain of our adverbs. And no adverb more than the adverb immediately; unless it be the kindred evangelical adverbs vicariously and believingly. Well, then, as soon as you again fall into any sin, go to God alone

about it; and go vicariously, and believingly, and immediately. And then for the absolutely greatest sinner hiding in this house of God tonight there is this tremendous but most glorious lesson. It is not only the blood of Christ, and the blood of the Lamb, it is this: 'The Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood.' The Blood of God: the tremendous bareness, so to speak, and the tremendous boldness of the words: the astounding and overwhelming grace of the words, will surely bring them home to every specially guilty conscience and to every specially corrupt heart. Times and occasions without number, when every other scripture has threatened to fail myself, this supreme scripture has been a house of refuge and a high and heavenly tower to me. The Blood of God has a specially inward and a specially personal and a specially experimental evidence to me, and I recommend that most wonderful of all the scriptures to them that need it; I recommend it to them with all my heart. His blood can make the foulest clean, His blood avails for me: so sings Charles Wesley.

'Let it be counted folly, or phrenzy, or fury, or whatsoever,' says Richard Hooker, in what is, perhaps, the greatest sermon in the English language, 'it is our wisdom and our comfort. We care for no other knowledge in the world but this: that man hath sinned and God hath suffered: that God hath made Himself the sin of men, and that men are made the righteousness of God.' And then there is this so opportune and timeous lesson. You are on the search for a new minister who shall preach to you, and to your children, the right way to take off guilt, and to keep it off. Well, long ago, your fathers in this congregation were on the same scent, as Thomas Boston says of himself. And their spiritual scent took them north to Stewart of Cromarty. Now, if I once saw you settled with a minister like Stewart of Cromarty, I could depart in peace; so far, at any rate, as you are concerned. But tell us something about that elect-minister of our fathers, you will say. Well, Hugh Miller, who had such a sure scent both for evangelical doctrine and for English style in a sermon, he will tell you best all about Stewart. But take this home with you to-night out of one of Stewart's Cromarty sermons.

'Blood was sprinkled on the doorposts in Egypt; blood was sprinkled on the Book of the Law; blood was sprinkled on all the Tabernacle and on all the vessels of ministry; blood was sprinkled on the horns of the altar; blood was sprinkled from age to age within the veil; the priests were all sprinkled with blood; and the same blood was sprinkled upon all the worshipping people. And all this proclaimed continually that remission of sin in Israel was only to be obtained through the shedding and the sprinkling of blood. I implore you then,' the great preacher continued, 'to seek your forgiveness through that New Testament blood to which all that Old Testament blood pointed.' That was Stewart of Cromarty's way of preaching the right way to take off guilt and to keep it off.

And, O God, may that be the way of every future preacher who shall ever stand and minister to Thy people and to their children in this pulpit, which has, by Thy grace, from the beginning been above all things an apostolical and an evangelical pulpit! Amen.

# 096. A Thousand Pounds For A Tear.

XCVI ‘A Thousand Pounds For A Tear.’

MR. WETEYES is one of John Bunyan’s most speaking likenesses in his splendid gallery of spiritual portraits. Luther’s artist friend, Albert Durer, in a noble act of penitence put his own head and face on his famous portrait of the prodigal son, And in like manner, John Bunyan has put his own broken heart into the breast of Mr. Weteyes of the town of Mansoul. In his masterpiece portrait of Mr. Fearing, and in his companion portrait of Mr. Weteyes, we have John Bunyan’s own personal experience and his clear testimony concerning the true place of penitential tears in the spiritual life of a penitent sinner. The scientific students of tears tell us that they have discovered and have distinguished four outstanding kinds of tears. Namely natural tears, and diabolical tears, and human tears, and divine tears. Natural tears, according to those teachers, are all those tears that proceed from constitution, and from temperament, and from age, and from sex, and from all suchlike causes. And such tears as proceed from these and from all suchlike causes they assert have no real value at all; they have no religious value at all, nor any real importance whatsoever. Human tears again are such tears as flow at the loss of temporal goods, at the breaking up of earthly friendships and attachments, and at desolating bereavements; as also, sometimes, simply at pathetic occurrences and moving narrations. We all shed, and we see other people shedding, whole rivers of such humane tears every day. And such tears are not without a real value to us and to others if we make a right use of them. But the tears that those great authorities call divine tears are very different from the very best of all such natural and human tears. For divine tears, as their fine name indicates, are the immediate gift of God. And the tears that God gives are preeminently if not exclusively shed for sin. Divine tears are all those tears that we shed on account of the existence and the prevalence of sin. On account of the dominion of sin, and the pain of sin, and the guilt of sin, and the shame of sin, and the curse of sin, and especially because of all that in our own sin. The truly penitent sinner often sheds divine tears as he meditates upon and somewhat realises what his sin has cost his Saviour. Every true penitent sheds divine tears every day also for all the pain and all the sorrow and all the sin that he has brought upon other people through his own past sin as well as through his own present sinfulness. All these are the divine tears that the Holy Ghost alone can give to us and that the true penitents among us alone can shed. And all such tears are acceptable before God in the measure that they come up before Him in and through the intercessions and the tears of the Man of Sorrows. At this point it will both instruct us and impress us if we call to mind some of those Bible saints who were specially blest with the grace of tears. Those penitent saints whose divine tears were put into God’s bottle and in His bottle have been preserved to this day. ‘All the night make I my bed to swim,’ says the Weteyes of the Old Testament; ‘I water my couch with my tears. ‘And again: ‘My tears have been my meat day and night.’ And again: ‘I have eaten ashes like bread, and I have mingled my drink with my weeping.’ And again: ‘Thou feedest Thy people with the bread of tears, and Thou givest them tears to drink in great measure.’ And the prophet Jeremias, whom the Jews took to have come back to them again in the person of our Lord, he has filled his two books with utterances like

these:

‘Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears. Mine eyes shall weep sore, and my soul shall weep in secret places because the Lord’s people are carried away captive. Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease, for the daughter of my people is stricken with a very sore blow.’ And so Ezra, and Daniel, and Hosea, and Micah continually. And we never can forget that New Testament woman who by the grace given to her washed her Saviour’s feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Nor can we ever forget Peter in the garden of the high priest, nor Paul in his pastorate and in his whole apostleship. And to pass by whole generations of weeping penitents, we come to our present so penitent author. And we see him in the person of his own Christian standing and looking at the Cross till the springs that were in his head sent the waters down his cheeks.

‘Of all tears,’ he tells us, ‘they are by far the best that spring up within us at the moment when we are being sprinkled with the blood of Christ. And of all our joys they are the sweetest that are mixed with our mourning over the sufferings of Christ for our sins.’ But Bunyan is at his best in his Mr. Weteyes.

‘For you must know that this Mr. Weteyes was a poor man, and a man of a broken spirit, and one that could speak well to a petition. And for this cause he was often sent up from the town of Mansoul to intercede with the King. When he would fall down, and would utter himself in this way. Oh, my Lord, he would say, what I truly am I know not myself, nor whether my name of Weteyes be feigned or true. Especially when I begin to think what some have said, and that is, that this name of Weteyes was given me because Mr. Repentance was my father. But good men have sometimes bad children; and sinners do sometimes beget hypocrites. My mother also called me by this name of mine from my cradle. But whether she said so because of the moistness of my brain, or because of the softness of my heart, I never could make out. Be that as it may, I see much impurity in mine own tears, and great stains in the bottom of my prayers. But, I pray thee (and all the time the gentleman wept) that thou wouldest not remember against us our transgressions, nor take offence at the unqualifiedness of thy servants.’

Now with all that, and with whole volumes more like that, it is no wonder that among all the angels that stand around the throne, — This is the angel of the earth And she is always weeping. And at this point Jeremy Taylor comes in with this. Our tears for sin, he says, are so unlike the tears of the great saints; our divinest tears are so slow in coming, and they are so soon staunched and dried up again, that the great masters of the devotional life have invented ‘suppletory arts and spiritual stratagems’ so as to secure to us both timeous and sufficient tears. And one of those ‘suppletory arts,’ of which Taylor himself was such a past master, is the great art of penitential preaching. Now that great art never flourished more nor ever bore better fruit than just in the days of Taylor and Bunyan in England and in those same days in Scotland. But that great divine art is almost a lost art in our day both in Scotland and in England. Real penitential preaching, close and bold preaching coming right home to the conscience, preaching like Thomas Boston’s to terrify the godly in their too easy and too presuming way with God and with themselves, preaching fitted to keep a sinner once penitent always penitent, preaching that makes the holy law of God to enter deeper and deeper every day into the deceitful and corrupt and wicked heart; lifesearching, heart-searching, conscience-searching preaching, so far as can be gathered from the sermons that are published

and belauded and widely sold among us is all but a lost art. There is great intellectual power in the preaching of our day, there never was more; there is great Biblical and other scholarship, great eloquence, and great earnestness, of a kind; but preaching to the heart and to the conscience is a neglected, if not an altogether lost art. And the pity is, our best people are quite well pleased to have it so. They get what they want; and hence their hardness, and their dryness, and their self-complacency in the matter of divine tears; in the matter of that sacrifice which so pleases God when He can get it at the hands of His people. At the same time if the pulpits of your preachers are all but silent on the great penitential texts and topics, you have the penitential books of a far deeper and a far more spiritual day; as many of you as pine for such instruction and such direction. Though I have been labouring after it all my days among you, I bitterly feel that I have sinfully failed in preaching to you with the art, and with the power, and with the alternate commandingness and winningness of the great preachers of the penitential pulpit. At the same time, you cannot deny this that I have always told you about those great and true preachers and have pressed their priceless books upon you. The Way to Christ, The Imitation of Christ, The Unregenerate Man, The Indwelling Sin, The Mortification of Sin, The Saving Interest, The Saint's Rest, The Holy Living and Dying, The Private Devotions, The Serious Call, The Christian Perfection, The Religions Affections, and so on; and the great spiritual autobiographies. If any one among you seriously wishes to have himself exercised in some of the'suppletory arts and spiritual stratagems' of repentance unto life and divine tears, these books, and a lifetime of suchlike books, are confidently recommended to the purchase, and to the constant perusal, of that truly wise man.

I have no books, penitential or other, said the author of The Way to Christ, but I have myself. And one who early fell in love with her own salvation, and who kept true to her first love, and whom Behmen would have loved to have had for a daughter, she reports herself from the Valley of Humiliation in these inimitable terms:

'This place, methinks, suits well with my spirit. For I love to be in such places where there is no rattling with coaches, and no rumbling with wheels. Methinks, one may here, without much molestation, be thinking what he was, whence he came, what he has done, and to what his King has called him. Here one may think and break at heart, and may melt in one's spirit until one's eyes become like the fish-pools of Heshbon.'

'Here one may think and break at heart.' As much as to say that all our hearts would be broken, and all our eyes would be fountains of tears, if we would only think on the topics on which Mercy thought so much and so sweetly and so profitably. Thinking, then, just thinking, is another sure stratagem to be confidently recommended to all those who have neither the money to buy penitential books, nor have the help they so much need but in vain look for from their ministers' pulpits.

'More tears,' said McCheyne to himself when he was inquiring what was wanting in order to secure more success in missionary work. 'More tears,' he said, for the lost estate of this whole world, and more tears for the'unqualifiedness,' as Mr. Weteyes called it, of those who go out to do missionary work. Let both home ministers and foreign missionaries also shed far more tears, said McCheyne. 'Tears gain everything,' says Santa Teresa, in her so tearful autobiography. And then the restoration Psalmist strikes in to comfort both Teresa and McCheyne and says to them:

‘They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.’

Let us all close with seeking to say each one his own Amen to this penitential prayer of the great Weteyes of the English Church:

‘Thou knowest, O Lord, that I have great heaviness, and continual sorrow in my heart, for the way I have sinned against Thee. But, with all that, I am a burden to myself in that I cannot sorrow more. I beseech Thee, then, for a contrite heart, and for tears of blood for my great sins. Woe is me, for the sinfulness of my life, and for the hardness of my heart, and the dryness of my eyes. I can sin; but, of myself, I cannot repent. I am dried up like a potsherd. Woe, woe is me. Turn, O Lord, the hard rock into a pool. Give tears: give a fountain of tears. Give the grace of tears. Tears, such as Thou didst give to David, and to Jeremiah, and to Peter, and to Mary Magdalene. Give me some of the tears of the Man of Sorrows. And blessed be His Name, who so wept and so bled for me! Blessed be His name for ever by me! Even the Name of the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief for me. Amen.’

# 097. The Enmity That Is In Me To God.

XCVII ‘The Enmity That Is In Me To God.’

CALVIN says that the first table of the law, spiritually considered, holds by far the higher rank of the two; but the second table, he says, is far better adapted for making a scrutiny into our sinful hearts. And Stier takes the same view when he says that the second table is far better fitted than the first to carry conviction to our coarse-grained consciences. Now since that is so, let us commence to-night with our enmity to our neighbours. And when conviction is carried home to our evil hearts in the matter of our enmity to our neighbours, then after that we shall the better come to the far more spiritual scrutiny of our enmity to God. But to begin with, what exactly is this evil thing here called enmity? Enmity is estrangement. It is alienation. It is dislike. It is antipathy. It is animosity. It is ill-will. It is deep hostility of heart. As the saying is, it is to be at daggers-drawn with a man. Now, let us take those synonyms of enmity, and let us boldly and honestly make use of them for a somewhat thorough scrutiny of ourselves in this sad matter of enmity.

Well, then, who and what man is he from whom we are so estranged and so alienated? Let us name him to ourselves. From having been at one time good friends, or at least from having been at one time innocent and welldisposed neighbours, why are we now so estranged and so alienated? What was the original cause of this sinful estrangement and alienation? What was it in him, if it was in him? But more likely, what was it in us? A good and honest heart always begins a scrutiny like this with suspecting itself. My brethren, you will make yourselves good and honest hearts just by the way you set yourselves to find out in yourselves the whole cause of your sinful estrangement and alienation from so-and-so, naming him to yourselves as you commence your scrutiny of yourselves concerning him.

Again, why do you so bitterly dislike so-and-so? What is it in him that makes you so to dislike him? Is there really anything in him fully to account for your bitter feelings towards him? Make sure that it is not something in yourself. Is your dislike of him wholly honourable and creditable to you; or is it wholly the reverse? Imagine to yourself something that would turn your dislike to him into liking for him. Tell yourself what it is that would wholly turn your heart round to him. And that will throw a great light on yourself, and on your self-seeking heart.

Again, against what man do you harbour a secret and a rancorous ill-will? Put your finger on the name of the man concerning whom you like to hear evil tidings; on the name of the man concerning whom you hate to hear any good. How has that horrible state of mind arisen within you? Explain to yourself why it is that you have sunk to such a depth of wickedness as that. And at that point play the man. Look in your own evil face and tell yourself to your face that you have found yourself out. Say to yourself that you are that most hateful thing on the whole earth, a malicious-minded man. Cut open and spread out the black inside of your heart before God, and give Him no rest as long as an atom of that black heart dwells within you. Tell Jesus Christ in secret and unceasing prayer that since His name and His office are what they are, it is His proper and promised business to kill and cast out the devil who harbours and burrows and spits hell-fire in

your heart. And tell Him that you look to Him to do it. And to do it as quickly as possible, lest you die a devil yourself.

Then again, why have you nursed and suckled and secretly fed your illwill till you could kill such and such a man? Aye, and would do it too if you were not such a coward. You have not the courage of your evil feelings else you would dispatch him on his way home some dark night. As it is it would make you the best of company at the breakfast table tomorrow morning if you read in the paper that some other enemy of his had done your work for you. But among the weapons of civilisation cowards employ an anonymous pen where brave men employ an open dagger. Whether you go to that depth with yourselves or no, that was the way John Calvin scrutinised himself concerning his neighbour. And especially concerning his neighbour in the sixth and ninth commandments. Now you are all sound Calvinists in the doctrines of election, and redemption, and the final perseverance of the saints. Up then and be sound Calvinists henceforth in your scrutiny of yourselves, in your detection of yourselves, in your detestation of yourselves, and in your condemnation of yourselves. ‘Condemn yourselves,’ said Calvin’s master, ‘and God will justify you. But cover yourselves up, and excuse yourselves, and defend yourselves, and God will expose and condemn you, and that without appeal.’ In still further scrutiny of our enmity to our neighbour, take our ecclesiastical divisions and alienations. Now, do I love and honour and wish well to the ministers and the members of other churches, as I wish well to those of my own church? Or do I grieve over their prosperity, and does it rejoice my heart to hear of their adversity? Let every one of us scrutinise himself and then honestly answer that. Our Lord’s last prayer was offered to His Father concerning those rancorous animosities and hatreds and mutual persecutions which He foresaw would so lacerate the Church which is His body. Now how do you stand toward that great prayer of His? And is your heart and life advancing or frustrating that intercession of His? Does any minister, especially, deny this enmity? Then he is not a good heathen yet, not to say a good Christian. For even the ministers of heathendom all examined themselves and said to themselves, Know thyself. Calvin also had many a sore scrutiny of himself in respect of the church divisions of his day. And since we are among churches, how do you feel toward those men who have left your church and gone over to another church? But perhaps your hearts are too lukewarm to your own church to care very much about who comes to it or who leaves it. Only there are others among us who have the temptations that always accompany a real love and a real loyalty to their own church. Ministers, especially. Why, a minister will remember the people who deserted him and his ministry thirty, forty years ago. The wound those deserters gave to his proud heart is not healed to this day. And again on the other hand, the minister who receives those deserters with such effusiveness and with such open arms never has a thought to spare for the solace of his brother whose loss has been his gain. And I do not know that a minister’s elation of heart when he receives such deserters is one whit less sinful in the sight of God than is his neighbour’s enmity of heart at him and at them. Let a minister in prosperity as well as in adversity severely scrutinise himself. But you are not ministers, and you cannot be expected to understand or to sympathise with all their special temptations. But you are tradesmen, and shopkeepers, and lawyers, and advocates, and schoolmasters, and so on. And the same proud and selfish heart beats out its enmities in your bosom as in your minister’s bosom. And you also must learn to make your daily temptations in your shop and in your office so many calls and so many opportunities for a scrutiny of yourselves. Resentful merchants will remember the customers who left their shop with quite as long a memory as ministers will remember their ungrateful and run-away people. You

will see shopkeepers scowling at you on the street and in the church after ten, after twenty years.

Then, again, you will sometimes see Mr. Worldly-wiseman leaving a poor and struggling congregation, and joining a rich and an influential congregation, in the hope of finding a ladder there by the help of which he may climb up to the ambition of his heart. You see through him quite well; everybody sees through him. And you are tempted to despise him and to hate him. But, though he deserves to be despised, you must not dwell too much on his motives and his meanness. For your heart only too easily falls into a state of real enmity towards such men. Place-hunting, and especially in the Church of Christ, is very hateful. But your heart is not a safe home for much hatred. You must watch, and take good care, not to hate any man; no, not even in the interests of religion, nor in the interests of Church purity, nor in any other interest whatsoever. In all this, I may not have come within a thousand miles of my own special enmity, and yours. So unsearchable, so past finding out, is the sinful heart. So endless are the corruptions, and the malignities, and the enmities of the human heart, that it must be left to each spiritually minded man to scrutinise himself without ceasing, making use, as every spiritually minded man will do, of the unceasing calls and opportunities to that scrutiny which his God and Saviour and Sanctifier supplies to him. You will see that all I have done is to point out some of the more outstanding and more glaring instances of enmity, leaving it to each several man to go into his own hidden heart and to scrutinise himself there, by the help of the holy Word of God and the holy Spirit of God.

Now I very much doubt, my brethren, whether any man of us all has sufficient fineness of mind by nature, and sufficient spirituality of mind by grace, to enable him to enter truly and fully on the subject of his own enmity to God. Many who would quite frankly admit their enmity to certain men would honestly and loudly deny that they had any enmity to God. And I do not feel that I am able to-night to enter into all the scriptural proofs and experimental evidences of that universal and awful enmity. The Scriptures are full of the proofs and the evidences of our enmity to God. And what is, to my mind, by far the deepest and the truest theological literature of the Church, both doctrinal and experimental, is also full of it. And what is more to me than all that, my own scrutiny of my own heart over a long and a heart-searching life is full of it. But all that does not make me feel able to-night to enter fully with you on your enmity to God and my enmity to Him. The subject is so dreadful, the fact is so fearful, that the proper handling of it is beyond me tonight. If I entered on it, by my unskilful handling of it, I would be sure to arouse denial and contradiction in some men's minds, and that would cause more harm to them and to the truth than any good I could hope to do. A man must have that enmity in himself: he must have discovered that enmity deep down and widespread in his own heart, and he must daily lament and bewail its existence in himself, before I could preach with any profit to him about it. I do not say that any of us have such enmity to God as we have to some men; such enmity as that we would destroy Him out of existence if we could. And yet I am not sure. Let each man scrutinise his own heart about that. But no man can possibly deny his deep distaste sometimes, aye oftentimes, for spiritual duties and spiritual exercises; for secret prayer, for secret meditation, for secret self-examination, for secret communion with God, and for the pure spirituality and the pure divinity of all such exercises. And what is all that but distaste, and dislike, and weariness, and averseness, and almost enmity, to God Himself? Now to him who bitterly and with a broken heart feels all that in himself, and who hates his own ungodly and atheistic heart like hell, I will close with one word of encouragement to that man. And I take that word of encouragement out of a great forerunner of his in the depths of

the divine life — the little read but invaluable Halyburton.

‘I looked on it,’ says the Professor, ‘as part of my duty to-day to search into my spiritual state. And after earnest application to God for His Holy Spirit, who alone searches the heart of man, I pitched upon this evidence of the progress of His work of grace within me. I found in myself a real and true approbation of the holy law of God, in both its tables, and an approbation of the holiness of God in all His law. I am now satisfied with the holiness and the justice and the spirituality of the law of God. The carnal heart is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed, can be. But, blessed be God, the enmity that I once had to the law of God is now wholly and for ever removed.’ So writes that great man of God in his priceless diary. And till you come to that, take home with you to-night the paragraph of to-night out of John Bunyan. It is paragraph 115. I will read it again:

‘I remember that, one day, as I was travelling into the country, and was musing on the wickedness and blasphemy of my heart, and was considering the enmity that was in me to God, this scripture came to my mind: “He hath made peace by the blood of His Cross.” By which scripture I was made to see, both again, and again, and again, that day, that God and my soul were made friends by this blood. Yea, I saw that the justice of God and my sinful soul could now embrace and kiss each other through this blood. That was a good day to me; I hope I shall not forget it.’

Chapter 98

# 098. One Day, As I Was Passing In The Field, Having Some Dashes On My Conscience, This Fell Upon...

XCVIII ‘One Day, As I Was Passing In The Field, Having Some Dashes On My Conscience, This Fell Upon My Soul: Thy Righteousness Is In Heaven.’

LOOK at that tinker of Bedford as he leaves the open road and scrambles through the hedge into the lonely field. Why has the man such a hunted look this morning? And why does he turn his back so sullenly on his own house and on all the walks of his fellow-townsmen? Look well at him as he sets out to pursue his calling this morning with his satchel of tools on his shoulder and takes his solitary way across the lonely fields and through the dark and silent woods. What is the matter this morning with John Bunyan who was wont to frequent the roads and the streets of Bedford and to salute so genially every man he met? It is his conscience. It is his dashed conscience. He does not tell us what exactly it was that had so dashed his conscience and had so darkened his heart that morning. And thus it is that we are left to guess for ourselves what it may have been. Well, it may have been this. He may have dashed his wife’s heart that morning at breakfast by his cruel words to her. Or he may have dashed the heart of his blind child by his unkind impatience with her, till he left both his wife and his child in tears together. Or he may have lost his temper and let loose his tongue on some apprentice or some fellowworkman of his. Or again he may have been guilty of some great outbreak of ill-will against some other tinker in the town. Or again it may have been some of his ‘seven abominations’ that had so broken out that morning as to leave his conscience one mass of remorse and wounds and blood. I have my own guess what it was, but I cannot be absolutely sure. At any rate, there he is stumbling through the ploughed field, laden to the earth with that millstone of a satchel, and nigh unto death with those great dashes on his conscience. And then there was this also. As he stumbled on among the deep furrows of that lonely field that terrible breakdown of his religious life at home that morning set him a-questioning as to the reality of his conversion, and as to the truth of all his professions of religion. ‘I must have been deceiving myself all along,’ he said to himself.

‘And I must have been deceiving my minister and all the devout people of Bedford all along. For no man that had ever been truly born again could ever so misbehave himself, both to God and man, as I have again misbehaved myself this morning. No. I see now that I am a reprobate and a castaway as I so richly deserve to be.’ But the miserable man had scarcely said that to himself when suddenly this sentence fell from God on his soul:

‘Thy Righteousness is in Heaven. ‘Hear himself about it.’ Now, methought, withal, I saw, with the eyes of my soul, Jesus Christ at God’s Right Hand. There, I say, I saw my Righteousness; so that, wherever I was, or whatever I was a-doing, God could not say of me that He wanted my Righteousness; for, there it was just beside Him. I also saw, moreover, that it was not my good frame of heart that made my Righteousness better; nor yet my bad frame of heart that made my Righteousness worse. For, my Righteousness was Jesus Christ Himself: the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Now did my chains fall off my legs indeed. I was loosed from all my affliction

and iron. My temptations also fled away. And now I went home that night rejoicing in the grace and in the love of God. O methought, Christ! Christ! There was nothing but Christ that was before my eyes. Because I could now look from myself to Him; and should reckon that all those graces of God, that now were but green on me, were yet but like those crack-groats and fourpence-halfpennies that rich men carry in their purses, when their gold is in their trunks at home! O yes: I saw that my gold was in my trunk at home! Even in Christ, my Lord and Saviour! Now Christ was all to me. He was all my Wisdom, all my Righteousness, all my Sanctification, and all my Redemption. Now could I see myself in heaven, and on earth, and both at once. In heaven by my Christ, by my Head, by my Righteousness, and by my Life: though on earth by my body or person.'

Now is there any man in this house this evening with a dashed conscience? What have you been doing, Sir? When was it, and where was it? Was it at breakfast this morning, or was it at dinner this afternoon? Was it an outburst of bitter anger and bad temper? Or was it your enmity at some innocent and unsuspecting man? Have you struck again at your neighbour with your wicked tongue or with your wicked pen? After all that both God and man have done for your soul have you gone back again as a dog to his vomit, and as a sow that is washed to her wallowing in the mire? No wonder then, that your conscience is dashed to pieces to-night. No wonder that you are avoiding the eyes of good men. No wonder that you are in such shame and despair. But God delights in mercy to miserable men like you. And He has been beforehand with His mercy to you. For, among other things, He has had Grace Abounding written for you. And as God's much experienced servant hands down his golden book to you, he says to you, and to all his readers:

'My children, Grace be with you, Amen. I have sent you here enclosed a drop of that honey which I have taken out of the carcase of a lion. I have eaten thereof myself also, and I have been much refreshed thereby. This book of mine is something of a relation of the work of God upon my own soul; even from the very first till now. Wherein you may see my castings down, and my raisings up. For He woundeth, and His hands make whole. It is written in the Scriptures that the father to the children shall make known the truth of God. Yea, it was for this reason that I lay so long at Sinai, to see the fire, and the cloud, and the darkness, and the tempest, that I might fear the Lord all the days of my life on earth, and so tell of God's wonderful works to the ears of my children.'

Now the one sure lesson for you out of all that of John Bunyan is this: God, who justifies the ungodly, and Jesus Christ, who is the sinner's Righteousness, are both the very same in this house this evening as they were in that Bedford field that forenoon. The only difference is that you have taken John Bunyan's place before God. John Bunyan is no longer in Bedford with such dashes on his conscience. He is now for ever with Christ and for ever like Christ. He is now where his Righteousness and his Sanctification have always been. And you are in his identical place in this house this Sabbath evening. Like him that forenoon your conscience is sorely dashed with your sins; sorely dashed with the re-awakened remembrance of old sins, as well as with the fresh dashes of new sins. When suddenly this same sentence falls on your soul: O chief of sinners! Do not despair, for thy Righteousness is in heaven! Now after that heavenly voice has fallen on your soul, all that you have got to do to-night is to believe it so as not to make God a liar about it. All that you have got to do to-night is to look up, and to keep on looking up, till like John Bunyan you clearly see with the eyes of your soul Jesus Christ at God's right hand, and there representing you, and appearing for you, and transacting for you. All you have got to do to-night, and every day and

every night till you die, is to see continually, and to believe continually, and to assure yourself continually, that it is not your good frame of heart that makes your Righteousness better, nor your bad frame of heart that makes your Righteousness worse. Now, if you believe and receive that and continue to believe and receive that — and you have the same right and title and command to believe that as Paul and Luther and Hooker and Bunyan had — then your chains also will fall off your legs. You will be loosed from all your affliction and iron. And all your temptations to be a boor and a brute at home and abroad will more and more flee away, till you will find yourself exclaiming continually with John Bunyan, O Christ! O Christ! O Christ! And till there will be nothing but Jesus Christ before your eyes. You are frightened to have your name coupled with the names of such saints as Paul and Luther and Hooker and Bunyan. And no wonder. But all the difference between those four great saints and you is this: they are all men of great spiritual genius, and you are in your own eyes a cheap and a commonplace sinner. And that is quite true. But then you have Paul himself to comfort you and to encourage you in that respect in a great passage of his where he says:

‘Not many wise men, not many noble, not many mighty are called. But base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen. And therefore of Him are you also in Christ Jesus — if you will only consent to have it so — who of God is made unto you, not Righteousness alone, but Wisdom, and Sanctification, and Redemption also. That, according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.’

What a glorious ‘device’ is the gospel of our justification, — William Guthrie is always exclaiming in his Saving Interest. That Almighty God should devise and should discover to us such a way in order to show forth His holiness and His justice and His grace; and all working together into such a deep plot of divine wisdom! Yes, indeed, what a deep device! And how like God Himself in every respect! That, to begin with, He should place us sinful men under a law of His which is so holy, and which is so spiritual in its holiness, that no mortal man can, by any possibility, obey it so as to attain to eternal life by the obedience of it. A law so spiritual and so holy that we only break it the more hopelessly the more deeply we enter into it. And then that God should make His own Son, Jesus Christ, under that same holy and spiritual law, and that He should magnify the universally broken law, and make it honourable; should obey it and fulfil it in every thought and word and deed of His down to every jot and tittle of it. And should, both by His obedience and by His blood, finish for us what Paul by the Holy Ghost always calls the ‘Righteousness of God.’ And then that Jesus Christ should be made to us our immediate and everlasting Righteousness — what a ‘device’ of combined holiness and justice and grace is that! No wonder that Bunyan never ceased exclaiming: O Christ! O Christ! O Christ! And no wonder that Christiana exclaimed after Greatheart had expounded Christ’s righteousness to her: ‘O this is brave!’ she exclaimed. ‘Good Mercy, let us labour to keep this well in mind. And do you also, all my children, remember it all your days on earth.’ But with all that some of you will still say that you cannot believe it and receive it so as at all times to stay and rest your whole soul upon it. You cannot believe it, that the very next moment after some fresh outbreak of your deep-seated sinfulness you should have no more to do but just to look up to heaven and say: The Lord Jesus Christ, up there, is my complete Righteousness! You are concerned, for one thing, for God’s honour, and for the honour and for the authority of His holy law. And at other times you cannot be too much concerned about all that. But not now. Look up on the spot and claim Christ as your all-justifying righteousness, and leave God’s honour and

the honour of His holy law in His own hands. You may depend upon it that both God and His Son have looked well to all that long before they had the gospel of your free and full and immediate and everlasting forgiveness preached to you. And more than that, as a matter of sure fact and of indisputable experience, God has had His great device of an imputed Righteousness vindicated by two thousand years of the holiest men on the face of the earth. No; you need not take fear for God and His holy law. For neither you nor any other divinely forgiven man will ever be found sinning that grace may abound. No; but you will always find yourself, in the hour and in the opportunity of temptation, instinctively and indignantly protesting and saying, God forbid! Shall I, who am dead to sin, live any longer therein? Just put this immense matter upon an immediate experiment. The next time you fall, inwardly or outwardly, look up that moment to your Righteousness in heaven; and see if that sight will not, in the end, wholly sanctify you as well as wholly justify you. It will; it most certainly will; if Paul is right in his Romans, and if Bunyan is right in his Grace Abounding, and if Hooker is right in his immortal sermon. Paul's Romans you all know, and Hooker's sermon you have all heard of, and Bunyan's experience you are every Sabbath evening coming more and more to know. But Luther, Paul's best gospel scholar, you only know by name as yet. Take, then, this taste of the great Reformer before you go home. He is writing to an Augustinian monk, and he says:

'I should be very glad, my dear Spentein, to know what is the state of your soul. Are you not clean tired of working out your own righteousness? In our day pride seduces many, and especially those who labour, with all their might, to make themselves righteous. When you were living with me, you were in that fatal error, and so was I. And I am still struggling against that so fatal error. I have not even yet entirely triumphed over it. O, my dear brother, learn to know Christ, and Him crucified! Learn this new song, and sing it unceasingly to Christ: "Thou, O Lord Jesus Christ, art my Righteousness, and I am Thy sin. Thou hast taken what was mine, and hast, in room of it, given me what was Thine. What Thou wast not Thou didst become, in order that I might become and might remain, what, at one time, I was not." Sing and say that to Christ continually. Beware, O my brother, of ever pretending to such purity of heart and life as no longer to confess thyself a sinner; for Christ dwells only with sinners. If our labours and our afflictions could have given us peace of conscience why should Christ have died for us? Dear Spentein, you will find no peace save in Christ. And Christ is always opening His arms to you; He is always taking all your sins upon Himself, and giving you all His Righteousness.'

Learn that by heart, my brethren; as also this: 'One day, as I was passing in the field, and that, too, with some dashes on my conscience, fearing lest yet all was not right, suddenly this sentence fell upon my soul: Thy Righteousness is in Heaven.'

Chapter 99

# 099. The Most Fit Book For A Wounded Conscience.

XCIX ‘The Most Fit Book For A Wounded Conscience.’

‘BEFORE I had gone thus far out of these my temptations, I did greatly long to see some ancient godly man’s experience, who had writ some hundred of years before I was born. For, those who had writ in our days I thought (but I desire them now to pardon me) that they had writ only that which others felt, or else had, through the strength of their wits and parts, studied to answer such objections as they perceived others were perplexed with, without going down themselves into the deep. Well, after many such longings in my mind, the God in whose hands are all our days and ways, did cast into my hand one day a book of Martin Luther; it was his Comment on the Galatians — it also was so old that it was ready to fall piece from piece if I did but turn it over. Now I was pleased much that such an old book had fallen into my hands; the which, when I had but a little way perused, I found my condition, in his experience, so largely and so profoundly handled, as if his book had been written out of my own heart. But of particulars here I intend nothing. Only this, methinks, I must let fall before all men, I do prefer this book of Martin Luther upon the Galatians (excepting the Holy Bible) before all the books that ever I have seen, as most fit for a wounded conscience.’

Now, since very few of you can possibly have access to Luther’s Comment on the Galatians, I propose to give up the whole of this evening hour to that great Reformation book. I shall stand aside to-night and I shall let Martin Luther speak to you as he spoke to John Bunyan.

Take first, then, what Luther taught and what Bunyan felt and experienced about Sin.

‘Sin in Holy Scripture,’ says Luther, ‘signifies far less the outward act, than the sinful spirit that lives and works deep down in the bottom of the sinner’s heart. According to the universal teaching of Holy Scripture, the sinful heart is the true seat, and the real source, of all our evil. And, then, more than that, Holy Scripture looks on our Unbelief as being the real spring of all our evil, both inward and outward. “The Holy Ghost shall convince the world of sin,” says our Lord, “because they believe not on Me.” According to Holy Scripture faith alone justifies, and unbelief alone condemns.’

Therefore, says Luther, wherever you find a sin, the unbelief of the heart is always at the root of that sin. And then, like all Scripture, and like all spiritual experience, Luther adds that

‘our unbelief and our sin are so deeply rooted in our depraved hearts that they are never wholly eradicated in this life. Even the best saints are continually falling into sin through unbelief and an evil heart. Abraham fell, Isaac fell, Jacob fell. And so on, all down the Holy Scriptures. And all these sins of God’s saints are recorded in the Holy Scriptures in order that we may take comfort and may not despair. If Jacob, and Aaron, and David, and Peter fell, and rose again, so may we rise again like them. They rose again by repentance, and by faith, and by prayer, and so may we,’ says Luther. Now, I can imagine John Bunyan walking in the fields, with some dashes in his conscience, and with these strong passages out of Luther taking possession of his heart for the first time.

There is nothing on which Luther is more Pauline and more powerful than on the Law, and on our right use of the Law.

‘Understand,’ he is continually saying, ‘that Moses is not intended to be your saviour. You will never save yourself by the deeds of the Law. The Law is intended to have the very opposite result. For the divine intention of the Law is, to begin with, to show us ourselves. Its first function is to reveal to us our hopeless sinfulness and our estate of condemnation. Nay, not only does the Law reveal to us our hopeless sinfulness, it mightily increases our sinfulness, and it mightily deepens and darkens our despair.’ The Law enters, says Luther’s master in divinity, in order that the offence may abound. Moses with his Law is most terrible to us, Luther is always saying. There never was the like of Moses for terrifying our consciences and tyrannising over our hearts, he is always threatening and thundering against us. Moses and his Law never have had one single word of comfort, or of hope, to say to any poor sinner. Let every well-taught Christian man, then, learn to reason with the Law in this way, says Luther.

‘Let every well-taught Christian man dispute with the Law, and say to it: O thou so severe and so inflexible Law! thou wouldst fain set up thy seat of judgment in my guilty conscience! Thou wouldst fain summon up all thy witnesses against me! Thou wouldst fain sentence me as I deserve! But keep thee to thy proper office. Lay all thy terrors upon my sinful heart, and upon my evil life. But come not near my tender conscience. For thou must know that Christ, thy Master and mine, has Himself died for me. He has Himself settled all my accounts for me. And in Him I have, and I am righteously entitled to have, peace of conscience and a quiet mind. He has led me wholly out of thy jurisdiction, and He has placed me down in an estate of salvation, in which estate there is no condemnation. I am now the subject of a kingdom in which there is nothing but forgiveness, and peace, and joy, and health, and love, and everlasting life. Tell the Law that if it has anything in any way to say to thee now, it must say all that to thee through Christ. Say to it that thou art now stone dead to every one and to everything but Christ.’ That Gospel doctrine concerning the Law was very marrow and fatness to Bunyan’s soul. And then after he had thoroughly mastered all that out of Paul and out of Luther Bunyan puts it all to us in his own dramatic way, when he shows us Christian going out of the right road and wandering astray under the thunders and the earthquakes of Sinai, till Evangelist found him and spoke to him with such a severe countenance concerning his all but fatal error.

Out of a thousand passages about Christ in Luther’s writings Bunyan would read this a thousand times.

‘Christ, then, is no Moses. Christ does not speak from Sinai. No weapons in His hands are seen, nor voice of terror heard. Christ is not a hard master who will compel the uttermost farthing. Christ comes to all sinners full of grace and mercy; both able and willing to save. Christ is nothing but infinite grace and goodness. Be sure that you always paint Christ to yourself in His true and correct colours. It is the very top and complete crown of Christian truth to be able to define and describe Christ aright, and that especially in the season of sin and guilt and condemnation. Hold fast, at all times, by Paul’s description and definition of Christ. Now Paul’s true description and definition is this: He loved me, and gave Himself for me. For myself,’ says this true Pauline preacher and true pastor of souls;

‘for myself, I have much difficulty in always holding this divine definition of Christ which Paul gives to all believers. When I was a young man,’ says Luther,

‘I was so drowned in unscriptural and anti-evangelical error that my heart trembled at the very name of Christ, for I was taught to think of Him as an angry judge; whereas He is our Redeemer and our Saviour. Christ is joy and sweetness to every trembling and broken heart. Christ is the true and faithful lover of all those who are in trouble and anguish because of sin. He is the merciful High Priest of all miserable and fearful sinners. Let us learn to practise this distinction; and not in sacred words only, but in life and in experience, and with a warm inward feeling. For where Christ is rightly understood and held by, there must needs be joy of heart and peace of conscience. And that because He is our reconciliation, and our righteousness, and our peace, and our life, and our whole and complete salvation. In brief, whatsoever the afflicted conscience desires, that it finds in Christ abundantly and continually.’ In brief, says Luther; but instead of being brief he dwells upon Christ in that way at all length and in every sermon and comment of his. Spurgeon was like Luther his forerunner when he said that what his faultfinders complained of concerning his sermons was quite true; wherever he took his texts it did not matter, he straightway made across country to Jesus Christ. Spurgeon could not be brief when he came to Christ, and neither could Luther, and neither could Bunyan. ‘O methought, Christ! Christ! There was nothing and no one now but Christ before my eyes!’

You all know what a supreme and what a universal place Faith holds in the Bible, and especially in the New Testament, and especially in Paul’s Epistles. Well, faith holds an equally supreme and universal place in all Luther’s writings. And rightly so. For there is nothing in all the world so necessary to us as faith, and there is nothing so little understood by us.‘Especially that word faith put me to it,’ says Bunyan. And it was Luther who first and fully cleared up this supreme matter of faith to Bunyan. I take this passage on faith not from his Comment on the Galatians, but from his Christian Liberty, which is the finest thing that Luther ever wrote, and one of the foundation documents of our evangelical divinity:

‘Now since these promises of God are such words of holiness, and truth, and righteousness, and liberty, and peace, and are so full of universal goodness, the soul which cleaves to them with a firm faith is so united to them as to be penetrated and saturated with all their sweetness. For if the mere finger-touch of Christ’s clothes was so healing, how much more does that most spiritual touch of pure faith communicate to the soul all that stands in the divine word concerning Christ. In this way therefore the soul through faith alone is from the Word of God justified, sanctified, endued with truth and peace and liberty, and filled full with every good thing. There is this incomparable virtue in faith also, that it unites the soul to Christ as the wife is united to her husband; by which “mystery,” as the Apostle teaches, Christ and the soul are made one for ever. Now if they are made one for ever, and if the most perfect of all marriages is accomplished between them (for our human marriages are but feeble types of this one great marriage), then whatsoever Christ possesses, all that the believing soul may take to itself and hold as its own; just as whatever belongs to the soul Christ takes to Himself and holds as His own. Now Christ, our husband, is full of grace, and life, and salvation; and the soul is full of sin, and death, and condemnation. But let faith step in, and then our sin and our death and our hell itself will all belong to Christ; and all His grace and life and salvation will all belong to us. In all this the delightful sight is seen of our victory, and salvation, and redemption. When our Bridegroom, by the wedding ring of faith, takes the sins

of the soul and makes them all His own, then must all our sin and death and hell be swallowed up in the stupendous conflict our Husband holds with all our enemies. For His righteousness rises far above all our sins; and His life is now far more powerful than is our last enemy; and His great salvation is the conquest of our very hell itself. My Beloved is mine, the soul sings, and I am His. Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

I wish I could put into your believing hands the whole of Luther's incomparable treatise Concerning Christian Liberty. And especially I wish I could put into your hands those fine pages, those truly exquisite pages, on faith as it is the fulfilling of the whole law of God. But I must not withhold from you this great passage about Grace which one was reading aloud in a prayer-meeting in London at a quarter to seven one evening when John Wesley, on hearing it, had his eyes opened, and immediately entered into light and life.

'Grace has this distinction,' writes Luther, 'that it signifies the favour and the affection of God, through which He pours Christ and His Spirit into our hearts. And though our sinfulness remains in us more or less all our life on earth, nevertheless grace does so much for us that we are regarded as fully and entirely justified before God. For His grace does not divide itself, and parcel itself out, but it receives us at once and wholly into the divine favour for the sake of Christ. You can understand, therefore, the seventh chapter of the Romans, where Paul so reproaches himself as a sinner, and yet in the eighth chapter goes on to say that there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. On account of our indwelling sin we are still sinners; but because of our faith and trust in Christ, God is favourable to us, and will act toward us according to our faith in Christ till our sin is completely mortified from within us.'

Returning to the Galatians we find Luther saying;

'There is nothing in all the world more precious than this doctrine of grace. For they who understand this doctrine know that sin, and death, and all our other afflictions and calamities, as well of the body as of the soul, do work together for good. Moreover, they know that God is then most near to them, when they think Him furthest off. And that He is then most full of mercy and of love to them, when they think Him to be most offended and most angry with them. Also, they know that by grace they have an everlasting righteousness laid up for them in heaven, even when they feel in themselves the most terrible terrors of sin and death and hell. But this cunning knowledge is not learned,' says Luther, 'without many and great temptations.'

Hazlitt says that the only specimen of Burke is all that he ever wrote. And so I will say of Luther on the topics I have just touched. At the same time, I must sum up this shamefully meagre specimen of Luther's riches, and I will do so with quoting to you one or two of the things he says about the right use of some of the Pronouns. Commenting on Paul's words — Jesus Christ, which gave Himself for our sins, Luther says:

'Weigh well every word of Paul, and especially weigh well this pronoun our. For thou wilt easily believe that Jesus Christ gave Himself for the sins of Peter and Paul; but it is a different thing to believe that He gave Himself for thine invincible, infinite, and horrible sins. But be sure to exercise thyself diligently in this pronoun our; and this single syllable, being rightly believed, will swallow up all thy sins. Only, to do this when we are in the conflict with unbelief, is, of all things, the most hard and difficult. I speak this by experience,' says Luther. And, again, on Paul's further words — The

Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me, Luther asks:

‘But who is this me? It is even I, Martin Luther, a wretched and a condemned sinner. This word me is full of saving faith,’ he says. ‘He who will utter aright this little word me shall be a good advocate and disputer against all the accusations of the law, and of his own conscience. For Christ delivered up for me neither sheep, nor ox, nor gold, nor silver, but Himself, and that entirely and wholly for me. Yes even for me, who am such a wretched and miserable sinner. Say me then with all thy might, and print this pronoun me indelibly in thine heart. Not doubting, no — not for one moment, but that word is written for thee, to make it thy very own and to make Christ and His death for sin thy very own also.’ And in yet another place Luther teaches us that

‘all the religion of the Psalms lies in the right use of the personal pronouns, I, and Me, and Thou, and Thee.’

‘I never can separate the two names of Paul and Luther,’ says Coleridge in his English Divines. And again, ‘How dearly Luther loved Paul, and how dearly would Paul have loved Luther!’ exclaims Coleridge. But not more, I will add, than John Bunyan loved him. For much as has been said and written by Coleridge and by many others in praise of Luther, there is nothing that excels the classical text of this evening’s discourse:

‘Methinks I must let this fall before all men, I do prefer this book of Martin Luther upon the Galatians (excepting the Holy Bible), before all the books I have ever seen, as most fit for a wounded conscience.’

Chapter 100

# 100. Oh Many A Pull Hath My Heart Had With Satan For That Blessed Sixth Of John.

C ‘Oh! Many A Pull Hath My Heart Had With Satan For That Blessed Sixth Of John.’ THE name of ‘Satan’ was not a profane jest to John Bunyan. Satan was as real and as terrible and as diabolical to John Bunyan as he was to Adam and Eve, and to Job, and to Joshua the high priest, and to Luther in the Wartburg, and to our Lord in the Wilderness. John Bunyan was little child enough to take literally and truly all that he read in his Bible. He downright believed every syllable that he read in his Bible. And then with his great eyes of genius and of grace he actually saw and felt and acted upon every syllable that he read in his Bible.

‘If ever Satan and I did strive for any word of God in all my life, it was for this good word of Christ; Satan at one end of it, and I at the other end. Oh, what work we did make! It was for this in John, I say, that we did tug and strive. He pulled and I pulled. But, God be praised, I got the better of him.’ The old serpent, you see, was as real and he was as diabolical to John Bunyan in Bedford as he was to Adam and Eve in Eden, and to the second Adam in the Wilderness. But to come to some particulars: ‘We two, Satan and I, had the most terrible pull for the natural force of every syllable in that blessed sixth of John’: so our autobiographer tells us in another paragraph. Now, since all that was so, and since all that has been written by Bunyan for our learning, let us go back to Bedford to-night, so as to be present at that trial of strength between the prince of darkness and John Bunyan, that poor and oppressed servant of Jesus Christ. And as we look on we shall lay up some lessons as to how we also must play the man when we are in the same arena, and are in the same death agony with the same enemy.

Take, then, ‘the natural force,’ as Bunyan calls it, of this syllable ‘him’ in that blessed sixth of John — ‘him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.’ Now there are times when I cannot enter on my text till I have seen what Mr. Spurgeon has to say upon it. And I felt just in that way about this supreme text of tonight. And accordingly I sent up two or three postage stamps to Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster in London and they sent me down by return three sermons by Mr. Spurgeon on this blessed sixth of John. And I read those three sermons with salvation and with thankfulness in my heart, as I always read Spurgeon’s sermons, and as multitudes of men and women have read them all the world over. None of us preachers nowadays can hold the candle to Spurgeon. I suppose after John Wesley, and perhaps William Booth, Charles Spurgeon will have the most names of saved sinners read out to his everlasting honour on that day when every minister’s work shall be revealed. Well I will give you an example of the way in which that great preacher brings out ‘the natural force’ of this syllable ‘him’ in this blessed text now open before us.‘Him,’ says Spurgeon,

‘means the rich man, the poor man, the great and famous man, and the small and obscure man, the moral man, the debauchee, the man who has sunk into the worst of sins, the man who has climbed to the highest of virtues, him who is next of kin to the devil, and him who is next of kin to the archangel. The sixth of John,’ continues Spurgeon, ‘is one of the most gracious and generous

texts in the whole Word of God. I cannot tell what kind of men may be in this house to-night,' he said; 'but if burglars are here, and if dynamite men are here, him that cometh to Christ this night, He will in no wise be cast out.'

[As I copy these divine lines out of Spurgeon's Gospel, I read in the papers that even Orchard professes to have been awakened and converted. That is to say, he also, who is the horror of the whole world, has had a pull with Satan for this blessed sixth of John, and has not been cast out.] But let Spurgeon proceed with ourselves. 'If amidst this great congregation there should be some men here whose characters I had better not begin to describe; yet if they come to Christ He will not say one word of upbraiding to them, but will welcome them with open arms. Be your past what it may: wrapped up as it may be in such a mystery of iniquity that nobody would believe it about you; nevertheless you come, and all your sins will be cast into the depths of the sea. Any 'him' in all the world, let that man come, and it will never be asked where he comes from. Come he from a slum, or from a shebeen, or from a gambling hell, or from a brothel, or from the hulks, and if he is cast out he will be the first. Powerful as that is, it is only one of a thousand illustrations of the way in which Spurgeon in his day pulled so many sinners out of Satan's clutches.

But, then, with all that, your sins may have been such that nothing that Bunyan or Spurgeon ever preached comes at all near your awful case, as you now see it to be. Satan who tempted you to those awful sins now turns round on you and accuses you of those very sins, as his diabolical habit is to do; and you cannot deny or extenuate his accursed accusations. Your sins are such, he tells you to your face, that they were not anticipated, and consequently were not provided for, in the one great atonement for sin. The blood of Christ, Satan says he feels sure, was never shed for such horrible sins as yours. I defy you in all your vaunted New Testament, he says, to point out a single sinner to match you among all the saved. I can understand David being saved, says Satan, and Peter, and Paul, aye, and even Judas Iscariot himself, had he come back to Christ; but none of them all, no nor all of them taken together, ever sinned against God such scarlet sins as yours. Now, like John Bunyan, you must silence Satan and your own accusing conscience with this same blessed sixth of John. And you must silence him in this way. Admit at once, and quite frankly, that all he says about you is quite true. For the worst he has said is less than the simple truth. Tell him that your past sins are no news to you; no, nor to your Saviour. Tell him that if you are to die the second death, as you so richly deserve to do, you will die on Christ's doorstep. And if Christ shuts His door of mercy against you for ever, so be it: that is only as it should be. Only, God helping you, if you are to be cast out for ever, it will not be for want of a broken heart for ever for your unpardonable past. 'Holy peevish Satan!' cried Luther to the great accuser on a similar occasion;'He, to whom I look in my sin, is able to save to the uttermost: which uttermost Martin Luther is.' Borrow you that from Luther, and apply it to yourself. And always mix that with this blessed sixth of John.

Then again, Satan almost sophisticated Bunyan out of his soul by the way he worked upon the Saviour's words — 'him that cometh to Me.'

'"Had you been born in Galilee or in Judea you could easily have come to Christ," Satan admitted. "But the Son of God is not going about Bedford, as He was wont to go about Jerusalem. The times are wholly changed since He invited those contemporaneous men to come to Him. He is now exalted far above all heavens. He is now surrounded and encircled by His glorified saints and by

His elect angels. And how can a contemptible creature like you venture near such exalted majesty as His? The thing is preposterous! You have a Bible: open it and read about Job. Oh, cried that eminent saint, that I knew where I might find Him! That I might come to His seat! Behold, I go forward, but He is not there. And backward, but I cannot perceive Him. On the left hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him: He hideth Himself on the right hand that I cannot see Him. Read that chapter every night before bedtime," said Satan, "and content yourself with your lot. Go to church twice a Sabbath if you choose. You can even join Mr. Gifford's young communicants' class if he will admit you; but put going up to heaven to pray to Christ, put that out of your foolish head." Thus was I tossed between the devil and my own ignorance, till I could not tell what to do or what to say. Then again, when I would do my best to go to Christ in spite of Satan and his false reasonings, he would set on me with this: "Was I elected, or no? And what if my day of grace was over and gone?" One night, as I sat by the fire and mused on election and predestination, Satan took up my New Testament and opened it at this passage in the ninth of the Romans and bade me read it. And I read this: "It is neither in him that willeth, nor in him that runneth, but in God that sheweth mercy." With this Scripture I could not tell what to do. I evidently saw that unless the great God of His infinite grace and bounty, had voluntarily chosen me to be a vessel of mercy, though I should desire and long and labour until my heart did break, no good could come of it. Therefore this would still stick with me— how can you tell that you are elected? And what if you are not? How then? But when I had been long vexed with this fear, these words one day broke in on my mind: "Compel them to come in, that My house may be filled; for yet there is room." These words, yet there is room, were sweet words to me. For, truly, I thought that by them I saw that there was place enough for me also in heaven. This I then verily believed. And one other day this great word came in upon me: "I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed, for the Lord dwelleth in Zion." These words I thought were sent to encourage me still to wait upon God, and they signified to me that if I were not already, yet the time might come when I might in truth be converted to Christ.'

Now, who can tell, but among so many, there may be some man here tonight who is being sophisticated by Satan in this same way concerning his coming to Christ. Well let that man remember this: John Bunyan did not need to be born in Jerusalem in order to go to Christ and be welcomed by Him, and no more do you. At the same time you will find great guidance, and great encouragement, by reading continually about Jerusalem and Samaria, because Christ is the same; aye, and much better to-day. The Father draws sinners much better to-day to Christ than He did then. Indeed, that is the Father drawing your heart to Christ His Son at this evening hour. And, always remember this: Coming to Christ, whatever Satan may say, does not necessitate any change of time or of place on your part. Just where you now sit; just where you now dwell at home; Christ says to you individually and urgently, Come thou to Me from condemnation to justification. Come thou to Me from all thy guilt to all My Father's forgiveness and Mine. Come thou to Me from thy fearful looking for of judgment, to that peace with God which passes all understanding. Leave all your election, and all your predestination, and all your final perseverance to their proper time and place, and come you even now to Christ, and come just as you are. These are the true and proper Scriptures for you: 'Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.' And this: 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' And this blessed sixth of John: 'Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.' And then such psalms and hymns and spiritual songs as these:

Come unto Me, ye weary, And I will give you rest.

Come, ye souls by sin afflicted.

Come, ye sinners, poor and wretched, Weak and wounded, sick and sore.

Come, take by faith the body of your Lord, And drink the blood of Christ for you outpoured.

Read these Scriptures, and chant these psalms and hymns and spiritual songs without ceasing, and Satan will flee from you to try his sophistications on less well-taught and less believing sinners.

And, then,

"'Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." O the comfort that I had from that word "in no wise"! For it is as much as to say, by no means, for no thing, and at no time, will I cast you out. But Satan would greatly labour to pull this promise from me by telling me that Christ did not mean me, but sinners of a lower rank, and who had not done as I had done. But I should answer him again: O but Satan, there is no exception here: it is him, any him: it is him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out. And this I well remember, that Satan never did so much as put this question to me — Do you come aright? And I think the reason was, because he thought that I knew full well what coming aright was. For I saw that to come aright was to come just as I was, a vile and an ungodly sinner, and to cast myself at Christ's feet, condemning myself for all my sin.' And now to all that I will only add this to you: Beginning to come to-night keep always coming, never missing one single night, no not one single hour, all your days. In his 'Supersensual Life,' Jacob Behmen says to his disciple who has asked him,

'How shall I be able to live aright amid all the temptation and tribulation of my circumstances?' 'If thou dost once every hour throw thyself by faith beyond all creatures and into the abysmal mercy of God, into the sufferings of Christ, and into the fellowship of His intercession, then thou shalt receive power from above to rule over the devil, and death, and hell itself.' And again:

'O thou of little faith, if thy heart could but break itself off every half hour from all creatures, and plunge itself into that where no creature is or can be, presently you would be penetrated with the splendour of the divine glory, and would taste a sweetness that no tongue can express.' And I shall wind up with this out of our own Scottish Analecta:

'Mr. James Durham, of Powrie Castle, when he was on his deathbed, was under a great darkness as to his interest in Christ, and he said to Mr. Carstairs, "Brother, for all that I have preached and written, there is but one promise to which I can now dare to grip; tell me if I am safe to lay the whole weight of my salvation upon that promise. The only Scripture promise I can remember, or can get a good hold of, is this: Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." "Sir," said Mr. Carstairs to him, "you may depend upon that promise, though you had a thousand salvations to hazard."'

# 101. My Whole Soul Was Then In Every Word.

CI ‘My Whole Soul Was Then In Every Word.’

JOHN BUNYAN’S whole soul was then in every word of his prayers, he means to say. For there were no other words in all the world but the words of prayer that could receive and could contain John Bunyan’s whole soul. John Bunyan’s was a big soul, and by that time his whole big soul was swelling and heaving within him with his original sin, and with all manner of misery because of both his original and his actual sin. So much so that his heart would have burst and he would have died before his time had he not got some real outlet for his heaving and bursting heart in agonising prayer. But with all the outlet and all the relief his burdened heart could get even in his most outpoured prayer, there still remained in his mind and in his heart a whole world of what he describes as ‘irrepressible groanings.’

‘Oh,’ he exclaims, ‘how would my heart at such times put itself forth! I should cry with pangs after God that He would be merciful to me.’

Take some examples of how Bunyan would pour out his whole soul in every word of his concerning his sin and concerning his misery on account of his sin.

‘By these things my whole soul was now so turned that it lay like a horse-leech at the vein, still crying out, Give! give! it was so fixed on eternity.’ And again:

‘In those days I was never out of my Bible, still calling on God for the right way to heaven and eternal life.’ And again:

‘Now also I should pray wherever I was: whether at home or abroad: in the house or in the field: and should often, with lifting up of my soul, sing to God and to myself the fifty-first psalm.’ And again:

‘I went up and down, bemoaning my sad condition, and counting myself far worse than a thousand fools for spending so many years in sin as I had done, and I was still crying out, Oh that I had turned to God seven years ago! — Gold! could my salvation have been gotten for gold, what gold would I not have given for it! Had I possessed a whole world made of gold, it had all gone a thousand times over for this that my soul had been in a truly converted state.’ And again:

‘If now I had been burned at the stake, I could not believe that Christ could have any love for me. For, alas! I could neither see Him, nor feel Him, nor savour any of His good things. I was driven as with a tempest; my heart would be unclean.’ And again:

‘I was more loathsome in my own eyes than a toad. Sin and corruption would as naturally bubble out of my heart as water bubbles out of its fountain. I thought every one had a better heart than I had, and I could have exchanged hearts with any one. I thought none but the devil himself could equalise me for inward wickedness and pollution of mind.’

Now that is not so much rhetoric. That is not mere declamation. There is not one syllable of exaggeration in that. For that is the universal way that every truly awakened sinner feels and speaks about himself, if he is a man of sufficient mind and sufficient heart, and if both his mind and his heart are sufficiently broken.

Listen in the second place, to the way in which John Bunyan put his whole soul into every word of his concerning his Saviour. And mark here also the genuine reality and the intense sincerity of the man.

‘One day about ten or eleven o’clock, as I was walking under a hedge, full of sorrow and guilt God knows, suddenly this bolted in upon me — the blood of Christ remits all guilt. At this I made a stand in my spirit, and with that this word took hold of me — the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin. Wherefore I felt my soul greatly to love and to pity Jesus Christ, and my bowels did yearn toward Him. For I saw that He was still my Friend, and one who did reward me good for evil. Till I felt so to Him that if I had had a thousand gallons of blood in my veins I could then freely have spilt it all at the feet of my Lord and Saviour. There was nothing now but Christ before my eyes. O, methought, Christ! Christ! Christ in His blood, Christ in His burial, and Christ in His resurrection. Christ in all His virtues, relations, offices, and operations. Now Christ was my all. All my wisdom, all my righteousness, all my sanctification, and all my redemption.’

Again, there is no idle word there and no rhetorical word and no overstated word.

See also how he puts his whole soul into some single and separate words of Holy Scripture. As for instance into the single word ‘able,’ in that Scripture — able to save to the uttermost.

‘At last, when I was quite worn out, this word did sound suddenly in my ear — He is able! Methought that word able was spoken so loud to me; it seemed to be writ in such large letters to me; and it gave such a justle to my fear and doubt as I had never before experienced from any one word, no nor since. And it was the same with the single word “sufficient,” in Christ’s own words — My grace is sufficient for thee. One morning, when I was again at prayer, that piece of a sentence darted in upon me — My grace is sufficient. About a fortnight before, I was looking at this very passage, but got no comfort out of it, and that made me throw down my book in a pet. But now, this one word “sufficient” had its arms of grace so wide that it could not only enclose me, but many more besides me. And, one day as I was in a meeting of God’s people, these words also did with great power suddenly break in upon me: “For thee, for thee, My grace is sufficient for thee!” three times together. And O, methought, every word was a mighty word to me. These words were then, and they sometimes are still, far bigger than any other words to me.

‘And yet again: “I will in no wise cast out.” That word, “in no wise,” did most sweetly visit my soul. O the comfort that I had from that one word, “in no wise”! For it was as if He had said to me — By no means will I cast thee out. For no thing thou hast ever said or done will I cast thee out. O! what sweetness I got out of that!’ And then it is to that same noble and fruitful habit of mind and heart that we owe the Holy War and the Pilgrim’s Progress. Take the Pilgrim’s Progress. No man had ever poured his whole soul into that one Bible word a pilgrim, till God gifted and moved John Bunyan to do that. From the days of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, God’s people had all confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth; but none of them all, neither patriarch, nor prophet, nor psalmist, nor apostle, had ever put their whole mind and heart and

experience and imagination and full assurance of faith into that word and that thing till John Bunyan arose. And thus it came about that the same high habit of mind and heart that made John Bunyan such an eminent saint, made him also such an eminent author; made him, indeed, one of the most eminent in some things of all our authors.

Now in all that there is a whole world of lessons; intellectual lessons for intellectual people, and spiritual lessons for spiritual people. And let us take first what God Himself says on this same matter: for God Himself both felt and spoke on this same matter long before He made Bunyan feel with Him and speak with Him.

‘For, thus saith the Lord, I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord, and these are thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end. And ye shall seek Me and find Me, when ye seek for Me with all your heart.’ That is to say, in John Bunyan’s words, we shall always find God when we put our whole soul into every word of our prayers to God. And the thing stands to reason, and to our everyday experience, as well as to divine promise. For when we put our whole soul into our prayers, even to our fellow-men, they cannot long resist us. We carry men’s hearts captive to us as soon as we put our whole soul into our appealing words to them. When we are wholly moved and wholly melted ourselves we always move and melt other men. ‘Weep yourselves,’ said Horace to the young poets of his day, ‘and you will make me weep with you.’ And just look back at some of the Old Testament men and women who moved and melted God Himself. Abraham in his prayer for Sodom. Jacob in his prayer for himself at the Jabbok. Moses in his prayer for Israel on the mount. Hannah in her prayer for Samuel. And David continually in every prayer and in every psalm of his. David was the father indeed of all of us who put our whole soul into our every word toward God, John Bunyan especially came of the direct race and pure lineage of David. And they both showed their intellectual and their spiritual genius in nothing more than in the way they put their whole soul into every word they wrote. Let us all be like them in that. Let us all serve ourselves to be sons and heirs to their genius, and to their grace, and to their rich salvation.

I have often told you about Luther and his use of the personal pronouns. I have told you how he both reformed the church, and saved his own soul, by the way he made such believing use of the personal pronouns. He reformed the church, and he revolutionised the nation, far more by his powerful use of the personal pronouns than by his burning of the Pope’s bulls. ‘I, Martin Luther,’ he said continually in his confessions of sin, and in his prayers for pardon: ‘I, Martin Luther, the chief of sinners. Out of the depths, if ever there were depths, do I cry to Thee, O Lord’; putting his whole soul into every personal pronoun of his. I myself have a pastoral memory about that way of prayer which I will now take boldness to tell you for your good. I once tried Luther’s so personal way of prayer with a young man who was fast dying. His heart-broken father had come to me and had told me that his only son was on his unprepared death-bed. The fast-dying youth had been a prodigal son and his heart was now as hard as a stone. Day after day I did my very best with that sin-hardened youth, but with no result. Till one day I betook me to Luther’s personal way with him. I said to him, would he follow me in asking of God for himself, and by his own name, what I would now ask of God for myself, and by my own name. He was a courteous and a gentlemanly lad, and as soon as he fully understood what I said he answered me with his weak voice that he would. Forgetting him and every one else for the moment, I knelt down and prayed for myself by name just as Luther would have done. And as soon as I had risen from my knees the fast-dying lad

raised himself up in his bed, and said:

‘I, James Wedderburn, pray also and say pardon, O God, the sins of my youth. Enter not into judgment with me. But wash Thou me, for Thou canst make me whiter than the snow.’ And then he lay down never again to rise. But if ever I stood by and saw a sinful soul born again it was in that room that day. And it was a sight to see his father’s radiant face that day and to this day as often as he speaks to me about his departed son. Try Luther’s personal way with yourselves and with others, on occasion. For there is a wonderful power and reality in it, as you will soon find to your happy surprise, and to your lasting blessedness.

You all know what a fossil is. You have all seen and handled and mused over the pathetic sight of a fossil. For a fossil is a hard and dead stone that was once a soft and a living thing. It is stone-dead now, but at one time it was a living creature; at one time it was as full of life and fruitfulness as any of its kind now living on the earth. But long ago the life died out of that living creature till in the lapse of time it was turned into absolute stone. Now just so has it been with many Scripture words, and Scripture doctrines, and Scripture experiences, and Scripture prayers, and Scripture praises, that were at one time all palpitating with life; all blossoming and blooming with holy beauty and with spiritual productiveness. All these things were at one time full of the most heavenly life in the minds and in the hearts and in the lives of the prophets and the psalmists and the apostles and the reformers; but they are now all but turned to stone in our degenerate hands. Now, I never heard of a fossil bone or a fossil branch being brought back to life by any art or science or quickening touch of any man. But believing and praying and praising men are working a far greater miracle than that every day. Take any petrified psalm of David, or any petrified epistle of Paul, or any petrified creed of the Fathers, or any petrified catechism of the Reformers, and put it into a living man’s mind and heart and life, and straightway it will soften and swell and bourgeon and bring forth fruit, as it did in the great days of old. Let but a Luther or a Bunyan arise, or any man of their faith and their life and their power, and this whole desert all around them will rejoice and will blossom as the rose. Now my brethren, the whole point to-night is this — Will you take your part henceforth in this great resurrection and reanimation of dead prayers and dead psalms and dead doctrines and dead creeds and dead catechisms and all the other dead ordinances in the public and private worship of God? If you do so, you will live to say with the prophet Ezekiel: So I prophesied as I was commanded, and the breath came upon them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army.

I will wind up with a few words taken out of Father John of the Greek Church.

‘When you are at your prayers,’ he says to us, ‘do not hurry on from one word to another. Stay with every word till you feel in yourself its full truth and power. Lay every single word well to heart, and strive hard to feel every word that you speak. Always when you kneel down keep this of Paul well before your mind, that it is better to say five words from the depth of your heart than ten thousand words with the tongue only. And when at any time you feel that your heart is not a heart at all, but a hard and a cold stone, then stop attempting to pray for a few minutes, and warm and melt your heart by thinking of your sinfulness and your misery and what you deserve at the hands of God and man. Set the four last things before your eyes; death, and judgment, and heaven, and hell, and then return as fast as you can to the throne of grace.’ So far Father John. Now, is it not beautiful; is it not full of instruction and of hope, to see how the Greek High Churchman and the

Evangelical English Puritan so agree in pouring their whole soul into every word of their prayers? That is the true union of churches. That is the true communion of saints. Will you join with John Bunyan and Father John as they pour their whole soul into every word of their prayers? Be sure you do! And you also will live to write in your autobiography say: ‘My whole soul was then in every word.’

Chapter 102

# 102. I Thought Now That Every One Had A Better Heart Than I Had, And I Could Have Changed Hearts...

CII ‘I Thought Now That Every One Had A Better Heart Than I Had, And I Could Have Changed Hearts With Anybody.’

NOW, my Brethren, I will tell you the honest truth about this part of my work which I resume among you this evening. This question has arisen a hundred times in my mind during these past weeks, — Shall I go on with John Bunyan’s terrible book about the chief of sinners, or shall I stop these distressing discourses? And no later than last Saturday afternoon, when I was taking my farewell walk among the hills above Plockton and Strome Ferry, that same question challenged me, and indeed assaulted me, and that in more ways than one. Till suddenly, just as I was almost determining never to mention indwelling sin to you any more, what seemed to me to be a Divine Voice spoke with all-commanding power in my conscience, and said to me as clear as clear could be:

‘No! Go on, and flinch not! Go back and boldly finish the work that has been given you to do. Speak out and fear not. Make them, at any cost, to see themselves in God’s holy law as in a glass. Do you that, for no one else will do it. No one else will so risk his life and his reputation as to do it. And you have not much of either left to risk. Go home and spend what is left of your life in your appointed task of showing My people their sin and their need of My salvation.’

I shall never forget the exact spot where that clear command came to me and where I got fresh authority and fresh encouragement to finish this part of my work. I know quite well that some of you think me little short of a monomaniac about sin. But I am not the first that has been so thought of and so spoken about. I am in good company and I am content to be in it. Yes, you are quite right in that. For I most profoundly feel that I have been separated first to the personal experience of sin, and then to the experimental preaching of sin, above and beyond all my contemporaries in the pulpit of our day. And I think I know why that is so. But that it is indeed so I cannot for one moment doubt. Well then, with His support who so spoke in my heart last Saturday, and with your continued patience who have been so long patient with me, I shall go on for a few more Sabbath evenings with John Bunyan under the character of the chief of sinners. As thus:

‘Now, my inward and original pollution, that, that was my plague and my affliction; that, I say, at a dreadful rate, was always putting itself forth within me. That I had the guilt of, to absolute amazement. By reason of that I was more loathsome in my own eyes than was a toad, and I thought I was so in God’s eyes also. Sin and corruption would as naturally bubble out of my heart as water would bubble out of a fountain. I thought now that every one had a better heart than I had, and I could have changed hearts with anybody. I thought none but the devil himself could equalise me for inward wickedness and pollution of mind. And thus I continued a long while, even for some years together.

‘Now I quite admit that chapter was not written for Sabbath-school children, any more than was this kindred chapter that we have from the same master hand.’ The Interpreter then has them into the very best room in his house, and a very brave room it was, so he bid them look round about and see if they could find anything profitable there. Then they looked round and round, for there was nothing there to be seen but a very great spider on the wall, and that they overlooked. Then said Mercy, “Sir, I see nothing,” but Christiana held her peace. Then said the Interpreter, “Look again.” She therefore looked again, and said, “Here is not anything but an ugly spider, who hangs by her hands upon the wall.” Then said the Interpreter, “Is there but one spider in all this spacious room?” Then the water stood in Christiana’s eyes, for she was a woman quick of apprehension, and she said, “Yes, lord, there are here more than one. Yea, and spiders whose venom is far more destructive than that which is in her.” The Interpreter then looked pleasantly upon her, and said, “Thou hast said the truth.” This made Mercy blush, and the boys to cover their faces, for they all began now to understand the riddle.

‘Now, what do you say to all that? How do you feel about all that? Is John Bunyan out of all reasonable bounds in all that? If you were to speak out what you think, is he simply beside himself in such passages as those about the spider, and about the toad, and about the devil? Or on the other hand, do you subscribe, and that with tears and blood, to all he says and to more than even he dares to say? Do you have all those awful passages of his by heart? Do you turn to them and dwell on them till you feel that you are not wholly alone or wholly hopeless in your valley of the shadow of death? When you count up and go over all your best blessings, do you ever put God’s servant John Bunyan, and his Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners high up among them? I hope so. I most fervently hope so. And I shall continue to labour and to pray that it may more and more be so.

‘But my original and inward pollution, that, that was my plague and my affliction.’ These are very dreadful words, my brethren; but no words of God or of man are half so dreadful as is the simple truth. To begin with, this awful pollution of ours is ‘original.

‘That is St. Augustine’s word about it, and his word about it has been accepted by the whole Church of Christ ever since he first uttered it. Yes, our pollution is original — that is to say, it is native and natural to us. We were all born with it, and it grows and grows with all our growth. And even when we fain would outgrow it and cast it out and leave it behind us, we cannot. With all we can do, we cannot. And all the time it is the pollution of all pollutions. It is the parent pollution. Without it there would be no pollution anywhere. Take away our original pollution and there would be nothing to be called pollution in all the world. And then this original pollution is so inward that we cannot get down to it, all we can do, so as to cast it out. There is no bottom to the original pollution of our sinful hearts. It is an abyss. Our sin-polluted hearts are the true bottomless pit and there is no other. It is this same original and inward pollution that makes the man after God’s own heart to cry continually, ‘Wash me thoroughly, O my God. Purge me with hyssop, O my God. And create in me a clean heart.’ And it is this same thing that makes Job answer the Lord and say, ‘Behold, I am vile: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.’ And Isaiah, ‘Woe is me, for I am undone.’ And Daniel, ‘All my comeliness is turned to corruption.’ And the holiest of men, ‘O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’ ‘I had that original and inward pollution to amazement,’ says John Bunyan. How true and how fit is that word amazement! You must all have felt the truth and the power and the fitness of that word. You must often be

simply amazed and overwhelmed with the original and inward pollution of your own hearts. Where does that sudden and awful pollution come from? you must often stand amazed at yourself and say. It is the mystery of all mysteries to you. ‘Who can understand his errors?’ the psalmist exclaims; that is to say, his own sin-polluted heart. I greatly like that word amazement. Amid all the unspeakable bitterness of the thing, to have it so aptly described by a master of spiritual language gives me a genuine delight. There is such childlike simplicity in this word amazement. There is such manhood reality in it. There is such a sure note of personal experience in it. And, withal, there is such true literary genius in it. Yes, ‘amazement’ is the very word. Amazement at my original and inward pollution, at such a dreadful rate always putting itself forth within me. What a delight there is in John Bunyan’s English, even in his most dreadful passages, such as this!

‘I thought now that every one had a better heart than I had, and I could have changed hearts with anybody.’ What do you say to that offer, my brethren? Suppose you had been in Bedford in Bunyan’s day, and with your present heart, would you have struck an exchange of hearts on the spot with Bunyan? I would, and I would have given him good boot to the bargain. With all that he so honestly says in crying down his own goods, I would at once have negotiated the exchange, and been glad to do it. And I feel certain that the foolish and precipitate man would have repented all his days the bad bargain he had made with me. The sin-polluted heart so knows its own bitterness that it simply cannot believe that there is its match on earth or even in hell. And now to return to this gospel in Ezekiel before I let you go: ‘A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.’ Only there is no good in going back to that, unless you have first gone through John Bunyan’s eighty-fourth paragraph and have made it your very own. For you will not understand one syllable of what a new and a clean and a holy heart means unless you are amazed and are in despair at your own polluted heart. But to those of you who are so amazed and are in such despair, to you are all Ezekiel’s promises sent. And all his promises about a new heart and a right spirit are to you yea and amen in Jesus Christ; that is to say, you must always go directly and immediately to Jesus Christ for your new heart and for your right spirit. And you must plead with Him and press Him day and night as long as you live for a copy of the heart that His Father so graciously gave to Him. Reason and expostulate with Him first about His own heart, and then about yours. Be bold with Him; be very bold with Him. A lost soul, half down into hell, cannot be expected to choose soft and sleeping words. Remind Him then, remind Him that with all His horror and all His amazement in the Garden and on the Tree, He never had any such horror at Himself, or any such amazement at Himself, as you always have at yourself. With all the hell into which He descended He never came near the mouth of a hell like your heart. Tell Him that. Go to your closet and shut your door and fasten it firm and fall down on your face and open your whole fearful heart to Him, and plead with Him to take your heart at once in hand. Implore Him not to spit upon you, or to loathe you, or to hate you, or to cast you out of His presence. Ask if in all His experience He has ever had a heart on His hands quite like yours. Tell Him that if He wishes ever to see the full travail of His soul that it must be seen in you and in your holiness-healed heart. Tell Him that He has an opportunity in you, the like of which He will never have again to all time. Tell Him that you are quite the uttermost sinner on this side hell, and that your new heart and your right spirit will be by far His highest trophy in His Father’s house. And to encourage you, I must, and I will, tell you this. When He gave me my new commission in this matter last Saturday afternoon near Duncraig, He added this, as I shall always remember: ‘Comfort My people,’ He said. ‘Speak comfortably to My people, and say to them that I know all their sorrow. Cast them down with all

your might,' He said. 'Cast them down continually to death and hell: they have not far to go. But always hasten, after that, to lift them up. Tell them,' He said, 'about all the chief sinners that I have had written out and put in a book for their encouragement. All the Old Testament and all the New Testament sinners whose names they know so well. And add to them,' He said, 'all those great sinners whose books are on your table at Balmacara.' You know yourselves how homely and how home-comingly He sometimes speaks to yourselves. 'Tell them,' He said — at any rate, I took it for His voice, for no one has a voice just like His voice — 'tell the congregation and the classes this season about St. Augustine and his sin,' He said,

'and about Dante and his sin, and about Luther and his sin, and about Behmen and his sin, and about Teresa and her sin, and about Hooker and his sin, and about Shepard and his sin, and about Bunyan and his sin, and about Brea and his sin, and about Halyburton and his sin, and about Andrewes and his sin, and about Goodwin and his sin, and about Marshall and his sin, and about Pascal and his sin, and about Law and his sin, and about the Catechism and its teaching about sin and salvation, and about the Hymn-book and its songs of sin and salvation.' And when His voice ceased, I answered and said, Spare me this year also, and by Thy grace I will do what Thou hast so clearly commanded me to do in the pulpit and in the class.

# 103. Counterfeit Holy.

CIII ‘Counterfeit Holy.’

‘COUNTERFEIT holy’ is another of John Bunyan’s so arresting and so illuminating expressions. But in order to get at his exact meaning, what exactly is a counterfeit? Well, a counterfeit is a spurious imitation. It is a fabrication and a fraud. It is a sham and a make-believe. It is base metal. In the words of His Majesty’s mint, it is Brummagem coin. And it is in all these base senses that John Bunyan employs this contemptuous and contumelious word when he tells us that in those early days of his spiritual life the Tempter was ‘so counterfeit holy’ with him that he would not let him so much as eat his meals in peace. The old Counterfeit would come to the young tinker when he had just sat down to his well-earned dinner, and would insist with him that he must leave his half-eaten meal that moment, and must go hence to pray. ‘Now that I am sat down to my meat,’ Bunyan would remonstrate, ‘let me make an end.’ ‘No,’ insisted the old impostor,‘you must go pray now, else you will displease God, and will despise Christ.’ ‘So counterfeit holy would the devil be,’ says Bunyan, as he looks back to those neophyte days of his. Now that so characteristic passage arrests us: it makes us stop and think. And when we stop reading, and begin to think about counterfeit holiness, a thousand things arise in our minds.

‘It is a very difficult thing to counterfeit genuine gold and silver,’ says Professor Jevons in his Political Economy Primer. Perhaps so. But it has been done nevertheless. For do we not read to our amazement that counterfeit Christs arose and had their disciples even in the days of the true Christ Himself? Lo, here is Christ! and lo, there! it was preached, till the very elect were all but deceived and led astray. We need not wonder then that certain counterfeit Christs — evolutionary Christs, and historical Christs, and socialist Christs, and exemplary Christs, and such like, are preached far and wide in our so easily satisfied and so easily deceived day. And not in our day only. As to an exemplary Christ, it was only last night that I read an old book which used to have a great vogue in Scotland till it must have all but deceived the sons and daughters of the Covenanters themselves. The example of Christ is set forth with such power and with such beauty in that old classic that the reader is almost carried away to think that the exemplary Christ is the true and the only and the all-sufficient Christ. Our Lord’s unresting diligence in doing His Father’s will is so dwelt on: His unceasing devotion to prayer is so dwelt on: His charity, His meekness, and His humility are all so dwelt on, that, for the moment, the fair picture fills the mind. But as I finished the beautiful old book, this question began to arise in my mind and would not be silenced in my mind, this question: Did that ‘sometime Professor in Aberdeen’ ever really try to make Christ his own example for a single day? I do not know. He does not say. But as for myself I had been doing that all yesterday, with the result of many a sad breakdown during the day, and with a crushing load of remorse on my conscience at the end of the day. So much so that I could not attempt or expect to sleep last night till I had turned again to the one true Christ for me, as I always find Him, for one place, in the contents and in the text of Paul’s first chapter to the Colossians. Calvin was the first commentator, so far as I know, who called Paul’s Christ in that passage ‘the true Christ.’ ‘He describeth the true Christ,’ says the fine analysis also at the head of that fine chapter. And

remembering that I read that great passage again, and then the great commentator's exposition of that great passage, till my greatly defeated and greatly dejected soul found rest and peace again in the one true Christ for me. Let Paul and Calvin describe their true Christ to you also in every defeat and dejection of yours. For this is He:

'In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins. For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell. And having made peace by the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things to Himself. And you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and unblameable, and unreproveable in His sight. If ye continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel which ye have heard, and whereof I, Paul, am made a minister.' As always, the true apostle puts the true Christ first and foremost; and then, when the saints and faithful brethren have received the sin-atoning and peace-speaking Christ into their minds and hearts, Paul then passes on, with all his apostolic power and impressiveness, to set the Christ of God before them in His proper order, that is to say, in the second place, as their one and true and supreme example. For myself, as often as I glance at the sometimes beautiful but always superficial sermons of our day on Christ as our example, I turn again to Paul's divine order of preaching and presenting the true Christ. That is to say, the divine order and the rational order of preaching Christ as first and last and always our Redeemer and our Righteousness. And then, after that, as our example and our pattern. That was Paul's apostolic order in every sermon and in every epistle of his. That was Luther's order, who most took of Paul of all our great preachers. That was Calvin's order, and that was Bunyan's order. And in this matter I often remember how the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah for that he sought not God after God's due and appointed order. For myself, as I hear this man and that calling on me, and saying, lo here! and lo there! lest I be fatally deceived in this all-momentous matter, and have God's anger kindled against me, I anxiously ask, Hath He marks to lead me to Him if He be my Guide? And I am always and immediately and infallibly answered, In His feet and hands are wound-prints, and His side.

'Take Christ in His personal excellencies,' says Goodwin, 'and He is the Object of love rather than of faith. But the faith that justifies the ungodly looks upon Christ not so much in His personal excellencies, but rather as He is made sin for us, in order that we may be made the righteousness of God in Him.' The narrow way comes to its very narrowest in that valley where it lies crushed in between a counterfeit Christ on the one hand, and a counterfeit doctrine of the true Christ on the other hand. Never can any better counsel be given to any escaping sinner than to tell him to look to Christ for his salvation: and to look to Christ always and in everything. But that Scriptural and soul-saving counsel is turned into its soul-destroying counterfeit when the corrupt-hearted sinner is told to avoid all 'morbid introspection,' and all overanxious self-examination, as his counterfeit counsellors are wont to have it. In offering his great Temple prayer Solomon said that as soon and as often as any man in Israel should come to know the plague of his own heart, that divinely enlightened man would immediately, and would always thereafter make his way up to the temple, and to the atonement that was made in the temple. But the devil and his counterfeit clergy are wiser than Solomon. There is really no such plague as all that in your heart, they say to the too easily deceived sinner. Or if there is ever anything in the state of your heart that is not altogether right, look away from it. Do not brood and break and mourn over it. As your Bible has it, look only

to Christ. While, if those counterfeit teachers and their deluded disciples only had grace enough to know it, nothing is more certain than this, that no man has ever really and truly looked to Christ with a saving faith, who has not really and truly and always looked with shame and pain and horror and hatred at himself and at his own sinplagued and sin-possessed heart. Look unto Me and be ye saved, is the very truth of God, and the whole truth of God, as God says it. But the devil has often put his own diabolical sense upon God's truth, and has often got his counterfeit preachers to preach it. It was this same counterfeit Gospel that put Luther beside himself in those antinomian days when he cried out in every sermon of his, Beware of the devil when he comes with the words of the Gospel in his false mouth! Beware of that master of mountebanks! Beware of that prince of impostors! Beware of that arch evangelical counterfeit! But better than even Luther, John Bunyan puts the whole spiritual situation in his own inimitable and never-to-be-forgotten way.

'I saw also in my dream that so far as this valley reached there was on the right hand a very deep ditch; that ditch is it into which the blind have led the blind in all ages, and have both miserably perished. Again, behold, on the left hand, there was a very dangerous quag, into which if a good man falls, he can find no bottom for his feet to stand on. The pathway here also was exceeding narrow, and therefore good Christian was all the more put to it. For, when he sought in the dark to shun the ditch on his right hand he was ready to tip over into the mire on his left hand. Also, when he sought to escape the mire, without great carefulness he would be ready to fall into the ditch. Thus he went on, and I heard him sigh bitterly.'

I sometimes wonder that Bunyan did not bring in the old Counterfeit himself at this point to rebuke Christian for his so bitter sighs. I sometimes wonder he did not introduce Satan himself to command the downcast pilgrim to march on with a 'light heart,' as you will remember he got the French army to march out of Paris on their way to Berlin: a march that ended not at Berlin but at Sedan.

Then, again, there is a counterfeit conscience, more or less, in every one of us, though we may not all know it and admit it. That is to say, there is a counterfeit strictness, in some things, in all of us; and then that counterfeit strictness is always accompanied with a corresponding slackness in some other things. There is a spurious conscience in all of us that winks at the most serious evils in our own hearts and in our own lives, and then it compensates itself by raging loudly against some things in other people that are not real sins in them at all. Our counterfeit conscience will sometimes deal with the utmost scrupulosity and stringency with the most microscopic matters of Church doctrine and practice; it will resist to the death the least departure from a traditional ritual, while, at the same time, it will allow and well abet the most flagrant insults and injuries to our neighbours. James Fraser of Brea, who was one of the profoundest masters of the things of the soul that ever lived, has set down this as the devil's thirteenth device directed against his soul:

'When I could not be wholly deluded from laying to heart matters of religion, Satan, for the most part of my time, busied me with the externals and the formalities of religion, and made me all but forget the fundamental matters. Nice points were much studied, and were much talked about by me, whereas the great matters of my own soul, and of other men's souls, I forgot to think or speak much about.' To my mind it is not a good sign of our Church and our day that such a masterpiece of spiritual analysis as Fraser's autobiography commands so little sale. To my mind it is one of the greatest books of that great century in Scotland. In its own special field I have never met its equal.

But I find I must sum up before I am well begun: so endless is this subject of counterfeit holiness, so absolutely endless. For every spiritual and saving grace in our hearts and in our lives has its own special and inseparable counterfeit standing and working beside it. There are a multitude of counterfeit graces against which we must watch and pray, with a far from counterfeit watchfulness and prayer. Take a counterfeit humility as a good example of that; and take that counterfeit humility in its most subtle and its most spiritual shape. Santa Teresa warned her spiritual daughters that Satan never so nearly had her soul in his clutches for ever as when he tried to sophisticate her into a counterfeit contrition of conscience and into a counterfeit humility of heart.

‘Fie, woman!’ he would say to her, ‘if it is only for decency’s sake, wait a little! Would you rush into God’s pure and holy presence with your over-hasty repentance, and with your soul still reeking with your sin? Wait, woman, till your fall is sometime past. Wait till you have had opportunity to do some adequate penance to show to God and to yourself that you are not wholly insincere in your repentance and in your prayer.’ And the same subtle spirit tried the same sophistical indignation and the same spurious solicitude with that great Scottish saint of whom I have already spoken. ‘After my slips and my stumbles,’ says Brea in his masterly book,

‘Satan tried hard to shock me into despair. He tried to amaze me and to confound me with what I had again done. He tried hard to hold me down. He did his best to keep me from ever getting on my feet again. Whereas, my best way was immediately to seek a fresh pardon, and then to go back to my work.’ And yet another outstanding spiritual genius gives us — and word for word — the deceptive debate that the devil dictated to him when he was in the same sad plight in England as Teresa was in Spain and as Brea was in Scotland. ‘Oh,’ reasoned Walter Marshall with himself, in the great bitterness of his soul,

‘Oh, let me first have some true hatred of my sin before I prepare to return from it to God! Let the raging of my lusts be somewhat abated! Let the stinking kennel of my corrupt heart be somewhat cleansed and sweetened! Let me first be more humbled for my sin, and more ashamed of it; let me have a far more godly sorrow on account of it. At any rate, I would first be able to pour out my soul to God, and not be the lifeless lump of sin that I now am.’ But Bunyan beats them all at that also.

‘Oh, ‘twas hard for me to have to pray to this Christ, against whom I had sinned with such vileness! ‘Twas hard work again to look Him in the face, against whom I had sinned so frequently and so abominably! Oh, the shame that did now attend me! I was ashamed, yea even confounded, because of my villany committed against Jesus Christ! But I soon came to see that there was only one way left to me. I must go humble myself before Him, and must beg of Him that, in His amazing grace, He would again have mercy on this wretchedly sinful soul of mine.’ My brethren, before we part for the night, I do beseech you to lay all these things well to heart, and that before you sleep. For when any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not in its application to himself, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart.

‘Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal — the Lord knoweth them that are His. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and fit for the Master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.’

# 104. Those Who Had Writ In Our Days, I Thought - But I Desire Them Now To Pardon Me - Had Writ W...

CIV ‘Those Who Had Writ In Our Days, I Thought (But I Desire Them Now To Pardon Me) Had Writ Without Themselves Going Down Into The Deep.’

IF John Bunyan had lived in our day he would. I fear, have been in the same difficulty that he describes so feelingly and so powerfully in his hundred and twenty-ninth paragraph. The difficulty, that is, to get a book writ in our day that would prove itself most fit for a conscience wounded as his conscience was wounded. I will tell you some of the ways in which John Bunyan’s conscience was wounded, and then I will put it to yourselves to say if you know any book writ in our day that you could recommend Bunyan to buy and to read and to find his condition so largely and so profoundly handled, as if the book had been written out of his own broken heart. Take, then, some specimens of poor Bunyan’s wounded conscience and broken heart. And I will not water down my great author one iota. I will boldly and honestly read to you what he so powerfully writes about himself in his own unmitigated words.

‘Now, thought I, now I grow worse and worse. For I felt such discouragement in my heart as laid me as low as hell. I was driven as with a tempest. My heart would be unclean. The Canaanites would dwell in the land. My original and inward pollution, that, that was my plague and my affliction; that I had the guilt of to amazement. By reason of that I was more loathsome in my own eyes than was a toad. Sin and corruption would as naturally bubble out of my heart as water would bubble out of a fountain. I thought now that every one had a better heart than I had; and I could have changed hearts with anybody. I thought none but the devil himself could equalise me for inward wickedness and pollution of mind. Man, indeed, is the most noble, by creation, of all creatures in the visible world; but by his sin he has made himself the most ignoble. The birds, the beasts, the fishes, I blessed their condition, for they had not a sinful nature; they were not obnoxious to the wrath of God as I was. I could therefore have rejoiced had my condition been as theirs is. And now was I a burden and a terror to myself. Oh how gladly would I have been anybody but myself! Now was the Gospel the greatest torment to me. Every time I thought of the Lord Jesus, of His grace, love, goodness, kindness, gentleness, meekness, death, blood, promises, blessed exhortations, comforts and consolations, it went to my soul like a sword. Aye, I said to myself, this is the Jesus, the loving Saviour, the Son of God, whom I have parted with, whom I have slighted, despised, and abused. Oh! thought I, what I have lost! Oh! what I have for ever parted with! Then there would come flocking into my mind an innumerable company of my sins and transgressions, namely, my deadness, dullness, and coldness in holy duties; my wanderings of heart, ray wearisomeness in all good things, my want of love to God, to His ways, and to His people, with this at the end of all — are these the fruits of Christianity? Are these the tokens of a blessed man? But one day, as I was walking up and down in the house, as a man in a most woful state, that word of God took hold of my heart — thou art justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Then, O what a turn that made upon me! But with

all that I find to this day these seven abominations in my heart. First, inclinings to unbelief; second, to forget the love and the mercy of Christ; third, a leaning to the works of the law; fourth, wanderings and coldness in prayer; fifth, to forget to watch for that for which I have prayed; sixth, apt to murmur because I have no more, and at the same time making a bad use of what I have; seventh, my corruptions of heart will thrust themselves into everything I do. When I would do good, evil is present with me.'

Now if you have been attending to all that, and if you have been understanding all that, and feeling all that in yourselves, then, tell me, do you know any book, writ in our day, that goes down into depths like these? Tell me, I say. For I confess to you I do not know any such book myself, though I have searched for it as for hid treasure. Yes; I have most anxiously searched for such a book, and in this way. I already possess Luther on the Galatians, and concerning Christian Liberty, and Goodwin on the Ephesians, and Davenant on the Colossians, and Shepard on the Ten Virgins, and Marshall on Sanctification and many such like. But I am man enough of my own day to wish to read something writ in my own day, and writ in the style and in the physiognomy and in the atmosphere of my own day. And, with that view, I have most anxiously searched all the publishers' lists for this autumn and this winter and this coming Christmas. With something of John Bunyan's own hunger I have repeatedly gone over all the advertisements in the Quarterly, and in theEdinburgh, and in the Dublin, and in Blackwood, and in the Athenaeum, and in the Academy, and in the Spectator, and in the Nation, and in theBritish Weekly, and in the Scottish Review, and so on. But, would you believe it, among those hundreds upon hundreds of books written in our day, I have only found two or three that I could order and open with any hope. And even the two or three that I did order I found that my money was as good as thrown away upon them; so far that is as my present pursuit is concerned. I enjoyed to read the great promises of great books soon coming out in theology, and in philosophy, and in morality, and in sociology; in history, in biography, in poetry, in fiction, and in pure letters. But I found nothing at all that John Bunyan would have preferred, next to the Bible, for a wounded conscience and a broken heart. Till in my deep distress of soul I turned again to some of my old books that are ready to fall piece from piece if I do but turn them over. Books, that is, about sin, and about the sinfulness of sin, and about indwelling sin; books also about the sending and the substitution and the sacrifice of the Son of God; about faith in His blood; about justification, adoption, and sanctification, and eternal life, and such like. Yes, I said to myself, the old are indeed better; out of all sight better!

'I grow worse and worse,' says Bunyan about himself. 'My heart lays me as low as hell. I am driven as with a tempest. My inward and original pollution of heart, that, that I have to amazement. I am more loathsome to myself than a toad.' Do you know any book, writ in our day, that even so much as professes to deal with a state of things like that? Do not blame your booksellers because they do not display the deep books of the soul on their crowded Christmas counters. They are business men and they display what they know you will buy. But one or two of you will turn upon me in selfdefence and will say to me that all you can do you cannot find the books that I am continually instructing you to read for the real and the sure and the everlasting salvation of your souls. O no! that does not deceive me nor silence me for one moment! The great books of the soul are quite easy to be got by those who truly love them and who truly desire to possess them. You know quite well where to find old furniture, and old plate, and old pictures, and old lace, and old wine. And the sellers of those old things know you and send you from time to time their lists of rare and ancient

things. And when you become spiritual experts, and collectors of the masterpieces of the soul, you will discover those out-of-the-way shops where such books are still to be bought. It is not the authors of the day who are to be blamed, nor is it the publishers, nor is it the booksellers — it is yourselves. When you are once bent with all your mind and heart on the one thing needful in books, you will then importune your bookseller, and he will importune his publisher, and they will both importune our religious authors, and the right sort of book will be produced, and will be sold, and will be bought, and will be read even by you. Speaking about publishers — just as I am writing this page I come on this paragraph among the literary notes in last Monday's Westminster:

'It argues no small amount of courage,' says the writer of the notes, 'for a present-day publisher to issue a new edition of Baxter's Saint's Rest in a handsome format. Yet the thing has been done by Grant Richards. This book, famous in its day, and commended for its style by no less a person than Archbishop Trench, is in these days not so frequently read. But, perhaps, in this artistic form it may yet attract a select band of readers.'

Then again: 'My deadness and my coldness in holy duties. My want of love to God, and to His ways, and to His people.' Now suppose you were to come to your minister with that complaint about yourselves. He would not know a book, writ in your day, to recommend to you. There are masterly and immortal books that deal with all such complaints, but they were not writ to-day nor yesterday. You like to hear about classics and to talk about classics. Well, then, you order The Religious Affections of Jonathan Edwards, edited by Dr. Smellie. That true classic deals with all those complaints, and deals with them in a way worthy of a writer who has been competently called 'one of the greatest of the sons of men.' The book will only cost you half-a-crown, and if you have mind enough and heart enough to read it once, you will go on to read it till you have read it as often as Benjamin Jowett had read James Boswell.

Then again:

'As I was walking up and down the house, that word of God took hold of my heart — being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood.' Have you ever read that old book called The Romans? Well, that central passage in the Romans was William Cowper's conversion; and it was when one was reading in his hearing Luther on the same subject that John Wesley passed from his darkness of heart into the full light of God's countenance. My own special father in God, Thomas Goodwin, has a whole massive volume on this same subject of justification. Since my student days I have carried about that golden volume with me in trains and in steamers, at home and abroad, till I know it as well, I think, as the Master of Balliol knew his Boswell. But if any salad student here is shy of Goodwin, he can surely hold up his head for Hooker. Everybody honours Hooker and Hooker's readers. And Hooker was a Paul and a puritan at heart in the foundation matter of justification; though, on the surface, and to sciolists, he has a far more popular name. The very vocabulary of scriptural and evangelical religion has been scorned and set aside by the novice authors of our superficial day. As I have read those ephemeral writers I have honestly tried to fit their newfangled words and phrases into my mind and into my heart and into my conscience and into my imagination, but, I am bound to say, they do not fit into me at all. The new vocabulary of the new books has all been fashioned by men who are wholly different from me in their whole mental upmake and operation. So different are they from me that they seem to me to belong to another

race of men altogether. To me the religious phraseology of the present day wholly lacks the apostolicity, and the authority, and the height, and the depth, and the substance, and the strength, and the intellectual, and the spiritual satisfactoriness and finality of the old phraseology. I entirely agree with what Dr. John Duncan says about John Foster, great man and great preacher as John Foster was. 'You find it in a very noble man,' says Dr. Duncan,

'John Foster. That essay of his entitled, "The Aversion of Men of Taste to Evangelical Religion," I dislike exceedingly. You do no good by changing the vocabulary of your religion. If you change the words you change the things. The more I study language the more I am convinced of this, that particular shades of thought are wedded to particular words. If you cut the one, you wound the other; they are dermis and epidermis. I find that my best words are scriptural words, and my next best words are ecclesiastical words.' So far that true genius and profound scholar, Dr. John Duncan. And a writer of a very different school, Dean Stanley, says:

'Use them to the utmost, use them threadbare if you will; long experience, the course of their history, their age and dignity, have made them far more elastic, far more available, than any we can invent for ourselves.' And Dr. Forsyth has a fine passage to the same effect in his new book on preaching. Yes, the old, both in doctrine and in the vocabulary of doctrine, is the best. Like Marcus Aurelius, even where the new is true, the old is truest; even where the new is verus, the old is verissimus.

Now, you will be sure to ask me why it is that our day is so barren of the best books of the soul? Well, I often ask myself that same question. And I confess I cannot answer that question so as to satisfy myself about it. But this may be said. There have been great Sowings and great ebbings of spiritual truth and spiritual life all along the history of the Church of Christ. There was a great and an incomprehensible ebbing of spiritual truth, if not of spiritual life, at the very beginning of the Church of Christ. To this day it is an amazement and a mystery to students why the Apostle Paul and the Epistle to the Romans should have so fallen out of sight for hundreds of years in the early Church. And, indeed, what an astonishment it is to see that the greatest of the apostles and his special gospel never once got their true place in the pulpit of Christendom all down the ages till Luther was raised up of God to give them their true place. And then again even since Luther's great gospel day there have been whole generations, even in evangelical Christendom, in which both Paul and Luther and justification and sanctification by faith have been all but completely misunderstood and misrepresented. And this present generation, if we do not take good care, may yet be written down to our shame in Church history as one of those wholly misunderstanding and wholly misrepresenting generations. Then again, some of the ablest and best men of our day have been drawn away from the deepest and the most central doctrines of the Christian faith, and have wholly given themselves up to the study of sacred history, sacred scholarship, and sacred criticism. Noble and fruitful studies, in their own place. But even such legitimate and necessary studies may wholly take the place in our minds that belongs by right to Christian doctrine and to Christian experience. Dr. Duncan, already quoted, was wont to say that his Semitic studies were the wine and the whoredom of his heart. Then, again, account for it as we may, there have been whole generations when the spiritual sense of sin; the spiritual sense of the depth and the deceitfulness and the malignity of sin has been all but completely lost, and that even among God's best taught and most deeply exercised people. And so far as I can read the heart of my day that is one of its most deadly and most deplorable declensions. For myself I scarcely ever hear a sermon

or read a page or kneel under a prayer in which the unspeakable evil of my own sinfulness is at all felt or is at all attempted to be expressed. All these things combine with some other things to make both our preachers and our publishers somewhat ashamed and somewhat shy of the Gospel of Christ. And yet I feel sure that the apostolic doctrines of grace and truth must be far more preached in our pulpits than the silence of the press would lead us to think. There must be many able, deeply doctrinal, and genuinely evangelical preachers who feel that they do not possess enough of the gift and grace of English style to justify them in challenging a place among the literary men of our day. Paul himself must have felt something of the same shrinking. He must have felt tempted to water down certain of his pulpit doctrines in Greece and in Rome, else he would never have written, and with such emphasis, that he was not going to be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; and, especially, that he was not going to be ashamed of the scandal of the cross, but was determined at all costs to preach everywhere that so scandalising doctrine. ‘I was with you in weakness,’ he says to the Corinthians, ‘and in fear, and in much trembling.’ But Paul was a strong man; and he conquered and cast out his fear and his weakness far better than some of his successors have done. But the true and proper point of all that for you is this: You are independent both of your new preachers and of your new publishers. That is to say, if your new preachers are at all like those preachers of William Law’s day who preached in the morning on the wind called Euroclydon, and in the evening on the times when the Gospels were writ. You are happily independent of such preachers. For you have the Psalms, and the Gospels, and the Epistles at home. And you have the Confession — one of our elders died with the chapter on Justification open on his pillow beside his Bible — and the Catechism, and the Hymn-book at home. And you have Bunyan, and Baxter, and Rutherford; and perhaps Shepard and Brea and Halyburton. And you have Boston’s Life, and Chalmers’s Life, and McCheyne’s Life, and Spurgeon’s Sermons. ‘How are you getting on?’ I said to an old saint who was so full of years and rheumatism that she never got across her doorstep, and never saw her so-called pastor. ‘O,’ she said, ‘I get on fine, for I have Spurgeon’s Sermons.’

# 105. Upon A Time I Was Somewhat Inclining To A Consumption.

CV ‘Upon A Time I Was Somewhat Inclining To A Consumption.’ A CONSUMPTION is sometimes said to be the most deceitful and the most dangerous of all our diseases. And that is so because in a consumption, as in no other deadly disease, the patient hopes on and hopes on till at last he is suddenly summoned away. Well, if that is a danger and a disadvantage, on the other hand, the consumptive man has this immense benefit and advantage over all other dying men in that he usually has a long warning afforded him beforehand, and has thus a long time given him in which to prepare himself for his coming translation. As Dante has it, ‘The arrow seen beforehand slacks its flight.’ That is to say, if a man foresees his death long before it actually comes to him, that gives him time and opportunity to step aside and to evade the fatal arrow. In most cases of consumption the arrow is shot so slowly, and has such a long way to travel, that the dying man has a long time given him to prepare himself for its last attack. According to our own proverb, when the dying man is forewarned he is thereby forearmed.

‘Upon a time I was somewhat inclining to a consumption, wherewith, about the spring, I was suddenly and violently seized with much weakness in my outward man, inasmuch that I thought I could not live. Now began I to give myself up to a serious examination into my state and condition for the future, and of my evidences for that blessed world to come. For it hath, I bless God, been my usual course, as always, so especially in the day of affliction, to endeavour to keep my interest in the world to come clear before my eyes.’

Then there follow five paragraphs of spiritual experience the like of which, in some respects, I do not know where to find in any other spiritual writer. In his own incomparable way Bunyan goes on to tell us what a time of terror he had at the prospect of his unprepared deathbed. How all his past sins came flocking round his bed like so many harpies of hell hungering for his soul. And now his inward man was seized with a far worse consumption than was that which had seized upon his outward man. And that went on till one day as he was walking up and down the house in a most woeful state this word of God took hold of his heart:

‘“Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, through faith in His blood.” But O! What a turn that Scripture made upon me!’ And what a similar turn that same Scripture has made upon many. For that was Luther’s favourite Scripture. And it was when William Cowper was almost making away with himself that he was led to open this same Scripture which in a moment brought light and peace and hope and joy to his sad heart. And then this other Scripture came home to Bunyan in his double consumption of body and soul:

‘Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saves us.’ My brethren, it is worth a hundred consumptions to have those two Scriptures brought home to our hearts as they were brought home to John Bunyan’s heart. Now, this is the question. Have they ever been brought home to your hearts? You will know by this:

‘Then was I got up on high. Now death was lovely and beautiful in my eyes. For I saw now that we shall never truly live till we be gone to the other world. This additional word also fell with great weight upon my mind: O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? At this I became well again, both in body and in mind: and all at once. My sickness did suddenly vanish. And I walked comfortably, again, in my work for God.’

Now, are any of you, or are any of yours, somewhat inclining to a consumption? And are you, like John Bunyan, warningly threatened with that consumption from time to time? Well, it proved but a threat in John Bunyan’s case. He was one of those threatened men who proverbially live long. For he lived to write the Grace Abounding, and the Pilgrim’s Progress, and much more of that same kind. Bunyan’s threatened consumption was like Isaiah’s. God’s righteousness overflowed in both their cases. And you are to be spared to read the Grace Abounding and the Pilgrim’s Progress again and again, till you have those heavenly books by heart; and, who knows, perhaps you are to be spared to write an account of your own case which shall be not unworthy to be set beside those two immortal books of Bunyan’s. In any case, you must more and more read those immortal books before you go to meet their author. You would be ashamed to meet Bunyan, and Faithful, and Hopeful, and Mr. Honest, and Mr. Fearing, if you had never been at the trouble to read their recorded lives. When you are invited to a dinner in order to meet some great author, if you are not well read in his writings, you hasten to look into Who’s Who, and then you take a glance into such of his books as you can lay your hands on before the day of the dinner. Now just fancy your being set down at dinner between Bunyan and Greatheart and not being able to speak a word to them about any of their experiences or any of their exploits! You would motion to the ministering angels to change your seat to some other table. You would far rather eat and drink alone than have to sit stupid and silent beside Bunyan, and Evangelist, and Christiana, and Mercy, and the boys. I have seen as much as that you are threatened with a consumption in order to give you time to have your depraved taste for books completely changed before you are ushered in among the great authors and the great readers who shall sit on thrones in the celestial city. The last case of a fatal consumption I have had to do with was that of a Lochalsh student last summer. The last thing he had read to him in this world was the rapturous narration of how John Bunyan’s pilgrims all crossed the Jordan. Those splendid pages were read to him in the forenoon by an Edinburgh schoolboy, and then he crossed the same river himself in the afternoon. I had promised to see him again in a day or two. But that was another lesson to me not to say ‘to-morrow’ to a death-bed.

Then again are you one of those greatly-to-be-pitied consumptives who through fear of death are all their life-time subject to bondage? Well then, would it not be a glorious thing if you used all your allotted time so as to fight down all your fears of death, and so as to lay a firm hold on eternal life, before you leave this world? What a splendid victory that would be! How you would bless God to all eternity for the threatened consumption that was made the means of everlasting life to your soul! What a successful life, be it long or short, your life would be if you were able to leave it with the Apostle’s shout on your lips — O death! where is thy sting? And with George Herbert’s song in your mouth:

Death! thou wast once a hideous thing:

But, since my Saviour’s death Has put some blood into thy face, Thou hast grown, sure, a thing to be desired, And full of grace. On the great advantages of a consumption Richard Hooker is rich

and elaborate after his own great manner. The prince of English style takes high ground in this matter of a consumption, as thus: ‘The soul has time,’ he says,

‘to call itself to a just account of all things past by means of which its repentance is made perfect. The joys of the kingdom of heaven have leisure to present themselves. The pleasures of sin, and all this world’s vanities, are censured with an uncorrupted judgment. Charity is free to make advised choice of the soil wherein her last seed may most fruitfully be sown. The mind is at liberty to have due regard of that disposition of worldly things which it can never afterwards alter. And the nearer we draw to God, we are sometimes so enlightened with the shining beams of His glorious countenance, as shall cause those present at our death-bed to say, — Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his! All which benefits and opportunities are by a sudden death prevented.’ So far Hooker. But that great writer does not mention what I look on as one of the most outstanding advantages and opportunities of a consumption. I mean the precious time that a slow consumption gives the dying man to drink into his very soul the best books concerning that strange and wonderful world he is soon to enter. That immense advantage bulks very much in my own mind. For myself, if I am to have some spare time to prepare myself finally before I die I know the great masterpieces of salvation that I shall have set on the shelf nearest my bed. Shall I tell you some of them? My New Testament; my Paradise; my Bunyan; and, especially, the Jordan scenes at the end. My Saint’s Rest, and it in my old class fellow William Young’s beautiful and fit edition. My life-long Goodwin; my Rutherford; my Catechism on the benefits of being a believer; my Gerontius; and my Olney, and Wesley, and kindred hymns. But since I am not myself constitutionally inclining to a consumption, and will not have the great advantage of that; since I may any day die in a moment let me have my hand on that heavenly shelf for a few minutes every day; and, especially, every night, lest the cock crow in my case suddenly.

And, then, there is this other advantage in a slow consumption that Hooker should have dwelt on as he only could. A man whose life has been full of faults, and offences, and errors, and injuries, if he is dying of a slow consumption he has time to write a book of retractations and self corrections such as St. Augustine and Richard Baxter wrote before they died. A consumption gives a man time to write his late, but all the more sincere, apologies to those men to whom he has been an offence, and a temptation, and a burden, and a snare. It gives him authority also to summon the presence of some of the worst cases to his bedside and there and then to make a clean breast to them. As, also, he has time to send to his friends plain-spoken and outspoken messages of love and prayer and counsel that he has not had the courage to speak or to write as long as he was well. I would be bold enough to add these two immense advantages to Hooker’s rich and richly expressed list of the consumptive man’s privileges and advantages.

And, then, there is this last lesson:

‘Now began I afresh to give myself up to a serious examination after my state and condition for the future. For, I bless God, it hath been my usual course, as always, so, especially, in the day of affliction, to endeavour to keep my interest in the life to come clear before my eye.’

Now, you would not stay long enough to-night to let me speak to you about your interest in Christ and in the life to come. But if you have any care to possess an interest in Christ and in the life to come William Guthrie has a little book on that supreme subject, a little book of which John Owen said, drawing a little gilded copy of it out of his pocket, ‘That author I take to have been one of the

greatest divines that ever wrote; his book is my vade-mecum, and I carry it always about with me.' 'I think Guthrie is the best book I ever read,' said Dr. Chalmers also. Now, you might set down William Guthrie's Saving Interest for a Christmas present to some one who is visibly inclining to a consumption, and whose interest in Christ and in the world to come you would like to see secured before his consumption gallops away with him for ever.

'This did sweetly revive my spirit, and did help me to hope in God. And, at this, I became well again, and all at once, both in body and in mind. My sickness did suddenly vanish, and I walked comfortably in my work for God again.' The curability of consumption is still a great question among our doctors. John Bunyan does not take time to tell us just how Dr. Skill treated his case. I fear the open-air cure would have been scoffed at in Dr. Skill's day. But I suppose there is no doubt whatever that the open-air cure has worked many miracles in our day; and I hope it has many more miracles to work among our consumptive friends. And then their work for God will be all the more comfortable that their consumption, like Isaiah's and Bunyan's, has been overflowed and carried away by God's grace and righteousness. The best programme of the work that our cured consumptives have still before them is so excellently put by my old favourite Thomas Shepard that I will copy the pilgrim father's words for you, and will so close.

'It may be there is much work to be done by thee at home,' says Shepard, 'at home, and inside thine own doors. Many odd distempers to be cashiered, and many spiritual decays to be recovered. Also, it may be, there is much for thee yet to do out of doors. It may be there are friends of thine who are still unconverted; and that may be so because thou hast been an offence to them, and hast stood in the way of their salvation. And, converted or unconverted, few will say that they have been much blessed in their souls, or much helped in any real way by thee; and that work for God and for thy friends stands yet to be done by thee. Also, it may be, God has some deep secrets of His providence, and some deep secrets of His grace, to reveal to thee before thou leavest grace for glory. Then, again, thy talents have not been laid out to the best usury in the past; thy time, thy means, thy station, thy opportunities; and thy consumptions have been suspended in order that thou mayest have a good account to render on that day. Thou wilt walk comfortably with God all the time that is left thee on earth if thou settest about these tasks with all thy recovered strength. And, then, when thy appointed work is finished, thou will say: I was not ready, at that time when I first took ill, O Lord; but now let Thy servant depart in peace!'

# 106. I MUSED, I MUSED, I MUSED.

CVI ‘I MUSED, I MUSED, I MUSED.’ THE religiously minded Greeks acknowledged and worshipped the best they knew. And among many other objects of their worship they paid a special honour and showed a special love to the Nine Muses. Those nine deities dwelt on Parnassus, and from that sacred mountain they presided over, purified, sweetened, and greatly ennobled the best life of ancient Greece. The wisest of the Greeks believed that God Himself was the Father of the sacred Nine, and that the human mind when it was at its best was their mother. And thus both heaven and earth combined in the begetting and in the birth of the Nine Muses of the Greek religion and the Greek civilisation. Nor does the greatest of our Christian poets disdain to invoke the assistance of the classic Nine when he is entering on his high enterprise:

O Muses! O high genius! now vouchsafe Your aid! O mind! that all I saw hast kept Safe in a written record, here thy worth, And eminent endowments, come to proof!

John Bunyan had never gone to school to Clio nor to Melpomene; and yet such was his native genius and such was his Christian experience that he has left behind him a history and a tragedy — Dante would have called it a comedy because it all ends so well — a history and a tragedy that far excel all Greek and Roman fame. No Greek philosopher, no Greek poet, has ever spoken to our hearts as John Bunyan has spoken in his Grace Abounding, and in his Pilgrim’s Progress. And in telling us in his own inimitable way all that God had done for his soul, Bunyan at the same time shows us how much his lifelong habit of musing had to do with his religious experience and with his intellectual and spiritual equipment for his splendid work. The first time we find John Bunyan engaged in his lifelong habit of musing is on the village green on that memorable Sabbath afternoon.

‘A voice did suddenly dart, as from heaven, into my soul, which said to me — Wilt thou leave thy sins and go to heaven, or wilt thou have thy sins and go to hell? And, all that afternoon, I fell to musing on all my sanctuary sins, and on all my other Sabbath-day disobediences. Thus I stood in the midst of my play, before all that were present, but yet I told them nothing.’

You will follow out for yourselves what line John Bunyan’s musings took that Sabbath afternoon; and when and how those Sabbath musings of his ended. For myself, I also have often had a good deal of musing about the right sanctification of the Sabbath day. And so, I feel sure, have some of you. I will tell you some of my own musings on this sacred matter, and some of them are yours also, no doubt. Musing on this matter I sometimes say to myself that even if the Fourth Commandment had never come into my hands at all, I would still have observed the Sabbath day. As long as the Four Gospels and the Epistle to the Romans have come into my hands, and as often as I believe in my heart that the Son of God was delivered on the Friday morning for my offences, and was raised again on the Sabbath morning for my justification; as long as I truly believe that I would be a stock and a stone if I did not devoutly observe every returning Sabbath morning. As long as I continually stake my soul on my Lord’s death and resurrection — nature herself, common-sense herself, not to say the Spirit of Christ speaking in my heart — all that

would combine to make me a devoted observer of the Lord's Day. Sufficient, I sometimes say to myself, sufficient surely are six days out of the seven for this fast-passing life. For if there is indeed another life immediately before me, and if it is to be at all such a life as Holy Scripture forecasts it to be, then surely one day out of every seven is not too much to give up to the preparation of my mind and my heart and my habits and my character for that future life. I spend a large part of my life among books, and I often muse over my books on a Saturday night and on a Sabbath morning and say to myself — Six days and six nights are surely quite enough, in all conscience, to give to the books that bear upon this fast-dissolving earth, and one day and one night is surely not too much to give to the books that bear upon the new heavens and the new earth and upon my preparation to enter them. Six days and six nights to the history, and to the biography, and to the philosophy, and to the poetry, and to the fiction of time, and one day with one night to the whole literature of eternity. So I sometimes muse to myself. And as I so muse, the fire burns; till I again determine that as for me and my house, so far as I can secure it, we shall more and more observe, and more and more sanctify, and more and more enjoy, the Lord's own Day. There is a twohundred- year-old and a very musical voice which exactly expresses not a few of my own musings on this whole matter, and it is this:

Bright shadows of true rest; some shoots of bliss;

Heaven once a week; The next world's gladness prepossessed in this; A Day to seek Eternity in time; time's bower; The narrow way;

Transplanted paradise;

God's walking hour; The cool o' the day; The creation's jubilee;

God's parle with dust;

Heaven here; man on those hills of myrrh, of flowers;

Angels descending; the return of trust; A gleam of glory after six days' showers.

Passing on into our author's 'life of conviction,' as he calls it, I come on this paragraph which I shall neither curtail nor water down one single drop.

'Thus was I always sinking, sinking, sinking, whatever I did think or do. So one day, I was walking on the street of a neighbouring town, and I sat down upon a settle in that street. And as I so sat, I fell into a very deep pause about the fearful state into which my sin had brought me. And, after long musing, I lifted up my head: but, methought, I saw as if the sun that shineth in the heavens did grudge to give me his light, and as if the very stones in the streets, and the tiles on the houses, did bind themselves against me. Methought that they all combined to banish me out of the world. I was abhorred of them, and was unfit to dwell among them, or to be a partaker of their benefits, because I had so sinned against their Maker who was also my Saviour. O how happy was every creature over I was! For they all stood fast and kept their station, but I was lost and gone.'

These were some of that poor tinker's musings on the depth of his fall and on the unspeakable awfulness of his sin and misery. Now listen to a great bishop's similar musings some time before that in his episcopal palace.

‘Two things, O Lord, I see in myself; nature which Thou hast made, and sin which I have added to my nature. Oh! take away from me this depravity that I have brought upon myself! Truth, Lord, I deserve damnation; but no offence of mine can surely be so great as is Thy compassion. Infirm, therefore, I come to the Almighty. Wounded, I hasten to the Physician. Unclean, I flee to the Fountain.’ From a settle on a Bedfordshire street, and from one of the most luxurious palaces in England, the same sad self-musings rise to heaven.

‘At another time, I sat by the fire in my house, and was musing on my great wretchedness, and on death as the wages of my sin, when the Lord came and made this word a most precious word to me: “Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself took part of the same; that, through death, He might destroy him that had the power of death, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” I thought that the glory of these words was then so weighty on me that I was, both once and twice, ready to swoon as I sat. Yet not with guilt and trouble, but with solid joy and peace.’

We have the very same wretchedness, and the very same issue out of it, in that half chapter of Paul’s which stands away out at the head of all the literature of wretchedness, ancient and modern, sacred and profane. Melpomene had her own tragical experiences in wretchedness, and she had her own triumphs in the literary expression of her wretchedness. But all her experiences of wretchedness were shallow and superficial, and all her expression of it was feeble and ineffectual, compared with the concentrated wretchedness, and the transcending expression of it, in the Fifty-first Psalm, and in the seventh of the Romans, and in certain chapters of Grace Abounding. ‘Rightly to feel sin,’ says Luther, ‘is the torture of all tortures.’

‘Especially that word Faith put me to it. So that, sometimes, I must question as to whether I had any faith, or no. On this I mused, and could not tell what to do.’

Till at last Martin Luther came to John Bunyan and told him with all clearness what to do.

‘Do this,’ said Luther. ‘Saving faith is nothing else but this. It is nothing else but a sure and steadfast looking to Christ. It is nothing else but a fixed and an unwavering taking hold of Him, and of Him alone, as the alone Giver of righteousness, and salvation, and eternal life. This,’ said Luther to Bunyan, ‘this is the reason that Paul sets Jesus Christ forward so often in his Epistles; yea, almost in every verse. And, like Paul,’ said Luther to Bunyan, ‘you, John Bunyan, must do nothing else but look to Christ. For this alone is true faith.’ And at another time Luther spoke with great point and great power and said to Bunyan:

‘These words — who loved me, and gave Himself for me — these words are full of the right sort of faith. And he who will utter this one word me, and will apply this one word to himself, as Paul the chief of sinners did, he will be a successful disputer with the broken and the angry and the soul-accusing law. Say always, therefore, even for me, a most miserable and a most wretched sinner! Read and repeat with a great vehemency these words me, and for me, not doubting but that thou art of the number to whom these words belong.’ And Bunyan obeyed Luther and did all that till he became the Bunyan that we all know and love; that is to say, one of the most blessed of all our great believers, and one of the sweetest and most consoling of all our great authors. And all that came of his much musing on that one word Faith. The next time we find Bunyan musing it is on a subject which is twinsister to saving faith; that is to say, God’s imputation of Christ’s

representative and suretyship righteousness to all true believers. This was the true open-air-cure of Bunyan's threatened consumption as you will see if you study the passage.

'At this I was greatly lightened in my mind, and bettered in my body, and was made to understand that God could justify and establish a sinner at any time. It was but His looking upon Christ and imputing of His benefits upon us, and the work was forthwith done.' And my brethren, when we read it aright we discover that the whole of our Bible is one long muse upon this same imputation. As far back as the fifteenth of Genesis we find the God of Abraham Himself laying the foundation of Gospel imputation in His gracious treatment of the father of the faithful. And when we come to Moses and Aaron we find that they are the divinely appointed ministers of imputation, far more than of anything else. And the God of Israel gave His two servants their first lesson in imputation when He said that as often as He saw the blood of the pascal lamb on any door He would make His destroying angel to pass by that house on which the atoning blood was sprinkled. And David, who so much needed God's imputation, sings a fine psalm celebrating his own experience of it:

O blessed is the man to whom Is freely pardoned All the transgression he hath done, Whose sin is covered.

Bless'd is the man to whom the Lord Imputeth not his sin. And Isaiah in his great Gospel sermon:

'Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed, All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.' And the Apostle Paul, that mighty muser, he muses on little else but on Gospel imputation. His great masterpiece the Epistle to the Romans is the very Magna Charta of Gospel imputation. And it was when Luther, Paul's great scholar, mused on this same subject in his cell, that the chains fell off his sin-enslaved conscience when he burst out of his prison-house and became the creator of an emancipated Christendom. The Westminster divines also mused on imputation till they asked and answered their three great Gospel questions, to which all our children know the answers: 'How doth Christ execute the office of a Priest?' And, 'What is justification?' And, 'What is faith in Jesus Christ?' All the hymns of the Reformation also, and of every true revival of religion; all the Olney Hymns, all the Wesley Hymns, all the Bonar Hymns, and indeed all the hymns that are worthy to be called hymns, they are all so many musings on Gospel imputation. Let every Sabbath day of ours begin then, and go on, and wind up, with a constant musing on Gospel imputation; for, without Gospel imputation there is nothing left for you and me but a fearful looking for of judgment. And then as the end of all and the best of all,

'As I was musing and in my studies how to love the Lord, and how to express my love to Him, I felt my soul greatly to go out in love and pity to Him, and my bowels to yearn towards Him. For I saw that He was still my Friend and did reward me good for evil. Yea the love and affection that did then burn within me to my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, did work at this time such a strong and such a hot desire of avengement upon myself for the abuse I had done unto Him, that had I had a thousand gallons of blood within my veins, I could freely then have spilt it all at His feet.' To such a heat did the fire burn, as Bunyan mused, and mused, and mused upon sin and salvation, upon himself and upon his Saviour.

Now, my brethren, that is John Bunyan; or rather that is a small selection and a poor specimen of that great spiritual writer on his lifelong habit of musing. But what do you say yourselves to all that? Marcus Aurelius to himself says this in one place, this:

‘If we were of a sudden seized upon and turned inside out how would we appear? If our secret musings were all openly discovered and read from the house-tops, how would we stand?’ My brethren, if you are wise, and if you would be found among the wise, besides these offered lessons out of John Bunyan to-night, you will take home with you this added lesson out of the Stoic Emperor, ‘Suddenly surprised,’ and searched to the bottom of your heart, what would your most secret self-musings be found to be? Would they ever be found to be, like John Bunyan’s, about the Lord’s Day, about its past history, about its weekly message from Christ’s empty grave to you, and about the rest that remains for you in heaven? Again, would your musings ever be like those of Bishop Andrewes and John Bunyan, as to how your sinfulness has degraded you and defiled you and enslaved you? Again, would your musings ever be suddenly found to be about that great word faith, and what faith does, and on Whom faith rests? And on imputation? With all your knowledge, do you know the great imputation chapters in your Bible? And the great passages on that supreme subject in Luther, and in Hooker, and in Bunyan, and in all the other greatest authors in the Church of Christ? If we could but overhear you musing and singing to yourself what would it be? Would it ever be, ‘O blessed is the man’? Would it be, ‘Just as I am’? Would it be, ‘Nothing in my hands I bring’? Would it be, ‘Jesus! Thy blood and righteousness’? Would it be, ‘Standing on His merit I know no safer stand’? Would it be, what we sometimes go home from the class on Sabbath nights singing:

Jesus! how precious is Thy grace! When in Thy Name we trust, Our faith receives a righteousness That makes the sinner just?

# 107. When Comforting Time Was Come.

CVII ‘When Comforting Time Was Come.’

JOHN BUNYAN was immensely indebted to the Puritan preaching of his day. It was the Puritan preaching of his day that first opened John Bunyan’s eyes to see himself. It was the Puritan preaching of his day that first opened his eyes to see his Saviour. It was the Puritan preaching of his day that so settled and grounded his heart on Jesus Christ as made of God to him his wisdom, and his righteousness, and his sanctification, and his redemption. And it was when his comforting time was come that he heard one preach a Puritan sermon on a sweet passage in the Song of Solomon. And then it was his own Puritan preaching all his days that was so much blessed, first to himself and then to all his spiritual children, as he so often and so eloquently testifies. Do you know, my brethren, and from your own experience, what a truly Puritan sermon is? Do you know what it is that differentiates and exalts a genuine Puritan sermon above all other sermons? And can you trace in yourselves, and can you trace up to Puritan preaching, such a succession of spiritual blessings as John Bunyan traces here, and indeed traces all through his Grace Abounding? For the very title of this spiritual masterpiece of his may very well be taken as the title of every genuine Puritan sermon; that is to say: first, sin abounding, and then grace much more abounding. Besides, that is the supreme theme of the true Puritan pulpit, and of no other pulpit that I have ever sat under. The sermon that John Bunyan heard from the lips of a Puritan preacher when his comforting time was come was, as we say at college, an eminently Christological sermon. That is to say, it was a mystical, an evangelical, and an intensely experimental sermon on that passage in the Song. It was the kind of sermon that was wont to be so much relished by our fathers and our mothers when, like John Bunyan, they were in deep spiritual distress and when their comforting time was again come to them.

Walter Marshall’s Ninth Direction is to this effect:

‘We must first receive the comforts of the Gospel in order that we may be able to perform sincerely the duties of the law.’

Now, the attentive student of John Bunyan’s great autobiography is able to trace quite clearly that same spiritual sequence, and that same evangelical and experimental order, in John Bunyan’s life, first of Gospel comfort, and then of consequent obedience. I shall not attempt to incorporate into this short discourse one hundredth part of the passages inGrace Abounding that bear upon Walter Marshall’s Ninth Direction. But he who is wisely interested in the one thing supremely interesting, he will find that rich chain of John Bunyan’s spiritual experiences for himself, which is a far better way than any one else finding them for him. As to the special sermon of this comforting time after many years Bunyan remembers the preacher’s text, and his five heads, and his application of his fourth particular. And no wonder. For it was that application which sent Bunyan home from church that Sabbath in such an ecstasy of unearthly joy.

‘So as I was going home that application came again into my thoughts; and, as I well remember, I said then in my heart: What shall I get by thinking on what I have now heard? And, still as what I had just heard ran thus in my mind, the words of the text waxed stronger and warmer, and began to make me look up. Now was my heart filled with comfort and hope, and now could I believe that my sins should be forgiven me. Yea, now, I was so taken with the love and the mercy of God that I could not contain myself till I got home. I thought I could have spoken of God’s love and mercy to me, even to the very crows that sat upon the ploughed lands before me, had they been capable to have understood me. Wherefore, I said in my soul, and with much gladness: Well, I would I had a pen and ink here, and I would write this down before I go any further. For surely I will not forget this forty years hence.’

Now like that comforting Sabbath morning to John Bunyan, so every returning Sabbath morning of our own is appointed of God to be a comforting time to us also. Every returning Sabbath morning the command comes forth from the God of Salvation to all His true preachers:

‘Comfort my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her iniquity is pardoned. Say to her that He who was delivered for her offences was raised again this morning for her justification.’

Now all other preachers among us but the Puritan preachers are either afraid, or they are ashamed, or they are in some way not willing, or are in some way not able, to preach the one thing worth preaching: a free and a full justification by faith in Jesus Christ that is; and, then, out of that, a life of evangelical obedience. You never hear the one divine message of a free and a full and an immediate forgiveness from any other pulpit but the Puritan pulpit. Or if you ever hear it, all other preachers mix it up and adulterate it with the wood and the hay and the stubble of our own impossible performances. For my part, the older I grow and the wiser I grow, I both preach and pray and sing more and more every Sabbath morning Paul’s gospel, that is to say, the Puritan gospel. Summer and winter, fair and foul, dark and clear, I open my Divine Day with Charles Wesley’s Sabbath morning words:

Dark and cheerless is the morn Unaccompanied by Thee:

Joyless is the Day’s return Till Thy mercy’s beams I see. And almost more with this of Charles Wesley’s also: His blood can make the foulest clean, His blood avails for me. And Jonathan Edwards, that mighty Puritan, says to us that we are on this day specially to meditate upon and to celebrate the work of our redemption. We are with especial joy to remember the resurrection of our Lord, because His resurrection was the full finish of our redemption. This was the Day of the great gladness of His heart. For this was the Day of His deliverance from the chains of death, as it was the day of our deliverance from the chains of hell. And as John Bunyan has it in his own inimitable and incomparable way: On every Sabbath morning he always asserted that he saw Jesus Christ leaping and dancing and singing around his deserted grave, because He had that morning finished for ever John Bunyan’s justification. Hooker himself was a true Puritan as often as he preached on justification on a Lord’s Day morning. Would that that wonderful man had given more of his time and more of his strength and more of his style to the pure Gospel, and less to the ecclesiastical polity of only one section of the Church of Christ; great as his services have been to all our Churches in some parts of his great debate. Keep up your hearts, all you Puritan preachers. For yours is the only truly heart-comforting and soulsatisfying preaching in all the world. That

preaching of yours made Paul, and it made Luther, and it made Hooker, and it made all the English and Scottish reformers, and it made the pilgrim fathers, and it made the Wesleys, and it made Chalmers, and it made Spurgeon and Parker. It made them all, because there is nothing else to be called true preaching; there is nothing else to make true preachers in all the world. There is no other preaching with such Scripturalness, and such depth, and such strength, and such insight, and such adequate and expert treatment of the case, and such adequate and expert treatment of the Cross, and out of all that such Pauline treatment of a sinner's Sabbath morning justification. The true comforting time comes again to every truly Puritan and truly evangelical preacher, and to every truly Puritan and truly evangelical people, with every returning Lord's Day morning. And then above all other comforting Sabbath mornings the communion Sabbath morning comes to us here next Lord's Day with its special and its supreme comfort to all true communicants. For the God of Salvation is at His best on a communion morning, and His Puritan preachers are at their best, and His prepared people are at their best also. Not that Jesus Christ can be any more or any better to you on a communion day than He is every Sabbath day, when you again receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered to you in the Gospel. Only, the Lord's Supper has a Gospel impressiveness about it all its own. For as the Apostle says to the Galatians: 'Christ crucified is more evidently set forth before your eyes in the Lord's Supper.' You hear Christ preached every Sabbath, and as often as you hear you again believe to the saving of your souls. But on the communion Sabbath you both hear, and see, and touch, and taste your salvation, till all your bodily senses are, so to speak, sanctified to the salvation of your souls. As Robert Bruce has it in his magnificent sacramental sermons:

'Speers thou what new thing we get in the sacrament? I say, we get Christ better than we did before. We get a better grip of Christ in the sacrament. The same thing which thou possessed by the hearing of the Word, thou possesses now more largely. For by the sacrament my faith is nourished and the bounds of my soul are enlarged; and so where I had but a small grip of Christ before, as it were betwixt my finger and my thumb; now, I get Him in my haill hand. For, ay the more my faith grows the better a grip I get of Christ Jesus. So far that great Puritan preacher in Reformation Edinburgh. And then when you prepare yourselves for the communion day and for the Lord's Table by some previous days and nights of recollection of your past life, and by retired reading of the Word of God, and by much secret prayer to Him, then the Supper comes home to you with an immense power and an immense impressiveness. So much so, that at the very moment when the elder puts the bread and the wine into your hand, that very moment Almighty God again puts His Son and His salvation into your heart. And then Christ Himself comes and speaks in your heart and says to you: My broken body thus I give For you, for all: take, eat, and live. My blood I thus pour forth, He cries, To cleanse the soul in sin that lies. And that very moment the sin-cleansing efficacy of His atoning blood is anew experienced and anew possessed by every believing and appropriating heart. Yes: Jesus Christ is at His very best on the communion day, and your Gospel preachers are at their very best. And you are at your very best yourselves. And then your great comforting time has again come round to you once more in this sad and sinful world. But it is not your Puritan weekly Sabbath, nor is it your Puritan communion Sabbath, nor is it your best Puritan preaching that is your truest and your best and your consummating comforting time; it is — will you let me say it? — your death-bed; yes, it is your death-bed if you are prepared for it. It will be sure to startle some and it will almost anger others to hear a good word said for death; for death, which is the last of all our enemies, as Paul himself in one place calls it. But a

great Pauline preacher, Thomas Shepard, who is by far the deepest and the most spiritual of all the pilgrim fathers, he says again and again and again of death that to a true Christian man his death is his most comforting time; it is by far and away his best means of grace; it is by far and away his best Gospel ordinance. Far away better than the weekly Sabbath, far away better than the Communion Sabbath, and far away better than the best preaching. For, says Shepard, the Sabbath and even the Supper itself and even when they are both at their very best, they only bring Christ down to us for another short season. But our death, if we are thoroughly prepared for it, and if we accomplish it aright, will immediately take us home to be with Christ for ever; never again to be parted from Him, and never again to be found unlike Him. But for Thomas Shepard or any one else to speak of death in that bright and eager and entrancing way will seem I fear to some of you to be simply monstrous and insufferable and impossible. You would rather have the so-called Puritan gloom than an unnatural and an impossible hilarity like that about death. But all the same, it was David's hilarity, and it was our Lord's hilarity, and it was Paul's, and Luther's, and Shepard's, and Rutherford's hilarity and that of many more. Read the Revelation of John the Divine, and the Paradise of Dante, and the deathbeds of John Bunyan's pilgrims, and Newman's Gerontius, and your own Rutherford's Letters. Read in all those so masterly and so heavenlyminded books, and you will see that death, as we are wont to call it, is not death at all to them, but is the true beginning of everlasting life. It is the true comforting time to all those who have been for so long saying to themselves secretly like David that they shall be satisfied only when they awake with His likeness. And again like David: I wait for God, my soul doth wait, my hope is in His word. And like Paul: To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. And like Rutherford:

There to an ocean fullness, His mercy doth expand, And glory, glory dwelleth In Immanuel's Land. And again:

Amid the shades of evening, While sinks life's lingering sand, I hail the glory dawning In Immanuel's Land. And like George Herbert:

Death! thou wast once an uncouth, hideous thing! But since our Saviour's death Has put some blood into thy face, Thou hast grown, sure, a thing to be desired, And full of grace. And like James Montgomery:

So, when my latest breath Shall rend the veil in twain, By death I shall escape from death, And life eternal gain. And like Alfred Tennyson:

Sunset and evening star, And one clear call for me! And may there be no moaning at the bar When I put out to sea.

For, though from out our bourne of time and place The flood may bear me far, I hope to see my Pilot face to face, When I have crossed the bar. And almost best of all — for your tombstone and mine — this: 'The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory.' Yes; our death, says Thomas Shepard, is our best means of grace; it is our best Gospel ordinance; and it is by far and away our best comforting time. Comfort ye, therefore, comfort ye, my dying people, saith your God.

# 108. O Methought, Christ! Christ! Christ!

CVIII ‘O Methought, Christ! Christ! Christ!’

JOHN BUNYAN frankly confesses to us that he never had the advantage of going to school to Aristotle or to Quintilian or to Longinus. At the same time, and in spite of that great disadvantage, he is able to employ their rhetorical figure of apostrophe to absolute perfection. Genial and generous Nature, very Genius herself, was the tinker’s sole and sufficient teacher in his oratorical style. And then the grace of God came to him and gave him his unparalleled impulse and opportunity. Till he is as good at this literary figure of those ancient masters as if he had taken first-class honours in one of their famous schools. And till we carry this great apostrophe of his in our memories and in our hearts beside the great apostrophies of the prophets and the psalmists and the apostles. And till we borrow this great apostrophe of his and make use of it on our own account and on our own occasions almost as much as if it were Holy Scripture itself.

‘O methought, Christ! Christ! There was nothing but Christ that was now before my eyes! O Christ! O Christ! O Christ! My Lord and my Saviour! O Christ! O Christ!’

Let us take in his own order some of John Bunyan’s experiences of the grace of Christ that led him to apostrophise Christ in this so impassioned and so impressive way. You all have the first of those great passages of his by heart, and therefore you will enjoy it all the more when I again repeat it in your hearing. Out of Paul himself I know nothing to equal this passage:

‘But one day as I was passing in the field, and that too with some dashes in my conscience, fearing lest yet all was not right, suddenly this sentence fell upon my soul, Thy Righteousness is in Heaven! And, methought, withal, I saw with the eyes of my soul, Jesus Christ at God’s Right Hand. There, I say, was my Righteousness. So that wherever I was or whatever I was doing, God could not say of me that He wanted my righteousness, for, there it was, just before Him. I also saw, moreover, that it was not my good frame of heart that made my Righteousness better, nor my bad frame that made my Righteousness worse. For my Righteousness was Jesus Christ Himself, the same yesterday to-day and for ever.’ And again:

‘Twas glorious to me to see His exaltation, and the worth and the prevalency of all His benefits. And that because I could now look from myself to Him, and should reckon that all those graces of God that were now green on me, were yet but like those crack-groats and four-pencehalfpennies that rich men carry in their purses, when their gold is in their trunks at home! O, I saw that my gold was all in my trunk at home! Even in Christ, my Lord and my Saviour! Now Christ was my all! He was made of God to me all my Wisdom, all my Righteousness, all my Sanctification, and all my Redemption!’

Now, righteousness, you will remark, is the one foundation of all those glorious passages. And righteousness is the one foundation of a thousand passages elsewhere, far more glorious than any passage even in Grace Abounding. For righteousness is the one foundation word and the one foundation thing of all the great foundation passages in the prophets, and in the psalmists, and in

the greatest of all the apostles. If you will take the trouble to consult your Cruden on this great subject you will see that for yourselves. And as you think over all that, this reflection cannot but occur to you that of all the preachers of the Gospel, old or new, John Bunyan and his Puritan contemporaries come, by a long way, the nearest to David, and to Isaiah, and to Paul in this fundamental matter of righteousness: what it is, in whom we have it, how it is to be obtained, and how it is to be held fast and for ever made our own. Now as regards righteousness, true and pure and complete righteousness of heart and of life, you yourselves know as well as Paul and Luther and Bunyan, how the holy law of God condemns you to your face every day and every hour you live: condemns you, and all but executes you on the spot. God's holy law arrested and condemned and executed David, and Isaiah, and Paul, and Luther, and Bunyan every day, and on the spot, as you will read in their great autobiographies. And what those great sinners did when they were so executed and slain we read in all their apostrophes, and in all their prayers, and in all their praises.

Now with all that the main point for us is this, not what Paul and Luther and Bunyan did, but what you and I do when we are in the same awful condemnation. To us the priceless importance of the Psalms and the Romans and the Galatians and the Grace Abounding stands in this, that they all show us what all those sinful men did in their dreadful extremity. And it was what they were enabled to do, or rather it was what Christ came and did for them, that makes them all so to apostrophise Him in every psalm and epistle and paragraph of theirs. And as many of you as are taken by the throat continually by God's broken law, it is for you above all men that the Psalms and the Romans and the Galatians and theGrace Abounding were all written. Nobody but you, and the like of you, will understand a single line of those divine books: no, not one single syllable. And then if you will take your lesson in all this matter of righteousness and life from John Bunyan, he will do you a service in this respect that neither Aristotle, nor Quintilian, nor Longinus, nor Dionysius of Halicarnassus can do you. That is to say, he will take you to his own school of Christian doctrine and Christian experience and Christian eloquence, and he will there teach you how to adore and how to magnify and how to apostrophise and how to cry continually, O Christ! O Christ! O Christ! And that with more and more passion and more and more rapture every new day: O methought, Christ! Christ! There was nothing but Christ that was now before my eyes! I was not now only for looking upon this or that benefit of Christ apart, as of His Blood, His Burial, or His Resurrection. But I considered Him now as a whole Christ. As He in whom all these and all other His Virtues, Relations, Offices, and Operations met together: and that too, as He sat on the Right Hand of God in Heaven.

Sometimes, so Bunyan tells us about himself, he would be like David in the Hundred and Third Psalm and like our own Shorter Catechism. That is to say, he would sometimes look at some one benefit of Christ alone and by itself. As David looked in that fine psalm of his now at the forgiveness of all his iniquities, and now at the healing of all his diseases, and now at the redemption of his life from destruction, and now at the satisfying of his mouth with good things, and now at this, that God had not dealt with him after his sins, nor had rewarded him according to his iniquities. Or again as our Catechism looks in one place at our assurance of God's love, and then at our peace of conscience, and then at our joy in the Holy Ghost, and then at our increase of grace, and then at our perseverance therein to the end. And again our Catechism looks at the benefits believers receive from Christ at their death, and then again, at the benefits they receive at their resurrection. And Bunyan sometimes looked at his salvation benefits one by one and apart in

that way. But as he became better and better skilled in this matter, so far as he himself was concerned, and not finding fault with the Psalm, nor with the Catechism, he was now not only for looking upon this or the other benefit of Christ apart and by itself. But he got more and more into the great evangelical way of gathering up all Christ's benefits into Christ Himself. In his own so expressive words, he more and more accustomed himself to consider Christ as a whole Christ and as a complete Christ. He more and more trained himself and practised himself to see Christ and to treat with Him as the true Christ of God in whom it has pleased the Father that all God's fullness should dwell. And out of whose fullness, day after day and hour after hour, he was to receive the assurance, and the experience, and the personal possession of all his salvation benefits, as often as he felt his need of them, and again went back to Christ for them. And it was as he continually returned to Christ for all his salvation benefits that he more and more broke out into this adoring and rapturous apostrophe: O Christ! O Christ! O Christ! My Lord and my Saviour! O Christ, the alone source and spring of all my saving benefits! O Christ! O Christ! O Christ!

Now after all that, was it any wonder that the very Name of Christ, as often as he read it in the Word of God, was made to spangle in John Bunyan's eyes. 'Spangle' is his own expressive word in this matter. And no wonder. For whose eyes would not spangle at that glorious Name? Whose eyes that were once opened truly to see Him to whom that glorious Name belongs? I have often seen your own eyes spangling in this house and in your own house at home as I read that Name to you in the Gospels and in the Epistles. I saw some of your eyes spangling like the sun itself this forenoon and this afternoon as often as the Name of Christ fell again upon your open and hungry ears as you sat at His Table. How could it be otherwise? As John Bunyan says, you would be so many Philistines if your eyes did not spangle at that Name which is above every name. Far better be born and die without having eyes at all than have to give an account of two eyes that had never once spangled at the Name of Christ. You will need nothing more to secure you a great welcome and an abundant entrance on that Day than just the light and the love that will spangle in your eyes at your first sight of Christ. I always think of our own Samuel Rutherford as having two of the most Christ-spangling eyes in all the world. You will all remember how he was wont to protest that from the day when he first saw Christ in the beauty of His holiness, he had so fallen in love with Christ, that he could give up his whole heart to no one else. He was wont to write to his more spangling-eyed correspondents that if he loved wife or child or Anwoth, and he loved them all with all his big and warm heart; yet, all the time, it was in Christ, and for Christ's sake, that he so loved them. And in the spangling of his heart he was wont to declare that he loved his very banishment in Aberdeen because it was for Christ's sake that he was living in silence there. And he was wont to declare also that he would welcome the stake and the gallows for the same Name, and that his eyes would spangle and that he would apostrophise Christ as he fell bound among the flames. Happy people! who besides your Bible have the spangling books of John Bunyan and Samuel Rutherford. Happy people who possess spangling eyes wherewith to read the Name of Christ in those spangling books! Now it was to teach and to constrain and to compel a multitude that no man can number to exclaim, O Christ! O Christ! O Christ! and that with spangling eyes: that was the final cause, as Aristotle would have said had he known it, and the chief end of all created things and all redeemed things and all restored things. Yes, the very creation itself, and then the fall, and then the cross, and then the Lord's Supper; all law and all righteousness, all grace and all glory; all, all was intended and was overruled to lead all God's saints up to this apostrophe: O Christ! O Christ! O Christ!

Aye and all your own personal experience of sin, with all your unspeakable misery and shame and degradation all your days on account of your sin, with all your inward agony from that never-ceasing war in your own soul between sin and grace, a war and a bondage past all imagination of mortal man; it has all been appointed you and ordained you in order that you might be brought at last to exclaim, with spangling eyes: O Christ! O Christ! O Christ! And if any of you have been so exclaiming all this communion day, then your households should keep their eyes on you and watch well both your going out and your coming in lest you be not left much longer with them. For the days of the years of your pilgrimage among them must be fast nearing their accomplishment when that communion day comes on which your heart is so carried captive all the day that you are heard to utter nothing so articulately as this: O Christ! O Christ! O Christ! Then the heavenly elder will soon be at your door with your communion card for the Table above. And when it is all over here I will tell you what will happen to you on your arrival there. Make way! it will be proclaimed as with the sound of a trumpet: Make way for this great lover of our Lord! Make way for this communicant with the rich voice and the spangling eyes! And then you will begin fully to see and fully to understand and fully to accept why it was that you had to pass through such a hell upon earth while you were here, through such a lifetime of such sinfulness and such spiritual suffering on account of your sinfulness. And why also you were so emptied from vessel to vessel till now you are to be for ever sanctified and for ever satisfied with the love of Christ and with your everlasting likeness to Christ. Only, your heart will be so full when you first see Christ that you will not be able for a time even to say to Him so much as His Name. But He will say your name to you. And to hear your name even once from His lips, with His eyes spangling when He sees you — let the bride describe your feelings: ‘He brought me,’ you will say, ‘to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love. Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love. His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.’ ‘Beloved,’ says one of the friends of the Bridegroom to you and to all such as you are, ‘Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.’ ‘O methought, Christ! Christ!’ says another friend of the Bridegroom. ‘There was nothing now but Christ before my eyes. O Christ! O Christ! O Christ!’

# 109. I Will In This Place Thrust In A Word Or Two Concerning My Preaching.

CIX ‘I Will In This Place Thrust In A Word Or Two Concerning My Preaching.’ THE beginning of John Bunyan’s preaching was something like this. It was something like what we ourselves have sometimes seen in Scotland and in our own day. At a time of religious revival, or some other season of refreshing, the Spirit of God lays hold of a young man: a ploughman, or a tradesman, or a student. ‘Some of the most able for judgment and godliness of life’ immediately have their eyes on that young man. ‘Some of the most able among the saints’ with us also will prevail with that young convert to accompany them to some of their meetings in such and such a kitchen, or carpenter’s shop, or barn, or hayloft. I have seen it myself a hundred times in Padanaram, and in Airlie, and in Kirriemuir, and in Logiealmond, and in Huntly, and in Aberdeen, and in Hopeman. I have seen Duncan Matheson and John More taken in hand by the ‘most able for judgment and godliness of life,’ and gradually led on till their names became a great fragrance to all the country round about. And this same went on in Bedford till the ‘priests and doctors’ set the civil arm in motion. And till one evening just as the tinker was entering a little prayermeeting the village constable laid his hand on the unordained preacher’s shoulder.

‘At the sessions after, I was indicted for an upholder and maintainer of unlawful assemblies and conventicles, and for not conforming to the National Worship of the Church of England. So being by the justices delivered up to the gaoler’s hands, I was had home to prison again, and there have lain now complete twelve years, waiting to see what God would suffer those men to do with me.’

It cannot, I should think, but interest us all to learn what sort of a preacher the Bedford tinker was before he was shut up into Bedford jail, there to learn to be a still better preacher before he came out.

Well then to begin with, it was the old story. ‘Unworthy wretch that I am! Such a fool as I am! Of all unworthy men, the most unworthy!’ And then as to his literature. To the end they never made John Bunyan a doctor of divinity nor anything else of that honourable sort. But three degrees had already been granted to Bunyan that neither Cambridge nor Oxford could either give or withhold.

‘To wit, union with Christ; the anointing of the Spirit; and much experience of temptation. All of which go to fit a man for that mighty work of preaching the Gospel of Christ, much more than all the University learning that can be had.’ So says John Burton of Bedford in his excellently written preface to John Bunyan’s Gospel Truths Opened. ‘In my preaching of the Word,’ says Bunyan,

‘I took special notice of this, that the Lord did lead me to begin where His Word begins. Yea, it was for this reason I lay so long at Sinai so as to see the fire, and the cloud, and the darkness, that I might fear the Lord all the days of my life on earth, and tell of His wondrous works to my children.’

God’s Word, and Bunyan’s own conscience and heart, were about all the books he ever had; and in his preaching he always took the Bible view, and the view that his own conscience and heart

took, of what true preaching is; with what all true preaching begins, and with what it all ends. Bunyan always began where Paul always began, and where Luther always began, and where all the Puritan preachers always began. And then, beginning as he always began, Bunyan shall tell you in his own words how he went on.

‘Now, this part of my work I fulfilled with great sense; for the terrors of the law, and guilt for my transgressions, lay heavy on my conscience. I preached what I felt; what I smartingly did feel; even that under which my poor soul did groan and travail to astonishment. Indeed, I have been to my hearers as one sent to them from the dead. I went myself in chains to preach to them in chains. And I carried that fire in my conscience that I persuaded them to beware of. I can truly say, and that without dissembling, that when I have been to preach, I have gone full of guilt and terror to the pulpit-door, and there it hath been taken off. I have been at liberty till I had done my work, and then, immediately, even before I could get down the pulpit-stairs, I have been as bad as I was before. And yet, God carried me on, but surely with a strong hand, for neither guilt nor hell could take me off my work.’

‘Now, this part of my work I fulfilled with great sense.’ Canon Venables’s editorial note upon ‘great sense’ is this: ‘With great sense: that is to say, with great feeling and with great sympathy. As in Shakespeare, Othello says:

O brave Iago, honest and just, Thou hast such noble sense of thy friend’s wrong. And our own Highland Brea, speaking like Bunyan about the beginning of his own ministry, says:

‘The preacher must have the sense of his charge; the danger of immortal souls deeply imprinted on his heart. He that hath but slight impressions of his charge will never faithfully perform it.’ And Newman, though he does not use the word ‘sense,’ has the very same thing under the word ‘earnestness.’ I like to give you Newman’s fine English when I possibly can. ‘He’ — says that great writer —

‘he who has before his mental eye the Four Last Things will have the true earnestness, the horror of one who witnesses a great conflagration, or the rapture of one who discerns some rich and sublime prospect of natural scenery. His countenance, his manner, his voice, all speak for him; and that in proportion as his view has been vivid and minute The great English poet has described this sort of eloquence when a calamity had befallen:

Yea, this man’s brow, like to a title leaf Foretells the nature of a tragic volume.

Thou tremblest, and the whiteness in thy cheek Is apter than thy tongue to tell thine errand.

It is this earnestness, in the supernatural order, continues Newman,

‘which is the eloquence of saints; and not of saints only, but of all Christia preachers, according to the measure of their fait and their love.’

Now John Bunyan should have satisfied the Cardinal so far at any rate as his mental eye was concerned. For not St. Francis himself, not Dante himself, has ever held the Four Last Things before their eyes better, and to more earnestness and impressiveness, than John Bunyan has done.

‘God gave me some utterance wherewith to express in some measure what I saw. For still I preached as I saw and felt.’ And it was because Jacob Behmen had the same eyes as St. Francis and Dante and Bunyan had that there would continually arise within him what he calls a ‘fiery instigation’ to tell to others what he had seen and heard when he was caught up by the hair of the head, and was carried away into the Vision of God, as the captive prophet was carried away at the river of Chebar.

‘Wherefore I did labour so to preach the Word, as that thereby, if it were possible, the sin, and the person guilty of the sin, might be particularised by my preaching.’

‘The Lord,’ says Halyburton, ‘did point out to me particulars wherewith to try me. But when I saw that it behoved me to quit these particular sins, then I begged a little delay: Augustine-like, I was willing to be pure, but not yet.’ And out of that experience like Bunyan, Halyburton, in his pulpit particularisations, was very home-coming and very heart-searching. And he was wont to complain that most preachers were much too general and much too remote in their application of truth. And Fraser says this on this same subject:

‘I felt called to preach plainly, particularly, and authoritatively: yet courteously, wisely, meekly, and gently; not to speak in a cloud of words, but to say, Thou art the man!’

‘Again, I never cared to meddle with things that were controverted and in dispute, especially things of the lowest nature.’ Old Thomas Shepard shall comment on this of John Bunyan. ‘Divisions,’ says that great Pilgrim Father,

‘pull down kingdoms without foreign enemies. It is the delight of hell to see churches at variance among themselves. This is Satan’s continual attempt in the best churches and he is too often successful. It is most distressful to see what a small thing the devil will make to do his work: a word, a gesture, a garment will do it. One must have liberty to speak one thing, and another another thing. I am of this mind, saith one. But I am not of that mind, saith another. Even a breath of suspicion will not seldom do it. O, tremble to entertain a thought of contention! Love one another sincerely, and you will live together quietly.’ So far dear old Shepard.

‘Besides,’ says Bunyan, ‘I did let alone the things that engendered strife, because my proper work did run in another channel, even to carry an awakening word: to that therefore did I stick and adhere.’

‘Again, when, at sometimes, I have been about to preach upon some smart and searching portion of the Word, I have found the temper suggest and say — What! will you preach this? This, of which you are yourself guilty? Do not preach upon that subject to-day. Or if you do, mince it down so as to escape the condemnation yourself. But I thank the Lord I have never consented to these satanic suggestions. Let me die, said I, rather than water down the Word of God.’

Plutarch-like, I like to give you parallel lives in all these matters. To me parallel lives are very instructive and very impressive. You see how John Bunyan’s mouth was almost shut sometimes by reason of his own sinfulness. And listen to Jacob Behmen on the same experience.

‘Leave all these matters alone, it would be said to me. And so have I often said to myself; but the truth of God did burn in my bones till I again took pen and ink. All this time, do not mistake me for a saint or an angel. For my heart is full of all evil. In malice, in hatred, and in lack of brotherly love,

after all I have experienced, I am like all other men. I am surely the fullest of all men of all manner of malignity and infirmity.'

And, wholly unlike Bunyan and Behmen in everything else, I myself am only too like them in my temptation to mince matters and to be mealymouthed in my preaching. Like them I would flee the pulpit if I only could, and for the same reason. Often when the church officer is bringing in the Bible I think of escaping by the back door. You will not believe me, but it's true. And when you are settling yourselves down in your luxurious seats I am holding on by the banister behind, and am pleading with God that He would not cast me away from His presence, but would uphold me with His free Spirit! And when the organist is welcoming you in with sweet music I am staggering in with this prayer: O! sprinkle the pulpit, and the preacher, and the sermon, with the peace-speaking and the powergiving blood! And I never once come along Melville Street on a Sabbath morning or on a Sabbath evening that I do not have to reason with myself in this way: Be quiet, O my conscience! Be sensible, and look on things as they are! Remember that you are but a postman, as it were, to the people. You are not proposed as a pattern to them. Go boldly, then, and declare your message to them. It is not because you have attained, or are already perfect. If you follow after that is enough for you. And that, well considered, and laid close to my conscience and to my heart and to my imagination carries me through; when, otherwise, I would flee from before your faces. 'It is far better,' said Bunyan and Behmen to themselves, 'that we condemn ourselves in what we preach, rather than, to escape condemning ourselves, we imprison the truth in unrighteousness.'

Every self-observing preacher will read with a humbled heart what Bunyan says about his temptations now to vainglory and now to a too great depression of spirit in and after his pulpit work. Again and again he returns to that, and not once too often. But there is one of his passages on that subject which I must give you.

'I have also, while found in this blessed work, been often tempted to pride and to liftings up of heart. Yet the Lord, of His precious mercy, hath so carried it toward me, that I have had but small joy to give way to such a thing. For, it hath been my every day's portion to be let into the evil of my own heart, and still made to see such a multitude of corruptions and infirmities therein, that it hath caused hanging down of my head under all my gifts and attainments.' I have often wondered — and I say it with all reverence — how it was with our Lord Himself in this matter. He could not but have felt satisfied, and happy, and hopeful after such a sermon as the Sermon on the Mount: nor could it have been sinful in Him so to feel, could it? And Paul could not but have known that he had spoken eloquently and impressively on Mars Hill. Now, was it vainglory in the Apostle so to feel? And when he felt buoyant and generous-hearted and affable all day after such a sermon was he in that sinfully puffed up? What do you think? Or did the Apostle protect himself and justify his happiness by saying, 'It is no more I that preach good sermons, or offer good prayers, but it is the Spirit of Christ that preacheth and prayeth in me'?

Both in their elation and in their depression, our preachers must often be thrown back upon such problems and such patterns as these.

There are many more points of the greatest interest in Bunyan's account of his experiences in preaching. But I have time to mention only one more.

‘Now, I altered my preaching. Now, I did labour to hold forth Jesus Christ in all His Offices, Relations, and Benefits, to His Church. And with this God led me also into something of our mystical union with Christ. Therefore that I discovered and shewed to them also.’

Now this raises a question that I have often thought about. And that is how much, how far too much, a congregation is dependent on the attainments, and on the experiences, and on the labours, and on the alterations of their minister. For years John Bunyan’s congregation heard next to nothing of Jesus Christ as their Prophet Priest and King. And nothing at all of their mystical union to Him. It is true, they had five years of all that from Bunyan before he was caught, as he says, and was cast into prison. But there must be multitudes of our ministers who are caught and cast into their graves before they have ever preached a single sermon on the Mystical Union, or so much as know what it is. Now, in what way is that famine of the Word to be met? I do not know any other way but by all our ministers setting themselves to grow deeper and deeper into the divine life every day themselves; and then their preaching on the Sabbath day will grow deeper and deeper also. But here again, and most happily, our people are not wholly dependent on us. They need not be starved of evangelical, and spiritual, and mystical doctrine, even though we who preach to them know little or nothing of these great matters ourselves. You will all remember James Stewart of the cab office down at the Dean Bridge. Holding up his well-worn Walter Marshall to me on his death-bed, he said, ‘I read little else now but Marshall’s Third Direction. It is pure gold!’ he exclaimed. ‘It is pure honey out of the Rock! It is heaven upon earth to me to read it again and again!’ Now James Stewart to most men’s eyes was a plain man and an unlettered man. He was just the sort of man, you would have said, who would be wholly and entirely dependent on his minister for the deepest things of the spiritual life. Not at all! Not at all! James Stewart, plain man as he was, was a spiritually-minded student of spiritual things, and he was a much-experienced man of God. And it was largely Walter Marshall’s Sanctification, and it was largely his Third Direction, that made James Stewart the man he was, and the man he now for ever is. Blessed be the God of Walter Marshall and the God of James Stewart! And may He be your God and my God for ever also! Amen!

# 110. I Find To This Day Seven Abominations In My Heart.

CX ‘I Find To This Day Seven Abominations In My Heart.’ THE number seven has been a mystical and a sacred number in all ages and in all literatures and in all religions. But it is in Holy Scripture and in Christian literature alone that the number seven has taken to itself that special height and depth and breadth and completeness with which we are so familiar. As for instance, there are the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost: Wisdom, and Understanding, and Counsel, and Fortitude, and Knowledge, and Piety, and the Fear of God. Then there are the seven Penitential Psalms. Then, again, there are the seven deadly sins: Pride, and Lechery, and Envy, and Wrath, and Covetousness, and Gluttony, and Sloth. And over against them there are the seven chief virtues: Humility, and Chastity, and Love, and Patience, and Bounty, and Abstinence, and Vigilance. Then, again, there are the seven spiritual works: to convert sinners, and to instruct the ignorant, and to counsel doubters, and to comfort the sorrowful, and to bear wrongs patiently, and to forgive enemies, and to pray for all men. And, lastly, there are the seven works of charity: to feed the hungry, and to give drink to the thirsty, and to clothe the naked, and to shelter the homeless, and to visit the sick, and to come to the imprisoned, and to bury the dead. And then, after the Bible examples of the number seven, the seven scars that were cut on Dante’s forehead have made by far the deepest impression on our minds and our hearts:

Seven times The letter that denotes the inward stain, He on my forehead, with the blunted point Of his drawn sword, inscrib’d. And ‘Look,’ he cried, ‘When enter’d, that thou wash these scars away.’ But all that only serves as so much preface and introduction to the seven arch-abominations that John Bunyan still finds in his own unsanctified heart.

Now my brethren, those seven arch-abominations in John Bunyan’s heart have given me more deep thought, and more perplexing thought, than I can well attempt to tell you. And in this way. When first I took those seven arch-abominations of John Bunyan’s heart, and laid them alongside the whole Law of God, I did not know where I was: I did not know what to say or what to think. For in the Book of Exodus I read that the Lord gave unto Moses two tables of stone written with the finger of God. And the tables were written on both their sides, and the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the two tables. Now, the first table contained all the commandments concerning our duty to God; while the second table contained all the commandments concerning our duty to our neighbour. And just here arose my great perplexity about Bunyan’s seven arch-abominations. For in all his deep self-discoveries, in all his sometimes almost too awful contritions and confessions, in all his quite extraordinary brokenness of heart and burdensomeness of conscience, he has not recorded one single instance of any transgression of his against any of the commandments of the second table. In speaking of the holy law of God which the Holy Ghost makes use of to show us our sinfulness, John Calvin says that the first table of the law holds by far the higher spiritual rank, but that the second table is far better suited for the purposes of our self-examination: for our severe scrutiny of ourselves. Now, I will not say that John Bunyan never scrutinised himself by the second table; only we have no report of any such scrutiny. In all the three hundred and thirty-nine paragraphs of Grace Abounding to the Chief of

Sinners there is not so much as one single line that speaks of any single sin of his against either the fifth, or the sixth, or the seventh, or the eighth, or the ninth, or the tenth commandment of the law. And in his enumeration and confession of his seven archabominations at the end of his heart-searching book there is not one syllable that refers to any sin of his against man, or woman, or child: not one syllable. In all his openness of heart and in all his brokenness of heart about himself Bunyan has not one word to say about anger, or about malice, or about pride, or about impurity, or about ill-will, or about an unbridled tongue, or about an envying or a grieving heart at the good of his neighbour. And yet you may depend upon it John Bunyan was quite as guilty in all these respects as you and I are. Emerson the American essayist once boasted that he did not care who saw into his heart. But in that boast Emerson only advertised to all the world that he had never seen so much as one inch under the surface of his own heart himself. And thus it is that we find that literary man saying that the Christian Church has dwelt with 'noxious exaggeration' on the Person of Christ. But John Bunyan was not such a born Philistine as that. And just how to account for the seven arch-abominations in Bunyan's heart, and all of them against the first table of God's holy law, and not one of them against any commandment of the second table, that fairly confounded me: I did not know how to explain that. I did not know what to make of that. And then when leaving Moses I went on to lay Bunyan alongside of Dante, I was only more and more staggered and perplexed and thrown out. You will all remember the successive names of Dante's seven scars. You will all remember them because they are all your own. All your own foreheads have had cut in upon them all those same seams and scars of sin and shame. But not Bunyan's forehead as it would seem. For Bunyan in all his humiliations, does not confess to so much as one of those seven scars of Dante's and yours and mine. Only, on the other hand — and how this more and more perplexes us! — on every red-hot page of his Grace Abounding John Bunyan is constantly confessing to kinds of sins, and to aggravations of sins, and to a guilt and to a despair on account of sins, to all of which Dante seems to have been wholly ignorant and innocent. Now, how is all that, and all that on both sides, to be accounted for and explained? If I were to suggest to you that perhaps Bunyan saw deeper into some divine things than even Dante saw: that for one thing, he both saw and felt the spirituality of sin far better than Dante did, what would you say to me? If I were so much as to hint at my belief that Bunyan's seven abominations are far away more significant, spiritually considered, than all Dante's sufficiently fearful scars, what would you say in answer? Would you not start up and tell me that John Bunyan was not worthy to stoop down and unloose Dante's shoe-latchet? Would you not exclaim that the tinker of Bedford is not to be named in the same day with the greatest of all Christian poets? And I would at once admit that. That is to say, I would at once admit that as far as Dante's aristocratic birth and aristocratic breeding were concerned. And as far as his classical education and his oceanic reading were concerned. And as far as many more such like immense advantages of his were concerned. But perhaps there may have been one or two very real and very rich blessings left behind for Bunyan that even Dante did not wholly inherit, much less exhaust in his day. For one thing, Bunyan lived after Luther had written; whereas Dante lived and died long before that great epoch in the Church of Christ. And a great saying of our Lord comes to my mind at this moment:

'Among those born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.'

Now to my mind, Dante is among the very greatest born of women: notwithstanding, at the same time, John Bunyan is greater in the kingdom of heaven than he. Not that Dante is not high up in the kingdom of heaven also: for so he is and very high up. But the whole point is this: the kingdom of heaven had made some immense advances between Dante's day and Bunyan's day: immense advances in inwardness, and in depth, and in spirituality, and in evangelical doctrine and evangelical experience: immense advances of which the best men of Dante's day had no knowledge and no experience. If Luther was all that Evangelical Christendom is now wholly agreed that he was, then simply to have been born after Luther, and to have heard him preach Paul's Gospel, and to have read his Comment on the Galatians; all that places a man like Bunyan in a position of such privilege as to make all talent, and all learning, and all labour to fall into a far inferior place. Yes, yes: that great saying of our Lord about John the Baptist gives us the true point of view in this whole matter now in hand. The whole explanation of which we are in search lies away out in that direction. And they who are willing to receive that explanation, they will find it sufficient the more they think about it. For that explanation sheds a great light on all our confessed perplexities about the two tables of the law; and about Dante and his seven scars: and about Bunyan and his seven abominations. And when once you get a point of view that harmonises difficulties and perplexities hitherto insoluble and irreconcilable: however new to you, and however unexpected by you that point of view may be, you will be wise to take it, and to hold it, at any rate till you have found a better. The sum, then, under this head, is this. These same seven scars would all have been cut deep into Dante's forehead, even though Jesus Christ had never come, and had never died, and had never risen again, and had never sent down the Holy Ghost. But unless the Son of God had come, and had been made sin, and had been made an atonement for sin, and had sent the Spirit of holiness to the Church; and unless Paul and Luther had had the Son of God and His righteousness revealed in their hearts, and had had the Spirit of gospel holiness shed abroad in their hearts, Paul would never have written his seventh chapter, and Bunyan would never have written his seven abominations. Nature herself, the law of God written on the natural conscience, would have secured Dante's seven scars. But evangelical illumination and evangelical experience alone could have opened Bunyan's eyes to such spiritual sins as he here laments, and that with such inconsolable bitterness. Where Dante is so severely ethical, Bunyan is intensely spiritual. Where Dante is consumed with the fire of legal and moral righteousness, the zeal of evangelical holiness has eaten Bunyan up. Dante's seven scars are seen and are felt and are bitterly confessed by every righteously-minded man, pagan and Christian. But Bunyan's seven abominations are seen and are felt and are bitterly confessed by the most evangelically-enlightened and the most heavenlyminded of God's New Testament saints alone.

'Unbelief' was the first and it was by far the deepest of all John Bunyan's abominations. Unbelief, and unbelief alone, was the one baleful mother of all the abominations in Bunyan's heart. And when our own eyes are opened we then see that our unbelief also is the true and the only mother of all our abominations also. They have all been begotten in her bosom, they have all been suckled at her breasts, and they have all been brought up on her knees. All our sins and all our scars and all our abominations of all kinds arise out of our unbelief. Our Lord met with no enemy and no opposition in all His ministry but unbelief. He never upbraided any man or any woman or any city for anything else but for unbelief. He went about from city to city, and from synagogue to synagogue, and from one suppertable to another, asking for nothing but faith. And as soon as He found faith He straightway praised it and rewarded it and blessed it. 'O woman!' He said, 'great is

thy faith! Be it unto thee and unto thine according to thy faith!' And so it is, down to our own day. For I find this illuminating passage in the spiritual biography of a great believer and a great preacher.

'Having been much exercised, and for many years, with troubled thoughts, he had, by many self-mortifying methods, sought peace of conscience, but notwithstanding all he could do, his troubles still increased. Whereupon he consulted several eminent divines, who told him that he understood the Scriptures much too legally. Upon giving one of them an account of the state of his soul, and particularising his sins, that divine told him that he had forgotten to mention the greatest sin of all, the sin of unbelief, in not believing on the Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of his sins, and for the sanctification of his nature. Hereupon he set himself to studying and to preaching Christ, till he attained to eminent holiness and to great peace of conscience.' So bitterly did Bunyan feel the evil of unbelief that 'he set down even'inclinings' to unbelief as the first and the greatest of all his seven abominations, and as the too fruitful mother of all the rest.

All the same, it still remains no little of a mystery to me how Bunyan in all his so severe scrutiny of himself, spiritually and morally, should make no mention at all of pride, or of anger, or of hatred, or of malice, or of revenge, or of impurity, or of envy, and such like. I would have thought that by this time his eyes would have been so opened to all his sinfulness that he would have seen and would have confessed himself to be guilty of all these abominations of heart every day he lived. But no. For some still unexplained reason, no. Well, then, to make a last guess, was it this? Was it because Bunyan by this time had become so absolutely godly in all his views of things, that all his sins of all kinds, and of all degrees, and of all aggravations, he now saw to be committed not so much against man or woman as against God: indeed, as committed against God alone? Was that it? Would that be it? Yes, that was it; that must be it. That, I feel certain, is the whole of our difficulty resolved and explained. By this time Bunyan has become so like David that he says after every single sin of his of whatever kind, Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight. And so like Paul and Luther has Bunyan become that to him now faith, faith working by love, is the fulfilling of the whole law in both its tables, and in all that is required and in all that is forbidden in both its tables. And to him now the lack of faith in Christ and the lack of love to God involves all sin of all kinds. Yes; since God is the God He is, and since Christ is the Christ He is, faith in God, and faith in Christ, is everything. Only have faith in God, as God is in Christ, and all things are yours: law and gospel; Moses and Christ; whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's. Read this now in the light of all that:

'I find to this day seven abominations in my heart.

(1) Inclinings to unbelief.

(2) Suddenly to forget the love and mercy that Christ manifesteth.

(3) A leaning to the works of the law.

(4) Wanderings and coldness in prayer.

(5) To forget to watch for that I pray for.

(6) Apt to murmur because I have no more, and yet ready to abuse what I have.

(7) I can do none of those things which God commands me, but my corruptions will thrust in themselves. When I would do good, evil is present with me.'

'These things I continually see and feel, and am afflicted and oppressed with; yet the wisdom of God doth order them for my good. For (1) they make me abhor myself.

(2) They keep me from trusting my own heart.

(3) They convince me of the insufficiency of all inherent righteousness.

(4) They show me the necessity of fleeing to Jesus.

(5) They press me to pray unto God.

(6) They show me the need I have to watch and be sober.

(7) And they provoke me to look to God, through Christ, to help me, and to carry me through this world. Amen.'

Chapter 111

# 111. Temptations, When We Meet Them At First, Are As The Lion That Roared Upon Samson. But If We...

CXI ‘Temptations, When We Meet Them At First, Are As The Lion That Roared Upon Samson. But If We Overcome Them, The Next Time We See Them, We Shall Find A Nest Of Honey Within Them.’ IN the preface to Grace Abounding John Bunyan dedicates that great book to his spiritual children.

‘I have sent you enclosed a drop of that honey which I have taken out of the carcase of a lion. I have eaten thereof myself also, and am much refreshed thereby. Temptations, when we meet them at first, are as the lion that roared upon Samson; but when we overcome them, the next time we see them, we shall find a nest of honey within them. The Philistines understand me not.’ And so on, all through that wonderful preface to that wonderful book.

Now when we go on to read that wonderful book itself we soon find that the temptations of its author were temptations of no ordinary kind. They were very far from being temptations of that coarse and common kind into which we would have expected to see young Bunyan falling, when we consider his birth, and his upbringing, and his tinker and his soldier life. So inward indeed, so spiritual and so evangelical even, were John Bunyan’s temptations all through his wonderful life that the most of us are much too philistine fully to understand either him or them. For there is nothing in which the most of us are more philistine than just in the true understanding of inward and spiritual and evangelical temptations.

‘Temptations, when we meet them at first, are as the lion that roared upon Samson.’ Now you all know from your childhood the Bible story of Samson and the lion. You all remember how Samson went down, and his father and his mother to Timnath; and, behold, a young lion roared against him. And how the Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson mightily, till he rent the lion as if it had been a kid, and he had nothing in his hand. And when some time after Samson returned to the place to look at the carcase of the lion, behold! there was a swarm of bees and a nest of honey in the carcase of the lion. And Samson took of the honey in his hands, and went on eating, and he came to his father and mother, and he gave them, and they did eat. But he told them not that he had taken the honey out of the carcase of the lion. That is the substance of the old Bible story. And then the classical preface to Grace Abounding contains John Bunyan’s spiritual interpretation and personal application of that same old Bible story.

Now to John Bunyan and to all Bunyan-like men among us the roar of Samson’s lion is never out of their ears all their days on earth. Like Samson’s road to Timnath, some men’s roads all through this life lie alongside of the lions’ dens and up among the mountains of the leopards. To some men every step of their earthly life is just another new temptation. They are no sooner delivered out of one temptation than they suddenly fall into another and a worse. Till their whole earthly lifetime is one long snare to them, one long warfare, one long watching, one long weariness, one long waiting for the deliverance of death.

During a solitary walk along the hillside above the village of Durinish one day last September, all the way as I walked I was thinking about my own unceasing and ever-increasing temptations. Now as God would have it there had been a whole night of the densest sea-fog from the Atlantic, and the wet spray stood in millions of shining gems all over the spiders' webs that were woven all over the broom, and the bracken, and the bushes of whin, and the bushes of heather. Had I not seen the scene with my own eyes I could not have believed it. The whole hillside was absolutely covered from top to bottom with spiders' webs past all counting up. All the spiders in Scotland seemed to me to have conspired together to weave their webs and to spread their snares all over that Durinish hillside that day. To the casual and innocent-minded passer-by the whole hillside would have seemed simply splendid with its brilliant network of sparkling silver. But the very brilliancy of the scene only made that hillside all the more horrible and diabolical to me, as I thought of the bloodthirsty devil that lay watching for the silly flies at the hidden heart of every silvery web. It was a Saturday forenoon, and it would have been well worth a week-end ticket to some of you just to have stood beside me for a few moments, and to have seen with your own eyes that satanic hillside that September forenoon. For myself, I shall never forget the sight. I see it at this moment as I stand here. A thousand times that sight has risen up before my eyes since I came home. If our Lord had been passing that hillside that forenoon He would have stopped His walk, and looking at the spiders' webs He would have said to His disciples: Such is the kingdom of Satan! Which when the twelve had seen and had laid to heart they would have been exceedingly amazed, and would have said: Who, then, can be saved? When He would have answered them: With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.

It was the rising of the sun that morning that revealed to me those thousands on thousands of glistering snares. But for the sunlight falling on the hillside, and but for the subject of my morning meditation, I would have wholly missed seeing that never-to-be-forgotten spectacle, and I would never have read to myself or to you that so impressive parable. If I had not been musing all that morning on matters of eternally vital importance to you and to me, and if the sun had not by that time been high in the heavens, I would have stumbled on like any idle-minded holiday maker, and would never have seen so much as a single one of those thousands of death-spreading spiders' snares. And so it is, I said to myself, with the thousands of Satan's death-spreading snares in the case of every human soul. Satan's accursed snares are woven and woven over and over every inch of every human soul. But those snares of Satan are wholly invisible till the sun rises and till the soul awakens to a life of watching and praying and believing. But when, by the special grace of God to any of us, we are so awakened, then this whole city in which we dwell becomes to us a second Durinish hillside, and you and I become those dismembered flies whose blood-sucked wings and legs I saw dangling in the wind all up and down among those glistering spiders' webs. The streets and the squares of Edinburgh, our own houses, and our own churches even, all are that doleful hillside over again to every man who is not a stark philistine. Nay to every man who is not a stark philistine his own soul is that doleful hillside. For the very body which his soul inhabits is all set over with snares for his soul. The very table also at which he eats and drinks, the very chair on which he sits, and the very bed on which he sleeps. The close pursuer's busy hands do plant Snares in thy substance: snares attend thy want;

Snares in thy credit, snares in thy disgrace;

Snares in thy high estate, snares in thy base;

Snares tuck thy bed, and snares attend thy board;

Snares watch thy thoughts, and snares attend thy word;

Snares in thy quiet, snares in thy commotion;

Snares in thy diet, snares in thy devotion;

Snares lurk in thy resolves, snares in thy doubt;

Snares lurk within thy heart, and snares without;

Snares are above thy head, and snares beneath;

Snares in thy sickness, snares are in thy death…

Skill, bugle, poison, steed, bow, raiment pale, Decoys, snares, nets, shafts, dogs — make up the tale. By far the worst of all John Bunyan's temptations, so he himself tells us, was to question the being of God, and the truth of His Gospel. And some of you have had your own worst temptations in that same so fatal direction. But by persevering in secret prayer, and by constant and exclusive reading of your Bible and other devotional and experimental books, and by continuing to do the will of God all through your darkness, you came at last to 'know the doctrine,' as Christ said you would. Aye and to know the doctrine with a certitude that nothing shall ever any more shake in your case. That is what Bunyan in his own sweet style calls a nest of honey taken out of the carcase of a lion. For an assault of unbelief in God and in His Gospel is the lion of all lions, and her roar is the roar of all roars. But then the sweetness and the strength that dropped into your heart when your faith in God came back to you, that was to you like Samson's honey and his honeycomb.

Then again, to come to another side of your awful life of temptation: in the case of some of you that is. You are sometimes so fixed and fastened down inside such a perfect network and woven web of trials and temptations as to make your daily life all but absolutely unbearable by you. Some man that you hate in your heart, some man that is an incessant and a wearing-out temptation and snare to you, is fastened down at the very heart of your life. He lives in the same house with you. Or his house is next door to you. Or his house or his office or his shop is straight across the street from your house or your office or your shop. And so tortured are you in your heart with that man's simple neighbourhood that you often think of going to live in another part of the town so as to get him out of your sight. Nay you have sometimes thought of spending the rest of your days in another country altogether. You sometimes wish in your misery that either he were in his grave or that you were in yours. Nobody would believe the terrible trial that man is to you. Nobody will ever know what a snare that man is to your soul. Nobody — but your minister. Nobody will ever guess at your terrible torture but that solitary traveller among the spiders' webs of Durinish that awful September forenoon. It was of you that he was thinking when the sun came out and the whole hillside became so full of personal and pastoral lessons to him. Only one man on earth, and one Man in heaven, for one moment understands and sympathises with your fearful sufferings. But they both understand your case; yes, down to the deepest and the darkest bottom of it. I have told you something about your minister. John Bunyan shall tell you something about his High Priest and yours. 'Christ Himself was tempted to blaspheme His Father,' says Bunyan. 'He was tempted to fall down and worship the very devil. Nay, he was tempted, like you, to take His own life.' But

long before those recorded temptations of His, you are invited to imagine His year in and year out of temptations, so like your own that you alone can imagine them or believe them possible. His year after year of temptations and trials in the carpenter's shop all day, and then every morning and every night at His mother's fireside, beside all His unbelieving and unsympathising brothers and sisters. He was in all points tempted like as you and I are. A whole forest of lions roared on Jesus Christ day and night for thirty years. But He forgot it all as often as He again ate the honey that lay hid for Him also in every overcome temptation. Pray you and endure you like Him, and you will eat honey like Him.

'If you pray for an enemy and an injurious and an offensive man, and speak good concerning him, and continue to do him good, it will end in your actually loving him,' so says William Law to us, and he had tried that way of it, and had taken the honey out of it that he shares with us in his so victorious books. Try much more prayer on your so offensive and injurious neighbour; try much more prayer and much more good neighbourhood as God gives you your opportunity; and some day soon you will find a great nest of honey opened up next door to you aye, opened up in the very house beside you. And so on, through all the lions, and through all the spiders, and through all the men, and through all the devils that are now ensnaring your soul, and are roaring upon your soul every day and every hour of your earthly life.

You are in downright desperation some Sabbath morning. And you stumble into some open church, as Hannah stumbled up to Shiloh. And you hear a prayer offered or a sermon delivered, the like of which you never heard before. And it goes straight home to your broken heart. It takes away your breath. You feel as if your whole secret case had somehow been all discovered to that commanding preacher. Already you are not so desperate and so near drowning yourself as you were all last night. You are not so awfully alone on your bed in hell as you were all last night. A strength and a sweetness straight down from heaven entered your broken heart that never-to-be-forgotten Sabbath morning. You have always dated your deliverance from death and your newness of life from that miraculous Sabbath morning. For it was both a birthday and an espousal day and a true marriage day to your lost soul. A true Samson, if ever there was one, shared his nest of honey with you that Sabbath morning. But, though you found him out, and told him something of what his sermon had done for your soul, I feel sure he has never told you where he got his sermon. He has never told you out of what temptations of his he took his sermon, nor what it cost him before he preached it.

'And Samson took thereof in his hands, and went on eating, and came to his father and mother, and he gave to them, and they did eat.' But Samson never told them that he had taken all that honey out of the carcase of a dead lion that had at one time roared upon him.

I have seen as much as that some prodigal son who is all but ready for the Dean Bridge will stop me in the dark lane behind the church on my way home to-night, and will say to me:

'Sir,' he will say, 'I am that blood-sucked fool that you saw dangling among those spiders' webs by the wayside! Temptations, you said, to some men become a nest of honey. My temptations have become to me, for years past, nothing but dust and ashes in my mouth, and I have drunk nothing but blood and tears.'

Some thirty years ago I took home a prodigal son from the same dark lane, who is now in his Father's house, where all tears are wiped from off all eyes. But before he was received home in heaven he lived long enough on earth to find his sweet nest of honey not only in all his overcome temptations, but even more, in those temptations that he did not overcome, but that at one time had overcome him. And on many a communion day in this same house of God I have heard him singing with all his heart and soul after the table this thanksgiving psalm:

'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his Holy Name, who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction, and who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies. Yes, truly, bless the Lord, O my soul!'

# 112. The Philistines Understand Me Not.

CXII ‘The Philistines Understand Me Not.’ THE Philistines were the aboriginal inhabitants of Palestine. Philistia was the original name of Palestine, and the original inhabitants of Philistia were known by the name of Philistines. As far back as we are able to trace the Philistines their chief cities were Gaza, and Ashdod, and Ashkelon, and Gath, and Ekron. And their chief gods were Ashtoreth, and Baal, and Beelzebub; three of the most cruel and most obscene of all the cruel and obscene gods of the Gentiles, The Philistines were of a gigantic size and of herculean strength, while in their moral character they were exactly like the gods they made and worshipped. Brutish size and brutish strength of body; brutish grossness and brutish stupidity of mind and heart, with great cruelty and great obscenity, these were the outstanding characteristics of the Philistines among all the heathen peoples of those days. And these are the broad and deep footprints that the Philistines have left to this day on the pages of the Old Testament.

One of the first things that drew the young tinker of Bedford to open the Bible and to return to it was the story of Samson’s victorious encounters with the Philistines of Timnath. But the Philistine that young Bunyan liked best to read about was that gigantic Goliath of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span; the weight of his coat was five thousand shekels of brass; the staff of his spear was like a weaver’s beam; his spear’s head weighed six hundred shekels of iron, and one bearing a shield went before him. And he stood and cried to the armies of Israel, and said unto them, Am not I a Philistine? I defy all the armies of Israel this day! And when Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and were greatly afraid. By the time that John Bunyan had finished his classical preface to Grace Abounding, the opprobrious epithet of ‘Philistine’ had already entered the vocabulary of English literature never again to leave it. The contemptuous students of the German universities were not the first to make the modern application of that ignominious term. Neither was Thomas Carlyle nor Matthew Arnold the first to transfer that ignominious term to our English tongue. The tinker of Bedford was beforehand with the students of the fatherland when he already penned these so expressive and so plainspoken words: ‘The Philistines understand me not.’ It was not their want of a university education that drew down upon so many of Bunyan’s contemporaries this severe description that he here gives them. Had the want of a university education been the sure mark of a Philistine there would have been no greater Philistine in the whole of England in that day than just John Bunyan himself. But the author of the preface to Grace Abounding is far deeper in his insight, and he is far more masterly in his use of such words, than are those home and foreign critics who use the word philistine with such studied contempt of their unlettered neighbours. The students of Germany, and our own Matthew Arnold after them, apply the nickname of philistine to those of their fellow-countrymen who do not possess the openness of mind and the intellectual refinement that a classical education is assumed to give. But our author employs this condemnatory term in a far deeper way and in a far truer way than that. For he finds the true and the genuine philistines of his day fully as much among the ‘priests and doctors’ of the University of Cambridge as among the tradesmen and shopkeepers of the town of Bedford. With John Bunyan it is not the lack of a

university education that makes and keeps a man a philistine; it is the lack of personal religion. It is the fatal lack of a personal experience of spiritual and divine things. To John Bunyan there is no ignorance and no narrow-mindedness like the ignorance and narrowmindedness of the man who does not know his own heart and consequently does not know his overwhelming need of Jesus Christ and His redemption. To John Bunyan there is no stupidity like the stupidity of an unconverted and an ungodly man. And if that man is a member of a famous university his spiritual stupidity is only all that the more notorious and is only all that the more mischievous. Read the preface to Grace Abounding — a piece of English writing of the first order both intellectually and spiritually considered — and unless you are a philistine yourself you will at once feel how deep that preface cuts into yourself. For if you are a man of an enlightened and a spiritual mind, it will cut to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and will be a discerner of the thoughts and intents of your heart.

Now, are there any philistines left in our day? And if so, who are they and where are they to be found? How shall we know them? And how shall we behave ourselves towards them? Well, a proud heart, and a scornful and a blustering tongue, were the sure marks of the original and indigenous dwellers in Philistia. Now if pride and scorn are the indubitable and universal marks of a philistine, how beset and how possessed is the very Church of Jesus Christ with that spirit and that temper in our own day. Our Church parties, our Church divisions, our hostility to one another, our hatred and con-tempt and scorn of one another, is all due at bottom to our philistine pride, self-conceit, and insolence. The Greek Church in her ancient ecclesiastical pride and insolence despises and excommunicates the Latin Church, and the Latin Church in her turn despises and excommunicates the English Church. And then the English Church, not yet having learned wisdom by all that example and experience, makes herself very unlovely sometimes by her behaviour to the Churches that she thinks are beneath her. Three-quarters of a century ago there was a great outbreak of ecclesiastical philistinism in the Tracts for the Times and in the so-called Lyra Apostolica. The pride and insolence of those productions are a painful study to any man with a spark of brotherly love and Christian humility in his heart. But two can play at that philistine game. And thus it was that when the Tractarians turned away from their evangelical brethren in England to seek an alliance with the Holy Synod this was the proud reply that they got:

‘You English separated from the Latin Church three hundred years ago, just as the Latins had separated from the Greeks. We orthodox Greeks think even the Latin Church heretical, but you are an apostasy from an apostasy. You are a descent from bad to worse.’

There speaks a very Goliath of Gath. Now how are we to behave ourselves toward the Churchmen of this spirit who are so plentiful among ourselves in our day? Well, our best way is to track the same spirit down to its universal root in our own half-regenerate and half-sanctified hearts. Let us put its proper name upon that so unchristian mind when we discover it in ourselves. And that will work patience in us and even pity toward our brethren who so much allow themselves in this so unchristian temper and attitude toward those for whom Christ died, quite as much as He died for them. Let us put on strength even to love and to pray for the proudest of such men. And let us more and more be clothed with humility and contrition that such a spirit should obtain at this time of day in that body of Christ, which they and we equally are, and which we and they taken together wholly constitute.

Then again, you may be the most polished and the most urbane of men in the world of letters, and yet you may behave yourself toward the far better world of religion so as to prove yourself to be at heart little better than a philistine yourself. You may be the universally recognised scourge of all stupidity and all dullness and all narrow-mindedness in your own world of things, and yet you may go on to act the part of the uncircumcised in a far better world of things with which you have too little sympathy. To be plain, you may be Matthew Arnold himself in your intellectual insight, and in your matchless criticism of ancient and modern literature, and yet you may act the part of a philistine scoffer toward certain religious men and toward certain religious and social movements of your own day. Every lover of English literature, who is also a lover of evangelical religion, must have often been sorely vexed at the way Matthew Arnold gibes and jests at such men as Lord Shaftesbury, and Mr. Bright, and Mr. Moody, and Mr. Spurgeon; and at such centres of religious activity and social redemption as Exeter Hall and the Salvation Army. Poor gibes and jests at the best, that every true admirer of Arnold could so much wish to see blotted out of his beautiful books. For, not to care how much you pain and even injure good men in their work for God and man, if only you can make a point and raise a laugh at their expense — that, surely, is to act the part of the true philistine. That surely comes down from Gath and Ekron even when it comes to us by the way of Oxford and Cambridge. Another writer of much the same literary rank as Arnold some time ago published a Life of John Bunyan. And he so patronised and so belittled and so philosophised over and so explained away John Bunyan's religious experiences and his apostolic doctrines as to make his book, practically and eventually, a powerful plea for unbelief. I know what I am saying. For I knew in those days a divinity student who was so dazzled and sophisticated and bewildered by that brilliant book that he went aside altogether from the study of divine truth and has landed by this time I do not know where. For all the strength and all the high interests and all the high motives went out of his life with that book. Now if that is not to do the work of a genuine philistine — literary insight and English style and all — then I do not know what the work of a modern philistine is. But the most practical and the most profitable point of all this study of the philistines, past and present, is this: it is to carry the inquiry home to ourselves: first to myself, and then to you. For I would be an archphilistine myself if after all this I let myself go free. Well then, I must understand and must accept this, and you must all understand and accept this along with me: that the bitter dregs of the true philistine are still in us all; aye, and more than the dregs in many of us. There is pride to begin with, if we know what pride really is, and how it shows itself. All selfimportance also, and all self-assertiveness, and all self-opinion-ativeness. All talkativeness, and all boastfulness. All indifference to other men's feelings and sufferings and necessities. All injustice, all injury, and all cruelty. All neglect of the poor, and the oppressed, and the friendless; and so on all through our sinful hearts and lives. All that and everything of that kind is the dominion, or at best it is the deep dregs and the inward remains of the philistine still in us all. In short, it is the old story: it is sin. It is all the deep dregs and all the inward remains of indwelling and unconquered and unexpelled sin. But in all this the true and genuine philistine will not understand one syllable of what I am saying. Only, beloved, says the Apostle, I am persuaded better things of you, and things accompanying salvation, though I thus speak.

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